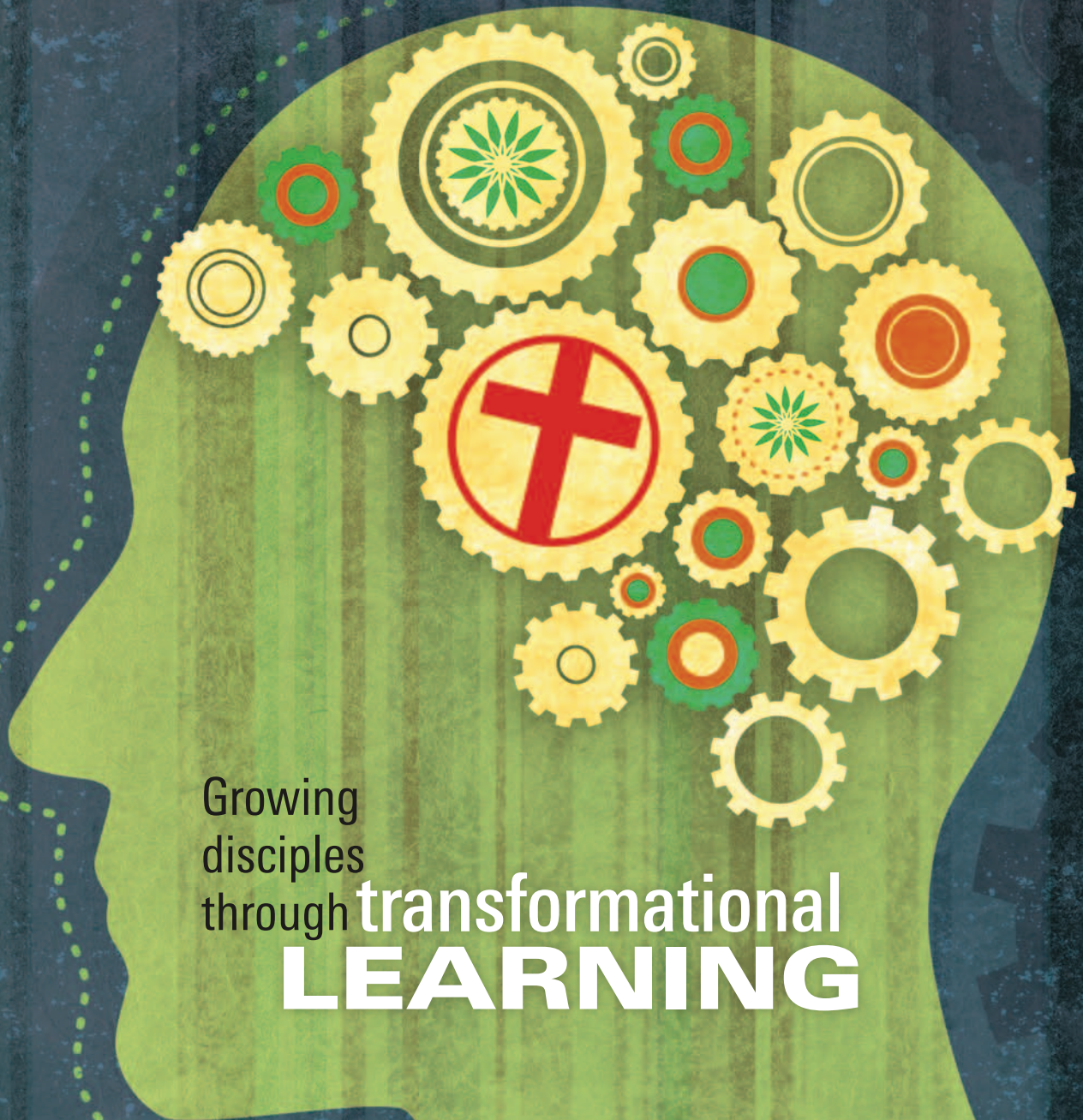


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disciples
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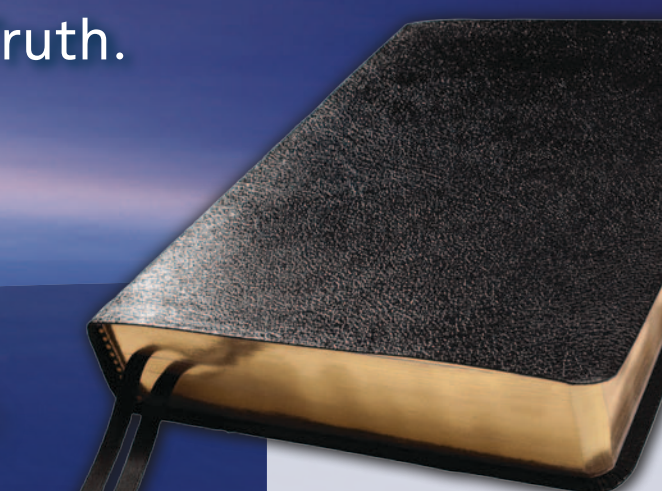
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06 **Growing disciples through transformational learning**
 Discover how God uses the strengths, personalities, life experiences, and even weaknesses in pastors to accomplish His purpose in the lives of His people.
Bonita Joyner Shields

10 **“Where is the joy?”: Three keys to avoiding burnout**
 How did the author of this article find his vocational joy—stronger and richer than ever?
Martin Thielen

14 **The immortality of the soul: Could Christianity survive without it? (Part 2 of 2)**
 This article features the beliefs of prominent writers, in previous centuries, regarding the mortalist viewpoint.
Bryan W. Ball

18 **Understanding the Word**
 In a world literally choking with books, documents, and publications, what makes the Word of the Living God so special?
Roy Adams

21 **The mystery of Israel’s salvation: A study of Romans 11:26**
 Romans 11:26 does not refer to political or geographical deliverance prior to Jesus’ second coming but to spiritual salvation. Do you agree?
Wilson Paroschi

26 **The erosion of funeral customs and its impact on ministry**
 What must be done to restore and preserve ministry effectiveness when death strikes a family?
Jay Sulfridge

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- 04** LETTERS
- 05** EDITORIAL
- 09** REVIVAL AND REFORMATION
- 28** DATELINE
- 29** RESOURCES
- 30** THE PASTOR AND HEALTH

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“THE THINGS THAT UNITE US ARE STRONGER THAN THE THINGS THAT DIVIDE US.”

Editor’s note: We received an overwhelming number of letters concerning Carl P. Cosaert’s article “A Broken Commandment or an Affirmation of Hope?” (March 2011). Here is a sampling.

I am 75 years old and a retired Lutheran pastor. And I don’t remember a time when a magazine article so moved me. I felt accused and penitent for having sent a brother (another retired Lutheran pastor) a copy of a letter I’d recently sent to President Obama. Since the letter was strong against homosexuality and my colleague and his wife have a son who recently “married” another male, the letter had the effect of holding them responsible.

I now stand under conviction and have sent my fellow pastor an apology, along with a copy of this article. I thank you once again for this fine article.

—Ted Kriefall, Olympia, Washington, United States

Dear Dr. Cosaert, I just read your moving article and was genuinely moved by the crisis that you faced with the loss of your daughter. But I was made uncomfortable by the insensitivity of the letter written to you that you referenced in the article. The person who wrote this letter has a relative in all of our churches. Their tribe is legion.

Your exegesis of the Isaiah 58 passage was superb. I think you did it just right. I hope the unnamed letter writer can be sensitized by the pain and grief of a family’s loss and

by the truth of the scriptures that you shared with him. I have been in the ministry for 57 years and have had the privilege of speaking to some Seventh-day Adventist meetings. The things that unite us are stronger than the things that divide us.

—William L. Self, senior pastor, Johns Creek Baptist Church, Alpharetta, Georgia, United States

Carl P. Cosaert’s article is an outstanding example of trying to make sense of an event that ultimately makes no sense.

I commend Cosaert for not allowing himself to be demoralized by the misguided counsel of a person whose simple answer will never do justice to an issue as complex as why good people experience heartache and tragedy. And I hope readers of *Ministry* will think twice before presuming to speak for God and offering either comfort or condemnation.

—Stephen Chavez, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

Carl P. Cosaert’s article is so needed within our Christian circles—including Adventist circles. So many so-called Christians have created a culture of judgmentalism because so many possess a law-centered theology rather than one that is grace-centered. This is the reason why we cannot love like Christ.

Those of us who think thusly possess a foolish mentality and need to repent. We have so much to learn from the life of Christ.

—Manuel Fernandez, email

I cannot tell you how deeply touched I was by Carl P. Cosaert’s article. When I first read the letter sent to Dr. Cosaert, I was so overcome with disgust and a wave of “How could anyone say these things after such a tragic loss?” Then I came back to read the rest of the article and actually broke down in tears with the revelation of the girl with the pink hair who displayed such a Christlike response in Mindy’s moment of need. Cosaert stated, “I had seen her hair, not her heart,” and later, “We simply do not know what God is doing in the heart of a person—regardless of what we might think of his or her actions.”

I honor the author for keeping his exegesis biblical and his attitude toward the one who wrote that uncalled-for letter so thoroughly Christian. I am humbled and challenged anew to speak and seek the heart of God who, when among us, befriended the tax collectors and sinners, and who “came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10, RSV).

—Jack L. Keith, pastor, email

I read professor Cosaert’s article with much interest. However, when I read the letter sent to him after the death of his daughter Mindy, I almost blew a fuse. “How much,” I thought, “do these people know about the importance of grace being ministered through such things as letters of sympathy?”

Their approach seems to echo Job’s “comforters” as well as the Pharisees’ response to the man born

Continued on page 29 ►



Daily bread

Regarded as one of the great biblical preachers of the twentieth century, Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was trained as a physician and throughout his life read widely in theology, Christian biographies, and medicine. According to his daughter Elizabeth, one particular volume stood out as her father's all-time favorite: the Bible. To Lloyd-Jones, the Bible was bread for his soul. Early in his ministry, Martyn, and his wife Bethan, embraced a Bible reading plan developed a century earlier by the Scottish preacher Robert Murray M'Cheyne.

Though his public ministry was brief, M'Cheyne left a priceless gift both for his parishioners and also for us. Shortly before his untimely death at age 29, M'Cheyne provided a Bible reading plan for his parish.¹ Following this plan as a community of faith, M'Cheyne and his parishioners read through the Bible once each year plus a second reading of the New Testament and Psalms. M'Cheyne recommended that some passages be read together as a family while other passages might be read privately.

What are some of the advantages of a systematic reading of the Bible? Many Christians have never read through the entire Bible, though they profess to accept the entire Scriptures as inspired by the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul reminds us, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).²

Having a Bible reading plan avoids wasted time wondering what to read and also provides many opportunities for family and

church members to share insights from their common reading of the Word of God.

M'Cheyne offered the following cautions for all who would engage in systematic reading of the Bible:

1. Beware of lifeless formalism, where you are reading the Bible just to fulfill a religious obligation. Read with a prayerful and receptive heart.
2. Beware of a self-righteous attitude. Do not consider yourself more virtuous than others simply because you are following a systematic reading of Scripture.
3. Beware of careless reading of the Scriptures. View every reading of Scripture as a personal meeting with the Infinite One, listening attentively to His Word.

I recently learned about the M'Cheyne Bible Plan while listening to a lecture on the life and reading habits of Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Lloyd-Jones and his wife followed the Murray M'Cheyne Bible Plan for more than 50 years. His powerful biblical preaching and writing were visible fruit of a life filled with the Word of God.

The example of these two dedicated Christian pastors, Robert Murray M'Cheyne and Martyn Lloyd-Jones, inspired me to learn more about the M'Cheyne Bible Plan. To my delight, I discovered that some gracious Christians have designed a process to assist all who would fill their hearts with the Word of God. You can sign up at www.BiblePlan.org to participate in the M'Cheyne Bible reading program. Every morning, you will receive an email with the assigned Bible passages for that day. I have found great joy knowing that countless Christians around the

I HAVE FOUND GREAT JOY KNOWING THAT COUNTLESS CHRISTIANS AROUND THE WORLD ARE ALSO SEEKING TO BE FILLED WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

world are also seeking to be filled with the Word of God.

The whole Bible testifies of Jesus (cf. John 5:30). Read the Bible to know Him whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3). Beware of cold formalism, self-righteousness, and careless reading, but at the same time be assured that the words of the prophet Jeremiah are true, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16).

I encourage you to visit www.BiblePlan.org, not only for your own blessing, but for the blessing of your family, church, and community. There are 13 options for Bible reading (the M'Cheyne Plan is #10). Perhaps you will be inspired by the instruction of Robert Murray M'Cheyne and the example of Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and invite your church family to join you on a journey through the Word of God. **M**

¹ <http://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/bmcheyne5.html> provides a copy of "Daily Bread, Being a Calendar for Reading Through the Word of God in a Year," the correspondence written by Robert Murray M'Cheyne to his parishioners at St. Peter's, Dundee, Scotland, on December 30, 1842.

² All scriptures are from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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

Bonita Joyner Shields, MA, a former local church pastor, currently serves as an editor in the General Conference Sabbath School/Personal Ministries Department, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.



Growing disciples through transformational learning

Clarence first attended church on a dare.

He promised his pastor friend he would give church a try if the pastor could beat him in two games of checkers. The pastor won, and Clarence found himself in church the next week. He responded to God's Word and the love of the congregation, and eventually was baptized, along with his wife and children.

A few weeks later, Clarence went to his pastor with a troubled heart. He did not know how to live the Christian life. "Before I was baptized," he said, "if you came to me and told me that you wanted to be a football player, I would not have just given you permission to do it, I would have *shown* you how to be one. I need someone to *show* me how to be a Christian."

Most of the time, those of us in spiritual leadership can effectively share with our church members *why* it is important to be a disciple of Christ, but often we stop short in teaching our people *how* to be a disciple. Both are important to the maturation of a Christian. But how can we, as pastors, follow through on what is called "transformational learning"—learning geared to not only inform but to transform?

Serving as an editor and working with colleagues who have educational backgrounds has helped me appreciate the value of integrating

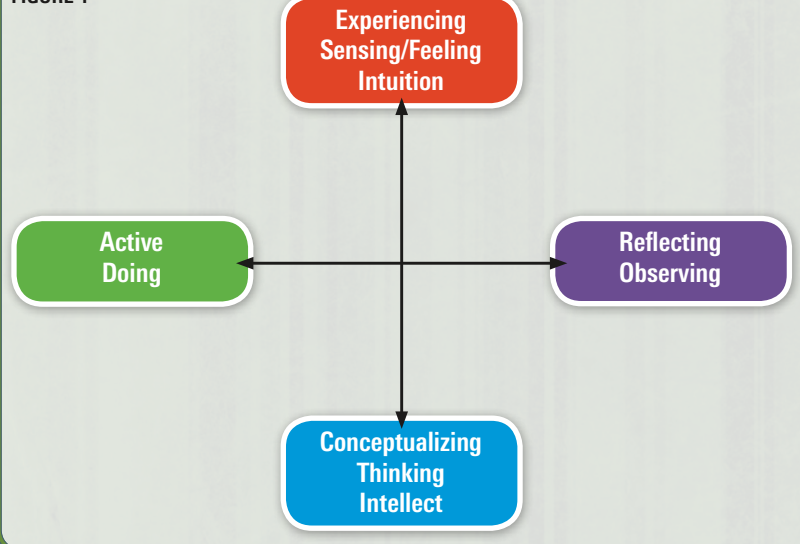
the educational and theological models of ministry within our church. Of course, Scripture links these two models of ministry together. In Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul writes, "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, *some pastors and teachers*, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to *maturity*, to the

measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph. 4:11–13, NRSV; emphasis supplied).¹

This article will show how an integration of the Learning Cycle, taken from the educational model of ministry and used to encourage transformational learning, can enhance pastoral effectiveness in preaching and teaching and, thus, enhance church members' understanding of the gospel and maturation as growing disciples of Christ.

HOW WE PERCEIVE (VERTICAL) HOW WE PROCESS (HORIZONTAL)

FIGURE 1



What is the Learning Cycle?

People learn in different ways. In the early 1970s, David Kolb identified two dimensions of learning: *perceiving* and *processing*.² The ways in which people perceive and process information constitutes their “learning style.”

first one into the water. And everyone usually knows it, since his zest for life is difficult to keep under wrap, and he yells with excitement as he enters the water! “Come in, Bonita,” he will urge. “The water is *perrrrrfect!*” I, on the other hand, sit back and observe the situation for a while before I feel comfortable enough to go in. My

to think about an activity more than others before they actually do something about it, and we have those who would much rather think and reflect on it than do something.

Using Kolb’s work as a foundation, Bernice McCarthy, in 1987, described four basic learning styles and the corresponding teaching



BUT HOW CAN WE, AS PASTORS, FOLLOW THROUGH ON WHAT IS CALLED “TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING”—LEARNING GEARED TO NOT ONLY INFORM BUT TO TRANSFORM?

Some *perceive* life through their senses and feelings—by direct (subjective) experiences. Others perceive life through their intellect (objectively) by conceptualizing or thinking. Most of us have a blend of these two lenses, but we usually favor one.

People *process* new experiences through *reflecting* (observing) or through *action* (doing)—or somewhere in between.³ (See figure 1.)

For example, while my husband and I share the same style of perceiving life—through direct experiences—we process it differently. He processes new experiences through action while I process them through reflection. Both are valuable. So, when we go to the beach, he is the

internal dialogue runs along these lines: *OK, Bonita, there appears to be no undertow—Roy’s still standing. . . . It’s a sunny day, so the water won’t freeze me to death. . . . There aren’t too many people around, so I won’t have to dodge them.* Once I have gone through this reflection time, I am usually ready to jump into the new experience—unless I have a great book to read; then, forget the water.

Just as my husband and I perceive and process experiences in different ways, so do members of our congregations. They are of both types—and perhaps more. Some want to act, do, and experience; others want to reflect and observe before they experience. Some want

strategies most effective for people to learn. According to McCarthy, each learning style asks different questions and displays different strengths during the learning process. These learning styles use both right- and left-brain processing techniques.⁴ Thus, when we integrate all four learning styles in our preaching and teaching, we are educating the “whole brain.” (See figure 2.)

The *relational* learner asks the question, “*Why* is this subject important to me?” The *analytic* learner asks, “*What* do I need to know about this subject?” The *practical* learner asks, “*How* do I use the information?” The *dynamic* learner asks, “*What* if I use the information this way?”

My primary learning style is relational; the dynamic being my secondary style. Thus, as a preacher, I typically am very strong in answering for my congregation the questions, "Why is this subject important?" and "What if I use this information this way?" I am also fairly strong in the analytic aspect of "What do I need to know?" Unfortunately, I am often weak in answering the question, "How do I use the information?" Thus, as I prepare my sermons, I must be *intentional* about connecting with the practical learner.

each component into our sermons, more of our listeners may connect with our message.

How to use the new learning style

So, how do we incorporate this educational model into our preaching and teaching?

First, visit the Web site listed within the sidebar of this article and take the learning style inventory for yourself. That will give you a better understanding of your own learning process, as well as the needs of others.

be just for "entertainment." With a weak introduction, your listener may not feel engaged enough to continue listening to you. In writers' terminology, the introduction comprises the "hook" that draws the listener in.

The next question to ask is, *What does my listener need to know about this subject?* This, our homiletics teachers tell us, is the "Body" or "Argument" of the sermon. In this section, you want to offer information, facts, and state or define your subject more finely. Possible techniques to be used include comparing and contrasting, relating it to other subjects or even illustrating your points. As an experiential learner, I can say that while I appreciate our church's more recent emphasis on the *experience* of salvation and our relationship with God, in some cases we may have gone to the extreme and not given our members enough facts about their faith.

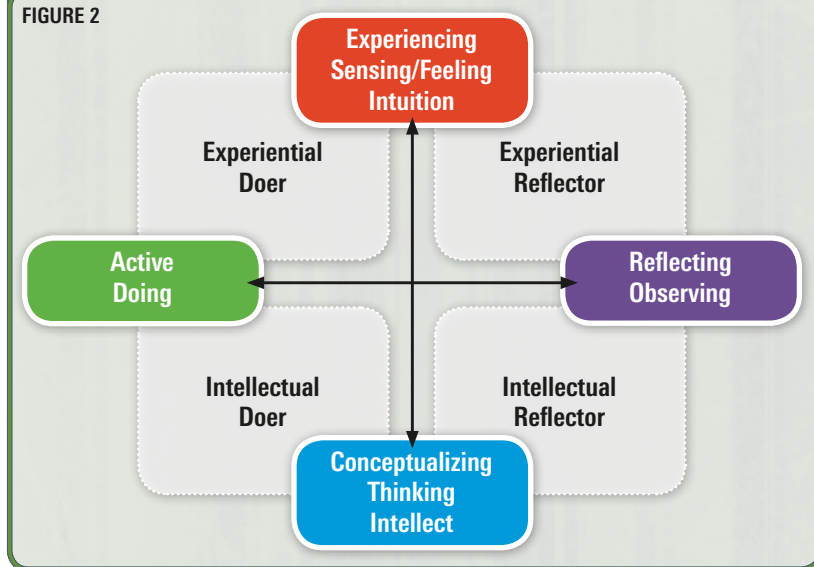
Our next question is, *How can my listener use this information in everyday life?* This comes as the application section of our sermon. Recently, I found something interesting as I perused one of my preaching books. While the other aspects of sermon preparation were given a page or two, the element of application was given *two* paragraphs!

This component, when strong, encourages action—not merely "talking the talk but walking the walk." It is here that we want to persuade our members of the benefits of applying the message to their lives.

The last question for us in creating our outline is, *What if my listener puts this information into practice; what will their life look like?* I believe this can correspond with our conclusion. As one teacher of homiletics describes, conclusion consists of "A few striking, well-chosen, soul-moving sentences or illustrations that give the central idea and purpose of the sermon."⁵ A strong ending to a sermon is as important as a strong introduction. As I recap the sermon, *What vision am I going to leave with the congregation? What*

LEARNING STYLES

FIGURE 2



Have you ever heard church members say about their pastor, "He's a nice man, but I just don't get anything out of his preaching"? Or "Her sermons are too 'dry,' too 'shallow,' 'just a bunch of stories,' or 'just plain irrelevant to my life.' " First, we must face the fact that we will never be able to reach everyone. However, as we come to better understand the learning cycle, I think we will begin to realize that one of the reasons people feel that way is because often we are skipping one or more of the components of the cycle. And, when we incorporate

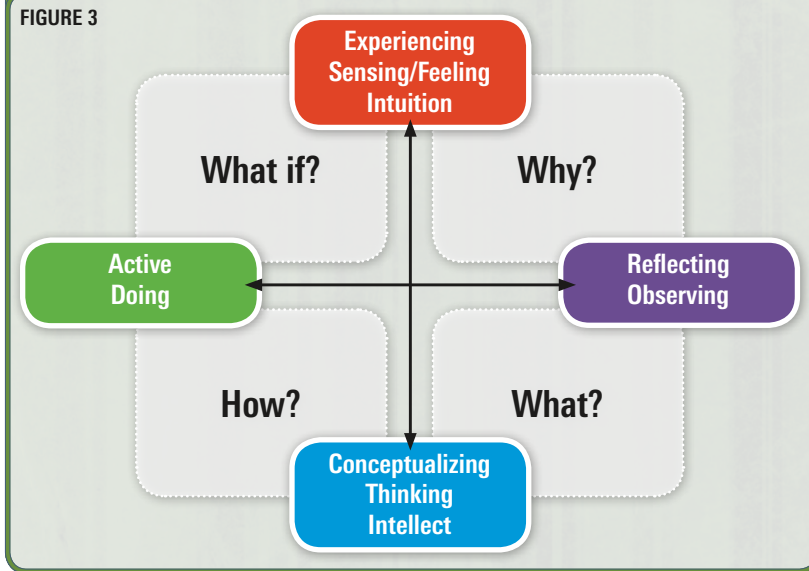
You will also find other articles in the Web site explaining this concept.

Second, think in terms of the four questions of the learning cycle as you prepare your sermon outline. (See figure 3.)

After you have chosen and exegeted your text, ask yourself the question, *Why should my listener find this subject important?* The objective of this question is to awaken an interest in the topic and prepare the listener for what will follow. Often, the introductory story answers this question. Thus, the purpose of an opening story/illustration should not

ANSWER THESE LEARNING QUESTIONS

FIGURE 3



will their lives look like after they have taken in this message?

Third, once you have used your outline to create your sermon manuscript, enlist the aid of a spouse and/or elder to evaluate your effectiveness. Your spouse may have already given you an unsolicited opinion—and preachers need that! But be intentional about asking for it. Ask several people who have different learning styles from yours. Use their feedback as a means to discover if this model has helped you strengthen a possible weak area in your sermons. With pre-sermon feedback always preferable to post-sermon feedback, you still have time

to make adjustments to your sermon before preaching it.

The preaching moment

Preaching God's Word remains a profound privilege—a supernatural experience. God uses our strengths, personalities, life experiences, and even our weaknesses to accomplish His purpose in the lives of His people. But God's empowering does not negate the need to do what we can to be the most effective vehicles through which to fulfill that mission. The Spirit works through learning cycles. And, sometimes, the Spirit even works through a game of checkers. **M**

Resources

- To discover your personal learning style, go to <http://bit.ly/ghWXHU>.
- For a Growing Disciples Curriculum Framework to help you grow fruitful, mature disciples based on the Learning Cycle, go to www.growingfruitfuldisciples.com.

- 1 For an excellent article on the need for these two branches of ministry to collaborate, see George Knight's "Two Ministries, One Mission," *Ministry*, December 2010.
- 2 <http://effective.leadershipdevelopment.edu.au/david-kolb-learning-styles/experiential-learning/>.
- 3 Charles Betz with Jack Calkins, "Leading Adult Sabbath School" (Lincoln, NE: Advent Source, 2001), 20.
- 4 See Dr. McCarthy's office Web site at <http://www.aboutlearning.com>.
- 5 William Evans, *How to Prepare Sermons* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1964), 90.

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Revival and REFORMATION

God's goodness revives and reforms

The platform upon which all true revivals and reformations stand is the goodness of God. His goodness speaks to our hearts, changes our motives, and inspires us to become more like Him. His demonstration of love "while we were still sinners" (Rom. 5:8, NIV) melts the hardness of our sinful hearts. His "kindness leads you [us] toward repentance" (Rom. 2:4, NIV).

Revivals and reformations are initiated by God's desires or actions, not ours. He first loved us (1 John 4:19). By beholding His character we are drawn back to God (cf. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 761). From God's own goodness we are called "to participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Pet. 1:3, 4, NIV). Whatever goodness we possess emanates from God's goodness and gives authenticity and power to our own witness. In other words, "who" God is precedes "what" God does. His actions flow from His character. It is the same with the converted Christian. Our acceptance of God's invitation ushers us into His kingdom—bringing to each one a revival of true godliness, a continued response bringing transformation into His image.

Revival and reformation is, in part, an accelerated response to the goodness of God.

—LARRY R. EVANS, DMIN, SERVES AS
AN ADVISOR TO THE WORLD CHURCH
PRESIDENT FOR THE REVIVAL AND
REFORMATION INITIATIVE.

revivalandreformation.org



“Where is the joy?”: Three keys to avoiding burnout

Twenty-three years ago I had almost completely burned out as a pastor.

Multiple factors contributed to my ministerial “near death” experience at the young age of 30. I served in a community suffering massive economic collapse. My church loved to fight. Several mem-

“I don’t know where the joy is. But if I don’t find it again soon, I won’t survive in this business much longer.”

Fortunately, I found the joy again, and joy continues to this day. At the age of 53, I have more vocational joy than ever before. What follows are practices that rekindled my joy and have kept it

us to “divert daily, withdraw weekly, and abandon annually.”

That quote saved my vocation. While driving home from the workshop, I promised God and myself that I would faithfully live out that threefold challenge. When I got home, I made the same promise to my family. Keeping that promise

PASTORS HAVE THE REMARKABLE PRIVILEGE
OF POINTING PEOPLE TO SOMETHING
BIGGER THAN OURSELVES.

bers relentlessly criticized me. I was also working on a doctor of ministry degree, leading preaching and worship workshops, and writing books and articles. I routinely stayed up until two in the morning doing my work.

After two years in that grueling environment, I found myself depleted—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. At my lowest moment, a concerned colleague asked me a question that rattled me to the core.

“Martin,” he said, “where is the joy?”

His brutally honest question stunned me until I finally responded,

alive for more than 20 years. My hope and prayer includes that you can learn from them as well.

Practice self-care

Three weeks after admitting my vocational joy had vanished, I registered for a clergy self-care workshop. The presenter covered all the pertinent topics: getting regular exercise, eating a healthy diet, taking time off, setting boundaries, practicing spiritual disciplines, and developing a support system. At the end of the day, the workshop leader, like a revival preacher, offered an invitation. He challenged each one of

required significant adjustments to my workaholic lifestyle. I began making these difficult adjustments by negotiating my primary priorities with our personnel committee. We agreed that my top five priorities were preaching, worship leadership, big picture leadership, staff supervision, and limited pastoral care. Beyond that, many of my duties had to be relinquished. For example, I delegated many of my responsibilities to staff and key lay leaders. I quit attending a large number of meetings and activities. And I also curtailed some of my writing projects. I will not pretend

these changes came easy. They also disappointed some members who wanted me to continue my old but unsustainable schedule. However, other than affirming faith in Christ, marrying my wife, having two children, and becoming a minister, this serious commitment to practice these self-care disciplines was the most life-giving decision I ever made.

The day after the workshop, I immediately implemented the “divert daily, withdraw weekly, abandon annually” strategy. This felt so good I am still doing it more than 20 years later. Four days a week my daily diversion means a trip to the gym or a ride on my bike. Most days it means writing a journal entry, eating dinner with my wife, and reading a book or magazine or watching television. Although the diversions vary, I carve out time every day for non-church-related activities and that makes me a more balanced person and pastor.

I withdraw weekly every Friday. My church knows Friday as my day off and respects it. When I arrived at my current appointment, I told the congregation that unless somebody dies, I do not work Fridays. I purposely do not schedule many Friday activities either. Instead, I sleep late, read, write emails to friends, and go out to lunch with my wife. Friday evenings my wife and I sometimes get together with friends or invite our daughter and son-in-law for dinner. This daily diversion consistently restores my soul.

Now, my longstanding practice includes taking two to three continuous weeks of vacation in July. I also take a week off in January. Because our Annual Conference recommends that clergy take four weeks of vacation per year, I do not ask permission. I inform our staff parish relations committee of the four-week policy, tell them when I will be gone, schedule others to cover in my absence, and go. The

extended time off nurtures me: mind, body, and soul. My church manages to survive.

Connect with others

After two months of diverting daily and withdrawing weekly (I had not yet abandoned annually, but it was on the calendar), the rector of our local Episcopal church invited me to lunch. I did not know it at the time, but he was evaluating me for a spot in his weekly clergy support group. Several days later, I received an invitation to join the group. It consisted of an Episcopal rector, a Roman Catholic priest, a Presbyterian elder, two United Methodist ministers, and a Baptist preacher.

Our congregation served a severely economically distressed community. Several major industries had closed down almost overnight. People left town by the thousands. Anxiety and anger consumed the community, including the churches.

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Every congregation in town was hemorrhaging members, money, and morale. Having a group of clergy friends who understood that environment made it possible to weather the storm without drowning. We even managed to produce a good bit of laughter. The group gathered every Wednesday morning at 11:00 for dialogue and support followed by lunch.

Since those difficult days, I have either joined or created a clergy support group in every ministry setting I have served. I simply could not survive pastoral ministry without a group of close clergy friends.

Remember the positives

After several months of practicing self-care and connecting with my clergy group, I felt myself slowly rising up from the dead. The final step in resurrecting my vocational joy began with a three-month journaling experiment. Keeping a journal was not new to me; I had done so since high school. However, given my

dismal ministry setting, it digressed into a laundry list of complaints, whining, and negativity. So I decided to shift the focus.

First, I went out and bought a new journal. Then, on the first page, in large bold print, I wrote down these words from the apostle Paul: "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Phil. 4:8, NRSV). Although I continued to record vocational struggles in my journal, I made a new rule. At the end of every entry, I had to list at least one thing about pastoral ministry I was grateful for on that day. That simple discipline helped transform my vocation from joyless duty to heartfelt gratitude. My three-month experiment of remembering the positives evolved into a lifelong, life-giving practice. More than 20 years later, I continue to affirm the

positives of my vocation, both in my journal and in my daily prayers. While I love many things about this vocation, three items in particular consistently stand out.

First, I love the *freedom* of this vocation. Ministers are blessed with remarkable autonomy. For example, few people enjoy the flexible schedule that clergy do. If we want to attend our child's school program, spend an afternoon reading a book, or make a trip to the dentist, we do not have to ask permission. We also get to set our own priorities, goals, and dreams. And, as long as we cover our essential pastoral tasks, we can specialize in a particular passion like counseling, small groups, evangelism, or worship. Most people only dream of a job with such freedom and flexibility.

Second, I love the *relationships* of this vocation. Pastoral ministry, especially in long-tenure pastorates, allows us to build relationships with members and staff that deeply enrich our lives. I know church members



If you pastor more than one church—we want to hear from you

Here at the *Ministry* magazine editorial offices, we are planning another issue featuring and recognizing the work of pastors who have more than one church. In order for this issue to be valuable to ministers around the world, we need your participation. You are invited to prepare an article for *Ministry* magazine. Here are some suggested topics you may consider:

- Training lay leaders to effectively work with you
- Designing sermons to meet the needs of different churches
- Addressing family life in a multichurch district with special emphasis on children
- Organizing the evangelistic outreach in a district
- Coordinating boards and committees in a district
- Working with the communities in the district
- Creating a spirit of cooperation among the churches
- Recognizing the needs of the pastor's spouse and children for continuity as the pastor preaches in a different church each week

If you pastor several churches, you will no doubt have other topics in mind.

NEXT STEPS:

- Email, write, or call and discuss with us the topic or topics you are suggesting.
- Once we have agreed on the specific topic, we will ask you to proceed with the writing.

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can sometimes be difficult. But most of them are good people who love, respect, and support us, and it is a joy to be their pastor. Who else, besides clergy, get to make relationship building the core of their vocation?

Third, I love the *transcendence* of this vocation. Pastors have the remarkable privilege of pointing people to something bigger than ourselves. We stand in the pulpit and share the Word of God for the people of God. We visit the hospital and remind people by our presence that God is with them even in their fears. And, in death, we affirm, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Who could ask for more from any vocation?

Conclusion

The movie *The Prince of Tides* tells the story of a high school teacher and football coach named Tom Wingo who lost his joy, both vocationally and personally, but then found it again. The beginning of the movie finds Tom struggling with unemployment, burnout, and marital problems. However, after a long and painful process of healing, Tom reunites with his wife and children, returns to his vocation, and finds renewed contentment and joy in his life. In the final scene of the film, we see Tom mowing the grass of his high school football field. In voiceover narration, Tom says, "I am a teacher and a coach, and a well-loved man, and it is more than enough."

As did Tom in *The Prince of Tides*, I lost my vocational joy. However, by practicing self-care, connecting with others, and remembering the positives, I found it again. Best of all, the joy continues today, stronger and richer than ever before. Therefore, I can affirm with Tom (with minor revisions), "I am a pastor and a writer, and a well-loved man, and it is more than enough." ❏

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Pastoral burnout statistics

According to the *New York Times* (August 1, 2010): "Members of the clergy now suffer from obesity, hypertension and depression at rates higher than most Americans. In the last decade, their use of antidepressants has risen, while their life expectancy has fallen. Many would change jobs if they could."

- 45% of pastors say that they have experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence from ministry.
- 50% feel unable to meet the demands of the job.
- 52% of pastors say they and their spouses believe that being in pastoral ministry is hazardous to their family's well-being and health.
- 70% do not have any close friends.
- 75% report severe stress causing anguish, worry, bewilderment, anger, depression, fear, and alienation.
- 80% of pastors say they have insufficient time with their spouse.
- 90% work more than 50 hours a week.
- 94% feel under pressure to have a perfect family.
- 1,500 pastors leave their ministries each month due to burnout, conflict, or moral failure. (The above statistics come from PastorBurnout.com.)

Resources for dealing with pastoral burnout

- PastorBurnout.com is an invaluable resource on pastoral burnout. It includes burnout statistics, causes of burnout, humor for dealing with burnout, and resources for overcoming burnout.
- The following three books will also help pastors deal with burnout:
- Wayne Cordeiro, *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2009).
- Anne Jackson, *Mad Church Disease: Overcoming the Burnout Epidemic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).
- C. Welton Gaddy, *A Soul Under Siege: Surviving Clergy Depression* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).



The immortality of the soul: Could Christianity survive without it? (Part 2 of 2)

Editor's note: In part 1 of this two-part series, the author traced the mortalist viewpoint through the continental and English Reformation. He concluded the first part by listing theologians, scholars, and philosophers throughout the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries who believed in the mortalist viewpoint.

Throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries a succession of able and prominent writers were persuaded of the essential correctness of the mortalist viewpoint and felt strongly enough about it to publish their convictions for their contemporaries and posterity. What, then, did they believe? Constraints of time and space will permit us to note only three or four of the main planks in the mortalist platform.

The authority of Scripture, correctly interpreted

Fundamentally, they believed in the Bible, that is, in the authority of Scripture as the source of revealed truth, and the final court of appeal in all controverted matters. But so did those whom they opposed, the immortalists. Wherein lies the difference? We may detect three points of emphasis and divergence in mortalist theology.

First, they insisted that what they believed was a correct methodology

of biblical interpretation. This meant that the Bible should be interpreted literally, unless it was self-evident from the text itself that it was not to be so understood. An important case in point was the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), frequently advanced by immortalists as textual evidence of the soul's existence beyond the grave. Mortalists argued that the story was inadmissible since a parable cannot form the basis of doctrine. Henry Layton says, "We take it not for proof, because it was but a parable, spoken without design to teach anything concerning the State of Man after death."¹ Overton likewise insists, "There was never such a man as Dives or Lazarus, or ever such a thing happened, no more than Jotham's trees did walk and talk."²

Second, no doctrine should be established on a single text or passage, but the whole weight of biblical evidence should be taken into consideration before any conclusion was reached. Mortalists were highly suspicious of doctrines formulated on less than all the evidence available. Layton contends that he is no "idolizer of the Scripture," but holds that "whatsoever doctrines or opinions can be proved by a strong current or stream of Scripture texts, ought to be accepted and believed as

absolute truth and the very word of God."³

Third, and even more important, is the place of reason in the interpretation of Scripture. Richard Overton believed that the subordination of reason in biblical interpretation had contributed to the development of the innate immortality doctrine. The existence of the soul as an entity separate from the body, able to think and feel apart from the body, and its supposed departure either to heaven or hell at the moment of death, are all contrary to reason.⁴ The subtitle of Layton's compendious work, *A Search after Souls*, emphasized the importance of reason in theological and philosophical inquiry as well as in the debate over the soul, "The Immortality of a Humane [sic] Soul, Theologically, Philosophically, and Rationally Considered." Similarly, while Milton regards Scripture as the final authority, as his *Treatise on Christian Doctrine* repeatedly demonstrates, it is not Scripture read blindly or subjectively. Thus to the "testimonies of Scripture" Milton contends "may be added . . . arguments from reason" in "confirmation" of biblical doctrine.⁵

John Locke, perhaps, shows the best example of mortalism's insistence on reason as necessary to biblical interpretation. His great theological treatise on the rational nature of authentic Christian faith,

The Reasonableness of Christianity, begins with a lengthy and reasoned exposition of the thnetopsychist view of man, commencing with the assertion, "To understand therefore what we are restored to by Jesus Christ, we must consider what the Scripture shews we lost by Adam." The process is one of rational consideration. From that point on, he assumes that true Christian faith is essentially reasonable, that is to say, it is always consistent with reason, sometimes beyond reason, but never contrary to reason. It was reason applied in the interpretation of the divine revelation in Scripture that led Locke to an unequivocal thnetopsychism.⁶

Human nature and destiny

Approached from these standpoints, the Bible led to a mortalist eschatology. In this context, the Genesis account of human origins is crucial to a correct understanding of human nature and destiny. A key text was Genesis 2:7: "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."⁷ Overton's interpretation of this text is representatively mortalist. When God imparted the breath of life to the lifeless form of Adam, the man became "a living soul." Overton says, "That which was formed or made of the earth became a living soul, or creature, by breathing . . . the breath of life (and) that lifeless lump became a living soul."⁸ Overton then adds an important rider, "that which was breathed before it was breathed, was not a living soul."⁹ It was merely breath which, when infused into the body, caused a living soul, a man, to exist.

Death, as the reversal of this process, occurs when a person ceases to breathe, when the breath leaves the body. When that happens, the person dies. He or she ceases to exist. The "soul" is no more because the living person is no more. Overton states death "returns man to what he was before he was, that is, not to

be." After death, Overton says, "Man is void of actual Being... he absolutely IS NOT."¹⁰ Priestley similarly affirms that God made the whole man from the dust of the ground, arguing "God made this man, who was lifeless at first, to breathe and live . . . the substance which was formed of the dust of the earth became a living soul, that is, became alive, by being made to breathe."¹¹

Priestley, like all other mortalists, returns to the resurrection at the last day as the key to the future and immortality, for once again the process of death is then reversed. Although life ceases at the moment of death, this is not the end for the

the dead, and has no other foundation whatever."¹³

Origins of the immortal soul doctrine

Almost as important in mortalist minds as the biblical teaching on human nature and destiny, were the origins of the immortal soul doctrine. Once again there was widespread concurrence among mortalist writers in relation to this question, and once again Layton and Priestley may be taken as representative spokesmen.

Layton's collected works were published posthumously in two volumes, in 1706, under the title *A Search After Souls, or the Immortality*

THE GENESIS ACCOUNT
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NATURE AND DESTINY.

believer, for the temporary extinction of life at death is not the same as annihilation. When we say *a candle is extinguished* "we surely do not mean it is annihilated, that there is nothing left to light again."¹² This illustrates "precisely" what Paul had in mind by the resurrection of the dead. Priestley maintains, with Tyndale and all other mortalists, that Paul consistently stresses the resurrection as the gateway to immortality. So he concludes that human hope of a future life "depends upon the resurrection of

of a Humane Soul, Theologically, Philosophically and Rationally Considered. Layton's search began late in life, in 1690, after reading Richard Baxter's *Dying Thoughts*, in which Baxter re-affirmed the soul's ascent to heaven to be with Christ, stressing "the necessity of believing it." Layton remarked, "It seemed an over-great morsel to swallow all this together,"¹⁴ embarking on a tireless campaign of clarification and refutation that lasted for the rest of his life. Layton came to believe early in this search that the idea of an immortal

soul ante-dated Christianity by several centuries and that it could be found in many pre-Christian Greek philosophers, noting in particular Pythagoras, Anaxagoras and Plato, adding that most of the early Greek and Latin church fathers did not accept it.¹⁵

Priestley's *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* included a brief survey of the history of mortalism, in which he maintained that the first Christians did not believe in an immortal soul. The distinction between body and soul, "originally a doctrine of Oriental philosophy," had in later centuries spread into "the Western part of the world," a process that Priestley traces back through Greek thought to its earliest Egyptian, Chaldean, and possibly Persian and Indian origins, arguing that these pre-Christian pagan views had "exceedingly altered and debased the true Christian system."¹⁶ Although some third-century Christians in Arabia kept mortalism alive, eventually they capitulated to the teachings of Origen. Priestley maintains that most of the later fathers were Platonists who "borrowed many of their explanations of Scripture doctrines from that system."¹⁷ Thus Platonic dualism infiltrated the medieval church, resulting in the doctrine of purgatory that was built on the foundation of the immortal soul and eventually came to dominate medieval eschatology. Mortalists, in general, would have unhesitatingly concurred with that.

Immortalism and the redemptive work of Christ

Perhaps the most serious charge brought against the traditional view of the soul's immortality was that it undermined the redemptive work of Christ. We have already caught a hint of this concern in Tyndale's introduction to the second edition of his New Testament in 1534. In fact, Tyndale is much more explicit. In his famous dialogue with the erudite and very orthodox Sir Thomas More, Tyndale accuses More of proposing

a way to eternal life contrary to that set forth in Scripture. The debate came to focus on the classic Pauline passages in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, which deal with the resurrection at the last day. With heavy irony, Tyndale challenges More:

Nay, Paul, thou art unlearned, go to Master More and learn a new way. We be not most miserable, though we rise not again, for our souls go to heaven as soon as we be dead, and are there in as great joy as Christ that is risen again. And I marvel that Paul had not comforted the Thessalonians with that doctrine, if he had wist it, that the souls of their dead had been in joy, as he did with resurrection, that their dead should rise again. If the souls be in heaven in as great glory as the angels, after your doctrine, shew me what cause should be of the resurrection?¹⁸

Burns comments of Tyndale's robust psychopannychism, "He was certain that God had clearly announced that the resurrection of the body was the beginning of the whole salvation of Christians, not just an additional reward for souls already in joy."¹⁹

Two hundred and twenty-five years later, in 1756 to be precise, Peter Peckard published the first of three works in which he persuasively set forth the thnetopsychist understanding. "Scripture expressly asserteth the mortality of man, and the restoration to life from that mortality by Jesus Christ,"²⁰ he wrote. This theme ran throughout Peckard's work. The doctrine of the soul's immortality negated the redemptive work of Christ at its very heart, effectively rendering that work superfluous and unnecessary. In Peckard's own words:

Jesus Christ came into the world on purpose to redeem men from death and to give them life and immortality. It is very certain

that he could not redeem them from that state in which they were not, nor give them that life and immortality which they already possessed. So that by this scheme [the natural immortality of the soul] the whole notion of redemption by Jesus Christ is absolutely and entirely destroyed.²¹

Without question, this exists as the most damning accusation brought by mortalists against the inherent immortality of the soul. That doctrine, mortalists were convinced, was not only unbiblical, it was essentially and literally anti-Christian.


Conclusion

While this essay has concentrated on the views of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English mortalists, it will not be inappropriate, in conclusion, to note that the mortalist interpretation of Scripture, or crucial elements of it, have survived until the present time. Two examples must suffice. The work of Oscar Cullman, cited at the beginning of this paper (see part 1) as a contemporary advocate of mortalist theology, appeared in time between them.

It is now 75 years since William Temple, then archbishop of York and shortly to become archbishop of Canterbury, published *Nature, Man and God*. Dr. Temple wrote, "Man is not by nature immortal, but capable of immortality." The "prevailing doctrine of the New Testament," he said, "is that God alone is immortal . . . and that He offers immortality to man not universally but conditionally."²² It would be difficult to find a better summary of the mortalist position.

Just a few years have passed since the publication of N. T. Wright's latest book, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*.²³ Dr. Wright, the bishop of Durham and one of today's leading New Testament scholars, speaks of the infiltration of Christian thought by Greek philosophy and says, among many other things, "at least since the

Middle Ages the influence of Greek philosophy has been very marked, resulting in a future expectation that bears far more resemblance to Plato's vision of souls entering into disembodied bliss than to the biblical picture of new heavens and new earth."²⁴ Wright's consistent and repeated argument is that the resurrection at the last day, posited on the resurrection of Jesus Himself, is the key to immortality and eternal life.²⁵

So, the question presents itself once again, Could Christianity survive without the immortality of the soul? If Christian history and historical theology are in any way reliable guides, the answer must be in the affirmative. 

1 Henry Layton, *Observations Upon a Short Treatise* (1697), 43.
2 Richard Overton, *Mans Mortalitie* (1644), 31. The parable of Jotham's trees is in Judges 9.

3 Henry Layton, *A Reply to a Letter Dated Sept. 14, 1702* (1703), 70.
4 Richard Overton, *Man Wholly Mortal* (1655), 9–11, 33–35.
5 Milton, "Treatise on Christian Doctrine," in *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, D. M. Wolfe, ed., (New Haven and London, 1953–1982), IV: 191, 480.
6 John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity, As Delivered in the Scriptures* (1695), 1. For a more extended discussion of Locke's *Reasonableness* and its significance and the significance of reason per se in Locke's theology, see Ball, *The Soul Sleepers*, 119–126, and Victor Nuovo, ed., *John Locke, Writings on Religion* (Oxford: Oxford, 2002), xiv–lii.
7 Quoted from the Authorized, or King James Version, the translation most used by scholars and writers after its publication in 1611.
8 Overton, *Man Wholly Mortal* (1655), 29.
9 *Ibid.*, 30.
10 Overton, *Mans Mortalitie* (1644), 6, 7; emphasis in the original.
11 Joseph Priestley, *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit* (1777), 115.
12 *Ibid.*, 164.
13 *Ibid.*, 252.
14 Henry Layton, *A Search After Souls and Spiritual Operations in Man* (1691), 3.
15 Henry Layton, *Observations upon Mr. Wadsworth's Book of the Souls Immortality* (1692), 8, 16.
16 Joseph Priestley, *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (1782), I: 156, 168, 266–8.
17 Priestley, *Disquisitions*, 294. Plato's immortalism appears in several of his works, notably the *Phaedo* (c.360 B.C.), in which Plato reflects the thinking of Socrates. The *Phaedo*

was first translated into Latin only in 1160. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (p. 1300) notes that "the authority" accorded to Plato's teachings "throughout the Middle Ages, did much to secure for many Platonic notions a permanent place in Latin Christianity."
18 William Tyndale, "An Answer Unto Sir Thomas More's Dialogue" in *The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale and John Frith*, T. Russell, ed., (1831), II: 123.
19 Burns, *Christian Mortalism*, 101, 102.
20 Peter Peckard, *Observations on the Doctrine of an Intermediate State Between Death and the Resurrection* (1756), 4.
21 *Ibid.*, 19. Peckard further explained, "By allowing men a natural principle of life, we do in effect hinder them from coming to Christ that they may have life." *Ibid.*, 39.
22 William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (1934), xxx, 461–463. See also his article, "The Idea of Immortality in Relation to Religion and Ethics," in *The Congregational Quarterly X* (1932), 17 in which he also called for a radical re-evaluation of the traditional doctrine of eternal torment in hell. Temple was a contemporary of the influential Oxford Old Testament scholar H. Wheeler Robinson, who in 1911 published a work with similar sentiments under the title *The Christian Doctrine of Man*.
23 N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008).
24 *Ibid.*, 80. Dr. Wright points out that Christian minds have been conditioned by Greek philosophy "whether or not we've ever read any of it." *Ibid.*, 251.
25 *Ibid.*, *passim*, noting in particular the index as a pointer to Wright's insistence on resurrection.

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Roy Adams, PhD, is the recently retired associate editor of the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*.



Understanding the Word

Editor's note: This article has been adapted from a sermon given by Dr. Adams at a Ministry Professional Growth Seminar, broadcast from the campus of Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, United States, April 20, 2010.

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. . . . In a loud voice they sang: 'Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!' "(Rev. 5:11, 12).¹

I use this passage as my principal text, not to exegete it but as a point of departure, as a place to which I'd like to return at the end. I will divide the article into three simple parts: first, what we have; second, how to decipher it; and third, the point at the heart of it.

What we have

As a young teenager, I became impressed, for the first time, that the Bible is not an ordinary document. I still ask the questions, *What is this document we call the Bible? In a world literally choking with books, documents, and publications, what makes this one special?*

As I reflected on these questions, my mind wandered back some 2,600 years. With hostile foreign forces lurking on the outskirts of Jerusalem, waiting for

an opportune moment to strike, a certain young man came forward, claiming to have special supernatural intelligence as to how the leaders and people should respond to the national crisis.

But his message proved impossible to stomach: The Babylonians will take the city! (cf. Jer. 37:9, 10). For the powers that be, it was too much. And Jeremiah was thrown "into a vaulted cell in a dungeon" (Jer. 37:16).

But one day his cell door rattled open and a royal messenger appeared with a summons from the king. Entering the royal palace, Jeremiah faced a trembling monarch with a bad case of siege fatigue. Dropping his voice and bending forward, a frightened Zedekiah whispered the critical question we find in Jeremiah 37:17: "*Is there any word from the LORD?*" (emphasis added.)

It's an extraordinary question. And the utterly outrageous claim of the Christian church says that the Bible *is indeed a Word from the Lord*.

Sometimes, in my quiet moments, I think about this astonishing claim in stark, elemental terms—such as when visiting Stone Mountain just east of Atlanta, Georgia, I broke away from the family for a moment of reflection. I thought of the huge slab of rock I was standing on. How much does it weigh? I don't know. (And, incidentally, I understand it extends some nine miles below ground level.) What is it sitting on? The earth, of course. And what's Stone Mountain and the earth sitting on? Nothing!

How could it be nothing? It's held in place by gravity. And we think we've solved the problem by that one word: *gravity*.

My mind moves from Stone Mountain through our solar system, past the Milky Way, and into the fantastic reaches of an endless universe—a universe seemingly without borders. And we're making an astonishing claim that the One who holds it all together has spoken a word to this planet—and this Book is it!

At the beginning of Romans 3, Paul raised the question as to whether Jews had an advantage in the world. And answering his own question, he said, "Much in every way! First of all, [the Jews] have been entrusted with the very words of God" (Rom. 3:2). And as Christians, we believe that we have what they had, plus the Second Testament, and together they make a complete Bible.

And what we discover is that the Bible is not an ordinary document. In the language of Hebrews 4:12, "the word of God is living and active." And anyone who's taken the time to read it devotionally can testify to how directly it probes the deep, secret recesses of our souls. Probably every single Christian experiences discomfort when reading the Bible with known sin in their life. Something uncanny exists about the way it divides us asunder, but then, thank God, puts us back together again.

That's what we have: the word of the Living God.

How to decipher it

The Scriptures are not like the Delphic oracles of ancient Greece, whose forked-tongue messages could always be twisted to mean whatever suited the interpreter's fancy. On the contrary, we need to approach the Bible with a "scientific" mind-set, if you please.

As we approach the text, we need to ask, along the lines of Christa Standahl (former dean of Harvard Divinity School), the following

biblical theologian, the systematic theologian, and so forth.

Then we need to consider the different genres of writing in the one document we call the Bible: poetry, history, prophecy, apocalyptic, story, parable, and so on. Each of these forms requires a somewhat different orientation, a different approach, a different set of tools.

That's what I mean when I speak about a "scientific" approach to Scripture.

people can have direct access to its most vital message—the *essential message they need for eternal life*.

This is part of what Jesus meant when He said in Matthew 11:25, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children." "

In the end, the advance of the gospel will not depend on our ability to articulate complicated biblical

SO, HOWEVER RISKY IT MIGHT BE TO SAY IT, WE HAVE TO AFFIRM THAT THIS MYSTERIOUS BOOK WAS DESIGNED IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE CAN SPEND SEVERAL LIFETIMES PROBING ITS ENORMOUS DEPTH AND STILL NOT REACH BOTTOM.

questions: What did this particular message mean for those who first received it? How have believers across the centuries understood it? What does it mean for us today?

There's a high risk of seriously misunderstanding Scripture when we read it as though it was written directly to us in the twenty-first century. We need an historical perspective, remembering that the Bible was written over the course of 1,600 years and under a wide variety of political and cultural circumstances.

Furthermore, given the complexity of the subject, a multitude of disciplines must be brought to bear on the text so as to understand it adequately. We need the linguist, the historian, the archaeologist, the

But here's what I consider an extremely important caveat: notwithstanding all of the above, we impugn the character of God if we leave the impression that everyone needs to spend years, if not decades, in college and university before they can understand the gist of the biblical message. That would be like saying that a newborn infant needs to be taught how to breathe and suck. No, breathing and sucking are too critical to have them depend on formal training.

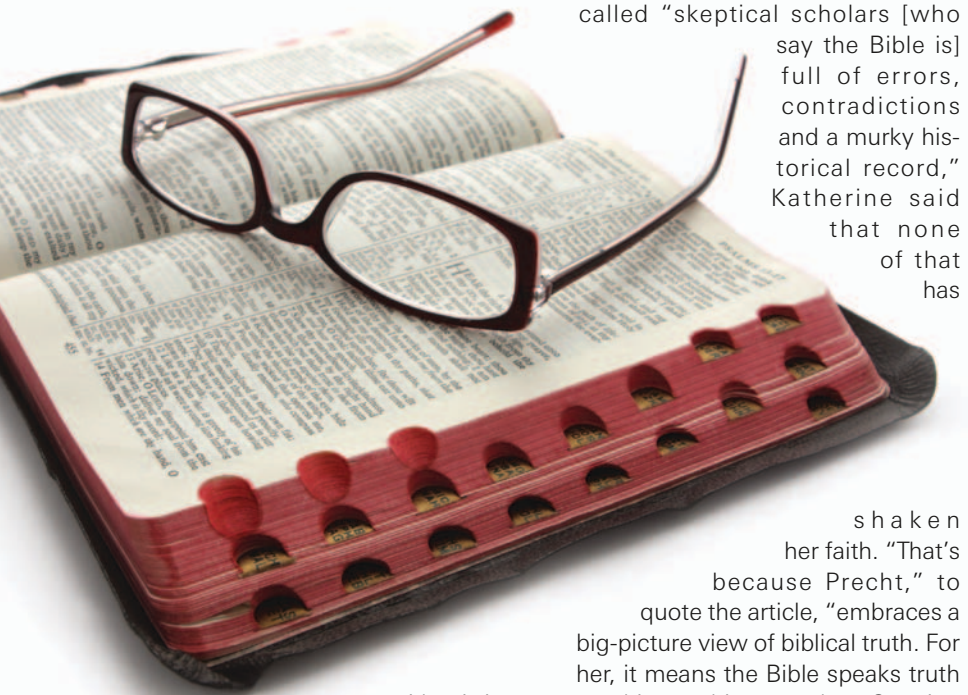
So, however risky it might be to say it, we have to affirm that this mysterious Book was designed in such a way that we can spend several lifetimes probing its enormous depth and still not reach bottom. Yet, at the same time, ordinary, uneducated

or theological formulations, but—especially in our cynical, jaded, postmodern times—on the degree to which the Word becomes incarnate in our life and witness; the degree to which we reflect the Word—and, in particular, *the Word*, who became flesh and dwelt among us. Many who have difficulty deciphering meaning from words on a page will capture the essence of Scripture from its reflection in our witness and behavior.

In his book, *Maybe Tomorrow*, Australian Aboriginal writer Boori Pryor (known to his compatriots as "Monty") tells the moving story of what happened after he'd given a performance at a school in Sydney. The children all wanted to talk to him. One girl, about seven years of

age, walked up and said, "Thank you, Monty." He gave her a big hug. Then he described what followed: "She looked up at me with her beautiful eyes and said, 'Can you make me an Aborigine?'"

"I looked down at her and I thought, 'This little one has something special.' It wasn't just a whim. She really felt that what she had seen was beautiful. So I knelt down and I gave her another hug and said, 'Look, really, I can't make you an



Aborigine. But I think deep inside you're asking questions and you're listening and you're learning. It's sort of making you into an Aboriginal person in your heart. . . .

"I felt wonderful about this. I went out to my car . . . and got a T shirt from the Laura Festival, an Aboriginal cultural festival . . . held every two years in Laura . . . near my homeland. I gave the T shirt to her and she squealed, 'Thank you!' As she was going back I saw her throw off her jumper and put the T shirt on over the rest of her clothes."²

When the living Word becomes incarnate in our hearts, people, even in our jaded times, will come to us

and say, Can we have some of what you have? How can we become Christians too?

The point at the heart of it

The April 3, 2010, issue of the *Washington Post* ran an article by Jeffrey MacDonald, under the title "Putting in a Good Word for the Bible." The article cited the sentiments of Vanderbilt University student Katherine Precht. Responding to what the article called "skeptical scholars [who say the Bible is] full of errors, contradictions and a murky historical record," Katherine said that none of that has

shaken her faith. "That's because Precht," to quote the article, "embraces a big-picture view of biblical truth. For her, it means the Bible speaks truth on ultimate things, such as Creation and salvation."

I read that and said, "*Touché*—way to go!"

Properly understanding the Bible means seeing the big picture. The Creation story is what it is: a factual, historical account of the origin of the human family, an indispensable plank in what biblical theologians call *Heilsgeschichte* ("salvation history"). But in the wake of the Fall, Creation also points us to God's re-creation in Jesus Christ.

The Exodus is what it is—a factual account of the rescue of Israel from Egyptian slavery. But understanding the bigger picture means looking beyond the multitude of details in

the story and seeing the event as a depiction of the release of the entire human race from spiritual bondage through our cosmic Liberator, Jesus Christ. The old Negro spiritual captured this bigger picture:

O let us all from bondage flee,
Let my people go,
And let us all in Christ be free,
Let my people go.
Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt's Land.
Tell ol' Pharaoh,
Let my people go.

As we explain the Word, we should imagine millions of people wondering as they listen to us: *What's the point?* And we must keep making the case that the point at the heart of it all is Jesus. *He is the point!*

And this all brings me back to the passage at the top of this article, taken from Revelation 5. As that chapter opens, John sees a scroll—that book of destiny in the hand of God. And John weeps bitterly to find that not a single being in the entire universe is found worthy "to break the seals and open the scroll" (verse 2). But suddenly a voice says, "Don't weep; there's somebody!"

Understanding the Word means knowing that this ghastly, bloody, age-old drama ends in a triumph of grace, with all creation singing around the throne of God, *Jesus Christ at the shining center*.

Our big challenge is how to share what we've got with a jaded, been-there-done-that generation. I believe that without compromising a single principle of Scripture, the church in society—and at every gathering—can create around itself an atmosphere of grace in anticipation of that splendid moment when we shall meet at last around the throne of God. ❏

1 All Scripture is from the New International Version of the Bible.

2 Boori Prior, *Maybe Tomorrow* (Victoria, Australia: Penguin Books Australia Ltd., 1998), 34, 35.

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The mystery of Israel's salvation:

A study of Romans 11:26

In Romans 9 through 11, Paul deals with the respective place of Jews and Gentiles in God's plan of salvation. While contrasting Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Messiah with the acceptance of Him by the Gentiles, the apostle makes the striking statement: "And so all Israel will be saved" (11:26). Taken at face value, these words would seem to indicate that at some time in the future, and in some way, the entire Jewish nation will be saved. Quite a number of interpreters believe just that. They foresee a kind of apocalyptic conversion of the literal nation of Israel and the restoration of the Davidic kingdom right before the second coming of Jesus.¹ Some even suggest that God values the Jews so much that He will eventually save them on a basis different from that of Gentiles.² Others have argued that "Israel" in this passage stands for the full number of believing Jews through the ages, or the Jewish-Christian remnant.³ Another interpretation, which goes back to the early Christian centuries, is that "Israel" represents the new, spiritual Israel, that is, the church, comprised of all who are saved by the grace of God, whether Jews or Gentiles, of all ages and races.⁴

What is Paul really saying in this passage?

The meaning of "Israel"

Though still quite popular in some circles,⁵ the idea that "Israel," in Romans 11:26, refers to the church at large has little if any exegetical warrant. While it is true that elsewhere Paul seems to allude to what is customarily referred to as "the spiritual Israel" (Rom. 2:28, 29; Gal. 3:6–9, 26–29; 6:16; Eph. 2:14), the decisive argument against reading this concept into this passage is the context of Romans 9–11. Here the term *Israel* indisputably refers to ethnic Israel in each of its occurrences,⁶ especially the immediate context in chapter 11, which clearly distinguishes Gentiles from Israel (v. 25). First of all, the failure of ethnic Israel to obtain salvation is what was called for in chapters 9–11. Moreover, earlier in chapter 11, Gentiles are explicitly distinguished from ethnic Jews: Gentiles are being grafted onto the olive tree while the Jews, as the natural branches, are being broken off. Indeed, to argue that Israel, in verse 26, includes believing Gentiles, requires Paul to jump to a new meaning for the term *Israel*, for, in verse 25, he says that a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of believing Gentiles is reached. It seems obvious, then, that, in verse 26, "Israel" refers to ethnic Israel as distinguished from Gentiles. This is

confirmed by verse 28 where the distinction between ethnic Jews and Gentiles is still present.⁷

As for the claim that the term "Israel" in this passage refers only to the Jewish-Christian remnant, or the elect within ethnic Israel, the main objection comes also from the context. There is no question that the remnant motif is prominent in Scripture, particularly in Romans 9–11 (9:6–8, 27–29; 11:1–6), but in these chapters the remnant is not Israel. It is only a part of Israel, for it does not include "the rest" (11:7), that is, those who have not believed in Jesus. More significant, however, is the fact that what concerns Paul in these chapters is not the remnant, but the rest, the unbelievers of Israel. For Paul, the remnant only shows that God's mercy continues and Israel, as a whole, has not been rejected (vv. 1–5). It is exactly because some have believed, including Paul himself, that he anticipates a full inclusion of Jews who remain in unbelief (v. 12). This means that the remnant does not exhaust the meaning of verse 26. To confine the expectation of all Israel to the remnant already saved would render the entire chapter 11 irrelevant.⁸

"All Israel will be saved"

With regard to the word *all*, it seems clear that it does not mean

“every” individual Jew and therefore cannot refer to a national or wholesale salvation of Israel. Such a position can also be demonstrated from the context, for Paul’s expectation was not “all” but that only “some” would be saved (vv. 14, 17), and that, too, if they did not persist in unbelief (v. 23). For Paul, the salvation of the Jews is not inevitable, nor is it collective, but individual and has to do with each deciding to accept Jesus Christ.⁹ Some have observed that the necessity of believing in Jesus for salvation is not mentioned in Romans 11, implying that the Jews can be saved on a different basis, namely, by obedience to the law. Romans 11, however, cannot be snatched away from the context of Roman 9–11 and the epistle as a whole. What troubles Paul is that his own people are separated from Christ (9:3). He charges Israel at length for failing to believe in Christ (9:31–10:8) and proceeds to argue that salvation for both Jews and Gentiles comes only through Christ (10:9–13). Paul does not know of any other way to salvation except through faith in Jesus (cf. 1:16, 17).¹⁰

It is important to highlight that the salvation Paul talks about here is essentially spiritual, not material or political. In chapters 9–11, the terms *salvation* and *to save* are used repeatedly (9:27; 10:1, 9, 10, 13; 11:11, 14, 26), with their spiritual sense clarified by synonyms and related motifs, such as justification, reconciliation, acceptance, mercy, kindness, compassion, and grace. In the very passage of 11:26b, 27, Paul depicts Israel’s salvation as

a taking away of sins by the Deliverer. And it could not be different: since Israel’s failure was the rejection of Christ (10:1–4), Israel’s salvation and restoration has to be understood specifically in relation to Christ, so it must be spiritual by nature rather than material; eternal rather than temporal.¹¹

Understanding the “mystery”

Before stating that “all Israel will be saved,” Paul refers to what he

is reached,¹² which certainly does not mean more than a large Gentile conversion. The “fullness of the Gentiles” stands in parallel with “all Israel.” It is not possible to expect each Gentile to be saved but all that accept Jesus will be saved. In other words, the principle remains the same for “all Israel.” One expression explains the other.¹³

Another aspect of the mystery is that Gentile conversion would function as the manner or way in which Israel would be saved. This



calls a “mystery” (11:25), which has a threefold aspect: “Israel has experienced a hardening in part *until* the full numbers of the Gentiles has come in. *And so* all Israel will be saved” (vv. 25b, 26a, NIV; emphasis supplied). By using the word *until*, Paul does not indicate that the hardening of Israel is temporary and will be reversed one day, but rather that the situation would prevail through the end of time as the “fullness” of the Gentiles

shows what the expression “and so” means. Thus, Paul was able to envisage a divine purpose behind the conversion of Gentiles in relation to Israel. He went as far as to concede that the hardening of Israel was caused by God Himself (9:18; cf. 11:7, 17),¹⁴ but the point he wants to make is that God is in control, and even if something goes wrong, He still can turn it into a blessing, of which even Israel can partake

(v. 23; 11:11, 12). Rather than destining some people to salvation and some to damnation, God's ultimate purpose includes showing mercy on all (v. 32). Hence, the failure of Israel became the opportunity for the Gentiles (v. 30), and now He wants to use the conversion of the Gentiles as an opportunity for Israel (v. 31). By being provoked to jealousy (vv. 11, 14), Israel, or at least some of Israel, would repent and return to God (vv. 14, 23).¹⁵ Being so, God's saving purpose would be fulfilled, but in the

fulfillment. It is true that several times in chapter 11 Paul used the future tense when referring to the salvation of Israel (vv. 14, 23, 24, 26), but he set no fixed time line as to when this would occur. The phrase *out of Zion* (vv. 26b, 27, NKJV) does not apply to Jesus' second coming, as some argue,¹⁶ but to His first advent and its effects, which are the basis for the salvation of Israel. In addition, by using the word *now* three times in verses 30 and 31, Paul seems to conceive the preaching

11:25, 26 assumes a course of events already in progress in Paul's time (vv. 13, 14), which, of course, will not be finished before this era of salvation itself comes to an end. When the full number of believing Gentiles will have been gathered in, then the full number of believing Jews will also be gathered in.¹⁸ The process, therefore, still awaits its consummation.

This does not, however, mean that the process may not increase in intensity as the end draws near. Nothing in Romans 11 excludes a possible large-scale conversion of Jews in the future. As long as the meaning of verse 26 is not restricted to the future or is not argued that this conversion should occur only after the full number of Gentiles has been gathered in, there is no reason why it could not happen.¹⁹ Though Paul does not explain how this would work, there is no question that he sees the conversion of the Jews, and of the Gentiles, only in connection to the preaching of the gospel (10:14, 15; cf. 1:16). Therefore, many more conversions among the Jews might be expected if, for example, as part of an eschatological revival, the "Gentiles" increase their missionary efforts towards them.²⁰

At any rate, the salvation of Israel in this passage seems to be conditional by nature. From the Old Testament one learns that both prophecies and promises may be conditional even when the conditions are not made explicit (John 3:1–10; 1 Kings 21:19–29; Jer. 18:7–10). In the case of Israel's salvation, however, Paul identifies it as an expression of his "heart's desire and prayer to God" in Romans 10:1 and also in Romans 11:14, 27, 31, 32. The Greek used in the five references in chapter 11, is in the subjunctive mood, indicating the apostle's wishes or possible actions, not necessarily real actions. This matches verse 23, where Paul says that God has the power to graft them back onto the olive tree, and that He will do this, "if they do not persist in unbelief" (NIV; emphasis supplied).

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opposite way from that which had been anticipated by the prophets, and in a sense, by Paul himself (cf. 1:16). That is, the Gentiles would not be attracted to God by the people of Israel (Isa. 2:2–4; Mic. 4:1–5) but the other way around.

The time frame of the mystery


A major problem in relation to this mystery is the time of its

of the gospel to the Gentiles and the carrying out of God's purpose for the people of Israel as having a present fulfillment.¹⁷ He does not suggest an order of successive dispensations, nor a sudden event in a distant future, but rather a dynamic process within the framework of the present era of salvation, which, already in his days, Paul considered to be essentially eschatological (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11). Being so, Romans

This is the condition. Everything depends on their attitude in relation to Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

In Romans 11:26, therefore, Paul is talking about the salvation of ethnic Israel, which would take place, not necessarily at some time in the future, but throughout the history of salvation. Thus, “all Israel” does not mean Judaism of the last days. Even if “all” meant “every,” Paul could hardly be thinking only of the fraction of the Jews who would be alive at the end of time. This only reinforces the idea that Romans 11:26 does not refer to political or geographical deliverance prior to Jesus’ second coming but to spiritual salvation.

God has not rejected Israel forever (v. 2). He still loves them (v. 28) and is still committed to them (v. 29), as the conversion of the remnant demonstrates. But God does not want to save only the remnant. He wants to save “all Israel,” and He is more than able to do so, as long as they turn to Jesus. Provision has been made for this to happen. In a complete reversal of Old Testament expectations, Paul trusts that the great Gentile ingathering may incite the Jewish people to jealousy and thus bring them to salvation. If they come, says Paul, this will have a powerful impact on the Christian world itself comparable to “life from the dead” (v. 15, NIV). 

position is held, for example, by Krister Stendahl, *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 215n1, 243; John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 128–142. C. H. Dodd goes as far as to draw universalist conclusions from Paul’s words, affirming that somehow God’s “love will find a way of bringing all men into unity with him” (*The Epistle to the Romans* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1954], 184). Dodd even includes a diagram in his commentary showing how exactly every member of the human race, as well as the fallen angels themselves, will eventually be reconciled to God and saved (187).

- 3 For example, G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ*, trans. James van Oosterom (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 349; Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John R. DeWitt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 354–361; Christopher Zoccali, “And so All Israel Will Be Saved”: Competing Interpretations of Romans 11:26 in Pauline Scholarship,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 30 (2008): 289–318.
- 4 This view, which appears already in some second-century church fathers (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria) and became rather popular in the Middle Ages, as well as in the Reformed tradition, has found less support within contemporary scholarship. Modern proponents include Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul’s Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 134, and N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 249–251.
- 5 See the recent publication by the Biblical Research Institute: Clinton Wahlen, “Will All Jews Be Saved? Romans 11:26,” in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl, Biblical Research Institute Studies 2 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 351–355.
- 6 The references are 9:6 (2x), 27 (2x), 31; 10:19, 21; 11:2, 7, 25, 26. If in 11:26 the term meant something different, it would be the only case in the entire context of chaps. 9–11. Wahlen’s claim that in 9:6, 7 Paul “modifies the normal definition of Israel away from an exclusively ethnic-based notion” (351) is not correct, as in that passage the apostle is only talking about the remnant within ethnic Israel.
- 7 As F. F. Bruce states, “It is impossible to entertain an exegesis which takes ‘Israel’ here in a different sense from ‘Israel’ in vs. 25 (‘blindness in part is happened to Israel’)” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, rev. ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986], 209). This also applies to Jacques Doukhan’s unique interpretation according to which “Israel” in v. 26 takes on a new meaning: the “eschatological Israel,” in which “all the redeemed people,” comprising both ethnic Jews and Gentiles, “will be found” (*The Mystery of Israel* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004], 27–34).
- 8 It should also be noted that when Paul talks about the remnant of Israel (9:6–8, 27–29; 11:1–6), he alludes specifically to the eschatological event of Jesus’ first coming as the Messiah of Israel. In other words, the remnant was the Jewish believers of Paul’s own time. “At the present time,” he says, “there is a remnant” (v. 5). To ascribe the remnant of Israel a continuous existence throughout Christian history is to draw within the community of faith some ethnic boundaries which are foreign to Paul’s thought (cf. 3:22, 23, 29, 30; 10:12; Gal. 3:27–29).
- 9 From the syntactical standpoint, it is perfectly correct to understand the Greek adjective translated as “all” (*pas*), when used without the article and followed by a noun in the singular (“all Israel”), as a reference to the whole, without any sense of individual (see BDF, §275). It has, therefore, a corporate meaning, as in these passages from the Septuagint (LXX): 1 Sam. 7:5; 1 Kings 12:1; 2 Chron. 12:1; Dan. 9:11. In addition, by saying “all Israel,” Paul may also be using a fixed rabbinic formula that occurs several times in Jewish literature. In the Mishnah, for example, which is a compilation of the Jewish oral law dating from approximately the turn of the second century, the salvation of “all Israel” was clearly expected not in relation to the sum

of individuals without a single exception, but Israel as a whole (see *m. Sanh* 10.1).

- 10 “Whatever form the salvation of Israel takes, it is clear that the terms of salvation must be the same as those for the Gentiles: faith in Jesus as the crucified and risen Messiah” (George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 584, 585). For a comprehensive critique of the idea that the Jews will be saved in a different way other than through faith in Jesus, see Reidar Hvalvik, “A ‘Sonderweg’ for Israel: A Critical Examination of a Current Interpretation of Romans 11:25–27,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38 (1990): 87–107.
- 11 For an introductory discussion on dispensationalism, see Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1994). Still valuable is Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*, Andrews University Monographs, Studies in Religion 13 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983).
- 12 The emphasis lies not on a new beginning after a termination point in time, but rather on the continuation of the present situation for Israel until the end of time (see the discussion by Ben L. Merkle, “Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 [2000]: 715, 716).
- 13 For a succinct and helpful case against a universalist reading of Paul, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 182–188.
- 14 Since in the book of Exodus the first reference to God’s actual hardening of Pharaoh’s heart (9:12) comes after references to Pharaoh’s hardening of his own heart (8:11, 28), perhaps the simplest explanation for the hardening of Israel is that it represents “a protological way of expressing divine reaction to persistent human obstinacy against him, a sealing of a situation arising, not from God, but from a creature that rejects divine invitation” (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 568).
- 15 Although the expression “and so” (v. 26a) may also have a temporal sense, in which case the meaning would be “and then” (see Pieter W. van der Horst, “‘Only Then Will All Israel Be Saved’: A Short Note on the Meaning of *kai houtōs* in Romans 11:26,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 [2000]: 521–525), the modal sense is far more common and, in the case of this passage, required by the immediate context (vv. 11–24; cf. vv. 30, 31), as correctly highlighted by Douglas J. Moo (*The Epistles to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 720).
- 16 In Rom. 11:26b, 27a, Paul quotes the prophecy of Isa. 59:20, 21 (LXX). As Fitzmyer points out, “Not even the future *hēxei* [“will come”] necessarily implies the second coming; reference to the parousia is nowhere made in chaps. 9–11” (625).
- 17 There is a question whether “now” (*nun*) in v. 31b (“they too may now receive mercy”) is original or represents a latter addition to the text. Though the earliest known Greek manuscript of Romans, the Chester Beatty Papyrus (3rd cent.), does not include this word, the combined evidence of Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (4th cent.), reputedly the most accurate New Testament manuscripts, seems to favor its presence in the text.
- 18 William Hendriksen, *Israel in Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), 48–51. As Merkle declares, when referring to the hardening of Israel in v. 25, as well as in v. 7, “Paul is speaking quantitatively (‘in part’) and not temporarily (‘for a while’)” (715).
- 19 See Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 147.
- 20 Ellen G. White says, “The Lord has declared that the Gentiles shall be gathered in, and not the Gentiles only, but the Jews. There are among the Jews many who will be converted, and through whom we shall see the salvation of God go forth as a lamp that burneth” (*Evangelism* [Washington: Review and Herald, 1946], 578).

1 This view is particularly associated with Dispensationalism, which sees Israel and the church as two totally separate entities (see, for example, *The Scofield Study Bible*, 1504). Others, though not talking in terms of a material or political restoration of Israel, do maintain that in this passage Paul means exactly what he says, that is, that the entire Jewish nation, with no exception, will be saved (for example, Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007], 702). John C. Brunt also seems sympathetic to this idea (*Romans: Mercy for All*, ALBA [Boise: Pacific Press, 1996], 202). Otfried Hofius comes to the point of suggesting that the salvation of Israel will take place at Christ’s return, when all the Jews will resurrect and “hear the gospel from the mouth of Christ himself” (“All Israel Will Be Saved”: Divine Salvation and Israel’s Deliverance in Romans 9–11,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin, Supplements* 1 [1990]: 19–39).

2 Also known as the Two (or Dual) Covenant Theology, this

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MOVING MINDS UPWARD

PRIVATE SCHOOLS LEAD THE WAY

The reports are alarming. More than 80 percent of U.S. public schools could fall short of federal standards this year, according to an article in the *Los Angeles Times*.¹ Millions of high school graduates can't read or do math at a basic level.

In the midst of this news, however, researchers are discovering that keys to better learning may be found in private schools.

The latest evidence comes from the *CognitiveGenesis* study, a four-year look at the Seventh-day Adventist school system—the second largest Christian school system in the world. More than 50,000 students in North America took standardized tests of thinking ability and academic achievement. Scores were compared to national averages.



KEY FINDINGS:

- Students in the Adventist school system had higher than national average scores in all subjects—math, reading, language arts, social studies and science.
- They achieved higher than predicted based on individual ability scores.
- They did even better the longer they were enrolled in the private school system.

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The researchers believe the academic advantages stem from a holistic approach to education.² Among other factors, higher academic achievement was found among students who tried to do their best in school, had healthy relationships with parents, had a positive spiritual outlook, took care of their health and spent time doing family chores. The evidence is in. An expectation of excellence and a commitment to educate the mind, body and spirit pay off in higher academic achievement for students.

The *CognitiveGenesis* study, a four-year look at the Seventh-day Adventist school system—the second largest Christian school system in the world. www.cognitivegenesis.org

¹ Parsons, Christi. "82% of U.S. public schools could fail 'No Child Left Behind' review, Obama administration says." *Los Angeles Times* (online) 9 Mar. 2011.
² Kido, Elissa. "For real education reform, take a cue from the Adventists." *The Christian Science Monitor* (online) 15 Nov. 2010.

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The erosion of funeral customs and its impact on ministry

Death is dreadful. Death is inevitable. Death affects all. Nevertheless, wherever or whenever it touches, death leaves behind a horror touching every area of life. Physically, death becomes a repulsive and frightening cutoff point: a dear one whom the family saw each day is no longer around. Emotionally, family and friends are impacted by the hard fact that someone they loved, talked with, and laughed with is no longer there. Their spiritual values are challenged, sometimes raising questions such as, Why did God allow this?

Ministers must relate to and care for the grieving family on all three levels—physical, emotional, and spiritual—taking into account all the levels and intensity of pain the family experiences during the grieving period. In addition, ministers must also be aware of prevailing customs and expectations involved in dealing with the grieving process, funeral planning, and other details the occasion requires. This is not a time to experiment with new approaches; it would be well to respect traditions and the wishes of the family. Saying this does not mean everything in the tradition is good and all that is new is bad. Whatever is done, ministers need to respect the feelings of the family and the community, as long as they are in harmony with Scripture.

Four traditional elements

Although this article is developed from the perspective of a Western culture, funeral customs anywhere have traditionally included four elements: attending to the deceased, some form of a wake (or visitation), a funeral proper, and the disposition of the remains (burial, cremation, entombment, etc.).¹ These four elements form an obvious parallel to the three levels at which death touches the surviving family and friends.

First, attend to the dead body. Dead bodies are often thought of as repulsive, scary, and surreal, and the sooner this is attended to, the better. Where the death occurs at home, the family that had a loved one in their midst a few moments ago now has a cadaver in their house. “Who should I call? What will they do? I’ve never even touched a dead body before, and now I must deal with one in the midst of my grief and disbelief and shock.” The physical aspects cannot be ignored.

Second, arrange for an orderly wake (also referred to as “the visitation” or “the receiving of friends”) where friends and family gather around the body for the wake. At these services, memories are shared and condolences offered concerning the departed. This is a formal attempt by the community to offer emotional support to the grieving family. Format varies from region to region, but usually some opportunity exists

to pass by the casket to pay respect to the one who has passed away, as well as an offering of support and concern for the immediate family.

Third, at the funeral proper, spiritual help has traditionally been offered to the grieving. It is chiefly through this service that ministers share Scripture and spiritual insight on the subject of death. Encourage families to accept in faith that which they cannot understand, and remind mourners of a Power higher than themselves. In an attempt to answer the spiritual questions spawned by the pain and grief of loss, present God’s Word along with an assurance of His infinite wisdom. This may well be an occasion to present the biblical portrayal of death as a short sleep, waiting for the voice of the Life-Giver to call for the deceased to arise from the grave. That hope of the resurrection confirms the biblical answer to the tragedy of death.

Fourth, ministers must plan for a sacred graveside service after the funeral service. The graveside service is a formal treatment of a very sordid reality. The subject is often seen as so delicate and unpleasant that terminology becomes treacherous ground. We prefer the term *disposition of the remains* indicating the final settlement of a matter, rather than the more accurate “disposing of the body.” The putting away of the body is the necessary goal, but no one

wants to acknowledge or accept the technical truth of disposing of the remains. The graveside service includes some of the elements of the visitation and the funeral to draw attention away from the real task at hand—the burial of a dead body.

Erosion of funeral ministry

As somber as the subject may be, attitudes toward funerals and death in Western culture have lightened in recent years. What used to be unquestioned etiquette in funeral matters has become optional behavior.

Death rituals seem to be suffering from an erosion of quality that has already been addressed in other disciplines. While those involved in health care have noted a renewed attention to spirituality in that field,² it seems that one of the sources of erosion in funeral ministry includes a diminishing of the spiritual aspect of the service.

The weakening or even absence of any offering of spiritual help indicates that the content of the funeral custom, as a whole, has weakened. Where a funeral sermon delivered by a member of the clergy was once the norm, even for unbelievers, now the sermon is being replaced by eulogies delivered by someone other than a pastor. Before 1980, the percentage of United States funerals including a eulogy by someone other than a member of the clergy was less than 10 percent, rising to about 25 percent by 1990, and now over 50 percent.³ The emotional ministry is slightly increased, but only at the sacrifice of spiritual help, as fond recollections replace scriptural support. While many details of a funeral service may be cultural, one issue should not be surrendered to varying dictates of culture, and that is the scriptural core teaching that death is a defeated foe, and that every funeral includes an occasion for Christians to affirm their faith in their risen Lord in whom they have the hope of the final resurrection.

A slight increase of emotional support, it seems, is bought at the price of a major decrease of spiritual


help. Where today the wake, or visitation, seems almost exclusively social in scope and emotional in the ministry offered, it once was also rich in spiritual help for the grieving family. In the 1800s, the wake had more spiritual emphasis than does the funeral proper in many cases today. The wake then was usually held in the home and included somber reflection and Scripture reading.⁴ The visitation that replaced the now obsolete wake is also moving to the background, with times of visitation becoming shorter and the emphasis lessening.

Modern priorities

Time, or the lack thereof, and busy lives have contributed to the streamlining of funeral services. Once a rarity, now night funerals are becoming the norm because they do not interfere with jobs and daily life routines. Ministry to the grieving was once seen as such a pressing need that daytime routines were put on hold for the ministry's sake. Communities are now less willing to interrupt their busy lives when an individual's life has ended. The families must reschedule the time of the funeral to accommodate the routines of the rest of the community. The night funeral typically follows immediately after the visitation, causing the two formerly distinct and different gatherings to blur into one event. Visitors can choose to come early for visitation and leave before the funeral or come late just in time for the funeral service. The graveside service will likely be attended only by the immediate family and a few very close friends. Families are often choosing to just meet at the graveside for an all-purpose committal service, omitting the more formal funeral service and sometimes the visitation as well. Even the graveside service itself is disappearing, as cremation removes the need for burial. One report reveals that whereas cremations accounted for 21 percent of all body dispositions in 1997, that number likely doubled during 2010.⁵

The potential problem is that streamlining the last rites may come at the price of inadequate ministry at a very crucial time. If friends have no part in the burial, do not bring food to the family, and stop looking for physical ways to minister, a wound is left unattended. If visitation is diminished or deleted from the ministry, emotional support from the community is lessened. When the minister stands to proclaim the love of God at such times (if a minister is involved at all), the spiritual ministry is less effective because the love of God has not been fully exhibited through the offerings of His people in the other realms of need.

Turn back to traditional ministry

What must be done to restore and preserve ministry effectiveness when death strikes a family? Do not wait until death intrudes into the church. Prepare the church, in advance, to meet a grief as tragic as death. As in so many areas, the church must take the lead and pastors must guide the process. Pastors may begin by teaching their congregations, stressing the desire of God to work through His people to offer physical, emotional, and spiritual care. Ministry to the grieving must be held up as a sacred and vital duty. Congregations, led back to a high view of their role in ministry and armed with an awareness of the physical, emotional, and spiritual pain of grief, will more readily reverse the process of erosion of funeral importance. If the church will lead the way, hopefully the world will follow. 

1 For the validity of this observation, see Donald Irish, Kathleen Lundquist, Vivian Nelson, and the Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support, *Ethnic Variations in Dying, Death, and Grief: Diversity in Universality* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1993).

2 Joan Farrell, Scott Brooks, James Cooper, and Leigh Mathias, "Godly Play: An Intervention for Improving Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Responses of Chronically Ill Hospitalized Children," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 62 (2008), 261–271.

3 Jeffrey Zaslow, "And John Was a Terrible Gambler: When Eulogists Get Carried Away," *Wall Street Journal*, 2003, 242: D1.

4 Jacqueline Thursby, *Funeral Festivals in America: Rituals for the Living* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2005), 90.

5 Peter Gilmour, "The Many Ways to Say Goodbye," *U.S. Catholic* 13 (1998), 7.

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



Al Waad Channel viewership exceeds expectations

Beirut, Lebanon—February 1, 2011, marked the launching of Al Waad Channel (Hope Channel in Arabic) reaching the countries in the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe. Since beginning the broadcasts, Al Waad Media Center, based in Beirut, Lebanon, has received numerous emails and thousands of visits on their Web site. The media team has been working hard to reach an audience of potentially more than 300 million Arabic people in the region with the message of love and hope. The programming is designed to help guide people to a better life in this world and give hope of an eternal life to come.

A recent viewer's response revealed that many Arabs are welcoming the Al Waad broadcast with open arms. The feedback indicates enjoyment of the high caliber quality and content of the programs. "We never expected viewer feedback to be so immediate and so positive," says **Amir Ghali**, director of Al Waad Media Center. He continued, "This is an indicator for us to continue working hard in producing programs that will present the Adventist Hope in relevant issues such as health, morality, education, family, and business ethics."

"This is wonderful news to hear that people have already expressed their satisfaction in the quality of Al Waad programs and are interested in knowing more about Jesus as the only hope for the human race. I want to praise God for it and thank the Al Waad team for their hard work and creativity to share the present truth in the context relevant for Arabic people," says **Bertil Wiklander**, president of the

Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Trans-European Division under which the Middle East region falls.

The Al Waad Channel is the newest member of the global Hope Channel, the Adventist Church's official television network. Please visit www.al-waad.tv/en/home to see a glimpse of some programming. [*Miroslav Pujic, tedNEWS*]



Adventist-Muslim dialogue


Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines—An Interfaith Dialogue between Muslims and Adventists was conducted at the campus of Mountain View College (MVC), Philippines, January 26, 27, 2011. The program was organized and coordinated by the Adventist-Muslim Relations Department of the MVC Alumni Church with the support of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) Adventist Missions Department. In attendance were some of the country's prominent Islamic religious leaders and scholars, as well as leaders and professors from the SSD, Adventist International

Institute of Advanced Studies, MVC School of Theology, and pastors assigned in Muslim-populated areas in Mindanao.

The program was a continuation of the dialogue conducted in Mindanao State University, Marawi City, in May 2008, consisting of a series of alternate presentations from the Muslim and Adventist sides, and an open forum after each presentation. With the theme "Building Bridges of Understanding and Peace," the aim was to identify points of commonality between the two religious faiths and to clarify issues in areas of difference. Prayers from both Muslim and Adventist participants were said at the opening of each day's sessions. Resolutions were formulated toward the end of the dialogue, wherein it was decided that more dialogues involving larger participation would be conducted. [*Jimmy Jiamah V. Adil Jr.*]

Ministry Web site sees significant increase in traffic

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—Have you visited our Web site recently, www.ministrymagazine.org? We have experienced a significant increase in traffic in recent months. You can search all of the articles published in *Ministry* for the past 30 years by author, title, or issue. A remarkable new feature of our Web site is the translator, which makes articles available in 52 languages.

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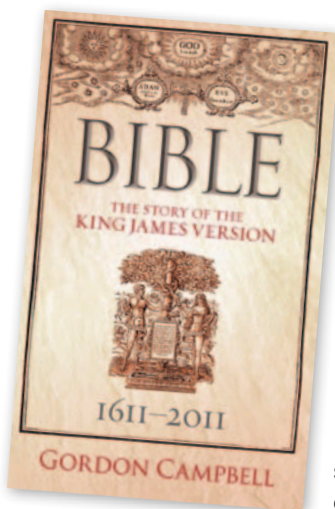


Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611–2011, by Gordon Campbell, Oxford University Press, 2010.

The most significant book ever published in the English language, the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, celebrates its 400th birthday this year. Its importance cannot be overstated.

Gordon Campbell, professor of renaissance studies at the University of Leicester and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, wrote *Bible: The Story of the King James Version*. It makes for absorbing reading—concentrating on the story of the text in printing and its history to the present day.

A vigorous discussion on the role of the KJV exists among



many denominations. More than 1,000 churches subscribe to an evangelical statement of faith that includes “We believe the King James ‘Authorised’ version of the Bible to be the perfect and infallible Word of God.” He has an illuminating discussion of some absurd claims made for the KJV and the sup-

posed infallibility of its text. Campbell concludes, “Other translations may engage the mind, but the King James Version is the Bible of the heart.”

Among other things *Bible: The Story of the King James Version* is beautifully printed and easy to read. There are more than 30 illustrations throughout the text with two useful and informative appendices, along

with an extensive bibliography and index to the contents.

The reader will be impressed with the understanding that God, in His providence, has preserved the Scriptures throughout thousands of years, and the influence of the Sacred Writings remains. However, there is a very relevant fact that all who wish to communicate the truths of God’s Word have to recognize. The vocabulary of the KJV is not the same as that of contemporary society. To most non-Christians, much of the language of this revered Book is, at best, difficult to understand and at worse unintelligible. There remains an argument for modern translations to make the gospel known and understandable.

Having said that, no one with a feeling for words and good literature will be disappointed with Campbell’s book—and certainly not with the King James Version.

—Reviewed by Patrick Boyle, MA, a retired pastor living in Watford, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom

LETTERS



Continued from page 4 ▶

blind (John 9). Fortunately, Jesus ministered what was necessary for this individual, and I believe He issued a just rebuke to those who exhibited spiritual blindness.

Over nearly 33 years within the ordained ministry, I have seen a great many changes in our society, including the many compromises adopted by younger folk. However, rather than entering into judgment and beating them up with the law, it behooves us to bring grace, mercy, and peace into situations of ministry. Honoring God’s Sabbath can easily be used as a cudgel when it is

applied without grace. It becomes nothing less than blind legalism!

Professor Cosaert has my empathy and sympathy in what he faced and continues to face through his path of bereavement for a much-loved daughter.

—Matthew J. Beech, member, clergy ministry team, Motueka Anglican Parish, New Zealand

It takes a lot of courage to write about this personal tragedy. It will surely help me to not jump to conclusions when some actions seem inappropriate.

I recall in the 1930s, the three teenage Hamel children were avid

snow skiers. We lived in northern Wisconsin on a small dairy farm.

One Friday night, we had a massive snowstorm that made it impossible to drive to church. Our church was more than a mile away so we decided to ski to church instead of staying home. When we arrived at church, we were welcomed by some saying, “You’re skiing on Sabbath?” We just smiled and didn’t let it bother us.

I am now 88 years old, but I still remember this incident. Thanks for publishing this article.

—Lyle Hamel, Waverly, West Virginia, United States

Jina Kim, MPH, is wellness program coordinator, Adventist Risk Management, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Are you eating nutritional food?

It is never too late to alter eating habits and implement a healthy diet. Diet and physical activity go hand in hand. Healthy eating helps you look good, feel great, gain energy, stay in shape, promote quality of life, and minister effectively to your congregations.

With fast food industries, instant meals, and a fast-paced world, obesity has become a hot topic. Currently, 1.6 billion overweight adults live in the world, according to the World Health Organization. That number is projected to grow by 40 percent over the next ten years.¹

The top ten countries, with the highest percentage of overweight adults aged 15 and over, follow:

1.	Nauru	94.5%
2.	Micronesia, Federated States of	91.1%
3.	Cook Islands	90.9%
4.	Tonga	90.8%
5.	Niue	81.7%
6.	Samoa	80.4%
7.	Palau	78.4%
8.	Kuwait	74.2%
9.	United States	74.1%
10.	Kiribati ²	73.6%

In the United States, the most recent analysis from the Framingham Heart Study shows that a 30-year-old has a 92 percent (male) or 74 percent (female) chance of becoming overweight³ at some point in their life. The risk of becoming obese,⁴ at the same age, is 48 percent for men and 39 percent for women. This study included 4,117 Caucasian men and women followed between 1971 and 2001.⁵

Obesity currently reduces life by an average of four to nine months. The steep increase in obesity rates is


expected to reduce life expectancy even more severely over the next 50 years, possibly shortening life as much as two to five years.⁶

Adding on extra pounds has an effect on health care spending and puts a toll on employers. Obesity-related illnesses have been responsible for a tenfold increase in private health insurance spending since 1987. It is estimated that treating an obese individual in 2002 costs \$1,244 more than treating a healthy-weight individual. In 1987, the cost difference was \$272. It is predicted that as the obesity epidemic continues, these sky-rocketing costs will soar even higher.⁷

With these staggering statistics it is essential to make smart food choices for your health every single day. Here are some tips to get started:

- **Eat breakfast.** Eating breakfast can help regulate weight control. Studies consistently show an inverse relationship between body mass index (BMI) and breakfast consumption across all age, race, gender, socioeconomic, and lifestyle groups. Individuals who eat breakfast tend to have lower BMIs than individuals who skip breakfast. Those who eat cereal/whole grains for breakfast tend to have lower BMIs than breakfast skippers OR meat and egg eaters.
- **Include 5–9 servings of fruits and vegetables every day.** This is not as hard as it seems. One medium-size fruit, ½ cup of raw, cooked, or frozen fruit or vegetables equals one serving. Choose all the colors of the rainbow because variety becomes key. Add vegetables to soups; toss dried fruit in salads; have fun and make a fruit smoothie with your favorite fruits.

- **Reduce sodium.** The daily recommended amount of salt is 2,400 mg/day (this equals about one teaspoon of salt). Especially be aware of the amount of salt in packaged food items.
- **Increase whole grains.** Read your labels and watch for 100% whole grain, such as wheat, corn, etc.
- **Limit sweets.** Eat sweets in moderation, but do not deprive yourself because this may lead to overeating.
- **Watch your portion sizes.** Portion sizes have dramatically increased during the past 20 years. Be more aware of your portion size. At a restaurant, ask for a box to go right away and divide your meal or split the meal with someone. When eating in, serve the food on individual plates instead of serving dishes.
- **Drink more water.** Drink six to eight cups of water per day.
- **Daily physical activity.** Thirty minutes of exercise helps you avoid being sedentary, and 60 to 90 minutes of physical activity prevents weight gain.

Be aware of the decisions you make as you walk down the aisle of the grocery store, local market, or when you are perusing the menu at a local restaurant. Eat a wide variety of nutritious and colorful foods and control how much you eat. Education starts in the home—so choose wisely. 

1 www.Forbes.com.

2 Ibid.

3 The World Health Organization (www.who.int) calculates "overweight" as a body mass index (BMI—a person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of their height in meters-kg/m²) greater than or equal to 25.

4 The World Health Organization (www.who.int) calculates "obese" as a BMI greater than or equal to 30.

5 Vasan, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, October 4, 2005.

6 *New England Journal of Medicine*, March 17, 2005.

7 *Health Affairs*, June 6, 2005.

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