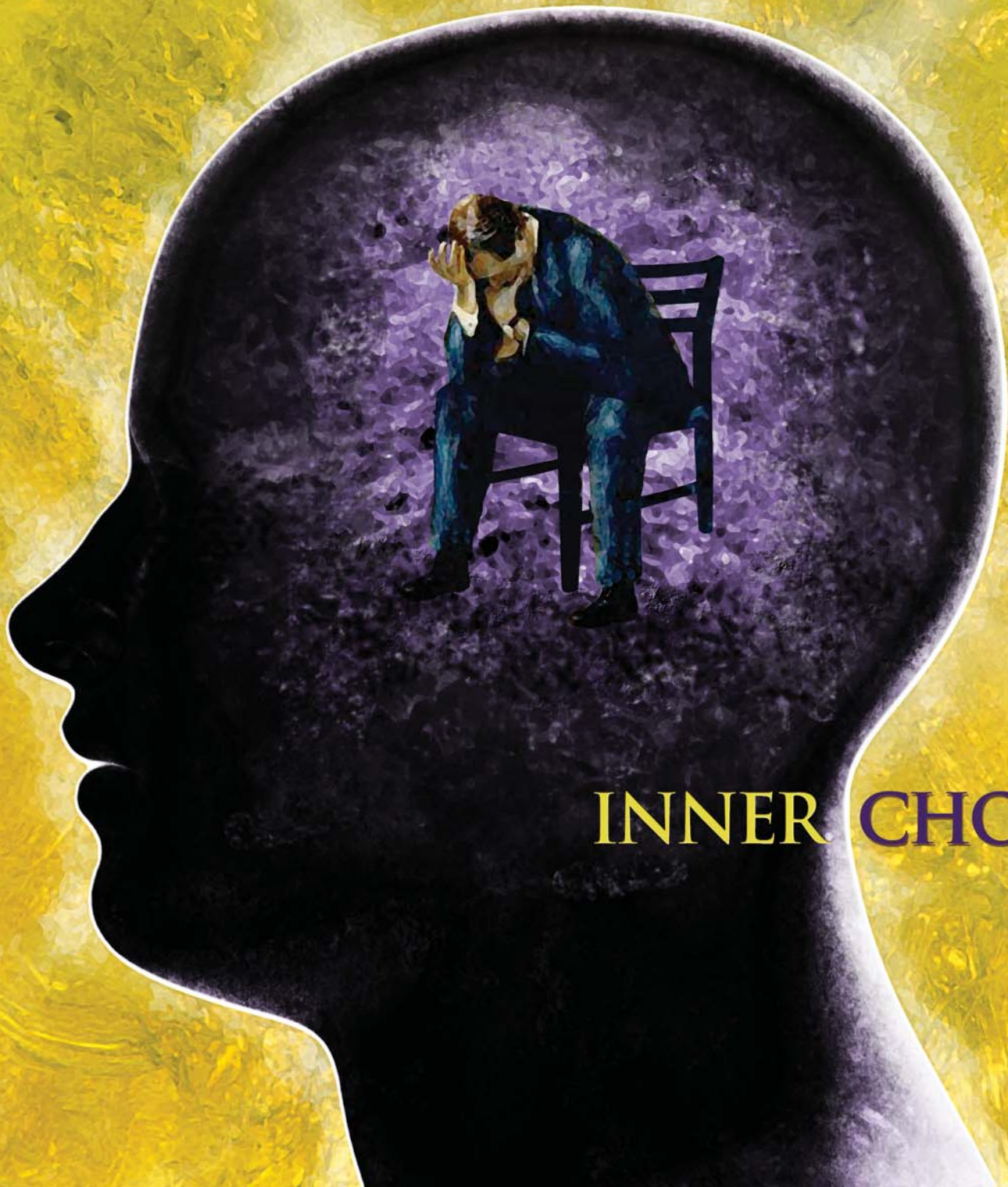


# MINISTRY

INTERNATIONAL

JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

JANUARY 2007



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# MINISTRY

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## OUR READERS RESPOND...

**Hospital visitation 101**

**C**ongratulations to Kathy McMillan for writing and to *Ministry* for publishing “Hospital Visitation 101” (September 2006). Having been the director of the chaplaincy service for 30 years (now retired) of an 1,100-bed hospital of world renown, I applaud her insights regarding pastoral care in a hospital setting. Her counsel is very much in line with what I repeatedly told community clergy and the theological students that I supervised.

It would be well worth having this article printed in brochure form and made available to all pastors who take seriously their ministry to the sick.

—Clyde R. Shallenberger, D.D., D.H.L. Chaplain Emeritus, The Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland, United States.

**I**am currently doing an internship at a local Catholic hospital as a chaplain. Having found the *Ministry* magazine at work, I was interested in the article “Hospital Visitation 101” (September 2006). At our hospital, all clergy are identified by their own hospital-provided badges that put them on the inside with the rest of us who work here. I especially appreciated when she noted that “anyone can hear words and repeat them.” This undermines *active listening* techniques I have learned in the past, and I applaud her bravery in saying it. Hearing happens with one’s heart—not just the ears.

I appreciated what Kathy McMillan said about hospital ministry being a “journey.” I think that if we can shift

our thinking from carrying a message to actually being a message, it will shift how we approach not only people who are sick and in need, but all those with whom we come in contact.

—Cindy Lou Bailey, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, United States.

**A**s one who has been writing and lecturing in the area of hospital ministry for over 30 years, I would wholeheartedly commend Kathy McMillan’s article “Hospital Visitation 101” (September 2006). She very succinctly presents the major blunders I have seen ministers and lay visitors repeatedly make.

Being a pastor or church visitor does not give the authority to assume a divine right to be feted by hospital staff or have divine knowledge about the prognosis of the patient. Often some staff duck for cover when they see certain known patronizing and even arrogant visitors enter into the ward.

On many occasions staff members have requested the chaplain to see that such a clergy person does not enter the ward again because of the state in which they leave patients. On other occasions patients have requested that the pastoral visitor not be allowed to visit them again. There have been very awkward times when the person has had to be informed personally by the chaplain and the denominational authority contacted to ensure that such a request is enforced.

Kathy McMillan’s warning on prayer also applies to the use of

Scripture. Before reading Scripture or saying a prayer for a patient, I had to be comfortable that I had observed enough evidence that such a suggestion was likely to be accepted. Particularly with an unknown or fringe church person, such an offer could make the patient feel to be a captured audience, thus losing future opportunities for effective ministry.

McMillan’s suggested wording requesting the possibility of prayer is excellent. The opportunity for an unbarring refusal could be added such as, “Would you like a word of prayer now or at another time?” It becomes the patient’s choice, for even a refusal maintains the goodwill and acceptance built up earlier in the visit.

It is an article the hospital visitor should cut out and regularly digest.

—Neville A. Kirkwood, D.Min., MACC., Woorim, Queensland, Australia.

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**M**inistry contributes a powerful influence all around the world, and your work and commitment are to be acknowledged.

Our ministers around the world are our greatest resource, and your support, resources, and positive encouragement help them to continue in their God-given calling.

No one knows what 2007 holds, but this we do know: God will not let us down in such tremendous times.

—Eric Winter, Australia. ☐

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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, visit us at [www.ministrymagazine.org](http://www.ministrymagazine.org), or email us at [ministrysubscriptions@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministrysubscriptions@gc.adventist.org).

# Make the list very short

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



**W**e often start a new year with many goals. We may have promised that the things we did not accomplish in the previous year, we will do in the next year. Somehow it just seems a good time to make a list of goals as we anticipate a fresh start.

These goals usually describe our behavior—personal and professional. The list may include items such as *I will spend more time studying*, or *I will keep a more faithful record of my appointments*, or *I will spend more time with my family*, or *I will more carefully monitor the church programs*. You know the lists, and you know what often happens—either we get discouraged or we become too busy to refer to the goals. When the next year comes, we start all over.

Maybe you should resist the temptation to make a long list of goals—maybe you should have just one goal on your list. You may think that task too easy, but before you reach that conclusion, please continue reading. I believe that the depth and breadth of this goal will give each of you a sufficient challenge. At the end of this editorial you can decide if that one goal is sufficient or if you need to make a longer list.

## A unique commandment

We are familiar with the Ten Commandments and no doubt even refer to them in our preaching and teaching.

The first, second, and third address our relationship with God—certainly foundational to our spiritual life. The fourth gives us the gift of the Sabbath and reminds us of God, our Creator. The fifth contains promises for those of us who honor our elders. The sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth address issues of life: marriage, respect of that owned

by others, and the value of truthfulness. Now read the tenth commandment—different from the first nine. The first nine address our behavior—that which others can observe—the tenth addresses our thoughts.

The tenth commandment, “You shall not covet . . .” (Exod. 20:17) reaches into the depths of our thoughts and motives. Coveting can be practiced and even enjoyed without others knowing what’s going on. Even in the historical context, the tenth commandment differs, for “most [ancient] codes went no further than the deed, and a few took speech into account, but none proposed to regulate the *thoughts*.”<sup>1</sup> Or as James Londis writes concerning the tenth commandment, it “penetrates the outer layer of actions into the motives underneath them.”<sup>2</sup> According to the Bible, God focuses on the inner person (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chron. 28:9; and numerous sayings from Jesus, such as found in Matt. 5:8, 28; 15:18).

“The tenth commandment strikes at the very *root of all sins*, prohibiting the selfish desire, from which springs the sinful act.”<sup>3</sup> This statement of Ellen White reminds us of the critical role of the tenth commandment.

The tenth commandment refers to our character—that very basic feature that drives our actions. It is possible to covet—position, person, honor—without our outward actions revealing what we are coveting. We can talk humbly, “No, I have no interest in that position,” while our thoughts focus on the best way of getting that position. Sometimes even

outward humility becomes driven by an inner coveting. This commandment addresses a basic and critical aspect of our humanity—who we are and what we really desire.

## The needed Savior

It’s easy to covet. After all, who will know? William Barclay writes that “Man,” and may I add, *ministers*, “will always covet something.” But we should not despair because, Barclay continues, “It is only when Jesus Christ reigns within his heart that the desire for the wrong will be eradicated and the desire for the good will be the dynamic of life.”<sup>4</sup> God always gives us hope, with that hope available to each person. That’s the good news for the new year. We who preach the Word of God often remind our hearers that the Savior is available to them. But this promise was written for us also, and that news is wonderful.

## The one item on the list

What will be that one item on your list for 2007? Let’s list “our character” as that one item—who are we? Once we answer the “who are we?” then the “what we do” will follow more naturally. So, I invite you to go into the new year with a short list and with the Lord Jesus Christ. ■

- 1 Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1970), 607.
- 2 James Londis, *God’s Finger Wrote Freedom* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1978), 110.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1955), 65.
- 4 William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments for Today* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1974), 199.

# On spending time in the Word

Marguerite Shuster



Marguerite Shuster, Ph.D., is a professor of preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, United States.

This message was given at a Ministry Professional Growth Seminar broadcast, March 21, 2006, in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

**M**y assignment is to talk about spending time in the Word. So, here goes: *Spend more time reading your Bible. Just do it.* The command doesn't work very well, does it?

Most of us dread being told to do what we know perfectly well we *should* do, but for which we simply cannot find the heart, the will, and, yes, that dirty word, the discipline—but mainly, I think, the heart, and perhaps the hope that something good really might come of something that for too long seems not to have lived up to all that has been promised for it. Our lives are too much for us already. One more allegedly necessary thing, no matter what, just isn't going to happen. We are muddling along as well as we can. Besides, we already have to read the Bible for our school work, or our sermons, or our articles and papers; surely that should do.

But, of course, it won't. You know that *using* the Bible is not enough, that *using* it for our tasks does not equal being nourished by it any more than a cook gets a proper diet by preparing nutritious meals for others.

To take the meal analogy further, consider breakfast. It's not usually the most exciting meal of the day, right? Indeed, lots of folks regularly skip it, and if many of them are in much worse shape than they look on the surface, missing breakfast is not the only reason for that.

Now, breakfast or the Bible, as you choose, is good for you: It becomes a part of you and

remains there for you to draw on when you need it. But do you have to get all excited and emotional about it? No. Most of the time—true confession—I don't and am just being dutiful (though actually I am pretty consistent about both eating breakfast and reading Scripture; how else could I talk with you about such matters with even the vaguest sense of integrity?). These things, done regularly, become part of you and shape you in ways of which you are barely conscious. And most of the time, that's it.

Most of the time. But not always. There is, after all, a difference between breakfast and the Bible: Breakfast is a lot safer. Breakfast, except in nightmares and really bad restaurants, can pretty much be counted upon not to rise up and bite you, and it doesn't have much promise for touching you gently or inviting you on an adventure, either. In that respect, the Bible is different.

The metaphor my text uses for it does not describe something tame like a meal, but rather a sword: "Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account" (Heb. 4:12).

True, in the first instance the text refers primarily to the Word of God as spoken in the living voices of the prophets. But we do not distort the text by applying it to Scripture as a whole, though, because a living word does not perish along with its hearers but continues to speak with authority. It does so through God's own Spirit as the Spirit works in our hearts to illumine and confirm that word. That is something God alone can do. All those theories of inspiration and all those proofs of why the Bible must be true may reassure us when we already believe, but they have been strikingly ineffective with most unbelievers. It's not our theories but God's Word itself that, applied by the Spirit, captures the skeptic—yes, even if the skeptic is you, or me.

Take, for instance, Emile Cailliet, a prominent once-atheistic French philosopher who eventually came to teach at Princeton. Dissatisfied with his entirely naturalistic early education, as a young man he sought some source of meaning to counter what looked like the complete absurdity of existence. Having found no book that met his needs, he spent long hours copying particular passages that spoke to him out of the great literature he read, thinking that he could thus make

for himself what he called a book that would understand him. He later wrote,

"The day came when I put the finishing touch to 'the book that would understand me,' speak to my condition, and help me through life's happenings. A beautiful, sunny day it was. I went out, sat under a tree, and opened my precious anthology. As I went on reading, however, a growing disappointment came over me. Instead of speaking to my condition, the various passages reminded me of their context, of the circumstances of my labor over their selection. Then I *knew* that the whole undertaking would not work, simply because it was of my own making. It carried no strength of persuasion. In a dejected mood, I put the little book back in my pocket."<sup>1</sup>

He found that what we make, what we produce, simply does not meet our deepest needs; in the end it is no bigger than we are. That insight could have been a moment yielding lasting despair. But by a strange miracle of God's providence, Cailliet's Christian wife had just, almost without knowing what she was doing and almost at that exact moment, obtained a French Bible from an aging pastor. She brought it to him apologetically, for he had forbidden all discussion of religion in their home. But he grabbed it eagerly, having never even seen a Bible before. He read and read and read throughout the night, full of awe and wonder, finding at last the Book that would understand him—that understood him because, as he said, "its pages were animated by the Presence of the Living God. . . . To this God I prayed that night, and the God who answered was *the same God* of whom it was spoken in the Book."<sup>2</sup> He heard a word that was indeed living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrated his soul and he was changed, permanently.

Something rather similar happened to me when I was an unconverted, grade-obsessed university student, reading a portion of the Bible with a bad attitude and only because of an assignment in a Western Civilization class and reading repeatedly for the sake of getting a good mark. About my third time through the passage, the inescapable conviction dawned that

there was something different about that book. The miracle stuck. Today there hangs on the wall of my home a calligraphy version of Augustine's famous words, "Thou didst strike my heart with thy word, and I loved thee."

And something at least analogous happened to Martin Luther, with the difference in Luther's case being that he had studied the Scriptures diligently for years, but found in them only the condemning and judging God that he most feared—found only what he feared until, that is, that night in the tower when light dawned and he came to understand righteousness through faith

can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand."

We can, for instance, avoid concerns about judgment only by avoiding the Bible altogether, but that is like avoiding anxiety about ill-health by refusing to see the doctor. The Bible's sword, like a surgeon's knife, will hurt, at least when the numbness wears off; but despite all it cuts away, despite all it requires that seems like terrible loss, it places us finally in the midst of a story larger than our own little story, a story in which our life has its only enduring meaning.

That's the reason we read Scripture and insist that it be Scripture, not

## AND WE MUST READ SCRIPTURE, NOT JUST READ ABOUT IT.

in a brand new way. The point is that in each case something about the living Word of God broke down the barriers in these diverse and resistant people, just as Prince Emmanuel in Bunyan's allegory *The Holy War* came battering down Eargate and announcing to the trembling citizens of the City of Mansoul, "Pardon, pardon." The sheer unexpectedness of it all was overwhelming. And that the news could be *good* news—well, it was inconceivable before it happened.

Of course, the Word that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart, in conjunction with the One to whom we shall have to render an account, as the end of my text reminds us, does not *always* come in a way conducive to our comfort. We may avoid Scripture, not out of philosophical skepticism, not from bad habits or stress or boredom, or worries about its pre-scientific worldview or historical obscurity or patriarchalism, but because of how it fingers all too accurately where we fall short. Maybe what troubles us is not the difficulties, but what is all too clear. As Mark Twain is said to have put it, "It ain't those parts of the Bible that I

something else, no matter how superficially edifying, that we proclaim from our pulpits. And we must read *Scripture*, not just read *about* it. I was cheered when a colleague objected in a recent faculty meeting to providing a remedial "basic Bible knowledge for beginners" course precisely on the grounds that it would be giving poorly prepared incoming students a substitute for reading the Bible itself. Between reading *about* the Bible and reading *the Bible*, lies all the difference between talking *about* someone and talking *with* that person. And we read and listen because, even in ways we do not understand, biblical truth takes root in us and grows; and because sometimes, by God's Spirit, it grabs us in ways we could not have predicted or even dreamed.

Techniques and colleagues may help keep us faithful, whether set readings from a lectionary or commitments to a group study. A program in my own Presbyterian denomination tries to combat the huge problem of burnout and dropout in beginning pastors by placing selected students in a covenant



group with some faculty advisors. The whole group commits to certain disciplines of Scripture-reading, prayer, and discussion. The students start out by finding even very modest disciplines to be difficult to adhere to. Even so, early results suggest that these practices have a profound effect on new pastors' ability to persevere and flourish.

Generations ago, a prominent Christian suggested that one spend just 15 minutes a day reading the Bible slowly, taking in the words as a way of reaching beyond the words to Him who gave them, seeking to put heart and will in contact with God that they might be strengthened and fortified. He recommended taking to heart whatever seemed at that moment fitting for one's own soul and passing gently over the rest—not criticizing, not trying to apply what did not seem to fit, certainly not actively rejecting or resisting it (for what rubbed one wrong today might be exactly what one would most need at another point) but just passing over it and taking in the nourishment that one needed, receiving the light that one could at that stage in one's life use. He thought one should not spend more than 15 minutes at a time doing this, lest the reading slip over into ordinary reading. After 40 years, he called this one of the greatest sources of sustenance and calm for his life.<sup>3</sup>

So read. With a group? Individually? Both? The how of the practice is not the key thing, but simply that one finds a practice fitting for oneself and one's own circumstances and that one observes it with regularity. And remember how God can surprise us.

God surprises us. In our consciousness of our inadequacy and sin, in our faithlessness, in our fear of being laid bare before any judge, most of all God, I suspect we keep dreading that the surprises are going to be bad ones, and our dread drives us away. But we are wrong. In the end, despite God's sometimes stern chastening, the surprises for those who love God will be good ones; and even now, we may be surprised by blessings where we did not expect them, if we can just remain faithful in our practice.

I'd like to take just one extended example. I am always moved when I see how Israel has delighted in God's Word—even and most especially in God's Law—and how Jewish people have expressed that delight. What a contrast with modern Americans, sporting bumper stickers such as one I saw awhile back reading, "No gods, no bosses." How wonderful that God should tell us what pleases Him rather than play hide-and-seek with us. Yes, we misuse the Law; yes, we are incapable of keeping it in our own strength; yes, it is, in fact, death to us apart from Jesus Christ. Yet it is still full of blessings when we trust in the Lord's mercy, for it shows us something of God's character and of His will for righteousness for His people. What a marvel that God has chosen to reveal Himself to us in Scripture, which is indeed a light for our path, and leads to pleasure as well as difficulty in obedience.

Often, I think, the Jewish people, in their love of God's Law, have grasped that truth better than we Christians have. "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it," says the Lord in Psalm 81 (and He isn't referring to a trip to the dentist, as we with our jaded imaginations and truncated hopes may cynically rush to assume).

"Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." The setting of Psalm 81 is a celebration, the great Feast of Tabernacles, instituted by God Himself for Israel. The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, comes somewhere between mid-September and mid-October. That day was a solemn festival of trumpet blowing on which the *shofar*, the ram's horn mentioned in verse 3 of the psalm, instead of a metal trumpet, was blown. Fifteen days later, at the full moon, the Feast of Tabernacles began, also hinted at in verse 3: "Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day." The festival was the most joyous of all the feasts ("Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob!") and was the occasion for the special recitation of—guess what?—the Law that took place every seventh year. Even now, in fact, on the 23rd day after Rosh Hashanah comes Simchat Torah, the day of the celebration of the Law—and we see allusions to the Law

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in verses 9 and 10: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (the introduction to the Ten Commandments); "There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god" (as the first and second commandments insist).

God commanded the feast to be kept. A terrible importance attaches to the ability to celebrate and carry out the rituals involved in celebration of these things central to one's identity, for in celebration lies a testimony to confidence in God's faithfulness and provision. I love Chaim Potok's book *In the Beginning*, about an orthodox Jewish family, before, during, and just after the Depression and the Second World War. On a Rosh Hashanah when the effects of the Depression were being deeply felt by the members of a little synagogue, the protagonist-narrator's father went to the podium for the traditional sounding of the *shofar* and, as the narrator recounted it,

"He faltered over the *teruah* blast during the repetition of the Silent Devotion. He stood at the podium in the white knee-length cotton garment that he wore over his dark suit and in his tall white skullcap and tried to complete the series of staccato blasts from the ram's horn, and for the third time the attempt ended in a hoarse spitting wheeze before he was halfway done. His face was dark red; the veins and muscles bulged in his neck. The congregants were very still. He had never had any difficulty sounding the *shofar* before. He waited a moment, cleared the spittle from the *shofar* by blowing into it, then tried once again and was able to complete the blast. The congregants stirred with relief and the service continued. My father came back to his seat next to me and out of the corner of my eye I could see his flushed face and the faint trembling of his hands."<sup>4</sup>

When you experience your world falling apart, it matters more than ever that the horn be sounded, that you carry on the celebration. For in the celebration, and in the recounting of the Law, comes the reminder of our reason for both confidence and faithfulness. The Law, lest we forget, begins not with demand but with gift: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of

the land of Egypt." No other god, no strange god, did or could have done that for us. So why should we turn to any other in a time of crisis?

But that was then and this is now, you say? Strikingly, the psalmist depicts the Lord as addressing the Israelites of his (the psalmist's) day as one with those of an earlier day—and thus, implicitly, addressing us: "I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket. In distress you called, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah." In a profound sense, all of God's people, near and far in time and in space, are one. The Lord's dealings with His people do not fundamentally change because He does not change; and the human response, in both its faithful and its sinful aspects, does not fundamentally change because human beings of every era and race share a humanity common in its essentials.

Thus, the reminder of the deliverance from Egypt should be understood as a pledge that God not only did come to His people's rescue then but will answer the prayers of His people today. From faithfully attending to Scripture we learn the character and power of the Lord on whom we rely.

It can hardly be emphasized enough that the acts of God revealed in Scripture are acts in history, even as our own sins and failings are acts in history: The Jew points to the Exodus as the evidence of the Lord's ability to deliver; the Christian points, above all, to the resurrection of Christ. These are not myths, or interpretations of our hunger for meaning and help, or pious wishes. They are solemn, historical facts. And the Lord asks that our celebration of the past, our faithfulness in the present, and our trusting expectancy of the future also take place as historical facts. We need both daily attentiveness to the roots of our faith and great moments of remembrance.

With respect to those great moments, at a later point in the Potok story, after a later Rosh Hashanah, the community was celebrating Simchat Torah, the rejoicing in the Law. The narrator recounts:

"The little synagogue was crowded and tumultuous with joy. I remember

the white-bearded Torah reader dancing with one of the heavy scrolls as if he had miraculously shed his years. My father and uncle danced for what seemed to me to be an interminable length of time, circling about one another with their Torah scrolls, advancing upon one another, backing off, singing. Saul and Alex and I danced too. I relinquished my Torah to someone in the crowd, then stood around watching the dancing. It grew warm inside the small room and I went through the crowd and out the rear door to the back porch. . . .

"The noise inside the synagogue poured out into the night, an undulating, swelling and receding and thinning and growing sound. The joy of dancing with the Torah, holding it close to you, the words of God to Moses at Sinai. I wondered if Gentiles ever danced with their Bible. 'Hey, Tony [he said aloud to an almost-forgotten Gentile friend]. Do you ever dance with your Bible?'

" . . . I had not thought of him in years. Where was he now? Fighting in the war probably. Or studying for the priesthood and deferred from the draft as I was. Hey, Tony. Do you ever read your Bible? Do you ever hold it to you and know how much you love it?"<sup>5</sup>

Tony, Maria, Jorge, Isolde, Kwon, Wei-Ling. Do you read your Bible? Do you ever hold it to you and know how much you love it? Try it. Just maybe, it will make alive again the hope that if indeed we open our mouths, the God of all good gifts will fill them. The promises are real, even as the God who, in His Word, discerns the thoughts and intents of our hearts is real. The promises do not cancel out the pain of this life, but they give it a new context in God's faithfulness, God's guidance, and God's final victory, and that can make all the difference. ■

1 *Journey into Light* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1968), p. 16.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 18

3 Baron Friedrich Von Hügel in John Baillie, *A Diary of Readings* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1955), #1.

4 *In the Beginning* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Crest, 1975), 214, 15.

5 *Ibid.*, 382, 83





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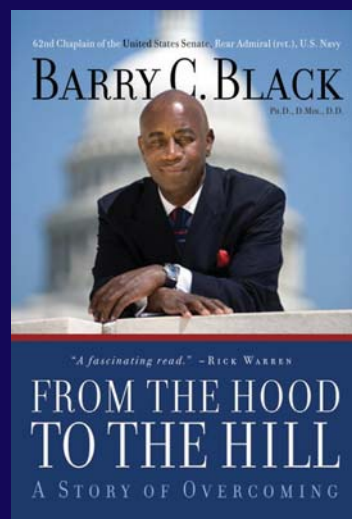
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leaving two small children. With no will or guardianship directions, the children's future was left to the courts. The custody

dispute, together with probate costs, significantly reduced the children's inheritance. When we thought about our own family, we knew we couldn't live with uncertainty. We had to fulfill our obligations as parents, as pastors of the flock and as responsible stewards of God's goods. Now that we have wills, we are so relieved. We know that if anything happens to us, our sons will be raised in an Adventist home.

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# Living in a diverse church: a case study

Reinder Bruinsma



*Reinder Bruinsma, Ph.D., is the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Netherlands, Huis ter Heide, Netherlands.*

**T**he composition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has changed drastically in recent decades. In North America, Australia, and Europe, among other places, church growth has been relatively slow, and, regrettably, in some places there has been no growth at all. At the same time, in other regions of the world the church has grown exponentially. Those who have attended global meetings, such as annual councils or a General Conference session, over the last 20 years or so cannot have failed to notice the outcome of this development in the gradual changing of the color of the audience. Slowly but surely, faces of a darker complexion began to outnumber those who are usually referred to as white, and they now form a substantial majority. In 1950 more than 50 percent of the membership of the Adventist Church lived in North America, Europe, and Australia. In 1980 this percentage had decreased to around 30 percent. According to the latest statistics, the percentage for the western countries combined stands at less than 10 percent of the world membership.

But there is more to be noted, for this 10 percent of the membership that lives in the industrialized world is an increasingly mixed population. People have moved between countries, and significant numbers of members have arrived in the West from other parts of the world in search of more freedom or more economic or educational opportunities. In a number of European countries there has, in

particular, been a constant stream of new arrivals from countries that were once the colonies of these respective countries.

If you want to check this out, go to the Ontario province in Canada and you will note that in many Adventist churches a majority of the members have come from Central America. If you pass through Australia, it will not be difficult to find several congregations that mainly consist of members who have come from the former Yugoslavia. Visit an Adventist church in Paris or London, and you will hardly see a white face, as multiple thousands of people have migrated to France from a number of African countries and from the Caribbean. Continue to Germany, and you will find churches that are predominantly Romanian. In many of the major cities of western Europe, you will discover Ghanaian Adventist congregations. Talk with an Adventist leader in Belgium, and he will tell you about the influx of members with various African nationalities and also about the hundreds of people who have come from Romania and Russia.

Obviously the church membership does not reflect the actual population mix—in the countries mentioned, the indigenous population is radically underrepresented. It must be realized that the mix is primarily an issue of indigenous population as compared to newcomers and not necessarily of color. In some parts of the United States, for example, the membership of African-Americans is significantly underrepresented in the church while the newcomers, usually African-Caribbeans, have a much higher ratio of members as compared to their population. I will not attempt to give a complete inventory of the membership diversity in industrialized countries. Nor do I suggest that the phenomenon is limited to such countries. But in this part of the world the phenomenon is most widespread, and of this I know best. This development has drastically changed the present situation of the church and will, to a major extent, determine the future of Adventism in many of these countries.

## The Netherlands as an example

Even though I think I have a reasonably accurate picture of the diversity in ethnic and cultural composition of the church in the Western world in general, I am, naturally, best informed about the situation in the Netherlands—the country where I was born, where I lived a major part of my life, and where I currently serve as one of the church's administrators.

The Netherlands has a history of cultural diversity. Over the centuries people from other European countries have tended to find refuge in Holland



(the name of a part of the Netherlands, but often used as a synonym), and many family names still betray a foreign origin. In the post–World War II years factory workers came from Spain and Portugal—and many stayed. The same is true in more recent years for the hundreds of thousands who have come from countries such as Morocco and Turkey.

Almost none of these immigrants were Seventh-day Adventists, and the influence of this stream of migration has had minimal impact on the Adventist Church. However, the influx of people from former Dutch colonies from the early 1950s onwards and, to a more limited extent, from some African countries, included a substantial number of Seventh-day Adventist Church members, and their arrival and varying degrees of integration into the Adventist Church changed Dutch Adventism forever.

After Indonesia received its independence from the Netherlands in 1949, and when somewhat later (1962) Netherlands New Guinea followed, tens of thousands of people who held Dutch nationality or had been close to the Dutch colonial administration moved to the Netherlands—a few hundred Adventists among them. When in 1975 Surinam, a small country on the northern coast of South America, negotiated its independence from the Dutch, a new stream of non-European Dutch citizens arrived in the former mother-country. Over time, a few hundred thousand Surinamese people settled in Holland—among them at least a few hundred Adventists. But the group of immigrants that would impact most on the church in the Netherlands came from the Dutch Antilles and Aruba—six small islands with a total population of just under three hundred thousand. It could have been almost double that number if all had stayed in their tropical paradises, but many opted for a “cooler” life in the Netherlands. Most of them came since the 1980s. More than one thousand Antillian Seventh-day Adventists who moved to Holland found their way into the Dutch Adventist church, but possibly as many, or even more, arrived in Holland without connecting with the church in their new environment. In

## THE LAST TWO DECADES HAVE BEEN A STEEP LEARNING EXPERIENCE, AND THERE ARE STILL MANY CHALLENGES THAT AT TIMES BAFFLE US.

addition to these new members from former colonies, some two hundred plus members arrived from Ghana as well as a sprinkling of others from a range of other countries.

To some readers it might appear that we are not talking about enormous numbers. And true enough, the gross figures in some other countries are much higher. But remember: These people had to be absorbed into a constituency of a little more than 4,000. Today, the membership in the Netherlands stands at about 4,700. We have no precise statistical data on cultural and ethnic diversity, but possibly as much as 40 to 50 percent of our present members are of foreign origin. It occurred to me, while thinking about this development, that this diversity in the Dutch church might provide a useful case study from which others could benefit.

### Issues

Honesty demands that we admit that the process outlined above has been far from painless. Many of the new members who have come from elsewhere found (and find) it difficult to feel at home in the Dutch church. Some of the Dutch members disappeared when their local church was taken over by those from elsewhere who enthusiastically joined their congregation and soon assumed leadership positions and changed the ways in which things had always been done. Dutch church members, in particular in the churches in the big cities, frequently complain that the church they have been part of for many years is no longer “our” church.

Of course, it is hard to say what would have happened if these new members

had not come. The total membership would probably have declined, as it has done in those Western European countries where there has been little or no migration. Let me, without any attempt at completeness, list the major issues the Dutch church had to face as a result of the increasing diversity and complexity in its composition.

- *Theological orientation.* Many of the new members have tended to be more conservative in theological outlook and have found it difficult to tolerate views that differ from their own.

- *Behavioral patterns.* Most of the new members have been very critical of some behavioral patterns among the original members in their new country without realizing that some behavioral patterns that are part of their cultural baggage tend to raise just as many eyebrows on the part of their Dutch brothers and sisters.

- *Dealing with rules and regulations.* For a majority of the new members the church manual tends to have a semi-inspired status, while this and other prescriptive documents have a much lower profile among the Dutch members. Related to this is the area of church discipline, which the new members tend to emphasize much more.

- *Time.* It has often been remarked that non-Europeans have time, while Europeans have the clock. Many of the Dutch members find it difficult to accept that services organized by their non-Dutch fellow believers seldom start at the announced time and will end simply when they will end.

- *Ellen G. White.* The new members often complain that the Dutch Adventists do not pay enough attention to the

counsels of Ellen G. White. In reality both groups are selective, but in different ways, in what they stress and what they tend to gloss over.

- *Evangelistic methods.* Those who have come from elsewhere advocate the use of traditional evangelistic methods and are often critical of the evangelistic experiments that are undertaken by the Dutch. These methods still, to a significant degree, work for them in reaching their target audience. Many feel that they would also continue to be successful in addressing the majority population segment of the country.

### **Bases for a strategy**

Church leadership—pastors and administrators—had to face the realities just referred to. The last two decades have been a steep learning experience, and there are still many challenges that at times baffle us. But we have made progress. We have learned from others, and we are increasingly trying to be proactive. How successful have we been? It is for others to judge, and there are many aspects where only time will ultimately tell. We realize that, while our situation may have some unique elements, it is not unique. We know that we have made mistakes, have missed opportunities, and need to focus better on particular issues. But we thank God that as a result of recent developments, our church in the Netherlands is growing. Many good things are happening, and while change usually results from many interconnecting factors, the vitality of the faith of the new members is certainly one of them.

We realize that we must continue to be intentional in fostering unity in our diversity and in nurturing the entire church—both the original membership and the new members. There are, we feel, a few important points that are part and parcel of our strategy to build and strengthen our multicultural and multiethnic faith community:

- *Face the issues squarely.* Do not try to run away from the facts. Do not kid yourself that everything will just work out nicely with a bit of luck and a bit of patience. A dramatic shift in the cultural and ethnic composition of the

church has lasting and many-faceted consequences that need to be studied and need to be confronted. They must be faced, not in a spirit of apprehension and fear, but in a spirit of embracing the challenges and the new possibilities that they bring. However, that can happen only as intensive dialogue takes place in which issues are clearly identified and freely discussed.

- *Make sure that your fundamental attitude is positive.* Yes, diversity causes problems. But diversity, first and foremost, is something to be celebrated. It enriches the church. It adds to its experience. However, it will do that only if there is a fundamental openness to other cultures, and if the various segments of the church treat each other with love and respect.

- *Do not discriminate in giving credit or in attributing blame.* It may be tempting, at times, to give extra praise to the new members, to make them feel good and accepted and to remain silent when things have gone wrong. It may seem wise to be extra careful with criticism and not to upset certain new groups, since this may have undesirable repercussions. But new members must be treated in the same way as the original members. Positive discrimination, I believe, in the long term will not help establish an atmosphere of fairness and equitability.

- *Give space to each segment of the church to be what they are and to stay that way as long as they choose to.* Each segment must feel that they did not have to conquer this space for themselves, but that it simply is there, and that they are encouraged to take and fill this space in which they can enjoy their own uniqueness and develop their potential.

- *Organize events that will cater to the various segments of the church in an equitable way but also provide for meetings and other events at which all will feel welcome and at ease.* Ensure that in the organization of such events the selection of speakers and of musical groups reflects the diversity of the audience.

- *Be proactive in developing a ministerial force and in creating committees and boards that reflect the reality of the*

*church composition.* Do not operate on the basis of a policy of wait and see until pressure groups demand fairer representation and force this upon your organization by means of vigorous protests. Fair representation is a right for all, and responsible leadership will give this a high priority. Responsible leadership includes leadership training opportunities for new leaders from all segments of the church.

- *Be intentional in communicating about the different segments of the church to the church as a whole.* Emphasize the potential for growth and enrichment. Build on the various strengths and the vitality that the new members bring to the church, and explain what made the church in the host country what it is today. With evangelistic methodology as a key area of communication, new members must come to the realization that many traditional evangelistic methods do not work in the environment where they now live and must accept that methods they are not familiar with are being tried. On the other hand, the original segment of the church must realize that evangelism by the new members in their community represents hard work. It is not as if they can hold a tree above the baptistry, shake it a little, and have twenty or so candidates fall into the baptismal waters. Evangelism is a way of life to them from which others can learn vital lessons and gain deep inspiration.

### **Conclusion**

The Adventist church in the Netherlands has to deal with many challenges, just as sister churches do in almost any part of the world. But we do believe we are ahead of some fields in the way we have approached the diversity in our ranks. We are determined to remain intentional in dealing with the challenges of diversity in a positive and constructive manner. If our situation and the manner in which we have approached this can be of some help to others—like those in the local church or in the conference/union level who face similar challenges—presenting this case study will have been worthwhile. ■

# Cancer and faith

**Andrew J. Weaver  
and Harold G. Koenig**



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**C**ancer ranks among the most dreaded of all diseases. In the United States alone, 1.3 million new cases are diagnosed each year, with 8,000 of them being children. Currently 8.9 million people are living with the killer disease, with 62 percent being in the bracket of the five-year survival rate. The second leading cause of mortality, cancer is responsible for one in every four deaths in America—totaling some 550,000 deaths.<sup>1</sup>

While such statistics are alarming, researchers have found a strong relationship between patients' faith experience and the effectiveness of their coping with cancer.<sup>2</sup> Faith can give a suffering person a framework for finding meaning and perspective through a source greater than self, and it can provide a sense of control over feelings of helplessness. Religious practice supplies the natural social support of community.

Religious faith also appears to make an objective, measurable difference in the mental health of cancer patients. In a study of 100 older adults diagnosed with cancer, a consistent positive relationship was discovered between the practice of faith, spiritual well-being, and hope and low anxiety and depression.<sup>3</sup>

Hope is particularly important for those suffering with cancer, and researchers have found a strong link between religious belief and hope.<sup>4</sup> In a study of cancer patients at the University of Michigan Medical Center, 93

percent said that their faith had increased their capacity to be hopeful.<sup>5</sup> Hope enables persons to actively cope with difficult and uncontrollable life situations. Patients with a strong sense of hope report a high quality of life,<sup>6</sup> with hopefulness specifically linked to better adjustment by those receiving radiation therapy.<sup>7</sup> Robust hope can provide strength and courage to face the stress of illness and treatment, while hopelessness brings passivity and resignation.

Quality of life has become increasingly important for patients as treatment advances extend the length of survival. One study, involving a random sample of 296 breast cancer survivors in southern California, found that spiritual care was more important to the patients' quality of life than support groups, counseling sessions, or even peer or spouse support.<sup>8</sup> Spiritual well-being among these patients often involved feelings of hopefulness, sense of purpose, participation in prayer or meditation, and attendance at religious services.

A second study of 1,337 cancer patients in the United States and Puerto Rico found that spiritual well-being influenced their quality of life as much as their emotional and physical well-being did.<sup>9</sup> Spiritual well-being was associated with the ability to enjoy life, even when experiencing negative symptoms—and the relationship remained strong even after accounting for many other factors associated with quality of life.

## Coping strategies

The most common coping strategy for cancer patients is praying alone or with others, as well as having others pray for them.<sup>10</sup> Fathers of children being treated for cancer in a hospital clinic were asked about various methods of coping. Among 29 separate strategies used, prayer was both the most common and most helpful for men.<sup>11</sup> Patients also place a high value on interactions with clergy, noting that pastoral visits and prayers help them maintain hope and optimism.<sup>12</sup>

## Caregivers and faith

Family caregivers of those with chronic illness often rely heavily on their religious faith to cope with the burden of providing care. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University surveyed caregivers of persons with end-stage cancer and Alzheimer's disease. They discovered that successful coping was associated with only two variables: the number of social contacts and support received from religious faith.<sup>13</sup>



When these persons were followed for two years to determine what characteristics predicted faster adjustment to the caregiver role, again only the number of social contacts and support received from personal religious faith predicted better adaptation over time.<sup>14</sup> Thus, having support from one's faith appears to be one of the most important factors responsible for successful coping with the stress of caregiving.

Religious teachings can foster an ethos of care and responsibility. This is an important resource for those providing long-term care. Furthermore, caregivers who have an active faith tend to have a better relationship with their care recipients than do nonreligious caregivers.<sup>15</sup>

As their illness advances, cancer patients tend to focus on religious issues increasingly. When 231 patients with end-stage cancer were asked what maintained their quality of life, their "relationship with God" was the most common response among 28 choices that included "how well I eat," "physical

contact with those I care about," and "pain relief."<sup>16</sup>

According to these findings, terminal patients maintained their relationship with God in spite of severe functional difficulties and serious physical symptoms. In a study of 108 women in Michigan at various stages of cancer, about half felt they had become more religious since they were diagnosed, and none said they were less religious.<sup>17</sup>

### How churches can help

Churches and other faith-based communities can play a vital role through measures such as promoting early detection and screening. Research indicates that the participation of clergy and key lay members in church-based cancer control programs can improve access to and participation in screening for cancer, particularly by African and Hispanic Americans.<sup>18</sup>

For example, a study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that church-based telephone counseling in ethnic minority communities in

Los Angeles significantly increased the regular use of mammography screening.<sup>19</sup> Such faith-based programs can have great impact in promoting regular cancer screening. Their support and implementation by religious communities will help ensure congregations that are healthy in both body and soul.

### Resources on cancer

*While these organizations do not serve all countries, they may be able to put you in contact with an organization in your area.*

1. American Cancer Society, 1599 Clifton Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30329-4251 (800-ACS-2345, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)), is a nationwide, community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing and diminishing suffering from cancer through research, education, advocacy, and service.

2. Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation, 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 460, Bethesda, MD 20814 (800-

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366-2223; [www.candlelighters.org](http://www.candlelighters.org)), offers support for parents of children and adolescents with cancer, their family members, and adult survivors of childhood cancer.

3. Leukemia Society of America, Family Support Group Program, 600 Third Avenue, 4th floor, New York, NY 10016 (212-450-8834; [www.leukemia.org](http://www.leukemia.org)), a national program of 125 professionally run groups, offers mutual support for patients, family members, and friends coping with leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma, and Hodgkin's disease.

4. Make Today Count, c/o Mid-America Cancer Center, 1235 East Cherokee Street, Springfield, MO 65804-2263 (800-432-2273), provides self-help support groups in nearly 200 communities for persons facing a life-threatening illness.

5. National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship, 1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 770, Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301-650-9127, [www.canceradvocacy.org](http://www.canceradvocacy.org)), works on behalf of persons with all types of cancer. Its mission is to strengthen and empower cancer survivors and advocate for policy issues. It provides information on employment and insurance issues, referrals, and publications.

6. Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization, 212 West Van Buren Street, Suite 1000 Chicago, IL 60607-

3903, (800-221-2141, 24 hrs., or Spanish, 800-986-9505, 24 hrs.; [www.y-me.org](http://www.y-me.org)), provides information and peer support for breast cancer patients and their families during all stages of the disease. It also offers community outreach to educate people on early detection. 

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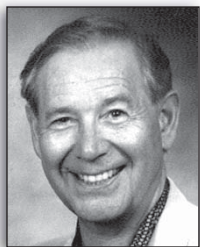
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# Israel in biblical prophecy

Hans K. LaRondelle



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**W**hat is the role of Israel in biblical prophecy? The question assumes urgency in view of continuous presentation in some circles that the present-day state of Israel has a definite role defined in prophecy. Such presentations abound in an array of publications, in movies such as *Left Behind*, and in public preaching.

To answer the question decisively, it is essential that the entire Bible be understood regarding Israel in prophecy, in particular what Jesus and the New Testament writers taught about the Hebrew predictions concerning the restoration of Israel. Only when we see the whole picture of Israel in both Testaments do we have the biblical standard of truth by which we can judge the idea that the Jewish people and Palestine are supposed to be at the center of Bible prophecies. If we make the Old Testament the final teaching of God, we are bound to apply the prophecies as if Christ has not yet come, as if the New Testament has not yet been written. For Christians, the New Testament has the final word.

## The novelty of a literalistic interpretation

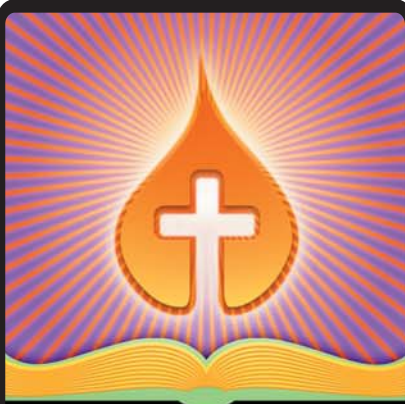
In 1868, in Plymouth, England, John Nelson Darby<sup>1</sup> began to argue that an absolutely literal application of Israel's end-time prophecies to the modern Jews was the only valid principle of prophetic interpretation. Consequently, Darby began to divide the Bible into arbitrary sections

that applied either to Israel or to the church, no matter what the consequences were in dissecting the Bible that way. Lewis Chafer, who systematized Darby's hermeneutic of literalism, even asserted that "the only Scriptures addressed specifically to Christians are the Gospel of John, the Book of Acts, and the New Testament Epistles."<sup>2</sup> Thus John Walvoord's claim, "The book [of Revelation] as a whole is not occupied primarily with God's program for the church."<sup>3</sup> Darby's theology assumed that the church of Christ has no part in God's covenants with Abraham, David, and Israel. He saw the Christian church with its gospel of God's grace merely as an "interruption" of God's original plan with Israel, as an "intercalation" unforeseen by Israel's prophets. That theory demands, however, that all believers in Jesus Christ must first be secretly raptured away from the world to heaven, so that God can continue His program with Israel in the time of the end. That's why Darbyism, and its modifications in modern dispensationalism, is called "futurism." Even when some dispensational theologians begin to propose drastic revisions, the futurism concerning Israel and a secretly raptured church remains central to their eschatology. The essence of futurism is the expectation of a future theocracy for Israel in Jerusalem during a future Jewish millennium. How do dispensationalists justify their dichotomy between Israel and the church of Christ?

Charles C. Ryrie, an influential spokesperson for dispensationalism, states in his popular book *Dispensationalism Today*, "Since consistent literalism is the logical and obvious principle of interpretation, dispensationalism is more than justified."<sup>4</sup> Here we learn that the principle of literalism in prophetic interpretation belongs to the very essence of dispensational thought. However, Ryrie justified literalism, not from the Bible, but by human logic! The question should be asked, Is the "logic" of absolute literalism the correct principle for applying Bible prophecies? Shouldn't the Bible, as the Word of God, provide its own principle of interpreting prophecy?

To find the Bible's own principle of interpretation, we must ask, How do Christ and the New Testament writers apply Israel's covenant promises and prophecies? Shouldn't Christ be our final Interpreter of Israel's prophecies? The crucial point is this: If a Bible interpreter is a Christian believer, he or she is obliged to accept the Old and New Testaments *together* as one organic revelation of God to humanity. The Old Testament is not the last word of God! When God finally spoke through His Son, the testimony





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of Jesus constituted God's final and definitive revelation about Israel and His plan of salvation. By His divine authority, Christ determined *who* belong to the true Israel of God and the characteristics of Israel as the new-covenant people of God.

There is no justification for adopting the philosophy of absolute literalism in prophetic interpretation because Jesus Christ did not do that. Jesus gave the term *Israel* a new meaning by creating a body of Christ-believing Israelites who would inherit the covenant promises. This requires a theological application of Israel, not a literalistic one. In his book *Understanding Dispensationalists*, Vern S. Poythress correctly warns against a restricted literal view of Scripture: "Grammatical-historical interpretation is only one moment in the total act of interpretation."<sup>5</sup> For the Christian, Jesus is the authoritative and final interpreter of the Hebrew Scriptures! The Epistle to the Hebrews begins with an emphasis on this theological unity of God's revelations to Israel and to the church: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1, 2, NIV).

### Does the New Testament dissect Israel and the church?

Does the New Testament teach that God has two different purposes and destinies for a national Israel and the church: one raptured to heaven while the other remains on earth? Did Christ really offer Himself to the nation of Israel as the Messianic King to establish the earthly kingdom that was promised to David, and did He ever postpone His kingdom for some two thousand years because His kingdom depended on acceptance by the Jewish people? Furthermore, does the book of Revelation teach that God's covenant promises will be fulfilled in a Jewish nation during a future millennium, during which the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem, that animal sacrifices will be reinstituted in "commemoration" of the death of Christ, and that all nations will then acknowledge national

Israel as the favored people of God? Is God's covenant with Israel really Israel-centered?

### The testimony of Jesus

Jesus announced that God had sent Him for the purpose of gathering both Jewish and Gentile believers to Him as the true Shepherd of Israel: "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16, NIV). Jesus referred here to Isaiah's promise of Israel's restoration: "The Sovereign LORD declares—He who gathers the exiles of Israel: 'I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered'" (Isa. 56:8, NIV). Even the dispensationalist *New Scofield Reference Bible*<sup>6</sup> acknowledges that Isaiah predicted the gathering of Gentiles that "are not of the Jewish fold" (on John 10:16, note 1:1140).

As the God-sent Messiah, Jesus came primarily to gather Israel to Himself (Matt. 12:30). But His goal was not limited to national Israel. He announced: "When I am lifted up from the earth, [I] will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32, NIV). To fulfill this global mission, Jesus chose twelve apostles, who in their chosen number, twelve, clearly represented the twelve tribes of Israel. By ordaining the Twelve as His apostles (Mark 3:14, 15), Christ constituted a new body of Christ-believing Israelites. This Messianic Israel He called "my church" (Matt. 16:18, NIV). In the ordination of the Twelve, Christ founded His church as a Messianic Israel, with its own structure and authority. He endowed her with "the keys of the kingdom" (v. 19) and even appointed His twelve apostles to be judges over "the twelve tribes of Israel" in the future age (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30).

When the Jewish leaders ultimately rejected the Messianic claims of Jesus, Christ made this solemn declaration: "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matt. 21:43, NIV). Christ announced here the ending of the theocracy or God-rulership for national

Israel. But Jesus did not postpone the theocracy for thousands of years. To His apostles He said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32, KJV). When God and Christ together transferred the kingdom to the Messianic Israel, how then can a Christian still assume that God has an obligation to fulfill His kingdom promises to a national-political Israel? The New Testament does not present God as walking backward!

Jesus recognized a faithful remnant of Israel that believed in Him as the God-sent Messiah. Frederick Bruce correctly concluded, "Jesus' calling of disciples around Himself to form the

Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, who accepted Jesus as the "Lord," Christ declared, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9). Jesus stressed that faith in Him as Israel's Messiah was the decisive factor for belonging to the Israel of God. When a Roman centurion approached Christ with full trust in His divine authority to heal his servant, Jesus was astonished and said, "I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" (Matt. 8:10). He then added these words of profound prophetic significance: "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their [that is, Jewish] places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac

as the Second Adam for all humankind (see Rom. 5:12–21). Vern S. Poythress sums it up well: "There can be only one people belonging to God, because there is only one Christ . . . the corporate unity of the people of God derives from their common representative Head."<sup>8</sup>

### **Paul's theology of Israel and the church**

Around A.D. 53 Paul wrote a pastoral letter to the church in Rome. In this significant epistle he gave special attention to the relationship between Jews and Christians, namely, in Romans, chapters 9–11. He had heard that the Christian community in Rome was experiencing an emerging hostile

CHRIST WAS LOOKING PRIMARILY FOR THE ISRAEL OF FAITH, BUT HE ACCEPTED ALSO BELIEVING GENTILES. THUS HE GATHERED FOLLOWERS FROM BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES INTO ONE SPIRITUAL FLOCK, INTO THE MESSIANIC REMNANT PEOPLE WHO WILL INHERIT THE COVENANT PROMISES OF ABRAHAM AND ISRAEL ON A WORLDWIDE SCALE OF FULFILLMENT.

'little flock' who were to receive the kingdom... marks Him out as the founder of the new Israel."<sup>7</sup> Thus the keynote of Jesus' gospel of the kingdom was not postponement but rather fulfillment in Himself as the Messianic King.

Christ constituted His church not as a body beside the Israel of God, but as the faithful remnant of Israel that inherits the covenant promises. The apostolic church fulfilled the predicted "remnant" of Israel. Jesus distinguished between a natural and a spiritual or true Israelite. When Nathanael recognized Jesus as the Messiah of prophecy, Christ said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false" (John 1:47, NIV). When Jesus visited the home of

and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:11, 12). Apparently, Jesus did not dissect Israel and His church into separate covenant peoples, with different destinies. Christ was looking primarily for the Israel of faith, but He accepted also believing Gentiles. Thus He gathered followers from both Jews and Gentiles into one spiritual flock, into the Messianic remnant people who will inherit the covenant promises of Abraham and Israel on a worldwide scale of fulfillment. The idea of two separate peoples of God was foreign to Jesus because He was sent by God

attitude from Gentile Christians toward Jews and Jewish Christians. Paul rejected such an attitude of anti-Judaism. In Romans 9–11 he recognized that there were different ethnic backgrounds of Jews and Gentiles within the church, because he addressed one special faction, "I am talking to you Gentiles" (11:13, NIV). He warned them not to "boast" or to be "conceited" about some alleged superiority or prerogative from God (11:18, 25, NIV). He stressed that all people are disobedient to God and thus stand in the same need of faith in Christ as Messiah, and of standing in the right covenant relation with God. He explained this right relation: "What then shall we say? That the Gentiles,

who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the ‘stumbling stone’ [quoting two Messianic prophecies from Isaiah]” (Rom. 9:30–32, 33, NIV).

Clearly, for Paul the decisive issue in God’s covenant with Israel is faith in Jesus as the righteous Messiah and representative of all humanity. Gentiles have no other covenant with God than God’s covenant with Israel. Jesus made His new covenant with twelve Jewish believers. He based it on His self-sacrifice as the fulfillment of the sacrifices of the old covenant. Thus “Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant” (Heb. 7:22, NIV).

some sequence of dispensations but the present responsibility of Gentile Christians to relate the gospel properly to the Jews, so that all believing Jews and all believing Gentiles will be saved by faith in Christ. It is crucial to learn from Romans 9–11 that there is no true conversion than that which results from preaching the gospel of Christ. Paul stressed this explicitly in Romans 10: “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. . . . There is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’ [Joel 2:32]” (Rom. 10:9, 12–13, NIV).

Paul’s quotation of Joel 2:32 proves that he views the church of Christ as the

time prophecies, we do not apply our Christocentric hermeneutic and deny our Christian faith. To literalize the name *Israel* to ethnic Jews only is a serious theological error that misrepresents the will of God and devalues the decisive mission of Christ. The one olive tree in Paul’s metaphor implies that Jews will not come to the kingdom of God by preferential treatment. Like the Gentiles, Israelites enter the kingdom only through justification by faith in Christ. Therefore we are not to wait for an apocalyptic miracle to happen for the Jewish people seven years after the “fulness of the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:25, KJV) has been raptured out of the world!

Paul concludes his counsel to the divided church in Rome with a challenging outlook on the triumph of God’s plan to save both the Israelites and the Gentiles by way of a surprising interdependence. One New Testament scholar summed it up: “God grants no mercy to Israel without the Gentiles, but neither does he do so to the Gentiles without Israel.”<sup>9</sup> Paul places the salvation of ethnic Israel in a dynamic interrelation with the salvation of the Gentiles. This mutual dependence reveals an amazing vision of God’s faithfulness to His covenant promise to Israel, in spite of her faithlessness.

The primary purpose of Paul’s counsel to the church in Rome is to end the arrogant attitude among Gentile Christians toward their Jewish fellow believers, and to instill in them rather a sense of responsibility for ethnic Israel. Gentile believers should realize that the ingrafted church is called to provoke Israel to exercise faith in their Messiah for their salvation. Paul mentions his own efforts to that effect, stating, “I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them” (Rom. 11:13, NIV). Paul thus practiced his belief that the gospel was to be offered all the time “first to the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16; 2:9, 10, NIV). By way of the gospel ministry all Jews who believe will be saved. Paul emphasizes this gospel way of salvation when he states explicitly, “and so [*houtôs*, ‘in this manner, so,’] all Israel” will be saved (Rom. 11:26). In other words, all Jews

## THE IDEA OF TWO SEPARATE PEOPLES OF GOD WAS FOREIGN TO JESUS BECAUSE HE WAS SENT BY GOD AS THE SECOND ADAM FOR ALL HUMANKIND.

In Romans 11 Paul portrays the continuity of God’s covenants by a single olive tree for both Israel and the church. His symbolic description of the “engrafting” of Gentiles as wild olive branches into the covenant tree of Israel vividly illustrates the theological unity of God’s covenant with Israel and with the apostolic church. Through faith in Christ, Gentiles are being incorporated in Israel’s olive tree, and share in the “supporting” root of Abraham (11:18). The humbling lesson for both Jewish and Gentile Christians in this picture is that God does not show favoritism (see Rom. 2:11). Paul therefore warns the Gentile believers: “Do not be arrogant, but be afraid” (Rom. 11:20, NIV). Paul’s pastoral burden is not

historical fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy of a faithful remnant of Israel in the last days (Joel 2:28). Earlier, Peter had indicated on the Day of Pentecost that Joel’s prophecy was visibly fulfilled in Christ-believing Israel or the apostolic church. Paul now emphasizes the same condition of faith for all Israel: “If they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again” (Rom. 11:23, NIV). Here Paul distinguished between a natural and a believing Israel. In this he only continued the traditional distinction of Israel’s own prophets. Paul states explicitly: “For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel” (Rom. 9:6, NIV). If we lose this basic distinction of a natural and a believing Israel in our application of the term *Israel* for the end-



will be saved in the same manner as all Gentiles: by faith in the crucified and risen Lord as Israel's Messiah. Paul did not say "and *then* all Israel will be saved," as if to suggest a sequence of different dispensations. He rather stressed the present opportunity and sacred duty of the church. Notice how he emphasized this present calling of Gentile Christians by repeating the word *now* in his concluding words of Romans 11, "Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have *now* received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have *now* become disobedient in order that they too may *now* receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you" (Rom. 11:30–32, NIV; emphasis added).

We need to remember that there is only *one* olive tree in Paul's metaphor, meaning one Savior, one people of God, and one way of salvation for all! Paul's perspective on ethnic Israel in Romans 11 is one of hope and assurance that still many—"the fulness of"—Israelites will return to their covenant God through faith in Christ. But this will occur in Paul's perspective only by means of Christ-centered and Spirit-filled Christians who demonstrate the wonderful mercy of God in reaching out to all Jews with the love of God in Christ. Then the experience of the first Pentecost will be repeated and thousands of Jews will return to their own Messiah. This promised return to their covenant God does not include for Paul a restored theocracy in Palestine. He says nothing about Israel's physical return to the land of Palestine, nothing about the restoration of an earthly Davidic kingdom, nothing about national reinstatement as the people of God in the land of the forefathers. Paul saw something infinitely better for Israel: reconciliation with God through Christ and the assurance of a more glorious inheritance.

### One glorious inheritance

Among the prophets of Israel, Isaiah stands out as the one who extended his vision to global and cosmic proportions. Not only did Isaiah envision the influx of countless Gentiles into the Israel of God in the last days (2:1–4; 56:3–8; 60:3–14; 66:19–23), he predicted that "...all mankind will come and bow down

before me,' says the LORD" (66:23, NIV). Placing this vision in a larger perspective, he prophesied, "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind . . . for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy" (Isa. 65:17, 18).

Here the prophet unites heaven and earth as one glorious inheritance for the Israel of God. This eschatological outlook advances the hope of Abraham. By faith Abraham had already looked forward to inherit the Promised Land. However, he did not look for some human conquest of Palestine or for a rebuilt Jerusalem. "He [Abraham] lived in tents. . . . For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:9, 10, NIV). To Abraham and his believing descendants was promised, not Palestine in its present condition, but a heavenly country with a heavenly city. In short, they looked beyond Palestine to a new heaven and a new earth, and to a new Jerusalem. Hebrews says of those Israelites in the past: "They were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them" (Heb. 11:16, NIV). The comforting assurance for all Hebrew Christians is that they will inherit the same heavenly inheritance that was promised to Israel's patriarchs. Hebrews 11 concludes with the broad perspective of the ultimate unification of all God's people: "God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they [Israel] be made perfect" (11:40, NIV).

The true church will live together with the Israel of God in one and the same Holy City on a new earth. In Revelation 21 and 22 God's covenant with Israel finds its perfect fulfillment in the New Jerusalem on the new earth. Both Israel and the church are then united in their worship of the Creator-Redeemer and of the Lamb of God as one harmonious community. That city of God has twelve gates on which are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12). The city has walls with eternal foundations, on which are written the names of the twelve apostles of Jesus

(21:14). That grand vision of John only reinforces the apostolic gospel message that Israel and the church constitute an indivisible unity for all eternity.

Jesus had invited all Jews to attend His coming Messianic banquet in the kingdom of God. He warned them, however, that ethnic origin by itself was no guarantee for divine acceptance: "I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth" (Matt. 8:11, 12, RSV; cf. Luke 13:28, 29).

These words of Christ teach two solemn truths: (1) Gentile believers in Christ from east and west will share in Israel's eternal destiny; (2) both Jews and Gentiles who reject Christ will be disinherited from the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All God's people will sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and be united in the New Jerusalem as one flock under one Shepherd. Together they will sing "the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3, NIV) in grateful praise to God the Father and the Lord Jesus. No New Testament passage teaches a future Jewish millennium. ■

- 1 John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) was born in London, England, to Irish parents. He is widely known as the father of modern dispensational theology.
- 2 "Dispensationalism" in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 93 (1936): 406, 407.
- 3 John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1967), 203.
- 4 Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 97.
- 5 Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 91.
- 6 *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, published in 1967, is not to be confused with the *Scofield Reference Bible*, which was edited and annotated by Cyrus I. Scofield and first appeared in 1909, then revised by the author in 1917. Dr. Scofield had no involvement with the *New Scofield Reference Bible*.
- 7 In J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 588.
- 8 Poythress, 43.
- 9 H. N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 360.

# Belonging before believing: reaching out to the emerging culture

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**I**n college I spent two summers working as a Bible worker<sup>1</sup> for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in central California. I was working in the area south of San Francisco known as the Silicon Valley. Each evening I'd get a stack of names and addresses from the student literature evangelists,<sup>2</sup> and each morning I would plot my day on a map of the Silicon Valley.

Yet I was frustrated. I'd been giving Bible studies for years, but always to those who already believed in the Bible. I'd never been faced with the kind of raw skeptics, people who honestly rejected the whole notion of truth, as I found here in Silicon Valley. My standard study guides were useless with these people because the studies simply fueled the raging cynicism about Christianity that these individuals already had.

I can't criticize the Bible study guides. They were great for those who already believed in the authenticity of Scripture and the divinity of Jesus. But not for this Silicon Valley crowd.

At a loss I started writing my own studies by putting my personal experience into each encounter. Instead of just transferring information, I made our teachings part of *my story*. I didn't know it then, but I had instinctively begun to adapt my evangelism efforts to the requirements of a postmodern society.

## Who are postmoderns?

Postmodernism is often wrongly categorized and largely mislabeled. We mix the words *secular*, *postmodern*, *pluralist* and *contemporary*, though they are not the same. A *secular* person doesn't

believe in God. A *pluralist* believes in many gods or many truths. A *contemporary* person is merely someone living in the same time period as you and me. But a *postmodern* individual is more complex. Postmoderns don't necessarily deny God; they just don't have a growing relationship with Him. They don't reject truth; they just aren't sure where to find it.

"Postmodernism is a reaction to the rationalistic outlook of modernism," writes Miroslav Pujic, "specifically a reaction to the concept that truth can be discovered by simple rationalistic induction. The most common caricature of postmodernism is that it is a complete denial of truth, thus relativizing everything. Postmodern people, however, do not deny that there is truth and objective reality. What they question is our ability to distinguish truth from non-truth."<sup>3</sup>

Postmoderns question any claim to one big answer to everything. In his book *Ancient-Future Faith*, Robert Webber explains postmodernism: "Indications of a postmodern worldview suggest that mystery, with its emphasis on complexity and ambiguity, and community, with its emphasis on the interrelationship of all things and symbolic forms of communication, with an emphasis on the visual, are all central to the new way of thinking."<sup>4</sup> In other words, mystery and community are integral parts of postmodern culture—they place a high value on visual learning and symbolism.

In this emerging postmodern culture, relationships are typically valued more than facts. To the postmodern, relationship equals personal experience. This is why listing a series of proof texts will never work; they must first know that you're their friend. The days of simply presenting truth, and then backing it up with Scripture, are gone. If your "truth" doesn't show up in your life, the postmodern doesn't want to hear about it. If they can't see the change and connect with your story, then your message is considered worthless.

## The postmodern mind

This value placed on relationship translates into a deep need for narrative evangelism. Your story of how God has transformed your life becomes your unique personal narrative. "The church in the postmodern era must continue to tell the 'old, old story' by helping others to consider the plausibility and authenticity of the gospel, not by making a rational defense of its credibility. Narrative evangelism merges 'our story' with 'God's story' through sharing with

others. Narrative evangelism is preferred in a postmodern context. Since it is more personal, the story invites others to enter into it. Today many people make commitments to Christ based on stories that seem coherent and ring true to them."<sup>5</sup>

Consumerism is another facet of the emerging society. People like the freedom of taking back what doesn't fit right, or returning what they bought if they find something better in the next store. This mentality flows over into their view on religion, too. They hesitate to be tied to one congregation or denomination. They shy from what they see as the impersonal distance of organized religion. They'd rather have a spiritual gathering with trusted friends than attend a church full of strangers.

But all this does not mean that postmoderns can't be reached, or that we have to dilute Bible truth in order to try to entice them. On the contrary. Many positive traits within postmodern culture are compatible with discipleship—areas where you can share with them our common ground.

## Statistics on postmodernism in North America

- thirty-eight percent of U.S.A. population attends church weekly (according to polls by ABC News)<sup>10</sup>
- all others can be considered unchurched
- unchurched American population includes:
  - nominal Christians
  - secularists (against God)
  - postmoderns (spiritual seekers who do not see church and Bible as the only place to find answers)
- majority of Americans under 30 are postmodern

For instance, postmoderns love people. They place a premium on authentic relationships and community. They long to belong—somewhere, anywhere. They want to be a part of something bigger than themselves. They have a strong need to belong in a group of friends, and this sense of belonging

must occur before they can transition to a new belief system. It's about *belonging* before *believing*. Our churches can, of course, at least ideally, fulfill this need.

### Unhealthy Christian reactions

The Christian world has reacted in a wide variety of ways to postmoderns.

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Some retreat within the church walls, isolating themselves. Others water down the core doctrine of Scripture to make truth more palatable to unconverted hearts.

But shouldn't we seek to reach the postmodern generation the way Jesus reached people in His day—caring for their needs, listening to their woes, healing their aches, and befriending each one? Isn't that what Christianity is all about?

Christ gave the Great Commission to *go and teach and baptize* (Matt. 28:19, 20). Just joining in the postmodern trends doesn't achieve this divine commission. But then, neither does hiding behind the church walls.

Far too often, Christians are oblivious to the power of our words. Instead of tuning into the nuances of language around us, we entrench ourselves in isolated jargon. But we shouldn't be so careless. When we attune to the needs of the emerging culture, "Christians will use words less flippantly, more like lovers and artists and less like lawyers and salesmen. We deal with precious meanings, with love stories, with antidotes and cures that can save lives but can become poisons if they are not prepared with care. Syllogism and story, classification

and metaphor, cause-effect and allegory, rhetoric and poetry, understatement and wild exaggeration for effect—our rhetoric will reflect our increased sensitivity to words and their vast and varied potential for changing people."<sup>6</sup> Should we turn around then, and embrace every slang or uncouth phrase of popular culture, just to relate? Of course not. However, we *must* educate ourselves to understand shades of meaning in language and to use it cautiously. Relationships include conversation, and wise Christians will become good conversationalists if we want to develop friendships within the emerging generation.

Rather than presenting a specific worship style or playing down core doctrine to make membership more appealing to postmoderns, ministers must show members how to build friendships and gradually present important truths the way Jesus did—within the context of trust and relationships. "This enables members to experience a paradigm shift to view evangelism as dialogue instead of monologue, moving from compelling proof to compelling stories," Pujic says. "It creates a shift from 'Come and see' to 'Go and be,' moving from the gospel presentation to a gospel experience."<sup>7</sup>

### Reaching postmoderns: one approach

For years Western Europe has led the trend toward postmodernism. At one time this center of Christianity and mission movements had become the home of skepticism and doubt. But North America is not far behind. Fewer people each year claim to regularly attend church, and more children are growing up without any formal religious instruction or influence. With morality on the decline, even the younger generation clings to each other for community and support.

## Reaching postmoderns in your world

It's important to make sure that every form of evangelism imitates Christ's example. He made people feel welcome and loved, and then He shared what they needed to know. LIFEdevelopment uses seven levels of discipleship to accomplish this goal.

### LIFEdevelopment Discipleship Pathway

1. Get Connected: making friends
2. Biblical Values: starting conversation
3. Basic Christianity: sharing concepts
4. Blended Worship: small group study
5. Covenant Celebration: baptism
6. Spiritual Nurture: Christian lifestyle and spiritual disciplines
7. Gift-Based Ministry: preparing to serve

According to a recent European Social Survey, the following are the number of people who attend church weekly in European countries:

**Ireland – 56%**  
**Poland – 54%**  
**Italy – 32%**  
**Greece – 26%**  
**Croatia – 22%**  
**Britain – 13%**  
**Netherlands – 12%**  
**Hungary – 11%**  
**Germany – 9%**  
**France – 8%**  
**Serbia – 8%**  
**Sweden – 5%**  
**Norway – 5%**  
**Denmark – 3%**  
**Russia – 2%**

Most Christian evangelism models haven't changed in decades. You hold a revival at your church, or maybe a series of meetings in a downtown hall. You have Bible studies with interested individuals, but your church members don't think witnessing really begins until the Bible study group has someone asking to be baptized. Unfortunately, that system works for only part of the population. The entire emerging culture lives largely untouched by the message of Jesus' love and saving grace.

Because Europe has been the center of postmodern culture, it is only fitting that new ministry strategies are explored there. LIFEdevelopment.info (LD) is a fresh biblical concept proving successful in the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>8</sup> Developed by Miroslav Pujic, director of the Center for Secular and Postmodern Mission, LIFEdevelopment equips ministers and

lay members for engaging with their community to share the story of Jesus (cf. Mark 5:19).

Unique among evangelistic models, LD focuses on the value of intimate relationships rather than on public evangelistic meetings. Instead of viewing evangelism as an isolated event, LD introduces process evangelism where witnessing becomes a narrative between two friends sharing experiences and getting connected with each other based on some common ground other than shared religion.

LD presents seven levels of discipleship—from building initial

friendships to equipping new disciples for service. It begins by teaching church members how to connect with the postmoderns around them. Once they are friends, they can converse about biblical themes like love, relationships, and the meaning of life. After these, the conversation can develop toward more Christian themes like the life and ministry of Jesus and the inspiration of the Holy Bible.

As time progresses, these discussions continue, and they begin studying the Holy Bible together. Forty Bible talks bring out the main teachings of the church, using postmodern language and nonthreatening vocabulary. This stage brings the decision for baptism and public celebration of a covenant of faith with God.

After celebrating the covenant of baptism, the real nurturing begins. During this phase each new member receives purposeful mentoring to help them adjust to their new lifestyle and to deepen their growing relationship with Jesus and with church friends. This time period is extremely important for newly baptized disciples, giving them time to adapt to their new life in Christ.

The final stage of discipleship trains new disciples into Christian service both in the church and the community. These opportunities should be matched with God-given gifts and skills to minimize burnout and frustration and maximize success. Pujic says, "You need to be intentional about what you're doing. It's fine to say 'witnessing should be natural,' but unless you have a strategy, you'll stay too busy with other things and never get around to it. Even Jesus had a strategy!"<sup>9</sup> Without purposeful training and nurture, even the most dedicated and zealous new disciple will likely fail in sharing the story of Jesus' love.

## Ways to connect

You don't have to feel isolated in the challenge of ministry to postmoderns. Growing research is building the foundation for strategies to understand postmodern culture and to work within it to teach Bible truth.

LIFEdvelopment.info is one of these resources. You can register for upcoming LD training conferences, browse resources, watch video clips, and connect with others at [www.lifedevlopment.us](http://www.lifedevlopment.us) or (outside the United States) [www.lifedevlopment.info](http://www.lifedevlopment.info).

More than anything else, as you face the challenges of leadership in a world increasingly neutral or even antagonistic toward church and religion, it is vital to make witnessing a way of life. Without each of us having the desire to emulate Christ, any witnessing effort will be destined for failure, no matter the audience. But when we seek to copy Jesus, when His love flows out into our daily social connections, when our lives reflect a commitment to living out the truth of Scripture in every way—we cannot avoid making friendships that will lead to sharing the gospel. ■

## Resources for postmodern evangelism

[www.lifedevlopment.us](http://www.lifedevlopment.us)

[www.lifedevlopment.info](http://www.lifedevlopment.info) (outside U.S.A.)

Level 1. "GET CONNECTED"—handbook

Level 2. "EVIDENCE through my experience"—10 DVD programs (Biblical Values)

Level 3. "MIND the GAP"—10 DVD programs (Basic Christianity)

Level 4. "EXPERIENCING the JOY"—40 Bible talks, for a group study setting

Level 5. "MY DECISION"—celebrating the covenant of baptism

Level 6. "QUALITY LIFE"—book, personal mentors for intentional spiritual nurture

Level 7. "EQUIPPED to serve"—book, inventory for spiritual gifts and service

-LD guidebook for lay members to use at every step

-LD training conference: March 9–11, 2007, Atlanta, Georgia. (See Web site to register.)

- 1 An individual who studies the Bible in a systematic approach usually with those who are not members of the church.
- 2 Usually college students, who during their school breaks sell Christian books by going door to door.
- 3 Miroslav Pujic, unpublished doctoral thesis, Andrews University, 2005.
- 4 Robert E. Webber *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 35.
- 5 Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 188.
- 6 Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix, Revised and Expanded Edition of Reinventing Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 90.
- 7 Miroslav Pujic, LIFEdvelopment Seminar Lecture, Macon, GA, March 2006.
- 8 This unit of the church is known as the Trans-European Division, which covers a number of European nations, plus nations in other parts of the world.
- 9 Miroslav Pujic, *The Missionary, 3rd Millennium AD: LIFEdvelopment.info Handbook* (Nottingham, UK: Pyramid Press, 2003).
- 10 See "Who Goes to Church? Older Southern Women Do; Many Catholic Men Don't," [http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/church\\_poll020301.html](http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/church_poll020301.html), November 16, 2006.

# Silent sermons

Zdravko Stefanovic



*Zdravko Stefanovic is a professor of theology at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington, United States.*

**F**or most people, speech becomes a very important component of life. Most of the time, when we as human beings communicate, we do it verbally. The crucial role that spoken and written words play in interpersonal relations should never be underestimated. Several passages from the Bible teach that words should be carefully weighed before spoken. The psalmist, for example, once prayed, "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3),<sup>1</sup> while Jesus warned that " 'by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned' " (Matt. 12:37). In Bible times, people perceived words to be agents capable of creating realities, both positive and negative, leading either to life or death.

Christians are traditionally known to be a "people of the Book." That Book, the Bible, can also be described as a sacred library because it contains 66 books. These books, full of words, communicate the basic message of Scripture through words. After all, Romans 10:17 states that "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." Seventh-day Adventist Christians in particular, from the beginning of their existence, have understood their important role to take God's special message and tell it to the world.<sup>2</sup>

## Silent preachers

However important verbal communication is, let's point to the importance of some

nonverbal ways in which God's message can be communicated because silent ways of *preaching* have often been neglected in Christian life and witness. Why does the use and overuse of words so often eclipse nonverbal ways of communicating God's love? How can we talk about the good news silently and still be God's effective witnesses?

Following are three persons from the Bible who witnessed for God even though their words were not recorded in biblical accounts of their lives. In other words, these people were powerful *preachers*, although their *sermons* were silent. Their stories illustrate the fact that in order to be an effective witness for God, one does *not* necessarily have to use words. Truly, their actions spoke louder than words.

## Abel the shepherd

Early on, the Bible presents Abel the shepherd. This man is not introduced as someone trained in homiletics or speech delivery. The text from Genesis 4:2-4 simply states that at a time designated for worship, Adam and Eve's firstborn son Abel presented himself before God and brought an offering to Him. In contrast to his brother Cain, who merely brought some of the fruits of the soil from his field, Abel presented to the Lord an offering that consisted of fat portions from the firstborn of his flock. In the culture of Bible times, where people offered sacrifices, this was considered to be the best type of gift to God. Although the mention of a sacrificial animal presented by Abel is important in this context, at this time another detail in the story merits our attention.

The writer of Genesis carefully points out that the Lord looked at Abel first, and then at his sacrifice (v. 4). The state of Abel's heart mattered to the Lord far more than the gift that he had brought. For this reason, the Bible teaches that God does not judge us by our appearances or by offerings we bring, but He first of all looks into our hearts (1 Sam. 16:7). What did God see in Abel's heart? He most likely saw an attitude of gratitude and his readiness to obey and serve his Creator and Lord.

If we were to express in words the message that Abel delivered at that worship service, what would it be? One way would be to say that when God looks at us human beings, He sees what is in our hearts. Abel did not try to hide his heart behind his offering because he knew that nothing can be hidden from God's eyes. Abel's story teaches that God looks at the worshiper before He considers the gifts that are brought to Him. In other words, worshipers matter to God far more than the presents that they bring.



Abel's witness contains a powerful testimony that shows what God is like, yet according to the biblical record his witness was delivered in a silent, noiseless, speechless manner. Some ancient interpreters of Scripture were not comfortable with the fact that this powerful preacher should remain silent, so they used their imagination to make Abel speak words. Thus, although Abel is silent in the Bible, the author of a *Targum* placed some words in his mouth. *Targums* are Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible that add lengthy comments to biblical passages, especially those that are short and enigmatic, in an attempt to make them clearer. Thus the *Targum Neofiti*<sup>3</sup> on Genesis 4 presents an extended verbal exchange between Cain and Abel dealing with the topic of God's judgment. In this imaginary duel, Cain accuses God of favoritism while denying any prospect of an end-time judgment. Needless to say, Abel strongly disagrees with Cain.

These *targumic* additions, although interesting, do not make a significant contribution to the account. As far as the Bible text goes, Abel's testimony was speechless, devoid of all words. Yet the author of the book of Hebrews described the lasting impact that Abel's preaching made through centuries when he said, "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead" (Heb. 11:4).

### Joseph the carpenter

The opening chapters of the New Testament tell the story of how Jesus was born. His mother, Mary, played a key role in the events that resulted in the birth of the Savior of the world. For that reason many, even today, revere her. However, we often neglect the role of Joseph, who was Jesus' other earthly parent. One wonders if this neglect may be due to the fact that his words are nowhere found recorded in the Gospels.

Although not a single word of Joseph can be found in the pages of the Bible, that does not mean that he did not effectively witness for God. Much like

Abel, the shepherd, Joseph, the carpenter, had no training in homiletics, yet he delivered his silent sermon in a powerful way. Chapters 1 and 2 of Matthew inform us that on no less than three occasions an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and gave him clear instructions on how to ensure that Jesus' birth and childhood

speechless, yet ready to conform to God's will, his witness remained voiceless, yet its message is still effective. One such effect on Jesus' life can be deduced from Luke 2:51: "Then he [Jesus] went down to Nazareth with them [His parents] and was obedient to them." Possibly Jesus' attitude of obedience came in response

## IN ORDER TO BE AN EFFECTIVE WITNESS FOR GOD, ONE DOES NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TO USE WORDS.

would be safe and sound (Matt. 1:18–25; 2:13–15, 19–21). In all three cases, the inspired writer claims that Joseph did not question divine instructions but rather fully obeyed them.

If the message that Joseph silently delivered through his actions were to be expressed in words, it would go something like this: We should trust God even when we do not fully understand His plans for us. Although we may not see the final outcome of our acts of faith, God's Word assures us that the Lord's plans for us are intended to give us "hope and a future" (Jer. 29:11). For that reason we are summoned to trust in God under all circumstances.

Some readers and interpreters from the past were not content to accept Joseph's silent way of witnessing for God. An apocryphal document, for example, offers the imaginary "account of Thomas the Israelite philosopher concerning the childhood of the Lord."<sup>4</sup> From it one can read about a supposed event that took place when Jesus was five years old. He played with soft clay, which he molded into twelve sparrows. Because this event took place on the Sabbath, a certain Jew reported it to his father, Joseph, who, in turn, rebuked Jesus for breaking the fourth commandment.

No such account can be found in the four canonical Gospels because in our Bible Joseph remains silent, yet obedient to God's instructions. Presented as

to Joseph's trust in his heavenly Father. In this case, the saying "like father, like son" proves to be true and serves as a positive example for us to follow by obeying Him who said, " 'For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me' " (John 6:38).

### Dorcas the seamstress

The art of delivering silent sermons according to the Bible can be mustered by both genders. Acts 9 introduces one such preacher known as Dorcas, or Tabitha. Her vocation was tailoring, yet that did not prevent her from witnessing for her God. On the contrary, she used that type of work to the glory of her Savior and for the blessing of others. In Acts 9:36–41 we read that Dorcas made clothes for many needy people. Her heart went out, especially to the poor, and her hands provided for their needs. Ellen White praises the dedicated work of Dorcas in the following way: "She was a worthy disciple of Jesus, and her life was filled with acts of kindness. She knew who needed comfortable clothing and who needed sympathy, and she freely ministered to the poor and the sorrowful. Her skillful fingers were more active than her tongue."<sup>5</sup>

Dorcas may have never had a privilege of speaking from the pulpit, but her way of witnessing was quieter than the sound of words. How can one express through words the message of

the sermons that she delivered silently? One could say, Helping the needy communicates God's love in the very best way. These acts of kindness testify that a gracious God abides in heaven. We have a great privilege to be God's hands and feet, and that is equally as helpful as being His mouth. Proverbs 19:17 says, "He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done."

The book of Acts does not remain wordless as to the effects that Dorcas' silent witness had on the believers of her time. Chapter 11 says that when a severe famine later threatened the lives of God's children in Judea, "the disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea" (Acts 11:29). Indeed, Dorcas' spirit of generosity was contagious, and it spread among the believers then while even today her story can move hearts.

### A modern example

Albert Schweitzer was born during the last century in Alsace, France.

Both his father and grandfather were pastors. Having earned his doctorate in theology at the age of 27, he became an accomplished professor and writer. Later, at the age of 30, he was known throughout Europe as an excellent organist and organ engineer. Who would not covet such a brilliant career in academics and art? Then came a turning point in Schweitzer's life. Having studied the life of Christ, a strong desire was born in his heart to follow Jesus' example. When he was 39, he went to the country of Gabon in Africa, where he built a hospital and served as medical missionary until the age of 90. In 1953 he received the Nobel Peace Prize and donated that money to help lepers in Africa.

No doubt Schweitzer, the physician, was another silent preacher.

### A need for more silent preachers

What Abel the shepherd, Joseph the carpenter, Dorcas the seamstress, and Schweitzer the physician all had in common was that they learned in life

how to witness for God without using words. Wouldn't you say that today the world needs more of such silent sermons? Indeed, in this way, every believer can be a preacher of the good news of God's kingdom. I have met a great number of believers who witness for God in this way day after day. But we need a much greater number of such witnesses. In fact, all of us need to practice more silent preaching. ■

- 1 All Scripture references in this article are taken from the NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION OF THE BIBLE (NIV) published by Zondervan.
- 2 This is the title of Mervyn C. Maxwell's book *Tell It to the World: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists*. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1977).
- 3 *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*. Transl. with apparatus and notes by Martin McNamara. The Aramaic Bible vol. 1A (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 64–67.
- 4 J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 75, 76.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1911), 131.

## BOOK REVIEW



**When Johnny/Joanie Comes Marching Home** Dr. Lester L. Westling, Jr. Captain, Chaplain Corps, U.S. Navy retired

Extended separation from family by a military spouse can either strengthen or negatively impact marriage and family relationships. Prior to the Persian Gulf War, the armed forces seldom addressed the impact of deployments, combat, and reunions on families. With the help of concerned chaplains and commanders, families worked out issues associated with military mission requirements. Today, the United States Department of Defense gives increasing attention to this readiness factor. Several books and programs are available about reunions of military personnel with their families. *When Johnny/Joanie Comes Marching*

*Home*, by Chaplain Les Westling, is a most helpful resource and one worth reading.

Dr. Westling provides invaluable insights for ministering to the emotional, relational, and spiritual needs that separations can cause. He addresses the deeper concerns often masked by surface behavior without attempting to be analytical. Deployments, combat, and extended separations cause changes. Those changes affect relationships and cannot be ignored. Separations also create uncertainty and apprehension. Couples who prepare, communicate, and live responsibly discover their marital and family bonds actually grow stronger. Hope, respect, and trust counteract the negative impacts of separation and change.

Writing from more than a quarter-century of naval deployments and combat experience, Chaplain Westling shares a succinct and practical guide for care-givers who counsel reuniting

military families. He does not give a checklist of things to do or avoid. Rather, he alerts counselors to issues often mistakenly attributed to post-traumatic stress disorder or critical incident stress. Given some supportive assistance, Westling believes most military families can work through the challenges of separations and reunions.

The book packs a wealth of professional care concepts in its well-documented 117 pages. Part two offers detailed pre-reunion seminars for spouses at home and returning groups. A CD complete with illustrations is also included. Pastors and military families alike will find reunions less problematic after reading *When Johnny/Joanie Comes Marching Home*.

—Reviewed by Chaplain (Colonel) Gary R. Councell, U.S. Army retired, currently serving as associate director/military endorser of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. ■



## Church representative calls for more openness to religious groups at UN

**New York, NY**—Seventh-day Adventist Church representative to the United Nations, **Jonathan Gallagher**, called for more openness to religious groups at UN-sponsored meetings, particularly large conferences.

"We need to make such gatherings more faith-friendly," he said, "so that we can engage the membership of these large religious communities around the world." He added that frequently religious groups did not seem to be attracted to the current agenda.

Gallagher was speaking on November 2, 2006 at a forum planning the largest public gathering at the UN in New York—the annual DPI/NGO conference that brings together thousands of civil society representatives.

"Historically, the UN has run on rather secular lines," Gallagher adds, "and while not wanting to turn it into a 'religion-fest' we do need to be aware of the values and principles that religious people bring to the table. By clearly welcoming people of faith to UN meetings such as this conference we can do much to ensure that there is more engagement, and so ensure that vital humanitarian and societal goals are achieved. For example, many religious groups are engaged in providing better healthcare and reducing poverty, yet they are often conspicuous by their absence from some UN gatherings. They need to be part of whatever agenda is being established."

UN officials agree that in the past religion has not played a major part

in agendas and planning, but recently some greater emphasis is evident regarding the contribution made by faith communities, Gallagher concludes. "We certainly do not want a religion-dominated UN with all that such a system would imply, but recognizing the social contributions of religious believers is essential. People of faith have much to contribute to the wellbeing of this world, and their participation can make a real difference to the lives of so many." [PARL News]

## Reducing climate change, one church at a time

**Watford, England**—Seventh-day Adventists joined other churches in a consultation on climate change at the London headquarters of the charity, *Christian Aid*, on November 20, 2006. According to *Christian Aid*, "No other single issue presents such a clear and present danger to the future welfare of the world's poor.

"The potential ravages of climate change are so severe that they could nullify efforts to secure meaningful and sustainable development in poor countries," the report continued. "At worst, they could send the real progress that has already been achieved spinning into reverse. Climate change, then, is a pressing poverty issue."

Set within the theological context of churches being good stewards of God's creation, *Christian Aid* stressed the importance of a timely lowering of carbon emissions in order to protect the environment and fight against poverty in developing countries.

Adventist pastor **Paul Lockham** said the way church members treat the planet should reflect their beliefs. Lockham, also the executive secretary for the Adventist Church in South England, asked, "If we believe God is the Creator, can we trust Him and destroy what He created?"

Pastor **Don W. McFarlane**, president of the Adventist Church in Britain, agreed. "As people who believe that the earth was created by God, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in engaging in measures to stabilize its climate. We might think that our individual contribution to climate stabilization might be too small to make a difference; however, every little bit counts."

That churches supporting *Christian Aid* should practice what they preach was the essence of discussion at the meeting. Questions raised include: What are the churches doing to lower their carbon emissions? Should church members use energy-saving light bulbs? Have church buildings been properly insulated? Is there more that could be done, such as carpooling when attending church services?

**Berit Lisle**, bursar at the Adventist-owned Newbold College in England, spoke of the changes being implemented on campus. "At Newbold College, we believe that stewardship of the environment is a practical Christian responsibility and we have worked on improvements in a variety of areas," she said.

During 2007 *Christian Aid* plans to target the government and businesses in an effort to encourage companies to register and lower their carbon emissions by five percent each year. [TED News]



# Defeating the spiritual axis of evil

JAMES A. CRESS



In the annals of history there have been times when nations have formed an axis of evil in which their own people or other nations have suffered. Borrowing this analogy, the church faces a massive threat to the very core of our spirituality—a massive threat that relishes prejudicial differences of race, class, gender, or heritage.

As we boast that we are rich and increased with goods, having need of nothing, this spiritual axis of evil exults in our racial divisions, in our social distinctions, and in our gender discrimination of worship, fellowship, polity, and deployment of laborers. With such an intolerable status, Jesus threatens to spew us out of His mouth (Rev. 3:16).

Surely Jesus longs for His church to have progressed, after two millennia, beyond the fever of compromise, the fervor of rationalization, the histrionics of boasting, or the hysterical separations that plagued the early church.

Along with His dismay, however, God also provides the solution for victory over this evil axis. The secret of transformation for the church today has not changed—it lies in becoming God's children. This means *putting on* Jesus in our daily lives as much as *putting Him on* in our profession.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed,

and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26–29, KJV).

**Cause-effect relationship.** Did you note the process? Being baptized into Christ means putting on Christ with the consequence that we are all one. If we are in Christ, we no longer experience racial division. If we are in Christ, we no longer experience social distinction. If we are in Christ, we no longer experience gender discrimination. Paul's theology is clear. If we still exhibit such unconverted, unsanctified characteristics, then we must ponder whether we are really "in Christ." Moreover, Paul's theology demands more than lip-service acknowledgment. It demands implementation in our practice equal to affirmation in our theology.

**The evil of racial division.** If we are "in Christ," then racism, tribalism, pride of nation of origin, or segregation remains sinful as much today as it was when Paul admonished the churches of Galatia. Yet, in many parts of the globe, the "righteousness" of the children of darkness exceeds the righteousness—or at least the right behavior—of the children of light. In some countries, we are mandated by law not to segregate with respect to schooling, housing, employment, or citizenship rights. But when we exercise nonmandated free choice, we choose to segregate ourselves, and the hour of divine worship remains the most self-segregated hour of the entire week.

**The evil of social distinction.** In his article "Living by the Word: God's

Choice," Stephen Fowl states regarding the apostle James's admonitions about pandering to the wealthy and powerful, "We are much more comfortable operating in the realm of power and wealth because it seems like something we can manage for our own benefit and even for the benefit of others.

"The most charitable account one can offer of the actions of the characters addressed in James is that they were seeking to cultivate the favor of the rich and powerful to benefit the church and its mission" (*Christian Century*, September 5, 2006, page 20).

Yet, it is sobering to survey the socioeconomic status of those who populate our church boards, governance committees, and policy-creating commissions. Fowl says, "This is a bit of a puzzle. On the one hand, James is uncompromising in his assertion that making distinctions between people based on their wealth is a violation of the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. Such distinctions work in opposition to God's plan of choosing 'the poorer of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.'" (Ibid.)

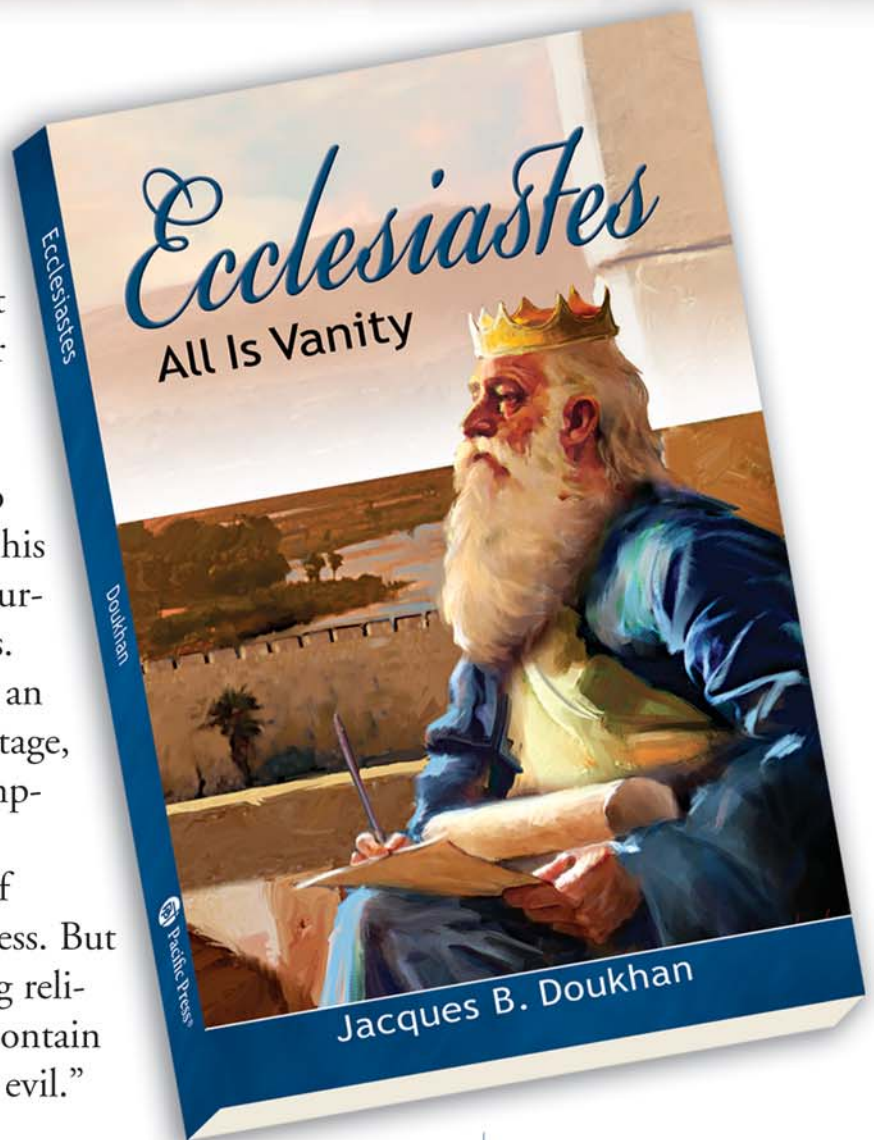
**The evil of gender discrimination.** Like the other evils, preventing deployment in ministry on the basis of gender hampers the proclamation of the gospel and denies the biblical message of the priesthood of all believers. In March's article, I will study this issue more fully, along with Jesus' own example and antidote for victory over this spiritual axis of evil. ■

# The companion book to the Adult Bible Study Guide for the *first quarter 2007*

## All Is Vanity! On earth, that is.

Solomon the king is approaching his death still haunted by his past. When first on the throne, he had asked for wisdom. He was granted that and much more. But looking back over his life in an effort to pass on what he has learned to his successor, Solomon finds his journey riddled with contradictions.

Author Jacques B. Doukhan, an Adventist scholar of Jewish heritage, identifies contradiction as a symptom of our human condition. "Ecclesiastes affirms the value of work, wisdom, life, and happiness. But all these good values—including religion and even righteousness—contain the potential of corruption and evil."



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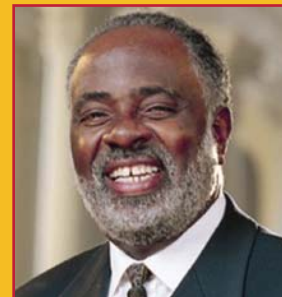
**Barry C. Black** is the 62nd Chaplain of the U.S. Senate. The Senate elected its first chaplain in 1789. Prior to Capitol Hill, Chaplain Black served in the U.S. Navy for over twenty-seven years, ending his distinguished career as Rear Admiral and Chief of Navy Chaplains. Chaplain Black opens the Senate each day in prayer and provides counselling and spiritual care for Senators, their families, and staff—a combined constituency of over seven thousand people. Chaplain Black has been selected for many outstanding achievements. He and his wife, Brenda, have three sons: Barry II, Brendan, and Bradford.



**Randy Roberts** was born in South America of missionary parents. Until college age, the majority of his life was spent in Latin American countries. Dr. Roberts has extensive experience as a church pastor, hospital chaplain, marriage and family therapist, and lecturer in religious studies. Randy has fulfilled speaking invitations to many and varied audiences, both nationally and internationally. He has written articles for various publications and has authored the book *The End is Near (Again)*. Currently Dr. Roberts serves as senior pastor of the Loma Linda University Church of Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda, California. Dr. Roberts and his wife, Anita, have a son, Austin, and a daughter, Miranda.



**Dr. Gordon Moyes** recently retired after 50 years of preaching, the last 27 at Wesley Mission in Sydney, Australia. During this ministry, his church grew to be the largest in Australia with 4,200 paid staff ministering in 500 buildings. Moyes became the first minister in the world to raise and spend over one billion dollars in one church. He also served as a national television and radio minister for over forty years. Since retirement, Moyes has been elected as a State Senator and is an advisor to the Australian Prime Minister who describes him as “the epitome of Christian leadership.” Moyes, who has authored fifty-six books, has also received highest national honors including Companion of the Order of Australia (2002) and the New South Wales Father of the Year (1986).



**Robert Smith, Jr.** serves as Professor of Christian Preaching at Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama. Previously he served as Carl E. Bates Associate Professor of Christian Preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he received the 1996 Findley B. Edge Award for Teaching Excellence. An ordained Baptist minister, Smith served as pastor of the New Mission Missionary Baptist Church for twenty years before returning to complete his Ph.D. He has also authored a study of ministry in the African American church, *Preparing for Christian Ministry*, and co-edited *A Mighty Long Journey*. His research interests include the place of passion in preaching, the literary history of African American preaching, Christological preaching, and theologies of preaching. He received Beeson’s “Teacher of the Year Award” in 2005. Dr. Smith and his wife, Wanda, are the parents of four adult children.

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