

ADVENTIST REVIEW

FEBRUARY 2024: DIGGING INTO THE PAST + THE
GOSPEL + DEALING WITH DIFFICULT BIBLE TEXTS +
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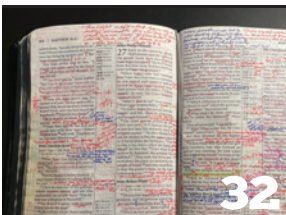
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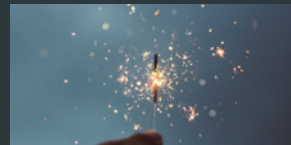
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It is only 26 verses long.

The Third Greatest Sermon

Some were too short, too long, or too technical; others were too irrelevant, too confusing, or too simplistic. Unfortunately, I have heard more “bad” than “good” sermons. That’s when I tell myself that there’s no such thing as a “bad” sermon, and force myself to pay attention, mumbling that there’s always some lesson to glean in every sermon.

While enduring in the pew, I think of the great sermons throughout Christian history. Like Martin Luther King, Jr.’s eloquence and cadence in his “I Have a Dream.” Or Jonathan Edwards’ zeal and fear in “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” I think of such godly preachers as Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Billy Graham. I think of celebrated Adventist preachers, such as C. D. Brooks, H.M.S. Richards, and George Vandeman.

Turning to the titular topic, I offer that the third greatest sermon is by Peter in Acts 2. It is only 26 verses long. Thirteen are direct quotes from the Old Testament, while 11 are explanations of these 13. The final two are an appeal. In other words, a sermon that is comprised of 50 percent Bible readings, 42 percent explanation, and 8 percent appeal has the potential to convert 3,000 souls

(verse 41). No Chicken Soup stories, no video illustrations, no pop theology. How? You may say that obviously the Holy Spirit empowered the message. Without a doubt. But there was something else special about Peter’s message.


A. The message had an **appeal**. Peter declared, in verse 38, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you . . .” (KJV). The followers continued steadfastly in the apostle’s teachings, and Acts describes one of the most ideal community fellowships in Scripture (verses 42-47)—all because Peter made a call.

B. The message was **biblical**. It was a message based on the Bible and explained what the Bible meant. Many sermons today yearn to be biblical, but merely moralize or state a denominational position without actual Bible study. Others eschew biblical content, using only stories meant for little children or more primitive audiences. They are often, too, filled with anecdotes, popular religious thought, and conventional and socially acceptable morality.

C. The message was **Christo-centric**. It was all about Jesus, who He was, what had happened to Him, and, most important, where He was then and still is today—in heaven. More than about the Spirit, Pentecost was the day Jesus, now

enthroned at the right hand of God, issued His first act as Sovereign of the universe: to send forth His Holy Spirit to His disciples. “After Christ’s ascension His enthronement in His mediatorial kingdom was signaled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.” Too many sermons do not lift the work, ministry, and character of Jesus. “Present truth” isn’t just theology or promoting some behavior; it is a Christocentric message on what Jesus is doing in heaven—right now.

What are the first and second greatest sermons, then? I think of Jesus’ sermons, which I argue were the second greatest messages preached. Whether the Sermon on the Mount, His Olivet Discourse, or any other sermon from the four Gospels—they are core teachings to every disciple and impact the Christian and non-Christian alike.

But the greatest sermon is the humble simple life of a sinner converted to the gospel. It is one not assigned to angels, but tasked to human beings. A life manifesting the appeals of Scripture, based on the Bible, centered on Christ, and preached with more than just words is God’s greatest sermon. 

*Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 120.

A THOUGHTFUL START

We don't really comprehend the daily miracles God provided to the children of Israel as outlined in the devotional by Hensley Mooroooven, "Facing Your Future With Assurance" (January 2024). He who took care of their needs will also faithfully provide for our daily needs! This message is a beautiful and thoughtful way to start the new year! Thank you!

Kathryn Proffitt



FACING YOUR FUTURE WITH ASSURANCE

HENSLEY M. MOOROOOVEN

Most psychologists agree that focusing too much on the past can lead to depression, focusing too much on the present often triggers stress, and concentrating too much on the future may provoke anxiety.

We are entering a new year, standing at the threshold of uncharted territory. Throughout the past year we have traversed many roads, faced countless trials, and experienced moments of triumph and despair. As we embark on a new year, we must acknowledge that this journey carries with it an air of uncertainty, an invitation to embrace the unknown. Amid this situation of uncertainty, we know the Lord will be with us, so we face our future with assurance rather than anxiety.

Selected Messages, book 2, p. 114); I think this means that only a part of the Adventist Church will be united and receive the latter rain to equip them to finish the commission of taking the gospel to the entire world.

Jeremy Vandiemann

SOME EXCELLENT PRINCIPLES

Every denomination has members who do not fully comply with the official teachings of that denomination. If we are to interact with members of other denominations, we must not confuse the unique beliefs of a member with the official teachings of their denomination. In my opinion, this is often an issue with us as we relate to people from a Catholic background. The author of "On the Path to Fruitful Interfaith Interactions" (January 2024), Boubakar Sanou, has given us some excellent principles for building positive relationships with people from other religious backgrounds.

Gregory Matthews

INFORMATIVE

The December 2023 issue of *Adventist Review* was informative about stress, fear, worry, and trauma. We will all face them to varying degrees throughout our lifetimes as a result of ill physical, mental, or spiritual health.

Richard Lane

WORRY IS BLIND

Having spent many years working for the Seventh-day Adventist Church's work for the blind, I especially appreciated the article by Hensley M. Mooroooven, "Facing Your Future With Assurance," in the January 2024 issue of *Adventist Review*. Truly, "worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330).

Howard Loewen

PENTECOST AGAIN

As I reflect on "His Invitation" (January 2024), my understanding is that Pentecost fell on united Jews, before the gospel was taken to the Gentiles. Unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians wasn't a prerequisite for the outpouring of Pentecost. Instead, the outpouring of Pentecost was the means by which united Jews were able to take the gospel to the Gentiles, and of course other Jews.

Perhaps the analogy now is denominational: the latter rain will fall on united Adventists for the three angels' messages to be taken to all denominations and nondenominations. We know that wheat and tares will grow together until the harvest (cf.

If we keep our eyes on Jesus and spend good time with our loved ones, we can keep going on.

SAM WILLIAMS

TIMELY

Beautifully put! “When Prophets Fail” (December 2023) is a blessing at such a difficult time with many mental health challenges in and around us, compounded by our greatest and most urgent need for the Holy Spirit.

Joel Mutungi

HUGS HELP

Justin Kim’s editorial, “When Prophets Fail” (December 2023), is so timely. So much evil is going on around us today—it seems overwhelming. But if we keep our eyes on Jesus and spend good time with our loved ones, we can keep going on. Also, hugs help heal the soul.

Sam Williams

SUCCESS, GOD’S WAY

Erton Köhler’s article, “Mission Refocus: An Urgent Call” (December 2023), reminded me of Ellen G. White’s statement in *The Desire of Ages*. She writes, “Nothing that does not bear His [Christ’s] superscription is to be recognized in His kingdom” (p. 826). Yes, “water has been getting into the boat.” Many think that participation in worldly customs is necessary for the church’s success. Some appear to think that God is disinterested in the success of His message, and that we are on

our own to pursue success in our own way.

Connie Dahlke

CHALLENGED

I thought “The Train Bums” (December 2023) was the best story ever. My wife and I are going to make a greater effort to live hospitably again. We used to be more hospitable, and then over time things changed and we stopped. The pandemic sure didn’t help. Now we can start again, more passionately than ever. It’s wonderful the people the Lord sends your way when you let Him!

George Odell

THE ELIJAH MESSAGE

Reflecting on “A Christmas Prayer” (December 2023), by Sikhululekile Daco: Jesus referred to John the Baptist’s message as the Elijah message. Malachi tells us that before the Second Coming we will again hear the Elijah message. And 1 Kings 18 tells us about Elijah’s message—

worship God or Baal. The difference is about the character of God and Baal. For too many years I was the obedient Seventh-day Adventist to appease God. It was no joy. Now that I understand that I worship a God who loves me, gives me freedom to choose, and always tells the truth, there is joy. God does not need to be appeased; He just wants to love me. I can really love a God who is like that! We are in the last days, and the true Elijah message must be given loud and clear.

Ruth Calkins

PRAYING

I am thankful for the story of faith, fear, hope, and the power of praise, even in the darkest hallways of life, shared in “Windows” (December 2023). May God help us to all love and be the physical hands, heart, smile, and feet of Jesus. I will be praying for the family in this story.

Debora

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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“The inclusion of Nepal in the Northern Asia-Pacific Division is a great work of God, and we will overcome challenges through unity.”

Yo Han Kim, p. 15

NEWS



Rear Admiral (Ret.) Barry Black was the guest speaker at a special chaplains' Sabbath during the recent Pastoral Evangelism and Leadership Council. PHOTO: BRYANT TAYLOR, SOUTHERN UNION CONFERENCE

PASTORAL CONFERENCE INCLUDES CELEBRATION OF CHAPLAINS' WORK

AT PELC 2023 ADVENTIST CHAPLAINS ARE HAILED AS MINISTERS IN A PLURALISTIC SETTING.

CHRISTELLE AGBOKA, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

In 1976, when I became a chaplain, it was said that I was leaving the ministry,” said Rear Admiral (Ret.) Barry Black, the guest speaker for a special chaplains' Sabbath meeting at Oakwood University church in Huntsville, Alabama, on December 2, during the Pastoral and Evangelism Leadership Council (PELC).

He continued, “I was looked upon as leaving the ministry because providing spiritual nourishment in a pluralistic setting of religious diversity was not valued by the church.”

Black's critics could not anticipate his remarkable, far-reaching ministry, including assuming office as the sixty-second chaplain of the United States Senate on July 7, 2003, and, before that, serving as chief of chaplains of the U.S. Navy. His words un-

derscored that chaplains' pastoral work in diverse settings is as vital to the church's mission as ministry within a traditional church context.

More than 700 chaplains endorsed by the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (NAD) serve across six disciplines—corrections, health care, community, law enforcement, military, and campus chaplaincy. Washington Johnson II, director of NAD Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, defined chaplaincy as “reflecting the image of God, meeting people where they are.” They were later affirmed for their work as “agents of healing” in a prayer of consecration by Debleaire Snell, lead pastor of Oakwood University church and speaker/director of Breath of Life Ministries.

THRIVING IN AN UNFRIENDLY WORLD

In Black's message, “Thriving in an Unfriendly World,” he recounted being in his Senate office on January 6, 2021—the day the Electoral College verified the presidential election votes, watching helplessly as an angry mob attacked the Capitol. God sent an angel in the form of Gino Aversano, a six-foot-three-inch, burly United States Capitol Police officer who followed the Spirit's prompting to “go find [his] chaplain.”

Black testified, “Beloved, I have lived long enough to know that ‘the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them’ [Ps. 34:7]. But I also know we are living in an unfriendly world. This is not [an idyllic] neighborhood. Yet

I'm so happy that we as believers cannot just survive but thrive . . . if [we] keep our eyes on Jesus."

He concluded with "guardrails" for navigating perilous times, based on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22. These include guarding your joy, unceasing prayer, gratitude, and the Holy Spirit's presence. "In an unfriendly world, you need the Holy Spirit every day," he stressed.

OF CHALLENGES AND HONORS

During the chaplains' Sabbath luncheon, keynote speaker Johnny Poole, retired U.S. Navy captain and cofounder of Chaplain Care, emphasized that humility signifies strength. He shared countless stories of mentors who were his guiding lights, expressing his passion to reflect the Greater Light through his work.

The Sabbath program closed with the ordination of U.S. Army chaplain Colonel Primitivo Davis by the Central States Conference. Taking a chaplaincy course in his second year at Oakwood University as a theology major planted a seed for Davis. After attending seminary and pastoring within a conference, he said, "I began to feel God tugging on my heart, saying, 'I called you to ministry, and now I'm calling you to a very specific type of ministry.'" He and his wife discussed it, and after 10 years in pastoral ministry, he made the leap to military chaplaincy.

Twenty-two years later, Davis said, he has no regrets. "I find it very interesting and fulfilling to work alongside other people of

faith. I work with priests, Buddhist monks, Muslim imams, and probably every Protestant denomination in America," he said. Davis also enjoys serving soldiers and civilians holding diverse theological perspectives, including atheists. He shares wisdom from the Word and gently nudges them along a path toward God.

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Sunday's professional development on mental health awareness recognized the impact of mental health challenges on chaplains' ministry and personal lives. Chaplains' spouses were also invited, contributing to rich discussions. "Mental health awareness is an issue we [often] don't want to address, but as chaplains, we are the front line. So we must address [mental health] knowing people are hurting and in need of support, but most of all, God's love," Johnson said.

The day began with a devotional from Michael Tomlinson, mental health chaplain with the Central Arkansas Veterans Health System and retired U.S. Navy commander. Tomlinson encouraged attendees to follow Jesus' blueprint of servant leadership. Subsequent speakers addressed the gamut of mental health issues, with such topics as "Mental Health Legislation and Human Rights," "Your Mental Health Matters," "Happiness Starts Within: Prioritize Mental Wellness," and "Emotional Health and Spirituality."

These presentations educated attendees on the signs and symp-

toms of trauma and other mental health issues and ways to boost mental wellness. Speakers encouraged participants to treat people with mental health issues with compassion. "They're more than the diagnosis given to them," Lynval Williams, lead chaplain at Springfield Hospital Center in Maryland, said, adding, "Mental health is the good news that recovery is possible."

Presenters also emphasized the importance of self-care. Paula Chavis, U.S. Air Force chaplain, stressed, "You can't help others if you're not well," while Jindriska Vesela, vice president of financial stewardship, Messages of Hope International Ministries, added, "Mental wellness is a community approach."

The day culminated in a heartfelt season of prayer as attendees shared poignant requests for family members, friends, and others grappling with mental or physical health challenges.

Eric Covington, a Veterans Affairs Medical Center chaplain since 2022 and retired U.S. Navy officer, attended PELC for the first time with his wife, Larnita, a local church secretary. Both said they valued the supportive network of chaplains and chaplains' spouses at the chaplains' track, some of whom they had met earlier at an NAD health-care chaplains' training, as well as the practical training.

"It's been beautiful, this portion [of PELC]. I learned so much that I can place into my job when I go back. I'm excited! God is just amazing," Larnita said. 🍀



Part of the team of students and faculty from Loma Linda University stand in the Adventist Theological Seminary in Cuba.

PHOTO: LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY

LOMA LINDA TEAM PROVIDES FREE DENTAL SERVICES IN CUBA

STUDENTS AND FACULTY HELD CLINICS IN COORDINATION WITH PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS.

LIBNA STEVENS, INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

A group of students and faculty from Loma Linda University's School of Dentistry recently traveled to Havana, Cuba, to take part in the first-ever dental health fair. The two four-day clinics were coordinated with the Cuban Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Office of Religious Affairs and Public Health in Cuba. More than 300 people received free dental care during the fair, organizers said.

Gary A. Kerstetter, Loma Linda University School of Dentistry director and professor, along with a team composed of third- and fourth-year dentistry students, performed fillings, cleanings, and extractions. A handful of local Adventist dentists and professionals assisted with the procedures. The clinics were held at the Adventist Theological Seminary in Havana (SETAC) and at the public health clinic in the Boyeros municipality in Havana. The team also provided oral health education for each patient.

"We have been able to be part of a mission of dentistry work, providing clinical experience for our students where they can do pro-

cedures on patients and also have an opportunity for a cultural experience in a different country, where they can help people in another situation," Kerstetter said.

The team from Loma Linda brought a portable X-ray machine, dental tools, equipment, and supplies, Kerstetter said. "We had six to eight patients being seen on five chairs each day, and they were so appreciative to our team for the work they performed on them."

The clinics were historic and extraordinary, said Orquídea Ferrer Hurtado, director of Christian Medical Services Network, an organization that organizes health professionals through the Cuban public health ministry.

Ferrer, who also is a professor at the School of Dentistry in Havana, said the mission trip led by the Loma Linda University team meant a lot to her and the 10 health professionals who joined in to help with the dental clinics. "We were able to assist and share professional experiences and how things work here," Ferrer said. "They learned from us, and we learned from them, and that's what it's all about."

"I am more than grateful to God and these students who came to help us, who did magnificent work on me and my children," Yaremis Leyva Ross, a local resident, said.

"This health fair has opened a door here," Heber Paneque, health ministries director of the Cuban Union, said. Church members and people in the community were among the patients who benefited from the dental health fair. "We are incredibly thankful and saw how it made so many people happy and could sense that the government authorities were also pleased with the oral health fair," he said. "We know that it will open new doors for Loma Linda University to continue serving humanity the way God wants us to do for the world."

Obed Carrera, program manager for Loma Linda University Students for International Mission Service, said there have been several trips to Cuba during the past six years. Among them were multidisciplinary mission trips twice a year, but this year brought a new level of medical care services, he said. Carrera and Kerstetter traveled to Cuba a month before the clinics to go over logis-



From left to right: Lidija Godina, Patrick Johnson, Zlatko Pavlovic, and Mišo Havran at the Helping Hand Counselling Centre.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MIŠO HAVRAN

tics with local church leaders and government officials.

Crystal Robinson, who traveled as a nurse for the team and has been part of logistics mission trips to Cuba for several years, said the latest trip has been a blessing. “Students remember most the people’s resiliency and see how happy and appreciative they are, and willing to give you whatever they have to show gratitude,” Robinson said.

“It has been a life-changing trip for us,” Kerstetter said. “We hope to have more opportunities to show a little bit of human compassion for the people in Cuba.”

LLU School of Dentistry, which opened in 1953, has a long history of supporting outreach and mission initiatives around the world. According to school leaders, the School of Dentistry is home “to a thriving, diverse, and creative community of faculty and students committed to Christian values.”

At its main campus in Loma Linda, California, the School of Dentistry runs 13 clinics, including an orthodontic clinic, a pediatric dental clinic, and an oral and maxillofacial surgery clinic, school officers said. Clinics also include periodontic and prosthodontic services and a department devoted to research. ▀

ADVENTIST COUNSELING CENTER HELPS THE COMMUNITY IN CROATIA

PROFESSIONALS OFFER FREE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TO RESIDENTS.

TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION NEWS AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Since Helping Hand Counselling Centre opened its doors to the public in May 2021 in the seaside city of Pula, Croatia, a dedicated team of professionals has been providing support to the community, addressing health, psychosocial, and emotional needs—all at no cost to the individual, thanks to generous funding from the Adventist Church’s Trans-European Division (TED), Adriatic Union, Croatian Conference, and the local church in Pula.

What makes Helping Hand unique, according to leaders behind the initiative, is that the center hosts engaging group workshops for those wishing to explore spiritual topics alongside personalized therapeutic support and online therapy sessions.

“People in the community feel incredibly grateful and blessed” because of the center, Mišo Havran, health ministries director for the Croatian Conference, said. Highlighting the unique approach of Helping Hand, seamlessly blending psychosocial and spiritual support, he commented, “Our support groups explore different topics, such as emotional growth, relationships, and spirituality. We start our meetings with a moment of prayer, ensuring everything we share is grounded in spiritual values.”

The center’s affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist Church is transparent and warmly embraced by participants. “All involved in creating and

running Helping Hand are grateful to God for His tangible leadership so far and for the opportunities to not only assist with physical and psychological health but also to introduce people to Christ,” Havran said.

The work of professionals and volunteers at Helping Hand recently caught the attention of Croatia’s leading TV station, HRTV 1. “Ivana Simic, journalist and producer of the well-established program *Together in Spirit [Zajedno u Duhu]* and her team interviewed us about the work done since our opening,” Havran said. The interview, featuring Zlatko Pavlovic, Lidija Godina, and Havran, aired on November 11.

Commenting on how Helping Hand has supported the Pula community, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, Simic said, “We often hear in the media that people are depressed, under stress, and looking for help. This is why the Health Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Pula opened Helping Hand’s doors, with the help of excellent professionals.”

The Croatian Conference plans to replicate this success by opening a similar center in Zagreb. “We already have professionals who are willing to be part of this new center in Zagreb,” Havran shared, underlining the vision for a broader impact on the community. “We dream of connecting the centers to share resources and reach more people.” ▀



Members of the Ngombe Seventh-day Adventist Church gather in their one-day church, provided by Maranatha. PHOTO: MARANATHA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

MARANATHA BRINGS CHANGE ACROSS ZAMBIA

SUPPORTING MINISTRY IS BUILDING CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, AND WATER WELLS.

JULIE Z. LEE, MARANATHA VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Zambia, located in central southern Africa, is a country about the size of Texas. While its capital, Lusaka, boasts the typical developments of modern cities—fine hotels, shopping centers, and high-rise buildings—the rest of the country is more rural and rugged. Move past the borders of its bigger cities and towns, and you'll find a lifestyle frozen in time. People push through waterways on narrow, hand-carved canoes. Men with machetes harvest tall, wild grass on the side of the road to make thatched roofs. Children run through clusters of mud huts that comprise a family unit within a village. Women, wrapped in colorful fabrics, carry buckets of water on their heads.

Among these scenes of idyllic beauty, some challenges arise. Many of the people working the boats are trapped in poverty. Thatched roofs and mud walls tend to disintegrate in the heat and rain. Some children have no school to go to. And some areas lack clean water access, forcing women and girls to walk to distant watering holes to retrieve contaminated water.

Maranatha Volunteers International is working in Zambia to build one-day churches for congregations that need an enduring place of worship, schools for children who need access to education, and water wells

for the general good health of everyone. Maranatha's first effort in Zambia started in 2009 and continued over the next six years. The work started up once more in 2018, when Maranatha responded to a request for more projects from the Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership in Zambia.

In 2021 Maranatha launched a water maintenance program, which now has crews in Zambia traveling from site to site, doing maintenance and repairs on existing wells. The flurry of activities makes Zambia one of Maranatha's most prolific countries in terms of completed or active projects.

ONE-DAY CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, AND WATER WELLS

Launched in 2008, the One-Day Church (ODC) program continues to provide strong, safe structures for hundreds of congregations around the world. The program has been especially helpful and successful in Zambia, where Maranatha has a goal to build 120 ODCs this year.

At the same time, schools have always been a priority in Zambia, as there is a shortage of Adventist educational centers in the country. Most recently Maranatha expanded the campus at Liumba Hill, located in the

western part of the country. This year we are examining requests for a school in Sala, near Lusaka, and a campus at Mwami Adventist Hospital, on the far eastern border of the country.

Students who seek an Adventist education and live far from Liumba Hill must find their own housing near the school. This option typically isn't safe, as female students in particular are vulnerable to assault and robbery. Some of them rent a room in the community. Maranatha is currently planning to build a girls' dormitory at Liumba Hill.

Crews have been busy drilling water wells all over Zambia, as clean water continues to be elusive to many people. In 2023 alone Maranatha had a goal to drill 300 water wells in the country. Those water wells require maintenance and repairs, especially when it is being used multiple times a day by hundreds of people. And once a well is broken, people go back to drinking contaminated water or spending inordinate amounts of time searching for clean water.

"In response to these challenges, Maranatha created a team to check on existing wells to ensure that they are working properly," ministry leaders said. "They travel all over the country responding to calls for assistance." ■

One of the baptismal ceremonies at the end of recent evangelistic meetings in the Central Mindanao Mission in the Philippines. PHOTO: CENTRAL

MINDANAO MISSION



RADIO EVANGELISM IN PHILIPPINES RESULTS IN MORE THAN 1,700 BAPTISMS

CENTRAL MINDANAO MISSION EVENT DRIVES LEADERS AND MEMBERS TO INVOLVEMENT.

ROXIE PIDO, SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

Adventist World Radio (AWR) and the Central Mindanao Mission in the Philippines recently concluded an impactful evangelism campaign in San Fernando and Sitio Natampod, Namnam, with 1,729 baptisms.

The event, which ran from November 26 to December 2, was a joint effort between AWR and the Central Mindanao Mission (CMM). Held simultaneously at the San Fernando gym and in Sitio Natampod, the campaign witnessed a remarkable display of faith and total member involvement, church organizers said.

Key leadership figures from AWR, including president Duane McKey and his wife, Kathy, were at the forefront of the event. Other AWR officers included vice president Cami Oetman; Catherine Proffit, a former U.S. ambassador to Malta and a member of the AWR board; Sue Hinkle, AWR outreach director; and AWR special projects coordinator Robert Dulay. Their presence and participation contributed significantly to the event's overall success, regional leaders said.

AWR coordinator for the SSD Roseller Zamora delivered powerful and inspiring messages during the first five nights of the evangelism series at the main venue in San Fernando. Oetman delivered a powerful message during the program's final night, and Duane McKey then delivered a thought-provok-

ing sermon on Sabbath worship. The final night and the Sabbath worship left a lasting impression on the audience with their stirring messages.

In addition to their participation in San Fernando, McKey and Oetman engaged with the audience in Sitio Natampod on Friday and Saturday mornings, respectively. Their involvement was instrumental in connecting with the local community, fostering spiritual growth, and contributing to the overall success of the campaign, regional leaders shared. Furthermore, McKey and Oetman participated in the morning baptism ceremony, where a significant number of the newly baptized individuals were formerly associated with rebel groups.

The event in Sitio Natampod was particularly noteworthy, as it was named the "Peace Development Summit." Jeiel Basi delivered devotional messages to the attendees every morning and evening during the summit, which included not only spiritual growth but also daily livelihood training provided by government organizations.

CMM administrators, including president Porferio Lagunday, secretary Judyben Cabil, and treasurer Sir Sealoy Godillano, expressed their collective joy at witnessing the record number of baptisms

and the full engagement of members and pastors. Lagunday led a team of pastors and lay volunteers in erecting a large dome tent in Natampod to accommodate the sizable crowd in attendance. Under the direction of Rommel Subigca, the CMM communication department coordinated the event with the help of the South Philippine Union Conference's communication department.

"The deep-seated significance of the evangelism campaign in San Fernando and Sitio Natampod is profound," regional church leaders said. "It symbolizes a beacon of hope and renewal for the local community, uniting people in faith and fostering a spirit of reconciliation."

They added that "the collaboration and united efforts of religious organizations, government agencies, and community leaders showcased the potency of collective action in effecting positive change. The event's success demonstrates the potential for meaningful transformation when diverse voices and organizations come together with a shared vision for a better future."

AWR operates a Center for Digital Evangelism in the Philippines, which provides Bible-based answers, prayer, and Bible studies to interests across the country and beyond. ▀



On November 27, church leaders convened in Nepal to review and plan missionary activities across the country. PHOTO: NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION EMBRACES HIMALAYAN SECTION

LEADERS IN NEPAL HOLD THEIR FIRST YEAR-END MEETING UNDER NEW ARRANGEMENT.

NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

After becoming part of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division (NSD) of Seventh-day Adventists, the Himalayan Section held its year-end meeting for the first time. On November 27, at the Banepa Adventist Church east of Kathmandu, regional church leaders convened to review the direction of missionary activities across the country after the recent transfer of the territory from the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD).

NSD leaders and numerous local pastors attended the year-end meeting of the Himalayan Section. Among them was NSD president Yo Han Kim, treasurer Tae Seung Kim, and Adventist Mission director Sun Hwan Kim.

The Himalayan Section officially is composed of 41 churches and has more than 94,000 baptized members. The region is currently led by president Umesh Pokharel and Hae-Sung Kim, a missionary from South Korea, who serves as the director of global missions.

While Nepal does not have an official state religion, Hinduism functions as the de facto state religion, presenting practical challenges for organizing churches in the country. Since 2018 the Nepalese government has implemented the “Anti-Conversion Law,” significantly complicating

missionary activities. Foreign missionaries, including Koreans, have faced increased restrictions.

The region’s year-end meeting addressed various challenges confronting the organization, including a comprehensive reorganization. This involves bringing numerous independent churches and mission agencies scattered throughout Nepal under the section’s umbrella, and addressing the treatment of nondenominational churches embracing the Seventh-day Adventist message.

Despite not having an official building, the Himalayan Section perseveres, leaders reported. Missionaries across the country face adversity, with several foreign missionaries working in challenging circumstances.

The 2023 year-end meeting focused on strengthening links between mission agencies in Hetauda, Dachcha, Pokhara, and other areas; improving organizational management; and addressing the creation and staffing of new departments.

The committee also discussed the integration of members from other denominations, particularly those who have accepted the message of the second coming of Jesus. Many of these individuals lack biblical knowledge, posing challenges

for assimilation into the existing Adventist culture. The meeting emphasized the need for systematic education and nurturing for these new members, leaders reported.

Following the year-end meeting, discussions took place with the NSD president, local pastors, and missionaries. Despite transportation challenges in Nepal, ministers from across the country managed to come together for the meeting.

NSD president Yo Han Kim expressed high hopes for Nepal, citing the dedication of church members and missionaries working tirelessly despite numerous challenges. He emphasized the church members’ commitment to supporting missions in various ways.

When Nepal was part of the SSD, it faced missionary challenges, leaders explained. Since joining the NSD, the reality has become clearer, revealing hidden potential. “This reality underscores the necessity for systematic and comprehensive support,” they said.

“The Himalayan Section serves as a bridgehead for missionary work in Hindu countries,” Yo Han Kim said at the close of the meeting. “The inclusion of Nepal in the NSD at this critical time is a great work of God, and we will overcome challenges through unity.”

Heather-Dawn Small, General Conference Women's Ministries director for 18 years, died on January 2. PHOTO: DAVID B. SHERWIN/ADVENTIST REVIEW



ADVENTIST WOMEN'S MINISTRIES LEADER HEATHER-DAWN SMALL DIES AT 66

SHE LED THE GENERAL CONFERENCE DEPARTMENT FOR 18 YEARS.

MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Heather-Dawn Small, a longtime Seventh-day Adventist women's leader and advocate, died on January 2 from cancer. She was 66.

Upon learning of her death, General Conference (GC) president Ted N. C. Wilson marked her life of service and contribution to the world church. "Heather-Dawn diligently served the world church," Wilson wrote on his social media accounts. "She was supportive of helping women become involved in evangelism and assisting the church in outreach and community activities."

In a statement to ANN, Audrey Andersson, a general GC vice president overseeing Women's Ministries, also wrote that Small "helped shape women's ministries over the past 18-plus years," adding, "She . . . leaves a legacy of service that will continue to be a positive influence on each person she has met."

A LIFE OF SERVICE AND ADVOCACY

During several decades Small served the Adventist Church in varying capacities. She became General Conference associate director of Women's Ministries in 2001 and was elected director in 2005. Small was subsequently reelected at General Conference Sessions in 2010, 2015, and 2022.

During her tenure, Small developed and trained a generation of women committed to service, several Adventist leaders said. She also embraced advocacy efforts through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) campaign *enditnow*[®], an initiative to mobilize members to learn about and speak out against abuse and violence.

IN THE INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

Despite traveling around the world to visit her Adventist "sisters," as Small would often call them, she never forgot the Inter-American Division (IAD), her home division, where she returned on many occasions as a guest speaker and to network and train other women leaders. Former and current leaders remember her for her kindness and commitment to supporting women in mission.

Former IAD president Israel Leito, who met Small for the first time decades ago in the Caribbean and later at the IAD, remembered Small as someone whose "humble service has touched the lives of and transformed so many. Heather was a real inspiration and exemplary Christian worker," he said.

Also, former IAD Women's Ministries director Dinorah Rivera said she fondly remembers the years

she interacted with Small in leadership. "Her passion and commitment were evident, and her love and zeal drove her to fight for [women's] well-being," Rivera wrote.

On January 3, during the devotional to open the activities of the new year at the IAD headquarters in Miami, Florida, IAD president Elie Henry asked for prayers for the family as he relayed the sad news. "We are losing a strong voice in the world church and the Inter-American Division," he said. "She was a good preacher. Her words, her messages, her testimony, and her passion for the Lord will stay with us."

IAD Women's Ministries director Edith Ruiz Espinoza also shared her thoughts upon learning about Small's death. "I feel a great, painful emptiness inside," Espinoza said. "We will always remember our dear Heather because of her smile, kindness, and leadership on behalf of women around the world."

Espinoza shared how Small visited the IAD region for the last time in late October 2023. On that occasion she attended an event during which more than 5,000 women were present.

Small is survived by her husband, Joseph Small, an Adventist pastor, and her adult children, Dalonne and Jerard. ♠



ADVENTIST SCHOOL HOSTS SIGN LANGUAGE-INTERPRETED CHRISTMAS PROGRAM IN AUSTRALIA.

An Auslan sign language-interpreted session of Road to Bethlehem made it possible for deaf individuals to fully experience for the first time the walk-through dramatization of the story of Jesus' birth. Held at Mountain View Adventist College (MVAC) in Sydney, Australia, on November 26, the inclusive initiative using the Australian sign language system was a partnership between Christian Services for the Blind and Hearing Impaired and MVAC.



NEPAL CHURCH REACHES THE COMMUNITY THROUGH SERVICE TO FAMILIES, ORPHANS.

A Korean group recently provided health services, children's ministry activities, home visitation, free haircuts, and family photo services at Dapcha Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nepal. A team of 14 members led the initiative, which sought to meet a variety of community needs, as the team worked to ensure the well-being of families and promote unity and happiness through the family photos. More than 300 people were treated during the three days.



ADRA CAMBODIA SUPPORTS INITIATIVE TO FIGHT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS.

A team from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in Cambodia recently conducted training sessions to help community leaders tackle the ongoing scourge of violence against women and girls. The December 2023 training, led by ADRA's TOGETHER Project team, enlisted the support of regional authorities in Thalaborivat, Stung Treng province, and Choam Ksant and Rovieng, Preah Vihear province, for the campaign "UNITE! Investing to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls."



IN MALAYSIA, ADVENTISTS SPREAD CHRISTMAS JOY FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN.

In a display of the Christmas spirit, several departments and ministries at Malaysia Union Mission (MAUM) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church joined forces for a charitable cause, bringing joy to the children of the Children's Future Education Centre, a school catering to Myanmar migrant workers and refugee children. Representatives from MAUM headquarters traveled to the capital city of Kuala Lumpur in December for a day filled with activities for children.



ADVENTIST CHURCH DONATES HOSPITAL BEDS TO JAMAICA'S MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

Amid an urgent cry for more beds in Jamaica's public hospitals, the Seventh-day Adventist Church gave a much-needed boost of 40 hospital beds to Jamaica's Ministry of Health at an estimated cost of US\$120,000. The handover ceremony took place at the Good Samaritan Inn in Kingston on December 12, 2023. The initiative took place on behalf of the AdventHealth hospital network; the board of governors, administration, and staff of Andrews Memorial Hospital; and church leaders.



PUBLIC CAMPUS MINISTRIES CAMP CONNECTS ADVENTIST STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA.

The Peninsular Malaysia Mission recently organized a Public Campus Ministries camp for Adventist students, most of whom attend public universities. The event took place at Port Dickson Methodist Centre in Port Dickson, south of Kuala Lumpur. More than 140 Adventist students attended, coming together from all around the peninsula, for the camp, themed "My Circle of Influence." The camp was intended to instill awareness about being a Christlike influence among the youth in a secular context.



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Exegesis for Everyone

Exemplified in Psalm 23

RICHARD M. DAVIDSON

The word “exegesis” may seem to be fancy jargon used by professional biblical scholars, without much relevance to the average Bible student. The word “exegesis,” however, is a biblical term used concerning Jesus Himself! According to John 1:18, Jesus “exegeted” the Father! “God the only Son, who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained [*exegeomai*, “exegeted”] Him” (NASB). The Greek word *exegeomai*, from which we get our English word “exegesis,” simply means to “explain.” To “exegete” the Scriptures is to explain their meaning.

The process of biblical exegesis, as it emerges from Scripture’s own testimony, may be outlined in rough comparison with the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20. Just as the first table of four commandments deals with the divine-human (vertical) relationship, four general principles arise out of the divine-human nature of Scripture that form the foundational presuppositions of exegesis. Similarly, just as the second table of six commandments in the Decalogue deals with human (horizontal) relationships, the specific



The Greek word *exegeomai*, from which we get our English word “exegesis,” simply means to “explain.” To “exegete” the Scriptures is to explain their meaning.

exegetical guidelines for the interpreter may be organized under six basic headings. Unlike the Decalogue of Exodus 20, this outline is not infallible! It represents one way of organizing the fundamental principles of exegesis. This article uses Psalm 23 as a case study illustrating how to apply these principles.¹

THE FIRST TABLE OF THE EXEGETICAL “DECALOGUE”: FOUNDATIONAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

I. The Bible and the Bible Only (*Sola Scriptura*)

The *sola scriptura* principle (Isa. 8:20) means that the Bible and the Bible alone is the rule of our faith and practice. Scripture alone is the final authority for truth, by which we judge all other authorities, such as tradition, philosophy, science, reason, and experience (Matt. 15:3, 6; 1 Tim. 6:20; Prov. 14:12). In Scripture we can breathe the “pure oxygen” of truth, and we use our reason, guided by the Spirit, not to critique, but to receive and understand Scripture (Isa. 66:2).

II. The Totality of Scripture (*Tota Scriptura*)

All Scripture is inspired by God and trustworthy (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 3:14-16). Hence, we accept all of Scripture, not just the parts that fit our own predetermined worldview.

III. The Analogy (or Harmony) of Scripture (“Scripture Interprets Scripture”)

If all of Scripture is inspired by the same Spirit, then there is an underlying harmony among the various parts of the Word. The “analogy of Scripture” means that we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture (Luke 24:27; 1 Cor. 2:13). According to the biblical principle of the analogy of Scripture, we accept the consistency and clarity of Scripture (John 10:37; Deut. 30:11-14; Rom. 10:17).

IV. Spiritual Things Are Spiritually Discerned

“The things of the Spirit . . . are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). The Bible cannot be studied as any other book, coming merely “from below” with sharpened tools of exegesis. At every stage of the exegetical process, we need the Holy Spirit “from above,” to help us lay aside our own biased presuppositions, to see ever more the meaning of Scripture through His enlightenment, and to be spiritually transformed by that same Spirit (John 5:46, 47; 7:17; Ps. 119:33).

THE SECOND TABLE OF THE EXEGETICAL “DECALOGUE”: SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

The specific guidelines for exegesis of Scripture arise from and build upon the foundational presuppositions set forth in the “First Table.” This part sets forth practical steps in the exegetical process that emerge from the self-testimony of Scripture, applying them to Psalm 23.

V. Text and Translation

Since exegesis focuses on the written word of Scripture, it is vitally important that we have access to what are indeed the Holy Scriptures, not adding to or taking away from the inspired Word (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5; Rev. 22:18, 19), and faithfully translating the original languages into our modern languages (Neh. 8:8; Matt. 1:23). For those who cannot read biblical Hebrew or Greek, it is beneficial to read several (I suggest at least five!) translations of a biblical passage, to get an idea of the various possibilities of translating various words and phrases. For free online access to a variety of modern translations, see Bible Gateway (<https://www.biblegateway.com>). It is important to note that some modern versions provide a literal, word-for-word translation (e.g., NKJV, ESV, NASB), while others

give a thought-for-thought translation (e.g., NIV, NLT) or a paraphrase (*The Message*). Each is good for its own purpose, but word-for-word translations are best for serious Bible study. To apply this guideline to Psalm 23, read this beautiful psalm over and over, in different versions!

VI. Historical Context

Scripture is largely a history book. In order to exegete the meaning of a passage of Scripture, we must first seek to grasp the historical context in which the Scripture was written. The superscription of Psalm 23 specifically indicates that it is “A Psalm of David” (Heb. *mizmor le David*). This phrase clearly indicates that David was the author of the psalm, written sometime during David’s life in the early tenth century B.C.² In 1 Samuel 16 and Psalm 78:70 we find the background of David as a shepherd boy. We can examine the shepherd/sheep imagery of Psalm 23 elsewhere in the Scriptures (using a concordance or Bible with marginal references). We can view the psalm through the eyes of a shepherd to gain a knowledge of the behavior patterns of sheep.³

We can also learn about the geographical location of the areas where David probably led his sheep in the environs of Bethlehem. For example, Psalm 23:4 reads: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” Archaeologists and biblical geographers have suggested that this phrase refers to a specific place in Palestine called “the Valley of Death.” It has been identified with the Wadi Qilt, which runs through the Wilderness of Judea from Jerusalem to Jericho. The wadi (a dry ravine except during rainy season) is some 15 miles long in total, and I have hiked (and camped) with my son through the entire gorge. The narrowest part passed through over five miles of cliffs reaching some 1,500 feet on each side, with space to walk at the bottom only 10-12 feet wide. There are numerous caves where wolves and other predators could hide in David’s time. At the end of the wadi, as it opens out, my son and I came upon a whole flock of sheep, lying in the pleasant grass shaded under the tall cliffs. The meaning of this verse came together in a powerful way!

VII. Literary Analysis

Scripture is also a literary work of art. Many verses, chapters, and even whole books of the Bible are structured in a special literary structure called a chiasm, in which the second half of the

passage mirrors the first, and the central part often highlights the main point of the passage.

Psalm 23 has an intricate chiasitic structure:

A. Presence: With God (verse 1)

B. Provisions: Needs Supplied (Food and Drink) (verses 2, 3a)

C. Paths: **Righteousness** (verse 3b)

C'. Paths: **Shadow of Death** (verse 4)

B'. Provisions: Needs Supplied (Food and Drink) (verse 5)

A'. Presence: With God (verse 6).⁴

We will return to the significance of this structure (and especially its apex) in the principle of theological analysis.

VIII. Verse-by-Verse Analysis (Word Studies, Grammar, Syntax)

The Bible comes alive as one looks at the rich meaning of various biblical words, and the grammar and syntax (relationship of words) of sentences. For those who do not read the original language, this becomes accessible by examining a variety of modern translations, or using an interlinear Bible (such as the free online Blue Letter Bible, <https://www.blueletterbible.org>). For example, Psalm 23:2 reads: “He makes me to lie down in green pastures.” I used to think that this described a verdant place with good-quality grass for the sheep to eat. But a closer look reveals that the Hebrew word used for “pasture” (*na’vah*) is not the normal word for a sheep’s feeding place; it means “comely, lovely, pleasant place.” The emphasis is upon beauty and pleasantness, not food. What is more, the Hebrew word for “green” (*deshe*) is really a noun, not an adjective, referring to “tender, fresh soft grass” (cf. Prov. 27:25; *The New Jerusalem Bible* and the *New English Translation Bible* capture this picture). Habits of sheep verify this insight. Sheep *do not eat lying down!* The verse is not speaking of sheep eating (although this may be secondarily implied). The focus is on their place of comfort *after* their eating, as they are lying down, chewing their cud (ruminating) in a place of pleasant, fresh, soft grass. To apply this verse to us who are “the sheep of His pasture” (Ps. 100:3), God “causes us to lie down” sometimes, and invites us to “ruminate” over His Word.⁵

IX. Theological Analysis

As one thinks of David writing about God as his shepherd, rich theological insights into the character of God emerge from the language he uses. For example, in Psalm 23:3 the shepherd leads the sheep “in the paths of righteousness for His



name's sake." The phrase "for His name's sake" indicates that the shepherd's very name (reputation) is at stake as a good shepherd in making sure the sheep are safe. We see that God's character is at stake in caring for His people, His sheep.

The psalm also holds a deeper meaning! Psalm 23 is sandwiched between two messianic psalms—Psalm 22, the Psalm of the Cross, and Psalm 24, the Psalm of the Crown (Christ's ascension and entrance into heaven), making it likely that these three psalms form a "Messianic Trilogy."⁶ The clues in Psalm 23 verify this conclusion.

Note, for example: *the Shepherd's Psalm was sung by a sheep (or lamb)!* "The Lord is my shepherd." On the deepest level, this sheep is none other than "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He trusts His Father, the Shepherd. The messianic import of this psalm is supported by its literary structure highlighting key messianic terminology. As noted in the literary analysis section above, the climactic central verses of Psalm 23's chiasmic structure describe the two fundamental experiences of the Lamb: (1) "He leads me in the paths of righteousness" (verse 3) and (2) "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (verse 4). Ultimately only the Lamb of God was both the Righteous One (Isa. 53:7, 11; cf. 1 Peter 1:19) and the one who passed through the shadow of death (as the sacrificial Paschal Lamb [1 Cor. 5:7]).


Psalm 22 is the Psalm of the Cross. Psalm 24 is the Psalm of the Crown. Psalm 23 is the Psalm of the Paschal Lamb!

X. Practical Contemporary Application

In light of the messianic interpretation of the psalm, we can "follow His steps" as God's sheep (1 Peter 2:21, 25). The messianic dimension heightens its practical application to our lives. If Psalm 23 is ultimately about the Lamb of God trusting in His Shepherd, then it has even more precious relevance for us. We can walk in

the steps of the Lamb of God (Jesus) and, like Him, trust in the Shepherd (the Father) as He leads us on the paths of righteousness and even through the valley of the shadow of death.

CONCLUSION

Applying the exegetical principles that emerge from Scripture allow us to plumb the depths of Scripture. In the Shepherd's Psalm, following the clues of the contents and the contexts, we discover its Christ-centered focus (as with the rest of Scripture: Luke 24:27; John 5:39). The twenty-third psalm invites us to "exegete" the Lamb of God as He "exegeted" the Father (John 1:18), and then, walking in His steps, to "follow the Shepherd." Exegesis is for everyone! 

¹ For further study, see Richard Davidson, "Interpreting Scripture: An Hermeneutical 'Decalogue,'" *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 95-114, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jats/vol4/iss2/5/>. For more detail, see Richard Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), vol. 12, pp. 58-104, https://www.academia.edu/9014488/Biblical_Interpretation. For application to Psalm 23, see Richard Davidson, "The Shepherd and the Exegetes: Hermeneutics Through the Lens of Psalm 23," *Current 4* (Fall 2016): 18-21, <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/479/>.

² See Jerome L. Skinner, "The Historical Superscriptions of the Davidic Psalms: An Exegetical, Intertextual, and Methodological Analysis" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2016).

³ See, e.g., James K. Wallace, *The Basque Shepherd and the Shepherd Psalm* (Vancouver: Graphos Press, 1956, 1970, 1977); W. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970, 1989).

⁴ For this basic structure, I am indebted to one of my students, Kevin Neidhardt, who wrote on this psalm for one of my seminary classes many years ago.

⁵ See Charles Allen, *God's Psychiatry: Healing Your Troubled Heart* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1984), for a powerful application of Psalm 23 to one's spiritual experience.

⁶ For more details, see Richard Davidson, "Psalms 22, 23, and 24: A Messianic Trilogy?" in *Reading the Psalms*, vol. 2 of *Songs of Struggle, Promise, and Hope* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: ATS Publications, 2023), forthcoming.

Richard M. Davidson is a senior research professor of Old Testament interpretation at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University.


DIGGING INTO THE PAST

*How archaeology
brings the Bible to life*

CONSTANCE CLARK GANE

The window shades were drawn and the room dark. It was my final year of college. I had done my share of classroom survival, but this was a different class: “Archaeology and the Bible,” taught by Professor Paul Bork at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California. While others slept, I was wide awake and mesmerized by the graphic connections between historical finds and the biblical narratives.

I became so enthusiastic about the class and topic that Bork finally suggested I might consider going into archaeology myself. That notion was ridiculous to me, and I laughed out loud—I thought it was for older men with whiskery beards.



Hyoungu Kim (M.Div. student at SDATS from Korea) sifting at Khirbet Safra, Jordan, 2023. PHOTO: CONSTANCE GANE

About this time, I heard Siegfried Horn, the “Father of Seventh-day Adventist Archaeology,” give a talk at chapel on correlations between archaeology and the Bible. I was thrilled with every detail that connected history with the Bible. I took out a loan and traveled to Israel to try out field excavation at the Solomonic harbor site at Tell Dor on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, working under Professor David Stronach from the University of California, Berkeley, and Professor Ephraim Stern of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel. There were several others who were exploring archaeology as a future career, but at the end of the summer season I was the only one who declared, “This is where I belong!” The combination of my hands in the dirt, disciplined physical work, recording the findings, and correlating the rich finds with the biblical events, not to mention the daily refreshing swim in the salty sea, gave me an enthusiasm and passion for life in the archaeological world that I have never lost.

BRINGING THE BIBLE TO LIFE

The Bible gives us an account of God’s interactions with our physical world and with a specific segment of humanity. It gives us a theological perspective that is couched in historical events, but it is not a complete history of any culture or civilization. The field of biblical archaeology provides fascinating details that substantiate and validate the historicity of the biblical setting. In other words, archaeological finds may be correlated with many of the physical, cultural, and religious details described in the Bible.

Archaeology, however, has limitations that have to be acknowledged. Ancient sites relevant to the biblical narrative were often destroyed in antiquity. Fires, wars, famines, and abandonment have left the sites in ruins. The material remains found through excavations are fragmentary, and only a fraction of any given site has been excavated. When my husband, Roy, and I were traveling across Iraq in the late 1980s, we were amazed to see numerous high mounds, or ancient sites, dotting the open landscape. Some had been partially explored, but many more had never been touched.

Our knowledge, though great, is so very limited. When there are apparent discrepancies between archaeological finds and the biblical record, one

The field of biblical archaeology provides fascinating details that give us a glimpse into the past that substantiate and validate the historicity of the biblical setting.

cannot be forced to agree with the other. It is crucial to keep both the biblical and the archaeological data separate for the integrity of the disciplines.

EXTRABIBLICAL INFORMATION AND THE BIBLE

Finding points of commonality between archaeological finds and the biblical narrative is an exciting and rewarding experience. There are many finds from which our rich collections of ever-expanding illustrated Bible commentaries and study Bibles draw. The cuneiform texts found at the ancient site of Nuzi (modern Yorghana Tepe), located in northern Iraq, provide a fascinating window into the everyday world of ancient Near Eastern patriarchal life (Early and Middle Bronze periods, c. 2000–1500 B.C.).¹

For example, Abram determined that since God had not blessed him with an heir, his servant Eliezer would be his heir (Gen. 15:2). This practice is also seen in accounts from Nuzi in which a childless man could adopt his servant to become an heir.²

A marriage contract from Nuzi makes allowance for a barren wife to acquire a slave girl as a concubine for her husband. If the slave girl has a child by the husband, the wife is to have authority over that child.³ This reminds us of what Sarai asked of Abram when she requested that her maid Hagar be taken by Abram to fulfill God’s promise of a child (Gen. 16). These are only two of the numerous similarities found between the biblical patriarchal narratives and the ancient culture and society revealed at Nuzi.

Ancient Near Eastern backgrounds have also enhanced the study of the private and public lives of biblical women. The book of Esther refers to the gathering of beautiful women from across the Persian (Achaemenid) Empire. While we have no extrabiblical evidence (yet) for Esther the queen or for this particular gathering, we do have



Roman Weins (Ph.D. student in OT at SDATS from Germany), Hyoukku Kim (M.Div. student at SDATS from Korea), Constance Gane (Field A director, Institute of Archaeology, SDATS), Carina Prestes (professor, Centro Universitário Adventista de São Paulo, Brazil). Location: Khirbet Safra, Jordan. Summer 2023. PHOTO: CONSTANCE GANE

evidence of other gatherings. The Babylonian Chronicle from Babylon in Iraq, of the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes III (359/358–338 B.C.), describes the taking of Sidonian women to the king's palace after the king defeated Sidon. The relevant portions of the text read: "The fourteenth [year] of . . . Artaxerxes (III): . . . On the sixteenth day the . . . women prisoners from Sidon, which the king sent to Babylon—on that day they entered the palace of the king."⁴

Though we do not know how these Sidonian women would have been groomed for their future positions, we know something about the possible process from the story of Esther. The biblical account tells us that the young women went through 12 months of preparations, with six months dedicated to treatments with perfumes. Fragrant oils and spices were exported from Persia, India, and Arabia.⁵ Cuboid spice burners, like those found at the Israelite city of Lachish (in modern Israel) and the Babylonian city of Nippur (in modern Iraq), were most likely used as cosmetic burners for this type of aromatic treatment.⁶ This type of incense burner has a long history in Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula and continues

to be used today.⁷ The spices burned on them would have been "chosen for the combination of scents, insect repellents, and therapeutic purposes."⁸ A woman stood over the burning incense, thus perfuming her bare skin beneath her clothing.⁹ Other forms of incense burners come in the form of stands often placed near important individuals. These can be seen on the Persepolis relief depicting the seated Darius the Great (now in the Archaeological Museum, Tehran) and the cylinder seal of a seated woman with attendants (on display at the Louvre Museum).¹⁰

BIBLICAL PEOPLE IN EXTRABIBLICAL SOURCES

Confirmation of biblical individuals not otherwise mentioned in extrabiblical sources continues to exercise our patience and faith. Outside of the Bible, there is no ancient Near Eastern verification of several prominent individuals such as Zaphnath-Paaneah (Joseph), Belteshazzar (Daniel), and Esther (Hadassah).

This was once true for the Assyrian king Sargon II, who is mentioned only once, in Isaiah 20:1, and was believed to be an example of the biblical author's ignorance. An entire city, Dur-Sharrukin

As a biblical archaeologist, I am passionate about making connections between the dusty remains found in the dirt of excavations and the biblical narrative.

(literally translated as “Fortress of Sargon,” modern Khorsabad), however, was discovered north of Nineveh by the French consul general at Mosul, Paul-Émile Botta.¹¹ Not only did the entire city bear the name of the hitherto-unknown Assyrian king, but his name appeared repeatedly on inscriptions, which also recorded his attack on Israel.

Similarly, mention of Belshazzar as the last king of Babylon in the book of Daniel (Dan. 5, 7, and 8), was used as proof that the author was unfamiliar with Babylonian history. Eventually, four identical Late Babylonian cylinders engraved with cuneiform were found on top of the Sin ziggurat at the site of Ur on which were written a prayer to the moon god, Sin, for the protection of Nabonidus and his son, Belshazzar.¹² Eventually other cuneiform tablets, such as the “Verse Account of Nabonidus,” were found which mention Nabonidus’ journey to Teima and that he left his firstborn (Belshazzar) in charge of Babylon.¹³

A tablet housed in the British Museum and analyzed by Assyriologist Michael Jursa has a rare correlation with a nonroyal individual mentioned in Jeremiah 39. The royal administrative tablet from the Babylonian city of Sippar dates to 595 B.C., the ninth year of Nebuchadnezzar II. One of the highest officials in the Babylonian court, the “chief eunuch” of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebo-Sarsekim, is recorded as giving an offering of gold at the Éšagila, the temple of Marduk, in Babylon. This official is the same Nebo-Sarsekim mentioned by name in Jeremiah 39, whom Nebuchadnezzar orders to guard and protect the prophet Jeremiah in 587 B.C., when King Zedekiah was taken captive.¹⁴

Such extraordinary discoveries make the stories in the Bible become even more alive. Thousands of other cuneiform tablets in numerous museums remain to be deciphered. Who knows what else we might discover?

CONCLUSION

As a biblical archaeologist, I am passionate about making connections between the dusty remains found in the dirt of excavations and the biblical narrative. Archaeology adds to our grow-

ing knowledge of the biblical world in new and exciting ways. We know and understand details, issues, conflicts, and relationships as never before in the history of biblical studies. We take much of this knowledge for granted, not realizing that just 25 years ago our understanding of the biblical world was much more limited. Exegesis of the biblical text, the study of biblically relevant ancient languages and texts, archaeological excavations of historical remains—each of these areas of study enrich our reading of the Bible. As exciting as these finds are, it is not these fine details but the knowledge that we can have a deep and abiding relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that gives us confidence in the validity of Scripture. It is the love for Scripture and the world of the Bible that drives me forward to continue exploring, learning, and broadening my horizons. 📌

¹ Maynard Paul Maidman, *Nuzi Texts and Their Uses as Historical Evidence*, ed. Ann Guinan (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), p. 4.

² James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 219; John H. Walton, “Genesis,” in *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), vol. 1, pp. 84, 85 (citing note 343).

³ Walton, pp. 86, 87; see also Pritchard, p. 220.

⁴ Translation of ABC 9 in A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), p. 114.

⁵ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Esther: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, Eng.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), p. 68.

⁶ The Nippur Incense Burner (B15521) is at the Penn Museum.

⁷ William G. Zimmerle, “From History to Heritage: The Arabian Incense Burner,” in *Gulf in World History: Arabian, Persian and Global Connections*, ed. Allen James Fromherz (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), ebook.

⁸ William F. Albright, “The Lachish Cosmetic Burner and Esther 2:12,” in *A Light Unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob Meyers*, ed. H. N. Bream, R. D. Heim, and C. A. Moore (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), p. 28.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 29.

¹⁰ The Darius I Relief is in the Archaeological Museum at Tehran, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Darius-I>. Cylinder seal: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010147091>.

¹¹ Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1849), vol. 1, pp. 1-10.

¹² One of the cylinders is located at the British Museum (BM 91125).

¹³ Pritchard, pp. 312, 313; “Verse Account of Nabonidus” (BM 38299).

¹⁴ Jonathan Taylor, “The Babylonian Captivity,” in *Babylon*, ed. I. L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 145, fig. 128. The tablet is in the British Museum (BM 114789).

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THE GOSPEL

Plain and simple

All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3; see also Heb. 1:2; Col. 1:16, 17).

"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7; see also Matt. 1:25; Gal. 4:4).

"Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him" (Mark 15:25; see also Rom. 5:8; Rev. 13:8).

What are these three verses, together, saying about Jesus?

The first verse teaches that whatever once didn't exist but, then, did—did so solely through Jesus, because "without Him nothing was made that was made." It was only in the early decades of the twentieth century that, between astronomy and Albert Einstein, humanity came to believe—instead of in an eternally existing universe (standard fare since Aristotle)—that the universe had been created. From phytoplankton to the 2 trillion galaxies careening through the cosmos—Jesus created it all. Which is a lot. The observable universe is an estimated 93 billion light-years wide. Maybe it is infinite, but we just can't see that far. If not infinite, though, what borders its edges? It can't be "nothing," because if it borders the edges of the universe—then it's something.

The point? If we finite beings can barely grasp the creation, how can we grasp the One who, having created it, must be greater than it?

The second verse teaches that Jesus was born a human into humanity. If He could create the world, then He could certainly incarnate into it, if He wanted.

Bigger than the mystery behind the metaphysics of the Incarnation, then, is the motivation. Why would He put Himself into humanity in the first place?

The answer comes in the third verse. His coming into humanity is amazing enough, but then allowing Himself to be crucified by some of the very souls He came to save? Remember, the One on the cross was the Creator of the cosmos, and He came here specifically to die for our sins (Acts 2:22-24; 1 Peter 2:24). If we have a hard enough time grasping, not just the cosmos but the One who created it—how do we even approach the idea that He, God Himself, died for us contingent, fleeting, and fairly wretched beings?

Also, Jesus' death shows us the blasphemy of salvation by works. What? The self-sacrifice of the Creator of a 93-billion-light-year-wide cosmos (probably more)—that wasn't enough to atone for our sins, so we'll throw in a few good works just in case?

Nothing we do, or conceivably ever could do, could adequately respond to the cross. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't try. The Creator of "all that was made" died for us, offering us salvation, a gift, by faith. And what does He ask in return? To love Him, and to love those for whom He died. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11; see also Luke 10:27).

This is the gospel, plain and simple. 🍴

Clifford Goldstein is editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*. His most recent book is *Risen: Finding Hope in the Empty Tomb*.

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN



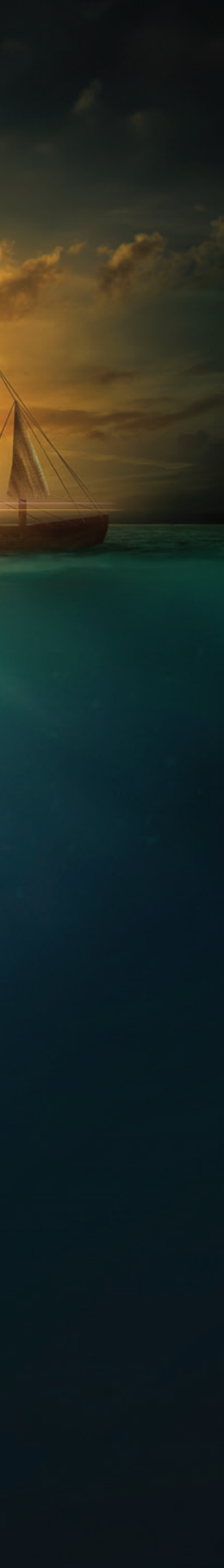
**NOTHING WE DO,
OR CONCEIVABLY
EVER COULD DO,
COULD ADEQUATELY
RESPOND TO
THE CROSS.**

A sunset over the ocean with a sailboat and a person swimming. The sky is filled with golden light and clouds, and the water is a deep blue. A sailboat is visible on the right side of the frame, and a person is swimming in the water in the distance.

Far More Than
**CHILDREN'S
STORIES**

*Cherishing the
inspired narratives
of Scripture*

JO ANN DAVIDSON



There is a wide range of literary styles employed by many different writers in the Bible. The biblical writers worked in many different centuries without collaboration with each other, yet their writings amazingly cohere. The writers use numerous literary conventions because no single literary form would be adequate to provide comprehensive expression of divine glory. The biblical canon is greater than the sum of its many parts.¹ Some today treat biblical narratives as merely stories for children that can be left behind as one grows more intellectually sophisticated. But this results in a shallow consideration of narrative texts.

Biblical narratives have their own integrity and authenticity and deserve careful attention to their unique expression. Instead of being nice stories for children and merely “secondary materials” for mature readers, biblical narratives call for alert and informed readers. Though having a simple surface texture, they are very sophisticated writing—valuable for their historicity and brilliant theological expression. This shouldn’t be surprising, as the Author is divine and abounds in skill and grace! Thankfully biblical narratives are more and more appreciated for being well written and historically accurate.

UNPARALLELED IN ANCIENT TIMES

Regarding their historical value, temporal scope, and persuasive strategy, biblical narratives have no parallel in ancient times. Alone among ancient texts, they present a people who kept their historical memory alive—recognizing that the past affected the present and determined the future.

Biblical writers used unique rules of discourse, often anchoring facts in aesthetic frameworks. It is this record that caused one distinguished historian to declare the Bible as “the greatest surprise in the whole story” of history writing. There emerged a people “possibly more obsessed with history than any other nation that has ever existed. . . . It was this historical memory which made Israel a people.”² The people of Israel “stand alone amongst the people of the ancient world in having the story of their beginnings and their primitive state as clear as this in their folk-memory,” in creating the history of a nation and even of humanity itself.³ In short, “ancient Israel provides, therefore, a pocket-size example of the very rise of historiography.”⁴

The biblical canon, with its unprecedented scope, is now recognized as an important landmark in the development of history writing, including:

- clarified customs.
- ancient names and current sayings traced back to their origins.
- monuments and decrees assigned concrete reasons and a slot in history.
- persons, places, and pedigrees specified as if inviting the reader to check it out.

Scripture refers to other written records, such as the Book of Yashar or royal annals, because historicity matters. Writers anchored narratives in public and accessible traces of reality to undergird their veracity.

UNFOLDING THEOLOGY IN ACTION

Narrative history thereby unfolds a theology in action—distinctly grounded in God’s providence and control, enjoining a remembrance of His wonders from Creation onward,

including the Exodus from Egypt (an Old Testament focal point)—uniquely explaining the passing of time in reference to God’s covenantal relationship with His people. Hebrew writers wrote about real history. To the narrator, history is an affair between heaven and earth. God wants His creatures to know Him—biblical writers providing a long sequence of divinely inspired and historically valid narratives recording this. God is the author, the source and norm of truth who inspired the human writers. If we lose sight of this, we misunderstand the nature of biblical narratives, which provide inspired descriptions of what really happened.

Biblical narratives can be underread and overread, but should never be counter-read. The narrator always tells the truth and is straightforwardly reliable. Critics have tried to quarrel with the facts, with some calling the narratives fiction. But taken at face value, the narratives are accounts of truth communicated and recorded with highest authority. In terms of the internal established premises—and these alone must determine interpretation—readers cannot go far wrong if they do little more than follow the statements made and the incidents presented. Statements can be expressed in a cryptic manner, though, so it is important to be sensitive to possible implications.

Scripture’s narratives cover many issues, including how God deals with everyone, within the covenant line and outside of it, with the same standard of justice. This is seen through the repetition of key words and phrases, subtle comparisons, and even irony in the divine actions with different people and nations. The Bible’s verbal artistry, without precedent in ancient history and unrivaled since, operates with its own art and sequential linkages. We cannot separate the literary aspects from theology any more than we can separate word from thought. Every narrative breathes out a deliberate theological vision of reality. At its heart the Christian gospel itself is not an abstract system but a living story, which the divine Author often proclaims through narrative writing.

PAYING ATTENTION TO IMPORTANT DETAILS

The nature of the parts, the vocabulary, and units are carefully governed by the whole biblical canon. Seemingly incidental details need to be noted with shrewd observation. Details apparently unnecessary earlier will become clear later. For example, the mention of Absalom cutting and weighing his hair seems extraneous—this detail



regarding hair isn’t noted of David’s other sons. But later the significance of the detail becomes clear when Absalom’s hair gets caught in a tree—the lead-in to his death (2 Sam. 14:26; 18:8-14).

Such literary conventions as chiasmic and panel structures highlight vital issues in the narrative as well. Careful study of biblical narratives is more than just an aesthetic study of craftsmanship, but not less than that. Of primary concern is to understand the truth of the text at a deeper level. Narrative texts do not come right out and announce their themes—hiding theology in plain sight.

Narrative sequences likewise aid interpretation. For example, Genesis covers approximately 2,500 years in 50 chapters—with the first two of those 50 chapters pausing over only seven days—an example of narrative time “slowing down”—indicating the importance of the Creator’s acts. Chapter 3 narrates the fall of Adam and Eve. The reader is not told how long they lived in Eden before they sinned. Instead, chapters 1 and 2 describe the “very good” world God created and chapter 3 suddenly presents the dreadful, all-encompassing, results of the Fall. This striking contrast reveals the deadly nature of sin.

STORIES THAT PREPARE HEARTS AND MINDS

God, the Creator and Master Artist, chose to reveal Himself through a sacred story that resembles more the imaginative works of epic poets and tragedians than the rational abstract materials of philosophers and theologians. The gospel story spreads its light both forward and backward to connect and inform all biblical narratives, speaking of messianic promise and eschatological hope, of redemption and reconciliation. Through psalms and prophets, as well as the “epic” tales of the Old Testament—Abraham’s long circuitous journey, Joseph and his brothers, the Passover and Exodus—the divine Author, using poets, storytellers, and prophets, sought to instruct and prepare hearts and minds of people for salvation in Christ.⁵

Through its many writers and narratives we are confronted with an omnipotent God who is in earnest to communicate His ways and love to human beings, whom He loves more than His own life.

The extraordinary technical inventiveness of the ancient Hebrew writers is increasingly acknowledged and extolled—including how biblical texts refer to other biblical texts. The way Hebrew writers allude to other biblical verses connects the texts together with an amazing, overarching unity.

Narrative writers often describe rather than state truths. For example, instead of providing abstract propositions about virtue or vice, narratives depict people in action. The commandment “You shall not murder” is propositional and direct. Far earlier, the narrative of Cain and Abel embodies the same truth without even using the word “murder.”

The extraordinary technical inventiveness of the ancient Hebrew writers include repetition (a major tool for underscoring a vital issue) and dialogue. Narrative dialogues are a vital key for understanding biblical narratives. Rarely involving more than two persons, the recorded dialogues often furnish a major insight into what the narrative is about. For example, the first chapter of the book of Job is a dialogue between God and Satan providing background to what happens to Job, and why. In Genesis 3 the dialogues of the Creator with Adam and Eve after their sin indicate the deadly nature of sin. In Genesis 4 God’s dialogues with Cain right after Cain murders his brother—assuring that God seeks to save the lost! Intriguing also is Abraham’s dialogue with God over the fate of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:20-23), as well as Moses’ numerous dialogues with God.

THE STORY OF JONAH

In the book of Jonah the reader doesn’t discover the real reason Jonah refused to go to Nineveh at first until the last chapter through the dialogue of Jonah and God. There Jonah finally admits that he knew God would be merciful with Israel’s archenemy. In the concluding verses of the book, Jonah is reminded by God that His compassion and mercy are not divine flaws—and even extend to animals (Jonah 4:11)!

The narrator pays much more attention to the problematic character of Jonah than the violent

practices of Nineveh—recording more of Jonah’s rebellion than Nineveh’s wickedness. The four chapters of the book thus highlight God’s boundless mercy to pagan sailors, violent Ninevites, and even to the petulant prophet himself in spite of his callous disobedience. Moreover, Jonah tries to hide from God’s presence (just as Adam, Eve, and Cain had earlier)—recalling sin’s appalling nature (Gen. 2:8; 4:9-16; Jonah 1:2, 10).

There are no textual indicators that the book of Jonah is a parable or anything but a true historical record. However, because of the obedient fish, worm, and wind, critics of Jonah’s book do not accept it as true history.⁶ Yet the opening words—“And it came to pass”—are used in many biblical narratives that are not questioned regarding their historicity.

MORE THAN A BOOK

The God of heaven has authored a book! But truly it is more than a book. The biblical canon is not some disjointed collection of miscellaneous documents. Through its many writers and narratives we are confronted with an omnipotent God who is in earnest to communicate His ways and love to human beings, whom He loves more than His own life. The biblical canon has a power all its own. God awaits us in His text—the narratives being a major aspect of this holy historical record. ▀

¹ There are letters (Jer. 29); royal edicts (Ezra 1); songs (Isa. 5); sermons (Deut.), court records (2 Sam. 20:23-26), liturgical rubrics (Lev. 6), parables (2 Sam. 12), allusions to ancient Near Eastern myths (Isa. 51:9), genealogies (1 Chron. 1-9), codes of moral teaching (Ex. 20), accounts of battles (2 Kings 23), love songs (S. of Sol.), historical data (2 Kings 14:26-28), and especially numerous narratives.

² Herbert Butterfield, *The Origins of History* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 80-82.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

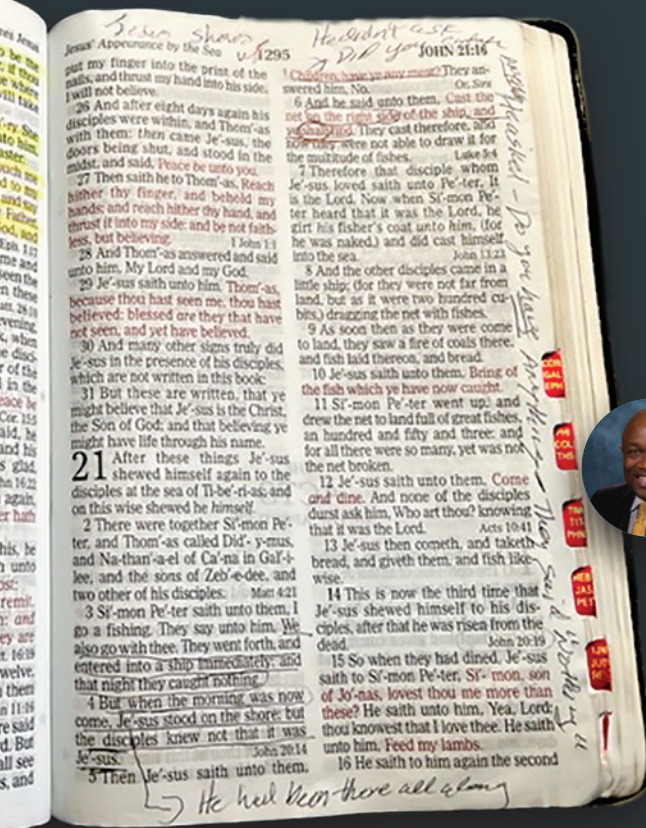
⁵ Ellen White eloquently addresses this issue: “The study of the Bible demands our most diligent effort and persevering thought. As the miner digs for the golden treasure in the earth, so earnestly, persistently, must we seek for the treasure of God’s Word” (*Education* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903], p. 189).

⁶ For a fuller consideration of the Jonah narrative, see Jo Ann Davidson, *Jonah, the Inside Story* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2003).

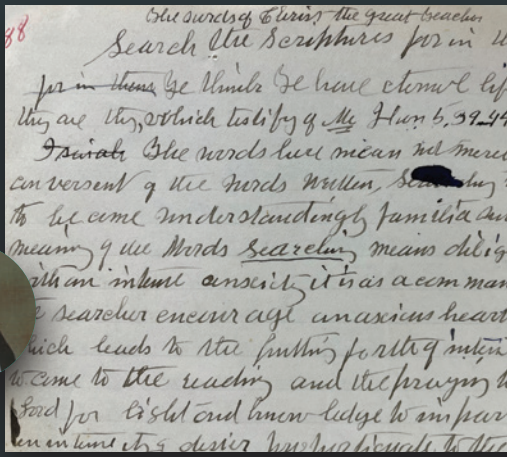
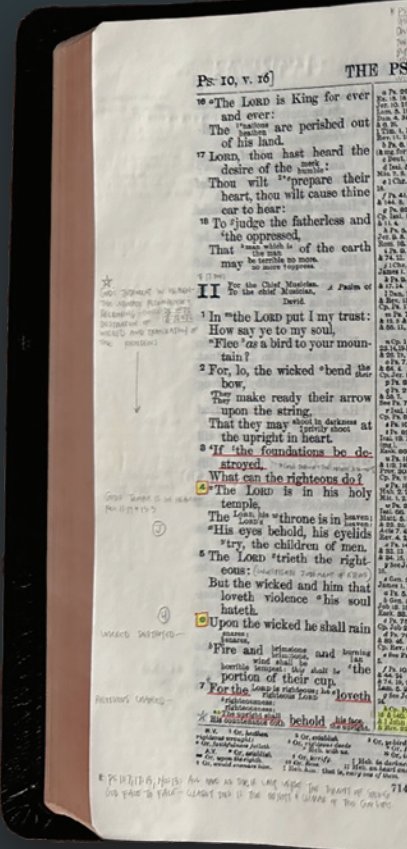
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BIBLE STUDY GALLERY

Requiring skill and imagination, the study of God's Word is, in effect, an art form. An art that has benefited from the advent of technology. For many, laptops, tablets, desktops, and smartphones, providing access to a wealth of Bible study resources, have become a part of their Bible study routine. Yet the tactile practice of highlighting and notetaking by hand, which increases information retention, still remains an integral aspect of the Bible study experience. The visual product of the art form of Bible study, with its colors, lines, pages of notes, and screenshots, form the substance of this gallery of Bible study.



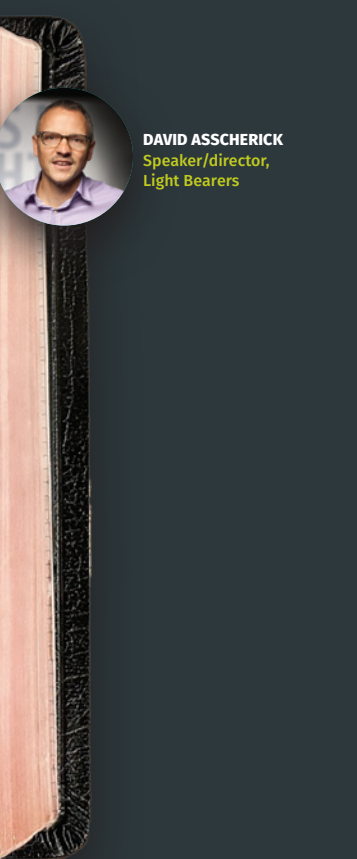
G. ALEXANDER BRYANT
President, North American
Division of the General Conference
of Seventh-day Adventists



ELLEN G. WHITE
(COMMENTARY ON JOHN 5:39)
Pioneer, Seventh-day
Adventist Church

Ps. 13, v. 1
12 For the chief musician, set to the tune of the chief musician, upon Sheminith. A Psalm of David.
1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth:
2 For the faithful fall from among the children of men:
3 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour:
4 With flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.
5 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,
6 And the tongue that speaketh great things:
7 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail;
8 Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?
9 For the spoiling of the poor, and for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD;
10 I will set him in safety at whom they speak.
11 The words of the LORD are pure words:
12 As silver tried in a furnace on the earth,
13 Purified seven times.
14 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD.
15 Thou shalt preserve them from ever.
16 The wicked walk on every side,
17 When thine is exalted among the sons of men,
18 The LORD's name.
19 How long, O LORD, wilt thou forget me, O LORD?
20 How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

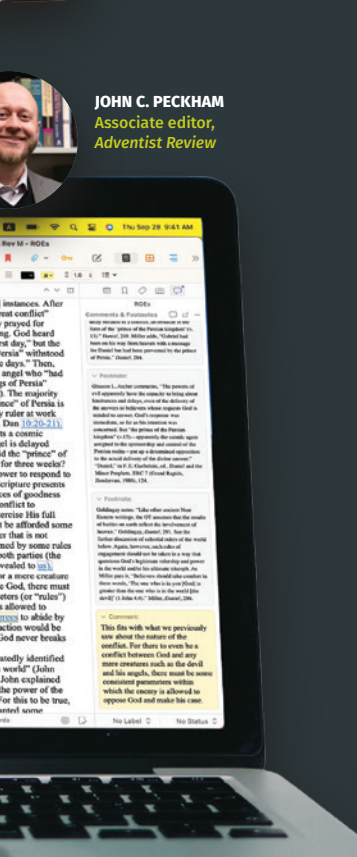
Ps. 13, v. 2 THE PSALMS [Ps. 16, v. 1]
2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
3 Having sorrow in my heart, because I have provoked against him?
4 How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
5 Consider and hear me, O LORD my God:
6 Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;
7 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him:
8 I am moved, but I have trusted in thy mercy:
9 My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.
10 I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.
11 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.
12 They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.
13 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
14 To see if there were any that did understand,
15 And that sought after God.
16 They are all gone together, they are all together become filthy:
17 There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
18 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
19 Who eat up my people as they eat bread,
20 And call not upon the LORD:
21 There were they in great fear:
22 For God is in the generation of the righteous,
23 Because the LORD is his refuge,
24 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!
25 When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people,
26 Then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.
15 LORD, who shall stand in thy tabernacle?
2 Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
3 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
4 And speaketh truth in his heart,
5 He that despiseth not with his tongue,
6 Nor doeth evil to his friend,
7 Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
8 In whose eyes a person is despised,
9 But he honoureth them that fear the LORD.
10 He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
11 He that putteth not out his money to usury,
12 Nor taketh reward against the innocent.
13 He that doeth these things shall never be moved.
16 Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.



DAVID ASSCHERICK
Speaker/director,
Light Bearers

Ps. 13, v. 1
12 For the chief musician, set to the tune of the chief musician, upon Sheminith. A Psalm of David.
1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth:
2 For the faithful fall from among the children of men:
3 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour:
4 With flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.
5 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,
6 And the tongue that speaketh great things:
7 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail;
8 Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?
9 For the spoiling of the poor, and for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD;
10 I will set him in safety at whom they speak.
11 The words of the LORD are pure words:
12 As silver tried in a furnace on the earth,
13 Purified seven times.
14 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD.
15 Thou shalt preserve them from ever.
16 The wicked walk on every side,
17 When thine is exalted among the sons of men,
18 The LORD's name.
19 How long, O LORD, wilt thou forget me, O LORD?
20 How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

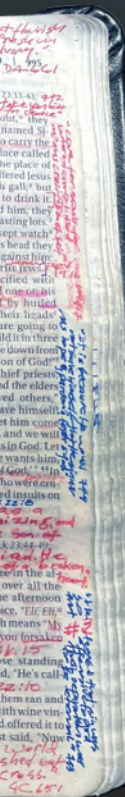
Ps. 13, v. 2 THE PSALMS [Ps. 16, v. 1]
2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
3 Having sorrow in my heart, because I have provoked against him?
4 How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
5 Consider and hear me, O LORD my God:
6 Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;
7 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him:
8 I am moved, but I have trusted in thy mercy:
9 My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.
10 I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.
11 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.
12 They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.
13 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
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15 And that sought after God.
16 They are all gone together, they are all together become filthy:
17 There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
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20 And call not upon the LORD:
21 There were they in great fear:
22 For God is in the generation of the righteous,
23 Because the LORD is his refuge,
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4 And speaketh truth in his heart,
5 He that despiseth not with his tongue,
6 Nor doeth evil to his friend,
7 Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
8 In whose eyes a person is despised,
9 But he honoureth them that fear the LORD.
10 He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
11 He that putteth not out his money to usury,
12 Nor taketh reward against the innocent.
13 He that doeth these things shall never be moved.
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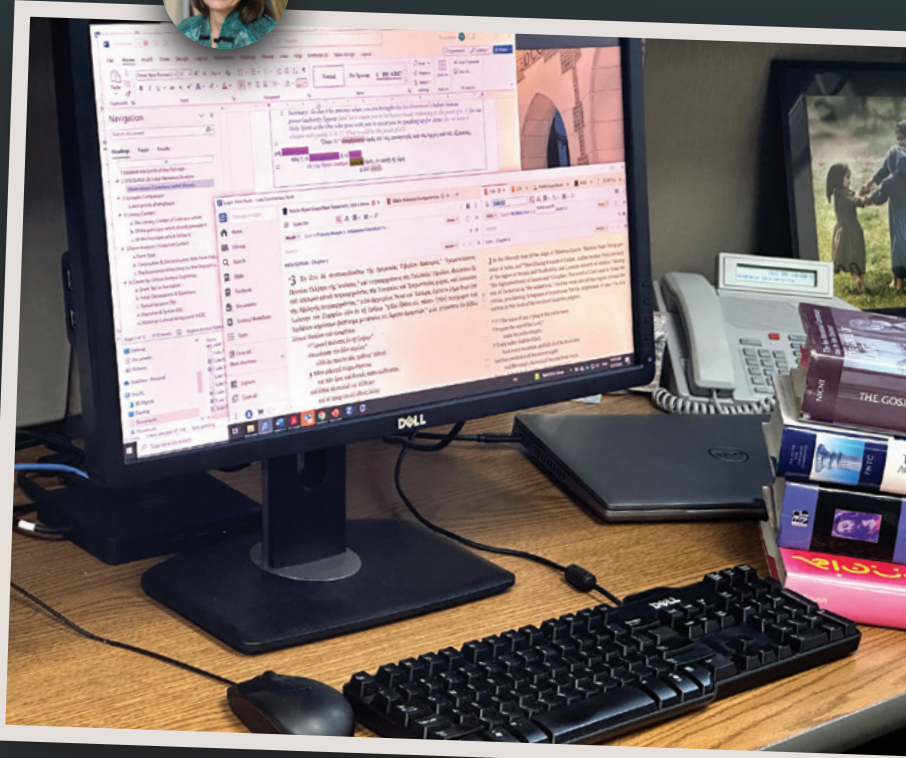
JOHN C. PECKHAM
Associate editor,
Adventist Review

These are not isolated instances. After receiving a message of a "great conflict" (Dan 10:1), Daniel fervently prayed for three weeks for understanding. God heard Daniel's words "from the first day," but the "prince of Persia" withheld God's angel for "twenty-one days." Then, Michael "came to help" the angel who "had been left there with the kings of Persia" (Dan 10:2, 12-13, 19:20). The majority of scholars believe this "prince" of Persia is a celestial being, a heavenly ruler at work behind the human ruler (cf. Dan 10:20-21). Daniel 10 thus depicts a cosmic conflict wherein God's angel is delayed three weeks. But, how could the "prince" of Persia oppose God's angel for three weeks? God possessed the sheer power to respond to Daniel immediately. Yet, Scripture presents a real conflict between forces of goodness and darkness. For such a conflict to transpire, God must not exercise His full power and the enemy must be afforded some genuine freedom and power that is not arbitrarily removed, governed by some rules of engagement known to both parties (the details of which are not revealed to us). Indeed, as noted earlier, for a mere creature such as the ruler to oppose God, there must be some consistent parameters (or "rules") which the enemy is allowed to operate. Insofar as God engages to be by such "rules," God's own action would be morally limited because God never breaks His word.

Jesus Himself repeatedly identified Satan as the "prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and John explained "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19). For this to be true, Satan must have had restricted some



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Handwritten notes on a printed page of text from the Bible, including the Gospel of John and the Acts of the Apostles. The notes are written in red and blue ink.

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who do receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.' " 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

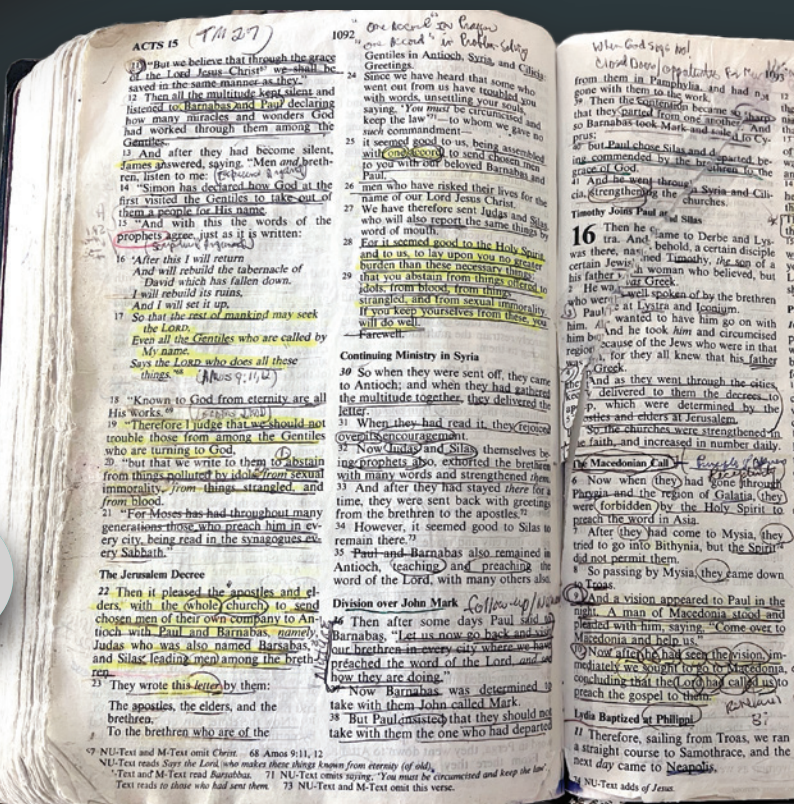
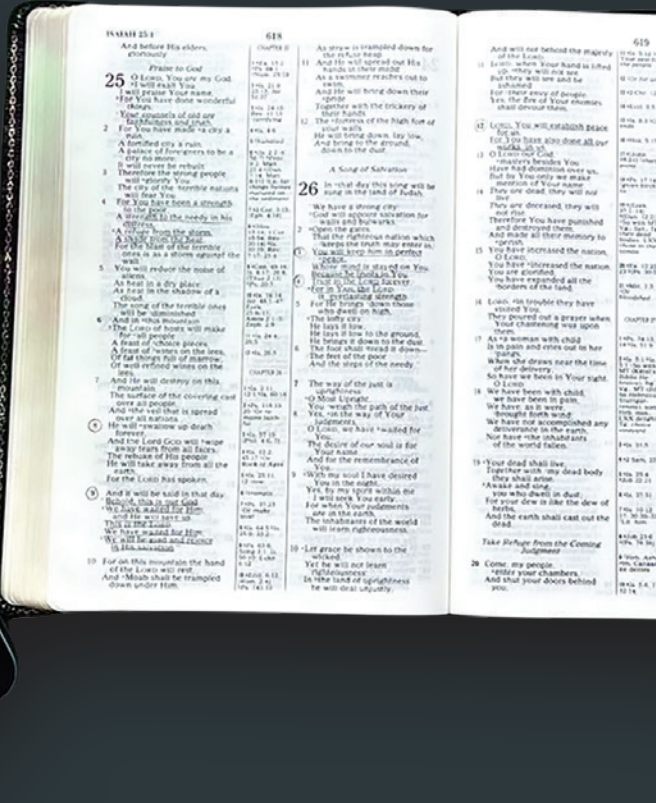
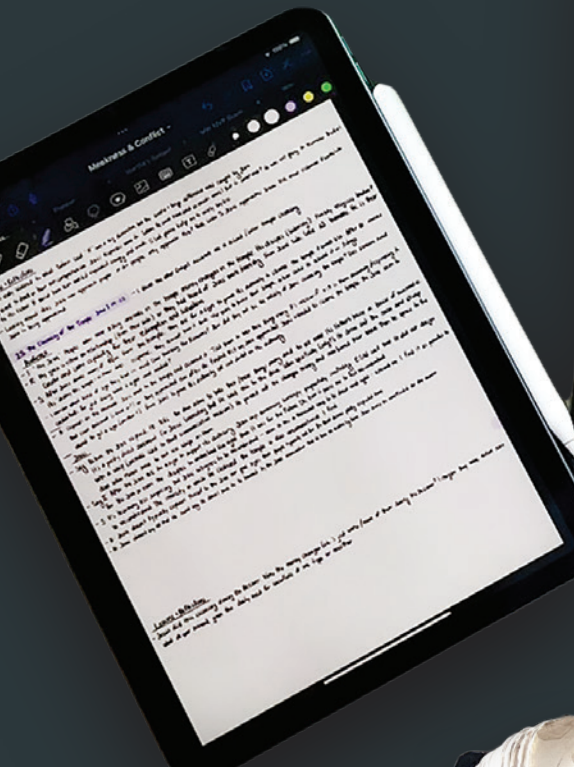
The Testimony of John the Baptist

19 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness. 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." 24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) 25 They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, Elijah, or the Prophet?"

Handwritten notes in red and blue ink are scattered throughout the page, providing commentary and cross-references.



SHAWN BOONSTRA
Speaker/director,
Voice of
Prophecy Ministry



MARK A. FINLEY
Retired vice president, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



ACTS 15 (71-77)

10 "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

11 Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.

12 And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men brethren, listen to me: (Reverence & respect)

13 "Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name."

14 "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: (Scripture)

15 "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up."

16 "So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name. Says the Lord who does all these things."⁶⁸ (Amos 9:11,12)

17 "Known to God from eternity are all His works."⁶⁹ (Ephesians 3:10)

18 "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God."

19 "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."

20 "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

The Jerusalem Decree

22 Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabbas,⁷⁰ and Silas, (leading on) among the brethren.

23 They wrote this letter by them: To the brethren who are of the

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one record in Cyprus and record in Paphos, Salamis

24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law," to whom we gave no such commandment—

25 it seemed good to us, being attended with one accord, to send chosen men with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

26 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report to you the things which we have decided.

27 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

Continuing Ministry in Syria

30 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

31 When they had read it, they rejoiced exceedingly with encouragement.

32 Now Judas and Silas themselves being prophets also, exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them.

33 And after they had stayed there for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles.

34 However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there.⁷¹

35 Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Division over John Mark

36 Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and now they are doing."

37 Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.

38 But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed

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when God spoke to them in Pamphlygia, and had gone with them to Antioch, and had said that they gathered from one another, so Barnabas took Mark, and made him to go with him.

16 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

17 Timothy joined Paul at Asia.

18 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra, and behold, a certain disciple of a his father, a woman who believed, but who was not Greek.

19 He was called Theophilus.

20 And he was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

21 Paul wanted to have him go with him, and he took him and circumcised him, because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

22 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

23 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

24 The Macedonian Call

25 Now after they had finished their journey from Perga and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to pass the word in Asia.

26 After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

27 So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

28 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help me."

29 Now after they had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

30 Lydia Baptized by Phillip

31 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis.

⁶⁷ NU-Text and M-Text omit Christ. ⁶⁸ Amos 9:11, 12. ⁶⁹ NU-Text reads Says the Lord, who makes these things known from eternity (of old). ⁷⁰ Text and M-Text read Barsabbas. ⁷¹ NU-Text omits saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law." Text reads to those who had seen them. ⁷² NU-Text and M-Text omit this verse.

ESAIAS 27:30
 Hide yourself as a dove
 'Tis a little animal
 Lest the midwives in pain
 For behind the Lark 'comes
 out of his place
 To punish the whippers of the
 earth for their iniquity
 The earth who also discloses her
 Ark will no more cover her
 skin

27 In the day the Lark with his
 horns twirls, gives and
 sings
 Will punish Larkish the
 living serpent
 'Levathan that I wanted serpent
 And his with 'rags' the repair
 that is in the sea

The Restoration of Israel
 1 In that day 'sing to her
 'A vineyard of red wine
 'The Lark, as if
 I were a curly minstrel
 I keep it night and day
 'I will not let it
 Who would set 'vines and
 vines
 Against Me in battle?
 I would go through them,
 I would burn them together
 Or let them take hold of My
 strength
 That he may make peace with
 Me
 And he shall make peace with
 Me

Those who come He shall cover
 'To take root in Israel
 And fill the face of the world
 with fruit

2 'Has He struck Israel as He
 struck those who struck him?
 Or has He been true to his
 covenant with those who were
 slain by Him?
 'In measure, by sending it away
 You contended with Me
 He removes it by His wrath
 and
 in the day of the staff wind
 Therefore by that the sign of
 Israel will be covered
 And this is all the fruit of
 violence away his sin
 When he makes all the stones
 'Like chalkstones that are
 level
 Wooden shakes and increase
 'Dark the stones
 19 Yet the fortified city will be
 'Desolate
 The tower of the watchmen
 and left like a widow's.



CALLIE BURUCHARA
 Software engineer,
 Harrisonburg, Virginia

Handwritten notes in a notebook, including a blue bookmark and an orange pen. The notes appear to be a translation or commentary on the Isaiah text on the left.

Philippians of Macedonia
 ACTS 16
 and from there to Philippi which is
 the chief city of that part of Macedonia
 a colony. And we were staying in
 the city for some days.
 And on the Sabbath day we went out
 by the city to the riverside, where prayer
 was customarily made; and we sat down
 and spoke to the women who met there.
 Now a certain woman, named Lydia,
 a seller of purple from the city of
 Thyatira, who worshipped God,
 heard us; and she desired to hear
 the things spoken by Paul.
 And when she and her household
 were baptized, she begged us, saying,
 "If you have judged me to be faithful to
 the Lord, come to my house and stay."
 And we consented to her.

Paul and Silas Imprisoned
 Now it happened, as we went to
 pray, that a certain slave-girl possessed
 with a spirit of divination met us, who
 brought her masters much profit by
 fortune-telling.
 This girl followed Paul and us, and
 cried out, saying, "These men are the
 servants of the Most High God, who
 are proclaiming to us the way of salvation."
 And this she did for many days.
 Paul, greatly annoyed, tore and they were
 of his spirit, "I command you in the name
 of Jesus Christ to come out of her!"
 And she came out that very hour.
 Then her masters saw that the source
 of their profit was gone, they seized
 Paul and Silas and dragged them
 into the marketplace to the authorities.
 And they brought them to stand before
 the magistrates, and said, "These men
 are disturbing the city, because they
 teach customs which are not lawful
 for us to observe."
 Then the multitude gathered
 against them; and the assembly was
 so full that they did not know
 how to deal with them.
 And when they had beaten Paul and
 Silas, they threw them into prison,
 commanding the jailer to watch them
 closely.
 Having received their money,
 they took them into the inner
 prison, where they were both.



CARLTON P. BYRD
 President,
 Southwest
 Region
 Conference

JOHN 3
 16 "For God so loved the world,
 that he gave his only begotten
 Son, that whosoever believeth in
 him should not perish, but have
 everlasting life.
 17 "For God sent not his Son
 into the world to condemn the
 world; but that the world through
 him might be saved.
 18 "He that believeth on him is
 not condemned; but he that believ-
 eth not is condemned already, be-
 cause he hath not believed in the
 name of the only begotten Son of
 God.
 19 And this is the condemna-
 tion, that light is come into the
 world, and men loved darkness
 rather than light, because their
 deeds were evil.
 20 For every one that doeth
 evil hateth the light, neither
 cometh to the light, lest his deeds
 should be reproved.
 21 But he that doeth truth
 cometh to the light, that his
 deeds may be made manifest,
 that they are wrought in God.

John the Baptist testifies of Jesus
 22 After these things came Je-
 sus and his disciples into the land

of Judea; and there he tarried
 with them, and baptized.
 23 And John also was baptiz-
 ing in Aeon near to Salim, be-
 cause there was much water there;
 and they came, and were bap-
 tized.
 24 For John was not yet cast
 into prison.
 25 Then there arose a question
 between some of John's disciples
 and the Jews about purifying.
 26 And they came unto John,
 and said unto him, Rabbi, he that
 was with thee beyond Jordan, who
 whom thou barest witness, behold,
 the same baptizeth, and all men
 come to him.
 27 John answered and said, "A
 man can receive nothing, except it
 be given him from heaven.
 28 Ye yourselves bear me wit-
 ness, that I said, 'I am not the
 Christ, but that I am sent before
 him.'
 29 "He that hath the bride is the
 bridegroom; but the friend of the
 bridegroom, which standeth and
 heareth him, rejoiceth greatly
 because of the bridegroom's
 voice: this my joy therefore is ful-
 filled.

3:18. This verse answers the question, "Why do people go to hell?" It is because they do not believe in Jesus.
 3:22-24. Here are the concurrent ministries of Jesus and John. Sometimes the other gospels may leave the impression that John's ministry ended when Jesus began. Although it did decrease, it continued for a season (cf. Acts 19:1-7).
 3:23. Much water suggests that John's baptism was probably by immersion.



HOLY BIBLE

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT BIBLE TEXTS

FRANK M. HASEL

That the Bible is the authoritative standard for faith and practice implies not only its truthfulness and trustworthiness but also that the Bible is sufficiently clear to be understood correctly. This conviction is repeatedly affirmed by the biblical writers and by Jesus Christ Himself. Questions such as “Have you not read?” (Matt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31; Mark 12:26) or references to “It is written” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10) or such statements as “Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4, ESV) indicate that Jesus and the apostles expected people to be able to read *and* understand the meaning of Scripture accurately so that they could practice it faithfully. While the response of the reader can affect the ability to understand the text, the response of the reader does not determine the meaning of the biblical text. The reader can misunderstand Scripture, but it is the text of Scripture that ultimately determines its own meaning. That’s why the biblical writers refer to Scripture time and again to establish their teachings.

WHY ARE SOME BIBLE PASSAGES DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND?

In stark contrast to skeptics and critics of the Bible, the Bible writers affirm the truthfulness of Scripture and do not give any clear warrant for the belief in the existence or prevalence of errors that would question the Bible’s infallible authority and reliability. One reason that some perceive apparent mistakes in the Bible is that they rely on a poor translation that might convey a wrong or misleading meaning of the original words. To understand *difficult* statements in Scripture, it is best to have a thorough knowledge of the biblical languages and to study the Bible in Hebrew and Greek. Where this is not the case, one should at least compare several good Bible translations before drawing any conclusions.¹ It is possible that some mistakes have occurred in the process of transmitting the Bible manuscripts.² Yet those minor mistakes that have crept in through the subsequent process of copying and translating Bible manuscripts are so insignificant that not one honest soul need stumble over them.³

Yet the question remains: Why are some Bible passages difficult to understand? Even the apostle Peter knew about the challenge to understand some of Paul’s writings “in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter

3:16). The challenges of such difficult passages in the Bible have been recognized by serious students throughout history, and we do well to remember that most likely we are not the first readers of Scripture to discover them. It is quite probable that other careful scholars of Scripture have noted the same difficulty long before us and most likely have come up with a solution. Just because I am not acquainted with a solution to a problem in Scripture does not mean that no solution exists.⁴

This brief article cannot deal with all aspects relating to the interpretation of the Bible,⁵ but here are some thoughts that can help relative to dealing with Bible difficulties.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES IN SCRIPTURE

Peter states that only “some things” are hard to understand with Paul. Not all things are difficult to understand! In fact, most things in Scripture are quite clear and can be understood very well. We should not let the few statements in the Bible that are more difficult darken the many passages that are clear. We must decide whether we want to build our faith on things that are uncertain and hard to understand or whether we want to build our faith on those things that are very clear. An important principle of biblical interpretation is that we should always move from the clear statements of Scripture to those that are less clear. We aim to shed light from the clear statements of the Bible on those passages that are more challenging. Never the other way around.

In dealing with biblical statements, we also need to remember that the Bible writers frequently used nontechnical, ordinary, everyday language to describe things. For example, they spoke of sunrise (Num. 2:3; Joshua 19:12) and sunset (Deut. 11:30; Dan. 6:14), i.e., they used the language of appearance rather than scientific language. One must not confuse a social convention with a scientific affirmation. The need for technical precision varies according to the situation in which a statement is made. Therefore, imprecision cannot be equated with untruthfulness. Furthermore, the biblical writers did not write in a technically perfect yet unknown heavenly Esperanto, but in ordinary everyday language. All human language is deficient in its ability to describe the totality of reality. Yet the language that is used by the biblical writers is not mislead-

ing in what it describes, but faithfully reflects what God wanted to communicate through it. Even fallible human beings are fully capable to communicate truthfully. Hence the repeated warning in Scripture not to change or add anything to the written Word (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:18, 19).

In dealing with difficulties in Scripture, we must also remember that many so-called mistakes are not the result of God’s revelation, but are the result of the misinterpretation of humans. Ellen White has pointed out that “many contradictory opinions in regard to what the Bible teaches do not arise from any obscurity in the book itself, but from blindness and prejudice on the part of interpreters. Men ignore the plain statements of the Bible to follow their own perverted reason.”⁶ Thus, often the problem is not so much with the biblical text but rather with the interpreter. It has been said that for some people the most difficult Bible verses are not those passages that are difficult to understand, but rather those statements of Scripture that they can clearly understand but are not willing to obey.

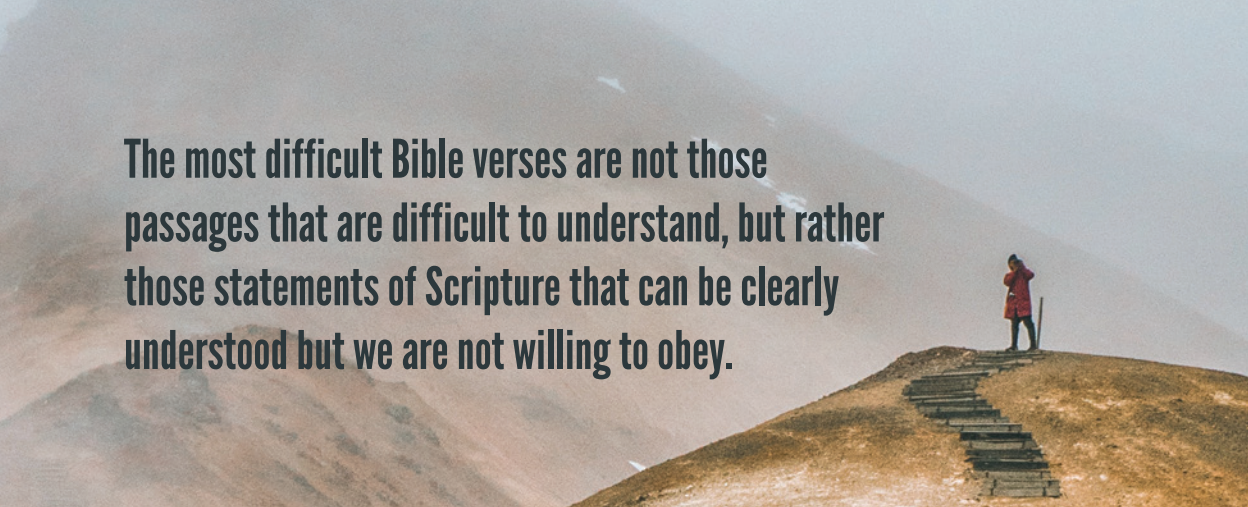
This leads to another challenge in biblical interpretation that we often face when dealing with difficult passages. There is a negative effect of sin on our understanding of Scripture. Sin darkens our understanding of God’s Word and leads to pride, self-deception, doubt, and a distortion of meaning that ultimately ends in disobedience.⁷ Unwillingness to follow God’s revealed will negatively affects our ability to grow in our understanding of Scripture and to interpret it correctly. Disobedience and deliberate sin are effective barriers to knowing God’s truth (Ps. 66:18). A persistent opposition to God’s revealed truth leads to a point in which the disobedient person is unable to hear and understand God’s Word properly.

APPROACHING SCRIPTURE WITH THE RIGHT SPIRIT

So what does it take, then, to approach the study of God’s Word, including those difficult passages, with the right spirit?⁸

Maintain integrity: When we deal with a difficult passage in Scripture, we do well to approach it in perfect honesty. God is “pleased with integrity” (1 Chron. 29:17, NIV). This implies, first, that we acknowledge a difficulty and do not try to obscure or to evade it. An honest person has an open mind set that is receptive toward the message and subject matter of what is being studied.

The most difficult Bible verses are not those passages that are difficult to understand, but rather those statements of Scripture that can be clearly understood but we are not willing to obey.



Furthermore, honesty includes the willingness not to twist the evidence or to come to premature conclusions because of a lack of evidence. In biblical and archaeological studies the absence of external evidence is no evidence for the absence of things that are affirmed by Scripture. Honesty also requires the use of proper methods of investigation. To explain and understand the Word of God correctly, we cannot use methods with naturalistic presuppositions that are based on atheistic premises that run counter to God's Word.

Deal with difficulties prayerfully: Prayer is no substitute for hard work and thorough study. In prayer, however, we confess that we are dependent upon God to understand His Word. It is an expression of humility that acknowledges that God and His Word are greater than our human reason and even greater than our current understanding. On our knees we can ask for the leading of the Holy Spirit and gain a new perspective of the biblical text that we would not have had if we had placed ourselves above the Word of God.

Explain Scripture with Scripture: With God as the ultimate author of Scripture, we can assume a fundamental unity among its various parts. This means that to deal with challenging aspects of Scripture, we need to deal with all difficulties scripturally. The best solution to Bible difficulties is still found in the Bible itself. There is no better explanation than explaining Scripture with Scripture. This means that we must compare Scripture with Scripture, taking into consideration the biblical context in which a statement is found.

Be patient: While all the aspects mentioned above can help in dealing with any difficulty in Scripture with confidence, it will not always produce an easy or swift solution. We must be determined

that no matter how much time and study and hard thinking it may require, we will patiently work on finding a solution. At the same time, as we wrestle with difficult Bible passages we should focus on the main points and not get overwhelmed by or get lost in some insignificant details. And if some problems persistently defy even our hardest efforts to solve them, we should not get discouraged. Perhaps God has allowed some difficult parts of Scripture to exist to demonstrate how determined we are to study its meaning and how important the Bible is to us. Part of our perseverance is to be able to live with open questions, yet to joyfully embrace and obey the many passages that are clear to us. ▀

¹ For a recent evaluation of the strength and weaknesses of various Bible translations from an Adventist perspective, see Clinton Wahlen, "Variants, Versions, and the Trustworthiness of Scripture," in Frank M. Hasel, ed., *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 2020), pp. 63-103.

² Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 1, p. 16; cf. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 246.

³ E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 17.

⁴ Some recent books that deal with difficult Bible passages are Gerhard Pfandl, *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 2017); Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), and Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

⁵ If you want to dig deeper and explore important aspects of biblical interpretation, see the discussion in Frank M. Hasel, ed., *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Adventist Approach*.

⁶ Ellen G. White, "Thoroughness in Christian Work," *Review and Herald*, Jan. 27, 1885, par. 8.

⁷ See Frank M. Hasel, "Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture," in George W. Reid, ed., *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), pp. 30-32.

⁸ In the following I follow closely Frank M. Hasel, "Are There Mistakes in the Bible?" in Gerhard Pfandl, ed., *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers* (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 2017), pp. 38-40.

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OUR GREAT TREASURE-HOUSE

*The Bible is to be
understood by all.*

ELLEN G. WHITE

The enemy knows that to a great degree the mind is affected by that upon which it feeds. He is seeking to lead both the youth and those of mature age to read story books, tales, and other literature. Those who yield to this temptation soon lose their relish for solid reading. They have no interest in Bible study. Their moral powers become enfeebled. Sin appears less and less repulsive. There is manifest an increasing unfaithfulness, a growing distaste for life's practical duties. . . .

WHAT SHALL WE READ?

"The Bible is the book of books. If you love the Word of God, searching it as you have opportunity, that you may come into the possession of the rich treasure that it contains, and be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, then you may be assured that Jesus is drawing you to Himself. But to read the Scriptures in a casual way, without seeking to comprehend Christ's lessons or to comply with His requirements, is not enough. There are treasures in the Word of God that can be discovered only by sinking the shaft deep into the mines of truth."

"The Bible, with its precious gems of truth, was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people. The poor man needs it as much as the rich man, the unlearned as much as the learned. It is a great mistake for ministers to give people the impression that they can not understand the teachings of the Word of God, and should be content with the interpretation given by those whose business

it is to proclaim the Word of God. Ministers who thus educate the people are themselves in error. To him who loves the truth, the Word of God is as a light shining in a dark place, pointing out the path so plainly that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.

“The uneducated man, in earnest desire of soul, may in humility and simplicity reap from the Bible far greater consolation than the more highly educated man. He may never be able to present the same evidences of the inspiration of the Word that a learned man could, but he can bear in his life a testimony that will have greater power than any other testimony in convincing men and women of the power of the truths of God’s Word.

A SURE GUIDE

“It is God’s purpose that the poor and uneducated shall have, in His Word, a sure guide in the path of righteousness. If they are sincere, and desire earnestly to know the will of God, they will not be left in darkness. It is the privilege of every one to understand the Word of God for himself. The great truths necessary for salvation are made as clear as noonday; and none need mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God. A single text has proved in the past, and will prove in the future, to be a savor of life unto life to many a soul. As men diligently search, the Bible opens new treasures of truth, which are as bright jewels to the mind.

“If the unlearned are not capable of understanding the Bible, then the mission of Christ to our world was useless; for He says, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.’

“The command to search the Scriptures, Christ addressed not only to the scribes and Pharisees, but to the great multitude of the common people, who crowded about Him. If the Bible is not to be understood by every class of people, whether they be rich or poor, what would be the need of the Saviour’s charge to search the Scriptures? What profit would there be in searching that which could never be understood? What would be the consistency of this command, if the searching of the Scriptures would

not dispel the clouds of error, or lead to an understanding of the revealed will of God?

“Let every one who has been blessed with reasoning faculties take up the Bible and search its pages, that he may understand the will of God concerning him. In this Book divine instruction is given to all. The Bible is addressed to every one—to every class of society, to those of every clime and age. Every one should read the Bible for himself. Do not depend on the minister to read it for you. The Bible is God’s Word to *you*. And Christ has made this Word so plain that in reading it, no one need misunderstand. Let the humble cottager read and understand the Word given by the wisest Teacher the world has ever known, and among kings, governors, statesmen, there is none greater than He.”

“We are pilgrims and strangers on this earth, looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The path in which we travel is narrow, and calls for the exercise of self-denial and sacrifice, but God has not left us without help. He has filled His Word with wonderful promises, to strengthen and cheer His children. In these promises He draws back the veil from eternity, and gives us glimpses of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that awaits the overcomer.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF PROMISE

“Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.’

“‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.’ ‘For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.’”

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 *Signs of the Times*, June 13, July 11, and August 22, 1906.

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LEGACIES OF LIBERTY

Three debts we owe

Black History Month provides a special space for contemplation, a moment to reflect on God's providence and the rich history of African Americans in the United States and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This historical odyssey, from the crucible of slavery to the zenith of the civil rights movement and beyond, testifies to the transformative power of faith and resilience. Three critical facets emerge, forming the bedrock of the march to freedom, for which we are eternally indebted.

FLAME OF FREEDOM

In the 1860s, when approximately 10 percent of the U.S. population—roughly 3 million individuals—were enslaved, the endurance and eventual liberation of these oppressed people were rooted in their unwavering resilience and the profound belief that freedom was on the horizon. A God-inspired faith and a reliance on spiritual strength and Scriptures played a central role, as evidenced by the spirituals sung and the profound influence of God, church, and religion among those in bondage.

PROVIDENCE OF GOD

The struggles and trials of the oppressed did not elude God's watchful eye, resonating with the biblical narrative of the Hebrews in bondage. Ellen White's inspired insights draw a poignant parallel between the plight of the Hebrews in Egypt and the enslaved Black people in the South. She declared, "God spoke concerning the captivity of the colored people as verily as He did concerning the Hebrew captives. . . . Those who study the history of the Israelites should also consider the history of the slaves in America." This connection underscores that God was just as attentive to the

plight of the colored people as He was to the Hebrew captives.

FEARLESS MEN AND WOMEN

History venerates the heroic and sacrificial actions of individuals who played pivotal roles in ending slavery. Sojourner Truth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, William Lloyd Garrison, and Abraham Lincoln, alongside thousands of heroic Union soldiers, both White and Black, fought tirelessly to eradicate the scourge of slavery. Within the Adventist community, anti-slavery advocates such as John Byington, Joseph Bates, and James and Ellen White stood as outspoken change agents against this injustice.

In words credited to Harriet Tubman, "Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world." The intertwining of faith and resilience has sculpted the narrative of the African American community. From the shackles of slavery to the pursuit of civil rights and beyond, faith has been a steadfast companion, providing strength, fostering resilience, and empowering individuals to realize their purpose in Christ and society.

This Black History Month let us be inspired to express gratitude to God for what He has done and anticipate the positive transformations He will continue to bring about. The legacies of liberty are a testament to the enduring power of faith, the providence of God, and the courage of individuals committed to justice and freedom. 🦋

* Ellen G. White, *The Southern Work* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1898, 1901), pp. 41, 42.

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**PRACTICALLY
SPEAKING**
DELBERT W.
BAKER



**BLACK HISTORY
MONTH PROVIDES A
SPECIAL SPACE FOR
CONTEMPLATION.**

A young girl with dark skin and hair in a ponytail is running on a dirt path. She is wearing a white shirt, a dark skirt, white socks, and dark shoes. She is carrying a large yellow bag or jacket over her shoulder. The path is flanked by green grass and trees in the background.

IN THE MIDST OF RACISM

*A story that is yet
to be completed*

ELLA SIMMONS

The following is taken from a presentation at the 2021 Adventist Global Camp Meeting by Ella Simmons, then general vice president of the General Conference, and Jennifer Woods, then general counsel for the General Conference. In recognition of Black History Month, we have excerpted portions of Simmons' remarks. Some of the oral style has been retained. You can listen to the entire presentation here: <http://tinyurl.com/EllaSimmons>. —Editors.

We should begin by acknowledging that while there have been many significant advances, racism in the United States and throughout the world has not disappeared, but taken on new dimensions, nomenclatures, and codes. I have lived through many eras.

I lived through Jim Crow and periods of denial—the false belief that racism was eradicated during the 1950s. I lived through the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s; through what some might term a period of advancement in the 1980s and 1990s; and into the twenty-first century, when we all have had to acknowledge that race still matters in the world and injustices still target groups of people for harm.

I most remember the demeaning and destructive laws and practices of the Jim Crow era that lasted into my teens. Jim Crow laws were a collection of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation. These laws spanned a period of about 100 years from 1865, following the Civil War and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which supposedly abolished slavery.

Jim Crow laws were created to set structures and keep Black people in their place. They were designed to marginalize African Americans by denying them the right to vote, hold jobs, receive an education, and otherwise take advantage of the opportunities this nation provided. Anyone who attempted to defy Jim Crow laws was subjected to arrest, monetary fines, jail sentences, violence, and even death.

It is essential that we acknowledge that racism is not a societal anomaly of individual ideology or perversion, but rather a combination of systemic structures, policies, and laws that perpetuate inequalities and oppressive outcomes based on ethnicity, skin color, and other race-related or assigned factors with individuals acting within these constructs.

FIRST MEMORIES

Prior to my entering third grade, my parents informed me I would be attending a new school. I remembered that my White friends from our neighborhood attended that school while I attended an all-Black school, a little farther walking distance.

This racism was more subtle than a rowdy mob, but it was more devastating coming from my teacher and the leaders of our educational system.

When they told me where I would be going to school, I was not against it. It was closer to home, and I had friends there. This decision followed the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which had trickled down to implementation in Louisville, Kentucky, my hometown.

I felt it was a new adventure. My parents knew better, but did not want to alarm me that there were those in our city and neighborhood who did not favor me and my Black friends going to the Whites-only school. I walked to school with my hair in pigtails and pretty ribbons, carrying my satchel and my lunch box. There were no angry mobs, but my parents did not trust the calm. I was surprised to learn later they had escorted me. Actually, they followed me to school each day for some time. All along the way, they hid from me so I would think I was on my own. They wanted me to develop a sense of security, of independence and courage in the face of fear to face new challenges. It was a good year because my teacher, a Southern White Christian woman, showed me love, made me feel valued, and protected me from some of the uglier sides of desegregation.

In sixth grade I was to represent my class and school at the state and national levels in a photographic compilation of student scientific achievement. I was happy beyond words. From the time I received a little chemistry set for Christmas, I thought I could be a research scientist. Now the world would see me this way too. The day came when the team from the State Department of Education came to take the photographs. All went well. I was pleased with my accomplishment, and my teacher was as well. But later I was called to the teacher's desk, and he explained there had been a problem with the photograph, and it had to be retaken. He went on to explain as best he could, obviously struggling, that while I was in the first photo, my lab partner, my best friend, would now be photographed to represent our class. She was White.

This racism was more subtle than a rowdy mob, but it was more devastating coming from my teacher and the leaders of our educational system. As an 11-year-old, I knew the real reason—a Black girl could not be the face of the school district or state. It was then and there, whether true or not, that I learned that a Black girl from Louisville, Kentucky, could not grow up to become a research

scientist. A little scientist died that day.

Studies have shown that racism is often defined as individual prejudice. But, in fact, racism is imprinted in cultural artifacts, theological discourse, institutional realities, historically derived ideas, and cultural patterns, which all contribute toward present-day racial inequalities. The Adventist Church has not been unaffected.

AN UNFORTUNATE HISTORY

The General Conference established a cafeteria for employees and guests in 1918. Fast-forward to August 13, 1941. General Conference officers met regarding a letter to Miss Arthelia Watlington. The minutes reveal that Miss Watlington was a college stenographer called to work at the General Conference office for G. E. Peters (then director of the Black work). The letter explained that she might have to bring her lunch since the cafeteria did not serve Colored people.

In March 1949 the General Conference Committee and the Review and Herald met together about the cafeteria. They studied the policy with respect to patronage in the cafeteria. It was suggested that Colored members coming to the President's Council, the Review and Herald Centennial, and the Spring Meeting might present a problem. The minutes record their agreement by consensus that the cafeteria should serve all workers of Seventh-day Adventist institutions, workers from the field, and students from the seminary, regardless of color or race.

But it didn't end there. A headline from a Baltimore African American newspaper, April 1, 1951, is so telling. The headline reads: "Religion Fails to Check Jim Crow, Adventists Find." It went on to say, "Prominent Seventh-day Adventists here found out on Monday that Jim Crow thinking knows no religious bounds. After dinner in the Adventist vegetarian cafeteria in Takoma Park, which previously had served Whites only, they [a Black group] were told, in effect, not to come again. The cafeteria assistant manager said that their patronage might discourage White patrons." The cafeteria in question was in the Review and Herald building.

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO?

Jesus defied the social order of His day. He broke down prejudicial walls that prescribed acceptable spheres of relationships, and He directly addressed the sins of racism in its many

If we really love Jesus, we cannot hate each other.



forms. In fact, this drove Him to Samaria, where He kept a divine appointment with a Samaritan woman. In that meeting Jesus overcame national, racial, ethnic, tribal, gender, social class, religious, and historical prejudices.

We, as members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, must do all in our power to distinguish ourselves and the church from the legacy of what I would call biblicized bigotry—the ingrained history of racism and separation that has been perpetrated on the world by Christianity and other world religions to placate racists in their efforts to maintain the illusion of racial or ethnic supremacy, social control, and economic advantage over other people of the world. We are people of the Word. We should strive with all our hearts and resources to distinguish ourselves from that form of Christianity.

We must acknowledge as a diverse global church that we are committed to being agents of peace and reconciliation in society by modeling and advocating for the biblical truth about our shared ancestry. We should acknowledge that we are ambassadors in this divided world with words of reconciliation,

saying we will support and nurture those marginalized and mistreated because of their color, caste, tribe, or ethnicity. Further, we should accept and embrace our Christian commitment to live through the power of the Holy Spirit as a church that is caring and loving, grounded on biblical principles.


Some were born in the church, but I came into the church through Bible study. I remember how I felt as I discovered the truth of the Bible. I fell in love with Jesus. I think somehow we have been drawn away. We have forgotten our first love. We need to regain that first love, that heat, that passion for Jesus and for what He calls us to be and to do. If we really love Jesus, we cannot hate each other. If we really believe that Jesus is the Son of God, we cannot think either one of us is lesser than the other. We must recognize Satanic deception and sin for what they are. We need to be converted all over again, to start fresh and to do all in our power to be like Jesus. 🖊

Ella Simmons previously served as a general vice president of the General Conference. She retired in 2022, but still remains an active volunteer for the church.

IS THE TRINITY BIBLICAL?

This window, designed by Roy Callagan, is in the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Silver Spring, Maryland. In it are symbols of the Trinity with the hand of God the Father reaching down from heaven. Christ is identified with His cross, while the Holy Spirit, symbolized by a dove, descends to the faithful in swirling fire. The lines surrounding the central image symbolize rays of light radiating from the Godhead—light that no human can approach other than through the merits of Jesus.





The Trinity doctrine in three points

JOHN PECKHAM

No!" I nearly shouted at Grandma. I was about 7 years old and I trusted her, but for a moment I thought she was trying to cheat me. What happened? I had three one-dollar bills in my hand and was going shopping for a treat. Grandma wanted to give me a couple more dollars, so she held out a five-dollar bill and said, "I'll give you this, and you give me the three dollars in your hand."

I didn't know much about money, but I knew three is more than one! So I refused. I didn't recognize the value of what she offered me. I had a lot to learn.

When it comes to the things of God, we all have much to learn, and some things in Scripture are "hard to understand" (2 Peter 3:16). Yet, if we are committed to the Bible as our rule of faith and practice, we should believe what Scripture teaches even when that teaching is difficult to understand.

FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT

After being baptized, Jesus came up from the water, "and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matt. 3:16, 17).

In this scene the Son is baptized, the Holy Spirit descends, and the Father speaks from heaven. Have you ever wondered how these three—the Father, Son, and Spirit—can be one God and yet three persons? If so, you've wondered about the Trinity doctrine.

Some claim we shouldn't use the word Trinity, because that word is not in Scripture. However, the words incarnation, millennium, and theodicy (to name a few) also do not appear in Scripture. Yet these are *biblical* concepts. When seeking to determine whether a doctrine is biblical, the issue is whether it is *taught by* Scripture.

The question is, then, does Scripture teach the Trinity doctrine?

THE BIBLICAL TRINITY DOCTRINE

The basic Trinity doctrine can be defined in one sentence: There is only one God, and God is three distinct fully divine persons.

Is this taught by Scripture? Indeed it is. Scripture *repeatedly* teaches the following three points:

1. There is only one God.
2. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each (fully) divine and, therefore, coequal and coeternal.
3. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct persons.

Together these three teachings amount to the basic Trinity doctrine. As we will see, Scripture repeatedly teaches each of these points and, therefore, teaches the basic Trinity doctrine.¹

THE ONENESS OF GOD

Scripture directly teaches that there is only one God. For example, "the Lord Himself is God; there is none other besides Him" (Deut. 4:35; cf. verse 39). Further, Deuteronomy 6:4 teaches, "the Lord our God, the Lord is one!"

Elsewhere God Himself proclaims, “I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me” (Isa. 45:5). James also teaches, “there is one God” (James 2:19), and Paul likewise writes, “there is no other God but one” (1 Cor. 8:4). Indeed, Jesus Himself refers to “the one and only God” (John 5:44, NASB).

Scripture also teaches that there is no one like God: “You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You” (2 Sam. 7:22; see also 1 Chron. 17:20). This teaching that there is no one like God rules out the possibility that someone is *partially* God. Scripture sets forth an *absolute* distinction between God—the Creator—and everyone else. Even as one cannot be a little bit pregnant, one cannot be a little bit divine.² One is either God (divine) or not.

The Bible expressly teaches, then, that there is only one God.

THE DIVINITY OF THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT

Alongside the Father, Scripture repeatedly teaches that the Son and the Holy Spirit are divine, referring to both as “God.” And, as seen earlier, the Bible excludes the view that anyone is *partially* God or partially divine.

In Acts 5, after Ananias falsely claimed he gave *all* the proceeds from selling his land, Peter replied: “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit. . . . You have not lied to men but to God” (verses 3, 4). To lie to the Holy Spirit, then, was to lie to God, thus referring to the Holy Spirit as God.

Later, Paul quotes a message God gave to Isaiah (Isa. 6:8-10) as given by *the Holy Spirit*, saying, “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah” (Acts 28:25). Likewise, Hebrews 3:7 quotes words spoken by God in Psalm 95:7-11, saying “as the Holy Spirit says.”

Further, while only God is eternal, all-knowing, and present everywhere, Scripture refers to the Holy Spirit as eternal (Heb. 9:14), all-knowing (1 Cor. 2:10, 11), and present everywhere (John 14:16). These and other texts identify the Holy Spirit as God.

Scripture also refers to the Son as God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through

Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:1-3, NASB). Notice, John writes, “The Word was God,” and John later identifies the Word as Christ (John 1:14). This passage further identifies Christ as eternal—He was “with God” “in the beginning” and did not Himself come into being, because “apart from Him [Christ] not even one thing came into being that has come into being” (see also Col. 1:16, 17; Rev. 22:13).

Later Jesus declares, “Before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58), identifying Himself as the great “I AM” who spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3:14; cf. Rev. 22:13). Further, Jesus taught, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30) and “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9; cf. John 5:18).

Likewise, Thomas calls Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). And though Scripture strictly forbids worshipping anyone other than God (Ex. 34:14; see also Deut. 4:39; 5:7-9; Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8; Rev. 19:10), humans worshipped Jesus, and Jesus did not rebuke them (John 9:38; cf. Matt. 2:11; 14:33; 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:8-14). Indeed, the Father Himself even commands angels to worship Christ! (Heb. 1:6).

Scripture further teaches that “in [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9) and identifies Christ as “the radiance of His [God’s] glory and the exact representation of His [God’s] nature,” who “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:3, NASB). But only One who is God could be the “radiance” of God’s “glory and the exact representation of His nature” (cf. Isa. 42:8; John 5:23). Accordingly, later in Hebrews the Father Himself refers to Christ as God: “But to the Son He [the Father] says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever’” (Heb. 1:8). These texts and more teach the full divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It is no coincidence that Jesus commanded His followers to baptize “in the name [singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19; see also Matt. 3:16, 17; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; Isa. 63:7-14).³

THE DISTINCT PERSONHOOD OF THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT

The personhood of the Father and the Son are not typically questioned, but some question whether the Holy Spirit is a person.

First, we must recognize that “person” in this context does not mean *human* person or someone limited to a physical body, as humans are. Instead, “person” refers to one who possesses *personal* characteristics, such as self-consciousness, reason, and will.

Scripture repeatedly attributes to the Holy Spirit *personal* characteristics and actions. The Holy Spirit:

- can be grieved (Eph. 4:30),
- knows the things of God (1 Cor. 2:11),
- and distributes gifts to individuals as He wills (1 Cor. 12:11).

A mere force or power cannot be grieved (requiring self-consciousness), cannot know the things of God (requiring reason), and cannot will to give spiritual gifts (requiring will).

The Holy Spirit also teaches (Luke 12:12), intercedes (Rom. 8:26), testifies (John 15:26), is lied to (Acts 5:3, 4), speaks (Acts 8:29), admonishes (Neh. 9:30), leads and guides (Ps. 143:10; Acts 8:29), calls and sends to ministry (Acts 13:2-4), and forbids or allows (Acts 16:6, 7). These and other passages attribute distinctly *personal* characteristics and actions to the Holy Spirit.⁴

Further, Scripture repeatedly distinguishes the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son such that the Holy Spirit cannot be a part of or the same person as the Father or the Son. For example, Jesus said, “The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things” (John 14:26). Later Jesus taught further, “When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (John 15:26). Since the Holy Spirit is sent *by* the Father *in* Jesus’ name (John 14:26) and sent *by* Jesus *from* the Father (John 15:26), the Holy Spirit cannot be either the Father or the Son (or part of them), but must be distinct from the Father and Son (see also Matt. 12:32; Luke 3:21, 22; John 14:16).⁵

These and many other biblical texts identify the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as *distinct* persons.

THE BASIC TRINITY DOCTRINE IS BIBLICAL

Taking these three points together, we find that Scripture teaches that there is only one God, and that the Father, Son, and Spirit are fully divine (each referred to as God) and distinct persons. In other words, Scripture teaches the basic Trinity



There is only one God, and God is three distinct (fully) divine persons.

doctrine: There is only one God, and God is three distinct (fully) divine persons.

But, one may ask, how can God be one *and* three? My next discipleship of the mind article will address this question and the great importance of the Trinity for our faith and practice.

For now, notice that even as my grandma offered me more than I grasped in my hand, the truth about God is always more than we fully grasp. This should remind us to be humble and diligently study and cling to what God has revealed about Himself in Scripture, “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5), which is the task of discipleship of the mind. 📌

¹ While there are competing understandings of some aspects of the Trinity, this article focuses only on this basic Trinity doctrine. See, further, John C. Peckham, *God With Us: An Introduction to Adventist Theology* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2023), chaps. 4-6.

² I reserve the word “divine” for Persons who have attributes that only God has.

³ The word “name” in singular here “points to the fact that they [Father, Son, and Spirit] are in some sense one” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992], p. 748).

⁴ Ellen G. White comments: “The Holy Spirit is a person. . . . The Holy Spirit has a personality, else He could not bear witness to our spirits and with our spirits that we are the children of God. He must also be a divine person, else He could not search out the secrets which lie hidden in the mind of God” (*Evangelism* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946], pp. 616, 617).

⁵ Ellen G. White writes: The Holy Spirit “personifies Christ, yet is a distinct personality” (manuscript 93, 1893, in *Manuscript Releases* [Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993], vol. 20, p. 324).

John Peckham is associate editor of *Adventist Review* and research professor of theology and Christian philosophy at Andrews University.

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THE SERMONS WE DON'T PREACH

One of the more sobering episodes I've come across in my doctoral research took place more than two centuries ago in a Congregational church in Massachusetts.

As heirs of the Puritans, Congregationalists were heavily steeped in strict Calvinism, with its emphasis on humanity's utter depravity and God's irresistible and sovereign will. But beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, a growing number of Congregationalists started to question and quietly reject the Calvinist theology they'd inherited. By the early nineteenth century it had turned into a full-blown controversy, with many ministers and their congregations becoming unitarian (or "liberal Christians," as they originally preferred to call themselves).

One such minister, Ebenezer Gay, led his congregation in Hingham, Massachusetts on this precise journey—though he did it in a rather stealthy manner. Recounting the story, historian David Robinson notes how, despite Gay's growing discomfort with Calvinism, he chose not to openly preach against it from the pulpit. Instead, he simply didn't preach about Calvinism at all. As a result, as Robinson describes, "during his long pastorate, his congregation silently became liberal, abandoning the doctrines of Calvinism 'without being aware when or how.'"¹

For some reason, that last line really struck me, causing me to reflect not only on the sermons I *do* preach but on the sermons I *don't* preach.

Of course I have many gripes with Calvinist theology, and I'm not attempting to defend it. I use the episode merely as a sober illustration of how we can "silently" change theologically—not as the result of proclaiming an openly hostile message, but by simply neglecting to teach ideas

that don't seem to quite suit us anymore.

Indeed, neglect is often a more effective weapon in our attempts to lay siege to a theology we disagree with than is open warfare—because people are less likely to raise their walls in resistance.

This isn't to imply that there *aren't* inherited ideas, based more on tradition than Scripture, that need to be neglected or discarded. Adventists have always believed God is continuously trying to bring us into clearer understandings of His character and truth. As Ellen White said in 1892: "We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible."²

But this episode just causes me to be more aware of the way I'm discipling others theologically—and the beliefs and doctrines I may implicitly be leading them away from through neglect. As a parent, as a pastor, I have many blind spots in my theology, and there are teachings I probably downplay—not because I've explicitly deemed them to be unbiblical, but because I may simply be uncomfortable with them. And so I minimize or rarely talk about them.

It may very well be that this is, in the end, good and appropriate. As I said, there are many false teachings worth killing through our silence.

But again, I just want to make sure I'm aware of what I'm doing—and if any teaching dies by my hands, I want to make sure it was intentional on my part, rather than an accident. ♣

¹ David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 17.

² Ellen G. White, "Search the Scriptures," *Review and Herald* 69, no. 30 (July 26, 1892): 465.

Shawn Brace is a pastor and author in Bangor, Maine, whose most recent book, *The Table I Long For* (Signs Publishing), details his and his church's recent journey into a mission-centered life. He is also a D.Phil. student at the University of Oxford, researching nineteenth-century American Christianity.



**THERE ARE MANY
FALSE TEACHINGS
WORTH KILLING
THROUGH OUR
SILENCE.**

Once White was elected, Uriah Smith stepped fully into the editor's role. Smith began to experiment with the *Review* to encourage more readership. A weekly eight-page publication since 1856, the *Review's* number of pages was increased to 12 in 1866, with a subscription increase to \$2.50 per year. This was done so secular news could be added for those who couldn't afford two papers. Of course, it was assumed they would subscribe only to the *Review*.¹

Departments were also added in 1866 with the following headings: The Sermon; The Commentary; Editorial; News and Miscellany; Conference; Obituary Notices; Publication; Appointments; and Business.²

By 1867 it was clear that because of his tenuous health situation, James White would not be able to continue in his leadership positions. John Nevins Andrews was elected General Conference president, Uriah Smith served as secretary and *Review* editor, and J. M. Aldrich was president of the publishing association. Great changes had taken place in the past six years: the church had organized, a health institution had been established, the *Review* was joined by several other publications, and the first church school opened. In addition, the work had spread with "missionaries" John Loughborough and D. T. Bourdeau leaving Michigan for California.

KEEPING THE CHURCH TOGETHER

The little paper that began in 1849 with 1,000 copies had increased its circulation. While exact numbers aren't known for each year, we do know that by 1872, 5,310 copies were mailed each week.³ The paper acted as the connector for scattered members, some living in isolated areas with no other believers. Thus, the role of the paper functioned sometimes more as a community newsletter. There were articles for edification with heavy emphasis on doctrine and theology, but there were also news notes, and updates where leaders might be preaching. James White frequently used the paper to communicate his own personal messages, sometimes in very direct terms.

We find a communication from White in the *Review* in 1867 related to camp meeting appointments. Many members expected that camp meeting would include the Whites as speakers. One can imagine the schedule if they attended all of them. He writes:

The paper acted as the connector for scattered members, some living in isolated areas with no other believers.

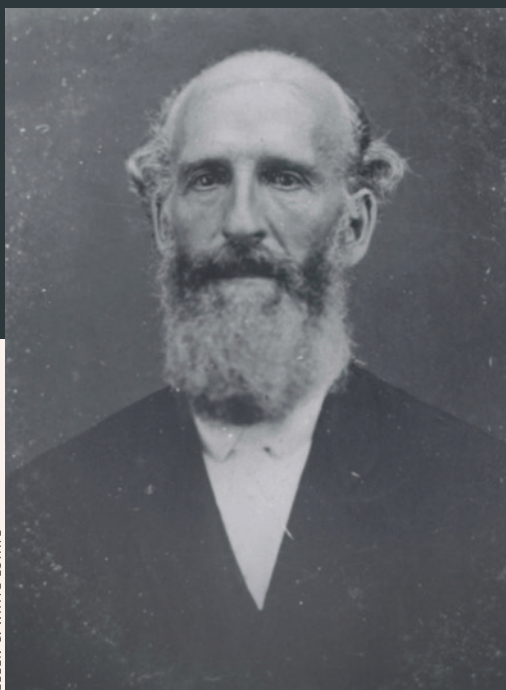
"And now we wish to say to our brethren, we are both worn, and must labor under the most favorable circumstances. We cannot ride in a springless open wagon. We cannot be up to late evening meetings. We cannot sleep on hard beds, or sit on hard seats. We cannot, when weary from preaching, converse upon different subjects of little or no interest all the time we are out of meeting. Most of the brethren know how it is with me. Some do not know that I am but a shadow of what I once was. . . . Pray for us. If the Lord be with us, I can be a fraction of a laborer, and Mrs. W. one and the remaining fraction."⁴

Despite his precarious health situation, White pushed himself to support the cause in whatever way he could. This along with his candor often resulted in conflict. While things appeared to be going well, trouble was brewing in Battle Creek, Michigan, where the church was headquartered.

TROUBLE IN THE RANKS

Accusations were made against James White in 1869. The criticism included Ellen White as well. John Andrews, Uriah Smith, and Goodloe Harper Bell were asked to investigate the charges. A request was made for all who had a testimony about James White, positive or negative, to submit them to the committee. This led to the publishing of a 151-page "pamphlet" with a defense of White's dealings, including 54 positive testimonies that vindicated him of all rumors and charges. No negative evidence was received.

Despite this, James White was again elected president of both the General Conference and the publishing association in 1869. During his two-year absence the publishing house, in particular, had



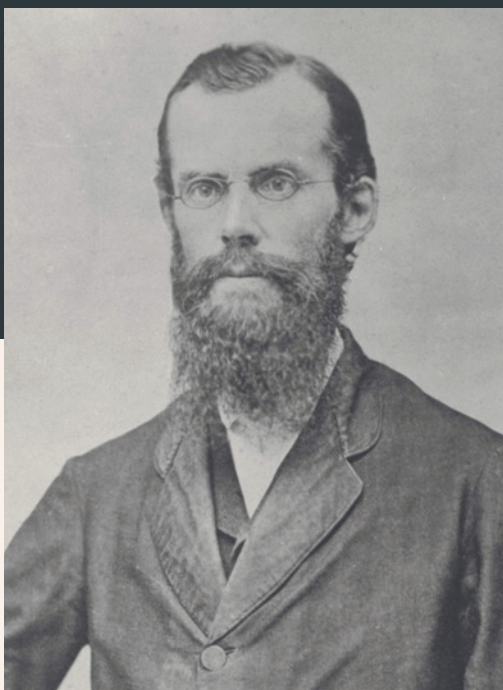
James White

gone deeply into debt. White's zealotry for the cause, along with his desire for integrity and transparency compounded by his sharp words, made for some serious conversations that began with J. M. Aldrich, then president of the publishing association. At the end of their exchange, Aldrich resigned. White then proceeded to criticize Andrews, General Conference president at the time, for the accrual of debt, and Smith, secretary and editor, for remaining neutral and not speaking up when detrimental financial decisions were being made. In response, although Smith defended his position, he chose to leave the editor's role. In 1869 John Nevins Andrews, also Smith's brother-in-law, became editor, albeit reluctantly.

A year later we find Uriah Smith back in the editor's chair, although his position varied from editor to resident editor, trading positions with James White. With White serving as president of both the General Conference and publishing association, even though he was frequently listed as editor, Smith bore the heavy responsibilities for the *Review*.

AWAKENING THE MEMBERS

Smith was a prolific writer and soon became one of the major contributors and scholars among the



John Nevins Andrews

pioneer leadership. He began a commentary on the book of Revelation, writing in the evening after work at the office was completed. The first nine chapters of what would eventually become a book were published in the *Review*, beginning in 1862 through 1863. In 1869 he began a series on Daniel. This, too, was printed in the *Review*, beginning in January 1869 through July 1871.

As editor, Smith desired to awaken within the readership an awareness that the end-time was near. He urged them to examine their readiness for the judgment and Second Coming. To this end, topics in the *Review* included the labor movement, railroad strikes, the Ku Klux Klan, the rise of spiritualism, the increasing strength of the Papacy, communism, and political corruption. He continually emphasized doctrinal beliefs, particularly the Sabbath (a favorite topic), the sanctuary, and the state of the dead—all doctrines that distinguished Adventism from other Protestants. Both Smith's and White's desire was that the *Review* "should be the best religious paper in the world."⁵

More experimenting was done with the size of the *Review*. The paper was enlarged to 11 x 16.5 inches, nearly doubling the space for reading



Uriah Smith

material, but remained eight pages. Smith wrote:

“We want all of this space filled with living, flaming words of truth, something that will arrest the attention of the unthinking, instruct the ignorant, convince skeptics, establish the wavering, stir up the backsliding, comfort believers, strengthen the weak, cheer the desponding, and bring us all nearer to Christ, and more into sympathy with His will, and into the spirit of His work. . . . And while we try to have a paper worthy of a cause, we want a cause worthy of the paper. A living cause is worthy of a living paper. But the paper cannot long retain its life, if the cause is in a feeble, languishing condition.”⁶

OUT OF OFFICE

Yet troubles were still ahead for James White and Uriah Smith. The two families along with the Andrews family had been close and worked together from almost the beginning. Tensions arose among the Smiths and Andrewses (related by marriage) pertaining to the acceptance and support of Ellen White’s visions. Eventually things came to a head, and James White was informed that on May 15, 1873, Uriah Smith had been fired as editor because of his lack of support for the

“A living cause is worthy of a living paper.” —Uriah Smith

Whites. While Smith gave a defense, he seemed to accept the decision without much protest. He moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he took a position as an engraver. It was reported that he was happy, content, and making twice the salary he did at the *Review*.

James White was again editor and stayed in this position for the next four years, even as he also served as president and in other capacities. George Butler, president of the General Conference, stepped in to attempt a reconciliation between the factions. By November 29, Smith was back in the office; and the December 9 issue listed him as an additional editor again. So that readers might know that unity among leaders prevailed, each party wrote an article for the paper extolling their partnership in the cause.

What appears to be a turning point for Smith and the *Review* came in 1877 when he shifted the burden for maintaining the cause from the leaders to the magazine itself. “There are truths for this time clearly developed, sharp and well defined, to which the people must be aroused or perish. In such truths as these the *Review* undertakes to deal. It will give the trumpet no uncertain sound.”⁷

It was the beginning of a steady editorship that continued another 26 years.⁸ 📌

¹ This lasted until September 1, 1868, when subscriptions dropped because of the increased price. Secular news was eliminated, and the paper returned to eight pages per week with a price of \$2 per year. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 31, 1919, p. 12.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

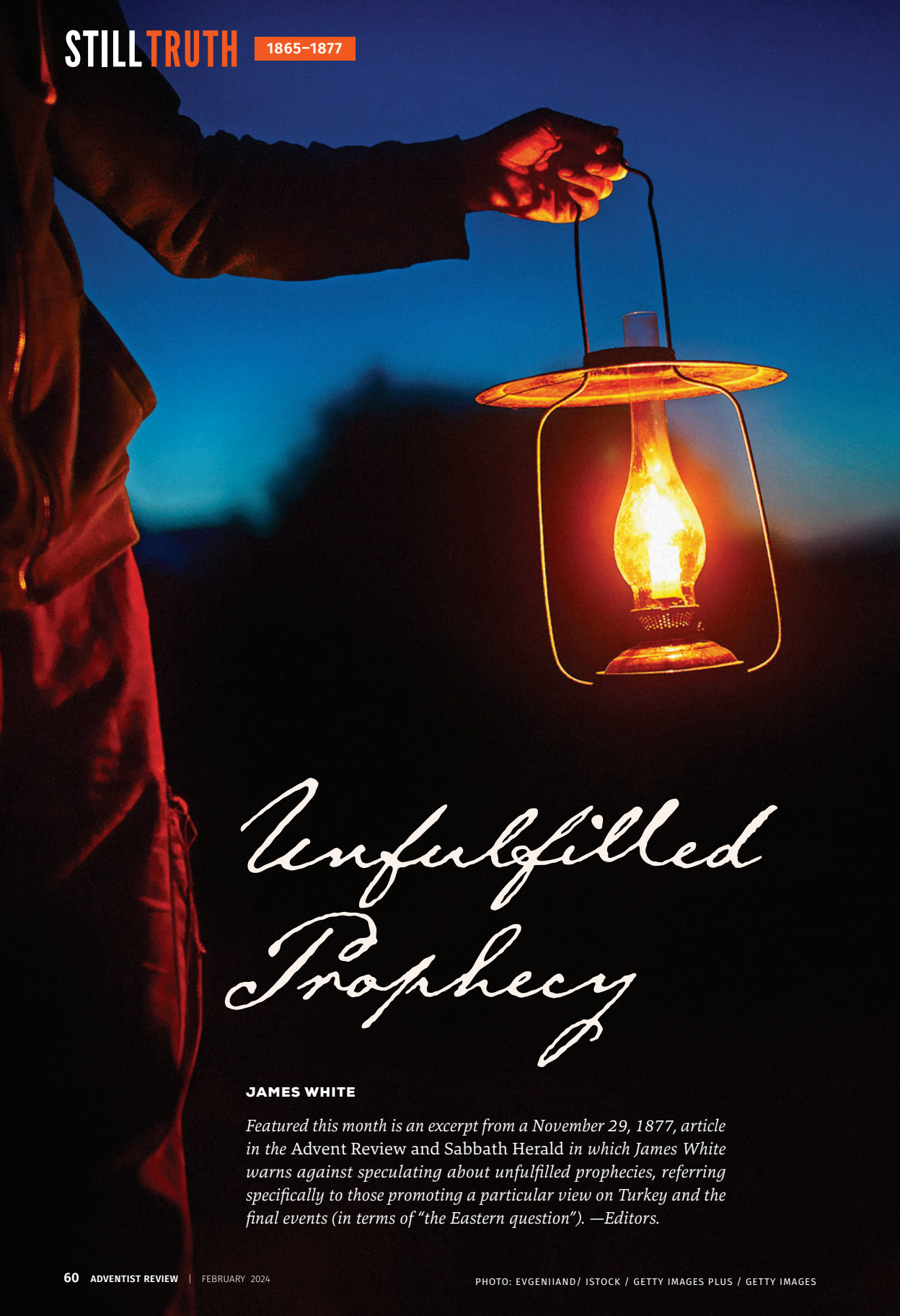
⁴ *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 27, 1867.

⁵ *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 6, 1870.

⁶ *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 20, 1870.

⁷ *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 28, 1877.

⁸ I’m indebted to biographers Virgil Robinson, Gerald Wheeler, Eugene Durand, and Gary Land. For an in-depth read, check out *James White* (Wheeler) and *Uriah Smith* (Land), part of the Adventist Pioneer Series.

A person's arm and hand are visible on the left, holding a glowing lantern. The lantern is the central focus, emitting a warm, golden light. The background is a deep, dark blue sky, suggesting dusk or dawn. The person is wearing a dark jacket. The overall mood is contemplative and historical.

Unfulfilled Prophecy

JAMES WHITE

Featured this month is an excerpt from a November 29, 1877, article in the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald in which James White warns against speculating about unfulfilled prophecies, referring specifically to those promoting a particular view on Turkey and the final events (in terms of "the Eastern question"). —Editors.

The Bible was given as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.* It was designed for the benefit of the people in this world and not the next. It is the sure Word of prophecy that shines in this dark world. It was not designed for angels or for immortal saints. Therefore we shall not have to wait until we reach heaven before we understand what the Lord has said to us in His Word. The Bible is what God has revealed to man, and if he does not understand it the fault is because he does not search its pages as he should, or because he does not live as near Him as he should, so that he can understand what the Lord has revealed. To say that the Bible was given to be understood—and who will deny this plain proposition?—is one thing, and to say that we do understand every chapter and every verse is quite another thing.

Fulfilled prophecy may be understood by the Bible student. Prophecy is history in advance. He can compare history with prophecy and find a complete fit as the glove to the hand, it having been made for it. But in exposition of unfulfilled prophecy, where the history is not written, the student should put forth his propositions with not too much positiveness, lest he find himself straying in the field of fancy.

There are those who think more of future truth than of present truth. They see but little light in the path in which they walk, but think they see great light ahead of them.

Positions taken upon the Eastern question are based upon prophecies which have not yet their fulfillment. Here we should tread lightly, and take positions carefully, lest we be found removing the landmarks fully established in the advent movement. It may be said that there is a general agreement upon this subject, and that all eyes are turned toward the war now in progress between Turkey and Russia as the fulfillment of that portion of prophecy which will give great confirmation of faith in the soon loud cry and close of our message. But what will be the result of this positiveness in unfulfilled prophecies should things not come out as very confidently expected is an anxious question.

Wars, pestilences, famines, and earthquakes are not the surest signs of the end. These have ever existed. We may have war, then peace, pestilence, then health, famine, then plenty, earthquakes, then the bowels of the earth may be quiet; but the message of the third angel is given but once. The progress of this work in fulfillment of prophecy is the highest and brightest light now shining in the religious heavens. Those looking at the Eastern question will probably be disappointed; but we may bear our whole weight upon the last message without fear of disappointment. As we now see our world-wide message extending to the nations, we see the fulfillment of prophecy, and the clearest sign of the close of the work, and the consummation of the hope of the church. ♣

J. W.

* [James] W[HITE], "Unfulfilled Prophecy," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 29, 1877, p. 4.

James White (J.W.) was the founder of the *Review*, serving as its editor intermittently between 1849 and 1881.

The progress of this work in fulfillment of prophecy is the highest and brightest light now shining in the religious heavens.

STILLCONNECTING

1865-1877

As part of our 12-part series celebrating 175 years of the Adventist Review, we share what would be representative of a feature during the period of 1865-1877. This article appeared 154 years ago in the February 15, 1870, edition of the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald. The editor at that time often used selected pieces from other Christian publications that he felt would benefit Adventist readers. This one was originally printed in the Advocate and Guardian, a small tabloid newspaper published by the American Female Guardian Society, a group formed in 1834 by Protestant women concerned with the welfare of poor and indigent women, hoping to guide them away specifically from prostitution, through education and employment opportunities.





“What Have They Seen in Thine House?”

A lady had just parted with some friends who had been her guests for a few days, and, with a feeling of loneliness, sat down in her now deserted drawing-room. Looking around for some book, her eyes fell upon the Bible. She opened it, and read the words (Isa. 39:4), “What have they seen in thine house?” Strange words. What do they mean? She glanced through the preceding chapters, and learned how graciously the Lord had delivered Hezekiah, first from the dangers of battle, and then from sickness. She then read how visitors came with presents from the king of Babylon, and how Hezekiah entertained them. What did he show them? “Not the Lord’s doings,” said the lady to herself, with a rising feeling of self-reproach.

“Surely,” she thought, “the Lord must have sent these words to me. Do not I resemble Hezekiah? Two years ago the Lord delivered me in my terrible conflict with unbelief, and brought me out into the liberty and joy of a child of God. Last summer when I lay in my darkened chamber, sick, nigh unto death, I earnestly entreated Him, and said within my heart, Oh! that I were allowed now to tell all my friends of this glorious Jesus, His love, His death, His righteousness, and all His marvelous riches and grace.

“Mrs. R. and her daughters have been my guests. I fear they are too much like the visitors from Babylon. And now the Lord asks, ‘What have they seen in thine house?’ What have I to answer? Last night, a dinner was given for them. I remember how everyone admired the new paintings in my dining room. After dinner I showed them all our water-colored drawings, and then I took Mrs. R. to

my boudoir to see my new carpet. I do not remember what they saw on Tuesday, excepting that I showed Mrs. R. that beautiful set of jewels my uncle gave me. We spent Wednesday afternoon consulting about what our children should wear next spring. What an opportunity I lost of telling her of the spotless robe of righteousness of God! And poor Marian has gone home longing to have a bracelet like that she saw on my table, and hoping to persuade her pa to get her one. Had I been faithful, she might have left me to speak to her father of Jesus and His glory. What have they seen in my house? Alas! Vanity, idleness, worldly treasures. And what have they heard? True, they heard family reading and family prayers. But it must have seemed a mere formality. They must have thought that we had far more delight in the songs we sung, and the gay conversation which the form of family worship scarcely interrupted. Although I thought about Jesus, and often longed to speak about Him, yet they have left me, having seen nothing better than the visitors from Babylon saw in the house of Hezekiah. Is not this a word to my soul?”

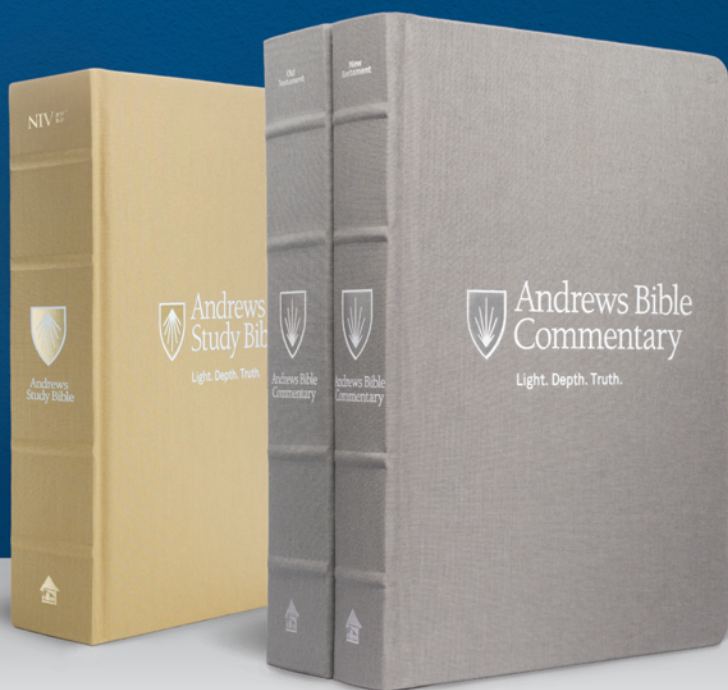
Reader, is not this a word to thy soul? Look around you, and see how many things you have gathered around you which war against the soul. Review your social intercourse, your entertainment of guests and visitors, and then to God answer the question, “What have they seen in thine house?”

Oh! that the robe of Christ were the rich apparel we delighted to show, and that the word of Jesus dwelt in us so really that we could not refrain from testifying of Him.—*Advocate and Guardian.* ♣



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MY DREAM

We stepped into the little country church on Sabbath morning, and a tall teenage girl greeted us. Her eyes sparkled warmly; her smile genuine. I discovered she was a senior in high school, and already sat on this church's board, the pastor encouraging her to become a youth pastor someday. Besides the friendliness, she had a groundedness, a sense of purpose rarely seen in someone so young. After graduation she was taking a gap year to hike the Appalachian Trail. I thought of the practical skills she would glean, the self-reliance and resiliency obtained. She was well on her way to launching on this free-for-all of life.

Later I strolled the Riverwalk with one of my nephews. At 15, he's intuitive, disciplined, and driven, with keen people skills. He's responsible, with a special gift with relationships, and the ability to affirm others for a job well done. I asked about his goals, and he responded instantly: "I want to be a surgeon." He talked of the work ahead of him, the long years of school, and how it could be overwhelming. How does one keep the end goal in sight while living in the moment, not allowing the drive to overshadow the joy?

Young people are precious, with a wide-eyed view of life, untainted by people, life's mistakes, or even self-doubt. It leads me to ask myself this question: What is life, really? Do we chase an elusive dream, only to watch it pop like bubbles right in front of us? Do we struggle to hold on to those dreams, only to discover that the sacrifice wasn't worth the reality? Do we cling to hope, or learn to live without?

What are dreams, really? What is our purpose in life? What are *your* dreams?

My dream is:

- To live with purpose, knowing who I am and whose I am.
- To experience an evolving walk with Jesus, where I discover fresh revelations of who He is and what I mean to Him.
- To realize my identity so no words spoken, no outside influence, can impact my purpose and direction.
- To live with joy in the midst of the purpose: to not allow the end goal to eclipse the moment.
- To love others as God does, whether family, friends, coworkers, strangers, or even those who are hard to love.
- To listen to other's hearts, to discern what really matters to them, as opposed to merely hearing the words they speak.
- To lift up and encourage others, whether through my words, actions, or prayers.
- To live the gospel, and to share this Jesus I've discovered, along with the beautiful truth in His Word, as far as I can, as fast as I can, for as long as I can.

My dreams are not necessarily fulfilled through my profession, church, or friend circle. Perhaps their center and circumference are to be in Jesus.

For without Him, there is no dream. 🍷

Jill Morikone is vice president and chief operations officer for Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN), a supporting Adventist television network. She and her husband, Greg, live in southern Illinois and enjoy ministering together for Jesus.

JOURNEYS
WITH JESUS
JILL
MORIKONE



WHAT ARE
DREAMS,
REALLY?

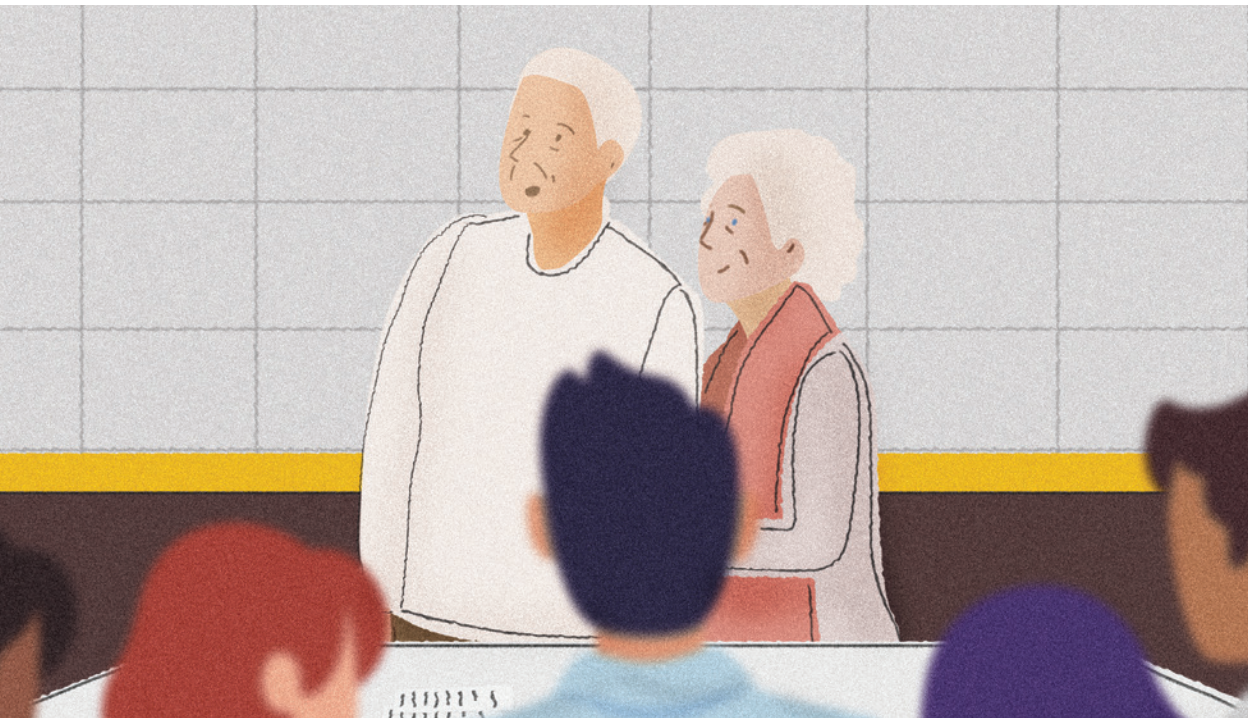
Jim and Donna

are in good health,

happily retired, and love their community. They want to pass on their legacy of giving to their grandchildren and want them to have a say in how they begin to make donations with their funds each year. They've called a family meeting to explore interests and gauge how to move forward with exciting contributions that all can see the fruit of.



To learn more about Jim and Donna's journey—
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PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

Heal Thy Husband?

Encourage and support, but don't nag

Q: My wonderful, loving husband is sedentary, prediabetic, overweight, and has irregular sleeping habits. He seems to be in denial, so how can I help him?

A: A supportive, understanding, Christlike approach that does not downplay the seriousness of his health risks has a good chance of being successful. Denial is often a coping mechanism that protects us from overwhelming emotions or situations and provides a period of adjustment that gives us time to process information at a pace that feels more manageable. Prolonged denial, however, can hinder effective self-care.

We suggest that you start with and persist in prayer. Ask God for wisdom. Praying together and seeking God's guidance for strength and healing, and together exploring relevant Bible verses that emphasize taking care of one's body as "a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19), are advantageous. If you tap into your husband's own self-motivation, internal drive, and personal values as a son of God, who has been "bought at a price" (verse 20), you are more likely to be effective in the long term.

Pick a suitable time and private place for an open and honest conversation. Express your loving concerns in a caring and nonjudgmental manner. No one likes to be nagged. Avoid addressing the issue in front of others, as he may become defensive. Ask him how you may best support him. Some men prefer "going it alone," while others enjoy doing things together. Allow him to express his own concerns, thoughts, and feelings. Listen actively and show that you value his perspective. Don't trivialize his resistance or fears and don't belittle him. Respect his preferences and acknowledge his feelings. Show compassion and keep your own emotions in check. The objective here is to have an amicable dialogue that leads to his decision to make some tangible changes.

You may also do some things that indirectly influence the health habits of your entire house-

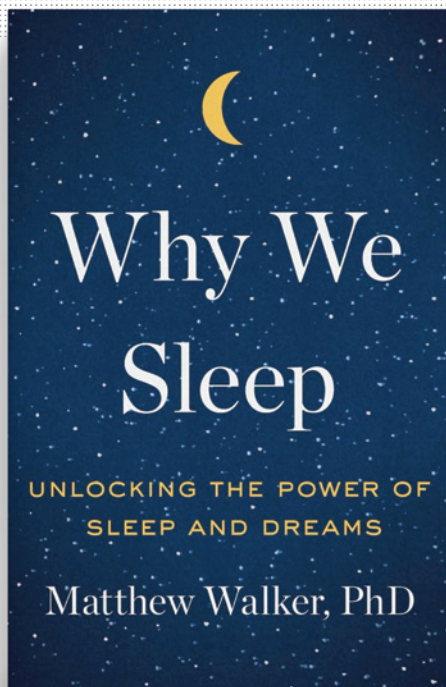
hold: keeping nutritious foods readily available, creating opportunities for physical activity, and establishing a relaxing (or enticing) bedtime routine that favors healthier choices. As a twist, ask him to help you make some needed improvements in your health habits and include him in your improvement plan. Suggest some outdoor activities in the spring that you can do together: walking, swimming, bicycle riding, gardening, fix-it projects, and the like. Playing outdoors with the children (or grandchildren), picnics, and other recreation may be subtle nudges in the right direction.

Engage him in conversation that involves how a person's lifestyle might impact their overall well-being, including energy levels, mood, and daily activities. Encourage conversations that explore the potential for a better quality of life with healthier habits. If needed, consider seeking professional counseling or consulting with a health-care professional together. They can provide personalized advice and guidance, reinforcing the importance of health from a medical standpoint, never underestimating God's power to help (see Phil. 4:13). Moreover, through your actions and words, let him know that you want to grow old together with him, by God's grace. ▀

Encourage conversations that explore the potential for a better quality of life with healthier habits.

Peter N. Landless, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist, is director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference. **Zeno L. Charles-Marcel**, a board-certified internist, is an associate director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference.

EDITORS' PICKS



Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams

Matthew Walker, *Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams* (New York: Scribner, 2017), ISBN-13 978-1-501144-33-2 (eBook), 367 pages, US\$10.99. Reviewed by Eric Louw, student, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Sleep. Do you get enough of it? Most people can't live without it, yet too many of us minimize it and prioritize nearly everything else as we try to cram more waking hours into each day. If you were to ask the average person what happens when they sleep, few would be able to explain what goes on in the brain and body. Could you? What we do know is that getting enough sleep makes a significant difference in our ability to function and thrive.

Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams is a detailed collection of fascinating studies, explanations,

and suggestions to improve sleep. Matthew Walker, Ph.D., is a neuroscience and psychology professor and the director of University of California, Berkeley's Sleep and Neuroimaging Lab. This book is particularly relevant to Seventh-day Adventists because it shares numerous research findings that help support the longstanding beliefs and practices that Adventists have inherited from our pioneers. These include the benefits of avoiding caffeine and alcohol, and eating several hours before bed.¹

In chapter 2 Walker discusses the various chemicals associated with sleep. Although melatonin is better known, it serves only to help regulate the timing of sleep, with little influence on the generation of sleep. Instead, another chemical called adenosine builds up in the brain throughout the day, slowly producing a desire to sleep. This signal can be muted by taking the adenosine receptor blocker caffeine. Caffeine makes your brain less sensitive to the sleep pressure building up with adenosine's continual release. Once it begins to wear out, a backlash occurs as the accumulated adenosine reaches the receptors in the brain. This accumulated adenosine can be purged during sleep, but it takes about eight hours. Sleeping less may mean that some adenosine is not drained. Fortunately, one's circadian rhythm can often override this sensation.

Nevertheless, Walker stresses the importance of avoiding a backlog, as the debt will roll over, resulting in chronic fatigue. Dependence on caffeine with reduced sleep hours can result in an ongoing backlog. Because caffeine has a half-life of five to seven hours, it can continue to interfere with and cause a bad night's sleep 10 hours later.

In a similar vein, his examination of alcohol's effects contrasts sharply with caffeine. Walker reveals that it sedates one from wakefulness rather than inducing natural sleep. The brain wave state one enters with alcohol is akin to light anesthesia combined with fragmented sleep. It also blocks REM sleep. Compared to a control group that was tested at the end of a one-week trial, one study demonstrated a 40 percent decrease in recall among individuals who got drunk two days into the study.

Why *should* we sleep, though? Walker explains that during sleep, the interplay between NREM and REM sleep is necessary to “remodel and update our neural circuits” and “manage the finite storage capacity within the brain.”² In this way, sleep that precedes learning activities “refreshes our ability to initially make new memories.”³ Sleep that follows learning helps cement and consolidate recent memories. In fact, one study demonstrated that students learning piano scales in the morning showed no evidence of improvement by evening. In contrast, students who practiced in the evening showed a 20 percent improvement in speed and a 35 percent improvement in accuracy the following day just by getting a good night's sleep. Surprisingly, this motor skill enhancement in speed and accuracy was directly related to the last two hours of an eight-hour sleep, emphasizing the need to prioritize enough sleep.

What about sleep deprivation? This is perhaps the most sobering component of Walker's research. Whether pulling an all-nighter or simply sleeping only six hours a night for 10 days, the impairment measures similarly. Even after two full nights of good sleep following a single all-nighter, students tested had a 40 percent deficit in learning ability. Along similar lines, 60 percent of Alzheimer's patients have at least one clinical sleep disorder. Other effects of sleep deprivation discussed included significantly poorer glucose absorption, increased food desirability, increased daily caloric intake, a dramatically increased probability of getting sick,

Sleep that follows learning helps cement and consolidate recent memories.

reduced antibody reactions, telomere damage, and lower levels of self-control.

When I picked up this book, I was interested in what Walker might say about the optimal time to begin sleeping. While he emphasizes the importance of getting enough sleep, he doesn't focus much on the best sleep time. Furthermore, he approaches his work with evolutionary presuppositions. This may influence his perspective on human biology and the fixedness of teenage circadian rhythms, which he suggests are naturally wired differently to parents. It's unclear if this results from societal trends or is genuinely fixed. Nevertheless, this book is a valuable resource if you want to gain a deeper insight into sleep, motivate yourself toward healthier habits, or learn strategies for a better night's rest. It will transform your perspective on sleep and, ideally, enhance your overall sleep experience. 🍷

¹ Ellen White writes, for example: “The influence of coffee is in a degree the same as [caffeinated] tea, but the effect upon the system is still worse. Its influence is exciting, and just in the degree that it elevates above par it will exhaust and bring prostration below par” (*Testimonies for the Church* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948], vol. 2, pp. 64, 65). “The youth and children should understand the effect of alcohol, tobacco, and other like poisons in breaking down the body, beclouding the mind, and sensualizing the soul. It should be made plain that no one who uses these things can long possess the full strength of his physical, mental, or moral faculties” (*Education* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903], p. 202). “If a third meal be eaten at all, it should be light, and several hours before going to bed” (in *Review and Herald*, June 13, 1899).

² Matthew Walker, *Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams* (New York: Scribner, 2017), p. 43.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

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LOOKING BACK

CONTINUED FROM P. 72

Even more problematic, the General Conference did not yet have in place any developed policy framework for sending missionaries abroad. Andrews set off without a salary. The General Conference apparently expected the Swiss believers to cover it. But Swiss Sabbathkeepers themselves were deep in debt. It was a rocky start, but Andrews persevered even if he sometimes had to scrimp on food and often draw down on his own scant savings or that of work colleagues.

Painful, severe culture shock and a desperate struggle to learn to converse in the local language darkened the first year as the 45-year-old missionary slowly found his feet. But he won hearts, wrote letters, advertised about the Sabbath in newspapers, preached in hotels and town halls, baptized converts, planted churches, and organized the mission. And he established *Les Signs des Temps*, an effective missionary magazine that still serves the church to this day.

The victories won were, however, at enormous personal cost. At a low point in the journey to success, some local believers, having difficulty with his American ways, criticized Andrews and made things difficult. When the criticism reached Ellen White, she assured the Swiss believers that the church had sent across the “ablest man in all our ranks” and that this had been at immense sacrifice both to him and to the senders. Andrews’ determination ultimately paid off. But what had prepared him for such a mission?²

LIFE LESSONS

John Andrews, as a 14-year-old in Maine, had experienced disappointed Advent hope and the trauma that followed. But he had held on to his faith, and in 1849 had become part of the inner circle of Advent leaders who helped uncover new Bible truths that lay at the core of Adventist belief. He had become an authoritative exponent of the three angels’ messages and their supporting doctrines. His many articles and pamphlets were highly valued by the church.

Of a scholarly bent, he had taught himself to read several foreign languages and was proficient in the biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew. He had become a successful evangelist and planter of churches throughout the New England states and had mentored other evangelists and

pastors, helping them to succeed. He had farmed with his relatives for a while out on the prairies of Iowa and had developed practical skills and animal husbandry.

Andrews had experienced economic hardship and struggled through consequent ill-health. As a result, he had become a committed health reformer. He had served as General Conference president when James White was too ill to continue in the role. He had also served as editor of the *Review and Herald* and become thoroughly familiar with the publishing industry. As president of the New York Conference, Andrews had nurtured steady growth and learned church management skills. He had been called upon to mediate tensions at the church headquarters and developed skills as a valued counselor. He had represented the fledgling church to government officialdom when it sought conscientious objector status during the Civil War. He knew how to be diplomatic. And he had become a widely respected scholar on the antiquity of the Sabbath doctrine though his magnum opus, the much-cited *History of the Sabbath* (1861, 1873).

When, in 1871, a group of inquiring Sabbathkeepers in Switzerland got in touch with church headquarters, Andrews, with his language skills, was the natural one to correspond with them. And when they sent Jakob Erzberger as a delegate to America to learn more about Adventism, John Andrews was the natural one to teach him about evangelistic campaigns and church pastoring. Andrews had never planned to be a missionary, but Providence had surely prepared him for such a role. In 1874, as Providence opened the door of international mission opportunity, the deeply spiritual John Andrews, the “ablest” worker available, was willing to respond. And in spite of the culture shock and financial distress, John Andrews, our first official missionary, succeeded in helping the church find its way in undertaking its worldwide task. ▀

¹ John N. Andrews, “Our Work,” *Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1874, p. 4.

² Readers wanting to learn more will enjoy reading Valentine’s full-length biography, *J. N. Andrews: Mission Pioneer, Evangelist and Thought Leader*, published by Pacific Press (2019).

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JOHN NEVINS ANDREWS

The making of our “first” missionary

John Nevins Andrews preached his first sermon as a missionary in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, on October 18, 1874. It was Sabbath, just two days after his arrival in his new mission field, and the worshippers gathered in the home of Swiss watchmaker Albert Vuilleumier. Andrews and his two children, Mary and Charles, felt not a little bewildered and strange. They could not understand the conversations. With the aid of a halting translator, Andrews related the story of the Advent movement and of the work of Joseph Bates and James and Ellen White.

He also told of his own experience of Advent hope as an early believer in the movement.

ANDREWS HAD NEVER PLANNED TO BE A MISSIONARY, BUT PROVIDENCE HAD SURELY PREPARED HIM FOR SUCH A ROLE.

AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK

Four days later, on October 22, Andrews found himself looking out from the third-floor window of the Vuilleumier home that was the family’s temporary lodging place and thinking about the strange foreign country that was now his mission territory. It struck him that the great disappointment of 1844 had occurred 30 years ago, which meant that “the time to work is short.” How was he to warn this vast population about “the preparation we must make in order to stand in the judgment”?

It had not been an easy decision for the still-youthful Advent movement to send its first official missionary overseas. The General Conference had procrastinated for more than a year because some were not sure that the recently widowed John Andrews was the best person to send. James White had suffered further serious strokes and had become disabled. Would



Andrews be what the new mission field needed? Or would his skills perhaps be more needed in Battle Creek? Eventually the new General Conference president, George Butler, on the last night of the August 1874 General Conference Session, insisted on a resolution. Delegates agreed, and voted to “instruct” the executive committee to send Andrews to Switzerland “as soon as possible.”

From an economic perspective it was not a good time to send someone to Europe, although this was not initially understood. Just a few months previously, extreme financial hardship had descended on the church and on economies around the world as what would become the “long depression” of the 1870s took deep root. Financially, sending out the first missionary could not have been at a worse time.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 71



“A second evil which plagues the modern world is that of poverty. Like a monstrous octopus, it projects its nagging, prehensile tentacles in lands and villages all over the world. Almost two-thirds of the peoples of the world go to bed hungry at night. They are **UNDERNOURISHED, ILL-HOUSED, and SHABBILY CLAD.** Many of them have **NO HOUSES** or beds **TO SLEEP IN.** Their only beds are the sidewalks of the cities and the dusty roads of the villages.”

—Dr. Martin Luther King
Nobel Peace Prize address, 1964

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