

A person wearing a long white robe with a patterned sash is walking away from the camera on a dirt path. The scene is set at sunset or sunrise, with a warm, golden glow and long shadows. The background shows a hazy landscape with hills.

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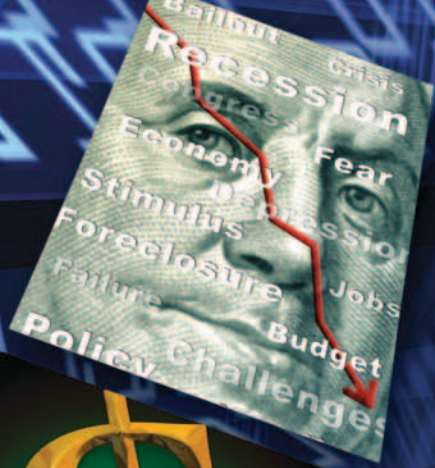
INTERNATIONAL

JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

JUNE 2011

The  
**Way**  
of the  
**Cross** in Mark's  
Gospel

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

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**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

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**CONSULTANTS TO EDITOR**

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L. Williams, Ted N. C. Wilson

**ADVERTISING**

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

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**ADDRESS CHANGES**

subscriptions@ministrymagazine.org

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+1 301-680-6502 (fax)

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Director Anthony Kent | kenta@gc.adventist.org | +1 301-680-6516

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**SECRETARY** Jerry N. Page

**ASSOCIATE SECRETARIES**

Jonas Arrais, Robert Costa,

Willie E. Hucks II, Anthony Kent,

Derek Morris, Janet Page

**MINISTERIAL RESOURCE CENTER**

**Coordinator** Cathy Payne

888-771-0738, +1 301-680-6508

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## “WE MUST COMBAT THE WORLD’S DEFINITION OF TRUE LOVE (LUST/INFATUATION) AND HELP THEM SEE THAT THE METHODS IN WHICH MEDIA TELLS US TO GROW A LOVING RELATIONSHIP ARE DANGEROUS AND UNSUCCESSFUL.”

### Sex education in the church

I just read James Wibberding’s article, “Beyond Abstinence: Presenting God’s Ideal for Sexual Intimacy” (April 2011). I am so glad this message is being discussed more and more within our church. Unlike the author of this article, I grew up in the church and never remember hearing this message discussed anytime, anywhere. This realization came to me as I was hired by a nonprofit organization to teach abstinence until marriage to public high school students. Later, when I was called into ministry, I vowed I would never let any of the youth in my church go without hearing the purity message.

Unfortunately, while I enjoyed the focus on a positive attitude toward sex as a gift, overall I was disappointed with the author’s presentation of the topic. I believe most pastors know the theology behind the issue. It’s the practicality that we often lack. Many young people believe the things presented in the article, but apply them to a dating relationship they think will last forever (no matter how young they are). Often, they physically act on that belief. We have a hard time

giving young people good practical reasons to save sex for marriage and limit the message to disease, and pregnancy, and sin. We often look dumbfounded when our answers are challenged by youth beyond these reasons in a practical sense.

I believe the place to begin the discussion is simply based on life goals and understanding *true* reality: (1) Most young people want to accomplish something in life, and there are decisions in life that help accomplish these goals and decisions that make it much more difficult. Sex (as well as many other choices) can be a huge stumbling block. (2) Everyone wants their marriages to be successful; however, the more sexual and/or romantic relationships we have before marriage, the more baggage we take into a marriage. Baggage-free marriages are most successful. (3) We must combat the world’s definition of true love (lust/infatuation) and help them see that the methods in which media tells us to grow a loving relationship are dangerous and unsuccessful. (4) If they have made a mistake in the past God forgives, the connections of bonding in the brain can reset, and they can begin a life of purity again with sex as a bonding agent, not a

physical addiction. (5) The dating culture puts too much pressure upon our young people to fulfill socially accepted norms. They feel they must fulfill physical, emotional, and financial expectations to be in a good “relationship.” This is too much pressure on people who are not in a place in life to get married anyway. We must teach them to make good friends with people, then remember them later when they know where they are going and who God wants them to be (goals achieved). (6) Accountability. Without surrounding themselves with people who believe and encourage the same things while setting boundaries for themselves, they will likely fail.

Practicality is the key to success. Only when our young adults see how wonderful sex is, but understand that, like fire, it is good only in the right context (in your fireplace, not in the middle of your living room), will they achieve success. Theology with real practicality is the key.

—Dustin Hall, pastor, email

James Wibberding is to be commended for tackling the issue of teens’ and singles’ sexuality and suggesting some proposals

Continued on page 29 ►



# A Christ-centered mission

The apostle Paul was bold and unapologetic in his confession to the followers of Jesus in Corinth: “I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).<sup>\*</sup> Similarly, to Christians in Galatia, he wrote, “God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

Why was Paul so passionate about a Christ-centered mission? Perhaps we find a partial answer in his testimony to followers of Jesus in Rome: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). Later in that same epistle, Paul declares, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Rom. 10:9). Then Paul asks a crucial question for his readers in Rome and also for us: “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14).

*Ministry* is a preacher in print. As an editorial team, we are committed to a Christ-centered mission, proclaiming “glad tidings of good things” (Rom. 10:15). We have a threefold goal: to help you experience a life-changing, world-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord; to provide you with careful reflection on the Scriptures that testify about Jesus and the implications of those teachings for our lives today; and to equip you in practical ways to share the glad tidings of good things with others in your community.

This current issue includes a thoughtful article by Kayle de Waal

titled “The Way of the Cross in Mark’s Gospel.” De Waal provides an opportunity for you to reflect on the mission of Jesus. His contribution also reminds us that ours is an international journal for pastors. This current issue includes authors from Australia, France, and the United States of America, and will be read by clergy in more than 190 countries. We are intentionally seeking to diversify our pool of writers so as to address the opportunities and challenges of clergy in a variety of cultural settings.

Have you ever considered writing an article for our journal? Recently, I received an email from a former classmate of mine inquiring if I would be interested in an article for our journal on preaching. My response was immediate—Yes! We not only accept manuscripts from our readers, we welcome them. All submissions go through a rigorous peer review process that might sound somewhat intimidating; but, if published, your article will have been strengthened as a result of the process.

In order to make the glad tidings about Jesus more accessible to you and those within your circle of influence, we have designed a Web site—[www.ministrymagazine.org](http://www.ministrymagazine.org)—that provides *Ministry* resources for your own study and sharing with others. We are excited to report that we have experienced an exponential increase in traffic on our Web site in recent months, with visitors representing more than 200 countries. Thanks to our Google translator, articles are now readily available in 52 different languages. We encourage you to explore our Web site and also tell your ministerial colleagues about this valuable resource. All of these resources are free. We have taken seriously the exhortation of

Jesus: “Freely have you received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8). Our most searched article in recent months is titled “What Teenagers Want From Their Pastor” by Keith Hardy (November 1980). Apparently, that is a topic that remains relevant from generation to generation.

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Many readers of *Ministry* are surprised when they learn that our journal has a total readership of more than 80,000 pastors and other spiritual leaders representing many different faith communities. We welcome your feedback regarding ways that our journal can more effectively share the good news of glad tidings. Just write to us at [ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org](mailto:ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org).

The apostle Paul concluded his message to the Christians in Ephesus with a prayer request, and we will do the same. Pray also for us that we might boldly make known the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19). By God’s grace, may we have a part in sharing the good news of glad tidings with every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. **M**

<sup>\*</sup> All quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible.

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# The Way of the Cross in Mark's Gospel

The *way* is an important designation used in the early church to articulate the newfound faith in Jesus (see Matt. 22:16; Acts 9:2; 18:25; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14, 22).

This article will examine the usage of the word *way* in Mark and draw some theological and pastoral implications.

Mark 1:2 reads, "It is written in Isaiah the prophet: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way'—a voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" <sup>1</sup> Mark quotes Isaiah 40:3. When a New Testament (NT) writer quotes or alludes to an Old Testament (OT) text, the literary and thematic context of the OT text needs to be taken into account in the interpretation of the NT passage. <sup>2</sup> Even though Isaiah 40:3 is only a slight reference, we shall see how important this reference is in the Gospel of Mark, and how the whole message of Isaiah needs to be considered in order to understand the gospel. <sup>3</sup>

## Isaianic New Exodus in Mark

One of the themes Isaiah addresses, in chapters 40–55, includes the New Exodus in the context of God's people in Babylonian bondage. <sup>4</sup> Along with Isaiah 40:3, <sup>5</sup>

consider Isaiah 43:16–19: "This is what the LORD says—he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: 'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.'" <sup>6</sup>

These passages revisit the mighty display of Yahweh's power in the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. While Isaiah 40:3 says that the *way* is prepared by Yahweh, Isaiah 42:16; 43:16–19; and 49:11, 12 say that the *way* is prepared by Yahweh for His people. There is no distinction between "the road of Yahweh and the road of Israel, for Yahweh travels with His people, as He did in the Exodus." <sup>6</sup> The *way* signifies the salvific act of God on behalf of His people. By alluding to Isaiah 40:3, Mark draws on the Isaianic New Exodus as the background context to understanding his gospel.

This Isaianic New Exodus theme is not drawn on again in the Gospel until Mark re-introduces the word *way* in Mark 8:27. <sup>7</sup> Scholars have generally acknowledged Mark 8:27–10:52 as the theological nerve

center of this Gospel. <sup>8</sup> In this section, charged with "outbursts of predictive energy," Jesus announces three passion predictions and attempts to clarify for His disciples the nature and substance of His mission. <sup>9</sup> Mark 8:27 reads, "Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way He asked them, 'Who do people say I am?'" Mark's reference to the word *way* here is intentionally used to lead his readers back to Mark 1:2; Isaiah 40:3; and possibly 43:16, 18. On His first use of this word, Jesus asks His disciples His identity, which is an important theme in Mark. "God himself had declared Jesus to be his Son (1:11, cf. 9:7), with the demons chiming in with fearful acknowledgment" as well (1:24; 3:11; 5:7). <sup>10</sup> The disciples confirm that He is the Messiah, after which Jesus declares that the Son of Man must suffer many things, die, and be raised again.

Interestingly, the concept of *way* is used while the disciples are in Caesarea Philippi. It was a major Hellenistic city built by Herod Philip in honor of Augustus and boasted a shrine for the emperor cult. In addition, this city had also been a place where the god Baal had been worshiped. Therefore, in the midst of a city dedicated to false gods, Jesus' true identity is revealed. The revelation of the identity of

Jesus, here in Caesarea Philippi, counters the claims of past and present pretenders to godhood. Jesus is, in fact, God in human flesh and has demonstrated His power over nature, demons, sickness, and death (cf. Mark 1:22–27; 4:35–41; 5:1–43).<sup>11</sup>

### The Way and the Cross in Mark's literary structure

Mark uses the word *way* with increased frequency in Mark 8:27–10:32. Mark 9:33, 34 has a reference to the disciples arguing while they were on the *way*. The next use of

the *way* is in Mark 10:17: "As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'" This incident recounts the story of the rich young ruler who eventually turns away from Jesus. The last reference to the *way* in the section of Mark 8:27–10:32 is in verse 32, which reads, "They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him."

At the end of this important section, Mark identifies where the *way* leads: it leads to Jerusalem, where Jesus will be crucified. Drawing on the Old Testament background, the use of the *way* in Isaiah leads to the conclusion that the *way* is, in fact, a fulfillment of the Isaianic New Exodus. This New Exodus in Mark is not from Babylonian captivity, but rather from the captivity of Satan and sin and far exceeds the prophecy of Isaiah 43:16–19, which pointed to God already transcending what He did in the Exodus of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Typologically, the Cross now becomes the zenith



THE WAY  
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ACT OF GOD  
ON BEHALF  
OF HIS  
PEOPLE.

of God's redemptive activity, superseding His redemptive work in the historical Exile and Exodus.

## The Way and Discipleship

Mark wrote with a deep conviction that Jesus was *leading* the way to Jerusalem for Jesus knew what would befall Him there. On the other hand, the disciples were astonished either because they were beginning to understand the teaching of Jesus in relation to His death or because of their obduracy to comprehend the actions of Jesus in leading the way. In any case, Mark 10:32 is one of the central verses to unlock the commitment and passion of Jesus to fulfill the mission set out for Him by His Father.

A strategically placed reference to the *way* occurs in Mark 10:52, which recounts the story of blind Bartimaeus. Why has Mark now used the word *way* to conclude the story of Bartimaeus when he has already concluded his section on the passion predictions at Mark 10:32? He creatively placed two stories, Mark 8:22–26 and Mark 10:46–52, on either side of Mark 8:27–10:32 to illustrate the nature of discipleship.

In Mark 8:22–26, Jesus heals a partially blind man. After Jesus places spit on the man's eyes, he reports that he sees people that look like trees that are walking. Only after Jesus places His hands on his eyes is the man healed by Jesus. Mark has placed this story before Mark 8:27–10:32 to portray the inability of the disciples to understand the mission of Jesus. On the other hand, Mark 10:46–52 recounts the healing of blind Bartimaeus. This healing is meant to recall Isaiah 42:16, which is a Messianic prophecy pointing to the ability of the Messiah to heal the blind.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Bartimaeus exemplifies true discipleship, and the use of his story here is drawing on the call of the disciples in the early part of the Gospel.<sup>13</sup> As the


disciples give up their boats and employment, so Bartimaeus gives up his cloak. That this story emphasizes discipleship and contains deep symbolic significance is evident in the "conspicuous lack of emphasis on the course of the miracle itself . . . no healing word or gesture, no demonstration of the cure and no choral acclamation."<sup>14</sup>

Most importantly, Bartimaeus follows Jesus on the *way* in Mark 10:52, which is a metaphor of the Cross. While Jesus' disciples have failed to grasp the realities of discipleship, Bartimaeus has. Jesus demonstrates His empathy and power by giving His time and consideration to one of Israel's most insignificant members of society. This final episode in Mark's Gospel provides a fitting conclusion to Jesus' public ministry as He heads toward Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup>

Mark used the *way* (and the Holy Spirit) to be an illustration of the Cross and the human response to what Christ has done for us there. Christ's true identity can only be fully grasped and appreciated in the light of Calvary's love, hence its significant use in Mark 8:27. The two stories on either side of Mark 8:27–10:32 illustrate the differing responses to the Cross—initial misunderstanding in the case of the disciples or acceptance in the case of Bartimaeus. The story that makes use of the *way* motif in Mark 8:27–10:52, that of the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17–22), is tragically the response of rejection. The *way* also serves as a paradigm of discipleship in Mark's Gospel. Like Bartimaeus, disciples are invited to leave everything and follow Jesus along the *way*.

## Conclusion

As pastors, we, too, are on the *way* with Jesus. He leads in His ministry through each of us. The call of Bartimaeus reminds us that we must surrender all to Jesus. Bartimaeus persevered. He would not leave Jesus until he had his

miracle. As pastors, there may be times when we question God's plans for us and our church. There may be times when we are like the disciples who could not see properly. We do not understand the *way* in which God is leading us. Bartimaeus reminds us to persevere in our relationship with Jesus. Our miracle is on its *way*. Remember, Jesus has already walked this *way* and triumphed. The *way* offers the privilege of fellowship with Him and a share in His victory. 

- 1 All Scripture references are from the New International Version.
- 2 This principle was first articulated by C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: Collins, 1952), 126–33.
- 3 According to Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, Biblical Studies Library (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 54, "in literary antiquity the role of the prologue was, by convention, to provide an indication of what is to be said so that hearers can know beforehand what the work is about." Further, Watts suggests that "the gospel of Jesus Christ is that gospel about which Isaiah wrote," 56, 57.
- 4 On the Exodus motif, see B. W. Anderson, "Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, eds. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York: Harper, 1962), 177–195.
- 5 The ideas are developed from Isaiah 11:16 and 35:8. According to Klyne Snodgrass, "Streams of Tradition Emerging From Isa. 40.1-5 and Their Adaption in the New Testament," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 8 (1980): 24–45 (41), states that "the themes of 40.5 that are developed later such as the theme of the effectiveness of the Word of God (55.11) or all flesh being affected by God's activity (66.23)."
- 6 John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, Anchor Bible 20 (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1968), 17.
- 7 M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 37, suggests that the motif of "way" is used in 2:23; 4:4, 15; 6:8; 8:3; 11:8; and 12:14. We will not consider these verses due to the constraints of this article. The references before 8:27 are, in fact, incidental and add no hermeneutical weight to the motif I am addressing in this article. Due to constraints of this article, I will not engage with every occurrence of the term *way*.
- 8 Cf. Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, Word Biblical Commentary 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 3, 4.
- 9 Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 425.
- 10 Evans, 14.
- 11 Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 240.
- 12 Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 34, writes, "The removal of blindness is linked to the picture of the holy highway upon which the redeemed of the Lord return to Zion with the exultant singing. Thus, . . . opening eyes of the blind, and the way of the Lord are interrelated themes."
- 13 The verb "call" (*phoneo*) is repeated three times in verse 49, emphasizing the discipleship focus of this pericope.
- 14 Christopher D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*, SNTSMS 64 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 124.
- 15 Evans, 134.

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# *The Great Controversy* Project: An interview with Delbert W. Baker

*Editor's note: Delbert W. Baker, a general vice president for the world church of Seventh-day Adventists, who chairs The Great Controversy Project (GCP) Committee, discusses the worldwide initiative to distribute Ellen G. White's book The Great Controversy, disseminating its last-day message to a world in need of hope.*

**Willie E. Hucks II (WH):** *Dr. Baker, thank you so much for taking time to share with our readers about The Great Controversy Project. First of all, what is the purpose of this initiative?*

**Delbert W. Baker (DB):** The purpose of this project is to give the reading public an opportunity to be aware of the coming events portrayed in *The Great Controversy*. In a very intentional manner, this project allows our neighbors and friends to be privy to one of the best messages to be found anywhere—that the great controversy between good and evil will be ended, and there will be a triumphal ending to all the pain and suffering we are experiencing in this life. That's the blessed hope. So by sharing this dynamic book, it's our way of saying to the world, "Here is a simple message to which we want you to be exposed, [which] is both inspiring and life changing."

That's what our General Conference president, Pastor Ted Wilson, was referring to when he preached his first message in Atlanta—do something big and bold for God! Under God, we need to do something bold and get our message out in a very powerful and distinct way. We must tell the world about the message God has given us. By sending millions of copies of *The Great Controversy* around the globe, we think that can be accomplished.

**WH:** *I understand the goal is to distribute tens of millions of The Great Controversy. Could you discuss the overall logistics behind this distribution plan?*

**DB:** Well, we're really downplaying an actual number—we do not want to be driven by a number; rather, let the Holy Spirit help us [to] distribute the highest amount possible. But we are trusting God that He will impress members to distribute millions! Again, we don't want people to get caught up in a numbers game. Let's just do our best and see what God does. The point is we want to distribute *The Great Controversy*—it is a great Spirit-filled book, and the masses need to get it, read it, and be changed by it. So President Wilson

has challenged all the divisions of the world field, all the departments in the General Conference, all the entities, for example, hospitals, Adventist Health Systems, schools, Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries, independent ministries, publishing houses, supporting organizations, and so forth, to help us in spreading *The Great Controversy* like the leaves of autumn. Now, will the world church distribute forty or fifty million or more? We do not know. But we do want to do all we can under God. But, again, we don't want to get caught up with the numbers. The number is subordinate to doing our very best to get the books out in large volume and letting the Holy Spirit anoint the project.

**WH:** *What do you see as the benefits of The Great Controversy Project?*

**DB:** I think there are several very concrete benefits. First, *The Great Controversy* gives us a real-time version of religious liberty through the ages. From the very beginning until now, people have fought for the basic principles of religious liberty and the freedom of choice and the ability to decide how to serve God according to their conscience. And that's a current message for today.

Not everyone will choose Adventism, but they should have the right to choose; for that's what *The Great Controversy* talks about.

The second one addresses the eternal theme of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, between good and evil, between the positive and the negative. Christ is presented as Savior and Lord and as [the] coming King. And the book shows it in such a wonderful way. Though I've read *The Great Controversy* before, I'm reading it again, and it's transforming. It's helping me to experience revival and reformation. I'm inspired to be like the Reformers of ages past. The same values and traits that were needed then are needed now.

The third benefit of *The Great Controversy* is that it has a way of applying history in a very practical fashion to our lives. So when we read the story about Zwingli, Luther, Calvin, then the Reformation, lessons are not simply relegated to the distant past, but they can be applied to our lives today.

In the latter part of the book, Ellen G. White talks about end-time events. She had to have prophetic insight. People need to know what is in these pages. Today, people are very interested in the future. They want to know, what does the future hold? What can we expect? *The Great Controversy* answers those questions. Ellen G. White said she wanted to see this book distributed more than any of her other books. And so we are following through with her desire. Now, there are some people who believe we should distribute *The Desire of Ages*, or *Steps to Christ*, or perhaps others of her books first; and clearly these books have been distributed in the past—and they have their place. We need to distribute those

as well. But now is the time for *The Great Controversy*. Many people are distributing it now and have been for some years. But it is the conviction of Pastor Wilson, the division presidents, the vice presidents here, and church leadership overall, that the message of *The Great Controversy* is what needs to be shared at this time!

**WH:** *We have been engaged in the "Tell the World" initiative for the last*

initially reaching up to Christ. We're not simply doing things for the sake of doing them. Our actions originate from the spirit of Christ. It's all a part of revival and reformation. We're being quickened in our hearts to do something with our hands. It's one thing to pray and ask for something to happen, but we also believe it should result in a witness and a reaching out to others. So revival and

reformation are key. Then on top of that you have *The Great Controversy*, which is a tool of the "Tell the World" initiative and revival and reformation. We have the heart and the hand involved in these two initiatives. We're praying that God will bless these efforts and that the Holy Spirit will be behind all [of] this.

I think also about the Office of Adventist Missions and the great 10/40 window thrust we have. Certain divisions in the world field will have different versions of *The Great Controversy*. We hope, as much as possible, that people will send out the classic version of *The Great Controversy*. But some may publish a portion of this, as was the case with *The Impending Conflict* some years ago. That's OK. There's latitude in how people distribute

the volume in order to give the people the latitude to do what they need to do in their fields.

We're working closely with Jim Nix in the Ellen G. White Estate to be sure that the message reaches people in a way that remains consistent with the objectives of Ellen White; and we want the book to be distributed in every possible form: print, digitally, the social media. We will have videos, podcasts, and trailers for it. We will have whatever way is needed to share the message of this powerful book. We are open for any suggestions.



Delbert W. Baker

*five years. Now we are also embarking on the very necessary thrust of revival and reformation. How do you see The Great Controversy Project tying into both "Tell the World" and revival and reformation?*

**DB:** They are inextricably bound together. You cannot separate them. In fact, "Tell the World" is the umbrella initiative—the program under which all the other initiatives fall. When we speak of reaching out, reaching up, and reaching across,\* revival and reformation consist of

The idea is that in the year 2011 we're encouraging all Adventist members to read it and become reacquainted with it. But in 2012 and 2013, that's when we want to distribute the millions of copies around the world field.

**WH:** *Can you share some anecdotes from your travels and personal experience as it relates to The Great Controversy and The Great Controversy Project?*

**DB:** One that comes to mind is about one of the elders in one of the churches I once pastored. In the years before he became a Seventh-day Adventist, he was pretty much destitute. He had given himself to alcohol and promiscuity. He pretty much had lost all hope in life. In his homeless wanderings, he ran across a portion of *The Great Controversy*. Not even the whole book. In his drunken state, he began to read it. He then put the partial copy in his bag with all his other stuff. At moments when he was more sober, he went back and read more and more of it. There he happened across a reference—I suppose in the back of the book—to an Adventist church. He visited the church and met some members. As a result, he received Bible studies and began to attend church, eventually getting baptized. Now that was just a portion of *The Great Controversy*! This guy was at a very low point in his life, and the words in the book changed him.

I heard a colleague of mine tell a story about a man in South America who got a copy of *The Great Controversy*, and though he was already a Christian, he did not know about Seventh-day Adventists. He began to read the book and started giving Bible studies from the book to

his family and friends—and remember, *he was not even an Adventist!* Finally, he met an Adventist and was planning to give him studies from his copy, and the person said, "We Adventists know that book, and we can give you more books from where that one came from." He got connected with the church members, got studies, and today, is an active Seventh-day Adventist. In

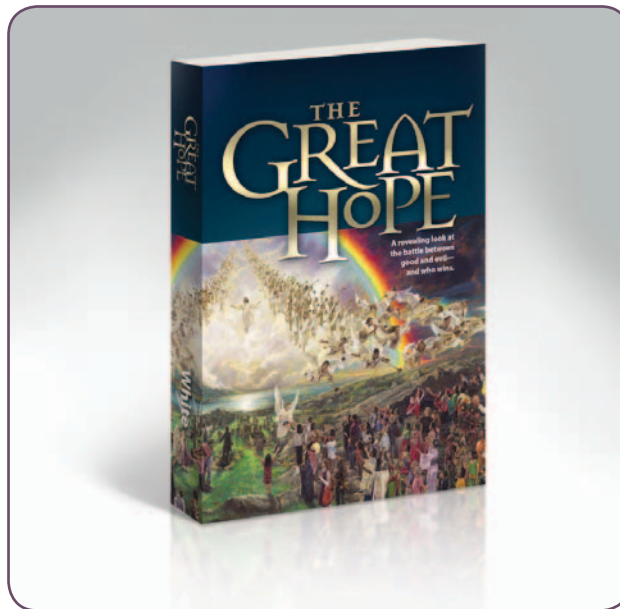
problem with it, because it contains some hard-hitting truths. And that is why we are working with the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department of the General Conference, developing some questions and answers that we will have on the GCP Web site, so that if our church members are asked, "Why are you distributing this book at this point in time?" they will have definitive answers to provide.

**WH:** *What can pastors do to make this project succeed? How do you plan to link this to local churches?*

**DB:** Well, I think there are two ways. First, a person can accept the Christ-centered message of *The Great Controversy*, personally, by reading it. I use my iPhone and iPad to listen to it when I'm working out. Additionally, pastors can creatively find ways to urge their members to buy copies and distribute them. The books will be very inexpensive; we're hoping they will be a dollar or less. The members can buy a book to give away during the planned years of distribution—2012 and 2013. They can give [it] to people they know—or even to those they do not—or leave it in public places for people to pick

up. They may be too shy to go and give it to a friend. But they can buy multiple copies and leave them in Laundromats, stores, salons, and other places. So pastors can be the link in facilitating the distribution of the book into the hands of the members and others.

In the South American Division of the Adventist Church, the president is committed in 2012 to distribute at least fifteen million copies of *The Great Controversy* in one day. Other divisions are planning [and] developing their goals as well. They



fact, he's now a strong lay preacher! It all started with the reading of *The Great Controversy*.

I was in Brazil recently, and at the publishing house there, I saw a video production of a man who was both using and selling drugs. He came across a copy of *The Great Controversy*, and it changed his life. Now, he's working for Christ. So, there's power in this book. Just think what the Holy Spirit can do with millions of copies around the world.

However, there may be people who read the book and have a

are planning carefully because the logistics of a project like this are impressive. Currently, publishing houses around the world are gearing up for giant print runs. So pastors and conference and union presidents are crucial to the success of the project—it cannot be done without them.


There may be others who would like to donate funds to send out to various ZIP codes and to various parts of the world. They may say, “I cannot pass them out myself, but I’ll give five thousand dollars, ten thousand dollars, and more to be sure that they go to Africa, Australia, the Solomon Islands, or the Caribbean—wherever they need to go.” We are also encouraging presidents of our colleges and universities, as well as principals of our schools to guarantee that all of their students get a

copy and that they give them out in the community of the educational institution. We are asking the CEOs of our hospitals and health care systems to take large quantities and make them available in their lobbies and [in] their communities.

So what we’re saying is “just do it!” Put the word out there. God has promised that if we sow, we will reap. We believe *The Great Controversy* Project will bless us with immediate results and for years to come.

Some people may ask, “Well, how will they make the connection to the Adventist Church and know how to interpret receiving a free book?” Each book will have a simple but tactful message in it, saying, “This is being sent to you by your friends the Adventists . . . to speak to you where you are now as well as to give you answers for the future.”

There will also be some reference in there either to a local congregation, and will include a Bible correspondence course where they can receive Bible lessons, or to a Web site where they can read more of the great controversy story. So the entire GCP will be a 24/7/365 witnessing project. I’m convinced that God is going to bless it in ways we cannot imagine.

**WH:** *Dr. Baker, thank you so much for sharing with our readers. May God continue to bless both the book and the GCP.* 

\* “Reach Up, Reach Out, Reach Across” is a component of the “Tell the World” initiative that focuses on reaching up to God through Bible study, prayer, Adventist Bible study guides, and the Spirit of Prophecy; reaching out to others as a friendly church that puts Christ’s mission first, inviting all peoples to fellowship, and making a difference daily in the community; and reaching across the barriers that threaten to divide us as a family, endeavoring to disciple, nurture, and involve every individual in the life and mission of the church.

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# Is biblical Creation important?

## Seven reasons why it really does matter what we believe about Creation

Amid the current discussion about the early chapters of Genesis, some have suggested that belief about origins is not a big deal. I disagree. What we believe about Creation matters greatly because our belief in Creation has far-reaching implications for other doctrines and practices as well.

What are those implications, and what can result from rejecting the biblical position on origins?

### Scripture has a position

The first reason that what we believe about Creation matters is that the Bible sets forth a clear position on it; and the Adventist Church accepts Scripture as authoritative. We need, therefore, to advocate the biblical position. Passages throughout Scripture are consistent with, and supportive of, the description in Genesis that God began life on earth by creating all original life forms over one literal week.<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20:11 declares, “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.”<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Psalm 33:6 proclaims, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.” And verse 9 of the same chapter asserts, “For he spoke, and

it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.”

Whenever the Bible alludes to the Creation story in Genesis, the Scriptures depict Creation as a reliable portrayal of life’s origins.<sup>3</sup> In light of this consistency, there is no credible way to be faithful to a high view of Scripture and hold to an alternative concept of creation, such as progressive creation or theistic evolution.

Because the Bible takes a clear position on this matter, grave implications exist if the Adventist Church abandons the biblical position in an attempt to agree with the current interpretations of science. One of the most obvious is that if Scripture is untrustworthy on this point, what else, among its teachings, should be doubted, modified, and discarded? The Bible’s status as the revealed Word of God is thus in jeopardy.

### Jesus took a position

A second reason why it matters what we believe about Creation follows the first naturally: Jesus had a position on Creation, and the church’s position should be in harmony. What did Jesus teach about Creation? In Matthew 19:4, Jesus—clearly drawing from the biblical Creation account—asks, “Have you not read that he who

created them from the beginning made them male and female?”

With this statement, Jesus affirms the biblical position that the first two humans were created, male and female, at the beginning and by a direct act of God. By contrast, progressive creation, theistic evolution, or some other variant, contend that animal life went on for long periods before humans even came into existence. None of these views hold that humans were created directly by God at the time life began.

Should the Adventist Church turn away from the biblical teaching on Creation, it would also be turning away from Jesus’ view on origins. This move would involve a rejection of the hermeneutics of Jesus. In contrast, our fervent desire should be to follow the same approach to Scripture that Jesus used. Jesus, the Lord of Creation, must be our Model and Guide for understanding the Creation story.

### Relationship to the plan of salvation

A third reason is that the Bible’s doctrine of creation is integrally tied in with its teaching about salvation.<sup>4</sup> The great story of redemption, the theme of the entire Bible, is intimately related to the Creation account.

According to Scripture, God created the world perfect, harmonious, lovely, and free of any taint of sin or death. Because Adam and Eve sinned, they and their descendants became alienated from God. Consequently, death, the penalty for sin, spread over the entire created world. But God enacted a plan: through the gift of His Son, all people have the opportunity to be redeemed and overcome death, the “last enemy” (1 Cor. 15:26).

### Foreshadows the new earth

The fourth reason why it matters what we believe about Creation is that the biblical portrayal of the new earth in the last book of Scripture, Revelation, parallels the description of God’s original creation. Eschatology echoes its protology.<sup>5</sup> Just as the tree of life was in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9), so it will be in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:2). God personally interacted with His children in Eden,

or some other variant, none believe that a world devoid of suffering and death ever existed.

I was talking with a fellow pastor who took a position on origins that involved long ages of predation and death in the animal kingdom before human existence.

“According to this view,” I asked, “when did the world, described in Genesis, a world free of suffering and death, exist?”

His reply was illuminating. He

THE ONLY PERSPECTIVE ON ORIGINS THAT TRULY VALUES HUMANS AS CHILDREN OF GOD, FORMED IN HIS OWN IMAGE, COMES FROM THE BIBLICAL CREATION STORY.



Romans 5:12 is key, because it unambiguously states that death came into this world through sin. The clear implication is that, prior to sin, there was no death. Simply put, death was not a part of the original creation.

All other positions on creation maintain that death has been part and parcel of this world ever since the first and simplest forms of life. Not only has death been ever-present in this world, it also played an essential role in the process by which higher life forms evolved. In other words, death, far from being an enemy and an alien force, was God’s *modus operandi* in creation.

Thus, at their core, these alternative theories, if embraced, would destroy our basic understanding of salvation.

sharing His presence with them in a very real way, and such will be the case also in the new earth (Rev. 21:3). As the original world was said by God Himself to be “very good” (Gen. 1:31), implying it was without sin, suffering, and death, so the earth restored will be devoid of these same elements (Rev. 21:4). The earth at the beginning had a source of light apart from the sun (cf. Gen. 1:3–5, 14–16), and the same is true of the new earth (Rev. 22:5). According to Scripture, the earth restored will be like the earth at the beginning.

In contrast, none of the alternative creation accounts believes in the existence of a good and perfect world at the beginning. All depict a world where suffering and death are part of the equation. Whether progressive creation, theistic evolution,

said (and at least he was consistent with the position he was espousing), “I suppose one would have to say it existed only as an ideal in the mind of God.”

If so, is it possible that the new earth, as described in Scripture, will exist only as an ideal in the mind of God? If there never was a perfect world at the beginning, in which none of the effects of sin were present, how can we be certain that a perfect world will be a future reality? We, in fact, cannot.

### Implications for the character of God

The fifth reason why what we believe about Creation matters is the implications about the character of God, which are at the heart of the great controversy, the ongoing battle

between good and evil. What is more central to the character of God other than His benevolence, goodness, graciousness—and love (1 John 4:8)?

How do we know that love is at the core of God's being? Many things could be emphasized, such as the plan of salvation. God also demonstrated His loving character through Creation. He formed a wonderful, magnificent world and gave it to His human children. He placed them in a beautiful garden in which they could thrive and prosper. He blessed them and gave them dominion (see Gen. 1; 2). Nothing that could have added to their happiness or fulfillment was lacking. Clearly, God's character of love was on display in the world He created.

But what if someone does not accept the biblical record and instead embraces a view such as progressive creation? Because all alternative views on origins hold that God used the process of natural selection over long ages to get to more advanced forms of life, these other views raise grave questions about God's character. How can we say that God is loving, kind, and benevolent if He used the "law of claw and fang" to create? Is a God who would make extensive use of predation and extinction in order get to advanced life forms a good and loving God worthy of worship and service? If there never was a world in which perfection reigned, in which death, suffering, pain, disease, tragedy, and death were nonexistent, the question could be asked, *What kind of God do we really serve?*

### Implications for the worth of humans

The sixth reason why it matters what we believe about Creation is what it teaches about humanity and human worth.

We as humans have worth and value because of the truth proclaimed in the first chapter of the Bible. Genesis 1:26, 27 states, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish

of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Sometimes verses of Scripture become so familiar that the profound truths they express cease to impress us. It would be tragic should that be true of this passage. What a majestic and profound thought, that humans are a direct creation of God, formed in His own image!

Other perspectives on human origins see us as the result of a long chain of development, moving from invertebrates to vertebrates, progressing from reptiles to birds to mammals. Should a view like this be adopted, one might be tempted to conclude with Stephen Jay Gould: "Why do humans exist? . . . I do not think that any 'higher' answer can be given. We are the offspring of history and must establish our own paths in this most diverse and interesting of conceivable universes—one indifferent to our suffering, and therefore offering us maximal freedom to thrive or to fail, in our own chosen way."<sup>6</sup>

What we teach about the origin of humans has a pronounced impact on how humans will view and conduct themselves. It is sadly ironic that in science classrooms all across the world, young people are taught that humans are the direct descendants of apelike ancestors, and then when the bell rings and with the class dismissed, these same students go to a class that attempts to build their self-esteem and encourages them to have good ethics. The connection is there, articulated so succinctly by Barbara Reynolds in her *USA Today* op-ed piece titled "If Your Kids Go Ape in School, You'll Know Why."<sup>7</sup>

The only perspective on origins that truly values humans as children of God, formed in His own image, comes from the biblical Creation story. Therefore, it remains vital that the Adventist Church continue to embrace this perspective.

### Implications for the Sabbath

The seventh reason why it matters what we believe about Creation is the Sabbath. If we adopt another view on origins and are consistent with that view, following it to its logical conclusion, the Sabbath is shorn of its biblical foundation and loses some of its theological significance.

For example, according to progressive creation, long ages elapsed in the history of this earth before humans arrived. At the various major transition points, such as from reptiles to birds and from birds to mammals, God stepped in and performed a creative act.

But what can one say about the Sabbath? If there was no Creation week, as stated in the Bible, when did God rest? The assertions of Genesis 2:2, 3 that God "rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done" and that He "blessed the seventh day and made it holy" become merely a theological metaphor with no historical reality. Or, as some biblical skeptics suggest, they may be the statements of a later Israelite who wanted to make the Sabbath seem more convincing and important by foisting it onto the literary account describing the first week of this planet's history. Thus, the Sabbath is no memorial of Creation but merely a Jewish institution that some unknown, but resourceful, individual wanted to link with Creation.

Are the declarations of Genesis 2:2, 3 true or not? If not, how should we understand the statement of Jesus in Mark 2:27 that "the Sabbath was made for man," in which our Lord seems to make a clear reference to the setting aside of the Sabbath for humans at the beginning of earth's history?

As Seventh-day Adventists, we value and treasure the Sabbath day as a memorial of our Lord's rest from His creative work in Eden; as a memorial of His rest from His redemptive work on the cross, and, as Hebrews 4 suggests, as a foretaste of the ultimate rest we will experience in the kingdom of God.

Such theological richness about the Sabbath is diminished if we reject the biblical account of origins.

### Conclusion

Ultimately, God gives us the choice about what we believe. We are thus confronted with this fundamental question: Will we accept the Creation story as related in His Word, or will we embrace one of the various alternative positions? Do we opt for a God who, over long periods of time, with minimal involvement, supervised a process by which advanced

life forms gradually evolved through pain, suffering, and death? Or do we choose the Lord of Creation described in the Bible, who formed a world that was perfect and beautiful and promises to restore us to that original perfection and beauty?

Upon our answer, a great deal depends. **M**

- 1 For a survey and brief exposition of biblical verses outside of Genesis that deal with Creation, see William H. Shea, "Creation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 428–436.
- 2 Unless otherwise indicated, biblical passages in this article are quoted from the English Standard Version.
- 3 There are many verses and passages in the Bible

that refer to Creation, and all of them build upon the teaching of Creation in Genesis, assuming its validity and reliability. These include Job 38; Pss. 104: 8:5–8; Isa. 40:26–28, 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, 18; 48:13; Jer. 10:11, 12; 27:5; 51:15, 16; 32:17; 2 Cor. 4:6; and Heb. 4:4.

- 4 For a fine volume that emphasizes the relationship of Creation and the Flood to the plan of salvation, see John Templeton Baldwin, ed., *Creation, Catastrophe, & Calvary* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000).
- 5 For a good presentation of the theological nexus between the beginning and the end, see Michael G. Hasel, "In the Beginning . . . The Relationship Between Protology and Eschatology," in *The Cosmic Battle for Planet Earth*, eds. Ron du Preez and Jiri Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 2003), 17–32.
- 6 Stephen J. Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989), 322, 323.
- 7 Barbara Reynolds, "If Your Kids Go Ape in School, You'll Know Why," *USA Today*, August 27, 1993, 11.

## Recommended Resources for Studying Creation

John Templeton Baldwin, ed., *Creation, Catastrophe, & Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000).

The author makes a strong biblical case for the literal days of the Creation account and a universal flood and highlights other important issues connected with Creation.

Harold G. Coffin, Robert H. Brown, and R. James Gibson, eds., *Origin by Design* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005).

This book provides helpful information dealing with biblical, geological, and biological aspects of the origins issue.

Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* 20th anniversary edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010).

A highly significant work by a lucid, compelling writer, considered to be the beginning of the Intelligent Design movement.

Colin Mitchell, *Creation Revisited* (Grantham, England: Autumn House, 1999).

The author presents a strong philosophical critique of evolution and also sets forth astronomical, geological, and biological arguments favoring a literal reading of the Genesis Creation account.

Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, eds., *Coming to Grips With Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008).

A recent volume by evangelicals setting forth the strong biblical support for the young life creationist position and urging Christians not to compromise on this point.

Dwight K. Nelson, *Creation and Evolution* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2009).

A very readable volume by a leading pastor summarizing key issues in the creation-evolution debate and giving the leading arguments made by proponents of Intelligent Design.

Ariel A. Roth, *Science Discovers God: Seven Convincing Lines of Evidence for His Existence* (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House/Review and Herald, 2008).

This easy-to-follow but insightful book speaks of the nature of science and highlights evidence for the origins of life and the fine-tuning of the universe.

Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator: A Journalist Investigates Scientific Evidence That Points Toward God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).

The author interviews leading scientists and scholars while marshaling convincing evidence in favor of a Creator God.

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## GARY L. HOPKINS, DUANE MCBRIDE, SHELLEY BACON, AND MAUD JOACHIM-CELESTIN

**Gary L. Hopkins, MD, DrPH**, is research professor, Department of Behavioral Science, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan; and associate director, Department of Health Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

**Duane McBride, PhD**, is professor and chair, Department of Behavioral Science, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

**Shelley Bacon, MA**, is AdventistLIVE Distance Learning coordinator, Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Spokane, Washington, United States.

**Maud Joachim-Celestin**, is a MPH student, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California, United States.



# The family that eats together:

## A gift that can promote your family's health and keep your children on track

**M**y teenager isn't engaged in our family anymore. What can we do?"

"How can I protect my children from the risky behaviors all around them?"

"My daughter is struggling with school; how can we help her at home?"

"My son's always on some sort of technology and tunes me out. What should I do?"

Have you ever had anyone ask you questions such as these? While we all know there is no cure-all for anything in life, there is something simple, inexpensive, and available to all—your family, parishioners, and community—a powerful tool to face such problems that relate to kids. Connect with your kids and help make them healthier, improve their test scores, and reduce the chance of risky behaviors by using this simple tip: eat family meals together!

### Family meals, distractions, and better eating habits

A research study conducted on adolescents found that 11.8 percent skipped meals to watch television,

10.5 percent skipped meals to play computer games, and 8.2 percent skipped meals to read books.<sup>1</sup> Another study reported that 34.5 percent of boys and 30.9 percent of girls watched television during family meals, and kids who watch television during meals tend to eat less of vegetables (specifically dark green/yellow vegetables), calcium-rich foods, and grains, but consume a larger amount of soft drinks compared to adolescents not watching television during meals. The studies concluded that family meals during adolescence may have a lasting positive influence on dietary quality and meal patterns in young adulthood.<sup>2</sup>

Look at your dinner table. What is on it? Newspapers? Bills? Books? What is near the table? The TV? A computer? A cell phone? An MP3 player? Put away distractions. Turn off your cell phones and TV. Focus on your kids. It's free and effective in creating healthier kids.

### Family meals and combating obesity

A report from the University of Wyoming issues this startling

statement: "Current national figures indicate one third of adult Americans and one quarter of children and adolescents are overweight. The heaviest people in our society are now heavier than ever. Children born in the United States today have a 50 percent chance of becoming overweight sometime in their lifetime."<sup>3</sup> Data from the Centers for Disease Control document that during 1976–1980, 6.5 percent of 6–11-year-olds were obese. In 2007–2008 this had increased to almost 20 percent.<sup>4</sup> There is no doubt that parents play a critical role in the development of children's eating habits as they are responsible for deciding what foods are in the home. "The family meal setting has the potential to substantially impact the dietary intake of children and may provide an important avenue for obesity prevention. However, opportunities for families to have meals together have been negatively affected by changes in society, and data suggests that the frequency of family meals may be declining."<sup>5</sup>

Another factor that affects the traditional family dinner table is

the increased stress on time availability. Extracurricular activities for the children and extra jobs or odd working hours for parents often lead to dependence on fast food. Research shows that homes where fast food replaces traditional meals at least three times a week are likely to have more chips and soda available, and both of these are associated with obesity among adolescents.<sup>6</sup>

## Emotional health and academic test scores

With the frenetic pace of life today, what can we do to ensure our kids have the best chance at academic success? Can eating meals together help in this area too?

A program called Project EAT explored the association between the frequency of family meals and the psychosocial well-being of ado-

characteristics. Eating meals with their family was a stronger predictor of academic success than whether they lived with one or both parents." According to Mayfield, "Research by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA), and others, has found a striking relationship between frequency of family meals and grades. In 2003, the percent of teens who



FROM IMPROVING HEALTH TO GETTING BETTER GRADES TO REDUCING THE CHANCES OF FAILURE THROUGH RISKY BEHAVIOR, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE SIMPLE ACT OF EATING WITH YOUR CHILDREN WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR LIVES.

In a study of kids at risk for academic failure (all of these students were enrolled in alternative schools), students who reported never eating family meals were more likely to eat fewer fruits and less breakfasts and to be more depressed and overweight.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, more and more scientific data is available to corroborate that family meals are associated with more healthful meals and therefore less obesity.

lescent boys and girls.<sup>8</sup> The research showed the frequency of family meals was associated with higher academic performance. Similarly, another study found that teens who eat with their families are more likely to have higher grades in school and are more likely to go to college.<sup>9</sup>

Barbara Mayfield of Purdue University states that "a Reader's Digest survey of more than 2,000 high-school seniors compared academic achievement with family

got A's was 20 percent of those who ate with their families five or more times per week compared to only 12 percent of those who ate with their families two or less times per week."<sup>10</sup>

## Reduce risky behaviors

Eating together as a family is not only likely to increase academic performance, it also tends to decrease risky behaviors, from early sexual activity to drug use. Concerned and engaged parents want to keep their kids away

from these dangers, and family meals can assist them in this area.

One study showed that among teens who have sex by age 15 or 16, over 50 percent come from homes that do not have the habit of eating dinner as a family. This rate decreased to 32 percent when there were family meals in the home. Teens who have meals with their families are also less likely to have suicidal thoughts or attempt suicide, and are less likely to ever be suspended from school.<sup>11</sup>

Research also shows that families who eat together face fewer problems of their children having problems with substance use. One such study reported that the frequency of family meals predicted less substance use along with less stealing and engaging in gang membership.<sup>12</sup> In another study with similar findings, it was reported that family meals were associated with a lower likelihood of the use of tobacco and alcohol.<sup>13</sup> The sixth annual family

dinner survey conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) found that those youth who had dinner five times or more per week with their families were only half as likely to use tobacco and alcohol and about a third less likely to use marijuana than those who ate dinner with their family only twice a week or less.<sup>14</sup>

From the Council on Economic Advisors, we learn that throughout the teenage years, teens who eat dinner with a parent regularly or feel close to their mother and/or father have lower rates of smoking. That pattern held true even for the same kids who did not have a close relationship with a parent. They also reported that family meals were related to less marijuana use.<sup>15</sup>

What is it that happens at a family dinner to account for these dramatic results? A recent CASA report puts it succinctly: "The magic that happens at family dinners isn't the food on the table, but the conversations around it.

Family dinners relate to family bonding which relates to significantly higher rates of pro-social behavior and lower rates of all types of risky behavior."<sup>16</sup>

## Family dinners and genetics

Genetic codes are written long before anyone eats a single meal, so why would family meals be important in this area? We all have "genetic markers" that give researchers clues as to who we are and what we are capable of doing. For example, you might be genetically predisposed to be a runner (i.e. you might have a "genetic marker" that is shared by runners), but if you never take up the sport, you will not display the end result of becoming a marathoner or sprinter. In other words, your genetic predisposition to running will never be expressed. While this concept may seem complicated, it helps us understand why the benefits of family meals have something to do with genetics.

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The relationship between genetics and behavior is complex. Recent data<sup>17</sup> suggests that family dinners may play a role in the prevention of genetic expression for aggression. A landmark study focusing on molecular genetic variants associated with serious violent delinquency, found that youth who did not have frequent family dinners and had the genetic markers for aggression, had high rates of acts of violent delinquency. However, those youth who had dinner with their family six or more times per week and who also had these same genetic markers for aggression, did not engage in violent delinquent behaviors. Although this is one of the first studies to examine the interaction between family dinners and genetic expression, it does suggest that while genetic propensities may not mean inevitable violent behavior, behavior can be modified by something as simple as family dinners!

### Give your kids a head start—eat with them

From improving health to getting better grades to reducing the chances of failure through risky behavior, it is clear that the simple act of eating with your children will make a difference in their lives. As pastors, you have many opportunities to communicate this important information to your parishioners or community members. Share this concept with engaged couples, newlyweds, people seeking marriage or family counseling, new parents, community groups, and others. Here is a list of practical suggestions for making family mealtimes important and effective:

- Plan on having at least five or six meals a week as a family, allowing a good hour for the meal, conversation, and clean-up time (ideally, making all of the above a joint family activity).
- Make mealtime extra special. Meals (at home or elsewhere) become a wonderful opportunity to show your children how important they are. Give them

your undivided attention: Turn off cell phones (yes, both parents and children). Turn off the television. Turn off the computers, radio, MP3 devices, etc. (Replace the “personal” distraction with some soft background music all can enjoy together.)

- Follow general mealtime etiquette: keep conversations positive, pleasurable, and nonjudgmental. Avoid conversations that bring up disciplinary, controversial, or depressing issues. Instead, discuss your children’s day and share yours. Encourage everyone to take part in talking and listening.
- Consider taking an extra step by changing your answering machine message to say, “We don’t answer our phone during family meals, but we will be happy to call you back as soon as possible.”
- Design a conversational expectation at meal times. Suggestions include the following:
  - » Asking a child or teenager to share something of interest that happened during the day.
  - » Discuss a news item of the day and evaluate its moral or social implications.
  - » Discuss a scientific question pertinent to a teenager’s interests or life experience (astronomy, physics, physiology, sociology). This may take some homework.
  - » Discuss a challenge to spiritual or moral principles encountered by a student at school.
  - » Plan a family vacation, or just a family day trip.

Everyone desires to raise children who are healthy and fit rather than sickly and obese, intelligent and successful rather than senseless and indolent, and protected and secure rather than exposed and engaging in risky behavior. These children can be free to pursue an abundant life—a life that submits itself to the One with whom we plan to share many “family meals” throughout eternity. You can

encourage steps in this direction by passing along these simple tips to your parishioners and community, and modeling them in your own home as well. You have nothing to lose and many things to gain. Let’s get started! **M**

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# Are Seventh-day Adventists Tritheists?

Having recently published an 850-page book answering objections to the Trinity,<sup>1</sup> I recently received an email with the accusation that most Seventh-day Adventists are tritheists.<sup>2</sup> Although I had devoted six pages of my book to argue strongly against tritheism,<sup>3</sup> I was challenged because I had used the word *being* with reference to each Member of the Godhead. This was done because I felt that the overuse of the word *person(s)* could lead to a too-human-like description of God.

For instance, I wrote, "Since there are thus two Persons or Beings who are both God, there is no reason why, in principle, there should not be a third Person or Being who has also eternally existed as God."<sup>4</sup>

## Is this tritheism?

The problem is that although careful Bible study gives us the basic concepts of the Oneness and the Threeness of God, this perusal of Scripture does not give us the words with which to describe these apparently paradoxical concepts. One possibility, found in Hebrews 1:3, refers to Christ being "the express image of his [the Father's] person" (KJV). The word here translated "person" is *hupostasis*. However, this is the only place in the New Testament where *hupostasis* is translated "person." *Hupostasis* has no

really satisfactory English translation, as evident from the variety of ways the word is translated: person (KJV, NKJV); substance (RV); nature (RSV); being (NIV).

According to Robert Letham, Basil the Great (A.D. 330–379) is the first Christian writer to use *hupostasis* to emphasize the distinctness of the Members of the Godhead. Basil's usage denotes that "God is three, thereby opening the way to speak of the Trinity in clearer language."<sup>5</sup>

This terminology was taken up by others and used at the First Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381), where the following statement was made: "According to this faith there is one Godhead, Power and Substance of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; the dignity being equal, and the majesty being equal in three perfect hypostases, i.e. three perfect persons."<sup>6</sup>

In English, as in the above quotation, the concept of "three *hupostases*" has traditionally been expressed as "three persons." Thus, we have the hymn referring to "God in three persons." For reasons that we will shortly see, most Trinitarian writers will not speak of "three beings," but at least one defender of Trinitarianism has been prepared to argue, "The admission of three infinitely perfect Beings does not at all imply the existence of more Gods than one."<sup>7</sup>

Although Greek had one term that could refer to the Threeness of God, it had no suitable term with which to express the Oneness of God. Instead, Greek Christians appear to have borrowed a term from the Gnostics,<sup>8</sup> *homoousios*, which is composed of two parts, *homo* and *ousios*, literally meaning the "same substance" or "same essence."

This term first came into prominence at the First Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, and Eusebius, the church historian, who was present at the council, found it necessary to explain the adoption of this term, *homoousios*, to his constituency at Caesarea.<sup>9</sup>

Although the Greeks felt justified in using *hupostasis* and *homoousios* when referring to the Threeness and the Oneness of God, Scripture does not tell us whether they were correct in using these terms the way they did.

Further questions arose when attempts were made to translate these two words into other languages. The English scholars have traditionally used "person" for *hupostasis* and the phrase "of one substance" for *homoousios*. Are these the best expressions to use when describing the Threeness and the Oneness of God, and where does the term *being* fit in? Scripturally, we do not have enough data to be sure.

The problem with the use of the term *being* seems to date back to the time of Augustine, who wrote a rather famous book on the Trinity. Augustine wrote in Latin, and we are reading it in the English translation, but we can still see what he did. Augustine first explains the use of the term *persons* saying, "Yet when you ask 'Three what?' human speech labors under a great dearth of words. So we say three persons, not in order

we may and surely must say that the Three Persons are integrated in the One Being and the One Being is integrated in the Three Divine Persons, such that there is no One Being apart from the Three Persons, and there are no Three Divine Persons apart from the One Being."<sup>13</sup>

This kind of language, speaking of the Trinity as "One Being," is confusing to the ordinary reader because, in the English language,

being," or "three beings," the ordinary reader becomes fixed on the third of the above meanings, a concrete noun. The result is that when an author says that the Three Persons of the Godhead are "One Being," the ordinary reader can see only an expression of modalism. This heresy, one of the earliest in the Christian church, teaches that only One Divine Being exists who reveals Himself sequentially in one or other of three

ALTHOUGH CAREFUL BIBLE STUDY GIVES US THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF THE ONENESS AND THE THREENESS OF GOD, THIS PERUSAL OF SCRIPTURE DOES NOT GIVE US THE WORDS WITH WHICH TO DESCRIBE THESE APPARENTLY PARADOXICAL CONCEPTS.

to say that precisely, but in order not to be reduced to silence."<sup>10</sup>

Augustine also explains why he will not speak of "three beings." Among other things, he says, "By 'being' I mean here what is called *ousia* in the Greek, which we more usually call substance."<sup>11</sup> With this definition in place, he went on to say, "we do not call these three together one person, as we call them one being and one God, but say three persons while we never say three Gods or three beings."<sup>12</sup>

While there may be some justification for what Augustine did in Latin, his use of "being" instead of "substance" has caused great confusion, as English theologians appear to have followed his lead in this matter. For instance, note the following from a recently published book: "However

the word *being* is used in three quite different ways. First, it is most frequently used as a participle, as in the following verse: "Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily" (Matt. 1:19, KJV). Second, it is used as an abstract noun, synonymous with the word *existence*, as we find in Acts: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28, KJV; emphasis added). Third, it is used as a concrete noun meaning an intelligent form of life, such as a human being, angelic being, or Divine Being. Used in this sense, the word *being* is much closer to the meaning of "person" than to "substance" or *ousia*.

Now when a numeral is placed before the word *being*, as in "one

modes, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Evidence seems to say that the cause of Trinitarianism would have been better served had English theologians been content to keep with the creedal statement, "of one substance,"<sup>14</sup> instead of following the path laid down by Augustine. Letham observes, "Today most Western Christians are practical modalists."<sup>15</sup> He further states, "Colin Gunton has argued that the tendency toward modalism, inherited from Augustine, lies at the root of the atheism and agnosticism that has [*sic*] confronted the Western church in a way that it has not done in the East."<sup>16</sup>

### Ellen White insights

Sadly, there is no sure scriptural way out of this dilemma, for the Bible does not give us the words with

which to express the Threeness and the Oneness of God. Seventh-day Adventists can, therefore, be thankful that where the biblical revelation leaves off, the Spirit of Prophecy, through Ellen White, comes to our aid and gives us some wonderful descriptions, not only of the Threeness, but also of the Oneness of God. We will take the primary oneness statement first, a statement she made in 1893. “Jesus said, ‘I and my Father are one.’ The words of Christ were full of deep meaning as he put forth the claim that he and the Father were of one substance, possessing the same attributes.”<sup>17</sup>

While Ellen White certainly followed the “of one substance” statement with the expression “possessing the same attributes,” no implication exists that the latter exhausts the meaning of the former. It’s true that “possessing the same attributes” must be part of what is meant by “of one substance,” but it is only a part, as she herself indicates by the preceding expression “full of deep meaning.”

The phrase “of one substance” was very common among biblical commentators in Ellen White’s day. A search using Google’s Advanced Book Search returned approximately 19,000 results for books in the Google files, published between 1700 and 1893, with the exact phrase “of one substance.” A quick scan showed that most of these instances were descriptions of the Godhead. Four samples will suffice:

The Anglican Book of Common Prayer: “And in Unity of this Godhead there be Three Persons, of one Substance, Power, and Eternity.”<sup>18</sup>

M’Gavin, quoting the Scottish Presbyterian Reformer, John Knox: “I offer myself without further delay to prove that Jesus Christ is of one substance with the Father.”<sup>19</sup>

William Robinson, on the phrase “of one substance with the Father,” says, “This phrase was adopted by the Nicene council. Those who would accept it were reputed orthodox; those who would not, were reputed heretics.”<sup>20</sup>


In the final example, the Adventist writer A. T. Jones provides an additional detail concerning the Council of Nicea:

Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, was chief of the Arians who held seats in the council [of Nicea]. At this point a letter was brought forth, which he had formerly written, in which he had stated that “to assert the Son to be uncreated, would be to say that he was ‘of one substance’—*Homoousion*—with the Father, and to say that “He was of one substance” was a proposition evidently absurd.

This gave to the party of Alexander and Athanasius the very opportunity which they desired; it supplied from the opposite party the very word upon which they had all the time insisted, and one of the chiefs of that party had declared that the use of the word in that connection was evidently absurd. If they, therefore, should insist upon the use of that very word, it would certainly exclude the Arian party.<sup>21</sup>

These remarks by Jones were part of his extensive treatise, *The Two Republics*, published in 1891, in which he details the theological events around the rise of the papacy and also gives a verbatim report of his representations to a government committee, by which he succeeded in averting the introduction of a national Sunday law in America. These things would have been of vital interest at that time, and the negative publicity given to the phrase “of one substance” would thus have become rather widely known.

That Ellen White published her “of one substance” statement just two years after that of Jones is significant. She could hardly have been unaware that her readers would recognize this phrase “of one substance” as the hallmark of Trinitarian orthodoxy. We should be particularly grateful that she penned



## Days of fasting and prayer

In the early years of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Sabbaths were often set aside for fasting and prayer.<sup>1</sup> These special fast days included testimonies of confession, especially where there had been disharmony among the group.<sup>2</sup>

While in Texas, Ellen White was overwhelmed with the need of more ministers and other gospel workers to answer the many calls for spiritually insightful preaching. She wrote to her son Willie that she wished the church would set aside one Sabbath a month to fast and pray that more workers would respond to the need to give themselves totally to evangelism.<sup>3</sup> Speaking again of the need for workers, Ellen White wrote, “We have had seasons for fasting and prayer, beseeching that the Lord would raise up laborers to go into his harvest-field.”<sup>4</sup>

The following counsel seems relevant at this time in earth’s history as we respond to the appeal for revival and reformation: “Now and onward till the close of time the people of God should be more earnest, more wide-awake, not trusting in their own wisdom, but in the wisdom of their Leader. They should set aside days for fasting and prayer. Entire abstinence from food may not be required, but they should eat sparingly of the most simple food.”<sup>5</sup>

—CINDY TUTSCH, DMIN, IS AN ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.

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1 *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate), 9:96.  
 2 *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate), 15:370.  
 3 *Ibid.*  
 4 *Review and Herald*, October 31, 1893, par. 4.  
 5 *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald), 188, 189.

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this marvelous statement, “of one substance,” and placed it in the widely read magazine, *Signs of the Times*, in 1893, for it stands as a mighty bulwark against tritheism.

As far as I know, it is the only statement, in such a summary form, of the Oneness of the Godhead that has been revealed to us. Although this statement is all that is necessary, there are other significant statements as well.

While we can be thankful for Ellen White’s classic statement of the Oneness of God, we can also be thankful for the descriptions of the Threeness of the Godhead that were revealed to her. A number of such statements were made in 1900:<sup>22</sup>

- “The three great powers in heaven are witnesses . . . the pledge from the three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>23</sup>
- “You made a pledge in the presence of the Father, the Son, and

the Holy Spirit—the three great personal Dignitaries of heaven.”<sup>24</sup>

- “The three great and glorious heavenly characters are present on the occasion of baptism.”<sup>25</sup>
- “There are three living persons of the heavenly trio . . . the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>26</sup>
- “You are born unto God, and you stand under the sanction and the power of the three holiest beings in heaven, who are able to keep you from falling.”<sup>27</sup>
- “I just call upon the three great Worthies, and say: You know I cannot do this work in my own strength.”<sup>28</sup>

What a wonderful variety of words referring to the Threeness of the Godhead are revealed to us in the writings of Ellen White: Agencies, Powers, Persons, Instrumentalities, Dignitaries, Characters, Beings, and Worthies.

By comparing the dates of the above statements, we can see that

more than six years passed after her landmark statement “of one substance,” before she began to emphasize in such a marked and specific way the Threefold nature of the Godhead. This is significant.

It was important that God’s people should be established on the Oneness of the Godhead as a barrier to tritheism, before she began to emphasize the other side of the paradox, the Threeness, as a protection against unitarianism, modalism, and, incidentally, much of today’s non-Trinitarianism.

Nor was it a matter of Ellen White having forgotten about the Oneness when writing of the Threeness, for interspersed with her Threeness statements are statements which preserve the Oneness, such as the following:

“Those who are baptized in the threefold name [singular] of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life.”<sup>29</sup>

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"After we have formed a union with the great threefold power [singular], we shall regard our duty toward the members of God's family with a much more sacred awe."<sup>30</sup>

How well Ellen White has expressed the basic concept of the Trinity, a union of Oneness and Threeness, in these two passages.

## Conclusion

So long as Seventh-day Adventists hold to the classical statement endorsed by Ellen White, that the Persons of the Godhead are "of one substance," they cannot rightfully be accused of being tritheists. Nor is there any valid reason why they should not use the term *beings* as a synonym for the word *persons* when referring to the Three Members of the Trinity.

Other Christian theologians would, I believe, gain greater

credibility with their readers if they abandoned their Augustinian terminology and refrained from using the word *being* in reference to the Oneness of God. ❏

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- 15 Letham, 5.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 7 (referring to Colin E. Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity, and the Theological Crisis of the West," in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 43 [1990]: 33–58).
- 17 Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Nov. 27, 1893, 54.
- 18 The Book of Common Prayer, Church of England, 1716, 1765, 1838, 1892, etc.
- 19 John Knox and William M'Gavin, *The History of the Reformation of Religion in Scotland* (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1832), 568.
- 20 William Robinson, *Biblical Studies* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866), 127.
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- 22 These statements together with additional similar statements may be seen in a larger context in Parfitt, 467–473.
- 23 *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 6:1074.
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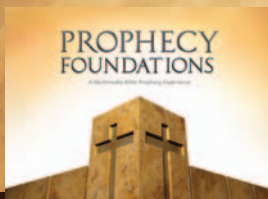
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# The good but absent God?

## The dilemma of a Christian cancer survivor

A minister of the gospel is often called upon to console, encourage, and pray for those who stare death in the eyes. As such, the minister must be “strong.” But what happens when the minister himself faces death?

This is my story, what I have learned and what I have not.

### A miracle?

At 33 years of age, and with four years of pastoral experience, I was a husband and the father of a six-month-old daughter. Also, I learned that I had cancer. The doctors did not hide their concern. An oncologist rather tactlessly shared the grim statistics. The odds were that I was going to die from it—and rather soon too.

Yet, after about six months of chemotherapy, alkaline diet, phytotherapy, homeopathy, prayers, an anointing service, and care from my loved ones (especially my wife), I am still here. In fact, I have been in complete remission since 2008. As of this moment, I feel very good.

A few months after my “healing,” an Adventist radio journalist interviewed me, asking if I thought that my healing was “a miracle.”

“No,” I responded, knowing it would shock many people, especially those who diligently prayed for me.

Yet, I cannot speak of “miracle” in the same sense we commonly use this word. What I felt was a somewhat discreet presence of God. I felt His hand outstretched and at work, even if the contours are difficult to define. I do not clearly understand how God manifested Himself in my healing, nor can I say that my experience is a clear manifestation of the fact that the Lord wants to show He still operates with power among His people. I cannot imagine my recovery as “proof” of His love and interest for me. Perhaps I am not yet quite spiritually mature; it is certain, though, that many things in my experience remain unanswered.

### The silence of God

Of course, I am sharply aware of the two limitations I am working from. First, this is indeed *my* experience, and therefore subject to my interpretation, which is not universal (nor does it aspire to be). Second, this *experience* continues, indeed, as an ongoing experience; that is to say, the process is not a punctual, but a linear process; a process lived out in time, and thus is interpreted and reinterpreted retrospectively. My understanding about what happened changes, it evolves, which makes

it even more difficult to convey in words.

As a Christian, I believe that the first reef on which one could be wrecked is the “silence” of God. My wife and I have asked ourselves several questions about this silence. And though we both experienced it differently, out of these differences we were able to grow and interact. The void needed to be filled with feelings, words, and invocations.

My wife reacted as I would have were I in her shoes—dramatically. For my part, I felt calmer. I felt the responsibility to reassure my family; thus, I downplayed the seriousness of the situation. I did not want to sink emotionally, lest I pulled others down with me.

The serenity was not artificial but, rather, rooted in a precise faith: God loves me, and He is not responsible for my illness. But today I can say it was a fatalistic faith. My God was good, He was not responsible for the evil, and He did not need to produce any “evidence” to show His love. But He also seemed very far away.

### The good but absent God?

As we all know, violence and injustice often strike the “innocent,” and this cannot be interpreted as any kind of divine punishment. At the

same time, however, we often feel the need to rationalize pain and evil. We refuse to attribute them to the will of God. In my specific case, I rebelled against the many “Thy will be done” prayers offered in my behalf.

I asked, more than once, *Is this really the will of God? Has God got a dark side?* If this is truly the incomprehensible and inaccessible will of God, then my revolt against evil, injustice, and this disease will likely cause guilt, for my revolt happens to be rebellion against the Creator Himself!

The resulting bitterness could generate, or even justify, uneasiness and hatred. Precisely at this point, one feels the need for a liberating act: get rid of that God, or rather, that image of God that makes one feel guilty. This liberating act is to return to a God who is not responsible for evil but, nevertheless, seemed distant when it came. In short, I experienced what I believe to be the good, but absent, God.

### The death of Denise

Ironically enough, my deepest revolt came, not during my disease, but after I went into remission. And that was when Denise, my 14-year-old cousin, died from cancer. Denise and I were diagnosed in the same year. Stricken by different cancers, we fought together, and we encouraged each other, when possible.

In February 2008, I was declared in remission, but less than a year later, Denise died. My real revolt occurred when my brothers and sisters in Christ told me in good faith, “You are a living miracle! You are the *proof*.” These are words that hurt, burn, and tear at my soul because if I experienced a miracle—then what happened to Denise?

I just could not understand how and why this would happen, so I had to move beyond it. I needed to reconnect to the God who saves, who perhaps does not visibly act in the urgency of the present situation, but who, in His essence, beyond our

immediate circumstances, is the Savior God, the Savior of both the dead and the living.<sup>1</sup>

I am still angry at the God who does not, as in the case of Denise, always dispense healing. But I praise

is an “after,” and that death, when it comes, does not constitute the final word. No, death is not the final word. However I die, I will do it, not as someone who understood (on the contrary), but as a man who trusts in

## I ASKED, MORE THAN ONCE, IS THIS REALLY THE WILL OF GOD? HAS GOD GOT A DARK SIDE?

the God who saves us eternally. This may seem psychotic but it is not. A nihilist wrote, “Man is made in the image of the universe: he is full of emptiness.”<sup>2</sup> But I believe that man is made in the image of God: he is full of paradoxes. It was necessary for me to free myself from linear thinking and enter into the dynamic of the paradox. I thank God for helping me see that heaven exists, not merely as the absence of hell, and that my life has meaning even before a death that has none.

### The crucified God


In the end, I identified myself with the thief on the cross, next to a lonely, shunned, and suffering Jesus. This is the brigand who, looking at the dying Christ, exclaimed, “He did nothing wrong,” that is to say, “this is not His place.”

I found myself dying, too, but not alone. On my side, I discovered the One who died beside me, and in silence too. I do not understand why, but I know that He did nothing wrong and, yet—He was there, anyway. That is the place where you realize that, even facing death, there

the God who has already been there ahead of me. I want to fall asleep with an attitude of serenity, leaving those who are around me a legacy of peace and hope, and a smile too.

My journey is not finished. I am a work in progress, and I have tried to share my own firsthand understanding of my experience of illness and healing. And what I have learned, even amid all my ignorance, is that we need to respect those who are sick and dying and do not understand; but we also need to respect those who are healed and still do not understand. It is painful to be nicknamed a *walking miracle*, a “proof.”

Do I think it was a miracle? No. But God was there. This is my paradox.

*For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*<sup>3</sup> 

1 Cf. Matthew 22:31, 32 (NIV): “But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

2 Paul Rancœur, *Friandises nihilistes* (Obernai: Edition Florian, 2003), 168.

3 1 Corinthians 13:12, NIV.

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## Interfaith event in Jordan opens new conversation with Islamic world

**Amman, Jordan**—A religious liberty conference held in Jordan, March 2011, represents a historic step forward in dialogue between the Islamic world and advocates for religious freedom, organizers said.



The Teaching Respect for Religions Symposium gathered scholars, political representatives, and legal experts at the Amman College of Al-Balqa Applied University. The event marked just the second time the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA) has met in the Middle East in its 119-year history.

Organized in 1893 by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the IRLA is the oldest association dedicated to freedom of conscience for people of all faiths and persuasions.

“This conference has opened up an extraordinary opportunity for meaningful conversation with key Islamic leaders and thinkers about what it means to respect different religious traditions, and to live in harmony with one another,” said **John Graz**, IRLA secretary-general.

The symposium was co-sponsored by the Arab Bridge Center for Human Rights, a

nongovernmental organization founded by former Jordanian Judge **Amjad B. Shammout**. This occasion brought together IRLA experts, Islamic scholars and imams, Jordanian law-enforcement leaders, youth leaders, and members of the diplomatic community. Jordan’s prime minister, **Marouf Suleiman al-Bakhit**, lent his support to the event and was represented by **Jiryis Samawy**, secretary-general of Jordan’s Ministry of Culture.

**Delbert Baker**, a vice president of the Adventist world church and vice president of the IRLA, spoke to the group about respect and freedom—principles that he said are mutually valued by both the Islamic and Judeo-Christian worlds. Yet, he said, too often a gap appears between theory and practice. He challenged the audience to analyze whether these principles influence their interactions with people.

IRLA coordinator for Interfaith Relations, **Bill Johnsson**, defined the difference between respect and tolerance. “Respect” actively affirms an individual’s right to religious freedom, while “tolerance” can imply a reluctance to grant people their religious views, he said.

According to Johnsson, Jordan provided an ideal location for the symposium, given its track record as “a moderate Islamic nation that models openness, tolerance, and rejection of violence.” *[Adapted from Bettina Krause/IRLA/ANN staff]*

## The One Project

**Atlanta, Georgia, United States**—Seven leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: **Alex Bryan**, senior pastor at the

Walla Walla University Church; **Japhet de Oliveira**, director of the Center for Youth Evangelism and chaplain for missions at Andrews University; **Dany Hernandez**, pastor for collegiate and young adult ministries at Forest Lake Adventist Church; **Eddie Hypolite**, associate youth director for the South England Conference, UK; **Sam Leonor**, chaplain for La Sierra University; **Tim Gillespie**, pastor for young adult ministries at Loma Linda University Church of Seventh-day Adventists; and **Terry Swenson**, campus chaplain for Loma Linda University, created the One project to bring people back to Jesus.

“We started with a desire to gather people together for prayer, Bible study and reflection on the person of Jesus,” says Leonor.

“Secularism has taken root and the power and presence of Jesus is missing,” says de Oliveira. “We have a generation who are almost-Christian but lack vitality in their faith.”

As their conversations unfolded, their mission began to take shape:

- “What if we gathered together leaders from all over the world to celebrate the supremacy of Jesus in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?”
- “What if we focused on what it would mean for us, on a personal, local, and global level?”
- “What if we had honest conversation about our legacy, heritage, and call for our church today?”
- “What if we brought leaders, pastors, and members together and simply soaked in Jesus again?”

Their movement adopted the moniker, the One project.



They extended personal invitations for others to come to the next One project gathering.

Leonor hopes this movement can turn attention to what matters most. “When William Miller wrote about the soon coming of Jesus, he expressed a deep love and longing for Him. He was less concerned with streets of gold and eternal life, etc. He wanted to be with Him. My desire for our church is that we renew that kind of devotion to Jesus. That our longing be solely for His presence.”

What began with just seven individuals grew to nearly 180 at the February 2011 One project in Atlanta. There, for a day and a half, it

was Jesus alone who took the spotlight. Each presenter shared personal testimony and reflections about Jesus: Jesus in our church; Jesus in our history; Jesus in our theology; Jesus in our mission; and Jesus in our experience. A Communion service, the leaders’ heartfelt testimonies, paired with opportunities for dialog, responses, prayer, and worship through music resulted in a transformative experience for those who came to see what the One project was all about.

“I chose to attend the One project because I truly believed that Jesus was working in the lives of its leaders,” said **Leah Rodriguez**, a student at Andrews University. “I

wanted to be a part of that. I saw it as a chance to see Jesus in a new light.”

One project gatherings are planned in Finland (Oct. 31–Nov. 1, 2011), Seattle (Feb. 13, 14, 2012), and Denmark (Oct. 29–30, 2012).

The One project partners with the Center for Youth Evangelism, a training and resource center for claiming, training, and reclaiming youth and young adults for Jesus Christ, located on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States, as part of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. *[Adapted from Keri Suarez, Andrews University Office of Integrated Marketing and Communication]*

## LETTERS



Continued from page 4 ▶

for presenting sexuality in a more positive light. It is a welcome contribution and stimulus for current thought on the subject.

Of his three proposals, the first and third have merit, but the second cannot be supported. To say that the image of God is only completed in humanity when a man and woman are joined in sexual intimacy not only lacks inspired support but has serious negative implications. It suggests that those who remain single may never fully experience the complete image of God. This would even extend to the man Jesus, who never married, but who truly was “the express image of” God’s person (Heb. 1:3).

In Scripture, each man or woman is, in himself or herself, in the full

image of God. In Genesis 9:5, 6, murder is forbidden because “in the image of God He made man.” Also Paul wrote of a man—in this context not including a woman—“he is the image and glory of God” (1 Cor. 11:7).

One must agree with his third proposal, that sex is designed to create an emotional bond. However, some of his elaborations on this are troublesome. The idea of “completing the image of God” must be rejected as “the governing concept.” Also, that sexual union is to be a person’s “most godly moment,” and opens “a window into His heart” is open to question. True, sexual intimacy is a sacred experience. But is such a “most godly” experience something denied to singles? And

are prayer and the Lord’s Supper less godly moments than sexual intimacy?

In my experience of growing up Adventist, though I was taught abstinence outside of marriage, I didn’t see this as teaching that sex is bad. Sex is only to be delayed until the appropriate time. Though there is surely room for improvement, I’m not as pessimistic as Pastor Wibberding about how our church has generally handled the issue of sexuality.

That far too many Adventist youth are drawn into illicit sex may be explained by our current culture and media rather than inadequate education by church and parents.

—Lewis Anderson, retired pastor/Bible teacher, Allendale, Michigan, United States



***The Case for the Investigative Judgment: Its Biblical Foundation***  
by Marvin Moore, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2010.

In order to settle once and for all the questions he had regarding the investigative judgment, Marvin Moore decided, in 2007, to engage in a thorough study of every aspect of our Adventist teaching on that theme. He examined the writings of Adventist biblical scholars, as well as the writings of the critics—especially those of Desmond Ford—all with a view to better understand what the biblical text says about the judgment. After reflecting on his research, comparing it with Scripture, and drawing his conclusions, he wrote *The Case for the Investigative Judgment: Its Biblical Foundation*, which is considered by Bill Shea, in the foreword, to be “the capstone” of Moore’s “long and illustrious writing career.”

The book, divided into eight parts with a total of 36 chapters, analyzes the judgment from every conceivable point of view. While Ellen White is cited on occasion, the book primarily focuses on what the Bible says. Moore acknowledges that he probably has not answered every question that can be raised about the Adventist view of the judgment, but he did try to answer the main ones.

This has resulted in a careful, thoughtful, and innovative analysis of the main issues in the Adventist doctrine of the judgment. For example, Moore devotes 15 chapters to the issues in Daniel 7, 8, and 9, such as the nature and timing of the judgment, the sins of the saints in the judgment, the Antiochus Epiphanes interpretation, the assault on the heavenly sanctuary by the little horn, the year-day principle, how the heavenly sanctuary is cleansed, the purpose of the 70 weeks, and the beginning and ending of the 2,300 days. He devotes five chapters to the


sanctuary, dealing with such issues as the transfer of sin to the sanctuary, the Day of Atonement and the problem of evil, and the blotting out of sins. Six chapters are devoted to issues in the book of Hebrews, such as the purpose of Hebrews, the daily service, Jesus’ entrance “behind the veil,” and the Day of Atonement in Hebrews 9 and 10. The reader will find this discussion teeming with fresh exegetical insights expressed in easy-to-understand language.

One specific example is found in Moore’s analysis of Daniel 7 and Revelation 12, where he points out that the sins of the saints come up in the judgment, not because “God and Christ bring them up for they have already forgiven those sins, nor because the angels bring them up. It’s because Satan brings them up! He’s the accuser of God’s people.” Thus, “the books of record are God’s response, and when the angels have completed their review of the lives of the saints, they will all be satisfied that God is right and Satan is wrong. All of Satan’s charges against those who are truly God’s saints will be proved groundless” (104, 105).

The backdrop to the author’s analysis of these biblical texts includes what he considers to be the most critical issues: (1) the Bible teaches that there will be a pre-Advent judgment and that it is investigative in nature; (2) this pre-Advent investigative judgment will include an examination of the lives of God’s own people; (3) it will be for the benefit of the angels, not God, who passed His judgment on the lives of human beings at the time they lived; (4) it doesn’t threaten the assurance of God’s acceptance that His people can have throughout their Christian experience; (5) it must be understood in the context of “the great controversy,” for only in that context does it make sense; and (6) the doctrine of the pre-Advent investigative judgment is relevant to daily Christian living (chapters 2–4, 36). These issues or principles show up repeatedly throughout the

entire book and set forth Moore’s clear understanding of the inseparable nature of the gospel, the judgment, and the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

At times I wished the author had provided more references for certain claims he made, but that would have, perhaps, complicated his purpose of staying straightforward and simple in the plan of the book. Furthermore, the chapter that describes the critics of the investigative judgment (chapter 7) did not address Dale Ratzlaff, the most contemporary outspoken critic of this doctrine. While Moore chose to deal with the more sophisticated arguments of scholar Desmond Ford—and he was wise in doing so—some explanation of Ratzlaff’s intense war on the investigative judgment would have added a greater sense of urgency to the subject. These minor issues, however, do not detract from the profound contribution of this study.

Moore’s own unique insights and his ability to take the work of biblical scholars and make it “understandable to the average person” (13) makes this book an excellent read. His writing is clear, uncluttered, simple, and stimulating. Pastors will appreciate this book in their own study of the judgment and find it useful for Bible study groups and prayer meeting series. Ultimately, the greatest contribution of *The Case for the Investigative Judgment: Its Biblical Foundation* is the evidence the author provides for its driving thesis, expressed by the title: the *case* for the Adventist understanding of the *investigative judgment*, built on a solid *biblical foundation*. As such, this important book should be read and digested by every Seventh-day Adventist interested in what Jesus is doing in the heavenly sanctuary, which, according to Ellen White, is “the foundation of our faith.”\*  
—Reviewed by Jud Lake, ThD, DMin, professor of preaching and Adventist studies, Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee, United States. 

\* Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970), 221.

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