

ADVENTIST REVIEW

DECEMBER 2019: THE BOOKMARK + OUR PLACE IN THE KINGDOM + JOSEPH'S CRISIS PREGNANCY + MINISTRY IN A CAN OF SPRAY PAINT + FIRST NOTE TO FINAL BOW + "DO YOU HAVE ANY MORE?"

The Church
I Want to
Belong to Is...

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I Want to
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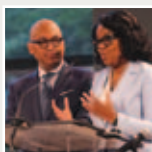
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TRENDING

THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:



- 1 Annual Council 2019
- 2 Conference in Fiji Remembers Heroes of Adventist Mission
- 3 Leaders in Inter-America Study Membership Losses
- 4 International Center for Trauma Provides Support, Training
- 5 Beyond Prophecy to Prophetic Voice

Most Nearly Correct

When speaking about this etching of Christ, W. C. White heard his mother say she “considered it the most nearly correct of any picture she had seen.” Others also recalled Ellen White’s commenting that this picture was similar to the likeness of Christ that she had seen in vision. But nowhere in her writings does Ellen White make such a claim about this picture.

Ellen White wrote very little about Christ’s personal physical appearance while He lived on earth. She did say that He had a beard, and described His eyes as being “mild, clear, and undaunted” and “His forehead broad and high.” In another place she wrote, “His height was but a little above the general size of men. His personal appearance bore no special marks of His divine character, which would of itself inspire faith. Yet His perfect form, and dignified bearing, His countenance expressing benevolence, love, and holiness, were unequaled by any then living upon the earth” (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a, p. 119).



John Saittain/Library of Congress



Ending the Year Well

Get a head start on your year-end tax planning.



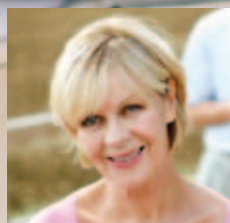
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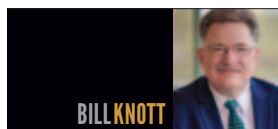
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BILL KNOTT

A Christ-centered faith must be like Jesus, gentle.

Jesus, Our Only Joy

*Jesus, the very thought of Thee,
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.*

It's one of the oldest Christian hymns sung by Seventh-day Adventists, appearing in hymnals since the beginning of this movement. Each of the church's last three hymnbooks (1985, 1908, and 1886) attribute it to Bernard of Clairvaux, a twelfth-century poet and pastor.

But it was the way that it appeared on the lips of one seminary professor that made me come to love the hymn, to draw it deep into my life, and make it mine.

He would stand before a group of bleary-eyed seminarians each day as though he was addressing distinguished colleagues, speaking to us with the precision of what was then still called "the King's English," albeit with a soft South African accent. In the darkness of snowy Michigan mornings or in the dreaded after-lunch seminars, he seemed unflappably the same: gentle, thoughtful, eager, sometimes passionate.

His lectures on the varieties of spiritual experience ranged across all continents and faiths. His stories included examples from Christian and non-Christian religions, showing us how for at least six millennia, men and women have responded to the reality of God in language, theology, music, and art.

But at least once in every class, he would summon the words to Bernard's ancient hymn. His eyes would fasten on some far-off place; his eyelids would quietly close; and he would recite the words we knew were closest to his heart:

*"Jesus, the very thought of Thee,
With sweetness fills my breast."*

You couldn't doubt that his faith was Christ-centered, for everything that could be congruent with the words he recited was apparent as he spoke. This was recitation, yes; this was a fragment of medieval devotion, yes; this was an artifact from the history of Christian faith. But it was also his own—fully his own—in a manner so convincing that I have never been able to sing the hymn without thinking of him, remembering how deeply the words seemed anchored in his soul.

Jesus was at the center of his faith, and because of his quiet witness, my faith increasingly put Jesus at the center of it all.

It is temptingly easy to declare that our personal or corporate faith is "Christ-centered" because we can connect the theological dots between our understanding of Jesus and what Scripture teaches about the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the Second Coming, and the state of the dead. In a similar way, I can show how the writings of Henry David Thoreau, the iconoclastic nineteenth-century philosopher and

author, influenced the thought of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Desmond Tutu. Each of them would own their debt to a man whose essay on "Civil Disobedience" helped launch movements that freed tens of millions of people.

But to accurately describe any faith—yours, mine, or my seminary professor's—as "Christ-centered" is to say something about more than just an organizing principle or person. It is to assert that the joy and light of the gospel permeates all the ideas and the structures that are actually developed from it. A Christ-centered faith must be like Jesus, gentle. A Christ-centered faith must seek healing and reconciliation when all about are warring. A Christ-centered faith has to carry in its preaching the chain-breaking, soul-liberating message of justification by faith. It must call us all to serve each other—and the world—on bended knee, not from thrones or pulpits. And it must move us—urge us—on to holiness through the power of His Spirit.

"Christ-centered" means that Jesus must be as fully met in the margins of my faith as at its core—in its structures and its institutions, as well as in its preaching and its practice.

That's why the church I want to belong to is "Christ-centered."

Bill Knott

[Knight] has identified a most important—and fascinating—way to connect young people (and the rest of us) with our rich Adventist heritage, through the medium of “authentic, honest, modern, and compelling ways.”

JEANNETTE JOHNSON, MILES CITY, MONTANA

A PROPHETIC MESSAGE

The message of the November issue about the prophetic message should be read by every Seventh-day Adventist. The Lord knew that His children would be prey to the enemy. As we look back through the ages, we can see how many times they lost their way and the Lord placed men and women to alert them and bring them back. These prophets spoke in God’s behalf.

What a merciful God, who always wanted to keep the church and His children in the right path back to Him. It is sad, as Bill Knott wrote, that Ellen White’s writings have been misused and misinterpreted, especially to young people. When I became a Christian at the age of 14, I fell in love with her writings, reading several books. They have been a blessing to me and my ministry. She was the little light shedding light on the Bible and the church.

Leo Ranzolin, Sr.
Estero, Florida

RESTORING OUR ROOTS

I read Somer Knight’s article, “Restoring Our Roots” (October 2019), with great interest. She has identified a most important—and fascinating—way to connect young people (and the rest of us) with our rich Adventist heritage, through the medium of “authentic, honest, modern, and compelling ways.”

May I suggest another

resource for her—“Go Deeper” sidebar: the Pioneer Series, each book featuring the story of one of our Adventist pioneers, and the major contribution each made to what became the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The authors of each biography were selected for their in-depth knowledge of their subject, telling their story in all the ways Somer declares will “create in

young Christians a sense of identity and heritage, pride and belonging.”

Thank you, *Adventist Review*, for the deeply spiritual, thematically presented issues written by a wonderfully diverse group of authors, who always present fresh perspectives that enrich my spiritual life and growth.

Jeannette Johnson
Miles City, Montana

COMMENTS FROM ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG

ADVENTIST CHURCH AND ADRA MAKE PUBLIC APPEAL TO HELP SCHOOLCHILDREN WORLDWIDE

Thank you for reporting this. The right to education is fundamental. Illiteracy and innumeracy hinder people’s ability to participate in development and exacerbate their poverty. Many a community is trapped in abject want and hopelessness because of lack of an education.

Education is the harmonious development of the mental, spiritual, and physical aspects of human beings. This concept has often been disregarded by responsible persons. The result is persons who are learned but not truly educated. Furthermore, universal education programs



Our Adventist health message is still being proved correct by the scientific community.

PATRICIA HARVEY, VIA WEB

are often overridden by political considerations, resulting in underperformance. A holistic education should be viewed as a fundamental human right. You have my wholehearted support.

Justine Mwanje

CLIFF'S EDGE: DESIGN, PURPOSE, TELEOLOGY—OBVIOUSLY

This whole discussion highlights just how gracious our Creator really is. He could have designed nature to prove His presence, but He has left us with the option to believe. Thank you for seeking to tip the scale of evidence in the direction of life, hope, faith, and reason.

Steve Cook

PUMPKIN SEEDS AND CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

Regarding "One More Reason Pumpkin Seeds, Walnuts, and Lentils Are Good for You" (www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story14146-one-more-reason-pumpkin-seeds-walnuts-and-lentils-are-good-for-you): That is great to know. Our Adventist health message is still being proved correct by the scientific community. I wonder whether we do not value our health message as much as we should.

Patricia Harvey



FLASHBACK

Here's a glimpse at the *Review's* "Letters" section from 40 years ago, which shows how you can help us get it right. We thought this exchange would intrigue you.—Editors.

SAW IS WRONG!

I was admiring the painting by Harry Anderson on pages 8 and 9 of the Gift Issue—Joseph supervising Jesus as he builds a pigeon house and Mary being so pleased. Then it struck me—unbelievable! The saw that Jesus is using is falsely constructed. The twisted cord used to add tension to the blade belongs on the top. The top bar in the picture belongs in the middle of the saw as a fulcrum. I have used and serviced this type of saw many times.

Alfred L. Christensen

Avon Park, Florida

You are correct. Actually, what research the editors have been able to do suggests that the type of saw portrayed in the picture on page 9 in the Gift Issue is probably medieval. Probably the kind of saw Jesus would have used was single-handed and cut when pulled toward the carpenter, as do many saws used in the Orient today.

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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“If we wait for money to come, mission will be never accomplished.”

G. T. Ng, p. 13

NEWS



Members of the General Conference Executive Committee cast secret ballots for the vote dealing with proposed actions resulting from the 2018 Compliance Document. PHOTO: ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS DEBATE PROPOSED COMPLIANCE ACTION

VOTE AMENDS MOTION TO CHANGE REPRIMAND TO WARNING

BY ADVENTIST REVIEW AND ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

The much-anticipated discussion of possible discipline for church entities deemed not compliant with ordination votes and policies witnessed surprising turns as delegates to the 2019 General Conference (GC) Annual Council wrestled with competing values.

On Tuesday, October 15, multiple speakers underlined the contrasting importance of preserving church order while also acting with fairness toward church organizations whose constituents have voted for alternate approaches to voted positions on ordination.

On the floor were two separate motions to accept recommendations outlined in the document entitled “Recommendations Resulting From the 2018 Annual Council Compliance Action.” The document proposed warnings for four Seventh-day Adventist union conferences and public reprimands for the presidents of two other union conferences.

Delegates voted to accept the first recommendation to provide warnings to certain unions and voted to amend the second recommendation, altering the recommendation to deliver a public reprimand

to two individual members of the committee, to a warning of the respective church organizations they represent.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

“This is not at all an easy situation,” said Adventist world church president Ted N. C. Wilson as he introduced the proposal. “I have personally struggled with the Lord over this situation.”

Wilson, who chaired the session, then laid out the steps taken by the GC since the action voted by the

**“IT IS ALREADY
PUBLIC
KNOWLEDGE
THAT THERE ARE
CONSEQUENCES
FOR WORKERS
OR ENTITIES
THAT ARE OUT OF
COMPLIANCE.”**

**ROGER O. CADERMA,
PRESIDENT OF THE
SOUTH PHILIPPINE
UNION CONFERENCE**

2018 Annual Council that outlined a process for addressing perceived noncompliance and disciplinary measures for those deemed non-compliant. The process mainly involved giving divisions, the regional administrative bodies of the General Conference, time to assess and address perceived noncompliance within their territories. In addition, a letter was sent by the GC to the divisions in question on June 4, 2019, reminding them of the stipulations of the 2018 action and requesting they report back on the status of such organizations within their territory.

“Whether you respond favorably to the recommendation or not, at least you will know that your officers have done this in keeping faith with the 2018 voted action,” said Wilson.

Wilson also clarified the status of the noncompliance committees, established by the GC’s Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and referenced in the 2018 action. “They are still there,” Wilson said. “They haven’t been done away with.” The clarification was offered in light of reports over the past few months that the noncompliance committees had been disbanded.

According to Wilson, ADCOM chose not to use the noncompliance committees because they had been “so maligned” following their appearance in the 2018 compliance document. Wilson said the noncompliance committees are advisory committees to ADCOM and reminded attendees that the 2018

action specified ADCOM “may” use the compliance committees.

THE NATURE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Wilson next reported that “no appropriate response was provided for changes in the entities that are named within the proposed recommendations,” which led to the proposal being considered at this year’s Annual Council.

“I know of nothing in the history of our church, unless I’m missing it, where there has been direct action against a voted action by a General Conference session on the part of entities,” Wilson offered. “That’s why it lifts this to a fairly high profile.”

Consequently, the “Recommendations Resulting From the 2018 Annual Council Compliance Action” document called for official warnings to be given to the Danish Union of Churches Conference, the North German Union Conference, the Norwegian Union Conference, and the Swedish Union of Churches

Conference. These entities “have taken actions that are not in harmony with *Working Policy* and practices on credentials,” stated the document.

The actions taken by the four unions concern official union-level decisions to commission both male and female pastors (as opposed to ordaining males and commissioning females), among other variants.

A second recommendation concerned two other unions, whose executive committees had previously voted to approve the practice of ordaining women. The document named the Columbia Union Conference and the Pacific Union Conference, both in the North American Division (NAD), and referred to them as being “in persistent noncompliance.”

The document recommended the “presidents of the above-named entities as the individuals representing the noncompliant entity be given a ‘public reprimand’ as provided for in the 2018 Annual Council voted document.”

DISCUSSION ON THE FLOOR

Discussion on the floor began with an invitation from Wilson for any of the presidents representing the unions in question to express their thoughts. While two-minute time limits for speeches were imposed by the delegates, time was extended for these leaders to four minutes each, beginning with the four presidents from Europe whose unions were to be officially warned.

“One third of our pastors in the Swedish Union are women, and I am extremely proud of each one of them,” said Robert Sjolander, president of the Swedish Union. “They, along with the rest of us in Sweden, are not insisting on ordination.” Sjolander said his union has respected the San Antonio decision not to ordain women by choosing not to ordain either male or female pastors.

Victor Marley, Norwegian Union president, offered the perspective that his union is abiding by GC *Working Policy* and also Fundamental Belief 14, which emphasizes nondiscrimination based on various factors, including gender.

North German Union president Johannes Naether added similar comments. “We treat men and women equally,” said Naether, “and for us this is a fundamental value, a human right that we think is expressed in the Bible and in Fundamental Belief 14.”

Danish Union president Thomas Muller suggested that “we need to dig a little deeper in the toolbox, and find other ways of talking, finding, solving issues.” He expressed concerns that in following this course of action “we are alienating our members from the world church.”

Speaking in favor of the motion, GC executive secretary G. T. Ng said he appreciated the presidents’ speeches because he sees that they are “trying to do their level best to be compliant with the world church.” However, as hard as they have tried, said Ng, “they are still in noncom-

pliance.” He also reminded committee members that they are not discussing process, which was voted in 2018. “What we are doing now is to implement the process,” he said.

On that note, Roger O. Caderma, president of the South Philippine Union Conference, reminded attendees that “it is already public knowledge that there are consequences for workers or entities that are out of compliance.”

“I was expecting some level of remorse that we have gone against what has been brought to our forum. I didn’t get that. For the lack of a better term, the open display of impunity is worrying,” said Nana Kofi Nimako, a lay delegate from the West Central Africa Division. “What if a young person challenges their leadership by saying their conscience mandates them to do something wrong? What would the leadership do?”

Former Adventist world church president Jan Paulsen also reflected on the future. “Where will it take us?” he asked. “What if they [the unions] cannot make the changes that some of the leaders are asking? I cannot see that this is the way God wants us to proceed.”

Others directly acknowledged the conundrum with which the Executive Committee was wrestling. “We have a decision that was made at the highest levels which needs support, because we can see the trickle-down effects of having, what appears to be, everyone going their own way,” said Oakwood College president Leslie Pollard. “On the

other hand, we have a group of colleagues pleading with the body, ‘Please let us do mission in our contexts.’” Pollard then asked rhetorically, “Which one is more urgent, compliance or mission?”

“As a global body I want to appeal to my brothers on both sides of the aisle,” said Kenaope Kenaope, president of the Botswana Union Conference, who offered further thoughts. “The way I understand it, unity means that you don’t necessarily have to agree, but you do have to cooperate for the sake of unity.”

Discussion on the recommendation addressing the two NAD unions named in the document took an unexpected turn with an amendment to the motion to alter the public reprimand of the two union presidents to the same warning given to the unions from the Trans-European and Inter-European divisions.

Dave Weigley, president of the Columbia Union and one of the leaders recommended for public reprimand, said he would “appreciate the amendment” because it would give him a chance to come back to the Annual Council or ADCOM to “try to explain the ‘why’ behind [the Columbia Union’s action].”

Wilson reminded Weigley that “we’ve been at this for seven years” and added, “We work through a representative system, and the division is supposed to work with you, and we’ve asked them to do that.”

The final comment was made by Ricardo Graham, president of

the Pacific Union and the second president recommended for reprimand. “I want to declare that I am a Seventh-day Adventist today and I’ll be a Seventh-day Adventist tomorrow regardless of what this vote does,” said Graham. “I’ll be a Seventh-day Adventist, believing in the 28 fundamental doctrines, believing in the Spirit of Prophecy, believing in the Bible until the day I die. No one in the Pacific Union is talking about leaving the world church.”

THE RESULTS OF THE VOTE

The votes on the two recommendations were both taken by secret ballot. The first motion to warn the four unions from the European divisions passed by a margin of 164 to 124. The now-amended motion to warn the two unions from the North American Division passed by a margin of 190 to 94.

As stated in the document outlining the recommendations, the result of this vote now provides the warned organizations an opportunity to come into compliance with voted actions and policies before any further disciplinary steps are taken.

The document that was released to the delegates, and that contained the original disciplinary recommendations, also stated that “each of the named noncompliant entities have the opportunity to appeal this action through processes already provided for in the 2018 Annual Council document and General Conference *Working Policy*.”



“If we wait for money to come, mission will be never accomplished,” said Adventist Church executive secretary G. T. Ng in his report to the 2019 General Conference Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

WHEN MISSION IS FIRST, MONEY WILL COME, SECRETARY SAYS

ADVENTIST CHURCH SECRETARY’S REPORT HIGHLIGHTS MISSION POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

What does a lemon-squeezing contest have to do with Adventist mission?

A lot, according to Adventist Church executive secretary G. T. Ng. True to his style, Ng introduced his 2019 Annual Council Secretary’s Report by telling a story.

In the hypothetical contest, no national champion from around the world had been able to squeeze the last drop of juice from a lemon. Then a man from the audience offered to try, managed to do it, and was crowned champion.

Shocked, the host asked, “Who are you?”

“I’m a treasurer,” the man answered.

“In order to do mission, we

need plenty of lemon juice,” Ng said.

THE BOOMERANG EFFECT

But money might not be the most important element of mission, Ng emphasized. The most important element, he said, is to make mission a priority, something reflected also in budgets.

In a brief historical review Ng reminded the audience that at the time of the first Annual Mission Offering in 1897 the church established that home missions would receive one third of the amount collected, and that the remaining two thirds would be devoted to foreign missions. A few years later many congregations were sending up to half their

“Worldwide the number of Adventist pastors has increased 85 percent in the past 30 years, but the number of administrators has increased 300 percent.”

offerings to foreign missions.

Ng quoted Adventist Church co-founder Ellen White, who referred several times to the “reflex effect” by which churches that invest more of their funds in missions are more blessed and prospered more than those that do not. When churches ramp up their “self-denying, self-sacrificing efforts,” White wrote, “prosperity will follow.”

“If we wait for money to come, mission will be never accomplished,” Ng said.

MISSION IS REAL

The second part of the report brought Adventist Mission director Gary Krause to share some statistics and challenges about the office he leads.

“Every day more people are born than those who join the church,” he said.

But Adventist Mission keeps coordinating the sending out of missionaries overseas by a variety of means and through various initiatives. Unlike in the past, when missionaries usually went from North America to other regions, today’s missionaries go “from everywhere to everywhere,” he said.

Other programs, such as Loma Linda University’s Deferred Mission Appointees, support mostly young, committed health professionals to serve in some of the most challenging parts of the world. Another initiative, Mission Envoy, pairs people usually retired from regular service to travel to churches and institutions to create a greater mission awareness.

“We cannot outsource mission; we cannot make mission only virtual,” Krause said.

Adventist Volunteer Service (AVS) director Elbert Kuhn shared that the office he leads is coordinating



David Trim, director of the Office of Adventist Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR), reported to the 2019 Annual Council different rates of increase in members, pastors, and administrators over the past 30 years.

the service of 1,962 volunteers, a 106 percent increase since 2015. Since its beginnings, AVS has trained and sent more than 30,000 volunteers, he reported.

“We have come to a point where we have many well prepared, well trained, and willing to go, but few opportunities [are] available,” Kuhn reported. “We need to open more opportunities for volunteer service,” he said.

PASTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS

David Trim, Office of Adventist Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR) director, then shared some data based on the research his office regularly does. Trim said that worldwide the number of Adventist pastors has increased 85 percent in the past 30 years, but the number of administrators has increased 300 percent. Meanwhile, the number of yearly accessions (people who become members of the Adventist Church) seems to be plateauing at around 1.4 million a year.

“If the increase of member accessions would keep up with the increase in administrators, we wouldn’t have a problem,” Trim said.

It is a question, Trim advised, that every region should reflect on and discuss. “Examining the balance between administrators and pastoral/evangelistic workers might help us to see greater growth in the number of accessions,” he said.

MAKE MISSION FIRST

Ng emphasized that the key is to keep mission as the foremost element in church plans and activities. Quoting David Jamieson, pastor of a mission- and community-driven Adventist church in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, he said, “Mission first; money will follow.”

“We never worry about money,” Jamieson has said, according to Ng. “When we do God’s mission, money will always come.”



Karen and Ron Flowers led the Family Ministries Department from 1988-2010. During Annual Council on October 14, 2019, they were awarded the Arthur and Maud Spalding Medallion for Lifetime Service.

AT 100, FAMILY MINISTRIES RECOMMITTS TO SUPPORT, STRENGTHEN FAMILIES

"OUR GOAL IS TO HELP FAMILIES TO LEARN NEW SKILLS AND GROW," LEADERS SAY.

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

On October 8, 2019, the Adventist Church Family Ministries (FM) Department turned 100. At a special celebration during the denomination's Annual Council in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, on October 14, FM leaders renewed their commitment to "strengthen, inspire hope, and bring healing to marriages, families, and individuals through the abundant love and saving grace of Jesus Christ."

"Family Ministries focuses on people in relationships and helps families grow in love and live in harmony as the family of God," said Elaine Oliver. Elaine, with her husband, Willie, are directors of GC-Family Ministries. "Family ministries happens at the local church, and family ministries is evangelistic," she added.

Willie Oliver shared that the department creates resources and organizes training events "designed to empower ministry lead-

ers and churches" in their work with families.

"We apply tools to help individuals communicate more effectively,



Willie and Elaine Oliver have led the Family Ministries Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 2010.

deepen their commitment in marriage, and become better parents," he said.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF GROWTH

The Adventist Church has come a long way since it first understood

the importance of working intently to support the families of the church. According to FM leaders its origins can be traced to a conversation Arthur Spalding had with church cofounder Ellen White in 1913, two years before her death.

"I want to talk to you about the importance of the work to be done for the parents of the church," White reportedly told him. "The work of parents underlies every other," she added. "It is the very most important work before us as a people, and we have not begun to touch it with the tips of our fingers."

Six years later, in 1919, the General Conference Committee created the Home Commission, which saw Spalding and his wife, Maud, appointed as its first directors. Soon the Spaldings began to create literature for the education of the whole family. They led the commission until 1941.

Decades later, in 1975, the church voted to establish the Home and Family Service with Delmer and Betty Holbrook as leaders. The Department of Family Ministries was voted into existence in 1995, and the Olivers have led the department since 2010.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION AND AWARD

Family Ministries planned a year of special activities and events to mark this centennial, suggesting that local churches get involved. Activities include two Family Emphasis weeks and the suggestion of honoring a couple, person, or

family in each congregation that has made a difference in helping to develop stronger, healthier families.

Leaders also advised making good use of resources such as sermons and seminars specially prepared for the centennial year. Resources include the Olivers' book *Hope for Today's Families* and their 2020 planbook, *Making Disciples: Reaching Families for Jesus*, which can be downloaded for free.

During the October 14 celebration FM leaders also presented the Arthur and Maud Spalding Medallion for Lifetime Service to Karen and Ron Flowers. The Flowerses worked in connection with FM for more than 30 years, 12 of those years as its General Conference directors.

The award was presented, Willie Oliver said, "for their mission to Family Ministries, and for being mentors of other leaders in the area."

Adventist Church president, Ted N. C. Wilson, seconded that sentiment. "This is in recognition for your extended service to Family Ministries, [which] by God's grace continues," he said.

CHARACTERS FOR HEAVEN

In a conversation on the sidelines of their presentation to the Annual Council, the Olivers said that the keyword in the department they lead is growth.

"We want individuals and families to learn and practice new skills for conflict resolution, and to grow into the families God wants them to be," Willie Oliver said. "In our seminars we train members and leaders to feel more empowered and [to] help themselves and others to support and strengthen families."

In his closing prayer at the end of the celebration, Wilson reminded that God established the family from the beginning. "We ask that [this] great legacy, begun in Eden, will continue throughout eternity," he prayed. "And we ask that each of us may take that personally; that we may encourage, support, and direct . . . children and grandchildren, since we are helping form characters for heaven."

Wilson then closed with a wish. "May each of us be involved in family ministries," he said. ▀



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AdventistReview.org



Adventist Church leaders pray for ADRA and for the joint campaign aimed to promote education opportunities for children worldwide who are not in school. Dubbed “Every Child. Everywhere. In School,” the petition campaign aims to collect 1 million signatures by June 2020. PHOTO: ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

ADVENTIST CHURCH AND ADRA MAKE PUBLIC APPEAL TO HELP SCHOOLCHILDREN WORLDWIDE

ONE MILLION SIGNATURES NEEDED TO ADVOCATE FOR 262 MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN SCHOOL.

BY KIMI-ROUX JAMES, ADRA INTERNATIONAL, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

During its 2019 Annual Council the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its international humanitarian agency, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), announced a global campaign, Every Child. Everywhere. In School.

According to ADRA leaders, the joint campaign is an urgent call to leaders and members around the world that all children, regardless of race, age, nationality, gender, religion, or origin, have a right to earn and complete an education, and that being in school is a recognition of the value and potential of each individual child.

The campaign aims to collect 1 million signatures by 2020 through grassroots efforts in collaboration with the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church and the ADRA network of offices in more than 130 countries. The petition will be presented during the sixty-first session of the General Conference of

the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, and will urge world leaders to take action for children everywhere to receive a high-quality education.

“As a global Christian family, we Seventh-day Adventists must come together to do what we can to see that every child, everywhere, attends school, completes their education, and has hope for a better tomorrow,” said Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A 2018 UNESCO study reported that there has been little improvement in reducing the number of out-of-school children, adolescents, and youth in the world since 2012, and that as of 2016, more than 262 million children around the world are still out of school.

“We do not accept the fact that 90 percent of children with disabilities in the developing world are not in school. We do not accept the fact that refugee children are

five times more likely to be out of school than their nonrefugee peers, or that 25 million primary school-age children have never been to school. This is why it’s so important that we speak up on behalf of every child who is not in school today,” said Michael Kruger, president of ADRA.

To disseminate the campaign and collect signatures for the petition, the Adventist Church and ADRA have developed inclusive technologies for a global audience, including an online presence and the databased messaging platform WhatsApp. To sign the petition on WhatsApp, persons must first download the app and then visit ADRA.org/WhatsApp. The campaign can also be found at ADRA.org/InSchool.

ADRA and the Seventh-day Adventist Church have long supported social justice issues, including working with faith-based communities to champion support for refugees, migrants, and displaced persons during World Refugee Day and World Refugee Sabbath. ADRA also supports *enditnow*, a campaign spearheaded by the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Department of Women’s Ministries that pushes to end violence against women and girls.

“Together, ADRA and the Seventh-day Adventist Church can change the lives of children all around the world,” Wilson said. “We want to see every child everywhere in school by 2030, and it starts with 1 million signatures.”



MARANATHA INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATES 50 YEARS OF SERVICE.

September 19-21, 2019, more than 2,000 volunteers, supporters, and friends met to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Maranatha Volunteers International in Sacramento, California, United States. The supporting ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church coordinates and sponsors church and school building projects and water well drilling around the world. Since 1969 Maranatha has enlisted more than 85,000 volunteers as part of 2,170 missionary teams in 88 countries.



ADVENTHEALTH ELECTS RON C. SMITH AS NEXT BOARD CHAIR. AdventHealth's board of directors elected Ron C. Smith to serve as chair during its most recent quarterly board meeting. Smith assumes responsibilities immediately, replacing Gary Thurber following his two-year term. Smith is president of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which serves more than 300,000 church members across eight states in the Southern region of the United States.



ADVENTISTS CELEBRATE 125 YEARS OF GOSPEL WORK IN SOUTH AMERICA.

On September 9, 2019, the South American Division celebrated 125 years of mission work in its territory. A few weeks later church leaders gathered near a backroad corner in Crespo Campo, Entre Ríos, Argentina—the exact spot where the first Adventist congregation in South America was organized. More than 140 people attended the service, including church leaders from the South American Division and the Argentina Union Conference church regions.

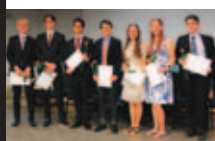


ADVENTIST-PRODUCED BREAKFAST CEREAL FEATURED IN AUSTRALIAN COIN COLLECTION.

Weet-Bix, a breakfast cereal manufactured by a Seventh-day Adventist health-food company in Australia, is set to cement its icon status. The cereal was chosen recently as part of a new dollar-coin collection created by Australia Post (the post office system in Australia) and the Royal Australia Mint. The high-fiber, low-sugar cereal produced by Sanitarium Health and Wellbeing Company was assigned the letter "W" in a 26-piece A-to-Z coin collection that features elements related to Australian culture and language.



INVASION OF LOVE HELPS TO RECONCILE DIVIDED COMMUNITY. Linking up across the country, Adventist volunteers spent five days serving in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina, a town divided along ethnic lines since the Balkan conflict. The project entitled "Invasion of Love" aimed to build bridges by coordinating volunteers in acts of service, such as free car washes, painting park benches, and giving away ice cream.



ADVENTIST STUDENTS SCORE AMONG THE BEST IN NORWAY. Tenth-grade students at an Adventist school in Norway gained the highest grade-point average across the country during the past school year, according to statistics recently released by Norwegian education authorities. The graduating class of Tyrifjord videregående skole had a GPA of 5.22 on a grading system in which 6.0 is the top grade. Tyrifjord videregående skole is one of 11 Seventh-day Adventist secondary schools in Norway.



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY OPENS SCHOOL IN MALAWI. September 18, 2019, marked the first day of school for six children of medical missionaries and local health-care professionals serving at Malamulo Adventist Hospital, a Loma Linda University Global Campus in the southeast African nation of Malawi. The newly constructed Malamulo Adventist International Mission School is a 1,774-square-foot (165-square-meter) concrete block building housing kindergarten through sixth grade.





My [Christ-Centered] Adventist Church

What Peter can teach us today

JOHN K. MCVAY

The opening vision of the book of Revelation is a vision of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:9-20). Having announced that history is moving toward a destined rendezvous with Him, “the ruler of kings on earth” (verse 5), Scripture portrays the cosmic Jesus (verses 12-20).¹ He is robed, sashed, white-haired, with fiery feet, a roaring voice, and a sunlike face (verses 13-16). To judge by the conclusion to the vision, though, there are two features that are of particular importance—the position of Jesus and what He holds in His right hand (verse 20).

He is portrayed as “in the midst of the lampstands” (verse 13), which symbolize the seven Christian congregations (verse 20) that are the focus of John the revelator’s pastoral concern—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. This towering Jesus holds in His right hand “seven stars,” “the angels of the seven churches” (verse 20). So Jesus is church-centered. He walks among Christian congregations, and He treasures and guards—as though holding in His right hand—those who lead and nurture them.

THE (SOMETIMES) CHRIST-CENTERED CHURCH

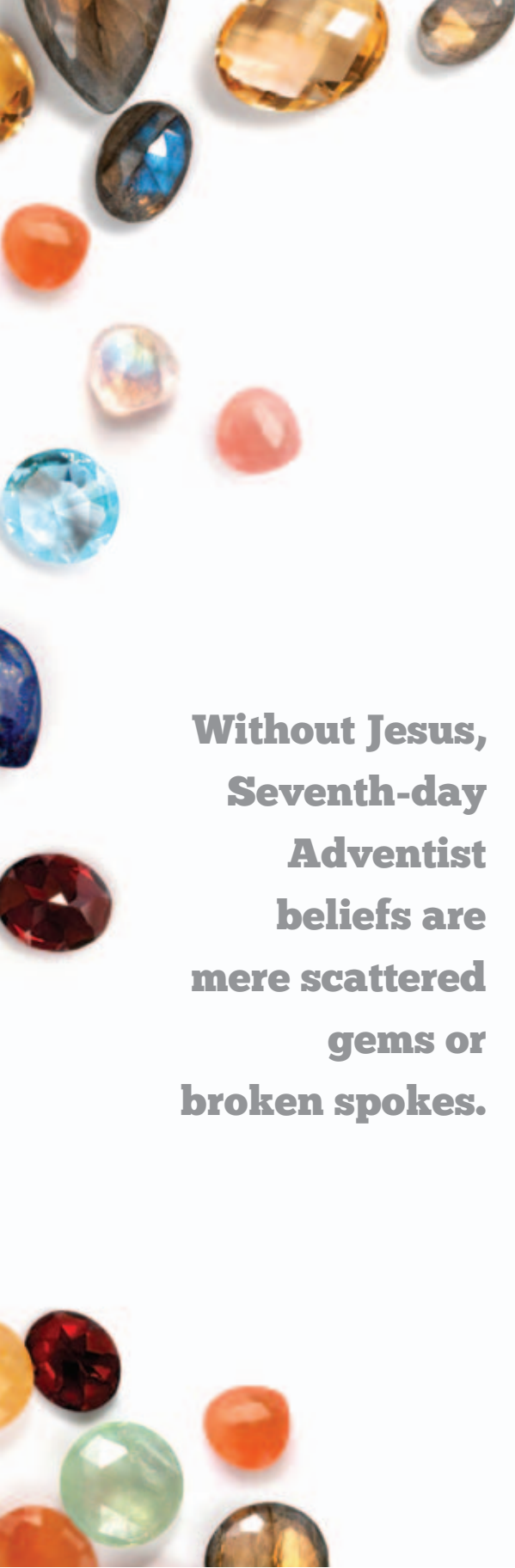
It would seem, then, to be the most natural and appropriate thing for the churches—and the church—to return the

favor and be Christ-centered. His attention and care focused on them; their worship and praise directed toward Him. In the letters the risen Christ sends to those seven churches (Rev. 2; 3) we learn that the church can stray from Jesus. And, reviewing our own Seventh-day Adventist history, we acknowledge the same to be true. Especially painful are the chapters of our story where we have forgotten that to be truly Christ-centered we must be just and merciful in our relationships with others (recalling Christ’s portrayal of the final judgment in which the King says, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” [Matt 25:40]). We are at our best when we are focused on Jesus and extending His grace to others. We are at our worst when we are centered on ourselves.

DOES THE CHURCH HAVE A CHRIST-CENTERED FUTURE?

Is it possible, though, that the mistakes are behind us? Have we, perhaps, accomplished this developmental task of becoming Christ-centered? Under the sway of the gospel focus of past decades, have we made the appropriate theological and cultural adjustments and turned a corner on this challenge? Or is this an essential and ongoing task that must be taken up by every generation of Adventists?

One way to answer that question is to



**Without Jesus,
Seventh-day
Adventist
beliefs are
mere scattered
gems or
broken spokes.**

survey Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In the letter Paul offers an idealistic portrayal of the church as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:1-16, 25; 5:22, 30), a holy temple to the Lord Jesus (Eph. 2:19-22), the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:21-33, esp. verses 25-27), and a unified army (Eph. 6:10-20). In doing so, Paul offers Christ-drenched correspondence to his readers, a letter brimming with the phrase "in Christ" and similar expressions (e.g., "in Christ Jesus," "in the Lord," "in the Beloved," "in Him," "in Himself"), which together he uses more than 30 times. Believers are united in such solidarity with Christ that they are co-resurrected, co-ascended, and co-exalted with Jesus (Eph. 2:4-6).

Early on, Paul shares the great theme of his letter: It is God's grand, eschatological plan, His "plan for the fullness of time," to "unite all things in him [in Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10). Christ, says Paul, is not subject to last-day events. He is the subject of last-day events, the goal of God's culminating, fullness-of-time strategy. The point is this: Ephesians is a Christ-saturated letter that everywhere praises the actions of God in Christ and celebrates the access of believers to the spiritual resources offered to them in Christ. Are we as Christ-centered and Christ-saturated, as Ephesians suggests that we are and should be? If not, we have work to do. Now. In this generation.

ELLEN WHITE'S ADVOCACY FOR CHRIST AS CENTER

Ellen White's own affirmations of Christ as the center of Adventist faith are numerous and inspiring. She writes, "There is one great central truth to be kept ever before the mind in the searching of the Scriptures—*Christ and Him crucified. Every other truth is invested with influence and power corresponding to its relation to this theme.*"² The "truth for this time" consists of doctrines "united by golden threads, forming a complete whole, with Christ as the living center."³

She exhorts: "Never should a sermon be preached, or Bible instruction in any line be given, without pointing the hearers to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'" (John 1:29). "Every true doctrine makes Christ the center, every precept receives force from His words."⁴ In a similar vein she writes, "Where the people assemble to worship God let not a word be spoken that shall divert the mind from the great central interest—Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."⁵

In a two-part 1893 series in the *Review and Herald*, “Contemplate Christ’s Perfection, Not Man’s Imperfection,” Ellen White readily admits that we are part of an imperfect church.⁶ We should avoid focusing on the imperfections so readily on display and instead focus on Christ. We should “turn to the precious Saviour.”⁷ She cites the positive example of some immigrants to the United States who refused to be dissuaded from their search for truth by the imperfections of Adventist believers. Instead, these believers “studied the doctrines, finding in the links of truth precious things that were like jewels hung upon a golden thread.” She comments, “Christ, His character and work, is the center and circumference of all truth, He is the chain upon which the jewels of doctrine are linked. In him is found the complete system of truth.”⁸

Rightly understood, Seventh-day Adventist beliefs are like precious jewels joined by “a golden thread” (or “a chain”). That “golden thread” is Jesus, who runs through the center of each valuable gem and joins the whole as one. Alternatively, Seventh-day Adventist beliefs may be thought of as a wheel in which Christ is both hub (or “center”) and rim (“circumference”), with every spoke of truth finding its beginning and end in Christ, who unites the system of truth, holding it together. Without Jesus, Seventh-day Adventist beliefs are mere scattered gems or broken spokes. But when joined together in Jesus they constitute a beautiful and functional system of truth. “Christ is the center of all true doctrine.”⁹

WALKING THE WAVES TO JESUS: THE CHURCH’S STORY

To consider the challenges of living out such a Christ-centered faith, we may turn to the story of the storm on the lake and Peter walking on the water (Matt. 14:22-33). The disciples—the church—face an array of temptations and challenges that follow on a great triumph, the feeding of the 5,000. The fact that Jesus compels the disciples to depart in a boat and dismisses the crowd (verse 22), suggests His worry that the two groups may respond inappropriately in a moment of accomplishment and victory. Strangely, in celebrating the miraculous power of Jesus, they are under threat of diverting their attention away from Him to their own dreams and ambitions about Him.

If temptation threatens in good times, it is present in dark and challenging ones as well. The disciples

toil in their journey against a ferocious headwind, and do so for hours. It is in the fourth watch of the night—3:00-6:00 a.m.—that Jesus comes striding across the waves to this church-in-a-boat. Their vision had become so filled in the intervening hours with the wind’s fury and the waves’ lashing that they are ill-prepared to discern Jesus. In the eeriness of the storm they judge Him to be a ghost. In this moment of trauma and stress, the disciples have so thoroughly forgotten Jesus that they turn to folk religion to explain what they see. The disciples, looking out across the waves at their living Lord striding across the sea, perceive instead only a pale, wispy, and menacing presence. “It is a ghost!” they say. And they groan and moan in fear.

Jesus jars them from their ghost-ridden and Christless world with the message, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid” (verse 27). It is likely that Jesus’ words offer “a conscious echo of the divine name of Yahweh” (cf. Ex. 3:14).¹⁰ It is an amazing turnaround moment for the disciples—from fearing a wispy phantom to worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that very trajectory that the church must retrace today—to turn from our worries and fears, the wispy phantoms that too often dominate our worldview, and center our thoughts, hopes, and dreams on Jesus.

Peter, though, hesitates to be drawn into this turnaround moment. In folk religion, after all, ghosts do speak. He is unwilling to flip the identity of the apparition before him from unidentified ghost to forgotten Lord without further validation. It occurs to him that a deed, a miraculous one that would measure with the wonders he has seen from Jesus, would offer more trustworthy proof than mere words. In a flash he identifies an excellent test close at hand. Responding to the heartening affirmation of Jesus, Peter shouts his proposed test into the storm: “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water” (verse 28). Across the waves, carried by the wind and punctuated by a lightning bolt and a rumbling peal of thunder, comes a one-word command: “Come” (verse 29).

I find it fascinating that Jesus, striding across the waves as the Lord of creation, accepts Peter’s little test. It would seem to be a good moment for a short, storm-blown lecture about taking the Lord—this Lord Jesus—at His word (and at the end of the story Jesus does admonish Peter through a stinging question). To his credit, Peter

We should avoid focusing on the imperfections so readily on display and instead focus on Christ.

climbs out of the boat and onto the storm-tossed sea, ready to test the identity of the One who commands him to do so.

One could argue that Peter's early steps in this test differ from the later ones. At first what is at issue is not the faith of Peter in Jesus but the very identity of Jesus. As Peter begins his trek, he is not sustained by his faith in Jesus. Instead, Jesus sustains him on the waves as miraculous testimony to His own identity. He is who He says He is. His message of hope rings true.

Peter does not begin his singular adventure in faith and then lose faith. He begins by testing the word of an apparition, perhaps fully expecting to end up cold, wet, and disillusioned. But in possession of an important truth: It is a ghost! But after a few steps the spiritual dynamics of the experience shift. He has now confirmed the identity of the One who has commanded him to come. The test mutates into a test of him, of his faith in Jesus, whose identity has just been confirmed. It is just here that the church—our church—is drawn afresh into the story. We face Peter's test. Having confirmed the identity of Jesus in our shared life and experience, will we keep our vision focused on Him? Will we refuse to be distracted from our essential fixation on Jesus?

Peter fails the next test. He becomes distracted by "the wind." And when his focus shifts to the gale, He forgets both Jesus and His hope-filled message. The wind blows fear into his heart, and he begins to sink into the roiling deep. Peter "took his eyes off the Master and fixed them on the raging sea. Looking at the storm, he came to believe in its might more than in the might of his Lord. He saw Jesus through his difficulties instead of looking at his difficulties in the light of his Lord. Thus his problems loomed so large that they blinded him altogether to the presence of Christ."¹¹

But Peter does not fail the ultimate test, for in this moment of panicked fear he abandons any trust in himself and cries out, "Lord, save me!" And just here we, the church, learn a vital lesson. Should we lose our focus on Jesus and begin to sink, we can always cry out to Him. And Jesus, our

incredible, trustworthy Saviour, will do for us just what He did for Peter. His arm thrust through the hungry waves. His hand, not waiting for our weakening grasp, but firmly gripping us. Lifting. Raising. Resurrecting. Then, eye-to-eye and heart-to-heart, comes the piercing, searching question: "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Jesus and His drenched disciple "got into the boat" and "the wind ceased" (verse 32). With the last bolt of lightning and peal of thunder fading over the horizon, the windblown waves settle to a calm, glasslike sea and a worship service breaks out in that little boat: "And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (verse 33).

The history of the church—our church—in story form. We will all too often fail our own vision test, allowing someone else or something else other than Jesus to dominate our field of view. But what an ending to the story! And what a grand place for the church's story to conclude: Eyes on Jesus. Affirming His identity as the Son of God. Worshiping the One who has saved us. I wish to be part of such a Christ-centered church, don't you? 🍀

¹Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

²*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1084 (repeating Manuscript 31, 1890 as cited in *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1957], p. 662). Italics original.

³Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 2, p. 87.

⁴Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 54.

⁵Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 331 (repeating *Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers*, Series A, No. 8 [1897], p. 17).

⁶Two-part series published serially on August 8 and 15.

⁷Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Aug. 8, 1893.

⁸Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Aug 15, 1893.

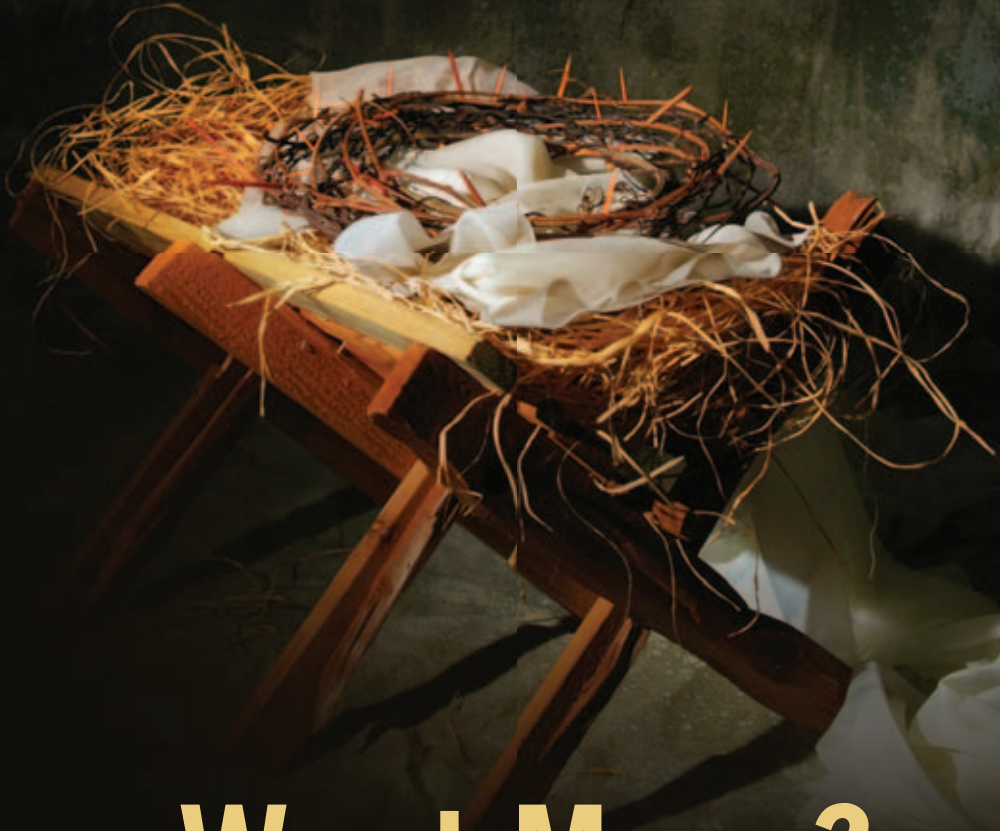
⁹Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1913), p. 453.

¹⁰Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew, New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), vol. 22, p. 235.

¹¹Clovis G. Chappell, *Questions Jesus Asked* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press), p. 49.

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THE WAY OF LIFE

*From Paradise
Lost to Paradise
Restored*

These four illustrations reflect the growing understanding of the plan of salvation experienced among our church pioneers. Notice the progression in each version.



1873 Designed by Merritt G. Kellogg, older half-brother of John Harvey and William K. Kellogg, the illustration was first advertised in the *Review* in the May 27, 1873, issue. Kellogg published a 15-page booklet explaining the picture that same year. Evangelists used it to explain the relationship between law and gospel.



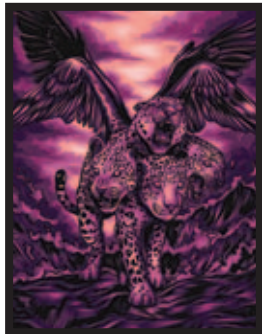
1876 “The Way of Life is to be revised and improved in every way,” wrote James White to his wife, Ellen. This version was made available through the *Review*, in October 1876. A booklet by James White offering an explanation was also available. The prominent eye representing “that God sees all we do” is no longer present. The Holy City has been brought down to earth. The child and the animals representing the earth made new have been removed. A few figures, such as the angel and those depicting baptism, have been improved or changed.



1883 In 1880 James White planned another version with two major changes. Writing to Ellen he noted that “The Law Tree is removed. Christ on the cross is made large, and placed in the center.” This reflected a change in James White—Christ, not the law, is the center of the plan of salvation. Thomas Moran, one of America’s foremost landscape artists, was commissioned to produce the steel-plate engraving. White planned to publish a book to accompany it. Unfortunately, he died August 6, 1881. Ellen White, with the help of her two sons, had the steel-plate engraving produced and copyrighted. The law was replaced by the crucified Christ.



1980 The most recent version was commissioned by the Ellen G. White Estate as a full-color mural painted by Alfred Lee. It was first displayed at the 1980 General Conference session in Dallas, Texas, and now hangs prominently in the stairwell leading to the White Estate visitor center at the General Conference.





GOD IS A CREATIVE

Illustration as a reflection of the Master Illustrator

DANIEL BRUNEAU

Growing up, Ashley Bloom, a London-based illustrator, saw some great examples of illustrated children's Bibles, but often felt frustrated that the depictions didn't do the actual stories justice. "When drawings were too childish and didn't communicate reality, or where prophecy illustrations looked very amateurish, I felt it took away from the sense of realism and believability," he says. That drove me to study illustration and graphic design at university, and ever since, I have always tried to use visual communication as a way of bringing the Bible to life."

Taking on Bible-based projects has allowed Bloom to strengthen his relationship to Scripture. "In illustrating the story of David, I tried to interpret it as a graphic novel. In my effort to illustrate the story as accurately as possible, I began analyzing small parts of the text that I had previously overlooked." As a youth leader in his local congregation, using art to convey biblical truth is an important educational method. "Whenever I teach young people, even if they're not artistic themselves, I still make them illustrate things like prophecies based on the text, because it causes them to question details they might otherwise gloss over, and it increases their understanding," he says.

Bloom has a unique way of looking at the notion of placing Christ at the center of his art. "There are two elements to it," he says. "One part is that it's

actually as important what I don't draw as what I do draw. There are some things that I've committed to not try to depict. One of them is the face of Christ Himself. That's just my understanding of how it relates to the commandment of not making graven images and realizing the reasoning behind that is to keep us from doing a disservice to something that we could never accurately portray. So there are certain scenes that I've committed to not actually draw, and it's because I think, as an artist, your level of reverence for your subject matter has to come across."

In the creative and emotive world of the arts, inspiration is often taken from the culture, the times, and the way in which the world moves. But for the artist who places Christ at the center of his or her work, how does one juxtapose Christ with culture? "I try to make sure my culture doesn't influence my work too much," says Bloom. "I recently worked on a T-shirt design for a Christian client who wanted to make a line of shirts that appeal to young people outside the church. So I drew a few superhero characters looking like they are about to take on an enemy, but with Jesus' hand just visible, raised in front of them saying, 'It's all right, guys. I've got this.'" That kind of relevance, reaching out to people and meeting them where they are, if done well, can be effective. ▀

Daniel Bruneau is creative director for Adventist Review Ministries.



GOD NOTES

Music as a spiritual resource

J. BRUCE ASHTON

Spoken language was highly important to Jesus: “tears were in His voice as He uttered His scathing rebukes”; and He “exercised the greatest tact, and thoughtful, kind attention in His intercourse with the people.”¹ Mark reports that “common people heard Him gladly” (Mark 12:37, NKJV).² The people of Nazareth wondered “at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke 4:22, NKJV).

THE WORD ENRICHED

If words themselves count for so much, with what zealous attention should we consider the impact of song, where the symbolic meanings of words are richly enhanced by the emotional power of music and poetic form. Music itself admits of no literal translation into “meaning,” but instead provides an experience to be relished (or despised!). And while it cannot be absolutely reduced to verbal interpretation, it nevertheless carries a message (primarily emotional) by its very nature.

Indeed, research shows that music, even apart from any words that may accompany it, preempts and synchronizes the listener’s brain waves, “entraining” them with an immediacy that overrides mere verbal content. When the musical and verbal messages correlate, the impact is multiplied. If they are not the same, the musical impact consistently prevails over the rhetorical.

EXAMPLES: GOOD AND OTHERWISE

The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal (SDAH) offers many fine examples of great pairings. The final victory of the redeemed, as William How described it in “For All the Saints,” fairly shouts in Ralph Vaughan-Williams’ vibrant tune, SINE NOMINE (no. 421). James Montgomery’s self-searching in

“Go to Dark Gethsemane” finds appropriate expression in Richard Redhead’s GETHSEMANE (no. 157). And John Goss’s LAUDA ANIMA (No. 4) ably and amply supports Henry F. Lyte’s “Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven.”

Not all possible combinations are as successful. *The Church Hymnal*, predecessor of *SDAH*, included three stanzas (out of 14!) that Charles Wesley called “Wrestling Jacob.” They were grossly mismatched with a subdued, funeral-parlor kind of tune—and Jacob’s terror-stricken grappling to survive disappears into thin air!

Good matches make good opportunities for new creative work. I have just arranged “Away in a Manger” for clarinet and cello. When any appropriate pair of artists plays this version, the accompanying words will come to life in many a listener’s mind.

There is always the possibility of creating an entirely new musical context for a hymn. Any hymn that begins with a dramatic “Alas” deserves significantly intense musical support (such as *SDAH* 163). My new setting, for choral purposes, includes the third and fourth stanzas omitted in *SDAH* that prepare effectively for the “but” that opens the final stanza.

Whatever the process, the goal is always the same: to enrich worshippers’ vocabulary of praise, of spiritual comfort, of devotion and commitment to the God whose love impels Him to sing over His own (Zeph. 3:17). ♣

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 353.

² Bible texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

J. Bruce Ashton, actively retired from Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee, continues to teach, perform, and create for God’s glory.

All the Saints

SINE NOMINE 10.10.10. Alleluias
Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

who from their la - bors rest, Who Thee by faith be -
 their For - tress and their Might; Thou, Lord, their captain
 diers, faith - ful, true, and bold, Fight as the saints who
 is fierce, the war - fare long, Steals on the ear the
 nds, from ocean's farthest coast, Thro' gates of pearl streams

Thy name, O Je - sus, be for - ev -
 Thou, in the dark - ness dread, their one
 And win with them the vic - tor's crow
 And hearts are brave a - gain, and arm
 sing - ing to Fa - ther, Son, and Ho

MINISTRY IN A CAN OF SPRAY PAINT

God working through graffiti

WILONA KARIMABADI

Drawing was an escape and way of expression,” says Milton Coronado, street artist, pastor, and proud Chicagoan. Coronado’s talent, noticed and nurtured by teachers early on, led him to decide on a career in art in high school. Expressing himself through this form was also a balm for his troubled heart through a lifetime of hardship, which included the early deaths of his mother and father.

When he decided to pursue art as a high school junior, he was also drawn to graffiti and illegal street art. Only after his father passed away did he stop. Four years later, after dedicating his life to Christ, he picked up a spray can again. This time it was for ministry.

Coronado had a chance meeting with Pastors Manny Cruz and José Murrillo at the 2005 General Conference session in St. Louis, and learned more about their own street art ministry. He was encouraged to pursue his talent for street art for the glory of God. “I started painting messages that just gave the hope of Jesus Christ and shared His love toward the community,” says Coronado. “I was really, motivated by that, especially because of young people coming up to me and saying, ‘I paint as well. My parents don’t know, and my pastor doesn’t know.’”

Coronado now uses this unique talent in workshops for youth in both Adventist and non-Adventist churches. He teaches about the origins of this art form, technique, and how it can be used for good—and lets his students get to work on their own masterpieces for the Lord. “Churches all have young people who are impacted one way or the other by hip-hop culture,” he says. “I say hip-hop culture because graffiti is a part of that culture, especially in the inner cities.” Sharing his testimony and way of using graffiti art positively helps these kids find common ground with the message he tries to convey.

When Marlen Ochoa-Lopez, a young pregnant woman, was senselessly murdered, the crime deeply affected the city. Coronado felt compelled to do something. “She passed away on a Thursday. The next Sunday I left my house at 6:00 a.m. and began painting by 11:00 a.m.,” Coronado remembers. “I finished around 4:00 p.m. I did this because first, I could relate. Second, there was so much evil about this, and the entire city was affected by it. I just wanted to give back something positive, something that pointed toward hope, that pointed toward Jesus Christ in the midst of this evil. That’s why I added a Bible text to the mural.”

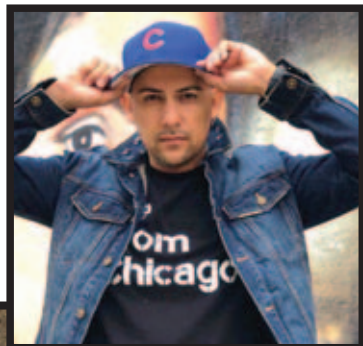
Coronado believes his gift for street art has a place in the ministry of the gospel. His focus now is on helping other young people pick up their spray cans for the cause. “I want to mentor young artists who have a passion for Christ and others, and have an interest in street art, so that they too can lead this ministry years down the line.”

Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor at *Adventist Review*.





Marlen Ochoa-Lopez's tragic death was memorialized through this mural. Coronado (right) added the image of Jesus cradling her unborn son to give comfort to all who witnessed the artwork and were deeply affected by the senseless murder of both mother and baby.





FIRST NOTE TO FINAL BOW

Connecting with the Ultimate Composer

WILONA KARIMABADI

Lawrence Galera, music teacher at Collegedale Academy in Tennessee, credits his grandmother with first instilling in him a passion for musical theater. She was the one to first expose him to different musical productions and he felt immediately drawn to the genre. “I was greatly impressed, and loved everything I’ve seen and was drawn emotionally to it. I just loved every minute of it and was very inspired,” he says. That started him on his own musical journey that took him into the world of composing original musical productions.

As the former music teacher at Pennsylvania’s Blue Mountain Academy, Galera found himself with access to a choir, a band, and an orchestra, and it wasn’t long before his first production—themed on the story of Noah and the great Flood—was born. “I decided to write something that would give my students a biblical perspective through music— theater music and the drama experience,” says Galera. Another production followed, this time on the Exodus story, following the life of Moses as he led the Israelites out of Egypt. Both works incorporated classical composer music as well.

“I had symphonies from Beethoven, from Schubert, and some opera choruses that infused the music,” Galera recalls. “I wrote my own lyrics, so both—music and lyrics—were infused into the overall production.” Galera next created a completely original production—holding all rights to the lyrics and music—based on the story of Esther. This work was specially commissioned for the music program at San Gabriel Academy in southern California.

Galera’s love of music is best expressed in musical theater. But the unique connection he makes to the Author of music is evident through the subject matter his productions are focused on. “Particularly with the biblical themes and the lessons we as Christians learn from them, students are able to play [the music] and see different roles,” says Galera. Yet while playing and studying the pieces, Galera’s students are actually gaining so much more. “They are internalizing the plot and characters and seeing different aspects of the story that we are always trying to learn from in order to make ourselves better.”

“The combination of biblical principles and Christian values that we learn about gives us a little more perspective,” he adds. “As the students develop themselves as musicians working with each other in the orchestra and through their instruments, or even as singers and soloists in the chorus, we have the experience of seeing this art form come alive as a ministry.”

The journey from an idea to an actual polished performance is never an easy one. But Galera has felt the hand of God guiding him in bringing biblical inspiration to musical fruition. “In every step of the way, every time I sit down and compose or write lyrics to orchestrate, there is a sense of prayer that I need to connect with,” Galera says. “And from the beginning of the first note written to the actual final performance and final bow, it’s such a fulfilling experience to know that I am supported by a higher divine power that helps me get through it.”

Wilona Karimabadi is an assistant editor of *Adventist Review*.



Church designed by Franck and Lohsen Architects, Washington D.C., features stained glass, woodworking, and mosaics to lift worshipers' thoughts to God.

GOD AND DESIGN

In the beginning God was creative.

ANDWELE WORRELL

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was creative. And the Word created things beautiful and enjoyable. Men and women marred that creation, but God is determined to redeem and restore the beauty He made; and He's asked us, humans, to collaborate with Him.

For me and for many, December is a celebration of this collaboration. My favorite destination for pondering the Advent is the Festival of Lessons and Carols at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., a stunning work of architecture where so much of the human experience is etched in stone and glass.

Art has special power to evoke thought. As a student at Andrews University, the statue of the J. N. Andrews family pointing to the world from the front steps of Pioneer Memorial church was a material reminder of the mission that engages me. On many days the bravery, the commitment to mission, that it depicts caused me to consider the alignment of my life with the singular purpose of Christ's work, winning people for His kingdom.

One doesn't know much of Jesus' building, carving, design, and production in Nazareth. He spent most of His time here on earth building people. Redemption illustrated. But when God chose to articulate His plan of salvation to Israel, He expressed it in a fantastic work of art known as the tabernacle.

I wish more Adventist buildings reflected the tabernacle's dedication to beauty. Like the star over Bethlehem, the visual arts can be a powerful tool to help lead people to Christ. Church, school, and hospital buildings, gardens and landscaping, are all great opportunities to exploit the power of that much-quoted saying: a picture is worth a thousand words. ♣

Andwele Worrell practices architecture in Washington, D.C., where he seeks to use architecture and art to bring meaning to the human experience and happiness to his wife and two children.

I wish more Adventist buildings reflected the tabernacle's dedication to beauty.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREWS UNIVERSITY

THE THE GEM





More than the great star sapphire

DWIGHT K. NELSON

A tale that has achieved the status of urban legend has professional gemologist Roy Whetstine strolling through an amateur rock collectors' exhibit when he was stopped by the collection of a rockhound from Idaho.

On the card table amid the prized and polished rocks sat a Tupperware bowl containing a menagerie of rocky duplicates and discards. The masking tape on the front of the bowl read "For Sale—\$15 Each." Whetstine reached into the dusty bowl and fingered the rocks. One felt strange. He lifted a potato-shaped gray violet rock into the air, twisting it before his trained eye. "You want \$15 for *this*?"

The collector grabbed the rock and looked at it closely. "No," he finally replied. "You can have this one for \$10."

Whetstine pulled out a wrinkled \$10 bill and walked away with, according to the legend, the world's largest star sapphire—700 more carats than the previous record holder, the Black Star of Queensland, Australia. Estimated value? \$1.7 million. Marked down to \$10!

GEM OF THE UNIVERSE

Just a fictional story? Nothing more than a parable? But have we in the church done the same thing? Or worse: relegating the star sapphire of the universe to our dusty Tupperware bowl of doctrines, creeds, and other such collector's items? Do we tote them about, touting their value to the

world, when all the while the infinite treasure of Jesus lies unnoticed, buried beneath our dusty accumulations of orthodoxy?

Make no mistake. Choosing between Jesus and doctrine is a false dichotomy. Although given our culture's distaste for creed and doctrine, for the notion of capital-T Truth at all, it's hardly surprising that we might be tempted by the opinion, "Jesus—Yes! Doctrine—No!"

But that would be patently illogical. Because by very

definition a doctrine is a belief or set of beliefs held by a church. How could the star sapphire truth of Jesus not rank as the doctrine extraordinaire? Yet no matter how you cast it, "doctrine" doesn't feel very warm and friendly, certainly not as friendly and inviting as Jesus. So must we choose between them?

Jesus didn't. Just hours away from His execution, He declared without equivocation, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). He was not only the incarnation of God; He was—and still is—the personification of truth, capital-T Truth. Thus by definition any biblical doctrine, any scriptural truth and belief, must ultimately be Christocentric, Christ-centered. A point Jesus sprang on the ecclesiastical hierarchy one unforgettable afternoon.

Jesus had just had the temerity to heal a man paralyzed for 38 years—done it with a simple command, and done it on the Sabbath.

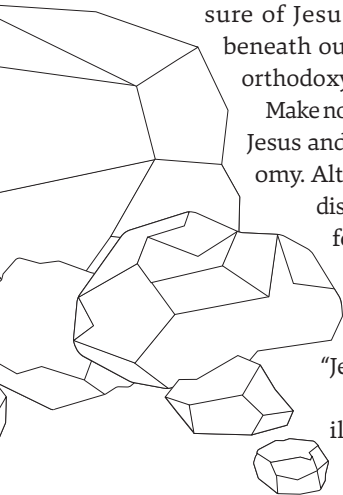
The guardians of tradition and orthodoxy descend on the young Teacher-Healer with fury. But Jesus doesn't flinch. It's another one of His "need versus creed" showdowns, in which He elevates human need above prevailing creed. Challenged by Scripture He quietly responds: "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39, 40). Catch His point?

You can't miss it here in Eugene Peterson's *Message* rendition of Jesus' words: "You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you'll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about *me*! And here I am, standing right before you, and you aren't willing to receive from me the life you say you want."¹

"These Scriptures are all about *me*!" Christocentric, Christ-centered, all about Jesus—that is the compelling truth about all Bible doctrines—they are all about *Jesus*.

EXPOSING THE GEM

Wouldn't you love to have a YouTube clip of that moment? Two heartbroken followers of Jesus are returning to their village home—grown men



All about Jesus—that is the compelling truth about all Bible doctrines—they are all about Jesus.

crying, so disappointed they are over the tragic death of their Leader. A stranger catches up to them, slips into their tearful conversation, and begins a recitation of Old Testament passages and promises: “He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in *all the Scriptures* concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

There it is again from the lips of our Lord Himself—the gospel truth that *all truth* is the truth as it is in Jesus in “all the Scriptures.” Period. No surprise: when Jesus returns to heaven a few weeks after His Emmaus walk, He leaves behind an embryonic but genuinely Christocentric faith community. Just listen to His disciples:

Peter: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Paul: “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

Paul again: “Christ is all, and is in all” (Col. 3:11).

John: “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16).

Jesus through John: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 22:13).

THE GEM AND YOU AND ME

Who can deny the Bible depiction of this Christ-centered church founded on Christ-centered doctrines taught by Christ-centered leaders? The record is clear. But all of that was 2,000 years ago. What about the third millennial church today? How is it with us?

May I be candid with you? I love my church,

this faith community into which I was born. I’m a fifth-generation Seventh-day Adventist and a fourth-generation preacher. But I have this gnawing sense that in spite of all the good we read about and hear about, something is still missing.

I’m not so worried about my church losing its hold on Christ-centered proclamation. Although I’ll be the first to admit that even Christ-centered preaching can sometimes feel sterile and heartless, even Jesus-less. I plead guilty. But we pastors and preachers know our marching orders.

Ellen White is clear: “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel’s message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; *but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out.*”² You cannot get any more Christ-centered than “the great center of attraction.” Christ’s church must preach Christ. Must proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus.

I’m also confident that the church’s theologians will continue in their duty to keep this faith community focused on Christ-centered proclamation and *orthodoxy* (“right believing”).

WE AND THE GEM: AN EARNEST CONCERN

But to be honest, I am much more concerned about Christ-centered *orthopraxy* (“right behaving”) or the lack of it in our church. At least in my life, if not in yours.

A woman called our church one day. I didn’t recognize her voice. She said she’d been listening on the radio and knew if she called me I would help her. I admit: my immediate reaction to her word “help” was “she’s going to ask for money.” Sure enough, she did.

In that split second I’d tried to think of a place I could send her for a handout—United Way or the police station, maybe. But before I could speak, the Holy Spirit clamped my mouth shut as she went on. She had \$1,000 waiting for her in Chicago, but after listening on the radio, she felt she should abandon that easy money. Turns out she was a prostitute with two little children—and out of money. So I made arrangements for her to anonymously pick up some emergency aid from the church.

Several weeks later an attractive woman came up to me after worship and asked if I remembered

her. I didn't. She spoke about that phone call and immediately, of course, I remembered it all. "I hope you don't mind my children and me worshipping here." I assured her she was always welcome.

Some months later when I saw her face radiant with joy as she came up from the baptistry waters, I realized how close I'd come to spoiling the work of Jesus in that woman's heart.

Wasn't that Jesus' point that night before He died? "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34, 35, NKJV).³

Jesus' point is inescapable: The only way the world will know we are His people is by our love. Are we a loving people? Or are we, as Mark Twain cynically quipped, "good . . . in the worst sense of the word"? Like the little English girl prayed: "O God, make the bad people good . . . and the good people nice."⁴

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." How could we possibly be a Christ-centered church if we are not a loving people? Doesn't Christ-centered mean Jesus in the middle—in the middle of our friendships, in the middle of our marriages, in the middle of our studying, in the middle of our careers, in the middle of our everywhere and everything? Are we a Jesus people?

H.M.S. Richards, Sr., the beloved preacher who founded the Voice of Prophecy, once was asked, "What is the Adventist message?" His reply was two words long: "Jesus only." Yes, but what about these "Jesus freaks" (it was the 1960s)? His answer: "Sounds like a good idea. I've been one all my life."⁵

Isn't that to be the truth about you and me, too? Jesus freaks—people known for their Jesus kind of living, Jesus kind of loving?

John Stott is right: "The cross is a revelation of God's justice as well as of his love. That is why the community of the cross should concern itself with social justice as well as loving philanthropy. It is never enough to have pity on the victims of injustice, if we do nothing to change the unjust situation."⁶

God asks: "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe

them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?" (Isa. 58:6, 7).

Given the state of our nation and world, shouldn't Jesus' people, Jesus' church, be just like Him in defending the marginalized, the disenfranchised, the alien and the alienated? "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." What are we waiting for?

For Jesus to come? Be careful what you look forward to! "When the nations are gathered before [Christ the judge], there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering."⁷

PASSION FOR THE GEM

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). "I want to know Christ" (Phil. 3:10). Christ-centered people, such as Paul, have always had a passion for Him. Nikolaus von Zinzendorf penned: "I have one passion—it is He and He alone."⁸

Ellen White was no different: "In the long weary hours of the night, . . . when every nerve seemed to be shrieking with pain, when if I considered myself, it seemed I should go frantic, the peace of Christ has come into my heart in such measure that I have been filled with gratitude and thanksgiving. I know that Jesus loves me, and I love Jesus."⁹

That's the church I want to belong to—a people who know Jesus loves them, who love Him back, and move into the world to love it back to Him. 📌

¹ From *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.

² Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 156. (Italics supplied.)

³ Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁴ Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1997), p. 32.

⁵ Robert E. Edwards, *H.M.S. Richards: A Biography* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1998), p. 266.

⁶ John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), pp. 292, 293.

⁷ Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 637.

⁸ books.google.com/books?id=54BgAUIPih-kC&pg=PA355&lpg=PA355&dq=%22I+have+but+one+passion--it+is+he,+only+he%22&source=bl&ots=F5iXXCzOjv&sig=ACfU3U3r_4deG1QmF7lqLu7v0EWfpglyAA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKUkwj-q4K597LIAHvDdt8KHatFA-AQ6AEwA30ECAVQAQ#v=onepage&q=%22I%20have%20but%20one%20passion--it%20is%20he%2C%20only%20he%22&f=false

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 2, p. 233.

Dwight K. Nelson is lead pastor of Pioneer Memorial church, on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

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THE BOOKMARK

Several years ago I was given a bookmark. The bookmark is square, thick metal, and has beautiful Celtic designs carved on it with the engraving: “Live, Laugh, Love.” It’s not a bookmark I would have selected for myself. It’s heavy and slips out of books quite easily, which renders its primary purpose useless.

Yet it is beautiful and oddly profound: Live, Laugh, Love. An invitational phrase; a checklist of sorts. It makes me wonder: could we sum up transformative moments of our lives into just three words?

* * *

The week is dedicated to academic professional development meetings. For four days professors from across the state will spend six hours in workshops, training, and lectures.

I am late to the first faculty lecture series, and I quickly search for a seat. I quietly tiptoe toward the last aisle in the auditorium to an empty chair next to my friend, Dr. Michaels, a composer and music professor. I whisper hello, sit down, and, to my horror, I hear the sound of my Celtic bookmark fall to the floor, hit the tile, and oscillate in vibration.

As the bookmark becomes silent in its movement, my colleague whispers: “Your bookmark is set to A sharp.” I try to control a small burst of laughter.

During a break Dr. Michaels examines the bookmark. He finds the metal to be resilient yet problematic as he notices the bookmark’s weight will never “hold still” between pages. “It is a rather persistent bookmark,” he says. “Every time it escapes the pages of a book it will fall and remind you of three rather important general tasks: live, laugh, love.”

Still holding the bookmark, Dr. Michaels shares that as a young disabled boy, he grew up at a time when few resources could help him succeed in school. He never spoke in class. Music helped him communicate. When his grandmother took him to church, he would listen to the choir, hear the harmonies meant for heaven, and say: “I want to write something for God.”

He prayed for a gift and dedicated its outcome: “Help me learn to play and write music for You, and I will spend my life teaching others to praise You.”

I listen, reflecting on the many concerts I have attended in which he conducted original compositions performed by the university orchestra. Amid many standing ovations he always looks up, points to the heavens, then humbly asks the orchestra to stand and accept *their* standing ovation. I never understood the blessing behind the talent, the answered prayers, in every note he writes.

“You have a bookmark in the pages of my life’s story,” he says, adjusting his glasses. “My three words would be: pray, listen, praise.” He smiles and slowly walks away, using his support cane to probe through a busy crowd he cannot see, carefully touching the back of the chairs, silently counting them until he returns to his seat.

I somehow know that his three words are part of a ministry for me. I follow him to our seats, with my advantage of sight and the challenge to engage other senses, as he has done all his life: to pray, listen, praise. Because those are the roots that sprout life, laughter, and love. ♣

Dixil Rodriguez, a university professor and hospital chaplain, lives in Texas.

SEARCHING
THE OBVIOUS
DIXIL
RODRIGUEZ



“HELP ME LEARN TO
PLAY AND WRITE
MUSIC FOR YOU, AND
I WILL SPEND MY LIFE
TEACHING OTHERS
TO PRAISE YOU.”

1888 ROAD MAP

Trying to condense the story of the **1888 General Conference session** is not an easy task. But this is our attempt to “simplify” it into an easy-to-read informational map. It is not meant to give the full story. We encourage you to learn more about this watershed event in Adventist history by checking out the resources in the list we’ve provided.

MERLE POIRIER



3

WERE THERE ANY CONTRIBUTING FACTORS?

Yes. It had deeper roots. Because of its distinctive doctrinal teachings, debates were common between Adventist preachers and those of other faiths; so much so that Adventists became known as being all about the law and not about the gospel.

During the 1880s there emerged growing support for Sunday legislation in certain states. By May 1888, a Sunday law bill, introduced into the U. S. Congress, led Adventists to believe end-time prophecy was being fulfilled. Butler and Smith’s reaction was influenced by believing the church was being attacked from the outside as well as from within. To interpret the law in Galatians 3 as anything other than the ceremonial law was to abandon the distinct beliefs of Adventism itself.

Ellen White wrote a testimony on the issue in the 1850s that could not be found, but which Butler and Smith believed supported their view. They felt that accepting the new interpretation meant abandoning traditional Adventism, as well as the prophetic gift.

JESUS IS THE **CENTER** OF OUR FAITH.

5

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Ellen White was unhappy with Butler and Smith because of their sharp attacks against Jones and Waggoner. When Smith retaliated in the *Review*, White advised that Waggoner should have his time as well. Thus Butler reluctantly included him on the session agenda.

Interestingly, at the session Waggoner abandoned his earlier tactics and preached about

4

WHERE AND WHEN WAS THE 1888 GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION?

The easiest question to answer. Things finally came to a head in the newly constructed Adventist church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, from October 17 through November 4, 1888.



1

WHAT WAS THIS ALL ABOUT?

Simply put, it was about how to interpret certain passages in the book of Galatians. One view stressed Paul's support for the law, while the other emphasized the gospel. There also was tension between those who perceived "new" theology versus traditional theology preached by Adventists for the previous 30 years. Mix in further disputes over the identification of the 10 horns in Daniel 7 and personalities who revealed a less-than-Christlike spirit, and you had a recipe for controversy and misunderstanding.

George I. Butler



Uriah Smith



Alonzo T. Jones



Ellet J. Waggoner

2

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

The main antagonists were George I. Butler, General Conference president; and **Uriah Smith**, *Review and Herald* editor; versus **Alonzo T. Jones** and **Ellet J. Waggoner**, coeditors of *Signs of the Times*. Butler and Smith represented the traditionalists and were part of the church leadership in Battle Creek, Michigan. Jones and Waggoner were talented younger preachers who lived in California. All four were known for setting themselves on certain principles and refusing to move. Sharp words were sent back and forth, both verbally and in print, as they argued their positions.

Ellen White, recognized by the church as God's messenger, was also involved. Prior to the session she attempted to stay neutral regarding the debate between the two sides. As discussions became more heated, she ventured in to help keep a civil tone between the men. Ellen White eventually became a strong advocate for the message of Jones and Waggoner.

righteousness by faith. More than half of his sermons were on this topic. Only then did he deal with Galatians. This caused the entire debate to turn.

Butler resigned at the 1888 session. Smith also gave up his position. Ellen White left discouraged, but did not give up hope. She joined her voice with Jones and Waggoner's, proclaiming a renewed focus on Christ. They preached across the nation to leaders and members. By 1896 Ellen White felt that the church had mostly accepted the 1888 message.

7

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

1. *A User-friendly Guide to the 1888 Message*, by George Knight
2. *Manuscripts and Memories of Minneapolis* (online only): egwwritings.org/?ref=en_MMM.1¶=936.2 (contains non-EGW source material)
3. *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*: egwwritings.org/?ref=en_1888.1¶=428.2.
4. Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*
5. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1 (1958), pp. 211-416; book 3 (1980), pp. 156-204.

6

WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FOR TODAY?

Why should we care about the 1888 crisis within the church? There are four important reasons:

1. Jesus is the center of our faith.
2. Bible study is important and central to theology.
3. Christian civility is of utmost importance.
4. Within the gospel, law and grace find balance and harmony.

*Understanding
legitimate
righteousness*

A hand holds a black compass with a lens over the sun at sunset. The sun is visible through the lens, creating a bright flare. The compass face shows cardinal directions: N (North), S (South), E (East), and W (West). The background is a blurred sunset over water.

THE PROMISE



Barry is living his best life. Graduated from an Ivy League school, working on Wall Street, living in Brooklyn, Barry is married to his childhood crush, the beautiful Sarah, who owns a sustainable fashion boutique. They both appreciate the graciousness of affluent relatives who have enabled them to establish themselves, and for Sarah to pursue her passion project. Sarah and Barry love their community. They also love God. With His help they look forward to making a positive difference in their community. They dream of someday raising kids to also enjoy this good life they've carved for themselves.

Four thousand years ago Abram lived the good life that Barry is now living. Abram grew up in Ur, a cultural and financial center of the ancient world. He and his family were wealthy and respected, living a life at the pinnacle of success. After marrying his stunning half sister Sarai and establishing his own household, he and some of his family followed God's call to relocate to Canaan. They traveled for 600 miles and many months, and "when they came to Haran, they settled there" (Gen. 11:31, NET).¹

Why, when Haran was only halfway to Canaan?

Haran was like Ur's sister city. Was it the pull of familiarity—customs, culture, and religion—that reminded them of home?

SOMETIMES LIFE GETS SERIOUS

In Haran, Abram's father, Terah, died, and from his very grave "the divine Voice bade him [Abram] go forward."² "Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father's household to the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12:1, NET). Abram could not settle anymore. The time for stopping was over. With Sarai and Lot he went—leaving behind past and pride, heritage and esteem, Ur and Haran and their support networks. The call was "Go!" and go they did.

Back to our contemporary representation of Abram and Sarai: under what circumstances would Barry and Sarah follow a call to "go out" from the place that gave them identity, purpose, and security? As millennials they would need a cause. But what cause would so grip their hearts as to compel them to go and leave their coveted lives behind? For Abram and Sarai, the cause was God. Though their own family mixed the worship of God with the worship of idols, they believed in God only, and became God-chosen, appointed bearers of His great promise: "Go from your country . . . to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great. . . . I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses

Don't stop believing. Believe in "the God who makes the dead alive and summons the things that do not yet exist as though they already do" (Rom. 4:17, NET).

you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:1-3).

A truly great cause—to be blessed by God and to bless all peoples on earth! Even Barry and Sarah would have been in awe of the magnitude of such a cause. Perhaps, with today's notion of overpopulation, they would not be so fond of the idea of spawning a great nation. But to give birth to one world-changing child who would alter the course of history, a child who would need to be raised in a place God would show them, would they go? There's a good chance.

Abram and Sarai did go, journeying stage by caravan stage. Barry and Sarah drive mile by mile—through city and suburbs, through the country and rurality. Going where? To the land that their Lord will show them. Hope is in their eyes. In the world's eyes their future is behind them in Ur and Haran, or Brooklyn and Philadelphia. In their eyes God holds their future; He has called them to a cause that will change the world. They travel for months, and finally God appears to Abram, and says, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7, KJV).

Abram and Sarai settled in that promised land. Sometimes they were bad representatives of God—as when in Egypt they fearfully hid the fact that they were married (Gen. 12:10-20). They also faced great challenges—as when Abram's nephew Lot was taken captive by the forces of four invading kings. In response Abram engaged 318 of his trained servants to attack the captors and release Lot and others from Sodom (Gen. 14). Through all this God and Abram were ever on good terms (Gen. 13:14-18; 15). Still, among all their experiences, one matter brought them more enduring sorrow and consternation than anything else.

SOMETIMES LIFE GETS PAINFUL

Consider God's promise spoken to Abram: "Look around from where you are. . . . All the land that

you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted" (Gen. 13:14-16).

Now consider the fact that Abram and Sarai were completely childless. They had tried for years, for decades. Barry and Sarah, our contemporary Abram and Sarai, would have spent a nice chunk of their wealth at all the best fertility clinics in the country—all to no avail. All the hoping and waiting, the roller coaster of hormones and emotions, every passing month.

In the midst of it all, what stung them most was *the promise*. It was bad enough not to have a child. Barry and Sarah would feel that same ache when they longed for a baby to love and hold. But for Abram and Sarai, living in a culture in which preservation of the family line was of vital importance, the shame of childlessness was inescapably painful.

Then, added to that ache, was *the promise*—from God Himself; the promise not of a child, but of a whole nation, numerous as the dust and the stars. *That promise*—they could never escape it, never avoid it, never forget it even if at times they wanted to. In the daytime they saw dust everywhere; it caked their feet, and they remembered the promise. At night countless shining stars in a silent desert sky shouted their constant reminder of that promise. God's promise gave them no rest, even as they watched their bodies age and saw the promise remain barren and unfulfilled.

How long would you have held on to the promise? Until age 40? 50? 99?

Later Abram heard his promise-making God again: "Fear not, Abram! I am your shield and the one who will reward you in great abundance" (Gen. 15:1, NET). But Abram responded, "You have not given me a descendant" (verse 3, NET). So the Creator of stars took Abram outside to count them and reiterated His promise: "So will your descendants be" (verse 5, NET).

Imagine Abram's heart, flooded with conflicting emotions: he must choose between God and his lived reality of great age and no child! He must deny visible reality to believe the invisible One. His decades of proven faith—living in Canaan, not Ur and Haran—ever tested by the emptiness of that promise of a seed. Still, how could he deny his Creator and true friend? So "[a]gainst hope

Before or After?

Abraham believed” (Rom. 4:18, NET); “believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6, KJV).

It is the summary of our role in the gospel story: like Abram, counted as righteous by God, because we cherish hope-against-hope belief—belief that chooses the reality of God’s presence in our life over the reality that human eyes see. God asks of us no more than to believe beyond our human understanding, to *really* believe in Him. Then He deems us what we could never make ourselves, righteous; and covers us with the robe of perfect righteousness that He earned for us. Righteous we are—*by faith!*

ALWAYS, THE TRUTH IS LIBERATING

Have you staked your life on God and His promise though everything you see screams that you’re mistaken, that it’s all for naught? Don’t stop believing. Believe with Abram in “the God who makes the dead alive and summons the things that do not yet exist as though they already do” (Rom. 4:17, NET). Believe in the God who waited to fulfill the promise so long that its very fulfillment became an undisputed miracle, powerful evidence for His existence.

Look at your life: do you see your faults and sins? Then look at your Savior, look at His face on the cross. Believe Him: believe that His grace cancels out all your sins; that you are a new and spotless creature because of His promise; that on your disheartened, discouraged, dead days He is the resurrection of your dry bones (Eze. 37:1-14). Receive Christ’s righteousness, His gift for all who choose to believe. Receive His perfect peace in your heart, the peace that every human since Adam has searched for. Believe His promise that everything will be all right in the end. Celebrate the promise of life: you have it all because you believe, because you believe that His life has replaced your debt and death—“believe in the Lord Jesus” and His promise is sure: you shall be saved (Acts 16:31).¹

¹ Scripture quotations marked NET are from the *New English Translation Bible*, copyright © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. All rights reserved.

² Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 127.

Marla Samaan Nedelcu, systematic theologian, teaches online classes for Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee, and shares life with husband, Adrian; son, Simon; and daughter, Nadia.

Was 1888 a turning point in Ellen White’s understanding of righteousness by faith? Some believe it was. In fact, they go as far to say that her writing changed after the 1888 General Conference session. But is it true? Take our “Before or After” 1888 quiz to see if you can determine when each Ellen White statement was written.

Directions: Which of the following statements do you think were made by Ellen White prior to the Minneapolis session, and which were after? Check the box under “before” or “after” as it relates to the 1888 session. Then turn to page 54 for the answers, as well as to read a relevant statement from Ellen White.

BEFORE

AFTER

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. “The Lord requires at this time just what He required of Adam in Eden—perfect obedience to the law of God. We must have righteousness without a flaw, without a blemish.” | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. “We must learn to trust, to depend solely upon the merits of the atonement, and in all our helpless unworthiness cast ourselves upon the merits of the crucified and risen Savior. We shall never perish while we do this— <i>never!</i> ” | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. “We may rest upon God, not because of our own merit, but because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us.” | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. “We can do nothing, absolutely nothing, to commend ourselves to divine favor. . . . God will accept every one that comes to Him trusting wholly in the merits of a crucified Saviour.” | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. “Man’s destiny will be determined by his obedience to the whole law.” | <input type="checkbox"/> |



CHILDIMPACT INTERNATIONAL

Previously Asian Aid USA

Child Impact International is a fully supportive ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist church and a member of ASI.

Its outreach is to take children based on need and sponsor them in an Adventist Mission school.

Child Impact operates in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar and supports a project in Papua New Guinea.

Child sponsorship is a very effective outreach as the children are given an education and introduced to Jesus. The impact is wider as the child's family are given hope and the mission school gains financial support.

Child Impact International

PO Box 763, Ooltewah, TN 37363

facebook@ChildImpactInternational

email: support@childimpact.org

phone: (423) 910-0667

childimpact.org

Key outreach for Child Impact International includes:

Where needed most fund

This fund allows us to cover emergency needs and any operation requirements in the USA or the countries where we operate. This fund is critical to our operation as needs always arise. **There is an urgent need now for this fund.**

Child sponsorship

You can sponsor a specific child or contribute to our **Un-sponsored Child fund**. Sponsors receive correspondence and a school report from their child.

Orphanages

Child Impact supports three Adventist church orphanages in India including Sunrise home which it funds 100%. These homes give **HOPE!** to those who have no hope.

Special Needs schools

Child Impact fully funds a Blind school and Deaf school operated by the church in India. These schools serve rural India which is very poor and give these children an education would never have. You can make a big **IMPACT** supporting these schools.

Operation Child Rescue

In Bangalore, India, Child Impact, through its **Operation Child Rescue** program funds and manages a rescue operation and rescue home for trafficked girls rescued from the sex trade. The problem is overwhelming but this program makes a difference in their lives.

“ Child Impact International is a fully supportive ministry of the Adventist church. My family are excited to be a sponsor of a child with Child Impact Jean and my girls have visited her and the work of Child Impact in India. They do amazing work! ”

Shawn Boonstra

Speaker/Director
Voice of Prophecy





CHILDIMPACT
INTERNATIONAL

IMPACT GIFTS

*The time of year
for a gift to
impact children*



Choose your gift of **HOPE** and make your contribution to **IMPACT** the life and future of a child in greatest need

WHERE NEEDED MOST

\$100,000 URGENTLY NEEDED

Help Child Impact meet urgently needed costs to run our many programs that assist hundreds of poor children.

BLIND, DEAF & ORPHANS

\$100,000 URGENTLY NEEDED

We need help so we can continue to provide a home, education and future for these special children.

CHILD RESCUE

\$100,000 URGENTLY NEEDED

Child Impact rescues girls from sex trafficking, slum orphans, abandoned babies and provides a life of HOPE.



Child Sponsorship

Give a needy child an education in India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka or Zambia.

From **\$25** a month

or contribute to our **Un-sponsored Child Fund**



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A CHRISTMAS TREE IN CHURCH?

*Exploring its
positive aspects*

God would be well pleased if on Christmas each church would have a Christmas tree on which shall be hung offerings, great and small, for these houses of worship.

Letters of inquiry have come to us asking, Shall we have a Christmas tree? Will it not be like the world? We answer, You can make it like the world if you have a disposition to do so, or you can make it as unlike the world as possible. There is no particular sin in selecting a fragrant evergreen and placing it in our churches, but the sin lies in the motive which prompts to action and the use which is made of the gifts placed upon the tree.

The tree may be as tall and its branches as wide as shall best suit the occasion; but let its boughs be laden with the golden and sil-

ver fruit of your beneficence, and present this to Him as your Christmas gift. Let your donations be sanctified by prayer.

Christmas and New Year celebrations can and should be held in behalf of those who are helpless. God is glorified when we give to help those who have large families to support.

A TREE LADEN WITH OFFERINGS

Let not the parents take the position that an evergreen placed in the church for the amusement of the Sabbath school scholars is a sin, for it may be made a great blessing. Keep before their minds benevolent objects. In no case should mere amusement be the object of these gatherings. While there may be some who will turn these occasions into seasons of careless levity, and whose minds will not receive the divine impress, to other minds and characters these seasons will be highly beneficial.

PROVIDE INNOCENT ENJOYMENT

I know the poorer class will respond to these suggestions. The most wealthy should also show an interest and bestow their gifts and offerings proportionate to the means with which God has entrusted them. Let there be recorded in the heavenly books such a Christmas as has never yet been seen because of the donations which shall be given for the sustaining of the work of God and the upbuilding of His kingdom. ▀

These passages were excerpted from *Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), pp. 482, 483. Seventh-day Adventists believe that Ellen G. White, 1827-1915, exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

In Genesis, He's the breath of life
In Exodus, the Passover Lamb
In Leviticus, He's our high priest

Numbers, the fire by night
Deuteronomy, He's Moses' voice
In Joshua, He is salvation's choice

Judges, law-giver
In Ruth, the kinsman redeemer
First and Second Samuel, our trusted prophet

In Kings and Chronicles, He's sovereign
Ezra, true and faithful scribe
Nehemiah, He's the rebuilder of broken walls
and lives

In Esther, He is Mordecai's courage
In Job, the timeless redeemer
In Psalms, He is our morning song

In Proverbs, wisdom's cry
Ecclesiastes, the time and season
In the Song of Solomon, He is the lover's dream

In Isaiah, He's the prince of peace
Jeremiah, the weeping prophet
In Lamentations, the cry for Israel

Ezekiel, He's the call from sin
In Daniel, the stranger in the fire
In Hosea, He is forever faithful

In Joel, He's the Spirit's power
In Amos, the arms that carry us
In Obadiah, He's the Lord our Saviour

In Jonah, He's the great missionary
In Micah, the promise of peace
In Nahum, He is our strength and our shield

In Habakkuk and Zephaniah,
He's pleading for revival
In Haggai, He restores the lost heritage

In Zachariah, our fountain
In Malachi, He's the son of righteousness
Rising with healing in His wings

In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
He is God, Man, Messiah
In the book of Acts, He is
The fire from Heaven

In Romans, He's the grace of God
In Corinthians, the power of love
In Galatians, He is freedom
From the curse of sin

Ephesians, our glorious treasure
Phillipians, the servant's heart
In Colossians, He's the Godhead Trinity

Thessalonians, our coming king
In Timothy, Titus, Philemon
He's our mediator and our
Faithful pastor

In Hebrews, the everlasting covenant
In James, the one who heals the sick
In First and Second Peter, He is our shepherd

In John and in Jude, He's the lover
coming for His bride
In Revelation, He's King of kings
and Lord of lords

The Prince of Peace
The Son of Man
The Lamb of God
The Great I Am

He's the Alpha and Omega
Our God and our Saviour
He's Jesus Christ the Lord

And when time is no more
He is

He is

LYRICS BY AARON JOFFREY



PETER N. LANDLESS ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL

PET SCANS *Are pets truly healthful for humans?*

Q: This may not be politically correct, but I see pet dogs invading our public spaces on airplanes, trains, and buses, and just wonder if pets are really all that healthy for humans.

A: It is said that “a dog is man’s best friend”; and, as you pointed out, more and more animals are seen providing support, even therapy. “Pet therapy” refers to the use of animal intervention for human health. It ranges from animal-assisted activities (such as comfort, companionship, and cheer to institutionalized patients) to animal-assisted therapy to help people cope better with, and recover from medical conditions. A new term, emotional support animals (ESA), refers to animals that are trained to provide special comfort and ease to persons with anxiety (especially for flying and crowds) and depression. Anyone who has ever been greeted enthusiastically by a dog when arriving home after a hard day has experienced the power of pet therapy firsthand.

Despite the aforementioned, a great concern with the use of animals in hospitals and public indoor spaces is safety and sanitation. Well-thought-through and strictly enforced rules concerning cleanliness, vaccinations, training, and field testing must be in place. Unfortunately, some people fraudulently pass off their pets as service animals, and this creates a significant potential hazard since real service animals undergo careful selection for temperament and stringent training that allows them to perform their functions with calm efficiency and appropriate gentleness without becoming distracted or uncontrollable.

Regular pets are usually not trained in this way, but should be healthy and of appropriate size and temperament, especially around small children and those who are elderly.

- Home pets have been shown to:
- lower the likelihood of allergies

by 19-33 percent if persons are exposed in infancy and childhood.

- improve socialization skills of their owners; pet-focused social networking sites even provide digital opportunity.
- decrease blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglyceride levels; decrease heart attack risk and improve recovery after one. Having a cat is associated with 30 percent less risk of a heart attack and 40 percent less risk of stroke.
- act as personal trainers (dogs); dog walking is associated with lower obesity rates.
- improve mood and help beat the blues and loneliness. Pets give their owners a sense of purpose, joy, and happiness, along with unconditional love.
- decrease anxiety outbursts in patients with dementia.

Some pet dogs have been able to detect health conditions of their owners and warn them of impending problems, such as migraine, epileptic and nonepileptic seizures, high and low blood sugar levels, and even some cancers. This adds new meaning to the expression “pet scans.” Playing with your pet, hugging your spouse, watching sunsets, or appreciating the beauty in nature raise serotonin and dopamine, the body’s “feel-good” hormones, healthily without drugs. Oxytocin, our “trust and bonding” hormone, is boosted in both dogs and humans when dog owners look into the eyes of their dogs. Even robot pets provide health benefits to lonely people.

Yes, it is God who made us and the animals to work and play together, and that is His desire for us in the new earth. But despite all that’s been said above, it is God Himself, not the dog, who is man’s and woman’s best friend! 🐾



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

LIFE LESSONS

I'm not sure if it happened after I turned 40. Or perhaps it was the result of some rough patches in my path. Then again, maybe it's just the nostalgia of the season, the end of one year and the beginning of the new. Whatever the reason, I find myself reflecting on the journey that Jesus and I have been walking together. It's a journey of lessons learned and experience gained; of questions encountered and friendships grown; of previously undiscovered depths in my Savior.

As this year draws to a close, here are some of the life lessons God has been teaching me this year:

- * Accept responsibility, but don't linger over your mistakes.
- * Believe in God and others, regardless of how you feel.
- * Cherish your friends and family, for you might not always have them.
- * Develop a thankful heart.
- * Extend forgiveness to others, as this enables God to work.
- * Face your fears; don't run from them.
- * Grace is often revealed through pain.
- * Hurting people sometimes hurt others.
- * Indulge in life's simple pleasures.
- * Just because it's right, that doesn't mean it's easy.
- * Kindness works when authority fails.
- * Learn to laugh at yourself—and with others.

- * Minister to those around you: whether you feel like it, whether you have time, whether it costs you something. Simply minister!
- * Niceties in life never go out of style.
- * Offer a smile whether you want to or not, even if it's not returned.
- * Pray when you want to, and especially when you don't.
- * Quiet your heart before making a decision.
- * Respect others—their decisions, their differing points of view, their feelings, their space.
- * Share Jesus at all times and in all places.
- * Trust your intuition.
- * Understand your own limitations.
- * Value those around you.
- * Work isn't everything.
- * X-rays don't always show the heart. Only God can do that.
- * Yesterday doesn't necessarily determine today.
- * Zeal never substitutes for compassion.

What about you? What life lessons is our Father teaching you? May the Lord help us to learn His lessons, for all His lessons are love. 🍀

Jill Morikone is vice president and chief operations officer for Three Angels Broadcasting Network, 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



HERE ARE SOME
OF THE LIFE
LESSONS GOD
HAS BEEN
TEACHING ME
THIS YEAR.



PHOTO BY JAMES HOSE JR. ON UNSPLASH

TABLES TURNED

A caregiver's story

It all started in 2007. Werner and I traveled to Chile and Argentina to meet with his relatives. After seeing two batches of them, we took a bus from Bariloche to Buenos Aires—18 hours! By the time we got there, I knew something was wrong with my husband. He seemed confused, unsure of himself, lacking his usual leadership abilities.

BEGINNING MY TAKEOVER

I decided I had to do something. His sister, with whom we were to spend the weekend, had not yet come back from the family reunion, so without asking

questions, I made new plans. The next morning we took the ship across the river to Colonia in Uruguay so we would not have to meet people at church on Sabbath. There we found a simple hotel by the river's edge and settled into a calm weekend, where no one knew us. We slept, took walks, picnicked, and read. By Sunday Werner was his usual self, and we continued our trip to Montevideo.

I had no idea what had happened, but I realized that whatever was wrong, I had to make decisions. That was strange, because on family matters Werner, my husband of nearly 50 years, always made decisions. Little did I realize that one of the important parts of caregiving is making decisions—rapidly deciding what to do, even if that had not been your task before.

The following year Werner and I were in northern Brazil by request of the General Conference, to put together the proposal for a new Adventist university. That was something both of us had done before; we felt comfortable doing the work—in Spanish, English, and (with help) in Portuguese. All went well for the first three weeks. But during the fourth week Werner suddenly couldn't put words and ideas together. My caregiving task was to take over his writing and complete the task.

FULL CAREGIVER STATUS

This time I worried about what had happened and determined to seek medical help as soon as we returned to the United States. That was the beginning of my "medical

career"! As a caregiver I have learned more about all aspects of medicine than I ever wanted to know. Besides, I had to organize medical visits, treatments, medications, and the long drive to our chosen physician.

Little by little our trips to the doctor came more often; and I was the driver! Then Werner's doctor declared that Werner was suffering from dementia, and Werner lost his driver's license. Caregivers become drivers—even if they (as my problem was) do not like to drive.

Late in 2012 I realized I had driven as much as I wanted to drive. It was 20 miles from our house in Yucaipa to the doctor's office in Loma Linda. Suddenly, as a caregiver, I was in the real estate business. Of course, God joined the party, and it took only two months for us to sell our house in Yucaipa and buy one only one mile from the doctors' offices. I had never done that before, but as a caregiver you have surprises.

For three years in our new home we took long walks every morning. Then, as his steps became shorter, we stayed closer to home. I found some exercise videos, and we did easy exercises every morning. I became a physical education coach as part of my caregiving task.

For years Werner had done the dishes after every meal. Now he was forgetting how to put things into the dishwasher and wipe up the sink. He also stopped running the vacuum cleaner. Fortunately, about that time I met Toni, who took over some of my household tasks, giving me time to deal with Werner's issues. Caregivers get tired and need to get help, lest they themselves get sick.

Yes, I knew how to write a check. I had learned to use an adding machine. But neither finances nor bookkeeping was my forte. One day the church treasurer's assistant called to tell me that Werner had written a check to the church, but had not signed it. This caregiver obviously had a new job: family finances.

Decisions! Decisions! Decisions! What doctor to go to. What medications to give Werner. How much outside help I needed to have. Which instructions regarding diet to follow. The hardest one came when, suddenly, one afternoon, he sat down on his walker and had to be pushed home. His blood pressure was way too high. With the help of his brother, a physician, I decided to call 9-1-1.

In the hospital Werner could not feed himself

God has allowed me the privilege of being my husband's caregiver, but I so much wish for some of his old friends to visit him.

Important aspects of care sharing

Make it a team affair. You'll need willing and capable partners:

- family
- friends
- church members
- caring neighbors



Keep visitation regular, yet varied and interesting: pastoral staff, church elders, deacons, etc., church youth, singers, and other Christian entertainment groups.

Make sure that caregivers give themselves proper care. For example: sufficient rest—including sound, uninterrupted sleep; relaxation; concerts; picnicking with friends; healthful food; eating schedules in a calm atmosphere; adequate time for personal devotions—reading, prayer, etc.; regular exercise, preferably shared with a group; enjoyable social interaction with friends and family.

The main caregiver does not want to beg for respite care. She (usually!) will be happy to accept offers of help: a ride for the one incapacitated, a half hour of reading to the visually impaired, a meal fed to one who cannot manage a fork. The church that seeks to fulfill Christ's law will thrive as it exploits these opportunities to share one another's burdens. Moreover, burdens grow lighter when we share them.

As Jesus said: "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'" (Matt. 25:40).

or walk. Thank God, our medical daughter was there with us. She helped us locate him in a memory care facility. The family decision to place him there was supported by a decision some 15 years earlier—before there was any Alzheimer’s diagnosis—to purchase long-term-care insurance. It is a true blessing for us.

SHARING CAREGIVING

Supposedly, the girls at the facility were taking care of Werner, but I found myself caring for him anyway: seeing that his hearing aids were in right, that he had his reading glasses, that he brushed his teeth. Then I was answering questions: “Why am I here?” “When can I go home?” “Why can’t you stay here with me?” That brought about the battle over how to tell the truth and still be reasonable. It also brought about tiredness—from giving the same answer 25 times.

Another important issue of caregiving is the “I have to go” problem. Fortunately, today there are appropriate undergarments; however, there are few appropriate bathrooms—ones that allow for a female caregiver and a male patient. That did away with church attendance—a great grief for us.

In January 2018, when we were flying home from a Chile family reunion—probably his last such privilege—Werner quietly told me “I have to go.” I knew it would happen someday, yet I panicked. We both squeezed into the airplane bathroom, with hardly room to breathe. The Lord helped me play my caregiver role, and we both came out alive and dry. The “I have to go” story repeats itself daily. There is a clear preference for my care rather than that of employees at the facility.

He has been in memory care now for more than a year. I go to see him daily, usually for a total of three hours. I read to him, run TV programs or videos he might like, take him for walks—shorter now than before. Sometimes I get him into the car and drive to a shady place where we have a “picnic” in the car. The facility caregivers do their best, but—like an infant—he needs more attention. Many days I leave the facility in tears, wishing for the man he used to be, but knowing that will happen only when Jesus returns.

CAREGIVING: ANY TAKERS?

God has allowed me the privilege of being my husband’s caregiver, but I so much wish for some of his old friends to visit him and take him out for a ride. He enjoys the visits of family and friends, but most of them seem to be too busy for that. Paul says, “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). I know I’m privileged to bear my beloved’s burden, but I’m still praying for the burden-sharing experience. Could it be that some of our friends are afraid of dementia? Perhaps we need to have a training course for church members to learn how to visit the dear ones whose physical strength and mental clarity are on the wane.

Meanwhile the wonder of heaven and the new earth have become more real to me. Then we will care more fully than ever. Yet I can hardly wait for that glorious day when caregiving days, as I know them now, will be over. 🦋

Nancy Vyhmeister, a specialist in theological research methods, retired to Loma Linda, California, after decades in classroom ministry all over the world.

Before or After?

ANSWERS FOR QUIZ ON PAGE 45:

Ellen White said in 1889: “I have had the question asked, ‘What do you think of this light that these men [Waggoner and Jones] are presenting?’ Why, I have been presenting it to you for the last 45 years—the matchless charms of Christ. This is what I have been trying to present before your minds. When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband.”—*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, pp. 116, 117.

Answers:

1. After, *Faith and Works*, p. 89 (1890).
2. Before, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 309, 310 (1862).
3. Before, *Gospel Workers* (1892 ed.), p. 427 (1883).
4. Before, *Faith and Works*, p. 39 (1883).
5. After, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 498 (1898).

Jesus for Asia

...because people are dying without Jesus



Incurable Disease Becomes Incredible Praise

A Hindu lady was quite wealthy. This made her relatives jealous, so they hired a sorcerer to place a curse on her. One day, this lady came to church while James, a Jesus for Asia Bible Worker, was preaching. James noticed her crying in the back, so after church, he asked her what was wrong.

She tearfully told him she had contracted elephantiasis, a dreaded and incurable disease. Her leg was swollen and painful, with a rotten-smelling wound big enough to put your finger in. She was very embarrassed and not able to function in society. Her whole life was being ruined.

James prayed for her and told her to pray to Jesus too. He then made an amazing statement of faith: "Within a week your wounds will be completely healed, and you will give your testimony in this church next Sabbath!"

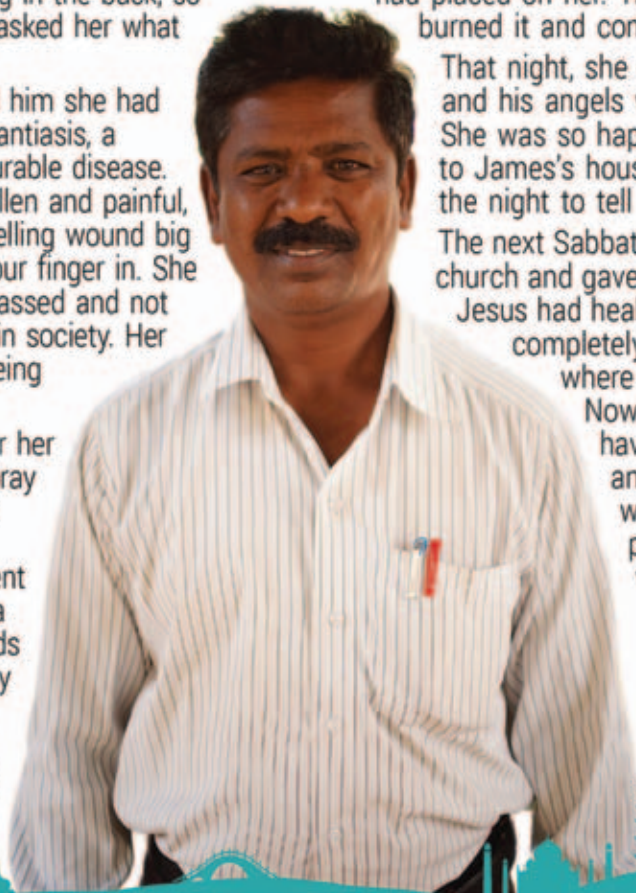
A couple days later, James went to her house to pray for her. When he walked to the middle of her dirt floor, it felt hot, like standing on fire. They dug in that spot and found a coconut with evil strings and her hair tied around it—the curse her relatives had placed on her. They immediately burned it and continued to pray.

That night, she dreamt that Jesus and his angels were coming to her. She was so happy, she even went to James's house in the middle of the night to tell him!

The next Sabbath, she came to the church and gave her testimony.

Jesus had healed her leg completely, with a small scar where the hole had been! Now, she and her family have accepted Jesus, and she lives as a witness of God's power and love in her village.

**Read more
or Sponsor a
Bible Worker at
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We are receiving calls from church leaders across India with requests for Bible Workers. There are many lay members whose hearts are touched with the love of Christ who would like to work for God full time. All they need is a small stipend of just \$90/month. We are praying for 1,000 Bible Workers for India!

Joseph's Crisis Pregnancy

A good man faces a crisis.

TIMOTHY G. STANDISH

Mary's pregnancy was a huge surprise to everybody else, but not to her. She had been told the plan and agreed to it (Luke 1:38). To her fiancé, Joseph, on the other hand, this was a crisis pregnancy: he responded to what was now his crisis by planning to "send her away secretly" (Matt. 1:19, NASB).¹ He could have walked away from this embarrassment, severing any obligation to Mary or her child.

AS JOSEPH SAW IT

We get most of our information about Mary and the birth of Jesus from the Gospel of Luke, which tells the story from her viewpoint. But Matthew's account is from Joseph's perspective. From Matthew we learn that while planning to walk away, Joseph was informed by an angel: "Do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (verse 20, NKJV).² Isn't it interesting that the angel's message



doesn't focus on Mary, on her goodness or need of help? Instead, the focus is on the baby conceived inside her. The baby is to drive the decision, not the crisis that Joseph is experiencing. This very special Child of God, the angel goes on to say, "will save His people from their sins" (verse 21, NKJV).

Perhaps Joseph responds to this mind-changing revelation because of his own lineage. Matthew lays out Joseph's genealogy before getting to the story of his crisis. The Bible provides some startlingly seamy history in the lineage of a "just man" such as Joseph (verse 19, NKJV), particularly the record of several ancestors who were conceived under startling circumstances.

As a devout Jew, Joseph would have been familiar with the writings of Moses, the first five books of the Bible that we call the Pentateuch. In the fifth book, Deuteronomy, Moses states the Bible's only case of condemning people on the basis of the circumstances under which they were conceived: "A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord. An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever" (Deut. 23:2, 3, KJV).³

DISCRIMINATION OR NOT?

This seems both harsh and contrary to standard Scripture principles. Bible commentaries continually struggle with it. The Bible and valid Christian practice point unambiguously toward caring for every person, no matter the circumstances of their conception, their social status, who their parents were, or the nation in which they were conceived. In the very next chapter Moses says, "Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* children, nor shall children be put to death for *their* fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin. You shall not pervert justice due the stranger or the fatherless, nor take a widow's garment as a pledge" (Deut. 24:16, 17, NKJV).

On principle, children are not responsible for the sins of their ancestors. The call to protect fatherless children along with the requirement of equal justice for foreigners is echoed repeatedly throughout the Bible.

I don't know exactly what Moses was talking about in Deuteronomy 23 when it comes to illegitimate children, and I am happy to leave that debate in the hands of theologians, even if they don't appear to have arrived at a consensus. What is clear in the Bible is that God cares for every child conceived. God named Jesus before His conception (Luke 1:31; 2:21), just as he named John the Baptist (Luke 1:13) and others, including pagan king Cyrus of Persia (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). God knew and had a plan for each of these children, just as He does for every other baby ever conceived, including you and me.

Undoubtedly, Joseph would have been aware of much of this, even as his own lineage contains examples of the very people banned from "the congregation of the Lord for ever." Precisely what Moses meant by the Hebrew word *mamzer* (Deut. 23:2), translated as "illegitimate" or "bastard," may be a matter of debate. But it is clear that Joseph's lineage contained people conceived under circumstances that the Pentateuch frowns upon. Isaac was a product of genetic incest (Gen. 20:11, 12), as was Moab (Gen. 19:36, 37), ancestor of Ruth the Moabite—of the very nation Moses said couldn't ever enter the congregation. Ruth married Boaz, the son of "Rahab the harlot" (Joshua 6:17, 25; James 2:25; Matt. 1:5); they were ancestors of King David, an ancestor of Joseph. Perez—product of nongenetic incest between Judah and Tamar—is also an ancestor of David. Each may have been conceived under less-than-ideal circumstances—in some cases clearly crisis pregnancies—or come from the wrong nation; but every one of them is presented as valuable, even noble, in Scripture.

It is almost as if Matthew goes out of his way to point out Joseph's ancestors who were products of "crisis" pregnancies. Joseph's family tree contains

A crisis pregnancy didn't make Joseph a real man and an example of Christianity. His reaction did.

multiple people who could have said exactly what David wrote when repenting of his sin with Bathsheba and solving her crisis pregnancy with the murder of her husband: "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5, NKJV); yet he remains a celebrated ancestor of Joseph and Jesus. Ironically, the conception of Jesus may be the only conception that with certainty cannot be described in this way.

JOSEPH AND US

Now, Joseph was not genetically the father of Jesus—that is what created the crisis in the first place. Nevertheless, he was considered to be Jesus' father (Matt. 13:55). From his ancestry he would have understood that good people can be conceived under the most unfortunate circumstances. I wonder if he had this in mind when he made that amazing decision. He may not have been Jesus' genetic father, but he chose to become a father to Him.

As Mary, Jesus' genetic mother, was also a descendant of David, we see that God used people conceived under circumstances inconsistent with His will as genetic ancestors of His Son, the sinless Savior of the world.

And what of our own pedigree? If we searched, we would promptly find that we all descended from sinners much like ourselves: the queen of England is a direct descendant of William the Bastard, as he was known before he became William the Conqueror.

Yet none of us need feel ashamed of our ancestry or justified in dehumanizing someone else because of the circumstances under which they came into the world. Joseph is a model for us today because he valued Jesus enough to marry Mary and care for her along with the Christ Child. By becoming the adoptive father of Jesus Christ, Joseph modeled exactly what Christ won for each of us through His

life, death, and resurrection. A legitimately adopted child cannot be a bastard. As the apostle Paul put it: "[God] chose us in [Jesus] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:4, 5, NKJV). "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God" indeed (1 John 3:1, NKJV)!

A crisis pregnancy didn't make Joseph a real man and an example of Christianity; his reaction did. Society offered him more convenient options: he could have walked away, leaving Mary and the baby to an uncertain fate. Instead he modeled Christianity and took on what may well have seemed an impossible challenge. The child was unplanned and Joseph was solidly working class, with limited resources for the child's care; practicality and pride shouted "walk away," but Joseph chose life because he understood the value of the child.

Joseph embraced a challenging responsibility, and God sustained his family against the most extreme attacks the devil and his agents could bring against them. The record of this just man's experience in caring for the Christ Child teaches the value of one innocent's life even at its most vulnerable. Joseph's conduct offers noble guidance for dealing with a crisis pregnancy. It models God's solution to crisis and demonstrates His love for all children and shows that Christ deserves to be the center of our thinking not only in reflection of His death and intercession for us, but even in contemplation of His infancy.

Christ-centeredness in the church I want to belong to models the faith Joseph exhibited in adopting the Christ Child; a faith that acts like God Himself in treating every baby conceived as our own child, irrespective of the circumstances: Christ came to earth and sacrificed Himself so that every one of us, babies included, might have life, life in all its fullness (see John 10:10).¹

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² Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

³ On rejection of Ammonites and Moabites see also Ezra 9, 10; Nehemiah 13:1-3.

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OUR PLACE IN THE KINGDOM

Years ago I was asked to lead a church that a buddy of mine, Jackie, had been leading temporarily. The situation felt delicate. “Jackie,” I asked, “how do you honestly feel about this?”

“Andy,” he said, “I completely support you. We all have to know our place in the kingdom.”

Jackie’s words amazed and humbled me—“We all have to know our place in the kingdom.” Even as Jackie recognized that this particular job fit my abilities, I also recognized that other aspects of our church perfectly fit his. As I took the mantle Jackie became my right-hand man, and together we had a wonderful working relationship.

A few years later I was coaching the middle school girls basketball team at our local Adventist school. While I loved coaching these girls, we weren’t winning many games. Following the season a new coach moved to the area—a great guy named Billy, whose teams had won more than 500 games through the years.

One afternoon the school principal (and a close friend) approached me. “Hey, Andy, how about letting Billy be the head coach, and you can be his assistant coach and team dad.”

Although these words stung a little, I also remembered Jackie’s words: “We all have to know our place in the kingdom.” I accepted the new arrangement, welcomed Coach Billy, and two years later our team went undefeated and won the championship. Years later we still talk about that special season together.

Knowing our place in the kingdom isn’t

always about stepping forward; sometimes it’s about stepping back.

Lately I’ve been thinking about this principle as it relates to our world church. There are times we as church leaders, too, must recognize our place in God’s kingdom—even if that means stepping back and letting someone else lead. When things just aren’t going very well, stepping back from a position isn’t spiritual failure; stepping back is spiritual victory.

Here’s the risk when leaders won’t step back: the leadership vacuum may be filled with the wrong new leaders instead of the right new leaders. A new generation frustrated with leaders who may be spiritual but not gifted (for a particular position) might bring in the reverse—a generation of leaders who are gifted but not spiritual.

What God’s kingdom, and His church, always need are leaders who are both gifted and spiritual—men and women who deeply love Christ and His Word, and who recognize their place of calling. Their leadership comes naturally and easily. And when it no longer does—when they feel the seasons changing—they humbly step down, or up, to new callings that come naturally and easily once again.

For the sake of the kingdom. ▀

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THE LIFE
OF FAITH
ANDY
NASH



KNOWING OUR
PLACE IN THE
KINGDOM ISN'T
ALWAYS ABOUT
STEPPING FORWARD;
SOMETIMES IT'S
ABOUT STEPPING
BACK.

The Christmas Baby That Waited

If they would live,
they must flee.
But the baby was coming.

STANLEY MAXWELL

The Adventist pastor's feet pounded soundlessly against the dusty path that ran between bamboo huts of his fellow Khmer refugees in Nang Samet border camp. The swoosh of Vietnamese rockets flying toward the camp interrupted his concentration. Would their enemy invade the camp today, Christmas—the day of peace and goodwill to all?

A shell screamed as it arched toward the camp. The pastor willed himself to ignore the fact that more artillery fire than usual was dropping toward his camp. He had work to do. He must choose garments suitable for his performers' costumes. He hoped this year his church's Christmas play would persuade more refugees to join his Adventist congregation.

A rocket exploded nearby. It jolted his thoughts back to the Vietnamese. Were they moving their equipment closer to launch an invasion? Uncontrollable emotions welled up.

Why do the Vietnamese control my country? he wondered. Why won't they go back to Hanoi, where they belong? Is God allowing me and my people to suffer for our sins? Are Khmers, like God's people Israel in the Bible, being made to suffer at the hand of their bitter foes, the Vietnamese? Why would God let Hanoi invade defenseless refugees on Christmas, of all days?

An invasion did not worry him so much for his own sake; he had almost nothing to lose. He had lost almost everything when he escaped from his home in Kampuchea. He had

fled once; he knew he would escape again.

He worried more for his wife. Pregnant, she had gone into heavy labor on Christmas Eve. He was excited about becoming a father—and, no less, a father of a Christmas child. But he wondered about his wife's condition. If the baby came today, and the Vietnamese did stage an invasion, would his wife be able to escape safely across Thailand's border?

"ANYTIME NOW"

Unconsciously he turned about to face his tracks. The morning sun shone offensively in his eyes. The pastor tried to shield himself from the brightness by extending his hand to cover the obtrusive ball of light. His steps quickened on the dirt road toward the clinic.

Inside the clinic the foreign doctor forced a smile.

"How is she, Doctor?"


"Your wife's in heavy labor. You'll be a father anytime now."

"What about the Vietnamese?"

"If there is an evacuation, your wife will be too weak to walk. You'll have to leave her behind. Maybe the hospital won't be destroyed," said the doctor trying to end on an upbeat note. "I'm sorry, Pastor," he said. "Let's hope there's no evacuation."

"Could she make it to Khao I Dang if the baby didn't come?"

"Her labor's very heavy, Pastor. That baby



is due very soon. But if she stops labor, the journey would be rough—I just don't think there's much time left. Babies come when they want to come. Your baby won't wait."

"I will pray . . ." The pastor hurried out of the clinic.

He didn't bother going to his church. The Christmas play was probably finished or, more likely, canceled. Instead he found himself heading toward home. He must gather his few belongings together, for the air was thick with doom. If he was to live, he must flee.

As he packed life's essentials, he pleaded with God, "Lord, why do You let these unwanted and unfriendly guests visit us today on Your birthday? If it's Your will, prevent the Vietnamese from attacking. But if they must invade, please perform a miracle. Maybe I'm asking the impossible, Lord, but listen." He realized he was praying aloud, his voice cracked and his vision blurred from tears.

He stopped packing and knelt on his bamboo bed. "My wife will have a child soon. But if she delivers today, she and her baby will die at the hand of the invaders. That baby makes a great Christmas present, Lord, but why take it away the same day? I've lost almost everything. Please, don't take away my wife and child, Lord—let the baby wait until its mother is safe. This I pray in the name of Your Son, whose birth we celebrate today. Amen."

He stood on the packed-dirt floor, dried his eyes, and threw together his last few things. Time was running out. The Vietnamese approached. Their artillery fire was heavy. He could hear their tanks rolling.

On his way back to the clinic the pastor prayed silently. Would the Lord grant his prayer? Could his wife escape? Or must he flee alone?

"I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT'S HAPPENED!"

Crowds from the camp were already trekking toward Khao I Dang when the pastor

pressed his way into the clinic. The doctor was still there, but the clinic showed signs that they too planned to evacuate. He had already packed most of the equipment, and the clinic stood almost empty.

The doctor saw the pastor. "I can't believe what's happened. Your wife stopped labor a half hour ago. Something like this has never happened to me before. I don't know how to explain it."

The pastor knew.

He saw his wife, large with child, smiling at him. "Can she make the trip, Doctor?"

"I think she'll be all right." The doctor caught the pastor's joy, and soon two smiles radiated from their faces.

A rocket's sound reminded them they had better go. They bade the doctor goodbye and set off to Khao I Dang.

Soon Vietnamese tanks rolled into the village. Driving back and forth over the camp, they flattened every building. After the pastor and his wife crossed the border into Thailand's safety, they looked back to watch their camp go up in flames.

A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER

So December 25, 1984, became a Christmas 62,000 Khmer refugees would never forget. They lost their homes, but all escaped safely into Thailand's Khao I Dang camp.

The Christmas baby was born in Bang Phu. The pastor and his wife thought no family was ever happier to have a child than they were. Together they prayed, "Lord, thank You for the belated Christmas baby. Making it come late was the best Christmas present You could give us. We thank You that we escaped safely, and that everyone else in Nang Samet escaped death. Thank You for building our faith, for showing Your greatness through the miracle of the Christmas baby that waited." ❧

This story first appeared in Adventist Review's December 25, 1986, edition.



No Footprints in the Snow

Going blind, out of work, and angry, Charley did not want to be interrupted.

JERIS BRAGAN

Early Tuesday afternoon, December 11, 1951, snow began falling heavily over the Hall farm, three and a half miles north of Lisbon Falls, Maine. It was a wet, wind-driven storm, blowing in from the ocean. More than six inches had accumulated when darkness closed in at 4:00 p.m.

Charley Hall, 59, a large, burly farmer, banged angry fists on the steering wheel of his 1939 Dodge panel truck as he drove recklessly through the storm toward home. Already close to blindness (one of the many things that had embittered him early in life), he drove the fishtailing vehicle over Bowdoinham Road more from memory than skill.

Laid off from the Bona Fide Linoleum Mill three months before, he felt trapped. The meager funds and food supplies he needed for his wife and five children during the winter were already running out.

He'd gone into town to beg for his old job. "I'm sorry, Charley, but we just can't put you back on the line, not with your poor eyesight," his former boss had said an hour earlier.

He spun the wheel hard and turned into the driveway. The rear end of his truck slid on

the ice and slammed into the mailbox. His face contorted in rage as he stomped on the accelerator. It was all *her* fault: Elsie, his 37-year-old wife, and her new religion. Everything had begun falling apart when she had joined that Christian church and started going with the kids every week.

Eddie, the 7-year-old daughter, peered through the living room window and watched apprehensively as her father approached.

"Daddy's home!" she shouted. Her tone was a warning, not an announcement.

Dropping the curtain over the window, Eddie fled to her unheated room in the attic. This was the one place she could escape the violence below.

At 5:30 the family gathered silently, cautiously, in the kitchen for supper: corn chowder or tomato stew mixed with milk; homemade toasted wheat bread covered in fresh butter churned on the farm. There was no conversation.

WHAT ABOUT ANGELS?

An hour later, with the sound of popcorn popping in the iron pot in the kitchen, Charley tuned the dial on the old radio to begin an evening of listening to *The Jack Benny Show* and *Our Miss Brooks*, his favorite programs.

But this was no Norman Rockwell portrait of a poor family spending an evening together. Theirs was not so much a poverty of material things as a grinding poverty that lacked love and normal affection. They came together because the kitchen was the only warm room in the drafty old house.

Eddie sat at the table, studiously biting her lower lip as she cut paper clothes out of a book to put on her cardboard dolls. Melvin, age 11, knew she wanted somebody to play with, so he sat down and offered to help.

"Only *girls* play with dolls," Ben, 13, sneered.

Melvin blushed a deep, angry red. But before he could reply, his father slammed his meaty fist hard on the kitchen table. "Shut up so I can hear my programs!" he roared.

Eddie blinked back a tear and looked at the Christmas tree standing near the front win-

dow in the living room. Most of the decorations were handmade: long strings of popcorn, slivers of tinfoil, colored snowflakes, and snowballs that Edie had made at school. The only commercial decorations were the bubbling lights and a few delicate balls their grandmother had given the family.

And one more thing: on top of the tree stood a ceramic angel with arms outstretched toward heaven.

"Do you believe angels really exist?" Edie asked Melvin in a whisper as she tried to break the sullen tension in the room.

Melvin shrugged. "I dunno. But they talk about 'em in church, so maybe they do."

A loud knocking at the front door interrupted their conversation.

A LATE-NIGHT CALLER

"Charley, somebody at the door," Elsie said.

"Well, go see who it is and get rid of them," he snapped irritably. "Just leave me alone."

A tall bearded man stood in the enclosed entryway. He smiled amiably when Elsie opened the door and peered at him in the gloomy darkness. Standing behind her mother, Edie shyly watched the stranger.

"I'm sorry to disturb you so late, but I need to speak with Mr. Hall," the man said.

"Well . . . I don't know . . ." Elsie said.

"It's very important. Would you tell him I'd like to speak with him?"

Her shoulders slumped in resignation. "I'll tell him, but I don't think he's . . . ah . . . up to talking with anybody."

While he waited, the man hunkered down on one knee by Edie and pointed at the Christmas tree. "I'll bet you made a lot of those lovely decorations," he said.

"Yes, I did," she admitted, pleased that he'd noticed. She liked the kindness in his eyes and the warmth in his voice. She wondered what it would be like to have a daddy like him.

His gaze went over the tree slowly and stopped when he saw the angel. She watched him studying the ornament.

"Do you believe in angels?" she asked shyly.

"Oh, yes indeed!" he said emphatically. "Don't you?"

"I don't know," she admitted honestly. "I wish I did, though. I'd like to meet one someday."

The man chuckled. "Maybe you have and just didn't realize it," he suggested.

She turned and looked into the smiling eyes. "How would I know?" she asked bluntly.

The question was interrupted by the sound of her father banging his fist on the table and shouting, "I don't care if he's the president himself—get rid of him!"

"Don't you worry, Edie," the man said as he stood up. "Angels always let you know in some way. It's God's way of sending you a personal note of His love."

Her mother returned, tight-lipped. Before she could speak, the stranger reached into his new coat pocket and withdrew a plain white envelope.

"I'm sorry to have disturbed your family," he said, handing over the envelope. "I just wanted to leave this with you and tell Mr. Hall to report back to work at the mill tomorrow. He's got a new job there."

He leaned toward the little girl, winked, and kissed her lightly on the cheek. "Merry Christmas. And don't forget what I said, Edie: Angels always let you know."

NO FOOTPRINTS

"What a strange man," Elsie murmured as she nervously tore the envelope open. The contents slipped through her trembling fingers and fluttered to the floor: three crisp \$100 bills. For a long moment mother and daughter simply stared alternately at the money and the door where the stranger had stood moments before.

Edie recovered first, scooped the three bills up, and handed them to her mother. They both ran toward the kitchen.

"Charley, you'll never believe what I've got!" Elsie cried.

"I don't care what you've got. Will you please shut—"

"Don't you dare tell me to shut up!" she interrupted. "Look at this!" The usually timid woman stood firmly in front of her husband and held the money out for his inspection.

Startled by the strength in her voice, he started silently at her in astonishment. Then he saw the money.

"What's that?" he asked suspiciously, pointing at the bills.

"That is what the man at the door came to give you—along with some good news. You go back to work at the mill tomorrow," she said as tears filled her eyes. "I told you God would take care of us."

Charley scrambled awkwardly out of his chair. "Where'd the man go? Call him back so I can talk to him."

"That's funny; I didn't hear his car leaving," Edie said before her mother could reply.

"Get me the lantern!" Charley said. "He couldn't have walked far in this snow."

Edie had already run ahead and picked the glass-topped kerosene lantern off the hook near the front door. Her father struck a match, lit it, and trimmed the wick for maximum light before stepping into the darkness.

"Hello!" he called. "Anybody there?"

Only a few flurries danced in the air.

"I don't see anything," the nearly blind man complained.

Edie pushed past her father. "Daddy, look at the ground," she whispered.

"What do you see?" he asked anxiously.

"Daddy, it stopped snowing before the man came. But there are no footprints or tracks of any kind in the snow."

Silently the family went back inside and closed the door. Elsie and the children looked at one another in confusion as Charley stood with his back toward them. He kept clearing his throat and rubbing the back of his weather-beaten hand over his eyes.

"I just don't understand it!" he muttered again and again.

Edie tugged on her mother's arm. "Mama, how did that man know my name?" she asked.

"I don't know, dear."

Suddenly, a broad, delighted smile spread over Edie's face as she looked at the angel on top of the Christmas tree and remembered the stranger's last words to her: *Angels always let you know.* ❖

This story first appeared in the December 23, 1993, issue of *Adventist Review*.

Do You

KATHY FAIRCHILD

Do you have any more?" The words seemed to bounce off the walls and echo throughout the church.

Imagine, the audacity of the offering collector asking Mrs. Gordon, who had just given her offering, if she had any more. And not even in a whisper!

To make matters worse, his hands already overflowed with cash. Under certain circumstances those words might not have been intimidating or embarrassing, but in this setting they were both. The only saving factor was that they were spoken by Logan, my then-4-year-old grandson.

GENEROUS TO A FAULT

In our church it was the custom for the "little lambs" to collect an offering as they headed to the front of the church for the children's story. Logan really enjoyed going up to collect the money, and since he usually had a happy demeanor, people were pleased to give him an offering. So it wasn't unusual for him to have a fistful of dollars. What was unusual was his question: "Do you have any more?"

Fortunately, Mrs. Gordon handled the situation with grace. After some whispered conversation, Logan went merrily on his way, oblivious to the humiliation he had caused his family.

I was not at church that day, yet I heard what happened. All sorts of thoughts went through my head, none of them positive. Don't kids have any manners these days?



Have Any More?

More than a childish question

How could he say such a thing when he'd always been such a sweet child? What will people think? I hate to admit it, but that was my main concern: *What will people think?*

THINKING OF OTHERS

A few days later I stopped by Logan's house for a short visit. He brought out his new piggy bank. He was so proud of the bank that I dug a few coins out of my purse to give to him. As soon as the money hit his upturned hand, out came the dreaded words: "Do you have any more?"

This was my chance! I could tell him a thing or two, kindly and firmly, of course, about manners and gratitude. I explained that yes, I had more, but I needed some coins for the toll roads. I started to say, "It's not polite to ask for . . ."

But just as I started to speak, his little hand came back up to mine. With a big smile and a sweet voice Logan said, "You keep these. I don't need them. I have lots of money in my piggy bank already."

After he insisted that I keep the money, it suddenly dawned on me the reason he had asked Mrs. Gordon if she had any more money. It wasn't that he wanted it for himself or for the offering. He wanted to make sure she still had some for herself.

What a difference a motive makes. Same words, different meaning.

MOTIVES

Nearly anyone would have the same initial reaction as the congregation had that day—to look at the seemingly negative

situation and pass judgment on the parenting skills, the influence of grandparents, and the overall "gimme" attitude of today's society.

I am reasonably sure that no one present thought the child had Mrs. Gordon's welfare in mind when he asked, "Do you have any more?" just as I never dreamed he would want me to keep the coins I offered him for myself. After all, asking if you have any more seems to imply "Give me some more" or "Is that all you're going to give?"

How quick we are to determine what someone meant by a certain remark that doesn't sound exactly right to our ears. Of course, our determinations are based on the life experiences we've had through the years, and our perceptions may or may not be accurate. We may have had a negative experience that influenced our interpretation. Or maybe what we heard did not accurately reflect the intent of the other party.

Fortunately, our heavenly Father realizes the motive behind every word and action. We don't have to wonder what He thinks. We can rest assured that He knows every motive. He always places our words and actions in the best possible light—never wondering what we really meant to say or do.

I'm so grateful that God doesn't see as we see. He looks on the heart. He was probably the only one smiling when a little boy asked, "Do you have any more?"

Kathy Fairchild writes from Florida. She is a mother of two and grandmother of three.

HERO OF HEROES JESUS



Photo: Shutterstock

CARTER REPORT
HERO

How could I doubt his existence? He came powerfully into my life sixty years ago. I still remember vividly the time and the place. It seems like it happened yesterday...



My father and mother

I was a restless, troubled teenager. I came from a turbulent home where there was too much religion and too little Christianity. My father was a fighting Roman Catholic and my mother a crusading Seventh-day Adventist. I was almost inoculated against religion for life.

Then Christ crashed into my life the night of the big storm while the thunder rolled and the lightning played in the skies above Avondale College.

My new friend and mentor Tom Ludowici was teaching me to pray. We stood beneath the campus trees, a distance from shelter. Tom told me God was a real person who loved me. This God had demonstrated His love by giving His beloved Son Jesus to die for my sins. I felt my heart strangely warmed. Then something happened that only a poor ignorant unsophisticated seventeen-year-old student would believe. In my naivety I asked God to let me get back to the dormitory before the coming deluge drenched me. I ran as hard as I could and as I reached the dormitory veranda, a barrage of big heavy drops struck the ground just inches behind me. I believed. Yes, this great God knew about me and cared for me. He had heard me and answered me. Wonderful.

Over the coming months and years I received from His Word new revelations about this Jesus who was Lord of all, even the rain drops. I discovered He was the Creator

made flesh who had taken my place on the cross.

Other truths dazed and amazed me. When I came to Him, He declared me, "Not Guilty!" He freely justified me by His grace. It took time to sink down among the molecules of my mind, what this justification meant. He had declared me, a penitent sinner, righteous.

Not only had He forgiven all my sins, but He had taken up permanent residence in me. I sang fervently in the college chapel, "He walks with me, and

He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own." I believed it, I still do.

Now that I have entered my sunset years, the promise of His return assumes greater importance. For one thing, both my old Catholic dad and Adventist mother eventually found Jesus as Lord and Savior. I expect with a firm certainty to meet them again when Jesus takes us home to Glory.

When I was a very young minister leading a mission choir (somewhat inadequately seeing I didn't read music), we sang with unfeigned enthusiasm, "The Savior has come in His mighty power, and whispered peace to my soul... O it is marvelous, it is marvelous and wonderful..." It was indeed marvelous and wonderful, and it remains so today.

Jesus is my hero of heroes. Everything I treasure and hold dear comes from Him. ❖

— John Carter



Pastor John Carter

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CLOSER LOOK



A Traveler's Tale

The Traveler: A Tale of Courage and Ultimate Sacrifice, Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, Pacific Press, 2018. Softcover, 111 pages, US\$13.99 (Kindle edition, \$7.99). Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

If you don't know the name Rafael Lopez Miranda, you're not alone. His story is not well known; his name is not one that is likely to be found in Adventist histories of Latin America.

But thanks to his granddaughter, Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, we have the thrilling story of a man who embraced life and was tireless in his attempts to share the story of God's love as a colporteur (literature evangelist).

Miranda was born in Puerto Rico, and his brushes with sharks and lions as a boy make this a particularly thrilling read for preteens and teens. But his journey through courtship, marriage, conversion, and his call to ministry make it a story that readers of all ages will find inspiring.

Morales-Gudmundsson's telling of Miranda's story is rich and nuanced. It's a quick read because the narrative flows easily, enhanced by realistic and dramatic dialogue.

Reviews and commentaries about books, films, or other items do not constitute endorsement by the editorial staff of *Adventist Review Ministries*.

The Word and Way

Hearing the Way: What the First Christians Heard in the Story of Jesus, Kayle B. de Waal, Signs Publishing, 2019. Softcover, 137 pages, US\$9.99. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

Kayle de Waal has a burden for Scripture. His burden is, first, that Scripture be understood in the context in which it was written; and second, that it be applied to the setting in which we read it.

This is the premise of de Waal's latest book, a book that seeks to identify the timeless truths of the Old Testament as they appeared in the New Testament. In the process the author unpacks how God's salvation story—originally recorded in the Old Testament—was reinterpreted by New Testament writers, particularly Matthew, Luke, Paul, Peter, and John the gospeler and revelator.

This is not a book that one would read for pleasure (however interested some may be in New Testament literary styles and structures). Although it's written with a vocabulary that most nonscholars will understand, a careful reading of this book would be most profitable with a highlighter in

The author doesn't get bogged down in details that would take readers on useless detours. In addition to telling the story of one man's faithfulness (along with that of his wife and their families), the author gives a glimpse of the way the church's mission was guided in the early nineteenth century by native and foreign-born administrators.

The book is a chronicle of Miranda's desire to take the gospel to places it had yet to reach. His journeys took him first to Puerto Rico's many towns and villages, then to Venezuela; and not to just its cities, but to its jungles, where travel was perilous. He was often protected in ways



hand, or with a pad and pen for taking notes. It's not hard to understand; it just requires more than a casual reading.

The author, head of Avondale Seminary and senior lecturer of New Testament at Avondale College of Higher Education in Australia, is well equipped to identify and highlight the many themes and references New Testament writers

used to emphasize the “way” God led in the Old Testament; and how the life, death, resurrection, and second coming of Christ fulfills God’s way of salvation. Indeed, early Christians were identified as following “the Way” before they became known as Christians (Acts 9:2).

As an interpreter and identifier of the New Testament’s great themes, the author has done a magnificent job. Readers will come away with their appreciation of the New Testament greatly enhanced. One quibble with the book is that in only one chapter does the author directly mention biblical principles as an antidote to a world that, by his own admission, is post-Christian. While it’s admirable to mine the Scriptures for gems that sometimes lie slightly below the surface, one major value of the Bible today comes from its obvious application to modern life situations.

Still, *Hearing the Way* is a marvelous book for those who want to take a deeper dive into the great themes and structures of Scripture; and that includes pastors, Bible teachers, Sabbath School teachers, and any others who are passionate about the Bible. This book’s author is passionate for the Bible too, contagiously passionate. ♣

that can only be described as supernatural.

Morales-Gudmundsson, a professor in the Department of World Languages at La Sierra University, has told a story in the best tradition of Adventist authors who have told the stories of such Adventist mission icons as the Stahls, the Halliwells, the Hares. The fact that her story is about Rafael Lopez Miranda, a nearly anonymous colporteur, shows that we as individuals don’t have to be part of the mission establishment to share the love of Jesus with others.

With the gift-giving season on the horizon, this would be a great book to slip into someone’s stocking. Who knows how the recipient will be inspired? ♣

THE PRIMACY OF CHRIST

When Jesus told His disciples, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6), He was stating a reality that has focused and sustained Christians for centuries. As Christ lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, His character is reflected in our words and acts.

As we walk the narrow way, His promise is sure: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. . . . For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Following is a selection of statements on His love and transcendence, interspersed with testimonies from individuals whom His grace has conquered.—Editors.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”

APOSTLE JOHN, 1 JOHN 3:1.

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign of all, does not cry, Mine!”

ABRAHAM KUYPER.

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.”

APOSTLE PAUL, EPHESIANS 1:7-10.

“For to me, to live is Christ.”

APOSTLE PAUL, PHILIPPIANS 1:21.

“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”

APOSTLE PAUL, HEBREWS 5:8, 9.

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

APOSTLE PAUL, ROMANS 5:8.

“For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

APOSTLE PAUL, ROMANS 8:3, 4.

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

APOSTLE PETER, ACTS 4:12.

“Christ is not valued at all, unless He is valued above all.”

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO.

“The dearest friend on earth is a mere shadow compared to Jesus Christ.”

OSWALD CHAMBERS.

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.”

DAVID, PSALM 23:1.



“Jesus Christ, our Savior, has suffered and paid for our sins and those of all the people we will ever meet. He has perfect understanding of the feelings, the suffering, the trials, and the needs of every individual.”

HENRY B. EYRING.

“[Christ] is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.”

JOHN PIPER.

“My evidence that I am saved does not lie in the fact that I preach, or that I do this or that. All my hope lies in this: that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. I am a sinner, I trust Him, then He came to save me, and I am saved.”

CHARLES SPURGEON.

“As [Christ’s followers] make known the gospel of salvation, many will be convicted and converted by the power of God. The human instrumentality is hid with Christ in God, and Christ appears as the chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely.”

ELLEN G. WHITE, THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, P. 275.

“The theme of redemption is one that the angels desire to look into; it will be the science and the song of the redeemed throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. . . . We should dwell upon the character of our dear Redeemer and Intercessor. . . . As we thus contemplate heavenly themes, our faith and love will grow stronger. . . . There will be more constant confidence in Jesus, and a daily, living experience in His power to save to the utmost all that come unto God by Him.”

—**ELLEN G. WHITE, CHRISTIAN EDUCATION, P. 57.**

“The Word through whom all things were made is now the Word through which all things are remade.”

N. T. WRIGHT.



THE UNWRAPPING

Packaging is key to sales. Major technology brands such as Apple or Samsung invest millions developing sophisticated boxes that promise high-end content. There are seemingly endless unboxing videos on YouTube—and people watch them.

I remember the first Christmas with our oldest daughter, Hannah. She couldn't yet walk but enjoyed rolling around on the carpeted living room floor. She loved the wrapping paper—*any* wrapping paper. She had no interest in the actual gifts, but was fascinated by the crinkling, crackling sound and feel of the glittering packaging.

SHE HAD NO INTEREST IN THE ACTUAL GIFTS, BUT WAS FASCINATED BY THE CRINKLING, CRACKLING SOUND AND FEEL OF THE GLITTERING PACKAGING.

When Jesus came the first time the packaging didn't look very promising. Rumors about the acceptability of Mary and Joseph's marriage swirled around. They had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem and couldn't find any respectable place with family or rent a decent place in an inn. Mary finally gave birth in a dirty hovel used as a barn. There were no gloating grandparents or joyful family celebrations. Instead, a bunch of smelly shepherds came to welcome the Messiah and became ambassadors of the news of His arrival (Luke 2:8-20). No one would have made an unboxing video of that moment. Instead of a hearty official welcome appropriate for a king, Jesus and His family had to flee to Egypt for safety following Herod's death decree (Matt. 2:16-18).

John captures this moment poignantly: "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (John 1:11). The wrapping didn't look promising; expectations weren't met; the outward appearance didn't coincide with the content.

We often wonder why most people steeped in the Torah and living in first-cen-

tury Palestine could get it so wrong. We sigh at their unrealistic expectations; yet we too can suffer a similar fate. Adventists love to talk about the second coming of Jesus. That's part of our theological DNA and enshrined in our name. We carefully study Scripture to discern God's timetable. We dig deep into Ellen White's writings to understand the sequence of final events. We know what should happen. The special outpouring of the Spirit, the shaking, the mark of the beast, a time of trouble, or the seven last plagues figure prominently when we talk about the Second Coming. But could it be that in our search for the signs of the times and our yearning for the blessed hope we look for the wrong packaging and forget to keep first things first?

Jesus talked quite a bit about His second coming. Beyond signs and final events, however, He talked about unity (John 17:20-23) and our ability to stay focused and awake (Matt. 25:1-13). In Matthew's Gospel the last story He tells, the one Jesus doesn't want us to forget, is about the final judgment. It's a simple scene: there are two groups, sheep and goats. We definitely want to belong to the sheep, for they follow the Good Shepherd. What makes the difference between these two groups in Jesus' story? *You were engaged in this world*, Jesus declares. *You took care of Me when I was hungry, when I was thirsty, when I was alone, when I was naked, when I was sick, even when I was in prison.*

The sheep (now called "the righteous" in Matthew 25:37) don't get it: *We never saw you like this, Lord*, they announce. *Yes, you did*, Jesus responds. "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40).

We don't want to be sidetracked by the packaging. ▀



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