

MINISTRY

International Journal for Pastors

May 2006

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TO
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TESTAMENT
LAW

TO
NEW
TESTAMENT
CHRISTIANS

IN
EVERY
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MINISTRY

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I BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT TO BALANCE AN AWARENESS OF THE WORLD'S CONDITION WITH OUR INABILITY TO KNOW WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR JESUS' RETURN.

Preaching memorized passages

Thank you for the thought-provoking article by Andrew Marttinen entitled "Let the Scriptures speak: preaching memorized passages" (March 2006). We all need to prayerfully fill our minds with the Word of God. This discipline will result in powerful biblical preaching, whatever sermon form we select. I would add that we must be careful to avoid a mechanical recitation. Words are only a small portion of the communication process. Appropriate oral interpretation and congruent nonverbal communication are essential if the message is to be clearly heard.

—Derek J. Morris, senior pastor, Forest Lake Church, Apopka, Florida, United States

God's time? Our time?

Thank you for Marguerite Shuster's perceptive look at the tension between our time and God's time (March 2006). I believe it is important to balance an awareness of the world's condition with our inability to know when the time is right for Jesus' return. Our own history tells us that too much emphasis on the signs of Jesus' imminent return can lead to disappointment and disillusionment. While keeping the "blessed hope" fresh in our thinking, we need to be careful not to invoke fear-based motives by constantly referring to world conditions. Instead, we need to draw people with Jesus' love and encourage them to demonstrate it to others. Then, when the day we have long looked for

arrives, we will all be ready and waiting with joy.

—Carrol Grady, Snohomish, Washington, United States

In Jesus, peace

In your March 2006 issue, I found a number of articles which really spoke to me. Randall Roberts' article, "A Person of Peace," reminded me of two points I came to appreciate since transitioning from conference employment to being part of a Governor's personal staff: (1) In the world, trouble, (2) In Jesus, peace.

Roberts is absolutely on point when he says, "It is so tempting to allow all of the hurry and worry of life to crowd out that for which every Christian and, more closely, for which every pastor has been appointed—the duty of simply being with Jesus."

My ministry now takes place in a Governor's office, where I am part of her senior policy staff. I no longer chair church board meetings, preach on Sabbaths, or worry about how the conference views our tithe gain or baptismal counts. In addition to leaving those headaches in the past, I now have my Sabbaths back. As a church-employed pastor, Sabbath was indeed a day where a lot of activity and genuinely exhausting labor took place: last minute sermon preparation, unexpected hospital visits, Pathfinder hikes, and emergency elders meetings. While not sinful, taken in their totality, they did not make for a restful or peaceful Sabbath.

Now that's not the case since I work as an attorney and policy advisor. What does this tell us about pastors whom the devil keeps so busy doing good things that they, like Martha, miss out on the best? As pastors, we may not be working in the world, but with our incessant email and voicemail communications, jam-packed daily planners and calendars, and never-a-free-moment lifestyles, we may be letting a lot of the world in.

—David A. Pendleton, Kailua, Hawaii

Ministry archives online

This morning I discovered your searchable online archive of previous issues of *Ministry*. What a treasure!

Last Sabbath a parishioner asked me a question about the Trinity. I remembered a recent *Ministry* article about W. W. Prescott's journey to a Trinitarian understanding of Jesus; and I promised my member I would try to find it for him. But perusal of my magazine stack was unfruitful. I then went to your Web site and within two minutes the article was in my hand (May 2005, "A Slice of History: How clearer views of Jesus developed in the Adventist Church").

Perhaps you've already widely advertised this marvel, but somehow I missed it. Every pastor should discover this invaluable user-friendly resource! Many thanks to those who envisioned and created it!

—Dale Wolcott, Holland, Michigan

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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 clergy of other denominations. To receive your complimentary subscription, please write to us at our Editorial Office, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, or visit us at <www.ministrymagazine.org>, or email us at ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org.

They belong together

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



Recently I heard about a study alleging that married couples, after a number of years, acquire each other's characteristics, with each one even beginning to look somewhat like the other.

At first I was skeptical. How could that be? All my life, for example, I have had difficulty accurately describing colors or choosing good color combinations. That's one reason my wife, Ruth, does not trust me to buy my own clothes. The fact is, I don't trust myself to buy my own clothes!

If married couples acquire characteristics and abilities from each other, why have I not acquired my wife's ability to choose color combinations? I don't know, but I do believe that some validity exists in the assumption that couples do acquire each other's characteristics. Looking at some couples whom I know, it does seem that they reflect each other. They belong together. This seems especially true for couples who have a positive marriage relationship, for in some ways we can hardly imagine one without the other.

Belonging together does not come about by force. It has to be natural and obvious—it must be evident to others. I want to focus on another togetherness—the Old and the New Testament. But, is that not obvious? Perhaps to many, but since the completion of the New Testament there have been individuals and groups who have not seen the two Testaments as belonging together.

Some 120 years after Christ, Justin Martyr was downgrading the Old Testament—especially the law of the Old Testament. But we need not look solely at history, for in the contemporary religious world we have found examples of advancing one portion of the Bible over the other. Some Christians seem to be almost embarrassed over the Old Testament while other religious groups

place no value in the New Testament. It seems to me that, while they are not the same, they do belong together. The Old Testament anticipates the New, and the New Testament depends on the Old.

Anticipation, promise, and hope

Not complete by itself, the Old Testament foresees that which is to come. As an example of anticipation and promises, Daniel refers to the "Anointed One" and assures readers that "He will confirm a covenant with many" (see Dan. 9:25, 27). Isaiah likewise looks with hope to the future even though the Promised One "had no beauty or majesty," and "he was despised and rejected by men." Why hope? Because "he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows." But that is not the end, for the Promised One "made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:2–4, 12, NIV). *Transgressors* identifies the people living during both of the Testaments, and it also refers to us. In spite of our states of helplessness, the promise of the Messiah gives hope. Daniel, Isaiah, and others, all Old Testament writers, give us reasons to anticipate and hope: More is coming. That's the promise of the Old Testament.

Fulfillment of the promise

Not isolated from the Old Testament, the New Testament displays stories of fulfillment throughout. Unfortunately, the

trained theologians and religious leaders did not always recognize that fulfillment. At least on one occasion, a person who was not a theologian (and shunned by many except for her secret customers), recognized Jesus as fulfillment. John writes that "The woman said, 'I know that Messiah' (called Christ) 'is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us'" (John 4:25, NIV). And when she learned that Jesus was the Promised One, she hurried to tell the good news. Old Testament promise—New Testament fulfillment.

Jesus saw Himself as a fulfillment of Scripture promises—specifically the Old Testament. " 'Today,' " Jesus said, " 'this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing' " (Luke 4:21, NIV). He spoke those words after He quoted Old Testament promises about Himself.

Togetherness

The Old and the New Testaments belong together as inseparable partners. We look at one and it reminds us of the other, and the more we study them, the more we realize how much they complement each other. There is a continuity in their messages—a continuity that leads into God's kingdom.

Let's appreciate them

In this issue, we share the first of a series of articles by Daniel I. Block. His in-depth study shows the value God places on both the Old and the New Testaments. John McVay and Phillip Long provide us with a list of valuable resources for New Testament studies. In a future issue, we will do the same for the Old Testament. After all, the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, remains the foundation of our faith. I hope that these and other articles will lead us to appreciate the value of the Word of God—both the Old and the New Testaments. ■

Preaching Old Testament Law to New Testament Christians

First of a three-part series

Daniel I. Block



Daniel I. Block, D.Phil., is professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, United States.

Preaching Old Testament (OT) Law generates little interest in our churches, whether they are mainline Protestant or charismatic or fundamentalist or generic evangelical. This aversion toward OT Law arises from a series of myth conceptions concerning the Law. First, the ritualistic myth that OT Law is preoccupied with boring ritualistic trivia declared to be obsolete with Christ's final sacrifice on the cross. Second, the historical myth that OT Law concerns the times and cultural context of nations so far removed from our own that, unless one has purely academic or antiquarian interests, what it has to say about the human condition is hopelessly out of date. Third, the ethical myth that the OT Law reflects a standard of ethics that is rejected as grossly inferior to the law of love announced by Jesus and the high stock placed on tolerance in our enlightened age. Fourth, the literary myth that the OT laws are written in literary forms that are so different from modern literature that we cannot understand them. Fifth, the theological myth that OT Law presents a view of God that is utterly objectionable to modern sensitivities. So long as these myth conceptions determine the disposition of preachers and pastors toward OT Law, there is little hope that they will pay much attention to those parts of the OT that we refer to as Israel's constitutional literature.

Contributing to these myth conceptions are fundamental ideological and theological prejudices against OT Law. The essentially anti-law stance

of contemporary Western culture may represent the most important factor, especially in our post-Christian and increasingly secular culture. But these will hardly explain why *within the church* the Law has had such a bad reputation for such a long time. The roots of the aversion to OT Law within the church may be traced back almost two thousand years to the second-century heretic Marcion. Marcion proclaimed a radical discontinuity between Old and New Testaments, Israel and the church, the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New. In his canon, he rejected all of the OT and accepted only those New Testament (NT) books that highlighted the discontinuity of the church from Israel, which left him with radically edited versions only of the Gospel of Luke and ten Pauline epistles (minus the pastorals and Hebrews). This is not so different from American evangelical Christianity, which bears a distinctly Pauline stamp (cf. the eastern church) and hears only Paul's criticism of OT Law.

Two streams of antipathy

In western Protestantism we observe two traditional specific streams of antipathy toward OT Law. The first is associated with Lutheranism, with its fundamental Law-gospel contrast. In his discovery of the gospel of grace in his study of Romans, Luther came to identify the ritualism and works-oriented approach to salvation of Roman Catholicism with the OT Law. In Christ believers are declared to be free from the Law! The grace of the gospel in Christ has replaced the bondage of the Law under Moses. The second is associated with extreme forms of dispensationalism. In its division of human history into seven dispensations, a radical change in the divine economy is seen to have occurred in the transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament. We are now in the church age, which is fundamentally the dispensation of grace, in contrast to the age of Israel, ruled by the dispensation of Law. To these two traditional sources of the problem of OT Law within American evangelical Christianity we must now add a third, more recent development, namely, the influence of New Covenant theology. This movement, which has its roots in Reformed theology but exhibits a radically different view toward the OT than Calvin himself did, insists that since the "Mosaic covenant" [*sic*]² has come to an end in Christ, it has no claim on Christians. We are subject only to the law of Christ.³ This dichotomy is remarkable, especially in the face of the NT's repeated and emphatic identification of Jesus Christ with Yahweh.

Consequently, if one hears preaching from OT Law at all (which is rare!), the preaching tends to take one of three approaches.⁴ First, since through His atoning work Jesus Christ has abolished the Law as a way of life, OT Law has no bearing on the Christian at all. In fact, the blessed gospel of grace liberates us from the curse of the law (Rom. 3:21; 6:14; 7:4; 10:4; Gal. 2:19–21; 3:23–26; 4:21–31; Heb. 7:12). Second, interpreting the word *telos* in Romans 10:4 as the “fulfillment” rather than the “end” of the law, Jesus Christ is seen as the culminate fruit of OT Law, and since His righteousness is imputed to us, we are not under obligation to any external code. Third, since the Ten Commandments and some of the ethical injunctions of the Torah are thought to have some binding force on Christians, the operative question with respect to OT Law is, “Do I have to keep this law?” Careful attention is paid to distinguishing among the ceremonial, civil, and moral laws. A fourth theonomist option, which views the OT Law fundamentally to be in force even for the church, receives scant attention these days.

So long as the first three perspectives determine the relationship of OT Law to NT Christians, we can hardly expect to hear much preaching from the Law. But how Christians can tolerate this anti-Law stance remains a mystery to me, especially in the light of Jesus’ own statements that He came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it, and His own declarations of its permanent validity (Matt. 5:17–20); in the light of His declaration that love for Him is demonstrated first and foremost by keeping His commandments (John 14:15; cf. 15:10); and Paul’s assertion that “it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (Rom. 2:13, RSV).

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the person of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Does this statement really mean that “while believers were not obliged to carry out all the demands of the Mosaic law, they *could*

nevertheless draw from the OT, read paradigmatically, lessons for Christian living?”⁵ They *could* draw lessons? Does it have no more moral force than an invitation to read it as an optional source-book for optional lessons? Should C. G. Cruze not have said at least “they *should* nevertheless draw from the OT, read paradigmatically, lessons for Christian living”?

operate until further decrees are handed down.

The laws in the Pentateuch are often referred to by the standardized word pair *ḥuqqīm ūmišpāṭīm*, often translated “ordinances and judgments.” On etymological grounds, one may surmise that the former expression, singular *ḥōq*, derives from a root *ḥāqaq/ḥāqā*, “to inscribe, incise,” and refers

WE ARE INDOCTRINATED BY THE THEOLOGICAL MYTH THAT OLD TESTAMENT LAW PRESENTS A VIEW OF GOD THAT IS UTTERLY OBJECTIONABLE TO MODERN SENSITIVITIES.

To move beyond this typical trivializing of the OT, we probably need to take a closer look at OT Law, particularly as the OT Law presents itself. I propose to do so in three articles. In the present one, we will examine the designations for *law* and the literary contexts of laws in the OT. The second one will deal with the significance of the laws of the OT for OT saints. The third one will note the significance of the laws of the OT for NT saints and draw some reflections on the implications of these observations for our preaching today.

The designations for *law* in the OT

The OT uses a series of expressions to refer to the laws of God. Perhaps the most explicit is the term *mišwā*, “commandment,” from the verb *šiwwā*, “to command.” But the term *commandment* should not be construed as synonymous with *law*. In day-to-day life, we often give orders that need to be carried out immediately or in a given circumstance, but this is not the same as an ordinance by which our church or company must

to “inscribed” laws, that is, laws that have been prescribed by a superior and recorded by incising a clay tablet with a reed stylus, or a wax-covered writing board with a metal stylus, or even a stone with a chisel. The second expression, *mišpāṭīm*, literally “judgments,” apparently originates in case law. Judgments previously made in judicial contexts become laws in a prescriptive sense. While some have argued that *ḥāqaq/ḥāqā* relates primarily to religious regulations and *mišpāṭīm* to civil law,⁶ these distinctions certainly cannot be maintained within the book of Deuteronomy, at least.

To this list we should also add *piqqûd* (pl. *piqqûdīm*), “obligation, regulation, procedure,” from *pāqad*, “to muster, commission,” which occurs twenty-four times in Psalms.⁷ A fifth expression is *hā’ēdôt*, “the stipulations.” Based on the assumption of a derivation from the same root as *’ēd*, “testimony,” NIV follows the traditional rendering of the word with “testimonies.”⁸ However, because we usually think of *testimony* as the utterance of a witness in a court of law or some less formal context in

which a particular event is being debated/discussed, this interpretation is misleading.⁹ It is true that in the case of a person who had sworn an oath to keep an agreement but was being brought to court for violating it, the written document could certainly be produced as a standard against which to measure his behavior, hence serve as a witness. However the possibility of an etymological link with the Akkadian word for “covenant/treaty” and “loyalty oath”¹⁰ strengthens the case for interpreting *’ēdōt* (plural of *’ēdūt*) as a general designation for the stipulations of the covenant. This interpretation is confirmed in Deuteronomy 4:45, which clarifies the sense of *hā’ēdōt* by adding *haḥuqqīm wēhammišpāṭīm*.¹¹ The fact that all these expressions have the article suggests a specific and identifiable body of laws. In accordance with our conclusions regarding the significance of *haḥuqqīm wēhammišpāṭīm* stated earlier, the covenant stipulations refer to the specific body/bodies of prescriptions revealed by Yahweh through Moses at Sinai, and periodically prior to the present addresses (cf. Num. 36:13), an interpretation supported by the addition of “when they came out of Egypt.”

These five words do indeed often refer to the specific laws and regulations prescribed by Yahweh at Sinai and elsewhere. While the expressions above tend to be associated with specific kinds of laws, the expression most often associated with *law* itself is *tôrâ*. The noun *tôrâ* derives from the verb *hôrâ*, “to teach.”¹² On occasion, *tôrâ* may be legitimately translated as “law.” However, its everyday meaning is illustrated by the book of Proverbs, which applies the term to the instruction that the wise provide for the community (13:14), parents provide for children (1:8 [mother]; 4:1–11), and the woman of the household to those under her influence (31:26). Its theological meaning is illustrated most clearly by the book of Deuteronomy, which, contrary to the Greek (and English) name of the book (meaning “second law”), does not present itself as “law” but as a series of pastoral addresses (Deut. 1:1–5; 4:40). Admittedly, Moses repeats and adapts many of the ordinances previously prescribed by Yahweh, but the first

eleven and the last nine chapters contain little that we would classify as “law” in a legal sense, and even the so-called Deuteronomic code (chaps. 12–26) has a predominantly pastoral and didactic (rather than legal) flavor. In fact, in the book of Deuteronomy, the semantic range of *tôrâ* is much better captured in Greek by *didaskalia* or *didachē*, rather than *nomos*, as the Septuagint renders the term in 202 of 220 occurrences.¹³

This conclusion regarding the meaning of *tôrâ* is confirmed when we observe how easily its scope was extended to the rest of the Pentateuch, despite the fact that at least two-thirds of Genesis through Numbers is narrative, that is, the story of the Yahweh’s grace in election, salvation, and providential care for Israel, and His establishment of His covenant first with Abraham and then with the patriarch’s descendants at Sinai. When the psalmist declares that the godly delight in the *tôrâ* of Yahweh (Ps. 1:2), surely he did not have only the laws of Sinai in mind, for apart from the surrounding narrative, the laws provide no occasion for joy.

The literary contexts of laws in the OT

Before we preach from OT Law, we need to remind ourselves that there is law in the Old Testament and there is law. Since the groundbreaking work of Albrecht Alt,¹⁴ many scholars have recognized two major types of laws:¹⁵ laws in the conditional form dealing with specific cases, and laws in the unconditional form. The former typically involve a protasis (a conditional clause) introduced with “when/if” (Hebrew *kî*, or *’im* in subordinate cases), describing a specific circumstance, followed by an apodosis (a main clause) outlining the required response. These may be cast in third person (“If a person . . .”) or second person (“If you . . .”). The latter are typically cast as direct commands in the second person, though third person jussives are not uncommon. Apodictic laws subdivide further into positive prescriptions (“Honor your father and mother”) or negative prohibitions (“You shall not murder”). The differences between the two types are obvious when specific examples are juxtaposed as in the following synopsis:

A comparison of conditional and unconditional law

CONDITIONAL LAW	UNCONDITIONAL LAW
Exodus 21:28	Exodus 20:3
If an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished.	You shall have no other gods before me.
Exodus 22:26-27	Exodus 20:16
If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in?	You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
FEATURES	FEATURES
Conditional	Unconditional
Declarative mood	Imperative mood
In third (or second) person	In second person
Specific: based on actual cases, often with motive or exception clauses	General: without qualification or exception
Usually positive in form	Often negative in form
Begin with “If” or “When”	Begin with the verb (in the imperative)

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The Pentateuch contains a great deal of prescriptive material through which Yahweh sought to govern every aspect of the Israelites' lives. Maimonides, a twelfth-century Jewish rabbi and philosopher, established that the number of commandments scattered throughout the Pentateuch numbered 613.

Beyond recognizing the basic formal differences between individual laws, preachers do well also to recognize the differences among the series of specific documents within the Pentateuch that might qualify as law. These may be grouped in two classifications. One involves focused instructions, usually dealing with cultic and liturgical matters: instructions concerning the Passover (Exodus 12; 13), instructions concerning the tabernacle (Exodus 25–31), instructions concerning sacrifice (Leviticus 1–7). The other one has to do with collections of ordinances and regulations governing a wide range of human activity: the Decalogue (Exod. 20:2–17; Deut. 5:6–21), the book of the covenant (*sēper habbērīt*, Exodus 21–23, cf. 24:7), the holiness code (Leviticus 17–25), and the so-called Deuteronomic code (Deuteronomy 12–26). Although these documents all represent collections of prescriptions whose scope covers all of life, each has its own distinctive flavor.

1. The Decalogue

In both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 the Decalogue is presented as the only speech of Yahweh addressed directly to the Israelites. Contrary to modern

BEFORE WE
PREACH
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practice, the Scriptures never refer to the Decalogue as the "Ten Commandments." The genre of the document is identified in both contexts as "all these words" (*[kol] haddēbārīm hā'ēlleh*, Exod. 20:1; Deut. 5:22) that Yahweh "spoke" (*dibbēr*), rather than "these commandments" that Yahweh "commanded." In fact, wherever this document is identified by title, it is always referred to as "the Ten Words" (*ʾāšeret haddēbārīm*, Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4), and never "the Ten Commandments." We would do well to follow the Septuagint in referring to this document as the Decalogue (literally "Ten Words"), or, since the Hebrew word *dābār* is capable of a broad range of meaning, the Ten Principles of covenant relationship. That this document is perceived as the foundational written record of Yahweh's covenant with Israel is demonstrated not only in the fact that two copies (one for each party) of this document alone were stored in the ark of the covenant of Yahweh (*ʾārôn bērit yhwē*, Deut. 10:1–5) but also in Moses' explicit reference to this document as "His covenant" (*habbērīt*, Deut. 4:13). The structure of the narratives introducing the Decalogue reinforces the covenantal nature of the Decalogue. Indeed, in both Exodus and Deuteronomy, it is cast in the pattern of an ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaty:

(a) *The preamble* (Exod. 20:1; Deut. 5:1–5) sets the stage for the document.

(b) *The historical prologue* (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6) introduces the divine Suzerain and summarizes the history of the relationship of the parties to the covenant to this point: "I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

(c) *The covenant principles* (Exod. 20:3–17; Deut. 5:7–21) specify the fundamental obligations placed upon the human vassal. The principles of covenant relationship were reduced to ten presumably to facilitate commitment to memory and to match the number of fingers on our hands. Their unconditional form invests them with an absolutist flavor. Inasmuch as the terms of the Decalogue are addressed to potential perpetrators of offences, it may be

interpreted as ancient Israel's version of the Bill of Rights. However, unlike modern bills of rights, the Decalogue is concerned to protect not *my* rights but the rights of the next person. According to the arrangement of the stipulations of the Decalogue, the *next person* involves two parties: Yahweh, the divine Suzerain, and fellow members of the vassal community.¹⁶ In fact, as Jesus and Paul recognize in their reduction of all the commandments to the command to love Yahweh and one's neighbor (Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9), the objective of the Decalogue is to encourage love for God and for one's neighbor,¹⁷ the kind of behavior that puts the interest of the next person ahead of one's own.

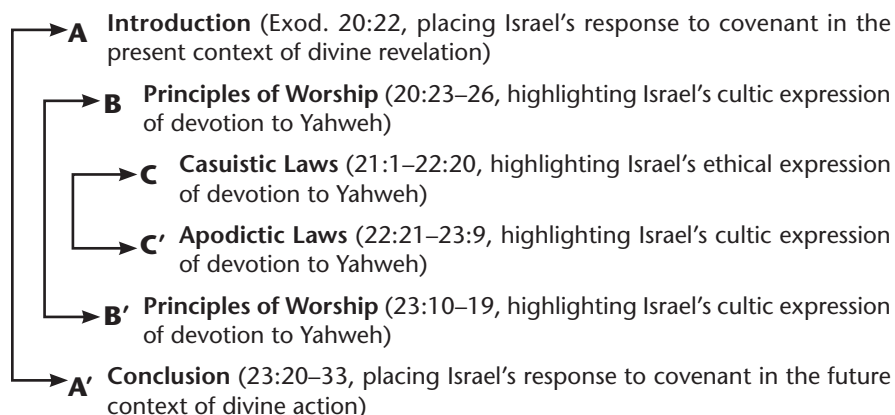
(d) *The declaration of the people's response* (Exod. 20:18–21; Deut. 5:22–33) reports the people's acceptance of the document and a recognition of its revelatory significance. The latter text ends with a summary blessing as a reward for obedience (vv. 31–33), also common to ancient treaty forms.

2. The book of the covenant

Although the Decalogue obviously functioned as the official covenant document, this does not mean that it exhausted the terms of Yahweh's covenant. Indeed the other collections of laws may be interpreted as elaborations and practical explications of the Decalogue. The book of the covenant, encompassing Exodus 20:22–23:33, derives its name from Exodus 24:7, according to which, as part of the covenant ratification ceremony, Moses took the *sēper habbērīt* (literally "written document of the covenant") and read it in the hearing of all the people, precipitating their third declaration of "All that Yahweh has spoken we will do." Unlike the Decalogue, which is referred to as *dēbārīm* declared directly to the people by Yahweh, this document is formally introduced as *mišpāṭīm* ("judgments, regulations") that Moses is to set before the people (Exod. 21:1). Furthermore, whereas the Decalogue consists entirely of unconditional statements in the second person, the book of the covenant consists largely of conditional statements in the third person. Taken as a whole, the book of the covenant may

be divided into six parts arranged in an artful chiasmic order:

"as a catechism for some sanctuary school, or as a guide for priests and



Note that prescriptions for Israel's worship frame the prescriptions governing daily life. The purpose of worship is to inspire devotion to Yahweh and to create an ethical community of faith. Worship and ethics are tightly linked.

3. The holiness code

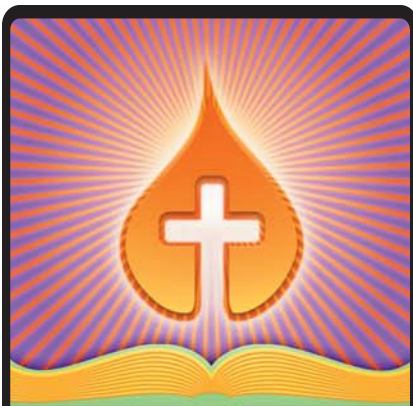
What distinguishes this code from other similar texts, such as the book of the covenant (Exod. 20:22–23:33), is its emphasis on holiness. First, Yahweh identifies Himself as the Holy One (*qāḏōš*, Lev. 19:2; 20:26; 21:8). Second, Yahweh identifies Himself as the One who makes Israel holy (*qiddēš*, "sanctify them," Exod. 20:8; 21:8, 15, 23; 22:9, 16, 32; cf. *hibdil*, 20:24, 26). Third, Israel is challenged to "sanctify yourselves" (*hitqaddēš*, 20:7) and "be holy" (*qēḏōšim tihyū*, 19:2; 20:7, 26 [to Yahweh]; 21:6a, 6b [cf. 7, 8]). Fourth, many of the articles and persons discussed in this section are described as holy (*qōdeš*): Yahweh's name, 20:3; 22:3, 32; sacrificial food, 19:8; ordinary food, 19:24; sacred bread, 21:22; 24:9; food dedicated to Yahweh, 22:2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 14, 15, 16; convocations, 23:2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 21, 24, 27, 35, 36, 37; a place (tabernacle), 24:9; a time (year of jubilee), 25:12. As for the content of this long section, it provides a summary catch-all of moral exhortations, cultic regulations, and legal prescriptions. What use was made of this holiness code in ancient Israel we may only speculate. D. N. Freedman suggests it may have served

Levites in their work as teachers of the people."¹⁸ We may view this document as an exposition of the expressions "a kingdom of priests" and "holy nation" in Exodus 19:6.

That this is viewed as an exposition of the nature of Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh is demonstrated by the 18-fold occurrence of Yahweh's self introduction as "I am Yahweh your God,"¹⁹ which represents an adaptation of the covenant formula, "I am your God and you are my people" (cf. Lev. 20:26; 26:12). Looking far ahead to the time when the Israelites will be settled in the land that Yahweh has promised them, this document seeks to govern the life of the Israelites as Yahweh's vassals (*ābādīm*, Lev. 25:42, 55) living in Yahweh's land (25:23). The covenantal nature of this document is affirmed by the addition of chapter 26. This chapter not only refers to the covenant six times,²⁰ but its presence here accords with the pattern of ancient Near Eastern Hittite treaties, which typically followed up the stipulations with declarations of blessings as a reward for obedience.²¹

4. The Deuteronomic code

It has become customary for scholars to refer to the long section of text encompassing Deuteronomy 12–26 as the Deuteronomic law code. We may be justified in doing this on several grounds. First, it is formally framed by references to the laws of God:



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Read 'til it burns

God still speaks to us today through His Word. When He does speak, the words of the Bible come alive and glow with a brilliant relevance to our lives. He uses the Scriptures to place truth in our minds, inject truth into our decisions, impress truth on our hearts, provide comfort to us, and discipline and correct us.

Our hearts are captured and stirred by His Word. When Jesus appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, they did not recognize Him at first. Afterwards, they exclaimed, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32, KJV).

Read the Scriptures with an expectation that God is going to speak to you. Listen for His voice. Depend on the Holy Spirit to open your ears. Read the Scriptures until His voice sets your heart on fire.

—Don Pucil, *Lifeway Christian Resources*.

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Introduction: "These (*'ēlleh*) are the decrees (*ḥuqqîm*) and laws (*mišpāṭîm*) that you shall keep (*šāmar*) by doing (*la'āšôt*) [them] in the land that Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth" (12:1).

Conclusion: "Yahweh your God commands you this day to follow these (*'ēlleh*) decrees (*ḥuqqîm*) and the laws (*mišpāṭîm*), and you shall keep (*šāmar*) and do (*āšā*) them. . . ." (26:16)

Second, Moses repeatedly refers explicitly to "statutes" (*ḥuqqîm*),²² "laws" (*mišpāṭîm*),²³ "commandment" / "commandments" (*mišwā/mišwōt*),²⁴ "instruction" (*tôrâ*, usually rendered "law"),²⁵ and "covenant stipulations" (*'ēdôt*, usually rendered "testimonies"), if one may refer back to 4:45, which functions as a heading for the second half of Moses' second speech.

Stephen Kaufman, for example, has argued that the Deuteronomic code derives from a single redactor, who has organized the entire code after the model provided by the Decalogue as a whole.²⁷ It is apparent throughout that Moses has the principles of covenant relationship as outlined in the Decalogue in mind, but this system seems quite forced and can be achieved only by resorting to extraordinary exegetical and redactional gymnastics.²⁸ Moses seems here to have been inspired by other aspects of the Sinai revelation as well. Although there are also strong links with Exodus 34:11–28,²⁹ Bernard Levinson argues more plausibly that the Deuteronomic code represents a revision of the covenant code (Exodus 21–23).³⁰ The links are recognized not only in the details but also in the broad structure of the text, as the following synopsis illustrates:

EXODUS 20:22–23:33		DEUTERONOMY 12:2–26:15	
A	Principles of Worship (20:23–26)	A	Principles of Worship (12:2–16:17)
	Highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh		Highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh
B	Casuistic and Apodictic Laws (21:1–23:9)	B	Casuistic and Apodictic Laws (16:18–25:15)
	Highlighting Israel's ethical and civil expression of devotion to Yahweh		Highlighting Israel's ethical and civil expression of devotion to Yahweh
A'	Principles of Worship (23:10–19)	A'	Principles of Worship (26:1–15)
	Highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh		Highlighting Israel's cultic expression of devotion to Yahweh

Third, within this large block of material we do indeed find several series of regulations that have the appearance of legal lists, especially in chapters 22–25.

Fourth, the types of issues dealt with in these chapters often correspond to those found in codes of law outside the Old Testament.²⁶

Recently it has become fashionable to argue that Moses' presentation of the covenant obligations in Deuteronomy 12–26 is structured after the Decalogue.

Moses' flow of thought is best grasped, not by forcing it into some sort of decalogue pattern, but by outlining Deuteronomy 12:2–26:15 on the basis of content and without reference to any external document. This lengthy document also displays strong links with the holiness code. Most striking is the addition of the lists of covenant blessings and curses in chapter 28, which echoes the addition of Leviticus 26 to the holiness code.³¹

Despite these links with the book of the covenant, in tone and style much of Deuteronomy 12–26 bears a closer resemblance to chapters 6 through 11 than it does to the Sinai documents³² on which they are based. In fact, there is no appreciable shift in style and tone as one moves from chapter 11 to chapter 12 and beyond. While scholars are quick to recognize in the speeches of the book of Deuteronomy the voices of a prophet or a scribe, or even a priest,³³ the concerns and style of the speaker are better understood as the addresses of a pastor, who knows that his own tenure as shepherd of Yahweh's sheep is about to come to an end.³⁴ As pastor, Moses is concerned not only about civil and liturgical matters but especially with the spiritual and physical well-being of the people. He expresses particular passion about the people's relationship with God, a relationship that, on the one hand, is to be treasured as an incredible gift and, on the other hand, is to be demonstrated in a life of grateful obedience to their divine Redeemer and Lord. ■

(To be continued in July issue)

- 1 This article is based on a lecture given on the *Ministry Professional Growth* satellite broadcast aired from Loma Linda, California, April 5, 2005.
- 2 *Mosaic covenant* is quite a misnomer. Unlike the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, which are rightly named after the person whom God graciously chose to be his covenant partner, the covenant made at Sinai was not made with Moses. He served as the mediator between the two covenant partners, Yahweh and Israel. No other biblical covenants are named after the place where they were established, so "Sinai covenant" is no better. Following the paradigm of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, it is best referred to as the "Israelite covenant," or neo-Abrahamic covenant, inasmuch as through this ceremony Israel as a nation was formally recognized as the heirs of Abraham (cf. Gen. 17:7, 8).
- 3 See Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, Md.: New Covenant Media, 2002).
- 4 Cf. Robert D. Bergen's summary of the three basic positions represented in New Testament scholarship on the disposition of the early church to the law in "Preaching Old Testament Law," *Reclaiming the Prophetic Mantle: Preaching the Old Testament Faithfully*, ed. G. L. Klein (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 55, 56.
- 5 Thus C. G. Kruse, "Law," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, eds. T. D. Alexander, et al. (Downers

Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000), 636.

- 6 See G. Liedke, "hqq einritzen, festsetzen," *THAT* 1.631.
- 7 HALOT 959.
- 8 Thus LXX (*marturion*), Vulgate, the Targums.
- 9 S. T. Hague (*NIDOTTE* 1.502) notes that "the translation of 'ēdūt as 'testimony' is reasonable, as long as we understand the testimony as the law that is the seal of the Lord's covenant with Israel."
- 10 On the meaning and significance of *adē*, see Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), XV–XXV.
- 11 This interpretation is strengthened by the observation that what Moses will call the ark of the covenant of Yahweh 'ārōn bērit [*Yhwh*], Deut. 10:8; 31:9, 25, 26) is elsewhere referred to as the ark of the 'ēdūt (Exod. 25:22; 26:33, 34; 30:6, 26; 31:7; 39:35; 40:3, 5, 21; Num. 4:5; 7:89; 4:16). The present triad of terms recurs in Deuteronomy 6:20 (with 'ēdā preceding the present pair). 'ēdūt appears between *mišwōt* and *huqim* in 6:17. On the meaning and significance of 'ēdūt /'ēdōt, see H. Simian-Yofre, *TDOT* 10/514, 15.
- 12 HALOT, 436, 37.
- 13 Both expressions are common in the NT. For *didaskalia*, see Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7; Romans 12:7; 15:4; Ephesians 4:14; Colossians 2:22; 2:10; 1 Timothy 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3; 2 Timothy 3:10, 16; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7. For *didachē*, see Matthew 7:28; 16:12; 22:33; Mark 1:22; 27 4:2; 11:18; 12:38; Luke 4:32; John 7:16, 17; 18:19; Acts 2:42; 13:12; 17:19; Romans 6:17; 16:17; 1 Corinthians 14:6, 26; Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:6; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 6:2; Hebrews 13:9; 2 John 9, 10; Revelation. 2:14, 15, 24.
- 14 "The Origins of Israelite Law," in *Essays in Old Testament History and Religion* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), 101–71.
- 15 Albrecht's classification of these laws as "casuistic" and "apodictic" has recently been criticized as too simplistic, not allowing enough room for mixed forms, and even misnamed. See Rifat Sonsino, "Forms of Biblical Law," in *ABD* 4.252, 53.
- 16 The vertical dimensions of covenant (Exod. 20:1–11) respectively call for a recognition of Yahweh's right to (a) exclusive allegiance, (b) the definition of His image, (c) honor and true representation, (d) govern human time. The horizontal dimensions of covenant (20:8–17) respectively call for a recognition of (a) the household members' right to humane treatment (cf. Deut. 5:12–15), (b) parents' right to respect from children, (c) the right of all to life, (4) the right of all to a pure and secure marriage, (5) the right to personal property, (6) the right to an honest reputation, (7) the right to security. The terms add up to eleven because the fourth is transitional. The Exodus version highlights the Sabbath as a creation ordinance; the Deuteronomian versions highlight its humanitarian character.
- 17 Cf. Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 439.
- 18 D. N. Freedman, "Pentateuch," *Interpreter's*

Dictionary of the Bible, ed. G. A. Buttrick (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), 3.722.

- 19 Lev. 18:2, 4, 30; 19:3, 4, 10, 25, 31, 34, 36; 20:7, 24; 23:22, 43; 24:22; 25:17, 38, 55.
- 20 Vv. 9; 15, 25, 42, 44, 45.
- 21 See Kenneth A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 283–89.
- 22 Deut. 16:12; 17:19; 26:16, 17.
- 23 Deut. 26:16, 17.
- 24 Deut. 15:5; 17:20; 19:9; 26:13; cf. 27:1; 30:11; 31:5/Deut 13:4, 18; 26:13, 17, 18.
- 25 Deut. 17:18, 19; cf. 4:44; 28:61; 29:21, 29; 30:10; 31:9, 11, 12, 24, 26.
- 26 The links have been noted frequently. For a helpful collection of ancient Near Eastern law codes see Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 2nd ed., vol. 6, SBL Writings for the Ancient World Series (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).
- 27 "The Structure of Deuteronomical Law," *Maarav* 1/2 (1978/1979) 105–58. For a variation of this approach, see Georg Braulik, *Die deuteronomischen Gesetze und der Dekalog*, vol. 145, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991); *idem*, "Die Abfolge der Gesetze in Deuteronomium 12–26 und der Dekalog," *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft*, vol. 68, ETL (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985), 252–72. Eugene H. Merrill follows this approach in his commentary *Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman), 31.
- 28 It is an unlikely stretch, for example, to interpret Moses' instructions regarding administrative institutions in 16:18–18:22 as an exposition of the commandment to honor father and mother in 5:16. This approach is also rejected by Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 226. n. 19, and E. Otto, *Das Deuteronomium*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 226.
- 29 So also Norbert Lohfink, "Zur deuteronomischen Zentralisationsformel," *Bib* 65 (1984): 324–26.
- 30 *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), especially pp. 144–50.
- 31 Chapter 28 seems originally to have been attached directly to chapter 26, before chapter 27 was inserted.
- 32 The book of the covenant (Exod. 20:22–23:33), the so-called holiness code (Lev. 17–26).
- 33 For a helpful discussion of the prophetic and scribal voices, see James W. Watts, *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch*, Biblical Seminar 59 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 112–121; on the priestly voice, see G. von Rad, *Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 23–27.
- 34 Moses gives most eloquent expression to this understanding of his role in Numbers 27:15–17: "Moses spoke to Yahweh, saying, 'Let Yahweh, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of Yahweh may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.' "

Visuals in preaching: increasing the impact of your biblical sermons

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Preachers work with words. We prayerfully study the Word of God and then carefully use words to craft biblical messages. When we preach, we pray that those words will convey life-changing truth to our hearers.

But have you considered the fact that words are just a small portion of the communication process? Nonverbal communication can either reinforce or hinder your effectiveness as a biblical preacher.

Included in the nonverbal communication process are your facial expressions and gestures; congruent ones will increase the impact of your sermon. If your nonverbal communication is not congruent with your words, listeners will not believe what you are saying. Even in preaching, actions speak louder than words.

In addition to facial expressions and gestures that agree with your words, you can also use visual illustrations to increase the impact of your sermons.¹ This article will highlight five forms of visual illustrations that, when used appropriately, will make your words more powerful.

The gavel—1

This first example of a visual illustration can be found in a sermon titled “What Jesus Taught About the Judgment.”² To illustrate the anxiety that some Christians feel when thinking about the coming judgment, the preacher recounted the experience of a child standing before a judge. To the child, the judge’s gavel looked like a deadly

weapon. To increase the impact of the illustration, the preacher decided to look for a judge’s gavel that he could hold in his hand while preaching. A few days before the sermon, a member of the worship team found something even better than a regular judge’s gavel. While in the process of ordering a wooden gavel at a local trophy store, she noticed a massive gavel hanging on the wall. This oversized gavel was more than three feet long, and she was able to borrow it. When this dramatic visual aid was lifted up by the preacher during the recounting of his childhood experience, the impact of the words was greatly increased. Following the sermon, a businessman approached the preacher, pointed at the oversized gavel, and said, “That’s exactly how I felt about the judgment when I was growing up. I was afraid. That sermon really helped me to understand what Jesus taught about the judgment. I could really love a Savior like that!”

Large fonts—2

In a series of sermons titled *Healthy Christians*,³ another example of a visual illustration was found. This illustration provided a visual motif for the entire sermon series. Large 24-inch letters were cut out of 5-inch thick styrofoam to spell the title of the sermon series, **HEALTHY CHRISTIANS**. The letters for **HEALTHY** were created using a Comic Sans font with each letter painted a bright, different color. These letters were balanced on top of the letters for the word **CHRISTIANS**, which were created using an Arial font and painted black. The theme of balance was conveyed by balancing **HEALTHY CHRISTIANS** on top of a full-size balance beam, borrowed from a local gymnastic training center.⁴ A foam-board cut-out of a gymnast was placed on the balance beam alongside the title of the sermon series.⁵ This visual illustration was memorable. Creating a visual illustration for a sermon series may require more work than simply finding a prop for a single sermon, but the benefits continue to be felt throughout the entire sermon series.

The potter—3

In a sermon titled “God’s Masterpiece,”⁶ the preacher focused on the work of a potter to illustrate that “you are God’s masterpiece in progress.” However, instead of simply using words to describe the work of a potter or holding up a piece of pottery, the preacher brought a potter to the platform, who created a clay pot in front of the congregation.⁷ While the preacher preached, the congregation watched the potter at the

potter's wheel. An image of the potter working with the clay was also projected onto a large screen at the front of the church. This living visual illustration was powerful because every action of the potter reinforced the biblical truth that we are God's masterpiece in progress. The actions of the potter will be remembered long after the congregation forgets the preacher's words. The pots created during the sermon were later glazed, fired, and returned to the church as a visual reminder that we are God's masterpiece in progress.

The costume—4

Because the form of a sermon titled "The Innkeeper—Making Room for Jesus"⁸ was a first-person narrative, a seamstress in the congregation volunteered to create a costume for the preacher. The seamstress carefully researched the clothing of first-century Palestine and then sewed an innkeeper costume for the preacher. A member of the worship team, with the help of some members, created a visual representation of an inn on the platform. The result was remarkable.⁹ Those involved sensed the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit as the visual illustration took shape. Creating this visual illustration was just as important a part of the sermon development process as the sermon. Like all effective visual illustrations, this inn did not simply draw attention to itself but rather helped the congregation to experience the full impact of the biblical sermon.

Love letter—5

Several weeks prior to the sermon titled "My Prayer for You,"¹⁰ a member had given the preacher a DVD, *The Father's Love Letter*, which was a compilation of Scripture texts created in 1999 by Barry Adams.¹¹ It beautifully expresses our heavenly Father's heart of love. Several versions of *The Father's Love Letter* are available on the DVD, but the preacher used the shortest version titled "The Father's Love Letter Narration Video." This version includes a reading of the Scripture compilation accompanied by music and pictures. When this six-minute video clip was played at the close of the sermon, the impact was profound, with

the accompanying music and pictures reinforcing the power of the Scripture passages that were being read. In the week following the sermon, the pastor received many requests for copies of *The Father's Love Letter* to share with loved ones and friends.

Conclusion

These five examples of visual illustrations demonstrate ways that visuals can increase the impact of your words. When you prepare your next sermon, think carefully about the words that you use, but don't forget visuals even though you might be tempted to think that you don't have time. However, you can ask gifted spirit-filled people to help you in the creative process. People have the right to be given the opportunity to be involved, and many people are eager to help. Some may not even be members of your congregation.

Remember the importance of variety by not using the same type of illustration every time. Pray for creativity and discernment as you open your mind to fresh ideas and creative approaches. Never assume that the best solution is going to be found in the most likely place. Many materials and help for visuals come from small, family-owned businesses in the community rather than from the large companies. Soliciting the help of businesses in your neighborhood can be considered authentic community outreach. You can return to those businesses with pictures or videos to show how their contribution to creating the visual illustration helped the church family.

Remember also the importance of quality. Excellence honors God. Each person enlisted in conversation for suggestions provides potential for a better visual. Nurture a culture of excellence. Determine to find or create the very best visuals that you can for the honor and glory of God. Take the time to become comfortable with the visual. Then, with all of the prayerful preparation completed, preach the truths of God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, knowing that appropriate use of visual illustrations will increase the impact of your words.¹² ■

- 1 Jesus frequently used visual illustrations in preaching. For example, see Mark 9:36, 37.
- 2 This sermon was part of a six-part series titled "What Jesus Taught." It can be viewed at <www.forestlakechurch.org>. Click "View an Archived Sermon Anytime" and go to 3/5/2005. As you review the sermon video, you will notice other visuals that are used during the preaching of this sermon.
- 3 A DVD of the Healthy Christians sermon series is available by calling 800-ACN-1119 or by visiting <www.acn.info> or <www.adventsource.org>.
- 4 As a result of our interaction with the owner of this gym, we asked permission to pray for her and her gymnastics team during our church service. We also gave her a DVD of the sermon series Healthy Christians, along with a note of thanks.
- 5 The cut-out of the gymnast was created by projecting a picture of a gymnast onto a sheet of foam-board, adjusting it to the desired size, tracing around the form of the gymnast, and then cutting out the shape with a utility knife.
- 6 This sermon was part of a series on the Epistle to the Ephesians. It can be viewed at <www.forestlakechurch.org>. Click "View an Archived Sermon Anytime" and go to 9/10/2005. As you review the sermon video, you will notice that the preacher uses a scroll when reading from the preaching passage. Each member of the congregation was also given a scroll of the letter to the Ephesians. This scroll was used as a visual to tie the whole series together.
- 7 The potter was not a member of the congregation. At the end of the morning service, she testified that her own life had been greatly blessed as she heard the good news of the gospel while helping to preach the sermon.
- 8 This Christmas sermon can be viewed at <www.forestlakechurch.org>. Click "View an Archived Sermon Anytime" and go to 12/24/2005.
- 9 For a detailed description of the process of creating the visual representation of the inn, send an email request to <phofer@forestlakechurch.org>.
- 10 This sermon was part of a series on the Epistle to the Ephesians. It can be viewed at <www.forestlakechurch.org>. Click "View an Archived Sermon Anytime" and go to 9/24/2005. The video clip, "The Father's Love Letter Narration Video," is played 26 minutes into the sermon.
- 11 Free video downloads of *The Father's Love Letter* are available at <www.fathersloveletter.com>. Permission was granted to show the DVD as part of the church worship service.
- 12 To dialogue about visuals in preaching or to share insights that you have learned from your preaching experience, send an email message to <dmorris@forestlakechurch.org> or <phofer@forestlakechurch.org>.

Talking about death: helping your members make final decisions

Drexel C. Rankin



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In planning funerals, two problems often arise. First, the family of the deceased may know little or nothing about the desires of their loved one concerning the funeral. Second, the minister seldom has sufficient information about the deceased to properly offer a personal word at the funeral service.

Occasionally, an individual is given time to prepare. A diagnosis is presented. A physician predicts the amount of time a person will live. The patient is given time to ponder his mortality, to plan how he intends to use the remaining days, and to think about how he wishes to express his faith after he is gone.

Unfortunately, not every individual is granted such a boon. In those situations, decisions fall upon a grieving family. The emotional stress of the situation makes these judgments very difficult, and they are often made emotionally rather than rationally. By indicating wishes in advance, a person can help to ease the burden on loved ones.

How important, then, that you encourage church members to prepare in advance.

Prearrangements

Over more than thirty years in ministry, I have watched families agonize over the "proper" way that a loved one's funeral should take place. I have seen family members battle while trying to decide "just what Dad would want." In the trauma of the moment, these decisions are seldom made with ease.

For that reason, I have encouraged parishioners to stay in charge of these troublesome, and sometimes complex, decisions by making arrangements long before they are necessary. Much as a living will gives certain directives to medical doctors and staff, the prearranged funeral or memorial service allows the wishes of an individual to be crystal clear.

When my mother passed away eight years ago, I was living several hundred miles away. She had the foresight to make most of her arrangements prior to the illness that took her life. An insurance policy that covered funeral expenses was in place with the funeral director. She had carefully drawn up a list of her wishes concerning her funeral service. The only decision or expense that I had to make was for transportation of family members from the funeral home to the cemetery. A difficult situation was made much easier thanks to her foresight.

For many years, I have encouraged members of my congregations to do the same. The process could be viewed as intrusive if conducted on a congregational scope. If conducted on a more personal level, however, congregational members will view it as a way in which their wishes are cherished and their family is spared making hasty decisions—especially if death occurs suddenly.

Recently, we incurred a family death in which a wife and her husband were away from home, visiting friends. With no previous medical ailment, the wife simply went to sleep one evening and did not wake up. Her death was unexpected, but she had previously made her wishes known: to be buried in a state other than where she and her husband lived; to be laid to rest in a particular cemetery; to have a bag of Cheetos placed in the casket with her at viewing and at burial. From the most serious of decisions to the humorous, her wishes were carried out because they were known by family members. The agony of losing a wife and a mother so suddenly was almost unbearable. Had her wishes not been known, the family would have encountered extreme difficulty in knowing how to arrange for her service and interment.

Shortly after I arrived at a new pastorate, two individuals gave me a folder with information regarding their wishes for funeral arrangements, place of the service, a personal history, and burial instructions. Within three months, one of those individuals died. Her presentation to me was most helpful because, in such a short time, I could not have known most of the data that she had given me. She had no close family in whom to confide.

Prearrangements by an individual are exceedingly helpful to family members and to ministers. They save precious time and energy, especially if there are several children who, otherwise, might be conflicted about decisions. Moving through this process helps to protect the individual and his or her loved ones from the conspiracy of silence that surrounds death and dying.

Gathering such information should provide for the wishes of the deceased; how much better than forcing family or friends to make those difficult decisions.

How to

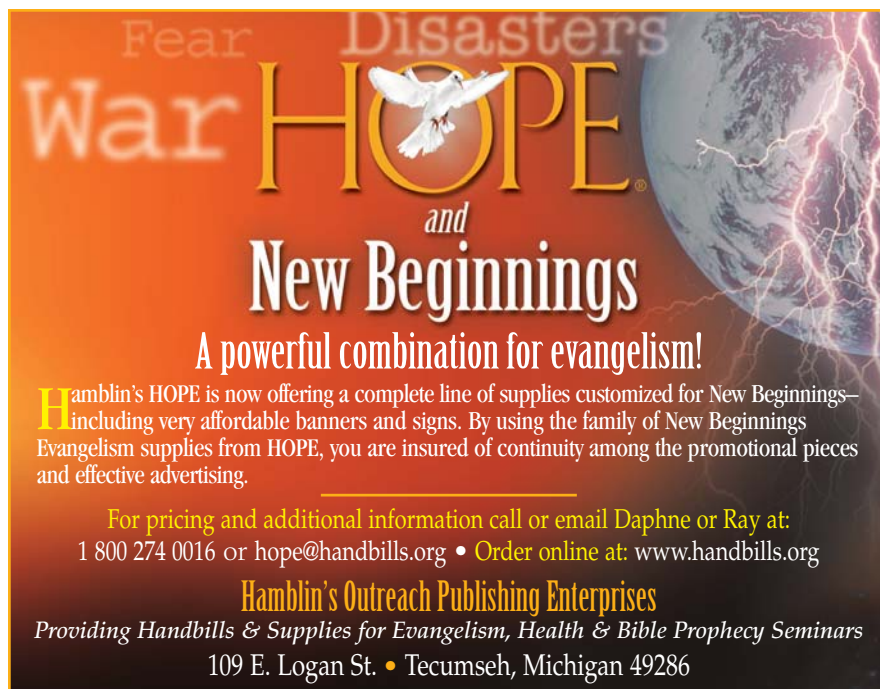
Encourage individuals to talk openly with family, to listen carefully to expressions of concern, and to give attention to those desires. The purpose of this exercise is to abide by the wishes of the deceased, and to make this death as easy on the family as possible.

Information can be gathered in at least two ways. After I have called on an individual, I carefully record matters of importance and significance that the individual has shared with me. I then log the date of my pastoral call in my personal copy of the church directory. I am able to look back in my calling log to retrieve a great deal of information that I may have forgotten over a period of several years.

I can also gather information directly from the individual in writing. I prefer to do this on a person-to-person basis so that it does not seem so intrusive.

Laying some groundwork, however, is necessary. Ministers have opportunities to talk about death during the worship service. Preaching from the Psalms, from Jesus' promises of resurrection and a life more abundant, or from Paul's words to the Romans or the Corinthians—all give the minister ample opportunity to broach this subject in an assuring manner. When preaching on this subject of death, I have often alluded to the importance of individuals making prearrangements to ensure their wishes and to ease the family from the burden of making decisions hastily.

In a similar manner, an occasional note in the pastor's column of the weekly newsletter opens the door to discussion.



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Denial

Many people choose not to deal with their own death or make such prearrangements, either because of fear or denial of their finite nature. Many people simply don't want to discuss these issues.

All that the minister can do is encourage individuals to have discussions about their lives, about who they are, about what they want at the end of life. It is essential for the minister to provide that opportunity. Certainly, it is best to begin these discussions sooner rather than later, for the individual may run out of time.

Procrastination in talking about the end of life is not in anyone's best interest. It is fear that keeps us silent about difficult topics; it is courage and compassion that allow us to begin to speak. Only in confronting the inevitability of death does one truly embrace life.

Some have pondered my spoken or written words and have visited with me about their desires. Occasionally, an individual calls me to talk specifically about their wishes. At other times, the subject is raised during a pastoral call in the home or hospital.

However it comes, and whatever the context it's given in, the more the survivors know of the deceased's wishes, the better those wishes could

be fulfilled at the time of death and for the funeral itself.

The funeral

At the funeral, and armed with the needed information, the minister can do four things: express thanksgiving for the life of the deceased, console the grieving family, personalize the service with anecdotes from the life of the deceased, and read appropriate Scripture with the individual and the family in mind.

The funeral represents a purposeful opportunity to establish meaning—to reflect on the meaning of a life that has been lived and to determine the impact of that meaning for those who continue. It is a time for human sharing in its deepest sense. The choices made regarding the funeral service will determine its significance for that person. Preplanning is simply a mechanism to ensure that a person will have choices. It enables the individual to arrive at choices with a clear mind reflective of the life lived rather than the grief at death.

Solomon was right. "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die, . . . a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Eccles. 3:1–4, NIV).

I would like to add, "And a time to plan for death . . ." ■

Creation and Flood implications of the first angel's message in Revelation 14:7¹

John T. Baldwin

A six-day creation method

Recent New Testament research by Jon Paulien, professor of New Testament,² shows that the language of the last part of Revelation 14:7, “‘worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea’” (NASB), alludes to the language of the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:11.³ In part, the Revelation passage accomplishes this significant allusion by listing, in the same order, four of the identical terms that appear in the Exodus text. Paulien offers the following conclusion regarding the certainty of the allusion: “The cumulative evidence is so strong that an interpreter could conclude that there is no direct allusion to the Old Testament in Revelation that is more certain than the allusion to the fourth commandment in Rev. 14:7. When the author of Revelation describes God’s final appeal to the human race in the context of the end-time deception, he does so in terms of a call to worship the creator in the context of the fourth commandment.”⁴

Building on Paulien’s conclusion, the present essay offers the diagram on the facing page to illustrate how the allusion also seems to endorse a literal, historical six-day Creation.

The diagram illustrates that by alluding to the *full* cosmological wording of Exodus 20:11, the allusion endorses the concept of a six-day Creation. While not rewriting a portion of Scripture, the dotted line in the diagram indicates the

biblical source for the bracketed insertion of the important concept implied by the first four words of the allusion in Revelation 14:7. The messenger could have said simply, “worship your maker,” but that would not signal a six-day method of Creation. The critical need in the end time for the allusion to suggest the six-day method of Creation is addressed in the application section of the essay. However, the complete allusion suggests more than a concept of six-day Creation.

The biblical Flood

The allusion in Revelation 14:7 to Exodus 20:11 ends with a phrase of remarkable focus, “fountains of waters.” Do these words have some special significance? The hermeneutical key that can unlock the importance of this phrase seems to be its placement in a context and setting of judgment: “‘Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made . . . springs [fountains] of waters’” (Rev. 14:7, NASB). The immediate connection of the phrase “fountains of waters” to a judgment setting needs to be borne in mind continually throughout the following discussion.

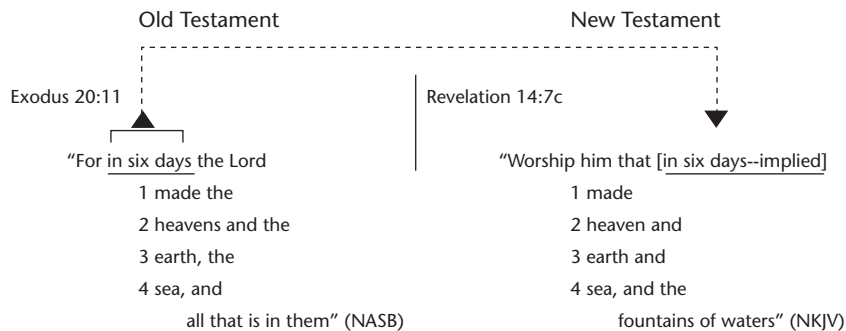
The special uniqueness of the phrase helps to raise questions that lead to a deeper understanding of its meaning. Because the allusion in the Revelation passage begins and *continues* as an exact verbal paralleling of the language in Exodus 20:11, the allusion can be said to end with an unparallel, thus unexpected and surprising, phrase, “fountains of waters,” not found in the Old Testament passage. A central question confronting the interpreter seems to be: If Revelation 14:7c is a clear verbal parallel allusion to the Exodus passage, why doesn’t the angel messenger complete the allusion by using the expected phrase “and all that is in them” (NASB) found in Exodus 20:11? Why does the messenger break his method of paralleling by inserting the unparallel and specifically focused phrase “fountains of waters”?

The importance of the unparallel phrase “fountains of waters” is further heightened by noting that its departure in Revelation 14:7 from the wording in Exodus 20:11 stands in sharp contrast with a biblical pattern established and illustrated elsewhere in Scripture when individuals refer at some length to Exodus 20:11. For example, in the context of describing the goodness of God as the one who sets the prisoner free, David (like the first angel in Revelation 14) articulates the following words precisely as found in Exodus 20:11, “Who made heaven and earth, the sea” (NASB), but ends by stating the expected “and all that is in them” of the Exodus passage (Ps. 146:6, NASB). In a



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Diagram Suggesting How Revelation 14:7c Implies a Six-Day Method of Creation



The numbered words indicate the four verbal parallels existing between the two passages. This diagram illustrates that by an endorsing allusion to Exodus 20:11, and thus to the totality of Exodus 20:11, the message of Revelation 14:7 implies that a six-day method of Creation is true, and should be considered so in our day. The unparallel phrase “fountains of waters” in Revelation 14:7 is a surprising, yet highly important, feature of the text discussed later in the essay.

similar context, New Testament believers who express thanksgiving for the loving kindness of God displayed by His healing of the lame beggar mention the same portion of Exodus 20:11 and add the expected phrase “and all that is in them” (Acts 4:24) in the same manner as David. Again, when the healing of a lame man of Lystra reveals the power of God, Barnabas and Paul cite the same words of Exodus 20:11 and complete their reference to the Exodus passage with the expected “and all that is in them” (Acts 14:8, 15). Thus we discern a typical pattern used by biblical individuals when referring to or quoting Exodus 20:11. Evidently, they did not feel at liberty to deviate from the wording of the fourth commandment.

Remarkably, the allusion in Revelation 14:7 takes a different pathway.

The typical biblical pattern illustrated above is broken only in Revelation 14:7. Any scriptural parallel allusion or reference to Exodus 20:11 that starts with the words “Who made” and reaches the word “sea” and then continues never strays after that from the exact wording of Exodus except in Revelation 14:7c. Why? Is something theologically important being communicated? Is God, through the angel, signaling some relevant, theological truth(s) by means of a somewhat fluid allusion that otherwise would be lost if

Exodus 20:11 were to be fully, exactly paralleled?

Most importantly, why in this end-time passage might God select the “fountains of waters” for special mention and not some other created item among “all that is in them”? The independent research of several scholars can, when placed together, contribute to a theologically and geologically significant response to these questions.

Bible scholar David Aune indicates that the term “fountains” of Revelation 14:7 refers not to artificial constructs but rather to natural water sources flowing from below ground.⁵ This qualification supports the claim in Revelation 14:7 that the “fountains of waters” were realities created by God and not by humans.

Wilhelm Michaelis considers several possible explanations for the “fountains of waters” mentioned in Revelation 14:7. In the end, he wonders whether they likely refer to the “fountains of the deep” of Genesis 7:11 and 8:2.⁶ We can add that, if so, this would suggest a reference in Revelation 14 to the Genesis judgment Flood account within the Revelation judgment passage.

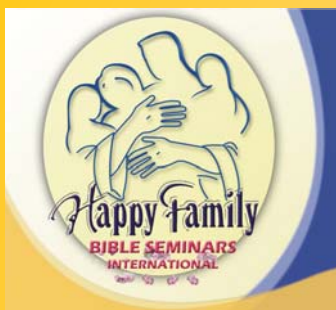
The above possibility is rendered all the more plausible when one considers that the Greek word *p'gas*, used in Revelation 14:7 for “fountains,” is also used for

“fountains of the deep” (Gen. 7:11) in the Greek version of the Old Testament (LXX). Moreover, the concept “fountains of waters” is a universal concept that would include the “fountains of the deep,” which were created by divine wisdom (Prov. 8:27, 28, 30) and were broken open at the Flood (Gen. 7:11). Here the judgment setting of the Revelation 14 phrase “fountains of waters” begins to reveal its importance.

In her recent Ph.D. dissertation, titled *Water Symbolism in John: An Eschatological Interpretation*, Wai-Yee Ng implies that, “John’s use of water symbolism . . . involves implicit allusion rather than explicit citation.” She notes that “Revelation is . . . filled with OT themes, and the two books [Revelation and the Gospel of John] unite in the formulation of a typology that harks back to creation.”⁷ These conclusions invite the reader to seek cautiously for possible theological meaning in the allusion in Revelation 14:7.

Regarding specific water symbolism in Revelation, Ng shows that there are three groups of “water” passages in Revelation: “one related to calamities, one to God’s promise of salvation, and one to the consummation.”⁸ She indicates that the reference to the fountains or springs of waters in Revelation 14:7 is a passage in the calamity group.⁹ Given the immediate context of divine judgment announced by the messenger in Revelation 14, this placement becomes appropriate and helpful for purposes of this essay. The present author suggests that, understood in the calamity context, the reference to fountains of waters in the immediate context of divine judgment may be intended to recall or imply a former event of divine judgment, the biblical Flood, when the fountains of the deep were broken up. If so, the use of “fountains of waters” in the Revelation 14:7 context serves to strengthen the judgment announcement of the angel by recalling that the Lord is indeed a God of judgment, and that the hearers, therefore, should take the message with utmost seriousness.

Recently, theologian Oleg Zhigankov explored the possible meaning of “fountains of waters” in Revelation 14:7. Among other helpful suggestions, he observes



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that the use of the phrase 'fountains of the water' bring[s] together the idea of a literal creation and a coming judgment . . . The fact of the unavoidable judgment is confirmed by the reference to another global historical event—the flood."¹⁰ Here, Zhigankov indicates that the phrase "fountains of waters" is employed to recall the Genesis Flood as confirmatory evidence of the reality of the judgment announced by the angel in Revelation 14:7.

Henry Morris, scientist and bible student, also indicates that the angel uses the words " 'fountains of waters'. . . because of their association with the earlier judgment of the great deluge, when 'all the fountains of the great deep [were] broken up' " (Gen 7:11).¹¹ "The angel's cry," says Morris, "reminded men that as God had created all these things and then had destroyed them once before because of man's sin, so He was still able to control all things and that another great divine judgment was imminent."¹² Of the commentators studied, Morris develops the most explicit and broad connections between the phrase "fountains of waters" of Revelation and the biblical Flood.

Reflecting upon the angel's use of "fountains of waters" in Revelation 14:7, David Fouts, professor of Old Testament, Bryan College, observes that to interpret the angel's words as recalling the Flood is "certainly supportable in the context of judgment in Revelation 14."¹³ He further wonders whether a parallel might be made between the angel's use of "fountains of waters," as discussed by Morris, "with the words of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:36–39, wherein end-time judgments are linked with that of Noah and the Flood."¹⁴

Most recently, in a Ph.D. dissertation titled "Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9," Chun Sik Park analyzes, among other things, several biblical passages that he considers to be dealing with the theme of judgment in relation to the Flood, including Revelation 14:7.¹⁵ He offers the following conclusion regarding the Revelation passage: "Rev. 14:7 has a terminological link to the Genesis flood narrative ('the fountains of the deep,' Gen. 7:11; 'the fountains of waters')."¹⁶

Park insightfully unpacks the connection by focusing on two dimensions of the creative power of God: “While ‘all that is in them’ (Exod. 20:11) reflects God’s global creative power displayed at creation, the corresponding phrase ‘the fountains of waters’ (Rev. 14:7c) reflects God’s global uncreative power displayed at the flood.”¹⁷

The combined research of these scholars suggests that the phrase “fountains of waters” in Revelation 14:7 points to God’s Flood, thereby endorsing its historical reality, in order to underscore the truth that the Lord is a God both of judgment and of mercy. He is patient “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9, NASB). But all must take seriously the historical reality of God’s judgment as announced by the angel.

Practical, contemporary application

Important spiritual, systematic theological, and geological implications flow from the above conclusions. In post-modern science, and even in evangelical circles, the long age evolutionary *method* of the origin of species and the adamant denial of a global Flood (along with the attending fatal spiritual and theological consequences indicated below) remain central working assumptions.¹⁸ This means that individuals living in the end time need to know the truth about the *method* of Creation and whether the Flood was part of actual earth history. What we need to know, God delivers. That the resurrected Lord would put language into His last message to humanity that endorses a six-day *method* of Creation and recalls the biblical Flood remains a masterful and timely divine response to the rise of macroevolutionary theory and its rejection of the Genesis Flood and safeguards central biblical truths identified in the following discussion.

A historical six-day method of Creation is critical for evoking true worship, because a brief, recent, historical Creation preserves the goodness of God who, thereby, does not create by using death, suffering, disease, and predation in a cruel, demonic fashion over millions of years before human sin. Thus, God is shown

ALL MUST TAKE SERIOUSLY THE HISTORICAL REALITY OF GOD’S JUDGMENT AS ANNOUNCED BY THE ANGEL.

to be profoundly worthy of worship. In addition, a six-day Creation renders the Sabbath a powerful monument to a finished Creation rather than to a world in the process of being created.

A global Flood stands as a necessary complement to the biblical method of Creation. The divinely initiated aquatic catastrophe can account for the formation of major portions of the geologic column after the entrance of sin and death, thus indicating that the fossiliferous geologic column does not require millions of years for its development. This means that the very possibility of a six-day Creation is preserved by the basic results of the Flood. Moreover, the Genesis Flood safeguards other crucial biblical teachings such as the authority of Scripture and, above all, the validity of an atonement based upon the truth that, in earth history, death does not precede sin but is its wage.

Spiritually, in the end time, we sorely need to know the truth about the two key earth history issues discussed above—Creation and the Flood—because the way in which these questions are answered can either establish or undermine living faith in God. Thus, the end-time reaffirmation by Jesus Christ of the concepts of the six-day Creation and the Genesis Flood in the message of the first angel in Revelation 14 is striking indeed, glorifying the wisdom, foresight, faithfulness, loving kindness, and power of God. From this perspective, the passage can be understood as God’s earnest call to everyone to accept these truths for themselves. In this way, God’s significant allusion in Revelation 14:7 to Exodus 20:11 can facilitate grateful and loving worship of the Creator.

In this age, to which all the prophets looked forward with hope, can we do no less than study together, pray together, and seek to understand the messages God has transmitted to enable us to meet the challenges of end time? ■

- 1 The author expresses appreciation to Roland Hegstad for suggestions regarding an earlier version of this essay.
- 2 Jon Paulien is chair of the Department of New Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.
- 3 See Jon Paulien “Revisiting the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 9 (Spring–Autumn 1998): 179–86.
- 4 Ibid., 185.
- 5 David Edward Aune, “Revelation 6–16,” in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 52B (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1998), 828–9.
- 6 Wilhelm Michaelis, “Fountains of Waters,” in Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1954–1967), 112–7.
- 7 Wai-Yee Ng, *Water Symbolism in John: An Eschatological Interpretation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 194. Ng wrote her dissertation at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia under the direction of Moisés Silva, currently the Mary F. Rockefeller Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, United States. Ng serves as associate professor of biblical studies at China Graduate School of Theology in Hong Kong, China.
- 8 Ibid., 187.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Oleg Zhigankov, “Significance of the ‘Fountains of Waters’ in Revelation 14:7,” an unpublished manuscript written in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States (revised 2004), 31.
- 11 Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983), 266.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 David M. Fouts personal communication to the author, January 13, 2003.
- 14 David M. Fouts personal communication to the author, February 11, 2003.
- 15 Chun Sik Park, “Theology of Judgment in Genesis 6–9” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 2005).
- 16 Ibid., 368.
- 17 Ibid., 347.
- 18 For example, see, Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 188–208; Davis A. Young, *The Biblical Flood* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 311.

The Da Vinci Code and the Nag Hammadi Gospels

Robert K. McIver



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Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*¹ is a publishing phenomenon, having sold, so far, over thirty million copies in 40 languages. A movie is also scheduled to be released shortly. The book begins with murder and continues as a high-stakes mystery in which the two heroes, Langdon and Sophie, frantically try to solve a sequence of puzzles that will eventually lead them to the holy grail,² all the while running from the police and a psychopathic killer. A crucial part of the plot of *The Da Vinci Code* revolves around the claim that Christianity is, in fact, one big conspiracy. To back up this claim, the character Teabing provides evidence based on a couple of the so-called "gospels" found at Nag Hammadi.

What are these "gospels"? What do they teach, and what can we learn from their appearance in *The Da Vinci Code*?

Nag Hammadi

In 1945, two brothers discovered a jar in a field in Nag Hammadi of Upper Egypt. Within the jar were 12 codices, which contained 52 tractates.³ After many adventures, worthy of a book themselves (including a murder), the documents ended up in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, Egypt. The tractates are fourth-century Coptic translations of works that were originally in Greek. They all have been published and are available in English.⁴

Several of the Nag Hammadi tractates are identified as gospels, which include the Gospel of Truth, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of

Philip, the Gospel of the Egyptians, and the Gospel of Mary.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, the two gospels that the fictional character Sir Leigh Teabing, former British Royal Historian, quotes from are the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Philip. The first six pages of the Gospel of Mary have not survived, but what is left begins with "Peter said to Mary, 'Sister, we know that the Savior loved you more than the rest of women. Tell us the words of the Savior which you remember—which you know (but) we do not nor have we heard them.' Mary answered and said, 'What is hidden from you I will proclaim to you.'"⁵

Mary's speech becomes more and more philosophical. Toward the end of it she says, " 'When the soul had overcome the third power, it went upwards and saw the fourth power, (which) took seven forms. The first form is darkness, the second desire, the third ignorance, the fourth is the excitement of death, the fifth is the kingdom of the flesh, the sixth is the foolish wisdom of flesh, the seventh is the wrathful wisdom. These are the seven [powers] of wrath. They ask the soul, 'whence do you come, slayer of men, or where are you going, conqueror of space?' " "⁶

At the end of the speech is the following: "Andrew answered and said to the brethren, 'Say what you (wish to) say about what she has said. I at least do not believe that the Savior said this. For certainly these teachings are strange ideas.' Peter answered and spoke concerning the same things. . . . Levi answered and said to Peter, 'Peter, you have always been hot-tempered. Now I see you contending against the women like the adversaries. But if the Savior made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us.' "⁷

The Gospel of Mary claims to present the secret words of Jesus, words unknown to the regular apostles but revealed to Mary. What do these secret words reveal? They reveal a version of Christianity that is philosophical—in which the Cross of Jesus has no place. A type of Christianity, in fact, that has much in common with the "heresies" described as Gnostic by the second-century writer Irenaeus.⁸ But Andrew and Peter, as representatives of more orthodox Christianity, reject these secret words of Jesus. In this reading, the Gospel of Mary is an apology for Gnosticism—it claims that those advocating Gnostic ideas are correct, and that the rest of Christianity is wrong.

This, however, is not the reading of the gospel presented by the character Teabing

in *The Da Vinci Code*, which quotes the words cited above. According to Teabing, Peter is speaking out of jealousy of the real status of Mary, a status that Teabing had revealed a couple of pages earlier, when he quoted the Gospel of Philip: “And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth. The rest of the disciples were offended by it and expressed disapproval. They said to him, ‘Why do you love her more than all of us?’”

WHAT DO THESE SECRET WORDS REVEAL? THEY REVEAL A VERSION OF CHRISTIANITY THAT IS PHILOSOPHICAL—IN WHICH THE CROSS OF JESUS HAS NO PLACE.

“The words surprised Sophie, and yet they hardly seemed conclusive. ‘It says nothing of marriage.’”

“‘*Au contraire*.’ Teabing smiled, pointing to the first line. ‘As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word companion, in those days, literally meant spouse.’”⁹

The passage Teabing cited from the Gospel of Philip is certainly one of the more sensational passages in the Nag Hammadi library. The paragraph concerned is actually a reconstruction of a fragmentary text, which reads, “As for the Wisdom who is called ‘the barren,’ she is the mother . . . angels. And the companion of the . . . Mary Magdalene . . . her more than . . . disciples . . . kiss her . . . on her . . . the rest of . . . by it . . . They said to him, ‘Why do you love her more than all of us?’”¹⁰ The reconstruction is probably not that far from the original. But the interpretation provided of the word *companion* by Teabing is open to dispute. While Jesus doubtless spoke Aramaic, the Gospel of Philip was written in Greek and then translated into Coptic. The particular word *companion* is a loan word from Greek, and elsewhere means “companion.” It is not impossible that

“sexual partner,” or even “spouse” is intended in the Gospel of Philip, but this would be an unusual use of the word. Besides, we hear of Jesus’ mother, brothers, and sisters in the canonical Gospels (e.g., Matt. 13:55). Would we not also expect to hear if He had a wife?

According to the character Teabing in *The Da Vinci Code*, Jesus was just a man, albeit an important man, and married to Mary Magdalene. It was only later, and under the somewhat sinister instigation of the Emperor Constantine, that Jesus

remains, and it can be answered by reading the other gospels that have survived, such as what was found at Nag Hammadi. I, for one, after reading these other gospels, think that the early church made the right decision, and that we should form our understanding of Jesus from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. As the Bible says of itself: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16, NIV). That would include, of course, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Most parishioners can recognize that *The Da Vinci Code* is fiction, but some will have questions regarding assertions made in the book about such writings as the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Mary. Welcome these questions, because they provide an opportunity to discuss several matters of great importance to Christianity, such as the authority of the New Testament and the divinity of Jesus. ■

was said to be the Son of God, and all other documents that might suggest otherwise were suppressed. Among these documents were the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of Philip.

Conclusion

It is, indeed, true that the noncanonical gospels of Nag Hammadi portray a Jesus different from what’s in the canonical Gospels. But here is where historical judgment must be exercised. Which of these pictures of Jesus is most likely? The early church had little doubt. Spurred on by Marcion, who vigorously advocated that Christians should use only Luke and some of Paul’s writings, various Christian leaders produced a list of books, or canon, which should be considered authoritative by Christians. Admittedly, the list that was exactly the same as the books found in today’s New Testament did not appear until A.D. 367.¹¹

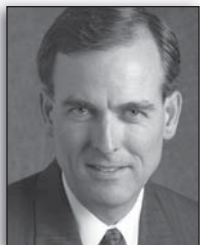
But here is the point. There was *never* debate as to whether Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John should be on that list. The debate was over such books as Revelation and Hebrews.

The question as to whether or not the early church chose the right Gospels

- 1 Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (London: Corgi, 2003).
- 2 Many stories from the medieval period feature a search for the holy grail—said to be the cup from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper, and which was attributed mystical properties. The holy grail also appears in modern stories and movies.
- 3 A tractate is a short work, mainly of a religious nature.
- 4 See James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977).
- 5 All of the translations of the Nag Hammadi Documents cited in this article are taken from Robinson, 472.
- 6 Ibid, 473.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 In several places in *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge, 2003), e.g. pp. 155–60, Karen L. King argues that the Gospel of Mary is not Gnostic, because “there was no religion in antiquity called Gnosticism” (p. 155). On the other hand, Fred Lapham describes the Gospel of Philip as “broadly Gnostic,” and the Gospel of Mary as beginning with a “Gnostic discourse.” See *An Introduction to the New Testament Apocrypha* (London: Clark, 2003), 95, 162. The term *gnosticism* remains a convenient term to describe a cluster of versions of Christianity that focused on philosophy and downplayed the Cross. Even so, strictly speaking we should probably talk of *gnosticisms*, rather than of *Gnosticism*.
- 9 Brown, 333.
- 10 Robinson, 138.
- 11 The list was produced by Athanasius in his 39th Easter festival letter.

The pastor's guide to resource materials on the New Testament

John McVay and Phillip Long



John McVay, Ph.D., is dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



Phillip Long, M.A., is associate professor of biblical studies at Grace Bible College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, United States.

The rich array of print, electronic, and online resources to aid in New Testament study represents a treasure trove for the pastor. However, the mushrooming of these resources also presents challenges. Where does one begin? Which resources are best? What must you have, either on the bookshelf or on the hard drive?

Here are our recommendations.

Bibliography

Given the limitations of time and money, where can the pastor turn for guidance on what books, especially commentaries, to purchase? Listed here are three in-print and up-to-date bibliographic guides written for pastors. In addition, there are helpful online resources.

1. David R. Bauer, *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry* (Hendrickson, 2003). An excellent guide, well arranged, providing solid advice and having the advantage of treating the Old Testament as well. Bauer comments on over two thousand texts. If you purchase only one bibliographical guide, this should probably be it.

2. Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Books for Pastors and Teachers: Revised and Updated to 2002* (Wipf and Stock, 2002). This excellent resource is available in its earlier 1984 edition online through the TheologyBooks.com Web site <www.theologybooks.com/site/biblio.cfm?tk=7>.

3. D. A. Carson, *New Testament Commentary Survey*, 5th ed. (Baker, 2001). While this survey

is a bit dated, it provides an excellent summary of a wide range of commentaries.

4. The New Testament "Exegesis Bibliography" by Drs. Craig L. Blomberg and William W. Klein, issued as part of the online *Denver Journal*, is up-to-date (January 2006) and very helpful. Time spent understanding the layout of section 11 on commentaries will be handsomely repaid: <www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles2006/0200/0201.php>.

5. The "New Testament Bibliographies" page on the NT Gateway site (see below) may prove useful: <www.ntgateway.com/resource/biblio.htm>.

Purchasing books online

Once you have identified resources you wish to own, where do you purchase them? Increasingly, we are turning to online bookstores. You may well have your own favorite sites for online purchases of New Testament-related materials. Here are ours:

1. <www.allbookstores.com>—Especially helpful for finding the best online price for new books.

2. <www.bookfinder.com>—Especially helpful for locating used or somewhat rare books for sale online.

3. <www.abebooks.com>—Also good for used books.

4. <www.a1books.com>—We often find that A1 Books offers the best price for new, New Testament-related books.

5. <www.christianbook.com>—Though increasingly cluttered by popular Christian merchandise, Christianbook.com is sophisticated and often offers excellent prices, especially on sets.

6. <www.theologybooks.com>—Perhaps not as helpful as a purchase site as it is for providing online bibliographic suggestions from Evangelical scholars.

7. <www.amazon.com>—Amazon.com often provides new books at discounted prices as well as used books. Amazon now allows the user to browse the text of many books online, including the indexes and copyright pages. More useful still, one can sample a list of citations within the text of the book.

Online and electronic resources

Online resources for studying the New Testament and for preaching are now maturing to the point of providing genuine help. We here offer several core resources:

1. The NT Gateway site, ably developed and maintained by Dr. Mark Goodacre, is the major index for New Testament resources available

on the World Wide Web: <ntgateway.com>. Spend some time exploring it and discovering your own favorite resources. Keep in mind that the site offers sources from a wide range of perspectives. For those interested in using or refreshing New Testament Greek skills, the subsite The Greek New Testament Gateway <ntgateway.com/greek/> is a treasure trove.

2. For accessing recent articles on New Testament themes and passages, we recommend obtaining access to the ATLA (American Theological Library Association) index and the related ATLAS (ATLA Serials) database. It now includes valuable journals, such as *Journal for Preachers*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *Journal of Pastoral Care*, and *Novum Testamentum*. (See the complete list at <www.atla.com/products/titles/titles_atlas.html>.) It may be possible to arrange access to these through the seminary from which you graduated (Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary alumni may arrange access to ATLAS by following the directions at <www.andrews.edu/library/alumni/index.html> or by affiliating with a local theological library). Often, identifying a recent, scholarly, but readable, article on your passage or theme can spark new insight.

3. Galaxie Software <www.galaxie.com> publishes the *Theological Journal Library*, a collection of journals in Libronix (Logos) format. This collection includes *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, *Bibliotheca sacra*, *Westminster Theological Journal*, *Trinity Journal*, *Review and Expositor*, and several others in a fully searchable format.

4. Increasingly, we find relying on an excellent online database to be essential in preaching and teaching. Our favorite one is Academic Search Premier from EBSCOhost. It offers in full text format magazines such as *Christian Century*, *Christianity Today*, and *Christian History*, and journals such as *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, and *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. A number of others (e.g., *Interpretation* and *New Testament Studies*) are covered using an abstracts format. We recommend that you explore gaining access to it or



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a similar online database (perhaps at a local library) because it provides a wealth of scholarly and popular resources.

of New Testament vocabulary. We would recommend *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 4 volumes., or *Exegetical Dic-*

INCREASINGLY, WE FIND RELYING ON AN EXCELLENT ONLINE DATABASE TO BE ESSENTIAL IN PREACHING AND TEACHING.

Essential New Testament resources for the pastor's library

What essential books and other resources, focused on the New Testament, should be in the pastor's library? An adequate answer would need to take personal interests and skills into account. Here is our sketch of "the essentials":

1. *Greek New Testament resources*. If you have taken New Testament Greek in college and/or seminary, you probably already have a library of resources close at hand. At a minimum, these should include a quality Greek text (Nestle-Aland 27th ed. or UBS 4th ed.), the ranking lexicon (Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., 2000), a quality grammar (e.g. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Beyond the Basics*, 1996, or his shorter *Basics of New Testament Syntax*, 2000), and a multivolume dictionary focused on the theological significance

tionary of the New Testament, 3 vols. You will also find a reading aid such as Sakae Kubo's *A Reader's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Max Zerwick and Mary Grosvenor's *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, or *New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (1998), by Dr. Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, to be extremely helpful, assuming you take the time to learn to use it. In order to review vocabulary, see *Mastering New Testament Greek Vocabulary Through Semantic Domains* by Mark Wilson (Kregel, 2002), or *The Complete Vocabulary Guide to the Greek New Testament* by Warren C. Trenchard (Zondervan, 1998). These resources should now be supplemented by a quality Bible software package (our favorite is *BibleWorks* for Windows, now available in version 7.0 <www.bibleworks.com>, though Mac computer-oriented friends express a preference for *Accordance* <www.accordancebible.com>). Logos

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Bible Software is currently available in a Windows and a Mac version with a wide array of tools for New Testament study <www.logos.com>. With the help of a good software package and a little dusting off of dormant language skills, you can study the Greek text for yourself. One additional aid for reading the Greek New Testament is the *Reader's Greek New Testament* (Zondervan, 2003). Because the Greek text of this volume is not identical to the NA27 or UBS4, it is perhaps not adequate for exegesis, but it is useful for improving reading skills because it glosses words used fewer than 40 times in the New Testament at the bottom of each page.

2. *Bible dictionaries.* The pastor's library should include at least one excellent multivolume Bible dictionary (e.g., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (1992) or *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* [1979–1988]) and two or three one-volume ones (e.g., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* [2000]; *New Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed. [1996]). The series of dictionaries recently offered by InterVarsity Press is also invaluable (*Dictionary of New Testament Background* [2000]; *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* [1998]; *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* [1997]; *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* [1993]; *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* [1992]).

3. *Commentaries.* Here we recommend purchasing volumes with the help of the advice offered by the sources listed under "Bibliography," above (based on the individual merits of the volume rather than that it is part of a given set of commentaries). As a minimum, build a library with at least two quality volumes covering each New Testament document. One of these may be more academic in focus (and, if your skills allow, will treat the Greek text in detail, such as the *New International Greek Text Commentary* series published by Eerdmans), while the other may be more focused on exploring themes for preaching and teaching. We recommend building this library over time, preferably in conjunction with preaching through the Bible. For your own personal Bible study and to provide a wider range of views, you should supplement these individual volumes with quality one- or two-

volume Bible commentaries (e.g. *New Bible Commentary*, 21st Century Edition [1994]; *HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. [2000]). Using these two together often provides an interesting mix of perspectives).

4. *Classic, devotional commentaries.* Identifying classic, devotional treatments of New Testament documents can be very helpful. While these books do not offer evaluation of the latest interpretive trends, writers of earlier generations offer much inspiration. Would one really want to do without G. C. Findlay on Ephesians (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 1931) or F. B. Meyer on Philipians (1905) or Hebrews (*The Way into the Holiest*, 1893)? Carefully nurture a collection of these works. Crossway Books has published a single volume compendium of classic devotional literature in *The Classic Bible Commentary* (1999). InterVarsity Press's *Ancient Christian Commentary* series collects choice comments from church fathers in single volumes.

5. *Exegetical method.* Gordon D. Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3d ed. (Westminster: John Knox, 2002) offers good, sound, detailed advice on the exegetical process and includes a commented bibliography of exegetical tools. Grant R. Osborne's *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (InterVarsity Press, 1997) and *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard (Word, 1993) remain useful handbooks on exegetical method.

6. *Other Areas.* With the help of the bibliographic aids listed above, you will wish to add to these essentials, especially in areas such as history and background (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 1994), textual criticism and history of the canon (Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Text to Translations* [Baker, 1999]), introductions (D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* [Zondervan, 2005]), theology (George Eldon Ladd and Donald A. Hagner, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. [Eerdmans, 1993]), and ethics (Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* [InterVarsity Press, 2003]). ■

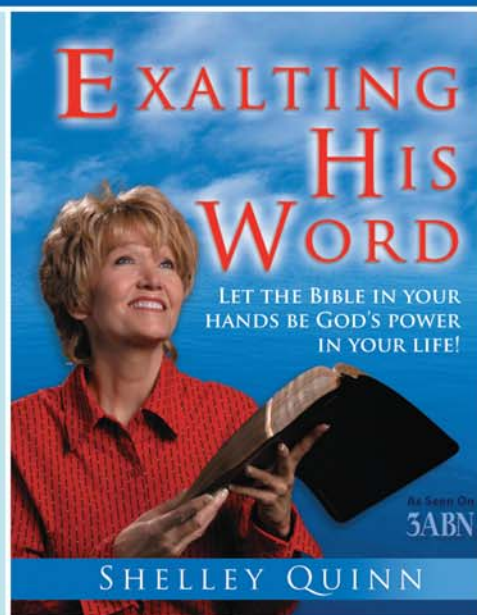
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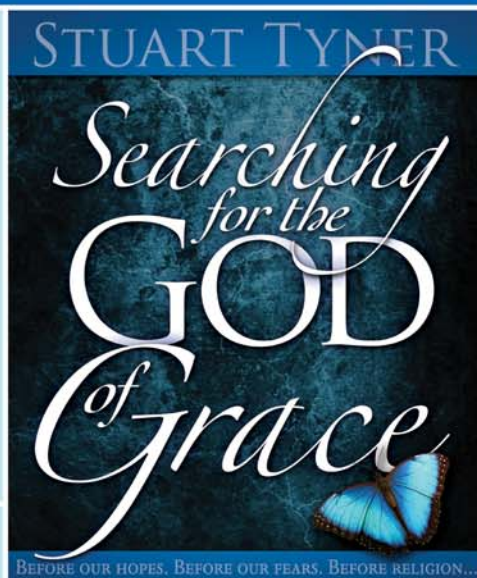


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Preaching to an unknown audience

Xavier Green



Xavier Green, a local elder in his church and well-traveled speaker, writes from Detroit, Michigan, United States.

Several years ago, having just arrived in a small town to visit family members, I telephoned a friend, the pastor at a local church, to let him know that I was there. During the conversation, he asked me to preach at his church service the next day. Surprised, but not willing to turn down the offer, I accepted.

When looking over the congregation the next morning, I felt confident about the message. However, as the sanctuary began to fill up, I was horrified: At least 75 percent of those in attendance were under the age of 15. My sermon addressed issues faced by adults, not by kids. While the service progressed, I hastily added a few things to my sermon in an attempt to bridge the gap. But it was an exercise in futility.

What information is useful to preachers when called to preach to a congregation with which they are not familiar? Below is a description of the categories I inquire about when gathering data about congregations.

Information needed

The *location* of the church is important. For example, if invited to preach at a church in an urban area, you can better relate to your audience by understanding the challenges and opportunities endemic to that urban community. The same holds true for a suburban or rural church. Other locations could include a collegiate church setting, military base, or hospital community. Granted, in a number of churches the con-

gregants do not live locally; nonetheless, the community does affect the overall ethos of the congregation.

The *occasion* is also important. Why were you asked to preach? What were the special circumstances? This knowledge can help you better reach the listeners of the host congregation. It is important to know the occasion that you're called upon to preach.

Expected attendance helps the speaker decide what delivery approach would be most suitable. A small intimate group doesn't require the same delivery as would hundreds or thousands of listeners. In a smaller group setting, the speaker may opt to have a group-study dialogue instead of a monologue.

Attention span gives the speaker an idea of the listeners' attention threshold. Attention span can vary from region to region and culture to culture. At one preaching engagement, I preached for nearly 35 minutes, which was commonly accepted at my home church. However, after 25 minutes, I noticed the host starting to get fidgety. After the sermon, he kindly remarked that I had preached too long. I later discovered that the resident pastor, then on vacation, usually preached for 20 minutes or less, and that is what the church was accustomed to.

The *gender* category identifies the male to female ratio of the congregation. This can be helpful in terms of dealing with issues common to one gender more so than another.

Age range is really helpful in finding out the age clusters within the congregation. Every congregation has a median (average) age and a dominant age cluster. Determining the largest age group can be helpful in targeting certain life cycle needs and issues linked to various age groups.

Racial, national, and ethnic composition can help the speaker be attuned to cultural and national sensitivity. This can also be helpful in ascertaining attitudes toward theological, national, and socioeconomic issues.

Marital composition of the congregation is the ratio of *intact* marriages to single listeners. This information helps you use illustrations and depict issues familiar to married couples and/or singles. Moreover, it is good to remember that within the marital category, subcategories of marital status exist, such as single, never married; and single, divorced or widowed. In addition, there are early years, middle years, empty nest, and retirement stages of marriage.

Education level helps you use appropriate language. Moreover, one can assume that a more

educated audience is widely read and exposed to more information. Therefore, you can prepare material that, perhaps, might not be appreciated by a less educated congregation.

Information provided in the *occupation* sector category will give the speaker an idea of the occupations of members. Every congregation has a dominant employment sector, such as manufacturing, professional, migrant, or health care. At one church where I preached, a large number of the members were in the auto manufacturing sector. At another church, the congregation consisted mainly of lawyers and teachers. The key is to ascertain the largest area of employment. Include material in your sermon that would be familiar to the listeners' occupation.

You will also want to ask if there is anything else you need to know. For example, some churches expect a guest speaker to perform several functions in the liturgy, such as dedicatory prayer, pastoral prayer, or the invocation. Often-times, this is not communicated in the preliminary correspondence.

You will also want to know who the person is that you need to contact before you reach the church and while you are there. Sometimes, the host pastor may be out of town, and the person with whom you communicated initially may not be the contact person at the church.

Conclusion

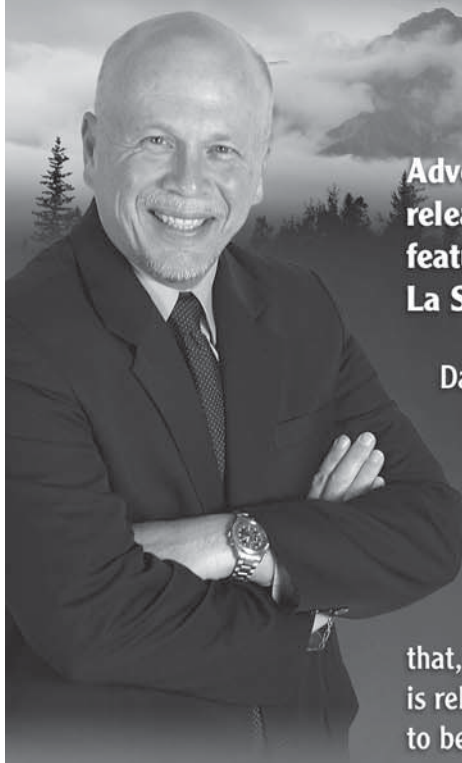
Jeff Scott Cook, in *The Elements of Speechwriting and Public Speaking*, stated, "The first secret of good speaking is to know who's listening."¹ Asking these questions helps you to know who is listening. Fred Craddock wrote in *Preaching*, "sermon should speak *for* as well *to* the congregation."² Therefore, when called upon to preach to a congregation with which we are not familiar, it is important to know something about the congregation so that the preacher can effectively speak *for* and *to* the congregation. ■

1 Jeff Scott Cook, *The Elements of Speechwriting and Public Speaking* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1989), 3.

2 Fred Craddock, *Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 26; italics supplied.

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Dateline

World ministerial leaders meet

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States: In 1922 the Seventh-day Adventist Church created a position known as *ministerial secretary*. The persons in these positions provide support to pastors and others ministers throughout the world.

Recently a week-long meeting of ministerial leaders from the thirteen world divisions of the Adventist Church was held at the church headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. Also attending were individuals who coordinate the support given to ministerial families.

According to **Jan Paulsen**, president of the Adventist world Church, church pastors sometimes feel disconnected from church initiatives that “come down from above” without their involvement. Leaders were encouraged to work toward making local pastors feel more connected with the global efforts of the church.

James A. Cress, world ministerial secretary, stated that “such meetings

provide an opportunity for the ministerial secretaries to focus on the needs of pastors and determine ways of assisting pastors. Pastors, after all, are key leaders who need resources and support.”

Providing input to *Ministry* editors

Loma Linda, California, United States: Convening formally for the first time, the *Ministry* Publishing Advisory Committee met on April 12, 2006, in Loma Linda, California. Church leaders from various ministries and parts of the world make up the membership of this committee of 36 members. The committee provides valuable input to the editors in the areas of publishing, distribution, and availability of the journal. Already available in seven languages, the committee has an interest in exploring the possibility of making the journal available in **additional languages**. Gerald Karst, a vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist world headquarters, chairs this committee, with Nikolaus Satelmajer, *Ministry* editor, as secretary.

UN expert on religious freedom calls for greater support

Geneva, Switzerland: In an April 6 meeting with nongovernment organizations (NGOs), United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, **Asma Jahangir**, called for greater support of the fundamental liberties of conscience.

Speaking in the context of the transition from the **Commission on Human Rights** to the new **Human Rights Council**, she argued for greater involvement from civil society to advance religious freedom.

“Freedom of religion or belief for everyone is only possible in a world where there is the possibility of accommodation of, respect for, and toleration of the religion of others,” Jahangir stated. “This first Human Rights Council will be a make or break event. Candidate countries must have a reasonable record of human rights, and must have standing invitations to special rapporteurs to visit, otherwise it must be presumed that they wish to obstruct rather than promote human rights.”

Responding to a question from **Dr. Jonathan Gallagher**, UN representative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, regarding how NGOs could be more involved, Jahangir suggested more participation at UN human rights meetings and a joint statement from NGOs. Such a statement would pledge to continue to advance freedom of religion or belief, to identify what governments and religious leaders should be doing, and to ensure that all interfaith dialogues should have the goal of building tolerance and respect and providing space for others.

“Freedom of religion or belief will only prosper when the broader perspective of human rights is respected,” Jahangir concluded. “I look forward to new UN Human Rights Council, where the work should concentrate on the universality and indivisibility of human rights.”



Two of the participants, Houtman Sinaga (Southern Asia-Pacific Division) (Left) and Passmore Hechalinga (Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division) (Right) at the recent World Ministerial Advisory.



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BOOK REVIEW

The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching: A Comprehensive Resource for Today's Communicators

Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson, editors, Zondervan, 2005, 732 pages.

Every now and then in the literature of preaching, a watershed volume comes off the press. This major homiletical undertaking is unquestionably one of those volumes. Edited by accomplished homileticians Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson, and written by one hundred plus masters of the preaching craft, this treasure trove of homiletical insights deserves a special place in every biblical preacher's library.

The book is organized according to 11 major categories: the high call of preaching, the spiritual life of the preacher, considering hearers, interpretation and application, structure, style, stories and illustrations, preparation, delivery, special topics, and evaluation. The 201 chapters are models of brevity, clarity, and readability. Each chapter within these categories will stand on its own, and the reader can skip around to subjects of interest.

The editors "expect this manual is one you will grow with for years to come. You will consciously focus on one important principle from a chapter for weeks or months. Eventually it will become second nature, and you will be ready to focus deliberate attention on another principle" (15).

The book's content comes from four sources: the best articles on preaching from twenty-five years of *Leadership* journal, nearly five years of *PreachingToday.com* (my favorite preaching Web site), twenty years of *Preaching Today* audio,

and chapters written specifically for this publication.

Three added features complement the chapters: Scripture, author, and subject indexes; an appendix containing an annotated list of books that have shaped the practice of preaching; and especially helpful, an accompanying CD that supplements the book's content with actual audio examples.

This book strikes the reader with the breadth, depth, and practicality of the insights. Every imaginable aspect of the preaching craft is covered. Only a few times did I find myself quibbling with an author. Those who want help in making each sermon better than the last sermon will find *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching* to be a stellar resource.

—Reviewed by Jud Lake, Th.D., D.Min., professor of preaching and Adventist studies, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee, United States.

BOOK REVIEW

One Body One Spirit by George Yancey, Downers Grove, Ill., U.S.A., InterVarsity Press, 2003, 189 pages, US\$13.00, paper.

Author George Yancey shares extensive information on the first-ever national study of multicultural congregations. The target audience includes clergy, church growth leaders, worship directors, committees, and all lay leaders. Concepts included can be used as a manual on what it takes to transform a church into a multicultural congregation.

Yancey has traveled abroad and studied multiculturalism, which has given him a great wealth of knowledge. This

book emphasizes academic knowledge as well as providing practical-application solutions. The author spent months with multicultural congregations, sharing strengths, weaknesses, what works, and what doesn't. As a consultant on local church growth and diversity, he captures your confidence and persuades you to believe what he presents. The author's writing technique helpfully blends information, stories, and personal experiences into a fine balance. The most impressive chapters were "Inclusive Worship" and "Diverse Leadership." He writes that churches fall into the trap of a mono-racial style of worship, appealing only to one group and not being deliberate about targeting a more multicultural membership. He shares principles and solutions for church growth and retention and notes the importance of incorporating diverse leadership.

I don't find the author opinionated or too philosophical. He writes of trends, traditions, and the necessary changes that need to be made as well as simple, logical, well-thought-out solutions in turning churches around. Although I couldn't find much with which to disagree, I do wish that the title of the book could be reversed to "One Spirit One Body." God's Spirit must be a prerequisite to a healthy and vibrant body (church).

I highly recommend this book to church leaders who are attempting to grow the church in a multicultural environment or who are concerned with racial tension within their church. I plan to share the contents of this book with the worship committee of the church I serve, hoping to incorporate some of its concepts within our local congregation. ■

—Reviewed by Steve Jencks, pastor, Atholton Seventh-day Adventist Church, Columbia, Maryland, United States.

What would Jesus do?

JAMES A. CRESS



A few years ago it was hard to go anywhere without seeing a plethora of lapel pins sporting the letters *WWJD*, popular shorthand for a serious moral consideration: "What would Jesus do?" This continues to be one of the most important questions sincere followers of Christ can ask.

This season, the lapel pin of choice seems to be a golden rendition of Moses' two tablets of stone, indicating the wearer's support for the Ten Commandments. This pin has been minted by the hundreds of thousands in preparation for the first annual Ten Commandments Day, slated (pun intended) for May 7.

The commission's membership reads like a "Who's Who" of conservative Christian and observant Jewish clergy, celebrities, and dignitaries. Last month I offered some observations on this upcoming day, especially from the viewpoint of those of us who have worked long in the arena of discussions regarding the validity and perpetuity of God's law, including the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment.

Those observations included appreciation for those who have come lately to a solid endorsement of the Ten Commandments, which had often been decied as having been nailed to the cross or obliterated by Jesus' resurrection.

I also offered some recommendations beyond sloganism, lapel pins, special agendas, or even commemorative events. These included emulate rather than legislate, repose rather than impose, show rather than tell, shine rather than whine, and motivate with love rather than law (article available at <www.ministerialassociation.com>).

Now, with particular reference to the fourth commandment and the biblical Lord's Day Sabbath (the only one of the

ten that has really divided sincere believers through the ages), please permit a few further thoughts on how to best commemorate the Decalogue.

Written in our hearts rather than on our lawns. The devout group in which our Lord grew up advertised the Ten Commandments constantly. They tied the Decalogue (in miniature, of course) to their foreheads and wrapped it around their wrists for all to see. And then Jesus came.

The Savior advocated a new covenant experience in which God would put His law in the minds of His people and write it on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). He promoted more than a lapel pin, more than a monument on the lawn of the county courthouse, more than an annual event. Jesus called His followers to a Spirit-born experience whereby hearts and minds once hostile to God's law could be transformed by grace to the point where the Ten Commandments were embraced, internalized, and lived out in loving service to God and others.

A weekly celebration rather than a yearly festival. God certainly knows how to construct annual, or yearly, festivals. As part of the ceremonial ordinances, He instituted the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Day of Atonement, for example. Scripture clearly notes, however, that these annual feasts were in addition to the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath of the Decalogue. "The Lord said

to Moses, 'Give the Israelites instructions regarding the Lord's appointed festivals, the days when all of you will be summoned to worship me. You may work for six days each week, but on the seventh day all work must come to a complete stop. It is the Lord's Sabbath day of complete rest, a holy day to assemble for worship. It must be observed wherever you live. In addition to the Sabbath, the Lord has established festivals, the holy occasions to be observed at the proper time each year' " (Leviticus 23:1-4, New Living Translation).

Much confusion would be avoided and multiple blessings would be experienced if this clear distinction were maintained between the weekly Lord's Day Sabbath and these annual feasts that foreshadowed Jesus' sacrifice.

Don't budge, but don't judge.

Any believer should worship according to their own convictions without attempting to impose those convictions upon others. While I am personally persuaded that the New Testament did nothing to remove or relocate the weekly Sabbath day (remember, Jesus' instructions that His followers should pray that in times of future difficulty they would not have to flee during the extremes of winter or on the Sabbath), nevertheless, I am equally persuaded that my opinion should not control your behavior. Scripture is clear that I may not judge you, nor may you judge me in these matters (Romans 14; Colossians 2).

So, should we observe Ten Commandment's Day? Yes! The answer is inherent in the query "What would Jesus do?" Jesus' example (Luke 4:16) and the fourth commandment make it clear—"the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." It is Jesus' day. And Jesus' way! ■

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