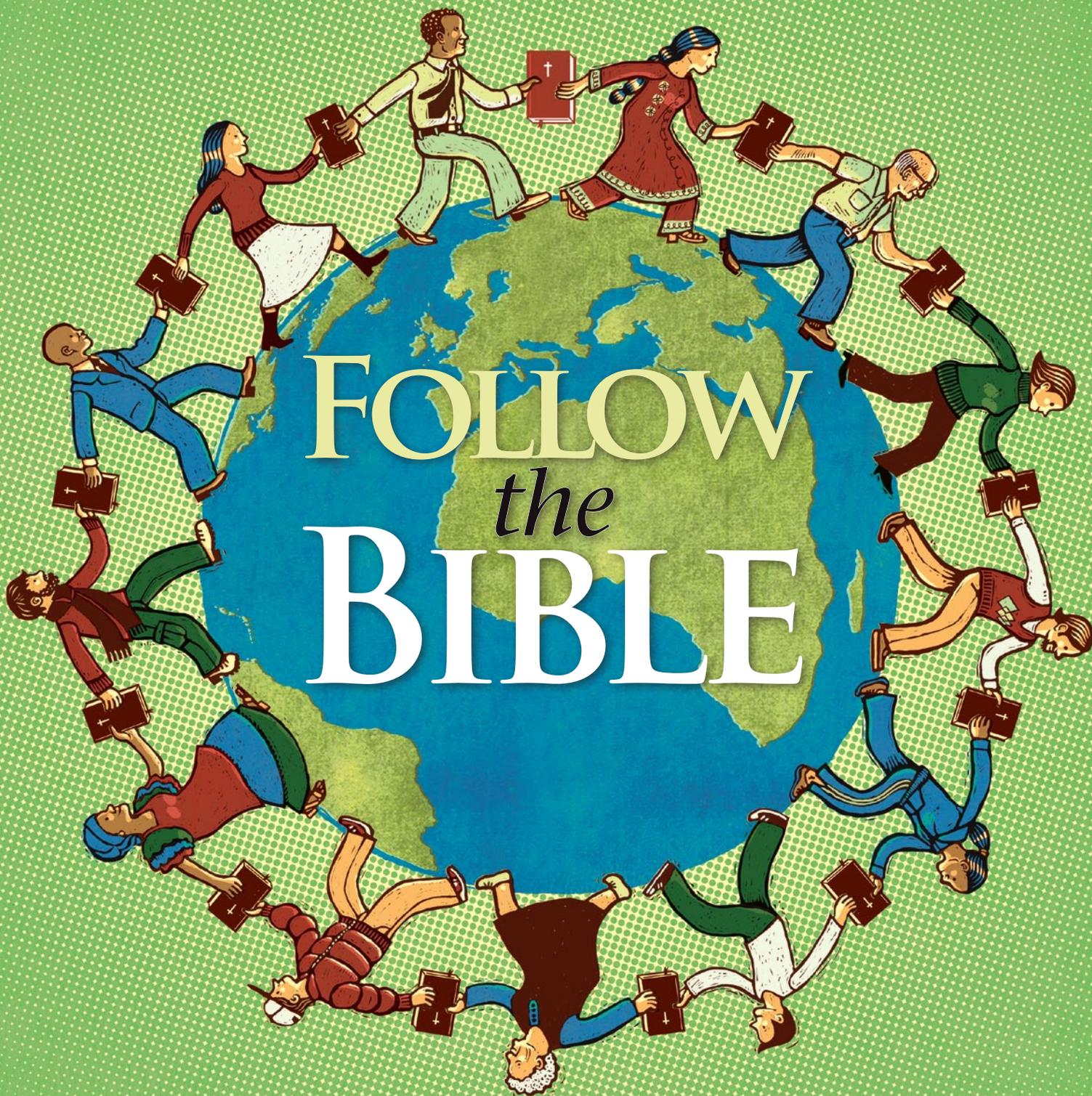


MINISTRY[®]

INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL FOR PASTORS
JANUARY 2009



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the
BIBLE

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OUR READERS RESPOND...

The Joseph factor

As a pastor of two churches, I was very thankful for the article, "The Joseph Factor: Seven Principles of Effective Leadership" (November 2008). While the entire article challenged and intrigued me, the point I resonate with the most was the statement that "Much of our organizational energy goes into supervision rather than empowerment for vision." As a pastor who seeks to introduce and promote a vision to my members, I find doing so to be challenging. Furthermore, I have discovered that pastors who strive to cast a vision must navigate the parameters of the organization. The authors point this out when they state, "policies not only express organizational values and culture, they create boundaries of the organization." These boundaries are needed and helpful, but I pray they don't limit the creativity of ministry.

—M. Curtis Powell, pastor, Jacksonville, Florida, United States

Pastoral leadership

Thank you to Jon Coutts for his excellent article ("A Theological Approach to Pastoral Leadership Today," November 2008) on the nature of pastoral leadership. It is a breath of fresh air in the midst of so much other material these days on the techniques of assembling and animating dry bones! Two additional resources that are very helpful in recapturing the heart of the unique calling of pastoral leaders are *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* by Eugene Peterson, and a newer but very helpful book by Chuck Miller, *The Spiritual*

Formation of Leaders: Integrating Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development.

—Ken Curtis, associate pastor, Calimesa Seventh-day Adventist Church, Calimesa, California, United States

I agree fully with Jon Coutts that recent leadership trends have brought some good and have helped me to better understand many of the complex processes in church leadership. However, some of us have been so excited about these insights that we have lost sight of the fact that the church is a spiritual institution led not by marketing instruments, but by the Holy Spirit working through the leaders. As a consequence, there seems to be more faith in human visions and growth principles than in divine revelation and spiritual guidance. There is more interest in using relevant methods than in preaching the biblical message for public evangelism.

One of the greatest needs today is leaders who are not infatuated by new leadership trends; rather, are living in close relationship with the Lord as true shepherds. Thank you, Jon Coutts, for this encouraging article.

—Arnold Zwahlen, pastor, Switzerland

Deaconesses in the church

Thank you for Nancy Vyhmeister's informative and well-researched series on deaconesses (July and September 2008). Both deacons and deaconesses have spiritual oversight in the church as well as over certain physical tasks ("attending to the things pertaining to the Lord's house"). In view of this, and the fact that the church ordains women

as local elders, it makes no sense not to ordain deaconesses as well. This is an inconsistency that needs to be addressed, and I hope Vyhmeister's series will be the catalyst for closing the gender gap for deaconesses.

—Carla Baker, Laurel, Maryland, United States

Editor's note: At the 2008 Annual Council—a meeting of church leaders and representatives from various parts of the world—it was voted to recommend to the 2010 General Conference Session that provision be made in the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual for the ordination of deaconesses.

Making a difference with young adults

Being one of the young adults A. Alan Martin's article ("Reaching Out: Making a Difference With Young Adults," July 2008) talks about, I feel that this epidemic will only stop when the leaders—all leaders—take the time to listen. I have heard so much talk about "caring about our young people" and no action, that I don't believe it anymore.

If churches really want to keep their young adults, and bring back the ones they've lost (myself included), radical changes are needed. The young adults of today are not content to sit in the pews, return tithe, and go home and live their lives. The young adults want to be involved—really involved—and make a difference.

—Amy Saxton, Orlando, Florida, United States

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Searching for the buried Bible

NIKOLAUS SATELMAJER



I don't even recall why I purchased the Bible, but shortly before the start of World War Two, a person was selling Bibles and religious books, and I bought one," a woman in a former communist country explained to me.

As the war raged and the communist forces gained more power, she wondered what would happen if they found the Bible in her house. She had good cause for concern—many individuals experienced persecution for no other reason than that they possessed a Bible. She was not a practicing Christian, and for her the Bible she now owned was a mysterious Book. Instead of risking potential problems, she decided to bury the Bible in her backyard.

And there the Bible rested, wrapped to protect it, for, after all, she spent a considerable amount of money to purchase it. After several years of the Bible being buried, she, out of curiosity, started digging and found it—surprisingly in good condition. In the privacy of her home, for the communists were still in control of the government, she started reading the Bible. And, as it often happens, through her reading of the Bible she committed her life to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God is indeed powerful and living. And today, this woman still remains a faithful follower of the Lord.

The ignored Bible

Many similar stories have been told, and many individuals are faithful readers of the Bible. Most of us have read studies that point out the fact that Bible reading in most denominations has decreased. That's including my church—the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As ministers, if we are serious about the Word of God, we need to remind ourselves that a healthy church not only possesses the Bible, but its members *read* the Bible. In order to reverse the trend of decreased Bible reading, the Adventist Church launched a program called *Follow the Bible*, during a meeting in Manila, Philippines, in

October 2008. Pastors, administrators, and lay representatives participated in the launching of this worldwide Bible emphasis project.¹ Often, during the next 18 months, we will update our readers on this initiative.

What about your congregation?

The launching of this Bible emphasis program will not, by itself, increase Bible reading. Our members, both personally and as part of congregations, need to experience the joy of Bible reading. What can we do to encourage Bible reading? Listed here you will find a few suggestions:

1. Make Bible reading a significant part of worship. In some congregations, the public reading of the Word of God has a minor role, and in a few, no public reading of the Bible happens. That's hard to believe—no public reading of the Bible. Why not make the public reading of the Bible a major part of worship?

2. During the worship service, why not share with the congregation the joy you experience when you read the Word of God? But don't stop there; invite members to share with the congregation their Bible-reading experiences. You just might be surprised how valuable such a testimony can be. I recall in one of my congregations the positive response as members enthusiastically listened to another member who shared how reading the Bible blessed him.

3. Feature various Bible translations. While in some languages there is only one translation, in many others there are various translations. Some people like to argue about which the best translation is

and even go so far as deciding that only a particular translation should be utilized. The reality? Such discussions have little positive value. Rejoice over the fact that you have several translations available. Tell the members the strengths of one translation; have your members tell their congregations why they like a particular translation. Such sharing will highlight the Bible and more members will turn to it.

Recently, I read an article by David Gibson, a convert to the Roman Catholic Church. The title, "Catholics Discover the Bible," caught my attention, and the location of its publication surprised me. It was published in the European edition of *The Wall Street Journal*,² a paper known more for its emphasis on reporting on business issues than articles about Bible reading. Gibson writes, "But a funny thing happened on the way to modernity: The Catholic Church opened itself to the Word in a way it hadn't done before." How about your denomination?³ How about your congregation? The question is not only how open you are toward the Bible—but, consider, *What role does the Bible play in the worship and life of your congregation?*

Listed above were a few suggestions on how to make the Bible more central in the life of your congregation and in the personal life of your members. I don't doubt that you can list more and better suggestions. Engage your members in the process. Ask them. Ask your church boards, councils, and committees to discuss what suggestions they have to make the Bible a part of their lives. After all, it is the Word of God. ■

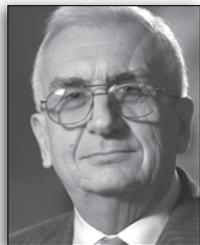
1 See the article in this issue titled, "Follow the Bible: A Journey to Spiritual Renewal," for additional information, or visit www.followthebiblesda.com.
2 David Gibson, "Catholics Discover the Bible," *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 14, 2008.
3 Our readers represent many denominations.

Tell us what you think about this editorial. Email us at MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to us at 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

Follow the Bible:

A journey to spiritual renewal

Nikolaus Satelmajer and Willie E. Hucks II



Nikolaus Satelmajer, DMin, is editor of Ministry.



Willie E. Hucks II, DMin, is associate editor of Ministry.

*Photos by:
Daniel Weber*

Editor's note: How many people in your congregation read the Bible regularly? What about your denomination? You might be surprised at the low ratio. "Follow the Bible" is an initiative launched by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but we believe that all denominations would benefit by designing their own programs to encourage greater reading of the Word of God.

The editors of *Ministry* interviewed three leaders of the world church of Seventh-day Adventists: Jan Paulsen, president; Matthew Bediako, secretary; and Mark Finley, one of the vice-presidents.

Nikolaus Satelmajer (NS): *What is the purpose of the Follow the Bible project?*

Jan Paulsen (JP): We have been known historically, and we've described ourselves as the "people of the Book," suggesting that the values we hold, the things we believe, and the impetus to our mission is all based and rooted in Scripture. We have always encouraged our people to stay close to the Book, to read it. Yet the sad fact is that far too many of our people spend little or no time reading the Bible. They limit their spiritual nurture as far as the actual reading of the Word of God is concerned to what is being served when they attend a meeting—what is being read to them in church. They don't spend time themselves in the Bible—or very, very little time studying the

Scriptures. This is what drives the project. *Follow the Bible* is to lift up the Bible as the Word of God, to highlight its relevance as being a message that addresses all people, all cultures, all times, and to encourage our people to spend quality time with the Bible.

Willie Hucks (WH): *Do you believe it will increase readership of the Bible among our church members? If so, how?*

Mark Finley (MF): I'll give you a little background on how *Follow the Bible* started. A group of us began to think and pray about what we could do to stimulate Bible reading among Seventh-day Adventist members. As we talked and prayed about it, we took a look at some of the data that was coming in that Dr. Paulsen referred to, indicating that Bible reading—although it has been a top priority for Seventh-day Adventists through the years—was beginning to come to the point in some minds where the Bible was not predominant, and some of them weren't studying the Bible as they had in past years. So we wondered if we could come up with an idea—if we could do something symbolic—that people could rally around. So the idea of the traveling Bible came up. We would produce a Bible in sixty-six languages. Each book of the Bible is in a different language—probably unique in the history of Christianity. If we could bring that Bible to key centers with thousands of people coming to major congregations or rallies, we could stimulate Bible reading. That will happen really in three ways. It'll happen at convocations where people will come by the thousands as this traveling Bible travels around the world—probably the most traveled Bible in the world. As these thousands come, sermons will be preached from the Bible, and people will be encouraged to read the Bible.

Secondly, as they come to each rally, they will be given a Bible-reading guide. It is unique in two ways. You can start any place. For example, let's say that the rally is in January, you can start in January and read from January to January. If you come to the rally in March, you can start in March and read from March to March. We think that as *Ministry*, other periodicals, Hope Channel, and all of the media outlets focus specifically on this Bible-reading project, members will be thrilled to read the Bible with millions of others. They will be stimulated at the convocations where they will receive this Bible-reading guide.

Thirdly, there's a Web site: www.FollowtheBibleSDA.com, and anybody can log in to the

Web site any place in the world, and they can join in this odyssey of the traveling Bible, and they can begin reading the Bible as well. So, we think it's going to renew a spirit in pastors to preach on the Bible. We think the pastors will encourage people to participate and log on to the Web site. We can see pastors all over the world busing people into these large rallies. So we think that this will stimulate Bible reading among hundreds of thousands.

Matthew Bediako (MB): I believe that it is going to arouse interest in Bible reading. As I was growing up, we were known as people who really loved to read and know our Bible. It is not so

site address in their church bulletins. So, pastors will be able, in a variety of ways, to participate in the *Follow the Bible* project. I think one of the amazing things about it is that it's not limited to any geographic area. The Bible is a universal Book; the Bible is going to pass through each part of the world. I really encourage pastors, when they hear that the Bible is going to be at a certain place in their area, to make these convocations and rallies a special event and use it as a springboard to stimulate Bible reading among their members.

JP: I think every minister, whatever the denomination, will want the Word of God to be central.

it up, and I think it is a wonderful point that it should be the focus of arrival at the General Conference session. The General Conference session is a unique gathering of God's people of Seventh-day Adventist believers around the world. It will deal with issues that may seem very businesslike and some of it is that. Yet, we are a spiritual community first and foremost. We are mission driven first and foremost—that is our agenda. Everything that we are, that we want to accomplish for God is spelled out in the Word of God. So I think it is the most suitable, fitting thing that the GC session should open with our spiritual torch arriving, being delivered there, symbolically telling the people around

FOLLOW THE BIBLE IS TO LIFT UP THE BIBLE AS THE WORD OF GOD, TO HIGHLIGHT ITS RELEVANCE AS BEING A MESSAGE THAT ADDRESSES ALL PEOPLE, ALL CULTURES, ALL TIMES, AND TO ENCOURAGE OUR PEOPLE TO SPEND QUALITY TIME WITH THE BIBLE.

now. Fewer members are spending time reading the Bible and praying. So, this will arouse the interest of more people to begin to read and pray often.

NS: *Ministry goes to thousands of ministers. What specifically do you envision they can do? What is it that they would be able to do with this project?*

MF: There are a number of things that they could do. We will prepare three sermons and post them on the Web site so that pastors can download, take those sermons to use as a base, and modify them to preach on the Word of God. We think that pastors will be able to encourage their people as well to be part of this Bible-reading plan. Pastors could also publish the Web

MF: The title is unique: "Follow the Bible." It's easily translatable, you're following the Bible with your eyes as it goes around the world, but you're also following the Bible through a daily reading plan.

WH: *What will happen regarding Follow the Bible at the 2010 General Conference (GC) Session¹ to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, United States?*

JP: A few months ago, the world completed the Olympic Games in China where the Olympic flame traveled the world and finally arrived at its goal. In a sense, the Bible is the spiritual flame that we lift up as a church. It is making the journey around the world, appealing to people everywhere to follow it. We lift

the world that not only is it a spiritual community gathered here, but that which holds us together as a people is the Word of God. So, I see this as a symbolic act as well as just underscoring the study of the Bible.

NS: *What do you all see beyond the GC session? Hopefully it isn't just "Here it is in Atlanta, we brought the torch." What do you envision after that?*

MF: The General Conference session really connects the previous five years and launches the next five years. We would like to see that as the Bible is brought into the GC session, like the Olympic torch as Dr. Paulsen mentioned, and millions of Seventh-day Adventists have been following the Bible, that the



Jan Paulsen

to read the Bible. I can see the possibilities. For instance, one time in the Inter-American Division² they had young people writing their favorite verses of the Bible on a sheet and it became a long sheet. They made a big publicity event of it—garnering a lot of interest. I hope this will help us encourage our young people to really begin to study the Bible.

MF: In one region, studies indicate that approximately forty-nine percent of Seventh-day Adventists do not have a devotional life in reading God’s Word. Now, one can question any study and we recognize that; but let’s assume that it’s ten or fifteen percentage points higher than that if you look at the whole world. Whatever the number is, our long-term goal is to raise it significantly. The focus of the initiative is not a big event. The

General Conference session itself give emphasis to the Word of God, the very foundation of our faith, and this be a stimulus for our people beyond the GC session in reading and studying the Bible.

JP: There is another face of this which is fortuitous, but points to the same thing. At this particular General Conference session, we are focusing on the life of the church pastor: the challenges, the fulfillment, the tasks, the assignment of the local church pastor, the one given the responsibility to specifically nurture and feed the flock. Where do pastors go to find what they need? They go to the Bible. So I see the linkage between highlighting the ministry of pastors to their congregations and the source to which they go.

WH: *What is your long-term hope for this initiative?*

MB: I hope that after the Bible has passed through a region, then that area will have a strategy whereby every church and every institution will put in place paths to encourage more people



Mark Finley

big event, the large convocations and rallies, are to stimulate families to read the Bible. Our long-term initiative is to encourage members to read the Bible. To encourage fathers and mothers to read the Bible to their children. To encourage our college students to get actively involved in Bible reading and devotional life in their dormitories. To encourage lay people to investigate again the great teachings of Scripture and to be stimulated again by the Gospels and by Jesus. Here's a statement that tells us how important Bible reading is, "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict."³ Another statement tells us that "If God's word were studied as it should be, [there would be] a breadth of mind, a nobility of character . . . rarely seen in these times."⁴ So, our goal is to help prepare our members for the coming of Jesus through their deep, serious Bible study that transforms their lives. That the same Spirit that inspired the Bible transforms people as they read it. Our goal is to help our members in this entire initiative find strength of character and renew their relationship with Jesus.



Matthew Bediako

NS: Any major program has to be started and emphasized for a period of months, and years sometimes. What have you heard so far throughout the world?

JP: We have presented it at Annual Council and Spring Council⁵ to leadership from around the world. They received the idea enthusiastically. They saw instantly the spiritual impetus that this could communicate. All of us who are involved in leadership roles in the church, whether it be here from the world headquarters or from our regional headquarters around the world, have no other wish than to see our people become stronger and rooted in Scripture and be better able to share the values they hold to from Scripture. So, anything that can help to make this better, stronger, and more effective, they support. When we presented it to our executive committee, they demonstrated huge enthusiasm for this. It's making its journey.

MF: Church leaders from throughout the world have really resonated with this idea. In one area of the world, the church leaders' plans are being made so that various church units will participate in the traveling Bible event.

NS: Whenever the Bible has been the focal point in the past in Christianity, it always has brought positive change. *The Reformation always started with the Word of God, whether it was Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Miller; whoever, it's always been there.*

MF: In the early Adventist movement, it has been the proclamation of God's Word. God's Word has provided that basis.

JP: If you look at our own church, particularly our own beginning—and I don't mean just the one hundred fifty years in North America. I mean when our message came to northern Norway—my parents were baptized in the first wave

of strong Adventism. People have strong convictions. The preaching from the Bible, the reading of the Bible lent itself to having very, very strong convictions about the values found in Scripture. It wasn't just a bland general spiritual feeling; they were strongly held values and convictions. Studying the Bible has been a part of our heritage. **M**

- 1 It is the international gathering of Seventh-day Adventists that takes place every five years.
- 2 Church organizational unit for the Caribbean and the countries between North and South America.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950), 593, 594.
- 4 White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956), 90.
- 5 These are major meetings of world leaders and representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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MINISTRY

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 - b. Historical studies
 - c. Theological studies (including ethics)
 - d. Ministry (preaching, leadership, counseling, evangelism, etc.)
 - e. World missions
2. **All submissions must follow the Writer's Guidelines as to length, endnotes, style, and other features of the manuscript. Please carefully read the guidelines found at www.ministrymagazine.org.**
3. Submit your manuscript in MS Word to MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org. Please include the following information at the top of the manuscript: your name, address, email address, telephone number, category for which you are submitting (see above), religious affiliation, name of college/university/seminary you are attending, and title of your manuscript.
4. *Ministry* will accept only one submission per writer.

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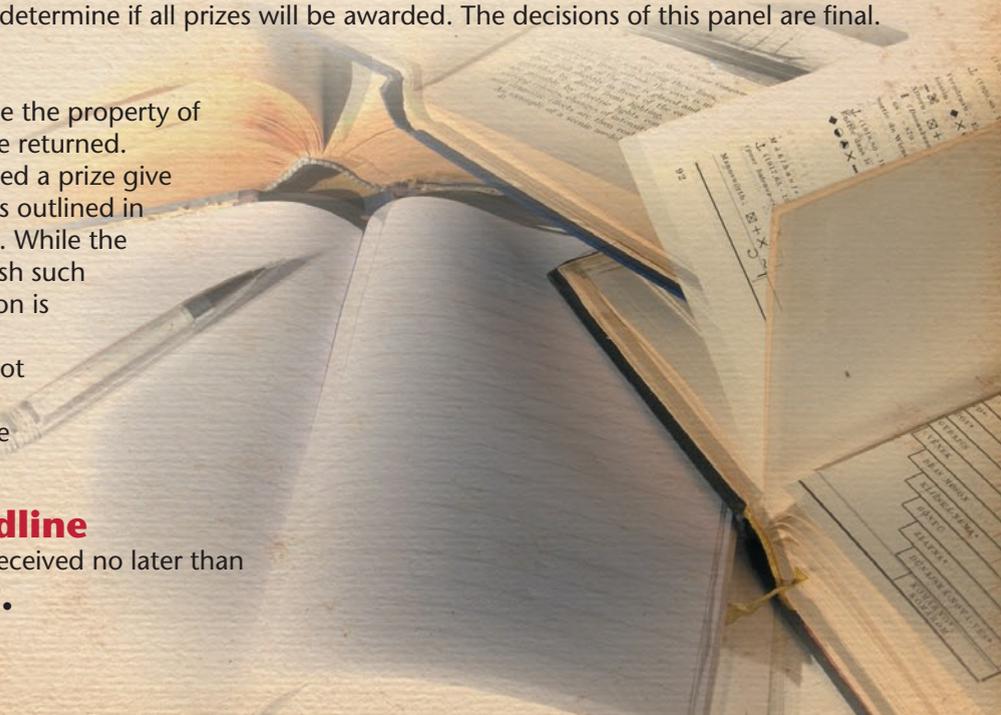
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3. Manuscripts that are not awarded a prize may be purchased at a price to be negotiated.

Submission deadline

All submissions must be received no later than

JUNE 30, 2009.



Worship: Maintaining theological soundness and cultural relevance

Part one of a two-part series

Alain Coralie



Alain Coralie, MDiv, MTh, is associate secretary for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in East Africa, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya.

Editor's note: Part one reviews two movements in contemporary worship trends (Seeker Service and the Praise and Worship movements), and Part two—to appear in March 2009—will provide an Adventist context from Revelation 14:6, 7 that will offer a balance between cultural relevance and theological soundness to worship. We believe that readers from varied religious perspectives will find this topic of interest.

With much anticipation, I entered the packed auditorium that Sabbath morning to experience what my friends called the *alternative worship service*. The worship leader, casually dressed, grabbed the microphone, shared some personal details, cracked a few jokes, and asked the audience to rise and sing with gusto and feeling the contemporary songs projected on a large screen. Some closed their eyes, raised their hands, and lifted their palms upward as they sang. Others seemed more interested in listening to the band and the worship team than praising. This lasted for about 20 minutes, after which the deacons collected the offering. Someone prayed for the offering, combining it with the pastoral prayer. Then came the sermon. A young man preached, clad in a *Matrix*-type outfit, showing DVD snippets of *The Lord of the Rings*, apparently comparing the film with Scripture. As I came out of the auditorium, I felt a bit bemused. Others seemed to have enjoyed the worship experience.

I have witnessed similar phenomena on four continents. Is this a sign of healthy creativity or a symptom of plain confusion? Are these forms of worship determined by present-day culture or by vital theological engagement?

This article argues that such liturgical changes reflect the wider cultural shifts that occur in society. Hence, the challenge that confronts worship leaders: how to keep worship services theologically sound and yet culturally relevant.

Revelation 14:6, 7 provides a powerful integrative factor for the theological soundness and cultural relevance, thus ensuring an Adventist ethos in worship. Before addressing the theological framework, let us review the contemporary cultural landscape in which we live and consider two influential movements (Seeker Service and the Praise and Worship movements) that have impacted Adventist thought and practice in recent years. As we will discover, both have a postmodern ethos.

Worship in postmodern times

Our postmodern times have created for many an identity crisis. People are confused, unfocused, fragmented, and have great difficulties defining themselves and perceiving the world in which they live. As Kenneth Gergen explains, "Under postmodern conditions, persons exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony and ultimately the playful probing of another reality. The centre fails to hold."¹

In the face of such identity crisis, the church's responsibility includes providing a credible solution, not just in doctrinal emphases but also in worship and fellowship.² The advent of "contemporary worship" has leveled the doctrinal walls and, for a growing number of Christians, created a new type of worship defined more by style than content. The contemporary yearning is not so much for doctrinal accuracy as for worship style that answers emotional and social quests.

The Adventist Church does not remain immune to this influence. In fact, there are two strong movements that have affected the way some Adventists view worship. The first: the Seeker Service movement with Willow Creek Community Church being the prime example. The second: the Praise and Worship movement whose main proponents have been Integrity Music and Hillsong. We shall briefly assess both movements and draw some links with worship innovation among Adventists.

The Seeker Service movement

The main goal of seeker friendly services equates with making the unchurched comfortable in a church while hearing the Christian message. The church can be described as a space where seekers can feel at home. The main elements of a typical service³ consist of contemporary “congregational” singing with simple lyrics projected on large screens and talks that always try to avoid “clichés and spiritualized and archaic language.”⁴ The speaker delivers a “practical” sermon in simple language, illustrated with PowerPoint presentations or video clips. The service ends with a prayer and a simple chorus. Everything that happens in the Seeker Service

turned worship services into evangelistic venues. Other revivalists and evangelists adopted this strategy and its legacy can still be felt in Protestant churches.

A number of Adventist circles have absorbed the Seeker Service mode. The existence of several church services on university campuses testifies to the popularity of worship *à la carte*. Hence, no need exists for groups with differing tastes in worship to worship together. Each can worship separately if they choose. Fundamentally, this puts into question the idea of the church as a family.

The Seeker Service model assumes that the closer worship becomes to the immediate culture and the further away

Seeker services are often so enmeshed with contemporary culture that they have difficulties soaring above it. They become so obsessed with being culturally relevant that they tend to “miss” God in worship. In addition, by rejecting all tradition, many worship leaders have ended up depriving God’s people of rich resources for worship. This lack of historical and theological perspective has reduced worship to the here and now, preventing solid engagement with the One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

One cannot deny that seeker-oriented services have most often made evangelism a top priority. However, seeker services miss the essence of

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consists of plans with the nonbelieving person in mind.

The Seeker Service movement is not new. One can see its roots in the American revivalist worship of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that found its best expressions in camp meetings. However, it was Charles G. Finney, the famous nineteenth century revivalist, who became the most influential worship reformer.

Three important aspects of Finney’s worship reforms may be noted.⁵ First, he emphasized freedom and innovation over tradition, arguing that the Bible does not prescribe any particular styles. Second, he contextualized worship by adapting it to its surrounding culture while removing all “unnecessary” barriers to the audience. Third, and perhaps most important, he reversed the relationship between worship and evangelism. For centuries, theologians had viewed evangelism as the by-product of worship. With Finney, evangelism took preeminence over worship as he

from traditional cultural trappings, the better. But the problem is that instead of creating something unique, it may end up identifying itself completely with the ambient culture. Equally, one finds in this postmodern context that many seeker-oriented churches put traditions and doctrinal differences in the background because of their perceived “authoritarian” or “divisive” overtones. The result? An utilitarian religion with distinctiveness often camouflaged in an effort to appeal to people. Angles are smoothed and those not palatable to contemporary tastes tend to be discarded. Churches get to be defined more by pragmatism than their historical or doctrinal affinities. Then, when pastors end up becoming obsessed with the notion of relevance at the expense of their prophetic calling, they tend to have action-oriented ministries based on satisfying immediate needs but with little doctrinal emphasis. As Marva Dawn puts it so well, they end up dumbing down as they try to reach out.⁶

worship in that they are profoundly anthropocentric. Many seeker services inversely downplay God’s centrality in worship as they increase focus on individual felt-needs. As churches become self-obsessed, the biblical God can easily be reduced to a heavenly therapist.

For these reasons, one needs to remember that authentic worship does not start with felt-needs or human ingenuity but God’s activity in history. Worship should be the believer’s heartfelt response to God’s mighty acts in creation and redemption—the creature’s affirmation of God’s love and faithfulness. Therefore, the primary point for worship leaders to realize is not how to make worship more appealing and relevant to seekers, but how to make believers engage more fully with their Creator and Redeemer. Such worship will not only draw the believer into God’s presence but will also help the seeker experience God in and through worship (1 Cor. 14). The main task for worship leaders

should not be simply relevant, but to engage the worship community to truly worship God.

The Praise and Worship movement

A second trend that strongly influences contemporary Adventist worship landscape includes the Praise and Worship movement. Distinct, and yet not unconnected to the Seeker Service movement, it has become the most influential Protestant worship renewal in recent years. Transdenominational and global in scope, it has been hailed by some as a new touch of Pentecost, and has been accused by others as representing “the blowing not of the Spirit of God but of the spirit of the age.”⁷

“Loosely and pejoratively identified as Pentecostal worship,”⁸ the Praise and Worship model often describes lively, expressive, and participative services in which congregations seek God’s presence through the sacramental use of contemporary worship songs.⁹ From fast-paced praise songs that extol God’s greatness and power to mellow music that emphasizes the believer’s personal relationship with God (hence the terminology “praise and worship”), the worshipers are led in a series of affective states that, according to its proponents, allow them to experience an ever-increasing sense of God’s presence in their midst.

Although this form of worship can be traced back to such diverse sources as Methodist Revivalism, the Holiness Movement, African American churches, and the Jesus Movement of the 1960s,¹⁰ this worship style has become most closely linked to what Peter Wagner calls the “Third Wave of Charismatic movements”¹¹ that swept across Christianity in recent years. Because of this wave and its phenomenal influence over churches “charismatic styles of worship have been diffused throughout congregations and denominations of varied theological persuasions.”¹²

This type of worship emphasizes a relational encounter with God rather than the more passive or cerebral expression of worship prevalent in other forms. In this “face-to-face” worship experience,

being “in the Spirit” becomes the essential condition for a real encounter with God. This often manifests itself through uninhibited singing, dancing, and *glossolalia*. Worshipers live in an experience of total engagement and abandonment to God. And the growth of this kind of worship parallels that of economic and cultural globalization. What happens in influential evangelical churches is quickly exported to the most remote areas of the world through modern means of communication. This expresses itself more in terms of the rapid exchange of culturally tailored products along with the mentoring by international leaders who travel across the globe to train a new generation of worshipers. In addition, through their worship seminars all over the world, influential charismatic worship leaders shape contemporary worship through their songs and their teachings. Whereas traditionally, worship rapprochement was fostered through talks and texts by ecclesiastical elites, today the most influential catalysts are CDs, DVDs, and musical artists.

This new situation definitely favors a global reshaping of worship. Harvey Cox contends that our age parallels that of the first century Roman Empire. He writes, “Christians use the hardware and the software of the global culture to make the gospel known. Just as Paul made use of ships, the Greek language, references to classical poetry, letters and his Roman citizenship to travel with the good news, so Christians benefit from the worldwide travel and communication technologies of today.”¹³

Cox, however, points out a caution: “While the first century Christians said both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to the global culture of their time, today’s Christians mainly just say ‘yes.’ . . . At worst certain Christian movements actually promote and even sacralize the false values of the market.”¹⁴

The point must not be missed: a market-driven world contains a tendency to make Christianity as attractive as possible. This raises some questions: Do we run the risk of denaturing the gospel by mass-marketing it? By making the gospel as palatable as possible, do we end up

robbing it of its power to challenge the world with the values of the kingdom?

(Part two of this article, to appear in March 2009, will continue a discussion of these problems and provide a resolution in terms of a theological framework of worship within the Adventist context as derived from Revelation 14:6, 7.)

- 1 Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self*, quoted in R. Middleton and B. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1995), 52, 53.
- 2 Cornelius Platinga Jr. and Sue Rozeboom, *Discerning the Spirits: A Guide to Thinking About Christian Worship Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 2, 3.
- 3 For a detailed analysis, see Gregory A. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Services* (N.P.: Baker Books, 1995), 80–156.
- 4 Pritchard, 87.
- 5 Robb Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening: Singing the Lord’s Song in the Postmodern Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 5 ff.
- 6 Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).
- 7 Platinga Jr. and Rozeboom, 3.
- 8 Paul Basden, *The Worship Maze: Finding a Style to Fit Your Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 77.
- 9 Lester Ruth, “Praise & Worship Movement” in Paul F. Bradshaw, ed., *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 378.
- 10 James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 192–216; Don Williams, “A Charismatic Worship Response” in Paul A. Basden, ed., *Exploring the Worship Spectrum: Six Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 139–144; Redman, 22–27; see also Platinga Jr. and Rozeboom, 27–38; Basden, 75–83.
- 11 Wagner suggests that the first wave was the Pentecostal movement of the 1900s, followed by the charismatic movement of the 1960s. According to him, the third wave, in the 1970s, is still unfurling. See Peter Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1988).
- 12 Simon Coleman, *The Globalization of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 22.
- 13 Harvey Cox, “Pentecostalism and Global Market Culture: A Response to Issues Facing Pentecostalism in a Postmodern World” in Murray W. Dempster, et al eds., *The Globalization of Pentecostalism: A Religion Made to Travel* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), 391.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 391, 392.

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The Name above all names: Redeeming Jehovah from hip-hop's¹ grip

Donna Olivia Powell



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Editor's note: The following article was one of our ministerial student writing contest winning submissions.

Sabbath morning. Congregants in their fineries stop to exchange greetings, while slowly making their way to the pews. An atmosphere of worship fills the sanctuary; surely the presence of the Lord is in this place. The worship leader stands and invites the congregation to invoke God's presence. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed, and hands are raised in a posture of worship. At the end of an unscripted and powerful invitation to usher in the already present Presence, the congregation and worship leader say together the Lord's Prayer, " ' 'Our Father in heaven, / hallowed be your name . . . ' ' " (Matt. 6:9, NIV).

Previous night. Clubgoers in their freshest outfits, with bling² to match, stand in a line that wraps around the building in anticipation of the party inside. Music is pumping, drinks are flowing, and bodies are gyrating. Inside, the disc jockey (DJ) grabs the microphone to introduce the next record and invites the crowd to get up and go wild. The beat drops, and as Jay-Z³ begins the verse, the crowd is on their feet, with hands raised, chanting together, "They call me J-Hova cause the flow is religious."

Issues of identity have been weighing heavy on me. If someone were to ask me who I am, I would respond with a list that includes Christian, African American, woman, artist, teacher, and

hip-hop lover. As I've pondered my identity, and how my decisions and behaviors are influenced by who I am, I have become aware of how my identities work in relationship with one another.

Prior to rededicating my life to Christ five years ago, at times I felt attacked and devalued by the booming beats and lyrical land mines of the hip-hop music that I learned to love. When I surrendered my life to the Lord in 2002, my already turbulent relationship with hip-hop worsened. Not only was my esteem as a woman quaking, but my values as a disciple of Christ were in conflict with most of the values communicated through hip-hop music. In an act of extreme obedience to the voice of the Lord, one evening I incinerated all of the music that was in opposition with my life as a Christian. I think I had about ten CDs left in my collection after the great cleanout. While my music collection was sparse, my heart was open to a mighty move of God.

Admittedly, there was a day when even I danced as Jay-Z proclaimed himself, J-Hova, the god of the rap game, a reference to the holy name of God. Those were the days before I knew Jesus as Lord and Savior and before becoming more intentional about cultivating my relationship with God. Once aware of the awesome nature and name of God, it was difficult to raise holy hands in worship to God and pump my fists to Jay-Z. This awareness led to a multiplicity of questions: Why does Jay-Z call himself J-Hova? What, if anything, is at stake by his use of this name? How do I understand the holy name of God? What should my response be? How does this affect other Christians who listen to and purchase his music? How can we discuss this issue without attacking Jay-Z and hip-hop? If Christians accept and endorse this usage of J-Hova to describe an ordinary man, what are the long-range implications for the sanctity of worship and the church?

The lure of hip-hop

Answering the questions that were dancing in my psyche required study of the Scriptures, of hip-hop culture, and commentaries about both. Like Bell Hooks, I consider this study to be the act of "cross[ing] boundaries to take another look, to contest, to interrogate, and in some cases to recover and redeem."⁴ I was unsettled by Jay-Z's use of the moniker J-Hova—and redeeming the name of my Redeemer became of paramount importance. Redemption and recovery would not be important if hip-hop were not a powerful force

in music and the global economy. Russell Potter states that “it is increasingly clear that hip-hop has become a transnational, global art-form capable of mobilizing diverse disenfranchised groups.”⁵ The disenfranchised, the very souls we Christians are commissioned to reach with the gospel (Matt. 25:31–39; 28:19, 20), are being drawn by hip-hop’s magnetic ability to give them voice and power. Even Christian youth and young adults, those who have been transformed and saved by Christ, are listening, dancing, and chanting along with Jay-Z.

What’s in a name?

HaShem, or “The Name,” is crucial to our relationship with God. God is first identified, in Genesis 2 as *YHWH*. The name *YHWH*, also referred to as the tetragrammaton, written in our English translation of the Bible as *LORD*, implies a covenantal relationship. This name was so sacred that Jews ceased from pronouncing it in fear of breaking the third commandment, which prohibits taking the Lord’s name in vain. The evolution from *YHWH*

to *Jehovah* is an interesting one, but it’s important to know that *Jehovah* is the “English translation of one of the Hebrew names for God. A more accurate translation is ‘Yahweh.’ This name was considered to be very holy, and religious Jews would not take this name to their lips.”⁶ Though the pronunciation of the tetragrammaton is uncertain, Christians have taken to pronouncing it *Jehovah* and thus should handle that form of the name with great care.

In the burning bush narrative (Exod. 3), when God makes a promise to Moses on behalf of Israel, Moses asks God’s name. Moses knew that in order for his words to carry weight, the people must know the source of the promise.

God’s answer to Moses, “I AM,” or *Hayah*, implied the eternal nature of God and also revealed God’s character. In contemporary worship, the name that we use to address God speaks to the way in which we relate to God. The name that we use to address God is part of our faith language, which “is crucial

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because it affords human beings the privilege of intimacy with the Ultimate. The language of faith grounds human life in a set of religious narratives that transmit the sheer beauty and integrity of human existence, that affirms our birthright as children of God.”⁷

When we call on *Jehovah*, we are recognizing the authority, reputation, and power of God. When we cry to *Jehovah-Jireh*, we are recognizing God’s ability to see us through any situation. When we call on *Jehovah-Shalom*, we are recognizing God as the Giver of peace in the midst of chaos. By lifting up the name of *Jehovah*, we are expressing our adoration, devotion, and honor to God.

The Psalms repeatedly reveal that we are to praise and glorify the name of *Jehovah*. My favorite source of comfort is the safety (Prov. 18:10), healing (James 5:14), and salvation (Acts 2:21) we find when we call on the name of *Jehovah*. The name *Jehovah* is so sacred and powerful that Christians worldwide should protect it from irreverence in popular culture and other venues.

The naming process

The act of naming becomes crucial in the formation of spiritual, national, and individual identity, with naming of tantamount importance in hip-hop culture. William Eric Perkins writes, “Central to the DJ verbal style was the elaborate rite of passage of naming, of creating an identity and personality that could not be matched. The naming ritual is another essential element in rap’s structure. African American rappers adopt names that confer identity and separate them from the crowd, while

celebrating attributes that embody the personality of the name given. Rhyming and naming thus became a rapper’s birthright, contributing to his or her image and personality.”⁸

With this in mind, it makes sense that Jay-Z would rename himself *J-Hova*. Nelson George further explains the renaming process, “Whether anointing oneself royalty or basking in words originally designed to demean, African American males are restless in the desire for self-definition.”⁹ As an African American male in America, struggling to transcend the world of drugs and crime, he needed a name that would describe the heights that he dreamed of reaching. He gave himself the highest

name, without regard for its power, and climbed heights many with his same background could not. His lyrics are mesmerizing and speak with authority, even to the point of listeners calling him the savior of hip-hop.

I am not attacking Jay-Z, his personal decisions, or his spiritual journey. This is part of a larger cultural and societal issue, and the onus is on the church to preserve the name and holiness of God. In a strange way, renaming himself worked. In 1996, Jay-Z modestly began his recording career, performing all of his concerts outfitted in a simple white T-shirt, blue jeans, and a New York Yankees cap. To date, Jay-Z has sold over 33 million records, recently stepped down as president and CEO of Def Jam records, co-owns the New Jersey Nets, and is reportedly worth \$547 million.

During my research on this topic, I turned to *VH1 Soul*¹⁰ and happened upon a charismatic Jay-Z performing new material and inviting the crowd to settle into his lyrical landscape. Though the chorus of the song urged listeners to pray, the crowd moved in reverence and worship of Jay-Z. Their hands were raised in adoration, much like the holy hands that are lifted to God in a worship service. Though captivated by his presence and disgusted by his arrogance, I will not deny his musical genius and smart business tactics, but even those attributes do not warrant him being exalted to a place only reserved for God. Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am the Lord, that is My name; / And my glory I will not give to another" (NKJV).

Adopting the name of God may be working for him now, but at what cost to himself and the millions who mindlessly worship him?

The challenge

As pastors, chaplains, ministers, and future religious leaders, we have a sacred obligation to protect the name of God. We do not have the pleasure, as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden, of physically seeing, touching, and hearing God. Unlike the disciples, we do not have the opportunity for physical encounters with Jesus. Our experiences of God is expressed through our faith

language, by confessing Christ's name. If we believe the Bible and the power of the name of God to heal, deliver, and save, then our responsibility includes making sure of the reverence and respect expressed for His name. In fact, we should delight in defending the name that transformed our lives, the lives of others around us, and countless lives to come.

I do not think it wise to take a steamroller approach to preserving God's name, for only acts and words of love will truly make a difference. God's name will be glorified if we prayerfully, thoughtfully, and strategically address the issue without condemning an entire musical genre or specific artists. Within the walls of the church, through preaching, intentional studies, and spontaneous conversations, we must raise the awareness of the value of worship and pride in the sacred.

Without worship, we have defective relationships with God, and without God's name, we cannot worship. Secondly, it would be appropriate to study popular culture and prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our understanding of how it impacts our relationship with God, each other, and ourselves. We cannot be afraid to become cultural critics, to study the music, television shows, movies, video games, Web sites, and books with which our people are connecting. Then we will be able to have informed, analytical discussions engaging youth and young adults without dumbing down the gospel. With consciousness raised and disciples fully understanding the significance of worship and the name of God, then we can engage in critical discussions with our youth and young adults about words, images, and sounds in popular culture and their

relationship to faith. In addition, these discussions will naturally spill out from the walls of our institutions, churches, universities, or otherwise, bearing witness to the world to those who do not know the holiness and power of God's name. In effect, we will create and sustain communities with worship rightfully directed to Jehovah. ❏

- 1 "Hip hop music, also referred to as rap music, is a music genre . . . typically consisting of a rhythmic vocal style called rap . . . accompanied with backing beats." "Hip-hop," Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hip_hop_music.
- 2 "Bling" is a slang for jewelry.
- 3 Jay-Z is a famous hip-hop rapper.
- 4 Bell Hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.
- 5 Russell A. Potter, *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 10.
- 6 Henrietta Mears, *What the Bible Is All About* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), 429.
- 7 Michael Eric Dyson, *Between God and Gansta Rap: Bearing Witness to Black Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), xiv, xv.
- 8 William Eric Perkins, "The Rap Attack: An Introduction," in *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture*, William Eric Perkins, ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 5.
- 9 Nelson George, *Hip Hop America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 52.
- 10 *VH1 Soul* is a television program that broadcasts music videos.

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In spirit and in truth: Let's talk about worship!

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It's often amazing—the things that separate Christians.

Many North American churches are divided in the so-called worship wars. Worship happens to be the most important thing Christians do, and it's one thing that the devil and his emissaries hate more than anything else. Worship continues as an important event because God demands it of His people and because worship brings purpose and meaning to our lives. Worship reminds us of our human limitations and of our Maker's limitless greatness. Worship brings salvation and assurance to believers and instructs us how to live and set our life's priorities. Worship exists as one of God's primary ways of infusing us with the abundant life that Jesus promises in John 10:10. Worship is practical; it fills us with a desire to serve God and others and remains as the one thing we carry from this life into the life to come.

Yet great confusion over worship continues in the church today. Tragically, when the church battles over worship (or anything else), truth becomes the first casualty and the devil prevails as the final victor.

Worship is not about you or about me or about what we like; and worship is certainly not about entertaining us. Worship is about God alone. Until we understand this point, we will be like spiritual cave dwellers. Our attempts at worship will be boring, meaningless, and futile. So, let us begin thinking about worship by looking at the most basic question.

What is worship?

The Bible, as God's basic handbook on life, becomes our most important worship source book. Scripture has more to say about worship than one short article can cover, but we need to start somewhere. Let's, then, start with Jesus. When Jesus met the woman at the well, He told her, " 'A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth' " (John 4:23, 24, NIV).

This is our beginning point. The Scriptures teach that worship gives us an appreciation of God—for who He is, what He has done, and what He is doing:

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever . . .

Open for me the gates of righteousness;
I will enter and give thanks to the
LORD . . .

I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation . . .

You are my God, and I will give You
thanks;
you are my God, and I will exalt
you.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever
(Ps. 118:1, 19, 21, 28, 29, NIV).

Contemporary versus traditional

What comes to mind when you think about worship? Do you think about attending church services? Or about the whole content of your life as a Christian? Is your mind picture of worship a coming together in a former warehouse with a praise band? Or a fine gothic building complete with stained glass, well-ordered liturgy, and a grand pipe organ? When you hear that the music in such-and-such a place is worshipful, do you envision new Christian songs and choruses? Stately old hymns? Toe-tapping Southern gospel melodies?

Let us set straight a couple of terms about worship that have crept into our modern vernacular and that have helped fan the flames of controversy. These flames, first kindled in the late 1960s, are now spreading like wildfire.

We hear about "contemporary" and "traditional" worship. Interestingly enough, these words are never applied in the Bible either to worship or to anything else. Why? Authentic worship is contemporary—or of-this-moment—and

at the same time traditional or established. This explains the meaning behind Jesus' words that worship must be "in spirit and in truth."

To define some worship as contemporary implies that other worship has passed its "sell by date." That can never be true. What makes worship "contemporary" is not a music style or a way of dress, but the presence of the Lord God in the midst of His people when they praise Him. What makes worship traditional is that it follows a timeless form that God Himself prescribes in Holy Scripture.

In short, if God is not present in our worship, then it is not worship at all, regardless of how new the music. Furthermore, if worship does not follow the Bible's pattern for praising God, then it cannot be worship at all, no matter how old its form or how many times we have done it that way.

The worship Jesus speaks about to the Samaritan woman at the well includes the abandonment of ourselves—including all our pet bywords—to the Lord God Almighty. "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you" (James 4:7, 8). Worship—whether led by a one hundred-voice, well-trained choir and orchestra followed by a robe-adorned preacher, or by a guitar-strumming, drum-beating music group that plays before someone preaches with his shirt tail hanging out—can never be called a *spectator sport*. The success of worship cannot be measured by the number of people who come because it is offered for an audience of One—and that One is the triune God.

Worship becomes far more than a 60-minute morning vaudevillian event, for true worship consists of a life dedicated to serving the living God. Until we understand this point, we will never be "true worshipers," regardless of our worship style. ■

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Embracing those who reject religion: An interview with Roger Dudley

A. Allan Martin



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Editor's note: Dr. Roger Dudley is the director of the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University as well as professor emeritus of Christian ministry. For more than 50 years, Dudley has devoted his ministry and research to understanding the spiritual experience of teens. Considered an expert in the field of youth and young adult ministry, Dudley is well known as a best-selling author. While his research focused on Adventist youth, his findings will be helpful to other denominations as well.

Allan Martin (AM): *We've come to the thirty-year anniversary of one of your seminal works, Why Teenagers Reject Religion and What To Do About It¹. As you look back over this period of time, what are some of your reflections on youth ministry?*

Roger Dudley (RD): I was actually involved in youth ministry quite a while before I ever started writing. I began as a teacher and principal of a school, and was also a youth ministries director. In that capacity, I traveled all over the conference and interacted with young people, so I got to really know them.

After I eventually wrote my dissertation, quite a few people said to me, "You really have a lot of good material, but nobody is going to read that." So I started to work on a book. Then one day, I got this letter from the Review and Herald Publishing Association, "We like your book and we're going to publish it." That's got to be a high point—my first book. This was far more successful than anything else I have written.

I began my job directing the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University in 1980. This gave me the opportunity to do research as part of my work. In fact, research *is* our work here. My wife was working to get her master's degree, and we worked together on her thesis, showing the comparison of teens and their parents.

Then a ten-year study was requested by the youth director of the world headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In a cross-sectional study, we get a picture at one given point. We know from this that some young people said, "I intend to stay an Adventist." We don't know if they really stayed because we only know what they intended. But if we could do a longitudinal study, we could show where they were and then after some years passed, what happened. So we began to put our heads together and see if we could do something like this.

Obviously, we found this to be quite complex as we began to research the literature. We couldn't find any other denomination that had ever done anything like this.

Although I wasn't doing youth ministry "out there" any longer, I was corresponding with teenagers and young adults through the study. Over this ten-year period, we were dealing with their issues asking, "How do you feel about this?" And we were getting letters—hundreds of letters.

I did write one more book on youth attrition; I thought it would be good if I could pull everything that I've studied together and put it in a book. *The Complex Religion of Teens²* looks more at the philosophical, theological, and psychological aspects of youth ministry.

AM: *Drawing from your vast experience and expertise, have young people changed over the years?*

RD: I'll start off by saying that human nature tends to stay the same. I do see that there are problems today that are probably worse than those we had to struggle with—for instance, drugs. When I was a teenager growing up, we didn't hear anything about drugs. Nobody ever offered me a drug. I never knew anybody who took drugs. And now they're all over. That has been a particularly negative aspect.

On the other hand, as I see young people today, I'm impressed by the many dedicated young people. I think about Andrews' students, who every Sabbath afternoon for years now, load up in a bus and go down to reach out in Benton

Harbor, [Michigan, United States]. I think about the student missionary program and the dedicated young adults who go to spend a year of their lives in a mission field. Obviously, when I see these young people, it really warms my heart.

So I know there are many young people who are just as spiritual and dedicated as young people everywhere. It's hard to make a blanket statement. We older people have to recognize that young people are different than we are. They dress differently, they listen to different music, they have a different way of doing things. But it's important for us not to jump to judgment. You try to be as helpful as you can.

AM: *In your book you quote Roland Hegstad. "Sometimes resentment originated from another seldom recognized source, the trauma of aging. As we grow older we need assurance that our life, our example, our values are worthwhile. But twentieth century culture makes such assurance difficult to achieve. Today's emphasis on change seems to challenge enduring values. Another source of adult resentment is the tendency of the young to challenge cherished traditions. With the passage of years, adults turn to ritual and tradition, the values of the past, while young people turn adventurously to innovation and experimentation."³ It was intriguing to hear what adults felt toward younger generations in the twentieth century. What about the twenty-first century?*

RD: I still agree with that. I think that one of the problems, and this comes out of all these interviews and letters I've had, is that oftentimes adults feel threatened

by young people in the church and they don't know what to do with them.

After the book came out, I was invited to speak at a number of places. One place I went was a college church. A group of people actually picketed the church, but we went ahead anyway. People wrote to me saying, "Why don't you just tell the kids to shape up! Get them to straighten up. We're doing OK;



Photo: Andrews University Public Relations Department

it's their fault." So you do meet those attitudes. They may not be as blatant, but there's often an undercurrent of that sentiment.

I concluded that while there are many factors in retention, I really think that the congregational climate is perhaps the most important thing of all. Young people, when they think about Seventh-day Adventists, they don't think about the denomination as a whole. To them, Adventism is *that congregation*. If *that congregation* is a warm, accepting

place, then Seventh-day Adventism must be a good thing. If *that congregation* is a place that is struggling, then they wonder, *What's the matter with Adventists?* I guess adults do that too, but young people do it particularly.

I'm convinced that all youth ministry is local. I have story after story of that kind of thing—people who were offended because of the congregation, as well as stories of people who love their church because of the warm way they are accepted.

AM: *Your research indicates young people are departing from faith life at a rate of forty to fifty percent. George Barna's work cites sixty-one percent.⁴ Is there an element that has not been implemented that could change the current attrition statistics?*

RD: One thing you learn in a denomination is that what happens in higher levels of administration isn't necessarily what happens down in the local church. It's therefore so dependent upon that local congregation—or that local school or university or whatever it is—on what they can do. You've got to be intentional about this thing; you can't just take it for granted.

I once read an article in a magazine about what a church did right. It was so warm and moving. The author talked about how she comes from this little church out in the boondocks and how the members all made the young people feel like they were really important. They made her Sabbath School secretary when she was in seventh grade, which was an adult thing to do; she was collecting the money and all that. Then, when she was about in eighth grade, they made her the press secretary for the church. And they had kids teaching the younger kids

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in Sabbath School departments and all that kind of thing. It was so ideal that I said, "I've got to get this in the book." I put this story in my latest book as an appendix. To me, the described church situation is ideal. I think this is what the churches need to do.

AM: *You have said that not only are we to look for and to redeem the individual that has had a prodigal experience with the church, but also let's not forget the ones that have stayed with us all along. What do you think would help the church to be an attractive, embracing place that young people would gravitate to?*

RD: We asked this question at the end of the ten-year study,⁵ "If you did stay with the church, why did you do it?" And we devoted a chapter in that book to those responses. They found a place of belonging there, they felt like they were a part of a family, they felt like they were needed, they felt like the church depended on them, they felt acceptance there, they had friends there, and it was a pleasant experience for them.

People will not continue for very long doing something they don't like. So we have to make the religious experience a good, happy, joyful experience. Again, I think helping young people find tasks where they can use their various gifts is really important. If you take this whole idea about wanting to be an adult—wanting to grow up, as it were, wanting to make that change that you need to do in your life—then being really useful doing an important job becomes one of the things that makes you feel most like an adult. If a young person says, "You know, I'm really a pillar of this place, they really need me here, this place would probably collapse if I wasn't here," then those people will be there. I think the dedicated young people that have various tasks do them so well because they've been able to buy into it.

AM: *Now that we're in the twenty-first century, what would be your word of encouragement to young people, as well as the church? What would be your encouragement to the many people who follow your legacy of loving young people?*

RD: I'd like to help young people see that religion is not a list of don'ts—things you can't do. It's not some kind of behavioral code, some complex theoretical experience. I want them to see it as a relationship experience. I want them to see that it is first a relationship with God who is a friend, and a relationship with their fellow human beings where they help and support each other. At the center of true religion is this matter of relationship. I think they need help to see that.

To the youth and young adult ministry workers, *that's the way we need to try to work.* We can't simply preach to people and tell them what they ought to do; they probably already know what they ought to do. We have to help them find that relationship with Jesus Christ and with their fellow humans that will lead them to actions.

AM: *Any final comments?*

RD: We have to develop the capacity to see beyond the outward shell, to look inside. I've seen all kinds of young people, some of whom apparently are very secular and have no religion at all, but if you really get to know these kids, they may be a little different from ours, but they have aspirations. I can hardly ever remember a time where I didn't find something good in them. ■

- 1 Roger Dudley, *Why Teenagers Reject Religion and What to Do About It* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1978).
- 2 Roger Dudley, *The Complex Religion of Teens* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2007).
- 3 Dudley, *Why Teenagers Reject Religion and What to Do About It*, 65.
- 4 George Barna, "Most Twentysomethings Put Christianity on the Shelf Following Spiritually Active Teen Years," *The Barna Report* [Online], retrieved September 12, 2006 from <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=245>.
- 5 Roger Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories From a 10-year Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000).

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Antichrist: From Persian dualism to contemporary Christianity

Timothy Perenich



Timothy Perenich, at the time of this writing, was pursuing a Master of Arts in Religion with emphasis in Church History, at the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

Editor's note: The following article was one of our ministerial student writing contest winning submissions.

Thanks to Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins in the Left Behind series, the most popular depiction of the “antichrist” is Nicolae Carpathia, a wealthy Romanian businessman described as the devil-incarnate ruler of the United Nations and tyrannical opponent of the forces of good. His goal commits him to achieving world domination and to crush Christianity. Despite the fact that this character is fictional, most Christians are convinced that the antichrist will be like Carpathia. Carpathia represents the archetypical antichrist, a single man endowed with all the evil of the devil, who works against the forces of good.

The ancient Near Eastern culture had their equivalent to Nicolae Carpathia as well—Beliar. *Beliar* or *Belial* in Hebrew means a worthless person. The term came to be associated with Satan and the antichrist during the intertestamental period (200 B.C.—A.D. 4).¹ The Beliar/antichrist concept was originally derived from classic Persian dualism and was incorporated in Jewish noncanonical apocalyptic writings: “This fanciful concept seems to have had its origin in the Persian eschatology, where the battle between Ahura Mazda, the god of light, and Angra Mainyu, the god of darkness, plays a predominant role. And from there it found its way into Jewish apocalyptic literature, where the

opposition between God and the devil, who is introduced under the various names of Beliar, Satanus, Diabolus, Pneuma-aerion. . . . Beliar, who originally was probably nothing else than incarnate devil, was soon expanded, under the influence of certain historical conditions to be the opposer of God in the last times.”²

Although Beliar’s description evolved through ancient literature, certain characteristics have remained to create the modern antichrist concept. Most of the descriptions of Beliar in the intertestamental writings were based upon dualistic parallelism between the Messiah and the antichrist. The descriptions found in these writings of the Messiah figure were reciprocally applied to the antichrist and vice versa. Apparent in the *Psalm of Solomon* (Pss. Sol.),³ this theme of dualistic parallelism describes the “Anointed One” as a literal “Son of David,” a man, who relies upon God’s help to defeat God’s enemies and save His people (Pss. Sol. 17:23–25). Reciprocally, it describes the antichrist to be a Gentile aided by Satan to crush God’s people (Pss. Sol. 2:24–29; 17:13–15). In another place, the Messiah figure reigns with mercy and justice (Pss. Sol. 17:23, 32), while the antichrist remains a tyrant (Pss. Sol. 17:13–17). Thus G. W. Lorien concludes, “in Pss. Sol.17, the theme of the Anointed One almost completely mirrors the Antichrist theme.”⁴

This theme is not limited to the *Psalm of Solomon*. In the *Sibylline Oracles*, the dualistic parallelism also exists.

God will send a messiah who will eliminate some through warfare and who will bind others to himself by loyalty. He will do this in the form of a human figure, and in total dependence on God. It has been stated that the way the Antichrist is portrayed is determined in part by the messiah figure. . . . From our reading of this description of the messiah, we can conclude about the Antichrist: “An Antichrist set by Satan will eliminate some through warfare and bind others to himself by loyalty; he will do this in a human figure and in total dependence on Satan.”⁵

Recognizing this theme in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, L. J. Lietaert Peerbolte writes,

The description of Beliar makes it clear that he is thought of as a heavenly figure. He will “come down in the form of a man” (4, 2). This is probably an allusion to the incarnation of Christ. The passage 10, 9–11 is a description



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of how Christ transformed himself into the likeness of those he visited in his descent through the vaults of heaven, and how in the end he took the form of man. In the same way Beliar disguises himself as a man. But the imitation goes even beyond this. As v. 6 phrases it: "he will act and speak like the Beloved and will say, It is I who am Lord, and before me there has been no other." Beliar appoints himself as the Christ, thus proving himself to be a deceiver.⁶

Similar reciprocal comparisons between the Messiah and the antimesiah are found in numerous places, but we will note just three. According to the *Testament of Dan*, Beliar, the antichrist, is a man imbued with satanic power, facing off against the "Lord," a man imbued with godly power.⁷ In the same book, the authors describe Beliar as a Jew from the tribe of Dan to oppress the Jews, whereas the Messiah arises from both Judah and Levi to save them.⁸ In the *Assumption of Moses*, the antichrist possesses the title of "king of kings," a title normally reserved for the Messiah.⁹ In *Pseudo Ezekiel*, the antichrist is called the "son of Beliar" who opposes the "son of God."¹⁰

Influence upon the church fathers

The influence of the Beliar myth upon the church fathers became quite pronounced.¹¹ Although certain characteristics vary from witness to witness, the concept of a single powerful, evil-end tyrant is pervasive throughout their writings.

Take Irenaeus, for example. Explaining Irenaeus's views on the antichrist, Gregory C. Jenks concludes, "In the case of Irenaeus, the relationship between Antichrist and Satan was expressed in terms of his doctrine of recapitulation. Just as Christ gathered up all mankind in himself for justification, so the Antichrist figure was understood as a person who would recapitulate in his human existence all the sin and apostasy of earthly and heavenly history."¹²

This theme of dualistic parallelism is even more pronounced in the writings of Hippolytus, a former student of Irenaeus.

Hippolytus's writings transparently reveal the influence of the Beliar myth. Notice the pervasiveness of the dualistic parallelism theme in his description of the antichrist:

For the deceiver seeks to liken himself in all things to the son of God. Christ is a lion; so Antichrist is also a lion; Christ is a king, so Antichrist is also a king. The Savior was manifest as a lamb; so he too in the like manner, will appear as a lamb, though within he is a wolf. The Savior came into the world in the circumcision, and he will come in the same manner. The Lord sent apostles among all nations, and he in the like manner false apostles. The Savior gathered together the sheep that were scattered abroad, and he in like manner will bring together a people that is scattered abroad. The Lord gave a seal to those who believed on Him, and he will give one in like manner. The Savior appeared in the form of a man, he too will come in the form of a man. The Savior raised up and showed His holy flesh like a temple, and he will raise a temple of stone in Jerusalem.¹³

Irenaeus and Hippolytus were important figures because their interpretation of the antichrist established an important precedent that many of the church fathers followed.

Ideas concerning the antichrist were borrowed and enhanced. For instance, Origen, describing the antichrist, argued that since Jesus was the Son of God, then the antichrist would be the son of the evil demon Satan.¹⁴ Victorinus inspired by patristic precedent believed that the antichrist would be a reappearance of Nero, a pseudomoral character, to deceive God's people.¹⁵ John Chrysostom, too, believed in the Nero myth, stating, "For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work. [Paul] speaks here of Nero, as if he were the type of Antichrist."¹⁶ Ambrose was of the view that just "as the Son of God in His humble birth manifested His divine nature, so also shall Satan appear in human form."¹⁷ Likewise, Theodoretus wrote, "For the persecutor of men

simulates the incarnation of our God and Savior; as He by assuming our human nature accomplished our salvation, so that one also by making choice of a man capable of receiving the fullness of his power shall tempt men?"¹⁸ Jerome, being thoroughly indoctrinated by the church fathers wrote, "Nor let us think that he [Antichrist] . . . is the devil or a demon, but one of men in whom Satan is wholly to dwell bodily."¹⁹ Although the early fathers made their own innovations here and there, they did not depart from the script derived from nonbiblical witnesses.

The church fathers were clearly influenced by the Beliar myth and sought to interpret the biblical record with the lenses they acquired from the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. Their interpretation influenced one generation of Christians after another

an appropriation from the sectaries of the late Middle Ages of two devastating ideas: eschatology and predestination. Luther, like the sectaries, believed in the speedy advent of Christ to overthrow his great enemy Antichrist, identified with the pope. There was this difference, however, between the view of Luther and that of his precursors. They equated particular popes with Antichrist because of their evil lives. Luther declared that even the exemplary popes were Antichrist because [they were] the representatives of an institution opposed to Christ.²⁰

Luther's view of the antichrist as a system or institution rather than a person was a clear break from the church fathers whose view was based on the Beliar myth. Luther's view of the antichrist

that of diverting men's minds from perceiving the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Antichrist in the Papal system. The Jesuit Alcasar devoted himself to bring into prominence the Preterist method of interpretation . . . thus endeavored to show that the prophecies of Antichrist were fulfilled before the popes ever ruled at Rome, and therefore could not apply to the Papacy. On the other hand the Jesuit Ribera tried to set out the Futurist system, which asserts that these prophecies refer not to the career of the Papacy, but to that of some future supernatural individual, who is yet to appear, and continue in power for three and a half years.²²

To sell these concocted interpretations, a reemphasis was placed upon the

CHANGING TRADITIONAL PROTESTANT IDENTITY OF THE ANTICHRIST WAS NOT AN EASY TASK. IT WAS LARGELY DONE BY CONVINCING PROTESTANTS TO RECEIVE THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE CHURCH FATHERS OVER THEIR IMMEDIATE PROTESTANT PREDECESSORS.

until the Reformation. However, since the Reformation, the Beliar myth has regained prominence.

Beliar myth and contemporary influence

Prior to the Reformation, most Christians espoused the Beliar-inspired view of the antichrist. However, with the advent of the Reformation, this view began to crumble. The Reformers, whose battle cry was *sola scriptura*, developed a prophetic interpretation independent from the church fathers. Focusing on the Bible and history, they were led to a distinctive view of the antichrist. This new interpretation of the antichrist was one of the bulwarks of the Reformation.

These attacks on the authority [of the Catholic Church] were supported by

influenced Protestantism, not only in "Germany but Switzerland, England, Scandinavia, and even France."²¹ The single individual antichrist theory was crumbling because theologians sought to read the Bible afresh.

The distinctive Protestant understanding of the antichrist exerted a great influence, and the papacy sought to invent new means to counter it. To do this, the papacy decided to invent two false systems of prophetic interpretation to eliminate the Protestant teachings on the antichrist.

Towards the close of the century of the Reformation, two of her [the Catholic Church's] most learned doctors set themselves to the task, each endeavoring by different means to accomplish the same end, namely,

church fathers and their Beliar-inspired antichrist concept evident in the writings of Jesuit Cardinal Bellarmine and Thomas Malvenda, who cite the patristic authorities to support their conclusions of a single person antichrist arising from the Jews.²³

The efforts of the Jesuits to reintroduce the eschatological views of the church fathers, who were inspired by the Beliar myth, have had an immeasurable effect upon Protestantism. This can be clearly seen from the success of the Left Behind series.

Changing traditional Protestant identity of the antichrist was not an easy task. It was largely done by convincing Protestants to receive the eschatology of the church fathers over their immediate Protestant predecessors. Most arguments follow the reasoning of John

Henry Hopkins, who wrote in his book *A Candid Examination of the Question Whether the Bishop of Rome is the Great Anti-Christ of Scripture*:

The oldest Fathers lived nearest to the Apostles, and therefore they were more likely to retain the sense of the Apostles in their interpretation of the scripture. . . . This is the main statement of those primitive writers (that the Antichrist is a single man inspired by Satan from the tribe of Dan). And therefore it is indisputable that they stand entirely opposed to our modern interpreters, who have labored so ingeniously to make Antichrist correspond to the Pope of Rome. But here we must ask, Who were the best qualified to understand these prophecies? Those eminent Fathers who lived nearest to the Apostolic times, and searched the scriptures without any interest or prejudice to warp their judgment? Or those men of modern days, doubtless equally honest and sincere, but who formed their opinions under the powerful bias produced by the struggles of the Reformation, when there was so strong an inducement to associate the domineering and persecuting spirit of Popery with the predictions concerning the Man of Sin and Son of Perdition?²⁴

Sadly, amongst a professed Bible standard bearing people, this argument of craft eventually won out. Without appealing to the Bible, history, or the evidence the Reformers had compiled, Hopkins with one broad stroke repeals a fundamental tenet of Protestantism. Resting on tradition and the memory of the church fathers, Hopkins and others were able to abrogate one of the key doctrines of the Reformation—that Catholicism was the system of the antichrist. Contemporary theologians and Christian leaders believing in a single, Satan-inspired, human antichrist have essentially recycled Hopkins's arguments. Ignominiously, Protestants who accept this interpretation of the church fathers are ignorantly espousing pagan mythology.

Thus the Nicolae Carpathia ideal—a devil incarnate man evolved from ancient Persian dualism—was incorporated in apocalyptic noncanonical writings in the form of a mythical character called Beliar. The church fathers adopted this archetype giving it a Christian makeover. During the Reformation, Bible investigation led to Protestant denial of Beliar as antichrist and the viewing of the antichrist as a corrupt system. However, due to the efforts of the Jesuits, who placed an emphasis on the church fathers, the Beliar concept now enjoys a renaissance. The popularity of Nicolae Carpathia represents a sad trend in contemporary Christendom, demonstrating that Christians are more likely to accept pagan tradition as Bible truth. ❏

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- 2 LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 1, *Early Church Exposition, Subsequent Deflections, and Medieval Revival* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950), 299.
- 3 See G. Buchanan Gray's translation of *Psalm of Solomon* in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English Oxford*, ed. R. H. Charles (London: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2:631–652.
- 4 G. W. Lorein, *The Antichrist Theme in the Intertestamental Period* (London: T & T Clark International, 2003), 106.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 56.
- 6 L. J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist: A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1996), 201.
- 7 R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2:282–367.
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- 10 *Ibid.*, 151.
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- 12 Gregory C. Jenks, *The Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 51.
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- 15 W. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore*, trans. A. H. Keane (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), 29.
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- 23 Froom, *The Prophetic Faith*, 2:499, 501, 502, 504, 505.
- 24 John Henry Hopkins, *A Candid Examination of the Question Whether the Bishop of Rome is the Great Anti-Christ of Scripture* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1868), 112, 113.

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A model of success: What I learned in Guatemala

Raewyn Hankins



Raewyn Hankins, at the time of this writing, was a Master of Divinity student, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

In a country that had been torn apart by a recent war, how is it possible that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been growing so fast? A little more than ten years ago, Guatemala ended more than 36 years of armed conflict; in the time since then, Adventism has grown there phenomenally.

Why?

From my time in the country, I could see three reasons in particular: (1) the centrality of cell groups, (2) the building of interpersonal relationships, and (3) the indispensable nature of community development.

These three produced a winning combination for evangelism. We would do well to learn from their success.

The cell

I started my mission in the West Guatemalan Mission in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.¹ Ten years ago in Quetzaltenango (Xela), there were only two churches; today, this second largest city in Guatemala has 17. In 2000, there were about 2,500 baptisms at the West Guatemala Mission; in 2007, there were about 4,000.

The goals of the mission include the following: ten new churches each year and 10 percent growth in church membership. When Ramiro Hernandez, the mission president, shared the strategy, I discovered that this is based on cell groups. The goal is to have each person in a small group share a meal and study the Bible with others in their homes. The home provides a

neutral, nonthreatening environment for people to experience the gospel. Public evangelistic events are also utilized, but their primary purpose is not to teach doctrine but to bring people to make a decision to follow Christ.

The focus does not center on creating megachurches but rather on establishing cell groups in communities where no Seventh-day Adventist churches exist.² These cell groups then become churches that give birth to new cell groups. Presently, in the Quetzaltenango Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, eight cell groups operate, which helps explain why the city has gone from two churches to seventeen in just ten years.

Another reason for starting new churches from cell groups is that newcomers often have a hard time integrating into an established church.³ Common human aversion to change often makes this difficult. Hernandez suggested that the West Guatemalan Mission wants to start new churches so that new believers will not be discouraged by the attitude of some older members.

Interpersonal relationships

When I asked Pastor Hernandez what challenges the churches there face, his first response was *lack of participation*. Only 40 percent of the members are active in ministry. He wished that more members would work *casa a casa* (“from house to house”) establishing relationships. As one worker said to me, “If you don’t evangelize, you can’t convert.” The key to so much evangelism centers around the personal contact between members and those to whom they are witnessing. Developing friendships, ministering to their needs, sharing in their triumphs and sorrows, and taking the time to listen to their hopes, their fears, and their joys—all these play a major role in establishing the kind of relationships that will bear fruit. This was Jesus’ method, and this also works in Guatemala today.

Community development

While Guatemalans have traditionally been very religious, young adults are questioning the value of religious commitment. After hearing of my hope in the Second Coming, one of my Spanish teachers said that “it sounds beautiful but it is not my point of view.” He feels that churches distract people from working together to solve the real problems in their present lives by, instead, focusing on God’s help in a future world. In his view, the people need four things right now: food, work, education, and health. He complains that instead of improving people’s

lives, the churches compete for their loyalties. They have *no amor al prójimo* (“no love towards their neighbor”). After the last hurricane, one church built an expensive new sanctuary while thousands went homeless.

Thus, community development has become an essential part of sharing the gospel. The Guatemalans I met, who knew about the Seventh-day Adventist Church, appeared to have a positive impression citing healthy lifestyle or education programs such as the Seventh-day Adventist *Asociación de Medicos* (“Medical Association”). This group of doctors and dentists provide their services for free in underprivileged rural communities. I also visited with Vicente Navas, a self-supporting minister who left conference employment in order to focus on health ministry and open a natural remedy clinic.

Another area needing involvement is reconciliation between various groups within the Guatemalan society. The majority of members in Guatemala are middle class in the cities and poor in the rural areas. The mission sensed the need for more work among the

wealthier classes. When asked about the relationships between indigenous and Ladino, the president cited Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NKJV). However, the churches are about 95 percent indigenous in some places.

Guatemalan churches also get involved by developing their youth in leadership. Seventeen teenagers meet each Sunday at the mission office to plan activities for the Youth Federation. Out of 55,000 church members, 10,000 are in their mid-teens through mid-20s. Although the youth are encouraged to serve as leaders in the church, still about 30 percent of the youth leave the church when they become adults.

Conclusion

Though many factors are involved, I’m convinced that these three—forming cell groups, focusing on interpersonal relationships, and facilitating community development—have been the active ingredients in creating such growth. I have no doubt, too, that whatever the

vast difference between the situation in Guatemala and my own home church, the principles that have worked in that country would make a difference in my own. ❏

- 1 I was studying here at CELAS Maya (www.celasmaya.edu.gt), which I highly recommend for full Spanish immersion. Quetzaltenango (known as Xela), in the highlands of Guatemala, has a large indigenous population and draws mainly Spanish students and aid workers.
- 2 Aubrey Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 26. Malphurs argues in favor of megachurches and planning for massive growth. He writes, “Quality churches with rare exceptions will become quantity churches because quality churches are actively involved in fulfilling Christ’s Great Commission, which involves reaching and discipling lost people.” While I agree that quality churches will grow, I disagree that a megachurch is the goal in every case. I believe that splitting into a greater number of churches is at least an equally effective method of reaching people.
- 3 Malphurs, 45. Malphurs writes that one advantage of planted churches is that “those involved in church planting are more open to change than those in established, traditional churches.”

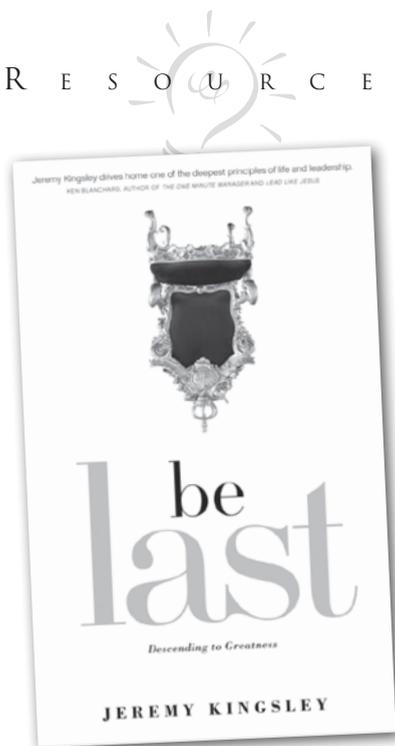
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R E S O U R C E S

BOOK REVIEW

Be Last: Descending to Greatness by Jeremy Kingsley, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008.

Last? Our society conditions us to value being first; first in our class, first across the finish line, or first to decipher an unknown. We reward the biggest, fastest, smartest, or prettiest. We do not consider finishing second as at all like winning. We celebrate winners and describe second place finishers as losers.



Jeremy Kingsley’s book, *Be Last: Descending to Greatness*, reverses the

order of life as we envision it. He writes in a time when our compulsion to be first, to “lead the way,” troubles us. The author’s assertion about life and its purpose is thus a timely reflection on the words of Jesus: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:25–28).^{*} Again, “But many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Mark 10:31).



What does it mean to be last? Kingsley charts a road to greatness through biblical accounts and devotional application mixed with the narratives of his own experience. Eight themes of greatness form the organizational skeleton of the book: service, mercy, sacrifice, love, humility, submission, witness, and confession. The last two chapters form an appeal for an application of the first eight themes.

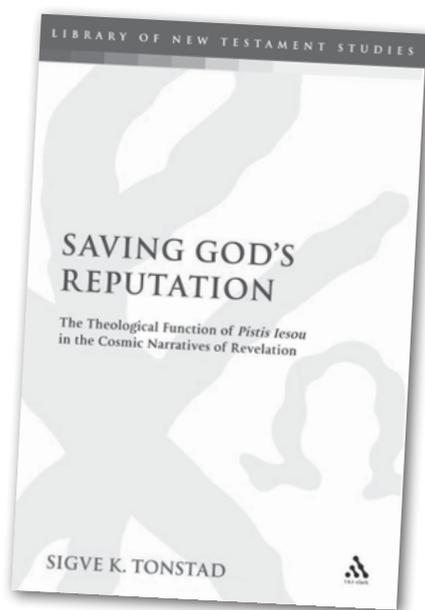
This book is not positioned as a comment on leadership theory, nor does it pretend to be a theology of leadership. *Be Last* does not identify and confront secular leadership practices nor announce itself as a call of Christian leadership to accountability. In identifying the life of every follower of Christ as a call to service, mercy, sacrifice, love, humility, submission, witness, and confession, Kingsley tactfully affirms that leaders and followers are in one community, respond in Christlike ways to serve within their various roles, and in humility are able to reverse roles. Greatness is expressed not in being first but in serving. And service becomes everyone's opportunity. Leadership centers around committed and loving service; not about position, honor, or power.

Kingsley writes in an easy to read style with his ministry focused on young adults and students; a passion evident in the voice of his writing. This book can be recommended as a good one for young adults and teens troubled by the materialism and striving of Christians in society. *Be Last* will be most appreciated when approached for devotional use. The narratives drawn from his experience contribute to the appeal for transformation within our lives, and the scriptural applications lead to devotional reflection. ■

—Reviewed by Skip Bell, DMin, professor of Church Leadership, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

BOOK REVIEW

Saving God's Reputation: The Theological Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation, by Sigve Tonstad, London: T&T Clark, 2006.



Sigve Tonstad has made an appreciable contribution to scholarship on Revelation with his perceptive, compelling monograph. The central questions he seeks to address are the overarching rhetorical situation of Revelation and the answer to why Revelation was written in the first place. Critical scholars have generally contended that the unmistakable trajectory of the text points to a conflict between the seven churches and the Roman Empire, with texts like Revelation chapters 13, 17, and 18 in particular brought to defend this position.

Tonstad argues, however, on the basis of the depth and scope of the Old Testament narrative, which he sees as the primary background for John's literary work, the trans-historical nature of Revelation 1:19 encompassing the past, present, and future and the central role of Revelation 6:9–11 as pointing to the

human predicament and not just John's situation as important precursors in facilitating his position for the centrality of the cosmic conflict in the interpretation of the Apocalypse.

The pivotal argument brought forward by Tonstad, however, is the story line of Revelation, which culminates in the death and expulsion of Satan in Revelation 20:7–9. The fact that Satan is left alone on the narrative stage at the end, highlights for Tonstad his importance and places Satan in a separate category distinct from the other protagonists. Recognizing the meticulous craft with which John drew on his Old Testament sources and the relevance of the Old Testament context for interpretation in Revelation, Tonstad makes a number of correlations between Revelation 20:3 and Isaiah 14:15 and 24:22. The result of this is the admission by Tonstad that Revelation takes the fall of Lucifer in Isaiah as its primary background for the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:1; 20:1–3).

He consolidates his position by recognizing the textual links between Revelation 20:2 and Genesis 3:13 in identifying Satan as a deceiver. Drawing on the intricate web of allusions within the narrative of Revelation leads Tonstad to find important textual links between Revelation 20:1, 2 and Revelation 12:7–9. After artfully weaving his argument together, Tonstad arrives at what represents for him the unremitting concern of Revelation—the cosmic conflict between God and Satan.

The theme of cosmic conflict is reflected in the following instances for Tonstad: the star of the third and fifth trumpet, the name of the agent causing destruction under the fifth trumpet, the war in heaven theme (Rev. 12:7–9), the binding and release of Satan (Rev. 20:1–10), and the description of Jesus as the "Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16). Other factors that strengthen Tonstad's position include the nuanced references to the "middle" utilized in Revelation 4 as the center stage for the praise rendered to God whilst similar references to the

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* All Scriptural references are from the New King James Version.



Orientation in a disoriented world

Oslo, Norway—After weeks of planning and preparations by young Adventist students, the third **Oslo Student Conference (OSC)** was held October 2–5, 2008. The intent of the conference was to present students with alternative views to the secular intellectualism prominent in many academic circles.

The theme of the conference was “Life—Orientation in a Disoriented World.” Topics covered included “The Meaning of Life,” “Lifestyle and Health,” and “Evolution Versus Intelligent Design.” The purpose of the OSC is to communicate an Adventist worldview and to make it more visible among academics; and to support Adventist students in a particularly challenging period of their lives.

During the weekend, the conference continued in the Ulsrud Adventist Church, where young Adventists and others spent time attending lectures, participating in workshops, and worshipping God together.

Kenneth Bergland, the pastor in Oslo behind the OSC concept, explains that his burden for student work has its background in his own experience. “Being a student, I was about to lose my faith. I did not feel I got the answers I needed in church, and I was on my way out [of the church].” His direction changed by meeting people who took his questions and concerns seriously. “My motivation is to help people in the same situation—as I myself was helped, and to be a support to people in a period when many difficult questions might appear.”

For more information and downloading of the seminars: <http://www.oslostudentconference.no>. [Camilla Kverndalen/TED News Staff/TED News]



Mathilde Frey (left) and Ross E. Winkle. [Photo: Nikolaus Satelmajer]

Sabbath consultation at an academic society

Boston, Massachusetts, United States—What is believed to be the first ever Sabbath consultation was held during the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, November 21–25, 2008. At the annual gathering of the society, more than 5,000 biblical and related scholars came from various parts of the world. The Sabbath consultation was initiated by **Dr. Tom Shepherd** of Andrews University and **Dr. Michael Chernick** of Hebrew Union College.

The presenters were **Gerald A. Klingbeil** and **Mathilde Frey** (both of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies), **Ross E. Winkle**

(Pacific Union College), **Jiri Moskala** (Andrews University), **Jeffrey Stackert** (University of Chicago), and **Nikolaus Satelmajer** (*Ministry Magazine*).

Most of the presentations were on textual topics, while one was on the his-



Tom Shepherd (left) and Michael Chernick. [Photo: Nikolaus Satelmajer]

torical aspect of the Sabbath. The plan is that this consultation will continue for at least another two years. ■

Pray for rain

JAMES A. CRESS



Scriptures compare the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to rain; special, abundant quantities of the Spirit preparing the soil for harvest. Consider dedicating the beginning of this new year to leading your congregations in special prayer—thirty one specific topics; one for each day of January.

It is time to pray! Be specific, timely, and inclusive. Pray for . . .

1. Yourself, your spouse, your children. Determine to rededicate your life and ministry to Jesus; making His priorities your priorities. Satan will do everything possible to destroy your marriage or to weaken its joy. Begin the year with apology, if needed, and affirmation that is always welcome. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you sensitively minister to “your first mission field.”

2. Peace. We just commemorated the birth of the Prince of Peace. Pray for goodwill to flourish. “Let there be peace on earth; and let it begin with me.”

3. Unity. On the night of His betrayal, unity of His believers was the focus of Jesus’ prayer. His desire still echoes: “that they might be one!”

4. New believers. Jesus prayed for those who would believe through the preaching of His disciples. Jesus understands that new believers must be surrounded by love and fortified by prayer.

5. Your preaching. Ask the Spirit to help you provide the best spiritual menu. Planning your sermons a year ahead enables the Holy Spirit to direct your thinking along the plan you have established.

6. The lost. Praying for lost souls does not change God’s mind about their condition or make Heaven more willing to save. Praying for the lost changes *your mind* as you begin to see the lost through Heaven’s eyes.

7. Change. Something must become different. Insanity believes we can continually repeat the past, yet experience different results. Ask for a burst of holy creativity.

8. Singles. Thousands of unmarried, many of them young professionals, become isolated from the church when they experience only couple-oriented messages. Seek to involve every “one” in church life.

9. Disgruntled. Almost every congregation harbors unhappy critics focusing on traumas, alarmism, extremist views, and peripheral agendas. These well-intentioned dragons cause havoc, especially when their venom combines with peculiar heresies or when they major in minors. Pray that they will convert or leave.

10. Public servants. Your community depends upon police, firefighters, teachers, hospital administrators, emergency technicians, and countless others who maintain necessary services. Pray for these “ministers” and honor them in your worship services.

11. Prayer-ers. Ask the Lord for prayer warriors who will focus on your church, lead the spiritual battle against evil, and encourage those needing specific, intercessory prayer. Remember, “prayer does not change things; prayer changes people!”

12. Prodigals. Virtually every family could list those who have journeyed far, even if they have never left home. Ask heaven to make your life a witness to welcome them back.

13. Neighbors. On our streets live divorced/single parents, overworked and overstressed young adults alongside retirees, gays, and secularists next to those from the religious right, as well

as gracious neighbors from various national, racial, and religious heritages. Pray they will consider Jesus as a result of living near us.

14. Givers. Rather than bemoaning traumatic consequences of global recession, seek thousands to come to Jesus who will bring the treasure of their hearts along with the treasure in their pockets. Design ministries to captivate commitment so their hearts will follow their treasure into God’s mission.

15. Women leaders. Seek to deploy this 70 percent of our members. Emphasize the power of women’s evangelistic witness (the Samaritan woman’s revival, Mary’s personal resurrection testimony, Priscilla’s instructing influence, and Phoebe’s congregational leadership). When you have employment opportunities, consider a woman.

16. Unloved saved ones. Every congregation has faithful individuals who rarely experience any expression of love. Organize your members to invite others into their homes and fellowship circles. They might entertain angels!

17. Hope. Imagine the audacity of hope to believe this world can move beyond national, racial, class, and social warfare. Jesus guarantees this when He returns—the Blessed Hope. Jesus can begin it now in your congregation—blessed assurance!

18. War. Pray for combatants on both sides of conflict. Pray for their spouses, children, and parents. Encourage chaplains and congregations who minister to military forces.

19. Discernment. Scripture invites you to pray for wisdom that you lack. God’s Word, the Holy Spirit, and Christ’s body—the church—will guide you to discover His will.

20. National leaders. This is inauguration day in the United States. Join me in praying for our new president and for governmental leaders everywhere. “When we pray for God

continued on page 30

to change leaders, we affect them and everyone who follows them. Praying for our leaders results in an atmosphere conducive to the spreading of the gospel” (John C. Maxwell, *The Maxwell Leadership Bible*, Maxwell Motivation Publishers; see 1 Tim. 2:1–4).

21. Revival. Pray now for an abundant experience during the Week of Prayer you will conduct later in the year. Plan, promote, prepare, and produce creative, participative services during that special week and watch the Spirit bless your efforts. Reform follows revival.

22. Maturity. Discipleship moves new believers beyond conversion to spiritual maturity. Jesus did not commission seeking for more entries, He envisioned more disciples. Any plans that separate evangelism from follow-up has schemed its own defeat.

23. Holiness. Spiritual disciplines should mark our lives. Pastoral responsibility includes specific guidance in those disciplines. Emphasize the ways to holiness—Bible study, prayer, fellowship, witnessing, and obedience. Sanctification accompanies those on this path.

24. Teachers. Adventists spend more denominational money on parochial education than all other ventures combined. Support the Lord’s empowerment of our teachers as evangelists. Pray for all of our school teachers.

25. Vision. Consider big plans and bold ventures. Vision is different than sight. Mere sight surveys reality and wonders why things remain the same. Vision sees potential and claims the promise of power to achieve. Gather your leaders and brainstorm ideas that challenge.

26. Colleagues. Pastors of every denomination face daily challenges in shepherding the flocks that Christ has given them. Pray with and for ministers. Participate in your local Ministerial Association. Share professional development opportunities. Request their prayers for you.

27. Elders. These men and women are your own pastoral team to make the Lord’s work effective in your church. Pray for and with them. Gather them often to seek Heaven’s favor. Remember that health care administrators, literature evangelists, departmental leaders, and conference officials are integral teammates.

28. Big cities. Jesus loves people. People exist in cities. If you could effectively minister there, ask the Lord to deploy you where millions of residents need your spiritual influence. Flee to the cities to live godly lives in the ungodly environments.

29. More workers. Jesus never asked us to pray for the harvest. The harvest is ready! Thousands are on the verge of the kingdom, waiting to be gathered. Jesus commands us to pray the Lord of the harvest will send forth reapers.

30. Love. Do you want more effective outreach? The secret is simple—loving and lovable Christians. Friends win friends to Jesus. Ask the Savior to help you be more loving.

31. The end. Pray that Jesus comes soon. When I pastored, I preached the last week of every month on the Second Coming. Proclaim the Blessed Hope and you will discover your members keenly desiring the appearance of our Redeemer. Even so come, Lord Jesus! ❏

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middle in Ezekiel, which for Tonstad is a significant intertext that portrays the struggle between God and Satan there.

Having established his argument, Tonstad, in the final chapter, seeks to develop his position on the enigmatic phrase “the faith of Jesus.” He postulates four options, namely the faith of Jesus, faith in Jesus, faithfulness of Jesus, and faithfulness to Jesus. After analyzing the subjective and objective genitive, Tonstad suggests that the phrase that most aptly portrays the story line of Revelation is the faithfulness of Jesus. This rendition reflects most concretely and explicitly the theme of the cosmic conflict and keeps the character of the divine government in view.

A concern here, however, is how Tonstad makes the leap of faith, as it were, from his contention for the cosmic conflict between God and Satan as the primary background for the interpretation of the book of Revelation and the phrase under discussion, without adequately developing a sound argument in linking the phrase “faithfulness of Jesus” to the issues in the cosmic conflict.

Another apparent weakness in Tonstad’s work is the omission of greater clarity on the specific role of Satan, for example, in the trumpets. While he has pointed to satanic activity in the third and fifth trumpets, he has nothing to say regarding the other trumpets. Granted that this may be beyond

the purview of his monograph, some explanation would have helped the reader in identifying the role of Satan with more certainty.

Tonstad’s work is nonetheless deserving of serious attention in the continuing discussion involving the rhetorical situation and interpretation of the book of Revelation, and is by far the best contemporary defense of the Adventist position on the great controversy theme. It is a must read for every pastor! ❏

—Reviewed by Kayle de Waal, pastor, The Gardens, Manurewa, Auckland, New Zealand.

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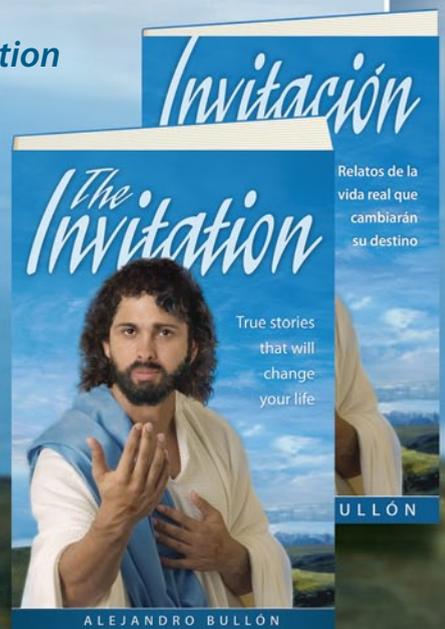


Alejandro Bullón's greatest passion is public evangelism and communicating the gospel by radio, television, and the Internet. Tens of thousands of people attend his public conferences, and millions have benefited from his ministry. He is also the author of several books and articles. His works have been published in English, Portuguese, and Spanish.

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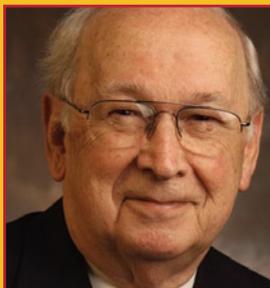


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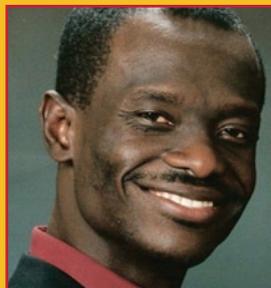


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Fred B. Craddock is Bandy Distinguished Professor of Preaching Emeritus, in the Candler School of Theology (Emory University). An ordained minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Dr. Craddock has served pastorates in Tennessee and Oklahoma. As well as lecturing at some of the world's finest universities, he is a frequently published author. Dr. Craddock is the founding pastor of Cherry Log Christian Church and Director Emeritus of The Craddock Center. He was deservingly selected by *Newsweek* as one of the 12 most effective preachers in the English-speaking world.



Israel Bamidele Olaore is the senior university pastor and head of the Division of Spiritual Life at Babcock University, Nigeria. Dr. Olaore has been a senior pastor in Tucson, Arizona and Los Angeles. Additionally, he has had pastoral experience in Nigeria as a hospital chaplain, church planter, and university lecturer. The focus of ministry for Dr. Olaore has always revolved around empowerment and the equipping of lay professionals for ministry in the marketplace.



Chris Oberg currently serves as senior pastor of the 1200-member Seventh-day Adventist Church in Calimesa, California. She describes her assignment as "life's grandest blessings: to be among colleagues for whom church matters, and to be with a congregation seriously seeking to follow Jesus in a complex world. Well, it doesn't get more rewarding." Chris Oberg is an alumna of La Sierra University, School of Religion in California, completing both a BA and an MA in Religion, with emphasis in NT Studies and Theology.



Michael Quicke is professor of preaching at Northern Seminary in Illinois. Educated at Cambridge and Oxford Universities, he spent 21 years in pastoral ministry in Blackburn, England and at the historical city-center church of St. Andrew's Street in Cambridge, where a mission center was developed and opened serving 4000 people weekly. Since 1993 he has served in seminaries, first as Principal of Spurgeon's College, the largest Baptist seminary in Europe, and since 2000 by teaching preaching in the United States. Author of many articles, his main books include *360-Degree Preaching* and *360-Degree Leadership*.



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