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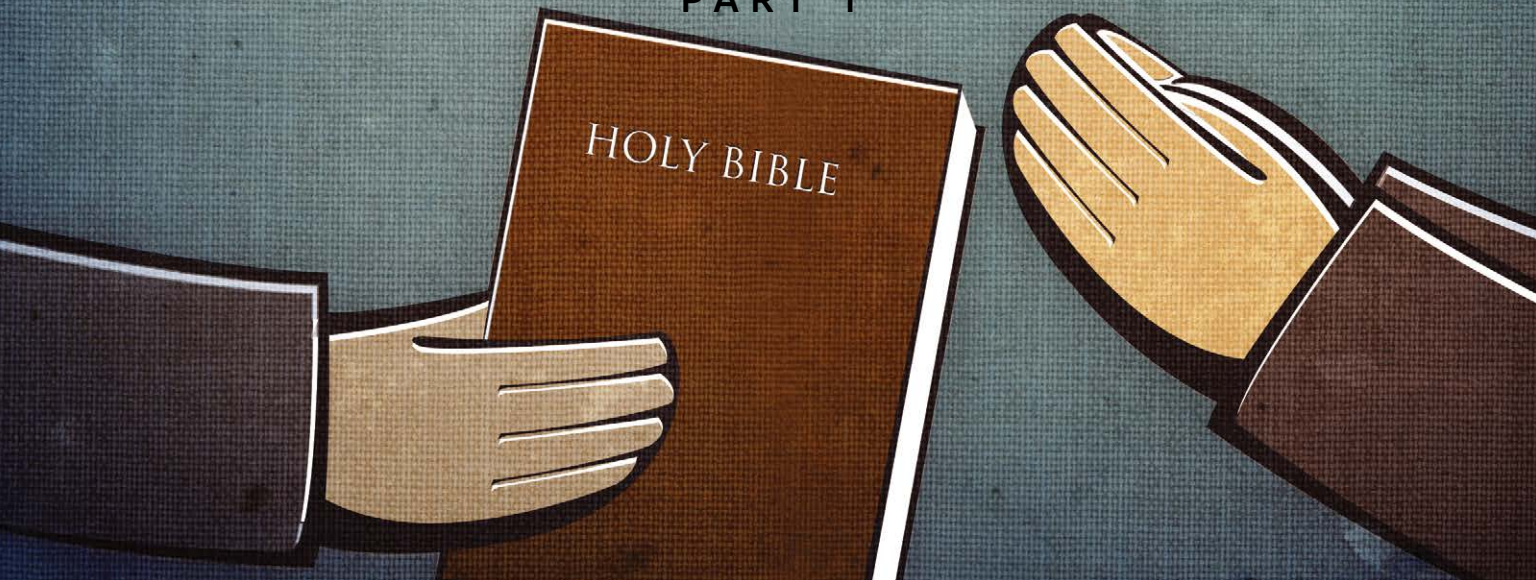
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR PASTORS

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*Dealing with **doctrinal issues** in the church*

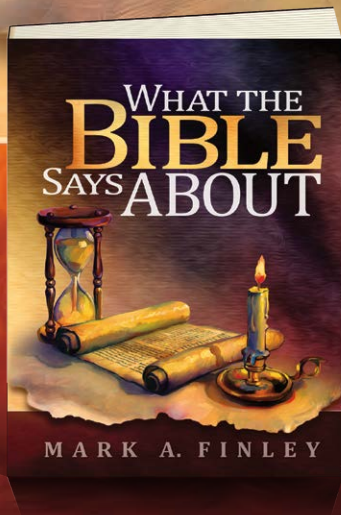
PART 1



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“The issue is not that we disagree on many topics. Rather, it is that everyone concerned seems intent that everyone sees everything exactly as they do.”

Climate for discovering truth

Reinder Bruinsma’s article (“Creating a Climate for the Discovery of Truth: A Perspective on Doctrinal Development”—December 2012) seems indicative of a common inclination on the part of some Seventh-day Adventist academics to see our church more as a religio-social-cultural movement rather than a *movement of destiny* predicated upon the “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19).

This is evidenced by Dr. Bruinsma’s acknowledgment that the push for the rewording of fundamental belief number 6 on creation is “widely regarded as an example of how the Adventist ecclesial system tries to prescribe exactly what members (including teachers and other scholars) should believe if they want to be viewed as true Adventists.”

Without a genuine conviction that this movement is truly prophetic and transcendent in its very character, and that the Bible and history demonstrate this, one is left to embrace the author’s recommendation that we hold to a degree of tentativeness about even our most fundamental teachings because they “may not stand the test of time.”

—Kent Knight, Grandview, Washington, United States

At last! In a milieu where it seems like civil discourse has been supplanted by open warfare on all sides, Reinder Bruinsma’s article is a breath of fresh air! I commend the courage of *Ministry* to print this manuscript. It will enlighten everybody who reads it while satisfying very few who seem bound and determined to drag us into theological conflict that is every bit as destructive as what is currently occurring in many parts of the political world

The issue is not that we disagree on many topics. Rather, it is that everyone concerned seems intent that everyone sees everything exactly as they do. Their shrill and strident voices threaten the very institution they claim to want to defend and protect.

Early Adventism was pretty unified on certain basic things that define us while most of the things we think are set in stone today were the subject of much individual understanding and healthy discourse. Just read the early *Review and Herald* to listen in on the discussion.

At some point we need to decide what are truly the undeniable basics of being an Adventist—call it a creed if you like—and what are open to individual freedom of belief. It would seem that

the “foundation stones” mentioned by Ellen White as defining Adventism might be a good place to start. (For those who may not be aware of them, they are the gospel, the law of God, the Sabbath, the condition of man in death, the three angels’ messages, and the pre-Advent judgment.) Our history the last 100 or so years shows that we have a hard enough time agreeing on these without endless debates and acrimony over an additional 22 “fundamental beliefs.”

Again, thank you, Dr. Bruinsma, for being a voice of reason in a sea of never-ending controversy!

—Dan M. Appel, Auburn, California, United States

It was with deep interest that I read Reinder Bruinsma’s article. It seems clear to me that he disapproves of belief statements being altered by administrative fiat, even when that alteration is well informed by solid biblical scholarship from the Biblical Research Institute. Would he feel differently if the biblical scholarship also included scholars from the seminary at Andrews University and other centers of Adventist biblical scholarship? Although the process he calls for does not appear altogether clear, he seems to call for a hermeneutic strongly influenced by science and reason.

He also points out that many of our beliefs developed over several decades. The deduction, then, is that we do not have to be in any hurry to settle the issue of Creation and its relation to science. Besides having an oddly evolutionary ring, that is not accurate history. Many of our basic doctrines, such as the Sabbath, the sanctuary, and a literal second coming of Jesus were pretty well nailed down, though they may have been refined later,

Continued on page 29





The challenge of change

Many times I have found myself repeating the Serenity Prayer originally penned by the twentieth century American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Perhaps we should add another sentence to that prayer: “God, help me recognize and embrace change when directed by Your Holy Spirit.”

Change isn’t easy, even when initiated by God. Facilitating and accepting change can be challenging. Our church family worldwide is currently involved in a lively discussion about the theology of ordination, asking questions such as, *What does ordination mean? Who is eligible for ordination? How did current church practices develop? Which practices are biblical and which ones have been inherited based on customs or long-standing traditions? How do we learn to communicate and work together in love even while holding differing views?* These are vital questions requiring careful reflection and prayer.

As I think about the days ahead, I am reminded of the wise counsel of James, the brother of our Lord: “be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires” (James 1:19, 20).^{*} Unfortunately, we have already heard too many angry voices. We need to listen to each other with respect. We all have much to learn, and God can teach us as we come together under His direction in a spirit of humility and love.

The lead article in this issue of *Ministry* is part 1 of a series by Paul

Ratsara and Richard Davidson, designed to help us navigate these choppy waters. Early Christians had to address the traditional divide between Jews and Gentiles. How should Jews relate to Gentiles who became followers of Jesus? The thought of experiencing *koinonia* with Gentiles was a major challenge for Jews. Even the apostle Peter struggled with this radical change. Paul testified to the Galatians, “When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong” (Gal. 2:11). What wrong had Peter committed? He was resisting change that was directed by the Holy Spirit. “Before certain men came from James, he [Peter] used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they [Jews from Jerusalem] arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid” (v. 12).


Peter had struggled with fear earlier in his walk with Jesus. This fear drove him to deny Jesus and declare, “I don’t know the man!” Why would Peter make such a dreadful declaration? He was afraid. Fear can cause us to say foolish things and resist change, even when directed by the Holy Spirit.

Philemon had to face the challenge of change after receiving a letter from the apostle Paul. Philemon’s transformed runaway slave, Onesimus, was being sent back to him by the imprisoned apostle with the following instructions, “welcome him as you would welcome me” (Philem. 17). *View your former slave as a brother in the Lord!* This drastic change was clearly directed by the Holy Spirit, but this change was only possible if Philemon embraced the truth of Paul’s closing words: “The

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit” (Philem. 25). Unity with Christ enables us to experience the miracle of unity in Christ. Fellowship with Christ enables us to embrace change that is directed by the Holy Spirit. Independent people with divergent opinions and convictions can be brought together in a loving, transformed community by the ministry of the Spirit of God.

Change isn’t easy, even when initiated by God.

I long to see our community of faith reflect more and more fully the beautiful character of our loving Savior. “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). We will speak the truth in love. We will engage in vigorous discussions with a spirit of love. We will lay aside our preconceived ideas and cherished views and seek the truth of God’s Word in love.

Please join with me in prayer for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven and for His love to be more fully revealed in us and through us. And remember the inspired counsel of James: “Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” 

* All Scripture references are from the New International Version.

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Dealing with doctrinal issues in the church: Part 1

Doctrinal controversies are not unique to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The history of Christianity itself shows that doctrinal and theological controversies characterize the growth and experience of the church. Francis Wernick observes, “Division and disunity have marked the history of the Christian Church from at least the end of the first century. . . . While not immune from this danger of dissent, Seventh-day Adventists have been relatively free of serious discord, having a remarkable unity on Bible truth. But danger is always present as the enemy of the church seeks in every way possible to bring in variance and disagreement.”¹

Our pioneers had to deal with controversial issues in the early days of our church; thus, today, with a membership of about 17 million from various backgrounds, we will as well. If the pioneers needed to be careful with the process of dealing with controversial issues, then we need to be more careful now. The ecclesiology of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is still in its infancy theologically.² There are a number of issues directly relating to ecclesiology that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has not yet settled biblically, theologically, and doctrinally.³

This series of articles suggests some ground rules for dealing with a potentially divisive theological issue.

We begin by looking at the history of doctrinal controversy, both at the beginning of the Christian church and the inception of the Adventist movement, and by learning from the first Christian disciples and from our Adventist pioneers.

A case study from the early Christian church

The Way to Emmaus and the Upper Room (Luke 24; Acts 1; 2)

The greatest doctrinal challenge to the early church came on Resurrection Sunday. The hopes of the disciples had been dashed when Jesus, the One they had believed to be the Messiah and Deliverer of Israel, had been crucified, apparently failing in His Messianic mission. How did the resurrected Jesus lead His disciples through this crisis of uncertainty to a solid understanding and experience of truth regarding Himself, His mission, and the future mission of the disciples? At least seven crucial points in the narrative of Luke 24 and Acts 1 and 2 are instructive for dealing with doctrinal issues.

1. *The foundational authority of Scripture.* As Jesus walked with the two disciples on the seven-mile-long road from Jerusalem to Emmaus that Resurrection Sunday afternoon, He could have simply revealed His wounds in His hands and side and feet and, upon recognizing Him, the

disciples would have eagerly bowed and worshiped. But Jesus determined that their faith not be based primarily upon physical phenomena but rather on the testimony of the Scriptures. Only after they were convinced, by the Written Word, concerning the truth of the Messiah and His mission, did Jesus disclose His identity by showing them the nail prints in His hands. At least six times in the narrative of Luke 24, Luke refers to the Scriptures as the foundational authority for the disciples’ faith and understanding of Truth (Luke 24:25, 27, 32, 44, 45, 46). Any study of doctrinal issues today must likewise recognize the same foundational authority of Scripture.⁴

2. *A solid biblical hermeneutic.* Speaking to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, Jesus “interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures” (Luke 24:27, NRSV). The word for “interpret” here is *diermeneuō* (*dia* + *hermeneuō*), which is related to the English term *hermeneutics*. During that seven-mile walk in the countryside, Jesus instructed His disciples in the basic principles of biblical hermeneutics. Later that evening, as He appeared to the larger group of disciples in the upper room, “He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures” (v. 45, NKJV).

Any study of unclear or controversial doctrinal issues must be built

upon a faithful exposition of Scripture carried out according to solid hermeneutical principles arising from the biblical presuppositions of *sola* and *tota Scriptura*—the Bible alone, and in its entirety, as the ultimate foundation of truth.⁵

3. *A Christocentric focus.* Jesus' only recorded words in His ambulatory teaching session with the two disciples focused upon His death and resurrection: "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25, 26, NKJV). Luke records that Jesus "expounded to them in all the Scriptures *the things concerning Himself*" (v. 27, NKJV; italics supplied). Later that evening, in the upper room, He reiterated "that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms *concerning Me*". . . 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to *suffer and to rise from the dead the third day*'" (vv. 44, 46, NKJV; italics supplied).

On the Day of Pentecost, 50 days later, the Holy Spirit was poured out, not as end in Himself but as an earthly sign that Christ had been anointed as Priest-King in the heavenly inauguration ceremony (Acts 2:31–33). The recognition that they had a Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary gave the disciples boldness to fearlessly proclaim God's Word.⁶

A Christocentric focus is vital to understanding truth. Ellen White affirms: "Jesus is the living center of everything."⁷ "In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary."⁸ "The correct understanding of the ministration [of Christ] in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith."⁹

4. *Unity of mind/purpose/impulse.* Scripture states that when the 120 disciples met in the upper room after

Jesus' ascension, "These all continued with one accord [*homothymodon*] in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (Acts 1:14, NKJV). The Greek adverb *homothymodon*, often translated "with one accord," refers to a condition of being "with one mind/purpose/impulse."¹⁰ Ellen White elaborates on the heart preparation of the disciples in relation to one another before Pentecost: "Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship."¹¹ "They emptied from their hearts all bitterness, all estrangement, all differences; for this would have prevented their prayers being as one. And when they were emptied of self, Christ filled the vacancy."¹² Such a spirit is needed as much today as we come together to wrestle for an understanding of God's Word in regard to unsettled theological issues.


5. *Earnest prayer and fasting.* As cited above, the disciples in the upper room before Pentecost "all continued with one accord *in prayer and supplication*" (Acts 1:14, NKJV; italics supplied). These seasons of prayer were accompanied with fasting,¹³ and involved humility of heart, true repentance, and confession;¹⁴ deep "heart-searching and self-examination" and consecration of their soul-temples;¹⁵ and earnest pleading to the Lord for the unction of the Spirit to be poured out upon them in fulfillment of Jesus' promise.¹⁶ Such seasons of prayer and fasting are just as necessary today on the part of those who are dealing with unsettled or controversial theological issues.

6. *The illumination of the Spirit to understand the truths of Scripture.* Before His death, Christ promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to guide them into truth: "when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13, NKJV). The pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost

brought about the fulfillment of that promise. "Pentecost brought them [the disciples] the heavenly illumination. The truths which they could not understand while Christ was with them were now unfolded. With a faith and assurance that they had never before known, they accepted the teachings of the Sacred Word."¹⁷ That same illumination of truth by the Holy Spirit is available even more now in the time for the pouring out of the latter rain: "The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the former rain, but the latter rain will be more abundant. . . . Christ is again to be revealed in His fullness by the Holy Spirit's power."¹⁸

7. *An evangelistic motivation—a passion for lost souls.* On Resurrection Sunday, Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit, not only to lead the disciples into all truth, but to give them power for witnessing for the gospel in His name, "to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47–49, NKJV). At the time of His ascension, He repeated His promise of the Holy Spirit for this same purpose: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The disciples in the upper room at the time of Pentecost "did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with a burden for the salvation of souls." As the disciples "grasped the imparted gift" of the Spirit, "[t]he sword of the Spirit, newly edged with power and bathed in the lightnings of heaven, cut its way through unbelief."¹⁹

In our day, as we seek for the gift of the Holy Spirit in order to deal with unsettled or controversial issues, such seeking needs to be carried out with an evangelistic purpose, to proclaim wonderful truth clearly and dynamically to a dying world. And this gift of power awaits our demand and reception: "Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for



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His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive.²⁰ God is ready to pour out such a gift to help us wrestle with weighty truths, if we are willing and ready to receive this precious gift!

(Part 2 will appear in the April 2013 issue.)



- 1 Francis W. Wernick, "Leadership Role in Maintaining Unity," in *Here We Stand: Evaluating New Trends in the Church*, ed. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Affirm, 2005), 769.
- 2 Very few Seventh-day Adventist theologians have written on ecclesiology. The Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference (BRI) has felt this need, and a study on ecclesiology is underway.
- 3 On May 12, 1982, the Biblical Research Committee (a committee overseen by BRI) took an action to embark on a series of studies on ecclesiology. Under this topic there is currently little written by Seventh-day Adventist scholars on ordination. It is only recently (at the 2010 General Conference Session) that the BRI was mandated to give a careful study of the question of the theology of ordination.
- 4 For an overview of Scripture's own testimony as to its full authority as the ultimate norm for doctrinal discussion, see, e.g., Peter M. van Bemmelen, "Revelation and Inspiration," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology: Commentary Reference Series*, vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 22–57; and idem., "The Authority of Scripture," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver

Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006), 75–89.

- 5 These basic hermeneutical presuppositions are apparent in the narrative of Luke 24. Jesus' grounding of truth was "by Scripture alone" (*sola Scriptura*), and He interpreted the things about Himself "in all the Scriptures" (*totā Scriptura*). For a summary of these and other hermeneutical principles arising from Scripture itself, see, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, "Biblical Interpretation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology: Commentary Reference Series*, vol. 12, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 58–104; and Ekkehardt Müller, "Guidelines for the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006), 111–134.
- 6 See Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 39: "The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people."
- 7 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 186.
- 8 White, *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1901), 315.
- 9 White, *Evangelism*, 221. For discussion of the Christocentric focus of all Scripture, and the importance of interpreting Scripture Christocentrically, see, e.g., Hans LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 4–9 and passim; and Richard M. Davidson, "Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture," in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle*, eds. Daniel Heinz, Jifri Moskala, and Peter M. van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2009), 5–29.
- 10 Walter Bauer, F.W. Danker, W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2000 [hereafter abbreviated as BDAG]), s.v. "ὁμοθυμαδόν."
- 11 White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 37.
- 12 Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1898. Cf. idem., *Story of Redemption*, 246, 247: "This testimony in regard to the establishment of the Christian church is given us not only as an important portion of sacred history but also as a lesson. All who profess the name of Christ should be waiting, watching, and praying with one heart. All differences should be put away, and unity and tender love one for another pervade the whole. Then our prayers may go up together to our heavenly Father with strong, earnest faith. Then we may wait with patience and hope the fulfillment of the promise. . . . The great and important matter with us is to be of one heart and mind, putting aside all envy and malice, and, as humble supplicants, to watch and wait. Jesus, our Representative and Head, is ready to do for us what He did for the praying, watching ones on the day of Pentecost."
- 13 White, *Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1898: "They were bidden not to leave Jerusalem till they had been endued with power from on high. They therefore remained in Jerusalem, fasting and praying."
- 14 White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 36: "As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief!"
- 15 White, *Evangelism*, 698: "After Christ's ascension, the disciples were gathered together in one place to make humble supplication to God. And after ten days of heart searching and self-examination, the way was prepared for the Holy Spirit to enter the cleansed, consecrated soul temples."
- 16 White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 37: "Now, in obedience to the word of the Saviour, the disciples offered their supplications for this gift [of the Holy Spirit], and in heaven Christ added His intercession. He claimed the gift of the Holy Spirit, that He might pour it out upon His people" (italics supplied). Ellen White summarizes this preparatory process in *Testimonies for Ministers*, 507: "It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The same work, only in greater degree, must be done now."
- 17 White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 45, 46. Cf. Ellen G. White, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, 3:1152: "No man can have insight into the Word of God without the illumination of the Holy Spirit. If we will but come into the right position before God, His light will shine upon us in rich, clear rays. This was the experience of the early disciples. . . . [Acts 2:1–4 quoted.] God is willing to give us a similar blessing, when we seek for it earnestly."
- 18 Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 121. For discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of Scripture, see John Baldwin, "Faith, Reason, and the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2006), 20–24.
- 19 White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 37–38.
- 20 White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 672.

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Through the eyes of Jesus

We need a revival! How true that is in both our church's life and our own individual lives. Many of us long for a strong and significant manifestation of God's power in our midst.

So, we look at ourselves (hopefully not so much as at others) and realize that there is room for change and growth in many areas. And we are determined that now is the time to make those changes and really seek God's kingdom first. Such a decision establishes the foundation for a true revival to take place.

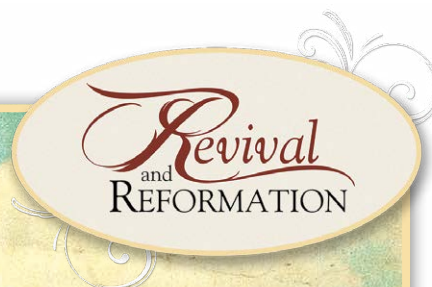
At times I have experienced that my self-evaluation, self-examination, and self-development have become a bit too self-centered. The focus on my own faith process (or lack thereof) has sometimes forced me into a self-centered worldview that has been unhealthy in the long run.

I need to look at myself through the eyes of Jesus. He loves me! Always! No matter what! He wants the best for me, and He has promised to be with me to the end of the ages (cf. Matt. 28:20). He sees all the problem areas in my life, and He truly

knows the best way to transform me. He is the Potter that can shape the clay much better than I, the clay, can do myself (cf. Jer. 18; Isa. 29).

Look to Jesus. Open your heart fully to Him who sees it all and knows what and how things need to be revived in your life.

—BOBBY SJOLANDER SERVES AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN SWEDEN, HEADQUARTERED IN STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN.



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A job for Superman?

A call to clarify the role of the Adventist minister

Adventist pastors are often expected to be involved in a daunting variety of skills. A local pastor may have to function as administrator, caregiver, chief financial officer, chaplain, church planter, coach, counselor, evangelist, fund-raiser, and several more. No matter how gifted, no human can be a Superman.

What is the pastor's job? It seems like an obvious question that should receive an obvious answer, yet the Adventist Church has not formally answered it.¹ As a previous *Ministry* article points out, for pastors, "a failure to understand their role will result in low self-esteem, lack of job satisfaction, anxiety, and serious stress."² Yet many pastors, pressured by conflicting expectations from parishioners, church administrators, and the wider culture, wrestle to know where to focus their efforts. This article will explore some reasons for the lack of a job description and suggest a way to move forward.

Multiple accountabilities

The *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook* highlights a difficulty in defining the pastor's role when it calls ministry "an intensely personal calling and service."³ Recognizing that

pastors ultimately answer to God rather than to the church, the church becomes hesitant to tell pastors what to do.⁴ But ministry cannot exist apart from the body of believers, as the ordination service—the laying on of human hands—illustrates. The call originates from God, but is also recognized and affirmed by the church. The "personal" nature of the call should not be an excuse for the lack of a job description.

Churches without pastors

The *Church Manual* says the pastor is the congregation's "spiritual leader and adviser" with responsibility to train church officers.⁵ This is a good start to a job description, but not enough. This manual actually spends more time describing the work of elders and deacons than it does that of pastors.

Adventist pastors are hired by the local field (commonly called a conference/mission/section). As such, we should expect a job description to appear in the working policy documents of the various fields. But in the policy documents we have surveyed, they give scant attention to pastoral roles. In a brief statement about pastors, the *General Conference Working Policy* states that the primary call of

the ordained minister is "pastoral, preaching, and evangelistic duties" rather than administration, teaching, or departmental leadership.⁶

The *Church Manual* avoids a detailed discussion of pastors because they belong to the larger administrative body. The field has little to say about pastors because they are local ministers. Pastors inhabit an undefined no-man's land—not quite local and not quite something else.

The pastor as elder

An additional difficulty in creating a job description is the role confusion between the pastor and church elder. The *Elder's Handbook* calls the work of pastor and elder "inextricably entwined"⁷ and goes on to say that "the interests and work of pastor and elder should be strikingly similar."⁸ Elders have a clear job description with three areas at the core: spiritual leadership, general oversight, and nurture.⁹ Could these three also serve as the core job description of the pastor? The *Minister's Handbook* also links the work of pastor and elder by saying that "pastors and elders lead the local congregation, and they shepherd the flock."¹⁰

In fact, the majority of the Adventist pastoral workforce is unordained.¹¹

Since the unordained pastor functions with the authority of the local elder, the two roles become nearly identical. If most of the ministers, known to their parishioners as “pastor,” are functioning with the authority of local elders anyway, then what really distinguishes a pastor from an elder? Only two things:

1. *Accountability.* Pastors are accountable to the local field rather than the local church.
2. *Vocation.* Pastors have accepted a call to full-time vocational ministry rather than part-time avocational ministry.¹² In the last few years, however, several conferences in North America have begun hiring pastors on a part-time basis, encouraging them to be bi-vocational. Vocation is becoming less significant in differentiating pastors from elders.

Like the unordained pastor, the ordained minister also differs from a local elder in terms of accountability and vocation. But ordination distinguishes him or her from the local elder in a third way:

3. *Authority.* The ordained pastor:
 - a. Has worldwide, rather than local, authority.¹³
 - b. Can conduct the baptismal service and marriage ceremony without special permission from the local field.¹⁴
 - c. Can ordain local elders and deacons.¹⁵
 - d. Can organize and unite churches.¹⁶

Most ordained ministers who work as pastors rarely exercise authority outside their own districts and do not organize or unite churches. Conference administrators assume most organizational authority. In some parts of the world like North America, local elders are pre-authorized to baptize and marry. The only commonly seen

and consistent difference between an ordained pastor and a local elder is therefore the authority to ordain local leaders.

How we got here

So far we have suggested three reasons why the Adventist Church may not have a clear job description for pastors: (1) the church recognizes ministry as something intensely personal; (2) local congregations are structured to function without pastors; and (3) when pastors are present they function much like a local elder. To understand how and why we arrived at this situation, we find it necessary to look at the

individualism and independence, so much a part of American culture. Nobody would have dared to tell a pastor what he could or could not do by tying him to a local church and saddling him with a job description.

Even as late as the turn of the century, Adventist congregations were few and scattered. A small and itinerant band of ministers served the burgeoning churches. Church growth was rapid in the early years of Adventism. The church was adding members faster than pastors, forcing ministers to continue in an itinerant, unsettled role with the arrival of the twentieth century. It took about 50

Perhaps a good place to begin would be to allow pastors to take off the Superman cape and take up the Shepherd's mantle.

development of Adventist ministry from its beginnings.

Prior to formal organization in 1863, Adventist preachers functioned as itinerant evangelists. James White described Adventist ministry thus: “We have no settled pastors over our churches; but our ministers are all missionaries, as were the early ministers of Jesus Christ, consequently they are most of their time deprived of the blessings of home.”¹⁷

A likely reason for the adoption of an itinerant model was its practicality. Adventist congregations were small. If pastors were to make a living from the gospel, they would need to be supported by multiple churches. Furthermore, the itinerant model fit well with the spirit of rugged

years for church growth to be steady enough that Adventist pastors could conceivably begin to settle into local churches and districts.¹⁸ Adventist leaders of the early twentieth century, however, continued to embrace the concept of pastors as itinerant evangelists, calling such a ministry model “The Lord’s plan” for the Adventist Church.¹⁹

Nonetheless, pastors increasingly began to settle over churches and assume traditional pastoral roles, creating inevitable dissonance. How much authority should pastors have over local churches? If “The Lord’s plan” calls for pastors to work as itinerant evangelists, should we call it a sin for pastors to become settled guardians of the flock? This dissonance is

a key factor in the ongoing confusion about the pastor's job that we see today.

Contemporary complications

In the last several decades, the world and the church have undergone immense changes. An explosion in church membership has coincided with an exploding world population, the digital age, globalization, increased affluence, and rising secularization. Growing out of these rapid changes in society, there are several factors pushing the church further away from clarity on the pastor's role:

1. *Specialization.* Today, especially in larger churches, pastors may carry titles such as Administrative Pastor, Counseling Pastor, Preaching Pastor, or Youth Pastor, and the duties of one type of pastor

may scarcely resemble those of another.²⁰

2. *New models for doing church.* Cell churches, house churches, seeker-sensitive churches, and many other new trends require radically different roles for pastors. Whether or not we agree that these new ways of doing church are valid for Adventism, they unavoidably influence our thinking.

3. *The globalization of Adventism.* Church membership in the North American homeland is now dwarfed by membership in the rest of the world, bringing diversity of practice and viewpoint. Pastoral expectations no longer arise solely out of an American Evangelical culture. Depending on our backgrounds, we cannot help but think, however incorrectly, of the Adventist pastor as an Adventist version of the Catholic priest, Jewish rabbi,

Buddhist monk, Muslim imam, or megachurch pastor down the road.

To develop a unified job description for the Adventist minister has become harder than ever. And maybe that is acceptable. Maybe each local field needs to develop its own job description. Still, we feel strongly that there should be something at the core of a pastoral job description that does not change from time to time or culture to culture. What is that core?

A push for clarity

There have been some notable efforts to clear up the confusion in recent decades. In 1990, the North American Division (NAD) Ministerial Association published *Adventist Pastoral Ministry* written by John W. Fowler, perhaps the most direct attempt to answer the question of the pastor's role. Fowler argues against

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the itinerant model of early Adventist ministry. He calls for “reestablishing the historic role of the pastor as the guardian of the church, as its spiritual and moral leader.”²¹ He also calls the minister back to the dual ministries of word and sacrament²²—something the *Church Manual* spends a good deal of time explaining in terms of the ministry of the local elder.

Russell Burrill, former director of the North American Division Evangelism Institute, is drawn towards the early Adventist model of the pastor as an itinerant evangelist. He scorns the idea of the pastor as primary caregiver in the church. According to him, “the New Testament demands an evangelistic clergy, not a care-giving clergy.”²³

In Burrill’s vision, the laity would be actively engaged in both nurture and evangelism. The pastor would serve as a consultant or coach, keeping church members at the top of their game. With a healthy church caring for itself, the pastor would be freed from the burdens of local ministry to engage in the work of planting churches in unentered territories. For Burrill, the pastor is not a local leader but a coach who always looks to start a new team somewhere else. This leaves the pastor without much local authority. Burrill recommends a “circular” administrative structure for the local church with the pastor as just one in the circle.²⁴

We have here two mutually exclusive models: Fowler’s guardian and Burrill’s evangelist. But there is a third model that both leaders incorporate into their thinking: the pastor as an equipper. Fowler and Burrill both agree that a part of the pastor’s role includes equipping the church for ministry. Pastors should not do all the work themselves but teach the church members how to work. Fowler’s guardian trains the members and then stays by to supervise the work of the church.²⁵ Burrill’s evangelist also trains the church members, builds up

local leaders, and then departs to start new work elsewhere.²⁶

Inspired counsel

So which model would you classify as “best”? Our natural inclination, as Adventists, suggests that we settle the issue by appealing to the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. But there are challenges in doing so.

The New Testament gives a snapshot of the life of the early church, but there is diversity of practice. Leaders meet challenges by adapting. The office of deacon, best translated as “minister,” gets invented to meet a specific need. The apostle Paul roams the world raising up new churches. Some apostles and leaders stay in Jerusalem for many years. Timothy and Titus seem to supervise the church (or churches) within a given territory. No single model emerges.

Comments by Ellen White can easily be used to support Burrill’s evangelist model. She certainly lived and wrote during periods when that was the primary model for Adventist ministry. Some statements can be read to suggest that the itinerant model is best,²⁷ but she makes it clear elsewhere that ministers have a responsibility to spend time caring for church members.²⁸

The consistent message in Ellen White’s comments about the church and pastoral ministry focuses on the health of the church. Pastors are responsible for the spiritual vitality of their churches. One of the best ways to keep churches healthy involves giving the members work to do. She champions the pastor as a trainer and equipper of the laity.²⁹

By reading broadly in her writings, we can discern that Ellen White was accommodating of multiple models of ministry. Pastors can and should be either itinerant or settled as time and circumstance may require. But always she calls pastors to be faithful in taking care of the flock and keeping the church strong.

A path forward

Ellen White’s consistent emphasis is, not surprisingly, where Fowler and Burrill agree: pastors should train church members to be healthy Christians who are active in ministry themselves. The Bible also provides a basis for seeing the pastor’s role as that of an equipping shepherd. Ephesians 4:12 says that the offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher are given “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry” (NKJV).

But a problem exists in applying Ephesians 4:12 specifically to the work of the pastor since the other three leadership gifts/offices have the same job description. Burrill, in fact, suggests that all four of the leadership gifts in Ephesians 4:11 are “clergy gifts.”³⁰ Our use of the term *pastor* in modern Adventism confuses the issue. If we want to maintain a single title for clergy, then perhaps the older designation “minister” or some other term would be more appropriate since the identification could more obviously cover all four gifts/offices.

We think, however, it is a mistake to conflate these gifts into a single calling. In Adventist practice, we ordain individuals to the ministry and then expect them to have all four leadership gifts. We expect them to become Superman.

So, what is the pastor’s role as distinct from apostle, prophet, and evangelist? The word *pastor* means *shepherd* in the biblical languages—the guardian of the flock. And in Ephesians 4, the term *pastor* is linked to the word *teacher*. Here we have a model that looks much more like Fowler’s than Burrill’s picture of pastoral ministry. The pastor is a guardian-equipper. Ben Schoun has an effective description of the pastor’s job: “moving the church and its members forward in a life of health and purpose.”³¹

An innovative illustration of how the guardian-equipper model might

be applied comes from the Sri Lanka Mission. In attempting to revitalize the churches and encourage members to assume local leadership, the Mission has removed the pastoral workforce from day-to-day responsibility for churches. Pastors have been assigned to regional teams responsible for training and supervising local church leaders.³² By working as a team, the pastors can utilize their individual and limited gifts to train and equip the churches. The individual pastor does not have to be Superman. The Sri Lanka model allows for a clear distinction between the pastor and the local elder and moves the pastor in the direction of field administration.

The specifics of application may vary from place to place, but at the core, pastors should be guardian-equipppers. They are spiritual leaders, delegated with the authority to supervise and safeguard the churches under their care, to recruit and train local leadership. Pastors are neither evangelists (with an extreme focus on the lost) nor chaplains (with a one-sided focus on nurturing church members), though, at times and briefly, out of necessity, pastors may personally need to do evangelism or nurture. But pastors should certainly not feel guilty or unfit if they are not gifted as evangelists or nurturing caretakers. Pastors are not Superman and should not try to take on all the roles in the church. Their focus must be training church leaders to put church members to work.

The health of pastors and churches lies in the balance. The church needs to study this issue with a view to making a clear statement about the pastor's role. Points that need to be studied include the following:

1. *Mandate.* Is a pastor an itinerant evangelist or a local shepherd? Or is the pastor simply a leader, regardless of whether he or she

is itinerant or settled, whose responsibility includes equipping the saints?

2. *Specialization.* In today's Adventism, the most common title for the ordained minister is *pastor*. Does it make sense to call those in specialized ministries (evangelist, administrator, chaplain) *pastor* as well? What pastoral function makes a pastor a pastor?
3. *Local function.* If pastors and elders do the same work, why pay one and not the other? If pastors and elders do different jobs, what are the differences? The differences must be defined in such a way that we do not move any further towards sacerdotalism, something we fear that Adventists in some parts of the world are dangerously close to embracing already.

For the sake of healthy pastors and congregations, the church must respond to these and other difficulties encountered in defining the role of the pastor in order to bring clarity to the pastor's job description. Perhaps a good place to begin would be to allow pastors to take off the Superman cape and take up the Shepherd's mantle. ❏

1 In his book, *Wanted: A Good Pastor: The Characteristics, Skills, and Attitudes Every Effective Church Leader Needs* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 2011), 91, Jonas Arrais states, "Job descriptions for pastors are rare. Over the years there has been resistance on different levels to establish a job description for pastors."
 2 Eric H. Winter, "Preserve the Vessel, Share the Treasure," *Ministry*, June 1996, 5.
 3 *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Ministerial Association, 2009), 52.
 4 Ellen White once counseled against requiring ministers to first serve as colporteurs by saying, "It is not the work of any man to prescribe the work for any other man contrary to his own convictions of duty. He is to be advised and counselled, but he is to seek his directions from God, whose he is, and whom he serves." *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 47.
 5 *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Secretariat, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), 33. This statement comes from a brief subsection titled "Ordained Pastors," which is not a job description but an overview of pastoral authority and responsibility in the local context. In addition to designating pastors as spiritual leaders with responsibility to instruct officers, the *Manual* states that the pastor outranks the local elders and deacons, can perform all church rites and ceremonies, should chair the church board, work closely with the elders, assist visiting evangelists, and plan and lead worship services. Curiously, no mention is made of the pastor preaching or himself doing evangelism.
 6 *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, L 40. Although the statements in this section of the *Working Policy* point to a local ministry for pastors, the section title points in another direction: "Ordained to

World Church."
 7 *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1994), 9.
 8 *Ibid.*, 51.
 9 *Ibid.*, 34.
 10 *Minister's Handbook*, 51.
 11 The world church has 12,736 ordained ministers serving as "Evangelistic and Pastoral Employees," 5,615 licensed ministers (unordained but on the path to ordination), and 8,368 categorized as "Other" meaning they work as pastors or evangelists but with a commissioned minister, missionary, or some other type of credential or license. That means there are 13,983 unordained pastors serving as "Evangelistic and Pastoral Employees." Data from *148th Annual Statistical Report—2010* (Silver Spring, MD: Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2010), 6. The same chart lists several other types of "General Employees" in addition to "Evangelistic and Pastoral Employees." These are "Administrative, Promotional, Office, and Miscellaneous Employees," "Primary School Teachers," "Bible Instructors," and "Literature Evangelists."
 12 *Minister's Handbook*, 40.
 13 The *Church Manual* states, "The authority and work of elders are confined to the church in which their election has been made. It is not permissible for a conference committee by vote to confer on an elder the status that is granted to an ordained pastor to serve other churches as elder" (73).
 14 *Ibid.*, 73.
 15 *Ibid.*, 72, 77.
 16 *Ibid.*, 37–40.
 17 James White, *Review and Herald* 14, (June 9, 1859) no. 3: 21, cited by Russell C. Burrill, *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life and Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 1998), 157.
 18 The cause and effect relationship of settled pastors and slower growth can be argued either way. Either settled pastors caused growth to slow or slow growth freed up personnel and money so pastors could settle over churches. Russell Burrill presents several graphs comparing growth rates to the number of pastors in North America to show that as the number of pastors increased growth slowed significantly. See Burrill, 174–177.
 19 John W. Fowler, *Adventist Pastoral Ministry* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1990), 11.
 20 *The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education* (Silver Spring, MD: International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2001), 41, lists four major categories of Adventist ministry specialization: Church Pastors, Specialized Ministries (comprising Congregational Specialist, Public Evangelist, Youth Minister/Leader, Departmental Leader, and Denominational Administrator), Teaching Ministries, and Chaplaincy Ministries.
 21 Fowler, 35.
 22 Fowler, 62.
 23 Burrill, 208.
 24 Burrill, 209.
 25 The pastor's "function is to coordinate the efforts of all the members in both the nurture and outreach ministries of the congregation," see Fowler, 58, 59.
 26 A couple of representative statements will suffice to showcase Burrill's view. "Pastors need to revise their church role and return to their biblical job description—as a trainer of the laity." Russel C. Burrill, *Revolution in the Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Books, 1993), 13. "Churches need to rise up and inform their conferences, 'We can care for ourselves. Take the money formerly used to give us a pastor and send our pastor out to raise up a new church, whose believers can likewise be taught to care for themselves.'" *Ibid.*, 38.
 27 "The churches that have not life in themselves, that have lost their spiritual discernment, call for ministers to come to their help, to bring them the breath of life. But the ministers have other work to do. They must carry the message of truth to those who know it not." Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 121.
 28 "The flock of God have a right to expect to be visited by their pastor, to be instructed, advised, counseled, in their own homes. And if a man fails to do this part of the work, he can not be a minister after God's order." *Ibid.*, 223.
 29 "When he [the pastor] entertains the idea that his work is comprehended in sermonizing, he overlooks, and is sure to neglect, the work devolving upon a shepherd of the flock. It is his work to have care, to oversee the flock, to so arrange the elements of the church the each may have something to do." *Ibid.*, 40.
 30 Burrill, *Revolution in the Church*, 47.
 31 Benjamin D. Schoun, "The Pastor and the Local Church," *A Guide to Effective Pastoral Ministry* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2009), 49.
 32 Seventh-day Adventist Buddhist Study Center, "Sri Lanka: Major Step of Faith," *Prayers Among Buddhists Newsletter*, December 12, 2011.

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The remnant church

On October 22, 1844, thousands of eager Christians in the United States waited for the second advent of Christ. Obviously, they had been mistaken, but out of their disappointment arose the Seventh-day Adventist Church, also referred to by its members as “the remnant church.” Adventists define themselves this way based on a careful exegesis of certain texts in Revelation. What are those texts, and why do Adventists see in them their identity as “the remnant church”?

The witness of Scripture

Revelation 12 clearly teaches that God has a remnant church at the end time. After describing the history of the Christian church (under the symbolism of a woman), from the time of Jesus (the child in verse 5) to the end of the 1,260 years (538–1798), Revelation says: “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring [“the remnant of her seed”—KJV], who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17, NKJV).

This verse brings us to a time after the 1,260-year period (Rev. 12:6, 14), i.e., in the nineteenth century. Seeing that he was unable to wipe out God’s faithful people, Satan becomes angry with a particular group called “the rest of her offspring” or “the remnant of her seed”—the remnant

church. The focus rests now, not on the woman (symbol of God’s faithful people throughout the ages), but on this particular group, “the rest of her offspring,” or the remnant church.

Only twice in this chapter does John mention an “offspring” of the woman. The first one is the male child in verse 5, the Messiah; the second, “the rest of her offspring,” the remnant church. Both times John clearly identifies the offspring of the woman, supporting the view that “the rest of her offspring” comprises the visible remnant church. Two identifying marks, or signs, of this remnant church are given: they keep “the commandments of God,” and they have “the testimony of Jesus.”

Keeping the commandments of God

Whatever commandments we may want to include in the first identifying mark, we must certainly include the Ten Commandments. Thus, the first identifying sign of the remnant church is their loyalty to God’s commandments—all His commandments, including the fourth, the Sabbath commandment. To paraphrase Revelation 12:17: *At the end of time God will have a church—the remnant church—which will be recognized by the fact that they keep the commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath commandment.*

In the time of the apostles, or the early church, this would not have

been a special sign because they all kept the Sabbath; but today, when most Christians “keep” Sunday, the Sabbath has indeed become a distinguishing mark.

Having the testimony of Jesus

The second identifying mark is “the testimony of Jesus.” What does this phrase mean? The expression “testimony of Jesus” (*marturia Iesou*) occurs six times in the book of Revelation (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10 [twice]; 20:4).

First, we look at Revelation 1:1, 2, and 9. The introduction to Revelation sets forth the source, i.e., God, and the content of the book—the revelation of Jesus Christ. In verse 2 we are told that John bore witness to “the Word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus.”

We commonly understand “the Word of God” to refer to what God says; and “the testimony of Jesus,” in parallel to “the Word of God,” must therefore mean the testimony that Jesus Himself gives. How did Jesus testify of Himself? While here on earth, He testified in person to the people in Judea. After His ascension, He spoke through His prophets.

In Revelation 1:9, the parallelism between the “Word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus” is again clearly discernible: “I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos *for the word of God and for the*

testimony of Jesus Christ” (NKJV; italics supplied).

“The Word of God” in John’s time referred to the Old Testament, and the “testimony of Jesus” referred to what Jesus had said, the truths He revealed as recorded in the Gospels and through His prophets, like Peter and Paul.

The spirit of prophecy

In Revelation 19:10, therefore, we read the explanation, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (NKJV). What is “the spirit of prophecy”? This phrase occurs only once in the Bible and only in this text. We find the closest biblical parallel in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, where Paul refers to the Holy Spirit, who, among other *charismata*, gives the gift of prophecy, and the person who receives this gift is called a “prophet” (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11).

Just as in 1 Corinthians 12:28, those who have the gift of prophecy (v. 10) are called “prophets,” so in Revelation 22:8, 9, those who have the spirit of prophecy in 19:10 are also called “prophets.”

Note the parallelism between Revelation 19:10 and Revelation 22:8, 9:

19:10	22:8, 9
And I fell at his feet to worship him,	I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.
But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”	Then he said to me, “See that you do not do that! For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

The same situation occurs in both passages. John falls at the feet of the angel to worship. The words of the angel’s response are almost identical, yet the difference is significant. In Revelation 19:10, the brethren are

identified by the phrase, “Who hold [have] the testimony of Jesus”; in Revelation 22:9, the brethren are simply called “prophets.”

Thus, if we use the Protestant principle of interpreting scripture by scripture, we can conclude that “the spirit of prophecy” in Revelation 19:10 is not the possession of all church members in general but only of those who have been called by God to be prophets.

Hermann Strathmann, a Lutheran scholar, commenting on Revelation 19:10, says:

According to the parallel 22:9 the brothers referred to are not believers in general, but the prophets. Here, too, they are characterised as such. This is the point of verse 10c. If they have the *marturia Iesou* [testimony of Jesus] they have the spirit of prophecy, i.e., they are prophets, like the angel, who simply stands in the service of *marturia Iesou*.¹

Similarly, James Moffat explains:

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” This prose

marginal comment specifically defines the brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus as possessors of prophetic inspiration. The testimony of Jesus is practically equivalent to Jesus testifying.²

The witness of the Targumim

The Jewish readers in John’s day knew what was meant by the expression “Spirit of prophecy.” They would have understood the expression as a reference to the Holy Spirit, who imparts the prophetic gift to man.

Rabbinic Judaism equated the Old Testament (OT) expressions “Holy Spirit,” “Spirit of God,” or “Spirit of Yahweh” with “the Spirit of prophecy.” This can be seen in the frequent occurrence of this term in the Targumim (written translations of the OT in Aramaic):

Thereupon the Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find a man like this in whom there is *the spirit of prophecy from before the Lord?*” (Gen. 41:38).³

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man who has within himself the *spirit of prophecy*, and lay your hand on him” (Num. 27:18).⁴

Sometimes the term *Spirit of prophecy* refers simply to the Holy Spirit, but, in many cases, it refers to the gift of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit. Commenting on this expression in the Targumim, F. F. Bruce says:

The expression “the Spirit of prophecy” is current in post-biblical Judaism: it is used, for example, in a Targumic circumlocution for the Spirit of Yahweh which comes upon this or that prophet. Thus the Targum of Jonathan renders the opening words of Isaiah 61:1 as “The Spirit of prophecy from before the Lord God is upon me.” The thought expressed in Revelation 19:10 is not dissimilar to that already quoted from 1 Peter 1:11 where “the Spirit of Christ” is said to have borne advanced testimony in the Old Testament prophets. . . . In Revelation 19:10, however, it is

through Christian prophets that the Spirit of prophecy bears witness. What the prophets of pre-Christian days foretold is proclaimed as an accomplished fact by the prophets of the new age, among whom John occupies a leading place.⁵

Summary of Revelation 12:17

Returning now to Revelation 12:17, we can say that “the rest of her offspring . . . keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ,” which is the Spirit of prophecy, or the prophetic gift.

This interpretation is strengthened by a study of the Greek word *echō*, meaning “to have.” This word indicates possession. They have a gift of God—the prophetic gift. If “the testimony of Jesus” was simply our testimony about Jesus, John would have written something like this: “They keep the

commandments of God and testify about Jesus,” or “they bear testimony to Jesus.” But the Greek word *echō* is never used in the sense “to bear a witness.”⁶

In summary, we can say that the remnant church, which, according to prophecy, exists after the 1,260-day period (after 1798), has two specific identifying marks:

1. They keep the commandments of God, including the Sabbath command as God gave it.
2. They have the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of prophecy, or the prophetic gift, in their midst.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, from its inception in 1863, has always claimed these identifying signs for itself. As Adventists, we proclaim the

Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath; and we believe that, as a church, we have the testimony of Jesus, i.e., that God manifested Himself in the life and work of Ellen G. White.

Our pioneers were quite certain that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Revelation 12:17. G. I. Butler, General Conference president between 1871 and 1888, wrote in an article entitled “Visions and Dreams”:

Is there then no people in whom these conditions combine in these last days? We believe they truly do in Seventh-day Adventists. They have everywhere claimed to be the “remnant” church for the last 25 years. . . .

Do they keep the commandments of God? Every one knowing anything about this people can answer that this is the most



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important part of their faith. . . . In regard to the Spirit of prophecy, it is a remarkable fact that from the first of their existence as a people, Seventh-day Adventists have claimed that it has been in active exercise among them.⁷

Ellen White firmly believed that Seventh-day Adventists were God's remnant church and that Revelation 12:17 applied to them. Seventh-day Adventists "are God's representatives upon the earth."⁸ She also wrote: "We have the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is the Spirit of prophecy."⁹ And she counseled, "Let all be careful not to make an outcry against the only people who are fulfilling the description given of the remnant people who keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus, who are exalting the standard of righteousness in these last days."¹⁰

And we still believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church with the Spirit of prophecy as one of the identifying marks.

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.¹¹

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are members of God's remnant church. However, this identification with the remnant church does not accord us an exclusive status with God. We have never taught that Adventists alone are saved; we have always recognized the reality of what has been called "the invisible church," God's faithful people throughout the ages. Also today, God has faithful people in all churches, including the Catholic Church.¹² Salvation is not guaranteed through church membership in any church; we are saved as individuals,

not as a church. But being a part of God's remnant church means that we have access to God's special gift, the inspired counsel of Ellen White, and can participate in proclaiming God's special end-time message—the three angels' messages—to the world. ▣

- 1 Hermann Strathmann, "Martyrs," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964–1974), 4:500.
- 2 James Moffat, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. R. Nicoll (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956), 5:465.
- 3 Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onkelos to Genesis, The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 6, eds. K. Cathart, M. Maher, M. McNamara (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 138.
- 4 *Idem.*, *The Targum Onkelos to Leviticus and the Targum Onkelos to Numbers, The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 8, eds. K. Cathart, M. Maher, M. McNamara (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 102, 145 (italics in the original). Other occurrences of the term *spirit of prophecy* are found in Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Num. 11:25, 26, 29; 24:2; Judg. 3:10; 1 Sam. 10:6; 19:10, 23; 2 Sam. 23:2; 1 Kings 22:24; 2 Chron. 15:1; 18:22, 23; 20:14; Ps. 51:13; Isa. 11:2. See Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 7 vols. (München: Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), 2:129.
- 5 F. F. Bruce, *The Time Is Fulfilled* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1978), 105, 106.
- 6 G. Pfandl, "The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy" in *Symposium on Revelation B Book II*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, DARCOM Series, vol. 7 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 312, 313.
- 7 G. I. Butler, "Visions and Prophecy," *Review and Herald*, June 2, 1874, 193.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 2:452.
- 9 White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1962), 114.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 58.
- 11 *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, 2005), 247.
- 12 See Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 234.

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What is revival?

J. J. Parkers defines revival as "a work of God by His Spirit through His word bringing the spiritually dead to living faith in Christ and renewing the inner life of Christians who have grown slack and sleepy." He further adds, "Revival thus animates or re-animates churches and Christians to make a spiritual and moral impact on communities. It comprises an initial reviving, followed by a maintained state of reviveness."¹

The marks of genuine revival include (1) a sense of the presence of God and the truth of the gospel; (2) an awareness of sin that leads to

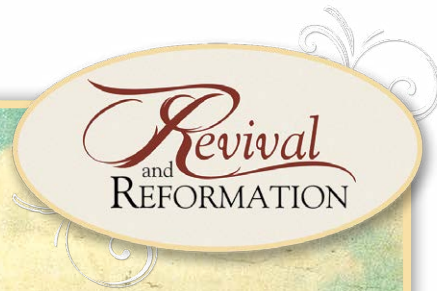
repentance; (3) a heartfelt embrace of the glorified, loving, pardoning Christ; (4) an intensifying and speeding up of the work of grace; (5) many conversions; and (6) community involvement in the revival.²

While we recognize that revival cannot possibly happen without the Holy Spirit, we also know the Holy Spirit as the Author of the Bible (2 Pet. 1:21). So, the Holy Spirit uses the Bible to bring revival, and the study of the Bible prepares the way for the Holy Spirit. This works both ways—a circular effect. Jesus said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are

spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). Studying the Bible helps us see that all genuine revivals are related to an increased study of the Word of God.

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1. Bill Hull, *Revival That Reforms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1998), 29.
2. *Ibid.*



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Putting young members to work: *Lessons from Jesus, the great evangelism Coordinator*

My life was heading in a downward spiral,” writes Colby. “And all because I had all the wrong friends in my life. But then I experienced a new me and a new life. I thank God for that. I was a newborn Christian at the time, and the [effect] you all had on me was incredible. Thank you all for that.”¹

“Last year,” writes Erin, “was an amazing experience that really changed my life (specifically my walk with God). I want people to know the God that loves them more than they can ever imagine and have the opportunity to have their lives changed as well.”

We read a lot about young people. They are interested in how to and how not to. They want nonnegotiable authenticity. They can smell a lack of genuineness a mile away. They seek connectivity and expect speed.

We hear the painfully overused but often heartfelt expression “Young people are not the church of tomorrow, but the church of today!” But what makes young people switch on for the kingdom of God so they choose to invest their time, talent, skills, energy, and creativity into service?

The young people quoted above did not attend an event. Instead, they participated in a carefully organized,

structured outreach program. They responded to Jesus’ “Go” in Luke 10: “Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:3).² They actively engaged in aggressive—and often difficult—evangelism.

What are some simple steps to achieve this? The story of Jesus, the evangelism Coordinator, gives us some answers.

Carefully select young adult leadership. Choose well in whom you will invest. Jesus first “appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out” (Mark 3:14). Later, “the Lord appointed seventy others also” (Luke 10:1).

Notice Jesus’ selection, or appointment, of defined groups. First, the Twelve. Then, the Seventy. On other occasions,³ He chose only three—Peter, James, and John. This means that there were times He *intentionally* excluded the nine. In spite of these selections of defined groups, one factor remains solid: that is His call, “‘Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden’ ” (Matt. 11:28). Jesus’ invitation to come to Him and experience the rest He offers stands open to all!—but this should not be confused with the careful selection of those whom we are targeting for leadership positions. We see some elements

of exclusivity necessary in mentoring leaders, and this is especially true of young adults.⁴

Note that this exclusivity does *not* mean that we need to make decisions based on who looks good or who appears to have the most talent. Often, we cannot tell initially who is a David and who is an Eliab or Abinadab (1 Sam. 16:6–8).

God also calls young leaders from various backgrounds. One of our strongest young adult leaders describes herself as an improbable candidate: “I come from a broken home and I’m a statistic!” However, at age 15 she preached a full evangelistic series to as many as 10,000 people in Ethiopia. She attended SOULS West Bible College,⁵ became a Bible worker, and now mentors other young Bible workers.

Furthermore, this careful selection of young adult leadership does not confine itself to religious groups. Two of the most famous organizations that have historically engaged young people in “mission” and action are the Hitler Youth and the Communist Young Pioneer movement. These organizations emphasized midlevel, young adult leadership and utilized slightly older young people to lead/mentor those who were somewhat younger. This

midlevel leadership harnessed the power of peer influence: What young person doesn't want to be like someone just older than him or her? Furthermore, these organizations brimmed with vision, action, and resources.⁶ They did not need a Barna study to confirm that young people make fertile soil: "Give us the child for eight years," said Lenin, "and it will be a Bolshevik forever."⁷

Writing to young people, Ellen White confirms what we all know intuitively: "Young friends, if you take hold of the work right where you are at the present time, doing what you can, be sure that you will have the help of Jesus.

sick and tired of living for nothing, and I wanted to have something to stand firm on."

Ron Hutchcraft writes, "The problem with most Christian young people is that they have no game. We keep giving them all the things they need to do as Christians—read the Bible, have devotions, study, pray, do God's will, do the right thing—but they have no reasons to do all that. There is no game to use it in. They need a mission."⁹

Comparing today's Adventist youth with the youth societies of the late 1800s, Cindy Tutsch writes, "The reason today's young people do not

their faces glow." So does Janet: "Last year's program affected me spiritually: I learned to feed myself spiritually."

I serve in the Central California Conference where we have experienced eight consecutive years of one-million-dollar-plus evangelism offerings. The committee has consistently (and wisely) committed to investing a good portion of this in youth and young adult outreaches, such as youth preaching events, overseas ShareHim trips, literature evangelism programs, and young adult Bible work programs.¹¹ The evangelism offering seeded a new program called GLOW—Giving Light to Our World¹²—initiated and executed exclusively by young adults, which promotes simple methods of tract distribution. In just over four years, GLOW has printed 26 million tracts in 32 languages; 22 conferences in the North American Division have adopted the program. Young people love action!

"I really enjoyed working with the group and growing in my relationship with God every day," writes Elizabeth. "I cannot think of anything else that I could have done this summer that would have been better than working with other youth who had the same purpose: letting others know about God's love for all of us."

My favorite illustration may be from a young Bible worker who recently took on a new church assignment. Within the first few days he wrote to me: "Here's what God did: Five teenagers went out door-to-door yesterday for five hours. We were blessed with over thirty interests. As a result, within less than 12 hours I had a Bible study with someone I just met yesterday, and the youth are on fire and are making a documentary on evangelism and how it affects our walk with Christ. Evangelism with much prayer still works!"

Give concrete, specific instruction. " 'Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house." And if a son of peace is there, your peace will

He [Jesus] instructed them how to relate to rejection—a big deal for a young person whose self-concept has not quite finished developing.

Begin the work by laboring for your companions. Ministers, or churchmembers advanced in years, cannot have one-half the influence over your young associates that you are capable of exerting; and you ought to feel that a responsibility rests upon you to do all you can for their salvation."⁸

Put them to work. Jesus "sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, ... 'Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves' " (Luke 10:1–3). Young people desperately need a mission "game" in which to put into play what they learn. If they do not experience it, to them it may not be real. "I am so tired of living for myself," writes Vania, "that I've finally found true happiness in reaching others; it has changed my life." From Michelle: "One of the reasons I [participated in the evangelism] was because I was so

appear to have the same appetite for evangelism as evidenced by the members of early Youth Societies may be that they're getting little exercise in evangelism. Adventist youth in the twenty-first century, particularly in western culture, are often spiritual couch potatoes—over-entertained and under-challenged, bored, apathetic if not overtly rebellious—and filled with spiritual junk food. To appreciate the meat of the Word and the beauty of a living relationship with Christ, they must once again organize and seek training in order to experience the rejuvenating reality of evangelism."¹⁰

Dillon agrees: "Struggling this summer was the most refreshing thing I have ever done. I had a closer experience with God than I have ever had in my whole life. And I can honestly say that I have experienced God's love. It was a powerful experience to see the students this summer have the same experience and

rest on it; if not, it will return to you. . . . And heal the sick there, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you”” (Luke 10:4–9).

Jesus gave definite instruction on what to say, what to do, how to deal with rejection. In fact, in just eight verses (vv. 3–10) Jesus uses nine imperatives, explaining what to take with them, what to say to people, where to stay, and even what to eat and drink.

One girl wrote to us when applying for a summer of evangelistic activity: “I want a program that is very spiritual as well as structured. . . . I would like to know more about programs that are very structured and successful.” One young man thrived in the structure of a steady daily schedule that included a devotional time: “Before last summer, I never read my Bible; but now, as soon as I am up in the morning I read it.”

One of the challenges with any evangelistic work is the possibility of rejection. Jesus knew this, and faced it squarely: “‘But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, “The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.”’ But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city’” (vv. 10–12). Here, He instructed them how to relate to rejection—a big deal for a young person whose self-concept has not quite finished developing.

Realize the power of the debrief. “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven’” (vv. 17–20). “And the apostles, when they had returned,

told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately” (Luke 9:10).

After a summer of aggressive ministry, Sasha wrote, “This is the happiest I’ve been in my entire life”—mirroring the disciples in verse 17, above.

In both Luke 9 and 10, the disciples’ return from outreach provided Jesus with perfect “teachable moments,” and He used those moments powerfully. Notice how Jesus maximizes this opportunity. He relishes the fact that their mental blocks have disappeared; He knows that, fresh off of satisfying experiences watching the Holy Spirit use them, they have an openness unmatched by virtually any other time in their lives. So He teaches them: (1) The great controversy between Satan and Me is real! (This is a favorite spiritual theme that interests young people.) (2) I am more powerful than the enemy, and I am delegating that power to you. (3) Warning—do not savor being powerful! Do not think about tackling Rome and setting up that earthly kingdom that I know lies near the front of your minds, else you might begin to love power and display, and forget that the kingdom of heaven is not like Herod or Tiberius. Instead, be happy because I have given you eternal life!

I get to watch and engage with more than 1,000 young people as they “return with joy” from their outreach experiences. Their openness and the depth and solidity of their Christian experience at those moments make me tingle. And there is nothing I enjoy more in ministry than addressing a group like that.


Furthermore, young people of “the feedback generation” expect their leaders to offer constant responses and evaluations. Some time ago one of my young adults stopped what she was doing in the adjacent office, came into my office, sat down, and said nothing. I looked at her mutely until she said somewhat sheepishly, “I just feel like I need some feedback.”

Inreach/outreach? Does outreach and evangelism solve every problem?

No. Young people need care, time, nurture, etc.—and the unchurched need bridges to the body of Christ. We all acknowledge this. However, could it be that we have erred on the side of “safety,” maximizing inreach and minimizing outreach evangelism?

Listen to 22-year-old Philip, reflecting on his time of evangelistic outreach: “I just wanted to let you know that . . . this year I probably made the best decision for my spiritual well-being. Personally, [Bible college] was a good choice as well, but since growing up as an Adventist, there was not much new to learn besides all the prophecy interpretations. *However, being out in the front lines of God’s army and actually doing the action part of my faith was very rewarding*” (emphasis mine).

Tutsch concludes, “It is yet possible that this generation of youth will re-capture the vision of early Adventist youth societies and become that segment of the church body who model, lead, and inspire the church at large to engage in Spirit-led inclusive evangelism.”¹³

I hope she’s right. If Colby, Erin, Philip, and their comrades have their way, this generation of young people will respond vigorously to Jesus’ command, “Go.” 

1 All testimonies from young people in this article are real and unsolicited. Some names have been changed.

2 All Scripture passages are from the New King James Version.

3 For example, Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33.

4 Some commentators such as Ray Vander Laan believe, based on various factors, that we can place most or all of Jesus’ disciples in the young adult category—35 or under.

5 Soulswest.org. SOULS West is owned and operated by the Pacific Union Conference.

6 Of course, we are not affirming all—or even most—of the methodologies or ideologies of these organizations.

7 An interesting case in point: the kidnapping of 30,000 Greek children and taken to Communist Eastern Europe in 1948.

8 Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 278.

9 Ron Hutchcraft, *The Battle for a Generation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 63. Dr. Cindy Tutsch quotes Hutchcraft at ssnet.org/blog/2011/11/where-goeth-adventist-youth-ministries (quote attributed to Kevin Ford).

10 ssnet.org/blog/2011/11/where-goeth-adventist-youth-ministries. Cindy Tutsch is an associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate.

11 These offerings are first and foremost an answer to united prayer by the prayer partners of the conference. However, the public testimonies of the young people also stimulate giving, which, in turn, supports those young people with resources for their aggressive outreach ministries.

12 sdaglow.org. GLOW is a ministry operated by the Pacific Union Conference.

13 ssnet.org/blog/2011/11/where-goeth-adventist-youth-ministries.

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The downfalls of Satan in the book of Revelation

The cosmic conflict is the primary background against which the book of Revelation must be understood. John, the author of this book, brings together this significant theme through numerous symbols and creative ways in Revelation. At the heart of this conflict is a struggle for universal supremacy between God and Satan.¹ John scans the whole of history, from pre-creation to the new creation, and outlines all the twists and turns in this cosmic saga between good and evil. In fact, John is deeply indebted to the traditions of the Old Testament and hence, the author fills the book of Revelation with its ideas and language.

According to Gregory Beale, “the Old Testament in general plays such a major role that a proper understanding of its use is necessary for an adequate view of the Apocalypse as a whole.”² The book of Revelation, studied in conjunction with the Old Testament, provides fertile soil for the pastor to dig carefully and uncover new facets of meaning on the cosmic conflict. By drawing on the Old Testament, an interesting tapestry of thought emerges that chronicles the initial fall and eventual demise of Satan. John identifies four downfalls of Satan in Revelation 12 and 20, each one more decisive than the previous one, resulting in the devil’s further curtailment and final destruction.

The first downfall — kicked out of heaven

The first downfall is the primeval fall of Satan indirectly alluded to in Revelation 12:3, 4: “Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. *His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth.* The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born” (NIV; italics added). The tail is a “symbol of deception by means of the persuasion that Satan has used to mislead” the angels (stars) “to rebel against God and follow him.”³ The scene of Satan deceiving the angels and flinging them to earth “denotes an earlier stage in the adversarial relationship” portrayed in Revelation 12:7–9.⁴ Isaiah 14:12–14 and Ezekiel 28:12–19 infer this initial expulsion of Satan described in Revelation 12:4. The biblical narrative reveals that Satan later tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3).

However, John does not draw on all the implications and issues involved in Satan flinging a third of the stars to earth. We need to tap into the larger biblical story. While Job 1 and 2 provide helpful information on the cosmic conflict, Satan’s expulsion from heaven is not fully explained in

the Old Testament. However, those studying their Bibles find God often depicted as engaging in battle with hostile forces. Psalm 74:13, 14 reads: “It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave him as food to the creatures of the desert” (NIV).⁵ The Old Testament depicts God as “the Lord of Hosts,” literally translated as the “Lord of Armies.” The concept that Israel believed that behind their earthly armies on the ground were the angelic armies of heaven is noteworthy. In fact, King David got into trouble for conducting a census of his fighting forces because he assumed his human army was all he had and underplayed the importance of the armies he could not count (1 Chron. 21:1). God’s heavenly armies, not David’s, brought victory to Israel in their battles with pagan nations (2 Chron. 20:18–30).

We find the concept very interesting that the outworking of this cosmic conflict is evident on a personal level as well. Psalm 69:14, 15 reads: “Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink; deliver me from those who hate me, from the deep waters. Do not let the floodwaters engulf me or the depths swallow me up or the pit close its mouth over me” (NIV; see also Pss. 144:7; 93:3, 4). According to

Gregory Boyd, in his book *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict*, David compares the rebellious cosmic sea that threatens to engulf him to the unruly chaotic forces at the time of creation.⁶ Furthermore, during this first stage, God seems to take responsibility for the wrong that takes place in the Old Testament. Satan is only explicitly mentioned five times in the Old Testament (Zech. 3:1, 2; 1 Chron. 21:1; 2 Sam. 24:1; Job 1; 2) to protect Israel from the dangers of polytheism.

The cosmic conflict intensifies in this first stage especially when Jesus came to earth as a baby. John records that “The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born” (Rev. 12:4, NIV), which most scholars recognize as a symbolic reference to Herod the Great’s attempt to kill every male child two years old and younger. There are numerous references in the Gospels where the devil, working through human agents, tries to kill Jesus prematurely (see Luke 4:13, 28–30; John 7:30; 8:59).

The second downfall — banished from heaven

The second, and, in fact, decisive downfall of Satan occurs at the Cross where Satan was legally defeated and expelled as earth’s representative. Revelation 12:7–10 reads:

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and *they lost their place in heaven*. The great dragon was *hurled down*—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was *hurled* to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and

the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been *hurled down*” (NIV; italics added).

At the Cross, where salvation occurs by the blood of the Lamb, Satan loses his place in heaven. Prior to the Cross, Satan still had limited access to heaven, but the Cross finalized his “no-access card” into heaven. In fact, the phrase “hurled down” refers to excommunication (cf. John 9:34, 35) and legal punishment (cf. Matt. 3:10; John 15:6; Rev. 2:10). This action

The conflict that began in Genesis is finally resolved in Revelation.

of “hurling down” denotes Satan’s expulsion from heaven because of the victory achieved by Jesus on the cross.⁷ The Cross reveals God’s character of love and exposes Satan’s hatred of all that is good and just. Since the character of God is seen perfectly in Jesus, the Cross also provides the deepest revelation of Jesus as the Son of God and our Redeemer.

In John 12:31, 32, Jesus states, “Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (NIV). Jesus understands His death, resurrection, and ascension as the turning point in the conflict between God and the forces of evil: “The hour has come” and “Now is the time for judgment” (vv. 23, 31, NIV).⁸ On the cosmic level, this moment brings the decisive victory over the evil ruler of this world. Therefore, the fall of Satan at the Cross replaces him, the accuser

of humankind, with humankind’s Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous (1 John 2:1). Moses describes an important Old Testament background for Revelation 12:9 in Genesis 3:1–6, 13. In both texts, Satan, portrayed as “the ancient serpent” with his key attribute of deception, is mentioned in both Revelation 12:9 and Genesis 3:13. The Genesis text reads: “Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’” (NIV). By alluding to Genesis 3:13, John draws on the Creation story in Genesis 3 in which Satan deceives Adam and Eve and brings about the fall of humankind.

John draws on this cosmic conflict theme from the earliest days of human history.

The concept of the cosmic conflict is developed into a full-fledged teaching in the New Testament. Satan is called the god of this world, the ruler of the power of the air, the ruler of this world (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; John 12:31; 16:11), and portrayed as possessing the kingdom of this world (Luke 4:6; 1 John 5:19), and the source of murder, theft, lying, sickness, and disease (John 8:44; 1 John 3:2; Luke 13:16; Acts 10:38). During the period of the second downfall, Paul urges the Christians in Ephesus to put on the full armor of God.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:10–12, NIV).

As Christians, we are in a very dangerous battle with demonic forces.⁹ The good news is that the armor of Ephesians 6 is a gift, won for us by



Jesus on the cross, and given to us by faith through the Holy Spirit. We fight, not to gain victory, but from a position of victory. As pastors, we need to encourage our members to stand firm in the victory Jesus has gained for us.

The third downfall—into the abyss

Revelation 20:1–3 depicts the third downfall of Satan into the abyss:

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

At this stage, an angel with the key to the bottomless pit binds Satan with a great chain, throws him into the pit and locks him in it so that he can no longer deceive the nations.¹⁰ The Old Testament describes the *abyss* as the abode of the enemy of God—the cosmic sea-dragon (Ps. 77:16; Job 40:12, 20); and is synonymous with the concept of *hades* (Job 38:16; Ezek. 31:15) and the realm of suffering (Ps. 71:20).¹¹ The New Testament refers to a place of suffering for demons (Luke 8:31). The strongest Old Testament connection is to Isaiah, where he portrays the host of heaven and the kings of the earth gathered together and confined in a prison (Isa. 24:21, 22). John understands that behind the activities of the kings of the earth and the host of heaven is actually Satan. The depiction of the abyss here in Revelation 20 points to the earth being a desolate wasteland with no living person in it. This third fall introduces the millennium, which begins after

the second coming of Christ, when the living and resurrected saints are taken to heaven and all the wicked on the earth lay dead until after the millennium when Christ returns again for the final disposal of Satan and all his minions and followers. During the millennium, God’s saints are in heaven, sitting in judgment on the course of sin and sinners including the archsinner Satan and his cohorts, while Satan remains on earth with his minions, to contemplate the misery they have wreaked on humankind.¹²

The final fall —into the lake of fire

John describes the final fall of Satan in Revelation 20:10: “And the devil, who *deceived* them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (NIV; italics added). The beast and the false prophet have already been thrown into the lake of fire (19:10) while Satan faces the music all by himself. Strikingly, Revelation 20:11 introduces the great white throne. Lucifer wanted the throne of God (Isa. 14:14). Now God is portrayed as unchallenged and unrivaled. Mentioned once more, the notion of deception (20:10) again points to the Creation story. The issues that were first brought to the fore in Genesis are now finally going to be resolved in Revelation. The Genesis story hence forms a significant backdrop against which to understand Revelation.¹³

The conflict that began in Genesis is finally resolved in Revelation. Sinners, who have rejected the Lamb, will be eternally separated from God at the final judgment. Sin, which has caused such misery, pain, and grief on this planet, will forever be no more, and Satan, the chief architect of sin and the cosmic conflict, will finally be destroyed (Nah. 1:9).

The good news for God’s children: the progressive downfalls of Satan reveal the love of God for humankind.

1 According to Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Book of Revelation,” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, eds. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen J. Stein (New York: Continuum, 2003), 205, “John’s thinking was dualistic in the sense that he perceived the situation in which he lived as characterized by a cosmic struggle between two diametrically opposed powers and their allies. God and Satan, along with their agents and spokespeople, were engaged in a struggle for the allegiance of the inhabitants of the earth.” In a similar vein, Warren Carter, “Vulnerable Power: The Roman Empire Challenged by the Early Christians,” in *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*, eds. Anthony J. Blasi, Jean Duhaime, and Paul-André Turcotte (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2002), 484, writes, “Revelation discerns its much larger context in a cosmic struggle between God and Satan.”

2 G. K. Beale, “John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* Sup 166 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 61.

3 Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 382.

4 Sigve Tonstad, *Saving God’s Reputation: The Theological Function of Pisticlesou in the Cosmic Narratives of the Apocalypse*, Library of New Testament Studies 337 (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 67.

5 See also Isa. 30:7; 51:9, 10; Job 7:12; Prov. 8:27–29; Ezek. 29:3–6; 32:2–8; Amos 9:2, 3. Yahweh is also seen in battle with Leviathan (see Ps. 74:14; Isa. 27:1) and Behemoth (Job 40:15–24).

6 Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 91.

7 Stefanovic, 388.

8 Judith L. Kovacs, “Now Shall the Ruler of This World Be Driven Out: Jesus’ Death as Cosmic Battle in John 12:20–36,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114 (1995): 227–47.

9 Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1990), 443–445.

10 Strikingly, all three occurrences of the phrase “coming down out of heaven” are connected with an angel in Revelation (Rev. 10:1; 18:1; 20:1) and describe a major event: the completion of God’s mystery and the end of time in chapter 10, the end of Babylon in chapter 18, and the ultimate end of Satan in chapter 20.

11 G. K. Beale, *Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 493.

12 See Stefanovic, 561–72 and references there.

13 Tonstad, 59.

Genesis 3	Revelation 21; 22
God portrayed as arbitrary (3:1)	Glory of God restored (21:23)
God’s presence evoking fear (3:8)	Seeing God’s face without fear (22:4)
Curse on the earth (3:17)	No more curse (22:3)
Cut off from the tree (3:24)	Access to the tree of life (22:2)
Returned to dust (3:19)	No more death (21:4)

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High-impact Internet ministry

Before His ascension, Jesus told the disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV). Although they knew the gospel would go to the ends of the earth, they probably had no idea how God was going to accomplish the goal through them. The congregation in Jerusalem, at the time of Jesus’ ascension, numbered only 120 (Acts 1:15). The disciples knew that it was impossible for their small number to reach the world, but they also knew that Jesus’ instruction was not to depend on *themselves* but to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They did, and the world has never been the same since.

Indeed, the good news of Jesus Christ has reached far and wide. According to Global Christianity, “A comprehensive demographic study of more than 200 countries finds that there are 2.18 billion Christians of all ages around the world.”¹

This does not mean that the work is finished. The world population now exceeds seven billion; the number of Christians comprises only about a third of that number. Although this amount has increased four times in the last 100 years, because of the

increase of the world population, “Christians make up about the same portion of the world’s population today (32%) as they did a century ago (35%).”²

How then, can we as a people, do the work that Jesus has called us to do in evangelizing the world?

One answer, interestingly enough, can be through the Internet.

A wired planet

The world has become interconnected, and everyday more and more people are plugged in and online. A recent survey by Faith Community Today on congregations and their use of Internet technologies reported that there is a “direct correlation between adoption of technology and vital, growing congregations.”³

One of the challenges with using the Internet to share the gospel is that many church leaders do not have enough knowledge about Internet technology, and therefore have no idea where to start. Although the youth in church are attracted to the Internet, they spend a lot of time in social networking, online chatting, and watching videos. But this situation usually changes when churches begin using the Internet to reach people. Church leaders need to teach the youth to use the Internet to share the gospel.

Exactly what can your church do to get members involved in Internet ministry?

First and foremost, they need to understand that this work can be done only through the power of the Holy Spirit. When disciples gathered at the upper room, they prayed earnestly for the Holy Spirit to come because Jesus told them specifically, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV). The requirement of the gospel going to the ends of the earth was that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit. They waited patiently until their differences were resolved. Ellen White says, “These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised.”⁴ Once they were filled with the Holy Spirit, their words cut to people’s hearts and “about

three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41, NIV).


Secondly, you must pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare people’s hearts. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit was the One adding numbers to the early church, and He also came upon not only the disciples, but also all of the people who listened to the disciples’ preaching that day. The Bible says, “When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language” (v. 6, NIV). How was it

3. Encourage and assist your IM Coordinator to attend Internet evangelism training sessions.
4. Assist in the establishment of Internet ministry service teams that can provide online answers for questions, inquiries, and letters from the Internet.

At one of the churches where I worked, we put a short video, *Do Not Be Afraid*, on one of the well-known video-on-demand sites as a test project. Much to our happy

to accomplish the greatest results. It is His plan that every part of His work shall depend on every other part, as a wheel within a wheel, all acting in harmony. The humblest worker, moved by the Holy Spirit, will touch invisible chords, whose vibrations will ring to the ends of the earth, and make melody through eternal ages.”⁵

God desires that every member of Christ’s body participate in His mission. The work of saving the lost should be the focus of the entire membership, not just the pastoral team. In the early church, God “added to their number daily those who were being saved” (v. 47, NIV). This growth was the result of involvement of every member of that congregation. With the advent of the Internet, church members, in one way or another, can get involved in reaching the world’s unreached for Christ.

The possibilities are endless, and the impact can be global. 

*The possibilities are endless,
and the impact can be global.*

possible that everyone heard in his or her own language? The Spirit came upon them and moved their hearts to make decisions. Your daily prayer should be to ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to make contact with people whose hearts are ready, no matter if they are in front of you or thousands of miles away behind a computer screen.

Thirdly, you should educate your members about the right use of the Internet. It can quickly become a tool Satan uses to lure people of all ages to sin. As young people spend more and more time on the Internet, your church should hold regular training to introduce members to practical tools and methods for reaching people through the Internet.

Practical tips

Here are some practical suggestions as you make plans:

1. Establish an Internet ministry in your local church and recruit an Internet Ministry (IM) Coordinator.
2. Be supportive of your local IM Coordinator as he or she develops a creative Web site.

surprise, in three weeks about 360,000 people came to the site to watch it. God opened our eyes to see that this is a large harvest field. Without high investment, a simple studio was built in that church, and the programs produced were uploaded to the Internet. The church’s young people put together a dedicated video on demand site to link together all of the videos.

By the end of that year, 20 million people viewed their videos.

Start recording your Sabbath sermons, upload them on your church Web site, and recruit youth to do video recording and editing. Start an Internet radio at your church and invite members to offer their time and talent to make radio programs. Organize field trips to other churches that already have vibrant Internet and Web ministries.

Conclusion

Ellen White says, “Christ’s work when upon earth appeared to be confined to a narrow field, but multitudes from all lands heard His message. God often uses the simplest means

- 1 Global Christianity, “A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population,” www.pewforum.org/Christian/Global-Christianity-exec.aspx. Retrieved July 6, 2012.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 “Report on Congregations and Their Use of Internet Technologies” <http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/report-congregations-and-their-use-internet-technologies>. Retrieved March 14, 2012.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 37.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 822.



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A. T. Jones: Point Man on Adventism's Charismatic Frontier

by George R. Knight, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011.

To write about a complex and controversial person such as A. T. Jones involves a skillful researcher and writer such as George R. Knight.

Alonzo T. Jones (1850–1923) may be familiar to most readers of this journal. In 1870, Jones enlisted in the United States Army and, during that period, read extensively—including the Bible and Seventh-day Adventist literature. Soon after his baptism into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he started preaching for the denomination. By 1885, he and E. J. Waggoner became editors of *Signs of the Times*, a missionary magazine. From the time he joined the denomination until his death (when he was no longer a Seventh-day Adventist), Jones was well known and controversial most of the time. If controversy did not find him, he found it.

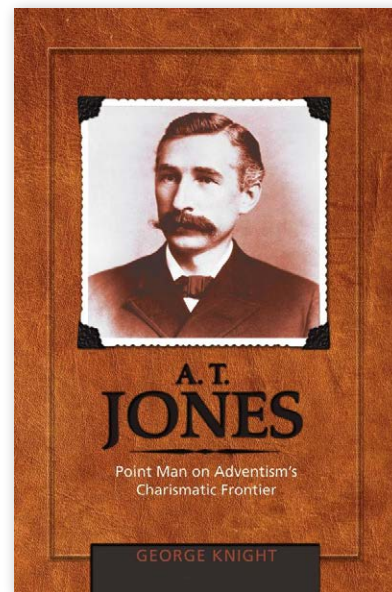
Knight shares insights into Jones' personality—thus enabling the reader to understand the multidirectional, and often confusing paths, Jones traveled. He took up countless causes and became an expert in many issues—perhaps too many issues. A few examples give us an insight into his complex personality:

In the 1880s, the National Reform Association advocated a constitutional amendment to “explicitly proclaim the United States to be a Christian nation” (23). Jones wrote in the *Review and Herald* four blunt articles opposing these moves. He not only opposed the goal of the proposed constitutional amendment but claimed that the National Reform Party was able to


“out-Jesuit the Jesuits.” For Jones, it was not sufficient only to defeat his enemy—he felt compelled to properly label his enemy (23).

He was one of the key presenters at the historic 1888 General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' Session in Minneapolis. This event propelled him to prominence in the denomination. Ellen G. White's counsel that he would be a power for good “if he cultivated practical godliness” (28) went unheeded.

In 1901, after he was relieved of his editorship of the *Review and Herald*, he embarked on a new mission. In the northwestern part of the United States, he advocated abolishing the office of president—at the General Conference and local conferences. He convinced enough delegates so that the Upper Columbia Conference “reorganized without anyone bearing the title of president” (222). But a month later a miraculous transformation occurred in Jones' thinking—he accepted the presidency (yes, his title was president!) of the California Conference. Denominational leader A. G. Daniells was “astonished” that Jones was elected (223). The reader should not only be “astonished” but should learn to observe actions and not only listen to words of others—yes, even today. Ellen White admonished Jones that he was “exercising ‘kingly authority’ ” (229), and paying too much attention to a female physician (231). He, the very man who just two years previously was against the office of the president, desperately wanted to get re-elected.



His desire to get re-elected was fulfilled after he publicly confessed at camp meeting and made things right with his wife (231). Craving for power won over principle, however, and within a year he abandoned his sought-after position and joined John H. Kellogg, who was in a stressful relationship with the denomination.

What can the reader learn from this well-written book about a complex and controversial personality? Some of his sermons and articles were positive contributions to a denomination that was painfully defining its positions on many important topics. At the same time the reader needs to heed Knight's observation that “He [Jones] took every position he touched to its logical extreme” (164). Also, Knight indicates that “He [Jones] knew salvific truth, but he failed to internalize it and put it into practice” (10). That timely admonition from Knight makes this book worth reading. 

—Reviewed by Nikolaus Satelmajer, DMin, pastor, Atholton Seventh-day Adventist Church, Atholton, Maryland, United States.

► Theology of Ordination Study Committee

Following the assignment of representatives from the 13 global divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the names of the 100-member Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) were announced November 29, 2012, by committee chairman Artur A. Stele, a general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The main tasks confronting the panel are to:

1. Review the history of the study of ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
2. Develop a Seventh-day Adventist theology of ordination.
3. Study the subject of ordination of women to the gospel ministry.
4. Focus on potential solutions that support the message, mission, and unity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

According to Stele, “The Theology of Ordination Study Committee will prayerfully study the issues presented above trying to reach a consensus on each assignment. In the areas where consensus will not be reached, the TOSC will present several reports and will also work on potential solutions. These steps will ensure that the process will be open, fair, and transparent.”

Stele said the steering committee has already met twice, and “we are suggesting that the first meeting of the TOSC [to have taken place in January 2013] will be totally dedicated to the study of the first step. A group of scholars has been given the assignment to work on the first draft of the Theology of Ordination document.”

He added, “We are planning to present the first draft to the TOSC in January, discuss it, and based on the contributions of the whole committee, to prepare a second draft and send it out to all Division [Biblical Research

Committees, or BRC]. We will ask each Division BRC to send in their suggestions, contributions, agreements, and disagreements. Based on the discussions involving all BRCs, a third draft will be prepared and we hope to come to a final draft that could be ‘hopefully’ accepted by the TOSC the first day of our meetings in July 2013.”

Stele said, “After concluding the study on Theology of Ordination, we will start working on the issue of women’s ordination.” Although women have functioned in various ministry roles from the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, ordination has come up as an issue before church leaders several times in the recent past. At present, the church does not ordain women to ministry, following votes at General Conference sessions in 1990 and 1995 on the question, where the issue was a major focus of the international deliberations. *[Mark Kellner/ANN]*

► 12,000 ADRA shoeboxes arrive in Burkina Faso

Watford, United Kingdom—“Most days I’m loading my truck to make rich people richer. Today, I’m transporting happiness,” Mac beamed while carefully swinging a 40-foot container up from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) compound on Stanborough Park, Watford, onto the back of his lorry.

A skilled operative, he was one of the lorry drivers commissioned to transport the two ADRA containers to the port of Felixstowe, from which began the six-week journey by ship to Burkina Faso where 12,000 shoeboxes,

WakaWaka solar powered lights, and 250 relief boxes from Aquabox arrived.

ADRA-UK CEO, **Bert Smit**, was visibly excited as he watched the containers being loaded. “So many people, and especially schoolchildren, have made this happen,” he stated, noting that there were 4,000 more shoeboxes than in the 2011 appeal. “People are so generous, even when feeling the pinch themselves.”

That generosity has been seen across the country. In Middlesbrough, 167 boxes were collected at the Adventist church while a further 202 were donated by children at a local

primary school. **Judy Hamilton-Johansson** states, “This is the sixth year the school has taken part in our annual shoebox appeal. The kids are so keen to help others and get really excited about making the boxes, after watching the ADRA DVD and realizing how little the children of Africa have, many used their own pocket money to buy gifts.”

Hundreds of churches and volunteers made the 2012 appeal the most successful to date. A young child from Manchester stated, “We saw your video, and we wanted to do shoeboxes to make more little



kids happy.” Said another volunteer, “When I saw the number of shoeboxes being delivered, it was only then I realized how big the shoebox appeal has become.”

“The response from our members and friends has been phenomenal,” states appeal coordinator, **Godwin Benjamin**. His thanks go not just to the donors, “but also the volunteers who


packed boxes at the collection points and those who helped to unload the trucks and pack the two containers. All your efforts were greatly appreciated.” [Victor Hulbert, BUC News/tedNEWS]

▶ Launching of FM program in Hyderabad, India

Pune, India—November 13, 2012, was a historic day in the life of Adventist Media Centre, Pune, India. Adventist World Radio, along with the Adventist Media Centre in Pune, launched its first FM program “Ven- nela” in the Telugu Language (the

largest spoken language in India) in the city of Hyderabad. Thus far, the Adventist Media Centre airs shortwave programs in eight Indian languages.

The program will be aired on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and

Sunday between 5:30 P.M. to 6:00 P.M. at the frequency of 102.8 FM. It consists of 30 minutes of general topics. The intention of the program is to make the church audible and visible in the society. [N. Ashok Kumar, producer of FM Telugu] 

LETTERS

Continued from page 4



shortly after the disappointment in 1844. In the Bible conferences of the 1850s, the infant church hammered out other doctrinal beliefs. Belief in church organization came in the early 1860s. Soteriology and the nature of the Godhead came in the late 1880s. A series of lurches, sometimes after an issue simmered a while, would better describe the process. This issue of creation versus evolution has been simmering for several decades and has been picking up quite a head of steam lately. Perhaps it is time for another lurch.

Perhaps Bruinsma would prefer the approach of the Methodist quadrilateral. Their rule of faith is fourfold: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. If we adopt that approach we can reinterpret history to fit current exigencies. We can also jettison the protestant hermeneutic of *sola Scriptura* and its corollary that the

Bible is its own interpreter. That will make room for science, administrative, and other reasonable inputs.


—Joseph Story, Hot Springs, South Dakota, United States

I am so grateful for Dr. Bruinsma’s wise, well-considered thinking and writing, as evidenced in his December 2012 manuscript published in *Ministry*. This article gives hope to those of us who tremble at the black-and-white intellectual/spiritual world that seems to be envisioned as the next step for Adventism. He is a denominational treasure. I hope he lives to be 100.

—Sharan A. Bennett, Loma Linda, California, United States

Reinder Bruinsma correctly counsels against “hasty administrative processes,” and properly advocates for patience, listening, dialogue, and discovery. Agreeing wholeheartedly,

one may still wonder why reviewing fundamental belief 6 means that someone is about to tell scientists, “Listen, there is only one way of looking at this, and this you must accept to be counted as a faithful Adventist.” And there are further wonders. Consider these: (1) Why is someone picking on scientists and leaving out . . . ? (2) What is the precise number of “faithful Adventist” ways of looking at “for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth . . .”? (3) Is this article to be heard as a call to inaction on the challenge of faith in evolution? (4) Is our topic about our article? For our topic is quite ample: “Creating a Climate for the Discovery of Truth: A Perspective on Doctrinal Development.” But our article is quite focused: it’s about relating to [potentially] evolutionary sympathies in the church. (5) Etc. . . .

—Lael O. Caesar, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States 



How to be a friendly church

Editor's note: One of the purposes of *Ministry* is to provide practical instruction in pastoral and evangelistic ministry. This bi-monthly how-to page will seek to fulfill that purpose, providing effective and implementable strategies for pastors and other church leaders.

We need your help as this ongoing bi-monthly column needs a name. Please visit [Facebook.com/MinistryMagazine](https://www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine) and suggest a 1–4 word name for this column by Monday, February 25, 2013. The chosen name will then be featured with the column in the April 2013 issue of *Ministry*.

If you survey churches and ask what their strengths are, almost every one would include “We are a friendly church.” However, when I surveyed some of the visitors who attend those same churches, I found the opposite perception.

People who attend church regularly look at the issue of friendliness from the inside out. From their perspective, they are experiencing a friendly atmosphere. Guests to a church view the issue of friendliness from the outside in for they may not know other people. If they have needs, they are rarely noticed or dealt with.

Many church growth studies have found a direct correlation between friendliness and potential growth. The friendlier a church, the greater its potential for growth. According to a Barna Research survey of people looking for a church, “More than 90 percent stated that friendliness is either extremely or somewhat important.”¹

At the beginning, we should point out that all members are responsible for greeting visitors. And while that is true, what often happens? The greeting may never get done. Members find it easy to slip into the mentality that *we are a friendly church* and therefore visitors will be welcomed by someone else.

Here are several practical guidelines to build a friendly church from research that has made a difference in churches.

1. Give guests the best attitude.

Visitors to your church need to notice a prevailing friendly attitude. Most will make up their minds about

your church within 30 seconds of entering the front door.

2. Give guests the best communication.

Whenever I visit other churches, I station myself in a busy part of the building to see how many people will speak to me. Many times, people will walk toward me, and then they will look away and ignore me. If this happens in your church, your guests will feel invisible. Teach your members that whenever they come within ten feet of a person, they need to say “Hi.”

3. Give guests the best service.

Recently I visited a church and, upon entering, a lady greeted me by asking “Hi! Is this your first time with us?” After I replied in a positive manner, she introduced herself, asked my name, and walked with me into the building.

At the welcome desk, she introduced me by name to the person at the desk who immediately offered help and gave me directions to important areas of the church, such as the restrooms and sanctuary.

If you want to be a friendly church, I suggest you follow these three principles:

- Approach new people promptly.
- Offer help and information.
- Introduce them by name to others.

4. Give guests the best welcome.

As I was visiting a church once, to my dismay the pastor asked all visitors

to stand. Then he asked each of us to introduce ourselves. This act is embarrassing for most. Barna shows that 72 percent feel very uncomfortable being pointed out during church greeting time.² To welcome guests from the pulpit can be a good thing, but be careful in how you recognize them. Whatever you do, take great pains not to embarrass the newcomer.

5. Give guests the best parking.


People often will drive around for several minutes to find a parking place closer to the entrance. If they do not find easy access, they will drive on by without stopping. If you want to be a friendly church, reserve approximately 5 percent of your parking places for guests as close to your main entrance as possible. Clearly mark them for *first-* and *second-*time guests.

6. Give guests the best seats.

People like to have a sense of openness; guests prefer the aisle seats and the seats in the rear of the sanctuary. But, most regular attenders like to sit there too. If you want to be a friendly church, reserve the aisle seats and the rear seats for guests.

7. Give guests the best time.

At the end of one church service, the pastor said to the audience, “Remember the five-minute rule.” I later found out that the people of that church had been instructed to speak to guests during the first five minutes following each worship service.

If you want to be a friendly church, I suggest you reserve the first five minutes following every worship service for your guests. How will guests who visit your church answer, “Is this church a friendly place?” 

¹ <http://www.evangelismcoach.org/2008/10/practices-to-welcome-church-visitors-part-1/>.

² George Barna, *Evangelism That Works* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 67.

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and that is what God has promised as we expand health outreach to include vital, testing truths that minister to the deepest questions and spiritual needs of your participants. Ministering to the sick in body and weary in spirit demands a more comprehensive approach than simply teaching health principles or promoting a plant-based diet. The most popular health programs today include a strong mind/body/spirit approach that all too often includes methods and philosophies that are contrary to biblical teachings. This is our moment of opportunity, to combine solid and practical health programming with the rich testing truths that glorify God and sweep away the errors that so often keep souls away from Christ. Turn your health programming into a soul-winning reaping event and transform your health evangelism into a true soul-winning wellness program.

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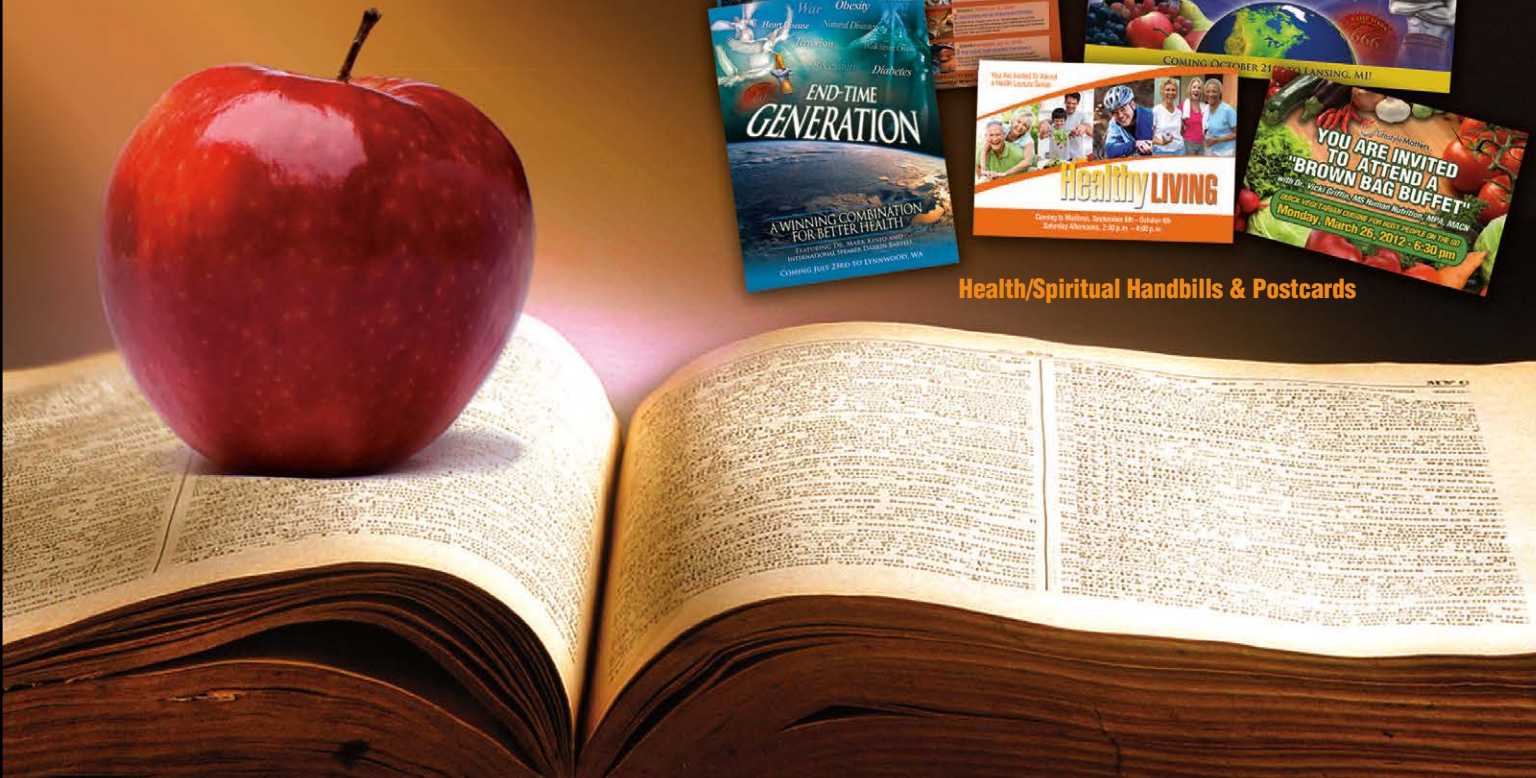
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