

# MINISTRY



International Journal for Pastors

September 2001

*Secret  
Rapture?*



IN  
EVERY  
ISSUE

Letters  
3

Editorial  
4

Pastor's Pastor  
30

5  
**The rapture: Why it cannot occur before the Second Coming**

Gerhard Pfandl

8  
**The rapture: A pastor's concern**

Steve Wohlberg

10  
**The rapture: The blessed hope, Jesus, and Paul**

Hans K. LaRondelle

16  
**Dealing with criticism**

*Helpful principles when facing critical people*

Victor M. Parachin

18  
**Pastoring the postmodern frontline (part 2)**

*Attitudes and approaches to the postmodern mind*

Samir Selmanovic

22  
**The case for creationism: Fifty scientists speak out**

*Contemporary scientific views that expose the inadequacies of Darwinian evolution*

John Ashton

26  
**The lonely pastor**

*Loneliness in ministry and how it can be eased*

Larry Yeagley

# MINISTRY

*Ministry* is the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association and has been published since 1928.

**Association Secretary** James A. Cress

**Editor** Willmore D. Eva

**Assistant Editor** Julia W. Norcott

**Editorial Assistant** Sheila Draper

**Professional Growth and Inter-church Relations**  
Nikolaus Satelmajer

**Contributing Editors** Sharon Cress, Peter Prime, Joel Sarli, Kit Watts

**International Editors**

**Inter-American Division** Felix Cortes

**South American Division** Zinaldo A. Santos

**Consulting Editors**

Ben Clausen, Raoul Dederen, Teofilo Ferreira, Ron Flowers, John M. Fowler, Michael Hasel, Roland Hegstad, Kathleen Kuntaraf, Ekkehardt Mueller, Jan Paulsen, Robert Peach, George Reid, Angel Rodriguez, Penny Shell, William Shea, Russell Staples, Richard Tibbits, Ted Wilson, Edward Zinke

**Pastoral Assistant Editors** John C. Cress, Fredrick Russell, Maylan Schurch, Loren Seibold

**International Advisors** Alejandro Bullon, John Duroe, Andrews Laurence Uwoo, Paulraj Isaiah, Anthony Kent, Jaiyong Lee, Ivan Manilich, Gabriel Maurer, Joel Musvosvi, Ivan Omana, David Osborne, Peter Roennfeldt, Raymond Zeeman

**Pastoral Advisors** Leslie Baumgartner, S. Peter Campbell, Miguel A. Cerna, Jeanne Hartwell, Mitchell Henson, Greg Nelson, Norma Osborn, Leslie Pollard, Dan Smith, Steve Willsey

**Advertising** Editorial Office

**Subscriptions and Circulation** Jeannette Calbi

**Cover Design and Digital Illustration** Harry Knox

**Resources** Cathy Payne

**Subscriptions:** 12 issues: United States US\$29.95; Canada and overseas US\$31.75; airmail US\$41.75; single copy US\$3.00. To order, send name, address, and payment to Jeannette Calbi, *Ministry* Subscriptions, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 U.S.A.

**Subscription queries and address changes:**

Email: calbij@gc.adventist.org

Fax: 301-680-6502

Phone: 301-680-6503

**To Writers:** We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Editorial preference is to receive manuscripts on diskette with name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and Social Security number (if U.S. citizen or possessing a U.S. Social Security number). Send editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600. Phone: 301-680-6510; fax: 301-680-6502; Email: norcottj@gc.adventist.org or drapers@gc.adventist.org (editorial offices).

**Writer's Guidelines available on request.**

**Ministry (ISSN 0026-5314)**, the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association © 2001, is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and printed by Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193. Member Associated Church Press. Standard mail postage paid at Nampa, Idaho.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

**Vol. 74 Number 9**

Bible credits: Scripture quotations from NASB are from the New American Standard Bible. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Texts credited to NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. Texts credited to NKJV are from The New King James Version. Copyright © 1979; 1980, 1982; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers. Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation. Copyright © 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois. All rights reserved. Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Verses marked TLB are taken from The Living Bible. Copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Ill. Used by permission.

# WE ENABLE CHILD ABUSERS BY IGNORING THE FACT THAT BAD PEOPLE CAN BE FOUND IN GOOD CONGREGATIONS.

## Luther and the gospel

I found the analysis of Luther's theology by Hans LaRondelle very stimulating ("Luther and the Gospel," November 2000). The letters it has drawn in response, both agreeing and disagreeing, are likewise most interesting.

However, there is a major problem with any assertions about Luther's, and the Reformers', thought on justification by faith, and indeed on theological issues generally, one that none of your authors or correspondents sufficiently recognize. First, there was no unanimity on these subjects among Reformers—there is no single "Reformation" tradition to lay claim to. Second, the Reformers not only had different views, but their view changed over time, as they studied more and as they debated with each other. Luther in particular was not trying to establish a systematic theology, but tended to be responding to particular situations. In this respect, his writings are similar to those of Ellen White, and, as with Ellen White, it is possible, by selective quotation, to "demonstrate" his (their) support for contradictory positions. We have learned that we need to look at the context when citing Mrs. White; the same is true of the Reformers, especially Luther.

Thanks for a journal with consistently stimulating and helpful content.

—D.J.B. Trim, *Newbold College, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.*

## Sexual abuse of children in the church

The article on "Sexual Abuse of Children in the Church" is so timely

(March 2001). A local church had a problem with one of the teachers on campus. However, they believed they were doing the right thing when they hushed the matter and transferred the teacher to a rural boarding school. The girl he abused was six years old.

We enable child abusers by ignoring the fact that bad people can be found in good congregations.

The article is something the Christian church in developing countries must act upon. We in developing countries do not know how to deal with sex, and find it even more difficult to deal with sexual abuse. There is a need for ministerial associations the world over to educate ministers and leaders of educational institutions on how, and more importantly why, they must act against proven sexual abuse.

Thank you for printing the article. We as Christians must take it from here, and help heal the hurt of the broken and their congregations.

—Falvo Fowler, *director, Family First Educational Trust, India.*

## The theological value of the Creation account

I appreciated the *Ministry* article on the theological aspects of what Scripture says about Creation ("The Theological Value of the Creation Account," by Greg King). For many years I have urged some of our scientists to see what Scripture's teachings on Creation says theologically before trying to use them as quasi-scientific documents, but they could not see the importance.

May I suggest some other theologi-

cal implications in the Genesis Creation account. First, Scripture has much to say about God bringing order out of chaos and maintaining that order. The ancients lived in a frightening world. Everyone was only one harvest away—from starvation, disease, and accident—and war could take life at any moment. Without our modern sense of scientific law, nature seemed capricious. It could revert to chaos at any moment. . . . Even the gods could slip back into the realm of chaos. . . .

Today, science and technology have made us feel more secure, and we do not have that sense of a general fear of total chaos. But we have lost some of our sense that order continues only because God maintains it. . . .

Second, creation in Scripture is more focused on the creation of God's people than it is on the creation of life and matter. God's greatest creation is that of His people, and the Sabbath is the symbol His forming the people. . . .

God created the first people and rested on the Sabbath. Then He created Israel at Sinai and the Sabbath memorialized that (Deut. 5:15). Whenever the people faced disintegration—the possibility of falling back into chaos—the creation-based theme of Sabbath re-emerges, as in Ezra-Nehemiah and Isaiah. . . .

One fundamental sign of the true God in the Old Testament and among the Jewish writings during New Testament times was that He was the Creator of everything. We see this concept displayed in Revelation 14:7.

*continued on page 31*

## Free Subscription

If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.

# Christian ecology

There's a strange, almost collective reserve among Christians ("conservatives" especially) when it comes to championing the health of God's creation, particularly that of earth itself and its collective environment.

There is in the Christian community:

- ◆ A consistent concern for preserving the moral purity of the humanity God fashioned from the dust of the ground and into whose nostrils He breathed life.

- ◆ A deep and far-reaching desire (especially among Seventh-day Adventists) to promote the physical health with which God created the human race.

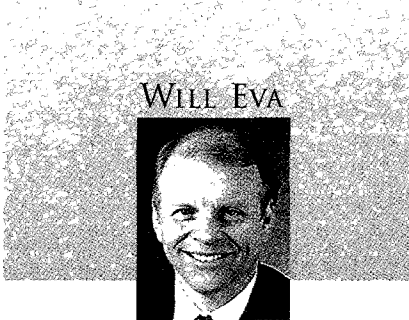
- ◆ A strong stirring of the conscience when animals, even wildlife, are not treated with kindness and care.

- ◆ The principle of loving, respecting, serving, and preserving our fellow human beings who are God's workmanship, those whom, along with us, He made of one blood.

- ◆ A deep and widespread appreciation for "the beauty of the earth and the glory of the skies."

However, we often hold back when it comes to connecting our faith with the ecologically informed respect so necessary for the preservation of a high quality of life in our industrialized, hyper-populated age.

In his stimulating article, "The Theological Value of the Creation Account,"<sup>1</sup> Greg King exposed the foundational theological suggestiveness, and even the definitude, found in the first few chapters of the Bible. Without question, one of the most evocative theological features of God's creative *magnus opus* was the brilliant



variety, balance, beauty, interaction, integration, and systemic coordination of His delicate yet resilient design and work. The words used in Genesis to describe God's work reveal a reverence for, or at least an innate deference to, God's creative work. These words call for us, as humans, to live life on this planet with the deepest respect for the primeval activity of God, and to obey the divine mandate to actively and properly "rule over" this work (Gen. 1:26-28).

The description of the personal act of God when He planted "a garden eastward in Eden" (Gen. 2:8), of God placing "the man" in the garden "to work it and take care of it" (verse 15) and God bringing to Adam all the "beasts of the field and all the birds of the air," "to see what he would name them" (verse 19), implies the need for humanity to understand his environment and God-given responsibility toward it.

God's act of simply putting Adam in charge of this magnificent garden is descriptive of the desire and commission of God for humanity in general to love, nurture, and care for what He crafted. Genesis 2:15-20 reveals the Creator placing the final and highest form of His creation—humankind—in loving charge of the rest of His handiwork.

It is interesting how easily we ministers (especially at weddings) see in the story of God's forming the woman and bringing her to Adam a formative pattern of marriage applicable for all time, yet we find it difficult to see the ecological mandate that is just as implied in the Creation epic.

I believe two things discourage the indifference in which we may traditionally have been able to luxuriate when it comes to the environment. One is simply the multiplied effects of today's massive proliferation of human beings all over the globe; the other is our now largely worldwide, hyper-industrialized, mechanized culture whose many manifestations are hostile to the original edenic ideal. Of course we should look to the time when God "will make all things new," but if we were to merely take that attitude about our health, our moral being, our spiritual development, or for that matter the viability of our marriages, we know what would happen.

We cannot be turned away from the calling to care for our world just because it's viewed as a "liberal" cause or because of extremists who give the ecology movement a bad name. We must, instead, seek to be more and more faithful to the original edenic mandate.

Clerical and ecclesiastical activism? I don't think so. Coming close to God's creation; loving it, understanding it, caring for it, being responsible for it, speaking out effectively for it—of course.

How could we do any less? ■

<sup>1</sup> Greg A. King, "The Theological Value of the Creation Account," in *Ministry* (March 2001), 7-10.

# The rapture

## Why it cannot occur before the Second Coming

Gerhard Pfandl



Gerhard Pfandl, Ph. D., is associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

**T**he date is a day in the near future. The place, a Boeing 747 over the Atlantic on its way to London Heathrow. Most passengers are sleeping or dozing. Suddenly almost half the passengers disappear into thin air. First one, then another of the remaining passengers cries out as they realize their seat mate is missing, only the clothes of those who have gone are left behind. The remaining passengers cry, they scream, they leap from their seats. Parents are frantically searching for their children, but all the children have disappeared in midflight.

Science fiction? No; this is a scene from the first volume of the projected multivolume series *Left Behind*<sup>TM</sup>.<sup>1</sup> Written by the Christian authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, their books have shown up on the *New York Times* best-seller list, and can be obtained in most bookstores.

These books are based on the theory that seven years prior to the second advent of Christ, faithful Christians will be translated, taken up into heaven—they will be raptured. Why exactly seven years? Because one of the mainstays of this theory is that the last week of the seventy prophetic weeks in Daniel 9:24 is still future.

### The roots of the rapture theory

The roots of this theory may be traced back to the time of the Counter-Reformation. The

Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century identified the papacy as the antichrist of prophecy.<sup>2</sup> Several Jesuit scholars undertook the task of defending the papacy against these attacks. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), head of the Jesuit College in Rome, sought to nullify the prophetic year-day principle as proof for the 1,260 years of papal rule.<sup>3</sup> The Spanish Jesuit, Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) projected the antichrist prophecies into the future (futurism), and another Spaniard, Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613), contended that these prophecies were already fulfilled in the time of the Roman Empire (preterism).

Alcazar's preterism was soon adopted by the Calvinist Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) in Holland, and in time became the favorite method for the interpretation of biblical prophecy among liberal theologians.

Ribera applied the antichrist prophecies to a future personal antichrist who would appear in the time of the end and continue in power for three and a half years.<sup>4</sup> For nearly three centuries futurism was largely confined to the Roman Catholic Church, until in 1826 Samuel R. Maitland (1792-1866), librarian to the Archbishop of Canterbury, published a 72-page pamphlet<sup>5</sup> in which he promoted Ribera's idea of a future antichrist. Soon other Protestant clergymen turned to futurism and began propagating it far and wide. Among them were John Henry Newman, leader of the Oxford movement, who later became a Roman Catholic cardinal, and Edward Irving, the famous Scottish Presbyterian minister.

### Dispensationalism

Ribera's futurism laid the foundation for dispensationalism, which teaches that God has dealt differently with humanity during different eras of biblical history. John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) is usually regarded as the father of dispensationalism. He was a lawyer and Anglican clergyman who in 1828, disillusioned with the spiritual laxness of the church, joined the Brethren Movement. He had a brilliant mind; not only did he preach fluently in German and French, he also translated the New Testament into German, French, and English. He was the author of more than 50 books, and in 1848 became the leader of the Exclusive Brethren.

Darby developed an elaborate philosophy of history in which he divided history into

eight eras or dispensations, "each of which contained a different order by which God worked out his redemptive plan."<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Darby asserted that Christ's coming would occur in two stages. The first, an invisible "secret rapture" of true believers, would end the great "parenthesis" or church age which began when the Jews rejected Christ. Following the rapture, the Old

is clear that these men believed that this coming will precede Christ's descent to the earth and the time of judgment. The purpose was to preserve believers from the time of judgment."<sup>8</sup>

The doctrine of the rapture was disseminated around the world, primarily through the Brethren Movement and the Scofield Reference Bible. In the twentieth century it was

i.e., the prophetic clock stopped on Easter Sunday and will begin to tick again after the rapture when God assumes His direct dealings with Israel in the future.

In response: (1) There is no logical or exegetical reason for separating the seventieth week from the other sixty-nine weeks. There is no other time prophecy in Scripture which has such a gap.<sup>11</sup> (2) The subject of Daniel 9:26 is the Messiah, and the subject in the next verse is also the Messiah, not the antichrist. According to the verse pattern in Daniel 9:25, 26 the prince in "the people of the prince" can also refer to Jesus.<sup>12</sup> But even if the prince in verse 26 refers to Titus (as a type of the antichrist) and not to the Messiah, he is not the subject of verse 27 because grammatically he is in a subordinate position to "the people." It is the people who destroy the city and the sanctuary not the prince. The "he" of verse 27 must refer back to the Messiah at the beginning of verse 26. (3) In Daniel 9:27 we read, "he shall confirm the covenant with many." The text does not say he will make a covenant.

The Hebrew idiom "to cut a covenant" is not used in this text. Instead the Messiah, it says, will strengthen or "cause a covenant to prevail." The reference is not to a new covenant but to a covenant already made. If the antichrist is to make a new covenant with "many," the prophet would have used the appropriate language of "cutting a covenant."

Contrary to the dispensationalist theory, the seventieth week presents the high points of the Savior's ministry.<sup>13</sup> During the first half of the week He strengthened or confirmed the covenant through His teaching. An example of this is where Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, took a selection of the Ten Commandments from the old covenant and strengthened or deepened their meaning. Then in the middle of the week He brought to an end the theological meaning of the rounds of sacrifices by

## AN INVISIBLE "SECRET RAPTURE" OF TRUE BELIEVERS, WOULD END THE GREAT "PARENTHESIS" OR CHURCH AGE WHICH BEGAN WHEN THE JEWS REJECTED CHRIST.

Testament prophecies concerning Israel would be literally fulfilled,<sup>7</sup> leading to the great tribulation which would end with the second coming of Christ in glory. At that time Christ would establish a literal one thousand-year kingdom on earth with Israel at its center.

Darby's eschatological views figured prominently in American fundamentalism in the 1920s when conservative Christians defended orthodox Protestant Christianity against the challenges of Darwinism and liberal theology. Today, most evangelical Christians have accepted the main pillars of Darby's eschatology.

The concept of a rapture prior to the final tribulation period was not new with Darby. "Peter Jurieu in his book *Approaching Deliverance of the Church* (1687) taught that Christ would come in the air to rapture the saints and return to heaven before the battle of Armageddon. He spoke of a secret rapture prior to His coming in glory and the judgment at Armageddon. Philip Doderidge's commentary on the New Testament (1738) and John Gill's commentary on the New Testament (1748) both used the term rapture and spoke of it as imminent. It

taught in schools like Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Theological Seminary. Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* and many books of a similar nature further propagated the secret rapture theory.

### Investigating the rapture theory

The rapture theory is based on a number of assumptions. Due to space limitations, we can briefly investigate only two of them: (1) that the seventieth week of the seventy-week prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27 is still future; and (2) that the church will not go through the great tribulation.

#### 1. *The Seventieth Week of Daniel 9:27.*

Though the idea that Daniel's seventieth week is still future surfaced first in the writings of Irenaeus (second century A.D.),<sup>9</sup> it played no significant role in Christian theology until it became a foundational pillar of dispensationalism in the nineteenth century. According to this view, the sixty-nine weeks end with the triumphal entry, and the seventieth week "is separated from the other sixty-nine by an indefinite period of time."<sup>10</sup> Why? Because the church age is seen as a parenthesis in God's plan,

offering Himself up for the salvation of the human race. Thus the everlasting covenant was confirmed and ratified by the death of Jesus Christ.

## 2. The Church and the Great Tribulation.

According to dispensationalism, the tribulation after the rapture of the church will last seven years. Its purpose is "to bring about the conversion of a multitude of Jews"<sup>14</sup> who will experience the fulfillment of Israel's covenants. First Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Romans 5:9; and Revelation 3:10 support this concept.

Careful exegesis of the texts in Romans and 1 Thessalonians indicates that the "wrath to come" refers to God's wrath which will destroy the wicked at the Second Coming<sup>15</sup> as indicated in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. It is the manifestation of God's wrath in the final judgment, not the time of tribulation preceding Christ's coming. Paul says that we "wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10). It is the second advent of Christ, at which time the rapture will take place, that delivers us from the wrath to come. Hence this wrath cannot come prior to the Second Advent.

The "hour of trial (*peirasmos*)" in Revelation 3:10, may well refer to the great tribulation, but the text does not say that God's people will not experience it. The phrase "will keep you from" comes from the two Greek words *téreo* and *ek*. *Téreo* has the meaning "to keep watch over," "guard," "preserve";<sup>16</sup> and the preposition *ek* has the basic meaning of "out of," "from"<sup>17</sup> referring to coming out of something or from somewhere. Another Greek preposition (*apo*) expresses the idea of separation, "away from."<sup>18</sup>

In His high-priestly prayer Jesus says: "I do not pray that You should take them out [*ek*] of the world, but that You should keep [*téreo*] them from [*ek*] the evil one" (John 17:15, NKJV). To "keep from the evil one" does not mean that Satan could not

tempt the disciples, but Jesus is asking the Father to keep the disciples safe in the temptation, to watch over them, and to prevent Satan from overcoming them.

Similarly, in 2 Peter 2:9 the apostle writes: "the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of [*ek*] temptations [*peirasmos*]" (NKJV). The apostle here is not saying that God's people will be kept away from (*apo*) temptations, but that He will deliver them out of (*ek*) the midst of them. In the same way the apostle John in Revelation 3:10 is not saying that the believers will be kept away from (*apo*) the hour of trial (*peirasmos*), which is the same word as "temptations" in 2 Peter 2:9, but that they will be kept safe during that time.

Thus none of the texts used to support the idea that the church will not go through the great tribulation is really saying that. In fact Scripture clearly teaches that the saints of God will go through the great tribulation (Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:11; Luke 21:12-19; Rev. 13:14-17).<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

The rapture theory, of recent origin, has captured the imagination of millions of sincere Christians. Its central teaching—that the fulfillment of the seventieth week of Daniel's 70-week prophecy is still future—is based on unbiblical presuppositions, and its teaching that the church will not go through the great tribulation caters to the human emotion of fear of hardship, but it is contrary to the Bible's teaching. According to Scripture, the church will experience the great tribulation, but will be delivered out of it through the rapture at Jesus' second advent. ■

1 Trademark owned by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois

2 Martin Luther, for example, said: "I believe the pope is the masked and incarnate devil, because he is the Antichrist" *Sämtliche Schriften* (St. Louis: Concordia Pub. House [1887]), 23:845.

3 L. R. Conradi, *The Impelling Force of Prophetic Truth* (London: Thynne and B. Co., Ltd., 1935), 346.

4 Ibid., 2:489-93

5 *An Enquiry Into the Grounds on Which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John has been supposed to Consist of 1260 Years*, 2nd ed. (London: 1837), 2.

6 See Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 292.

7 This view completely ignores the conditional nature of many Old Testament prophecies (Deut. 28:1, 15; Jer. 4:1; 18:7-10).

8 See Mal Couch, ed., *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology: A Practical Guide to the People, Viewpoints, and History of Prophetic Studies* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1996), 346.

9 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.25.3, (Ante-Nicene Fathers, 1:554). Speaking of the antichrist he says, Daniel "points out the time that this tyranny shall last, during which the saints shall be put to flight, they who offer a pure sacrifice unto God: 'And in the midst of the week,' he says, 'The sacrifice and the libation shall be taken away, and the abomination of desolation [shall be brought] into the temple . . . Now three years and six months constitute the half week.'"

10 J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 247.

11 None of the supposed prophecies with gaps listed by Pentecost (247) are time prophecies. All are based on the idea that Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel must be literally fulfilled to Israel in the future.

12 1. verse 25—Messiah (*mashiach*)—Prince (*nagid*)—A+B

2. verse 26a—Messiah (*mashiach*)—A-

3. verse 26b—Prince (*nagid*)—B

"This pattern suggests that all three references are to the same Messiah Prince designated by the first occurrence of this word pair in verse 25. If so, then 'the people of the ruler who will come' refers to the people of the Messiah . . . If this interpretation is correct, in what sense did the people of the Jewish Messiah Prince destroy the city and the sanctuary in A.D. 70? The Roman army was indeed the physical agent which brought about the literal destruction of Jerusalem. But why did they destroy it? They did so because Judea had rebelled against Rome. If Judea had not rebelled, the Roman army would never have come there, and Jerusalem would have been spared." W. H. Shea, *Daniel 7-12* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1996), 75, 76.

13 In dispensational thinking Christ's death does not even fall within the 70-week period. "The cutting off of the Messiah took place only a few days after the sixty-ninth week terminated" (*Pentecost*, 248) and about two thousand years before the seventieth week begins sometime in the future.

14 Ibid., 237.

15 See John Stott, *Romans* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 146; John Murray, *Epistle to the Romans* NICNT (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1965), 171; Charles Wanamaker, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Thessalonians* NIGTC (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 1990), 88.

16 W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, "Téreo," *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

17 Ibid., "ek."

18 Ibid., "apo."

19 To claim that these texts refer to the Jewish remnant and not to the church (Pentecost, 278, 238) is again based on the assumption that God must literally fulfill His prophecies to Israel.

# The rapture

## A pastor's concern

Steve Wohlberg



Steve Wohlberg  
pastors the  
Fort Worth First  
Seventh-day  
Adventist Church, in  
Fort Worth, Texas.

Christians are talking about the best-selling series of novels, *Left Behind*<sup>TM</sup>,\* by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. So far, eight books in the series have been released, with a ninth, *Desecration*, slated to hit Christian bookstores in the United States on October 30.

The question of whether or not there will be a secret rapture is not minor. Ministers of the gospel, whatever their denomination, may eventually have to take a position on this controversial issue. Why?

Starting with the simplest of reasons, because we pastors are often and increasingly being asked by our congregations about this topic. As shepherds of the flocks God has given to us, we need to have answers that lead in a right and helpful direction. Secondly, as part of our ministerial calling, we have been commissioned to preach the return of our Lord. Paul wrote to Timothy, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:1, 2). Here ministers are told to "preach the word," and to do so in the light of "his appearing."

What is the truth about the rapture? Will millions of Christians one day vanish, as taught in *Left Behind*? Will Jesus remove His followers before a final period of tribulation? Will those who miss this rapture have a sec-

ond chance to be saved? These are important questions, and we need biblical answers. From a practical perspective, the issue is this: Should we tell our church members that God will remove them from this world prior to earth's final days, or should we prepare them to pass through, endure, and overcome the deceptive, closing assaults of Satan before the visible return of Jesus Christ?

### The biblical teaching

It is impossible in this short article to examine every passage in the Bible relevant to this topic, but we can look briefly at the most important ones.

The main scripture used to support the idea of a rapture before the visible second coming of Jesus Christ is found in 1 Thessalonians 4. It is quoted in *Left Behind: The Movie*. According to sincere yet, I believe, misguided Bible teachers around the world, those words depict the sudden disappearing of believers prior to the final tribulation.

Is this actually what the Bible says? Paul wrote. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 4:16-5:3).

Do these verses teach a silent coming of Jesus Christ prior to a tribulation during which those who are "left behind" will be given a second chance to be saved? They do not. Instead, Jesus is described as literally coming down from heaven with a shout, a voice, and a trumpet! This is not a silent and secret return. A global resurrection takes place, and then believers are "caught up."

These two words, "caught up," are interpreted to mean vanish, yet the text does not say this. Just as Jesus was literally "taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9), even so does a simple reading of



these verses teach a literal and visible translation of Christians at the end of the world. And what about those who are not “caught up”? What will happen to them? Paul’s answer is clear, “they shall not escape” (1 Thess. 5:3).

The idea of Jesus coming as a thief is often interpreted to mean a silent and secret arrival. Yet the context doesn’t support this. Notice carefully, “the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (verses 2, 3). This is not a silent coming, but an unexpected one which results in the sudden destruction of those not prepared.

Thus the biblical evidence in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 points to a loud, climactic, highly visible, second coming of Jesus Christ, a literal catching up of true believers, and the sudden destruction of those not prepared for this event. No second chances are offered.

Another passage used to support the secret rapture idea is found in Matthew 24. Jesus said, “Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Matt. 24:40). Supposedly, those left behind will then be ushered into earth’s final period of tribulation.

Once again, does the context support this? A few verses earlier Jesus said His coming would be far from secret. “Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (verses 26, 27). In contrast to mistaken ideas of a secret return, Jesus compares His coming to the brilliant flashing of lightning bolts hurtling across the sky.

Concerning His coming, Jesus declared, “But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that

were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left” (Matt. 24:37-40).

Just as the Flood came suddenly upon the lost, and “took them all away,” even so will the coming of Jesus Christ be. “Then shall two be in

## WHAT SHALL WE TELL OUR CHURCH MEMBERS WHEN WE PREACH ABOUT “HIS APPEARING”?

the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.” This happens at the end of the world. Did the unsaved in Noah’s day receive a second chance? No, they did “not escape.” The parallel is clear. Neither will those who are not ready for the return of Jesus Christ when He comes visibly like lightning flashing across the sky.

Some Christian movies describe a secret rapture taking place in “a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” before the tribulation. Yet once again, the context reveals another story. Paul wrote, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump [as in 1 Thess. 4:16 and Matt. 24:31]: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:52). These words do not describe a secret

event, but rather a loud, distinctly announced return of Jesus Christ, and the instantaneous changing of our mortal bodies. This happens “at the last trump,” that is, at the end of the world.

### What shall we say to our congregations?

So what shall we tell our church members when we preach about “His appearing”? Should we lead them to expect to escape the final days through a secret rapture prior to the tribulation? Or should we seek to prepare them to endure to the end of the world? Jesus said, “He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” (Matt. 24:13). Paul also urged his converts, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:13).

Jesus said, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matt. 7:24-27).

I have concluded that we should not expect, nor teach a secret rapture before a tribulation or time of trouble.<sup>1</sup> We should “preach the word,” preparing our people to endure the coming storm.

The best place to prepare is at the foot of the Cross. ■

\* Trademark owned by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.

1 My book, *Truth Left Behind*, goes into greater detail about this important subject ([www.truthleftbehind.com](http://www.truthleftbehind.com)).

# The rapture

## The blessed hope, Jesus, and Paul

Hans K. LaRondelle



Hans K. LaRondelle, Th.D., is professor emeritus of theology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

**T**he apostolic church lived in expectation of Christ's return in glory and power. Paul defined Christians as those who experience the grace of God, live a sanctified life, and "wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation [*epiphaneia*, "appearance"] of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).<sup>\*</sup> This "blessed hope" of the glorious appearance of Christ "to judge the living and the dead" (2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:14), became the Christian hope of the church, until John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), of the Plymouth Brethren in England, began to teach the novel theory of a "pretribulation rapture"—a secret, invisible "rapture" of Christians to heaven some seven years before Christ's coming in glory.<sup>1</sup> According to this viewpoint, at the rapture, Christ comes invisibly "for" His saints; at the glorious *parousia* (advent) or *epiphaneia* (appearing), Christ will return with the saints. This construct of a two-phase second advent is the result of a system of hermeneutics called "literalism," originated by Darby and popularized by C. I. Scofield in the (New) Scofield Reference Bible.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental difference between the secret rapture theory and historic Christianity is the doctrine that Christ will return in glory exactly seven years after the rapture of the church. Hidden in this human construct is a secret date-setting for the Second Advent, something explicitly forbidden by Christ

(Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:6, 7). Serious Bible students have written many critical evaluations of this futurism or Dispensationalism, especially of the radical dichotomy it creates between Israel and the church.<sup>3</sup>

We offer a brief review of the biblical position on the blessed hope as taught by Jesus and Paul. The main passages are Matthew 24:29-31; John 14:3; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; and 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; 2:1-8. Every text needs to be interpreted within the framework of its own literary and historical context. Our use of the words "church," "Israel," *parousia* (advent) and "imminent," must be determined by the progressive revelation of the New Testament instead of by dogmatic considerations.

### Jesus' teaching about His future *parousia*

Of the four Gospels only Matthew 24 uses the term *parousia* (presence, coming, arrival) for His glorious appearance at the end of the world. From the start, Christ's coming is connected with God's retributive judgment at the end of the age: "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming [*parousia*] and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3; cf. 13:39, 40, 49, 50). Jesus affirmed this concurrence when He replied that all peoples on earth will see the "sign" of His *parousia* when He arrives on a cloud of angels in the sky "with power and great glory" as the "Son of Man" of Daniel's judgment vision (Dan. 7:13, 14): "Immediately after the suffering [*thlipsis*, "tribulation, distress"] of those days [cosmic signs will occur] . . . Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:29, 30). Christ emphasized the universal visibility of His *parousia*, stating: "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of Man" (verse 27).

It is essential to recognize that Jesus adopted the phrases "tribulation," "Son of Man," "the clouds of heaven," "power and great glory," all from Daniel's visions. Daniel 7 and 12 depict the final deliverance of God's faithful covenant people as coming after their tribulation by the end-time enemy of God (Dan. 7:25-27; 12:1, 2). Daniel thus portrayed a post-tribulation deliverance of the

saints through the intervention of the royal "Son of Man" or celestial Michael. Jesus claimed to be that heavenly King-Messiah of Daniel's vision and announced that God's judgment will be dramatically realized at His parousia in awesome power and glory. All people on earth will not only witness His parousia but, as a consequence, also "mourn" or be filled with bitter remorse and despair.<sup>4</sup>

This apocalyptic "mourning" in Matthew 24 is repeated and expanded by John in his Apocalypse: "Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail" (Rev. 1:7; see its enlargement in Rev. 6:12-17). This worldwide "wailing" is not the mourning of repentance but that of hopelessness and fear for the approaching judgment, because they will all "see" Him "coming on the clouds of heaven." Contemporary Greek writings used the word *parousia* as the official term for the triumphant arrival of kings and rulers on a visit to a town.<sup>5</sup> Jesus endorsed Daniel's prophetic perspective by declaring that His parousia would occur "immediately" after the end-time tribulation of His people (Matt. 24:21, 22, 29, 30; cf. Dan. 12:1). Clearly, Jesus also taught a post-tribulation parousia.

What dispensationalists assume, however, is that Jesus directed His prophetic discourse exclusively to His disciples as representatives of Israel as the "elect nation," so that Matthew 24 is not applicable to the church, the rapture, or the resurrection.<sup>6</sup>

Ironically, of all the four Gospel writers, Matthew alone uses the term *ekklesia*, "church" (16:18; 18:17). Matthew defines the "church" of Christ as the body of all who—like the apostle Peter—confess Jesus as Israel's Messiah (16:16-19), as the body in which Christ's presence dwells until His parousia or the end of the age (18:20; 28:20). Jesus called those believers "His elect" and "His church" (16:18; 24:31; cf. John 6:44; 12:32).

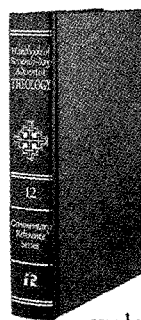
It is difficult to see how anyone can deny the fact that the apostles, to whom Jesus addressed His prophetic discourse, were also the founders and first members of the Christian church, which Christ had earlier called "My church." The apostles are representatives of all believers among all nations (Acts 1:8). Jesus' prophetic discourse in Matthew 24 is therefore addressed to the apostolic church till the end of the age (Matt. 28:19, 20). Any attempt to separate the apostles or Matthew 24 from the "church" is an unbiblical compartmentalization. Peter called all church members a "chosen people" (1 Peter 2:9) and "God's elect" (1:1, 2, NIV). Paul likewise called the church "God's elect" (Rom. 8:33; cf. Titus 1:1; Eph. 1:42; 2 Tim. 2:10; ). Jesus certainly did not restrict "His elect" to a Jewish remnant of believers after He witnessed greater faith in a Roman centurion than in any Israelite: "I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:11, 12).

The argument "from silence" that

Jesus did not mention the rapture or the resurrection in Matthew 24 because "the rapture does not occur at the second coming" (Walvoord),<sup>7</sup> begs the question. Such a precarious assumption is not based on Scripture but on doctrinal considerations. In Matthew 24, Jesus replied to the particular question of His disciples regarding the sign of His parousia (verse 3). In His answer Jesus pointed to the book of Daniel as the primary source for His reply (verse 15). There we read how the deliverance of the saints from the end-time tribulation will occur: the celestial Michael will descend for their rescue and bring about the resurrection of the dead (see Dan. 12:1, 2). We must read Matthew 24 therefore against the background of Daniel to receive the fuller picture. Shortly afterward, when Jesus assured His disciples that He would "come again" to "take" them to His Father's house in heaven (John 14:2, 3), He did not suggest a "secret" rapture, but explained the comforting purpose of His earlier promise of their resurrection on "the last day": "This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day" (John 6:40, 44, 54).

## *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*

### **Volume 12** *in the Commentary Reference Series*



This new volume in the Commentary Reference Series reviews carefully the biblical teachings undergirding the dynamic Adventist movement. Its purpose is to provide for both believers and inquirers a faith-centered, reasoned exploration of these truths as seen by Seventh-day Adventists. This 1,000-page resource covers 28 topics including the fundamental beliefs.  
0-8280-1460-4. Hardcover. US\$37.99, Can\$56.99.

Available at your local Adventist Book Center.

1-800-765-6955

[www.adventistbookcenter.com](http://www.adventistbookcenter.com).

*Price and availability subject to change. Add GST in Canada.*



## Paul's apocalyptic gospel

As early as 50 or 51 A.D., Paul wrote two pastoral letters to the Thessalonian church, which he had founded himself. Because the citizens of Thessalonica strongly favored the rule of the Roman emperor, they became hostile to those who glorified Christ as their Redeemer-King (see Acts 17:1-9).<sup>8</sup> Paul's central theme for the Thessalonian Christians was the hope for the Parousia, a term he used seven times in these epistles.

Paul described the blessed hope of the church with a preponderance of parallels with Matthew 24. One scholar concluded from his detailed comparison: "For in the Matthean and Pauline accounts we find the same Greek words used in the same sense and in similar contexts."<sup>9</sup> Another listed twenty-four substantial parallels between Matthew 24-25 and 1 and 2 Thessalonians, stating: "There is a greater amount of material parallel to Matthew's account than to either Mark's or Luke's, leading to the

conclusion that the words of Jesus as recorded by Matthew were the source of Paul's teaching."<sup>10</sup>

Paul recognized the authority of Jesus' teaching and appealed to "the word of the Lord" for his description of the Christian hope (1 Thess. 4:15). He adopted many of Jesus' key expressions and concepts, such as: the parousia from heaven, the final gathering of the saints by the angels, the clouds of heaven, the blast of the last trumpet, the coming of the Day of the Lord as a thief in the night. Jesus and Paul also emphasize that a sacrilegious apostasy will develop within the institutional church, accompanied by deceptive signs and lying wonders, before the gathering of the saints at the glorious parousia of Christ (Matt. 24:10-12, 24, 29, 30; 2 Thess. 2:1, 3-10). No wonder that New Testament scholars who have compared the two accounts meticulously, agree that "the substantial parallelism is remarkably extensive, and it includes parallelism of structure as well as of ideas."<sup>11</sup> This

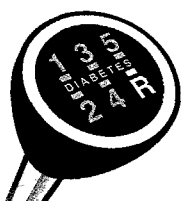
evidence requires that we consider Paul's eschatology as an elucidation and application of Jesus' prophetic discourse.

Paul may have used a source of "Logia," an original collection of sayings of Jesus, that antedated the writing of Matthew's Gospel. We focus on Paul's use of the key term *parousia* in comparison to its use by Jesus in Matthew 24. Paul responded to the question of some in the church of Thessalonica as to whether those who had died in the Lord had any disadvantage at the Parousia over those who will survive. Would the sleeping saints miss the glory of the Parousia? They needed reassurance of the Christian hope in contrast to those who had no hope (1 Thess. 4:13).

Paul grounded the hope of the gospel on the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus: "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died" (1 Thess. 4:14). This passage affirms that all who die in the Lord will surely be resurrected, just as Jesus died and rose again from the dead. The phrase, "God will bring with him," does not suggest any return of souls from heaven to earth but God's act of bringing the dead back from the grave, just as God had brought Jesus back from the tomb as the "first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

Paul explained his creedal statement as follows: "For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming [*parousia*] of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

Paul's purpose was not to describe



## Reversing Diabetes and Obesity Naturally

Learn to naturally reverse Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and obesity with the NEWSTART® Lifestyle. Hear scientific evidence from experienced Christian physicians. Discover simple lifestyle choices that eliminate or reduce the need for medications in this intensive three-day seminar. RN & RD earn 12 CEU.

Call Today

1-800-525-9192

[www.ReversingDiabetes.org](http://www.ReversingDiabetes.org)

NEWSTART® Lifestyle Program  
PO Box 486, Weimar, CA 95736  
A Non-Profit Christian Wellness Center

### 2001 Seminar Calendar

January 2-4	Sacramento, CA area Weimar Institute
February 6-8	San Diego/LA, CA area Calvary Chapel Conf Cen
March 20-22	Seattle, WA area Warm Beach Methodist Conf Cen
April 10-12	Baltimore, MD area Sandy Cove Conf Cen
May 22-24	Asheville, NC area Ridgecrest Baptist Conf Cen
June 19-21	Chicago, IL area Wheaton College Conf Cen
July 17-19	Colorado Springs, CO Glen Eyrie Conf Cen
August 5-7	Sacramento, CA area Weimar Institute
September 4-6	Albany, NY area Silver Bay YMCA Conf Cen
September 25-27	Santa Cruz, CA area Mt. Harmon Conf Cen
October 23-25	Santa Fe, NM area Glorieta Baptist Conf Cen
November 6-8	Portland, OR area Cannon Beach Conf Cen



the signs that introduce the Second Advent, but “by the word [or authority] of the Lord” to answer the specific question regarding the sleeping saints in relation to the Parousia. Only the aspect of the dead in Christ, mentioned four times in verses 13-16, is in view to reassure the grieving believers that the dead in Christ will have no disadvantage over the surviving saints, because they will “rise first.” Both groups will then simultaneously (*hama sun*) be snatched up to meet the Lord in the air.

The advent of Christ thus synchronizes with the resurrection and translation of the saints! In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 Paul clearly expanded in detail what Jesus had revealed in Matthew 24:30, 31. There is no need or justification for compartmentalizations. We should not assume that Paul suddenly reveals a different gathering and resurrection of the saints and a different parousia than the one mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24. The same trumpet that announces the angelic gathering of the elect in Matthew 24:31 also calls forth the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16. As Commander in Chief of the hosts of angels, Christ will appear in the sky and send forth His “cry” of command like a loud trumpet blast at His glorious parousia. Thus in this clearest text (1 Thess. 4:16, 17) addressing any kind of “rapture,” if taken literally, Paul teaches the very opposite of a secret rapture.

In his famous “resurrection chapter” to the church in Corinth, Paul introduced the apocalyptic “trumpet” again to announce the resurrection and the translation of all the saints: “Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). Paul does not state that the rapture will take place “in a moment,” a popular misconception, but that the

perishable body of the believer will be “changed” instantaneously into an immortal body “in the twinkling of an eye” (see also Phil. 3:20, 21). This translation into glory will take place,

living (2 Thess. 3:10, 11). This led Paul to a pastoral refutation of this premature sense of apocalyptic fulfillment. Paul reminded them of his previous instruction concerning the future rise

## THE ADVENT OF CHRIST THUS SYNCHRONIZES WITH THE RESURRECTION AND TRANSLATION OF THE SAINTS!

however, only “at the last trumpet,” which will be heard, according to Jesus, at His glorious parousia (Matt. 24:31).

The other question the Thessalonians asked Paul concerned the intervening time before the Day of the Lord arrives: “concerning the times and the seasons [*kairoi*, dates]” (1 Thess. 5:1). Paul replied that such a question is beside the point (see also Acts 1:7), since the date of that Day cannot be calculated, for “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2)—sudden and unexpected for unbelievers (verse 3), but expected by the saints because they live in constant readiness of the approaching end (5:4-8; cf. Matt. 25:13).

Paul stressed that the Day of the Lord, or the parousia of Christ (1 Thess. 5:23), will have a twofold aspect: “For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:9). Paul used this “wrath” to indicate the wrath or retributive judgment of God (1:10; Rom. 5:9), which he described in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

In his second letter to the church at Thessalonica Paul faced a different situation. Now he had to respond to an error regarding the timing of the parousia of the Lord and of its gathering of the saints (2 Thess. 2:1). Some in the Thessalonian church believed that “the day of the Lord” was “already here” (verse 2). As a result of this belief, some had become disorderly and refused to work for their

of “the lawless one” in the church age, as an event that must come before the Day of the Lord (2:3). Because that antichrist figure had not yet made his “parousia” apparent with “power, signs, lying wonders,” Paul said that the day of Christ’s parousia could not yet have come (verses 3, 4, 9).

As a second argument against their unjustified insistence on the expectation of Christ’s coming as being immediately imminent, Paul reminded the Thessalonians of the well-known “restraining” power that prevented the public coming of the “lawless one” to reveal himself “in the temple of God” at that time (2:4-7).<sup>12</sup> To properly understand Paul’s prediction of a massive “apostasy” or falling away from the Christian faith before the Day of the Lord, we must recognize Paul’s application of Daniel’s outline prophecies regarding the enemy of God (in chapters 7; 8; 11; 12). From Daniel 7 the Church Fathers learned that the “restrainer” who delays the rise of the antichrist, was the civil power of the Roman Empire and its emperor.<sup>13</sup> Dispensationalists insist that the “restrainer,” who must be “removed” before the “lawless one” can be revealed, is the Holy Spirit working through the church, thus assuming a hint at the rapture of the church “at any time.”<sup>14</sup>

In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul’s intention is precisely to refute such an expectation by his use of Daniel’s sequence of world empires in his prophetic forecasts (2 Thess. 2:3, 4 applies Dan. 7:25; 8:25; 11:36, as the

*New American Standard Bible* rightly indicates). Daniel is the indispensable key to understanding Paul's outline of the church age in 2 Thessalonians 2.<sup>15</sup> Paul urges the church therefore to watch for the signs of the predicted apostasy (cf. Acts 20:29, 30), so that the Parousia or Day of the Lord will not surprise her like a thief (1 Thess. 5:1-6).

Paul stressed the effect of the glorious Parousia on the antichrist: the Lord will come to destroy the lawless one "with the breath of his mouth, annihilating him by the manifestation of his coming [parousia]" (2 Thess. 2:8). The effect on the saints will be quite the opposite: "As to the coming [parousia] of the Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to Him [episynagōgē] . . ." (2:1; cf. 1 Thess. 2:19; 4:15-17). Thus Paul repeats the inseparable union of the Parousia and the rapture, which he had described earlier at length in 1 Thessalonians 4.

Paul's apocalyptic gospel resembles closely that of Jesus in Matthew 24:21-31. Both Jesus and Paul present the Second Coming and the rapture as a single event that will occur

immediately after the tribulation brought about by the antichrist. While Jesus warned particularly against the deception of a secret, invisible parousia (Matt. 24:26, 27), Paul warned specifically against the deception of a premature, "any-moment" parousia (2 Thess. 2:3-8). ▀

\* Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture passages in this article are from the New Revised Standard Version.

- 1 J. F. Walvoord explains: "Pretribulationism arose as a refinement of premillennialism based on literal interpretation of prophecy" (*The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1976, 48]). More correct is the assessment of David P. Gullón concerning Darby's two-stage coming of Christ: "The idea of the secret rapture of the church prior to the tribulation was a radical departure from historic premillennialism" (*An Investigation of Dispensational Premillennialism: An Analysis and Evaluation of the Eschatology of John F. Walvoord* [Ph.D. Diss. at Andrews Univ., Berrien Springs, Mich., 1992, 12]).
- 2 See C. C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965, 44, 45). For a critical evaluation of the dispensational eschatology of John Walvoord, see David P. Gullón, see Note 1.
- 3 See O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1974); G. E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); A. Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ* (Grand Rapids: International Pub., 1975); R. H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids:

Zondervan Pub. House, 1973); R. R. Reiter, P. Feinberg, G. L. Archer, D. J. Moo, *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984); A. A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, ch. 15); H. K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God. Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews Univ. Mon., *Studies in Religion*, Vol. 13, 1993, 8th pr.); G. A. Blaising and D. L. Bock, eds., *Dispensationalism: Israel and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

- 4 See K. K. Kim, *The Signs of the Parousia*. Ph.D. Diss. at Andrews Univ., 1994. Korean Sahmyook Univ., Mon. Doct. Series 3. Seoul, Korea, 1994. Dr. Kim states: "Nowhere else in the New Testament is there a Parousia scene composed of six apocalyptic motifs as we find in Matt 24:29-31" (364). See his treatment of the Old Testament sources of the apocalyptic "mourning," on pp. 231-39.
- 5 See *Dictionary of the New Testament*. C. Brown, ed., 2:898-901 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976). A. Deissmann concluded: "We can now say that the best interpretation of the original Parousia hope is the old advent promise: 'Lo, your King comes to you!'" (Light from the Ancient East, 1911, 372). Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), 635.
- 6 See J. F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1976) 34, 35. Cf. The New Scofield Reference Bible, note on Matthew 24:3.
- 7 Ibid., 59.
- 8 See A. Smith in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 11 (2000):675-78.
- 9 J. B. Orchard, "Thessalonians and the Synoptic Gospels," *Biblica* 19 (1938):19-42; quotation on 37. See also D. Ford, *The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology* (Washington, D.C.: Univ. Press of America, 1979), 198-210. L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*. Gleerup Lund, Sweden, 1966, 178-205.
- 10 G. H. Waterman, "The Sources of Paul's Teaching on the 2nd Coming of Christ in 1 and 2 Thessalonians," *Journal of the Ev. Theol. Soc.* 18:2 (1975):105-113; quotation from 113, italics added.
- 11 D. Wenham, "Paul and the Synoptic Apocalypse," in *Gospel Perspectives*. Vol. 2, R. T. France and D. Wenham, eds., JSOT Press, 1981, 345-75; quotation from 352.
- 12 See Hans K. LaRondelle, "The Middle Ages within the Scope of Apocalyptic Prophecy," *JETS* 32/3 (1989): 345-354; *How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible* (Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997), ch. 7, "Paul's Understanding of Daniel's Prophecies."
- 13 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 25 (ANF 1:554), already interpreted 2 Thess. 2 by means of Daniel 7. See LaRondelle, "Paul's Prophetic Outline in 2 Thess. 2," *AUSS* 21:1 (1983): 61-69, esp. 64. G. E. Ladd states: "The traditional view has been that the restraining principle is the Roman Empire and the restrainer the Emperor. This view, or a modification of it, fits best into the Pauline theology" (*A Theology of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1974], 560).
- 14 See Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation*, 128. J. D. Pentecost, *Things To Come* (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham, 1961), 296.
- 15 For a brief treatment on the main allusions to Old Testament prophecies in 2 Thess. 2:4, see H. K. LaRondelle, in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), 866-69; *The Israel of God in Prophecy*, ch. 2.

# PLANT THE FUTURE



Want to reignite your passion for soul-winning?  
Plant a church!

This book is for frustrated but loyal members eager to invest their lives in hastening Jesus' return. Using an effective, storytelling style, author Ron Gladden gets right to the heart of the matter. If his statistics don't persuade you, his enthusiasm will. "Church planting is the Gospel Commission at its finest."

US \$7.95 + 18% s&h

Ministerial Association Resource Center ♦ 12501 Old Columbia Pike ♦ Silver Spring MD 20904

Phone: 888.771.0738 (toll-free) or 301.680.6508 ♦ Fax: 301.680.6502

Email: [paynec@gc.adventist.org](mailto:paynec@gc.adventist.org) ♦ Web site: [www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com)

Also available at your local ABC

The questions have existed for centuries...

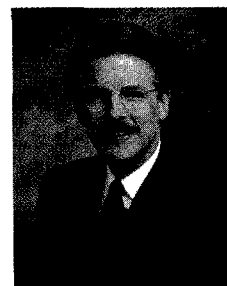
# DOES GOD REALLY EXIST?

# DOES HE CARE?

On September 15, 2001 people all  
across North America will discover the

## EVIDENCE

Over a year in the making, Faith For Today is proud  
to announce the premiere of their newest television  
series ***Evidence***. An engaging half-hour that exam-  
ines important issues of the mind, heart and soul.



Host Pastor Dwight K. Nelson

Discover compelling ***Evidence*** that God exists and  
He cares. Do you have questions? Do you know  
someone who does? Then you won't want to miss  
the premiere of ***Evidence***.

### Premiering On:

Safe TV



and on other television and radio stations all across North America.

Find out how you can view ***Evidence*** in your area, call toll free 888-940-0062 or visit our  
web-site [ffttv.org](http://ffttv.org) to see our latest stations.

Faith For Today Television *Engaging the mind, touching the heart*

## EVIDENCE

# Dealing with criticism

Victor M. Parachin



Victor M. Parachin  
writes from Tulsa,  
Oklahoma.

**D**uring his presidency, Abraham Lincoln was greatly respected and greatly reviled. Blamed for plunging the nation into civil war, he was the president people loved to hate. Those who opposed his views regarding the war and slavery as well as his efforts to keep the nation united were vocal and uninhibited in denouncing him.

One day during the darkest days of his presidency, Lincoln was walking down a street near the Capitol in Washington when an acquaintance caught up with him. As they walked, the man brought up the subject of the growing anti-Lincoln sentiment flowing in Washington and throughout the country. With brutal honesty the man related to Lincoln many of the stories outlining attacks on Lincoln and his policies. As the man spoke, Lincoln remained completely silent and absorbed in his own thoughts.

Finally, the exasperated man asked: "Mr. Lincoln, have you heard me? Are you listening to me?"

Lincoln stopped, looked directly at him and said: "Yes, I have heard you, but let me tell you a story. You know that during the time of the full moon it is the habit of all the dogs to come out at night and bark and bark and bark at the moon. This keeps on as long as the moon is clearly visible in the sky." Then he stopped speaking and continued his walk.

Confused by Lincoln's response, his exas-

perated companion persisted: "Mr. Lincoln, you haven't finished your story. Tell me the rest of it!" Once again Lincoln stopped walking, and said: "There is nothing more to tell. The moon keeps right on shining."

President Lincoln is a good role model for managing criticism. Although he was aware of his shortcomings and knew that many highly respected and influential people disagreed with him, the president listened to the criticism and still followed his own intuitive sense that his policies would eventually win over critics and unify the country.

One of life's challenging realities is the fact that there are always people around us who are faultfinders, people who seldom see the good but are quick to point out the negative. Like Lincoln, all of us need to find ways of hearing criticism without being detracted or destroyed by it. Here are several suggestions for clergy to deal with criticism creatively.

## **Do not be intimidated by criticism**

Fear of criticism is a greater threat than the criticism itself. People who are intimidated by their critics live timid, hesitant, and invisible lives. Elbert Hubbard says, "To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing." Cowering in the face of criticism always produces a negative impact upon life in general.

"Fear of criticism can affect you in ways both trivial and serious," notes Napoleon Hill in his book, *Keys to Success*. "It can lead you to buy the latest fashions, the fanciest cars, the most sophisticated stereo audio systems because you fear being left behind the times, out of step with what 'everyone' is doing. More insidiously, it can prevent you from presenting and acting on ideas that are revolutionary, ideas that would give you independence. It robs you of your individuality and your faith in yourself." Although the fear of criticism is a common one, face the fear with courage and conviction. Remind yourself you can feel the fear and still move forward. By refusing to be intimidated by critics, you rob them of their power to sap your initiative and creativity. As you move forward, opposing voices will shrink and shrivel in the presence of your determination.

## **Move from being emotionally fragile to emotionally resilient**

Some people let themselves become far too delicate emotionally and, as a result, are



extremely vulnerable to criticism of any kind. The antidote is to work at building emotional muscles so that you are stronger, more confident and less influenced by the opinions of other people.

One effective way of moving from being an emotionally fragile person to being a stronger and more emotionally resilient one is by locating and reciting biblical affirmations for yourself. Some excellent biblical affirmations include: "Be strong with the Lord's mighty power" (Eph. 6:10, NLT); "Be strong and do not fear" (Isa. 35:4), and "Take courage and work, for I am with you" (Haggai 2:4, NLT). Put these biblical statements in a place where you can't avoid looking at them at least three times a day. When you see them, read them aloud to reinforce them and have them permeate your mind and spirit.

### **Look for wisdom in criticism**

While many criticisms that come our way are unwarranted and unjustified, some criticism is not mere faultfinding but "friendly advice." Train your mind and spirit to sift out critical remarks that are simple nonsense from those that contain wisdom. When asked about criticisms frequently hurled at her, Eleanor Roosevelt replied: "Criticism makes very little dent upon me, unless I think there is some real justification and something should be done."

Responding positively to the wisdom in a critical comment can make us better people as well as enhance a career. Arthur Gordon tells of standing in a long line at an airport early one morning. Due to inclement weather, flights were delayed and canceled. Ahead of him in the line was an irate passenger. His plane had been delayed for over an hour. The plane crew ran out of coffee and he was furious. In a loud, angry voice, the man was berating the airline official behind the counter. The agent was patient and polite, frequently apologizing for the delay and inconvenience. In spite of the agent's

attempt to defuse the matter, the passenger continued to vent his anger.

Finally, an elderly woman, also standing in the line, made her way to the angry passenger and gently tapped him on the shoulder. "Do you mind if I say something to you," she said mildly. The passenger turned, looking surprised. "Sir," the woman explained, "you have just traveled across an entire continent in five or six hours. You were lifted above the clouds and drawn here through the skies where you saw the dawn rushing to meet you. You have just experienced a miracle that mankind could only dream about for thousands of years. And you stand there complaining about having no coffee!"

There was a long pause. Then the passenger replied quietly, "Madam, you are quite right. Thanks for setting me straight. It will be a long time before I forget what you just said." With that his angry confrontation with the airline official ended.

### **Take comfort from the life of Christ**

There is a valuable insight from Dale Carnegie. In his book, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*,<sup>1</sup> he writes: "Even if you and I are lied about, ridiculed, double-crossed, knifed in the back, and sold down the river by one out of every six of our most intimate friends—let's not indulge in an orgy of self-pity. Instead, let's remind ourselves that that's precisely what happened to Jesus. One of His twelve most intimate friends turned traitor for a bribe that would amount, in our modern money, to about nineteen dollars. Another one of His twelve most intimate friends openly deserted Him the moment He got into trouble, and declared three times that he didn't even know Jesus—and swore as he said it. One out of six! That's what happened to Jesus. Why should you and I expect a better score?"

The lesson from the life of Christ is this: anytime we are providing leadership and engaged in making our

home, our church, or our neighborhood a better place, there will be criticism. Expect it and don't be devastated by it.

### **Be guided by wisdom from other leaders**

Among the most criticized people in the world are United States presidents. Yet, they continue to lead, create policy and generally be at peace with themselves. When criticized, take comfort and guidance from the attitudes of some of them.

Ronald Reagan once explained: "I don't pay much attention to critics. The world is divided into two kinds of people: those who can, and those who criticize." Or consider these words from Theodore Roosevelt: "It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by the dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again . . . who knows the greater enthusiasms, the great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

### **Finally . . .**

Finally, when it comes to critics and criticisms, remember to follow the advice of Jesus: "Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!" (Matt. 5:44, TLB) While this may seem impossible to do while you are reeling under undeserved criticism, Jesus' advice is sound. Praying for those who hurt you brings an inner calm, peace of mind and, ultimately, freedom from the pains of criticism. ■

<sup>1</sup> Dale Carnegie, *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948).

# Pastoring on the postmodern frontline (part 2)

Samir Selmanovic

*In part one of this two part series, a philosophical base was laid for this more practical second article which deals with actually pastoring among postmodern people.*

Mark suggested to his wife, Jean, that they visit an Adventist church. "I'd like you to see the kind of a church I grew up in," he told her. "It'll be fun, like entering a time warp, like a walk through a museum!"

Mark supervises the computer division of a large Manhattan company. He goes to work in a T-shirt, jeans, and untied tennis shoes. He lives in a world of ideas. Jean is quiet, thoughtful, gentle. She's a journalist who grew up in an affluent family, an atmosphere of secular liberal humanism with connections to art celebrities and even the White House. The following Sabbath, as Mark had suggested, they came to observe the Adventist anachronism, the one in uptown New York.

I didn't notice them, not the first time they came and not for some weeks later. After attending for a couple of months, they wrote to me: "We want to become members, study the Bible, and contribute to the church in any way we can."

Within a year, Jean was baptized and Mark became a Bible Study Groups coordinator and a member of the church board. It was as simple as that!

Simple? Yes. But not so simple to understand if you're steeped in traditional church-growth literature. This couple never met the pastor before requesting membership. They were never reported as visitors and never became part of our database. So what made them decide to become followers of Jesus? It just doesn't fit the way we expect things to work, and they are not an isolated case. Dozens of disenchanted former Adventists and their secular friends have dropped by, found new faith, and joined our church.

My pastoring experience helped me identify three ways of ministering to contemporary people (postmoderns):

1. Communicating through life
2. Weaving the stories
3. Questioning the assumptions

## Communicating through life

Effective ministry to postmoderns doesn't just offer answers, it offers mysteries. It's a far-reaching ministry not merely a search for correct theological formulations. It's a search for truth and beauty and a search for a way of effectively introducing such beauty. As postmoderns maintain that the world is not there to be dissected, discussed, and exploited, but primarily to be cared for, enjoyed, and protected, so effective postmodern evangelism seeks to make sure that people are not there to be targeted and "statistically converted," but primarily to be valued and cherished.

When postmoderns find faith, they want it to be made of the stuff of life. Theology in the modern era lusted to emulate scientific certainty, and to give an objective, sanitized, and plausible explanation of God largely divorced from personal subjective variables. In modernity, subjective variables were considered a contamination in the process. So while we labored to put the "correct" map of Christian life together, we often excluded the data coming from the landscape of life itself. And life is always more complex, more perilous, and more beautiful than the maps our modernist theology has provided. For postmoderns, if the map does not fit the landscape, too bad for the map.

Look at the Bible. It is almost entirely made of poetry, personal letters, stories, and other forms of writing that include all the messy personal and relational variables. The Bible does not present situation-sanitized information about God. In modernity, this "messy"



Samir Selmanovic, Ph.D., is senior pastor of the Church of the Advent Hope, in Manhattan, New York.

form of the Bible was an embarrassment to us. To enhance our credibility we wanted the Bible to be more like a scientific textbook, a meticulously written, aseptic paper, a kind of legal, prescriptive code book. But what we have in fact in the Bible is a patchwork, a marvelously woven composite of complex, down-to-earth, divine-human interaction, which has as one of its central messages: God comes to us not as an object to be studied, He comes into and through the stuff of our particular lives.<sup>1</sup>

We have tried to teach people to study the Bible removed from their biases. But to study the Bible without our subjective variables is to try to study it without ourselves! It is asking people to have a relationship with a series of concepts instead of with God Himself in whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:24-28).

For postmoderns, there is no such thing as an abstract truth. Truth does not exist apart from a person or a community. This is affirmed in the teaching of Jesus who said, "I am . . . the truth," and to the teaching of the New Testament that God's church is the embodiment of Jesus Christ (John 14:1-7, 1 Cor. 12:27; 1 Peter 2:4-12). Truth to postmoderns must be incarnated to be communicated. Many of us are uncomfortable with this because we want truth to be laid out somewhere so that we can pursue it, control it, and hire good presenters to give it to others. On the contrary, postmoderns rightly seek the "embodiment of the truth."

Jesus clearly approves of this approach. He repeatedly asks his followers to judge who has the truth on the basis of their fruits (Matt. 7:15-23, John 15:5-8; 17:6-26). This is very unnerving to denominations that have based their claim to recognition merely on having a correct doctrine without a track-record of thoroughly changing people's lives. But the only truth that can actually be communicated to postmoderns is the one that is embodied in the life of a believer and in the life of a faith community.

## Weaving the stories

The modernist mind-set was extensively influenced by "foundationalism." Modernist scientists and philosophers held that a scientific theory or philosophy must have a logical structure built from the foundation up. Postmoderns think differently. They can hold quite contradictory beliefs without feeling discomfort or dissonance. They might believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior, but not believe the Bible is inspired. Or they might believe that it's wrong to kill, while holding to the relativity of many moral principles. If they were to attend an evangelistic series, they might be convinced that the presenta-

WE ASSUME  
THAT  
MAKING RATIONAL  
ARGUMENTS WILL  
CONVINCE PEOPLE.

tions are coherent and persuasive, but fail to think they should become believers. Why?

We assume that making rational arguments will convince people. We believe we can "corner" them by demonstrating that the prophecies have been fulfilled. Then we launch into further arguments of Christian apologetics. Traditionally, we have worked to discredit peoples' belief systems and then replace them with another one. Because we believe that belief systems are built on the foundational model, we launch an artillery attack on the belief systems of others thinking that they will crumble, and we are mystified when this does not happen.

Instead of using the modernist conception of building a foundation of belief and placing upon it further

layers of teaching, today we can instead conceptualize a person's belief system as a web of belief similar to that introduced by American philosopher Richard Rorty.<sup>2</sup>

A web consists mostly of holes with its strength in the connections. The threads of this web are composed of hopes, feelings, events, dreams, statements, facts, observations, stories, and fears—the elements of the daily experience of each of us, and such contradictory experiences do coexist in the personal web of a persons' belief experience.

We often have the feeling that contemporary people always seem to be contradicting us. Actually, that's not the case. What they are doing is "weaving their web." They collect everything they hear, see, and feel and weave it together. But instead of compiling a list of concepts about God, they question us as they explore how we have woven God into our lives. They can't develop a relationship with concepts, but they can let God and the faith community enter and change the story of their lives.

A deep abiding relationship with God is the most important experience we can share. It includes theology, feelings, and experience, in fact, everything our lives are made of. In a postmodern context, evangelism is "weaving our lives with nonbelievers," another metaphor for what Jesus described as being "salt" or "light" to and in the world.

Jesus was a master web weaver. With His parables, with His proclamation, with His care, with His judgment, with His blessings, He wove the kingdom of God into people's lives. He would say, "The kingdom of God is like . . ." In this way He said, "Let Me weave one more thread into your soul." We are to do the same. We ought to bless people's lives, their families, their businesses, their dates, their art, their hopes, by helping them connect these things with the kingdom of God.

When we transparently weave our lives into the company of other

General Conference Ministerial Association  
**CONTACT INFORMATION**

DEPARTMENT	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
Director	301.680.6501	massenburgg@gc.adventist.org
<i>Elder's Digest</i> , Theological Education	301.680.6508	74532.532@compuserve.com
Evangelism and Church Growth	301.680.6509	johnsonp@gc.adventist.org
Ministry Editorial Office	301.680.6510	norcottj@gc.adventist.org drapers@gc.adventist.org
Ministry Subscriptions & Circulation	301.680.6503	calbij@gc.adventist.org
PREACH and Professional Growth	301.680.6518	stangoj@gc.adventist.org
Resource Center	301.680.6508 888.771.0738 (toll-free)	paynec@gc.adventist.org
Shepherdess International <i>Shepherdess Journal</i>	301.680.6513	lowes@gc.adventist.org

Fax number for all departments: 301.680.6502  
 Web site: [www.ministerialassociation.com](http://www.ministerialassociation.com)

Christians and non-Christians, our sins and weaknesses become visible because the weaving takes place at close range. This is the sticky part, but it is the premiere work of the Kingdom. It is absolutely crucial to grasp that our imperfect, broken, individual lives are our primary apologetics. It leads to a whole new way of doing church.

### Questioning the assumptions

Every worldview has its idols. Modernism's obsession with analysis, individualism, and technique has been replaced in postmodernism with a fascination for experience, personalized spirituality, the idolatry of art, and cynicism. One of the ways we can approach contemporary people is to challenge the idols of postmodernity and explore the underlying assumptions of their worldview.

As argued in Part 1 of this series, for postmodern philosophers, all truth is created for the service of the powerful. Nietzsche, the grandfather of postmodern philosophy, taught that any religion, any morality, any claim, and any answers to any question are all

forms of accruing power. As a result, postmoderns have been led to believe that they can stand in a lofty position above all such truth claims. But their position has a major flaw, for there is no greater power trip than the one which says that every truth claim is a power trip except mine!

Further, it is an illusion to think that people can live without commitments and beliefs. To believe that everything is relative, simply justifies a lifestyle without responsibility to anyone but oneself. To put it bluntly, the claim that everything is relative is a claim with profound religious implications; it is dogma. Those postmoderns who honestly analyze their relativistic presuppositions become aware of that reality. Such relativism easily becomes a self-justifying doctrine under which one can oppress any other, because by its nature it must also allow for a relativization of oppression.

To say that nobody can know anything definite about God is itself also a statement of dogma. Such a person is sure nobody else can be sure. And to say, "You mustn't persuade others to

believe what you believe" is a dogmatic statement affirming, "You ought to see things my way. I have a relativistic view of reality and you ought to accept it." Such people do the very thing they forbid in others. The only difference between relativists and Christians is that, although both have dogmas, Christians are open about it and relativists are in denial.

People do not doubt Christianity out of thin air. All doubt is rooted in a commitment to some other belief or viewpoint. Postmoderns will ultimately realize that they have been indoctrinated, that they have dogmas they believe in, and be ready to question them. Many are returning to Augustine's realization, "I believe in order to understand." Deep inside they are saying: "We have lost our faith in unfaith." And here is their great predicament: while despising religion, they are haunted by the need for spirituality. In modernity, their trust in organized religion has been destroyed, but they still want God. They feel the need for God, but have learned to mistrust anyone who teaches about God. What can they do with such a dilemma?

They can meet Jesus. Reflective and sensitive contemporary people often hate religion. And it is wise to listen to them. Why? Because Christians are not here to defend religion either. Christ did not defend it. He viciously and relentlessly attacked it as a way of self-salvation. We, as with any other human group, can become entangled in building a religious system instead of building the kingdom of God. We can easily shift our energies into defending and saving our doctrines, traditions, and organization, instead of saving people. Postmodern people have a nose for this and are able to detect it from a great distance. So they have a way of grabbing us by the throat and throwing us to the ground with their questions until we realize we have been enchanted with our religiosity rather than with God. And when we repent not only of our sins



but also of what we consider our virtues, the only thing left to show them is Jesus Christ. And He is everything they are looking for!

### **Suggestions for effective ministry in a culture of postmodernity**

And so the question arises, How can we minister to these people? Below are a few points to consider:

♦ As modernistic Christians we are immigrants in the culture of postmodernity. Instead of reaching for our techniques and imitating the success of others, it is better to "get stuck" with just the Bible and with the people we are attempting to reach. It will take more time than we might wish, but it is the shortest way. If we do this we must be ready to be considered unfaithful or impractical by many of our fellow Christians.

♦ We should not think in terms of the postmodern mind. Instead we should think in terms of the postmodern *person*. Experiences, feelings, intuition, and choices count as much as reason.

♦ We must not merely try to make our church a more accepting and loving place. Cultural engineering is futile. Spending our energy and time changing and growing personally, deepening our community; this is what matters. We can work courageously on adapting organizational and financial structures if we remember that just working on appearances is counterproductive. We are to make disciples, not just nice people.

♦ Postmoderns prize experience and need to "try on Christianity" before they can believe it. As they come into our churches, we can include them in activities, bringing them close to the fire next to which we warm our own souls. We can let them participate at the Communion service and prayer meetings as a part of their exploration. Participation always precedes transformation.

♦ Be authentic and transparent. Invite nonbelievers everywhere, perhaps even including church business,

planning, and general meetings. Invite them in. Don't spin-doctor anything about your local church or the denomination. Tell the story of your faith and your church that is unforced, unhyped, unedited, and unsanitized. Honesty always empowers ministry.

♦ When guiding postmoderns on their journey to God, avoid giving direct answers and advice. That disengages their minds and hearts. Instead, help them to interpret their lives in the light of the stories of the Bible. Help them face themselves and God so that their lives can be woven into the story of salvation. Analyze less, identify more.

♦ When they tell you that all stories and belief systems are relative, and therefore equally valid, don't panic, don't attack. Instead, ask them: "My faith commitment is grounded in history, embodied in the community of my Church and verified in my personal experience. What is the basis of your faith?" Wait for their answers.

♦ Don't be anxious about their indifference or antagonism towards the doctrine. As they deconstruct their dogmas they will thirst for the power and beauty of clear teaching.

♦ Remember that one of the greatest needs of a postmodern person is spiritual: they are in need of a god (God) who can argue with them. Deep inside they fear that without something or someone to yield to, or submit to, they are running into the danger of having their own mind acting as God in their lives. And as they come to a realization that the gospel is made of something sterner than them, they hunger for it!

♦ Come to terms with the fact that the Adventist Church exists to serve a larger reality than itself. We as pastors, our local churches, and the denomination exist to invite people to be a part of something far larger—the kingdom of God. We are calling people to sign up in the fight against evil wherever it is found: evil in the world, evil in our own hearts, and evil in our own religious community.

That kind of appeal will win their allegiance.

♦ Don't present the Christian life only in terms of victory, clarity, and peace. We must let them see our brokenness, tears, and doubt. They don't expect or value simplistic answers. Only when they see our brokenness will they be able to discern the extraordinary hope, joy, and assurance that God brings into our lives. A crucial part of the witnessing process is enabling people to identify with our weakness and brokenness.

♦ We need to resist the urge to just teach people what they need to know. We must conceptualize evangelism as a two-way street. They are seekers, and so are we. They are learning from us as we are learning from them. We need to think of conversion as a radical change that can happen at any time, any place, and in any manner.

♦ The world is different from what most of us want to believe. We must think, with our churches, about what we are going to do with such a world. We need to ask God to give us the humility to learn and serve contemporary people, and the courage to walk out of our subculture into their world, as Christ walked out of heaven and entered earth. Postmodernity is not good or bad. It simply is. It is the water in which we catch fish. And we have to catch them on their own terms, where they are, not where we want them to be.

♦ Finally we are to remember that God does not subscribe to modernism, postmodernism, or any other worldview we humans have constructed. The genuine article of Christianity is far ahead of the times. For us, the ultimate reality is the one of the kingdom of God. It is real, present, and it is going to completely take over one day. ■

1 Brian McLaren, "Honey, I Woke Up in a Different Universe!: Confessions of a Postmodern Pastor," *Mars Hill Review*, No. 15, Fall 1999, 35-46.

2 For an accessible summary of his ideas see chapter 6 from Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1996).

# The case for creationism

## Fifty scientists speak out

John Ashton



John Ashton, Ph. D., is principal research scientist, Strategic Research, Sanitarium Health Food Company, New South Wales, Australia.

**E**volutionary theory holds that life on earth began when a mixture of chemicals in an ancient warm pond formed living cells by chance. Over billions of years, these cells evolved into the diversity of plants, animals, and humans that presently live on earth. Some scientists, however, now admit that new research in several different areas demonstrates that such “particles-to-people” evolution is impossible. Life and its supporting ecosystems must have been created over a very short time—possibly a few days.

I first formally encountered evolutionary theory in Geology I at a university in 1964, but I was never convinced. The existence of so many different species of animals and plants with such complex functions convinced me that a supreme intelligence must have designed the whole system. I could not see much difference between ancient fossilized seashells, fish, and insects, and their modern equivalents. Dragonflies were smaller versions of the giant prehistoric dragonflies, just like the domestic cat is a small-scale version of the tiger.

My particular interest in the creation-evolution issue was kindled a few years ago, when at Macquarie University in Sydney, a Christian student group presented a seminar on the scientific evidence for biblical creation. A prominent local scientist attended

the meeting and challenged the chairman by announcing that he did not believe that any scientist with a Ph.D. would seriously believe in Adam and Eve or that life on earth was created in six days. The scientist's position was understandable. Could educated scientists seriously believe that life on earth was less than 10,000 years old? How would they deal with the fossil record, the remains of dinosaurs, or the fossil-containing rocks which have been dated as millions of years old by radioisotope techniques. There are also continental drifts and the massive geological formations such as the Grand Canyon in the United States which seem to provide evidence that the continents are very old, not to mention the astronomical observations that claim to support the big bang theory. How could any scientist dismiss all this evidence?

These thoughts and experiences stimulated me to research what was to become a book: *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation*.<sup>1</sup>

I started by asking colleagues at the University of Newcastle if they knew of any scientists with a doctorate degree who believed in special creation. Eventually I was given the name of a Professor of Biochemistry at Loma Linda University in the United States. He in turn gave me other names. A few months and hundreds of emails later I had around 80 names of scientists who were willing to give the reasons for their belief in a literal six-day creation and allow it to be published.

The list of names read like a “who's who” of leading scientists, including: D. B. Gower, Emeritus Professor of Steroid Biochemistry at the University of London; Ker Thomson, former director of the U.S. Air Force Terrestrial Sciences Laboratory; E. A. Boudreaux, Professor Emeritus of Chemistry at the University of New Orleans; W.J. Veith, Chairman of the Zoology Department at the University of Western Cape, South Africa; W. Gitt, Federal Institute of Physics and Technology in Germany; and K. Wanser, Professor of Physics at California State University, Fullerton. I could not wait to read their essays.

Over the next couple of months, as the essays came in, I saw the arguments and evidence for Darwinian evolution very effectively challenged. I had never read anything like this material.

**church chair industries, inc.**

# Don't be too surprised.

For nearly two decades, we've manufactured chairs that are more comfortable, more durable, and a better value than any other church chair on the market. So it was only a matter of time until we found a line of tables to match. Now we have ... but what else would you expect from "The Original Church Chair Specialists"?

Church Chair Industries is pleased to carry the full line of high quality folding tables from

## midwest FOLDING PRODUCTS

Manufactured from the highest quality materials, these tables are designed to stand up to the stress of constant use, and come in a variety of colors and finishes.



Plastic Laminate over 3/4" Plywood  
**RECTANGULAR TABLES**

AS LOW AS **\$95.62**

Quantities of 24 or more



Plastic Laminate over 3/4" Plywood  
**ROUND TABLES**

AS LOW AS **\$83.12**

Quantities of 24 or more

### IDEAL FOR USE IN:

- Fellowship Space
- Banquet Halls
- Classrooms
- Any Multi-use Space



## The Cathedral Stacker

Features 4 1/4" high density foam seat, free lumbar support, 20 year steel frame guarantee, and 5 year fabric and foam guarantee!

If you're considering the purchase of 100 or more chairs in the next 12 months, call toll-free today for your

**FREE SAMPLE CHAIR!**

All prices subject to change without notice.

Our Most  
Affordable Multi-Use Chair!

JUST **\$24.75**

Quantities of 100 or more



ASK FOR YOUR FREE INFORMATION PACK  
(including samples of chair fabric colors and patterns)

**1-800-331-5411**

[www.churchchair.com](http://www.churchchair.com)

7007 New Calhoun Hwy NE  
Rome, Georgia 30161

**CHURCH  
CHAIR  
INDUSTRIES, INC.**

## Cell biology research

One of the first themes to emerge related to the latest cell biology research. Studies of cell biochemistry and the complexity of the genetic information storage/retrieval system coded in the DNA now demonstrated that "life" could not come from "non-life," even if billions of years were available. This is referred to as the Law of Biogenesis; that says life comes only from life. Decades ago Francis Crick, who shared a Nobel prize for the discovery of the structure of DNA, and British astronomer Sir Fred Hoyle were aware of this problem.

When I read this, I understood why millions of dollars were now being spent on searching for life in outer space. Without making it too obvious, scientists know that for the theory of evolution to survive, they need to find evidence for life coming to earth from outer space.

But this discovery would still not save evolutionary presuppositions from the consequences of the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which essentially precludes the spontaneous generation of life. This law underpins all aspects of engineering, from nuclear submarine design to the construction of rockets. Amongst other things, the Second Law suggests that increased complexity will not happen spontaneously. Adding energy does not create complexity. This requires an intelligent agent to direct the energy to create the complexity.

For example, a person will never wake up in the morning after a late evening dinner party and find that a whirlwind (or some other form of energy) has gone through the kitchen and all the dishes are washed and put away, all the crumbs are off the floor, and the rubbish bin has been emptied. Such a kitchen never gets back in order even if a person waits a million years, unless some intelligent machine (robot or human) arranges things in their proper places.

Similarly an explosion (energy) in a junkyard will never produce a

jumbo jet (or any other genuinely useful mechanism), even if there were explosions every second for a billion years. Yet the cells of a "simple" bacterium are more complex in many respects than a jumbo jet. In contrast, as the Second Law predicts, cells, once they die, decay back to component molecules. Also, a jumbo jet will either require continuous intelligent input in the form of maintenance or it will end up in bits and pieces in the junkyard!

The Second Law describes the universal tendency to deterioration and decay, which includes the loss of genetic information. This is precisely what we observe in the world today and is exactly the opposite to that needed for evolution to occur.

## Dating differences

What about the ages of the rocks supposedly proved by radioactive dating? Surely this constitutes hard evidence for the long age of the fossils and disproves the biblical Creation story? Here again the latest research is exposing another scientific myth. Different methods of radioactive dating often produce vastly different ages for the same rocks. One extensive investigation of radioactive dating results found a fossil with a conventional age of up to 350 million years. However, the dating of the fossil using the carbon-14 method repeatedly gave a value of around 4,000 years. Some scientists are now admitting that they don't really know what the results from radioactive dating methods really mean, and the assumptions behind these dating methods are being questioned.

## Big bang theory

What about the big bang theory that is frequently discussed by popular science writers? It turns out that this theory also has serious problems. Amongst other things, it violates the law of conservation of baryon number. Because of this, physicists in the past have proposed Grand Unified Theories, or GUTs to save the big

bang theory. But these new theories necessitate the decay of protons, the elementary particle found in atoms. This is one of the reasons research institutes have spent hundreds of millions of dollars building high-energy particle accelerators. Even with this sophisticated equipment, all searches to detect proton decay have failed and this lack of experimental evidence for the violation of baryon number strongly calls into question any big bang scenario for the origin of the universe.

## Nature and intelligent design

Some contributors have taken a different approach and have chosen to discuss examples in nature which suggest "intelligent design." For example, the dolphin's sonar system is so precise that it surpasses the best sonar technology in the U.S. Navy. It can detect a fish the size of a golf ball 70 meters (230 feet) away. It took an expert in chaos theory to show that the dolphin's "click" pattern is mathematically designed to give the best information.

This sonar system includes the "melon," or sound lens, a sophisticated structure designed to focus the emitted sound waves into a beam which the dolphin can direct where it likes. This sound lens depends on the fact that different lipids (fatty compounds) bend the ultrasonic sound waves travelling through them in different ways. The different lipids have to be arranged in the correct shape and sequence in order to focus the returning sound echoes. Each separate lipid is unique and different from normal blubber lipids. The lipid is made by a complicated chemical process, requiring a number of different enzymes.

Along with the example of the dolphins, the complex compound eyes of some types of trilobites, extinct and supposedly "primitive" invertebrates, were amazingly designed. They are comprised of tubes that each point in a different direction, and have special lenses that focus light from any dis-



tance. The required lens design is comprised of a layer of calcite on top of a layer of chitin-materials with precisely the right refractive indices. There is also a wavy boundary between them of a precise mathematical shape. The designer of these eyes must have been a master physicist, who applied what we now know as the physical laws of Fermat's principle of least time, Snell's law of refraction, Abbé's sine law and birefringent optics.

Lobster eyes are unique in being modeled on a perfect square with precise geometrical relationships of the units. NASA x-ray telescopes copied this design.

### Why six-day creation?

But the essential point is this: On what basis may we hold to a creation in six days? Why not 10 months or 10,000 years? The contributors whose essays I read suggest that there is overwhelming scientific evidence that life must have originated very rapidly because complete organisms and ecosystems are necessary for the

survival of living things. This fits well with the Creation description in Genesis.

Many scientists today believe in God. A study published in *Nature* in 1997 revealed that 39.3 percent of American scientists believe in a personal God they can pray to. How many of these scientists also believe in Creation? No one really knows, but several contributors to *In Six Days* reveal that they were ridiculed in university settings for holding to creationist views. This did not surprise me. I recall, when writing my own doctoral dissertation, that my supervisor, a former Harvard, Oxford, and Cambridge scholar and theist, advised me to remove the phrase "intelligent design" and replace it with the term "blueprint." When discussing the evidence suggesting the existence of God, I was to use the euphemism "cosmic synergy" instead of "God." In this way I would avoid provoking opposition from the university authorities who insisted on a purely materialistic explanation for scientific observations. I followed his advice

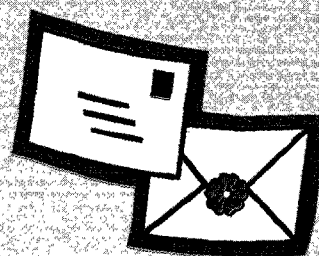
and it proved helpful. I was awarded a University Prize for the most outstanding research thesis.

*In Six Days* shows why leading scientists believe that God cannot be left out of our thinking. Indeed, insisting on material causes for everything, even where the evidence points to an intelligent Creator, sounds like religion, not science. But that sort of thinking pervades our schools and universities today. It also leads to illogical thinking, such as the spontaneous origin of life. Of course, if students are taught that they are just a complex arrangement of chemicals arising from a cosmic accident, is it really surprising that some will live as if there is no meaning or morality and slaughter their fellow students for the "fun" of it? Those readers who believe that they descended from Adam and Eve and have been made "in the image of God," feel good about themselves and their world. ■

1. John F. Ashton, ed. *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose to Believe in Creation* (Sydney, Australia: New Holland Publishers, 1999).

# MINISTRY

## SUBSCRIBER SERVICES



- ☐ Please send me a one-year subscription (12 issues) of *Ministry*. (United States: US\$29.95; Canada and overseas: US\$31.50)
- ☐ Please renew my subscription.
- ☐ Please update my address. (Enter new address below and include old mailing label.)

My Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

If you recently moved, enter previous address:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Credit card orders please complete the following:

☐ MasterCard ☐ Visa Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Cardholder's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE ENCLOSE PAYMENT WITH YOUR ORDER. MAIL TO:

Ministry Subscriptions ♦ c/o Jeannette Calbi ♦ 12501 Old Columbia Pike ♦ Silver Spring, MD 20904  
 Email: calbij@gc.adventist.org ♦ Fax: 301.680.6502 ♦ Phone: 301.680.6503

# The lonely pastor

Larry Yeagley



Larry Yeagley, a retired pastor, writes from Charlotte, Michigan.

Professional loneliness is a virus among ministers. Unlike the early apostles who went out two by two, most pastors work alone. When this lone ranger problem is ignored, loneliness drives some ministers to seek another profession.

Loneliness is like hunger. All of us have a healthy hunger that draws us to a meal. Ministers may study for a sermon for five or six hours, then they desire to fellowship with family or friends. This is normal. It signals that we need human contact.

Professional loneliness may be caused by unrealistic pastoral assignments, too little contact and affirmation from administrative personnel, mean-spirited treatment from parishioners, long stretches of solitary ministry, and lack of professional confidants.

Loneliness is a serious matter. Dr. James J. Lynch has shown that loneliness is the greatest risk factor in premature deaths.<sup>1</sup> His compelling research along with similar studies by other professionals shows that loneliness among pastors and their families must be addressed by church administrators if they are interested in the well-being of the church's working force.

## Loneliness and lack of affirmation

I first became aware of this when I attended an evangelism workshop. Another minister was assigned to be my roommate. The first

night we retired at midnight after sharing problems, fears, and personal dreams for ministry. The most troubling part of our late-night visit was the fact that he had already decided to leave pastoral ministry. The cumulative effects of professional loneliness had brought him to the edge of chronic depression.

Ministers often find themselves misunderstood. They have a vision for the church and creative ideas for making the vision a reality, but their ideas do not harmonize with the usual way of doing things. They get the sense that they are alone on a far-off island.

I had just finished teaching a class for ministers when a minister with 12 years of pastoral experience asked to speak to me. He couldn't talk for a few minutes because he was fighting back tears. I let him cry. After weeping, he told me about the cruelty he experienced at the hands of church members. He sought help from the director of ministers in his area, but the director brushed him aside, minimizing the problem. The minister exhibited many signs of chronic depression. I suggested to him that he would benefit from professional counseling while completing his seminary studies.

I taught a class in pastoral counseling attended by pastors who had been engaged in ministry for years before attending seminary. I showed a video on loneliness and then asked the class to share their own loneliness. The response was immediate and emotionally moving. I was shocked at the degree of professional loneliness that surfaced.

For years I was a presenter at professional growth seminars sponsored by *Ministry* magazine. It was not unusual for ministers to take me aside to share their concerns about ministry. Many of them felt misunderstood, unappreciated, and overworked. It has been over a decade since I participated in those seminars, but I still receive calls from a couple of the ministers. They share their pain with me because they don't trust their leaders enough. They bear their loneliness until they can't take it any longer.

I recently read an obituary that announced the death of a hospital chaplain. I knew him well. He was familiar with my style of hospital ministry and had invited me to lunch. We talked for two hours. His style of hospital visitation was graceful and pastoral, but the head chaplain didn't think his approach to the sick was clinical enough. He was told that he needed to be more confrontational. My friend

modeled his ministry after the ministry of Jesus and saw no need to adopt a style that seemed mostly psychological. He was a gentle and caring person who modeled the spirit of Jesus in the sickroom. But every day he felt the disapproval of the head chaplain who hinted at the possibility of job termination.

Months later I met my friend at his brother's home. He had struggled so long with the loneliness of being misunderstood that depression swept over him. Physical illness plagued him and he took an early retirement. He died prematurely, perhaps to some degree because of his years of loneliness.

I know of a pastor who spent the last ten years of his ministry in a section of the United States where the total emphasis was on public evangelism. He was known as a nurturing pastor who ministered to the needs of his congregation and brought people into the church after careful preparation. When he attended day-long pastors' meetings there was no opportunity to talk about his concerns and interests, neither was there any affirmation for his style of ministry. For ten years he felt that he did not fit in. He frequently left those meetings feeling very much alone.

Without a doubt, working without affirmation and a sense of belonging over years produces and abiding sense of loneliness.

### **Interpersonal and communicative sources**

Some churches seem especially in the grip of destructive forces. This is sometimes manifested in church board and committee meetings. Frequently when a church is at war, the pastor is caught in the crossfire. I have attended too many meetings in which I trembled inside and felt like I wanted to go off by myself and cry. During church building programs I have found myself under attack and needing to defend myself. Years of unfriendly interpersonal encounters and constantly having to defend one-

self is bound to create loneliness. According to James J. Lynch, such long-term experiences contribute to cardiovascular disease due to the frequent spikes in blood pressure.

Church members who have been given leadership positions for many years can view the pastor as a threat to their status. No matter what the pastor does, she or he may become the target of their jealousy.

An intern pastor called me about a local elder who insulted and humiliated him during a church business meeting. I suggested that he visit the elder with a speech something like this. "I thought you should know what my role is. I see myself as a preacher who can do a good job only as I take plenty of time for study and prayer. I believe in visiting the sick and discouraged. I am counseled by Scripture to help God's people develop their spiritual gifts. I also am committed to my marriage and family. I believe that God wants me to be a role model of a healthy, spiritual husband and father. I am asking you, as the elder of the church, to care for the administrative duties of the church. I believe you have skills and gifts in this area. I don't want to hinder you in your leadership of this church."

Several weeks went by before the young pastor could bring himself to visit the elder, but the results were surprising to him. The elder told him, "I have been unkind to you and ridden rough-shod over you. I want to apologize. I support you in your role as pastor."

The intern pastor removed himself from the power struggle. There was conflict between church members, but he refused to become a part of the triangular web. As a result, his ministry in that church was peaceful. He didn't have to defend himself, he made sure his role was understood.

### **Unrealistic self-expectations**

A young pastor told me he was leaving pastoral ministry because he was tired of the loneliness and the rat race of meeting everyone's expecta-

tions. I asked him to try to fit all of his activities into six eight hour days. When he failed to cram it all into that time frame, I asked him to eliminate until *no more than* those hours were filled. He soon realized that he was his own worst enemy. He was driving himself to loneliness and depression. He made his expectations more realistic and continued to pastor churches.

Eugene Peterson wrote a book about the "unnecessary pastor." I grabbed it from the new-book shelf and read it with excitement. He believes it is unnecessary for a pastor to live up to all the expectations of the church members and administrators. He believes it is unnecessary for the pastor to live up to all of her or his self-expectations. The reason: Not all expectations are realistic or healthy, no matter who formulates them.

I attended a ministers' retreat where an evangelist outlined the schedule of a successful pastor. He had the pastor visiting and giving Bible studies every weekday all day long. Late Friday night he had the pastor gathering quotations that elucidated Bible passages to be preached the following morning. He said nothing about the pastor's recreation, family life, or devotional time. This is just one example of misguided expectations. If a pastor takes these formulas seriously, burnout and professional loneliness is bound to be the result.

### **What's the solution?**

The cry of the lonely pastor is truly unheard, as Dr. Lynch so ably shows. The pastor must develop a sane approach to his or her work that will promote good emotional, physical, and spiritual health. The following suggestions are simply that—suggestions. Every pastor's situation is different, therefore preventing professional loneliness will be different for each pastor.

*Take time for yourself.* Personal time must be built into the weekly schedule. This is not sermon preparation time. This is time to cross-country ski, go to an auction, exercise, tinker in

your wood shop, or restore an old tractor. This is time totally unrelated to your work.

*Schedule time for the family.* Divorce is violent and should be prevented. Not only does it devastate husband and wife, it also has a long negative impact on children. If you doubt this, you need to read *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce*.<sup>2</sup> The research behind this book followed children of divorce for 25 years.

The intimacy and dialogue experienced in a healthy marriage and family guards against loneliness. Pastors cannot have too much of this quality of dialogue with the ones they love and who love them.

*Refuse to allow others to set your agenda.* If you don't make your own sensible agenda, others will be very willing to set it for you. You are the one who can create balance. Take charge of your professional life.

*Look up and outside of yourself.* High stress leads to loneliness. Dr. Lynch found that watching fish swimming in an aquarium has greater potential for reducing stress than all the psychotherapy and relaxation techniques put together. A young pastor I know takes a long walk in the woods after every required promotional meeting for clergy. Taking time to smell the roses is more than a cute saying.

*Define pastoral ministry for yourself.* A few priorities well-defined and carefully kept protect you from being pressured by others. Let your congregation know what your priorities and time frames are. My doctor does this. His office hours are well-defined. He expects me to make an appointment. He has a protocol for handling emergencies. A pastor should do the same.

*Avoid toxic conversations.* People who lash out, accuse, condemn, and rage must be stopped in their tracks. They elevate your blood pressure and ultimately push you toward professional loneliness. You may have to walk away as you say, "Jim, when you are calmed down and can talk to me in a nonaccusatory manner, I will be willing to listen to your concerns." People can be energy stealers. Don't allow yourself to be their victim.

*Speak up.* When church members or church administrators try to set your agenda, don't just sit there and stew about it internally. Quietly state your priorities and your thoughts about their attempt to violate your philosophy of ministry.

I used to grin and bear it, but I found myself being mired down in loneliness. When I spoke up, I preserved my own dignity and found that others respected me for having convictions.

*Change your view of administration.* If you are in an administrative position, shed the idea that you have to invent programs to drop on the shoulders of pastors. Your programs may fit only a small fraction of the pastors in your area. Instead of mandating programs, why not discover the gifts and visions of each pastor? Encourage them and enable them to exercise their gifts and realize their visions. My father used to say that a fellow has to work in his own overalls.

I worked with a conference president who trusted the pastors to use their gifts. He did not push programs. He affirmed us when we dreamed dreams and creatively tried to fulfill those dreams. I worked my heart out for that man. Years after I moved to another part of the country and after that conference president retired I met him in Minneapolis. He sat beside me and said, "Larry, I have been following your work over the years. I want you to know that I am very proud of your success. Keep it up." That man has been and continues to be an antidote for professional loneliness.

*Seek out confidants.* Decide that you will not play the role of the Lone Ranger. Join the local ministerial association and fellowship with ministers of other faiths. Arrange to do pulpit exchanges and join a colleague in conducting revival services in both parishes.

As a Seventh-day Adventist minister, I became close friends with a Church of Christ pastor. When he was having problems with his congregation or was struggling with a teenager in his home, he called and talked. We exchanged book titles. He encouraged me to write and I taught him how to conduct bereavement support groups. We enjoyed chatting about our theological views, but not once did either of us argue. We conducted support groups together and enjoyed meals together. We staved off professional loneliness.

Keep your relationship with God fresh. Jesus experienced loneliness during His earthly ministry. He sought intimacy with the Father in the night hours, but He also prized relationships with people around Him. He relaxed in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He valued the companionship of His disciples.

Pastors would do well to keep both of these relationships in balance. When loneliness creeps into your life, have some heartfelt conversations with Jesus. He knows loneliness personally. Seek out a friend. Talk about your loneliness without shame. Discuss solutions instead of dwelling solely on loneliness. Identify the causes of your professional loneliness and calmly discuss them with the people involved in those causes. Your courage to confront the issues will alleviate your own loneliness and possibly the loneliness of your colleagues. ■

Subscribe to *Ministry*  
O N L I N E

<http://ministrymagazine.com>

1 See James J. Lynch, *The Broken Heart* (New York: Basic Books, 1977); *The Language of the Heart* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); *A Cry Unheard* (Baltimore: Bancroft Press, 2000).

2 Judith S. Wallerstein, Julia M. Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee, *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce* (New York: Hyperion, 2000).



*Want a professional chef  
in your kitchen? Here's a  
more affordable solution—  
your own copy of*

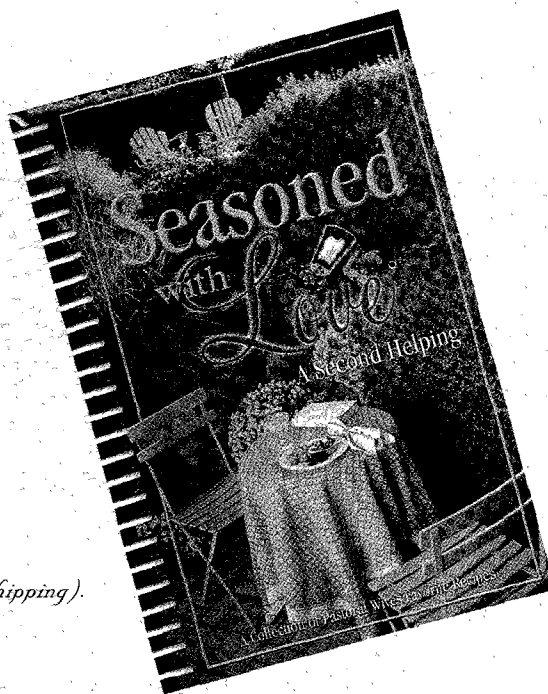
**Seasoned**

with *Love*

A Second Helping

Best recipes from the collections  
of pastoral spouses around the world—

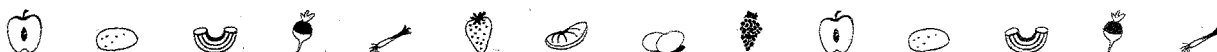
*Yours for only US\$14.95 (plus shipping).*



*Available from*

The Ministerial Resource Center  
12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

E-mail: [ministerialresouce@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministerialresouce@gc.adventist.org)  
Phone: (301) 680-6508; Fax: (301) 680-6502



## You need this resource

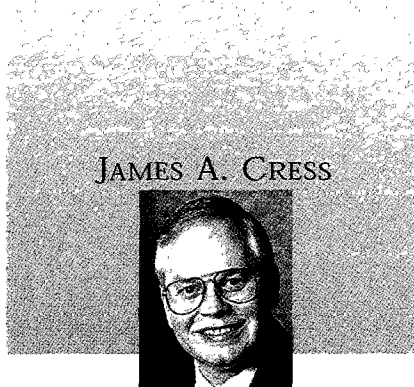
**N**early thirty years after seminary my favorite professor gave me a new assignment. A few months ago, Dr. Raoul Dederen asked me to write about the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Volume 12 of the commentary series.<sup>1</sup>

Even though the Ministerial Association has joint-ventured distribution of over 7,000 copies at special pricing, I had not actually read the entire book. So for months now I have made it a constant travel companion. Here's what I have discovered.

**Monumental.** This is a big book. At over one thousand pages, the term handbook almost seems a misnomer. This is no brief sketch or overview but a weighty, challenging, and in-depth study of various doctrines. The entire project took over a dozen years from conception to publication, providing the best insights from top Adventist scholars and capping the distinguished career of Raoul Dederen, editor, with a major contribution of permanent significance.

Volume 12 demands more than casual reading but it returned great reward for my study effort. I read with highlighter handy and found fresh ideas and faith-building insights. Perhaps in attempting to compact as much material into as few pages as possible, the publisher failed to maintain the print standards found in other volumes from this series. Regularized margins and spacing would allow for easier notations. I understand that subsequent printings promise to correct these defects so that the product's quality matches the value of the contents.

**Theological.** As its title states, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* presents fundamental doctrines of the denomination representative of mainstream Adventist theology



and biblical scholarship as they are practiced throughout the worldwide Adventist Church.<sup>2</sup> Dederen states that the editorial aim has been to produce a work of reference written in a spirit of unqualified loyalty to the Scriptures as the written Word of God, in the hope that these pages will be fruitful for personal reflection in faith and practice.<sup>3</sup>

Although clearly Adventist, this is an excellent reference tool for any serious student. Each article relies solely on Scripture for theological development and exposition. The utilization of Ellen White's prophetic role is confined to the conclusion of each chapter as expansion and commentary rather than a reliance upon her writings as the source of doctrine.

**Historical.** An historical overview follows the biblical exposition of each topic. This overview cites sources and views from the ancient church through to modern times, along with contemporary approaches and the development of Adventist positions; Volume 12 provides a context which is unified in Frank Holbrook's excellent concluding chapter, "The Great Controversy." Lists of relevant literature are also provided.

**Practical.** Like any pastor, I would be reluctant to invest much time in a book which offered nothing beyond

information. Of course, we need sound, orthodox doctrine, but pastors also need help in making practical application of God's Word from the pulpit; theory developed into daily living.

I found myself outlining sermons as I read. In fact, some chapters are so compellingly prepared that an entire series of sermons on the topic is already outlined. For example, John M. Fowler's chapter, "Sin," not only provides a word study of biblical terminology and in-depth theological development, but it also gave me 15 outstanding insights (a three-part sermon series, each with five points) on the essence of sin, consequences in the individual's life and relationships, and the biblical hope for the ultimate eradication of rebellion.

Likewise, Neils-Erik A. Andreasen's topic, "Death," presenting a fresh view of death's insatiable appetite to consume, will affect my preaching both on the doctrine of man's mortality as well as on our hope in Jesus' victory. I found outstanding material like this throughout the book.

**Spiritual.** Above all else, I rediscovered Jesus as the center of every biblical teaching and the reason for every proclamation.

These outstanding writers have moved beyond scholarship. Faith is awakened as God's love and plan for His people is consistently presented. I continue to be spiritually energized because of my time with this book.

Thank you, Dr. Dederen, for urging me to move from promoting this excellent resource to experiencing its benefits for myself. ■

<sup>1</sup> See ad on page 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2001), xi.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



## Letters

*continued from page 3*

Before we use the Creation passages to interpret science, we must first discover their theological meaning.

—Gerald Wheeler, Hagerstown, Maryland.

### The environment: Created and sustained by whom?

The May 2001 issue of *Ministry* had an article by Patrick A. Travis entitled "The Environment: Created and Sustained by Whom?" I would add the following:

At Christ's command we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." We make a statement of faith, gratitude, and acknowledgment of why it is all here and how food is on the table.

The natives of Central America stepped up their anxiety for the sun to come up. Atop their temples, they sacrificed a beating heart. This pagan notion is well on the way to building an altar of terror, hysteria, and devilish excess. It is called "environmentalism"!

In some schools, third-graders are writing essays with the dire warning, "Don't pollute!" which leads to ominous warnings about a far-away forest, where humans are predators and need to be stopped.

Finally, the ultimate sacrifice, "Don't breathe!" With absurd politeness comes the ultimate inanity, "Excuse me for living!"

When Jesus fed the 5,000, He ordered a clean-up. I wonder what they did with it? There was full consumption and conservation at the same time. All in the hands of the Son of God.

—F. A. Hertwig, Lincoln, Missouri.

### Managing conflict in the church

I was enriched by H. Jack Morris's article "Managing Conflict in the Church." The suggested ways of handling church conflict is a must to every minister. Pastor Morris also delineated the psychological reason, prompting people to be a problem. . . . Conflicts if unsettled can split the church into fragments. Also

it is interesting to learn that conflicts can be a means of blessing if well managed, rather than becoming a curse to the church.

—Sylas K. Tochim, pastor, Western Kenya Field, East Africa.

### Ministerial mendacity

As senior pastor of a church, I was encouraged and challenged by the *Ministry* article entitled "Ministerial Mendacity: A View From the Pew" (July 2001)

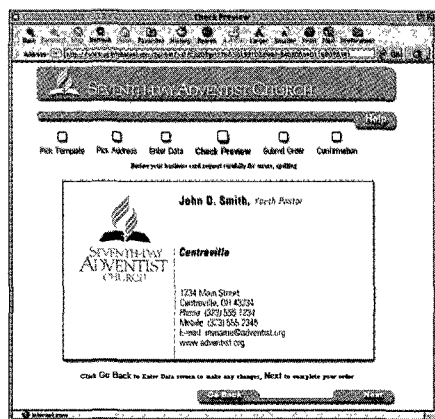
This article was very powerful and challenging, to say the least. I know that I have been guilty of stretching the truth at times, but as you become more mature in God, so do your sermons.

So I would like to pass on my thanks to *Ministry*, and to the author of that wonderful article, Ellie Green. My prayer is, as stated at the end of the article, "Let me introduce you to my pastor," and people would do this with pride, not embarrassment. ■

—Andrew J. Bearman, pastor, Macedon, Victoria, Australia.

## We only wish we could make the rest of your job this easy!

A new service has been created that simplifies the task of getting your business cards, while also dramatically reducing the cost—up to 75% less than you would expect to pay for comparable printing elsewhere.



Simply enter the information you want to appear on your card and in just a few seconds you'll see a preview of what your printed cards will look like.

Designed specifically for Adventist pastors, staff, and conference personnel, this service lets you use any standard web browser to create your own official Adventist business cards.

### Instant preview

The instant online preview will show you what your printed cards will look like so you can make sure it's right BEFORE you place your order.

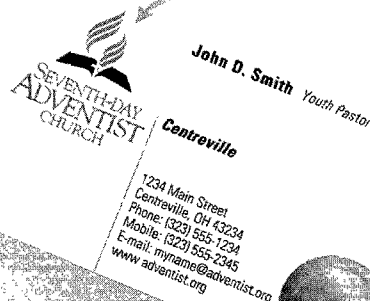
Your order is printed on high-quality paper with embossed logo to make that important first impression a positive one.

### Pricing

250 cards	\$36.95
500 cards	\$39.95
1000 cards	\$46.95

For shipping/handling  
add \$6.00 in the US  
add \$8.50 in Canada

### Embossed logo



A service of  
**positiveID**  
in cooperation with the General Conference Dept. of Communication

To order, go to **www.adventmall.com/print**  
For more information call 208-466-3887 or email [bkgray@mac.com](mailto:bkgray@mac.com)

# Are You Missing Someone?

## ADRA International Speaker's Bureau

Meeting your speaking needs for

- Church Services
- Children & Youth Ministries Conventions
- Camp meetings
- College/University Lectures & Worship
- Sabbath School
- Pathfinder Leadership Conferences
- Elementary School Classroom Visits
- Academy Lectures & Worship
- Teachers' Conventions
- Civic Club Presentations
- Camporees

Sharing  
the news of  
ADRA's ministry  
in more than  
120 countries.



**ADRA**

Adventist Development and Relief Agency International

12501 Old Columbia Pike • Silver Spring, MD 20904

To check speaker availability, call 1.800.424.ADRA or visit [www.adra.org](http://www.adra.org)

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS  
MINISTRY  
1350 N. KINGS ROAD  
NAMPA, ID 83687-3193

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Nampa, ID  
Permit No. 147

