

SEPTEMBER 2021: OUR GODLESS CONSTITUTION
AND THE SUNDAY LAW + BABYLON RED + HOW TO
DIG DEEP INTO SCRIPTURE + AMAZING JESUS

ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Reformers

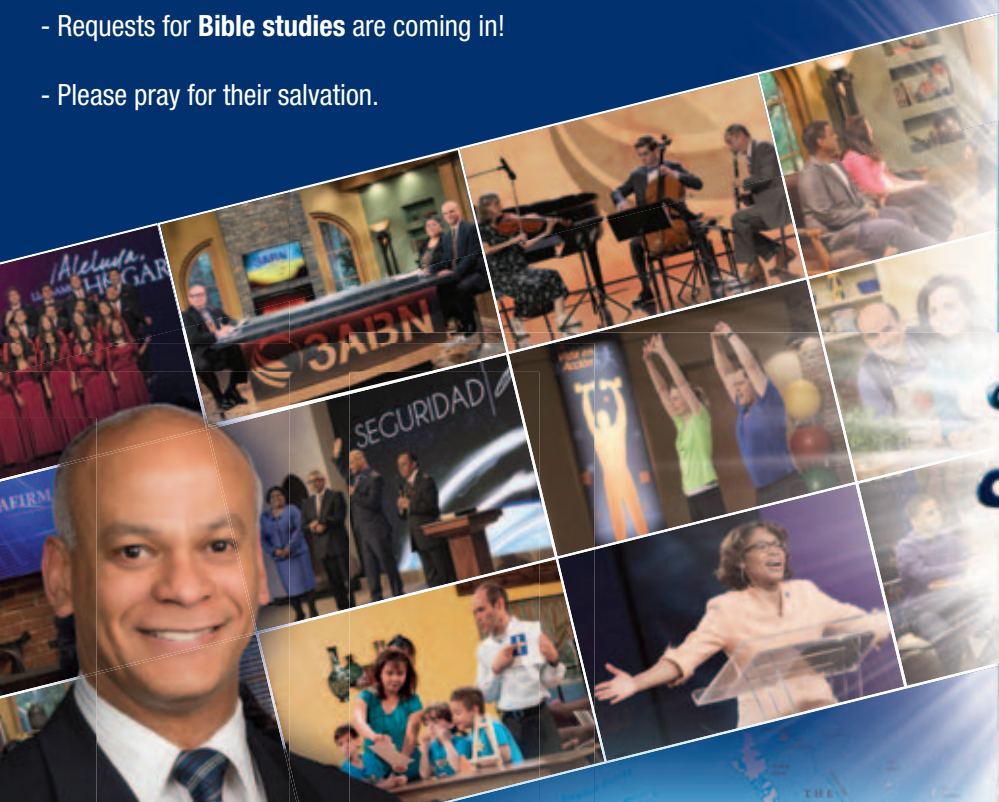
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Adventist Review Website: www.adventistreview.org
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self-addressed envelope to: Writer's Guidelines,
Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver
Spring, MD 20904.

E-mail: revieweditor@gc.adventist.org.

Web site: www.adventistreview.org.

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The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119) is the general paper of
the Seventh-day Adventist® church. It is published monthly by
the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 12501 Old
Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Periodicals postage
paid at Silver Spring, MD, and additional mailing offices.
Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, P.O.
Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353.

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Adventists®. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Twelve issues of the monthly *Adventist
Review*, US\$19.95, plus additional postage outside North
America. Single copy US\$2.00 plus shipping and
handling.

To order, visit adventistreview.org/subscriptions or
send your name, address, and payment to: *Adventist
Review* subscription desk, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID
83653-5353

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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

- 1 Adventist Leaders Tap Six New Leaders for the World Field
- 2 Vaccinated Yet? So What?
- 3 Why We Should Start "Seeing Color"
- 4 COVID-19 Vaccines: Addressing Concerns, Offering Counsel
- 5 ASi Convention Keynote Address Calls Adventists to "Fly Into Space"

20 YEARS AGO . . .



Many will not forget where they were on September 11, 2001, when two planes flew into the World Trade Center in New York City, one hit the Pentagon, and a fourth crashed into a field in Pennsylvania.

The *Adventist Review* profiled the 10 Seventh-day Adventists who lost their lives that day. We remember them by name again, along with the thousands who died that day.

Michael Baksh, 94th floor, South Tower
Steve Bunin, 103rd floor, North Tower
LeRoy Homer, copilot, Flight 93
Maxima Jean-Pierre, 105th floor, North Tower
Lizie Martinez-Calderón, around the 102nd floor,
South Tower

Ted Moy, Pentagon
Michelle Nelson, 103rd floor, North Tower
Valerie Silver-Ellis, 104th floor, North Tower
Claudia Sutton, 101st floor, North Tower
Jorge (Josue) Velazquez, 31st floor, South Tower



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BILL KNOTT



Believers were not long for this world, so why make ungodly peace with it?

Rediscovering Reform

By now, I've come to expect their eagerness: their eyes widen as they lean forward in their desks, excitedly glancing at each other when they discover how urgent and progressive their spiritual ancestors were. Their questions roll with every lecture pause: "Why aren't we like that now?" "Whatever happened to us?" "How can I find a church like that?"

I'm occasionally invited to lecture on Adventist college and university campuses about the commitment of early Seventh-day Adventists to moral and social change in nineteenth-century America. Drawing on my graduate study in the Age of Reform (1820-1860), I trace the progressive, even radical, beliefs and engagements of those who helped to organize this denomination in the midst of the American Civil War.

Joseph Bates was an early advocate for what was then termed "temperance"—a public stance against alcohol consumption and the industry that was destroying individual lives, homes, and the national economy. Decades ahead of other Adventists, he also advocated for removing laws against interracial marriage.*

James and Ellen White were ardent abolitionists, actively speaking and writing against the entrenched institution of Black slavery that denied more than three million Americans the promises of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" promised in the nation's Declaration of Independence. Their articles in this journal during the 1850s even encouraged civil disobedience when the Fed-

eral government demanded that citizens of "free states" assist in the capture and return of slaves who had managed to escape Southern slavery.

Hannah More, Seventh-day Adventism's first foreign missionary, cut her teeth on a passionate refusal to accept her government's mistreatment of Native Americans. Seething with moral indignation, she followed the exiled tribes to the thickets of Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) to give her life as an "atonement" for the sins of the Federal government. Also a passionate abolitionist, while living and ministering at mission stations in West Africa, Hannah read herself into Seventh-day Adventism, and planted the first Adventist congregations on that continent.

John Harvey Kellogg, raised as a teenager in the White home, adopted Ellen White's deep commitments to reforms in diet, exercise, and wholistic living. His world-famous Battle Creek Sanitarium spun off other reform-minded initiatives that cared for the poor and marginalized in Chicago, even opening a city home for former prostitutes.

This was Adventism of the first generation—a potent mix of end-of-the-world biblical teaching and this-world realism that caught the imagination of thousands whom the Spirit was calling. Even the briefest surveys of the archives of the *Adventist Review* from 1849 to 1910 reveal an ongoing and passionate critique of abuses in organized religion, homes, workplaces, the economy, and government.

The Adventism of that era seemed singularly unafraid of being criticized or even ostracized: believers were not long for this world, so why make ungodly peace with it?

The students in my lectures invariably want to know why that brand of Adventism is unknown to them—why they have usually experienced only the disengaged conservatism that makes a virtue of tranquility and disapproves of those who disagree. Adventism's historic claim to be a movement of reform is often doubted by the generation on whom we count for future leadership and vision.

One piece of our past helps us here. Our historic—and accurate—self-understanding as the church of Laodicea, the last of seven churches in Christian history, is a continuing call to repent of our belief that we are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17, KJV). The Saviour knocking at the door of our hearts and of earth's history describes us as "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (verse 17)—a vigorous, unflinching, and, yes, reformist portrayal of what we are always in danger of becoming.

Accepting His critique—allowing Him to heal our spiritual eyesight, to relearn the moral wealth of Scripturally-aligned social commitments, and to clothe us in that "foreign righteousness" that makes us long for heaven—is exactly the reform to which the Spirit is calling us today. 🍃

* See Kevin Burton, "Joseph Bates and Adventism's Radical Roots," <https://www.adventistreview.org/2002-32>.

A WOMAN'S LEGACY

The July 2021 issue mentions Jessie Weiss Curtis, a licensed Adventist minister in Pennsylvania from 1945 to 1972, but who did evangelism even earlier. I served in the Pennsylvania Conference as ministerial director and president for 21 years, and learned of the legacy of her ministry, preached in churches she raised, and met those who had known her. She conducted numerous tent evangelistic meetings, her first meeting resulting in 80 baptisms. To this day, the churches of Kingston, Tunkhannock, Montrose, Drums, and Beaumont, Pennsylvania, which she raised up and planted, are still meeting. Many pastors were sent to train under her, including N. R. Dower, a ministerial director of the General Conference. The Pennsylvania Conference is richer because of the legacy of this mighty woman in ministry. For more of her story, see *Called by God*, by Josephine Benton.

Ray Hartwell
Calhoun, Georgia



Ukraine, with more than 200 participants!

Leo Ranzolin, Sr.
Estero, Florida

IT'S OK TO NOT BE OK

Wonderful comments, courageous counsel. Thank you, Wilona [Online exclusive, adventistreview.org, July 27].

Jeffrey Brown

INSPIRING READ

It was inspiring to read the August issue with articles on archaeology proving the veracity of the Bible. It reminds me of the edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* revealing to the world that the Hittites, mentioned only in the Bible, did not exist! When archaeology uncovered this great civilization, they had to retract it

in their next edition!

I was also happy to read of the progress of youth ministry in the Ukraine. After the fall of Communism, Neal C. Wilson asked me to visit Russia, Ukraine, and Moldova, and meet with the leadership to start Pathfinder clubs and youth ministry! I can see that it is a reality now when I read of the youth forum in

PRESIDENT OF THE ALLEGHENY EAST CONFERENCE AND WIFE DIE IN HOUSE FIRE

Our hearts are broken at the loss of two beautiful and humble beings who exemplified servant leadership [Online news article on the deaths of Henry and Sharon Fordham, July 23]. May the Lord bring comfort to their

children and grandchildren. We lift the Allegheny East Conference in prayer as this spiritual family grieves such a heavy loss.

Daniel Honore

“NEW” PHOTO OF ELLEN G. WHITE DISCOVERED

Thanks for sharing about this remarkable woman under God’s service for His people [Online news article, July 15].

Robert Leo



2022 SPECIAL GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

Official notice is hereby given that a Special Session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held January 18, 2022 in the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists World Headquarters Building, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. The meeting will begin at 8:00 AM, January 18, 2022. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time.

Ted N C Wilson,
General Conference President
Erton C Köhler,
General Conference Secretary

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION VOTES TO ALLOW WOMEN ELDERS

[Online news article, July 11] Congratulations to my home division! This is wonderful news that will empower women to advance the mission.

Eric Richter

WHAT I’VE GAINED BY BEING AN ADVENTIST CHRISTIAN

Long ago I came to the conclusion that if there is nothing beyond the grave (which I reject) I am much better off today, and my life has been enriched by my belief in the Seventh-day Adventist (Christian) message that I have been taught and that I believe [Online commentary, July 3].

Gregory Matthews

MENTAL HEALTH IS HEALTH—IT’S ALL A GIFT FROM GOD

Insight is a gift, too, and helps with healing [Online commentary, June 30].

Sheila M. Cronin

RIZPAH

I have never heard this story in my lifetime (July *Adventist Review* print edition). This should be taught in our Bible classes in our churches.

Melanio Calayag

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY’S SINGLE MOMS

I’m a divorced single mom of three girls, and I must say, though very challenging at times, life couldn’t be better. It is a huge blessing to be a single mom because God Himself gets to be my partner in parenting (July *Adventist Review* print edition).

Nompumelelo Nkosi

THE SAME OLD WHINE (OF BABYLON)

Goldstein nailed it! [Online, June 17]

Diana Iversen

BOYS WILL BE MEN

I really needed to see this! I thank God that we can start again (Online, June 2).

Sherrie Bell

YOUR TURN

We welcome your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: letters@adventistreview.org.



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“It is my goal to zealously make Christ known through the preaching of the gospel.”

—Debleaire Snell, new speaker/director of Breath of Life Ministries, p. 11.

NEWS



Michael Sikuri



J. Francois Keet



Robyn Kajiura



Ivan Omana



Jennifer Gray Woods



Daniel Bediako

PHOTOS: GC EXCOM

ADVENTIST LEADERS TAP SIX NEW LEADERS FOR THE WORLD FIELD

THEY FILLED POSITIONS IN SEVERAL GC DEPARTMENTS AND ONE DIVISION.

BY GENERAL CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

On July 22, the General Conference Executive Committee (GC EXCOM) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church met by video conference. The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss and vote on six leadership positions within the world field.

Following a brief worship time led by GC president Ted N. C. Wilson focusing on John 17, leaders held moments of prayer that focused

on various requests coming from Executive Committee members.

Leaders announced that the 2021 Annual Council (to be held October 7-13) will be a “hybrid,” with resident Executive Committee members meeting in person in the GC auditorium in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. All other members will connect virtually.

As chair of the committee, Wilson

expressed deep appreciation to the divisions and unions “who have been responding beautifully regarding our January 18 Special GC Session.” The one-day session will include only one item on the agenda: to adjust the constitution to provide for electronic connection for the GC Session scheduled to be held in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, June 6-11, 2022.

Following announcements, the meeting moved into the main agenda items of filling various leadership positions. The following positions and names were discussed and voted on and are effective immediately.

Michael B. Sikuri, Secretary, South Pacific Division (SPD)

Originally from Fiji, Michael Sikuri has served since 2016 as president of the South New Zealand Conference. Previously he served as ministerial secretary and church pastor at that conference. He was in the Trans-Pacific Union Mission from 2009 to 2014, where he served as HR director, family ministries director, and children's ministries liaison. He also served in various pastoral/chaplaincy capacities for four years in the Fiji Mission. "My objective as a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to lead people to the Lord in whatever capacity the Lord calls my family and me to," Sikuri said. "My motto [is] to do all to the glory of God and be faithful to the calling placed upon us."

J. Francois Keet, Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer, South Pacific Division (SPD)

Francois Keet has much experience in executive financial management in various Seventh-day Adventist entities, as well as in the commercial banking world. Since 2017 he has served as associate treasurer for SPD. Previously he served as treasurer of

the Australian Union Conference (2016) and the Trans-Pacific Union Mission (2006-2015). He was vice president for finance at Avondale University from 2006 to 2010 and an audit manager for GCAS from 2003 to 2005. He has also served in managerial roles for several commercial banks. Originally from South Africa, Keet is a chartered accountant, chartered financial analyst, and certified internal auditor. He is a committed Seventh-day Adventist who is actively involved in his local Adventist church.

Robyn W. Kajiura, Executive Director, General Conference Auditing Service (GCAS)

Robyn Kajiura has more than 30 years of professional experience in the field of auditing. Before being elected GCAS executive director, she served as GCAS associate director, with responsibilities for the North America area operations. In this capacity she led a team of 80 professional staff and managed a budget of approximately US\$10 million. With a personal background influenced from her time living in India and Australia, Robyn appreciates the importance of cross-cultural understanding and brings to her leadership responsibilities a keen sense for respecting others and building relationships to get things done. In addition to her work in the United States, Robyn has led teams on assignments to Australia, Brazil, India, Russia, and Switzerland.

Ivan H. Omana, Associate Director, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM)

Since 2015 Ivan Omana has served as the assistant director of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries for the North American Division, providing support, encouragement, and denominational oversight to more than 300 chaplains in all areas of chaplaincy in the Pacific Union Conference and the North Pacific Union Conference. Previously he served as senior chaplain at Florida Hospital Kissimmee (now AdventHealth Kissimmee) from 2002 to 2015 and as a chaplain in Adventist care centers from 2000 to 2002. During the 1990s Omana was a pastor in the Central West Venezuelan Conference, where he also served as the official translator for every major evangelistic and ecclesiastical event.

Jennifer Gray Woods, Associate Director, Public Affairs/Religious Liberty (PARL)

Jennifer Gray Woods has served as associate general counsel in the Office of General Counsel (OGC) at the General Conference since 2015, where she has overseen the areas of copyright, trademark, and privacy for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Previously she was an attorney in the Office of General Counsel at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C., where she gained extensive experience in interagency and governmental

affairs. She has also worked as an attorney in Los Angeles, California, where she provided complex health-care regulatory guidance, litigation assistance, transactional advice, and more. Woods is a graduate of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and holds a Juris Doctorate (J.D.) from Harvard Law School.

Daniel Kwame Bediako, Associate Director, Biblical Research Institute (BRI)

Daniel K. Bediako has served as vice-chancellor/president of Valley View University in Ghana since 2015. Previously he served as academic vice president and dean of the School of Graduate Studies at Valley View. He is an associate professor of Old Testament language and exegesis with a particular interest in biblical Hebrew text-linguistics. Bediako has authored five books and 40 articles and has presented more than 20 conference papers. He has also edited 12 works, including *The Sabbath in Old Testament and the Intertestamental Period: Implications for Christians in the 21st Century* (Biblical Research Institute, 2020) and *Prosperity Gospel: A Biblical-Theological Evaluation* (Advent Press, 2020), and was an associate editor of the *Andrews Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Andrews University Press, 2020). Bediako has been a member of the Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRICOM) since 2010. 📌

DEBLEAIRE SNELL NAMED SPEAKER/DIRECTOR OF BREATH OF LIFE MINISTRIES

HE REPLACES CARLTON BYRD, NEW PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE.

BY NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

On July 28, the North American Division Adventist Media Ministries board voted to accept the name of Debleaire Snell for the position of speaker/director of Breath of Life Ministries. Snell is set to replace Carlton P. Byrd, who accepted a call to serve as president of the Southwest Region Conference in the United States in May.

“Pastor Snell is a gifted communicator of the gospel of Jesus Christ,” G. Alexander Bryant, NAD president, said. “God has called him to build on the great legacy of the Breath of Life Ministries forged by those who have gone before. I believe God has brought him to this ministry for such a time as this.”

Since 2010 Snell has served as senior pastor of the three campuses of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church (First Church, Abundant Life, and The Bridge) in Huntsville, Alabama, United States. He has conducted several major evangelistic meetings for the church. During his time at First Church, there were 878 baptisms. In 2020 Snell launched a local television ministry with the Huntsville CBS affiliate.

Before serving in Huntsville, Snell was senior pastor at the Lima Drive Seventh-day Adventist Church in Lexington, Kentucky, from 2006 to 2010. In the course of two years Snell and his team conducted three evangelistic series, baptizing more than 100 people. Snell also served as senior pastor of the Salem Seventh-day Adventist Church in Columbus, Mississippi, and the Lee Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church in West Point, Mississippi.

Snell has taught at Oakwood University as an adjunct professor since 2010. In addition to starting a devotional column in a local newspaper while in Kentucky, Snell has authored six books. He graduated from Oakwood University in 1999 with a bachelor’s degree in theology. In 2001 Snell earned his Master of Divinity from Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

“I am humbled for the opportunity to serve my Lord and Savior in this capacity. It is my goal to zealously make Christ known through the preaching of the gospel,” Snell said. “I look forward, with God’s help, to adding to the rich legacy established by Pastor [C. D.] Brooks, Walter Pearson, and Dr. Byrd. I would like to thank the leadership of the North American Division, along with members of the Breath of Life board and Adventist Media Ministries, for entrusting me with this sacred responsibility.” 📌



Debleaire Snell is the new speaker/director of Breath of Life Ministries. He replaces Carlton Byrd. PHOTO: NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

ASI CONVENTION ATTENDEES SAID THEY WERE GLAD TO MEET IN PERSON

1,700 ADVENTIST LAYPEOPLE CONVENE IN THE U.S. DESPITE CHALLENGES.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

An estimated 1,700 members and guests traveled to Orlando, Florida, United States, for the 2021 Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASi) international convention. Under the theme "Three Angels' Messages: Into All the World," the event had been planned initially for 2020 but had to be rescheduled.

The 2021 convention took place August 4-7 as ASi leaders discussed how to abide by the social distancing and prevention protocols in the state of Florida as much as possible. Orange County, where the convention venue was located, had been under a state of emergency since July 28 amid rising COVID-19 hospitalizations. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines in force had recommended that fully vaccinated people wear masks indoors in areas of "substantial" and "high" transmission of the virus.

The event included an opening plenary session by Amazing Facts ministry president Doug Batchelor and three seminar tracks with speakers that included television network 3ABN vice president and chief operations officer Jill Morikone, international evangelist Mark Finley, and It Is Written speaker/director John Bradshaw, among others.

The three tracks approached the topic of the three angels' messages, recorded in the Bible in Rev-

elation 14, from different but complementary angles, organizers said. Adventists believe, based on Bible prophecy, that God has called them to share those messages to worship God and leave systems of false worship.

According to the event program, the first track discussed how to relate to God while sharing the three angels' messages. The second seminar track presented how to relate to law and government while spreading the three angels' messages. The topics of this second track included "Jesus, the Coming Crisis, and Our Relationship to Civil Authorities," "How to Respond to the Sunday Law," and "How to Identify a Conspiracy Theory." Finally, the third track discussed how to relate to friends, neighbors, and coworkers while sharing the three angels' messages.

Television network 3ABN broadcasted and recorded the plenary sessions, Christy Beason, ASi membership liaison, reported. They also recorded the three tracks of seminars.

THE JOY OF MEETING IN PERSON

ASi members said they were glad to finally attend an event in person after so many months of video conference meetings.

"It's so wonderful to meet in person again!" Beason shared as she gave the finishing touches to the ASi Ministries booth in the exhibit hall. "I told a friend, 'It's so good to see you face to face and not through a computer screen!'"

Longtime member and supporter Jackie Small agreed. Small and a friend flew from Tennessee to Orlando to attend and felt thankful to travel and meet friends again.

Small's friend shared that for years Small has contributed to several ministries and mission initiatives. "ASi is an opportunity to meet in person some of the leaders of the ministries she's been supporting," she explained. Small agreed, adding, "[Attending the ASi convention] is a highlight in my year. It's a wonderful spiritual blessing. You see old friends and also make new friends. I love it!"

BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unexpected challenges to church and lay-led ministries, ASi president Steve Dickman acknowledged. But according to him, there is a silver lining in all of this. "As I think about the difficulties that our churches and supporting ministries face, my heart is cheered by Jesus Christ," he wrote in the welcoming message to the



ASI members participate in the Sabbath worship service in Orlando, Florida, United States, August 7.

PHOTO: PIETER DAMSTEEGT, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

convention attendees. “He is the answer to all the challenges.”

But if the pandemic’s toll has resulted in significant challenges for many ministries, others said the past 18 months have been a time for growth and expansion. Take, for example, F.I.T.T. Challenge, a food and health initiative based in Summerville, Georgia. In 2016 Gabriel McClover and his family opened a health-food restaurant in the 4,500-resident town northwest of Atlanta. Since then they have expanded by offering fresh meal plans and delivery options, coaching, and health and lifestyle classes, among other services.

The McClovers called their program F.I.T.T. Challenge from the words “Food Inspiring Total Transformation.” According to Gabriel McClover, a side effect of the pandemic restrictions in 2020 was a significant growth of their business. “We had been doing delivery two or three years before COVID, so we were way ahead of the game. When we had to close the restaurant, the delivery business exploded,” he said.

Despite the pandemic-related restrictions, the McClovers reported that they visited 32 U.S. states since the beginning of the pandemic, training people in churches and other Adventist ministries. They recently returned from Minnesota, where they are working on a joint project with the Minnesota Conference. “Now literature evangelists are canvassing with the F.I.T.T. Challenge in Minnesota,” he shared, beaming.

WHAT IS ASI ALL ABOUT?

In his welcome message Dickman reminded attendees what a privilege it is to meet again. He gave all credit to God. “God has opened the door for us to be here together in person,” he wrote. “I am so thankful.”

Dickman, however, reminded his audience that the meeting is not an end in itself. He added that ASI members and guests should use every opportunity to fellowship and network for mission work. “If I have learned anything during the past year and a half, it is not to take face-to-face fellowship for

granted,” he shared. “Our theme [about the three angels’ messages] . . . deserves our best energies and attention.”

Other ASI members seemed to agree.

Barbara Taylor, a businesswoman and church planter based in Copper Mountain, Colorado, began attending the ASI conventions in 1991, not long after becoming a Seventh-day Adventist. One of the things she loves about ASI, she shared, is that it demands active participation. “ASI is an involved organization; it is not just about sitting in the church pews,” Taylor said. It is one of the reasons, she emphasized, that motivates her to keep attending the convention year after year.

Another reason, Taylor noted, is the ultimate goal of the organization. “ASI is a wonderful group of people who are in love with the Lord and enjoy ministering to others,” she said. “They are committed to bringing people to Jesus and sharing the three angels’ messages. They love telling others that Jesus is coming soon.”



Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) staff member surveys a community in Argentina to assess needs during the pandemic. PHOTO: ELIAN

GIACCARINI, ADRA ARGENTINA

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS NOT OVER, ADRA SAYS

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AGENCY SCALES UP EMERGENCY OPERATIONS.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) stepped up its emergency response in early 2020 to serve nearly 20 million people around the world in 96 countries impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.

At the time, 422 projects were launched by ADRA in response to the ongoing health crisis, and 70 percent of those projects were in partnership with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Earlier this year ADRA pivoted its efforts to further help 21 countries heavily impacted by COVID-19 to find much-needed relief.

“ADRA has been closely monitoring our aid as we serve millions worldwide through this pandemic, and we’re finding that many people globally aren’t informed about COVID-19 prevention or have access to getting tested or being vaccinated, which leading health experts indicate helps decrease the likelihood of contracting the virus and ending up in a hospital,” Ma-

rio Oliveira, ADRA’s emergency response director, said. “Our goal from now into 2022 is to use the trust of people we work with and who are likely to be impacted by the coronavirus. We want people to receive accurate information to help them make informed decisions about their health and well-being and help them stay safe for themselves and among their families.”

Emergency relief activities, including food distribution and security, sanitation, and hygiene awareness, will remain part of the ongoing aid. Most of the projects will include continued collaborations with the Adventist Church. In addition to these activities, ADRA will be expanding communication about COVID-19 prevention and health training among the most vulnerable in local communities, where methods will vary for each country.

According to data collected by Johns Hopkins University and pub-

lic health agencies, COVID-19 continues to spread around the world, with more than 204 million confirmed cases, as of August 11, and more than 4.3 million deaths across more than 220 countries. The U.S., India, and Brazil have seen the highest number of confirmed cases, followed by France, Russia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

The following overview shows the targeted regions where ADRA will focus on providing additional support.

AFRICA

Africa has recorded more than 71 million COVID cases, and more than 179,000 deaths, as of August 11. According to official data, South Africa has more than 2.5 million cases and about 75,000 deaths, making the country the worst affected on the continent.

For the next few months ADRA aims to reduce COVID-19 incidence in local communities and ensure that health-care providers and patients are protected. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, ADRA will engage with several health facilities to instruct the community about COVID-19 prevention. In Mozambique ADRA will

“We want people to receive accurate information to help them make informed decisions about their health and well-being.”

—Mario Oliveira

provide 900 personal hygiene kits, teach COVID-19 prevention measures, and train residents to make face masks to generate income. In South Sudan ADRA will ensure that more than 4,500 school children can gain access to a safe learning environment and will help to restore struggling businesses.

ASIA-PACIFIC

The number of cases and deaths in the Asiatic region was initially lower than in Europe and North America, findings show. However, surges in cases in India and elsewhere changed the outlook. By early August India alone had recorded more than 32 million coronavirus cases, second only to the U.S. In Indonesia there were reportedly 32,000 new cases daily, and hospitals had almost exhausted their supplies of oxygen.

To combat surges in COVID-19, ADRA in the Asiatic regions is working with health-care workers and local communities to inform people about the coronavirus and offer ways to stay safe. ADRA has aimed to target 3,500 people in India to access psychosocial support and continue to drive confidence in taking safety measures during the pandemic. In Indonesia the elderly are among the most vulnerable and need support to access health care. ADRA is on the ground offering support to ensure they do. ADRA also coordinated a cash assistance distribution in Fiji to 5,000 people struggling with the protracted lockdowns. In working closely with local au-

thorities, ADRA planned to additionally distribute personal protective equipment (PPEs) to impacted health institutions.

CENTRAL AMERICA

According to reports, Mexico, by August, had seen the fourth-highest number of deaths globally, with more than 245,000. ADRA targeted more than 100,000 people to help them find sustainable care and access to health information, hot meals, and mental health treatment, and also get interested individuals the right tools to start a business. In El Salvador more than 3,200 people were supported by ADRA through education campaigns to learn about COVID-19 and prevention techniques. ADRA also equipped 1,200 people in Honduras with access to health centers and trained them on COVID-19 prevention methods.

EUROPE


Many European countries reported spikes in COVID-19 cases during the past few months, but data indicates that the number of daily infections had slowed by early August. Countries that were continuing to see a rapid increase in cases include Russia and the United Kingdom.

ADRA has proposed to arm the most vulnerable in several countries with information about COVID-19. Access to resources in most of these countries is key to their survival. In Bulgaria ADRA worked with local health centers to share information about COVID-19

and educate local communities about vaccines. In Kyrgyzstan more than 13,000 people with disabilities and older adults were assisted by ADRA to access psychosocial services and health-care treatment. ADRA also provided aid to mentally and physically disadvantaged people in Serbia and Slovakia, ensuring they receive access to health-care services, immunization information, and psychosocial awareness.

SOUTH AMERICA

Brazil had recorded almost 20 million COVID-19 cases and more than 550,000 deaths by late July, the world's second-highest official death toll, according to health agency data. Experts say the situation could get worse as the end of 2021 approaches. Additionally Peru reached the fifth-highest toll, with more than 190,000 deaths by late July. Colombia, Argentina, and Chile were also reporting surges in new cases.

ADRA planned to target more than 20,000 people to help strengthen the response capacities of local medical staff, community agents, teachers, supervisors, school principals, and volunteers. In partnership with health-care workers, the team in Paraguay, for example, educated local community members about COVID-19, information about staying safe, and more via a mobile app. In Colombia ADRA began distributing 1,100 COVID-19 hygiene kits to households in partnership with a local Adventist church. 



Henry J. Fordham III and Sharon Fordham, who died in a house fire on July 18, 2021, were laid to rest after a funeral service on August 8.

PHOTO: ALLEGHENY EAST CONFERENCE AND COLUMBIA UNION VISITOR

ADVENTIST COMMUNITY REMEMBERS HENRY AND SHARON FORDHAM

A FUNERAL SERVICE WAS HELD ON AUGUST 8 FOR THE COUPLE, WHO DIED IN A HOUSE FIRE ON JULY 18.

BY V. MICHELLE BERNARD, COLUMBIA UNION VISITOR, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Some 1,000 attendees gathered Sunday, August 8, to remember Henry and Sharon (Wright) Fordham, who, at the time of their death as a result of a house fire July 18, were president and first lady of the Allegheny East Conference (AEC) in the North American Division.

“[The Fordhams] indeed modeled how to reflect the love of Christ,” G. Alexander Bryant, North American Division (NAD) president, said. Bryant and his wife, Desiree, ministerial spouses director, shared condolences from division and world church leaders, including Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the General Conference.

“On behalf of the Columbia Union family, and my wife, Becky, and me, we send our deepest condolences,” Dave Weigley, Columbia Union Conference president, said. “We have a deep appreciation for this couple that has touched so many lives.”

Pete Palmer, AEC’s vice president for administration, who presented remarks with his wife, Dahlia, shared that Henry J. Fordham III spent nearly 30 years in AEC leadership as ministerial director, executive secretary,

and, for the past nine years, president. “He never lost his sense of being grateful to God for using him,” he said.

Representatives from the City Council of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania House of Representatives sent official citations and condolences and gratitude for the impact the Fordhams had on their communities. Tom Wolf, Pennsylvania governor, sent a letter honoring the Fordhams; and the mayors of Philadelphia and Baltimore also extended their sympathies.

Family members, friends, and Allegheny East Conference members and employees paid their respects through music via a mass choir and by wearing Henry’s signature beret.

Story after story echoed memories of how the caring couple—lovingly known to friends and family as “Butch” and “Sherry”—comforted, cared for, and pointed others to Jesus.

United States Senate chaplain Barry Black shared an anecdote of Elder Fordham, his mother’s pastor in the late 1980s. After rushing back

from a trip to Australia to be with his mother, who was in a coma, Black found Elder Fordham asleep in the family waiting room, “keeping watch.” Black said Fordham helped him grieve his mother’s death, as Black was on the “precipice of agnosticism.”

He added, “Butch and Sherry pulled me back,” helping him grow spiritually fit to have enough faith through his brother’s death in 2005 and again supporting him through his sister’s death in 2019. The Fordhams helped him “learn to keep believing, even though God didn’t make sense.”

Henry Wright, cousin to Sharon and a retired longtime pastor, delivered the eulogy: “Two good people, covered by the blood of Jesus, have shockingly and unexpectedly and tragically gone to sleep.”

Wright urged the attendees to use this period of mourning as a period of self-reflection: “I don’t preach eulogies; I preach homilies at funerals. Funerals are about the dead, but homilies are for the living. [The Fordhams’ future is] signed and sealed, but the question now is ‘What about you?’”

Wright emphasized that a funeral gives you the opportunity “to face the fact [that] when you do the self-evaluation and come up short, don’t worry. Jesus has paid it all. Everybody here has been covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. I wish I could change July 18. I can’t do that, but I can claim I’m covered.”

The couple was laid to their final rest at Crest Lawn Memorial Gardens in Marriottsville, Maryland. ▀



SOUTHWESTERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY ELECTS FIRST FEMALE AND HISPANIC PRESIDENT.

The university's board of trustees voted on July 7, for Ana Patterson to become the school's 26th president. Patterson has served as interim president of the institution located in Keene, Texas, United States. "I look forward to working with [the faculty] as we strive to provide our students with an educational experience that reflects the love of Christ," Patterson said.



ADVENTIST CLINIC IN SWITZERLAND CELEBRATES 115 YEARS OF SERVICE.

In 2020 Clinique La Lignière in Gland, Vaud, Switzerland, marked 115 years since it was founded. After a year of lockdowns and restrictions, the Adventist health-care institution was able to celebrate its 115th anniversary on June 12 and 13. From its beginning an emphasis was placed on physical activity, healthy eating, and rest to support treatment and promote recovery. La Lignière is now a private clinic integrated into the regional and cantonal health network and has 95 beds.



ADVENTIST COWBOYS AND COWGIRLS REUNITE AT CAMP MEETING.

After a year off, the Cowboy Camp Meeting assembled for their twenty-first annual meeting, with around 75 attendees experiencing five days of a past lifestyle, where the only worries were "Do we ride the horse or the ATV to the meeting tent?" The meetings took place in the heart of the national forest in the state of Colorado, United States. The common thread of conversation among everyone was "It's good to be back!"



#WERTHECHURCH UNITES ADVENTISTS IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

Adventists across the South Pacific Division (SPD) came together for a special night of inspiring stories, uplifting music, and worship on July 30. The online program featured stories about the impact Adventists are having in disciple-making, health, education, and media. From Australia to New Zealand, and from Fiji to Papua New Guinea, the shared stories showcased the SPD region's diversity and demonstrated the unity that exists as members share a common goal of bringing people to Jesus, organizers said.



ADRA BRINGS HEALTH EMPHASIS AND CARE TO BULGARIA'S MOST VULNERABLE.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) is responding to the continuing COVID-19 crisis through projects that will target thousands of Roma, homeless people, and other socially vulnerable groups in Bulgaria. ADRA has planned a facility in Pazardzhik with the threefold purpose of being an outreach center, a medical facility, and a social center. The location was chosen after research and consultation with local authorities and Seventh-day Adventist churches.



UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN APPOINTS NEW PRESIDENT.

The university, located in St. Joseph, Trinidad and Tobago, recently announced the appointment of its new president, Colwick Mervyn Wilson. Wilson became the institution's twenty-ninth president. He accepted the position after serving as provost and senior vice president at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama, United States. His vision for the university is that it continue to shine as a Christian university of excellence.



IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES, ADVENTISTS WELCOME 37,000 MEMBERS IN SIX MONTHS.

In the South Philippine Union Conference the Mindanao church region added 37,061 new members in the first and second quarters of 2021. The global pandemic has prompted churches to adapt to new ways of sharing the gospel. Rather than surrendering to despair, members continue to faithfully come together virtually with their phones and computers to continue the work of love, leaders emphasized.

THE END
(OF THE REFORMATION)
IS COMING



NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER

On October 31, 1517, a 34-year-old monk, pastor, and professor posted a list of 95 points he wished to debate. What Martin Luther did was not unusual. He asked individuals to debate him in person or, if they could not, to submit their points in writing. We call this the beginning of the Reformation—Luther thought of it as another day in his busy life in Wittenberg, Germany, a small city some 70 miles southwest of Berlin.

Luther did not wake up on October 31, 1517, and remind himself: “*This is the day to start the Reformation.*” The posting of the 95 theses was an ordinary act—that is how church announcements were made. He could not send electronic messages, create a video, or send texts. Newspapers did not exist, and churches did not have bulletins listing weekly announcements. His ordinary act led to extraordinary outcomes that Luther did not anticipate.

Some 500 years later we ask how Luther’s act became an event that is still discussed today. For us, the question is this: Was his act merely an important historical event, or does the Reformation impact our lives today? And more important, what is the future of the Reformation?

PRAYER AND PREACHING CHANGED

The event of October 31, 1517, opened the doors so that a world-changing reformation was launched. Prior to that event what the church said was all-important. Following October 31, 1517, the question was “What does the word of God say?” And the questions were asked not only by pastors and theologians. That happened because Luther translated the New Testament from the Greek into German, a version the people would use. His was not the first German translation, for nearly 20 German translations already existed. Unfortunately those translations were not from the original languages (Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic) but rather from the Latin Vulgate, which the Roman Catholic Church proclaimed to be the only reliable version.¹

Luther’s actions changed the preaching in churches. He maintained that there was a lot of bad preaching,² because the preachers focused on themes that were not grounded in the Scriptures. After the posting of the 95 theses, the focus of preaching changed.

Congregations, tiring of hearing priests exalt the Virgin and the saints, hungered for men fluent in the new gospel of faith and grace, and pulpit wars broke out between Romanist and Lutheran preachers.³

The new preaching challenged hearers “to depend the more on God, to deepen their relationship with him personally, and to increase their knowledge of his Scripture.”⁴ That was a revolutionary concept. God was speaking to people through the Bible, through prayer directed to God and not saints, and through sermons preached from the Word of God.

REFORMATION INTERRUPTED

Tragically, disputes arose among various reformers, and the Reformation turned into fights between various leaders. The message of hope from the

We are reminded that the Word of God must be central in any reformation movement.

Bible was overtaken by bitterness. Disputes arose that may have harmed the Reformation even more than the Counter-Reformation launched by Rome. But it did not stop there. Not too many decades after Luther's death the focus had become what *Luther said* rather than what was in the *Word of God*.

What happened to the Reformation? Did the arguments among those who claimed to be the children of the Reformation end it? The enemy of truth has his ways: "In every age Satan has sought to impair the efforts of God's servants by introducing into the church a spirit of fanaticism. Thus it was in Paul's day, and thus it was in later centuries during the time of the Reformation. Wycliffe, Luther, and many others who blessed the world by their influence and their faith, encountered the wiles by which the enemy seeks to lead into fanaticism overzealous, unbalanced, and unsanctified minds."⁵

Was the Reformation snuffed out? Is the Reformation merely an unnoticed footnote in history? How shall we deal with these questions?

NEW VOICES

While many argued with their opponents, others were experiencing spiritual renewal. The renewal was personal, but many benefited. John Wesley, for example, fifteenth child of Church of England rector Samuel and his wife, Susanna, trained to be a minister. Wesley embarked on a mission for the American colonies, a mission that proved to be a fiasco. He returned to England discouraged. But then something unusual happened on Saturday, May 24, 1738. He heard someone reading Luther's preface to the commentary on Romans, and that changed Wesley's life. His life was reformed. Thereafter he brought reformation into the lives of many. Many churches were reluctant to allow him to preach, but Wesley followed George Whitefield's practice of open-air preaching.⁶ Authentic reformation cannot be snuffed out.

William Miller (1782-1849) grew up in a Christian home, but as a young adult became a critic of the Bible. He, along with his friends, enjoyed mimicking preachers and their style of preaching. Today he is remembered as a preacher of the literal return of Jesus Christ. How did this skeptic become a preacher of a message that brought reformation into the lives of thousands? His preaching reformed the church, but before that, his life was reformed. That reformation took place because Miller was immersed in the Word of God. He writes that "the [Scriptures] became my delight; and in Jesus I found a friend."⁷

It was his personal reformation that made him a powerful preacher. Miller did not plan to bring about a reformation. The Reformation resulted from his personal experience, and, more important, because of his study of the Bible. Once again we are reminded that the Word of God must be central in any reformation movement.

Miller's experience shows that usually reformations are not started by reformers, that is, individuals whose goal is to reform others. Rather, reformations are the result of transformed lives. Others follow because they see what God has done in the life of a person.

READY TO BE SURPRISED?

It is difficult to predict who will be a reformer. Wesley became a reformer after he experienced devastating defeat. Miller became a reformer after he embarked on a personal study of the Bible.

Argula von Grumbach (1492-1563/68?) was accused of being a reformer because she defended a university student who was accused of “Lutheran” heresy. Von Grumbach, a mother of four children, was married to a man who did not support her views. She found time to publicly chastise university professors for persecuting innocent believers. A prolific writer, nearly 30,000 of her pamphlets were distributed in Germany at a time when the population was about 20 percent of today’s population. She was one of the most active female reformers in her day.⁸

And then there are those who never joined the Reformation, but who contributed to it. One such individual is Desiderius Erasmus⁹ (c. 1469-1536), a Roman Catholic whose work made it possible for Luther to translate the New Testament into German. In 1516 Erasmus published a Greek New Testament based on his thorough collection of Greek manuscripts. Starting with Luther’s German translation in 1522, the Bible was translated into numerous modern languages. God needed and used these translations for the Reformation to move forward. The Bible translations into languages understood by the people was the lifeblood of the Reformation.

THEN, NOW, AND BEYOND

Some of the Protestant reforms from the past are hardly recognized in the movements that resulted from their work. Though we may not be able to change that, we can still learn from the lives of the many individuals whom God used to bring reformation.

More important, God invites us to be part of His reformation until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are both challenged and encouraged by these words: “The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world’s history.”¹⁰ The Reformation will continue, but the more important question for each of us is—How can we be part of that Reformation? Here’s how:

1. *Make the Word and prayer central in your life:* Before William Miller preached from the Bible, he

studied it. Personal Bible study must be the foundation of our spiritual life. Reformation follows Bible study. And prayer. Meaningful Bible study demands an active prayer life. It was customary for Martin Luther to spend several hours in prayer each day. And during prayer Luther did something that seems unusual—he recited the Ten Commandments.¹¹ Prayer and study together open our hearts and minds to God.

2. *Be a witness, not a fighter:* Many recall Luther proclaiming before Emperor Charles V, “Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise.” Some see it as an affront to the emperor. More likely, Luther was just announcing his position. He was not looking for an argument. When we share the biblical message with others, it is more effective to share how God’s Word impacts us than argue about the Bible. The Holy Spirit will convince others that the Bible is the Word of God.

WILL THE REFORMATION EVER END?

Yes, it will—when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. Reformation is not a one-time event, even though the Reformation of the 1500s stands out. Until the Lord returns, God calls upon each of us to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, to follow Him, and to share our experience with others. That’s how reformers live and that’s what reformers do. 📌

¹ One problem with the Vulgate was its age—more than 1,000 years. Few understood its Old Latin.

² Timothy J. Wengert, “What Happened? An Overview of the Beginnings of Luther’s Reformation,” in Michael W. Campbell and Nikolaus Satelmajer, eds., *Here We Stand: Luther, the Reformation, and Seventh-day Adventism* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2017), p. 21.

³ Michael Massing, *Fatal Discord: Erasmus, Luther, and the Fight for the Western Mind* (New York: Harper, 2018), p. 549.

⁴ Eric Metaxas, *Martin Luther* (New York: Viking, 2017), pp. 445, 446.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 348.

⁶ *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (1978), s.v. Wesley, John.

⁷ Sylvester Bliss, *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1875), p. 67.

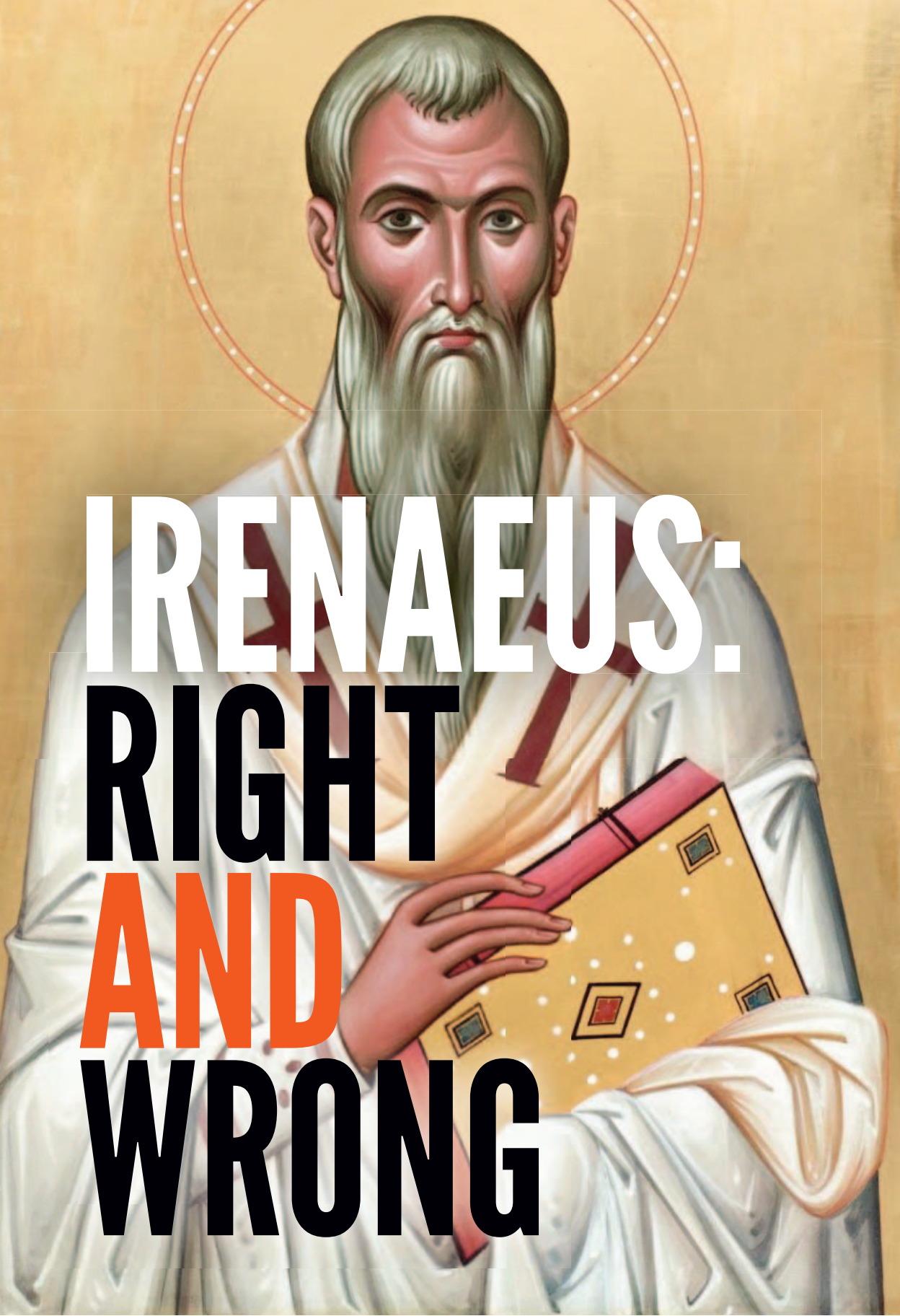
⁸ Kirst Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), pp. 71-85.

⁹ Michael Massing’s book is a helpful resource.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 148.

¹¹ Martin Luther, “A Simple Way to Pray, for Master the Barber,” in Philip D. W. Krey and Peter D. S. Krey, eds., *Luther’s Spirituality*, The Classics of Western Spirituality Series (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2007), pp. 217-232.

Nikolaus Satelmajer, retired, was editor of *Ministry* magazine and an associate Ministerial Association secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, in Maryland, United States.



IRENÆUS:
RIGHT
AND
WRONG

JOHN W. REEVE

Irenaeus faced a crisis of faith. The late-second-century bishop of Lyon was working to protect his church from the Gnostic truth claims about the Creator God and His relationship with humans. In his major work, known to us as *Against Heresies*, a work of five books containing 25 to 41 chapters each, Irenaeus reports the teachings of the various Gnostic sects and contrasts them with the teachings of the one church.¹

SETTING THE STAGE

The Valentinians (1.1-11), Marcosians (1.13-21), and dozens of other groups as presented by Irenaeus throughout books 1 and 2 of *Against Heresies*, claimed secret knowledge (Gnosis) about divinity that portrayed the Creator of the universe as a selfish, conniving, superficial manipulator trying to steal the inner light from eternal souls trapped in human bodies in the material cosmos he created as their jail. They claimed to find this knowledge in the text of Scripture as read through their knowing eyes (1.8), revealing the creator as the Demiurge (1.7).

Demiurge was the name Plato gave to the fabricator of the material cosmos, in his fourth-century B.C. dialogue *Timaeus*. Plato presents the creator not as the One God (Monad), but as the second, the Dyad, coming from the One God, but different enough from the One God to be able to have interactions with materiality and physicality, and be capable of actually making the physical universe. For Plato, this Demiurge is neither conniving nor evil, just different from and emanating from the One God, a lesser but good divinity. Similarly for Plato, the physical universe is essentially good, even though it is physical and changeable rather than eternal and unchangeable.

Nearly 500 years after Plato, in the second century A.D., things had changed. The physical universe and

the lesser god who created it were deemed not just lesser, but morally inferior. Physicality and materiality were viewed as evil in the time of Irenaeus and the Gnostics. The creator, the Demiurge, they understood as a low divinity within the hierarchy of gods, jealous of the one true God of pure, spiritual light. The only hope for trapped humanity was to learn the secret knowledge from the superior spiritual class of humans who innately possessed the “seed,” or “true light,” giving them access to the “fullness,” above and beyond the material world and the creator (Demiurge) of this universe.

MORE ON IRENAEUS’S TIMES

The circumstances of his place and time made Irenaeus’s Christian congregants susceptible to such deception. Their philosophical milieu, the basic assumptions of their age, gave credence to the popular ideas that physical bodies and material things were tainted and morally impure. Only pure, eternal realities were spiritual and morally superior. In this environment it was unthinkable that (a) the Christ could actually become physically human; (b) a future resurrection of the flesh would be deemed as positive; or (c) the privileged classes were not more spiritual and virtuous than the common classes. The very character of the Creator God, the nature of the incarnate Christ, and the basis of humans’ salvation were all at stake. Irenaeus’s work in these three areas is instructive for any study of Gnostic readings.

Irenaeus insisted that God’s prophets through Scripture teach us to expect the future bodily resurrection of the flesh. Christ’s resurrection was presented by Paul as the guarantee of our own future resurrection: “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . . The body that is sown is perish-

We recognize that the truth resides in Scripture.

able, it is raised imperishable" (1 Cor. 15:20-42).² Christ's resurrection body was portrayed as a real body, as Jesus walked with His disciples to Emmaus (Luke 24:15, 16), and later ate fish with them to prove He was no ghost (verses 37-43). Paul reiterated that the resurrection of the dead in Christ was future, at the second coming of Christ, and was the beginning of living forever with Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Irenaeus's statement of belief, pitted against the teachings of the Gnostics, affirmed that the beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, was "coming from heaven in the glory of the Father to recapitulate all things, and to raise up all flesh of the whole human race" (1.10).³

Similarly, in regard to Jesus Christ, the Word of God, becoming flesh, the prophet John voiced the eternity of the Word as God and the individuation of the Word as God with God (John 1:1, 2); this same Word who is God being the very one who became flesh (verse 14). As repugnant as it was to the people of the Greco-Roman world with their emphasis on personal positions of power and authority, Paul demonstrated that Christ Jesus, who is the very nature of the most high God and equal with God, made Himself nothing and became not only human but a servant of humans, dying on a criminal's cross (Phil. 2:5-8). In fact, Paul's description of the mystery of godliness began with Christ appearing "in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). God revealed through His prophets that He really did become flesh. Irenaeus, in his statement of the faith of the church, boldly declared that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "was enfleshed for our salvation" (1.10).

Again, God's prophets bore the message that God does not recognize human classes and hierarchies; that all humans are sinners in need of the blood of Christ; and that all are invited to accept His grace. The prophet Luke portrayed Peter as shocked by God's acceptance of Cornelius and his household: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one

who fears him and does what is right" (Acts 10:34, 35). Peter was here referring to Deuteronomy 10:17: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality." The Mosaic passage continued by describing God as defending normally powerless classes of people: the fatherless, the widows, the aliens (verses 18, 19). Peter's speech in Acts disclosed all God's prophets testifying "that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43). Peter's own writings asserted that God is patient, "not wanting anyone to perish, but [for] everyone to come to repentance" (1 Peter 3:9). These texts exposed Gnostic error: God did not orchestrate distinct classes of humans bound either for the realm of light or for destruction, with a middle class savable if given the right knowledge. No! Rather, all have sinned; all fall short; all may be justified freely by His grace (Rom. 3, especially verses 22-24). John quoted Jesus: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). All are sinners, all are drawn by Christ to the cross of Christ. Irenaeus paraphrased: "God consigned all things to disobedience that He may have mercy on all" (1.10; see Rom. 11:32).

Irenaeus relied on a right reading of Scripture to overcome the Gnostic misreading in all three of these areas. But what constitutes a right reading? Turning to Scripture to learn what to believe means understanding the principles of truth in each text within its original context; reading words and phrases for the rhetorical meaning of the sentences, the author's evident intention. We understand God's prophets as expressing their inspired thoughts to their intended audiences in understandable ways within shared, familiar contexts. We also understand them to be "carried along" by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20, 21) so as to ensure that God's message comes through. We thus place trust in the Scriptures as the final arbi-

ter of truth and practice (*sola scriptura*), seeking to understand each passage in its own context; then, to understand passages on the same topic in canonical context, i.e., within their own book and chapter as well as in context with each other, building up a whole biblical understanding of a topic (*tota scriptura*). We recognize that the truth resides in Scripture, in the authorially intended rhetorical meaning of the text.

The Gnostics, by contrast, believed that the truth resided in the privileged, spiritual reader, derived through allegory and noncontextual meanings where words and phrases mean something different than what the author intended, misguidedly attributing truth to the spiritual reader rather than to the Spirit-inspired text, as Irenaeus insisted.

The three cases cited above show Irenaeus's statement of truth in accordance with the evident intentions of the Bible writers. Irenaeus hinted at this kind of authorial intention when he pointed out that John never intended to speak of any Ogdoad—eight different archons—in the Gospel of John. For Gnostics, John's "Father," "Grace," "Only-begotten," "Truth," "Word," "Life," "Man," and "Church" stood for an Ogdoad of eight archons within the 30-member divine hierarchy. Irenaeus argued that John's use of these eight words was not intended to express any such Ogdoad. He rejected such a reading as not being the one right reading.

Problematically, though, Irenaeus's one right reading was not the text of Scripture with its internal evidences of authorial intent, but the handed-down apostolic tradition (1.10). He found security in his conviction that "the entire church has one and the same faith throughout the whole world" (1.10), a historically nondemonstrable claim. In book 3 of *Against Heresies* Irenaeus's argument for the apostolic succession of truth contended that the shortest line of succession from the apostles to his own day went through Polycarp of Smyrna, who, in his youth, knew the apostle John (3.1-5). Irenaeus knew Polycarp in his own youth, making himself the closest link to the apostles. Irenaeus said of Polycarp: "He always taught the things that he had learned from the apostle, which he also handed on to the church and which alone are true" (3.3).⁴ For Irenaeus, the truth resided not as much in the text

of Scripture as in the one right reading of the church, as found in the apostolic succession of bishops.

TAKING ISSUE WITH IRENAEUS

Holding to Scripture's only legitimate reading as the one traditionally handed down (3.4) sounds highly optimistic. But what happens when humans in the church make the inevitable mistake? How can the church be corrected by Scripture if the teaching of the church is the standard of truth (4.26)? Irenaeus correctly rejected the gross wrongs of the Gnostics, but wrongly elevated church tradition as the guarantor of truth. Following his well-meaning misstep, small mistakes in church thinking and action grew, uncorrected, into massive errors.

For sheer love of golf, I spend a lot of time in the trees and the long grass looking for golf balls I've sent there. True, there's always the second shot. But what you mainly need from that shot is right direction. How do you set the direction for your second shot? By looking back to check the direction of your last shot? If I continue going in the direction of my first shot, I'm making the same mistake that Irenaeus did. And soon enough, continuing without correction, I may be completely outside the golf course with no surviving idea where my original goal was.

Irenaeus was right about the Word becoming flesh, about the future resurrection of the flesh, about God's invitation to save all humans. But he was wrong about apostolic tradition, and about eternal punishing by a God who wills the wicked never to die (4.39, 40). Correcting misguided beliefs is an ongoing challenge. The Spirit who gave the Scriptures by inspiring His prophets invites each of us to accept the unbeatable privilege: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).⁵

¹ reference *Against Heresies* using the traditional book and chapter designations and in-text citations within parentheses.

²Scripture references are from the New International Version.

³Quotations from Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 1, are from Dominic J. Unger, trans., *St. Irenaeus of Lyons Against the Heresies*, book 1, *Ancient Christian Writers* 55 (New York: Paulist, 1992).

⁴Unger, book 3, *Ancient Christian Writers* 64 (New York: Newman, 2012), p. 33.

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OUR GODLESS CONSTITUTION AND THE SUNDAY LAW

For the years in the 1990s that I edited *Liberty*, I got quite an education regarding America and American history. And one thing I learned, early on, was just how secular, even godless, the United States Constitution is.

No matter how Christian the background to America had been, in that the founders and settlers came from a Christian environment (though with various levels religious commitment), they ended up creating a decidedly non-Christian constitution. The famous words written by Thomas Jefferson—"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"—came from the Declaration of Independence, not the U. S. Constitution. And, believe me, Jefferson's Creator was nothing like the Yahweh of the Bible.

In contrast, the founding legal document of the United States of America never mentions God, Jesus, or the Bible, a fact that greatly antagonized people over the centuries, and that caused them to advocate for amendments that would, they believe, remedy this great defect. So far, all attempts to have the United States Constitution acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ have failed.

Though the U.S. Constitution does not mention Jesus or God, it does mention religion. Each time it does, however, the document restricts what the Federal government can do with it. Article VI, Clause 3, known as the No Religious Test Clause of the United States Constitution, reads, well, "No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office

or public Trust under the United States." In other words, your religion, or lack therefore, cannot disqualify you from public office.

The one constitutional amendment that does deal with religion is the First, which reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Exactly what this means has been at the heart of more than two centuries of jurisprudence.

There is, however, a serious exception, where the U.S. Constitution does acknowledge Christianity—and Seventh-day Adventists will especially take note of this. Article I, Section 7, says that after a bill is sent from Congress to the president, he has 10 days to return it. "If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law."

Sundays excepted?

This was late-eighteenth-century America; Sunday, "the Lord's Day," was serious stuff, often strictly enforced by local and state laws. The idea of the "secular Sunday" didn't arise in America for another 100 years.

This implicit recognition of Sunday as sacred, in something as secular as the United States Constitution, shows ironically enough why it was a great idea to keep the government and religion as far apart as possible. And that's because the one time in the document that it even implicitly seeks to apply religious doctrine to the nation—it gets it wrong. ▀

Clifford Goldstein is editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*. His latest book is *Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity*

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN



THE U.S.
CONSTITUTION
DOES NOT MENTION
JESUS OR GOD.



BABYLON RED

*The harlot's
color is
a dead
giveaway.*

DWAIN N. ESMOND



*He saw her
"drunk with blood,"
and gasped
(see Rev. 17:1-6).*

It was September 2016 when one prominent evangelical unmasked the mysterious scarlet woman of Revelation 17.

ID OF SCARLET

You remember 2016, don't you? The year America elected its forty-fifth president after a bruising, divisive election. The Southern border of the United States took center stage as the centerpiece of candidate Trump's "Build the Wall" rallying cry. Other issues such as the economy, terrorism, foreign policy, and healthcare were also hotly contested.

Inauguration day promised an end to what the newly elected President termed "American Carnage." What followed was a series of high-profile incidents that not only exposed the raw racial underbelly of the nation but also the crass transactional politics of American evangelicalism. A tiki torch mob marched in Charlottesville, Virginia, announcing, "Jews will not replace us!" While protesting against this bigotry, a young activist named Heather Heyer was brutally killed during the melee. The FBI called

her killing domestic terrorism, but rationalizations abounded as to the source of the simmering racial divide exemplified in Charlotte: "God chooses the most imperfect vessels to carry out His work, does He not?" some "Christians" said. President Trump was not perfect but he was better than the alternative, they defended. This pattern of "Christians" justifying the unconscionable in service of the expedient has continued unabated, and the reputation of American evangelicalism is in tatters today because of it.

But it was Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham, who best encapsulated the astonishing thinking that came to characterize American evangelicalism that year and hence. In a 2016 interview for the *Conservative Chronicle* Graham said that if President Barack Obama was the anti-christ, then Michelle Obama, for riding in a limo called the Beast and wearing scarlet and purple clothing, must be the whore of Babylon.¹

Graham had earlier attributed the deaths of unarmed Black men at the hands of police to their lack of obedience to authority and bad parenting.² His unbiblical politics and that of other prominent evangelicals is aiding the continuing exodus from American Christianity, especially among the young.

Graham's absurd theologizing of Revelation's "lady in red" embodies, perhaps unknowingly, core characteristics that actually define the "scarlet

harlot” John saw in vision. Was he aware at the moment he spoke that his inner harlot was showing? Doesn’t he, in such moments, invite the biblically grounded observer to hear him, in eschatological terms, as a proper representative of apostate Protestantism inspired by demons (see Rev. 16:13, 14), a theological infant born of bastardized pseudo-religion and nursed in racism?

And we have heard such voices before. Consider Amaziah, priest of Bethel: keen on the favor of the head of state, he complains to King Jeroboam against the God-ordained ministry of prophet Amos (Amos 7:10, 11). Not that there is any law against communication between priests and kings. But there surely is ecclesiastical disaster in a church leader finding community with the one God identifies as evildoer-in-chief (see 2 Kings 14:23, 24) against the one God has called to denounce his evil. We wonder how the priest can miss the wretched contradiction of his spiritual and moral alignments. Can’t he see himself? The color of his spiritual garb is red—BABYLON RED.

Wherever the Bible is prohibited and error is promoted, there is Babylon red

A LEARNED RESPONSE

Where does apostate Christianity learn its abominations? Where else but from the “lady in red” herself—Babylon, the harlot of Revelation 17.³ This is the part of the Bible where the God of justice responds to the enemies of righteousness. Put another way, God is going to procure some “get-back!” When one sports team wallops another in some contest, the losing team sometimes says, “When they come to our house, we’re going to get some get-back!” One day God is going to get some “get-back!” “Vengeance is Mine,” He assures, and He’ll repay (Rom. 12:19).

In Revelation 16 plague after plague has fallen until earth is a horror-filled hellscape, worse than any movie can depict.

God’s punishments now are both plenteous and accurate, targeting those who disregarded the final warnings of the three angels of Revelation 14, worshipped the beast, and received his mark. Now they break out in loathsome sores (Rev. 16:2). For shedding saints’ blood, they now drink blood (verses 5, 6). While they perish, the righteous pray. While they suffer, the righteous are kept safe.

And amid it all God remembers to give great Babylon “the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath” (verse 19).

While most of Revelation 16 targets people, God, in Revelation 17, targets the system that misled the people, that hurt the faithful; the system guilty of crimes against God. John is clear about the principles embodied by the “lady in red.” He knew Babylon, Hebrew Babel, as the place where human beings built a tower in direct defiance of God (Gen. 11:1-9); where God confounded the language of the recalcitrant builders and threw them into a mass of confusion (verses 7-9). He knew that any power that defies the clear dictates of God is Babylon, the power wearing red—BABYLON RED!

John would remember Nebuchadnezzar, defiant king of Babylon, who forced everyone in his realm to bow down to an image he built, or die a fiery death (Dan. 3:14-21). John

would know that Babylon coerces false worship and corrupts true worship. And any power that coerces false worship while corrupting true worship is wearing red—BABYLON RED!

SHOW AND TELL

In Revelation 17:1 one of the seven angels holding the seven bowls invites John to see the judgment of the great harlot. John well understood the illicit sexuality of the “lady in red.” He knew that God often likened Israel’s spiritual apostasy to the breaking of a marital vow (Ezek. 16:15).

Not only the kings of the earth, but all earth’s inhabitants, have become intoxicated with the lady’s fornications (Rev. 17:1). She has led both the powerful and the powerless of earth to trade love for God and His Word for love of the world and its fables (2 Peter 1:16). Wherever people trade the love for God for other lovers, the allurements of the world for the joys of heaven, wherever the Bible is prohibited and error is promoted, there is Babylon red.

The angel takes John to the wilderness to behold the “lady in red”: She’s fine! Lying down with kings while paupers drink her bathwater; regaled in regal purple and scarlet red—Babylon red! Her “limo” is a beast with seven heads and 10 horns (Rev. 17:7). She is bedecked, bejeweled, and ready to befool; tattooed on her forehead is: “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (verse 5). Her tattoos are a direct counterfeit of the slogan that adorned the gold plate God instructed Aaron to wear whenever he ministered before God (Ex. 28:35-37). Her counterfeit slogan marks her as a religious power, the devil’s instrument, as he attempts to make himself God.

Wherever unholiness of thought replaces holiness of thought, there you will find red, BABYLON RED!

John marvels as he sees her “drunk with the blood of the saints” (Rev. 17:6). He marvels at her arrogance to think that she and her 10-horned dragon can rough-ride and trample God’s children with impunity.


The “lady in white” whom she pursues and

persecutes doesn’t need jewelry and royal garb, because she is robed in light. She doesn’t need a beast to ride upon—the moon is under her feet. She doesn’t need a forehead tattoo, because God has given her a crown with 12 stars—representing the 12 apostles who birthed the New Testament church, and the 12 tribes who stand for the totality of God’s kingdom (see Rev. 12).

THE WOMAN IDENTIFIED

For 1260 days (Rev. 12:6), the lady in white suffers the dragon’s persecution and experiences God’s protection. The angel fingers her tormentor. In fact, the tormentor gives herself away. For she is the only human institution that persecuted God’s church for 1260 years, drinking itself drunk with martyrs’ blood: the power under whose rule the woman’s Son was born before He was caught up to heaven (Rev. 12:5). She is Rome, in varied unholy postures both secular and religious, both political and ecclesiastical.

John saw Rome, the lady in red whom God names Babylon, ride herd on all political powers at the time preceding the second coming of Jesus. He saw secular powers adding muscle to the harlot’s hustle, doing her bidding in persecuting God’s people just as Rome earlier persecuted the wilderness church.

John also saw that the tyranny would not last. The secular powers will turn and hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire (Rev. 17:16)! The pleasures of one-night stands with the “lady in red” will not be enough to soothe the pains brought on by the plagues. When the secular powers of the earth discover her fraud, they will turn, and violently so. Don’t be confused by Franklin Graham. The real “Lady in Red” is soon to meet her end! 

¹ Franklin Graham’s remarks are no longer directly available from the *Conservative Chronicle*, but are repeated in Kim Peckham’s “The Scarlet Woman of Revelation,” *Signs of the Times*, June 1, 2017: <https://signsoft-hetimes.org.au/2017/06/the-scarlet-woman-of-revelation/>.

² Graham’s statement (now blocked on his Facebook page) about how unarmed Black men can avoid being killed by police is cited by Jim Wallis in *Sojourner Magazine* at this link: <https://www.facebook.com/207206302440/posts/last-thursday-franklin-graham-posted-the-following-on-facebook-about-obeying-the/10152653035032441/>.

³ See also Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 384-386.

Dwain N. Esmond, ordained pastor, writer, and editor, currently serves as associate director/editor of the Ellen G. White Estate. This article is adapted from one of his sermons.



GOD'S REFORMERS

*Retracing the journey
of Luther and others*

Notwithstanding all the persecution of the saints, living witnesses for God's truth were raised up on every hand. Angels of the Lord were doing the work committed to their trust. They were searching in the darkest places and selecting out of the darkness men who were honest in heart. These were all buried up in error, yet God called them, as He did Saul, to be chosen vessels to bear His truth and raise their voices against the sins of His professed people. Angels of God moved upon the hearts of Martin Luther, Melancthon, and others in different places, and caused them to thirst for the living testimony of the Word of God. The enemy had come in like a flood, and the standard must be raised against him. Luther was the one chosen to breast the storm, stand up against the ire of a fallen church, and strengthen the few who were faithful to their

holy profession. He was ever fearful of offending God. He tried through works to obtain His favor, but was not satisfied until a gleam of light from heaven drove the darkness from his mind and led him to trust, not in works, but in the merits of the blood of Christ. He could then come to God for himself, not through popes or confessors, but through Jesus Christ alone.

ONE MAN'S TRANSFORMATION

Oh, how precious to Luther was this new and glorious light which had dawned upon his dark understanding and driven away his superstition! He prized it higher than the richest earthly treasure. The Word of God was new. Everything was changed. The book he had dreaded because he could not see beauty in it was now life, eternal life, to him. It was his joy, his consolation, his blessed teacher. Nothing could

induce him to leave its study. He had feared death; but as he read the Word of God, all his terrors disappeared, and he admired the character of God and loved Him. He searched the Bible for himself and feasted upon the rich treasures it contained; then he searched it for the church. He was disgusted with the sins of those in whom he had trusted for salvation, and as he saw many others enshrouded in the same darkness which had covered him, he anxiously sought an opportunity to point them to the Lamb of God, who alone taketh away the sin of the world.

Raising his voice against the errors and sins of the papal church, he earnestly endeavored to break the chain of darkness which was confining thousands and causing them to trust in works for salvation. He longed to be enabled to open to their minds the true riches of the grace of God and the excellence of salvation obtained through Jesus Christ. In the power of the Holy Spirit he cried out against the existing sins of the leaders of the church; and as he met the storm of opposition from the priests, his courage failed not; for he firmly relied upon the strong arm of God, and confidently trusted in Him for victory. As he pushed the battle closer and closer, the rage of the priests was kindled still hotter against him. They did not wish to be reformed. They chose to be left in ease, in wanton pleasure, in wickedness; and they desired the church also to be kept in darkness.

I saw that Luther was ardent and zealous, fearless and bold, in reproving sin and advocating the truth. He cared not for wicked men or devils; he knew that he had One with him mightier than they all. Luther possessed zeal, courage, and boldness, and at times was in danger of going to extremes. But God raised up Melancthon, who was just the opposite in character, to aid Luther in carrying on the work of reformation. Melancthon was timid, fearful, cautious, and possessed great patience. He was greatly beloved of God. His knowledge of the Scriptures was great, and his judgment and wisdom excellent. His love for the cause of God was equal to Luther's. The hearts of these men the Lord knit together; they were inseparable friends. Luther was a great help to Melancthon when in danger of being fearful and slow, and Melancthon in turn was a great help to Luther when in danger of moving too fast. Melancthon's farseeing caution often averted trouble which would have come upon the cause had the work been left alone to Luther; and

**As he read the Word of God,
all his terrors disappeared.**

ofttimes the work would not have been pushed forward had it been left to Melancthon alone. I was shown the wisdom of God in choosing these two men to carry on the work of reformation. . . .

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

God raised up men to cry against the existing sins of the papal church and carry forward the Reformation. Satan sought to destroy these living witnesses; but the Lord made a hedge about them. Some, for the glory of His name, were permitted to seal with their blood the testimony they had borne; but there were other powerful men, like Luther and Melancthon, who could best glorify God by living and exposing the sins of priests, popes, and kings. These trembled before the voice of Luther, and his fellow laborers. Through those chosen men, rays of light began to scatter the darkness, and very many joyfully received the light and walked in it. And when one witness was slain, two or more were raised up to take his place.

But Satan was not satisfied. He could only have power over the body. He could not make believers yield their faith and hope. And even in death they triumphed with a bright hope of immortality at the resurrection of the just. They had more than mortal energy. They dared not sleep for a moment, but kept the Christian armor girded about them, prepared for a conflict, not merely with spiritual foes, but with Satan in the form of men whose constant cry was, "Give up your faith, or die." These few Christians were strong in God, and more precious in His sight than half a world who bear the name of Christ, and yet are cowards in His cause. While the church was persecuted, its members were united and loving; they were strong in God. Sinners were not permitted to unite with the church. Those only who are willing to forsake all for Christ could be His disciples. These loved to be poor, humble, and Christlike. ♣

Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry. This excerpt was taken from *Early Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1882, 1945), pp. 222-226.



HOW TO DIG DEEP INTO SCRIPTURE

It's not as hard as you think.

From time to time we get involved in theological discussions. We listen to sermons, read articles, and invest ourselves in theological arguments that lead us to question which one is most consistent with the Bible. Those of us who have no formal education in theology are often caught in a quandary, wondering how to find our way through the maze of arguments and opinions that may sound good but seem to vary in interpretation. Is there a way for the average church member to investigate the message of Scripture to better evaluate the messages and interpretations of those we listen to? How can we discover for ourselves a reliable understanding of the truths of Scripture?

SAFEGUARD THE WORD

Several things can help us safeguard our study of Scripture. The first of these is to approach Scripture with a humble spirit. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8, 9). We are reminded in Proverbs 3:5-7, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil."

A second safeguard we can rely on is prayer. We serve a God who has always chosen to reveal Himself to His people. We do well when we pray for the Holy Spirit to illuminate us whenever we open the Scriptures. We can pray the prayer of the psalmist: "Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long" (Ps. 25:4, 5, NIV).

Third, we need to realize that because of our human nature, we are in danger of self-deception. We tend to defend what we believe and often find it difficult to distrust our inclinations. In our study of Scripture we must remember that we are not called to be technicians piecing together an argument we want to sell. We are discoverers of the messages God has chosen to reveal. In 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 the apostle Paul reminds us that "the person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers

How can we discover for ourselves a reliable understanding of the truths of Scripture?

them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, 'Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ" (NIV). The disciple James counsels us further. "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (James 1:5, NIV).

A fourth safeguard is to always go back to the unambiguous passages of Scripture. It will help to read the passages in different translations. Too often we get stuck focusing on difficult passages on the subject, but if we pull back a little and take a broader perspective drawn from passages with unquestionable context, we will generally have a clearer picture of the issues involved.

UNDERSTAND AND DISCERN

Cleopas and his traveling companion puzzled over their disappointment as they traveled to the village of Emmaus that fateful Sunday afternoon after the resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:13-35). Jesus approached them and asked what they were talking about. They told Him about their dilemma over Jesus' crucifixion, saying, "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus" (verses 19-24, NIV).

Acknowledging the fact that they knew the Scrip-

tures, Jesus replied, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (verses 25, 26, NIV). Then "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (verse 27, NIV). Looking at the broader perspective of Scripture helps clarify many of our theological perplexities.

The fifth safeguard is to study Scripture in a group. We have a better chance of finding balance in our study of Scripture if we have several participants aiming at discovering the meaning of the passages being studied. It helps to have other dedicated students of the Word who will share what they understand in Scripture. Luke reminds us of this practice among the Bereans in Acts 17:11: "Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (NIV). Proverbs 11:14 is a reminder that "where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors, there is safety" (KJV).

The sixth safeguard is to study the context and seek to discover what the passage meant to those who originally received the message. Discover the context by going to a reliable commentary. Learn about the culture of the times when the Scripture was written; what circumstances prompted the writing; who is being addressed; and when was it written. We tend to view the Bible through our unique worldviews. We need to remember that the Scriptures were written primarily for contemporaries of the writers. We can indeed find meaning for our day, but we should never overlook the message for the primary recipients. We need to use the same principle when reading the writings of Ellen White.

Finally, we need to take seriously the rebuke of Jesus to the Jewish leaders of His day: "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39, NIV). If our study of Scripture does not provide us with a clear picture of the character of Jesus, we will have missed the whole point of studying God's Word. ▀

* Elements of this article are borrowed from Jon Paulien, *The Deep Things of God: An Insider's Guide to the Book of Revelation* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2004).

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For Better Bible Study

Here is a six-step exercise that might help you develop a reliable pattern for your Bible study.

- **Step One:** Read the passage and note your spontaneous reactions. (What strikes you? What amazes you? What raises questions in your mind?) Then write a paragraph detailing your thoughts.
- **Step Two:** Reread the assigned passage. Should we have started reading earlier in the passage, or should we extend the reading to include some of the next? Given the various parts of the passage (repeated words, key characters, story development, etc.), what phrase do you think is the **focus** of the passage? Why do you think it is the focus? Write a paragraph about your conclusions.
- **Step Three:** Given what you have already learned about that specific book of the Bible in which this passage is found, what themes or main characteristics of the book do you find in the assigned passage? Dwell on this step. It is key to your understanding of the context of the passage. Write a paragraph about your thoughts.
- **Step Four:** Think of the cultural values of the recipients of the Scriptures that you are studying. How does their culture help to explain what you have read in the passage? Write a paragraph about your thoughts.
- **Step Five:** After examining the cultural context of the passage you have read, how would you compare those values to, or contrast them with our twenty-first-century culture and values? Write a paragraph about your thoughts.
- **Step Six:** Given your careful work so far, how do you interpret the meaning of this passage for today? Write a paragraph about your thoughts.

MARTIN LUTHER: MASTER OF PARADOXES

*How Luther
highlighted
the gospel's seeming
contradictions*

TREVOR O'REGGIO



Some have argued in favor of paradox being one of the major literary techniques of the New Testament, especially for Jesus and Paul.

Martin Luther is considered one of the most original and provocative theological thinkers who ever lived.¹ One of the major qualities that characterized his writings was his use of paradoxical statements to express his most significant theological ideas.² More than any other Protestant reformer, Luther was given to thinking in terms of paradoxical propositions and binary dialectical oppositions that depended on each other for meaning, despite their apparent contradictions, such as faith and works, law and gospel, flesh and spirit.³

SELECTED EXAMPLES

Examples of Luther's most quoted paradoxical statements would include the following. Speaking of the Christian's freedom, he says: "The Christian is perfectly free, lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all."⁴ Elsewhere he states that "a Christian is simultaneously a saint and a sinner."⁵ Comparing human perspectives on God's works, he writes the following: "Although the works of humans always seem attractive and good, they are nevertheless likely to be mortal sins. Although the works of God are always unattractive and appear evil, they are nevertheless really eternal merits."⁶ As to destiny of salvation, he declares that "we cannot go to heaven, unless we first go to hell." The most shocking of his paradoxes would have to be that "God cannot be God unless he first becomes a devil."⁷

JESUS' PARADOXES

Merriam-Webster defines a paradox as a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true.⁸ Such speech, and, specifically, such theological speech is not original to Luther. In the Gospels Jesus expressed many of His most powerful truths in paradoxes. Examples of these are: "For whosoever

will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:25);⁹ Jesus also stated that "the last shall be first, and the first last" (Matt. 20:16).

The apostle Paul also expressed some of his most profound theological ideas in paradoxes: exaltation through humiliation (Phil. 2:8, 9); strength through weakness (2 Cor. 12:10); freedom through servitude (Rom. 6:18). Indeed, some have argued in favor of paradox being one of the major literary techniques of the New Testament, especially for Jesus and Paul.¹⁰

Thus, in speaking in paradoxes, the great German Protestant reformer reasonably sees himself as following sound and familiar biblical tradition. As surely as with his biblical predecessors, Luther's paradoxical quality about his theological ideas evades easy explanation or simplistic interpretation. Some consider that his theological genius enabled him to view both sides of an issue.¹¹ Others stumble over his paradoxical and apparently conflicting statements. This article is not intended as a validation of Luther's theology or of his social ideas. All it offers is an exploration of a few of the reformers paradoxes, specifically three: calling God the devil; a pertinent example from his early writing; and finally, the issue that is the hinge of all Luther's theological understanding, the cross.

CALLING GOD THE DEVIL

In explaining the statement in which he calls God the devil, Luther clarifies through his exposition of two kinds of works of God: God's alien work (*Opus Alienum Dei*) and God's proper work (*Opus Proprium Dei*). The former involves killing,

taking away hope, even leading to desperation. The latter speaks of forgiveness, love, and encouragement. In Luther's abrasive words, God makes bad results, which we do not understand, and even uses Satan in order to bring us to repentance. Luther proclaims that we must first understand our lost condition before we can be saved, and thus "we cannot go to heaven, unless we first go to hell"; hence, to us, "God cannot be God unless he first becomes a devil."¹²

HEIDELBERG DISPUTATIONS

One of the earliest examples of Luther's use of paradoxes was the Heidelberg Disputation at the chapter meeting of the Augustinian order in April 1518, where Luther was asked to explain some of his new ideas that seemed to be at variance with traditional Catholic views. At the behest of Johannes Van Staupitz, Luther, for this occasion, wrote a series of theological and philosophical theses that outlined many of the theological ideas that he would later develop. These ideas were often expressed in paradoxes. Theses 1-12 deal with the problem of good works, while theses 13-18 deal with the will.¹³ True to his paradoxical style, right from the onset of the disputation Luther asserted that the "good works" that appear beautiful and attractive are nothing less than "mortal sins"! By contrast, Luther continued, God's works, which to many appear ugly and evil, are really beautiful, for they are the sole source of salvation.¹⁴

In order to understand this particular paradox, we must understand the major crux of Luther's theology, which was focused on the impossibility of humans to earn salvation through their good works and deeds. A passage Luther frequently quoted was: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20). Other passages in Galatians also complement this idea: "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Gal. 3:10). Any attempt toward righteousness by works is for Luther a delusion that leads straight to hell. All human attempts to achieve righteousness through the keeping of the law take away from the merits and grace of Christ, and, as such, constitute the worst of all mortal sins. Humans' "good works" are hence, for Luther, mortal sins, since they give us the illusion of being saved while leading us

to hell. Righteousness and salvation come only from Christ; He alone is our righteousness. He alone can give us righteousness.¹⁵

In the second part of this paradoxical statement, Luther asserts that the works of God seem unattractive and evil, although they are really eternal merits. Luther argues that God's works to many appear evil, lowly, unimpressive, and even repulsive. God often chooses weak, sinful humans to speak His word of forgiveness, grace, and judgment. God's greatest work happened on a despised and lowly wooden cross where His Son hanged as a condemned criminal. Yet, through Christ's death, the solemn work of atonement is made for humanity. God transformed an instrument of capital punishment into a symbol of grace and salvation. God has indeed chosen "foolish things of the world to confound the wise" (1 Cor. 1:27).¹⁶ It is in the apparent ugliness and evil of the cross that God's greatest act of grace is accomplished.

THE PARADOX OF THE CROSS

Luther's use of paradox to express his understanding of the gospel should come as no surprise, since for him the cross is the hinge on which all theology swings. The doctrine of the cross is the doctrine on which the church stands or falls.¹⁷ For Luther, the cross of Christ is the great paradox of the Bible. Where humans perceive weakness, shame, humiliation, and suffering is precisely where God is to be found, hidden beneath it all, where only the eye of faith can perceive His power, glory, and love. Exactly where God seems absent is where God is revealed most fully.¹⁸

Luther carries the paradox of the cross further by saying that Christians must follow Christ in taking up their cross. Only through our personal cross can we experience God's glory.¹⁹ This is also a paradox. Luther wrote, "You, God, exalt us when you humble us. You make us righteous when you make us sinners, you grant victory when you cause us to be defeated, you give us life when you permit us to be killed."²⁰ Luther believed that it is only through the denial of self that we can truly receive life. This profoundly paradoxical yet historically fundamental Christian doctrine greatly shaped Luther's theological thinking. Richard Hughes argues that "Luther prized the theme of paradox, not because the notion of paradox was philosophically intriguing, but rather because he found the

notion of paradox at the very heart of the Christian gospel. Because his ‘theology of the cross’ stands at the very center of Luther’s thought, so does the notion of paradox.”²¹ God is found not only in the suffering, but also in the midst of doubt, fear, tribulation, temptation, and finally despair. This is what Luther calls God’s alien work, God’s work of wrath. Beneath is to be found God’s work of mercy. And only when human beings abandon themselves can they begin to trust in God’s mercy alone. Luther never tired of saying, “Only experience makes a theologian. Not understanding, reading, or speculation, but living—nay, dying and being damned—make a theologian.”²²

For the great reformer Luther, only the experience of the cross can bring anyone to true theology. In order for us to see God at work through our sufferings, we need a revelation of the Holy Spirit: “No one can correctly understand God or his word, unless he receives such understanding from the Holy Spirit. But no one can receive it from the Holy Spirit without experiencing, proving, and feeling it.”²³

In the end, the paradox of salvation is no mere theoretical construct: it is life lived in the flesh, the humanity of humans endowed with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. ♣

¹Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2013), pp. 53, 54; Heiko Oberman and Eileen W. Schwarzabart, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006). For more on Luther’s originality, see Robert Kolb, *Genius of Luther’s Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

²Markus Wriedt, “Luther’s Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge, UK: University Press, 2003), pp. 86-88, 103, 104.

³Carlos Eire, *A Brief History of Eternity* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 129.

⁴Martin Luther, “The Freedom of the Christian,” in *Luther’s Works (LW)*, 31:343.

⁵Luther, “Commentary on Galatians,” in *LW*, 26:232.

⁶Luther, “The Heidelberg Disputation,” thesis 3, in *LW*, 31:39.

⁷Luther, “The Exposition of the 117th Psalm” (1530), in *LW*, 14:31.

⁸<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/paradox>.

⁹Unless otherwise specified, all Bible references in this work are from the King James Version.

¹⁰See Stephen D. Cox, *The New Testament and Literature: A Guide to Literary Patterns* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006), pp. 21-30, 74-91, 113-126, 140-144.

¹¹Luther, “The Exposition of the 117th Psalm” [1530], in *LW*, 14:31.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Luther, “The Heidelberg Disputation” (May 1518), in *LW*, 31:39-70.

¹⁴Luther, “Heidelberg Disputation,” thesis 3, in *LW*, 31:43.

¹⁵Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 118-130.

¹⁶On this, see Christine Helmer, *The Global Luther* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), p. 230.

¹⁷See Alistair E. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 149, 150.

¹⁸On detailed analysis of Luther’s view of hidden/revealed God, see Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther’s Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 198-213; see also Luther, “Lectures on Jonah” (1526), in *LW*, 19:72ff.

¹⁹Luther, “Commentary on Psalm 118,” in *LW*, 14:95.

²⁰*Ibid.*

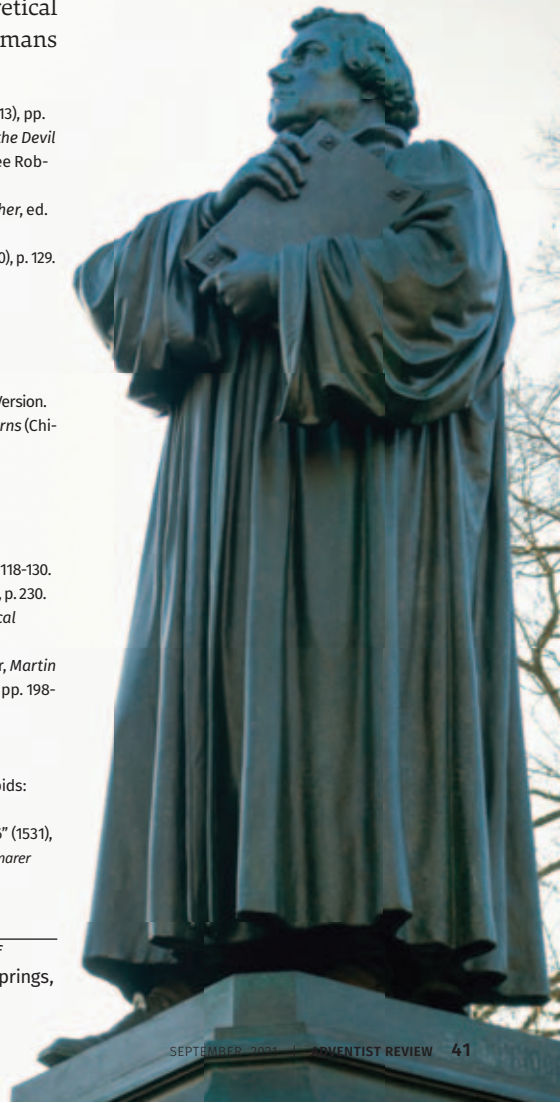
²¹Richard Hughes, *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 88.

²²George, p. 61. Luther repeated this idea several times. See Luther, “Table Talk 46” (1531), in *LW*, 54:7. See also Luther, in *Weimarer Ausgabe Tischreder (WA TR)*, 1:146, and *Weimarer Ausgabe (WA)*, 5:163.

²³Luther, “Exposition on the Magnificat,” in *LW*, 21:299.

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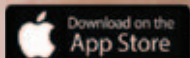
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God at work through
our sufferings, we
need a revelation of
the Holy Spirit.



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FRUITFUL CONVERSATIONS

We don't have to be divisive and split into factions because of our deeply held convictions.

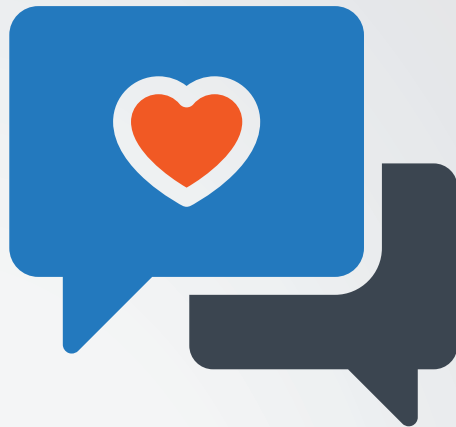
STEPHEN CHAVEZ

The social situation addressed by the apostle Paul to the believers in Galatia is remarkably similar to conditions faced by us today. “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like” (Gal. 5:19-21).*

Sexual immorality, idolatry, debauchery, drunkenness, etc., don't surprise us; they are typical examples of worldly behavior. We'd never expect these behaviors to be demonstrated in the church. But hatred? Discord? Dissensions? Factions in the church? Surely not! While such behaviors may be present, they are often hidden from public view and rarely discussed in polite company.

In my rather limited life experience, I can't remember when society (and the church) has been so roiled by discord, dissensions, hatreds, and factions—especially during the past four or five years. And thanks to social media, these conversations rapidly suck up all the oxygen in the room. Name any issue, and opinions cover not only the entire spectrum of liberal to conservative—they divide members, families, and friendships.

During the past several months I've read numerous books about the history of the United States. The record of factions, dissensions, and discord throughout its history surprised me. It seems that in every age, about nearly every social issue, many citizens saw each other less as patriots and more as traitors. The darkest episode was the American Civil War and its aftermath. From that time to this the United States has struggled to understand and deal with that sad legacy.



But enough about “them”; let's talk about us.

To the believers in Galatia Paul not only catalogued “the acts of the flesh”; he also listed the “fruit of the Spirit” (fruit [singular], not fruits [plural]): “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. . . . Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (verses 22-24).

News flash: we're opinionated (yes, we are). But we don't have to be divisive and split into factions because of our deeply held convictions. Since our citizenship is in heaven, our opinions are less important than our willingness to reflect the character of Christ as demonstrated by the fruit of the Spirit.

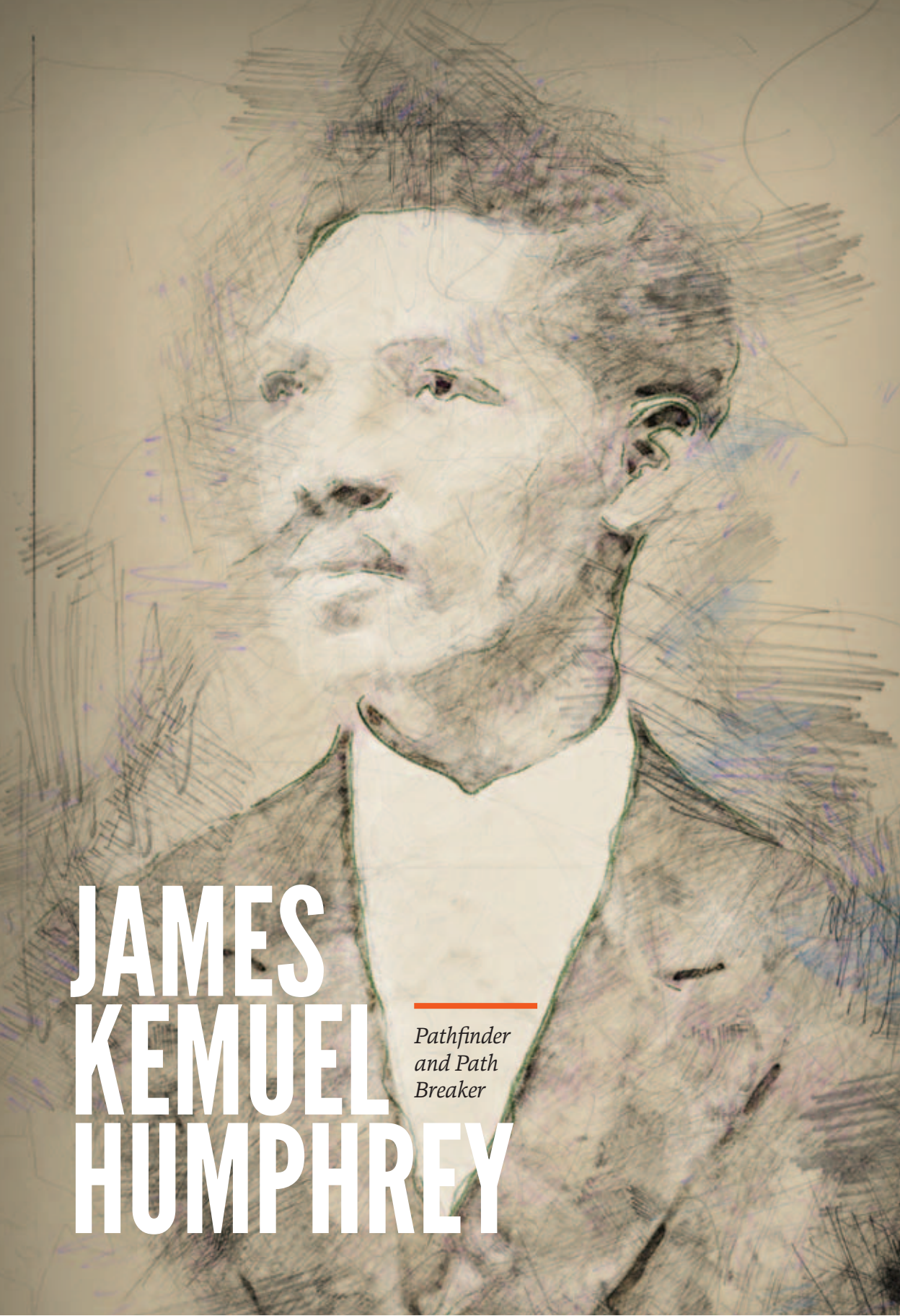
The young adults in my local church have monthly GLOW dinners. Before the pandemic forced us into Zoom rooms, we'd invite eight or 10 young adults to share a meal and, while sitting around a communal table, have a conversation about a current issue faced by society and the church. Topics addressed during the past 18 months included racism, immigration, LGBTQ persons, the minimum wage, etc. To each issue we'd ask, “What does Christianity bring to this conversation?”

The idea was to create a climate where people are heard, where their opinions are taken seriously, and where they are valued as individuals regardless of their opinions.

The apostle Paul's imperative to the believers in Galatia has implications for our conversations as well as for our behaviors: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (verse 25).¹

*All Bible texts are taken from the New International Version.

Stephen Chavez is retired after serving the church as a pastor, writer, and editor.



JAMES KEMUEL HUMPHREY

*Pathfinder
and Path
Breaker*

R. CLIFFORD JONES

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized in the midst of the American Civil War, a conflagration sparked by slavery that raged for four years.

AT THE BIRTH OF A CHURCH

Though the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation officially abolished slavery in the rebel states, millions of Blacks living in the United States had to contend with situations and conditions after slavery that mirrored what enslaved Blacks experienced during the “Diabolical Institution.”

Many Adventist pioneers spoke out against slavery, among them Ellen G. White. The Adventist Church founder categorically and vehemently condemned slavery, going so far as to encourage Adventists to disobey legislation that denied slaves their God-given rights. White was a reliable and staunch ally of those who stood up for the oppressed, believing that to do so was in alignment with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

In spite of the racial solidarity demonstrated by Ellen G. White and other Adventist Church leaders, the African American experience in Adventism was not without challenges. Race remained a vexing issue in America throughout Reconstruction and Jim Crowism, taxing America’s dream of equality for all people, especially those of African descent. Not surprisingly, the challenges and issues that race triggered in the broader society were mirrored in the Seventh-day Adventist Church as it struggled to respond meaningfully to the biblical call to embrace all humankind.

INTO THE NEW CENTURY

As the twentieth century dawned, Adventist Church leaders established another layer in the organizational structure of the denomination called unions. Intended to ward off Jerusalem centers that too often contribute to, if not result in, autocratic leadership, union conferences were followed in 1922 by world divisions of the General Conference. Yet the organizational issue that towered in significance in America, in the early twentieth century, was not the lack of servant leaders in the church, but the race issue. People of African descent continued to struggle for full acceptance in the denomination, their faithfulness to Adventism notwithstanding.

Histories of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

have not yet adequately noted the African American experience in Adventism. Though that experience and story are not always rosy, they still need to be told. If nothing else, they are instructive and should contribute to crucial conversations that, hopefully, will contribute to transformation and growth.

Among the outstanding Black Adventist leaders in North America in the early twentieth century was James Kemuel Humphrey, whose story is not well known in spite of the key role he played in the establishment of regional conferences in the North American Division. Yet Humphrey’s life and legacy provide a window into early-twentieth-century Adventist history and form a link that is crucial to Adventism’s unique self-understanding and journey in dealing with the issue of race.¹

READY BIBLE STUDENT, READY CHURCH LEADER

James K. Humphrey was a Jamaican national who stopped in New York City on his way to visit Africa from the West Indies. Humphrey stumbled upon an evangelistic series in Brooklyn, New York, one day, and was struck by the simplicity and force of what he heard. Though he was a Baptist minister, he immediately embraced the Seventh-day Adventist message, aborting his trip to Africa as a result.

Humphrey was tapped to lead the small group that resulted from the evangelistic series and, in large part because of his leadership skills, was a standout among the ministers in the Greater New York Conference by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. He was appointed to the executive committee of the Negro Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 1909, and as a delegate from the Atlantic Union to the General Conference Session in 1913. Humphrey conducted several tent crusades throughout the 1910s, and the result was that by 1920 First Harlem, which Humphrey was pastoring, boasted a membership of 600.

By the end of 1922 there were four African American congregations in the Greater New York Conference, all under Humphrey’s supervision. First Harlem grew so exponentially that it spawned Harlem Number Two by the middle of the “Roaring Twenties.” On every hand and by every measure, James Kemuel Humphrey was a minister of rare ability whose giftedness was recognized and appreciated by his peers and denominational leaders. His counsel was sought and embraced for its logic and depth.



J. K. Humphrey in the early 1930's



Delegates gather for a Sabbath Day Adventists General Conference Session in 1946.

His epochal ministerial tenure was not without its challenges. The pastor was prone to share his physical struggles and, on a couple occasions, petitioned church administrators to be relocated from New York City. Denied both times, Humphrey made it clear that he was struggling with the race issue and that it was a thorn in his side. As early as 1905 he had been lobbied by an African American minister who was contemplating severing ties with the denomination to join him. In spite of Humphrey's unhappiness with the state of race relations in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, he refused to break with the denomination at that time, or for several years thereafter,² claiming that Adventism was God's organized plan to bring the message of salvation to the whole world.

Humphrey chose to share the information about being asked to join another African American minister in breaking from Adventism during a sermon he preached at the General Conference Session in 1922. Entitled "The Divine Program," the sermon was more gripping personal testimony than biblical exposition of 1 Peter 5:10 (God will help after you've suffered for a while). Humphrey bemoaned the independent church movement, asserting that those who severed ties with the established church were, almost exclusively, disaffected recalcitrants out to make a name for themselves. He vowed to remain faithful to the Adventist denomination, saying that, in the end, Jesus Christ was fundamentally more significant than any organization or personality. His own salvation was of paramount importance to him, as was evangelizing everybody whom God had entrusted to his care.

Throughout the 1920s Humphrey's commitment and dedication to Adventism held firm. Serving in Harlem was both invigorating and motivating. Har-

lem was in its heyday as the Black capital of the United States. Located on the northern tip of Manhattan, Harlem had evolved from being a sleepy village to being the locus for the Black cultural awakening known as the Harlem Renaissance. The area attracted Blacks from the South as well as from the West Indies and was home to just about every social and political Black organization in the country.

Humphrey was among the first wave of immigrants who came to New York City from the West Indies. That population started coming in significant numbers around 1900 and continued to do so until the nation's immigration laws changed in 1924. The complex web of likes and dislikes that initially characterized the relationships of West Indian immigrants and Blacks born in the United States quickly dissolved in the face of their unified social vision.

As the "Roaring Twenties" neared their end, the First Harlem Adventist Church, which Humphrey was leading, was the largest Adventist congregation in New York City and one of the largest in the United States. Humphrey's frustration with race relations in the denomination was increasing, though, and would soon reach a breaking point.

BREAKING POINT

In 1928 William H. Green, a brilliant Black lawyer from Detroit who had led the Negro Department for the previous decade, passed away. Humphrey attended Green's funeral, presided over by General Conference president W. A. Spicer, who delivered the eulogy. Humphrey was one of three individuals who authored Green's obituary. Green's death created an opening in Black church leadership, which Black church leaders sought to fill by calling for the creation of regional conferences, a concept that had been

mentioned and advanced years earlier by Charles H. Kinney, the “Father of Black Adventism.”

Black church leaders believed that the Negro Department of the General Conference was largely ineffective and that regional conferences would be infinitely more effective in delivering on the mission to reach people of color. The call for the establishment of regional conferences met with emphatic resistance and was voted down by the 18-member special committee impaneled to consider the request. Humphrey was one of the committee’s six Black members, who were particularly chagrined when they were admonished never to raise the issue of regional conferences again.³

Shortly thereafter, Humphrey began to promote an independent business venture among the members of his Harlem congregation. The venture, called the Utopia Park project, would be a commune located outside of New York City where African Americans would experience a measure of self-determination in the pursuit of Adventism’s wholistic mission.⁴

When church leaders got wind of the project, they sought to engage Humphrey in conversation about it. A flurry of written correspondence was exchanged, and Humphrey was invited and encouraged to personally share with the executive committees of the Greater New York Conference and Atlantic Union the details of his plans. He rebuffed church leadership, and in January 1930 his ministerial credentials were revoked and his congregation, which voted 595 to 5 in support of him, was expelled from the sisterhood of churches of the Greater New York Conference.

His break with the Seventh-day Adventist Church final and irrevocable, Humphrey established a Black, independent religious organization called the United Sabbath Day Adventists, which flourished for a while in North America and in parts of the West Indies before disintegrating around the end of the twentieth century. Humphrey himself gave up leadership of the organization in 1947, five years before his death, and his last days are shrouded in uncertainty, conjecture, and suspicion. That he became legally blind toward the end of his life is almost certain.

Unable to reconcile Christianity’s emphasis on love and inclusion with what he considered the discriminatory practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Humphrey concluded that the time was ripe for African Americans to establish their own organizations. Humphrey did not have any doctrinal

differences with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. In fact, United Sabbath Day Adventists continued to mirror Adventism in how they understood mission and engaged in ministry. They studied the Sabbath School lessons [*Adult Bible Study Guides*] used by Seventh-day Adventists and structured their denomination as Seventh-day Adventists do. As Humphrey would tell it, he founded the United Sabbath Day Adventists because of the treatment people of color experienced in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Doctrinally, Humphrey was a Seventh-day Adventist to the end.

HIS LEGACY

Not many Seventh-day Adventists are familiar with James Kemuel Humphrey or the denomination he founded, and even among the few who know this episode of our church’s history there is uncertainty about Humphrey’s life and legacy. Yet James K. Humphrey and the United Sabbath Day Adventists form a critical link in the history of race relations in the Adventist Church. His bold break was the most noteworthy of those by prominent black leaders who severed ties with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the early twentieth century over the treatment of Blacks.⁵ Humphrey was viewed by those who broke with him and supported him as a courageous pioneer, and many contend that the true beneficiaries of Humphrey’s split with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination are African Americans who subsequently joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁶ Humphrey’s break, as well as others, may have created a barrier to winning Blacks to Adventism. But it did not last.⁷ 🍌

¹R. Clifford Jones, “James Kemuel Humphrey and the Emergence of the United Sabbath Day Adventists,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 41, no. 2 (2003): 256-259.

²Douglas Morgan, *Change Agents: The Lay Movement That Challenged the System and Turned Adventism Toward Racial Justice* (West Village, Calif.: Oak & Acorn, 2020), p. 134.

³Calvin B. Rock, *Protest and Progress: Black Seventh-day Adventist Leadership and the Push for Parity* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2018), p. 33.

⁴Joe Mesar and Tom Dybdahl, “The Utopia Park Affair and the Rise of Northern Black Adventists,” *Adventist Heritage*, January 1974, pp. 34-41, 53, 54.

⁵Rock, pp. 57-66.

⁶R. Clifford Jones, “Utopia Park, Utopian Church: A Critical Examination of James K. Humphrey and the United Sabbath Day Adventists, 1930-2000,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 43, no. 1 (2005): 77-90.

⁷Morgan, p. 144.

R. Clifford Jones, dean of Oakwood University’s School of Theology, is author of *James K. Humphrey and the Sabbath-Day Adventists*, available from University Press of Mississippi.

*Insights into and from
Matthew 27:27-31*

“The King of the Jews!”

MOCKERY

King of the Jews?

Hearing the charge sparks a caustic brew of emotions for Pilate’s soldiers. Auxiliary troops recruited from the area’s non-Jewish inhabitants, they possess a deep-seated hatred for the Jews.¹ The appearance of this criminal allows them to act out their disdain.

The whole cohort, 600 soldiers perhaps, parades Jesus into the courtyard of the governor’s headquarters to conduct their racist sport away from prying eyes. A self-appointed ringleader requisitions a few props while he supervises preparation of “the King” for a mock coronation. Stripping the Prisoner, they seat Him with simulated pomp on a “throne,” a rough chair procured

from some dark corner. A soldier contributes his worn, red soldier’s cape as rustic imitation of royal attire. With some pagentry a duo of soldiers wrap the ragged mantle around the recently flogged and bloodied Prisoner, investing the King. Catching the cadence of the proceedings, others add their cheering, jeering voices to the mockery.

Proper coronation requires a crown and scepter. Helpers appear with a hastily woven circlet of thorn branches. The ringleader raises the thorny crown for all to see and crashes it down on the Prisoner’s head. Then comes the scepter, a plain, old stick thrust into the right hand of this faux King of the Jews. The soldiers now offer their feigned adulation in raucous volume, their jeers amplified off the stony courtyard. A phony robe. A phony crown. A phony scep-

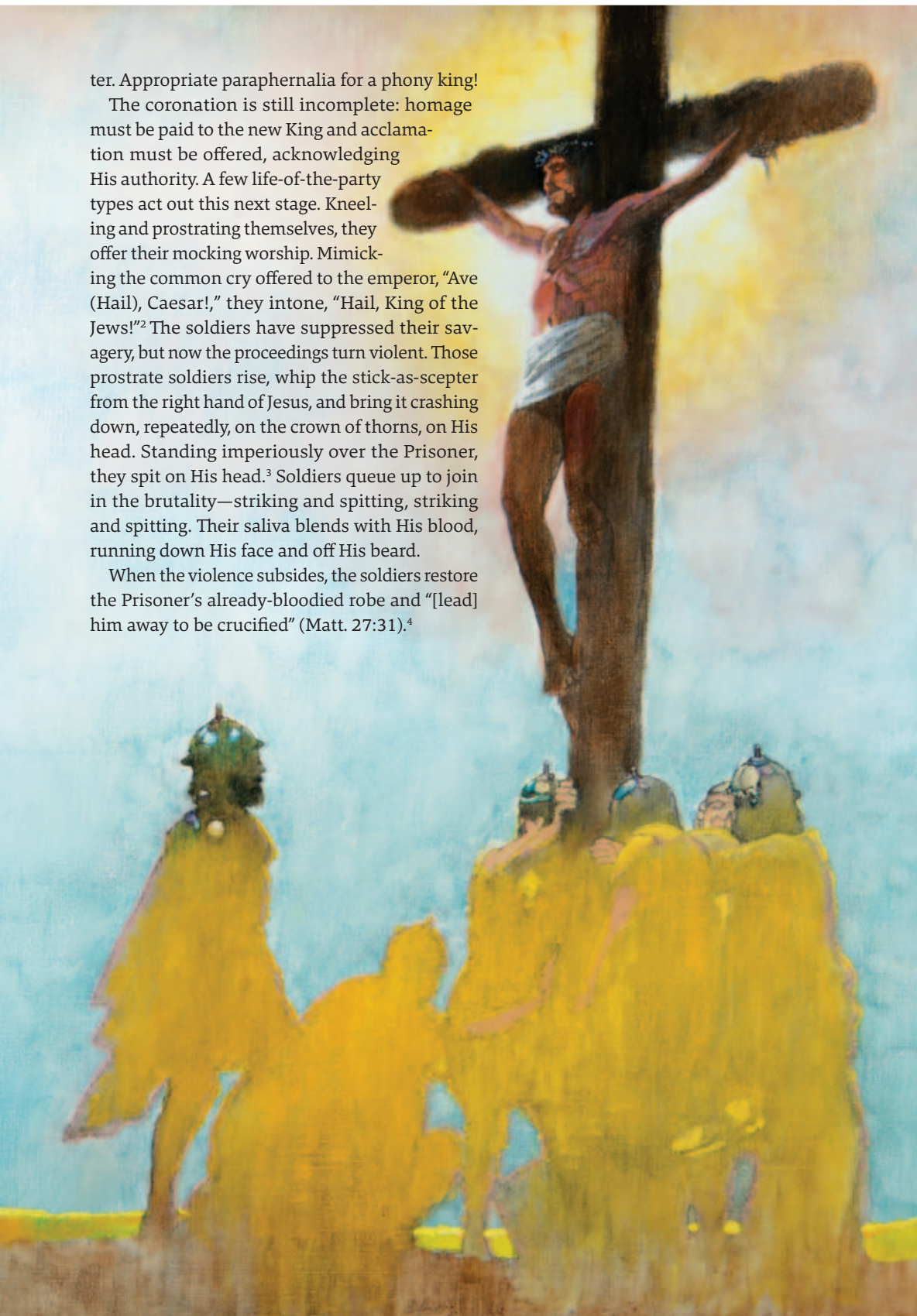
JOHN K. MCVAY

MOCKERY, EXALTATION, AND READING THE NEWS

ter. Appropriate paraphernalia for a phony king!

The coronation is still incomplete: homage must be paid to the new King and acclamation must be offered, acknowledging His authority. A few life-of-the-party types act out this next stage. Kneeling and prostrating themselves, they offer their mocking worship. Mimicking the common cry offered to the emperor, "Ave (Hail), Caesar!," they intone, "Hail, King of the Jews!"² The soldiers have suppressed their savagery, but now the proceedings turn violent. Those prostrate soldiers rise, whip the stick-as-scepter from the right hand of Jesus, and bring it crashing down, repeatedly, on the crown of thorns, on His head. Standing imperiously over the Prisoner, they spit on His head.³ Soldiers queue up to join in the brutality—striking and spitting, striking and spitting. Their saliva blends with His blood, running down His face and off His beard.

When the violence subsides, the soldiers restore the Prisoner's already-bloodied robe and "[lead] him away to be crucified" (Matt. 27:31).⁴



This was no phony King, nor merely an earthly one.

MATTHEW'S CODE

Matthew 27:27-31 is about Roman soldiers mocking and abusing a would-be king, a mock coronation, a degradation ritual.⁵ While Matthew means us to read the story that way, he has also skillfully encoded another story, using dramatic irony, which occurs when characters act and speak in ways they do not understand, personifying truths of which they know nothing.⁶ Matthew's readers know more than the characters in his story. They can crack his code.

Matthew's ironic, coded story echoes both Jesus' pre-crucifixion mockery and unimaginable jubilation following His resurrection. Matthew trains his readers to decode this other story, inviting them to attend to four embedded clues:

Clue 1: Jesus is the King of the Jews. Matthew shared this clue from the start: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David . . ." (Matt. 1:1). Kingship is hereditary, and Jesus is the Son of the greatest of all the kings of Israel. Jesus is not just a king of the Jews, but *the* King of the Jews, the new David, born in David's city, Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1). The question "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?" (verse 2) rattles Herod the Great, who thinks *he* is the real king of the Jews (verse 3). When Pilate asks Jesus: "Are you the King of the Jews?" (Matt. 27:11), we readers know the answer. We know Matthew's code.

Clue 2: Jesus is far more than the King of the Jews. For Matthew, Jesus' domain extends far beyond a small, troublesome Roman province.

Jesus has announced, "All things have been handed over to me by my Father" (Matt. 11:27). In the parable of the final judgment (Matt. 25:31-46), the royal Son of man presides from His "glorious throne" with "all the nations" gathered before Him. Jesus asks the sword-wielding Peter, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father" for all the forces I could need? (Matt. 26:53). A cohort of 600 soldiers mocks Jesus. Jesus can request 12 legions, 72,000 angels.

When the high priest demands of Jesus an oath that "you are the Christ, the Son of God," Jesus, drawing on the imagery of Daniel 7:13, 14, replies, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64). Jesus is far more than the King of the Jews.

Clue 3: The emperor does have clothes. In his brief story, Matthew portrays the soldiers stripping Jesus (Matt. 27:28), clothing Him in scarlet (verse 28), adding the cruel crown and scepter-like stick to His uniform (verse 29), stripping off the scarlet and re-dressing Him in His own robe (verse 31).⁷ Matthew's readers would understand this elaborate clothing ritual through an element of shared cultural understanding.

Within the Roman emperor's household was an organization called the *thesaurus*, a storehouse not for words, but for clothes. The *thesaurus* supervised the manufacture and care of the emperor's clothing and the *cubicularii*, his valets who dressed him.⁸ The soldiers' attentiveness to the dress of Jesus would evoke for Matthew's readers the role of the imperial valets.

Clue 4: Kings are anointed. Ancient coronations included steps visible in Matthew's story. A new king is: (1) *invested* in royal robes: note the scarlet robe (verse 28); (2) *crowned*: note the thorny crown (verse 29); (3) *authorized*: note the scepter—the "reed in his right hand" (verse 29); (4) *adored*: note the "kneeling before him" (verse 29); (5) *acclaimed*: note the announcement, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (verse 29).

The Old Testament adds: (6) *anointed* with oil.⁹ Both the Hebrew "Messiah" and the Greek "Christ" mean "the anointed One." In Matthew, Jesus is called "Christ" or "the Christ" 16 times. Invested. Crowned. Authorized. Adored. Acclaimed. *Anointed.*

Summarizing Matthew's clues: (1) Jesus is *the* King of the Jews; (2) Jesus is far more than the King of the Jews; (3) the emperor does have clothes; and (4) kings are anointed.

And what of Matthew's second story?

EXALTATION

"*King of the Jews?*" Enacting a fake coronation, the soldiers have no idea that the Prisoner has predicted that the chief priests and scribes would

“condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked” (Matt. 20:18, 19).

They remove the prisoner’s bloody robe, unknowingly playing the role of imperial valets, serving their emperor. They mockingly invest the King, wrapping a soldier’s worn, red cape around him, unaware it is a symbol of the exaltation of this Jesus in the courts of heaven.

Could this thorny crown symbolize unbounded authority? Could this stick, forced into the Prisoner’s right hand, symbolize His power over every “rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Eph. 1:21)?

Might their sneering homage, “Hail, King of the Jews!” prophesy universal adoration and acclamation? “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:12). Becoming violent in a rush of unhinged passion, they beat Him with the scepter-like stick and spit on His sacred head, deaf to the ancient prophecy: “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa. 53:3). Nor do they perceive in the mix of spittle and blood dripping off His lacerated face and beard an announcement of His anointing as King of kings and Lord of lords. Matthew’s second story is the story of Jesus’ heavenly coronation following His resurrection. While Matthew 27:27-31 is a story about mockery and abuse, it is also this story: The King of kings is invested, crowned, authorized, adored, acclaimed, and anointed. It is Matthew’s story of the exaltation of Jesus.

Matthew connects his two stories at the cross. The soldiers who mock Jesus also lead Him away and crucify Him. They cast lots for the bloodied robe (Matt. 27:35). They hear His cry, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (verse 46). When He dies, they watch the upheaval of nature and are transformed: “When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’” (verse 54). “This was no phony King, nor merely an earthly one. He was the royal Son of God!”

Listen as Matthew ends his Gospel. In portray-

ing the soldiers’ mockery, Matthew has already told the story of Christ’s exaltation. He need not repeat it in his conclusion. However, he does evoke it. Jesus Himself announces His exaltation: “And Jesus came and said to [the 11 disciples], ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations’” (Matt. 28:18, 19).

Learning to read five verses in Matthew’s Gospel, we also learn to read the news, for there are always two stories at work. On the surface, it may be a tale about a death-dealing plague named COVID-19. However, between the lines, another story resonates. It forgets the death of not one victim. It treasures the tears and measures the pain. It ignores nothing. It supersedes everything. It is a story that echoes in an empty tomb. It looks upward, tracing the trajectory of Jesus. It exults in Jesus’ declaration, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (verse 18). Matthew’s double story presents this great challenge of Christian discipleship: To perceive in every story the narrative of the risen, ascended, and exalted Jesus. Then, to live into *that* story. 🍀

¹See, for example, Ulrich Luz, *Matthew*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), vol. 3, p. 513.

²See, for example, Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), vol. 1, p. 1031.

³Matthew 26:66-68 mentions spitting in the face, evoking the language of Isaiah 50:6 and making for interesting comparison with Matthew 27:30, where the only portion of the body mentioned is the head.

⁴Bible quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁵For “degradation ritual” see William G. Johnsson, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Message and Passion* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute/Review and Herald, 2015), p. 155; Harold Garfinkel, “Conditions of Successful Degradation Ceremonies,” *American Journal of Sociology* 61, no. 5 (March 1956): 420-424.

⁶See James L. Resseguie, “A Glossary of New Testament Narrative Criticism With Illustrations,” *Religions* 10, no. 3 (2019): 217, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10030217>.

⁷Cf. Mark 15:16-20, which lacks the initial undressing of Jesus and the stick scepter.

⁸Kenneth D. Matthews, “The Imperial Wardrobe of Ancient Rome,” *Expedition* (Spring 1970): 2-13. Inferences about the emperor’s household are also drawn from descriptions of the house of Livia, the wife of Augustus. See Susan Treggiari, “Jobs in the Household of Livia,” *Papers of the British School at Rome* 43 (1975): 48-77.

⁹Ranko Stefanovic argues that in the Old Testament, “the rite of anointing” was a final, “essential element of the coronation ritual (cf. 2 Sam. 2:4; 5:3; 1 Kings 1:35, 39; 2 Kings 23:30)” (*Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation*, 2nd ed. [Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2009], p. 166).

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SCAN ME



PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

ADVENTIST HEALTH MESSAGE

Ridiculous or serious?

Q: I see all kinds of people sick and dying from COVID-19, no matter what we do to try to prevent its spread. But it seems that Adventists respond just by saying stuff to make their “ridiculous health message” seem relevant.

A: We pray that our response will be useful for anyone who may have similar queries or who would like to have objective affirmation of their belief.

Humans are continuously learning, and the yardsticks used to measure what constitutes sound health practices change to accommodate new knowledge. The Adventist health message, as preached in the early years, was accepted, not through appeals to science, but rather to intelligent trust that both the message and the messenger were inspired by God.

While Adventists have compared favorably to others in North America, Europe, Asia, South America, and Australasia regarding their health message, we know of no study directly comparing Adventists to others concerning COVID-19. We further acknowledge the ethical and practical difficulties in conducting such research. Nonetheless, some benefits have already been shown.

For instance, spiritual “groundedness” correlates well with resiliency. Adequate, restful sleep confers health advantages across the board. Appropriate hydration, likewise, is intuitively generally helpful. Robust social networks have salutary effects in a wide variety of life challenges. And, of course, the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other noxious substances has not shown benefit to health or life under any circumstances. But what does modern science say about diet, exercise, and sunshine in the context of COVID-19?

Independent researchers have specifically found during this COVID-19 pandemic that:

Diet matters. In six countries plant-based or pescatarian diets were associated with lower risk of moderate to severe COVID-19 and may be con-

sidered for protection against severe COVID-19.¹ We recommend a balanced plant-based diet as the eating pattern of choice as part of a healthy lifestyle.

Exercise makes a difference. Regular exercise strongly correlated with lower severe COVID-19 risk among infected adults.² We recommend this as part of one’s regular lifestyle.

Sunlight exposure has a beneficial effect. Sunnier areas are associated with fewer deaths from COVID-19.³ Sunshine exposure limits the spread of COVID-19 by making the virus unstable in the aerosols (from sneezing/coughing) and may also help to inactivate virus particles in the environment.⁴ Additionally, sunlight exposure, latitude, and vitamin D status are linked to COVID-19 incidence, fatality, and recovery rates. We caution against overexposure to sunlight because of potential health effects on the skin, eyes, and immune system. We advocate prudent, appropriate exposure and vitamin D supplementation if blood levels are not adequate and sun exposure is not feasible.

We encourage you to prayerfully adopt the health message as one of God’s gifts of grace to humankind and as something “serious” rather than “ridiculous.” We also recommend careful, responsible immunization in consultation with your health-care provider.

We are not saved by health habits, but we ignore or despise prudent counsel to our own detriment. ❖


¹ *British Medical Journal (BMJ) Nutrition, Prevention & Health*, 2021, 4, doi: 10.1136/bmjnp-2021-000272.

² *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, published online first, Apr. 13, 2021, doi: 10.1136/bjsports-2021-104080.

³ *British Journal of Dermatology*, 2021, doi: 10.1111/bjd.20093.

⁴ *Annals of Medicine and Surgery* 66 (2021): 102419, ISSN 2049-0801, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amsu.2021.102419>.

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IN SEARCH OF THE LOST SHEEP

*Reclaiming former and
inactive members*

DAN SERNS

Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10).

How tragic! Paul’s close friend and fellow worker (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24) abandoned Paul at the time Paul needed him most. Not only that, Demas abandoned the message and mission of Jesus.

Sometimes we’ll lose people to the church family permanently, no matter how hard we try to keep or reclaim them. Jesus lost Judas (Matt. 10:4). The apostle John said some never really were part of the church family (1 John 2:19). Some must receive constructive biblical church discipline¹ with the hope they will repent and return.

But the best biblical models for reclaiming are probably found in Luke 15:

1 The Lost Sheep (verses 1-7). The sheep wandered away. It was lost. It was scared. It didn’t know what to do. It would have died if the shepherd had not gone looking for it. Some people wander away from Jesus and/or the church family. They don’t know how to find their way back. The church family must go looking for them, help them, love them, and carry them back home. It’s never enough to say, “They know where we are. They can come back whenever they want.”

2 The Lost Coin (verses 8-10). The coin was lost in the house. It didn’t know it was lost. The



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It's never enough to say, "[Inactive members] know where we are. They can come back whenever they want."

only way it could be found was for the lamp (the Bible; see Ps. 119:105) to be lit and the Holy Spirit's cleaning to start (see John 16:7-11). Some people who attend church services regularly—both members and leaders—are actually lost, but they won't realize it until the truth as taught in the Bible is clearly taught and the Holy Spirit is allowed to transform their lives.

3 The Lost Son(s) (verses 11-32). The younger son hated living at home, so he left, went to a far country, and wasted his life and resources. He was lost. He knew the way home, but once he "came to himself" (verse 17), he didn't think he would be welcomed if he came home. He was right—but also wrong. His father ran to welcome him. His older brother, the other son, did not welcome him.

There are people who have misunderstood or hated the rules of God and have left the church and messed up their lives. They know where the church building is and when the services are held, but they aren't sure whether they'll be welcomed if they come back. Those who have experienced the love of the Father God will welcome them. Those who haven't won't welcome them back.

Here are the methods that I, as a pastor and church leader, have used in reclaiming people who are lost sheep, lost coins, or lost sons (both types).

1 Strengthen the church family by putting in place healthy systems for:

a. Preaching. Since we in my church enjoy a variety of speakers, often developing teams of new and young preachers, we make sure that each speaker has healthy attitudes; that the messages are Christ-centered, Bible-based, practical, have a call to action, and are simple but powerful.

b. Mentoring relationships. The church leaders need to be developed as mentors for group leaders, starting in huddles at church board meetings. As new groups are added, the group leaders are mentored, and then they mentor those in their groups.

c. Entry/reentry into the church family. If we bring people into the church family in a healthy way, clearly identifying what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist and mentoring them after membership, they are far more likely to remain in the church and to become involved in the mission Jesus gave us.

2 Distribute spiritual growth packets. Here's what worked for us and why.

Why give packets?

- It helps member families strengthen their relationship with the Lord.
- It helps connect all member families whether attending or not. It's an opportunity to contact inactive members in a friendly, encouraging way, listening to their stories and pointing them to Jesus while inviting them to reconnect with other believers.
- It helps us connect with guests.
- The packets are especially helpful when the resources are coordinated with the preaching theme(s).

To whom do you give packets?

- Every family on the church membership list.
- Guests.



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How often and how do you give out packets?

- a. At least once a year, but preferably quarterly.
- b. Leave packets in the lobby for two weeks so people can pick up their own packet and also take some to distribute to others (usually organized alphabetically).
- c. During the following two weeks, organize packets by geography and ask Sabbath School class members to distribute them. Mail to out-of-towners.
- d. Have extra packets for guests. Ask them to fill out an information card and exchange it for a spiritual growth packet.
- e. Have extra missionary books available in stacks of five for people to use to start a mission group.

What should be included in the packet?

- a. Missionary book on same theme as sermons that quarter.
- b. Letter from pastor/elder that includes positive updates.
- c. Bible reading bookmarks.
- d. Response card (to help out-of-towners and inactive members connect).
- e. Item from church school.
- f. Stewardship commitment card and tithe and offering envelope.

3 Add groups, especially ministry, mission, and Sabbath School groups. Each group becomes a landing place for new and reclaimed members.²

GAYLE'S STORY


Gayle had grown up in an Adventist home, and when she graduated from an Adventist academy, she also “graduated” from the church. For 26 years she chased her dreams and watched her relationships crumble as her addictions destroyed her life. She moved to another state and enrolled her

children in the Adventist church school. It was five years before she had the courage to set foot inside the church building next door.

On the Sabbath she stopped at the church, she found a warm welcome and friendly people. Within six months she was baptized, along with her husband, who was happy to see the change in her. She discovered that a Sabbath School group was just starting a ministry to the homeless in a park, many of whom had struggles with addictions. She knew she could help because she’d been through some of the same struggles they were going through. As the ministry became consistent, inactive members started showing up at the park to help. Some said, “This is what the church is supposed to be doing. Count us in.” Some of the homeless were baptized—including Wally,³ the worst alcoholic in the area—and became powerful witnesses throughout the city.

Today Gayle is serving on the staff of an Adventist conference, after having served with her husband as a volunteer Bible worker, volunteer evangelist, Bible worker trainer, church planter, and prayer coordinator.

There are thousands of other Gayles wanting to come home, hoping for a warm welcome. There are thousands of Wallys, lost and waiting for someone to lead them home. And there are thousands of people “in church” waiting to hear the Adventist message clearly and to become involved in mission.

What is your first step in reclaiming them? 

¹See more at <https://www.adventistreview.org/2008-1511-8>.

²For more information and guidelines on implementing these recommendations, contact the department of evangelism, Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Alvarado, Texas

³Read Wally's story at <https://www.adventistreview.org/2008-1523-28>.

Dan Serns is director of evangelism for the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Alvarado, Texas.

HIS Impact On Me



Soraya

Former student
Holbrook Indian School (HIS)



Liked by **HolbrookIndianSchool**

10/6/18 is when my sisters and I got baptized. It's the best decision I've ever made. I went to an amazing school, met a lot of amazing people, went to church, had bible studies, sang songs, went to camp, rode horses, went bike riding, participated in sports and in Native festivities.

This was all because God lead my mama to Holbrook Indian School (HIS). My decision to attend HIS helped me so much. I'm not embarrassed to say how much I rock with God because He's done so much for me that I can't explain. God has plans. I don't know what they are but I trust Him. --Soraya via Instagram

Soraya is a singular example of the experience that many of our students at HIS have. Help other Native American children and youth experience God's amazing love by making a gift to Holbrook Indian School today at [HolbrookIndianSchool.org](https://www.holbrookindianschool.org)



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NOT JUST ANOTHER CALL

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Pointing people to Christ

“And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled’” (Luke 14:23, ESV).¹

The clock’s pointers were reaching 5:30 p.m. when the last call of the day came straight to my queue.

Why me? I thought, a little bit annoyed.

QUITTING TIME? NOT YET

It had been a long, busy day. Feeling exhausted and ready to call it quits for the day, I had to wonder why some people wait to the very end of the day to get things accomplished.

I imagined myself standing somewhere. The background music that had been playing all day long stopped and, over a speaker that sounded 30 percent louder than normal, I recognized my own voice saying:

“Attention, shoppers, our store will be closing in five minutes. Please take the time to

make your final selections and proceed to the registers so our associates can enjoy the evening with their families. Thank you for shopping here.”

But of course, I was not a clerk in a store. I was a customer service representative for a Seventh-day Adventist publishing house, and I needed to jump back into reality.

Modulating my voice to sound professional, I picked up the phone and answered: “Good afternoon. Pacific Press. How may I help you?”

A woman’s voice on the other end of the line immediately said: “*Buenas tardes. ¿Me escucha?*”

I opened my mouth to say “Yes, I can hear you,” but before I could even take my next breath, the woman was already pouring out her soul on my left ear.

Suddenly, and in total astonishment, I remembered having prayed for this woman before.

Not for a moment did she ever ask if I spoke her language or understood what she was saying. She just assumed I did. And I followed along. **Help!**

“I’m not a Seventh-day Adventist,” she said, “but I know we are living in dire times, and I worry something very bad is about to happen.”

My heart stopped. I could hear real fear in this woman’s voice, and something told me this wasn’t going to be the typical customer call I was expecting.

Indeed, questions kept coming. The need for a personal Savior was on the tip of this woman’s tongue.

“What can I do?” she asked. “What’s going to happen in our world?”

The conversation immediately became more personal, expressions turned genuine, and a sense of bonding formed between this woman and me as we felt more open to talking in depth about the subject.

“Are my children going to be saved?” she asked at one point during our conversation. There was great concern in her voice, and it felt as if all of a sudden her worries were my very own worries and her cry my own cry before the Lord. Bringing others to Christ is like learning a whole new language and the culture that goes along with it. And I understood her: completely and deeply.

She told me her name was Maria. They had recently moved to Nampa from Arizona, and the transition had been challenging for her and her family. Violence, natural disasters, and the heavy impact of a global pandemic: all of these fed her uncertainty and her fears, but someone had been sending her *El Centinela*, and she desperately wanted to know more about that awe-inspiring God the magazine talked about.

As she was sharing these things with me, a light switched on in my mind: Suddenly, and in total astonishment, I remembered having prayed for this woman before—just a few months prior, while renewing her subscription to *El Centinela*, sponsored by a church in Arizona. I knew right there and then that the Lord had planned for me to answer Maria’s call that evening for a very special reason. I felt His beautiful presence all around me in strong waves of empathy and understanding.

If Maria felt comfortable telling me her heartfelt story, I would not stop shedding light on why I’m passionate about Christ’s second return.

THE END?

After our conversation ended, I autographed one of my books, *Friends of Jesus*, and placed a little note inside its covers with the name and address of our Spanish church in Nampa. I mailed the book to Maria, and left everything in God’s hands.

I had already forgotten all about the incident with Maria when one morning a few months later my husband received a call from one of the elders of the Nampa Spanish Adventist Church, to share the good news.

Maria and some other members of her family had been baptized that previous Sabbath, and he personally wanted to say “Thank you!” I played only a small part in Maria’s journey as a disciple of Christ. Discipleship takes a village—a dedicated church in Arizona, a magazine and the people who share the gospel through its pages, and a publishing house employee.

God does not call the equipped—He equips the called; and we all have a message to share with the world. The Bible makes it clear that God has called every believer to share the good news. “Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ” (Eph. 1:4, GNT).² What a privilege it is to be an ambassador for Christ and represent the King of kings to those we come in contact with. Let us build bridges, not walls, with our words, speaking a language the heart can understand.

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²Texts credited to GNT are from the *Holy Bible, Good News Translation*, second edition. Copyright © 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Olga Valdivia is a customer service representative at Pacific Press Publishing Association in Idaho, United States.

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SINAI SUNRISE

We wake up at 2:30 a.m.—my daughter and I—more eagerly than we’ve ever woken up at 2:30 a.m. This is the morning we’ve waited for! We’re climbing Mount Sinai at sunrise.

At 17, Summer knows I’m not the mountain climber she is. “I’m proud of you, Dad,” she says.

“This one’s different,” I tell her. “It’s biblical.”

We both laugh.

We attach our headlamps and head out, joining four dozen travelers on our Egypt study tour. Our group is all ages—8 to 80—just the way I like it: a traveling family, like the Israelites themselves.

Fortunately, we have ready help for the first two hours of our climb. Fifty camels sit steaming in the darkness at the base of the mount, sizing us up along with their Bedouin owners.

The always-awkward experience of mounting a camel is exceeded only by the camel’s sudden rise—a desert roller coaster: a startling dip, and then . . . stateliness. One by one I hear the gasps—then delighted laughter—of our travelers. (Just wait till the camel drops to its knees again!)

In the darkness we begin the ascent, and I let the tranquility wash over me, so grateful to rejuvenate, reflect, and watch the story of redemption unfold just a little bit more.

Bathed in fresh light, Mount Sinai is both harrowing and comforting. I keep returning to that word “bulwarks.” “Shut in by the bulwarks of the mountains, Moses was alone with God.”¹ To be climbing the very mount where Moses met Yahweh! It overwhelms me until I remember the words: “You [plural] will be my treasured possession,” “a kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:5, 6,

NIV). This was His plan all along: you and me entering directly into His presence, through the flesh veil of Christ, by the blood cover of Christ.

Jewish tradition holds that, right here, Yahweh spoke the Ten Commandments—more accurately, the Ten Words (*devarim*)—in every language on earth: meaning these Ten Words were for all peoples. (In this way, the Ten Words are distinguished from the 613 commandments.)

If the Ten Words were for everyone, I reason, then that includes the Egyptians too. Indeed, as the second-most-mentioned place in Scripture (700 times from Genesis to Revelation), Egypt often comes off as the enemy of God’s people. But in God’s eyes, the Egyptians have always been His people. “So the Lord will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord on that day” (Isa. 19:21, NASB).²

And the Lord personally introduced Himself to Egypt—when He traveled here as a toddler: Jesus in the shadow of the pyramids. Three decades later Egyptian God-fearers traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, which, ironically, celebrated the giving of the Ten Words at Sinai. At that final Pentecost, 50 days after the final Passover, the Egyptians heard not Ten Words, but only one: Jesus. And today, 10 in 100 Egyptians believe.

My realizations will grow with time. So will Summer’s, and those of the four dozen others experiencing Sinai at sunrise. For now, it’s time to let our animals rest and hike the final hour to the summit, together with my daughter and her Father. 🦋

¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), pp. 248-251.

² Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

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THE LIFE
OF FAITH
ANDY
NASH



IN GOD’S EYES THE
EGYPTIANS HAVE
ALWAYS BEEN HIS
PEOPLE.

AMAZING JESUS

*What can you do to
make Him proud?*

It was that time of June rituals, especially graduations rituals, taking place all over. . . . Perhaps more than other occasions, because people were coming out of the lockdown, eager to celebrate.

PARENTAL PRIDE

One of the major scenes: proud parents watching their child receive the document that certifies the culmination of another step in their long academic development. Some people are happy for you at graduation time, others may be jealous, and some may even be angry or disappointed (you could have done better). But parents are more than happy. They are proud, amazed, yet not surprised. They always knew their child was capable of doing



this. Their child was always certain to accomplish this feat, even if the child never knew it. Parents always know it. And so there is that unmistakable, amazing look. The same look that appears when a child comes home excited with their new driver's license or the news that they are getting married. You can also see that look in a teacher, a pastor, or a mentor. But none beats the face of a father or mother.

THE CENTURION INTRODUCED

In the New Testament we find in the Gospel of Luke a story of faith that amazes Jesus (7:2-10). It is the story of a Roman centurion. The majority of us know what a Roman was. We even know what a Roman soldier was. But what about a centurion? Who were they, and what did they do?

The Roman centurion was so called because the term means "captain of 100." A Roman centurion was captain over 100 foot soldiers in a legion. Loyal and courageous soldiers could work their way up the ranks, catch the eye of a general through their skill and courage in battle, and thus be named as officers. Their pay amounted to more than 20 times an ordinary soldier's 200-300 denarii per year income, reaching about 5,000 denarii per year. Legions included five senior centurions, who received 10,000 denarii per year, and a chief centurion ("the first javelin"), who earned twice that sum.¹ We do not know how high-ranking a centurion the man in Luke's story was.

We wonder what led to this man finding his way into the Scriptures. References to Roman soldiers in the Bible are often unflattering. What

We find in the Gospel of Luke a story of faith that amazes Jesus.

we do know of this man has more to do with his spiritual testimony, generosity, and faith.

"A centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die" (Luke 7:2).² The first thing we learn about the centurion is that he had a servant whom he "valued highly." The Greek word, *entimos*, was usually not applied to servants. In fact, it comes just short of implying that the centurion loved his servant. The text does not suggest that he was worried about losing property, but that he was genuinely concerned about the well-being of his servant/friend. Luke's text gives us additional insights into his character: he "heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant." The messenger elders argued: "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue" (verses 3-5).

The reader may easily conclude that this man was a trained politician who knew whom to send for a special request and how to state the request. That may have been the case, but there is more here. By the testimony of the Jews, this centurion was very generous, evidenced by his building their synagogue. He loved the nation of Israel. By their standards, Jesus had to help him; he "deserved" it. Today we have not entirely escaped such theology. We still think that we deserve blessings from God based on our performance, academic levels, years in membership to a particular denomination, nationality, etc.

THE CENTURION SPEAKS

We do need to allow the centurion to represent himself, for it tells us something about his faith. As Jesus and the Jews drew close to the centurion's house he sent friends to object: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will

be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it" (verses 6-8). The centurion has corrected the possible assumption implied by the Jews. He does not think himself "worthy" (*hikanos*) of Jesus coming into his house. It is the same sentiment John the Baptist expresses: "after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry" (Matt. 3:11). The centurion has not acted as a skilled politician by sending people who will give a good report about him to Jesus; he does not think that he deserves to present himself to Jesus. If he was going to get something from Jesus, it would be because of mercy and not out of deserving it based on his acts of charity and spiritual devotion.

And there is more. He dares to explain his theological conclusion of the power of Jesus based on the logic of his professional experience. He says, "I have authority because I represent the Roman Empire. I use my words to command. Based on what I know, You represent something greater than the Roman Empire; You represent the kingdom of God. If I, an unworthy, sinful man, have power, You have more. Just say the word; You do not need to come. Just say the word, and my servant will be healed."

And there you have it—words and an attitude that amaze Jesus: "When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him" (Luke 7:9). He turned to the Jewish crowd following him and said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." And needless to say, the centurion's messengers returned to the house to find the servant's health restored (verse 10).

JESUS' PRIDE

Can you see the face of Jesus as He pronounced those words? It is the face of a very proud parent. It is as if Jesus is saying, "I am thrilled that you have exercised such faith; you have honored your Father. He is always longing for His children to act in such a manner. You are capable of expressing even greater faith."

Why do we have this story in the Scriptures? I suggest that it is not only to highlight the logical, evidence-based faith of the centurion. Not only to give us an insight into a characteristic of our

We still think that we deserve blessings from God based on our performance.

God—the fatherly pride that He experiences in response to our faith. This story challenges us to live every day in a manner that amazes God. He wants us to be intentional, to aim high, to amaze God by your faith. You see, we also have evidence. We also can draw our conclusions regarding the power and love of our God. "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible" (Heb. 11:1-3). Creation is the most significant visible evidence of the existence and power of God. It is continuous and unavoidable, and we are all part of it; all, by our existence, an unavoidable element of the most significant evidence of the power of God. We can conclude with the centurion: just "say the word." The God who created everything by His word, things coming into existence as He spoke, is the same God looking to be amazed when we exercise the centurion's trusting faith today.

The world is looking and waiting for this manifestation. God and His world urge us on together: Amaze Jesus. God created you for it. It is a gift He places in everyone (Rom. 12:3). Even if you did not know it, God has always known it. Live faith! Amaze your God. Let Him testify that He is so proud of you! 🍀

¹<https://www.bible-history.com/sketches/ancient/roman-centurion.html>.

² Scripture references are from the New International Version.

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BIBLE SCHOOL

A photograph of a person walking away from the camera down a path lined with large, gnarled trees. The path is covered in green grass and fallen leaves. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an overcast day or early morning/late afternoon. The person is wearing a dark coat and a red hat.

MATERIALISTIC OR SUPERINTENDED CREATION?

Creationists expand maximum effort and energy in apologetic works, demonstrating the validity and even superiority of biblical creationism. In my years of teaching biochemistry and microbiology to undergraduate, graduate, medical, and dental students, I integrated creationism into the curriculum, stressing the sophistication and complexity of biochemical and biological systems. After the main biochemistry course for graduate students concluded, I gave two lectures on the impossibility of life arising spontaneously under any conditions, demonstrating that the very existence of life was a proof for creation.

G. T. JAVOR

CAN CREATIONISM BE MATERIALISTIC?

For 37 years I believed I promoted biblical creationism through my lectures and also the occasional articles I published on the subject. But several years after I retired from teaching, it occurred to me that by dwelling only on what the Creator accomplished originally, I implied that the created world and everything on it were exquisitely sophisticated machines.

My creationist-oriented message was (unintentionally) that although the Lord can be justly credited for our design and origins, our day-to-day existence is governed by the laws of



FRANCESCOCH / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

During my years teaching biochemistry and microbiology, I did not know what to do with the notion that the Lord is continually involved with the routine operation of nature.

to take back his spirit and withdraw his breath, all life would cease, and humanity would turn again to dust” (Job 34:14, 15, NLT). “He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. . . . For in him we live and move and exist” (Acts 17:25-28, NLT).

There are also pointed comments on this subject by Ellen White. “It is supposed that matter is placed in certain relations and left to act from fixed laws with which God Himself cannot interfere; that nature is endowed with certain properties and placed subject to laws, and is then left to itself to obey its laws and perform the work originally commanded. This is false science; there is nothing in the Word of God to sustain it. God does not annul His laws, but He is continually working through them, using them as His instruments. They are not self-working. God is perpetually at work in nature. . . . It is not by an original power inherent in nature that year by year the earth yields its bounties and continues its march around the sun. . . . It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. . . . In God, we live and move and have our being.”²

chemistry and physics. These laws appear to be essentially adequate to explain all physical phenomena. There was no difference between a materialist and me regarding how our world operates in the here and now. Created matter is independent of the Creator. I call such an ideology “materialistic creationism.”

This stance avoids even the appearance of pantheism, the notion that God is in everything. It is supported by everything science has discovered. But is it in harmony with the biblical view of existence?

The biblical references of the Lord’s involvement in the created world are unambiguous. “The Son radiates God’s own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command” (Heb. 1:3, NLT).¹ “If God were

GOD IN THE EVERYDAY OF NATURE

During my years teaching biochemistry and microbiology I did not know what to do with the notion that the Lord is continually involved with the routine operation of nature. In an essay, published in 2000, I wrote: “These and other similar passages in the writings of Ellen White suggest the Lord’s intimate engagement in the operation of our world. But science and scientists are clueless to deal with such a concept. To us matter behaves in a perfectly predictable manner, obeying the fundamental laws of gravity, attractions between positive and negative charges, etc. . . . While it may be suggested that the Lord works precisely through these and other laws of nature, it is a very unsatisfactory solution, because it is not testable. . . . Accepting the Creatorship of the Lord does imply that all matter

proceeded from Him, and that the Lord is aware of every atom in the universe. But it does not necessarily follow that the Lord micromanages the universe through actively superintending every chemical change. I am more comfortable letting the mystery of the nature of the Lord's involvement with our world linger until we enroll in a university on the earth made new."³

Thus, all through my teaching career, I lived with an unresolved tension between the clear statement of the Spirit of Prophecy quoted above, and my inability to integrate it into my understanding of science.

Following my retirement, I had an opportunity to make a presentation on teaching biology from a creationist's perspective. In preparing for it, I revisited my difficulties of the Lord's intimate involvement with the created world in scientific terms. Whereas, until this time I had questioned the need for the Creator to push atoms and molecules around to make chemical reactions happen, I soon focused on the very existence of subatomic particles and the forces that control them. Thinking of the fundamental forces—gravity, electrical charges, strong and weak forces within the atomic nucleus, which undergird the behavior of matter—I asked, "What if all of these manifestations require the continuous expression of the Creator's power?"

SUPERINTENDED CREATIONISM

This concept does not advocate the Lord pushing subatomic particles, atoms, or molecules around to make things happen. Rather, the very existence of matter depends on a continuous input of the Creator's power. This sustaining power is required at the most fundamental levels of existence. I call this "superintended creationism."

If this is not so, then we have a situation in which the created universe is independent of the Creator. Such a construct is not far from the materialistic view of the universe, which posits that matter alone is sufficient to account for everything in existence.

More recently I found another quotation from Ellen White, where the word "superintendent" is connected with the word "Creator":

"Those who have a true knowledge of God will not become so infatuated with the laws of matter or the operations of nature as to overlook or refuse to acknowledge, the continual work of God in nature. Nature is not God, nor was it ever God. . . .



The natural world has, in itself, no power but that which God supplies. . . . *God is the superintendent*, as well as the Creator, of all things. The Divine Being is engaged in upholding the things that He has created. . . . It is through the immediate agency of God that every tiny seed breaks through the earth, and springs into life."⁴

SUPERINTENDED CREATIONISM AFFIRMS:

The eternal Godhead Creator existed from forever, before time, space, and the universe.

Every particle in the universe has been created by God.

Every particle in the universe is sustained by the Creator moment by moment.

Should the Creator withdraw His sustaining power, the universe would cease to exist.

On a personal level, the concept of superintended creation assures us that we are constantly under the care of the Creator. Our very existence shows that we are not forgotten.

The Creator is deliberate in His work. "For He spake, and it was done" (Ps. 33:9, KJV). The apparent chaos and less-than-perfect state of our world and our solar system are consequences of the great controversy and show a degradation by the Creator's original design.

On Sabbaths we may worship the Creator not only for creating and redeeming us but also for sustaining us moment by moment. Superintended creation cements our relationship with our Lord, as we confess that we cannot exist without Him. ▀

¹ Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 8, pp. 259, 260.

³ G. T. Javor, *Biblical Approaches to Biology. Christ in the Classroom: Adventist Approaches to the Integration of Faith and Learning*, comp. A.H.M. Rasi (2000), pp 481-502.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 1, pp. 293, 294. (Italics supplied.)

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CLOSER LOOK



Death Warning in the Garden of Eden

Chris W. Lee, *Death Warning in the Garden of Eden*, FAT 2/115. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. Pp. x + 217. ISBN: 978-3-1615-8858-7. 74,00 € (approx. US\$79), paper; reviewed by Lael Caesar.

Chris W. Lee's volume, titled *Death Warning in the Garden of Eden*, is a revised product of his doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh in 2019. Seven of its chapters trace the history of theological explanations of God's unique, single-verse warning: if you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, *mot tamut*—"you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Lee's study covers the meaning of Genesis 2:17 for the human fate of mortality, the punishments that follow humanity's disobedience, and the varied treatment of Genesis 2:17 through Jewish and Christian biblical history.

Reading Lee's research pushes the conscientious Bible believer toward one more careful look at the Genesis warning, and the whole Bible story of the relation between Genesis 2:17 and mortality. Paul's categorical statement that in Adam all die (1 Cor. 15:22) leaves no room for doubt, but Lee's work invites the reader to know their Scriptures rather

than live with assumptions, e.g., that the text's report of the Fall specifically blames human disobedience. This is a bold claim, deserving of scrutiny.

Lee's point is that the matter of humans' pre-Fall state is not necessarily straightforward. This claim of a biblical quandary, expressed in his questions, reminds one of Jesus' remark that alleged spiritual guides have been known to "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matt. 23:34). His counsel against projecting one's own views onto the biblical text will always be apropos. The Bible student must be careful to know and teach the Scriptures rather than proclaiming their personal impositions as "Thus saith the Lord."

Lee's interpretative balance may yet improve. His respect for textual silence may have gone too far when, according to him, what is said about woman does not apply to the creation of man (Gen. 2:7), since woman appears later (verse 18). The thinking behind that position may deserve its own dissertation. But seeing Genesis 2:7 and 18-25 as linked involves no exaggerated exegetical exercise.

About his main focus, Genesis 2:17, Lee shows that its legalistic setting implies an immediate death penalty regardless of the prior state of the one condemned. The biblical narrative that best makes his argument is the horrible story of King Saul's pronouncement and Doeg's prompt slaughter of 85 priests (1 Sam 22:16ff.).

Many Bible readers may be surprised to hear Lee's position on a variety of topics in Genesis 1-3, particularly the claim that the link between the death warning (Gen. 2:17) and any stated punishment (Gen. 3:16-24) is weak. The directness and specificity of God's speeches to the serpent (Gen. 3:14, 15), the woman (verse 16) and the man (verses 17-19) sound with much more clarity than Lee's discussion suggests.

Notwithstanding its limitations, or perhaps because of them, Lee's analysis will stimulate the thinking, even as the student is compelled to recognize anew, the import of the words of Lee's focused text on the world we and he occupy today, thousands of years from when God spoke them in Eden. ♣

16TH CENTURY PATHBREAKERS

This article reproduces notes the *Adventist Review* printed during its earliest decades on six leaders of the Protestant Reformation. It concludes with an extended comparison of two of the greatest.

JOHN KNOX (1514-1572), foremost leader of the Scottish Reformation.



From vol. 7, no. 8 (Oct. 16, 1855), pp. 64, 65, unassigned note attributed to a correspondent of the *New York Observer*, entitled "Remarkable Special Providences":

"It is said of John Knox, . . . that it was his frequent custom, while in his own house, to sit at the head of a table, with his back to the window. On one evening, however, he would not take his usual seat, and gave a positive command that no one of his family should occupy it. He took another chair in a different part of the room; and shortly afterward a gun was fired, the bullet of which passed through the *favorite* window, grazed the top of his vacant seat, and shattered the candlestick that stood upon his table!"

From vol. 15, no. 5 (Dec. 22, 1859), p. 35, unassigned note, "Prayer":

"The bloody Mary is reported to have said that she was more afraid of John Knox's prayers than of ten thousand of the rebel army."

MARTIN LUTHER (1483-1546), whose biblical discovery of the power and meaning of the cross delivered him from dread of a cruel God, changed his life and altered history.

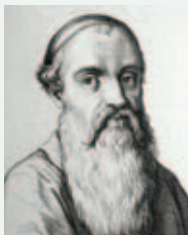


Joseph Clarke, "Fear," vol. 16, no. 6 (June 26, 1860), p. 44:

"He [Luther] had been favored with the best education Europe could afford; but . . . although he sought for the truth as it is in the Word of God, yet he knew not how to obtain it."

"Very happily . . . for the good, Providence had previously prepared a fit person to give to the distressed Luther, such advice as was calculated to set him free [teaching] him to look to God as to a kind father, . . . with faith in Christ, not in self-mortifications and severe penance."

MENNO SIMONS (1496-1561), former Roman Catholic priest; became major proponent of adult baptism and pacifism; his followers formed the Mennonite church.



H. P. Holser, "Russia," vol. 66, no. 24 (June 11, 1889), p. 374, on Simons' followers living in Russia:

"Like the Friends, they are opposed to war, and in consequence of their refusal to do military service, they have suffered many persecutions. . . . They are similar to the Baptists in faith, and practice the ordinance of humility. Having suffered much for the truth's sake, they are favorable to the reception of present truth. The first Sabbathkeepers in Russia were from these and the Baptists."

G. P. Gaede, "A Visit to Russia," vol. 75, no. 39 (Sept. 27, 1898), pp. 621, 622; p. 621; more on Simons' followers:

"These Germans are the followers of Menno Simons, who taught them to be noncombatants, and baptized by sprinkling adults. As the czar wished to increase the value of his land and elevate his subjects, he welcomed these inoffensive people to his domain, granting them all civil and religious liberty, provided they would not proselyte among the native Russians."



WILLIAM TYNDALE (c. 1494-1536), called the true father of the English Bible because of his success in its translation and distribution; executed, and body burned at the stake.



"Facts About the Bible," vol. 12, no. 5 (June 17, 1858), p. 35:

"William Tyndale, in 1526,

printed his English Testament at Antwerp; but those who sold it in England were condemned . . . to ride with their faces to the horses' tails, with papers on their heads, and to throw their books and themselves into the fire at Cheapside. Tyndale himself was strangled and burned. His dying prayer was "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

M. E. Cornell, "Old Translations," vol. 13, no. 24 (May 5, 1859), p. 186:

"Rome thundered death, but Tyndale's dauntless eye

Looked in death's face and smiled, death standing by.

In spite of Rome, for England's faith he stood,
And in the flames he sealed it with his blood."

ULRICH ZWINGLI (1484-1531)—Switzerland's most important Reformer until, and apart from, John Calvin; died in battle against forces resisting his determination to impose the gospel of Christ on all aspects of public and personal life.



Unsigned article, "The Reformation [*continued*]," vol. 61, no. 50 (Dec. 16, 1884), p. 796:

"At first he [Zwingli] had the consent of the bishop of Constance, who assisted him in putting down the sale of indulgences in Switzerland; but a rupture occurred in 1522, when Zwingli attacked the fasts as a human invention."

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564), alternately invited to, expelled from, and invited again to Geneva; eventually remained and ruled until his death; body interred in unmarked grave to avoid the development of cultish veneration.



"Luther and Calvin," vol. 46, no. 11 (Sept. 16, 1875), p. 83 [cites original sources]:

"Luther was the man of the people—Calvin of the divines. Luther was drawn on to greatness in spite of himself—Calvin became great on system, by a holy energy and an intense feeling of duty. The one was bold, abrupt, impetuous—the other, systematic, accurate, severe. Luther struggled much for sound doctrine—Calvin struggled yet more for piety and holy practice. Luther overthrew—Calvin constructed. The German originated deep feeling—the Frenchman elicited profound thinking from men.

" . . . Their diverse mental temperaments are exhibited in their views of Satanic agency. Luther, it is well known, thought, or dreamed, or persuaded himself, that he had frequent personal conflicts with Satan visibly—Calvin approached that awful subject with faith as firm, but with the fancy less fixed, than Luther. In this respect, as in others, the Genevese divine may be deemed the complement of the German. Calvin strove as energetically as Luther; but Luther aroused—Calvin tranquilized. The watchword of the one was war—that of the other, order. . . .

"Their mission and their spirit were one. . . . Hence, though they never saw each other, they never felt as strangers, but entertained a mutual respect, while each expressed his belief according to his particular character." ♣

SAFE AND SOUND

This time three years ago, my husband and I had just returned from taking our first-born west, to college. The whole experience of looking at colleges, essay writing, and applications, selecting a school, and finally dropping our daughter off at her choice, was brand-new. We had fun going on college tours, getting excited about the possibilities, and wondering which campus would be the place God wanted her to be. When we got our answer and prepared for her life far away from us, it was a bittersweet time.

When we finally left her on the evening of move-in day, watching her walk up to her dorm in a strange city thousands of miles from home, it was awful. Parents who know will know. It was divine strength alone that got us on the plane eastbound the next morning, knowing we were leaving a piece of our family behind. But we had one consolation: we had three years with our son before he too would take a similar journey. It all seemed so far away—three whole years. But time is a thief.

The pandemic changed everything for students around the world, from doctoral candidates down to pre-k babies. Instead of completing his junior year of high school as he thought he would, and rolling into a senior year with all the perks of being at the top of the heap on campus, our son was prevented from attaining those accomplishments. In the springtime of his junior year, when we had thought we'd be touring campuses as we had with his sister, there was none of that. Virtual tours were not the same. We had to fly somewhat blind in pursuing schools, hoping the campuses would match the hype. So when applications were due, they were submitted in the hope, but not certainty, that he'd be able to start college on campus as normal.

But the day has come, and he's off on his own—like his sister, thousands of miles from home (did we do something, maybe?). Will he like his college? Will he have a great roommate or a nightmare one? How will classes go? Will he adjust to the college academics and do well? Will he find some special one day? Will he learn to lean on his Savior for all his needs?

Clearly, I can't answer these questions on my own. Thankfully, I don't need to.

While talking with a fellow mother of college-age kids before lockdowns isolated us, I mentioned that it was an adjustment to go from caring for the everyday needs of a child, being there for all the moments when they talk to you or tell you they don't want to talk; to rest in the knowledge that the only One to care for their every need now is the Lord. She then said something wise: in parenting young adults away from home, we lose a lot of the face-to-face time exchanging it for more on-our-knees time.

How true and how comforting is that knowledge. Our efforts aren't what keep our kids safe, give them academic and career success and the blessing of love and commitment to another person. It is in the hands of the God who made the universe, whose creations continue to fill us with awe and wonder. There are no safer hands in which to place our children (at any age), but especially when they are out of ours.

This school year will bring much change for our family, but we won't worry about our tomorrows—for ourselves, for our new college kids, for anyone. Total surrender to the Lord is where our reassurance and comfort lie. We, and all whom we love, will always be well cared for with Him.

And there is no better place to be. 🍀

Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor for Adventist Review Ministries.

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