

MINISTRY[®]

INTERNATIONAL

JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

SEPTEMBER 2012



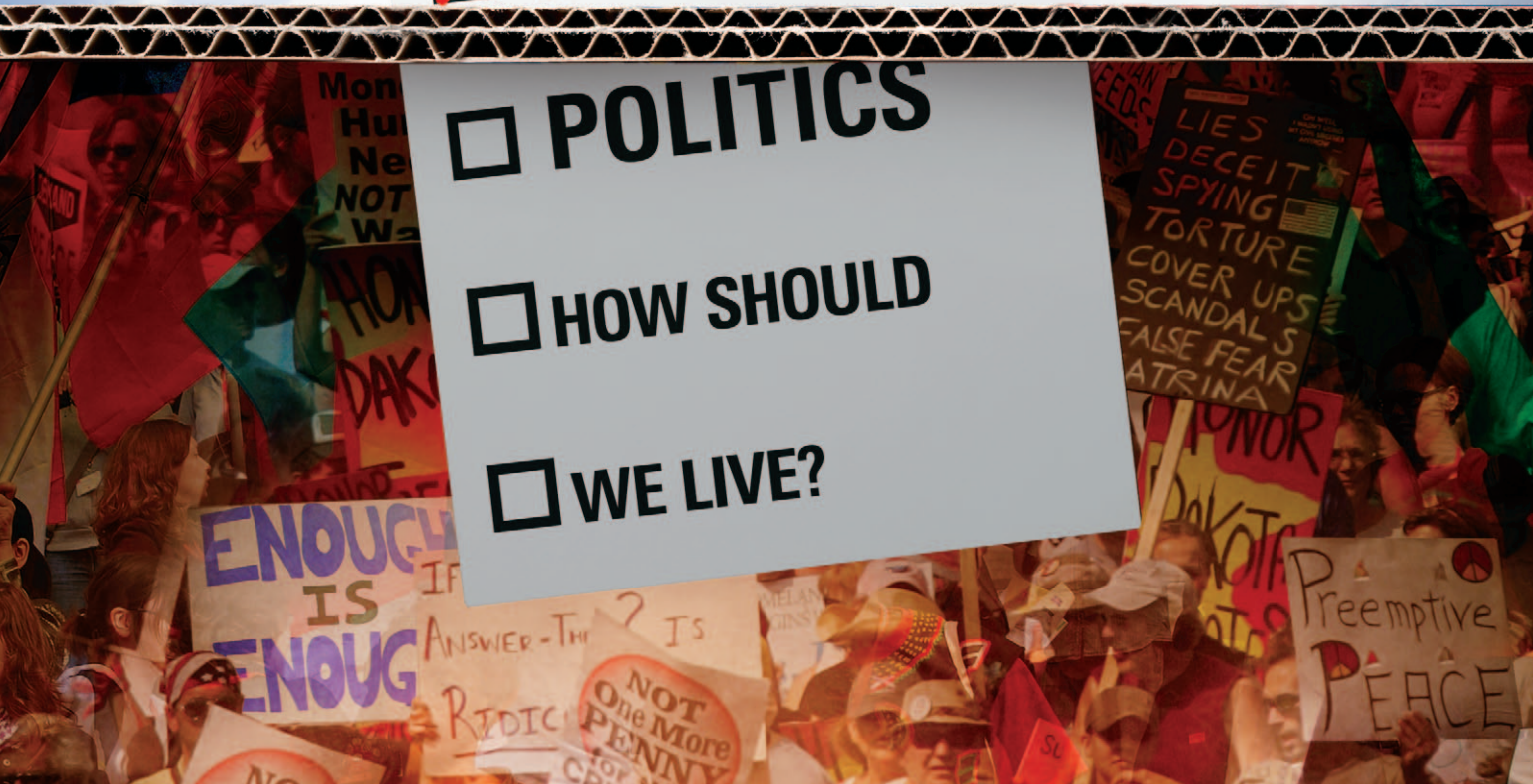
OFFICIAL BALLOT

FAITH AND

POLITICS

HOW SHOULD

WE LIVE?



DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Changing the People Who Change the World



APPLY NOW!

New DMin cohorts in 2013

choose from concentrations in:

- Chaplaincy Ministry
- Evangelism & Church Growth
- Leadership

coming in 2014:

- Health Care Chaplaincy
- Family Ministry
- Youth & Young Adult Ministry

Contact Information

Phone: 1-888-717-6244

Email: dmin@andrews.edu



Why obtain a Doctor of Ministry degree?

You have served with energy, enthusiasm, and skill. Now you're ready for more. You hunger for fresh ideas and new competencies. You want to go deeper in your relationship with

God and those you serve. More than ever, you are eager to make a strategic difference in your congregation and community. You want to prepare for that decisive moment when a vision and change of direction call for your leadership - this at a time when the church engages in a changing world with growing opportunities for evangelism.

Through theological reflection, a stimulating learning community, interaction with world-class professionals, challenging learning environments and international ministry you wish to develop competencies that will transform your practice of evangelism, mission, and ministry.

You are ready to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree!

06 Faith and politics: How should we live?

The author provides guiding principles for how Christians should relate to politics as seen in Scripture.

John Wesley Taylor V

12 Harnessing the reviving power of God's Word

Explore techniques to find strength and renewal in the Word of God.

Barry C. Black

16 Bringing meaning to ministry: Pastoring in the Light

How can the light of the Spirit illuminate our lives?

Willmore D. Eva

19 Shedding light on the outer darkness: A fresh look at the language of hell

The author investigates judgment motifs written in the Gospels.

Kim Papaioannou

23 Is the Bible historically reliable?

Is there archaeological evidence supporting the accuracy of biblical texts?

Gerhard Pfandl

CORRECTION: In Cristina S. Richie's July 2012 article, "A Christian understanding of in vitro fertilization," a copyedit change was made altering the meaning of the first sentence which should have read, "The desire to have a baby has been said to be one of the most primal and deep-seated desires of women..." instead of "Research testifies that the desire to have a baby remains one of the most primal and deep-seated desires of women." We apologize for this unintentional misleading change.

BIBLE CREDITS Scripture taken from *The New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. All rights reserved. Scriptures quoted from NKJV are from The New King James Version, copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers. Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

04 LETTERS

05 EDITORIAL

11 & 26 REVIVAL AND REFORMATION

27 RESOURCES

28 DATELINE

30 THE PASTOR AND HEALTH

MINISTRY®

MINISTRY®

International Journal for Pastors
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver
Spring, MD 20904-6600 U.S.A.
www.ministrymagazine.org
ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org

EDITOR

Derek J. Morris

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Willie E. Hucks II

CONSULTANTS TO EDITOR

John Fowler, Clifford Goldstein,
Myrna Tetz

EDITORIAL SPECIALIST

Sheryl Beck

FINANCE AND TECHNOLOGY

MANAGER

John Feezer IV

STUDENT ASSISTANT

Tiffani Caldwell

INTERNATIONAL EDITORS

Chinese-Robert Wong

Indonesian-Edwin T. Pandjaitan

Japanese-Yukio Ebihara

Korean-Sung Sun Hong

Portuguese (South America)-

Zinaldo Santos

Russian-Ilie Leahu

Spanish (South America)-

Marcos Blanco

Spanish (Inter-America)-Pablo Perla

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORS

Mario Brito, Mikhael Kaminsky,

Janos Kovacs-Biro, L. Chansanga

Colney, Armando Miranda,

Rudatinya M. Mwangachuchu,

Daniel Opoku-Boateng, Jongimpi

Papu, Bruno Raso, Ángel M.

Rodríguez, Hector Sanchez,

Houtman Sinaga, David Tasker, Ivan

L. Williams, Ted N. C. Wilson

ADVERTISING

Cheri Gatton
advertising@ministrymagazine.org
+1 208-965-0157

SUBSCRIPTIONS/RENEWALS/

ADDRESS CHANGES

subscriptions@ministrymagazine.org
+1 301-680-6515
+1 301-680-6502 (fax)

COVER ILLUSTRATION

316 Creative

LAYOUT

316 Creative

SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues: United States US\$32.99;
Canada and overseas US\$47.00.
To order: send name, address, and
payment to *Ministry*® Subscriptions,
12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver
Spring, MD 20904-6600 U.S.A.
ministrymagazine.org/subscribe

TO WRITERS

We welcome unsolicited manu-
scripts. Before submitting, review
the writers' guidelines at
www.ministrymagazine.org. Please
send manuscripts via email to
ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org.

**MINISTRY
in motion**

Co-hosts **Anthony Kent
and Derek Morris**
www.MinistryinMotion.tv

MINISTRY® has been published
monthly since 1928 by the *Minis-
terial Association, General Confer-
ence of Seventh-day Adventists*.
Ministry is a peer-reviewed journal.

SECRETARY Jerry N. Page

ASSOCIATE SECRETARIES

Jonas Arrais, Robert Costa,
Willie E. Hucks II, Anthony Kent,
Derek Morris, Janet Page

MINISTERIAL RESOURCE CENTER

Coordinator Cathy Payne
888-771-0738, +1 301-680-6508
www.ministerialassociation.com

PRINTER Pacific Press® Pub. Assn.,
1350 N. Kings Rd., Nampa, ID 83687
Standard mail postage paid at Nampa,
Idaho. (ISSN 0026-5314)

Member of Associated Church Press.
Adventist®, Seventh-day Adventist®,
and Ministry® are the registered
trademarks of the General
Conference Corporation of
Seventh-day Adventists®.

Vol. 84 Number 9 © 2012

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.



“I REALLY LIKED THE FEEL OF HIS GRASP OF THE GENUINENESS WITH WHICH SO MANY SCHOLARS OVER THE YEARS HAVE DEALT WITH THE MEANINGS OF GENESIS.”

Looking at the Creation account

I was delighted with Randall W. Younker’s summaries and review of various theories of interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis (“How Should We Interpret the Opening Chapters of Genesis?”—July 2012). I really liked the feel of his grasp of the genuineness with which so many scholars over the years have dealt with the meanings of Genesis.

When I got to the last paragraph, I expected a totally different conclusion. With all the arguments that Younker had presented, how could he possibly conclude that “the text was intended to be understood by its authors as an authentic account of earth’s origins in which the world was created in six literal days”? The famous poem/sermon “The Creation,” by James Weldon Johnson, captures the poetry, art, and creativity of the authors of Genesis 1–2, and effectively translates all of that for his contemporaries—and for all of

us—3,000 years later. It is with this sermon that Younker should have concluded his article, to illustrate the gut level meaning of the Bible story of Creation.

—Hilary Bitz, Vancouver, Washington, United States

Marriage and the image of God

The article by Karen and Bernie Holford (“How Your Marriage Helps You Grow More Like God”—July 2012) is a wake-up call for pastoral married couples’ self-awareness and appraisal of how to make the most of their marital and family life relationship and pastoral calling.

On the other hand, the title, and indeed the whole tenor of the article, seems to suggest (in my opinion) that single and divorced pastors may miss out on growing more like God because of their singleness. If the authors didn’t intend to convey that message, then *Ministry* can try and redress the balance by soliciting manuscripts from its growing ranks

of single and divorced pastors titled “How Your Singleness Helps You Grow More Like God.”

—Claude Lombart, email

In vitro fertilization

I read with interest the article by Cristina S. Richie regarding in vitro fertilization (“A Christian Understanding of In Vitro Fertilization”—July 2012). Her position is clear, though stated without direct accusation against those seeking IVF. Reading it reminds me of reading the fine print on the drug information sheet handed to me by a pharmacist. One can freeze in fear from reading all the possible consequences from using a prescribed medication.

What is needed, in the interest of fairness, is a response that acknowledges the dangers and difficulties the author points out but also addresses the implicit and explicit theological judgments she makes against a Christian using IVF. After all, there are millions of

Continued on page 29 ►



MINISTRYinMOTION

Have you heard the news? After more than 80 years of publishing an international journal for pastors, the *Ministry* team has added a new dimension: *MINISTRYinMOTION*. This weekly television program explores creative and practical ideas for your current ministry.

What can you expect from this new ministry resource? In harmony with the mission of *Ministry*, *MINISTRYinMOTION* has a threefold purpose: (1) to deepen the spiritual life of the pastor, (2) to develop intellectual strength through a careful study of the Scriptures, and (3) to provide practical instruction in pastoral and evangelistic ministry. The lead host for *MINISTRYinMOTION* is Anthony Kent. Anthony has more than 25 years of experience as a pastor, church planter, evangelist, and teacher-trainer of pastors. Many of you are acquainted with Anthony as the coordinator of the *Ministry* Professional Growth Seminars. In more recent years, Pastor Kent has been providing professional development for pastors around the world.

Anthony asked me to serve with him as a cohost for this new ministry program. Like Anthony, I am also passionate about helping pastors to realize their full potential. Each week, Anthony and I will talk with specialists who share their ideas for ministry based on a careful exegesis of the Bible and contemporary culture.

Here is one example of an upcoming program: Evangelist C. D. Brooks, speaker emeritus for the *Breath of Life* television ministry, shares some powerful insights on the theme of preparation for evangelism. In the three segments of the program, Brooks emphasizes

a threefold preparation for evangelism: (1) personal preparation by the pastor, (2) preparation of the church, and (3) preparation of the community. After watching this half-hour program, you will be informed and inspired. If you miss any of the *MINISTRYinMOTION* programs, they are all archived at www.MINISTRYinMOTION.tv.

Anthony and I were particularly blessed by a conversation with Willie and Elaine Oliver on how to protect your marriage. Pastoral

parts of the world, check the program schedule on your local Hope Channel. *MINISTRYinMOTION* is also available worldwide online at www.MINISTRYinMOTION.tv. You can download any program from the Web site at no cost for use in your church to train lay leaders.

We want to hear from you about needs and challenges that should be addressed in future *MINISTRYinMOTION* programs. You might even have a suggestion for a future guest who is making a unique




families experience unusual pressures and challenges. With many pastoral marriages failing all around you, how can you protect your marriage? Willie and Elaine share practical insights from years of family life ministry. You will find a deeper conviction and stronger commitment to protect and nurture your marriage when you watch this program. Here is a testimony from a viewer in North America: "I am writing to let you know that I very much enjoy *MINISTRYinMOTION*. I just watched 'How to Protect and Strengthen Your Marriage.' I was deeply touched, and I realized that I have been neglecting my husband. I am going to take the advice given on the program and make sure we spend more time together."

MINISTRYinMOTION is broadcast each week in North America on DIRECTV channel 368.* In other

contribution to ministry. Please write to feedback@MINISTRYinMOTION.tv or click "Contact" on the Web site and send us a note. Your input is important to us.

God wants you to be an excellent Christian leader and impact the world through you. We believe *MINISTRYinMOTION* can help you as you join God in His work in your community. Please tell your pastoral colleagues about this new ministry resource. Lay leaders in your congregation may also find this program informative and inspirational. More information is available at www.MINISTRYinMOTION.tv.

Our prayer is that you will be blessed as you read the excellent articles in this current issue of *Ministry*. May you be inspired, informed, and live what you learn. 

* Check www.hopetv.org for the current program schedule.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

John Wesley Taylor V, PhD, serves as associate director of education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



Faith and politics: How should we live?

How should a Christian relate to politics? Should the believer, for example, become involved in social causes, engage in political activism, or practice civil disobedience? Should a Christian vote, join a political party, or campaign for a person or party? Should he or she become an elected or appointed government official?

How should the church itself relate to the political arena? Should it align itself with a particular political platform or party? Should it orient its members toward activism or civil disobedience? Should it seek to legislate morality?

Though the answers do not come easily, Scripture can provide us with real-life illustrations and guiding principles that can give us some crucial guidance in this important area of life.

A spectrum of perspectives

Though there are probably as many nuanced perspectives on politics as there are faith communities, one might classify these in certain conceptual clusters.¹

Rejection: Christ against politics. Many fundamentalists view their culture as inherently evil, the domain of Satan. In this exclusive one-kingdom approach, advocated by Tertullian,

Christians are citizens only of the heavenly kingdom. The gospel is limited to the personal life, and the world is left to the devil. Politics is consequently rejected, and the faith community seeks to insulate itself from its corrupting influence.

Paradox: Christ and politics. For others, the Christian lives in the world as best as he or she can. Christianity and the culture remain in paradox, with no resolution in sight. In this separate-kingdoms approach, politics is seen as evil, yet necessary. As a Christian, one should play no significant role in politics, participating in government only when required by law and endeavoring meanwhile to avoid its contaminating influence. The church, as an institution, withdraws into the religious sphere.

Critical collaboration: Christ above politics. Thomas Aquinas maintained that though the Christian and culture must coexist, Christianity is superior to culture. In this higher-and-lower-kingdoms perspective, politics is viewed as basically good, or perhaps neutral, but still deficient. Though accommodation and compromise may be inescapable in certain areas, the Christian's role is primarily that of critique—evaluating political policies from the framework





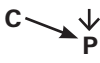
of the gospel—and of judicious involvement in social issues, without compromising gospel priorities.

Synthesis: Christ of politics. In the tradition of Justin Martyr and reinvigorated by liberalism, government is viewed as inherently good, an element of the divine plan for humankind. In this inclusive one-kingdom view, little or no tension exists between the Christian and politics. Christianity is, in fact, identified with politics at its best.

Imposition: Christ dominates politics. Some Christians, perhaps best exemplified by liberation theology and the Christian Right, maintain that Christianity must dramatically reshape the culture. Through the political process, evil must be opposed and divine standards established as the law of the land. In this revolutionary-kingdom perspective, the world is viewed as fallen, yet redeemable. Christians are God's agents for dramatic renovation, realigning the government according to God's political agenda.

While each of these positions (summarized in figure 1) may be an appropriate response in a specific circumstance, it would seem helpful to develop a unifying framework. We turn to Scripture to help provide us with such a foundation.

Figure 1: Perspectives on the Relationship of Christianity and Politics

STANCE	Rejection	Paradox	Critical collaboration	Synthesis	Imposition
Focus	Christ <i>against</i> politics	Christ <i>and</i> politics	Christ <i>above</i> politics	Christ <i>of</i> politics	Christ <i>dominates</i> politics
Kingdom view	Exclusive one kingdom	Separate kingdoms	Higher and lower kingdoms	Inclusive one kingdom	Revolutionary kingdom
Orientation	Politics is seen as inherently evil, the domain of Satan	Politics is viewed as relatively evil, yet necessary	Politics is viewed as basically good or neutral, but deficient	Politics is uncritically viewed as good, at least in principle	Politics must be forcefully reshaped to conform to divine standards
Depiction					

Insights from Old Testament characters

The lives of Bible characters provide orientation for the Christian's relation with politics, particularly in terms of underlying principles illustrated in their priorities and actions.

Joseph. Brought before the Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, Joseph does not stop with mere explanation. He proposes a plan of political action, including political appointments and taxation (Gen. 41:33–36). Some years later, in the midst of the famine, Joseph tells his brothers that it was God who " " 'has made me lord of all Egypt' " " (Gen. 45:9)² and that this occurred in order " 'to save lives' " (v. 5, NIV). Joseph, in essence, considered his position in government as a direct result of God's intervention in order that he might assist others through times of hardship.

Moses. As a political activist, Moses may be without peer. For example, spotting the abuse of a Hebrew by an Egyptian taskmaster, he took immediate action (Exod. 2:11–15). This abrupt act aborted his early political career and led to 40 years of exile.

By God's direct invitation, however, Moses initiated a second attempt to help his oppressed people by confronting Pharaoh and freeing the Hebrew nation from slavery (Exod. 2:23–14:31). He then

instituted a well-developed system of government. As recorded in Hebrews 11:24–27, his work as an advocate of a downtrodden, marginalized people places Moses in the select group of heroes of faith.

Saul. In the story of Saul, we find an intriguing incident regarding civil protest. In a fit of rage, King Saul vowed to kill his son Jonathan. The king's soldiers, however, protested, " 'Shall Jonathan die, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Certainly not! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground' " (1 Sam. 14:45). Their political intervention was effective and Jonathan was spared, illustrating that political activism can alter a course of affairs and result in favorable outcomes for citizens.

David. Following God's directive, Samuel anointed David as the next king of Israel. King Saul, well aware of David's popularity, pursued him relentlessly, determined to kill him. By a strange turn of events, however, Saul was found in David's power and his men urged him to kill Saul. David replied, " 'The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, . . . seeing he is the anointed of the LORD' " (1 Sam. 24:6). David seemed content to leave the removal of corrupt leadership in God's hands, at least in terms of serving his own political career.

Some years later, one of David's sons, Adonijah, proclaimed himself

king without David's knowledge. Nathan the prophet, aware of David's promise to Bathsheba that her son Solomon would be the next king, notified Bathsheba of the development and urged her to petition David. Furthermore, Nathan offered to come before the king and intercede in her favor (1 Kings 1:11–30). Here we find Nathan, a religious leader, endeavoring to hold the political process within ethical and moral parameters.

Ahab. As recorded in 1 Kings 21:5–13, Ahab coveted and Jezebel conspired to take possession of Naboth's vineyard. They sent a secret communication to local officials directing them to falsely accuse Naboth of blasphemy. As might be expected, Elijah, a religious leader, reproved Ahab for this base crime.

The most tragic part of the story, however, is that "the men of his city, the elders and nobles . . . , did as Jezebel had sent to them" (v. 11). If these men had taken a position of integrity, in opposition to the immoral political directive, the tragedy might have been averted. Both citizens and community leaders have a moral responsibility to resist the devastating impact of a corrupt government on innocent lives.

Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar. Delighted that his dream had been interpreted, Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel ruler over the entire province

of Babylon, a political position that Daniel accepted. Furthermore, at Daniel's request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as provincial administrators. Daniel, a prophet of God, did not think it inappropriate for believers to occupy positions of civil responsibility in a secular government.

Daniel 3 records that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were pres-

pay homage to Haman, a high official in the court.

This extended narrative describes (1) civil disobedience, by Mordecai refusing to bow to Haman, and Esther entering the king's presence uninvited; (2) a plan to lobby civil authority and avert genocide, by inviting the king and Haman to a series of banquets; (3) a report to authorities of criminal activity, with

James and John enlisted the aid of their mother to petition Jesus (Matt. 20:21). When the other disciples heard of what had transpired, they were indignant!

Jesus then called the disciples together and said, "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

WHILE THE DEGREE AND FORM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION MAY VARY FOR THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH, ITS LEADERS, AND INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS, THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL MUST ALWAYS INCLUDE BOTH THE PROCLAMATION AND THE TANGIBLE REVELATION OF WHO GOD IS.

ent at the dedication of the golden image, as Nebuchadnezzar had directed, but refused to bow down to the image. In essence, they submitted to civil authority, presenting themselves and not resisting punishment, but refused to compromise moral principle by worshiping a false god. God approved of their stance by joining them in the fiery furnace. Similarly, when confronted with an edict contrary to his commitment to God (Dan. 6:10), Daniel did not hesitate to engage in civil disobedience, but at the same time, he did not resist the consequences of his convictions.

Esther and Mordecai. Although God is never directly referenced, the book of Esther presents a vivid portrayal of the great controversy between good and evil, played out in the domain of politics. The story begins with Esther, a young Jewish girl, selected from obscurity to be Xerxes's queen, and her cousin Mordecai, a civil servant, refusing to

Mordecai revealing the assassination plot; (4) the enacting of new legislation to counteract the effects of a damaging law; and (5) granting a threatened people group the right to defend themselves.

Insights from New Testament characters

John the Baptist. "Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her' " (Matt. 14:3, 4). In addition to the adulterous relationship with Herodias, John had rebuked Herod for "all the evils which Herod had done" (Luke 3:19). It seems that there is an obligation to speak out against corruption and immorality. Christians cannot excuse what rulers do simply because of who they are.

James and John. In order to gain influence and occupy key positions in the anticipated kingdom,

desires to become great among you, let him be your servant' " (vv. 25-28). Seeking political office for the sake of position and prestige is contrary to the spirit of Jesus.

Peter and the apostles. Brought before the Sanhedrin, a religious-civil government, the apostles were given strict orders not to teach in the name of Jesus. Peter replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men' " (Acts 5:29). When members of the council urged that the apostles be put to death, Gamaliel intervened on their behalf, persuading the council and securing their release.

This episode clarifies that (1) the Christian must maintain loyalty to a higher Authority than civil government; (2) civil disobedience can be an appropriate response; and (3) when in a position of civil authority, as was Gamaliel, one may then exert influence on the side of good.

Paul. Throughout his ministry, Paul used his rights as a Roman citizen to further the gospel and work

for his own protection. In Philippi, for example, Paul and Silas were publicly beaten and thrown into prison. In the morning, the magistrates sent their officers to release Paul and Silas. Paul, however, stated, " 'They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out' " (Acts 16:37). In essence, Paul requested a public admission that the government position was wrong and that the Christian community posed no threat to Roman law.³

The experiences in Paul's life illustrate several key concepts: (1) When knowledgeable of its laws, the believer may appeal to the state for justice and protection of the well-being of its citizens. (2) Christians may use their legal rights to maintain freedom and advance the gospel. (3) A Christian must be submissive to civil authority (e.g., remaining in the Philippian jail when he had

ample opportunity to escape) but refrain from participation in its corruption (e.g., refusing to bribe Felix for release).

Jesus. After His baptism, Christ was tempted by the devil. The final temptation involved a political dimension: "The devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me' " (Matt. 4:8, 9). Jesus, however, successfully resisted the allure of worldly power.

When Jesus announced His ministry, He outlined far-reaching political principles, suggesting that fundamental changes would be needed in the basic structures of society: " 'The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to

the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed' " (Luke 4:18).⁴

While Christ clearly dealt with sociopolitical issues, He was not interested in holding political office or in revolutionizing the political order. Rather, He made it clear that His kingdom was " 'not of this world' " (John 18:36). His goal was to change society one heart at a time.⁵

In particular, the final hours of Christ's life speak persuasively regarding the Christian's relation to government and politics. In Gethsemane, Christ prayed that His followers, although in the world, might not become " 'of the world' " (John 17:16). When confronted by a mob sent by the civil and religious authorities to arrest Him, He did not attempt to resist or escape, although He did request that His disciples might not be apprehended.

Although Jesus would not defend Himself against false accusations when the high priest charged Him: " 'Tell us if You are the Christ, the



MINISTRYinMOTION is a weekly podcast and television program exploring best practices for your ministry. The hosts for the program, Anthony Kent and Derek Morris, bring broad experiences in ministry, both as local pastors and pastoral leaders.



Each program features a special guest with expertise in a particular aspect of ministry. As we design future programs for *MINISTRYinMOTION*, we want to hear from you. What are the areas of your greatest need for training and equipping?

Share your thoughts with us at www.MINISTRYinMOTION.TV

Son of God’ ” (Matt. 26:63), Jesus replied, “ ‘Yes, it is as you say’ ” (v. 64, NIV). Later, when Pilate asked, “ ‘Do You not know that I have power to crucify You . . . ?’ ” (John 19:10), Jesus answered, “ ‘You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above’ ” (v. 11).

Although Jesus was accused of being politically subversive, Pilate declared Him to be innocent of political resistance to Roman power, stating, “ ‘I find no fault in this Man’ ” (Luke 23:4). Falsely condemned on political charges as “the King of the Jews,” Christ died on the cross, a sign of political execution.

An overarching paradigm

Having considered biblical cases and principles (see figure 2), we return to the fundamental question of how we, as Christians, should relate to politics. While each of the perspectives noted earlier can help us to understand facets of this relationship, it would seem that an

overarching paradigm should guide the Christian in his or her relation to politics.

This response might be described as a position of Lordship—the recognition that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and that human society, in each of its dimensions, must be cognizant of His sovereignty. Paul, for example, writes, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Believers then see themselves, not as possessing dual citizenship, but as citizens of the encompassing kingdom of God.

In this view, Christians recognize that humankind is embroiled in the cosmic conflict between good and evil, between Christ and Satan. This great-controversy perspective acknowledges manifestations of both good and evil in each aspect of society, including politics. Thus, in the Christian worldview, evil is opposed, yet human culture is

affirmed and elevated, by the grace of God (see figure 3).


This position of Lordship may call for involvement in social causes: caring for the suffering and anguish of others, speaking out for social justice. It may include nonviolent activism, particularly where moral issues are involved. Forms of political activism that could fit particularly well within this paradigm include roles of advocacy, mediation, and conciliation.

The Lordship perspective may involve casting one’s vote in favor of specific issues or platforms, rather than merely as a reflection of partisan alignment. Provided that one does not compromise biblical principle, it may lead a Christian to hold political office in order to better address injustices or enhance the well-being of others. Finally, while the Christian should respect earthly government, there may be occasion for civil disobedience when the requirements of the state conflict with those of the kingdom of God.

Figure 2: Biblical Principles Regarding the Relationship of Christianity and Politics


Foundational principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The equality of humankind (Gen. 1:26, 27; Acts 17:26) • Stewardship of the environment (Gen. 2:15; Rev. 11:18) • A moral government results in prosperity (Ps. 33:12; Prov. 14:34; 29:2)
God’s role in government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God establishes civil government (Gen. 9:6; Exod. 21–23; Num. 35:12; Rom. 13:1) • God speaks out regarding corruption in government (Prov. 17:15; Isa. 1:23; 10:1; Mic. 3:9) • God is ultimately in control of earthly government (Ps. 22:29; Prov. 21:1; Jer. 18:7–10)
Relationship to government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God expects citizens to respect and submit to civil authority (Deut. 17:12; Rom. 13:1–7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13–17; 2 Pet. 2:10–12; Jude 8–10) • Christians are not to blindly obey civil authority (Acts 4:19; 5:29) • God enjoins believers to pray for secular rulers (Ezra 6:10; Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2)
Action in politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christianity must permeate society (Matt. 5:13–16) • Christians have a responsibility to critique government (Ezek. 3:17–19; Eph. 5:11) • God encourages active involvement in social causes (Isa. 58:6; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 25:31–46; James 1:27) • Christians are to advocate peace (Ps. 122:6; Isa. 2:4; Luke 6:29; Rom. 12:18; 14:19) • Christians must overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:14–21)
Tension with polities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political relationships involve inherent risks (2 Cor. 6:14–17; 2 Tim. 2:4; 1 John 2:15) • Christians are Christians first (Matt. 6:24, 33; John 17:15, 16) • Heavenly citizenship carries both limitations and responsibilities (2 Cor. 5:20; Phil. 3:18–21; Col. 3:1, 2; 1 Pet. 2:9–11) • Christians must answer to a higher standard (2 Cor. 8:21; 10:3, 4)

Figure 3: Relationship of Christianity and Politics: The Paradigm of Lordship

Focus	Kingdom view	Orientation	Depiction
Christ <i>infuses and transforms</i> politics	The encompassing kingdom	Evil is opposed, but politics, as an element of human culture, is affirmed and elevated by God's grace.	

The position of Lordship thus recognizes that there are perils as well as opportunities for the Christian. There are dangers of compromising principles and of a corruption of values as well as a consuming involvement with politics. At the same time, there are key opportunities for fulfilling the divine mandate to be the “ ‘salt of the earth’ ” (Matt. 5:13) and the “ ‘light of the world’ ” (v. 14). This perspective may consequently involve a radical reorientation of thinking—from seeing Christian engagement primarily in terms of political action to viewing political involvement as the faithful response of witness.

While the degree and form of political participation may vary for the institutional church, its leaders,

and individual members, the mission of the gospel must always include both the proclamation and the tangible revelation of who God is. This commission involves standing with voice and vote against immorality and in favor of all that is just and compassionate and includes caring for God's creation in all of its diversity—even “ ‘the least of these My brethren’ ” (Matt. 25:40). This commission involves furthering the kingdom of God through our witness and service. In essence, the commission comprises a commitment to live a life like Christ, of Christ, and for Christ in every way. 

¹ In developing these categories, I am indebted to the work of H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), and N. E. Thomas, “Church-State Relations and Mission,” in James M. Phillips and Robert T. Cootes, eds.,

Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 363.

- Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.
- On subsequent occasions (Acts 22:25, 29; 23–25), Paul maintained his innocence and claimed his right as a Roman citizen, ultimately appealing for a hearing before Caesar. We might note, however, that Paul's appeal for trial in Rome was not primarily to save his life, but in order to enable him to carry the gospel directly to the imperial court.
- Christ's daily life was, in fact, a grassroots effort—associating with castaways, eating with the rejected of society, bringing hope to the marginalized and exploited. He spoke out against societal wrongs, such as neglect of aged parents and devouring “ ‘widows' houses’ ” (Luke 20:47). He declined, however, to become installed as a civil authority, stating, in response to a dispute over inheritance, “ ‘Who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?’ ” (Luke 12:14).
- Christ's teachings are also instructive. He promoted, for example, the principle of nonviolence. “ ‘To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either’ ” (Luke 6:29). Christ further advocated the concept of submission to civil authority within the framework of allegiance to God. When the unlikely alliance of the Pharisees and the Herodians tried to entrap Him with a question of taxation, Jesus replied, “ ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's’ ” (Matt. 22:21).

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

The Cross

When I joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church more than 32 years ago, I came in riding on a whirlwind of end-time prophetic adrenaline rushes. My first study on America in prophecy, for instance, was the same week the pope (John Paul II) made his historic visit to the White House. Back then, end-time events, which seemed to unfold one after another at amazing speed, increased my faith and filled me with zeal.

More than three decades later, though I am still interested in end-time events, they alone are not enough to sustain me spiritually. They never should have been

enough to begin with, anyway. Prophecies might be exciting, but from a human perspective (the only one we have), they can surely seem to take a long time to play out.

We need something else. And the one thing that never fails to astound, excite, and revive me is the Cross. The Creator of the universe, the One who made everything that was made (John 1:3), shrank down, took upon Himself our humanity, and bore in Himself the punishment for our sins.

How do we wrap our minds around this when we can't even comprehend the universe itself, much less the One who created it?

I do not think we can. Instead, all we can do is fall to our knees and worship.

And yet, that is what we believe, the foundation of our belief. Sure, what the pope does can, from a prophetic point of view, catch our attention. But nothing can revive us as does the Cross and what it tells us about our God.

CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN IS EDITOR OF THE ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY GUIDE.

Revival
and
REFORMATION



Harnessing the reviving power of God's Word

Editor's note: This sermon was preached at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists headquarters, Silver Spring, Maryland, October 2011.

I'm going to speak to you as the Spirit empowers me on the reviving power of God's Word. And my thematic focus is simply this: harness the reviving power of God's Word. When we think of revival, we often think about some type of worship service, some type of outreach for the church. But revival comes in nuanced ways. When someone put a handbill in my mother's mailbox, in the inner city of Baltimore, that anonymous Seventh-day Adventist did not realize that he or she was about to trigger a revival in my family. My mother already had three children, and "one in the oven." (She was pregnant with me.) The handbill stated that the meeting's opening message was "The Day Money Will Be Thrown in the Streets of Baltimore, Maryland, and No One Will Stop to Pick It Up."

My mother was on welfare, and there was no paternal presence in the home. And Mama picked up that handbill and said, "I am going to that meeting. I'm not going to stay for the entire sermon. I simply want to know the answer to two questions: When

and where? When will the money be thrown? Where will it be thrown? Because I know one somebody who will stop to pick it up." She went to the meetings; and for 12 weeks, my mother heard the Adventist message. Our blessed Lord said, "My sheep hear My voice" (John 10:27).^{*} And through the power of the Word of God—a family that had never had a male graduate from college, a family that had relatives steeped in alcoholism and other addictions—that family joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church and experienced a literal overhaul because of the power of the Word of God.

Power in the Word

We do not so much search the Word of God as the Word of God searches us. There is reviving power in the Word that we, as a church, need to harness. There is a biblical illiteracy, even among people of faith. When you, as ministers, use illustrations, sometimes you see puzzled looks on the faces of those who are listening because many of our young people don't even know the Bible stories anymore. Billy Graham has stated that Christians are one generation away from agnosticism. If we don't tell the story, if we don't harness the power, the reviving power, of God's Word, we are going

to create a generation that does not know the power of God and His mighty deeds. Acts 13:36, speaking of David, says, "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers." I believe that that is the mission statement for every person of faith—to fulfill the purpose of God for your life, in your generation. One of the best ways of doing that is to learn from the generation that has gone before you, to take the baton from that generation, and then serve faithfully in every season of life. The springtime of a Christian should be prepossessing and exemplary. But so should the summer and the autumn and the winter. The end of our lives should be like a golden sunset, with its beautiful hues, serving the purposes of God, in your generation. And a part of the service should involve passing the reviving power of the Word to the generation that is coming behind you.

I love the Bible. This Book saved my life. When I was 13 years of age, in the toxic pathology of the inner city, prostitutes and drug pushers on the corner, two of my friends came and said, "Barry, we would like you to help us get back at someone." That morning—and this is something I have done for more than 50

years—I read the chapter of Proverbs that corresponded with that date of the month (31 chapters for 31 days). It was the first of the month, and that day I read chapter 1, dwelling on verse 10: “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (KJV). On the strength of the reviving power of the Word of God, I did not go along with my two friends. My friends did not just “get back at someone,” they killed someone.

Night after night on the evening news, their sad story was played out. One of the young men said, “I didn’t do it; he did it.” In the end, the judicial consequence was the same: life in prison. Had I been with them, even if I had stood and quoted Scripture, I would have received the same penalty. My life was literally saved by the reviving power of the Word of God.

The benefit of revelation

We need to harness that power and continue to harness it. One of the most beautiful chapters in the Bible is Psalm 119. It tells us about the benefits of the Word. The first benefit is the benefit of revelation. Verse 18 says, “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” (NKJV).

In the United States Senate, I teach a senators’ Bible study once a week. One of the senators, after listening to a briefing about how terrorists want to eviscerate major population centers, came up to me with a furrowed brow, and said, “Chaplain, do you believe God would permit humanity to destroy the planet?”

I said, “Senator, are you familiar with the prophecy of Daniel 2?”

He said, “No, I’m not.”

I said, “Well, we will have that for the Bible study next week.”

With standing room only at the Bible study, I unpacked Daniel 2 that involved revelatory knowledge. Nebuchadnezzar discovered that

his wise men had been playing games with him. As long as he could remember the dream, they could come up with an explanation. And that is so typical of so many experts today. But revelatory knowledge is needed. Because even the experts say, “We don’t know what to do.”

Nebuchadnezzar said, “I can’t remember the dream. And if you can’t tell me the dream, I’m going

WE DO NOT SO
MUCH SEARCH THE
WORD OF GOD AS
THE WORD OF GOD
SEARCHES US.

to have you and your families slaughtered.”

And Daniel said, “Don’t let the king be hasty. I believe we’ve a connection; we’ve got a message for him.”

And as I started unpacking Daniel 2, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the feet of iron mixed with clay, I said, “Senators, before God will permit humankind to destroy the planet, He will put up the sign ‘Closing Time.’ ” The reviving, revelatory power of the Word of God. That’s a marvelous benefit. “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.”

The benefit of revival

Then there is the benefit of revival. We see that in verse 25: “My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to Your word” (NKJV).

Ezekiel was a preacher given the challenge by God of preaching a devotional message to a congregation of dry bones. Sometimes that’s the way I feel when I’m preaching a devotional message. Ezekiel 37

begins, “The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. . . . There were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. He said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ And I answered, ‘O Lord God, You know.’ ”

Verse 4: “He said unto me, ‘Prophesy over these bones and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.’ ” “ There is reviving power in the Word of the Lord. And if you want to shape the church with a revival, if you want to get dry bones in the church to come together, let’s stop just preaching the newspaper; let’s stop preaching theological “niceties.” There’s power in the Word of God to revive dry bones. And

you’ll have the dry bones in your life come together and be vivified by the power of the Spirit.

The benefit of strength

There’s a third benefit mentioned in Psalm 119:28—“My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word” (NKJV)—the benefit of strength from the Word. Steve Farrar has a wonderful book called *Finishing Strong*. In that book, he talks about how only one in ten who begin their ministry, end up at the end of their ministry finishing strong. And I thought to myself, *What an amazing statistic! Could that possibly be?* I started thinking about the people in my seminary class at Andrews University more than 40 years ago. Farrar says there are two basic landmines: sexual indiscretion and money. I started seeing how my class had been decimated and even more. Farrar says there’s one primary reason. As they did the study, and questioned those who had had moral lapses, the primary reason for moral lapses emerged as the neglect of

one's devotional life. *I just didn't have time to get into the Word and receive the strength that I could from the Word.* There's nothing like a word from the Lord to strengthen you.

In 1 Kings, chapter 19, Elijah was suicidal. Remember? He fled, and Jezebel said, "He's a dead man." Elijah, who had done mighty things on Mount Carmel, was exhausted, worn out, burned out, and he needed strength. And it's beautiful how God handled that situation. He fed him and let him sleep. That's what some of you need. Then God woke him up, the angel fed him again, and God let him sleep some more before He tried to correct his cognitive distortion. Elijah needed more than just rest and food. He needed a word from the Lord. And that still, small Voice penetrated the fog.

This man had burned himself out so much that he had become a legend in his own mind. "I, even I only, am left" (1 Kings 19:10, KJV). How do you miss 7,000 saints? How do you become so wrapped up that you miss 7,000 saints? You need the strength of the Word of the Lord. And God gave him a renewed vision and a renewed mission. And then God said, "I know you asked Me to take your life, but I've got news for you. Although you asked Me to take your life, My plan for you is that you never die. You're going to be one of the few people on the planet who appear in the Old and New Testament, you see, because My Son is going to be on the mountain one day. As He sets His face like a flint toward Jerusalem, He's going to need somebody who knows what it is to tread the winepress all by Himself. My Son is going to be there, and He's going to need some encouragement. I want you—and I've got another tag team partner for you, Moses—to come down there and say, 'Hang in there, Jesus. You can do this, Jesus.' I want you to strengthen Him with your testimony." Just like Elijah, you know burnout and emotional distress, but let His small voice penetrate through

your fog. There's strength and power in the Word of God.

The benefit of wisdom

Finally, harness the reviving power of the Word of God by receiving the benefit of wisdom. I love how David puts it. He says, in verse 99 of Psalm 119, "I have more insight [wisdom] than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation."

I was pastoring in Chesapeake, Virginia, and had a home in Virginia Beach that I needed to sell. It had been on the market for nine months and my real estate agent was an absentee. So here I was, driving back from Chesapeake and listening to a news program, when the journalist said, "This is the worst time, probably in history, to be trying to sell a house." Now that was all the man of God needed to hear at that time. *Worst time in history!* A vagrant thought entered my mind. *You are never going to sell that house.*

Now I knew that thought was demonic and I decided to take it captive, to cast down imaginations. Right there in that car, I said, "That's a lie, devil. Philippians 4:19 says, 'My God will supply all [my] needs,' " and I said it out loud, "and I need to sell that house."

The next day, I got a call. I said, "Who is this?" He said, "This is Ron Gregory, your real estate agent."

"Ron, I didn't even recognize your voice, it's been that long." He said, "We've got an offer on your house!"

I said, "Really?" He told me the price. I said—and this is how much confidence the Word gave me—"Well, let me make a counteroffer. I want exactly what I asked for, and I'll pay the closing costs."

The next day, the realtor said, "I don't know how you did it, but it is sold." Praise God! The Word gives you the wisdom to not let the devil intimidate you, the wisdom to know that there's power in praying the promises of God.

When your child comes to you and says, "But Dad, you promised,"

you've got to do what that kid says. I had that happen to me. I'd made the mistake of saying, "Son, any college you want to go to, that you pray about, I am committed, I promise, that I will support you in your effort." So he comes in to me, full scholarships to three or four different schools, and says, "Dad, the Holy Spirit has impressed me to go to Yale."

My first response was, "The devil is a liar." Fifty-thousand dollars a year. "Do they give scholarships?" "No, they don't. They only give needs-based scholarships and you make too much money. . . ."

"But Dad, you promised!" And on the strength of my simple promise, that boy went to Yale and, praise God, graduated with a degree in molecular biophysics. Then graduated from the University of Michigan Medical School, attending there with a full scholarship!

Conclusion

When I harness the reviving power of Scripture, I say, "But God, You promised."

Come to Him with His promises. Tell Him, "You promised in Philippians 4:6, 7 that if I had no anxiety about anything, but pray about everything, your peace that passes all understanding will guard my heart and mind in Christ Jesus; You promised in Isaiah 54:17 that 'no weapon that is formed against [me] will prosper.' " You promised in Romans 8:28 that in everything You are working for the good of those who love You and are called according to Your purposes; You promised in Psalm 34:10 that 'the young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.' And moreover, You promised that I can find Jesus in this Book, and to know Him is to have life eternal."

Get in the Word! 

* Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

{ BE REVIVED } THROUGH PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY }



Join us in
10
of **DAYS**
PRAYER
January 9-19, 2013



Seventh-day Adventists
around the world praying at
7 every morning and evening.
Join us in prayer for the Holy
Spirit's presence in our
families, churches, leaders
and communities so Jesus
can come soon!

REVIVED
BY HIS
WORD

Reading through the
Bible together. Sign
up today!

www.RevivalAndReformation.org



Bringing meaning to ministry: Pastoring in the Light

Some years ago, our family was struck with the reality that my father was dying from a potent form of melanoma. Cancer was all through his nasal cavities and beyond, and there was not much that could be done besides palliative treatment. My retired parents were living in the lower level of our house at the time; and I remember what it was like as my dad began to come to terms with the inevitability of what was happening to him.

One afternoon I came home from work and went downstairs to say Hello. As usual, Dad was sitting in his favorite chair in the living room, near the glass sliding doors. But that day he was just staring outside. I noticed that the usual books were not there next to him, and, though it was about time for the news, the television was not on.

I sat down next to him and said cheerfully, "So how was your day, Dad?" He bypassed the question as though it had not been asked and said in a kind of desperate whisper, "It's so *dark*. Read me something." This was totally unlike

him. I immediately felt a strong surge of inadequacy.

His favorite New English New Testament was on the coffee table and I picked it up. I read just a few words to him; when I'd finished, he said, "Read it again, would you?" And so I read John 1:5 again: "The light shines on in the dark, and the darkness has never mastered it."

He kept looking out through the glass doors; and after a moment, he brightened up and said thoughtfully, "Thank you. That's just what I needed!"

Identifying a common need in us

Naturally, that was a memorable moment for me; but as time has moved on, my perspective on what happened that afternoon has broadened. For one thing, especially since I've retired from ministry and am now in a more reflective, looking-back mode, I realize that the profound moment of inadequacy I felt when my father asked me to help him as he struggled was to face death. I often had this feeling during my pastoral ministry; and it was largely due to a

common ministerial malady: I had gradually and unwittingly begun to concentrate more upon professional ministerial strategies than upon the living spiritual realities of real Christian ministry. Pragmatic professional pastoring had largely eclipsed the reality of ministry in the Spirit, which is so magnificently modeled in the life of Jesus and in the book of Acts.

I have to say it again: my ministry had actually come to lean on questions having to do with when to do something and what the prevailing winds of the latest professional and theological literature prescribed than on bringing the transcendent but life-giving light of Jesus Christ into the situations I faced.

It is definitely not as though I see no prominent place for continuing education, cutting-edge ministry, and strong theological growth. I certainly do. But such things cannot be allowed to take a dominant, let alone domineering, role in our daily lives and ministries. Even a disproportionate concentration on what we believe must not overshadow a personal, living faith. A good friend

of mine once said, “Don’t let anyone take your message away.” He was absolutely right. And losing our living reason for being in ministry, our message, is analogous to leaving our first love (see Rev. 2:4), and thus losing much of the light and life-giving passion that the Spirit gives to us in and for our ministry. Such a confusion of our priorities opens the door to mere humdrum functionality in ministry, an ongoing sense of meaninglessness and frustration, and lots of other undesirable tendencies.

This diagnosis of my situation, and indeed our collective situation, is not a disingenuous attempt to identify once again a tired, old spiritual malady or display personal humility. I believe this is a very real and common dysfunction in today’s ministerial and religious circles—one that we are only aware of in such a way as to identify it somewhat but not to actually deal with.

Were they just well-chosen and reassuring words that encouraged and spoke so deeply to my father on that dark day, or did the Light we read about in John 1 actually shine so that it could have its inevitable way with his darkness? The human dynamics were certainly significant; but is there something more in *this* Light as it penetrates our darkness and cannot be extinguished no matter how sinister things become? Yes, there’s mystery here; but is there something a minister can find through a more intentional or conscious connection with “the light” of John 1:5 so he or she becomes “ ‘the light of the world’ ” (Matt. 5:14, NKJV) in the lives of congregants? I find that the fundamental idea of being in such light, or thus being light ourselves, inspires and draws me toward seeking just such an imbued ministry.

The implications of Paul’s words in Ephesians 6 ring true for us as clergy, speaking with force and profundity of the need for something extraordinary and transcendent in us and our ministry: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic

powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God” (Eph. 6:12, 13, ESV). This scripture and what comes after it deserves careful thought and prayer.

The way of the Spirit and light in darkness

I used to think of good and evil or light and darkness as two entirely separate entities. These days, I still see the world as a battlefield with two great forces fighting it out. The irreconcilable hostility between good and evil is there, but the division is not as definite or visible as I used to picture it. Light and darkness are more like two wrestlers closely entwined in mortal conflict, battling in the same ring until the match is over. Their often perplexing interaction gives us fits and makes it particularly difficult for us to see what is really going on within ourselves, others, the church, and the world. And the wrestling and the ring are exactly what the light is designed to illuminate. This quality of light (or Light) helps us to see what we need to see when it is proverbially difficult to do so.

So, in short, we pastors would not argue that we need more light in our ministries. And it turns out that the Light is, in fact, in the midst of our darkened predicaments. It is all about the actual presence of God in the realities of the human scene. It is the here and now of the greatest of all events: the honest-to-goodness arrival of God in human flesh, not just in Bethlehem but here today. John says in the verse just before the one I read my father, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4, NKJV). To be aware of His presence at the heart of situations or people is to discern what is most significant.

John points out something crucial about the two contenders—light and darkness: *the* Light, shines on irresistibly, if dimly, in the darkness and the darkness does not have the capacity to extinguish the Light. Light and darkness exist in the same

place and encounter one another in the most direct ways, but light has an innate property that inevitably, and in all circumstances, overcomes darkness, even if it looks like darkness is winning the fight.

But we must once again deal with another reality that is intimately connected to what has been said so far: the promise and the presence of the Spirit in both the here and now of ministry. I have been moved by a simple shift in my perspective.

The four Gospels can be seen as discrete and even separate from the realities of the book of Acts. But when one looks at the New Testament, it is a magnificent whole, both theologically and experientially. The Gospels describe the birth, life, teaching, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. And Acts describes the profoundly powerful gift and effective work of the Holy Spirit in the lives and ministry of the first-century church. We see clearly that an inseparable wholeness exists between the work of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit. When we look at the particular way in which Paul writes about these realities, it becomes clear that he sees and glories in their profound unity.

Jesus’ beautiful and very significant promise of the Spirit in John 14–17 is a perfect and indissoluble fit with Acts 1 and 2. And so it is our calling to pray and relentlessly search and cry out to God for a Pentecost in our ministry every day.

What ministry in the light of the Spirit means

But what does all this have to do with ministry and the daily involvement of the minister in the cosmic fight? What does the presence of such Spirit and such Light in such darkness mean to ministers, especially as they relate to people?

At its heart, it means that though there is pain, anguish, death, fear, sorrow, corruption, confusion, and sin, there is also an inextinguishable love, underlying healing power, peace, courage, joy, and beauty even in the most miserable and worn out

of us. Even in the context of hell, heaven is not only at hand but is ascendant, whether or not it seems to be. This means that “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early” (Ps. 46:5, KJV). It means what the Lord proclaims with beauty and reality when He says, “I am the Light of the world.” In the end, there is no substitute for this highest pinnacle of verity.

It also means—and here we approach the practical epicenter of this reflection—that there is much more than meets the eye when we look at our world and into the eyes of our fellow human beings. When we look at one another in any situation, however idyllic or horrible, there is much more than there seems to be, even in the eyes of a carefully trained and experienced pastor. It means that in each person there is much more than our quick assessments insist on presenting to us.

It is clear from the overall emphasis of the New Testament on the Light and the work of the Spirit, that this Light and Spirit are not only here to illuminate us theologically or doctrinally, but They are here to enable us to see more clearly the aspects of reality that will make us better people, better ministers, better servants, and better in all of our relationships. The Light is not only here to illuminate the face of God, though that is the ultimate virtue of Jesus Christ (John 14:9), but the Light has come into the world to illuminate my understanding of and my identification with my fellow human beings. On this—love for God *and* humanity, which is really a monolithic whole—hangs the entire law and the prophets (see Matt. 22:40). In the end, it’s the Light of wise love and abundant grace that makes the difference. To go back to John 1:14, this is a Light that’s “full of [both] grace and truth” (NKJV).

Thus, the people we pastor are not merely patients in a hospital

room, that church treasurer who gives us fits at church board meetings, the legalist who stares icily at us from the pew as we struggle to share the balm of the gospel, the “liberal” who feels we are too uptight, the local religious competition down the street fighting to keep the seats empty at our evangelistic meetings, the obsessed reformer whose fires we are constantly having to fight, or the person who seems to suck the life out of us and whose telephone calls we dread. All of our perceptions of “our” people are not whole pictures, and the light of the Spirit has a wonderful way of illuminating the pathways to the hearts of all.

Closing illustrations

I have been moved by much of the work of Philip Newell who describes a scene in Shakespeare’s *King Henry VI* in which the French Countess Auvergne traps the English Lord Talbot in her house, and she triumphantly claims that she has him. To this, Talbot replies,

No. . . .
 You are deceived. My substance is not here;
 For what you see is but the smallest part
 And least proportion of humanity.
 I tell you, madam, were the whole frame here,
 It is of such a spacious . . . pitch
 Your roof were not sufficient to contain’t.*


“What [we] see is but the smallest part and least proportion of humanity.” This is a truism and the limitation that we ministers tend to live within every day of our lives.

Newell goes on to say that we tend to see ourselves and one another in terms of what can be seen, heard, defined, or measured. We are very apt to measure with the honed tools that are most familiar to

us, the cultural contexts in which we have grown up, and in the terms of reference we have come to employ by default. We know the often unconscious categories we so quickly and easily use in our interactions with people. These limiting conventions have a way of eclipsing not only our true selves but especially the true self of the person we encounter in situations; particularly if that person is not being very nice to us or if we are in conflict with him or her.

Susan Boyle was a very ordinary-looking Scottish woman who became a sensation after she stepped onto the stage of the TV show *Britain’s Got Talent*. As she walked onto the stage, everyone in the audience began to look incredulously at one another and whisper. The puzzled, dubious looks on their faces seemed to say it all: *Who in the world is this coming onto the stage? Someone has got to be pulling our leg.* Even the three talent judges looked uneasy and disdainful. All objectivity seemed to have fled.

But then she began to sing the magnificent theme from *Les Misérables*. And from the moment she began her song, Susan Boyle was transformed in the eyes of everyone. They forgot her dowdiness. They gasped, stood up, and cheered, and even the judges were momentarily speechless. There is always more to literally everything and everyone.

We have the distinct privilege to actually practice our daily ministry in the Spirit of light. I believe there’s a strong divine call, well known as it may seem to be, to do our daily ministry in the Holy Spirit and the light of Jesus Christ. Doing ministry in His light and the strength of the Spirit has a way of bringing ministry to life and giving it meaning for which we all so deeply long. 

* William Shakespeare, *1 Henry VI*, act 2, scene 3, lines 49–55, quoted in Philip J. Newell, *Shakespeare and the Human Mystery* (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2003), 1, 2.



Shedding light on the outer darkness: A fresh look at the language of hell

“Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ ” (Matt. 22:13).¹

The topic of hell has held a strange fascination for Christians through the centuries. And while one hears less about it today, all ecclesial bodies attempt to give some answer to the tantalizing question of what will happen to the wicked on the day of judgment. The majority view has been that hell consists of everlasting, excruciating torment.² Contrary to this, a small but vocal minority has held that such a teaching is incompatible with the loving and just character of God.³ Instead, they hold that judgment will result in the destruction of sin and sinners and prepare the way for the new heaven and new earth, where there will be no more pain, suffering, or death of any kind.

There are various judgment motifs and each is important in its own respect. One that has played a key role has been the “ ‘outer darkness’ ” where there will be

weeping and gnashing of teeth. The outer darkness appears three times (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30) and is assumed twice more (Matt. 24:51; Luke 13:28). The “ ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth’ ” appears in the above five outer darkness texts and twice on its own (Matt. 13:42, 50). These phrases have often been understood as reflecting the horrors of hell; the outer darkness—its dark and gloomy nature—with the sorrow and pain of its torments.⁴ But are such views correct?

This short study will explore these terms in their context. Properly understood, they point away from the supposed torments of hell into other more reasonable, but equally sobering, realities.

The outer darkness

We will first look at the outer darkness. In Matthew 22:13, the phrase concludes the parable of the wedding garment. A king prepares a banquet for his son’s wedding. When the invitees fail to appear, the king sends his servants to the “ ‘highways’ ” (v. 9) to gather people from all walks of life. Once the hall is filled, the king enters to inspect the guests and finds one

not properly attired with a wedding garment. The king questions him and the man can offer no explanation. Offended, the king orders the man be tied and thrown to the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In Matthew 25:30, the phrase concludes the parable of the talents. A rich man goes on a long journey and entrusts three of his servants with five, two, and one talents respectively, admonishing them to use them wisely until he returns. The first two work diligently and double their talents. But the third hides his talent and remains inactive. Upon his return, the rich man calls the three to account. The first two give their report, are congratulated, and told to “ ‘enter into the joy’ ” of the master (vv. 21, 23). The third offers excuses and attempts to blame the master for his inaction. However, he traps himself by his words and is finally declared unworthy. The master then orders him thrown to the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In Matthew 8:12, the phrase appears in the context of the healing of a centurion’s servant. Jesus

commends the faith of the centurion and asserts that many Gentiles will come into the kingdom and dine with the patriarchs, while those who were originally called, which have not responded, will be thrown to the outer darkness.

In Matthew 24:51, the outer darkness is not specifically mentioned but implied through the use of the Greek locative adverb *ekei* (“there”).⁵ Matthew 24:51 concludes the parable of the evil servant. A master goes away and appoints a servant to oversee his household. A wise servant will look well after the master’s household. If he does evil, the master will return at a moment the servant does not expect. The master will then “cut him in two” (v. 51) and throw him where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Lastly, Luke 13:28 is part of the parable of the narrow gate through which all true disciples should seek to enter the kingdom and feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Those

who choose not to enter will be left outside where *ekei* (“there”) is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So what is this mysterious outer darkness? A place of torment? A description of hell?

All five texts discussed above appear in the context of a banquet, and this is important to note. In Matthew 8:11, 12 and Luke 13:28, the banquet consists of the heavenly feast where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are present. That a feast is in view is evidenced by the word *anaklithesontai* (lit. “recline”—banqueting meals in the ancient world were taken while reclining)⁶ in Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:29, and by the mention of the *oikodespotés* in Luke 13:25, the master of the house who closes the door so that no more guests may enter.⁷ In Matthew 22:13, a banquet is clearly stated because the whole parable of the wedding garment takes place in the context of a wedding feast. In Matthew 25:30, in the parable of the

talents, a banquet is not mentioned specifically but is assumed. The rich man returns from his lengthy travels, calls his servants to account, and invites the faithful two to “enter into the joy” of the master, clearly a celebration for his return.⁸ And in Matthew 24:46–51, in the parable of the evil servant, again we have a master returning from a long trip, whereby a joyous celebration for his return would be the norm.

Banquets in ancient times, just like today, usually took place in the evening. At a time when there were few lights to lighten a dark night, there was an obvious contrast between a lighted banqueting hall and the darkness outside. The term *outer darkness*, therefore, is descriptive; in other words, “the darkness that is outside (the banqueting hall).” This outer darkness does not describe hell but the conditions outside the banqueting hall and is not language of torment but language of exclusion.

HMS Richards Lectureship in Biblical Preaching 2012

Theme: *The Listener and the Biblical Text*

October 28-29, 2012



Dr. Thomas G. Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching; Coordinator of the Initiative in Religious Practices and Practical Theology, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

Dr. Long’s 1989 book *The Witness of Preaching*—now in its second edition—is one of the most widely used texts on preaching, appearing on class reading lists in seminaries across the country and world. In 2010, *Preaching* magazine named *The Witness of Preaching*

one of the 25 most influential books in preaching, for the last 25 years. Long’s *Preaching from Memory to Hope* was named as one of the “top ten books for parish ministry published in 2009” by the Academy of Parish Clergy.

The author of 20 books to date, Dr. Long is a frequent contributor to *The Christian Century* and the *Journal for Preachers*, and a popular presenter at preaching conferences worldwide. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Move from being a **good** preacher to a **great** preacher!
You are invited to attend this lectureship.

 Seventh-day Adventist
Theological Seminary
Andrews University

Schedule

Sunday, October 28 (Seminary Chapel)

Lecture #1 1:00-2:30 p.m.

The Acoustical Impact of the Biblical Text

Light Refreshments & Fellowship
2:30-3:30 p.m.

Lecture #2 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Standing in the Middle Muddle: What Listeners Need from Sermons

Monday, October 29 (Seminary Chapel)

Sermon 10:30-11:20 a.m.

A Great Chasm

Lunch in the Seminary Commons

No registration fees.

CEUs available

Orders for DVDs will be taken

Weeping and gnashing of teeth

Those who find themselves outside the banqueting hall will experience weeping and gnashing of teeth. Is this a description of torment? Or is something else in view?

The Greek for “weeping,” *klauthmos*, can refer to a range of emotions like joy (LXX Gen. 45:2; 46:29), eager anticipation (LXX Jer. 31:9), but mostly sorrow (LXX Judg. 21:2; 2 Sam. 13:36; Ezra 3:13; Isa. 65:19). Nowhere is it used in relation to torments of any kind. The Greek for “gnashing of teeth,” *brugmos tōn odontōn*, consistently denotes anger (Acts 7:54; LXX Job 16:9; Pss. 35:16; 37:12; 112:10; Prov. 19:12), never the pain of torment.

That the people excluded from a banquet could experience both of these emotions is understandable. Sorrow is a natural reaction when a person realizes that something good has been lost. Anger is also understandable. The context of the five passages discussed above evidences a pattern, namely, disaffection with the master. In the parable of the talents, the servant who refused to make use of his talent was already negatively predisposed towards his master. When questioned why he did not use his talent, he replied, “ ‘I knew you to be a hard man’ ” (Matt. 25:24). Not surprisingly, such negative feelings turn to anger when he sees the two worthy servants welcomed into the banquet while he is thrown out.

In the heavenly banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the ones who are welcomed are the Gentiles from the far corners of the earth (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:29). The ones excluded are Jews who have failed to believe in Jesus. They were the natural heirs of the kingdom, the “ ‘sons of the kingdom’ ” (Matt. 8:12); but much to their chagrin, they find themselves excluded. Indeed, in Luke 13:24, they seek to enter the banquet, consciously, maybe forcefully.⁹ Clearly, they are not happy with the master’s decision to exclude them.

In Matthew 22:13 (the parable of the wedding garment), the anger of the man excluded is again easy to

understand. Some scholars suggest it was customary for a wedding host to oversee that guests had adequate attire.¹⁰ That the man chooses not to avail himself of such service indicates that he considers his own clothes of better quality. When the king confronts him and orders him to be thrown outside, the man naturally feels angry that the king has failed to appreciate the quality and beauty of his garments.

And in Matthew 24:45–51, the parable of the evil servant, the servant is clearly unhappy because the master has arrived unannounced and caught him mistreating his fellow servants and wasting possessions. Indeed, the rationale behind the servant’s prodigal lifestyle was that the “ ‘master is delaying his coming’ ” (v. 48). The sudden arrival of the master, therefore, causes intense anxiety and anger in the evil servant.

In all of the above instances, the anger is directed at the master, a symbol of God. Those who are left outside feel they should be inside and therefore are not happy with the verdict. They are angry.

The picture appears coherent enough: a heavenly banquet, unworthy individuals left outside experiencing weeping (sorrow) and gnashing of teeth (anger) because of their exclusion. Nothing is said about hell or torments.

Two final texts

There are two final texts that mention weeping and gnashing of teeth but no suggestion of a banquet or an outer darkness. The first is Matthew 13:42 at the conclusion of the parable of the wheat and the tares. A field is planted with good seed, but, during the night, an enemy plants tares. The owner allows the two to grow side by side, but at the harvest he commands his servants to gather the wheat into storerooms and burn the tares. Jesus explains that this parable is about the kingdom of God, whereby the good seed represents the saints to be gathered into the kingdom, while the tares represent the wicked. They,

together with everything that offends (v. 41), will be cast into the furnace of fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (v. 42).

The other is Matthew 13:50, at the conclusion of the parable of the net. Just like fishermen separate the good fish from the bad, likewise on the day of judgment the angels will remove the wicked from the midst of the saints and cast them into the furnace of fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Could these two references be descriptions of the torments of hell? Four facts suggest no. First, the phrase “ ‘cast them into the furnace of fire’ ” (Matt. 13:50) is a quotation from Daniel 3:6 and the story of the three Hebrew young men. The purpose of the furnace there was not to torment, but rather, to destroy. Second, in the parables of the net and the wheat and tares, the wicked are compared to bad fish and tares, which are burned not out of vengeance or for torment, but because they are no good. Third, in the parable of the wheat and tares, “ ‘all things that offend’ ” (v. 41), animate and inanimate, are thrown into the fire.¹¹ Will the fire torment these forever? No, it will destroy them. Fourth, as a general rule of exegesis, words and motifs should be understood in line with their primary meaning unless strong evidence suggests otherwise. As such, since weeping and gnashing of teeth nowhere else refer to torment, they should likewise not be understood as referring to torment here.

Exegetical interrelation suggests that the weeping and gnashing of teeth in Matthew 13:42 and 50 should be understood in the same way as in Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30, and Luke 13:28 as referring respectively to the feelings of sadness and anger that the wicked experience when they discover they are excluded from the kingdom.


Synthesis

The picture is very consistent. The term *outer darkness* always appears in the context of a banquet,

mostly in parables, and describes the literal evening darkness outside the banquet hall. Those who are not in the banquet hall are outside in the dark night. The word *weeping* defines the feelings of sorrow and loss experienced by those who are excluded from the banquet. The *gnashing of teeth* represents their anger. They believe they should be in but find themselves outside.

The day of judgment will not be pleasant. For God, it will be a day when He will do a “strange” work

not even required to work. All he had to do was put the talent in the bank to gain interest. The reason he is left outside does not represent a lack of ability but pure disinterest; he simply could not bother to do good. And the listeners of Jesus, who should be in the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but find themselves excluded, really were the ones who should have been there. They received the invitation first and are called “sons of the kingdom.” All they had to do was exemplify

phrase is, above all, a summons to heed the call of salvation—today. 

THE GREATEST TRAGEDY IN THE HISTORY OF THIS WORLD IS THAT PEOPLE WHO SHOULD BE IN THE KINGDOM WILL FIND THEMSELVES OUTSIDE.

(Isa. 28:21, KJV) in the destruction of sin and sinners. For sinners, it will be a fearsome day, for it is indeed a “fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). But whatever temporary physical suffering that day brings, in using the language of the outer darkness and the weeping and gnashing of teeth, Jesus opts to focus on other realities—not on the physical pain, but the immensity and sadness of the loss. The different banquets in question are all symbolic of the kingdom of God. To be left in the darkness outside means to be left outside the kingdom.

There is a sense of tragedy in all of these stories. All who find themselves excluded could and should have been in the kingdom. The man without the wedding garment was already there, all he had to do was dress appropriately. The servant with the single talent was

simple faith in Jesus, like the faith of the centurion. But instead, they rejected Him.

A certain sense of tragedy exists because nobody needed to be left outside. Everybody could have been in if only they had bothered to enter.

Jesus died for all and wants all to be in His kingdom. He has sent multiple summons and continues to do so. But in a sad repetition of the story, people often cannot be bothered. When the door closes, those who find themselves outside may weep and gnash their teeth, but it will be too late.

So is the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth a description of the supposed torments of hell? No. The emphasis is rather on the sadness of unnecessary loss. The greatest tragedy in the history of this world is that people who should be in the kingdom will find themselves outside. As such, the

- 1 All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.
- 2 E.g., Robert A. Peterson, *Hell on Trial: The Case for Eternal Punishment* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 1995); Paul Helm, *The Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989); John Blanchard, *Whatever Happened to Hell?* (Edinburgh, UK: Evangelical Press, 1993); Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994); Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984).
- 3 E.g., LeRoy E. Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*, 2 vols. (Washington DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1965); Edward W. Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: The Biblical Case for Conditional Immortality* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1994); Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and*

- Destiny* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1997); John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974).
- 4 Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, Hermeneia Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 11.
- 5 See Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 725.
- 6 Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 11; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 28a (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1020, 1026.
- 7 Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1021.
- 8 See David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 601.
- 9 See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1025; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 747, 748; W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., s.v. *οἶκος*.
- 10 Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 328, 329. See also Ellen G. White, “For every guest at the feast there had been provided a wedding garment. This garment was a gift from the king. By wearing it the guests showed their respect for the giver of the feast. But one man was clothed in his common citizen dress. He had refused to make the preparation required by the king. The garment provided for him at great cost he disdained to wear. Thus he insulted his lord. To the king's demand, ‘How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?’ he could answer nothing. He was self-condemned. Then the king said, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness.’” *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 309.
- 11 Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 269.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.



Is the Bible historically reliable?¹

Christians are so often confronted, especially by popular culture, with challenges to the historical accuracy of the Bible. Some big name scholars have appeared on television with various theories about the reliability of scriptural history, and, in almost all cases, they challenge it. From the Exodus to the resurrection of Jesus, nothing is sacred to these critics.

Thus, several questions are raised: How reliable, historically, is the Bible? What reasons do we have for trusting in the accuracy of the biblical texts? These are the questions this article will look at.

The value of the Dead Sea Scrolls

In early 1947, a Bedouin shepherd named Muhammad was searching for a lost goat. He tossed a stone into a hole in a cliff on the west side of the Dead Sea, about eight miles south of Jericho. To his surprise, he heard the sound of shattering pottery. Investigating, he discovered several large jars containing leather scrolls wrapped in linen cloth on the floor of the cave. Because the jars were carefully sealed, the scrolls had been preserved and were in excellent condition. They were evidently placed

there before the fall of Jerusalem, in A.D. 70, making them at least 1,900 years old.

The young shepherd had found what has come to be called the Qumran Scrolls, more commonly known as the Dead Sea Scrolls—the most important archaeological discovery of the twentieth century.

Until the discovery of the Qumran Scrolls, the oldest Old Testament manuscripts were a fragment of the Ten Commandments (Nash Papyrus), dated to the first century B.C.; a few biblical fragments from the Cairo Geniza (a synagogue storeroom) dating to the fifth century A.D.; and Hebrew texts from the ninth to the eleventh century A.D.

The oldest existing complete Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament, the Leningrad Codex, comes from the first decade of the eleventh century A.D. The great importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls, therefore, comes from the fact that some of them date back to the second century B.C., only about 300 years after the last book of the Old Testament was completed.

Thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls, we now have a complete manuscript of the Hebrew text of the book of Isaiah and fragments of most of the other biblical books, all of which are

more than 1,000 years older than any of the other known manuscripts. Of even greater significance is the detailed closeness of the Isaiah Scroll (ca. 125 B.C.) to the Hebrew text of Isaiah 1,000 years later. This demonstrates the unusual accuracy of the copyists of the Scripture over that period.

Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (A.D. 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations of spelling.²

Thus, we now know that our present Old Testament text, based on the Leningrad Codex, is practically identical with the Hebrew text in use at the time of Jesus. There is, therefore, no reason to doubt that what the authors of the Old Testament wrote is substantially the same as what we have in our Bibles today.

No other ancient writings comparable to the Old Testament have

been transmitted so accurately, mainly because the Jewish scribes treated God's Word with the greatest imaginable reverence. They devised a complicated system of counting the verses, words, and letters of the text to safeguard against any scribal slips. Any scroll not measuring up to these rules was buried or burned.

The transmission of the New Testament

What, though, about the New Testament? What evidence do we have regarding the accuracy of the texts we have?

For starters, all of the New Testament books were written during the second half of the first century: Galatians and the two letters to the Thessalonians around A.D. 50, and John's Gospel and the book of Revelation between A.D. 90–100.

As with the Old Testament, all of the New Testament autographs (original manuscripts) have been lost. However, because the New Testament books were the most frequently copied and widely circulated books in antiquity, we have today more than 5,000 known Greek New Testament manuscripts. No other book in antiquity even begins to approach such a large number of extant manuscripts. In comparison, *The Iliad* by Homer is second with only 643 surviving manuscripts. The first complete preserved text of Homer dates from the thirteenth century.³

The manuscripts of the New Testament

The earliest manuscript among the more than 5,000 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament is written on a small fragment of papyrus (called P⁵²) from around A.D. 130, containing portions of John 18:31–33, 37, 38.

The Chester Beatty papyri (named after their original owner) come from the second and third centuries, and they consist of papyri containing portions of all four Gospels and Acts, almost all of Paul's epistles, the book of Hebrews, and Revelation

9–17. From the same time period, we have the Bodmer papyri (also named after their owner), which contain the Gospels of Luke and John, and the letters to Jude and 1 and 2 Peter. These papyri all come from Egypt, where the dry climate helped preserve them.

The most complete New Testament manuscripts, written on vellum (parchment), come from the fourth century: (1) Codex Sinaiticus (A), discovered by Constantin von Tischendorf in St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai, comes from the middle of the fourth century and contains the entire Greek New Testament. (2) Codex Vaticanus (B), from the Vatican Library, is dated slightly earlier than Sinaiticus and contains the New Testament up to Hebrews 9:14. On textual grounds, Codex Vaticanus is considered the most valuable of all existing New Testament manuscripts. Three other important manuscripts are Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Beza, and Codex Ephraemi from the fifth century.

In addition to the approximately 3,200 manuscripts, which are continuous text manuscripts, we have another 2,200 lectionary manuscripts. Lectionaries are manuscripts in which the text of the New Testament books is divided into separate *pericopes* (sections), and are arranged according to their sequence as lessons appointed for the church year.⁴ While a few of these lectionaries go back to the fourth century, the majority were written after the eighth.

New Testament variants

Though no body of literature in history enjoys such a wealth of ancient manuscripts as the New Testament, this fact produces its own problems: the more manuscripts, the greater the textual variations created by scribal mistakes. If a scribe were listening to a dictation, he could make mistakes with words that sounded alike; if he was copying from a manuscript, he could mistake a word for another word that looked like it. Or his eyes could jump from one word to

another word with the same ending, and thus a portion of the text could be left out or written twice.

However, despite the many variant readings in the manuscripts, none affect any point of Christian faith and practice. The English classical scholar Sir Frederic Kenyon stated, "It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all these discoveries and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God."⁵

The evidence from archaeology

Besides all the evidence from the Bible itself, we have the witness of archaeology. Though archaeology cannot prove the spiritual truths of the Bible, it can illuminate and clarify the historical circumstances of numerous passages and thereby validate the historicity of many of the events recorded in Scripture. Among the most important discoveries of archaeology that support the historical reliability of Scripture are the following:

1. *The Hammurabi Stele* (ca. 1700 B.C.) was found by French archaeologists in the winter of 1901–1902 at Susa, the biblical Shushan (Dan. 8:2), and is now exhibited in the Louvre Museum in Paris. It contains about 280 laws, many of which are strikingly similar to the Mosaic laws:

- *Hammurabi 14*: If a citizen kidnaps and sells a member of another citizen's household into slavery, then the sentence is death.
- *Exodus 21:16*: " 'He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death.' "⁶
- *Hammurabi 196 and 197*: If a citizen blinds an eye of an official, then his eye is to be blinded. If one citizen breaks a bone of another, then his own bone is to be broken.
- *Exodus 21:24*: " 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.' "

The discovery of the Hammurabi Stele and other ancient law codes disposed of the old critical view that the laws of the Pentateuch could not have come from the time of Moses.

2. *The Merneptah Stele* (ca. 1200 B.C.) was found in the mortuary temple at Thebes, published in 1897, and today exhibited in Cairo. The stele celebrates Pharaoh Merneptah's (1213–1203) victory over rebellious forces in his Asiatic possessions, and contains the earliest reference to the people of Israel in the ancient world.

3. *The Moabite Stone* (ca. 850 B.C.) is exhibited in the Louvre Museum. In 1868, an Arab sheikh at Dhiban showed German missionary F. Klein an inscribed slab that was three feet, ten inches high; two feet wide; and ten inches thick. German

divine patron of Moab, was angry with his people. When the son of Omri succeeded him during my reign, he bragged: "I too will invade Moab." However, I defeated the son of Omri and drove Israel out of our land forever. Omri and his son ruled the Madaba plains for forty years.

- *2 Kings 3:4, 5*: "Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheepbreeder, and he regularly paid the king of Israel one hundred thousand lambs and the wool of one hundred thousand rams. But it happened, when Ahab died, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel."

4. *The Black Obelisk of Salmeser III* (ca. 840 B.C.) was

phrase "house of David" (1 Sam. 20:16). Joram, the son of Ahab (2 Kings 8:16), also appears in the inscription. This is the first time that the name *David* has been recognized at any archaeological site. Like the Moabite Stone, the Tel Dan Stele seems typical of a memorial intended as a sort of military propaganda.

6. *The Babylonian Chronicles* (sixth century B.C.) are clay tablets that present a concise account of major internal events in Babylon. They describe the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. (Zeph. 2:13, 15), the battle of Carchemish and the submission of Judah in 605 B.C. (2 Kings 24:7; Dan. 1:2), the capture of Jerusalem in 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:10–17), and the fall of Babylon to the Persians in 539 B.C. (Isa. 45:1; Dan. 5:30). In

NO OTHER ANCIENT WRITINGS
COMPARABLE TO THE OLD TESTAMENT
HAVE BEEN TRANSMITTED SO ACCURATELY.

and French officials showed interest in the stone. A French orientalist, Clermont-Ganneau, was able to obtain a "squeeze" (a papier-mâché casting) of the inscription. This was fortunate because the Arabs, realizing that they had something valuable, broke it into pieces. The fragments were then carried away to bless their grain. Not all the pieces have been recovered, but the inscription has been restored. It recounts the story of the Moabite king Mesha's rebellion against the king of Israel, and also supplements the account of Israel's relations with Moab as recorded in 2 Kings 3.

- *Moabite Stone*: Omri, ruler of Israel, invaded Moab year after year because Chemosh, the

discovered in 1846 by A. H. Layard at Nimrud and exhibited in the British Museum. It shows the Israelite king Jehu paying tribute to the Assyrian king and provides extrabiblical evidence for the domination of Assyria over Israel as well as the existence of Jehu as the king of Israel. " 'Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place' " (1 Kings 19:16).

5. *The Tel Dan Stele* (ninth or eighth centuries B.C.) is a black basalt stele erected by an Aramaean king in northernmost Israel containing an Aramaic inscription to commemorate his victory over the ancient Israelites. Only portions of the inscription remain, but clearly legible is the

connection with the fall of Babylon, the chronicles refer to Belshazzar (Dan. 5:1, 2) who was coregent with his father Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon.

7. *The Pontius Pilate Inscription* (first century A.D.) was found in 1961 in the theater of Caesarea Maritima, the city of Pilate's residence in Palestine. Among the few lines still legible are the words *Pontius Pilate Prefect of Judea*. The inscription is the first archaeological evidence for Pilate before whom Jesus was tried and condemned to death (Matt. 27:2, 11–26).

The evidence from prophecy

The purpose of prophecy is not to satisfy men's curiosity about the

future but to reveal important facts about God's nature—His foreknowledge, His control over all the nations, and His divine plans for His people. In addition, fulfilled prophecies are an important evidence for the inspiration and trustworthiness of God's Word. The two prophecies explained below are representative of the many prophecies found in the Old and New Testaments.

Daniel 2. The book of Daniel was written in the sixth century B.C., but its prophecies provide evidence for the fact that history remains under God's control. Daniel interprets the image in chapter 2 as four successive world empires, beginning with Babylon as the first empire (v. 38). The fourth empire would be followed by many smaller kingdoms or nations symbolized by the ten toes (vv. 41–43). These nations would continue until God's kingdom, symbolized by the rock " 'cut out without [human] hands' " smashing

the image to bits (v. 34), would be established on the earth (v. 44).


This prophecy found a remarkable fulfillment in history. Babylon was succeeded by three other world empires—Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome—and then Rome was divided up into many smaller kingdoms that still exist in Europe and around the Mediterranean Sea. The only part of the prophecy still unfulfilled is the arrival of the kingdom of God.

Micah 5:2. According to the prophecy in Micah 5:2, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The Gospels tell us that although the parents of Jesus lived in Nazareth, because of a census in the Roman Empire, Joseph and Mary had to travel to Bethlehem, Joseph's ancestral hometown, where Jesus was born (Luke 2:4–7).

Conclusion

While the Bible is self-authenticating, that is, the books of

Scripture themselves testify to their God-inspired truth, the manuscript evidence as well as the archaeological and prophetic evidence confirm the historical reliability of Scripture. The Dead Sea Scrolls and other manuscript finds have demonstrated the textual reliability of the Bible; and the many archaeological discoveries support the historical reliability of Scripture.

Finally, the fulfillment of Bible prophecies confirms the Bible's claim that "prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). 

- 1 This article was adapted from a book by the author, Gerhard Pfandl, ed., *Interpreting Scripture* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010).
- 2 Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 25.
- 3 Charles Leach, *Our Bible: How We Got It* (Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), 145.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 163.
- 5 Frederic Kenyon, *The Story of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), 113.
- 6 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New King James Version.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

The fast that God chooses

The Bible encourages God's people to fast. Moses fasted on Mount Sinai. The Israelites were called to return to God " 'with fasting and weeping and mourning' " (Joel 2:12).^{*} Daniel, seeking divine instruction, abstained from "choice food" for three weeks (Dan. 10:3). The believers at Antioch fasted and prayed before sending Paul and Barnabas on the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2, 3). And most important of all, Jesus fasted for 40 days at the commencement of His ministry (Matt. 4:1–11).

However, Jesus warned against the wrong sort of fast. " 'When you fast,' " He said, " 'do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting' "

(Matt. 6:16). This fasting strives to impress others.

Another misguided fast is one designed to impress God. He already accepts us because of Jesus, not because of anything we do. Fasting is about ourselves, not God; it is a spiritual discipline that helps us to focus on God.

True fasting comes from the heart. It involves the secret place of communion with God; it is totally devoid of outward show. It cannot be divorced from life, hoping that fasting will cover up for our quarreling and neglect of others (see Isa. 58:3–5).

God has told us plainly the sort of fast He chooses: " 'to loose the chains of injustice . . . to set the oppressed

free. . . . To share your food with the hungry, to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him' " (Isa. 58:6, 7).

So let us fast as God has instructed: sincerely, joyfully, secretly, and accompanied by ministry to others.

WILLIAM G. JOHNSON, PHD, IS RETIRED EDITOR OF *ADVENTIST REVIEW AND ADVENTIST WORLD*, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.

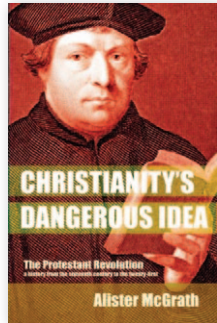
^{*} Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

Revival
and
REFORMATION



Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History From the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First

by Alister McGrath, New York, NY: HarperOne 2007.



What is Protestantism? A set of ideas? The result of historical events? No more than a reaction to the medieval Catholic Church? Does Protestantism have core beliefs? Is Protestantism a single or multifaceted phenomenon? Alister McGrath attempts to answer these questions in his book *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, which he has divided into three parts. Part 1, "Origination," deals with such topics as Luther and "Alternatives to Luther," "The Shift in Power: Calvin and Geneva," "England: The Emergence of Anglicanism," "Protestantism in America," and the global expansions of Protestantism. McGrath surveys Protestantism's history, its multiple origins in Germany and Switzerland from the Reformation, and eventually its "evolution" into many parts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Part 2, "Manifestation," deals with the Bible as the sole or highest authority within Protestantism, "Believing and Belonging: Some Distinctive Protestant Beliefs," such as the priesthood of all believers, "The Structures of Faith," organization, the sacraments, worship, preaching, and how Protestantism shaped Western culture,

"Protestantism, the Arts, and the Natural Sciences." Part 3, "Transformation," deals with the changing shape of Protestantism as it expands into the global South with the rise of Pentecostalism, and

Protestantism's future.

McGrath concludes that Protestantism is a method by which believers use the Bible to decide on beliefs and practices. Under the scrutiny of the Scriptures, believers will change and alter their ideas and walk away from the safety and comfort of their traditions rather than compromise their biblically informed consciences. The Bible becomes their only rule and guide in life. The Westminster Confession of Faith states, "In its formative phase, Protestantism was characterized by a belief—a radical, liberating, yet *dangerous* belief—that scripture is clear enough for ordinary Christians to understand and apply without the need for a classical education, philosophical or theological expertise, clerical guidance, or ecclesiastical tradition, in the confident expectation that difficult passages will be illuminated by clearer ones" (208).

The *sola Scriptura* principle teaches the "sufficiency of scripture" and the "clarity of scripture" (203). Nonetheless, the history of the Reformation shows how different interpreters, using the same Bible, came up with, in some cases, radically different interpretations with dire results. For example, Zwingli had one of his closest associates, Felix Manz, drowned in the river

Limmat because Manz refused to recant his belief that infant baptism was not taught in the Bible (71). Religious wars also resulted. In addition, McGrath discusses the changing understanding of various scriptures. For Luther, Christ crucified was the center of the Bible. For Calvin, the center of the Bible was the sovereignty of God. For Zwingli, the center of the Bible was the freedom of the human will. When Luther challenged the authority of Catholic tradition and the papacy, this opened a wide diversity of thought. What the Reformers wanted was reform, not rebellion. They wanted everything to be evaluated by the Word of God. This "dangerous idea" of Protestantism, that each individual Christian has the right to read and interpret the Word of God, the Bible, as he or she sees fit, fostered by Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and others, effectively strikes out at Roman Catholicism. This is in spite of the fact that each of the Reformers had his or her own differences with the other Reformers as just stated previously of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and the Pentecostals. Hence, what appears to have united Protestantism was not a common doctrine but a common enemy, the "other," Roman Catholicism (132, 291).

McGrath has written a book that tells us what it means to be a Protestant and how the meaning has shifted over time. In my view, I think every pastor should read this book because it refreshes one's memory of what happened in the Reformation as well as how Protestantism developed into what it is today. ❏

—Reviewed by Rollin Shoemaker, DMin, STM, a retired pastor living in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

Study: Pastors' concerns for others may harm their own health

Durham, North Carolina, United States—Most members of the clergy are taught to put the physical and spiritual needs of others first, but that self-denial may be harmful to their own health, according to a new Duke University study. Studies of United Methodist pastors in North Carolina found high rates of chronic disease and depression, and researchers worry it can be difficult to convince clergy to seek help.

To address these unique problems, Duke Divinity School's Clergy Health Initiative developed a program to provide preventative care in a spiritual context. "Clergy recognize the importance of caring for themselves, but doing so takes a back seat to fulfilling their vocational responsibilities, which are tantamount to caring for an entire community," said **Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell**, the initiative's research director and assistant research professor at the Duke Global Health Institute.

The institute's research found the 40 percent obesity rate among North Carolina United Methodist clergy eclipsed the state average of 29 percent. Pastors also suffered high rates of chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, arthritis, and hypertension. More than 10 percent showed symptoms of depression, about double the national rate. Despite these health issues, clergy were also more likely to say their health did not negatively affect their work.

Proeschold-Bell said stress, which is tied to overeating and weight gain, comes in many forms for clergy. Pastors' schedules are unpredictable and filled with diverse activities, resulting in what Proeschold-Bell called "role overload." She also points to an internal pressure to live faithfully and support the community. "Pastors have lots of social ties, but the support goes only in one direction," she said.

Initiative director **Robin Swift** pointed to the prevalence of food as clergy assume their hospitality roles, a factor leading to their high rates of obesity and associated health problems. "The community expects you to be grateful for their hospitality, and community happens a lot around meals," Swift said.

A study by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America found similarly higher rates of physical and mental health problems in its clergy. [*Religion News Service, Chris Lisee*]

On ordination questions, Adventist leadership appeals for orderly process

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—The world leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has issued an "appeal for unity" to regional administrative units of the church that have either taken or are considering independent action regarding the ordination of women to gospel ministry. The request comes in a statement issued June 29, 2012, in

response to actions by several union conferences.

Some union conferences, key constituent elements of the church's worldwide General Conference, have indicated either a willingness to ordain women or to take independent actions that would permit such ordinations in their territories. At present, the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not ordain women to ministry, following votes at General Conference sessions in 1990 and 1995 on the question, where the issue was a major focus of the international delegation.

The appeal was prepared and unanimously accepted by consensus of the General Conference officers, a group of 40 senior leaders of the church, including the 13 division presidents who also serve as vice presidents of the General Conference. It begins by noting the recent local actions and/or proposals as well as reminding both the union conferences and the church's wider membership that the entire subject of ordination is under study by the worldwide Adventist family, with results due in 2014. Once those results are received, the General Conference Executive Committee, the highest interim authority between quinquennial international sessions of the church, will decide whether to make further recommendations on the ordination issue to the 60th General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, United States, in July 2015.

Until then, a move "to change or modify ordination practices is a global one and necessitates a decision from the world body," the document stated.

"For any union to introduce a different ministerial ordination practice is seen, by the rest of the Church, as



readiness to set aside a world Church decision and proceed in another direction," Adventist leaders wrote. "Such actions, taken at the very time when the world Church is engaged in a study and discussion of the matter, pre-empt the process and any decision that might come from it."

The leaders pointed to the collaborative approach to key decisions that has characterized Seventh-day Adventist polity since the church's organization nearly 150 years ago in 1863: "The essence of unity in Seventh-day Adventist organizational functioning is the mutual commitment of all organizations to collective decision-making in matters affecting the whole family—and the acceptance of those decisions as the authority of the Church. The action of any union in pursuing a different course of action


represents a rejection of this key value in denominational life."

At the same time, the appeal noted, "General Conference officers welcome and invite unions to participate in the global study of ordination. This study will be the most widespread and thorough study the Church has undertaken on this topic. Earlier studies have been conducted by commissions. This is the first time that a study of ministerial ordination engages the whole Church through the 13 divisions."

The leaders acknowledge that the question of women's ordination has been a topic of deep concern to many within the movement: "We realize that sharply differing convictions with respect to ministerial ordination for women exist in our global family. We also realize that the passage of time without finding

satisfaction for the tensions on this question can give rise to frustration and the erosion of confidence that a timely and mutually satisfactory resolution can be found."

However, the Adventist world leaders said they "earnestly appeal" to the unions involved to

1. "operate in harmony" with the decisions of the worldwide church;
2. avoid any independent action contrary to the decisions taken by the global body of the church in 1990 and 1995;
3. communicate to their constituents the implications of independent action for the health of the wider denomination;
4. actively engage in the established global discussion about the practice of ordination slated to report in 2014 and 2015. [Mark Kellner/Adventist World] 

LETTERS



Continued from page 4 ▶

children alive today because of IVF. In the majority of these cases, these children would not exist apart from that technique.

By the way, if we compiled all the potential dangers of pregnancy itself, how long the list would be!
—Ernie Burse, email

I am very disappointed in "A Christian Understanding of In Vitro Fertilization." I expected a balanced presentation of the subject, but instead I read Cristina S. Richie's opinion that families should accept


childlessness as God's plan for them. She was so unbalanced that someone reading the article would feel guilty for even considering IVF. This is not what I expect from *Ministry*. I hope you will have the courage to publish a more balanced view soon.

—Frank Haynes, Pomona, California, United States

The precious body of Christ

It has been some time since I have been touched by an article as I

was by William L. Self's piece, "The Church Is Worth the Effort" (July 2012). Not only did he remind us of how precious the body of Christ is, but his excellent illustrations drove home the point dramatically. I especially liked the swimming pool analogy and will use it myself in the future. Thanks, Brother Self, for goading me so beautifully to relish my blessings within the church of our Lord.

—Steven Clark Goad, senior minister, Blythe Church of Christ, Blythe, California, United States 

Vicki Griffin, MS, Human Nutrition; MPA; MACN; is the Health Ministries director, Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Lansing, Michigan, United States.



How is your attitude, pastor?

As a pastor, have you noticed that some days you have a better attitude than on other days?

Our mind-set determines, to a large extent, our successes and failures. God has created our marvelous brains with the capacity to improve in function, ability, and attitude with proper use and exercise. Our brains constantly reshape themselves according to what they learn, think, feel, and expect.

THE REALLY
GOOD NEWS
IS THAT THE
FIXED MIND-
SET IS FIXABLE!

Attitude can be more important than facts when it comes to conquering life's mountains. When we possess bad attitudes, we may expend a lot of energy attempting to mount small issues but find ourselves unprepared when we need the mental mettle to scale a genuine peak of difficulty.

Fixed mind-set = fixed results

Social psychologist Carol Dweck studied what she terms the "fixed" versus the "growth" mind-set.¹ Fixed mind-sets believe that traits such as intelligence, ability, personality, and competence are inborn and unchangeable. They believe the

need to "work" at improving means there is a basic lack of intelligence or ability. They tend to view themselves as smart or dumb, strong or weak, winners or losers.

People with fixed mind-sets will choose easy problems instead of hard ones in order to reassure themselves they are competent. Because of the strong need to be smart instead of to "get smart," the fixed mind-set individual tends to avoid challenges, gives up easily when confronted with obstacles, ignores criticism, and is threatened by others.

Sociologist Benjamin Barber concluded, "I don't divide the world into the weak and the strong, or the successes and failures. . . . I divide the world into learners or nonlearners."² It is possible to have a fixed mind-set in certain areas but not others. The really good news is that the fixed mind-set is fixable!

Growth mind-set = growing results


Growth mind-sets believe that although people may differ in basic aptitudes, interests, and temperaments, everyone can change, grow, and improve. They have a passion for stretching and growing, even while making mistakes and facing challenges.

Growth mind-set people may not feel smart, but they are interested in "getting smart." They tend to embrace challenges and persist in the face of obstacles, learn from criticism, and find others' success inspiring. These people tend to be positive, are able to trust others, can bounce back when difficulties get them down, and tend to be more forgiving of others.

Change your mind-set

Victor Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist who was imprisoned in Auschwitz during World War II, said when he was finally released, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances."³ Choosing a new way of thinking is like changing any other habit—it takes practice, perseverance, and patience.

Do you tend to be a naysayer? No worries. Clinical professor of psychiatry John Ratey encourages, "We are not prisoners of our genes or our environment. Poverty, alienation, drugs, hormonal imbalances, and depression don't dictate failure. Wealth, acceptance, vegetables, and exercise don't guarantee success." "Genes set boundaries for human behavior, but within these boundaries there is immense room for variation determined by experience, personal choice, and even chance." "We always have the ability to remodel our brains."⁴

First, learn to identify fixed thinking. Second, determine to replace this faulty thinking with a growth mind-set. Third, read the Bible for direction and power. Jesus said, "Learn of me" (Matt. 11:29, KJV). Learning new and better ways of living and thinking is possible with Him. So practice a new attitude; it will help you achieve greater altitude when meeting life's challenges. This will become contagious for all around you, including your parishioners. 

¹ Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Random House, 2006).

² Dweck, *Mindset*, 16.

³ Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 66.

⁴ John Ratey, *A User's Guide to the Brain* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 17, 32, 36.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

*Alan wants to learn
more about God.
He is also blind.*

Is there someone like Alan in your congregation? Alan loves learning about God and wants to have a Bible of his own. Christian Record can help. Visit us online to learn about our free Christian reading services at www.ChristianRecord.org or call 402-488-0981.



Christian Record
SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

4444 S. 52nd Street • Lincoln NE 68516-1302
(402) 488-0981 • info@christianrecord.org • www.christianrecord.org





1350 N. KINGS ROAD • NAMPA, ID 83687-3193

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Southern Adventist University

your partner in ministry

JOIN US ON CAMPUS

Archaeology Lecture, September 20

Aaron Burke, Ph.D., will talk about the archaeology of warfare in the ancient Near East at 7:30 p.m. in the Lynn Wood Hall chapel. Burke is associate professor of archaeology at UCLA.

Adventist Heritage Lecture, October 11

Merlin Burt, Ph.D., will speak on the role of E. G. White in Seventh-day Adventist heritage at 11 a.m. in the Collegedale Church. Burt is associate professor of church history at Andrews University.

Origins Exhibit

Our new, museum-quality exhibit in the Biology Department offers an understanding of origins from a creationist worldview. Consider the intricacy of the cell, the relationship between the Geologic Column and biblical flood, and the significance of nature's intricate beauty.

For more information, visit southern.edu/faithandscience.

JOIN US FROM ANYWHERE

Vespers and worship services at our campus church are broadcast live at southern.edu/streaming.

INVITE US TO JOIN YOU

We are an abundant resource for talent and expertise in a wide variety of areas. We invite you to consider someone from Southern for speaking appointments, workshops, musical programs, and other occasions.

For more information, visit southern.edu/resourceguide.

Recommend Us

If you know of someone looking to attend a Christian university, we have a variety of campus visit options for prospective students. For more information, go online to southern.edu/visit.



SOUTHERN
ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

Power for Mind & Soul

1.800.SOUTHERN
Collegedale, Tennessee