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INTERNATIONAL
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Ministry

International Journal for Pastors
12501 Old Columbia Pike,
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 USA

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Vol. 93, No. 12 © 2021

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COVER

316 Creative / Shutterstock

LAYOUT

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

12 issues: United States US\$32.99;
Canada and overseas US\$47.00.
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Ministry® has been published
monthly since 1928 by the Ministerial
Association, General Conference of
Seventh-day Adventists®. Ministry is a

peer-reviewed journal.

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Printed by 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.

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Published by the Seventh-day Adventist
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We don't have another side

Though by no means perfect, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has become a leader in calling for the fair treatment of women. Its decades-long **enditnow**[®] campaign is based upon our fundamental belief that “distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us,” and that “we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.”¹ Yet when stating our opposition to abuse and inequity in the treatment of women, somebody said, “If you print that, you must give the other side.” Let us be clear—we don't have another side.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a leader in calling for health reform and has joined those calling for health equity.² The church states, “Beyond those benefits of healthy lifestyle principles and preventive public health practices, the church affirms and recommends the responsible use of vaccines as an important public health measure, especially during a pandemic. At the same time, the church respects the rights of individuals' freedom of choice for those who choose not to be vaccinated.”³ Yet some have said, “You must present the other side.” We don't have another side.

Sounds autocratic? It's actually quite accommodating. There are principles and there are practices. Principles are: “Your body is the temple of

the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19, KJV); “Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband's equal.”⁴ As Adventists, we unequivocally align ourselves with these principles, but we may choose to show our solidarity and support through different practices.

Regarding solidarity with women, the South American Division has chosen to organize annual marches against violence.⁵ Regarding supporting the health message, the South Pacific Division's approach has been a series of videos, including “COVID-19 Vaccines and Side Effects” and “Microchips, Magnets, and Mobile Phones.”⁶

We are committed (fixed) regarding our principles, and we are compassionate (flexible) regarding our practices. Rather like a couple getting married. Agreement on the details of our wedding is optional; alignment with the mission of our marriage is critical.

Agreement and alignment

Prepare-Enrich premarital and marital counselors say, “Agreement and alignment sound pretty similar, but in fact, they're not completely interchangeable. Think of agreement as alignment's uptight, perfectionist cousin—everything must be exactly perfect and in its place.

“Alignment, on the other hand, is a bit more laid back and realistic, recognizing that every tiny



Jeffrey O. Brown, PhD, is the associate editor of *Ministry*.



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detail is not always as important as seeing the bigger picture.”⁷

While we unapologetically recommend a plant-based diet, Romans 14:3 is the bigger picture. “The meat-eater should not despise the vegetarian, nor should the vegetarian condemn the meat-eater—they should reflect that God has accepted them both” (Phillips).

Disagreement and division

I will never forget that Sabbath in Norway. Theodore Stewart (chaplain at Texas Health Huguley Hospital) and I were student canvassing and, after a church lunch, the members asked us to join them in nature. “Sure!” we chorused.

Then they said, “We’re going swimming.”

We asked, “On Sabbath?”

“Yes,” they replied. “It’s nature.” We went to the beach with them. Some will be happy to know, we steadfastly refused to take off our black suits.

Paul said, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10, NKJV). Our Norwegian brothers and sisters were passionately committed to the Sabbath. What they saw as nature, we saw as pleasure. We had disagreed—but we were not divided.

Disagreement is tolerable; division is detrimental. Agreement is preferable; alignment is essential. Differences may exist between cultures and within cultures, but our fundamental beliefs represent our alignment. Extreme positions, practices, or people do not represent the church. We want to be known as warmhearted and welcoming, sensible and sensitive. That’s the side of the church we want the world to see. In fact, we don’t have another side.



- 1 “Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” Seventh-day Adventist Church, accessed October 22, 2021, <https://www.adventist.org/beliefs>.
- 2 AdventHealth News, “AdventHealth Vows to Keep Fighting Inequities in Health Care,” *Adventist Review*, September 10, 2021.
- 3 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Reaffirming the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Response to COVID-19,” *Adventist Review*, October 25, 2021.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), 231.
- 5 Rafael Brondani, “Thousands of Adventists March Against Domestic Violence in Brazil’s Capital,” *Adventist Review*, September 14, 2021.
- 6 Tracey Bridcutt, “New Videos Provide Clarity Around COVID-19 Vaccination,” *Adventist Record*, September 14, 2021.
- 7 “We Just Disagree (And That’s Okay),” *Prepare/Enrich*, September 29, 2021, 9.

“Three Cosmic Messages”:

An interview with Mark Finley





Editor's note: Due to the urgency of making sure that all Seventh-day Adventists are informed about and preparing for end-time events, I reached out to Mark A. Finley, assistant to the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, and asked him about a biblical perspective.

Pavel Goia, DMin, is the editor of Ministry.



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Pavel Goia (PG): The leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is encouraging a greater emphasis on the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-13. Aren't most Adventists already familiar with these messages?

Mark Finley (MF): Many Adventists are familiar with these messages, but many are not. A recent discussion with college students at one of our universities revealed an ambivalence regarding their content and relevance. A similar informal survey with Adventist elementary-school teachers also raised questions about their understanding of the significance of these messages. One could also ask the average church member to recall how many times they have heard a message on Revelation fourteen, six through twelve, in the past year.

PG: Hasn't the Seventh-day Adventist Church from its inception emphasized the three angels' messages?

MF: The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always emphasized the three angels' messages. It is in these messages that we find our unique prophetic identity. But there is a danger [of] either [neglecting] them altogether or [taking] for granted that each member understands them. Just as God reminded Israel to pass on their unique heritage to the next generation, "in a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention."¹ The reason we are

reemphasizing the three angels' messages is that we have a divine mandate to do so.

PG: What do you think the average Adventist thinks when he or she hears the term the three angels' messages?

MF: Most probably think of the mark of the beast, picturing frightening scenes of the judgment, mystic symbols, and cryptic images.

PG: What is the greatest misunderstanding of these messages?

MF: In my view, the greatest misunderstanding of these messages has to do with what I would call the "fear factor." Many members view last-day events with fear, anxiety, and worry rather than hope. The first angel's message begins with the "everlasting gospel"—a message of end-time hope. These are grace-filled messages leading us to trust totally in Jesus for our salvation. The first, second, and third angels' messages speak of the magnificent love of God, the folly of human pride, the consequences of disobedience, and the eternal relevance of truth in every age. They are filled with hope, climaxing with the coming of Christ.

PG: What relationship do these messages have with an end-time revival and reformation?

MF: The three angels' messages, rightly understood, lead to a wholehearted commitment to Christ and a decision, through His power, to live in harmony with His will. They expose the errors of all false religions and develop a people that keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus [Rev. 14:12]. In the blazing light of the sanctuary, the judgment, and the Day of Atonement, this message leads to earnest prayer,

heartfelt repentance, genuine confession, and willing obedience.

PG: What key points do you see in these messages that are relevant in Adventist preaching?

MF: There are so many, but I will list a few. First, the three angels' messages provide an opportunity to preach the gospel in the context of preparing a people for the second coming of Christ. Second, these messages of love from the heart of the Almighty call us to live godly lives in the light of heaven's eternal judgment. They reveal a God of fairness who will set all things right one day.

In an age of evolution, they underscore the significance of the Sabbath. The Sabbath, God's eternal sign of Creation, leads us to rest in His loving care, rejoice in His grace, and reflect on the day He will come in clouds of glory. These messages also warn against the errors of Babylon and the mark of the beast as manifest in the papacy's attempt to change God's law. There is so much in Revelation fourteen, six through twelve, that I recently wrote thirteen new sermons on these messages.

PG: I notice that in these sermons, you like the term "three cosmic messages." Why is that?

MF: This is just a fresh way of expressing the three angels' messages. It has the feel of the great controversy scene and lets you know immediately that this project focuses on the cosmic conflict down through the ages between Christ and Satan. It appeals to Adventist Church members as well as to the public.

PG: I understand that you, in partnership with Hart Research Center, have produced materials on this topic?

MF: Yes. The Three Cosmic Messages project began with a few laypeople who sensed a loss of prophetic identity among some members, pastors, and leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The project includes a two-week curriculum with books, teaching resources, videos, and lesson plans for elementary children and academy-aged youth.

It also features fully illustrated sermons; sermon manuscripts; participant lesson outlines; a book titled the *Three Cosmic Messages*; articles in major Adventist periodicals; and a thirteen-part television series aired on Three Angels Broadcasting [Network], Hope Channel, and the

HopeLives365 channel on YouTube.² Additionally, there is an upcoming Sabbath School series on the three angels' messages.

PG: How can pastors, who desire, access this material for Sabbath morning preaching?

MF: By going to our website, ThreeCosmicMessages.com, pastors can download the sermon manuscripts, the graphics, and the lessons to use for their members. There are thirteen sermons in the entire series—enough for one quarter of preaching. Of course, each pastor can adapt the messages to their own preaching style by using personal illustrations.

PG: Are these sermons and graphics appropriate for a short evangelistic series?

MF: Yes! We have now aired this series on multiple television and online platforms with millions of views and numerous responses from non-Adventists. This outstanding response has assured us of the general hunger in seeking minds for certainty regarding the future. The prophetic messages in Revelation fourteen, six through twelve, speak with increasing relevance to a generation looking for meaning and purpose. They are excellent for a short two- or three-week evangelistic series.

PG: Are there materials that pastors might find helpful for their members?

MF: Veteran educator Dr. Sandra Doran has prepared a complete series of age-appropriate materials for children from kindergarten to academy. These fully illustrated, engaging, interactive resources lead each child into a meaningful relationship with Christ and an understanding of the three angels' messages. There are teachers' instructional guides as well as participant materials for the children. These materials can be accessed at ThreeAngelsforKids.com.

PG: The General Conference has websites specifically geared to the three angels' messages as well as revival and reformation.³ How do your materials contribute to these overall objectives?

MF: The Three Cosmic Messages initiative is a resource to facilitate revival, reformation, and global mission which [undergird] everything else the church is doing.

PG: What impact has the preparation of the materials on the three angels' messages had on your own life?

MF: As I have prepared the materials, my own spiritual life has been enriched. Although I have preached the three angels' messages for over fifty years, I can identify with Jesus' statement in Matthew thirteen, fifty-one through fifty-three, that we are to bring from the treasure house of truth things "new and old." These messages touched my heart, led me to my knees, and burned their way into my soul to make a deeper commitment to Christ. If you approach the three angels' messages with a desire to let God speak to you through His Word, you cannot help but be deeply moved personally.

PG: Looking back from the standpoint of eternity, what do you hope this emphasis on the three angels' message will accomplish?


MF: We hope it will heighten the awareness of each Seventh-day Adventist of the spiritual richness, prophetic depth, and all-comprehensive mission

mandate of the three angels' messages. We believe this emphasis will lead to a richer prayer life, a deeper commitment to Bible truth, a fuller comprehension of Adventist identity, and an active involvement in witness. If millions of Seventh-day Adventists grasp the significance of these messages, their lives will be transformed. We will experience a mighty last-day revival and reformation that leads to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter rain power and the filling of the earth with the glory of God to usher in the second coming of Jesus.




- 1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1909), 19.
- 2 For the link to 13 sermons via YouTube, visit <https://hopelives365.com/three-cosmic-messages/>. For information on the book, visit <https://adventistbookcenter.com/three-cosmic-messages-earths-final-conflict.html>.
- 3 See <https://www.threeangels.info> and <https://www.revivalandreformation.org>.

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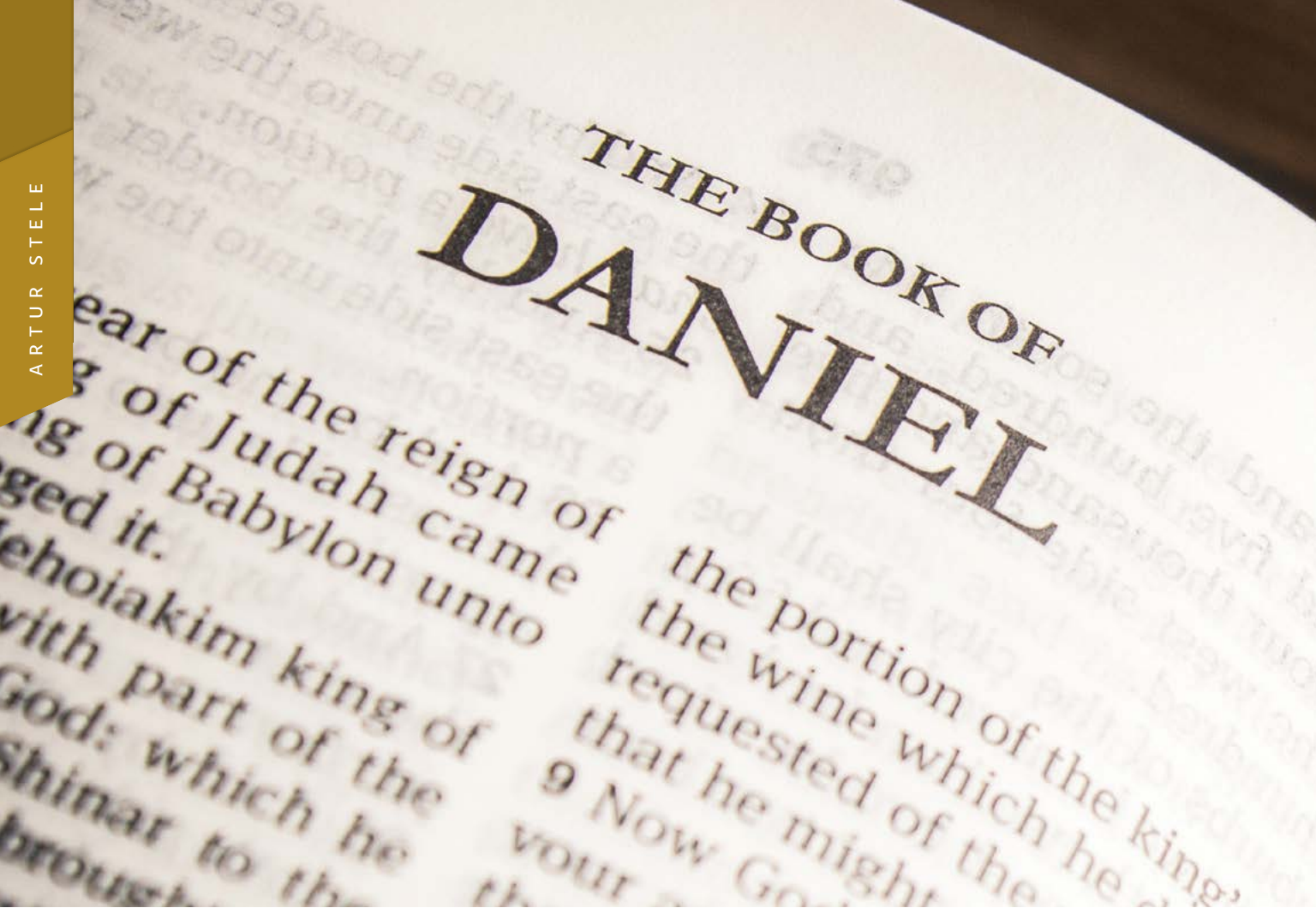
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“Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. ‘But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days’ ” (Dan. 12:12, 13, NKJV).

The history of interpretation of Daniel 12:13 in early Adventism is not only fascinating, but it also has crucial implications for biblical hermeneutics as well as Adventist mission. Interpretations held before the Great Disappointment¹ differed somewhat from those held after. We will survey these interpretations and then draw some conclusions.

Before the Disappointment

William Miller, Baptist preacher and leader of the Millerite movement, stated that a physical resurrection of Daniel himself is in view² in Daniel 12:12, 13 and that the general resurrection should happen at the end of the 1,335 days. Miller expected the fulfillment of the blessing promised to those reaching the 1,335-day prophecy in 1843.

He understood that the second coming of Christ was to take place at the end of the 1,335 days, which ended the 2,300 days as well.³

In a letter, Miller stated: “Do you not see that, at the end of 1335 days, Daniel will stand in his lot? And do you not see, sir, that his standing in his lot means the resurrection?”⁴

The Second Advent Manual, published in 1843, presents a clear interpretation of Daniel 12:13, which is said to refer to the resurrection of Daniel himself: “‘But go thou thy way till the end be, (*the end of these wonders*), for thou shalt rest (the condition of the righteous dead from their decease till the resurrection, Rev. vi. 11; xiv. 13,) and stand in thy lot’ (or, more literally, stand up for, i. e., be raised from the dead, to receive thy part in the inheritance) ‘at the end of the days.’ ”⁵

Artur Stele, PhD, serves as a vice president for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



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Daniel 12:13 and early Adventist interpretations

Consequently, it becomes apparent that the Millerites proclaimed that Daniel 12:13 refers to the physical resurrection of Daniel.

After the Disappointment

Having connected these two events—the fulfillment of the 1,335-day blessing pronounced in Daniel 12:12 and the resurrection of Daniel himself in Daniel 12:13—early Adventists now had to explain this interpretation, obviously wrong, in the light of the Great Disappointment.

Some continued to insist that the 1,335-day blessing had not been fulfilled in 1843 and that its fulfillment was still imminent, even suggesting new dates.

James White did not connect the 1,335 days with the resurrection of Daniel, writing: “The view that the 1335 days extend to the resurrection we do not endorse.”⁶ However, it does not mean that James White separated the events of Daniel 12:13 from events presented in verse 12.

He also wrote: “The day and hour of Christ’s second coming are not revealed in the Scriptures.

Neither is the year in which this glorious event is to take place pointed out. No one of the prophetic periods reaches to the second coming of Christ. The sanctuary is to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days, and Daniel is to stand in his lot at the end of the 1335 days. But that these events occur before the second appearing of Christ, is susceptible of the clearest proof. Both these prophetic periods terminated in 1844.”⁷

James White still saw Daniel 12:13 being fulfilled at the end of the 1,335 days. However, he did not interpret Daniel 12:13 as a reference to the resurrection of Daniel but, rather, to the vindication of Daniel in judgment. He said: “In the great day of atonement for the blotting out of the sins of all of every age, the cases of patriarchs and prophets, and sleeping saints of all past ages will come up in judgment, the books will be opened, and they will be judged according to the things written in the books. It is thus, at the end of the 1335 days, [Dan. xii. 13,] that DANIEL STANDS IN HIS LOT.”⁸

Although sharing with James White the understanding that Daniel’s “standing in his lot” refers to

his vindication in judgment, Uriah Smith differentiates Daniel's "standing in his lot" from the 1,335 days of Daniel 12:12. Speaking of the time prophecies of Daniel 12, Smith states: "But how can it be that they have ended, it may be asked, since at the end of these days Daniel stands in his lot, which is by some supposed to refer to his resurrection from the dead? This question is founded on a misapprehension in two respects: First, that the days at the end of which Daniel stands in his lot are the 1335 days; and, secondly, the standing of Daniel in his lot is his resurrection, which also cannot be sustained. The only thing promised at the end of the 1335 days is a blessing unto those who wait and come to that time; that is, those who are then living."⁹

Smith continues, pointing out that, under the blessing of Daniel 12:12, the increase of knowledge and the correct understanding of the prophecies should be assumed. "We see a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy in the great proclamation of the second coming of Christ. Forty-five years before this, the time of the end commenced, the book was unsealed, and light began to increase. About the year 1843, there was a grand culmination of all the light that had been shed on prophetic subjects up to that time. The proclamation went forth in power."¹⁰

Smith interprets Daniel's "standing in his lot" as when Daniel's name will come up in the investigative judgment and he will be vindicated. Other writers have followed his lead in interpreting this final promise given to Daniel.¹¹ One of the main arguments against the resurrection promised to Daniel was based on a very narrow study of the Hebrew word translated "lot" in Daniel 12:13.¹²

Ellen G. White's contribution

Ellen G. White¹³ did not get involved in the debate about the physical resurrection of Daniel as presented in the final verse of the book. Instead, using the language of the verse, she applies it to the fact that the prophecies of Daniel have now been more clearly understood.

"Those who become confused in their understanding of the Word, who fail to see the meaning of antichrist, will surely place themselves on the side of antichrist. There is no time for us to assimilate with the world. Daniel is standing in his lot and in his place. The prophecies of Daniel and of John are to be understood; they interpret each other. They give to the world truths which everyone should understand. These prophecies are to be witnesses in the world.

"Those who become confused in their understanding of the Word, who fail to see the meaning of antichrist, will surely place themselves on the side of antichrist. There is no time for us to assimilate with the world."

By their fulfillment in these last days, they will explain themselves."¹⁴

"The time has come for Daniel to stand in his lot. The time has come for the light given him to go to the world as never before. If those for whom the Lord has done so much will walk in the light, their knowledge of Christ and the prophecies relating to Him will be greatly increased as they near the close of this earth's history."¹⁵

These rare statements that Ellen G. White made in reference to the wording used in Daniel 12:13 do not imply a full interpretation of the passage of Daniel 12:12, 13. Instead, simply by using the language of Daniel 12:13, she applies it to the time when the understanding of Daniel and Revelation were greatly increased.

Observations and applications

Ellen White never spoke out against Daniel 12:13 as referring to a physical resurrection of Daniel, nor did she speak in favor of the interpretations provided by James White, Smith, or Loughborough. She simply applied the language of Daniel 12:13 to the fact that, in her day, the prophecies of the books of Daniel and Revelation were more clearly understood than previously. In other words, she provides an additional application to the actual fulfillment of the promise given to Daniel.¹⁶

The question remains, does the text itself provide any hint of a possible additional application?

Although we do not find any textual justification for the dual fulfillment of the prophetic period mentioned in Daniel 12:12, nevertheless, the wording of Daniel 12:13 seems to point to a possible additional application besides the promise of resurrection given to Daniel himself.

The indicator is found in the last word of the passage.¹⁷ For this last word, translated as “days,” Daniel uses two languages. He starts in Hebrew but ends the word in Aramaic.¹⁸ Although these two languages have the same root for the word *days*, the Hebrew beginning of the word cannot be mistaken because of the definite article. In Hebrew, the definite article comes as a prefix to the word, but in Aramaic, the definite article comes as a suffix to the word. In addition, the definite articles in these two languages are unmistakably different.

If Daniel had used only Hebrew, it would point back to the word *days* used in referring to 1,335 days. If Daniel had used only an Aramaic word, it would just clearly and totally differentiate the

word *days* in Daniel 12:13 from the word *days* used in Daniel 12:12. However, the fact that Daniel combines two languages in the final word may suggest that, although there is a clear distinction between the two passages, there still is some possible connection between them.

Ellen G. White, without proficiency in ancient languages, nevertheless saw indicators that allowed her to make a noteworthy contribution in addition to the fulfillment of the promise of a physical resurrection for Daniel himself. Ellen G. White referred to the “resurrection” of the *message* of the book of Daniel. We can believe that the same Holy Spirit who guided Daniel in writing his book, guided Ellen G. White in understanding it.



- 1 For a brief definition, see Eugene Zaitsev, “The Mission of Adventism,” *Ministry*, December 2012, 17.
- 2 Charles Fitch also supported Miller’s views on Daniel 12:13. For example, in one of his letters written in November 1841 quoting the thirteenth verse, he inserted: “But go thy way Daniel, for thou shalt rest [i.e., die] and stand in thy lot [i.e., be raised] at the end of the days.” Letter to Rev. J. Litch, on the Second Coming of Christ, 43.
- 3 Miller pointed out: “When, therefore, I found the 2300 prophetic days which were to mark the length of the vision from the Persian to the end of the fourth kingdom, the seven times continuance of the dispersion of God’s people, and the 1335 prophetic days to the standing of Daniel in his lot, all evidently extending to the advent, with other prophetic periods, I could but regard them as ‘the times before appointed,’ which God had revealed ‘unto his servants the prophets.’” This statement makes it clear that the 1,335 period and Daniel’s standing are connected to the Advent. William Miller, *William Miller’s Apology and Defense*, August 1, 10.
- 4 William Miller, *Miller’s Reply to Stuart’s “Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy,”* 1842, 48.
- 5 Apollon Hale, *The Second Advent Manual* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1843), 61.3.
- 6 James White, editor’s footnote appended to “William Miller: His Treatment of Opponents—Specimens of His Preaching,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 7, no. 18 (January 31, 1856): 137.
- 7 James White, *The Second Coming of Christ* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1871), 62.
- 8 James White, “The Judgment,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 9, no. 13 (January 29, 1857): 100.
- 9 Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assn., 1897), 343.
- 10 Smith, 343.
- 11 For example, see J. N. Loughborough, “The Hour of His Judgment Come,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 5, no. 4 (February 14, 1854): 30.
- 12 “I know of no period that can be so reckoned as to come this side of 1844; so that the time Daniel was to stand in his lot at the end of the days was 1844. The word which is rendered *lot*, does not signify his redeemed state, but *chance*. Daniel should stand his chance. Why? Because his sins had been confessed, and on the day of atonement those sins which have been confessed are opened before-hand to judgment.” Loughborough, 30. For arguments in favor of the physical resurrection, see Artur A. Stele, “Resurrection in Daniel 12 and Its Contribution to the Theology of the Book of Daniel” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1996), 150–191.
- 13 It is of interest to note that Ellen G. White clearly believed that the 1335-days prophecy has been fulfilled. In her letter to the church in Brother Hastings’s house, she states: “We told him [Brother Hewit] of some of his errors in the past, that the 1,335 days were ended and numerous errors of his.” (November [27], 1850, Letter 128, 1850). She also made several statements underlining that there will not be any message that will be based on time: “Time had not been a test since 1844, and it will never again be a test.” Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1945), 75. “There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time.” Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 188. For more information and bibliography on a better understanding of these quotes from Ellen G. White, see Alberto R. Timm, “The 1,290 and 1,335 Days of Daniel 12,” Seventh-day Adventist Church Biblical Research Institute, accessed July 8, 2021, <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/the-1290-and-1335-days-of-daniel-12/>.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *The Relief of the Schools* (1900), 11.
- 15 Ellen G. White, Manuscript 176, 1899.
- 16 The final fulfillment was seen in the resurrection. This thought was noticeably presented in a sermon preached by L. R. Conradi while Ellen G. White was still alive. See L. R. Conradi, “God’s Opening Providences,” *General Conference Bulletin*, June 4, 1913, 267.
- 17 See, Artur Stele, “The Last Word of the Book of Daniel: A Grammatical Mistake or a Conscious Choice,” in *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, February 2021, 6–9.
- 18 Some scholars see here just an Aramaism without any significance for interpretation. For example, see Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993), 271. However, the very fact that Daniel uses the word *days* in both languages in his book many times, but only one time in the entire book at the very end adds to the otherwise Hebrew beginning of the word an Aramaic ending suggests an intent. Besides, one must keep in mind that just a verse before, Daniel uses the Hebrew word for *days* with a Hebrew and not an Aramaic ending. If it would be a simple Aramaism, we would expect it in both places. It is of interest to note that the use of the Hebrew word for *days* with a definite article and with an Aramaic plural ending is only attested one time in the entire Old Testament: it is here in Daniel 12:13.

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Weaning Babies:

A meditation on Hebrews 5:11–6:8

Elizabeth Ostring, MBChB, PhD, a physician, theologian, and former medical missionary, resides in Helensville, Auckland, New Zealand, and works with the “Incredible Journey” Bible School and the Hope Channel Bible School.



A group of young adults and I studied Hebrews, and I can testify that it changed my life. Hebrews is the perfect bridge between the Old and New Testaments, explaining the meaning of the Old in the radiant light of the New.

But after magnificent chapters highlighting the absolute supremacy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we were puzzled by the accusation of babyhood at the end of the fifth chapter: “When you ought to be *teachers* because of the length of time that has passed since you first heard the gospel, you still need someone to tell you the simple elements of the very beginning

of the message of God. You have sunk into a state when you need milk and not solid food”¹ (v. 12, emphasis added).

The problem

Hebrews thus declares *all* Christians should move from a new birth experience to a teaching role. The milky doctrines appear to be the core of the Christian message, but “let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment” (Heb. 6:1, 2).² For the author of Hebrews, a major problem for Christians is not

that of regressing to a pre-Christian state but prolonged, unproductive babyhood.

If the milky doctrines are so important, what is wrong with spiritual babies? The apostle says that having tasted the heavenly gift and shared in the gift of the Holy Spirit, they crucify the Son of God again and hold Him up to contempt (vv. 4–6). Worse, it is impossible to restore such persons to repentance because they put the Son of God to open shame. This shocking indictment sounds like apostasy. But the next verses suggest another problem: “For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned” (vv. 7, 8).

What kind of land grows thorns and thistles?

Surely it is land not used for the good purpose for which it was intended.

Spiritual babies are interested primarily in their own salvation, in their own chance to escape judgment and reach heaven. They have lost the vision of extending the kingdom of God and are unfruitful, doing nothing to share the knowledge of Jesus with others. They have lost their first love.

Pastoral focus

Layer by layer, illustration by illustration, example by example, the author of Hebrews builds a dazzling picture of the glorious nature and supremacy of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice and mediatorial work. Insistently and persistently, the focus of Hebrews is Jesus. This vision of Jesus is the source of both preaching and outreach.

But the Word of God can be distorted. There is a demand, even industry, to promulgate riveting sermons recorded with the finesse of modern technology for the benefit of those who are confirmed in the milk of the Word. Congregants spend Sabbath afternoons reviewing and

critiquing the words of charismatic preachers expounding on end-time events or fulfillments of prophecy. The viewers congratulate themselves with the thought that they have superior knowledge that will save them from last-day horrors.

This is nothing new. Long ago, these words were written: “Sermons have been in great demand in our churches. The members have depended on pulpit declamations instead of on the Holy Spirit.”³ Nodding in agreement with the pastor’s words is not plowing the field and planting a useful crop for the rain of the Holy Spirit to fall on. Should pastors, therefore, abandon preaching? Of course not. Clearly, preaching is essential to educate and nurture.

But pastors need to help milk-imbibing babies grow and become mature teachers of the Word. The first step is to uplift Jesus, His sacrifice, His mediatorial ministry, and His enthronement in glory. When people look unto Jesus, the founder and perfecter of their faith, they are able to run with endurance the race that is set before them (Heb. 12:2, 1). Hebrews suggests the pastor’s work is not only to offer the beautiful milky doctrines of Christianity to newborn babes in Jesus but also to encourage those believers to grow and uplift Jesus to others, to share the good news that has blessed them so much. When the preaching message focuses on Jesus and uplifts Him in all His wonderful perfection and sacrificial

love, people will be encouraged and inspired to share Him with others.

Anointing all believers

Perhaps you are now nodding in bored agreement: all pastors recognize the obvious need to encourage people to share their faith. But too often, Christian witnessing is presented as mini-pastoring—that good witnessing for Jesus is doing the same type of work as the pastor, only on a smaller scale. This is not to deride pastoral work, but might the witnessing abilities of others be cramped by this approach?

Pastoral leadership might better be regarded as coaching—not coaching in pastoral methods but coaching people to be whom God intended them to be and showing them how they, in the areas of their own daily work experience, can share the message of Jesus Christ.

I was a practicing physician when I enrolled in a master’s class called The Theology of Ministry. To my dismay, most in the class were youth pastors—and the lecturer, a renowned youth leader. But Dr. Wayne French did not try to turn me into a pseudo-or semi-youth minister. He coached me to think of how to apply the principles he taught to my daily work with patients, introduce spiritual concepts, and pray with people more effectively. It was a life-changing experience.

Recognizing the connection

If pastors came close to their congregants and learned what their daily God-ordained work entails, they could powerfully influence and encourage people to move from spiritual babyhood to Christian maturity. It is highly significant that when Jesus called Simon and his brother Andrew, He said, “‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men’” (Matt. 4:19). Their call to ministry was couched in words that connected with their daily work and even intimated that their methods might be related to skills that they had already developed.

What congregants need to learn is how to turn ordinary labor into witnessing opportunities. It is easy to forget that the three angels’ messages encompass more than just “a day” but Jesus as Creator; our rest in His salvation; and, significantly enshrined in



the pivotal Sabbath command, God's mandate for humans to work six days a week. Witnessing for Jesus Christ is not merely a Sabbath-afternoon activity but a whole-life focus.

Work is not an unfortunate survival necessity to be (reluctantly) relinquished each week to somehow honor God but an opportunity for Christians to extend their influence, a natural mingling with the people⁴ that offers many chances to bless others in practical and spiritual ways. The Bible begins with work: the creative work of God. In fact, Genesis is built around the theme of God's work.⁵ Even more pertinently, Genesis focuses on the theme of "blessing," and forms of this word appear about 88 times in Genesis, more than any other book in the Bible.⁶

Of course, blessing is at the core of the Sabbath. Thus work (rightly appreciated) and Sabbath are intimately linked by the concept of blessing. For the mature Christian, this link both *leads* to practical assistance to others and *sharing* the good news of Jesus. This daily focus on others, on both their spiritual and physical needs, transforms milk-dependent baby Christians into mature teachers of their workplace colleagues. It also allows people to be creative, to work with God in their own Holy Spirit-anointed skills.

The mature Christian

The pastor does not need to be the expert lawyer, car mechanic, computer programmer, hospital cleaner, or supermarket supervisor when he or she coaches members of his or her congregation. By patient listening, the pastor can discover what the different types of work essentially involve. Then *together*, the pastor and congregant can learn how to meet the needs of the people in these various work environments and how to bid these fellow workers to follow Jesus.

A pastor will lead mature Christians in appropriate Bible study, training and equipping them to develop skills in the presentation of God's Word, enabling them to reach others by word and example, which is in the truth of Jesus Christ, not just doctrine. As the pastor joins congregants in understanding the Bible, he or she helps spiritual babies become teachers of God's Word. Importantly, this coaching partnership extends the pastor's immediate sphere of influence into the community.

An example of the value of lay initiatives is church planting, usually lay-led enterprises. While church plants represent only a small proportion of the total attendance within a conference, they

contribute a noticeably higher proportion of total baptisms.⁷ But imagine if the workplace of each congregant was a lay-led outreach initiative! What a harvest for Jesus there could be. All too often, outreach is seen as a pastoral activity, and the skills of others lie dormant and unrecognized until they become confirmed milk-sucking babies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how drastically both work and worship can be impacted and how important both these activities are. People have had to rapidly learn to do both in very different ways, and this has not been easy. But this challenge gives us an opportunity to rethink not only how Christians "do" church but also how they approach work.

Milk-dependent Christians need more sermons to watch in the comfort of their homes. But pastors can help move congregants from being mere consumers of Christian milk to thinking about how they can use their work opportunities to bless others. The disaster of underemployment or unemployment can become an opportunity for learning a new approach to combining work with outreach. May God help us lift Jesus and His righteousness high so that, through His Holy Spirit, spiritual babies can be turned into teaching witnesses and point others, as Hebrews says, to look "forward to a city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10).



- 1 Translation from William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Edinburgh, UK: Saint Andrew Press, 1957), 47.
- 2 Scripture is from the English Standard Version.
- 3 Ellen G. White, "The Need of a Revival and a Reformation," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 25, 1902, 1, <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Periodicals/RH/RH19020225-V79-08.pdf>.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), 143.
- 5 Elizabeth Ellen Ostring, *Be a Blessing: The Theology of Human Work in the Narrative of Genesis* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016).
- 6 Christopher Wright Mitchell, *The Meaning of BRK "to Bless" in the Old Testament*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 95 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987), 185; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 275; Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading the Old Testament Ethically* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 20, footnote.
- 7 Personal communication from Sven Östring, North New South Wales Conference, Australia, where church plant baptisms were 2.8 times the conference average.

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A Seventh-day Adventist chaplain in the FBI



Anyone who works in law enforcement or who has a loved one who works in a law enforcement agency dreads news like what we heard on Tuesday, February 2, 2021: two Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents were killed and three injured in a shooting at a home in Sunrise, Florida. The gunman, also killed, was a 55-year-old man suspected of producing and trafficking child pornography.

The incident began just after six o'clock in the morning. The FBI agents were at the home to serve a federal court-ordered search warrant in a case involving violent crimes against children. In the ensuing shoot-out, Special Agents Daniel Alfin and Laura Schwartzenberger were killed. Two other agents were injured and taken to the hospital and were released after treatment. One injured agent did not require hospitalization.²

I am a Seventh-day Adventist pastor and a volunteer chaplain with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. More specifically, I serve the Violent Crimes Against Children (VCAC) Unit to which these agents belong. On the afternoon of February 2, I was contacted by the unit chief requesting that I come to provide support for the local members of the team, some of whom were acquainted or had worked with the agents involved in this tragedy.

VCAC

The VCAC Unit was created by the FBI to “provide a rapid, proactive, and comprehensive [task force] to counter all threats of abuse and exploitation to children when those crimes fall under the authority of the FBI.” Their job is to “identify, locate, and recover child victims” and to “strengthen relationships between the FBI and federal, state, local, tribal, and international law enforcement partners to identify, prioritize, investigate, and deter individuals and criminal networks exploiting children.”³

The scope of the investigations conducted by the FBI's VCAC unit includes such things as:

- ▶ “Child abductions—the mysterious disappearance of a minor, especially a minor” 12 years of age or younger.
- ▶ “Contact offenses against children—production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), sextortion, domestic travel to engage in sexual activity with children, and international travel to engage in sexual activity with children.
- ▶ “Sexual exploitation of children—online networks and enterprises manufacturing, trading, distributing, and/or selling CSAM.
- ▶ “Trafficking of CSAM—distribution or possession.
- ▶ “International parental kidnapping—wrongfully retaining a child outside the United States with the intent to obstruct the lawful exercise of parental rights.”⁴

FBI chaplain

The FBI began the volunteer chaplaincy program in 1991 because its employees involved in shootings and who work gruesome scenes needed additional support beyond that provided by mental-health professionals. FBI chaplains are unpaid volunteers who are protected by workplace rules and have security clearances like other bureau employees. Many of the more than 150 chaplains serve as chaplains in other law enforcement agencies in addition to their role as pastors or church employees. Like those in the military, health-care facilities, or corrections facilities, FBI chaplains do not proselytize during their ministry service. However, chaplains can help answer, in a different way from other professionals, the deeper questions in the hearts of those who witness a tragedy.

I have been a pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church for most of my ministerial career of more than 35 years. I have served in 12

local, county, and federal agencies with as few as 12 people and as many as 40,000 people and have never received financial compensation for my work. But the greatest reward has been to be associated with some of the finest, most dedicated people in the country.

I have attended many training sessions on subjects such as critical stress management; suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention; line-of-duty death; and law-enforcement burnout. I have also received training in hostage negotiation and peer support and counseling.

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, I was deployed to New York City for two separate weeks to provide support to the rescue personnel, particularly the Port Authority Police Department. A few years later, following the collapse of the bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in which thirteen people were killed and 145 were injured, I was part of the team that provided more than 30 interventions to the rescue personnel who worked during that incident.

In 2016, I was invited to join the FBI, the first and only Seventh-day Adventist chaplain to serve the bureau. Since then, two other Seventh-day Adventist pastors have joined the bureau. It is an honor and privilege to serve the premier law enforcement agency not just in the United States but, perhaps, the world. FBI employees are some of the smartest, best trained, and most capable people anywhere.

A chaplain's work

Though among the best and brightest, FBI employees are still human beings, and they suffer great losses, such as on February 2, 2021. They have families, houses, cars, and pets, and yet they also have highly classified information being processed in their minds, information that can influence the safety and well-being of people all over the world, not just in the United States. They also carry the additional burden of secrecy and confidentiality. Much of what they do cannot be shared with anyone—family or friends.

My work with the FBI is to get acquainted with the personnel in the units where I serve as a chaplain. I walk the hallways and visit the agents and analysts in their cubicles and the supervisors in their offices. I make myself available if they wish to talk. I ask about their family, health, and well-being. I do not ask any specifics about their job because I do not need to know, nor would they tell me.

On Wednesday, February 3, I made my rounds around the office, stopping to talk to everyone. I returned on Thursday, February 4, just to make sure I had not missed anyone. I do not have to say much. A “Hello” or a “How are you?” is a sufficient invitation for anyone who would like to share what’s on their mind. But I know they appreciate my quiet presence, my willingness to listen, and whom I represent as a chaplain.

I remember the day a couple of years ago when I met Rachel.⁵ She saw me in the hallway and called to me. “Do you have a minute to talk?” she asked. We went to an empty conference room, where she told me that the next day would be the first anniversary of her daughter’s death. Her daughter had passed away unexpectedly, leaving Rachel to raise her daughter’s teenage son. Tears rolled down her face as she opened her heart, telling me of her sorrow, her concerns for her grandson, and how sad and tired she was. I listened quietly, shared a few prudent thoughts, and prayed with her. Ever since that day, whenever I see Rachel, she greets me with a big smile and thanks me for my help.

Helping law enforcement

That’s what I do as a chaplain. I am available, I listen, I help, I pray.

What about you, church pastor? I would like to encourage you to build bridges of understanding between police and community.

1. Pray for the law enforcement personnel in your church, community, and country. The stresses they live under can be overwhelming. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among them.⁶

2. Adopt your local police station. The Beltsville church in Maryland adopted the District VI Station of the Prince George’s County Police Department and made a space behind their station into a lovely patio, including a brand-new grill and picnic tables, where officers can enjoy a few minutes to relax and eat.

3. Set aside one Sabbath each year to celebrate and honor the law enforcement personnel in your congregation and community. Invite the chief of police or department representatives, introduce them to your congregation, and make them feel welcomed and appreciated.

4. Feed them on special occasions. I know cops have a reputation for eating donuts (more of a myth than a reality), but think about them working during all the holidays while you rest and spend time with your family. Your church can arrange to take precooked meals to the station

for Christmas and other annual holidays so that all they have to do is warm them up and have home-cooked meals. Be sure to contact them to find out how best to do that and what food they would most enjoy.

5. Volunteer as a police chaplain. Several Seventh-day Adventist law enforcement chaplains are serving their local police department, county sheriff's department, state police department, or federal agencies such as the FBI and the United States Secret Service. For information on how you can get involved in such ministry, reach out to Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries.⁷

Chaplaincy, and particularly law enforcement chaplaincy, is not for every pastor. For those of us who do it, it is a great opportunity to minister to those who serve and protect our communities. But even if you are not called to be a law-enforcement chaplain, as a pastor, you can pray and lead your congregation to encourage, support, and pray for those who protect and serve. As that tragic day in Florida showed, such

service can be painfully stressful for those who risk their lives almost daily for our safety.



- 1 The FBI does not allow names of the chaplains to be in print or online for both our safety and the bureau's.
- 2 A shorter version of this article may be found in *The Adventist Chaplain*, issue 2, 2021, published by Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries.
- 3 "Crimes Against Children/Online Predators," FBI, accessed October 22, 2021, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/violent-crime/cac>.
- 4 "Crimes Against Children, Online Predators."
- 5 Not her real name.
- 6 Brian Scott-Smith, "Suicide the Leading Cause of Death for Police Officers, Data Show," WSHU Public Radio, April 1, 2019, <https://www.wshu.org/news/2019-04-01/suicide-the-leading-cause-of-death-for-police-officers-data-show>
- 7 See <https://www.adventistchaplains.org/>.

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LETTERS

Practical

Thank you for the excellent August 2021 issue of *Ministry*. I especially appreciated the article by Glenn Townend, "Working With Other Strong Leaders: Lessons From David and Joab." The lessons drawn from David's interaction with Joab were relevant and practical.

—Derek Morris, president, Hope Channel International, Inc.

Partial

It was a pleasure to see an article on "Restoration for a Traumatized World" (August 2021) because of all we are currently experiencing. The writers presented some excellent materials, almost

as a foundation to the topic. However, as I read on, my eager expectations were left unfulfilled, and I am disappointed that the writers only partially finished their article. Indeed, the heart of God's restoration is where He says, as was said to the children of Israel, 'I see and feel your pain. I will come soon to rescue and restore all things. Never again will there be suffering, sorrow, or pain. All distress, pain, and death will end soon. Indeed, the God we serve is a God of feelings.'

When I am traumatized by the situations I have experienced or am going through, I find He is there, walking that road of Emmaus with me.

So please, writers, won't you finish the article? If so, in

part 2, please tell me about caring for the traumatized from a feeling perspective. Let me read and see the God who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities and traumas.

—Steve Thomas, DMin, National Health Service chaplain and pastor, Chiswick Seventh-day Adventist Church, London, United Kingdom

Grateful

I greet you in the name of Jesus. I am a student pastor at Bugema University in Uganda. I have received the *Ministry* magazine for pastors. It has a good message. May God bless you.

—Reonard Jackson Emmanuel, Bugema University, Uganda



The
Bible
in the **Seventh-day
Adventist Church**

Donny Chrissutianto, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Theological-Historical department, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.



SCAN FOR AUDIO

Whether the Seventh-day Adventist Church considers the Bible as the highest authority in faith and practice has been questioned by fellow Christians for a long time. Adventists have proclaimed *sola Scriptura* since 1874, when Miles Grant accused Seventh-day Adventists of basing their understanding of the heavenly sanctuary on the writings of Ellen G. White and not on the Bible.¹

The Bible for the Adventist pioneers

For Adventist pioneers, the Bible was the highest authority of faith and practice. One of the cofounders, Joseph Bates, stated that “the Bible is a sufficient rule” in understanding the Sabbath.² That also applies to other doctrines. James White, another cofounder, believed that “the Bible is a perfect, and complete revelation. It is our only rule of faith and practice.”³ Accepting Scripture as the standard for doctrines and Christian behavior, he explained that “the Bible is an everlasting Rock. *It is our rule of faith and practice.*” Every Christian should “take the Bible as a perfect rule of faith and duty. . . . The Word should be in front, and the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the fountain of wisdom.”⁴

Uriah Smith, an editor of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, answered Miles Grant’s accusation against Adventist belief about the heavenly sanctuary. He wrote that much has “been written upon the subject. But in no one of these are the visions once referred to as any authority on this subject or the source from whence any view we hold has been derived. Nor does any preacher ever refer to them on this question. The appeal is invariably to the Bible, where there is abundant evidence for the views we hold on this subject.”⁵

Seventh-day Adventists did not see themselves as depending on Ellen White’s visions to formulate doctrines. Instead, they went to the Bible as their source.

Ellen White, the church’s third cofounder and its prophetic voice, during the last General

Conference Session that she attended (1909), stated, “Brethren and Sisters, I commend unto you this Book.”⁶ She consistently held this position for her entire ministry. In 1885, she had expressed the same idea: “The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this holy word will be in harmony. . . . Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, ‘It is written.’ Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, The Bible our rule of faith and discipline.”⁷ She upheld Scripture as the only authority for doctrine in the church.

During the early stage of their formation as an organization, Adventists “were a people of the ‘book’ ” because they based their doctrines only on the Bible.⁸ While this is true for the initial formation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, what about later theological development? How did Ellen G. White respond to doctrinal controversy? Did she refer to the Bible or her own writings to settle problems?

The Bible in the doctrinal controversies

Perhaps the most controversial General Conference session in Seventh-day Adventist history occurred in 1888. At issue was whether the law discussed in the book of Galatians was the ceremonial law or the moral law. General Conference president George I. Butler asked Ellen White to settle the controversy.⁹ However, she decided that God “wants us to go to the Bible and get the Scripture evidence.”¹⁰ She also advised that “the truth can lose nothing by close investigation. *Let the word of God speak for itself*, let it be its own interpreter, and the truth will shine like precious gems amid the rubbish.”¹¹ Refusing to be used to settle doctrinal controversy, she instead suggested that the church study the Bible to resolve the issue.

Another significant doctrinal controversy involved the pantheistic ideas John Harvey Kellogg presented in *The Living Temple*. His book presented a unique view of God.¹² He argued, “Suppose now we have a boot before us,—not

an ordinary boot, but a living boot . . . and as we look at it, we see little boots crowding out at the seams . . . scores, hundreds, thousands of boots, a swarm of boots continually issuing from our living boot,—would we not be compelled to say, “There is a shoemaker in the boot”? So there is present in the tree a power which creates and maintains it, a tree-maker in the tree.”¹³ Kellogg’s belief that God is in all things actually depersonalized Him, striking at the church’s belief that God is personal.¹⁴ In confirming the church’s long-standing position about God’s personal nature, Ellen White again called attention to the Bible. “God has led us in the past,” she declared, “giving us truth, eternal truth. *By this truth we are to stand.*”¹⁵ To Kellogg, she straightforwardly wrote, “You are not definitely clear on the personality of God.”¹⁶ She did not give new light to settle the issue. Instead, she referred to the church’s conclusions as a result of its thorough biblical study about God’s nature.

In 1905, A. F. Ballenger challenged the doctrine of sanctuary. He expounded a teaching that Jesus, after His ascension to heaven, entered the Most Holy Place and not the Holy Place¹⁷ as the church had believed until then.¹⁸ Ballenger’s idea led to confusion among many Adventists. Ellen White directed attention to the understanding of the Bible that the Adventists had believed for many years. She wrote, “The Lord has strengthened me to come the long journey to Washington to this meeting to bear my testimony in vindication of the truth of God’s Word and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit *in confirmation of Bible truth.*”¹⁹

Referring to the Bible, she only confirmed the biblical truth that the church had received. Throughout her life, she called the church’s attention to the Bible and the Bible alone as the standard of doctrine and belief. She urged the church to test all teachings using only the Bible. The church should consistently study the Bible in settling doctrinal controversy.

The Bible in Adventist fundamental beliefs

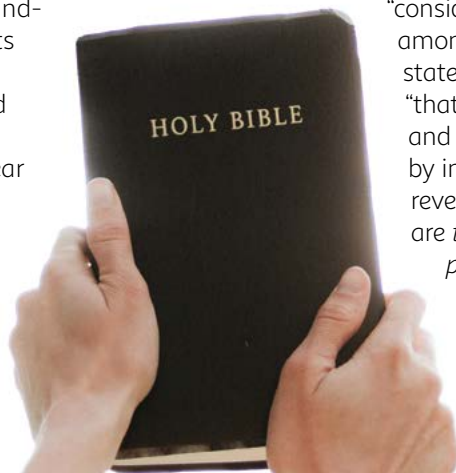
Since the beginning, Adventist pioneers saw the Bible as the highest authority for faith and practice. Statements of belief of both Sabbatarian Adventists and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whether written personally or voted corporately, have shown that their position about the Bible has remained unchangeable.

In 1854, for example, the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* articulated five core doctrines for the Sabbatarian Adventism. Even though it was not a formal statement of beliefs, it did outline their general understanding. For more than four months, it appeared as a header statement under the title “Leading doctrines taught by the Review.” The editor stated that the first doctrine was “The Bible and the Bible alone, *the rule of faith and duty.*”²⁰ Hence, even before the formal organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, believers held the position that the Bible was their only “rule of faith and duty.”

After the establishment of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Uriah Smith prepared “Fundamental Principles” of Seventh-day Adventism. Even though it was his personal statement, it came to be “considered somewhat normative among early believers.”²¹ The third statement of the belief declared: “that the Holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of his will to man, and *are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.*”²²

The list of fundamental beliefs published in 1931 by Seventh-day Adventists contained 22 statements of belief. The first declared: “That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of His will to men, and *are the only unerring rule of faith and practice.*”²³ It described the Bible as “unerring” in defining “faith and practice.”

The Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, voted



in 1980, expressed the same stance toward the Bible. Its first statement indicated that “the Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. *They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history.*”²⁴ The last sentence is still the same in the more recently expanded set of fundamental beliefs.²⁵ Through these statements, Seventh-day Adventists have constantly reminded themselves that the Bible is the primary source and highest authority for defining doctrine and practice.

We still believe

Throughout Seventh-day Adventist history, the Bible has been the only standard for

determining doctrine and practice. Its place was never taken by any writings or works including by Ellen G. White. She recognized and placed the Bible as the sole standard in the life and faith of the Christian. Statements from Adventist pioneers show they held the same position. Even during doctrinal controversy, the pioneers, including Ellen White, referred to the Bible as the source of authority.

The development of Adventist fundamental beliefs throughout the history gives the same hint that the Bible is the only source of doctrine and test of teaching and experience. This has been the official standing of the Seventh-day Adventist church. By God’s grace, we still strive to be “people of the book.”



- 1 Uriah Smith, “The Sanctuary,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 44, no. 26, December 22, 1874, 204.
- 2 Joseph Bates, *A Vindication of the Seventh-day Sabbath, and the Commandment of God: With A Further History of God’s Peculiar People, From 1847 to 1848* (New Bedford, MA: 1848), 136.
- 3 James White, ed., *A Word to the “Little Flock”* (Brunswick, ME: [James White], 1847), 13.
- 4 “The Gifts of the Gospel Church,” *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 21, 1851, 70; emphasis added.
- 5 Smith, “The Sanctuary,” 204.
- 6 William Ambrose Spicer, *The Spirit of the Prophecy in the Advent Movement: A Gift that Builds Up* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1937), 30. Cf. A. L. White, *Ellen G. White Biography*, vol. 6 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), 197.
- 7 Ellen G. White, “A Missionary Appeal,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 62, no. 49, December 15, 1885, 770.
- 8 George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), 60.
- 9 Knight, 96.
- 10 Ellen G. White, “Morning Talk by Ellen G. White,” October 24, 1888, Manuscript 9, 1888.
- 11 Ellen G. White, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials: Letters, Manuscripts, Articles, and Sermons Relating to the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 38; emphasis added.
- 12 Brian C. Wilson, *Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and the Religion of Biologic Living* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 2014), 90.
- 13 John Harvey Kellogg, *Living Temple* (Battle Creek, MI: Good Health Publishing Company, 1903), 29.
- 14 Department of General Information of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1889), 147.
- 15 Ellen G. White to physicians and ministers, October 1903, Letter 242, 1903; emphasis added.
- 16 Ellen G. White to J. H. Kellogg, March 16, 1903, Letter 300, 1903.
- 17 Calvin W. Edwards and Gary Land, *Seeker After Light: A. F. Ballenger, Adventism, and American Christianity* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2000), 137.
- 18 Department of General Information, *Yearbook*, 149.
- 19 Ellen G. White, “The Sabbath Truth in the *Sentinel* and Elder’s Ballenger Views,” May 20, 1905, Manuscript 59, 1905; emphasis added.
- 20 “Leading Doctrines Taught by the Review,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 15–September 12, 1854, 1; and then under the title “Leading Doctrines,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 19–December 19, 1854, 1; emphasis added.
- 21 Michael W. Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 27, nos. 1, 2 (2016): 96.
- 22 Uriah Smith, *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1872), 5; emphasis added.
- 23 *Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination 1931* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1931), 377; emphasis added.
- 24 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook 1981* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), 5; emphasis added.
- 25 Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrine* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2018), 11.

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10 DAYS OF
PRAYER

Materials by
Mark Finley

THE THREE ANGELS CALL TO PRAYER

January 5–15, 2022

“Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.”

REVELATION 14:6, ESV

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Taking Leave of Darwin: A Longtime Agnostic Discovers the Case for Design

by Neil Thomas, Seattle, WA: Discovery Institute Press, 2021.

Do not read this book just to prove divine Creation, although it will likely reinforce your convictions on that account if you are already a biblical creationist.

Author Neil Thomas set out on a personal journey to investigate the validity of the Darwinian theory of the origin of the species. Having been educated at Oxford, Munich, and Cardiff before becoming a professor at the University of Durham, England, Thomas had the educational chops to carry forth this quest. A longtime member of the British Rationalist Association, Thomas was a committed Darwinist and agnostic. Yet he began to discover quite a different view emerging from distinguished members of the scientific community, including Nobel prize winners, biologists, mathematicians, embryologists, cosmologists, and other recognized academics in their fields.

Beginning with Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, the story is traced of how their theory of evolution by natural selection came to be formulated. Reviewing the development of the theory and the arguments present in Darwin's day, both for and against, is most illuminating. Rather than just dismissing it as a nonbiblical approach, it is very helpful to understand how it developed, what gave it potency, what the challenges were to the Darwinian theory in its introduction, and why Darwin himself continually revised his work based on the challenges he consistently had difficulty answering.

Thomas then proceeds to show the development and near cultlike acceptance of the theory of the origin of the species as a "must have" answer that many academics were determined to hold even in the face of many unexplainable issues and discoveries. Quoting extensively from a variety of



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sources, Thomas fairly presents the position of those who are adamant that only this theory can explain life, and at the same time, he presents the scientific evidence from numerous scholars

demonstrating that such a position is insufficient at best and a major "scientific con" at worst.

Some of Thomas's best observations are of the cosmological discoveries in the last half-century, leaving researchers and scientists in awe of how the earth gained the unique supportive biosphere that enables plant, animal, and human life—like no place anywhere else in the universe. He frequently references Richard Dawkins, the British evolutionary biologist, atheist, and author well known for his criticism of creationism and intelligent design. I appreciated when he found Dawkins admitting that life is "almost unimaginably complicated in directions that convey a powerful illusion of deliberate design. . . .

"... Does it sound to you as though it would need a miracle to make randomly jostling atoms join together into a self-replicating molecule? Well, at times it does to me too" (109).

At the conclusion of his work, Thomas gives this summation of the evidence he researched, gathered, and personally responded to: "The genesis and evolution of our fine-tuned cosmos and biosphere must in the end come down to a clear binary: either nature did the fine tuning and selection or God did (however that latter entity may be conceived and glossed). To say that 'God did it' obviously does not sit well with people holding a non-theistic worldview. To say that 'nature did it' arguably carries even less plausibility, so that many persons may feel themselves torn between two equally improbable positions. However, with the naturalistic/materialistic alternative having failed so signally, we are left with no other choice but to consider the possibility of the 'God hypothesis'" (143).

This small volume is an excellent contribution to the current issues in origins and well worthy of any pastor's library.



Michał Belina-Czechowski Square marks hundredth anniversary Europe's first missionary

KRAKOW, POLAND

Poland's second-largest city, Krakow, has named a public square after the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary to Europe as part of the hundredth-anniversary celebrations of an Adventist church in the city. **Michał Belina-Czechowski**, a native of the city, became the patron of a square when it was officially opened by the mayor of Krakow on September 25, 2021.

Many official guests were present at the naming ceremony, including members of parliament, the marshal of the province, the mayor, and city councilors.

During the ceremony, Adventists in Krakow were also awarded the official Badge of Honor—the Małopolska Cross. Adventists also distributed 100,000 copies of the magazine *Signs of the Times* with plans for an open-air Bible exhibition called “The Bible: The Bestseller of All Time.”

“We are glad that for over a hundred years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been cultivating Protestant religious and social customs in Krakow. Krakow is an open city, friendly to all residents, and our strength is diversity and openness,” said Mayor **Jacek Majchrowski** during the ceremony.

“Michał Belina-Czechowski displayed courage. He acted unpromisingly both as a patriot, the first European missionary of the then-new religious community, as well as a pioneer

of abstinence movements,” states **Ryszard Jankowski**, president of the Polish Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Michał Belina-Czechowski was the first Seventh-day Adventist missionary to head to Europe despite his lack of official approval from the church leadership. Previously, he was involved in patriotic activities; the fate of Europe and Poland was very important to him.

“Due to his actions for the benefit of the country, he was forbidden to enter Poland, which was his greatest dream. The centenary of the Krakow congregation this year became a beautiful opportunity for the symbolic return of Belina-Czechowski to Krakow,” explained **Marek Rakowski**, executive secretary of the Polish Union.

Located in the territory of the Trans-European Division, Poland is a country with a population of 38 million with approximately 6,000 Adventists. “It is all the more miraculous for us to be given the square in the second largest Polish city the name of Michał Belina-Czechowski, an Adventist,” admits Rakowski.

Adventists are known for their extensive charity work, free stop-smoking programs, food bank, social campaigns opposing domestic violence (**enditnow**®), and encouragement to local leaders to support education for all children regardless of their gender, origin, or race (Every Child. Everywhere. In School. campaign). [Michał Rakowski, TED News Network]



Photo: Grzegorz Sroga

In Jamaica, Adventist food bank feeds more than 500 families monthly

Citing statistics indicating that approximately 400,000 persons go hungry daily in Jamaica and acknowledging that food is a basic need of humanity, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Jamaica continues the fight to alleviate hunger.

“As a church, we must respond to this vast need,” **Everett Brown**, president of the Jamaica Union Conference (JAMU) of the Adventist Church, said as he launched The Food Bank.

The virtual launch took place at the Seventh-day Adventist Conference Center in Mount Salem, St. James, on September 25, 2021, and was broadcast live on all church platforms across Jamaica.

The Food Bank will seek sources of food and distribute the food through the five conferences (administrative regions) in Jamaica, and in turn, conferences will distribute the food to persons in the church and the wider community, Brown said.

JAMU currently operates several food distribution units across its regions. The flagship operation is the Good Samaritan Inn in Kingston, which serves hot meals to more than 600 people three to four days per week.



“The Food Bank is expected to initially impact more than 500 families every month,” **Adrian Cotterell**, community services director for JAMU, said.


“Over time, this figure will increase as we receive support from our constituencies and donors locally and internationally.” [Nigel Coke, Inter-American Division News]

Ministering to 49 churches—one pastor

KAMULI DISTRICT, UGANDA

Pastor **Kudhongania Stephen** takes care of 49 congregations scattered in an area of approximately 208 square miles (541 square kilometers). Through seminars, preaching, and community evangelism, he has empowered his church elders and acknowledges that, without their dedication, very little could be achieved. Stephen has perfected the art of teamwork, saying that he draws

his energy from Ephesians 4:11, 12 and involves his 1,611 members in every church activity.

The COVID-19 pandemic led Stephen to change his ministry strategy. He embraced mobile phone communication to stay in touch with his elders. Since then, he has never failed to receive both statistical and financial reports. Despite the pandemic, the Kamuli district has established four primary schools, over 5,000 children are attending Sabbath Schools, and the district is on a steady path of growth. [Kamiza John Byaki, Ministerial Association secretary, Uganda Union Mission] 



Meric Dale Walker, PhD, is the executive secretary for the Jamaica Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mandeville, Manchester, Jamaica.



Secretarial efficiency: Its place in successful pastoral ministry

While many competencies are considered indispensable for successful pastoral ministry, secretarial efficiency is often sidelined. Yet a critical role of pastoral ministry is the proper administration of the church in evangelizing and nurturing believers to discipleship.

How can secretarial efficiency help pastors to positively impact lives for eternity?

Your home an office

1. Secretarial service in church administration. Secretarial efficiency is a critical resource in the pastoral toolkit for keeping track of appointments; recording names, addresses, and other important demographic details; documenting needs and requests; and following up to ensure effective pastoral service.

Prompt and professional attendance must be given to: making and returning phone calls; writing and replying to emails; composing letters; paying bills; transferring, receiving, and baptizing members; writing minutes; submitting reports; visiting people; attending meetings; organizing services; meeting deadlines; purchasing items; circulating documents; and planning events. Some pastors are blessed with an office administrator—for most pastors, their home is their office. Their work will be much smoother with efficient secretarial operations.

2. Secretarial service to local communities. An efficient organizational system can enable a pastor to render meaningful service to both church and community. Such service involves providing pastoral counseling; performing weddings; blessing babies; conducting funerals; performing house dedications; engaging in school, hospital, and business-place prayers and devotions; giving references for job placements; and offering career guidance. Recognize that you are only one person. Arrange your appointments for optimum service.

3. Secretarial service to the wider society. Every pastor should know who's who in the wider society, who is responsible for what in the community, and have contact information for respective

government departments or ministries. Pastors should be conversant with the community's social calendar of events and current affairs.

4. Secretarial service in teaching. Pastors have a responsibility to feed the flock and evangelize with sound doctrines. Secretarial efficiency in this digital age can certainly help the pastor deliver the Word with great impact when the pastor knows how to (a) file video clips and sound bites; (b) access graphics, font diversity, colors, and animation; (c) design promotional graphics; (d) critique presentations; (e) monitor chat texts; (f) compile appeal responses; and (g) follow up and document interests.

5. Secretarial service through writing. Writing can reach people with the gospel in ways that community outreach cannot. A pastor can minister by writing columns in news tabloids and intellectual journals and sharing profiles of success through struggle. Letters soliciting assistance for the destitute can be written and grant proposals for community building projects can be made.

Whatever is written from the pastor's office must be professionally and efficiently done while representing the values and standards of the organization.

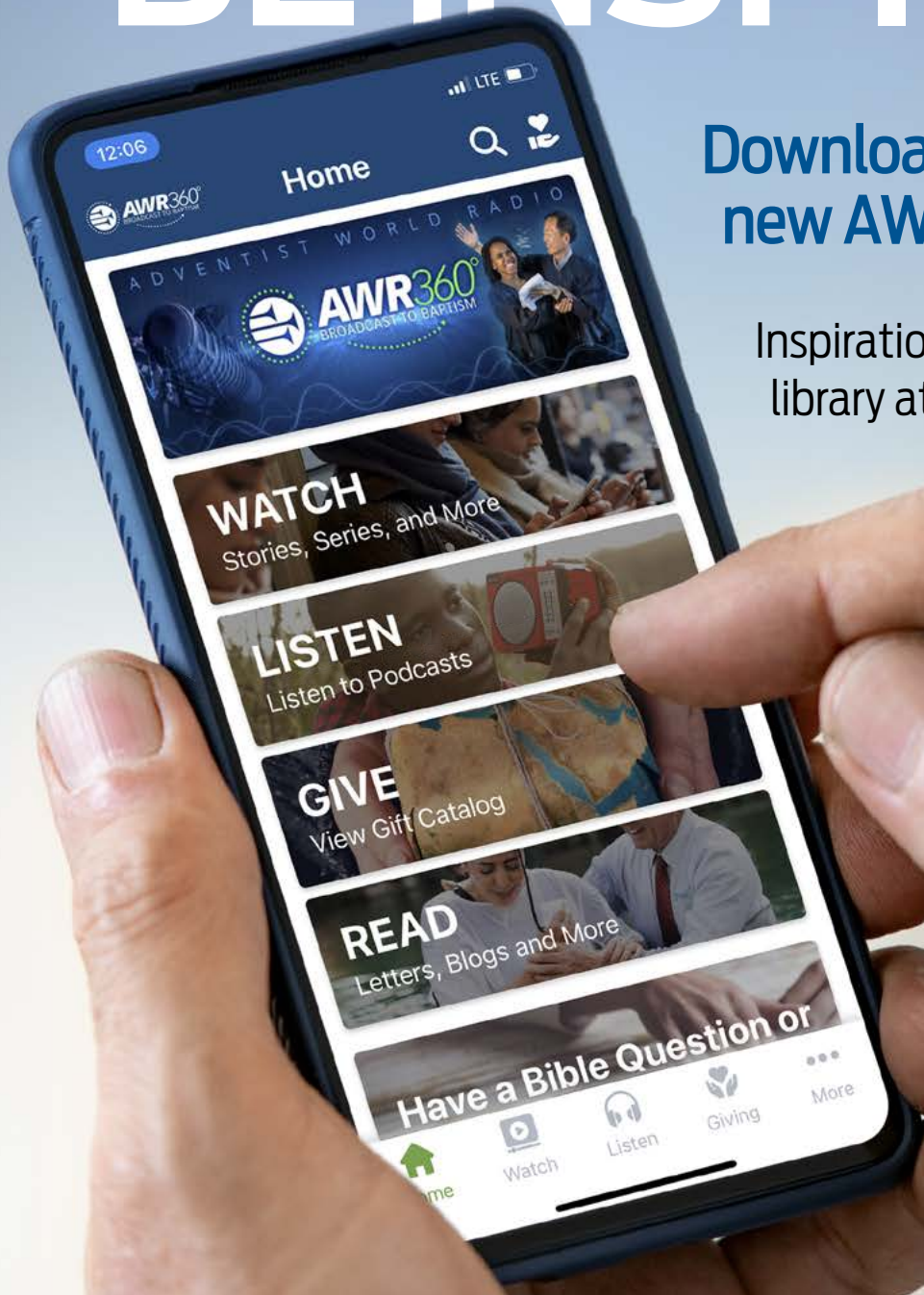
A resource in the toolkit

Secretarial efficiency is indispensable in pastoral ministry for accountable and seamless organization, record management and administrative excellence, and the delivery of pastoral care reflective of the thorough ministry of Jesus.

Jesus said, "Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost" (John 6:12, NKJV). Execute your duties with royal pride and regal class using the best language, following the best protocols, and employing the best professionalism. Give your best service with unflinching secretarial professionalism and unwavering Christian humility.

Put secretarial efficiency in your toolkit. It is not peripheral to or an appendage for pastoral ministry; it is critical for success. 📌

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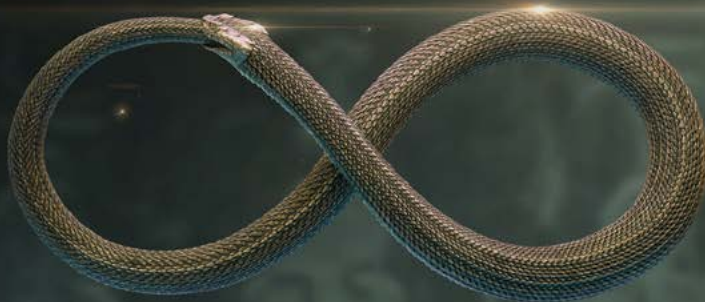
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