

NOVEMBER 2018: A RESCUED PRAYER + DOES GOD LIKE MY GUN? + ADVENTISM AFTER AUSCHWITZ + RESCUE ME + THE EARTHY FRAGRANCE OF GOD + A FRESH LOOK AT SETBACKS

ADVENTIST REVIEW

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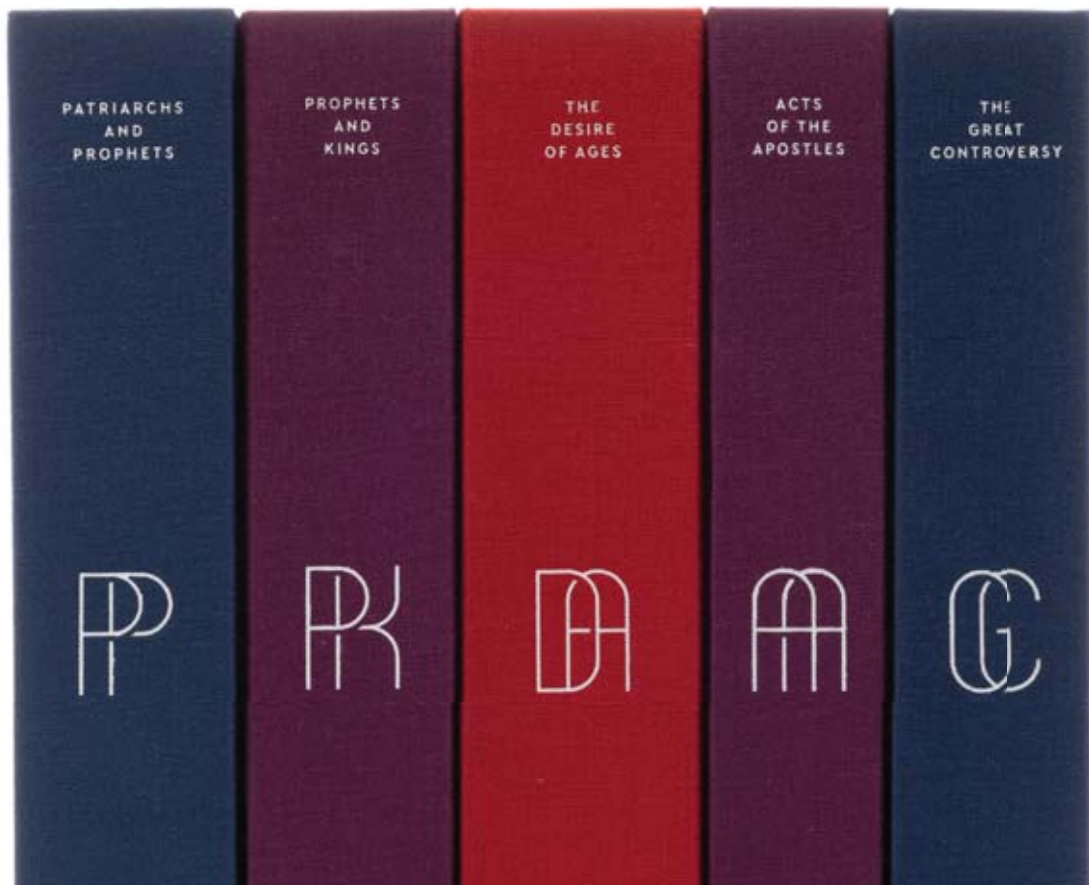
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—Dwight K. Nelson, Lead Pastor, Pioneer Memorial Church



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BILL KNOTT



*Faith invites change.
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Making Change Sustainable

Back when the world seemed young and new, I became an Optimist.

Urged by a senior administrator in the university town where I then lived, I signed up as a member of Optimist International, a service club focused on improving the lives of children and youth. At pre-dawn meetings, we gathered in a small restaurant to listen to news about local efforts to engage teenagers in town events, sponsor summer athletic leagues, and prevent drug use.

For all its obvious high-mindedness, being an Optimist required little of my life. A pair of ears, attendance at a monthly 60-minute breakfast, and occasional assistance with some civic project kept me a member in good and regular standing. I remember muttering to my wife that one portion of the Optimist Creed—"to look at the sunny side of everything"—would have been easier to achieve if we met—even once—in daylight.

But becoming a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is nothing like joining a service club, even one with a cheerful name. The expectations of membership touch almost every aspect of a new believer's life. We do well to remind ourselves of what we're asking when we invite a person to become a member of God's remnant people. Consider just three areas:

Day of Worship. In almost every case, the calendar dramatically shifts for a newly baptized believer. Learning to keep Sabbath after decades of spending Saturdays on shopping, sporting events, entertainment, or work is a monumen-

tal change—and largely lost on those of us who have never made that adjustment. All the weekly patterns are disrupted; all the friendship networks vibrate when the new Adventist no longer chooses to participate in some activities around which groups once bonded.

Diet and Health. For most new believers, implementing the biblical counsel to treat our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit brings about significant changes in what they eat and what beverages they consume. It also launches them into the brave new world of Adventist potlucks. Three times a day, seven days a week, new believers are reminded that their new faith touches almost everything on their plate and in their refrigerator.

Finances. Learning to return a faithful tithe is one of the most challenging experiences new believers face. Those who have been members of other faiths sometimes supported local congregations with weekly offerings: those new to Christian faith find it initially almost incomprehensible to imagine dedicating 10 percent of income—and more—because God asks it of them.

The first year of membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is frequently a time of enormous personal and professional stress as those convicted about Bible truths wrestle to integrate their new beliefs with their daily lives. High stress—even accompanied by optimism—requires high support if the changes made are going to be sustainable.

For 20 years—since the worldwide satellite evangelism event known as Net '98—the *Adventist Review* has been inviting its readers to rally around tens of thousands of new believers during the vulnerable first year after their baptism. Your support has strengthened and encouraged hundreds of thousands of newly baptized members—just when they needed it most.

Because of the faithful participation of your local conference, for just \$10 you can guarantee that a newly baptized Adventist gets a full year's subscription—12 beautiful editions—of the print magazine, with all of its eye-catching, relevant news, doctrine, and inspiration, as well as full access to all our digital content. New podcasts and videos such as our current "Digging Deeper" series help make Adventist faith and life understandable to those in this transition year.

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What made this hoax so successful was that the BBC was a trusted source of information.

KATHLEEN KING, AUSTRALIA



DON'T BE DECEIVED

I refer to the short article by Merle Poirier in the August 2018 edition of *Adventist Review* on the spaghetti harvest. In

1957 I was living in Britain and saw that video clip when it aired. Author Poirier said that in 1957 “most of those living in the United Kingdom had only heard of spaghetti.” This is not true. Spaghetti and other pasta varieties were available in the grocery stores, and there were Italian restaurants and diners serving a variety of pasta dishes. So spaghetti was quite well known.

But spaghetti’s origin was not so well known. What made this hoax so successful was that the BBC was a trusted source of information. It had a reputation for truth and accuracy in reporting. So those who didn’t know any better were easily deceived by this clever piece of “reporting”; I think this is important to note.

We are unlikely to be deceived by anyone we don’t trust anyway. Trusted sources will have the greatest power to mislead and deceive. When friends, or even pastors, present us with “messages” or “doctrines” we haven’t heard before, we need to take the advice of author Poirier and pray for guidance of the Holy Spirit as we study carefully what God has revealed to us in His Word and in the Spirit of Prophecy.

Kathleen King
Australia

THE GODHEAD

I understand that the July issue of the *Adventist Review* was dedicated to convincing those of us who do not feel comfortable calling the Godhead the Trinity that we should, in fact, do so.

I do not get the point of Gerald Klingbeil’s article, “So What?” It really has nothing to do with the Godhead.

Joel Ridgeway wrote: “It [is] self-evident that there are three divine persons in the Godhead.” Then he says that “they are not three Gods.” That being the case, then they are not the Trinity, which I understand is defined as three gods in one.

Therefore, we should do as Ellen White says—call the three persons of the heavenly Trio the Godhead and not try to be as much like the Roman Catholic Church as possible.

You will not find the word “trinity” in the Bible or in the Spirit of Prophecy. We are advised by Ellen White that we should not accept a doctrine that is not plainly taught in the Scriptures. One of our prominent

We are always looking for good recipes we can all enjoy with a good texture.

JACLYN KNIGHT, NEW MARKET, VIRGINIA

evangelists gets around this problem by defining “trinity” to be three personalities of the Godhead. We could probably all agree with this definition, but why not just follow the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy and call the Godhead what it is: the Godhead.

Philip Lewis

Seaman, Ohio

A GREAT CAKE

We recently got around to making Merle Poirier’s Gluten-free Sweet Potato Cake recipe and it was wonderful! With two members of our family who have celiac disease, we are always looking for good recipes we can all enjoy with a good texture. Even though this is quite belated, please accept our sincere gratitude for the inclusion of the recipe in the December 2017 issue!

Jaclyn Knight

New Market, Virginia

IN A FEW WORDS...

NEW ESCAPE GAME PROMPTS TEENS TO STUDY THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Thanks for sharing. What an excellent idea! So many of us, young as well as the elderly, have very little knowledge of end-time events. Working with young people in my “neck of the woods,” this knowledge is lacking. I would love to see something like this there. This is something I will be sharing with fellow leaders. Thank God for this innovative work. Blessings!

Catecha Francis, Via Web

THE HANDS AND FEET OF JESUS

I felt privileged to serve as a volunteer at [Pathway to Health], this great event. Seeing the healing ministry of the church carried out by high-level medical professionals is awesome.

Albert Dittes

WHEN SUICIDE STRIKES

Regarding “When Suicide Strikes” (September 2018): In recent years I have begun to understand the torture and other issues people go through. With more trust and faith we can praise God that He knows everything about us, that He is the holy and true judge. He will give grace to those who believe that for whatever reason they had no other recourse.

This is not a course I would take, but I leave them in God’s loving hands.

Lynnette Mcdermott

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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“This epidemic [e-cigarettes] holds the potential to cause serious health problems to both young and mature users.”

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NEWS



Joseph Zohming Thanga, who is pastoring the Mizo Seventh-day Adventist Company in Des Moines, Iowa, United States. Thanga immigrated to the U.S. after being persecuted, sent to prison, and sold as a slave.

PHOTO: MID-AMERICA UNION OUTLOOK

SOLD TO HUMAN TRAFFICKERS

AN ADVENTIST SURVIVES PERSECUTION, PRISON, AND SLAVERY.

BY JOSEPH ZOHMING THANGA, MID-AMERICA UNION OUTLOOK, AND ADVENTIST REVIEW

The Mizo people are an ethnic group native to South Asia. Joseph Zohming Thanga is an immigrant from Myanmar. He serves as pastor of the Mizo Adventist company in Des Moines, Iowa, United States.—Editors.

I was born in the small village of Tuingo. A third-generation Adventist, I was the second youngest of six children. My family was poor, and my parents supported us by working in rice paddies.

REFUGEE AND PRISONER

While I was growing up my country was an extremely dangerous place. In 2007 I sought asylum with

the United Nations refugee agency in Malaysia.

I stayed there for a year without legal papers, waiting for my appointment. One night I was startled out of sleep by the sound of security forces pounding on my door. I was arrested and taken to a detention center.

During this time my faith was tested. Like Daniel in the Bible, I prayed three times a day. During that period I learned what it means to put one's full trust in God.

I began sharing Jesus with non-Christian prisoners. Some of them were excited to learn more about my beliefs, and one man even asked me to baptize him.

Another man told me he had been a Christian in his youth, but had converted to Hinduism and later to Islam, because none of the Christians he knew had lived what Christ taught. He believed that God put him in the detention center with me to convince him to follow Jesus once more.

SOLD TO HUMAN TRAFFICKERS

One day a fire broke out at the detention center. After the fire, the government decided to deport the prisoners to their home countries.

This was a problem for some of us from my country, because the government wouldn't recognize us as citizens and refused to take us back. Instead, they decided to sell us to human traffickers from another country. I was sold for approximately US\$195. I would have been a lifelong slave were it not for my brother and uncle, who bought me back.

Once free, I managed to get a job at a restaurant and worked hard for the next year and a half to help support my family and pay back my brother and uncle.

LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

I had the opportunity to come to the U.S. in 2010. I settled first in Maryland and finished high school. For three years after that I worked in a factory warehouse in Indiana.

In 2014 God led me to work with the Mizo group in Des Moines, Iowa. We started with approximately 10 members but have grown to 32, becoming a company in 2017. Thanks to the Des Moines Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Iowa-Missouri Conference leadership and church members across the territory, many of the Mizo members' children are receiving an Adventist education. I believe God has big plans for this company.

Please pray for the Des Moines Mizo company as we work to reach the large number of Chin and Mizo people who live in Iowa. Jesus is coming soon, and I want to work to get others ready for His return. ♣

ARE ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES SAFE?

THEY COULD LEAD TO SERIOUS, LONG-TERM LUNG DAMAGE, SPECIALIST SAYS.

BY JANELLE RINGER, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH

The rapid rise in electronic cigarette use by teenagers has caused the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to consider banning the selling of devices to minors, raising the concern of safety for younger users. There is still a need for research to understand better the adverse effects these devices have on the body, but many studies have already shown numerous long-term, avoidable health risks.

Recently more than 1,000 businesses involved in selling e-cigarettes across the U.S. began receiving warning letters from the FDA cautioning them to stop selling to minors, a move that intends to hinder what the FDA is calling an epidemic.

WHAT ARE E-CIGARETTES?

Electronic cigarettes—known as e-cigarettes—are battery-operated devices that produce an aerosol by heating a liquid that usually contains nicotine, the addictive drug in regular cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products, according to

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

This epidemic holds the potential to cause serious health problems to both young and mature users, says Loma Linda University Health pulmonologist and asthmato­logist Laren Tan.

“The damage caused by e-cigarettes, both in minors and adults, can pose health risks that can instigate long-term harm,” Tan says.

E-cigarettes come in many forms, some resembling traditional tobacco cigarettes, and some im-

itating everyday items such as pens or USBs. “These devices are not regulated, so it is unknown whether the size of the device greatly impacts the degree of the vapor consumed,” Tan says.

THE EVIDENCE

Because of this lack of regulation, and being relatively new to the market (2006 in Europe and 2007 in the U.S.A.), Tan says the conclusive evidence needed is still being collected. He explains there is currently a shortage of information on the devices. Although the data is still out on many independent studies, it is thought by some users that e-cigarettes might not be as harmful as regular cigarettes. However, they are still very unhealthy to the lungs, Tan says.

THE USE OF VAPORIZERS CAN BE A GATEWAY FOR TEENS TO START SMOKING REGULAR CIGARETTES.



“Often what makes it harmful to the youth is the nicotine component,” Tan says. “What we’ve known, and what multiple studies have shown, is that nicotine to minors harms their brain development, which is detrimental.”

Marketing of these nicotine delivery systems is often viewed as targeting a younger demographic with such flavors as bubble gum or cotton candy. While flavors themselves do not pose a threat when ingested, Tan says inhalation can have adverse effects.

“We know that certain e-cigarette flavorings contain diacetyl, a chemical linked to a serious lung disease. Inhalation of diacetyl causes inflammation, irritation, and can lead to permanent lung damage,” Tan says.

A recent publication by the CDC noted that the metal component necessary for e-cigarettes to work—which heats up the liquid and changes to a vapor state—releases small particles of metal along with the vapor. These metal particles are usually from heavy metals, such as nickel, tin, or lead. When inhaled,

these metals damage lung tissue and lower the body’s natural resistance to infections and cancers, according to the CDC.

The vape from e-cigarettes is a cool-temperature vapor that does not require combustion. As such, users can take deeper breaths when inhaling the substance, causing them to inhale greater amounts of nicotine, along with particles of metal that come from the heating device.

“The plume of smoke caused by vaping is substantially larger than one of smoke caused by cigarettes, leading us to believe that even more nicotine is being consumed per puff,” Tan says. Because the smoke from cigarettes is a result of combustion, the user is not able to inhale as great an amount, because of toxic chemicals produced from the combustion process.

Tan says the airways constrict when exposed to the heated smoke, limiting the amount that can be breathed into the lungs. “This cool vape, laced with metal particles, nicotine, and carcinogens, is going deeper into the lungs. For devel-

oping youth, this can be extremely detrimental to both short-term and long-term health.”

A GATEWAY TO REGULAR SMOKING

The use of vaporizers can be a gateway for teens to start smoking regular cigarettes, say officials from the American Thoracic Society. Also, young people who become initiated to nicotine addiction with these devices are more likely to go on to use other tobacco products. Tan says smoking can be more harmful to younger people because their bodies are still developing. “Lungs are still developing until the early to mid-20s,” Tan says.

Another daunting concern is that companies selling these e-cigarette products are not FDA-approved and are not therefore required to meet any FDA regulations. “If young teens are addicted early in life to vaping, especially flavored vapes with diacetyl, they are likely to set themselves up for the formation or worsening of chronic respiratory problems,” Tan says. Without regulations and requirements, there are fewer systems in place to protect the consumer.

Tan says nearly 10 percent of his patients come in saying they are e-cigarette smokers. “These patients present with breathlessness, cough, and wheezing. Some of them already have underlying chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma or other chronic respiratory condition,” Tan says.

He also says those who are consistently coughing, or who have greater mucus production, or issues with breathing, might be showing signs of a lung injury. These symptoms can also worsen underlying respiratory problems. “Those that are experiencing these symptoms while smoking e-cigarettes should stop immediately and be checked out by your physician, who can determine if testing or more specialized care is necessary,” he said. ▀



A view of the Kigali Convention Centre's main auditorium on the opening day of the 3rd All Africa Congress and Festival of Religious Liberty in Kigali, Rwanda, on September 13, 2018. The event drew more than 500 religious liberty delegates and advocates from close to 30 countries. PHOTO: ABRAHAM BAKARI

RWANDA HOSTS CELEBRATION OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

ALL AFRICA CONGRESS MAKES CALL TO VALUE AND PROTECT "MOST BASIC FREEDOM."

BY MARCOS PASEGGI, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Twenty-four years after a bloody genocide left as many as 800,000 people dead and millions displaced, a peaceful and prosperous Rwanda welcomed more than 500 religious freedom delegates and advocates to the third All Africa Congress and Festival of Religious Liberty on September 13, 2018.

The "Hope for Building a Tolerant and Peaceful Continent" event, organized by the All Africa Religious Liberty Association (AARLA), brought together hundreds of church leaders, government officials, religious liberty leaders, and

advocates at the state-of-the-art Kigali Convention Centre in the country's capital, to celebrate religious freedom.

"We have come to recognize the need all of us have of enjoying religious liberty, and this is a public forum to celebrate religious freedom for all," said Blasious Ruguri, East-Central Africa (ECD) church region president and chair of the AARLC organizing committee, in his opening remarks. "It is a call to celebrate what is most uniquely human: our conscience."

To elaborate, Ruguri explained

that freedom of conscience is the basis of all other liberties and human initiatives. "It is impossible for men to truly love each other without having the freedom to worship his God."

In sharing the purpose of the Kigali congress, Ruguri said that such a gathering, which takes place every five years, goes beyond celebrating religious freedom. It's more than just getting together, he emphasized. "This is not a place to just share wishful thinking," he said. "We expect positive discussions and outcomes [out of these meetings]."

A WARM WELCOME

Rwanda Union Mission president Hesron Byilingiro welcomed delegates and friends to Rwanda as he emphasized the pan-African nature of the event. "This is an event for all Africans and friends of Africa,"

said Byilingiro, who also chairs the Rwandan chapter of the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA).

Joel Okindoh, IRLA secretary general for the East-Central Africa region, seconded Byilingiro's definition. In welcoming delegates from every region of Africa as well as the Indian Ocean islands, Okindoh added that the organizers' warm welcome included every guest from other continents who is also a friend of Africa. "As long as you are here, you are all Africans. Maybe we could even give you African names, so you really become part of us," Okindoh quipped.

WHY RWANDA

Religious freedom is enshrined in Rwanda's constitution, Ruguri explained, in providing a rationale for the location chosen for the 2018 congress. "[Religious freedom] is a belief that was threatened by the genocide, but the country did not choose to abide in the shadow of the genocide."

In 1994, after years of hostilities and hate speech, Rwanda's Hutu majority set out to annihilate the Tutsi minority. According to figures from several organizations in just 100 days about 800,000 people were killed, and millions were displaced.

Ruguri acknowledged that the country showed great resilience after the genocide. "Rwanda has demonstrated a very high degree of tolerance," he said in highlighting the current social and religious

climate across the nation. "It's an example of what Africa can achieve in a short time if [the continent] fosters a spirit of tolerance and peaceful coexistence."

"Africa will realize its vision if it uplifts religious liberty for everyone," Ruguri concluded.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The congress's opening ceremony highlighted the support that Rwandan leaders assign to freedom of religion and conscience.

"The government of Rwanda has a definite commitment to defend and promote freedom of religion," said Judith Uwizeye, cabinet minister in the Office of the President of Rwanda, in addressing the delegates. "The government understands that the foundation of progress is realized when people exercise their social, economic, political, and religious rights."

In the aftermath of the genocide, the country could have chosen a different path, including one of revenge and ongoing unrest. "However," Uwizeye reminded the audience, "we chose to stay together; we chose consensual democracy instead of confrontation, because Rwanda is based on harnessing the diversity of our people."

In this context of renewed peaceful progress and development (according to a 2015 Gallup report), Rwanda is one of the safest countries in the world. Uwizeye emphasized the role of faith-based organizations in the current climate.

"Faith-based organizations are considered strong partners of the government," she said.

FROM WORDS TO ACTION

Church leaders made a point of highlighting that Rwanda's support of religious freedom transcends words. Specifically, Byilingiro thanked the Rwandan government for respecting the Seventh-day Adventist day of worship.

In Rwanda, citizens and residents spend the last Saturday of every month in *Umuganda*, a mandatory

**"AFRICA WILL
REALIZE ITS
VISION IF IT
UPLIFTS RELIGIOUS
LIBERTY FOR
EVERYONE."**

—BLASIOUS RUGURI

day of community service. Based on Bible teachings about the seventh-day Sabbath, Adventists use that day as a special day of worship and abstain from regular work activities. When the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda petitioned for an exemption several years ago, the government offered Adventist Church members the option to discharge their civic duties on the following Sunday.

"I thank the government for also granting Sunday as a community service day," Byilingiro said. 🍀



Klaus Popa, left, interviews Marion Gaffron, lay leader of the Benzheim Hope Center, and Paulin Giurgi, vice president for communication and marketing of SdH, about Hope Sabbaths, Hope Centers, and Hope Camps. PHOTO: EDUARDO LUDI, STIMME DER HOFFNUNG

70 YEARS BROADCASTING HOPE

EUROPEAN MEDIA CENTER STIMME DER HOFFNUNG CELEBRATES LANDMARK ANNIVERSARY.

BY GERALD A. KLINGBEIL, ADVENTIST REVIEW

Saturday, September 15, 2018, marked a high Sabbath in Alsbach-Hähnlein, a small town close to Frankfurt, Germany, as Seventh-day Adventists in Germany celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the Inter-European Division media ministry *Stimme der Hoffnung* (Voice of Hope). One hundred eighty guests from all corners of the globe spent a day remembering, giving thanks, and dreaming about the future. The three-hour morning program featured engaging and varied presentations hosted by Klaus Popa, since 2014 the CEO of *Stimme der Hoffnung* (SdH).

The program was recorded and broadcast the following day on SdH's media outlets (satellite, cable TV, online). Guests enjoyed not only a professionally presented program but also a good lunch, afternoon tours of the media center facilities, time for networking and fellowship, and a concert with the chamber orchestra and choir of Schulzentrum Marienhöhe, a Seventh-day Adventist school located in the neighboring city of Darmstadt.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Popa introduced the journey through 70 years of hope by reminding the studio guests that God guided the destiny and growth of the ministry. Short, prerecorded

video clips, live interviews with past leaders of SdH, and testimonies of people whose lives have been affected by the ministry of SdH demonstrated the progress of the ministry started in 1948. That was when Adventist pastor Max Busch produced a weekly 10-minute broadcast in Berlin that was transmitted on Radio Luxemburg on medium wave, making SdH the oldest private Christian radio ministry in Germany.

Some of the images from post-war Germany illustrated the creativity of German Adventists during that time. They drew graffiti on building ruins to share broadcast times, program names, and radio frequencies with their neighbors. In the 1960s a new Bible correspondence study guide series replaced the translated *Voice of Prophecy* study guides that had originally been used.

GOD'S CARE IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION

The program not only highlighted spectacular growth but also reflected the highs and lows of German history. Following the closing of the border between East and West Germany, the media ministry continued to grow on both sides of the wall. Lothar Klenk, a retired 40-year veteran radio technician, shared some of the, at times, adventurous and clandestine stories of God's care in

the midst of political oppression and constant control. He recalled his work at the Friedensau Photographic and Sound Service organization in East Germany before the fall of the wall in 1989, followed by another 26 years of service at SdH in the former West Germany.

Heinz Hopf, director of SdH from 1972 to 1978, highlighted the use of the one-page monthly newsletter of the ministry, often privately sent to individuals in Communist Germany. He told the story of a lay member from Ludwigshafen in southern Germany, who had made it his ministry to single-handedly send out every month, at his own expense, more than 600 newsletters to people in East Germany.

The interview with Matthias Müller, SdH CEO between 2002 and 2014, recalled an often understaffed and overworked team that would leap into a digital future during his tenure. The dynamic interaction between Popa and Müller reminded guests of the *Faith Simple* evangelistic TV show that the two men cohosted in 2011.

Under Müller's leadership SdH moved to its state-of-the-art building in Alsbach-Hähnlein in 2007 and also began 24-hour radio and TV broadcasting. He reminded the audience that SdH, like any other ministry, "ultimately seeks to take viewers by the hand and lead them to Jesus."

"MY TIMES ARE IN YOUR HAND"

Brad Thorp, former president of Hope Channel International, shared

thoughts about Psalm 31:15, the motto of the day, highlighting God's sovereignty in the midst of personal pain, loss, and even chaos.

Mario Brito, president of the Inter-European Division, reminded the audience that SdH is part of a worldwide family, that hope drives how we look at the future, and that hope will help us stay faithful to God's mission. "Hope is rooted in God and fulfilled in Jesus Christ," he said.

WHAT REALLY COUNTS

The day's slogan, Seventy Years of Hope, was brought home powerfully by a prerecorded video clip featuring Jens from Torgau, a prisoner who found Jesus and the Adventist message while serving a life sentence in a German prison. His initial contact with SdH started with a desire to receive mail, as he felt completely isolated from family and friends. The weekly letters with the Bible study guides from the International Bible Study Institute team at SdH soon meant more to him than just receiving a letter.

Today Jens fellowships with his Adventist family during the 24-hour release time he gets twice a month. A gifted artist, he has begun a ministry of sending hand-drawn birthday cards to members of five congregations.

In the video Jens emphasized how much he values his newfound family. "It's a good feeling to belong and be part of a family," he said. ▀

NEW INSTITUTE WILL HELP ABUSED CHILDREN

LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH VOTES TO CREATE THE RESILIENCY INSTITUTE FOR CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY.

BY DONAJAYNE POTTS, LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH NEWS

Loma Linda University Health's Board of Trustees has announced the establishment of a new institute for child adversity, which will facilitate student education and research while addressing community needs in the area of child abuse.

In a vote in May 2018 the board created the Resiliency Institute for Childhood Adversity (RICA), an expansion of the current Children's Assessment Center (CAC) in San Bernardino, California. The expanded center is a forum for the collaboration of numerous local agencies to provide forensic interviews and evidentiary medical examinations to evaluate child abuse allegations.

RICA is a collaboration of local law enforcement, various funding agencies, legal systems, and Loma Linda University Children's Hospital.

"Abuse of children has become an all-too-familiar story in this country and beyond," said Loma Linda University Health president Richard H. Hart. "Loma Linda University Health's Resiliency Institute for Childhood Adversity will build and grow upon the reputation that CAC has maintained as a national exemplar in caring for abused children."

RICA will house a variety of educational rotations for Loma Linda students and residents, and will serve as a hub for Loma Linda University's three-year child abuse pediatrics residency program—one of only a few in the nation. This fellowship program, accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, emphasizes intervention and prevention and provides pediatricians with a variety of patient-care experiences, research opportunities, and educational activities.

RICA will join the ranks as Loma Linda University Health's thirteenth institute, said Mark Reeves, vice president for institutes. Loma Linda University's institutes integrate research, education, and health-related services across multiple schools and facilities to bring together an interdisciplinary mix of scientists, teachers, and practitioners.

CAC was launched in 1994, two years after San Bernardino's Children's Network Policy Council began exploring ways to evaluate child-abuse allegations more sensitively. Victimized children frequently suffered unnecessary trauma in the process of being interviewed by multiple agencies.

The council established a task force with representatives from Child Protective Services, County Medical Center, Public Health, Behavioral Health, the District Attorney's office, Sheriff's Office, Juvenile Court, Family Law Court, County Counsel, Children's Network, Children's Fund, and Loma Linda University Medical Center.

CAC's 1994 opening was a partnership between the county of San Bernardino and Loma Linda University Children's Hospital.

In 2014, the center was relocated to a county-owned and maintained, state-of-the-art facility in San Bernardino. The new institute is on track to help treat 1,600 physically or sexually abused children this year. ▀

“Now when people look at Paige, she wants them to see Jesus.”



Hayes and Paige Parnell smile alongside Pastor Edward Skoretz (right) after their baptism at the Summerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Summerville, Georgia.

PHOTO: EDWARD SKORETZ, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

DECADES-OLD GIFT PROMPTS FORMER MISS ALABAMA TO JOIN ADVENTIST CHURCH

PAIGE PHILLIPS PARNELL READ A COPY OF *THE GREAT CONTROVERSY* AFTER 34 YEARS.

BY NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

Members of the Summerville Seventh-day Adventist Church sang anthems of praise on Saturday, August 4, 2018, as they witnessed the baptism of Paige Phillips Parnell, 1980 Miss Alabama and 1981 Miss America first runner-up, and her husband, Hayes Parnell.

The couple joined the congregation in Summerville, Georgia, after Parnell rediscovered a copy of the book *The Great Controversy* by Adventist Church cofounder Ellen G. White. She had placed the book in her attic 34 years earlier. The book came from two teenage boys who visited her home in Arizona in 1984.

Just before Summerville pastor Edward Skoretz lowered Paige into the waters he told the congregation, “There was a time in Paige’s life when people looked at her, they [only saw her physical qualities]. Now when people look at Paige, she wants them to see Jesus.”

ROAD TO MISS ALABAMA

Following high school Parnell wanted to enroll in a religious college, but lacked the funds. Then she heard that if she entered the Miss Alabama pageant, which is part of the annual Miss America beauty competition, she might

receive a scholarship, even if she did not win. Parnell went on to win first place and was crowned Miss Alabama in 1980 at age 17.

She represented the state of Alabama in the 1981 Miss America pageant with double talents: ventriloquism and vocal performance—and placed first runner-up.

For three months Parnell enjoyed touring with the Bob Hope-Miss America USO shows, performing for thousands of soldiers at U.S. military bases abroad.

LIFE AFTER PAGEANTS

After her first marriage ended in divorce, Parnell moved back to Alabama, where she married her high school sweetheart, Hayes, who had also gone through a divorce.

Sometime later, while Parnell was in their attic, she felt drawn to a box that happened to contain *The Great Controversy*. When she began reading, she couldn’t stop. Parnell went on to read all of Ellen White’s *Conflict of the Ages* books, as well as *Steps to Christ*, and *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*. She and Hayes also started attending the Summerville church, where they were welcomed warmly and happily.

“Hayes and Paige are thrilled to have been baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and to become members of a family that circles the earth,” Skoretz said. “[They are thrilled] to identify themselves with a people who are looking for the imminent return of Jesus.”



GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION SPURS ADVENTIST VOLUNTEERISM IN BRAZIL. A resolution by the Brazilian government is expected to boost Adventist volunteer initiatives across that South American nation. According to an official release of Brazil's Ministry of Education, college and university students may now include volunteer service hours as part of their official academic transcripts.



OPERA SINGER'S MANSION TURNED INTO ADVENTIST TV STUDIO. Seventh-day Adventist leaders joined several hundred guests in rural Sweden for the opening of a new headquarters for LifeStyleTV, a supporting media ministry. LifeStyleTV founder Claus Nybo described the new media center, formerly an opera singer's mansion, as a miracle from God, during a concert at the hall-turned-television studio in Brunskog, a town located about 110 miles (180 kilometers) east of Norway's capital, Oslo.



ONLINE ADS ENHANCE OUTREACH ACROSS BOLIVIA. Three Adventist-operated community centers in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, recently saw an increase in seminar attendance because of social media advertising. Data gathered from participants showed that 62 percent of residents say they enrolled because of social networks ads, and 28 percent because of a printed poster they saw.



THE LIFE OF DANIEL IN CINEMATIC IMAGES. In early September four media ministries, including Adventist Review Ministries, brought together an international film crew, a professional Moroccan production team, the acclaimed biblical film backdrops of Ouarzazate, and 165 local actors and extras to produce a film on the book of Daniel. The video and images will soon be available for distribution.



PATHFINDERS WIN ROBOTICS COMPETITION. Pathfinders from Puerto Rico won the state level of an international robotics competition after competing against a dozen other groups from the island in August 2018. The seven-member team later represented Puerto Rico in the international finals of the competition. Teams competed to write code for operating floating robotic satellites used as part of the research conducted on the International Space Station.



ADVENTISTS STRENGTHEN TIES WITH MUSLIMS IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. Leaders from both the Zamboanga Peninsula Mission (ZPM), the Adventist Church's administrative region in southwestern Mindanao, Philippines, and the Muslim-dominated islands in the area met for the first-ever Adventist-Muslim Relations fellowship meal at ZPM's headquarters in Ipil in September 2018. Church leaders sought through the event to increase understanding between the two faiths in the region, and provide opportunities for fellowship and respectful exchanges.



ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES PROVIDES HELP TO VICTIMS OF HURRICANE FLORENCE. Adventist Community Services (ACS) and the South Atlantic Conference contributed to various disaster relief efforts to help victims of Hurricane Florence in the United States.



ADVENTIST REVIEW TAKES THE MIC

Talking about podcasts

Greg Scott has led Adventist initiatives in radio witnessing around the world for decades. In this interview *Adventist Review* talks with him about one of his latest projects, a podcast, or rather, several series of podcasts.—*Editors.*

Tell us something about yourself, Greg. Give us some idea of your interests, background, and experience in audio engineering.

I began in radio in 1977, the year after I graduated from academy. During my six months at a local broadcasting school I got a job as a DJ at a local AM radio station in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, working Saturday nights and Sundays. Then when I enrolled at Southern Adventist University, I convinced Olsen Perry, WSMC's station program director, to hire me, and he did.

Through my college years on various campuses I kept trying to decide whether a career in radio was for me. God seemed to be nudging me in that direction. After graduating from Loma Linda University at La Sierra in 1983, I packed up and moved to Italy,

where I started and operated an Adventist FM radio station for the next three years. The station was set up on the border with France to broadcast to cities, towns, and hamlets along the French Riviera. While there I heard of the church's plans to build a short-wave radio station on the island of Guam, and in 1987 I received a call to join Adventist World Radio (AWR) on Guam as program director. I served with AWR in various capacities for more than 30 years.

What was it that filled you with the need for an audio dimension to AR?

Starting an audio division at the *Adventist Review* was Bill Knott's vision and dream. Bill, the ministry's executive editor, recognizes the changing trends in media consumption and works to have them work for *AR*, the church's historic communication ministry. ARtv began two years ago: it provides a platform for posting short, sharable videos, something no other Adventist ministry was doing. Today there are nearly 800 items of video content on the ARtv platform. *AR* is advancing as digital technologies and platforms advance.

So *AR* already has its online dimension, and even its video arm, ARtv. Why a podcast too?

Our busy world leaves little time for reading, but podcasting fits its constant motion perfectly: people can listen just about anywhere, while doing just about anything. Growth in podcast listening and popularity is about 5 percent annually. About 44 percent of Americans (124 million) have listened to a podcast. It is important for the church to have its content on these platforms as well.

How does the content of a given podcast relate to print and online versions of *AR*?

Adventist Review Ministries, with its two print magazines, has nearly 170 years of archived material and resources. We are attempting to do three things: (1) create new content every month, based on the central theme of the magazines; (2) make available for listening existing magazine content, preferably using the authors' voices—for those who prefer listening to "one thing at a time" over reading; (3) create new podcasts, beginning early 2019, on topics relevant to those seeking a closer relationship with Christ.

What do you consider to be the purpose of the podcast? What do you want it to accomplish?

Forty-nine percent of podcast listening is done at home, 22 percent in the car. Podcast listeners tune in to an average of seven different shows a week. Podcast listeners tend to be loyal, affluent, and educated.* This new digital media is a wonderful way for the church to get its message of love that forgives and inspires hope to a world full of pain, suffering, and hopelessness. Anyone, anywhere in the world with Internet can receive these podcasts.

What can you share about the format of the programs?

We have several different types of programs, including a weekly podcast called **GraceNotes**—one-minute podcasts written and narrated by Bill Knott; approximately 12 to 14 podcasts a month based on monthly magazine content; and a monthly podcast, from June to December 2018, called “**Digging Deeper,**” based on the same *AR* magazine topics but distinct from them in content. General Conference president Ted Wilson also contributes a monthly podcast called **Global View**; and in August we began recording a new podcast called **HouseCall**, hosted by Drs. Peter Landless and Zeno-Charles Marcel of the General Conference Health Department. In the near future, we plan to launch podcasts for news and *KidsView*.

What goes into preparing a given audio program? Tell us the backstory of the entire operation, or, perhaps, of a specific program.

Ideas for the Digging Deeper series are generated by the same editorial team that meets and decides on the content for the magazine. Associate and executive editors help to identify individuals who may be the most interesting and best qualified to speak on given topics. I schedule and conduct most of the interviews. The ministry’s huge network of theologians, professors, and specialists from around the world is ever ready to contribute.

How many people are involved in recording content and publishing podcasts?

Currently I am the only one regularly writing scripts, recording interviews, and editing the audio. Daryl Gungadoo, *AR*’s media lab director, is also an audio engineer. He provides valuable technical assistance, almost on a daily basis, from his home in the United Kingdom. Our plan for 2019 is to have a small podcast production team to create new content every month on relevant topics,

similar to what is being done in the magazine.

Where do you do your recording?

I’ve converted my office here at the General Conference into a mini recording studio. It’s neither fancy nor soundproof, but it works fairly well. Now you better understand our needs.

How many podcasts have you turned out thus far?

From our beginning in May to September, we have turned out 12 different series, and I’ve recorded and published 73 podcast episodes. With very little advertising, promotion, or marketing those episodes have received 16,385 downloads, with the Digging



Deeper series being the most popular online, despite their length (30 minutes or more); while GraceNotes has gleaned 44,062 downloads of its podcast on Facebook. We know that podcasts take a while to build an audience and a following.

How does one access the podcasts?

Adventist Review Ministries podcasts can be accessed in a number of ways. One of the easiest ways to listen and subscribe is to go to iTunes and search for “Adventist Review.” Another easy way is to go to araudio.com, where all our podcasts are hosted. Audio content is also posted on the following Facebook sites:

- facebook.com/moregracenotes
- facebook.com/adventistreview
- facebook.com/adventistworld.

*www.podcastinsights.com/podcast-statistics/



Babylon does not have the final word. Jesus does.

BABYLON UNDONE

God's way out of confusion

LAEL O. CAESAR AND GERALD A. KLINGBEIL

Brace yourselves. Fasten seat belts. Buckle down. All those and whatever else: salvation's flight to glory is destined to encounter multiple gusts of angry wind; violent, sinking, sickening air pockets; threats to, and assaults on, the craft. Still, the Captain of our salvation is a master pilot; He will take us through safely and skillfully. He will not merely survive the violence; He will confront and swallow it all and consign it to oblivion, Babylon undone, de-created and de-formed. And as for His touchdown, we guarantee you that it will be a thing of beauty, a joy forever; just one more demonstration of His magnificent skills.

CONFUSION IS BORN

The first battering winds of confusion assault our salvation craft very close to history's beginnings. We hear their howl as early as the eleventh chapter of the Bible's first book, Genesis, with the story of a tower named Babel. But a perusal of the entire biblical library of 66 books shows us (1) that confusion has already disrupted earth's story in the Bible's 10 earlier chapters; and (2) that confusion will continue, and even intensify its confounding all the way through to the end of earthly time. Deciphering confusion's mystery and mischief demands determined attention—personally and generally, privately and publicly, technically, spiritually, and every other possible way. Eternal vigilance is the price of our success.¹

A BIT ABOUT LINGUISTICS

Technically speaking, we need a warning about linguistics, because there is no direct correspondence between the English word "confusion" and the Hebrew terms translated that way. The venerated King James Version of the Old Testament uses a half dozen different Hebrew roots to talk about confusion.² Almost 400 years later the very formal *New American Standard Bible* (1995)³ has used only one of those six terms, namely, the Hebrew root *thw* [*tohu*], to signify "confusion." We shall focus on *tohu*.

Tohu is Genesis 1 vocabulary: from the beginning of the Bible *tohu* stands for formlessness: the earth was formless (Gen. 1:2) before God shaped and filled it; before He brought it light of day, sound of music, and dance of motion. There was starry sky, and yet because He willed that this newest center of life have something of its own He said, "Let there be an expanse"; *tohu* was what there was before He made the expanse and called it heaven (Gen. 1:6-8). The emptiness, the nothing of *tohu*,⁴ is what He filled. He filled the nothingness with life-enhancing sunshine and soul-inspiring birdsong; with behemoths and leviathans to play with one another or with Him; with elephants' trunks and trumpets, lions' manes and roars, and humans' intelligence and anthems of praise to Him, the God from whom, alone, all form and goodness and life are derived; the God from whom alone all blessings flow.

For English-thinking minds shaped by 500 years of King James Version language saturating our art and commerce, entertainment, and religion, confusion is the shame and disgrace of potential wasted to nothing, as King Saul is sure his son Jonathan will become through his irresponsible devotion to a youth named David (1 Sam. 20:30).⁵ In Psalm 44:15 [verse 16 in Hebrew] confusion [*tohu*] is the debasing humiliation of a nation overrun by hostile forces and reduced to the contempt of an international laughingstock. In Isaiah confusion is stupidity, the senselessness of making idols for worship when there is a God who engages us intellectually, who is master of all times, seasons,

BABYLON TIMELINE

3RD MILLENNIUM B.C.	626-539 B.C.
TOWER OF BABEL	NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE
NOTEWORTHY: Hammurabi, 6th king, 1728-1686 B.C.	NOTEWORTHY: Nebuchadnezzar, 605-562 B.C.

and events, including the trajectories, failures, and triumphs of future centuries: in contrast with Him idol makers and their cronies “will be put to shame⁶ and even humiliated,⁷ all of them; . . . [they] will go away together in humiliation [*khelima*]” (Isa. 45:16).

CONFUSION: THE ARCHETYPE

Yet the compelling force of *tohu* and other terms notwithstanding, there is no more effective term, biblically, for conveying the truth and fraud, the emptiness and fullness, the all and nothingness, of confusion, than the term “Babylon.” The Bible’s earliest explicit commentary on confusion is Babylon, a truth that demands another linguistic clarification. In our English thinking we distinguish between a tower called Babel and a city, empire, and pervasive theological metaphor called Babylon. No such distinction exists in the Hebrew Bible. For the tower, the city, the empire, and the metaphor that makes its way through Scripture down to the close of human history and the triumph of salvation history are all the same Hebrew word *babel* [pronounced bah-VEL], Babylon. One may just as surely say, “They are all confusion.” Babel is Babylon. And yes, Babel is confusion.

Moreover, “Babel” [Babylon/Confusion] is from its beginning a label with spiritual implications, very much as “Israel” is. God bestows the name Israel for triumph and honor. God’s action inspires the name Babel for shame and disgrace. Citizens of the tower and city and empire named Confusion found no delight in its spiritual derivation. They established their own meaning: Babylon, they explained, means “gate of the gods,” the site of

God wept in brokenhearted grief at evil’s spread and entrenchment across civilization.

human access to the deities and of divine visits to earth. Their explanation may sound both linguistically plausible and psychologically flattering. But it is the living and powerful Word of God that has preserved the story of how the name was earned. And earned it was, the end and result of great effort, an effort in defiant rejection of God Himself.

Confusion’s backstory is Genesis’ gorgeous creation (chaps. 1; 2), the pathetic disobedience of chapter 3, and the horrible destruction of the global flood (chaps. 6-8). Ten generations from His flawless creation, God wept in brokenhearted grief at evil’s spread and entrenchment across civilization. Human wickedness “was great on the earth”; cognitive processes had sunk to the place where “every intent of the thoughts of [the human] heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). Lamech, Adam’s ninth-generation descendant, had looked upon the face of his firstborn baby and named him Noah, meaning “rest.” Somehow, Lamech hoped, God would use that newborn babe

726 / 715 B.C.

605, 597, 586 B.C.

605-561 B.C.

ISAIAH'S ORACLE ON BABYLON'S MONARCH

NOTEWORTHY:
Allusive of Lucifer's fall

BABYLON DESTROYS GOD'S PEOPLE, THE NATION OF JUDAH

NOTEWORTHY:
Dan. 1:1, 2; 2 Kings 24:1, 10-17; 25:1-7; 2 Chron. 36:5-7, 10, 15-21

JEREMIAH RE BABYLON'S COLLAPSE AND DESTRUCTION

NOTEWORTHY:
Jer. 51; 52

to bring relief from the stress then called life; stress and distress that flowed in overwhelming torrents from the curses that Adam brought in when he chose sin in Eden (see Gen. 5:29).

Noah was indeed a godly man, one on whom God looked with favor (Gen. 6:8). God used his voice for 120 years (verse 3), announcing the coming respite when God would begin again: He would send a flood that would blot out the now-perverted creation "from the face of the land" (verse 1); no longer would society's vulnerable women, children, and people with special needs have to live in constant dread; and no longer would the powerful have to constantly pursue the acquirement of even more brutal power to survive in a civilization "filled with violence" (verse 13). Rest was coming. God was going to bring rest.

Not too many cared about the promise of rest or the means for receiving it: floating in a boat while a flood destroyed civilization outside.

After the Flood's global destruction, God made a categorical pact with Noah: earth would "never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth" (Gen. 9:11). But the same cynicism at God's promise of rest in Noah's boat now showed itself at His promise of never sending a world-destroying flood again: human independence would build a tower that would ensure survival in the event of cataclysmic natural disaster. Humans would guarantee their own protection from any future "act of God"!

God's site visit found the builders doing very well, with a progress rate pointing to the day they would become unstoppable (Gen. 11: 6). God

responded to their progress with two actions: confusing the workers' language and dispersing the concentrated population globally (verse 8).

They could no longer communicate freely and fluently. Unable to understand each other as before, they journeyed off in frustrated, homogeneous groups to different corners of the globe. The construction project came to an abrupt halt. Its history of scattering and confusion gave it its name: Babel, Babylon, Confusion.

For the rest of Old Testament history, Confusion [Babylon] would be God's principal label for summarizing the climax of devil-inspired human ascent to the heights of power and success (Dan. 4:28-30), including its murderous assaults on God's people (2 Kings 25:1-21). He would also use it for spiritual conceit at a supernatural level (Isa. 14:3-23). The scope of Babylon would be the scope of *tohu*: the arrogance and emptiness of an evil Chaldean empire that would baffle Habakkuk, including the stupidity of idol and man worship (Hab. 1:2-2:19); the systematic assault on God's people and cause (2 Kings 25); and the descent to nothing of great potential (Isa. 14).

CONFUSION UNDONE

The long-awaited arrival of the Messiah refocused everything. Here was a voice of genuine clarity, calling a wayward people, as well as the larger world, to come and find rest (Matt. 11:28): rest from self-righteousness, rest from confusion and distortion, and rest from our own efforts to build more towers reaching into heaven. Jesus, working tirelessly during His years of public min-

BETWEEN A.D. 81 AND 96

A.D. 538-1798

AD 1798

**JOHN'S REVELATION RE
END-TIME BABYLON'S
REIGN AND DESTRUCTION**

NOTEWORTHY:
Reign of Emperor Domitian

**FIRST ASCENDANCY OF
END-TIME BABYLON**

NOTEWORTHY:
Dan. 7:23-25; 8:14; 12:7; Rev.
11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5; etc.; GC439

**END-TIME BABYLON'S
DEADLY WOUND**

NOTEWORTHY:
Pope Pius VI arrested
by Napoleon's General
Berthier; dies in captivity
(see GC439, 578).

istry, moved quickly to dispel wrong notions of the Father. His healing ministry was an illustration of grace; His preaching filled the hole in our souls; His sinless sacrifice made crystal-clear what Moses and the prophets had long spoken about and what had been foreshadowed in every sacrificial animal that had died on the altar of God's earthly sanctuary.

Death on the cross confounded Christ's disciples for a moment; resurrection morning dispelled all doubts. When Jesus ascended to heaven the early community of His followers, still fearful and wondering, prayed and waited for the promised Counselor. He came in power and visibly on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1), what Moses used to call the Feast of Weeks (Lev. 23:15-21). The day that celebrated firstfruits in Israel's festival calendar (Num. 28:26) now marked the day that God brought in the firstfruits of His bountiful harvest. Peter's powerful sermon, translated by the Spirit into many languages, was understood by Jewish visitors gathered from all corners of the Roman Empire in Jerusalem's temple. They had come for the comfort of familiar ritual; they left with the good news of Jesus, the Messiah, communicated in their own languages that went straight to their hearts. Similar to the story of the tower in Genesis 11, God comes down, not to confuse and disperse this time, but to unite and proclaim that atonement has been wrought, the Desire of Ages has come (Haggai 2:7). Through Him, the Word, human language becomes what it was always meant to be: a vehicle to communicate the good news of divine love. The Word blessed the stranger, the widow, the outsider, the enemy, the seemingly unworthy and lost.⁸

On the periphery of a power-hungry, land-thirsty empire the crucified and resurrected Christ began, slowly but surely, to undo the effects wrought by the fallen angel, Lucifer, who had propagated so much confusion, deception, and manipulation, as well as emotional and physical abuse of the weak by the strong. Less than 600 years before the arrival of the Messiah, the prophet Daniel had been shown a vision of the nature of secular and religious Rome (Dan. 2; 7; 8): those feet of mixed clay and iron (Dan. 2:40-43); a terrifying and frightening beast (Dan. 7:7, 23), so different from all other beasts preceding it; a little horn that uprooted three other horns and became larger and larger, speaking blasphemous words against the Most High and His saints and trying to change times and law (Dan. 7:8, 24, 25). This power, first civil then religious, was to reappear in the centuries following that glorious day of Pentecost in A.D. 31 in Jerusalem. Already, though, Babylon's undoing is foreshadowed.

BABYLON THE GREAT

Many decades after the day of Pentecost described in Acts 2, John ponders the future of the church he loves. Sitting on Patmos, a small island in the Aegean Sea, he catches a glimpse of the Lamb (Rev. 14:1) standing on Mount Zion surrounded by the perfect number of the redeemed (144,000). Against the backdrop of an awe-inspiring sound track John sees three angels flying in midair, proclaiming the everlasting gospel. "Fear God, and give Him glory" (verse 7), the first angel shouts triumphantly. The Creator is

SUMMER, A.D. 1844

GRADUAL AND CONSTANT
SINCE NINETEENTH CENTURY

NEAR THE END OF
HUMAN HISTORY

ADVENTIST PROCLAMATION OF END-TIME BABYLON'S FALL

NOTEWORTHY:

Ellen G. White, *Christian Experience and Teachings*: "That message was first proclaimed by the servants of God in the summer of 1844" (p. 51).

BABYLON'S "RESURRECTION"

NOTEWORTHY:

Deadly wound healed—Rev. 13:3; "This is spurious to the death and resurrection of Christ" Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation*, p. 406; see also Ellen G. White, *From Here to Forever*, p. 353).

END-TIME BABYLON'S FINAL AND UTTER COLLAPSE

NOTEWORTHY:

Rev. 18

Babylon's ability to manipulate, force, confuse, and deceive on a grand scale is intoxicating stuff.

about to come and His judgment will liberate His people. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great" (verse 8), roars the second angel. The third announces the complete destruction of all those in alliance with the beast, the power backing Babylon (verses 9-12). Revelation has exposed sin's confusion before, but this is Babylon's first appearance as Babylon in the book. It won't be its last. John cannot see it clearly yet, but centuries down the road the rise of papal Rome fits the bill when we consider Daniel's and John's prophecies concerning Babylon. It's a power that requires worship and offers its own way of salvation. Jesus' mother, together with saints and priests, are essential ingredients of a system built on works.

Revelation 17 uses the imagery of a woman dressed in scarlet and covered completely in blasphemous names. Her eye-popping costly attire must have dazzled John at first; but then he sees the golden cup filled with abominations and the

filth of her spiritual prostitution (verses 1-4). Conveniently she bears an identifying name on her forehead. It's "Babylon the Great," echoing an earlier king's fateful self-aggrandizement (Dan. 4:30) that led to complete humiliation and divine judgment. Scripture states that the inhabitants of the earth "were drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Rev. 17:2, KJV).

Babylon's ability to manipulate, force, confuse, and deceive on a grand scale is intoxicating stuff. Observers are wowed. Babylon prostituting herself picks up a well-known theme of Old Testament prophetic texts in which God's people Israel lose their way and decide to follow the Baals, the Asherahs, the Molechs of their times, mixing true religion with false religion (cf. Hosea 4; 5). "A spirit of prostitution is in their heart," wrote the eighth century B.C. prophet Hosea. "They do not acknowledge the Lord" (Hosea 5:4, NIV). One of the greatest proofs of Babylon's spiritual prostitution of mixing true and false religion is its opposition to recognizing God as the Creator, the Sustainer, the Lord of the universe.

FALLEN! FALLEN IS BABYLON THE GREAT

Revelation 18 describes the fall of Babylon. Echoing the second angel of chapter 14, another angel proclaims with a mighty voice the fall of the entity that for hundreds of years controlled the destiny of the then-known world. Judgment on Babylon is God's way of liberating His people. Babylon's fall is an opportunity to "come out." It's the right moment to leave an entity that once dazzled the world by its power and dominance,

“Money, money, money” is an expression of Babylon’s deceptive counter-structure designed to push the Creator God off His throne.

but ultimately rejected God’s lordship.

John describes this poignantly in Revelation 18:4, 5: “Come out of her, my people, . . . so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes” (NIV). There is a clear allusion to Genesis 11 here. Instead of a tower being built right into heaven, Babylon (dare we say papal Rome?) has piled up atrocities and sins that reach right up to heaven. Forget the millions of victims of the Inquisition; forget the thousands of children abused by unscrupulous priests; forget the uncounted souls who tremble at the thought of death without the assurance of divine grace offered freely through the righteousness of Christ—and no one else.

Again, using the Old Testament background, Babylon’s adulterous relationship with the kings of the earth points to religious syncretism, a system creating its own way of salvation (verse 3). Baal and Yahweh just do not go together. The assemblage of political and religious alliances fostered by Babylon is coercive and manipulative. We need to remember that this is the same little-horn entity that is seeking to change times (of worship) and law (Dan. 7:25). But this Babylonish conglomerate has more than political and religious dimensions. The merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries (Rev. 18:3). Business has flourished in Babylon’s world. Unscrupulous exploitation is another trademark of Babylon. “Money, money, money” is an expression of Babylon’s deceptive counter-structure designed to push the Creator God off His throne. Instant gratification and reckless accumulation of material things go hand in hand with the exploitation of nature and people. Babylon has worked its way into all elements of our lives.⁹

TOUCHDOWN!

Fortunately, John did not end his book with chapter 18. Babylon does not have the final word. Jesus does, for “after this” (referring to the fall of

Babylon described in Revelation 18) John hears “what sounded like the roar of a great multitude” (Rev. 19:1, NIV). It’s the roar of the Lamb’s great touchdown! The hallelujahs ring with the shouts of that multitude, those who did not pay allegiance to Babylon, who came out of her, who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. In their adoration of the Master Pilot, Captain of their salvation, they proclaim His triumph in the great controversy: “Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments” (verses 1, 2, NIV).

God’s character had been questioned by Lucifer at another time and in another place. Now His character as Creator, Saviour, and Judge is magnified by that countless multitude shouting “Hallelujah!” as if their lives depend on it. For when grace has captured and changed our hearts, we can but sing praises to the Lamb that was slain but lives forever! 🍌

¹ John Philpot Curran, Dublin, 1790, said: “The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance”; but the quote, also often attributed to Thomas Jefferson as “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty,” existed in some form or other before either of them: <https://www.monticello.org/site/blog-and-community/posts/eternal-vigilance>.

² *bsht, qln, tbl, chfr, klm, thw*. While *bbl*, which we discuss later, logically belongs to this group; the King James Version never translates it “confusion.”

³ Except otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. The version is a good example of “formal equivalence,” in which translators stay close to specific lexical meanings of terms, instead of “dynamic equivalence,” which aims at more fluid renderings of the general ideas involved.

⁴ In Isaiah 41:29, *efes* [nothing] is the synonymous parallel to *tohu*.

⁵ The term here translated “confusion” is *boshet*, literally “shame.”

⁶ Stative verb, passive voice—*boshu*.

⁷ Stative verb, passive voice—*niklemu*.

⁸ See Gerald A. Klingbeil, “‘He Spoke and It Was’: Human Language, Divine Creation, and the *imago dei*,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 36 (2014): 59.

⁹ See Igor Lorencin, “Babylonian Mentality: With Whom Do You Bank?” *Ministry* (April 2014): pp. 18-21.

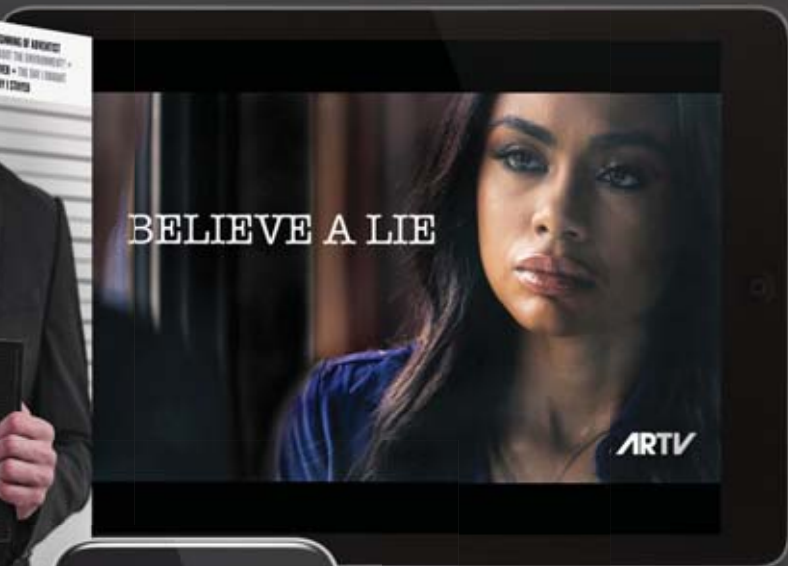
Lael O. Caesar and **Gerald A. Klingbeil** are associate editors of *Adventist Review* and both love discovering God’s revelation of His character and grace in the Old Testament. Writing this article together represents something they have never attempted before. It’s been a ride—and a blessing.

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BABYLON: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

*God's lovelorn plea
for His church*

ELLEN G. WHITE

In refusing the warning of the first angel, [nominal churches] rejected the means which Heaven had provided for their restoration. They spurned the gracious messenger that would have corrected the evils which separated them from God, and with greater eagerness they turned to seek the friendship of the world. Here was the cause of that fearful condition of worldliness, backsliding, and spiritual death which existed in the churches in 1844.

BABYLON EXPLAINED

In Revelation 14 the first angel is followed by a second proclaiming: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Revelation 14:8.

The term "Babylon" is derived from "Babel," and signifies confusion. It is employed in Scripture to designate the various forms of false or apostate



[Babylon] exerts a corrupting influence upon the world by teaching doctrines which are opposed to the plainest statements of Holy Writ.

religion. In Revelation 17 Babylon is represented as a woman—a figure which is used in the Bible as the symbol of a church, a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church.

In the Bible the sacred and enduring character of the relation that exists between Christ and His church is represented by the union of marriage. The Lord has joined His people to Himself by a solemn covenant, He promising to be their God, and they pledging themselves to be His and His alone. . . .

The unfaithfulness of the church to Christ in permitting her confidence and affection to be turned from Him, and allowing the love of worldly things to occupy the soul, is likened to the violation of the marriage vow. The sin of Israel in departing from the Lord is presented under this figure; and the wonderful love of God which they thus despised is touchingly portrayed. . . .

Babylon is said to be “the *mother of harlots*.” . . . The message of Revelation 14, announcing the fall of Babylon must apply to religious bodies that were once pure and have become corrupt. Since this message follows the warning of the judgment, it must be given in the last days; therefore it cannot refer to the Roman Church alone, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries.

CONFUSED CHURCHES

Furthermore, in the eighteenth chapter of the Revelation the people of God are called upon to come out of Babylon. According to this scripture, many of God’s people must still be in Babylon.

And in what religious bodies are the greater part of the followers of Christ now to be found? Without doubt, in the various churches professing the Protestant faith. At the time of their rise these churches took a noble stand for God and the truth, and His blessing was with them. . . .

[But] many of the Protestant churches are following Rome’s example of iniquitous connection

with “the kings of the earth”—the state churches, by their relation to secular governments; and other denominations, by seeking the favor of the world. And the term “Babylon”—confusion—may be appropriately applied to these bodies, all professing to derive their doctrines from the Bible, yet divided into almost innumerable sects, with widely conflicting creeds and theories.

Besides a sinful union with the world, the churches that separated from Rome present other of her characteristics. . . .

The great sin charged against Babylon is that she “made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” This cup of intoxication which she presents to the world represents the false doctrines that she has accepted as the result of her unlawful connection with the great ones of the earth. Friendship with the world corrupts her faith, and in her turn she exerts a corrupting influence upon the world by teaching doctrines which are opposed to the plainest statements of Holy Writ.

Rome withheld the Bible from the people and required all men to accept her teachings in its place. It was the work of the Reformation to restore to men the Word of God; but is it not too true that in the churches of our time [men and women] are taught to rest their faith upon their creed and the teachings of their church rather than on the Scriptures? . . .

The Protestant evangelical denominations have so tied up one another’s hands, and their own, that, between them all, a man cannot become a preacher at all, anywhere, without accepting some book besides the Bible. . . .

When faithful teachers expound the Word of God, there arise [men and women] of learning, ministers professing to understand the Scriptures, who denounce sound doctrine as heresy, and thus turn away inquirers after truth.

Were it not that the world is hopelessly intoxicated with the wine of Babylon, multitudes would be convicted and converted by the plain, cutting

Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ's true followers are still to be found in their communion.

truths of the Word of God. But religious faith appears so confused and discordant that the people know not what to believe as truth. The sin of the world's impenitence lies at the door of the church.

A WARNING REJECTED

The second angel's message of Revelation 14 was first preached in the summer of 1844, and it then had a more direct application to the churches of the United States, where the warning of the judgment had been most widely proclaimed and most generally rejected, and where the declension in the churches had been most rapid.

But the message of the second angel did not reach its complete fulfillment in 1844. The churches then experienced a moral fall, in consequence of their refusal of the light of the advent message; but that fall was not complete. As they have continued to reject the special truths for this time they have fallen lower and lower.

Not yet, however, can it be said that "Babylon is fallen, . . . because she made *all nations* drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." She has not yet made all nations do this. The spirit of world conforming and indifference to the testing truths for our time exists and has been gaining ground in churches of the Protestant faith in all the countries of Christendom; and these churches are included in the solemn and terrible denunciation of the second angel. But the work of apostasy has not yet reached its culmination.

The Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord, Satan will work "with *all* power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;" and they that "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," will be left to receive "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11.

Not until this condition shall be reached, and the union of the church with the world shall be fully accomplished throughout Christendom, will the fall of Babylon be complete. The change is a

progressive one, and the perfect fulfillment of Revelation 14:8 is yet future.

TIME TO COME OUT

Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ's true followers are still to be found in their communion. There are many of these who have never seen the special truths for this time.

Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition and are longing for clearer light. They look in vain for the image of Christ in the churches with which they are connected. As these bodies depart further and further from the truth, and ally themselves more closely with the world, the difference between the two classes will widen, and it will finally result in separation.

The time will come when those who love God supremely can no longer remain in connection with such as are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."

Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion.

This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. When those that "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call: "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4). ♣

These excerpts are taken from *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 380-390. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

ADVENTISM AFTER AUSCHWITZ

An Adventist friend, apt to be critical of the church, griped: “Why didn’t the Seventh-day Adventist Church change its theology after the Holocaust?”

The idea behind the question is that because of the astonishing evil of the Holocaust, how could people view God, faith, or anything the same again? Once the smoke of Auschwitz’s ovens cleared, many religious thinkers felt steamrolled by the hard questions raised by the atrocity.

This challenge, of course, hit Jews the hardest. Richard Rubenstein argued that the Holocaust proved that no God existed. Some ultra-Orthodox Jews, in contrast, argued that the Holocaust was God’s punishment because the Jews weren’t keeping the 613 laws faithfully.

Christian thinkers, too, found themselves forced to reconsider their beliefs after Auschwitz. What did kids learn in Sunday school about Jews that allowed them, as adults, to line up Jews—women and children included—and shoot them? Though Rosemary Reuther argued that anti-Semitism was the “left hand” of Christian theology; more thoughtful thinkers nevertheless had to wrestle with the question of how this horror could have happened in the “Christian” West.

Some theologians wondered, too, if the traditional understanding of an all-knowing, all-loving, all-powerful God was just wrong. After all, how could such a God be squared with the Holocaust? Others, who tended toward an optimistic view of humanity, of human potential to better the world, and even of the power to create “the kingdom of God” on earth, found these ideas shattered by World War II.

But what about my friend’s question? Why didn’t the Seventh-day Adventist

Church change its theology after the Holocaust?

Because it didn’t need to.

First, something like the Holocaust should have caused any thoughtful Christian of any denomination, anywhere, to rethink how they looked at Jews. Only the greatest perversion of anything our church teaches could have led to this genocide.

Second, Adventist theology presents nothing optimistic about either the nature of humanity or of the present world. The Holocaust was a shocking and painful example of just how fallen we are, a fact that only affirms Adventist theology.

Third, our Adventist worldview is framed, expressed, and interpreted through the great controversy motif. For us, Satan isn’t poetry, philosophy, mythology; he is not some literary device symbolizing the darker side of human consciousness.

He is a being of astonishing supernatural power whose sole purpose is to wreak as much pain and suffering and damage as possible on us here—the Holocaust being one of his most successful ventures yet.

“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Rev. 12:12, NKJV).*

“Woe” is right.

No matter how rich and deep, Adventist theology can’t fully explain the Nazi genocide, because nothing can fully explain evil. (Imagine there being a rational reason for the Holocaust. That’s a scary thought.) But contrary to my friend’s gripe, our theology didn’t change after Auschwitz because, frankly, it didn’t need to. ▀

*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.

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

CLIFF'S
EDGE
CLIFFORD
GOLDSTEIN



IMAGINE THERE
BEING A RATIONAL
REASON FOR THE
HOLOCAUST.
THAT'S A SCARY
THOUGHT.



CONFUSION: BABYLON

How do we keep from losing our way?

SIKHU DACO

The age of modernism with its perception of absolute truth is no more. The complexity of the modern age may well be understood for an ethic that espoused an individualistic pursuit of naturalistic truth. Modernism instilled a confidence in the power of one's mind to harness the potential of nature through scientific observation. Science was the harbinger of certainty. With science in your corner, you could be sure of what you knew and take full control of your destiny.

THE BABEL EXPERIENCE

While the emphasis on the scientific method as the premier means of knowing anything for certain posed its challenges to religion, the general ethos of epistemological certainty resulted in an emphatic, if not dogmatic, religious experience. No doubt Paul's statement would have resonated deeply with modern Christians: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).¹

But modernity faced the same challenge faced by the builders of the Tower of Babel: much reliance on "I," on human autonomy. "Let *us* make brick, and burn them thoroughly. . . . Let *us* build *us* a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let *us* make us a name" (Gen. 11:3, 4). Through their engineering prowess atheists, agnostics, and rebellious believers alike united to find—in the clouds—the natural causes of the global deluge and safety against another flood.

But what happens when the reality of human limitation hits? In the case of the Babel builders, divinity intervened to confound their efforts. But

Such a state of confusion is to be expected in a world which is anti-God, but Christ's followers ought not to be confused.

for those of us who live in modern times, the devastation of World War II raised a myriad of existential questions concerning humanity's ability to independently forge a bright future. When self-sufficiency proved futile, the modern age turned to postmodernity, with its ethos of uncertainty and fear. Deconstruction, pluralism, political correctness, and contemporaneity are considered of value—in short, it is fashionable and palatable, not to know.

SEEDS OF CONFUSION

Whereas confusion denotes a sense of disorientation, confusion is one of the markers of postmodernism. Not surprisingly, atheism and agnosticism are on the rise. "About a third of older millennials [adults currently in their late 20s and early 30s] now say they have no religion. . . . Nearly a quarter of Generation Xers now say they have no particular religion or describe themselves as atheists or agnostics."² Christian churches are closing. Many who still call themselves Christian are comfortable in their uncertainty of the biblical account of Creation, the Flood, Christ's miracles, and His prophecies. Disappointed by clergy indiscretions, specifically where racism, sexism, and Western hegemony seem to prevail, postmodern Christians lack the confidence that undergirds enthusiastic evangelism.

Postmodernity faces the same challenge as modernity and the builders of Babel—this ardent regard for "I." From looking at self as sufficient, postmodernism swings to looking at things self-deprecatingly. Either way, self is the focus.

BEGINNING IN THE GARDEN

In Eden the serpent convinced Eve to remove her focus from God's Word and trust her own senses. Confusion ensued. Instead of seeking God's presence (Ps. 63), Adam and Eve "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God" (Gen. 3:8). Rather than finding "fulness of joy" in God's presence (Ps. 16:11), they were afraid (Gen. 3:10). Adam blamed Eve for his decision (verse 12). Eve sought absolution by blaming an animal (verse 13).

Adam and Eve's confusion was a result of their rejection of truth. They indulged in that which God had forbidden and brought woe upon themselves. They treated God's good as evil, and the tempter's evil as good: "Woe unto them" (Isa. 5:20).

AN ORTHODOX RESPONSE

Christ's followers ought not to be confused. Yet if the foundation of confusion is rejecting truth, then Christianity today is riddled with confusion. From Roman Catholicism's outright assertion of tradition above Scripture to Protestantism's failure to protest, Babylon is an apt descriptor of the state of Christianity.

No wonder the call goes out: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). God calls His people out from a Christianity that rejects truth.

When Adam and Eve rejected God's Word as true they rejected God Himself. Did not Jesus say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)? To reject the truths revealed in God's Word is to reject the God who has revealed them. And to reject a relationship with the Jesus of whom the Scriptures testify is likewise a fallacy (cf. John 5:39).

Those who perish in the end are those who "received not the love of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:10).

Modern Christianity may have espoused absolute truth, but to the extent that the truths it touted stood on the platform of humanity's reasoning abilities, it totally missed Jesus, who is truth. Likewise, if postmodern Christianity's self-deprecation obscures the view of a merciful Savior, it is confused when it says it is following Jesus. Today, to avoid all confusion, God calls us to take our eyes off of self and turn them upon Jesus. ♣

¹ Bible texts in this article are from the King James Version.

² www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/

americas-changing-religious-landscape

Sikhu Daco is a senior editorial assistant in the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of the General Conference.



BABYLON AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

Who is to decide what you think?

NELU BURCEA

We live in a time when human rights are a front-page topic. Organizations talk about women's and children's rights, and the rights of people with disabilities; the rights of consumers, workers, refugees, indigenous people; rights of education, religion, and free expression; and above all, the right of all human beings to human dignity. For some, human rights seem so alive that they wonder, *Is it still necessary to discuss human rights, and freedom of religion and conscience in a world so concerned with defending those rights?*

ADVENTIST UNDERSTANDINGS

Adventists have always considered freedom of conscience and religion as fundamental human rights. The freedom to think and believe is at the core of all human rights. Most human rights concepts already presume freedom of religion, whether it be freedom of assembly, of thought, of speech, or otherwise. All these freedoms stand together on the Bible's teaching that we are all born free and equal, with abilities to think and act that mirror our Creator (Gen. 1:27; Acts 17:26).

But we can best understand freedom of conscience when we understand how God treats free will. God created us free, capable of making decisions according to our conscience and our level of understanding (Deut. 30:19; Joshua 24:15).

Freedom of choice is the central theme of the controversy constantly raging between good and evil. Its general principle is that God in love grants everyone the freedom of personal decision. When we examine His rules of engagement—the Ten Commandments—we see the concept of freedom flowing through them all, starting with the

reminder of their liberation from Egypt; continuing with the release from false worship; and culminating with the Sabbath as a symbol of freedom. When properly living the Ten Commandments, Christians celebrate freedom and pray for those who persecute them, inviting everyone to be ready for the return of Christ. Any effort to compel people to a set of beliefs or behaviors is the spirit of Babylon, opposite of the freedom of choice that God offers.

THE SPIRIT OF BABYLON

In contrast to the concepts of freedom and love reflected in the Ten Commandments, Babylon generates hatred, killing, and captivity. Freedom is not on its agenda. Life's fundamental struggle involves those who choose God's rules for freedom—the Ten Commandments—against those whom Babylon deceives and enslaves. In both the Old and New Testaments Babylon's characteristics include such elements as confusion and oppression, violence and rebellion against God and His followers. The Revelation 14 end-time scenario amplifies the religious dimension of that coercive, corrupt spirit in a range of areas including economics, politics, and religion.

For people living in free countries, widespread oppression of conscience in 2018 seems an almost impossible scenario. But available data validates the need for activities that promote freedom of religion and conscience. In 2013 the Pew Research Center reported about 5.5 billion people (77 percent of the world's population) living in countries with a high or very high overall level of restrictions on religion, up from 68 percent in 2007.¹ The constitutions of most countries recognize freedom of thought and freedom of religion as fundamental rights. But this freedom needs our defense and promotion.

When we hear of religious persecution the emotions we imagine are deprivation [of rights], fear, disorientation, and depression. I have interviewed hundreds of people who suffered from persecution. During those experiences they report feelings

of hope, joy, and faith. Fear goes away when God is with you.

Ellen White offered useful advice as we face trying times: "Let none sit in calm expectation of the evil, comforting themselves with the belief that this work must go on because prophecy has foretold it, and that the Lord will shelter His people. We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience."²

THE LIBERATOR

God's people had been in exile for seven decades. God changed the course of their history in one memorable act predicted by Isaiah: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut" (Isa. 45:1, KJV). Cyrus, named 150 years before his arrival on the scene of history, would open Babylon's gate to set God's people free. The Cyrus Cylinder, in the British Museum, records his feat: "When I entered Babylon peacefully, I established the seat of my dominion in the royal palace to great rejoicing."

Oppression is not the end; liberation is. In contexts of suffering, persecution, and discrimination God transmits the message of hope, liberation, and victory. His people hear Him clearly.

Cyrus the liberator points us to his antitype, Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16), who Himself will one day change the course of all things when He liberates God's children forever from the prison house of mortality. Freedom of conscience is His gift for which we must contend, for ourselves and for everyone else. ▀

¹ "Trends in Global Restrictions on Religion." Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (June 23, 2016) <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/06/23/trends-in-global-restrictions-on-religion/>

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, pp. 713, 714.

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BABYLON: THE MANIPULATOR

How God preserves gospel truth

ANIEL BARBE

The Bible portrays Babylon¹ as a major threat to God's people. Historic Babylon participated in the destruction of ancient Israel (Jer. 52), and end-time Babylon is declared guilty of the slaughter "of prophets and of God's holy people" (Rev. 18:24). Throughout history, Babylon had recourse to more insidious strategies to destroy God's people. Its corrupt methodology deserves both uncovering and reflection on the reason for its effectiveness.

THE MANIPULATOR

The treatment the Hebrew youth received in ancient Babylon illustrates Babylon's multiple strategies. Babylon uprooted them from their homeland and threw them into the fire when they refused to worship according to the defined pattern. This was the same power that had treated them as princes, inviting them to eat at the king's table! Whether through oppression or manipulation, Babylon pursues the same agenda of destroying God's people. Annihilation and assimilation are only different weapons in his armory.

End-time Babylon serves intoxicating wine (Rev. 17:2, 4). The image evokes the Old Testament warning against deception (Prov. 20:1). Wine's attraction and appeal ends in disaster (Prov. 23:31, 32). Babylon "sits by many waters" (Rev. 17:1) representing its far-reaching influence over "peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages" (verse 15). There is no deception-free zone on Planet Earth. In the end, Babylon will be condemned for using its magic spell (Rev. 18:23).

Many are privileged to live where overt persecution seems far removed from reality. We are protected by human rights and religious liberty legislations. In such contexts it would be naive to believe that Babylon is inactive. This apparent calm gives the impression that the storm has left our borders.

Ellen White wrote about the false calm: "Everything may move forward amid apparent prosperity; but Satan is wide awake, and is studying and counseling with his evil angels another mode of attack where he can be successful."² Balak, the Moabite king, was more successful in accomplishing his design of destroying Israel by befriending rather than by cursing or fighting Israel (Num. 25:1-18). Babylon, the crafty manipulator, is a dangerous foe.

Effective manipulation depends on the capacity of the manipulator to convince without the victim realizing the lie. As the father of lies (John 8:44),

Whether through oppression or manipulation, Babylon pursues the same agenda of destroying God's people.

Babylon excels in this area (Isa. 14:3-12). The prowess of the manipulator alone, however, is never sufficient for the manipulation to succeed. Manipulation thrives on existing desires in the one being manipulated.

BABYLON'S MASTER SCHEME

Babylon's strategies are multifaceted, oscillating from brutal coercion to subtle manipulation. According to Revelation 17:2 Babylon is spreading its adulteries over the nations, a clear reference to Babylon's design to influence the world into unfaithfulness (Hosea 5:3; Isa. 1:21; Eze. 16:15).

Revelation 18:3 repeats the idea of spreading unfaithfulness and introduces a new element: "The merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries." Several other passages in this chapter identify Babylon as the source of economic prosperity (Rev. 18:11, 15, 19).³

Paul predicted that earth's last-days generation would be characterized as "lovers of themselves" (2 Tim. 3:1, 2). In their self-serving capacity Babylon and friends partake of the poisonous potion from the tree of evil, whose root is the love of money (1 Tim. 6:10). Ellen White's warning is apropos: "Covetousness is one of the most common and popular sins of the last days, and has a paralyzing influence upon the soul."⁴

The Bible is clear about the source of true riches: "But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth" (Deut. 8:18). In opposition, Babylon presents itself as the provider of riches. As people follow this prompting, they continue to come to God for salvation, but they work for their living by themselves and through all available Babylonian schemes. We can observe financial practices among believers that violate or compromise God's clear instructions.


When God is not considered as the source of blessing, it is unlikely that someone will honor God with their acquired riches. It creates a situation of dual allegiance, where money competes with God for worship (Matt. 6:24).

STAND IN RESISTANCE

The call to get out of Babylon involves resisting the manipulation of Babylon, including in issues of finance. In our collective conscience money has become synonymous with happy living. Jesus disagrees: "Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

The apostle Paul makes the point that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). Contentment is nourished by a spirit of thankfulness. Ellen White recommended the practice of systematic giving: "This system is so arranged that men may give something from their wages every day and lay by for their Lord a portion of the profits of every investment."⁵ The prescription is to combat the drive of always seeking for more, by giving regularly, in proportion, a percentage of blessings received. "Constant, self-denying benevolence is God's remedy for the cankering sins of selfishness and covetousness."⁶

There is a higher pathway to happiness: "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35). Real happiness is in the happiness of those we bless and help.

It is not always possible to escape Babylon's persecution. But we can choose to resist the charms of Babylon and of its king. "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 407.

² "The seduced nations associate themselves with Babylon for the purpose of economic security and prosperity": Ranko Stefanovic, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, 2nd edition* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2009), p. 449.

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 3, p. 547.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 548.

⁵ *Ibid.*

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ARMOR

How can we steel ourselves ?

WILONA KARIMABADI

You've heard this admonishment before: "People, get ready!" If we are living in the last days of earth's history with all that entails, how do we arm ourselves on a daily basis?

In thinking about that question, I've often thought about the tangible versus the intangible. What I mean is better explained by thinking about the notion of "readying ourselves," i.e., participating in something deeper and more assertive than just hoping we're in the right group when the Lord returns.

In bracing ourselves against the winds of an often wicked world, I invite you to think seriously about what it means to put on the armor of God.

WHAT ARE WE UP AGAINST?

I've always been intrigued by Ephesians 6:12, 13: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day

of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and after you have done everything, to stand."

This verse makes me think about preparing for battle—but not in the physical sense, of course. There is good and bad in this world, and the author of evil is always about the business of ensnaring us in the most deceitful, underhanded, and often unexpected ways. So the struggle we gear up against is most certainly a mental and spiritual one. But thankfully, the Word of God is a toolbox readily available to equip and fortify us.

The Belt (of Truth): *Ephesians 6:14*

If a pair of pants fit too loose, you don't leave the house without a belt. That belt has to hold things in place or there will be a mild disaster ahead. The same is true when you think about truth. The truth is anchored in two places—our hearts and our minds. So we must know the truth, love it, and seek to make it the foundation of our lives. We cannot be moved to falsehood easily.

The Breastplate (of Righteousness):

Ephesians 6:14

Think about a medieval battle: a big part of a knight's armor was the breastplate. It covered parts of the body that could not be speared or

The Word of God is a toolbox readily available to equip and fortify us. We just have to know how to use it.

pierced without the knight dying. The heart—the organ that keeps our body functions moving—is vulnerable, and thus it must be protected. Our tender hearts (in the spiritual sense) must be protected at all costs. Seeking the righteousness of Jesus Christ on a daily basis is the way to guard our hearts against sin. It is a daily discipline.

The Shoes (of Peace and Preparation):

Ephesians 6:15

We can't run a race without proper footwear. Many of us can't even handle walking on a pebbly beach without something protecting our feet from jagged edges and uneven surfaces. For us to be fully prepared for a spiritual and mental battle, our footing must be sure. That footing is the peace of the Lord through the surety of the gospel. When we have that and allow that peace to wash over and bolster us, we can stand equipped and ready with confidence for whatever is to come.

The Shield (of Faith): *Ephesians 6:16*

So, we've got a belt and a breastplate on and solid footwear. What else do we need? Something that protects even those things but can also move with an attack no matter where it comes from. We need a shield, and that shield is faith in Jesus Christ. Not just faith, but unwavering faith. With such faith, the verse above says: "Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one" (NKJV).¹ I like how the verse says "all" the fiery darts, not just some or the really big ones. Faith can conquer all.

The Helmet (of Salvation): *Ephesians 6:17*

While the heart pumps blood through our body and allows for our organs to function as they should, if the brain is compromised we are in serious trouble. One of Satan's favorite targets is our minds. Confusion, distrust, depression, anger, doubt, etc., are all part of his arsenal to assault our thoughts and weaken us from within. Belief in the precious gift of salvation—belief that this gift is not anyone's

to take from us—is our protection against the devil's mental onslaughts. Wear that helmet proudly.

The Sword (of the Spirit): *Ephesians 6:17*

The sword—a mighty weapon of both assault and defense—is the Word of God. Anyone can say what they want to us, but we know where to go to prove our faith—His Word. It is all there for us, free and clear. The truth (and with it the power to convict us) all lies in what He has said. Delve into your Bible to know and believe that what God says is true and can be proven.

Prayer: *Ephesians 6:18*

Our one-on-one connection to the Savior is personal and powerful. Through prayer we talk to the Lord; we receive peace, direction, and comfort. For me, prayer ties all the pieces of God's armor together because it is unswerving access to the Creator of the universe.

If the bad that is upon us now, or will be soon, causes any distress or anxiety, turn to Romans 8:38, 39. This scripture helps me remember that we do not struggle alone. "And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (NLT).²

Every prayer breathed in strength or weakness is precious to the One who has always promised to hold us up and help us through.

So ready yourselves and bravely go forward. 🗡️

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ENVY: A MAJOR WEAPON

Does envy work for you?

I was driving to church. At a traffic light a brand-new Chevy Cavalier pulled up alongside me. When I spotted the driver I suddenly felt a lump in my throat so thick that I gasped for breath.

MASSIVE ENVY ATTACK

My vision blurred. I thought I was going to black out. My wife nudged me just as the light turned green. I pressed the gas pedal so hard that my 1978 Chevy Monte Carlo shot forward, but still fell behind the Cavalier. As I slowed down I realized I had suffered a massive envy attack.

THE BACKSTORY

The driver of the Cavalier was a fellow African student who had gotten to Andrews University a semester after me and bought an old rusty Buick. Yet here he was a month later driving a brand new car! I was stunned. It took me only a glance to recall, factor, and trigger an avalanche of toxic emotions. Such is the power of the devil's great weapon: envy.

MORE ABOUT THE WEAPON

Envy is the weapon that stuns me when I'm hurt by someone else's success, possessions, or qualities: "We are envious of what is another's. . . ; Envy is pained at seeing another have that which [self] wants for itself."¹ The weapon is wielded through invidious comparison, and its pain comes from impotence, from the inability to obtain the good someone else has. The pain is sharpest when I desire another's very essence or being. "Our strongest most vital hatred," wrote Paul Valéry, "goes to those who are what we would like to be ourselves,"² whose "very existence . . . is an eternal silent reproach."³ Or, as differently put by Lord Chesterfield, people hate those who make them feel inferior.⁴

Indeed, according to Ellen White, "to envy a person is to admit that he is a superior." But she added, "Pride will not permit any concession."⁵ The bind of simultaneously admitting superiority and denying it creates inner turmoil. It causes "not merely a perverseness of temper, but a distemper, which disorders all the faculties."⁶ One becomes dominated by *ressentiment*, a

persistent feeling of hatred, described by Max Scheler as “a self-poisoning of the mind.”⁷

There’s a progression here: envy resents; resentment hates; and hatred is murder (1 John 3:15).

This progression from envy to murder is evinced in multiple biblical narratives: Cain and Abel, Joseph and his brothers, Saul and David, Daniel and his rivals in Darius’ court, Jesus and the Pharisees, Paul and the diaspora Jews.

In the case of Jesus, Mark explicitly notes that Pilate “knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy” (Mark 15:10, NKJV).

Envy is given as the font of the Diaspora Jews’ various violent frenzies against Paul in Antioch: “When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy” (Acts 13:45, NKJV); in Iconium: “The same thing occurred in Iconium” (Acts 14:1, NRSV);⁹ in Thessalonica: “The Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar” (Acts 17:5, NKJV). The charges against Jesus and Paul were masks for deep-seated envy.

EXPERIENCING ENVY

Envy is a secret weapon: it batters us inside. It is so hidden that many are not aware of what keeps bludgeoning them and disrupting their efforts to be nice. Consider the wise man’s pessimistic remark: “All toil and all skill in work come from one person’s envy of another” (Eccl. 4:4, NRSV). But then, “envy being too ugly a feeling to admit . . . , the care one takes . . . usually ends in disguising it from oneself.”¹⁰ In short, envy consistently couples with a strong self-delusion. The effect is not only to deny the good of the envied other, but to vilify and misrepresent, while masking the malice under a cloak of righteousness.

A classic case of this vilification is the charge that Jesus cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Luke 11:15). Tellingly, much magic, superstition, and gossip derive their dynamic from envy. Demonizing those who are innocent yet envied allows hate, slander—indeed murder—in good conscience.

Envious malice is a weapon of mass destruction: via gossip, “the envious man,” wrote Ellen White, “diffuses poison wherever he goes, alienating friends and stirring up hatred and rebellion.”¹¹ Modernity’s material abundance, multiplicity of

The cross continues to set people free as they come to know the Son.

careers, and diverse avenues for self-advancement now allow us to envy and ape the Joneses without resorting to physical violence.

Not so with ancient societies. They, including the Greeks, dreaded envy with its violent propensities. They were also aware of its close link with pride. “Those who love honor,” wrote Aristotle, “are more envious.”¹² And Plato decried the feeling of pride united to envy that “reduces . . . rivals to despair by . . . unjust slanders.”¹³ Significantly, “according to the Greeks, envy was inherent in human nature and not simply the result of environment.”¹⁴

True. Our sinful nature is rooted in the Fall, in the envious desire to be God (Gen. 3:5). Interestingly, extrapolating from mythological and anthropological texts, René Girard has argued that “the origin . . . of all human culture is ultimately the devil.” If through envious or “mimetic” rivalry, the devil fomented violence, he restores peace by causing antagonists to project their hatred and violence on innocent or surrogate victims.¹⁵

Hatred of “the other” proves a powerful means of uniting human groups; they sustain their cohesion by uniting against some external enemy. This scapegoating is always attended by delusions, Girard says. Innocent-sounding myths and fairy tales are sometimes rationalizations or distorted stories of actual events told from the perspective of deluded persecutors.¹⁶

Girard’s interpretation of the demonic origins of human culture and the key role of scapegoating mirrors Ellen White’s account of the origin of evil. “Envy,” she wrote, “began with Satan. He desired to be first in heaven.”¹⁷ To dispossess God, he misrepresented Him, “attributing to him the desire for self-exaltation. With his own evil characteristics

he sought to invest the loving Creator. Thus he deceived angels. Thus he deceived men.”¹⁸ The psychological projection that denies evil in oneself while attributing it to another “originated in the father of lies and has been exhibited by all sons and daughters of Adam.”¹⁹

ESCAPING ENVY

The crux here is to grasp our blindness, our unwillingness to face up to our envy: “If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not . . . deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (James 3:14-16). Note how James links envy to violence: “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” (James 4:1). If you want something but don’t get it, then “you kill. You covet . . . , you quarrel and fight” (verse 2).

James warns us not to deny the envy and pride in our hearts. His counsel exposes the modern conceit of a rational objective self. Simultaneously he reveals how envy and pride insinuate themselves into our fights and quarrels, making them insoluble. Disagreements rooted in differences of opinion and perceptions may be mediated and settled. But envy denies the truth it sees and is impervious to reason. In the end only love can achieve the otherwise impossible feat of infiltrating envy’s dark realm. Only love can reveal envy’s self-deception and our unjustified malice. But envy can also rebuff love’s entreaties, respond with hatred, and expose itself as hatred “without reason” (John 15:25).

David felt this hatred without reason acutely, and mourned those who hated him without cause.²⁰

Jesus died reciting Psalm 22. At the cross “the pent-up fires of envy and malice, hatred and revenge, burst forth . . . against the Son of God.”²¹ Yet Christ “did not retaliate; . . . he made no threats” (1 Peter 2:23). His meekness exposed the devil as an enemy without cause, an irrational hater. Evil was seen to be “an intruder for whose presence no reason can be given.”²² The cross subverted the devil’s system of control, violence, “the pagan way of organizing the world.”

Brutality was not new. But until the cross “it remained concealed in the infrastructure of mythology.”²³ By His undying love that exposed sin’s mur-

derous functioning, God, at and through the cross, liberated humans from envy and hatred, violent reciprocity, and blood feuds, and started a wave that overwhelmed pagan Rome. The cross continues to set people free as they come to know the Son (John 8:36). His love frees us to acknowledge the blows of envy the devil has dealt us (Jer. 17:9). His love rescues us from the power of that evil weapon.

In exchange He gives us His own wondrous instrument, His spirit of self-sacrificing love. No longer does the sight of a brand-new Cavalier torment us so, especially one that, it turns out, was just a rented car. ♠

¹ Peter Walcot, *Envy and the Greeks: A Study of Human Behaviour* (Warminster, Eng.: Aris & Phillips, Ltd, 1978), p. 1.

² Cited in Joseph Epstein, *Envy: The Seven Deadly Sins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 65.

³ Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, trans. Lewis B. Coser and William W. Holdheim (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994), p. 47.

⁴ Cited in *ibid.*, p. xxii.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 56.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Scheler, p. 25.

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⁹ Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright (c) 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

¹⁰ Epstein, *ibid.*, p. 21.

¹¹ White, *ibid.*

¹² www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/Part%202-2/st2-2-ques36.pdf.

¹³ books.google.com/books?id=ZaP0CAAQBAJ&pg=PT8836&lp-g=PT8836&dq=reduces+rivals+to+despair+by+unjust+slanders&source=bl&ots=zUyUOr2-SG&sig=OyRBttzNx3iy9PVL0jT6LnST-uQ&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjfi4DUksrdAhVEMewKHW5_CtMQ6AEwA-HoECAEQAQ#v=onepage&q=reduces%20rivals%20to%20despair%20by%20unjust%20slanders&f=false

¹⁴ Walcot, *ibid.*, pp. 18-21.

¹⁵ Rene Girard, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), p. 87.

¹⁶ Rene Girard, “Generative Scapegoating,” in *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, ed. Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, California, 1987), pp. 73-104.

¹⁷ White, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940) p. 22.

¹⁹ Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 40.

²⁰ Ps. 69:4; see also Pss. 35:7-20; 38:19, 20; 41:9; 55:9-21; 59:3-7; 64:2-6.

²¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 501.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 493.

²³ Girard, *I See Satan*, p. 144.

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A CLASS IN RELIGION

A new study places people of faith in seven new groups.

The Pew Research Center recently conducted a survey that classified Americans into seven different religious groups.¹ Typically people sort themselves by denomination: Catholic, Baptist, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, Seventh-day Adventist, or any of a few hundred religious affiliations. This survey developed a new method of looking at people of faith in America.

The study was specifically designed to look at beliefs and behaviors seen across denominations—common traits that either unite or divide religious people. The results allowed for a new typology: “The new typology sorts Americans into seven groups based on the religious and spiritual beliefs they share, how actively they practice their faith, the value they place on their religion, and the other sources of meaning and fulfillment in their lives.”² It should be noted that race, ethnicity, age, education, and political opinions were not among the characteristics used to create the groups, although some of the groups were found to have strong partisan leanings.

You can read the entire findings at www.pewforum.org/2018/08/29/the-religious-typology. If you’d like to find out what group you identify with, take the quiz at www.pewforum.org/quiz/religious-typology.

¹ Study was conducted December 4-18, 2017. Findings were released August 29, 2018.

² The Religious Typology, www.pewforum.org/2018/08/29/the-religious-typology.



RESCUE ME!



Rescue takes many forms—and we're all in need of it.

BY S. JOSEPH KIDDER

We are fascinated by stories of rescue—bringing to safety people stranded on a mountain, marooned on a deserted island, or trapped in a cave. Our hearts go out to them, perhaps because we, too, might someday be trapped and in need of rescue.

Rescue, however, can take different forms. We might be trapped in a bad habit, an unhealthy relationship, or a financial crisis, and need to be rescued. Sometimes the situation is so challenging that only Jesus, our all-powerful Lord and Savior, can rescue us.

Bartimaeus was rescued from blindness when Jesus restored his sight (Mark 10:46-52). Zacchaeus was rescued not only from his greed but also spiritually from his sin (Luke 19:1-9). Lazarus was rescued from his tomb (John 11:1-44). The demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes was rescued from unclean spirits (Mark 5:1-20). Saul was rescued from the darkness of traditions and legalism on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

THE MEANING OF RESCUE

Merriam-Webster defines *rescue* as freeing or delivering from confinement, violence, danger, or evil.¹ The Old and New Testaments have many words for *rescue* and *deliverance* (the two words are interchangeable). To rescue or to deliver is to redeem, to ransom, to draw to oneself, to take out of one place and put in another place, to come to a person's aid, and to save: "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18). "I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (Ps. 34:4). When God rescues us from something, He bring us into something better. God's deliver-

ance of Israel from Egypt included bringing them to the Promised Land. When He delivers us from the power of darkness, He bring us into the kingdom of His Son (Col. 1:13, 14).

RESCUE IN THE BIBLE

In the Bible God delivers His people from all manner of peril and trial. He rescues His people from their enemies (i.e., 2 Sam. 5:17-25); He preserves them from famine (Ps. 33:19), death (Ps. 22:19-21), and the grave (Ps. 56:13; 86:13; Hosea 13:14).

In the story of David and Goliath we see a demonstration of the power of God when He rescues His people from their enemies. David said, "The Lord . . . will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:37; see also 2 Kings 20:6). Israel's Exodus from Egypt is an extraordinary example of deliverance. There God defines Himself as the deliverer of Israel who rescues His people, not because they deserved to be rescued, but as an expression of His mercy and love (Ps. 51:1; 71:2; 86:13).

In the New Testament God is always the subject—and His people always the object—of rescue or deliverance. God offers deliverance from humankind's greatest perils: sin, evil, death, and judgment. By God's power believers are rescued and delivered from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4) and from the power of Satan's reign (Col. 1:13). Deliverance is available only through the person and work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:25).

Christ also delivers His people from the trials of this life (2 Peter 2:9). Sometimes that deliverance is God walking by our side through trials, comforting and encouraging us through them as He uses them to mature us in faith.

On the other hand, Paul assured believers in Corinth that "no temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And



Rescue teams race against time to save 12 boys and their soccer coach from a flooded cave in Thailand.

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God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear” (1 Cor. 10:13). In these cases rescue can be immediate or in due time when God makes a way of escape.

Rescue and deliverance are often sought from evil spirits or the spirit of lust or jealousy. Believers need to understand that we already have victory over Satan by the blood of Jesus. But we can also be delivered from his influence in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Deliverance from sin, rescue from trials, and escape from the influence of the world come only through Christ, the Son of God, who has come and given us power and grace and understanding (see 1 John 5:19, 20).

THE ONE WHO RESCUES

I once saw a swimmer get rescued. The rescuer was a trained, strong swimmer who had learned the technique of rescuing and was willing to do it. So, too, Jesus saw us drowning in sin and plunged in to save us.

THE NEED FOR RESCUE

On June 23, 2018, a group of young Thai soccer players and their coach became trapped in the Tham Luang cave complex in Thailand. When rescuers finally found them days later, they dropped food through the holes of the cave, hoping the victims would find it. Continual heavy rains complicated the situation. Officials were also concerned about depleted oxygen levels in the cave. In an initial rescue attempt, a former Navy SEAL diver died from a lack of oxygen. Rescue workers, however, didn’t give up. With careful

planning and heroic courage, about 1,000 people who had come together from numerous countries were able to save all 13 stranded people.²

GOD’S RESCUE PLAN

We humans have sinned, have dishonored God, and are trapped in a cave of darkness, sin, and pain. Paul tells us that “we are continually sinning and falling short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23, author’s translation). Our heavenly Father, however, didn’t spare any expense to reach and rescue us. It cost Him everything. But He sacrificed all to save you and me because in His eyes we are worth it (see John 3:16).

The boys and their coach who were trapped in the cave were totally helpless. They could not save themselves. They had to depend on and trust in others.

The same is true when it comes to our salvation. We are totally helpless. There is no way we can save ourselves. We need Jesus, the greatest deliverer of all time, who dived into our messy, muddy world to rescue us. Jesus became the diver who came to rescue us from sin and death.

The Thai kids had to trust the divers, the equipment, and the methods. We also have to trust our diver, Jesus, His method, and His words.

If we are to be rescued from the pit of personal sin and delivered from death and destruction, it will have to be by Someone strong enough and able enough to do it. Only One is able and mighty to save. He is our Lord, Jesus Christ. ▀

¹ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rescue

² www.cnn.com/2018/07/09/asia/thai-cave-rescue-mission-intl/index.html; time.com/5328662/thailand-soccer-team-cave-rescue/

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THE EARTHY FRAGRANCE OF GOD

The challenge of leaving our comfort zones

On Sunday she told me her name was Christian. On Monday she told my husband her name was Sinbad. Her behavior in the restaurant was slightly, let's be honest, uncultured. Her fragrance? Is it appropriate to say that someone stinks? Can someone who reeks actually smell like God?

SLIGHT DETOUR

I no longer remember why I had to take a quick trip to the drugstore on a rainy Sunday evening. It was supposed to be a dash in and dash out. I expected to be home with my family in less than 15 minutes.

I parked near the store in the pouring rain and noticed a woman sitting on a bench by the side of the building. As I ran through the raindrops the

thought flittered through my mind: *she's waiting for her ride.*

Moments later, with purchase in hand, I once again made the quick sprint to the car, jumped in, and turned the key. As the headlights of my car beamed straight ahead I ground to a halt. Or should I say God stopped me? With His still small whisper He said, "You can't just leave her here."

Only then did I begin to pay attention. Peering through the windshield, I took in the details surrounding the almost-unnoticed woman on the bench. She was probably in her 50s, no jacket, a couple small bags clasped close to her in an attempt to keep them dry. She was trying to push herself back into the bench as far as possible to benefit from the slight overhang of the roof far above that might deflect a few raindrops.

Sigh. Please let it be something other than what it appears to be. I want to be home. I heard myself whining that last part. "It's damp and rainy, Lord. I want be home. My family is waiting." I wanted very much to see a car drive up and see her face light up as her ride finally arrived.

I knew that that wasn't going to happen. Maybe I could just put my car into drive and pretend I never saw her. But I know one thing without a doubt: there is no peace when we ignore the prodding of the Prince of Peace.

A NOT-SO-SIMPLE CHORE

Exiting the car, I took a few steps toward the bench and asked, "Do you need a ride?"

The conversation that followed made it abundantly clear

that Christian didn't have a warm, dry home waiting for her that night. But yes, she would like a ride somewhere, anywhere.

I was way out of my comfort zone. And I am often reminded that "out of my comfort zone" is the same as "in the presence of God." If we were comfortable doing what He asks us to do, we wouldn't need Him. God wants us to know unequivocally that we need Him.

I needed time to think. "I'm going to take a spin down the road to see if there's a motel available," I said. "I'll return shortly." I found nothing, but the short drive gave me time to think.

Remembering a motel not far in the opposite direction, I turned back, picked up soggy Christian, and headed north.

To this point my exchanges with Christian had taken place outside in the rain and were very brief. Now, with us both tucked into the smaller boundaries of the car, I was able to ask enough questions to realize this was a larger story than simply someone down on their luck. She needed help in much bigger ways than a dry roof. *Why me, God?*

IS IT ENOUGH?

Convincing the motel clerk that it was OK to take in a guest with no last name or home address for one night wasn't easy. But we worked it out, and I walked Christian to her room.

As soon as I opened the door she dove straight onto the bed, clothes and all. "I'm starving," she said.

Noticing a microwave oven in the room, I promised, "I'll be back shortly with some food."

She devoured everything I brought back.

I left Christian there tucked in bed. "I'll stop by on my way to work tomorrow morning," I told her. I had no idea what I was going to do. I had to work; and she'd have to leave the motel.

When I checked on her the following morning, it was clear that Christian, who was now Sinbad, was not safe on her own out on the streets. She needed medical and psychological help. My husband had the day off. He was able to check her out of the motel and keep her seemingly insatiable hunger at bay in a local restaurant until I was able to use my work contacts to locate a charitable assistance program that could take over.

I occasionally wonder what happened to Christian. I wonder: Did we make a difference?

MORE QUESTIONS

We never saw Christian again. I occasionally wonder what happened to her. I wonder: *Did we make a difference? What if she's back on the streets?*

God didn't ask me to reap a harvest. He asked me only to get Christian out of the rain. He loves her with a love larger than life. He died for her on the cross, and would have died on that cross if Christian, sitting on that wet bench in all her stinky layers of clothing, was the only soul left on earth.

Just as important, am I not just like Christian, albeit with all my stinky layers disguised and covered up? How can I presume to think of myself as any more important?

Two powerful quotes come to mind from the book *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*.^{*} Gregory Boyle, who has a ministry to gang members in Los Angeles, wrote: "If there is a fundamental challenge within these stories, it is simply to change our lurking suspicion that some lives matter less than other lives." And: "I have come to see with greater clarity that the day simply won't come when I am more noble, have more courage, or am closer to God than the folks whose lives fill these pages."

God may be asking us to make a difference. It may appear that we have little to offer, not enough time, and the notion that in the long run we can't change a life. But that may not be the mission God has given us. For some it is. For others He may simply be asking us to bring someone in out of the rain.

Jesus might be wrapped in those wet, stinky clothes. "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).[†]

^{*}New York: Free Press, 2011.

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Students at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School after a shooter opened fire on the campus.

DOES GOD LIKE MY GUN?

Is this a social or a spiritual issue?

The slaughter of 20 innocent children and six staff of Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, December 14, 2012, left America reeling in shock and sharpened the passionate debate across the nation about gun control. Opinions are expressed as feverishly today as they were then, and the rhetoric continues to be forceful.

Sharon Miller has remarked that “in our nation, the individuals most affected by gun violence are those that we as Christians are commanded to serve: the poor, the abused, and the young.”¹

For some, a “culture of violence” promoted by the media industry bears blame for some of this. Ruth Graham agrees: “We have a cul-

ture of violence. We wear our children on violent and graphic video games.”² Media reporting of guns and violence is also blamed for creating a “culture of fear.”³

Others blame nihilism and fatalism that leave God out of the equation, while the nation goes in an “opposite direction from its biblical roots toward a godless secular view.”⁴ Factors identified as predisposing Christians in America to purchase and own guns include fear of attack, a sense of insecurity, a feeling of powerlessness, the need for self-defense, and the assertion of personal liberty.

FEAR AND INSECURITY

Living in fear is reported to increase risk factors for heart

disease.⁵ Citing a survey conducted after September 11, John Tierney demonstrated that the fear of terrorism had physical and social consequences because people were more afraid of gathering in private places that are turned into fortified zones where civil liberties erode and mistrust grows.

Echoing similar thoughts, Frank Furedi stated, “In contemporary times, fear migrates freely from one problem to the next without there being a necessity for causal or logical connection.”⁶

Tierney sees the media, as well as public officials, security officials, and politicians as contributing to a current epidemic of fear.⁷

Insecurity, closely related to pervasive feelings of fear, often motivates people to purchase a gun. One effect immediately observable after the Sandy Hook massacre was a rush by many parents to purchase handguns. Some schools decided to require staff to be trained in the use of guns, and in some cases they armed certain staff for extra protection.

SELF-DEFENSE

A sense of powerlessness is pervasive in the wake of mass killings: a single individual wielding a firearm does so much harm, while those who are unarmed feel impotent and defenseless. Gun purchases provide for some a sense of control instead of inadequacy.

The gun lobby’s National Rifle Association (NRA) argues that “the only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.” Guns for self-defense is their reasoning.

PERSONAL FREEDOM

Gun owners, including many who decry the intrusion of government into their lives, also claim gun ownership as a constitutional right. To the Christians among them I wonder aloud: *How consistent with biblical Christianity are our reasons for gun ownership?*

CHRIST AND ARMS

In Gethsemane, as the mob led by Judas came to arrest Him, Christ invalidated the need for His followers to bear arms. Peter, armed with a sword, drew it and struck off the high priest’s servant’s ear. Jesus’ response was unequivocal: “Put your sword back!” (Matt. 26:52; see also John 18:11). Christ’s position was that His security lay with His Father, not with His weaponry. A legion of

The nature of Christ’s kingdom determines the weapons of Christ’s kingdom

angels was at His disposal if necessary. God, if He wills, is able to protect His own.

Jesus teaches explicitly in this episode that “all who draw the sword will die by the sword” (Matt. 26:52). Firearms and force seem to stand firmly over against His message. The use of force can trigger an irreversible cycle that eventually consumes much more than ever contemplated, whether of initiators or their original targets, including women and youth.

Our discussions may not consider sufficiently the nature of Christ’s kingdom. His is, unambiguously, a spiritual kingdom, independent of human agencies or devices. He says: “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight” (John 18:36). And the nature of Christ’s kingdom determines the weapons of Christ’s kingdom.

The apostle Paul declared, “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. . . . They have divine power to demolish strongholds” (2 Cor. 10:4). Too often in history Christ’s followers have fought to establish His kingdom while employing the weapons of the enemy, stripping the gospel of its disruptive countercultural power.

FLOURISHING FAITH

Faith in God is fear’s great antidote. God’s people have defied death and witnessed for Him in perilous moments because they recognize His ability to protect and deliver from every form of evil. Jesus foresaw that destitution of faith would characterize the age before His return (see Luke 18:8). If faith is to grow the biblical narratives need to be retold anew in ways that will be relevant, to lead to conviction and reconversion—for faith does come by hearing (Rom. 10:17).

GOSPEL POWER

Even as Christians deprive gospel preaching of its transformative power and church membership declines, there is an upsurge in people turning to

The gun debate in the United States presents a quagmire as treacherous as any that the church must face today.

New Age and spiritual movements. Entertainment industries exploit these moves, churning out blockbuster films and television series that thrive on belief in the existence of the supernatural and paranormal. Perhaps it is time again for the church to do as the apostles did when forbidden to preach in Jesus' name: they prayed for signs and wonders and God answered immediately (Acts 4:18-21). Perhaps the time has come again for the world to witness the power of the gospel. After all, the greatest desire of secularists and animists is the desire for power.⁸

COMMUNITY

Modern living typically lacks a sense of community. Many urban dwellers live insulated, private lives, with limited opportunity for socialization with neighbors. Major factors include individualism, changes in the nature of work, and the media—especially television.⁹ Loss of community breeds distrust, suspicion, and fear, which inexorably lead to the purchase of guns.

NEW ALLEGIANCE

The message of the gospel is supra- and counter-cultural. Every culture's good aspects should be affirmed; cultural vices, wherever found, need to be transformed through the power of the gospel. The church has a duty to teach members to be citizens of another country, a heavenly country. Our allegiance ought to be to the One who died on Calvary to purchase for us the right of citizenship in His kingdom. As pilgrims and strangers therefore, we shall live by the principles of heaven's constitution, where our minds should be constantly fixed (Heb. 11:12-14; 1 Peter 2:11; Col. 3:1-3). As citizens of another kingdom we learn to live in the world and yet not be of the world (John 17:15, 16; 1 John 2:15, 16). In other words, we should live as "resident aliens."¹⁰

PROCLAMATION

The church that witnesses for God to the world will inevitably come up against the evils that

inhabit all of earth's cultures. Discharging this prophetic function, the church will correct the erring and convert the broken communities of the world from fallen standards to lofty ideals unattainable through human effort alone. But to the extent that the church surrenders its prophetic voice it deprives itself of the authority to act as a moral guide for society.

The gun debate in the United States presents a quagmire as treacherous as any that the church must face today. Will it follow the uncompromising way of Christ, or travel the world's highway? Should it respond to the grave need for vital Christian spirituality (Heb. 11:12-14; 1 Peter 2:11), or propose some flaccid option for the sake of avoiding offense?

One thing is clear: just as the "foolishness of the cross" (see 1 Cor. 1:18) prevailed over the imperial might of the Roman forces, Christ's way can prevail today. As debates over self-protection continue, the church may recognize the moment for what it truly is: a call for God-inspired action, to (1) repair the social breaches that have led to fear and faith in arms, and (2) lead in proclaiming the word of faith—faith in the wisdom of divine providence instead of the will to survive at whatever expense.

God grant us again the primitive faith that trusts in the weapons of God's kingdom, and not in our own carnal weaponry. 📌

¹Sharon Hodde Miller, "Why All Christians Can Back Better Gun Control," *Christianity Today*, Jan. 9, 2013.

²Ruth Graham, "Gun Control," *BeliefNet*, www.beliefnet.com/columnists/safeplacewithruthgraham/2013/01/gun-control.html/, accessed Jan. 18, 2013.

³Margaret L. Anderson and Howard Francis Taylor, *Sociology: Understanding A Diverse Society* (Belmont, Calif.: Thomson Learning, 2007), p. 176.

⁴Joseph Mattered, "Why Guns Are Not to Blame for the Newtown School Massacre," *Charisma News*, Dec. 15, 2012, www.charismanews.com/opinion/34956-why-guns-are-not-to-blame-for-the-newtown-school-massacre, accessed Jan. 23, 2013.

⁵John Tierney, "Living in Fear and Paying a High Cost in Heart Risk," *New York Times*, Jan. 15, 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/01/15/science/15tier.html, accessed Jan. 23, 2013.

⁶Frank Furedi, *Culture of Fear Revisited* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), p. 4.

⁷Tierney, *Ibid.*

⁸Gailyn Van Rheenen, "Animism, Secularism, and Theism: Developing A Tripartite Model for Understanding World Cultures," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 10, no. 4 (October 1993): 170.

⁹Gerard Delanty, *Community: Second Edition* (N.Y.: Routledge, 2010), p. 64.

¹⁰Steven B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), p. 354.

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“NOT DONE . . .”

While working on my doctorate, I studied with a brilliant rhetorician. Well known in the collegiate community for many philosophical contributions, he was a gracious, kind professor.

Every time an essay deadline arrived, my professor personally collected the documents (no handing essays forward). As some students scrambled for a stapler or appeared seemingly anxious at submitting the essay, he simply said: “Ladies and gentlemen, it may not be done, but it is due.”

I never asked if he coined the phrase. I know he never imagined the teaching contexts in which that phrase served my students well, or how it affected me.

There are celebrations for professional achievements in my journey. An award is presented, yet I have learned to pause. I stand in gratitude only to see hubris a few steps away. I am reminded: “It’s not done, but it’s due”; it’s an acknowledgement that the award at hand is for the delivery of what remains a work in constant progress: the labor, the achievement, me.

* * *

I check my watch: 7:20 a.m. My classical philosophy classes have a guest speaker, Dr. Evans. Evans is a collaborator in various projects cataloguing the visual displacement of monuments. International organizations are slowly putting up buildings around monuments in Greece and Rome, modern buildings burying timeless monuments and their stories.

When Evans arrives, we speak of his work. He preserves images with specific dimensions of what may soon be lost architecture. As students arrive Evans pats his coat pockets, searching for something.

“I always wonder what I forgot before a presentation,” he says. “It’s never per-

fect, right? Still, time dictates delivery. I was at a symposium in your alma mater, and I heard a professor say: ‘It may not be done, but it’s due.’ I have applied the concept reflectively to aspects of life.”

* * *

That evening I am reminded how our words ripple through many lives. *Where is my professor now? Does he know how many lives became a bit more reflective because of a phrase he shared with us?*

Maybe the phrase is a philosophical construct: handing over the imperfect, the potentially “less than” product, when we know there’s room for improvement. Maybe it’s an invitational reminder of human kindness toward others in the collaborative actions to come: “What you have prepared is good; together we can make it great.” Maybe it’s just practical advice. May we explore meaning through a religious lens, revisit the powerful words “It is finished” (John 19:30), and expand on the complexities of what *began* once He spoke those words?

My long day has come down to prayer and sleep. I crawl under covers as a word comes to mind: accountability—an opportunity for personal self-revision in mission and purpose. A way to preserve the growing dimensions of spiritual growth and the stories that are part of it.

God calls us to be our best. We are accountable for every action that supports the process of self-revision toward a reverent, trusting heart and obedience to our Savior. “It’s not done, but it’s due”—a start of the obvious: acceptance? Incomplete and imperfect as my work may be, He accepts it.

At the end of any day: *What have we done that was due?* ♣

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

SEARCHING THE OBVIOUS DIXIL RODRIGUEZ



**A WORD COMES
TO MIND:
ACCOUNTABILITY:
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From his impressive media center, Danny the carpenter proclaims the "undiluted truths of the Three Angels' Messages," right around the world. Quite impressive. I first met Danny Shelton who by profession was a carpenter in 1986. I had just moved to America from Australia. He was just getting started in television. He was around 30 years of age, with an easygoing folksy manner. But you would have been naïve to underestimate Danny — he was a TV natural, smart, composed and sang songs that warmed your heart, and told stories until you could laugh no more and begged for mercy. He was easy to like, and lots of people liked Danny.

Most importantly, this young carpenter loved Jesus. In 1992, The Carter Report team went to Nizhni Novgorod, Russia. Danny Shelton came with us. He was there when huge crowds stormed the Palace of Sport and shattered the glass doors. He stood with me on the back of a giant truck supplied to us by the Russian army. From that vantage point, we watched as 2,530 precious Russian souls were baptized into Christ. He was with me as I presented the truths of democracy and religious liberty to Governor Boris Nemtsov, and met his sister Dr. Julia Outkina.

He was also there as the great crusade for Christ and Truth that had gone for six weeks every night thundered to a glorious conclusion. Mr. Shelton asked, "Where will we put all these new believers?" Thus it was that in his mind was born the dream of a great Russian worship center with facilities for radio and television production. It was his dream and God gave it to him. I was there when it happened. Time will not suffice to tell of the blood, sweat, tears, and money that went into the construction of the Russian 3ABN Christian Cultural Center. But today Danny's dream is a reality. It is the largest Protestant center in Russia. It exists to win souls to Jesus. It is a testimony to the power of God, and what one man's faith in that God can accomplish.

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THE UNLIKELY ORIGIN OF THANKSGIVING



COSTIN JORDACHE

For many, our Thanksgiving holiday is inextricably tied to the image of Pilgrims dining with Native Americans, feasting on turkey, squash, and corn on the cob. Historically the event took place in 1621 near Plymouth, Massachusetts. Pilgrims gathered with their Native American friends to celebrate—in thanksgiving—that year’s successful harvest.

Some deny that this “first Thanksgiving” has anything to do with our modern celebration. It wasn’t until 1789 that George Washington proclaimed November 26 of that year to be a national day of “thanksgiving and prayer” in honor of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

Regardless of this historical debate, it’s worth considering that Thanksgiving really originated long before the Pilgrims. Arguably, the origins of a formal day of Thanksgiving are surrounded not by turkeys but by camels.

Among their many required offerings and sacrifices, Israelites also engaged in voluntary offerings, acts of worship, and commitment. Among them was the peace offering. The idea was not making peace with God, but of recognizing that peace already existed between God and humanity.

The peace offering was generally preceded by a sin offering and a burnt offering. Blood had been sprinkled, atonement had been made, forgiveness extended, and justification assured. Next was a

voluntary offering of gratitude.

Some translators have called this the fellowship offering because it is the only sacrifice of which the one offering it may eat part of it. It involved fellowship because the one offering it would share the offering with the priest and others. Fellowship with God and with others centered on eating together.

One of the types of fellowship offerings is called the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Before the Pilgrims, football games, and cranberry sauce, a celebration was called the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The description is found in Leviticus 7:11-15.

Several elements in this passage could be the model for our Thanksgiving celebrations. The passage allows me three observations.

THE SACRIFICIAL CENTER

First, the ancient Jewish thanksgiving centered on a sacrifice. The one doing the thanking would sacrifice something precious as a token of thankfulness.

Merely saying thank you, or feeling it, was not enough. A three-minute prayer at the thanksgiving table was not enough. After the sin offering, the justification, the forgiveness of sins, and the successful harvest, celebrants were so moved by the unmerited outpouring of God’s love that they voluntarily wanted to give something valuable back to God. An Israelite family would take an animal of perfect quality (the best they had) and



offer it to God as an expression of thanksgiving.

Consider its significance. The offering was valuable; it could have brought a good price at market. The offering was truly a sacrifice.

Question: Is something a sacrifice if we really wouldn't miss it or if we have plenty of it? Is it a sacrifice if it is average or can be replaced? Is it a sacrifice if we can readily give it away without it affecting us in some way? As we look at our family, our home, our health, our relationships, our job; as we look at the assurance we have of salvation, what sacrifice could we consider putting on the altar of thanksgiving?

We gain deeper insight into that sacrifice by considering another element brought for the fellowship offering—bread.

At first glance we may be tempted to think of bread as common, even cheap. However, to Israelites it was a symbol of God's provision. "As the mainstay of life, bread came to be a primary metaphor for life and sustenance."¹ Bread was part of the offering of thanksgiving because it represented life itself, and thus, the bringing of one's life as a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

God essentially says, *if you want to bring a meaningful sacrifice of thanksgiving, why not start by bringing Me your life; why not bring Me yourself?* Some of us may be holding on to a part of our lives that we need to let go: an attitude, a grudge, material items, a destructive habit, or a stubborn perspective. Thanksgiving is a good time to let go of ourselves.

A COMPLETE CELEBRATION

A second observation: the ancient Jewish thanksgiving was a joyous feast—a party, if you will. An Israelite family would bring its offering, but not in a sullen, depressed manner.

In fact, among the items prescribed for the sac-

rifice of thanksgiving was leavened bread—a bit odd, since normally unleavened bread is associated with sacrifices. Bible commentators have noted that God prescribed leavened bread for the sacrifice of thanksgiving so that "nothing might be wanting to make it a complete and pleasant feast; for unleavened bread was less grateful to the taste."²

If we thought we had reason in the past to celebrate Thanksgiving, here is another: God wants us to enjoy life to the fullest—even as we remember His grace and provision for us.

TODAY IS THE DAY

The passage concludes with a verse that instructs the offering of thanksgiving be eaten on the day it is offered. None of it can be left till morning. The food was to be eaten that day; the feast was to be celebrated that day; the thanks was to be given that day; the living was supposed to begin that day.

We are confronted here with God urging us to live life in the present. God knew the temptation for Israelites to save and store, and perhaps even to skip the feast altogether.

It's equally possible that God knows what we may be thinking—that we'll get around to living out a celebratory spirit of gratitude when things settle down, when we're out of school, when the kids are grown, or when we're out of debt.

Today is the best possible day to embrace gratitude.

A THANKSGIVING CHALLENGE

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, consider the following challenges.

First, let us come individually to the altar of thanksgiving, carrying with us a tangible and worthy sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Second, let's accept God's gift in return—the gift of a life full of meaning and full of joy. Accept a place at the feast He has prepared for us this Thanksgiving season.

Finally, let's seize the moment so that our offering of thanksgiving will not sit around until tomorrow. Genuine thanksgiving cannot wait until tomorrow because God is alive and active in our life today.

Happy Thanksgiving! 🍂

¹ Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology.

² Matthew Henry's Complete Bible Commentary.

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PETER N. LANDLESS

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Zero Alcohol Consumption

The goal for all—regardless of age

Q: I am a senior in a church high school, but there is still peer pressure to drink alcohol. My uncle is a problem drinker, and I am afraid of becoming hooked. Do you have any advice for me, and for my school?

A: Alcohol drinking among young people is on the increase. Thankfully, there is a significantly lower amount of drinking in Adventist schools. This should not make us complacent, though; we must aim for zero alcohol consumption by both faculty and students.

You mention a family history of alcoholism. This is common, although not often talked about. We need to break the silence on difficult issues in order to address them. If one has a first-degree relative (mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, uncle, or aunt) who is an alcoholic, the chances of addiction from exposure to alcohol doubles from the standard risk of 7 to 14 percent. The earlier the age of exposure to alcohol, the risk of possible alcoholism increases to greater than 30 percent for those who start to drink in their early teens. The global trend is for experimentation to start at younger ages (9- to 11-year-olds). It is not worth any risk, but for you even more so because of your family history. So stay away from alcohol!

Schools and churches should educate about the dangers of alcohol. A large body of robust scientific evidence shows the many dangers of alcohol. Most recently the renowned medical journal *The Lancet* showed compelling evidence that proves that the Seventh-day Adventist Church's stance on abstaining from alcohol has been correct all along. It states that because of the very significant health risks—including cancer and cardiovascular diseases (on top of the addictive properties, associations with accidents, crime, domestic violence, and many diseases, despite a minimal benefit in reducing heart attacks)—there is no safe level of alcohol consumption.¹ It is important for young

people to know that it is not only “cool” to say no to alcohol, but also the smart and informed thing to do.

Additional and key information for schools and churches to understand is the importance of intentionally teaching the biblical concept that the body is the temple of God. The apostle Paul wrote, “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Cor. 6:19). In her doctoral dissertation Alina Baltazar showed that in students who believed that their bodies are the temple of God, there was a 60 percent lower use of alcohol. This is powerful; and should not be surprising.²

It is important for young people to know that it is not only “cool” to say no to alcohol, but also the smart and informed thing to do.

Education alone is not enough. You, your parents, your teachers—all of us—need a vibrant, personal connection with Jesus. Service, mentoring, caring relationships, family bonding, and regularly having meals together also play significant roles in preventing at-risk behaviors in young people. We all play a part in nurturing resilience and preventing addiction. Together we can!

¹ “Alcohol Use and Burden for 195 Countries and Territories, 1990–2016: A Systematic Analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016,” *The Lancet*, Aug. 23, 2018, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31310-2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31310-2).

² A. M. Baltazar, “*Role of Parents in College Student Regular Alcohol Use in the Context of Abstinent Religiosity*” (doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest.

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A FRESH LOOK AT SETBACKS

*Wrestling with
a theology of
disappointment*

CHIGEMEZI NNADOZIE WOGU

think the basic core of the Christian message is a message or theology of disappointment. This does not advocate seeing the Christian message and our authentic Adventist message to the world as disappointing. No! Rather, it's a call to rethink our understanding of disappointment because the history of Christianity (and Adventism) has involved various disappointing events that turned out to be key events of salvation history. Those who experienced such events decided to look at them with a positive outlook. Let's unpack this idea by looking at three distinct examples.

IN THE BEGINNING

Genesis records the account of God creating the first couple in perfect holiness and giving them the freedom of choice. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve disappointed God, their Maker, Friend, and Father, by misusing their freedom. This resulted in disobedience and death.

In spite of the dire consequences that their choice would bring future generations, God did something that would change the way we look at this particular event involving disappointment. He pronounced Scripture's first prophecy, the good news of salvation, about the redemption of humanity from sin (see Gen. 3:15). He went ahead to demonstrate this in the first sacrifice in Genesis 3:21,¹ typifying the coming sacrifice of the "seed of the woman."

What did this do for Adam and Eve and the generations that followed? They looked beyond their disappointing behavior and focused on the promise of a future Redeemer. Their longing resulted in optimism and hope. This becomes obvious in the

naming of Cain, "a man from the Lord" (Gen. 4:1, NKJV), and Seth, thought to be "another seed" (see verse 26). Hebrews 11 shows us how this hope was kept alive by the patriarchs.

JESUS ENTERS THE SCENE

When the Messiah finally came, He disappointed His followers and those who believed He had come to set up an earthly kingdom.

What happened? Their Master died a horrific, terrible, and shameful death: the death of a thief, hanging naked on a crude wooden cross! Nevertheless, that was not the end of the story! Jesus, resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God to mediate between God and humanity as Redeemer and High Priest of the human race. Through Him we can approach the throne of grace with boldness, as the author of Hebrews 4:16 affirms so powerfully.

So instead of a day of disappointment, the day of Jesus' death became the day that changed the world.

What is more, Jesus' death on the cross was the defining moment for the history of the universe. It was the day of salvation for the human race. In that death on the cross was all the pain, suffering, regret, "and all the rejection that evil has caused the human race."³ Thinking about that day changes the way we look at our lives as we come to acknowledge our rebellion and the need to submit to God for change.

Moreover, that day altered the way we value ourselves through the blood of Jesus. Jesus' death also transforms the way we look at suffering because we come to understand that since Jesus suffered that much, He understands

**So, instead of a day
of disappointment,
the day of Jesus'
death became the
day that changed
the world.**



A day of disappointment became a day of appointment.

what we are going through.⁴ It is not our positive prowess that makes us think this way. Rather, it is the power of God in reversing the cross event into a day of appointment. Through death, God brought life and victory. Through shame, humiliation, and rejection, God brought glory.⁵

Consequently the message of death, gloom, and disappointment that followed those two dark moments in earth's history was changed into good news on the third day. This good news spurred women and men to move toward God. Those who accepted this good news carried it to the then-known world, as the book of Acts testifies. Their message confirms the popular expression "Every disappointment is a blessing in disguise." This was no little blessing in disguise; it was a wondrous, public glory: blessing indeed!

ANOTHER CASE STUDY

On the eve of October 22, 1844, Millerites all around North America and beyond were ready to receive their Savior. They waited eagerly, believing the message they had preached that Jesus would come and end all sorrow, pain, and evil. However, they were heartbroken and disappointed. Jesus did not come. They "wept, and wept, till the day dawn."⁶ How could this have happened? As a result, some focused on the Disappointment and were disillusioned, turning into severe critics of Christianity and those who had waited for the return of Jesus.

Others, the group that would later emerge to be the Seventh-day Adventist Church, would look at this event differently. They came to understand the reason Jesus did not return, and focused on the positive aspect of this event, the beginning of the investigative judgment as an assurance of the *Parousia*, the return of Jesus Christ. Hence a day of disappointment became a day of appointment: the beginning of Jesus' final work of atonement.

As this group came to believe that Jesus took on a different role on that very day, a missionary movement was born concerned with preaching

the three angels' messages. This movement, one of the fastest growing Protestant denominations, has even been referred to as a world religion.⁷

Without that disappointing event, the Seventh-day Adventist Church would probably not have arisen. An African proverb says: "Smooth seas do not make a skillful sailor." Thus the difficulties of life can make us stronger. This disappointment made the group that emerged from the crises a strong army of missionaries.

It is said that "every stumbling block is a stepping-stone." If early Adventists had seen the Great Disappointment only as a stumbling block, the movement would be extinct. Instead they saw this as a stepping-stone toward telling the world about Jesus and sharing their unique sanctuary message.

THE BIG QUESTION

Today we Adventists can talk of our collective DNA not as a group of disappointed people, but as a hopeful people waiting for our Savior. If we had focused on that frustrating event, it would have been difficult to share Jesus. It was the move to look beyond the eve of October 22, 1844, that gave us the temerity to continue to share Jesus' soon return, His heavenly ministry, and the specific mission He has entrusted to us.

In turn, God has done miracle after miracle as we reflect on the exponential growth of this movement. The moral of these three examples is clear. Setbacks will always come. We will, one way or the other, experience the downside of life. The issue is not if such situations come or not. Rather, the issue is how we will handle our disappointments. 🍀

¹ This was the sacrifice that resulted in Adam and Eve's receiving coats of skin from their Creator.

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 Jon Paulien, *The Day That Changed the World: Seeking God After September 11* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2002), p. 127.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-138.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁶ Hiram Edson, manuscript fragment on his "Life and Experience" (Berkshire Springs, Mich.: Ellen G. White Research Center, James White Library, Andrews University, n.d.), pp. 4, 5.

⁷ This was suggested by Jon L. Dybdahl, "Doing Theology in Mission: Part 2," *Ministry*, January 2006, p. 21. With more than 20 million members and a record of planting a new church every 3.5 hours, this is no overstatement.

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AM I WASTING MY LIFE?

Last November my wife and I went on a short getaway to the Big Apple for our five-year anniversary. With two toddlers, demanding jobs, and extracurricular activities, our plates are constantly full. We needed time to talk. You know, *talk*.

Most of our conversation centered on my wife's career. After weighing pros and cons, we decided that it was the right time for her to start her own business. We put a bow on that conversation and figured we'd taken care of our "big" adjustment for 2018.

A month later I received word that after 10 years in Bakersfield, I was being promoted to regional marketing director for Adventist Health Southern California. I accepted the role but decided not to move our family, requiring me to commute to Los Angeles three days a week.

My new role has been an emotional roller coaster. I've had to learn how to manage both people and projects remotely, earn the trust of three hospital executive teams, become comfortable never having a normal schedule, and learn where to find reliable Wi-Fi and vegan cuisine.

Most of all, I've had to navigate feelings of not really belonging. In my previous role I was a regular at events, a key liaison to local churches, and embedded in initiatives to engage more than 2,000 employees. Now I swoop in for strategic meetings, get my parking validated, and "zoom" through L.A. traffic to my next appointment.

I'm trying to excel in my new job, while still putting God, family, and church first.

Am I wasting my life? Is all this in vain?

I'M NOT ALONE

Most of us have likely experienced similar feelings at some point in our lives, even

when we believe we're living in God's will.

The stalwarts of the Bible felt like this too. Perhaps no human accomplished more than Moses. He served as a divine mouthpiece to liberate an entire nation; met with God on Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments; faithfully led grumbling Israelites to the threshold of the Promised Land. *Whew*.

Yet as Moses came to the end of his life, unable to enter the Promised Land, he was in a state of mournful reflection. According to Ellen White: "As Moses reviewed the result of his labors, his life of trial and sacrifice seemed to have been almost in vain."

Moses—the guy who marched uninvited into Pharaoh's palace and parted the Red Sea—doubted that his time on earth had been put to good use.

Looking back, it's easy to see the eternal impact of Moses' earthly efforts. Yet his vision blurred in the waning moments of his life.

Maybe, like me, you've asked yourself: *Why am I living in this town? What is the point of this job? How am I supposed to reach these people?*

The usefulness of our lives isn't based on how we feel in a given moment. Our only job is to "die daily" and allow Christ to use us wherever He puts us, because He sees things we can't.

From His view, my life—and yours—is anything but wasted. ♣

* Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 472.

Jimmy Phillips is regional marketing director for Adventist Health Southern California.

INTRODUCING
THE WHY
JIMMY
PHILLIPS



MY NEW ROLE
HAS BEEN AN
EMOTIONAL
ROLLER
COASTER.

A RESCUED PRAYER

*Nature does not play favorites.
But nature's God does.*

KARL G. WILCOX

The day broke full of light and blue, but the temperature clung to the edge of freezing and stayed there all day. The climb went as expected: one day to hike the scree and talus up to Iceberg Lake; a night of waking sleep while sharing a down bag with my climbing partner; a granola start; then many rope lengths of superb climbing on handholds created for puny human passage.

We topped out kind of late (half shivering), and I knew that we had to move fast in order to get off Mount Whitney's summit plateau and down the hikers' trail before true dark captured us.

I unexpectedly caught sight of a lone figure plodding up the hiking trail toward the summit plateau. The sun hung low, the temperature stuck firmly in the high teens; and this guy approached the almost-15,000-foot summit wearing only a pair of running shorts, a cotton T-shirt, and the obligatory trucker's hat.

As he got close, I saw a mortally foolish grin on a bluish face: he had made the summit and he felt great. But now we had to go down some nine miles of trail, and he had committed the common error of thinking of the summit as his only goal. Hypothermia had gripped him, evidenced by slurred voice, wooden movements, random thoughts.

Saying nothing, I stuffed him into our only

Of course, she dismissed this command as absurd.



down bag. But I already knew the sleeping bag trick would not work; he was too cold to generate any body heat of his own. So soon after putting him in the bag, I climbed in with him in the hope that I could warm him up. This failed as well. His body temperature began to make me cold too.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

At this stage I knew the hiker would die. I think he, too, felt something had gone awry. But he still grinned anyway, heady with success; cold like the granite no longer warmed by the sun.

I cannot remember that I actually prayed. It came out as more of a “God, please don’t let this man die” exhalation.

At the time I counted myself a devout Adventist Christian. But looking back some 30 years, I know that my faith fed itself more on intellectual and social fare than it did on the grace of the Word. In short, I lived the life of conventionally pious yet secular Christians; a man not yet convinced of his own filthy rags as a practical fact. I had baptized my normative sins. I did not feel at that time the imperative to die daily, to pray for the indwelling Holy Spirit each morning, or to live wholly by faith for the invisible kingdom.

This prayer (of sorts) floated in thin air for just a few seconds when I noticed another figure hiking up the trail: a woman in the semi-official garb of the backcountry ranger with a large radio strapped to her hip. As the ranger came up to me I simply blurted, “What are you doing here?”

THE INNER IMPERATIVE

She then told me that some hours earlier she had been at her camp on the west side of the Mount Whitney massif cooking supper when she heard an inner voice say, “Go to the summit.”

Of course, she dismissed this command as absurd: the day waned; the Whitney summit did not even belong within her patrol area; and nobody would be on the summit in the dark and cold.

But again the voice urged, “Go to the summit.”

And again this inner *thought voice* repeated the bizarre command: “Go to the summit.”

She finally grabbed her jacket and her radio and started for the summit. The entire time she hiked up the John Muir Trail she struggled to understand why.

I explained the situation and told her that as a guide I was certain that we would not be able to keep the hiker alive until the next morning.

She nodded, turned on her radio, and within about 10 minutes a Navy helicopter swooped in from Lemoore Naval Air Station. As I loaded the hiker into the chopper, he thanked me and asked, “Are you really a guide?”

WHAT HAPPENED?

I clearly recall hiking some nine miles down to the car in stygian darkness, sometimes feeling the ground on hands and knees to avoid stepping off into the void. It counted as yet another miserable climbing descent. We did not get down until 2:00 a.m. But I felt joy for a life spared.

Of course, I did nothing to save the hiker. My training and experience as a guide did not make the least difference; my attempt to warm him came to nothing. I fully expected him to die. My hard-won mountaineering experience could only predict his tragic end. Yet God surprised me. The rescue had been divinely planned and executed before the emergency had even occurred.

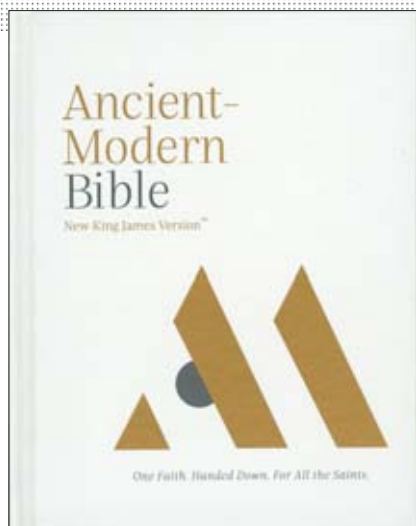
Did my prayer matter? Yes, I believe it did; but it did not deserve to. That prayer came more from impulse than from faith; more from resignation than from hope. Yet God honored it.

How many times have I wondered at God’s glorious competence in the arena of my failure? We try so hard, we secular Christians. And when our strivings fail, and we think all is lost, we slur a wooden prayer for half-veiled complaint, expecting nothing to change. Then a miracle happens.

God managed two rescues that cold night on Mount Whitney: He saved a terminally cold hiker’s life, but he also rescued a dying prayer. And since then my rising prayer has been “Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness” (Ps. 115:1). 🦋

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CLOSER LOOK



A New Edition of the Old, Old Story

NKJV Ancient-Modern Bible, Jeremy Bouma, general editor, Thomas Nelson, 2018, 1,700 pages. Hardcover, US\$49.99 (Kindle edition, US\$14.99). Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

The premise of the *Ancient-Modern Bible*, published by Thomas Nelson is intriguing: publish a study Bible and include commentary from various notable Christians from every age, from Augustine to N. T. Wright, from Justin Martyr to John Wesley.

This is not a study Bible per se. Not every page has commentary, and the commentaries that do appear are quite general; there is no attempt to provide word by word,

Adventist Review commentary on books, films or other items here considered does not constitute endorsement of items analyzed in such commentary.

Mission Stories From the South Seas

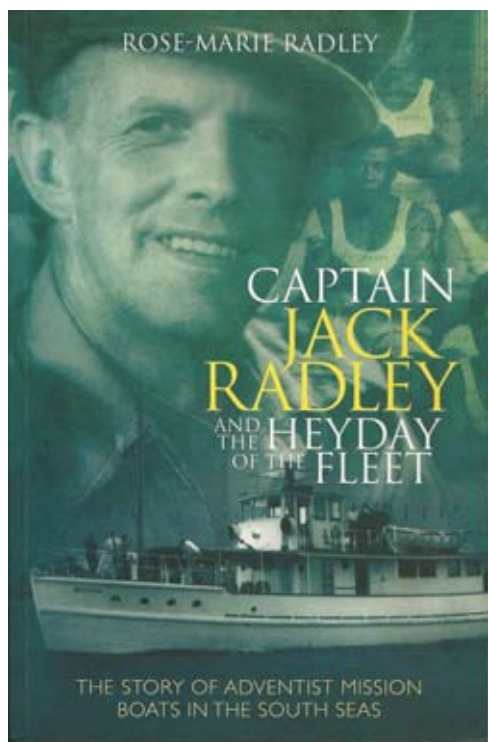
Captain Jack Radley and the Heyday of the Fleet: The Story of Adventist Mission Boats in the South Seas, by Rose-Marie Radley, Signs Publishing, Warburton, New South Wales, Australia, 2018, 402 pages. Kindle edition, \$9.99. Reviewed by Stephen Chavez, *Adventist Review*.

Comprehensive" is perhaps the best word to describe the book *Captain Jack Radley and the Heyday of the Fleet*. Author Rose-Marie Radley, one of Captain Radley's daughters, provides an extensive and well-documented history of Adventist mission activity in the South Pacific as told from the perspective of those who staffed the mission boats and launches.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, through the twentieth century, and still today, many places in Fiji, the Solomon Islands, French Polynesia, American Samoa, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu are accessible only by boat. This book provides many stories and photographs about those early pioneers and their missionary exploits.

not even verse by verse, explanations of the Bible passages cited. But the book does offer brief commentaries that allow readers to see the biblical material from the viewpoint of Bible students both ancient and modern. Each book of the Bible is preceded by a summary of that particular book, identifying who wrote it, when and under what circumstances, and its major themes.

An index lists all the commentators, and the sources from which their comments are taken. What the book does not have, and probably should, is a systematic way of finding some of the biogra-



The author is also a researcher and compiler: along with her own narratives, she includes the record of local conference and union conference actions that enabled these missionary endeavors. Also included are reports published by church administrators and missionaries themselves that

have appeared in denominational publications over the years, recording the progress of those efforts.

The one theme that predominates, and with which the author is most familiar, is the role that her father, Jack Radley, played in the development of Adventist mission boats. His name is probably unfamiliar to most readers outside the South Pacific, but his story is remarkable in its depiction of missionary activities of 50 to 100 years ago as an endeavor from which you might not return. It chronicles the sacrifices that mission personnel made to visit native populations on primitive islands, their encounters with tropical diseases, as well as their experiences with enemy forces during World War II.

The one quibble about the book may be that it includes too much information. Several lists of mission boats include their names, the years they entered service, their dimensions, and notes about their service. But the lists are easily skimmed over by casual readers, and their presence is a worthy addition for a book likely to become the definitive history of Adventist mission ships in the South Pacific. ♣

phies of the more than 175 commentators cited (only a few biographies are included). Having a device nearby to google the names is practically essential to discover who they were, when they lived, and their unique contributions to the interpretation of the Bible. Not all the commentators are historical. Frederick Buechner, Jimmy Carter, John Maxwell, Eugene Peterson, and Warren Wiersbe occupy space with Venerable Bede, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nazianzus.

The *Ancient-Modern Bible*, like any good study Bible, has maps of the ancient world from both Old and New Testament times. There is also a section of 15 artworks—ancient and modern—that reflect the contributions of Christian artists down

through the centuries. Supplemental articles address such issues as “Creation and Fall,” “Meditating on His Word,” “The Church,” “Salvation and Union With Christ,” “The Trinity,” and “What the Whole World Is Waiting For.”

The *Ancient-Modern Bible* joins a long list of study Bibles already on the market. What this Bible offers that most of the others don’t is the reality that Christians have read, studied, and tried to understand the Bible for centuries. Reading their words—alongside the words of Scripture—is a reminder that we are among millions of believers who have tried to honor Christ by being faithful to His Word. ♣

BABYLON IN HISTORY AND PROPHECY

Inspired commentary reveals a treacherous influence.

From Genesis to Revelation the name and influence of Babel/Babylon is a recurring motif. This month we devote these pages to some of the many comments Ellen White made concerning Babylon's role in history and prophecy.—Editors.

From the beginning God has wrought through His people to bring blessing to the world. To the ancient Egyptian nation God made Joseph a fountain of life. Through the integrity of Joseph the life of that whole people was preserved. Through Daniel God saved the life of all the wise men of Babylon.

And these deliverances are as object lessons; they illustrate the spiritual blessings offered to the world through connection with the God whom Joseph and Daniel worshiped.

Everyone in whose heart Christ abides, everyone who will show forth His love to the world, is a worker together with God for the blessing of humanity. As he receives from the Saviour grace to impart to others, from his whole being flows forth the tide of spiritual life.¹

As God called Daniel to witness for Him in Babylon, so He calls us to be His witnesses in the

world today. In the smallest as well as the largest affairs of life He desires us to reveal to [men and women] the principles of His kingdom.²

God exalted Babylon that it might fulfill this purpose. Prosperity attended the nation until it reached a height of wealth and power that has never since been equaled—fitly represented in the Scriptures by the inspired symbol, a “head of gold.” Daniel 2:38.

But the king failed of recognizing the power that had exalted him. Nebuchadnezzar in the pride of his heart said: “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” Daniel 4:30.

Instead of being a protector . . . , Babylon became a proud and cruel oppressor. The words of Inspiration picturing the cruelty and greed of rulers in Israel





reveal the secret of Babylon's fall and of the fall of many another kingdom since the world began.³

Prophecy has traced the rise and fall of the world's great empires—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. With each of these, as with nations of less power, history repeated itself. Each had its period of test, each failed, its glory faded, its power departed, and its place was occupied by another.

While the nations rejected God's principles, and in this rejection wrought their own ruin, it was still manifest that the divine, overruling purpose was working through all their movements.⁴

The term "Babylon" . . . signifies confusion. It is employed in Scripture to designate the various forms of false or apostate religion. In Revelation 17 Babylon is represented as a woman—a figure which is used in the Bible as the symbol of a church, a virtuous woman representing a pure church, a vile woman an apostate church.⁵

[Men and women] of faith and prayer will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. The sins of Babylon will be laid open. The fearful results of enforcing the observances of the church by civil authority, the inroads of spiritualism, the stealthy but rapid progress of the papal power—all will be unmasked.

By these solemn warnings the people will be stirred. Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these. In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven.⁶

The churches, represented by Babylon, are represented as having fallen from their spiritual state to become a persecuting power against those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.⁷

The doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul is one error with which the enemy is deceiving [humanity]. This error is well-nigh universal. . . . This is one of the lies forged in the synagogue of the enemy, one of the poisonous drafts of Babylon.⁸

It is our individual duty to walk humbly with God. We are not to seek any strange, new message. We are not to think that the chosen ones of God who are trying to walk in the light compose Babylon. The fallen denominational churches are Babylon.

Babylon has been fostering poisonous doctrines, the wine of error. This wine of error is made up of false doctrines, such as the natural immortality of the soul, the eternal torment of the wicked, the denial of the pre-existence of Christ prior to His birth in Bethlehem, and advocating and exalting the first day of the week above God's holy, sanctified day. These and kindred errors are presented to the world by the various churches.⁹

God has many thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal. There are God-fearing [men and women] in the fallen churches. If this were not so, we should not be given the message to bear, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen."¹⁰

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 13.

² Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900, 1941), p. 357.

³ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903, 1952), pp. 175, 176.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 381.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 606, 607.

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 197.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 558.

Seventh-day Adventists believe **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

Do Robots Need the Law?

Imagine a designer planning the creation of a new species. Someone walks up and asks, “Will you be giving these creatures laws or principles to live by?”

If survival is hoped for, sustainable laws must be put in place to keep these creatures alive.

Now imagine that the creatures begin playing god and begin creating new creatures with the ability to learn and adapt. I’m talking about robots, or machines, also known as artificial intelligence (AI).

**LAWS ARE OFTEN
GOOD, NOT BAD.**

Since more of us have experience with growing children than designing our own robots, do humans need laws as they grow? Do they need laws when they turn 16? You’re likely to think of reasons laws for a 16-year-old may protect rather than hurt.

In many research labs around the world the question is becoming more and more serious: Do machines with artificial general intelligence (AGI) and deep learning capabilities need laws?

Elon Musk, Bill Gates, and others seem to think that AI could be humanity’s greatest threat. The reason? With unlimited abilities to adapt, machines could become destructive, see humanity as disposable, and eventually take over the planet.

These fears are fueling debates about what code of ethics or laws should govern AI. More than 50 years ago Isaac Asimov developed his famous three laws of robotics, a code of ethics to ensure friendly robot/AI behavior.

1. A robot may not injure a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.

2. A robot must obey the orders given to it by human beings, except when such

orders conflict with the first law.

3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the first or second laws.

Parents teach their children the rule of not running out in traffic, not touching a hot stove. Laws are often good, not bad. Just as humans were given laws to live by, so robots, to learn and adapt, are best governed by laws as well.

What laws were given to govern humans?

Anyone who has read the Bible would find some interesting similarities between robots and humans.

Notice the similarities between Jesus’ summary of the law and Asimov’s three laws of robotics:

“Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). Or: “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Luke 10:27). Loving God never conflicts with loving our neighbors. In fact, it inspires such love.

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” (1 Cor. 6:19). Asimov may have been onto something. Do no harm, but also don’t allow harm to be done through inaction.

As we enter this new era of machine learning, and concerns arise about codes of ethics for artificial intelligence, it may help inform these new designers why laws like Asimov’s, and particularly those beautiful eternal principles of Jesus, are so important. ▀

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