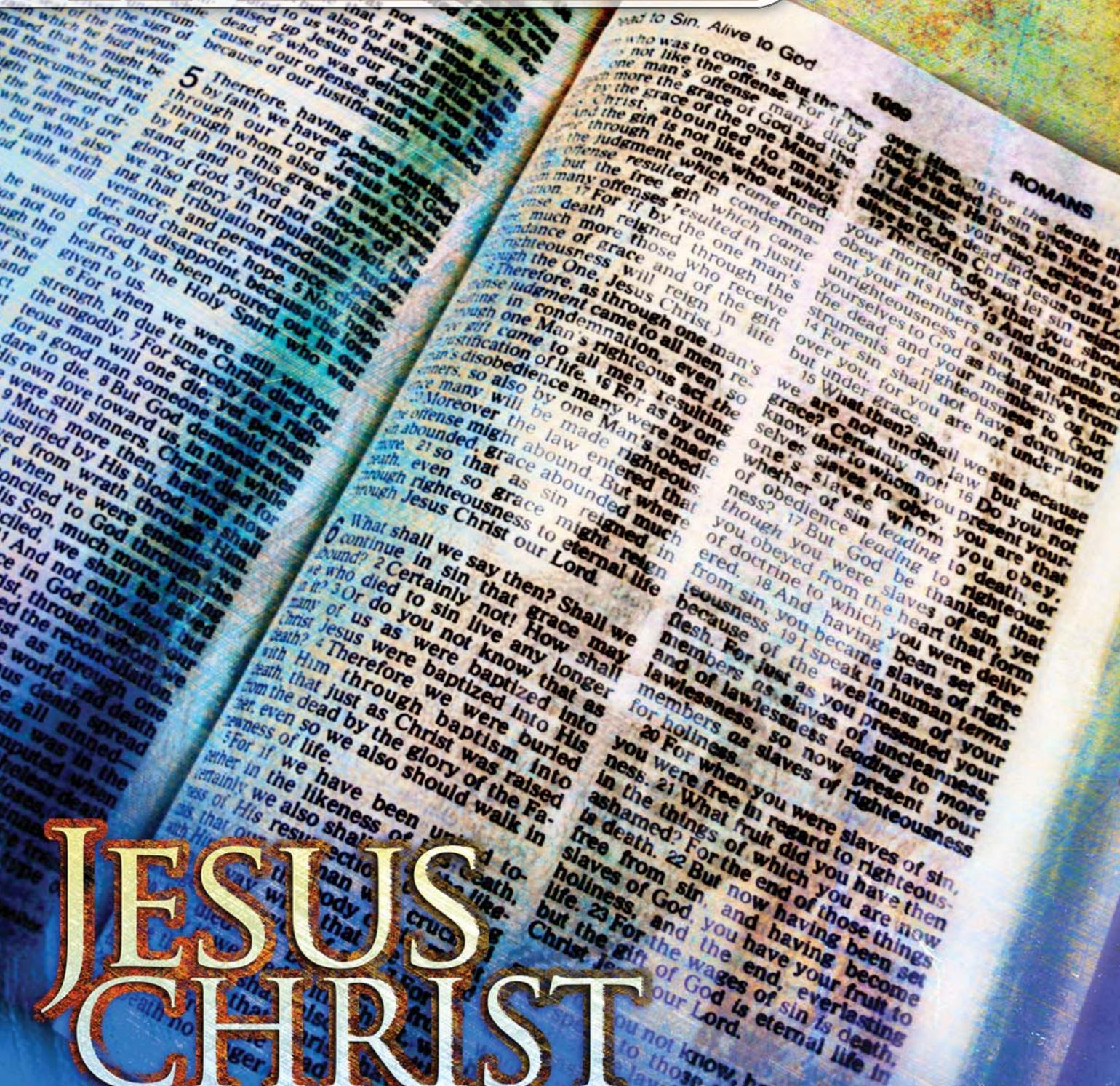


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JESUS CHRIST

in the apostle Paul's epistles

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OUR READERS RESPOND...

Missionaries' kids

Your article "What Happens to Their Children" (May 2007) clearly described the experience of my own family.

My parents were missionaries for 50 years in a Latin American country. I was homeschooled; went on to college, seminary, and graduate school; and served for 42 years as a missionary in the same country.

My four children, raised in the mission field, "suffered" many of the same experiences that Wheeler describes in his article. My wife homeschooled our children all the way through high school. They all excelled in college. The oldest went on to seminary and is a pastor in a multicultural church. My second son is getting a Ph.D. in intercultural studies, and my daughter has been a missionary in South America for 15 years and has just gotten her M.A. in conflict transformation. The youngest is getting his Ph.D. in haptics (a field of robotics) and plans to teach in Latin America.

The productive careers our children pursue are in large measure due to the positive experiences they had in the mission field: exposure to other cultures; the closely knit home environment; and other godly men and women, missionaries, and church leaders who modeled lives of loving service, took an interest in them, and befriended them.

—John E. Huegel, retired missionary and interim pastor, Raymondville, Texas, United States

Joseph Wheeler's article on the experience of missionary kids (MKs) is fascinating and enlightening—until its inadequate conclusion.

Wheeler postulates that most MKs morph as adults into one of three tracks: destructive behavior, self-righteous religiosity, or new and exciting trailblazer.

MKs who choose the last option will not be as "conservative" as their missionary parents, according to Wheeler, who seems to use the stereotype pejoratively.

I offer a fourth track, which I have observed in scores of MKs: hearing and accepting the call to fidelity to the Word of God themselves. They lighten their corner with the love and compassion of Christ through self-sacrificing service to the ends of the earth.

—Cindy Tutsch, D.Min., associate director, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

I enjoyed reading Dr. Wheeler's perspective. My mother was a missionary kid in Lebanon from the time she was 6 months old till she was 18, and my cousins were in Cyprus for 7 years. I remember being dragged to missionary kid reunions throughout my childhood.

My cousin, Hans Olson, is now in the Office of Adventist Mission [Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters] and has mentioned studies regarding the challenges of expatriate children raised in other countries. They are referred to as "third culture kids" (TCKs), and the phenomenon is not limited to missionary children. Many children of embassy workers and military personnel also fall into this category—living in a netherworld where they don't fit into their parents' home culture, nor do they fit into the culture in which they reside.

Thank you for an interesting article.

—Charity Pitton, Port Charlotte, Florida, United States

Thank you for publishing Dr. Wheeler's article. I have been familiar with the need for this sort of public discussion for some time. During my college days, when I saw MKs struggle as a result of

being missionary kids, it seemed that they got all the notoriety. But I was also aware of those MKs who went on to live good constructive lives.

Again, thank you.

—Chaplain G. Verle Peterson, email

God's everlasting covenant

I read with interest Dr. Hasel's article ("Old and New: Continuity and Discontinuity in God's Everlasting Covenant," March 2007). I quote a high point in it: "It is His work to write the law inwardly through His Holy Spirit. Thus the law becomes internalized within the believer, an integral part of the believer's will, permeating it so as to make the human will and the divine law conform perfectly with each other."

My questions for Dr. Hasel are, Is your own willpower in perfect conformity to the divine law? If your willpower is not in perfect conformity to the divine law, then you have no right to set up the standard for others.

And what do you mean by "divine law"? Is it the law in Exodus 20? Or Exodus 34? Or the Sermon on the Mount? What criteria do you use to judge that you have perfectly kept the immense breadth and enormous depth of these laws?

The claim that our willpower can be in perfect conformity to God's law rings the bells of perfectionism.

—Dr. Milton Hook, Hornsby, New South Wales, Australia

Spiritual axis of evil

Thanks for publishing such a clear statement in "Defeating the Spiritual Axis of Evil, part 2." Rarely have I read comments from a church leader so free of politically nuanced language. Dr. Cress's statements on the "troika of racism, social distinction, and gender discrimination" *continued on page 26*

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Planted between the past and the future

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



Eager guides in Jerusalem offered to show us the location of the cross.

“Come, I will show you where Jesus died,” they called out with certainty in their words. They did not want to show us where the cross *may* have been, but rather where the cross *was*. Each was certain of the location; and I suppose if you are a guide, certainty becomes important. The reality, of course, is that we do not know its exact location. And perhaps that’s just as well.

In the New Testament, the authors show the importance of the Cross through their descriptions of the death of Jesus. However, none of them mention its location even though the Cross plays a crucial role in the New Testament writings. In a sermon preached on October 23, 1999, Walter R. L. Scragg aptly noted that “the Cross is planted between the past and the future.”* What happened on the cross matters and gives it this monumental role in history and faith. Jesus’ crucifixion and its meaning are central messages of the New Testament and the Christian faith.

Jesus anticipated the Cross.

Matthew records detailed comments from Jesus about His upcoming crucifixion (Matt. 20:19; 26:2). To me, Jesus’ willingness to die on the cross reveals His character. It answers the question “who is this Jesus?” Jesus—Creator of “all things” and Possessor of life (John 1:3)—willingly allowed Himself to be crucified. It was His absolute commitment to His mission of salvation and His personal love for each that made such an astonishing act a possibility.

Some cannot accept Jesus’ death on the cross. Some months ago I attended a meeting at a place of worship that is not a part of the Christian community. Jesus was mentioned in many positive ways; the presenters expressed admiration for Him and talked positively of His return. What they could not accept was His death on the cross—it just could not have happened. They argued that God simply would not have allowed Jesus to die. In fact, these individuals, with great sincerity, explained that Jesus escaped and continued to live in a far-off country.

The disciples’ report. But the Gospel writers report Jesus’ death in detail. Even though His advance statement about His coming demise escaped them, they later report with certainty His death on the cross. In fact, they exhibit such a certainty of the death that they were surprised (even shocked) that He arose. Once they recovered from the shock, once their faith was reborn, they publicly embraced Jesus’ crucifixion (Acts 2:23).

Paul tells the world. Not satisfied just to report Jesus’ death on the cross, Paul used the Cross as a reference point representing power. He reminds the Colossians that “having disarmed the power and authorities, he [Jesus] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col. 2:15, NIV). From shame to triumph—that’s Paul’s message of the Cross.

The cross today. Unfortunately the cross has been used for purposes other than to announce Jesus’ triumph over evil powers. Some centuries after the New Testament era, the cross was used by armies, with the hope that their political mission would be blessed by its presence. No longer was it a symbol of conquering evil; rather, it was used with the hope that its presence would conquer human enemies.

Today I notice a disturbing trend. I see individuals wearing the cross even though they have no commitment to Jesus Christ. In fact, some wear the cross even though publicly they feel comfortable abusing the name of Christ. Do they think of the cross as a “charm” that will do something for them? Ignoring Christ, but wearing the cross—what possible reason would there be for wearing it?

As preachers of the gospel, our role should not be to make the cross popular. Our role is to present the Christ of the cross and the message of the Cross. With the Cross planted between the past and the future, the message of the Cross becomes a message of forgiveness and hope for the future. Once the New Testament writers started proclaiming the Cross, they had hope in their hearts. That should be the source of our hope.



* Sermon preached at the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Takoma Park, Maryland, United States.

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Jesus Christ in the Apostle Paul's Epistles

François Bovon



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According to Paul's thinking, there are two classical ways of presenting Jesus Christ. The first insists on Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection as redemptive acts (1 Cor. 2:2; Gal. 6:14, and 2 Cor. 4:5). "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2, ESV). In this line of interpretation, what comes first is not a definition of faith or of righteousness by faith but a narrative of Jesus' Passion and vindication. The name of Friedrich Büchsel is attached to this theological position.¹

The second way underscores the subjective side of Christology, the means by which the message of the Cross reaches the believers. What is original in the apostle's thought is not the historical depicting of Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection, but the manner through which the Word forces the person to pass from unbelief to faith by the manifestation of God's righteousness. Characteristic passages here are Romans 1:16, 17 and 3:21, 22. "But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe" (Rom. 3:21, 22, NRSV). This is the path followed by Rudolf Bultmann,² who refuses the simple narrative of historical facts and considers as mythological the recourse to the category of sacrifice. Only God's Word has the power to bring the believers to a true understanding of themselves and a pure appropriation of faith.

There is a third way, which I suggest here. If we consider Paul's personal encounter with Jesus Christ and his responsibility as an apostle, it is possible, even advisable, to respect four situations in Paul's experience, both personal and social, and to investigate how the apostle develops his own Christology in precise historical situations.

The first is the time of his conversion on the road to Damascus. It occurs in the presence of Jesus Christ at this decisive moment in Paul's life. It is the time of the apostle's training—his learning of being a disciple (*mathêtês*) of Christ. The second is the time of Paul's missionary activity when the apostle preaches and teaches along with the other apostles. This is Paul's period of being an instructor (*didaskalos*). The third situation is then created when Jewish-Christians attack him and criticize his understanding of the Mosaic Law. Paul in that period pursues a reflection on the relationship between Christ and the Law. The final one arises when Paul is accused of not having deepened enough his knowledge of Christ through the gift of the Spirit.

If the front against the Jewish-Christians is open in Asia Minor and evidence of it is preserved in the Epistle to the Galatians, the front against the Enthusiasts is located in Corinth and witnessed in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. As Paul's biography makes it clear, these two confrontations occur around the same time (around 50–55 C.E.), while the conversion to Christ occurred around 34 C.E., and the regular mission took place since then.

"For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain" (Phil. 1:21, NRSV).

Jesus Christ has been an element of rupture in Paul's life. There was a *before* and an *after* for the meeting with Christ on the road to Damascus. The cause of this decisive turning point was not a heroic depiction of Jesus' death but a divine intervention, a Christophany. Paul gives an account of this event in Galatians 1:13–17; Philippians 3:7–11; and perhaps Romans 7:18–25. Before this meeting with the risen Christ, life was for Paul a time of obedience to the Mosaic Law, of belonging to the Pharisaic movement, and of polemic against the Christian communities. After this event came the communion with Christ, the discovery of the gospel, the beneficence of freedom, the belonging to the Christian church, and the missionary activity, particularly among the Gentiles.

Three terms help to characterize this new period in Paul's existence. The first term is *rupture*. Christ has been a source of violent rupture for Paul, walking along his travel to Damascus: Paul's Jewish life has been suddenly broken. It is no longer the obedience to the Law but the righteousness by

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faith that dictates Paul's own life. The second term is *totality*. It means that the whole life of Paul has changed drastically. The change has been, not gradual, but brusque and sudden. It tells also how global Jesus Christ's input was in the apostle's life. Everything that does not belong to Christ belongs now to the past. Everything that survives is transfigured. Paul died to the Law, and from now on Christ is Paul's life. "For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:19, 20, NRSV). "Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him." (Phil. 3:7-9, NRSV). The third term is *exclusive service*. As answer to Christ's intervention in his life, Paul accepts the role of "servant." He recognizes this bond when he says, "If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16, NRSV). This relationship between the Lord and his servant is for Paul not a source of subordination but a source of freedom, of liberation from the old bonds. Paul feels himself more responsible for others than before, and he claims to be in communion with Christ. In summary, Jesus Christ for Paul the recent convert, the new Christian, has been a cause of an existential rupture and the source of a total new life. Jesus Christ remains a constant loving and authoritative Person. He has been the content of the revelation. He is at the origin of Paul's Christian faith and apostolic ministry. Divine calling and divine election are inexplicable without Him. Without Christ, Paul would not have reached the true faith and would not have been baptized.

"For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again . . ."
(1 Thess. 4:14, NRSV)

Jesus Christ, who had such a personal impact on Paul, is not an unknown

deity, not an *agnōstos theos*, whom the apostle would be the first to reveal. Even if Paul insists on the direct link that connects him to Christ (Gal. 1:1, 12), he recognizes that his Lord is the same as the Lord of the primitive church. Direct revelation, like the one on the road to Damascus, can live side by side with the human witness and the ecclesiastical traditions, liturgical (1 Cor. 11:23), ethical (1 Thess. 4:1), or doctrinal (1 Cor. 15:3-5). Paul can affirm that liturgical elements, as human expressions, nevertheless came "from the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:23). This reasoning explains that Paul does not hesitate to use and to quote creeds and hymns of the first communities. He shares with "those who were already apostles before me" (Gal. 1:17, NRSV) not only a treasure of traditions but also a cluster of Christological convictions. He believes that it is more important to know Jesus Christ's work of redemption than the exact identity of the Lord's person. He realizes with them that behind Jesus Christ's tragic destiny is the agenda of the benevolent God of Israel. "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19, NRSV): Christ's event is imbedded in God's will. To use other words, God's righteousness expresses itself in terms of grace and love (see Rom. 3:24; 5:15). This theological program does not arrive unexpectedly but constitutes the result of the prophecy inscribed in the Hebrew Bible (see Rom. 3:21 and in 1 Cor. 15:3, 4 the double mention "in accordance with the Scriptures"). In harmony with the church, Paul believes that Jesus came in an act of obedience and love (see Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:6, 7; Rom. 8:3, 4; 2 Cor. 8:9). In agreement with the church, he knows that Jesus was crucified and that this death can be interpreted as an act of redemption (Rom. 3:24-26); that God on the third day has vindicated His Son (1 Cor. 15:3-5).

"For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4, NRSV).

Paul had to fight a Christian form of religion that he could not accept. According to his Judaizing opponents, God's

promises are exclusively for Israel; a form of obedience opposed to the freedom that the apostle has discovered in Christ is required from every Christian. For these adversaries, the obedience to the Law in its external and ritual requirements is still valid; circumcision is the permanent mark of election; the death of the Messiah is a sacrifice only for the people of God and not for the nations. Acts 15:1–5 and the Epistle to the Galatians give us a glimpse into the doctrinal position of these adversaries.

What is, in this polemical context, Paul's Christological emphasis? First, the apostle's answer is extremely harsh. The adversaries' gospel is not another gospel; it is not a gospel at all (Gal. 1:6), because it brings the believers back to slavery (Gal. 4:9, 10). Second, insisting so much on the obedience to the Law (Gal. 4:1), these people do not understand the Hebrew Scriptures. They are not able to give a Christological interpretation of the Law, nor do they know how to distinguish prescription and promise, old and new covenant, flesh and spirit. Third, they do not realize the importance of righteousness through faith and have doubt in the eschatological power of Jesus' death. The result is that, according to their view, Christ died in vain (Gal. 2:20, 21; see also Gal. 5:2). Paul, on the contrary, places his pride in Christ and in Christ crucified (Gal. 6:13, 14). This is the *skandalon*, the offense of the Cross. It should not be removed, nor marginalized, for the Lord Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal. 1: 3, 4; see also Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 5). Through His sacrifice on the cross Christ liberates human beings and offers them adoption. Such is the core of Paul's Christological message in his fight against the Jewish-Christians.

"Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption . . ." (1 Cor. 1:30)

On the other front, Paul had to fight the Enthusiasts in Corinth, extremists who would underscore only the freedom and the presence of the divine spirit.³ These opponents do not appreciate

any allusion to the Cross, and they take pleasure in a *logos sophias*, a preaching centered on the wisdom of God. Paul's reaction is as harsh here as it was against the Jewish-Christians. To assimilate, as little as it may be, the Christian *kêrygma* with a human wisdom, is to pervert it completely. As they erase the value of the Cross, Paul's Corinthian adversaries transform the gospel into a human teaching. Paul does not fear to consider the Cross as a failure and the Christian message as an apparent foolishness, a *môria* opposed to any human wisdom (1 Cor. 2:6). But this apparent foolishness is in fact the real wisdom because it is connected with God's power and God's Spirit. Finally Christ is himself the true incarnation of God's Wisdom. He offers access to God, and He is the only one to offer it. He brings this gift while He ends any effort to reach righteousness by oneself.

If humanity accepts the Christian way, a way that refuses any human wisdom and knowledge, then humanity may have communion with God. Christ may reach these people coming to them through His Spirit. Therefore this life in Christ is not only suffering and foolishness, but through them the way of wisdom, the only *sophia* for the perfect (1 Cor. 2:6–16). If Christ is for the apostle Paul the end of the Law, He is also the beginning and the core of the wisdom. ☒

- 1 Friedrich Büchsel, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Geschichte des Wortes Gottes im Neuen Testament*, 2nd ed. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1937).
- 2 Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1958).
- 3 The adversaries I consider here are Paul's opponents according to 1 Corinthians, people from inside the community who believe to have already reached the fullness of wisdom and life. I believe that Paul's opponents, according to 2 Corinthians, come from outside the community and have another vision of Jesus.

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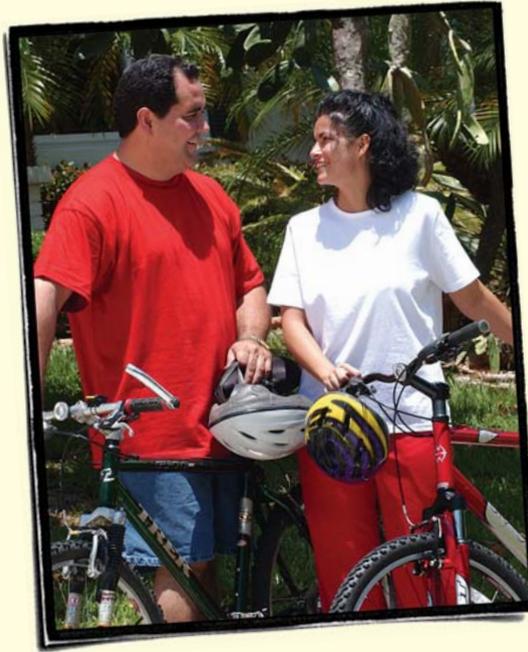
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*Pastor Minervino (Minner) and Evelyn Labrador
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The first question our financial advisor asked us about retirement was: Do you have a will and other estate planning documents? We didn't. Within weeks, two tragedies in our church showed us how important estate planning can be. A beloved deacon suffered a serious stroke. Machines kept him alive, but he could no longer communicate. Loving relatives found themselves in a painful conflict that could have been avoided, if only our church member had signed an advance medical directive. Then, a young couple related to a church member died in a car accident,

leaving two small children. With no will or guardianship directions, the children's future was left to the courts. The custody

dispute, together with probate costs, significantly reduced the children's inheritance. When we thought about our own family, we knew we couldn't live with uncertainty. We had to fulfill our obligations as parents, as pastors of the flock and as responsible

stewards of God's goods. Now that we have wills, we are so relieved. We know that if anything happens to us, our sons will be raised in an Adventist home.

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Preaching to the world: how web church can extend the impact of your preaching ministry

**Derek J. Morris
and Delwin Finch**



Derek J. Morris, D.Min., is senior pastor at Forest Lake Church, Apopka, Florida, and author of Powerful Biblical Preaching: Practical Pointers From Master Preachers.¹



Delwin Finch is a volunteer Web pastor at Forest Lake Church. He oversees the rapidly expanding web church ministry at www.forestlakechurch.org.

For the past several years, worship services of Forest Lake Church in Apopka, Florida, have been streamed via the Internet.² In recent months, a dramatic expansion of our Web church ministry has led to the appointment of a volunteer Web pastor who oversees our Web church ministry and ministers to our growing Internet congregation. This article is intended to bring inspiration and practical insights to you as you consider how to extend the impact of your preaching ministry through a Web church ministry in your local church.

During the early development of our Web church, we were hampered by limited bandwidth. Only 40 individual connections or “sites” could participate in our Web church at any given time. Through the generous support of a visionary donor and the creative leadership of our Web church team, we have been able to expand our bandwidth. Currently, we have 200 to 300 sites that join us during our four hours of live video streaming each Sabbath. Those sites represent more than 500 individuals within our local community and around the world who have found a spiritual home at Forest Lake Church through our Web church ministry.

One of those sites is a family of six who lives in our local community. When Rosie Finch’s mother had a stroke in December 2004, Rosie; her husband, Delwin; and her two sisters decided to relocate to Orlando and have their parents live with them. Shortly after arriving in the Orlando

area, they began looking for a church home that would meet the needs of their homebound parents. They discovered that Forest Lake Church had live video streaming every Sabbath, so they formed a house church where they point their Web browser to www.forestlakechurch.org for all three worship services every Sabbath.

Delwin’s participation with the Forest Lake Web church led to involvement in one of the church’s affinity groups and a meeting with Tim Goff, associate pastor for discipleship. Pastor Goff notified the Forest Lake Church senior pastor, Dr. Derek Morris, who then visited Delwin and his family in their home. When the Forest Lake Church family became aware that Delwin’s in-laws, Miriam and Enos Dalley, were homebound, the quilting ministry decided to give Miriam one of their handcrafted quilts. This proved to be a very meaningful experience for the entire family. When Pastor Morris shared this with the church family one subsequent Sabbath, everyone in attendance, on campus or online, was able to see what kind of impact the Web church can have on those who attend. The Dalley/Finch family is just one of many families that are looking for a church to call home and found it through the Forest Lake Church Web ministry.

Web church: a blessing to those who cannot attend church

Web church is a valuable resource for a variety of individuals who are unable to attend a local church. Barbara sent the following email from Nashville, Tennessee: “I connected to the www.forestlakechurch.org Web site, and have already enjoyed quite a few of the archived sermons there! In fact, I was able to watch your church service live this morning as I was snowed in!! Your church is such a happy, alive one!! May God continue to bless all your efforts!!” Cynthia wrote from New Mexico: “I have been worshipping with your church on-line since Jan. 2005. I live in New Mexico and I join you for worship live at 6:30 AM MST. I am always brought closer to God and the Holy Spirit.” In response to a recent sermon, Aleta sent this email from British Columbia: “What a powerful message! I pray that God will bless this series! Thank you for your Web church. We are living in Northern British Columbia, Canada. We’ve been without a Seventh-day Adventist church family for most of 25 years in the north. God bless you!”

Web church provides resources for those who are actively involved in service for Christ. Because services are archived, people are able to “timeshift” the church service and listen or

watch at a different time from when the service actually occurred. Gene wrote from North Carolina: "We attended church through your Webcast today at www.forestlakechurch.org and we were also able to watch the archived sermon from last week. I felt motivated to send a quick email of thanks. The Webcast is a great idea!" Sammy sent this note from Sydney, Australia: "I surfed on the Internet the other day and stumbled onto your Web site. Thank God for people like you. Now I can prepare my sermons easier by looking into your terrific sermon archives. How I wish I was a member of your church and could enjoy listening to your sermons live. I am not just a receiver of this spiritual blessing, but I am an extension of your tongue and voice to reach a group of worshipers who would not have heard the message before. Thank you for this great blessing you have made available to us." Luiz and Antonieta are active church leaders in Central Brazil. They come home from church each week and log in to www.forestlakechurch.org. They sent this note: "We listen online. Thank you for being a blessing in our lives!"

Participation in Web church can connect people with other resources on your church Web site. Karen wrote from Urbana, Illinois: "I've just finished watching the Sabbath sermon and wanted to thank you for presenting the beginning of Daniel's story both "there" and "here" in Illinois. This isn't the first time I've been grateful for your biblical insights and your willingness to be used of God to share it with others. I found the www.forestlakechurch.org link after reading the article on your Life and Teachings of Jesus class in the Web version of the *Southern Tidings*. I am looking forward to being a silent part of your classes via the Internet as well as in your Web site audience each week. Thank you again and may God continue to bless you, your family, and your ministry."

Web church: across denominational and geographic frontiers

Web church reaches across denominational lines. Chantal, a Baptist Christian from Bristol, England, sent this email:



JoAnn Roth, Evie Salzmann, and Pastor Derek Morris. Web church member Evie Salzmann is presented with a "Welcome home" quilt from the Forest Lake Church Prayers and Squares quilting ministry, under the direction of JoAnn Roth.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, for your ministry. It is such a blessing to me, more than you will ever know. God has given me answers to my prayers and questions through your preaching. This afternoon I listened to 'How to treat lost sheep' and before you asked people to come forward I was already on my knees in front of my computer in tears. I hope you do not mind but I have told many of my friends and family, Christians and lost sheep, about your church Web site." Elizabeth, an Episcopalian Christian from Maitland, Florida, sent this response after joining us online as part of our Web church: "I am finding it difficult to locate a church home near to Maitland with a bright, God-filled minister and believing church members. I'll listen to you at 10:00 AM on the Web this Sabbath. May you be bold and courageous."

Audio podcasting, with downloadable MP3 files, is opening new doors for ministry. Here is a response from a new participant in our Web church ministry: "I am going to borrow the kids' iPod and give this a try myself. I am always on the road between Atlanta, Jacksonville, and Orlando, checking on construction projects. This would give me a chance to listen to some sermons. Thanks for sharing!" A pastor from California writes: "I've been listening through iTunes and I plan to contact you about use of materials!"

We are currently in the process of adding video podcasting. This allows video files of our church services to be downloaded to video iPods and other handheld audio/video devices. One of

our church members has offered to set up the video podcasting at no charge. "I'm so grateful for this Web church ministry! My parents, who live in northern Idaho, download MP3 files every week. Now they will be able to download video files!"

With several hundred sites joining us each week, we are challenged with the task of connecting with our Web church family. In response to this challenge, Forest Lake Church has just appointed a volunteer Web church pastor. When Pastor Morris first visited with Delwin and his family in their home, he learned that Delwin had served as a pastor for 12 years before transitioning to a career as a computer specialist. Now God had connected Delwin's family to the Forest Lake Web church, and God had also uniquely prepared Delwin to become the first Web church pastor of the Forest Lake Church! Delwin and his family have already been blessed personally by our Web church ministry, so who better to understand the needs of our Web church "congregation"?

Here are some of the ways that Delwin is connecting with our Web church family:

Adding Web-audience-specific content to our Web church services, inviting participants to connect with their Web church pastor and others, share news from Web church attendees, and tie viewers into the larger church family.

Updating the content on the church Web site at www.forestlakechurch.org, making it easier for Web church participants to interact and become actively involved with their extended church family.

Developing a database of Web church members, making it easier to communicate with them via email and telephone.

Developing and distributing an online publication targeting Web church members to supplement the current church newsletter.

We estimate that within the next 12 months we will have identified and established meaningful connections with hundreds of Web church participants. Some of these Web church members will be local residents who are unable to travel to the church campus each

week. Others will be visitors from the local community who are looking for a safe way to “check out” the church. Still others will be Adventist Christians around the world who sense the need for additional spiritual nurture and encouragement. Whatever their background and motivation, each one of these Web church participants is precious to God!

One person’s experience

One of our Web church members, Evie Salzmann, recently gave a testimony at Forest Lake Church, telling how the Web church had helped her to come home. Evie was born in Haiti in 1941. Her parents were Holocaust survivors who had fled from Vienna, Austria, in 1938. Evie’s father was Jewish and her mother was Roman Catholic. Her father allowed her to be christened as a baby in the Roman Catholic Church in an attempt to protect her from Hitler’s persecution of the Jews, but Evie grew up in a home that practiced the Jewish faith. Thanks to the witness of Pastor and Mrs. Lebedoff, Seventh-day Adventist missionaries in Haiti, Evie’s parents gave their permission for her to attend Forest Lake Academy (FLA) in Apopka, Florida, for the last three years of high school. While a student at FLA, Evie learned more about Jesus, her Messiah. In her senior year, she confessed her love for Jesus through baptism.

When her father heard about her decision, he strongly opposed her

commitment to follow Jesus. He forbade any further contact with Seventh-day Adventist Christians. Evie had hoped to attend Southern Missionary College, but due to her father’s opposition, she ended

tithe envelopes because she wanted to “stop stealing from God.” Evie shared with Pastor Morris that she made some major adjustments in her shopping habits in order to honor God in her finances!

WEB CHURCH IS A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR A VARIETY OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND A LOCAL CHURCH.

up at a secular institution. She later married a Jewish man and has practiced the Jewish faith for most of her life. But Evie always knew, deep in her heart, that Jesus was her Messiah.

Some months ago, Evie began attending Forest Lake Church online via its Web church at www.forestlakechurch.org. She usually participates in all three services that are streamed live every Sabbath. While watching a sermon from the series Words of Blessing—A Fresh Look at the Ten Commandments, Evie came under a strong conviction that she needed to honor God with her finances. She wrote to Dr. Derek Morris, senior pastor of the Forest Lake Church, and asked for some

Evie now attends church regularly online every Sabbath as part of the Forest Lake Web church. On Sabbath, May 12, 2007, 48 years after her baptism, Evie asked to become a member of the Forest Lake Church by profession of faith! She traveled more than three hours from south Florida to testify to her new church family that she has always believed that Jesus is her Messiah, and that it was time to come home!

The Prayers and Squares quilting ministry of the Forest Lake Church, under the leadership of JoAnn Roth, presented Evie with a beautiful quilt to commemorate this joyful occasion. Embroidered on the quilt were these words: “Welcome home, Evie!”

We believe that a Web church ministry can help thousands of precious children of God to come home! Why not consider starting a Web church ministry at your local church?³ ■

Essentials for starting a Web church ministry

- A vision on the part of the pastor and the church to expand their outreach beyond the four walls of their church building.
- A dedicated team of audio/video volunteers—a group of men and women who are willing to handle the equipment and address the technical issues on a regular and consistent basis.
- A church Web site with the capability to archive previous sermons (video and/or audio) or other digital content.
- A Web stream provider (essential if you are going to Webcast your programs “live”).
- At least one video camera, preferably two, connected to an A/V recording device (DVD, DAT, VHS, etc.).

1 Available at www.ministerialassociation.com or www.preachwithpower.com.

2 Worship services begin at 8:45 A.M., 10:00 A.M., and 11:30 A.M. eastern standard time every Saturday morning. The entire morning is Web-streamed beginning at 8:45 A.M. and continuing until 1:00 P.M. Other services and classes are streamed throughout the week. For a current schedule, see the church Web site at www.forestlakechurch.org.

3 For more information on starting a Web church ministry, contact Pastor Delwin Finch at dfinch@forestlakechurch.org.

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Surprises in biblical typology (part 1 of 3)

Hans K. LaRondelle



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Typology is as old as the Old Testament itself. The prophet Hosea promised the backslidden tribes of Israel that their covenant God would re-enact the ancient Exodus deliverance to renew His covenant with them:

“I am now going to allure her;
I will lead her into the desert. . . .
There she will sing as in the days of her youth,
as in the day she came up out of Egypt”
(Hos. 2:14, 15, NIV; see also vv. 18–23).

The prophet Isaiah also used Israel’s exodus under Moses as an assurance of God’s promise of a “second” exodus from Babylon (Isa. 11:11–16; 52:1–12). He paints a striking parallel picture of God’s past and future deliverances:

The LORD will dry up
the gulf of the Egyptian sea;
with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand
over the Euphrates River (Isa. 11:15, NIV).

Isaiah stresses, however, that Israel’s second exodus will be more magnificent and on a global scale, because her deliverer will be greater than Moses: He shall be the glorious “Root of Jesse” or Messiah Himself, who shall gather Israel “from the four quarters of the earth” (11:1, 10, 12, NIV; 12:1–6). This future perspective harbors inconceivable surprises and gratitude, suggests Isaiah:

Since ancient times no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him” (64:4, 12, NIV; cf. 1 Cor. 2:9).¹

This example of Exodus typology teaches some inherent principles: (1) God is a covenant-keeping God, who remains faithful to His promise (see Deut. 7:9); (2) both type and antitype center on historical correspondences within redemption history; (3) the antitype will be realized fully only in the Messianic deliverance of God’s covenant people.

Biblical typology then is based on the consistent will of the Creator Redeemer, who alone guarantees the unity of His acts in the past, present, and future. One scholar points out an interesting implication: “The OT authors and participants did not necessarily recognize any typological force in the original, but in the divine plan the early event did anticipate the later reality.”² This hidden nature of an Old Testament type is the source of real surprises, especially when the Messianic age begins.

The new typology of Jesus

Jesus of Nazareth began His redemptive ministry by being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River and then receiving the fullness of the Spirit of God. At that moment a voice from heaven spoke: “ ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased’ ” (Matt. 3:17, NIV). The significance of these words lies in the fact that they allude to the Messianic mission of the “Servant of Yahweh” in Isaiah (see Isa. 42:1; 52:13). Jesus saw His own mission, therefore, in the light of this Old Testament prophecy, as His later citation from Isaiah 53 confirms: “ ‘Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment’ ” (Luke 22:37, NIV). Jesus’ life and work were thus guided by His willingness to conform to God’s will as revealed in the prophetic Scriptures.

But Jesus saw His mission also in the *history* of Israel’s kings, priests, and prophets. When the Pharisees challenged Jesus to give them “a miraculous sign,” He surprised them by declaring His superiority over Israel’s anointed ones: “ ‘Now one greater than Jonah is here,’ ” and “ ‘now one greater than Solomon is here,’ ” and by His shocking assertion, “ ‘one greater than the temple is here’ ” (Matt. 12:41, 42, 6, NIV). Read in context, Jesus referred to some specific “signs” of these anointed leaders: The sign of the prophet Jonah to the Ninevites consisted in his miraculous revival after being three days in the belly of a

huge fish (12:40); and the sign of King Solomon, son of David, consisted in his extraordinary gift of wisdom that caused the queen of the south to come to hear it (12:42). Jesus, however, claimed to provide greater signs than those of Jonah (see Matt. 16:21, referring to His own death and resurrection), and of Solomon (see Matt. 11:28–30, where Jesus is the embodiment of divine wisdom, offering the “rest” of salvation).

To defend His disciples against an alleged Sabbath violation, Jesus appealed to David, who on one occasion had broken the law regarding the consecrated bread in the temple, thus implying, “If David as God’s anointed one had the right to set aside a ritual requirement, how much the more have I as Messiah” (Matt. 12:1–8). Here Jesus argues on the basis of an underlying Messianic typology.

The temple priests of the old covenant served God continually with their sacrifices, which foreshadowed a greater sacrifice and a greater high priest (a typological theme that is developed more fully in Hebrews 8–10). In this respect Jesus announced during His last Passover meal with His disciples (while handing them the bread and the cup), “Take and eat; this is my body;” . . . “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt. 26:26–28, NIV). Here Jesus replaces the rituals that symbolized the ancient Exodus deliverance with His own emblems, because His self-sacrifice offers a new and greater deliverance, the forgiveness of sins for all who accept Him as Messiah (cf. Exod. 24:8; Jer. 31:31–34; 1 Cor. 5:7).

Such a dramatic fulfillment of the slaughtered Passover lamb could not have been deduced from the type itself, either. With Messianic authority, Jesus took the fragmentary revelations and imperfect types and interpreted them as witnesses to Himself, the Life-Giver (John 5:39; Matt. 13:17). No wonder the people were “amazed at His teaching” (Mark 1:27; Matt. 7:28; cf. 13:54).

Jesus’ teachings reveal two unsuspected and new advancements in Israel’s salvation history: (1) The time of the Messianic antitypes had come with His redemptive ministry, and (2) the renewal

of God’s covenant with Israel had come in His blood-shedding as the antitypical Passover Lamb.

Surprising typological design in Matthew’s Gospel

It is widely recognized that Matthew’s Gospel presents a design of correspondences between Jesus’ Messianic ministry and Israel’s history. Commentators speak of “Matthew’s christological Moses typology.”³ As one expressed it: “For Matthew, as for the early Church generally, the Christian dispensation is a new Exodus wrought by Jesus as the new Moses.”⁴

Matthew’s Exodus typology is not meant to convince outsiders but, rather, to strengthen the faith of those who already believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Matthew presents his perspective of faith, and not a hermeneutical method or technique of Old Testament exegesis. What is new in Matthew is his interpretation that certain events in Israel’s history were Messianic foreshadowings that needed to be “fulfilled” on a higher plane in Jesus’ ministry. The notion that Israel’s history encloses hidden types of the Messiah’s life may seem a human construct in retrospect, yet is to believers a revelation of the sovereign rulership of the Lord of history and a confirmation of the essential unity of the Scriptures.

For example, Matthew interprets Joseph’s flight to Egypt with Mary, his wife, and child “until the death of Herod” by his comment: “And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my son’” (Matt. 2:15, NIV). His citation is from Hosea 11:1, where the prophet recalls Israel’s exodus from Egyptian bondage by her faithful covenant God. How can Matthew turn this historical Exodus into a Messianic promise? Matthew applies here his Christian theology, which views Jesus as the promised Davidic King (1:1). He presents his typological correspondence, not as a coincidence, but as a divine intention to foreshadow a Messianic “fulfillment.” This typological interpretation of Hosea 11 originated in the Spirit-filled, or charismatic, exegesis of Matthew and can be accepted only by faith in Christ Jesus.

The understanding of Israel’s exodus from Egypt as a type of Christ finds its starting point in the New Testament. Matthew adds more unsuspected parallels between Jesus’ acts and Israel’s history. In particular, he presents Jesus as a corporate person who embodies Israel in his narratives of Jesus’ baptism and His “temptation” experiences in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry (Matt. 3:13–16; 4:1–10).

For example, Jesus wanted to be baptized to demonstrate His solidarity with Israel in her need, and thus to “fulfill all righteousness” (3:15). At that moment He receives the anointing of the Spirit to accomplish His mission. The same Spirit directs Jesus into the desert “to be tempted by the devil” (Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1, “full of the Holy Spirit”). Jesus resists Satan’s suggestions to manifest His Sonship (“If you are the Son of God”). He appeals three times to a central part of Israel’s Scripture, Deuteronomy 6–8 (see 6:13, 16; 8:3). This particular section of Moses’ writing is representative of the entire Torah, because it begins with the historic credo of Israel, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Deut. 6:4, 5, NRSV).

This summary of Israel’s covenant bond is the heart and core of the Torah, the greatest of all the commandments. The following parts (in chaps. 6–8) describe the alluring temptations for Israel in the Promised Land. Moses calls on Israel at the end of the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness to trust and obey the Lord, stating, “Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you” (Deut. 8:5, NIV; cf. Exod. 4:22, 23). Jesus applied Moses’ farewell address to Himself: As Israel was tempted for 40 years in the wilderness, Jesus (“being led by the Spirit”) parallels this testing time by going into the desert for 40 days. Where Israel succumbed to the temptation to disregard the commandments of God (see Pss. 78 and 95), Jesus stands the test of character and true worship. His responses demonstrate that He had set His mind on loving God supremely, “even if He takes away your soul.”⁵

BIBLICAL TYPOLOGY THEN IS BASED ON THE CONSISTENT WILL OF THE CREATOR REDEEMER, WHO ALONE GUARANTEES THE UNITY OF HIS ACTS IN THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

Such a manifestation of a humble Messiah was never anticipated in Judaism. It came as a complete surprise to all Jewish Messianic expectations. Matthew's narrative, however, strongly suggests that Jesus "fulfilled" Israel's history by carrying it to its eschatological completion.

Thus Jesus Himself introduced the time of the antitypes with its qualitative "newness" that exceeded the imperfect forms and limitations of the old covenant, stating, "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. . . . Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. . . . No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Matt. 9:16, 17, NIV). In His redemptive ministerial deeds, Jesus realized Israel's prophetic hope for the inauguration of the Messianic age, which surprised even John the Baptist (see Matt. 11:2-6; cf. Isa. 35:5, 6; 61:1). Jesus also embodied the transition from the old to the new covenant at His last supper. Thus He dramatically demonstrated His new-covenant typology.

Paul's Creation typology

The apostle Paul continues Jesus' typological thinking and develops it in astounding Creation and covenant typologies. His theological applications are taken mainly from the Creation narrative, the time of the patriarchs, and the Exodus. Paul's spiritual perspective is determined not primarily by an exegesis of the Old Testament but by the redemptive appearance of Jesus Christ (see Gal. 1:12; Acts 9:1-18).

The starting point of his typology is Christ's saving presence and "the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8, NIV). He chooses those Old Testament events that can enlighten his Christian gospel and confirm God's eternal purpose. Paul's typological interpretation is guided by his Christ-centered view of God's acts and covenant makings in ancient

salvation history. He begins to use the Greek term *typos* occasionally in a new theological sense, to teach the spiritual unity of God's works in Creation and Redemption. More than that, Paul wants to proclaim God's redemptive design for "the whole creation," to liberate it "from its bondage to decay" in revealing "the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:18-21, NIV).

In this universal perspective Paul develops his unique Creation typology, announcing Adam, "who is a type [typos] of Him who was to come" (Rom. 5:14, NASB). The apostle assumes that Adam and Christ are appointed as the two representative heads of all humanity. He adds in another letter, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22, NASB). Thus there exists not only a parallel correspondence, but also an antithetical parallel. Paul forcefully stresses both aspects: "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19, NASB). While both Adam and Christ lived a life of decisive and universal significance for all mankind, Paul's gospel message is the news that Christ's obedience and victory availed "much more" than Adam's disobedience and condemnation to death (5:15). Paul clarifies this superiority of Christ's self-sacrifice as "the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness" that brings "much more surely" divine justification and life for all believers (see 5:15-19, NRSV). He sums it up, stating, "where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (5:20, NRSV, NASB).

Paul's Adam-Christ typology is essential to his apostolic thinking. He reaffirms this Adam-Christ comparison and contrast when he highlights his future apocalyptic perspective for the believers in Corinth: "The first man Adam" stands for an advance presentation of the "last Adam" as "a life-giving spirit"

(1 Cor. 15:45, NIV). At the end Christ shall "swallow up death in victory" and bestow immortality on all who "belong to Him" (1 Cor. 15:22, 23, 49-57).

This Christocentric structure of Paul's typology led Leonhard Goppelt to conclude that, according to the New Testament, "typology is theologically constitutive for an understanding of the Gospel."⁶ The larger implication of Paul's typology is the affirmation that God's works as Creator and as Redeemer are an unbreakable unity from their inception.

God's revelations occur progressively in history (see Heb. 1:1, 2). From this fundamental truth, H. L. Ellison draws an important lesson: "The Old Testament, even though it only becomes fully understandable in the light of the New, yet remains necessary to our full understanding of the New and of God."⁷ This becomes more evident when we consider Paul's *covenant typology* in his letters to the Corinthians and the *sanctuary typology* in the Hebrews letter. ■

(Part 2 will appear in the September 2007 issue.)

- 1 For a more extensive treatment of Old Testament typology, see my book *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*. AUMon., Studies in Rel., vol. 13 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), chap. 4.
- 2 G. R. Osborne in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* vol. 4, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 931.
- 3 M. Eugene Boring, in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 8 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 175.
- 4 W. D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: University Press, 1966), 16.
- 5 The rabbinic exposition of Deut. 6:5 in the Mishna, Berakoth 9:5. For an extensive treatment, see B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son*, NT Series 2:1 (Lund: Coniectanea Biblica, 1966).
- 6 Goppelt, in his article "Typos," in *Theol. Dict. of the NT* 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 256.
- 7 Ellison, "Typology," in *The Evangelical Quarterly* 25 (1953), 158-66; quote from 166.

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Idolatry: it begins with /

Carol M. Norén



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As Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the Ten Commandments in his hands, he was horrified to see a wild orgy down below. I can picture it now: young girls dancing wildly as though they were on drugs, garlands of flowers being flung on the idol, men eating and drinking and running around in frenzy. They hail the golden calf as the god that brought them out from slavery in Egypt. If the episode were set in the twenty-first century, perhaps the crowd would be cruising around the idol in convertibles with spinning hubcaps and the stereo turned way up, open bottles of liquor would be being chugged down in the back seat by far too many half-naked, unmarried people with no desire for privacy. In other words, when I visualize idolatry, I see people who are unlike myself, busy doing forbidden things that do not tempt me.

What is generally missing from my recall of the Sinai scene, or from my transposition to the contemporary world, is Aaron. Aaron the brother of Moses, his deputy. There's no doubt that Aaron is a significant character in the story, but truth is, I'd rather remember the orgy scene for its party animals than for the religious leader who made it all possible. If I look too closely at Aaron though, I might also have to look at myself. I might have to consider the possibility that idolatry starts with I.

The call to ministry

Considering the story of Aaron, we can trace parallels between our calls to ministry and Aaron's, and between his yielding to idolatry and our own.

But just as the Almighty didn't give up on Aaron, I am confident God can do the same with us.

God called Aaron within the context of already existing relationships. Aaron didn't initially get his calling directly from God; he heard it from his brother. The Lord told Moses that Aaron had a gift for public speaking and that it should be used to accomplish divine purposes. How many of us first had an inkling of God's call to ministry, not when a big hand came out of the sky, but when someone from within the community of faith spoke God's call to us? How often, during our years of preparation and subsequent ministry, have we experienced the encouragement or correction or confirmation of the Holy Spirit through another person? God called Aaron through another servant, Moses. And Aaron got into trouble—into idolatry—when he did what seemed right and expedient in his own eyes, without reference to Moses.

We are called into God's service, and like Aaron, we have a message entrusted to us. Yahweh's instruction to Aaron was "go tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land." The same Lord has entrusted us with a more glorious message: to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation. God gave holy, supernatural power to Aaron so that he could bear witness that his message was indeed from the Lord. You and I have been given power and authority as ministers of the Word.

God loved Aaron, called him into His service, and had a special plan for Aaron and his descendants. On Mount Sinai, the Creator spoke to Moses of this plan, saying, " 'Make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty' " (Exod. 28:2, NKJV). These were to be of finest quality: gold, blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. There was to be a plate of pure gold, with "holy to the Lord" engraved on it, and it was to be fastened to a turban and resting on the forehead. Can you imagine walking around with a badge on you that reads "holy to the Lord"? And God said Aaron and his sons were to be anointed and consecrated that they might serve God as priests. They were to serve God as priests—not serve *the people*. That's not to say that they kept themselves apart from people; on the contrary, they were to lead Israel in the right worship of Yahweh. They would make sin offerings and peace offerings and burnt offerings to God on behalf of the people. They were to keep the laws of purity that the Lord gave Moses. They were to be "holy to the Lord."

Of course Christians do not have a Levitical priesthood, passed down from father to son, and we don't sacrifice animals in church. Some

of us are in traditions where vestments are worn, but others of us are not. I tell my students that whatever you wear to lead worship will take on “official” status and be subject to theological interpretations, even if it’s the same dark suit every week. It will be taken as a statement of your religious convictions, and those convictions may or may not be received well. Whatever color or fabric we put on our bodies, though, we’re like Aaron in that God has called us to wear a sign that says “holy to the Lord.” God didn’t suggest to Moses that Aaron take a survey among the people, asking what sort of clothing they’d like him to wear, or what sort of animals ought to be offered up. Of course not; being “holy to the Lord” means looking to God for the standards for our calling. Always has; always will.

God called Aaron, and God calls us. The Maker of heaven and earth knew what He wanted His priests to be, what He was calling them to do. God had already placed a hand on Aaron and done mighty works through him and Moses, and Moses reaffirmed Aaron’s position of leadership among the covenant people.

Aaron’s idolatry: one step at a time

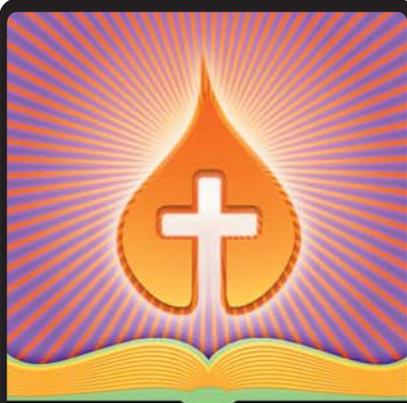
But Aaron bowed to market demand. Perhaps he said to himself, “I’m a pastor; I should try to meet people’s felt needs. I’m supposed to serve this congregation, facilitate laity in spontaneous religious expression, not be a prophetic killjoy. Shouldn’t theology and worship be indigenous? Shouldn’t I take our socioeconomic context seriously? I’m on my own here. If I want to survive in this wilderness, I’d better go along to get along.” We can’t be sure. His descent into idolatry was not a deliberate, dramatic rejection of the God of Israel. No, it was more like C. S. Lewis’s description in *The Screwtape Letters*: “The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.” Aaron’s idolatry happened one step at a time, as I suspect it does for many of us.

How did it happen? Well, first Aaron failed to set the record straight with the

people waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain. “Make us gods who shall go before us,” they clamored. Just who did they think had been going before them in a pillar of cloud up to this point? Aaron should have reminded them. “As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him” (Exod. 32:1, NKJV). They’d already forgotten the opening words of the Ten Commandments: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Moses was God’s instrument, but it was the power of God that got them out of Egypt. And what about Moses’ parting instructions, telling them Aaron and Hur would be in charge *until he returned* (see Exod. 24:14)? But it appears that the people and Aaron had selective memories, or they twisted their recollection to suit their desires of the moment.

Aaron should have uttered a prophetic word, holding fast to the divine covenant, but he didn’t. Instead, he tried to compromise and maintain the security of his position. If you look closely at the text (see Exod. 32), it appears he was pretty sneaky and calculating in the entire chapter. He didn’t say he was throwing off Yahweh to practice idolatry; he just let others utter the words unchallenged. “Give me your golden jewelry,” he commanded, and then fashioned it into a bull, which was a popular symbol in ancient near-eastern nature religions. The crowd loved it, and they cried out, “These are our gods!” When Aaron saw their enthusiasm, he built an altar before it. And then, trying to have it both ways, he declared, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord!” I’m sure his ratings were sky-high by then.

Well, you know what happened next in the story. Moses came down from the mountain. His anger burned hot. He broke the tablets at the foot of the mountain, burned the calf and ground it to powder, mixed it in water, and made the people drink it. And Moses turned to Aaron, to God’s chosen priest, and said, “What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?” (Exod. 32:21, NKJV). Aaron’s answer was as bad as what he’d done.



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While I was walking a few weeks ago, talking out loud with God, two neighborhood girls stopped their bicycles close to me and asked, “Hey, lady, who are you talking to?”

“Well, I’m kind of saying some things out loud that I need to remember.”

“Yeah? But who are you telling them to?”

“Actually, I’m praying. I’m talking with God about my husband and my little girls, and the things I’m hoping for them, and lots of other people too.”

One of them stared at me for a long moment, “You must be a loving person.”

“Oh, I hope so. One of my prayers is for the people in this neighborhood, so I’ll be praying for you later. OK?”

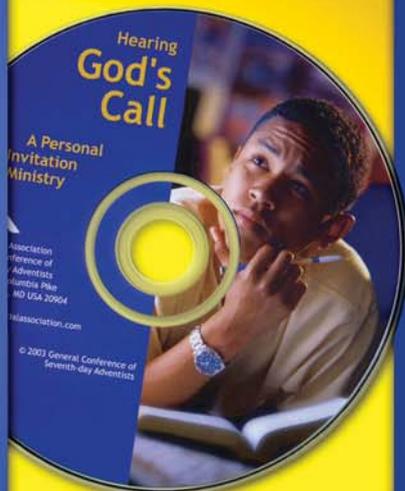
“Really? Cool! Hey, did you hear? That lady’s gonna pray for us!”

Cool indeed. The whole conversation took less than a minute—but it wouldn’t have happened without my time in prayer.

—Cindy Sigler Dagnan in *Focus on the Family*, May 2007 (www.family.org)

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He blamed his congregation. "Don't be mad at me. These people are set on evil. I just collected their gold and threw it into the fire, and there came out this calf!" His attempt to justify himself is incredible.

What are our idols?

How often do we scapegoat the people in our churches and communities rather than own up to our own failures in leadership? When have we shed the prophet's mantle in favor of a security blanket? I'm convinced that we are also tempted to remember selectively God's claim upon our lives and ministry. We, too, minimize or simply deny our complicity with the idolatries of our culture.

Paul K. Moser, head of the Department of Philosophy at Loyola University, has summarized idolatry as the universal human tendency to value something or someone in a way that hinders the love and trust that we owe to God. It is an act of theft from God whereby we use some part of creation in a way that steals honor due to God. We stand with Aaron in seeing people around us use earthly things in a way that steals honor due to

God. We also stand with Aaron in wanting to see idolatry anywhere except in ourselves. We do this in many ways:

1. *We commit idolatry when we have an eye to pleasing humans rather than God (see Eph. 6:6).* Of course, we rationalize it by thinking of it in terms of "meeting people where they are" and reminding ourselves that you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. We fail to see that what looks like honey is an offense to God and is deadly poison both to us and to those to whom we offer it. We hunger for the applause and approval of those entrusted to our care, rather than for the approval of the One who entrusted them in the first place. And what are the ways we do this? By turning a blind eye to things in the congregation and community that would trouble our conscience if we looked at them squarely. By deleting any reference to Jesus Christ when leading prayer outside the walls of our churches. By failing to speak a prophetic word and take a prophetic stand if it would displease people who matter to us. By avoiding hard choices in our discipleship.

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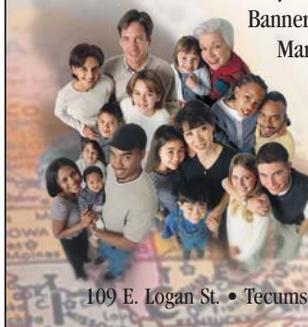
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2. *We commit idolatry when we evaluate our work—and our colleagues' work—in terms of success rather than of faithfulness.* By this measure, the zenith of Jesus' life and ministry was the Sunday before crucifixion. John's Gospel has the Pharisees remarking, " 'Look, the whole world has gone after Him' " (John 12:19, NKJV). That's success! Many years ago I was associate pastor at a church that reported a net loss of a few members at the end of the year. We'd had the usual number of baptisms and confirmations. Several elderly members died, and perhaps a few less new members were received, but on December 31 we were down by a handful. The senior pastor wrote in his annual report, "This has been the poorest year of my ministry." This was a deeply committed and pious Christian, working hard as ever and supporting the laity in all the ministries the church had going, but he was judging himself in terms of success rather than of faithfulness. That's idolatry; it's looking to market forces rather than the Master as its standard. That pastor's frame of reference was "my ministry" rather than "what God is doing here, and how I can be a faithful part of that work."

I fall into this idolatry *all the time*. You see, even though I don't serve a local church, I am prone to compare myself with peers and calculate whether I'm getting enough speaking invitations, how many books and articles I should have published by this stage in my career, what sort of reputation I've established in my field. Fixating on those issues is idolatry, because the real question is whether and how I am being faithful to my calling to serve God and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

3. *We commit idolatry—perhaps the worst kind, because it does the most damage—when we assume our words for God's words, and our ways for God's ways.* For a couple of years I attended a church where the pastor did all kinds of troubling and sometimes alarming things: slandering members she wanted to get rid of, giving partial or falsified reports, changing the divine service beyond recognition. When questions were raised about any of these matters, the minister would quote a Bible verse or shout the person down, claiming that, as pastor,

she had a right and power to do these things. This minister's idol was herself. Her postmodern mindset dates back at least to the book of Judges, when every man did what was right in his own eyes (see Judg. 21:25). This form of idolatry manifests itself in other ways, too. I remember reading about a minister who got involved in an adulterous affair. When questioned, the man said he still believed firmly in the words of Scripture and all that the Bible says about extramarital affairs; he simply believed that his were special and unusual circumstances; an exception to the rule, if you please. Self-justification is self-deception. Manipulating God's word to accommodate our words and wishes is as old as the Garden of Eden. It is the sin of idolatry, and we will be judged for it.

What are we to do?

Well, we can engage in examination of conscience, come to recognize the idolatry in our own lives and ministry, and repent. That's not a bad place to *start*, but a resolution to turn away from this sin will almost certainly not *keep* us away. John Calvin is famous for saying that the human heart is a factory for idols. We churn out new ones as quickly as we throw out old, and once we have made them, the desire to serve and worship them is almost irresistible. Remember Naaman the leper. After confessing, "Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15, KJV), in the next breath he asked for a dispensation to continue bowing in the tent of Rimmon (see 2 Kings 5:18).

Nature, or perhaps I should say humanity, abhors a vacuum, so the only effective and lasting way to rid our lives of idolatry is by replacing it with something else. The great Scottish preacher Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) wrote about the expulsive power of a new affection. He explained that the way to disengage the heart from the positive love of one great and ascendant object (that would be an idol) is to fasten the heart in positive love to another, coming to recognize the latter's superior worth and excellence. Of course, we as preachers are talking less about a *new* affection and more in terms of rediscovering and reclaiming "our first love" (see Rev. 2:4).

So we turn to our Lord, not so much asking for strength to *resist* idolatry as praying that the rediscovery of the glory of Christ's love for us and ours for Him will render idols *irrelevant and powerless*. When your heart goes into the sanctuary of God, when you allow yourself to fall in love with Jesus all over again, you can say with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is nothing upon earth I desire beside thee" (Ps. 73:25, KJV).

It has become customary in recent years for couples to repeat their wedding vows on milestone anniversaries. It doesn't make the marriage more valid than it would be otherwise, but there is power in affirming the love and exclusive commitment the man and woman made in the presence of God and human witnesses years earlier. Preachers, there is power in saying, "Lord, I love You and I thank You for the claim You placed on my life. Let me experience Your great love anew, as I recommit all that I am and all that I have to Your glory."

When you remember your first love, when you rediscover the surpassing worth of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, things happen. The fresh wind of the Spirit blows away the old idols, extinguishing their glow and allure; the Holy Spirit also fills us with God's own self.

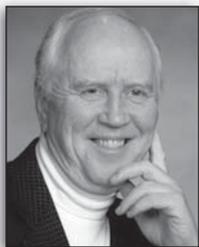
It is said that Michelangelo used to carry a candle on the front of his cap while he was working, to keep his own shadow from falling on his work. The light shone on his masterpieces because the artist did not get in the way. Even so, when we keep the light before us, the tasks God has called us to do will be more glorious, more true to our Lord's purpose, and those who witness it cannot help but recognize the touch of the Master's hand. No idol can deliver that. And our ministry will be an acceptable offering to God.

Idolatry? It starts with *I*, for preachers as for the rest of humanity. But it can end through the power of Jesus Christ at work within us. Thanks be to God. ■

Tell us what you think about this article. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

The anatomy of worship

Ken Crawford



Ken Crawford, M.A., is president of the Alaska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Anchorage, Alaska, United States.

Irise before dawn, stop at the kitchen, drink two large glasses of water, put several pieces of wood on the embers of last night's fire, and then settle in my chair for devotional time.

I am here to meet with God. And over the years I have concluded that it doesn't matter what rituals or forms I use or what books I start with. It is all a part of waiting at the gates of the temple for an audience with my Creator. There

AN HOUR OF WAITING TRANSFORMS THE DAY INTO ONE OF ANTICIPATION, WAITING UPON GOD TO CARRY US THROUGH THE STORMS OF LIFE, SAFE IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND.

is a deep mystery in worship—a delicate divine mechanism at work here—that I cannot interpret, a process from heaven that I cannot explain.

The busy day awaits: things to be done, people to meet, a thousand different wheels all turning to move life along the path of productivity to some unsearchable accomplishment. Yet I sit in quietness—waiting, listening, attentive to the echo from the throne, a whisper from the heart of God, a sense of the presence of the Spirit of God within me.

It is in the quietness of those moments that conversation begins to flow from within my soul.

I pour out my heart to God, the burdens of my spirit, the sorrows that crush me, the perplexity of relationships. They all flow out together. Then there are my own inadequacies, my sense of sorrow for things done in haste or left undone. It's a groan rather than a song. Confession is difficult, yet cleansing—always ending in gratitude. And I exclaim, "Why me, God? How is it that You could choose one like me?"

The natural flow of the heart now moves toward listening. "I am finished, Lord. If there is anything You would like to tell me, I am now open." Waiting for a response from God should receive at least equal time to all other conversation with God. Now, while there is silence of the soul, He speaks to my heart. Sometimes it is only the sense of peace that He hears, He receives, He understands, and He loves. At other times, it is the sense that the High Priest of my soul has received my feeble attempt at worship, and my prayer is heard, accepted, and answered in His name.

So the river of my audience with God rushes over narrow chasms, tumbles over rocks, and ebbs and flows, swirls and eddies, until finally there is rest in the still, deep waters of unconditional acceptance.

Here is the great mystery of worship. Our prayers are so feeble, the outreaching of our hearts so inarticulate, even selfish. Yet the miracle of this time with God is that the Holy Spirit understands, not my pandering, but the intent of my heart. Romans 8:26 says that with groaning which cannot be uttered, the Spirit

makes intercession for us, and the Father, who searches our hearts and knows the mind of the Spirit, accepts that intent of the deep longings of our soul.

Oh, the amazing miracle of that hour with God. An hour of waiting transforms the day into one of anticipation, waiting upon God to carry us through the storms of life, safe in the palm of His hand. ■

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How to deal with open questions: facing the challenges between faith and science

Frank M. Hasel



Frank M. Hasel, Ph.D., is dean of the Theological Seminary at Bogenhofen, Austria, and teaches systematic theology and biblical hermeneutics. He is also the director of the Ellen G. White Study Center at the seminary.

Any Christian, engaged with questions about origins, is often confronted with conflicting positions on the issue. What do we do when faith and science clash? How do we deal with questions for which we have no adequate answers? How can we approach unsolved problems that are raised by the natural sciences and yet credibly maintain what Scripture affirms?

All these are legitimate questions that deserve to be addressed. At the same time, these questions do not lend themselves to easy solutions and will not be solved by superficial answers. This article will briefly point out some aspects that can help us to affirm biblical truths despite some open questions.¹

Let us remind ourselves that unresolved questions are a challenge to others besides believing Christians. Even atheistic scientists face unresolved questions. Within a purely naturalistic explanation of the beginning of life on this earth one also encounters a number of unsolved problems that cannot be explained satisfactorily with an evolutionary model. However, those who have a high view of Scripture face significant challenges from the natural sciences when it comes to the issue of creation. What will be the most helpful approach to face those challenges while upholding the biblical account of Creation? Without claiming to be exhaustive, I submit the following ideas:

Distinguish between facts and their interpretation

It is important to distinguish between facts and the interpretation of those facts, for interpretation is often ideologically distorted. Disagreement between creation and evolution is not over facts, but over the interpretation of facts. What holds true for facts in the natural sciences is equally valid for the interpretation of Scripture. One has to distinguish carefully between what is actually written in Scripture and what is often deduced from Scripture in extrabiblical traditions. This requires a solid knowledge of the biblical languages and theology. Equally important is a substantial knowledge of the natural sciences. For both sides it is true that not all interpretations do justice to the facts, even though some interpretations have gained a status that is almost uncontested.

Allow for a creative tension between Scripture and science

Scientific facts that seem to contradict biblical statements should not be ignored or denied. Neither should they be colored or glossed over. It is not acceptable to support biblical truth by coloring facts. Neither do we have the right to color our interpretation of Scripture in order to adapt it to the scientific level of the day. To allow for a “creative tension” indicates that we are called to search for solutions that are faithful to Scripture and impartial in their scientific investigation.

Resist the temptation of superficial answers

To search for solutions that are at once faithful to Scripture and impartial in their scientific investigation implies that we have to resist the temptation to provide shallow answers and superficial explanations, which do not do justice to very complex and multifaceted issues. Such answers do not satisfy and will in the end do a disservice to the church and to biblical faith.

Be honest

In order to search for such answers we need to deal with every difficulty with honesty. Honesty implies that we acknowledge a difficulty and do not try to obscure, dodge, or evade it. Honesty always wins in the long run. An honest person has an open mind-set and is willing to learn. It is a mind-set that is receptive toward the message and content of what is being studied. Furthermore, honesty aims at the motives with which the interpreter and scientist approaches the biblical text and the field of science and also includes the willingness to use the proper methods of investigation. Everyone

has to face the following questions: Are my motives in harmony with the Word of God? Are my methods appropriate for the subject matter of science and also of Scripture? God is “pleased with integrity” (1 Chron. 29:17, NIV). If we are really convinced that the Bible is the Word of God and that it can be trusted in what it affirms, we are far better off to wait for an honest solution to a perplexing difficulty than to submit to a solution that is evasive or unsatisfactory. Honesty turns away from all lies. It includes faithfulness to God that results in an independence from naturalistic presuppositions that run counter to God’s Word, no matter how widespread and popular such science might be. Is it really appropriate to employ methods with presuppositions that are based on atheistic premises for the explanation of the Word of God and for the origin of life that ultimately are subversive to the subject matter of the Bible? While we will not share atheistic premises of naturalistic science, honesty calls us to be fair and respectful to those who work on those premises.

Be patient

Complex problems require untiring patience and an indomitable determination to deal with every difficulty we meet. We have to be determined that no matter how much time, study, and hard thinking it may require, we will patiently work on finding a solution. As Bible-believing Christians we have to recognize that especially in the scientific investigation of creation only limited resources and manpower are available to deal with enormous questions and challenges. The number of scientists who believe in biblical Creation is small (but growing), and therefore the results are still limited. It will be helpful to investigate and study some of those problems in our own laboratories, to conduct our own field studies in order to collect primary data, to do our own research, etc. This endeavor is costly and needs to be done systematically,² but over time this type of research can help find reliable answers that are scientifically sound and yet are faithful to the biblical view of Creation and other insights.³ If some difficulties persistently defy even

our best efforts to solve them, we should not get discouraged. It is interesting to note that one characteristic of the faithful believers at the end of history is to live patiently. “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus” (Rev. 14:12, NAS). The call to perseverance is made in Revelation 14 in the context of clear references to Creation (v. 7). Part of our perseverance is to be able to live with open questions, yet to be faithful to God’s Word. For God’s Word has proved to be reliable and trustworthy.

Practice humility

In science as well as in theology, humility is one of the rarest, yet most important, characteristics and presuppositions of those engaged in the study of both. Humility calls for a willingness and modesty to submit one’s beliefs to a higher authority. Humility expresses the unassuming insight that God and His Word are greater than our human reason and our current understanding of science.⁴ Every difficulty we encounter in the relationship between Bible and science should be dealt with using that humility that becomes all persons of such limited knowledge as we are. Recognizing the limitations of our mind and our knowledge, we should not suppose that there is no solution just because we have not found one yet.

Recognize the limited nature of scientific knowledge

In dealing with difficulties that are posed by science to Scripture we have to acknowledge that in our explanation of the distant past we do not have all the information we would like to have in order to solve a difficult question. At the same time we have to recognize that our scientific knowledge of things is very limited. John Lennox, professor of mathematics at Oxford University, has ably pointed out that no science can explain everything.⁵ This is especially the case when we have to deal with primordial issues. We may learn from archaeology that the absence of evidence is no evidence for the absence of certain things. Our limited knowledge of those things becomes evident already in a question that God raised with Job:

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth! Tell Me, if you have understanding” (Job 38:4, NAS). It is with the awareness of those human limitations and boundaries that we investigate God’s Creation scientifically, always being conscious that our knowledge is restricted.

Even though scientific explanations at times might seem omnipotent, we have to recognize that scientific theories are influenced by philosophical presuppositions and that scientific knowledge can be revised and changed. Science builds on empirical knowledge, and this means that new data can question scientific theories. Where this is no longer allowed, science has mutated to an ideology. Rather than adapting biblical ideas to the latest outlook in science, Scripture should have a unique input on science by asking questions that could function as a source of inspiration in developing new strategies of scientific research. Wolfhart Pannenberg’s remarkable words deserve to be taken seriously: “The theologian must not be too quick to adapt theological ideas and language to the latest outlook in the sciences, especially where such adaptation requires substantial readjustment of traditional doctrine. The theological vision of the world can also function as a challenge to science and as a source of inspiration in developing new strategies of research.”⁶ Such a new perspective will be open to the possibility that God intervenes.

Be open to the fact that God intervenes

In dealing with problems that interface between faith and science, biblical theologians and believing scientists have to be open to the fact that God intervenes supernaturally and that such a supernatural intervention cannot be explained with normal natural processes as we know them through the sciences. To be open to God’s supernatural intervention also encompasses a spiritual approach to difficulties where every difficulty is dealt with prayerfully. Prayer is no substitute for diligent and hard work. But on the other hand, we should never underestimate what God can do to our understanding of Scripture and nature through prayer.

Learn from love

Lastly, we can learn from love. Love has convincing evidence that leads to conviction. But love does not have a 100 percent mathematical or scientific proof for its existence. After all, there is more to love than scientific evidence. Love is a supernatural gift. Therefore, love is able to endure. And love is able to live with open questions. While we now may see dimly, nevertheless we do see. And we “may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (Eph. 3:18, 19, NASB; emphasis added). Thus, while we do understand what God has revealed to us, it is our hope that we “will come to understand fully” (2 Cor. 1:14, NIV). In other words, love is the epistemological basis for knowing and trusting. Love is the basis of our faith, and it is the foundation of our hope (it “hopes all things” [1 Cor. 13:7, NASB]). “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real

knowledge and all discernment” (Phil. 1:9, NAS; emphasis added).

While there are many unresolved questions from a creationist perspective, this does not invalidate the position of biblical Creation. Let’s learn from love that we can live with open questions while knowing that not everything is up in the air because God has sufficiently revealed Himself as Creator of this world. Furthermore, we should be aware of the fact that a good many tough questions are unresolved for the hypothesis of evolution as well, and it seems as if some of those difficult questions for evolution do not diminish but grow more vexed as time goes on. ❏

- 1 For a fuller discussion of this issue, see Frank M. Hasel, “Living with Confidence Despite Some Open Questions: Upholding the Biblical Truth of Creation Amidst Theological Pluralism,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14, no. 1 (2003):229–54, and other articles in this issue.
- 2 The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a Geoscience Research Institute and supports such efforts in various ways. Geoscience Research Institute, 11060 Campus St., Loma Linda, CA 92350 U.S.A. See also their Web site, www.grisda.org.

- 3 Regarding Ellen G. White and her understanding of creation, see Frank M. Hasel, “Ellen G. White and Creationism: How to Deal with Her Statements on Creation and Evolution—Implications and Prospects,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 17, no. 1 (2006): 229–44.
- 4 “When we come to the Bible, reason must acknowledge an authority superior to itself, and heart and intellect must bow to the great I AM” (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1892], 109f).
- 5 Cf. John Lennox, *Hat die Wissenschaft Gott begreifen? Eine kritische Analyse moderner Denkvoraussetzungen* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus Verlag, 2002), 18–26.
- 6 Wolfhart Pannenberg, “Theology and Philosophy in Interaction with Science: A Response to the Message of Pope John Paul II on the Occasion of the Newton Tricentennial in 1987,” in Robert J. Russell, William R. Stoeger, and George V. Coyne, eds. *John Paul II on Science and Religion: Reflections on the New View From Rome* (Notre Dame, IN: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), p. 78. Unfortunately Pannenberg himself does not follow his own advice and seems to advocate the readjustment of theological vision and the reassessment of doctrinal affirmations of the past in the light of modern scientific developments as presented by the theory of evolution of life (*Ibid.*, 78, 79).

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Submission requirements

1. Writers must choose a category from the list below for their submission and state this information on the first page.
 - (a) Biblical studies
 - (b) Historical studies
 - (c) Theological studies (including ethics)
 - (d) Ministry (preaching, leadership, counseling, etc.)
 - (e) Mission studies
2. All submissions must follow the Writer's Guidelines as to length, endnotes, style, and other features of the manuscript. Please carefully read the guidelines found at www.ministrymagazine.org.
3. Submit your manuscript in Microsoft Word to MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org. Please include the following information at the top of the manuscript: your name, address, email address, telephone number, category for which you are submitting (see above), religious affiliation, name of college/university/seminary you are attending, and title of your manuscript.

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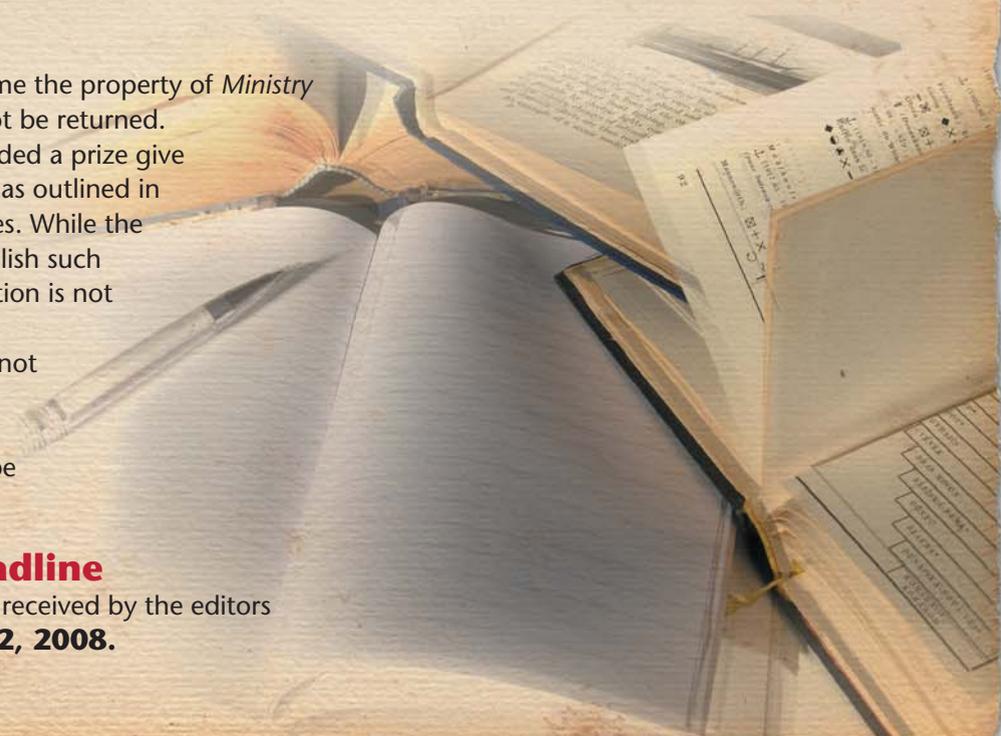
The evaluation panel will determine if all prizes will be awarded. The decisions of this panel are final.

Publication

1. All submissions become the property of *Ministry* magazine and will not be returned.
2. Writers who are awarded a prize give the rights to *Ministry* as outlined in the Writer's Guidelines. While the editors intend to publish such manuscripts, publication is not guaranteed.
3. Manuscripts that are not awarded a prize may be purchased by the editors at a price to be negotiated.

Submission deadline

All submissions must be received by the editors no later than **January 2, 2008**.



Spirituality: what the church needs most today

Ferdinand O. Regalado



Ferdinand O. Regalado, Ph.D., is associate professor of Old Testament studies, College of Theology, Adventist University of the Philippines, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

What kind of men and women does the church need today? Those of position, power, and wealth? Those who can keep others spellbound by their oratorical skills? Those with theological and pastoral skills of the highest type? E. M. Bounds goes to the very root of the question: "What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men [and women] whom the Holy Spirit can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer."¹

Spirituality—steeped in prayer and study of God's Word, empowered by the Holy Spirit, committed to serve God unreservedly, and manifested in a spirit of servanthood—is what the church needs today. The task of the kingdom cannot be advanced without such spirituality. The world may look to academic and educational qualifications of a person. Even the church may at times put in leadership those with M.B.A.s and Ph.D.s. While academic achievements are important, by themselves they are not sufficient. In the church, spiritual discernment of leaders is critical.

Meaning of spirituality

Spirituality in a secular sense is "a longing for something beyond the merely material."² But in the Christian context, spirituality is "the whole of

the lives of those who have responded to God's gracious call to live in fellowship with him."³ Spirituality refers to "the whole life of a person."⁴ When it refers to the whole life, it means that it is "not just of a supposedly 'spiritual' part"⁵ of a person's life. Rather, the totality of the person comes under the demands of spirituality; no part of the human being can escape its scrutiny. Spirituality is thus not merely the doing but the being. In fact, the doing is simply the result of the being.

Further, spirituality is not a human condition *per se*, but a response to God's grace. As such, a spiritual person in their salvation experience clings to righteousness by faith, not by works. Spirituality founded on anything but a continuous response to God's grace is no spirituality at all. In fact, it is a manifestation of the first sin—pride in one's capacity to be one's own god. That's what turned Lucifer into Satan. Pride leads one to think that one's own way is sufficient to find salvation. Pride leads one to affirm that one is more spiritual than others. Pride leads one to measure other people on the basis of one's own spirituality. And when others don't measure up to our spiritual standards, we tend to criticize and demean them.

Richard J. Foster has rightly pointed out that "when we genuinely believe that inner transformation is God's work and not ours, we can put to rest our passion to set others straight."⁶ Spirituality that is more concerned with correcting others than with looking inward is no different from that of the "righteousness" and "spirituality" of the scribes and the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20).

The biblical picture of a spiritual person is one who is "led by the Spirit of God" (Rom. 8:14) and "live[s] by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). That is to say, true spirituality is not the fruit of human effort or the works of our willpower, but the accomplishment of the Holy Spirit. Our part is to cooperate with the Spirit and place ourselves under the control of the Spirit who alone can transform us to be truly spiritual persons.

The implications for us

The problem with many of us is that we approach and perceive spirituality in a different way. To some extent we have been influenced by the culture and trends of the world, which emphasize public success, social recognition in the workplace, and the image one projects in relationships.

But spirituality is not focused so much on public success as in private and inner development. Private devotion is something intensely personal—consuming our souls in moments of devotion when one meets one's Creator and is confronted by His

demands. It does not focus on success; it focuses on faithfulness. It does not seek to be served but seeks to serve. It works not on building an empire for oneself, but on building an extension for the kingdom of God. The “other” is the key of operation in true spirituality. With that key, truly spiritual people approach their devotion, Bible study, prayer, and service. With that key in place, the applause of our superiors or colleagues is not preeminent, but the approval of God is.

Being a spiritual person is an inside-out affair, not an outside-in affair. Stephen Covey puts it appropriately: “Many people with secondary greatness—that is, social recognition for their talents—lack primary greatness or goodness in their character.”⁷ Look at actors and actresses. Many are successful in their careers in public but are often failures in their private relationships, such as marriage. This is also true for individuals in many other professions.

Private success is an inside-out paradigm. Covey says, “The inside-out approach says that private victories precede public victories, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making and keeping promises to others.”⁸ Ellen G. White made a similar comment when she emphasized that “the greatest victories to the church of Christ or to the individual Christian are not those that are gained by talent or education, by wealth or the favor of men. They are those victories that are gained in the audience chamber with God, when earnest, agonizing faith lays

hold upon the mighty arm of power.”⁹ This inside-out paradigm is at the core of our need of spirituality.

Why we need spirituality

First, as David McKay observes, “The greatest battles of life are fought daily in the silent chambers of the soul.”¹⁰ This means that we need to war with ourselves privately through examining ourselves and our motives before the all-knowing God, and then public successes will follow. We need private and internal victories before dreaming to have public and external victories. Private success precedes public success. By private success and victories, I refer to private devotion and spiritual discipline as means of growing spiritually. We need to examine our inner motives, settle our inward conflicts, and address our sinful tendencies and weaknesses.

Second, we need to be spiritual because this is the will of God for us. “What kind of people ought you to be?” asks Peter. “You ought to live holy and godly lives” (2 Pet. 3:11, NIV). Again, “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do” (1 Pet. 1:15, NIV). Third, as Morris Venden says, “Christianity is not based on behavior. It is based on relationship.”¹¹ “Christianity is not a set of rules or a creed to live by. It is involvement with a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹² Eternal life, according to John 17:3, is knowing God and His Son. This kind of knowing is not obtaining a theoretical knowledge but maintaining a relational depth. We cannot have this

personal relationship unless we spend quiet moments of study, meditation, and prayer. We cannot be content in knowing our Bible only; more importantly, we must know the Person of the Bible—Jesus our Savior. Hence the resolve of Paul: “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2, NIV).

Knowing Jesus personally, living in a close relationship with Him constantly, and serving Him with utmost devotion is the basis of true spirituality. That is the greatest need of the church today. ■

- 1 Edward M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, n.d.), 5, 7.
- 2 David J. Atkinson, ed., *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), 807.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*, 808.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 808.
- 6 Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987), 9.
- 7 Stephen R. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 22.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 43. “‘Inside-out’ means to start first with self; even more fundamentally, to start with the most *inside* part of self—with your paradigms, your character, and your motives.”
- 9 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 203.
- 10 Quoted in Covey, 294.
- 11 Morris Venden, *Morning Manna: How to Begin Each Day With God* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1987), 9.
- 12 *Ibid.*

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letters continued

are right on target, biblically sound, and very timely. Despite the force of the gospel and the text of Scripture, these evils continue to plague us.

—Mark F. Carr, Ph.D., associate professor of ethics, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, United States

The Bible should be explained according to its obvious meaning. James Cress tries to use Galatians 3:27–29 as an argument for position in the church. Paul is addressing in these texts who is

eligible for salvation—it has nothing to do with position.

Dr. Cress says there is no support in the Bible that excludes women from church leadership positions. I find no support in the Bible that includes women in church leadership positions. Paul is very clear about this, according to 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9.

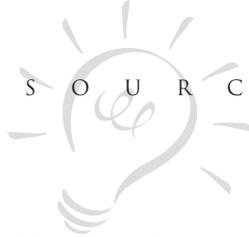
Cress ends with, “We are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). But he needs to add verse 29: “heirs according to the promise.”

—Malcolm Dwyer, *Horseheads*, New York, United States

Living with the other

I appreciate the thoughtful and timely words of Miroslav Volf in his March 2007 article, “Living With the Other.” Embracing the other, as I understand Volf, is not simply concerned with the question “How do I love my neighbor?” It also requires that we think about the second part and ask, “Who is my neighbor?” When that question is raised in a sincere way, we begin to discover that to be truly human we need others to be ourselves.

Simple awareness of this reality will not change our behavior toward the



BOOK REVIEWS



Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives.

Edited by Brian Bull, Fritz Guy, and Ervin Taylor. Riverside, CA: Adventist Today Foundation, 2006.

Editor's note: We have asked two individuals to review this book.

Review By Laurence A. Turner

Laurence A. Turner is principal lecturer in Old Testament and director of research degrees at Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

This radical yet irenic volume challenges the traditional Seventh-day Adventist view of a short chronology for the age of the earth. The somewhat uneven contributions from 11 individuals emphasize theology rather than science. I have space to assess only representative contributions.

Richard Rice provides a scrupulously honest and balanced survey of attempts to “reconcile theism with evolution” and the thorny issues they raise. These include how, if one adopts an evolutionary perspective, there can be death before human sin, and the implications for the character of God if He has used such

letters continued

other, nor will a mere willingness to embrace the other. We also need to have a vision of what is good. And for Christians this is a vision of a people of “all tribes and languages” brought together by God. I believe this emphasis on the social self has potential to look anew at our eschatology. It is refreshing and pertinent to the mission of the church in today’s world. I am looking forward to reading more about this in future issues of *Ministry*.

—Leendert Brouwer, Eindhoven, the Netherlands

a wasteful and cruel process as the survival of the fittest. Rice’s even-handed approach in which he acknowledges challenges for those who stand on opposite sides of this debate deserves thoughtful reflection and response.

Ivan Blazen contributes a rare example in Seventh-day Adventist publications of actually getting to grips with the theology of the Genesis Creation account. He includes some familiar material, such as the polemical intent of the Genesis text. However, he goes beyond this with a lyrical exposition of the text’s contribution to the theology of God, the natural world, human nature, and time and history. This chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

Warren Johns questions the validity of “flood geology,” which has formed the bedrock of popular Seventh-day Adventist responses to conventional geology. He argues, on the basis of the biblical text, that the Flood was not universal, was primarily aimed at wiping out centers of pagan worship, and that the waters did not rise above the mountains—which presumably means that far more than eight people survived the (limited) Flood. I believe Johns’s argument has some exegetical problems. Yet, as an Old Testament exegete myself, I too wince at overconfident presentations of the “biblical Flood” that presuppose numerous points found nowhere in the Bible.

Pastoral ministry to the alcohol-dependent

Thank you for the regular receipt of *Ministry* and in particular for the March 2007 issue.

Dr. Brian Bull’s article (“Alcohol Dependency: What Pastors Should Know,” March 2007) is clear, concise, and credible.

It is clear because it reveals the truth about the drug that is alcohol, as opposed to the lies and deceptions of those who promote the industry. It is concise because the article is well

written and researched and gets to the heart of the problem without a lot of jargon. It is credible because the author’s approach is factual and presents arguments that opponents cannot dispute.

For me, the most debatable contribution is that of Dalton Baldwin, who addresses Creation and time. He assumes the classical documentary hypothesis for the origins of the Pentateuch at a time when it is being radically questioned. His suggestion that (the later) Genesis 1 utilized elements from (the earlier) Psalm 104 to produce a “week” of events is hypothetical, radical, and problematical. Claiming, on the basis of critical scholarship, that the earliest biblical texts present creation as an ongoing process rather than a past event, he concludes, “Because the statements that express ongoing creation are the earliest, they cannot be taken as metaphorical” (p. 49). I can think of no logical, let alone exegetical, reason why this should be so.

Some will see this book as dangerous—heretical even. That would be unfortunate. Every thinking person should read it—not because they will agree with everything but because the profundity of Genesis needs to be rediscovered, treasured, and proclaimed anew in every generation. That can only be achieved if we come to the text in our new context and see what it might have to say to the twenty-first century. We are unlikely to do that if we do not listen carefully to those with whom we disagree.

continued on page 29

Thank you for the magazine and this article.

—Rev. William F. Hayward, Galston, New South Wales, Australia

—Rev. William F. Hayward, Galston, New South Wales, Australia

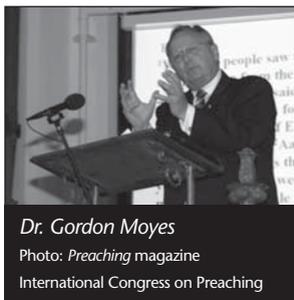


Dateline

Ministry Professional Growth Seminar

Cambridge, England, United Kingdom—The **Ministry Professional Growth Seminar** (PGS), live by satellite, was hosted in Cambridge, England, in conjunction with the **International Congress on Preaching** (ICOP) on April 18, 2007. The PGS was designed as a growth opportunity for clergy of all denominations.

It featured four outstanding speakers: **Barry Black**, the chaplain from the U.S. Senate; **Gordon Moyes**, a retired Australian pastor who until recently led a Sydney inner city humanitarian ministry with 4,200 paid staff;



Dr. Gordon Moyes

Photo: *Preaching* magazine
International Congress on Preaching

Randy Roberts, senior pastor of the Loma Linda University Church of Seventh-day Adventists, in Loma Linda, California; and **Robert Smith Jr.**, professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama.

The theme of the PGS and ICOP was **“For such as time as this: preaching truth in an age of idolatry.”**

Approximately 420 people attended the ICOP, including 130 Seventh-day Adventist pastors, theology students, and lay preachers.

The *Ministry* PGS was broadcast live on Hope Channel and on the Internet at the General Conference Ministerial Association Web site, www.ministerialassociation.com. The GC Ministerial Association will continue to make the broadcast available “on demand” on their Web site. It can also be purchased on a single DVD for US\$6.95.

It will also be rebroadcast “on demand” on a nondenominational British Web broadcaster, Premier TV, at www.premier.tv.

Anthony Kent, the producer of the *Ministry* PGS, says that he is delighted with the response of those who attended the program in Cambridge and those

who participated in the PGS as part of the international audience. Kent also said that those who spoke in the program were exceptionally positive of the PGS broadcast concept.

“Adventist Media is the most professional Christian organization I have ever worked with and is streets ahead of . . . all of the other big names. No fuss. Just cool professionalism,” stated Gordon Moyes, who has had extensive experience with broadcasting.

Kent also said that “it is extremely rewarding to be able to offer pastoral colleagues and clergy of all denominations such a valuable resource for their ministry.” Other organizations that made the broadcast possible were the JATA Group, the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, American Bible Society, and Adventist Media Productions.

The 2008 *Ministry* PGS is scheduled for April 22 in Walla Walla, Washington, United States.

Adventist Youth Ministries celebrates 100 years

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—May 15, 2007, marked the 100th anniversary of the Youth Ministries department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Adventist youth from around the world celebrated by planting trees.

A group of church leaders, church members, and other employees of the General Conference complex gathered at the Washington Seventh-day Adventist Spanish Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, to plant a tree. The ceremony started at 3:00 P.M.—the exact time that the Youth Ministries department was created 100 years ago in Gland, Switzerland.

While planting several hundred trees across the globe is good for the environment, **Baraka Muganda**, director

of the world Youth Ministries department, said planting trees has another purpose as well.

“When the next generation asks what this tree is for, we want them to know that this church

cares for young people,” he said. “Because of that care—that spiritual care—the church created a special department to nurture young people according to their needs and challenge them to participate in the mission of the church.

“The tree will also remind us [that] youth ministries bears fruit—young people for Jesus Christ. This is why we plant a tree,” he added.

Youth Ministries leaders estimate that 70 percent of the global Adventist Church is under 30 years old—the age group to which the Youth Ministries was created to minister.

Josant Barrientos, a 24-year-old pastor helping with youth ministries in two different local churches, said, “It’s a blessing to be part of . . . something that has been helping young people worldwide. I’m an example of how effective Youth Ministries is. I’ve been a part of it since I can remember, and that has given me [the desire] to go and help young people learn about Jesus.”

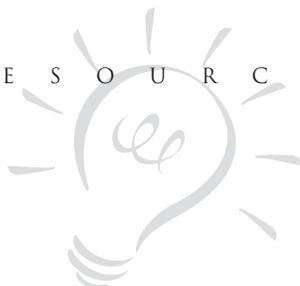
In addition to tree planting, the Youth Ministries department encouraged young people to do other projects to mark the occasion, such as service projects, preaching, baptizing young people, musical concerts, and a special prayer for young people.

We must “keep in the minds of youth and youth leaders the original purpose of creating this ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church was the ‘Salvation of our youth and training them for service,’” Muganda wrote in a letter earlier this year to youth leaders around the world.

—[Adapted from ANN/Taashi Rowe] ❏



Baraka Muganda (right) helps to plant a tree to celebrate 100 years of youth ministries



BOOK REVIEWS

continued from page 27



Review By Art Chadwick

Art Chadwick chairs the Department of Biology and Geology, Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Texas, United States.

I am not an Old Testament scholar; therefore, perhaps I am not the most appropriate person to critique a work promoting a new view of Genesis. However, as I reviewed the credentials of the contributors to this work, I felt quite at home. Among those listed as authors are a physician, a physicist, an anthropologist, two archaeologists, three theologians, a librarian, and a retired biologist. Almost all of these papers were presented in one form or another at the Conference on Faith and Science in 2003; but as the title implies, the authors represent only one perspective on Genesis, which they describe as the “contemporary” one.

The editors preface this little book with this caveat: “All of the views expressed contain no hint of disagreement, and are clearly cut out of the same cloth.” While this assertion is contradicted by the articles themselves, were it true, such a statement of uniformity on a topic of such controversy suggests a serious lack of balance. Actually, the volume presents a patchwork of ideas that would have been more readable and would have made the several authors’ points more forcefully had some editorial effort been made to integrate the material.

Because my expertise is science, I will focus my specific comments on those articles with science content.

The first such article is the editorially styled piece by Brian Bull titled “Why are Science and Religion Still Fighting?” The premise of this article is that

“value judgments are excluded from pure science” (p. 23). This definition of science is very Baconian, and most scientists recognize that “valueless” pure research is not possible in the real world. Unless it can be established by some empirical data that scientists indeed operate in this fashion, the article itself is based on a false premise. I know of no scientist who pretends to be objective, or who even denies applying value judgments continually in research. The war between people over issues of origins (i.e., Genesis) is an eruption of differing value judgments. The solution proposed by the author is to eliminate value judgments.

The next article with science content is by the same author together with the theologian Fritz Guy, titled “Then a Miracle Occurs.” The article is replete with unsubstantiated statements such as “In the thinking of the biblical world . . .” or “It was simply assumed . . .” when the authors probably mean “I think this is how they thought . . .” or “I think they assumed . . .” I suspect that if Solomon or Moses or Isaiah were here, the authors might have different thoughts.

The authors claim that in the old days people naively believed things happened because the powers on high so dictated. Today, they say, we are much better informed and we don’t need antiquated thought processes involving gods and such. These conclusions are not supported by the writers.

Section 3 starts with an informative article on radiometric dating by Bottomley that is worth reading, although one is left with the impression that the author, in his formative years, may have stopped looking for answers a bit too soon. Bottomley’s chapter is followed by an article by the one Old Testament scholar among the authors, Doug Clark. Clark’s chapter, with the clever title “It’s About Time,” is interesting and informative until

the conclusion. There Clark chooses to introduce new ideas in the form of undocumented speculations from other authors, and seemingly without context. Next follows a rather studied and intriguing chapter by Ervin Taylor that covers everything from the biblical chronology to “deep time,” including consideration of ¹⁴C dating, a subject on which the author is an authority. Taylor includes a helpful elaboration of approaches one can take in considering issues of time. The final chapter is “Archaeology of the Flood” by Lawrence Geraty. This article covers archaeological evidences for flooding in the ancient cultures of the Middle East. Although the author appears to favor historical critical interpretations of Scripture and seeks for evidence of a flood in localized ruins in the region, much of the material he presents is interesting reading.

In the sections I review here, little consideration is given to the impact the proposed “contemporary” (certainly not “new”) perspective might have on our view of God as Creator and Redeemer or of the authority or truthfulness of God. I was disappointed that no effort was expended at seeking to better understand the message of the Hebrew text of Genesis 1–11.

One wonders how the authors can talk about “understanding Genesis” if they make little effort to understand the meaning of the Genesis text, the intent of God, or the consequences of rejecting the clear meaning of the text.

In conclusion, the theology was disappointing; the quality of the articles, inconsistent; and the thematic development, nonexistent. Only section 3 contained material that might be helpful, and then only for those who have never understood why time is a problem for contemporary Adventist theology. ■

The numbers game

JAMES A. CRESS



Peter Wagner describes an encounter with an individual who declared his disgust against numbers: “My Bible tells me to feed the sheep, not to count them!”

Later, Wagner read Philip Keller’s book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. Keller, a professional sheep rancher, says it is “essential for a careful shepherd to look over his flock every day, counting them to see that all are able to be up and on their feet.” Wagner points out, “I believe that counting sheep is such a natural part of the shepherd’s life that Jesus took for granted His followers would know that. It is biblical to feed the sheep, but also to count them.”¹

In fact, the only way that the Good Shepherd knew that He had one lost sheep was because He had counted the other 99. “God Himself does a lot of counting. He even has the hairs on each person’s head numbered. When each individual comes to faith in Jesus Christ, that name is written in the Lamb’s book of life. Even the littlest person is important in heaven and gets individual recognition. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7), so somebody there must be keeping close track. As I see it, those who object to numbers are usually trying to avoid superficiality in Christian commitment. . . . I am vitally interested in lost men and women who put their faith in Jesus Christ and are born again. I am interested in true disciples who take up their cross daily to follow Jesus. I am interested in kingdom people who relate to Jesus as their Lord. I am interested in Spirit-filled people who have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and are using their spiritual gifts. I am interested in responsible church members who continue ‘steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers’ (Acts 2:42) as did believers in the Jerusalem church. When numbers

represent these kinds of people, they are much more than a ‘numbers game.’ They become a game of life and death, a game of time or eternity.”²

When Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, He was concerned about numbers—numbers of persons who would become disciples. To those who criticize, Bailey Smith has given an appropriate response: “Let’s never forget that numbers are all multiples of one. One hundred is a hundred ones; a thousand, a thousand ones; so it is possible to be honestly concerned about each one of several thousand ones. We need concern for all!”³

In the Great Commission Christ clearly mandates that His church should multiply, not simply maintain. The book of Acts is the story of rapid church growth—and it talks about numbers! “About three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41, NIV). “The Lord added to their number daily” (2:47, NIV). “Many . . . believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand” (4:4, NIV). “More and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number” (5:14, NIV). “The number of disciples . . . increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (6:7, NIV). “The church . . . grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord” (9:31). “A great number of people believed” (11:21). “So the churches . . . grew daily in numbers” (16:5). The message is obvious. If the church is going to

be interested in what interests Jesus, it will be interested in numbers—numbers of people for His kingdom!

Tom Stebbins says, “Someone has suggested that before we can win people to Jesus Christ we must win them to ourselves. Sharing the gospel is a very personal matter. We are probing the most intimate, private areas of the other person’s life so we must first earn that person’s trust and build some measure of friendship.”⁴

Therefore, our evangelistic methods must transform unbelievers into friends, friends into believers, and believers into disciples—great numbers of disciples! If we embrace only one primary evangelistic strategy—prophetic-based gospel proclamation and doctrinal instruction—we face two dangers: We risk limiting those whom we could win and we risk losing those whom we have already won!

Friendship involvement may become our most effective strategy for evangelizing new believers, and group interaction is a proven method for making disciples. The principle remains. New members must have something more than head knowledge regarding what they believe. Meaningful relationships and ministry tasks are not only the fruit of a disciplined individual but also the methodology for accomplishing that discipleship. These relationships and tasks are the process! This process is the product! **M**

1 C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 22, 23.

2 Ibid., 23, 24.

3 Bailey E. Smith, *Real Evangelism* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1978), 121.

4 Tom Stebbins, *Evangelism by the Book* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1991), 218.

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For Better or for Worse

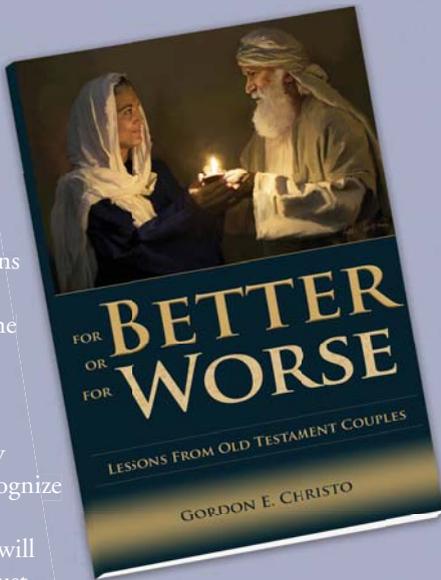
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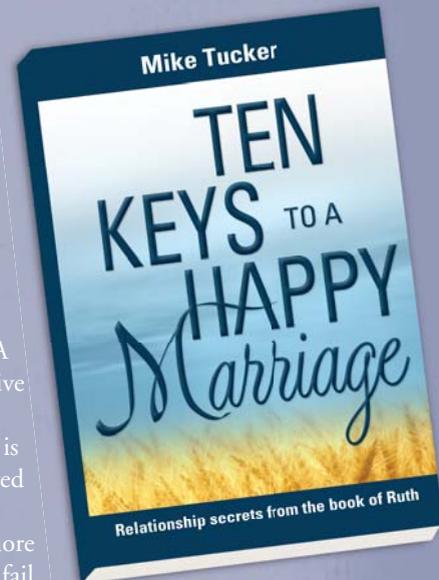


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