

# Ministry<sup>®</sup>

INTERNATIONAL STORIES

APRIL 2014



**Reflections on a  
ministry in prison:**  
*An interview with António  
Monteiro dos Anjos*



# MISSION to the CITIES

**Mission to the Cities** is an emphasis of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on sharing Jesus' love and the hope of His soon return with people in urban settings. It envisions initiatives in more than 650 of the world's largest cities, starting with New York City in 2013 and running through 2015. Comprehensive outreach activities will be as varied as the character of each city, and will include Life Hope Centers, church planting, community events, health seminars, small groups, and reaping campaigns.

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## 06 Reflections on a ministry in prison: An interview with Antônio Monteiro dos Anjos

**Delbert Baker**

This interview provides life lessons that transcend the experience of incarceration.

## 10 Adventist mission: Challenges from a pluralistic world

**Yelena Muzykina**

How do we reach this current population since the reconfiguration of the world's religious space has changed the status of global Christianity?

## 14 "God's chosen agency for the salvation of souls": Lessons from the preaching ministry of Ellen G. White

**Michael W. Campbell**

Because Ellen White believed that proclaiming God's Word was an essential requirement for an Adventist minister, she rebuked those who did not have this gift and urged them to pursue a different livelihood.

## 18 Babylonian mentality: With whom do you bank?

**Igor Lorencin**

God is preparing something qualitatively much better than Babylon, and He offers it entirely for free—the New Jerusalem.

## 22 In prosperity and adversity

**Gordon E. Christo**

A study of Jesus' teachings indicates that He warned about the perils of material prosperity. Read what the author believes to be these three perils.

## 24 How to increase the power of your preaching through stories

**Kelvin Onongha**

Jesus told stories—simple and elegant—to reveal the nature of God, the problem of sin, and God's redemptive mission. He was the Great Communicator.

### 04 Letters

### 05 Editorial

### 26 Revival & Reformation

### 27 Resources

### 28 Dateline

### 30 Practical Pointers

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*"I so wish we could educate our members so that they respect the boundaries of family life."*

### Putting pastoral families first

With reference to Roger Hernandez's article ("When Your Ministry Gets in the Way of Your Marriage and Family"—February 2014), it was insightful and excellent. As the wife of a pastor, I fully appreciate how ministry affects our lives. My husband currently pastors a church; but for most of our married life, he was a union conference director. We spent many years camping with a small child, traveling around the country every weekend, all in an attempt to minister to the members. He loved youth ministries, and I loved watching him enjoy serving his God as he felt called.

He now is a pastor of a 700-member congregation. The demands are high. One lady actually told me, "You have him at home, you don't need him at church," when I suggested my husband indulge in Sabbath lunch at 3:30 with his family.

I so wish we could educate our members so that they respect the boundaries of family life.

—Cathy Boldeau, United Kingdom

### The Scapegoat

I was interested to read in the October 2013 [issue of] *Ministry* a contribution by Alberto Timm entitled "The Scapegoat in the Writings of Ellen G. White."

I would like to comment, not on White's writings, but on Timm's

statement, "This would have changed her entire eschatological framework, shifting both the antitypical scapegoat from Satan to Christ and the antitypical Day of Atonement from the post-1844 era back to the Cross."

I ask the question, Isn't the Cross where that emphasis should have always been? In the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* (1988 ed.), page 106, Fundamental Belief 9 reads, "In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow."

Furthermore, on page 315 of the same book the following is found, "On the cross the penalty for human sin was fully paid. Divine justice was satisfied.

From a legal perspective the world was restored to favor with God (Rom. 5:18). The atonement, or reconciliation, was completed on the cross as foreshadowed by the sacrifices, and the penitent believer can trust in this finished work of our Lord."

I now need to ask the question, Is this 1988 publication correct? Or is the writer of the Q&A section on page 52, *Ministry*, October 1980, correct in writing, "the Passover feast is the festival primarily fulfilled at Calvary"?

—Peter Williams, Eagleby, Queensland, Australia

### The beast in Revelation 17

I read with great interest the article by Ranko Stefanovic in the December issue ("The Seven Heads of the Beast in Revelation 17"). The subject is quite familiar to me, and for most of the article, I agree with the interpretation presented. There is, however, one point that does not seem to gel: the eighth head. We seem to be stuck on papacy while all along we have the interpretation given to us by Ellen G. White in *The Great Controversy*, chapter 15: this is atheism.

It is quite simple, really. The "eighth" is described as the beast that comes out of the "bottomless pit" (KJV) or "Abyss" (NIV) in Revelation 11:7 and 17:8. It is also described as being of the seven (Rev. 17:11, KJV) or belonging to them (NIV), which simply means that they all were in rebellious opposition to God.

Who could deny that atheism is a rising specter in the world? Sure, it is going to its destruction (v. 11). It seems that the religious-political alliance is going to take the upper hand over atheism at

Continued on page 17





# What if it had been me?

For almost two years, many of us followed the story of Pastor Antônio Monteiro dos Anjos—the Seventh-day Adventist pastor imprisoned in the country of Togo. After 22 months of incarceration, he was found innocent of all charges in January 2014 and released.

During these last two years, I often asked myself, What if it had been me? Locked away in a prison and charged with a crime I didn't commit, how would I handle these new circumstances? Would I wonder, *Why am I being treated unjustly? How long will I be here? How will this affect my wife and children?*

I could easily find myself tempted to doubt God's presence and even doubt His call in my life. I could also easily be tempted to bitterness and anger. Most of all, *how could I possibly forgive the person who leveled these charges against me?*

## Answering the questions

Those questions are not that difficult to answer. While I cannot begin to compare my personal life and professional experiences with what Pastor Monteiro lived, the fact is that while circumstances vary, the issues remain the same. Whether dealing with family matters or church life, the potential exists for tensions to occasionally run high, feelings to get hurt, and anger and bitterness to ensue.

Looking back over my years of congregational ministry, I was blessed to have some of the best church members a pastor could ever ask for. Those local church leaders with whom I worked made my job relatively easy. The normal challenges of

ministry notwithstanding, I enjoyed a pleasant existence. In my various responsibilities since leaving active district ministry, I have also worked with some of the most pleasant and efficient professionals I could ever hope to work with.

Yet every so often (praise God, it has been rare) there was the church member, student, or coworker who proved chronically problematic—whose words or actions caused me to spend sleepless nights asking, *Why is this happening? How can he do something like that and get away with it?* Sometimes we face criticism (or worse) while we are conscientiously doing our best—often sacrificing for others. Sometimes others take advantage of us for no apparent reason.

## Taking the next steps

How do I handle it? I must confess that I am still on a journey. The road I travel is filled with potholes, detours, and wrong turns. But remembering several things encourages me—even if I am still trying to comprehend them.

*I remember the words and example of Jesus.* Jesus assured His disciples that the world wouldn't care that He had chosen them to closely follow Him. That would be all the more reason for them to be persecuted (see John 15:20). While what I experience cannot be remotely compared to persecution, I stand reminded that in this world I will face troublesome moments (see John 16:33). I am also reminded of Peter's counsel: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example. . . . When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.

Instead, *he entrusted himself to him who judges justly*" (1 Pet. 2:21,23, emphasis added.).<sup>1</sup>

*I remember that there are things I'll never understand.* As simple as the passage sounds, I still wrestle with the profundity of Romans 8:28: "God works for the good of those who love him." Admittedly, I ponder questions of theodicy and timing. But I continue to rest in divine providence, recognizing that "our heavenly Father in love answers our prayers by giving us that which will be for our highest good—that which we ourselves would desire if with vision divinely enlightened we could see all things as they really are."<sup>2</sup>

*I remember that life really is not about me.* Joseph speaks to our self-centered, narcissistic society. Sold into slavery by family, falsely accused, imprisoned, forgotten by the one he benefited while incarcerated, he was still able to say to his brothers, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:20).

## Conclusion

The story of Pastor Monteiro, as shared in Delbert Baker's interview that serves as our lead article this month, is not merely about his preaching and teaching ministry while in prison. Much more than that, this interview is about the ministry of his life while incarcerated. That may be his greatest sermon ever preached.

What about you? What about me? ▮

<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotations are from the New International Version.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1892), 96.

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# Reflections on a ministry in prison: *An interview with António Monteiro dos Anjos*

**Editor's note:** On March 15, 2012, António Monteiro dos Anjos, a Seventh-day Adventist pastor from Cape Verde, was falsely accused, arrested, charged, and subsequently imprisoned at the civil prison in Lomé, Togo. After 22 months in prison, he was found innocent of all charges against him by the Togo Appeals Court and released Monday, January 13, 2014. Pastor Monteiro and his family spent the first Sabbath of his freedom in Dakar, Senegal. Delbert Baker met Pastor Monteiro and his family in Dakar and conducted the first interview after his release. Pastor Monteiro then returned home to Cape Verde, where he received a warm and jubilant welcome from more than a thousand supporters and friends at the airport in the capital city of Praia. The Portuguese to English translation of this interview was provided by Pastor Monteiro's daughter, Andreia.

**Delbert Baker (DB):** *In brief, how do you summarize your experience of being falsely accused, arrested, and imprisoned for almost two years for a crime you did not commit?*

**António Monteiro (AM):** I helped a man who came to my office asking for assistance; a man whom I had never seen before. Sometime later, this same man, when in trouble with the police, blamed me and others for a crime that I knew nothing about nor had anything to do with. As a result of these false accusations, I was arrested and held unjustly in prison.

When all this was happening, it was as if the sky had fallen in on me. The last sermon I preached before I was arrested was on personal revival and walking with God. Little did I know when I preached that sermon how much I would need to believe and follow the very Bible principles I spoke about. My faith was tested, but God sustained me.

**DB:** *The Togo courts recently found you innocent of all charges. What were your emotions when you heard the verdict?*

**AM:** I was thankful, relieved, and glad. I remember when the judge was reading the declarations with all the legal terms and laws, the two guards who stood by me quietly turned to me and said, "Pastor, you are free!" It was an emotional and joyful moment. My first thought after hearing the verdict was, *I would be so happy to be with my wife and family!*

**DB:** *What were the factors that led to your eventual acquittal and freedom?*

**AM:** First, it was the direct intervention of God. He moved through people. I could have been overlooked or forgotten in prison, but my wife and family, local Adventist church leaders, and colleagues on all levels of the church did not forget me. Then God worked

through the Cape Verde government and the attorneys for my defense. God's power was magnificent.

**DB:** *As you look back, do you have any idea why God may have allowed this experience to happen?*

**AM:** I really can't explain why this happened. It seems God may have been accomplishing a bigger purpose. I realize I don't have to have the answers to all the things that happen in life. Some things you just have to live through. My biggest concern was for my family. If something befell them because of what happened to me—that would have been the worst thing.

**DB:** *Did the accusations and time in prison ever make you angry or bitter?*

**AM:** No. I was not angry or bitter. I knew there was no basis for the charges against me and that I was being treated



*Pastor Monteiro (third from right) with his family.*

unjustly. At first, I would always ask, “Why is this happening to me?” Then I began to ask, “What does God want me to learn from this situation?”

That was a much better way to approach my predicament. I decided not to spend time being negative but to use it as a learning, growing experience. I saw so many other prisoners who were angry, mad, and upset all the time. I saw what anger and bitterness did to break them down and poison their relationships. I didn’t want to be like that.

**DB:** *What about the others who were accused with you and not freed?*

**AM:** Someone said to me, and I believe it: I was on a mission in prison. I would not leave that prison before my mission was done. It was true with me, and it is true with the others as well. We have a mission to do, and God will be with us when we remain to do it or when He wants us to leave.

When departing from prison, I said to Brother Amah, who I respect and believe to be innocent, and to the believers, that they must continue the work we started. I still pray that the same God who worked with us in the past will continue to be with them. I remain concerned and supportive.

**DB:** *What if your verdict had been different? What if you hadn’t been freed?*

**AM:** That’s a good question that I’m happy I don’t have to deal with [laughter]. When I was in prison, I really believed that God would free me. He

impressed me with that thought. Yet I knew that I could not say too much about that conviction. But even though I believed that God would free me, I was prepared to remain in prison or to make any sacrifice that might be called for.

**DB:** *You did the work of a Christian by helping a person in need. Then, the one you helped falsely accused you. Does this experience cause you to rethink helping others?*

**AM:** No. What happened doesn’t influence me against helping others. The fact that undesired things may happen when we do good shouldn’t stop us from doing good. Jesus did good, and look how He was treated on the cross. In prison I was able to help more people than ever before. However, when helping others, we should always be wise and thoughtful and take safe and sensible precautions.

**DB:** *Do you feel your previous spiritual experience prepared you for this test?*

**AM:** God will not allow any experience or temptation to come to us that we cannot handle. I do believe that God prepares us for what we will face. Yes, my previous experience with God helped prepare me to cope and progress in this situation. It is not that one event will prepare you.

Like Jesus, I said, “Lord, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” But then I would add, “Not my will, but Thy will be done.” These are thoughts that don’t come only once, but come back from time to time. Each time you must face and dismiss them in faith and move on believing.

**DB:** *Describe a typical day in prison.*

**AM:** I lived in a prison that was built to hold five hundred inmates, but there

were almost two thousand crammed into it. My particular facility had approximately twenty-five men in it, very tight quarters, with no windows or air conditioner. We got up early. I would take time for personal prayer and Bible reading and then move out into the yard. Many prisoners considered the food to be not food at all. Of course we were denied the basic freedoms.

At five-thirty every evening, the guards would lock all of us in the room, and you couldn’t go out nor would they come in until the next morning at six o’clock. We had no beds, just mats on the hard floor. There was a big pail in the middle of the floor that everyone used as a toilet. There was no privacy. Let me just say the living conditions were not desirable. Due to the environment, there was sickness and the potential of fights. However, I was blessed for the way the other prisoners respected and treated me and the fact that I never once got sick.

**DB:** *Many people visited you in prison from around the world. What impact did these visits have on you and your time in prison?*

**AM:** Yes, the visits were most encouraging. I better understand what the Bible means when it says that we should visit those in prison. Each visit was a witness and demonstrated love and support.

The high point of my day was when my wife visited. She was allowed to bring me food, and she did so every day. Often my children would come as well. Then I received visits from Adventist union and mission leaders, pastors, and members; visits from representatives of the division, the General Conference, and my country, Cape Verde.

One of the most special visits was from Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the world church of Seventh-day Adventists. Everyone—prisoners, guards, prison officials, members, and community people—were impressed that the president took time to come and visit.

**DB:** *What are some lessons you’ve gained from your prison experience?*

**AM:** There are many lessons that I learned while in prison. I learned that there is great power in:

*Forgiveness without resentment.* There was a temptation to be bitter and mad about how I was treated. But I remembered that Jesus was also mistreated and wrongly accused, even by His own followers. So my plan was to forgive and hold no resentment. That's why I was able to relate kindly to the man who falsely accused me; a man who was later confined in the same prison where I was held. That gave me spiritual fire and staying power.

*Acceptance without giving up.* I didn't know what my future would be but accepted my state in prison. I believed I would be freed at some point, though I didn't know where and how it would happen. Therefore, I didn't tell people what or how I would react if not released. Why? Because I didn't want them to misunderstand me and think I was doubting and unsure. I would not give up on believing in and

working for justice against the false accusations.

*Compassion and generosity.* In prison there is always a need for helping people. Love and kindness were very important in that prison. We had many inmates in a small place. In this difficult situation, there is a real need to show the love of Christ.

When people were hungry, needed money, discouraged, having home problems, I would step up and help whenever possible. Then, when prisoners would get mad and fight, I sought to bring peace and reconciliation. Most of all, when people were open, I shared the gospel. There is a Portuguese word, *morabeza*, that summarizes what I sought to demonstrate. It is a powerful word that means hospitality, kindness, and love.

*Persistent trust in God.* I kept believing that God was in prison with me. I would not give up. I thought of other Bible characters who spent time in prison—Joseph, Jeremiah, Paul, and others—and it gave me encouragement.

Like Paul, I was not a prisoner of Togo but of Jesus Christ.

*Spending time wisely.* I had time on my hands. I could waste it, or I could use it to grow mentally and spiritually. I read the Bible and other books. I would pray, journal, and develop devotionals. I could preach, teach, and counsel others. I tried to use my time in constructive ways.

**DB:** *You talked about forgiving those who falsely accused you. How were you able to exercise the ministry of forgiveness?*

**AM:** I just forgave. In light of my decision not to be angry or bitter, I resolved to forgive just like God forgave me. Revenge doesn't pay, it costs.

People saw me treat my accuser kindly and decently, and they wanted to know how I could do that. This living demonstration of forgiveness opened many doors to witness, and it began to make a difference. The prison became a

JERRY D. THOMAS

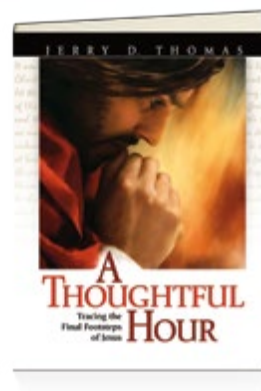
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Pastor Monteiro participating in a foot-washing ceremony.

religions came together to fellowship and pray for the country and leaders of Togo. These activities created unity in the prison.

**DB:** *In the typical model of prison ministry, people minister from the outside to the inside. In your case, it was from the inside to the inside. Did you find it difficult to do prison ministry as a prisoner?*

more peaceful place. The people would say, “We can’t fight like we used to with Pastor Monteiro around” [laughter]. The example of forgiveness is powerful and contagious.

**DB:** *You did widespread evangelism and witnessing. There are pictures of you conducting Communion services and baptisms. Tell us about your outreach activities.*

**AM:** The prison was an evangelistic territory, and the inmates were persons to help and, if possible, win to Christ. The prison experiences of Paul and Daniel and Joseph and their witnessing habits were good examples. Paul witnessed and won souls for Christ while in chains. Daniel was thrown into prison for a time and witnessed to the king. Joseph was in prison unjustly and yet witnessed to and treated other prisoners kindly.

When I arrived at prison, they introduced me as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. The prisoners wanted me to preach to them, and so I did. I would regularly preach and give Bible studies. Then I also gave away truth-filled literature that the church brought to the prison. We used and gave away the Conflict of the Ages series; hundreds of Bible studies, the Connected With Jesus series; books such as *The Adventist Home*, *Steps to Christ*, and more than two thousand of *The Great Controversy*.

Then we organized prayer and Bible study groups. We also organized a Pray for Togo Day. For the first time, Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, and other

**AM:** At times, it was difficult ministering in prison, but there was also joy, especially when you saw prayers answered and lives changed. I didn’t go into prison with a developed or established outreach plan [laughter]. The plan developed as opportunity presented itself.

I preached on Tuesdays and Thursdays and gave Bible studies all through the week. I also had time to translate the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy literature into Portuguese. Then there were the baptismal and Communion services that were so meaningful. In one baptismal service, nine inmates were baptized and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**DB:** *What do you think is the spiritual legacy of your time in prison?*

**AM:** I am not sure that I would call it a legacy, but I would like to think I accomplished the mission that Jesus wanted me to do. I went there accused of something I didn’t do. While there I discovered that great needs existed. I had something special to offer, a special work to do, and I did it.

**DB:** *Your ministry will undoubtedly continue. What are some future possibilities that you see?*

**AM:** My desire is to minister to and help people. I will see what God has in the future. I have a pastorate in the Cape Verde Conference. Further, I have a great

interest in ministry in prisons and to those who are there. I think I can use my experience to minister in this area and make things better. This is the ministry that Christ encourages, and there is much that can be done in this important area. I am willing to share my testimony with whoever wants to hear it.

**DB:** *What message would you like to share with Adventists and other people around the world who prayed for you and are happy for your freedom?*

**AM:** I have a message, a message of thanks. Tell the whole world church, *thank you, thank you, thank you*. I am grateful for the love, support, and prayers during the whole time I was in prison. The love of my wife and family, as well as the love of our whole church, will stay with me.

I’m thankful for the support of the Adventist Church; that was a strong witness to the government and people of Togo. It was also a powerful picture to my own country that Adventists are unified and supporters.

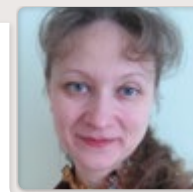
I am thankful to Pastor Ted Wilson for his prison visit and ongoing support. I am thankful to Pastor Gilbert Wari and the West-Central Africa Division staff, Pastor Guy Roger (and his team), Pastor Salomon Assienin of the then Sahel Union. Special thanks to you, John Graz, and Ganoune Diop of the General Conference (GC) and Religious Liberty Department who helped me and my family and gave leadership to the global movement to free me. Then I have deep appreciation for the defense attorneys and to Todd McFarland of the GC Legal Department for their good legal advice and defense work.

So I’m thankful for everyone who supported me in every way. Words can never fully express my gratitude. I have so much to be thankful for.

**DB:** *Thank you, Pastor Monteiro, for sharing your inspiring experience and for your message of praise and thanksgiving. I know God will continue to bless your ministry for Him. 🙏*

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# Adventist mission: *Challenges from a pluralistic world*

**D**espite predictions to the contrary, worldwide interest in religion is on the increase. More and more, religion is playing a stronger and more active role in public, political, and social affairs. The leading German philosopher Jürgen Habermas<sup>1</sup> points out three intersecting phenomena that show an extensive revival of religion.

## 1. Expansion of missionary activity.

Traditional world religions (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism) have soared in membership in recent years in Africa, Asia, and South America. The increase is largely owing to flexibility of forms, readiness to change organizational structures as needed, and adaptability of mission and witness to meet local needs. According to Habermas, for example, the transnational and multicultural Roman Catholic Church adapts more quickly than Protestant churches, and this results in an increased growth in Catholic adherents. The most dynamic structures are decentralized Islamic networks in sub-Saharan Africa and Evangelicals in Latin America.

## 2. Radicalization of fundamentalism.

The surge toward fundamentalism is common in both Christianity and Islam. This carries a mixture of emphasis on spirituality, mission, moral rigorism, and the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Another characteristic of

these fundamentalist movements is their deinstitutionalized form.

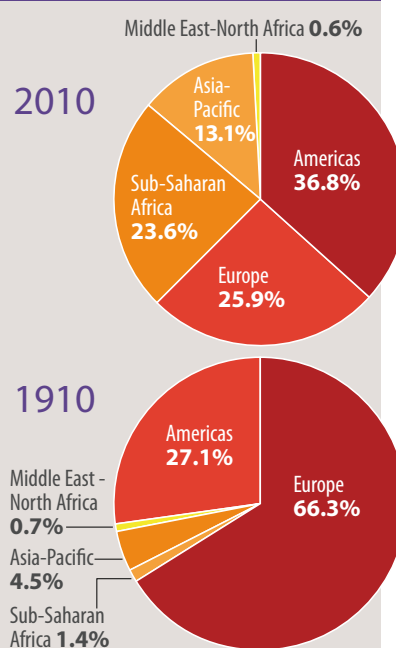
3. *Political usage of the religion's violence potential.* The Iranian regime and Islamic terrorism are the most obvious manifestations of this trend. Most often, conflicts are secular at their roots and gain new strength after their codification in religious terms. Examples are desecularization of the Middle East conflict, strife between Pakistan and India, and mobilization of the right-wing religious forces in the United States (US) on the eve of the Iraq War.

This general background easily harmonizes the process of reconfiguration of the religious space in today's world. We shall review a few of these tendencies that influence this process.

## Redistribution of "religious market"

The first tendency can be defined as redistribution of "religious market" shares. According to "Global Christianity," "The number of Christians around the world has more than tripled in the last 100 years, from about 600 million in 1910 to more than 2 billion in 2010. But the world's overall population also has risen rapidly, from an estimated 1.8 billion in 1910 to 6.9 billion in 2010. As a result, Christians make up about the same portion of the world's population today (32%) as they did a century ago (35%)."

## Regional Distribution of Christians



Figures for 1910 are from a Pew Forum analysis of data from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity. Percentages may not add up due to rounding.

Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life  
"Global Christianity," December 2011

"This apparent stability, however, masks a momentous shift. Although Europe and the Americas still are home to a majority of the world's Christians (63%), that share is much lower than it was in 1910 (93%). And the proportion of Europeans and Americans who are

Christian has dropped from 95% in 1910 to 76% in 2010 in Europe as a whole, and from 96% to 86% in the Americas as a whole. At the same time, Christianity has grown enormously in sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, where there were relatively few Christians at the beginning of the 20th century.”<sup>2</sup>

The growth rate of Christianity, currently at 1.35 percent—which still leads the world religions—is lower than the growth rate of the world population at 2.6 percent. At the same time, Islam and Buddhism, the second and the third largest world religions in terms of followers, grow more quickly and faster than the world population growth rate. Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project predicts that continuation of this trend will lead to a 35 percent increase in the Muslim population by 2030 and will comprise 26.4 percent (2.2 billion) of the forecast world population (8.3 billion).<sup>3</sup> When Samuel Huntington predicted this tendency in the mid-1990s, he mentioned that Christianity would grow due to conversion, while Islam would do so through conversion and reproduction.<sup>4</sup> Modern statistics prove him right.

Research into the change of the world share of Christianity and Islam also shows the influence of migration from developing countries to the West. Immigrants bring with them their religion, leading to a reconfiguration of the cultural landscape of receiving countries. Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project predicts the population changes shown in the following table:

**Increase of Muslim share in population of Europe<sup>5</sup>**

Country	2010	2030
Great Britain	4.6%	8.2%
Austria	5.7%	9.3%
Sweden	4.9%	9.9%
Belgium	6.0%	10.2%
France	7.5%	10.3%

## Independent Christian churches

The second tendency is the formation of so-called independent Christian churches.<sup>6</sup>

This process started in the 1980s in developing countries. By the end of the twentieth century, the number of “independent” or new Christians reached 386 million.<sup>7</sup> This number is greater than the number of Protestants (342 million) and stands next to the Catholic denomination (1 billion).

David Barrett, who has studied world religions for 40 years and has closely watched the formation of independent churches, comes to two conclusions. First, these churches are completely different from their “mother” Christian church of the West. The difference becomes apparent in (1) their much more conservative adherence to moral principles, church rules, and submission to the authority of priests and bishops than other Christians, and (2) their close connection to the poorest stratum of society, as the majority of new Christians are extremely poor according to Western standards.

Second, these new churches identify themselves as postdenominational and have no formal ties with any structure of Christendom. But they have adopted Western techniques of forming their networks. This helps them to be successful in development and expansion. So it can be concluded that this new trend can be compared to the Reformation spread of Protestantism and Protestants in the sixteenth century.

## Christian and Islamic population shifts

The third tendency is a shift of Christian population to the Southern Hemisphere, while Islam moves to the Northern Hemisphere.

This tendency is closely connected with demography, migration, and the new trend in Christianity. Many experts now claim that world Christianity will grow due to the developing countries. Alexey Pimenov, professor at George Washington University, summarized the data of the US research centers

and concluded that in 15 years the number of Christians in the world will reach 2.5 billion and there will be three major groups: the largest will be Latin Americans (around 640 million); next will be Africans (630 million); and the next will be Europeans (555 million).<sup>8</sup>

Peter Berger says that “Christianity is growing faster in sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else on earth . . . at 3.5 percent a year. . . . [Compare this with] 2.5 percent in Latin America and Asia and less than 1 percent in Europe and North America. The proportion of African Christians to all Christians has grown from one in ten in 1970 to one in five today. On current trends, African Christians outnumber European believers, leaving them second only to those in Latin America.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, by 2050 half of the Christian population (about 50 percent) will live in Latin America (Mexico, Brazil), Africa (Nigeria, Ethiopia), and the Philippines.

Thus, we may conclude that reconfiguration of the religious space that has been going on for the last few decades has brought a serious change in correlation of global religions, including Islam-Christianity parity, and has changed the status of global Christianity itself. The Southern Hemispheric model of Christianity is becoming more and more predominant. This happens because of demographic and economic factors. As a result, the Southern Hemispheric model influences the qualitative characteristics of Christianity. The European/Western model of Christianity loses its potential.

## Where are Adventists in this picture?

Now, where do Adventists stand in this reconfiguring religious picture, particularly the Protestant picture? According to the Pew Research project analysis of data from the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (see the table “Denominations of Protestants”),<sup>10</sup> Adventists occupy the eighth place on the list, with 2.7 percent of total Protestant membership. With such a ratio, obviously, it is an enormous challenge to try to influence global religious trends. This



## Denominations of Protestants

Denominational family	Percentage of all Protestants
Historically Pentecostal denomination	10.8%
Anglican	10.6
Lutheran	9.7
Baptist (unions of different denominations)	7.2
Presbyterian or Reformed	7.0
Methodist	3.4
Adventist	2.7
Congregationalist	0.5
Brethren	0.5
Salvation Army	0.3
Other (independent, nondenominational and others)	38.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Pew Forum analysis of World Christian Database. Historically Pentecostal denominations include the Assemblies of God and the Church of God in Christ. Many members of the Pentecostal movement belong to independent churches that are not part of historically Pentecostal denominations. United churches are unions of several Protestant denominations. Examples include the Church of South India, the Church of North India, and the United Church of Zambia. Figures may not add exactly due to rounding.

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picture gives a rather alarming subconscious feeling that Adventists are behind in fulfilling the mission they traditionally have claimed for themselves—being God's true remnant church, which calls all people to join her. According to traditional Adventist interpretation of biblical prophecies, there will be no other God's church, after the remnant church, to proclaim the end-time message to the world. So, if Adventists fail in their mission, what is next?

Let this question remain pending because answering it is not a goal of this article. Instead, after considering the global tendencies in the postmodern religious world, let us see some general perspectives that are quite realistic to cope with, even for the church with 2.7 percent of all Protestants. These may be viewed more like a program declaration.

First of all, we have to accept what Ellen White proclaimed at the dawn of the Adventist movement: "Today in every land there are those who are honest in heart, and upon these the light of heaven is shining. If they continue faithful in following that which they understand to be duty, they will be given increased

light, until, like Naaman of old, they will be constrained to acknowledge that 'there is no God in all the earth,' save the living God, the Creator."<sup>11</sup>

The application of this inspired truth in the postmodern world is direct and critical. God's light shines everywhere, and there are many who are ready to accept it. Adventists do not need to question the fullness of God's truth given to them. Under present conditions they should accept the responsibility to share given truth with others in a dialogue. A dialogue form of communication assumes a deep respect and tolerance for the opinion of another party. To accept that opinion if it obviously contradicts biblical truth is not necessary. But misunderstanding or flagrant delusion should not stop Adventists from communion, communication, and cooperation with other believers.

Secondly, cooperation should become a moving, integrating factor to draw Adventists closer to other Protestants. Expanding upon Ellen White's statement in *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists*, we can say, there is no believer, no denomination that is perfect in every habit and thought. One must learn of another. Therefore God wants different denominations to mingle together, to be one in judgment, one in purpose. Then the union that there is in Christ will be exemplified.<sup>12</sup>

Being one of the youngest of Protestant churches, our missionary activity started much later than other churches, such as Baptists and Pentecostals. Perhaps that is why we have to cooperate with other Protestants in order to learn from them if we need to and to share our knowledge if we can.

Thirdly, we often quote inspired words about the best method of doing the mission: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"<sup>13</sup> How can this counsel be applied practically to meet the challenges of those global trends specified above?


Starting with Christianity's growth in the Southern Hemisphere, we have to remember that the growth covers the poorest section of people, those who are not able to get proper (if any at all) education, medical care, social support, or welfare. Very often church communities become an alternative society for people in countries where government is not able to solve numerous problems. Jesus Christ is presented as an incarnation of divine power to overcome evil spirits; witchcraft; spells; and the demons of illness, poverty, and immorality. He gives spiritual and physical healing through the preaching of the new Christianity. That is why hundreds of thousands of people fervently believe in Jesus but understand Him according to their tradition as a great healer. Not more.

Here Adventists can offer an alternative perspective of Jesus Christ and life perspective in general using Adventist hospitals, Adventist educational centers, and Adventist Development and Relief Agency programs. These means of evangelism are long-term tools in comparison with an evangelistic series when the result is expected after nine weeks of preaching. But they become permanent sources of true light for months and years and help establish local springs of living water through those people who attend the institutions daily and become regular customers, then friends, and then independent light bearers.

As for the Muslim population, its main problem is labor migration. In Russia, Muslims comprise 20 million, or 14 percent of the total Russian population. By the year 2030, this figure will increase to 19 percent.<sup>14</sup> The majority of these migrants are males who come to earn money and support their families back home in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, or Kyrgyzstan. Their first and utmost need is to pass a state Russian language exam in order to get proper documents. Some local authorities develop social programs (e.g., in Moscow and Saint Petersburg). Regional mosques and *muftiyats*<sup>15</sup> try to support those migrants and provide some training. But the load is much heavier than one party is able to carry. This is a good opportunity for Adventist

specialists to offer their qualifications and start paving a road for further cooperation and dialogue on spiritual matters. Baptist and Pentecostal churches in Moscow have already been doing that for several years. They organize language and computer training programs and provide legal services and consultations. One Baptist church launched a whole program called Mission Is at the Door. It also educates church members about Islam and Muslims to help them get rid of innumerable superstitions widely spread among Christians that block their mission among Muslims.

Likewise, as Adventists, we face challenges in communication and reaching out in large areas of the world where Buddhism and Hinduism are the religions of the majority of people. Our pluralistic world presents many challenges to Adventists. Some of them look very serious and might require great intellectual, human, and financial resources to meet them. At the same time, the worldview of postmodernity suggests large advantages, which, if

used wisely, can lead to astonishing results. The Seventh-day Adventist Church as an organization has all of the necessary resources to cope with present circumstances and fulfill its mission. “What is impossible from a human perspective is possible with God” (Luke 18:27, NLT). 

- 1 Jürgen Habermas, “Protiv ‘Voinstvuyushchego Ateizma.’ ‘Postsekulyarnoe obshchestvo’ – chto eto takoe?” [“Against ‘militant atheism’: What is ‘postsecular society’?”]. The paper was presented at a seminar of the International Association, “Reset: Dialogues of Civilizations,” Istanbul, June 2–8, 2008. [www.russ.ru/pole/Protiv-voinstvuyushchego-ateizma](http://www.russ.ru/pole/Protiv-voinstvuyushchego-ateizma) (accessed November 20, 2012).
- 2 “Regional Distribution of Christians,” in “Global Christianity,” Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project, [www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-regions/](http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-regions/) (accessed December 27, 2012).
- 3 “Resources on Future of the Global Muslim Population,” Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project, [www.pewforum.org/2011/02/28/resources-on-the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/](http://www.pewforum.org/2011/02/28/resources-on-the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/) (accessed January 10, 2013).
- 4 Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, 3 (Summer 1993): 22–49.
- 5 “Future of the Global Muslim Population: Europe,” Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project, [www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-europe/](http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-europe/) (accessed January 10, 2013).
- 6 This trend was first presented by Irina Kargina, associate professor of the Sociology Department, Moscow State Institute of International Relations. Her article “Metamorfozy Khristianstva na Fone Postmodernistskogo Peizazha” (Christian metamorphoses against postmodern scenery background) was published in *Polis* 5 (September–October 2012), 106–21.
- 7 *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 4.
- 8 Alexsey Pimenov, “Na Puti k Global'nomu Religioznomu Konfliktu” [On the way to the global religious conflict], [www.moldova.ru/index.php?tabName=articles&owner=58&id=753](http://www.moldova.ru/index.php?tabName=articles&owner=58&id=753) (accessed December 28, 2010).
- 9 Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington, *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 229, 230.
- 10 “Christian Movements and Denominations,” in “Global Christianity,” Pew Research: Religion & Public Life Project, [www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-movements-and-denominations/](http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-movements-and-denominations/) (accessed December 28, 2012).
- 11 Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999), CD-ROM 253.
- 12 The original text is found in *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists, SDA Mission* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999), CD-ROM 137: “There is no person, no nation, that is perfect in every habit and thought. One must learn of another. Therefore God wants the different nationalities to mingle together, to be one in judgment, one in purpose. Then the union that there is in Christ will be exemplified.”
- 13 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1999), CD-ROM 143.
- 14 Alexander Panov, “‘Tchernyi Lebed’ na Puti k Ugosaniu” [“Black swan” is on the way to extinguishing], *Novaya Gazeta*, January 10–17, 2013, 9.
- 15 A *muftiyat* is a Muslim headquarters on territory of former Soviet Union republics. They deal mainly with religious and judicial issues.



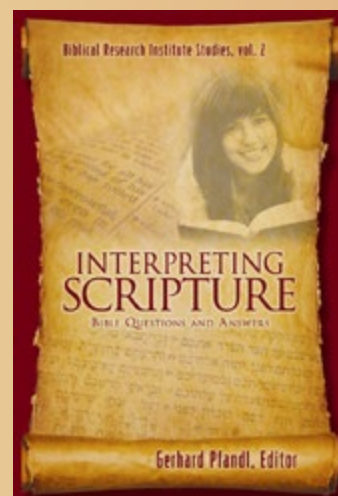
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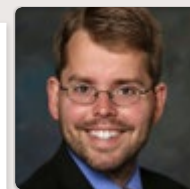
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# “God’s chosen agency for the salvation of souls”<sup>1</sup>: *Lessons from the preaching ministry of Ellen G. White*

Ellen White was a powerful preacher. She is perhaps best remembered today for her extensive writings, but during her lifetime she was a sought-after public speaker. The rise of Ellen White’s prophetic ministry during the 1840s coincided with a time in American culture when people became more open to women speaking in public, especially in church.<sup>2</sup> Ellen White was keenly aware of this and, at times, certainly knew that this phenomenon of hearing a “woman” helped draw a crowd.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of why people came, she used each opportunity to proclaim the Word of God and uplift Jesus Christ.

According to Ellen White’s granddaughter, Grace Jacques White, when “she began to talk I could not help noticing the soothing yet expressive tone of her voice. She spoke simply and wasted no words.”<sup>4</sup> A contemporary, Uriah Smith, noted in 1874 about her “magnetic speech and manner,” in which she gave “powerful” appeals for people “to flee from their sins.” That same year, at a different event, G. I. Butler noted a similar appeal whereby 75 people “came forward for prayers, most of them apparently under deep

and genuine conviction.”<sup>5</sup> She followed up this talk with a second one on temperance, her favorite topic,<sup>6</sup> and one she frequently used to connect with non-church members.<sup>7</sup>

At times, Ellen White spoke in some unusual places. In 1870, James and Ellen White traveled up the Mississippi River on the steamboat *Minnesota*. The Whites utilized creative and providential opportunities to share their faith. Willie, their son, noticed the eagerness with which men on log rafts sought newspapers from passengers on the steamboat. James and Willie grabbed pieces of coal attached with tracts and threw them. “God bless the truth thus distributed,” noted James. After they finished throwing pieces of literature, they sang the hymn “Resting By and By,” which drew a crowd. A passenger approached James, “‘It is rumored about this boat . . . that your wife is a public speaker, and every passenger will unite in a request for her to speak in the ladies’ cabin, if she will consent.’” She did, and the seats were arranged for a meeting. After a short prayer, Ellen White spoke “upon the great idea that God—his wisdom, love, and even his love of the beautiful—could be seen through the beauties of nature. The

subject was made more interesting by reference to the grand and beautiful scenery of the day’s trip up the old Mississippi [River]. A more attentive audience we never saw.”<sup>8</sup>

Another interesting speaking appointment occurred more than a decade later, during Ellen White’s travels in Europe. As she passed through Scandinavia, she was frequently invited to speak. In one such town, the largest venue was the local saloon. She encouraged the local leaders to secure the location for a meeting. They modified some tables into a makeshift preaching stand.<sup>9</sup> In an additional instance on the same trip, people noted that her favorite topic, especially to non-church members, was to speak about temperance as a neutral topic to build interest in spiritual things.<sup>10</sup> On yet another occasion, Ellen White spoke to 1,600 people, her largest audience while she traveled abroad.<sup>11</sup>

Ellen White spoke in public hundreds of times throughout her lifetime in a wide variety of venues. From her practical experience, she had definite ideas about the purpose of biblical preaching, practical advice for ministers, and the importance of



transformation preaching that culminates with an appeal.

## Biblical preaching

“Ministers should present the truth warm from glory,” observed Ellen White.<sup>12</sup> In other words, she firmly believed that all preaching should be firmly rooted in a fresh study of the Bible. As ministers open the Word of God, they become “a mouthpiece for God.”<sup>13</sup> Every person who proclaims the Word of God must study Scripture for light and truth. Thus, the act of preaching is a sacred privilege. If ministers “are really men of God” and “receive their words from God,” then, even though “their manner of address may be faulty and need much improvement,” “God breathes through them words of inspiration, [and] the power is not of man, but of God.”<sup>14</sup>

As ministers begin sermon preparation, they should approach the sacred Scriptures with a sense of humility. Rather than studying the Bible to obtain proof texts, they should be Bible students to “know how to attain the love of God.”<sup>15</sup> The Bible should be the starting point for all sermon preparation. H. M. S. Richards recalled her advice to him about using her writings in sermon preparation: “‘Here’s the way to use them. First, ask God to give you your subject. When you have the subject chosen, then go to the Bible until you know for sure what the Bible really teaches on that point. After that, turn to the writings and see what you can find on the same subject and read that. It may cast light on it or guide you into other scriptures or make some point clearer. When you go to the people, however, preach to them out of the Bible.’”<sup>16</sup>

Ellen White encouraged young ministers to study and prepare “a store of practical subjects that you have investigated and that you can . . . present in a plain, forcible manner to the people at the right time and place as they may need.”<sup>17</sup> She recommended, as an example, the parables of Jesus as a natural starting point.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, White counseled not to just use a list of set discourses either.<sup>19</sup>

Ministers need to be attentive by listening to their congregations. As they listen, they will be able to discern the “spiritual food” needed and “appropriate for the occasion.” Ministers have a responsibility “to give to each of the flock of God his portion of meat in due season.”<sup>20</sup> Such study during her lifetime most definitely included visitation of members in their homes to “understand the spiritual conditional of all.”<sup>21</sup> As a minister connects with his or her parishioners, it helps to avoid the problem of being “too distant” so that the influence of sermons will only increase.<sup>22</sup>

Altogether, Ellen White had a well-developed perspective on preaching by the 1870s that was rooted in Scripture.<sup>23</sup> “While Scripture was the major source of her sermons,” wrote Jud Lake, “she used a hybrid method of the topical and textual. Her sermons, therefore, were not expository in the sense of the biblical passage controlling the outline of the sermon. Nevertheless, she admonished ministers to preach biblical sermons.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, Ellen White, based upon the hermeneutical foundation of William Miller, used a preaching methodology shared by early Sabbatarian Adventist pioneers that was firmly rooted in a deep and widespread study of Scripture.<sup>25</sup>

## Simple steps to improve preaching

Ellen White believed that sermons should have a clear point along with a practical application. The minister “should leave his ideas before the people as distinct as mileposts.”<sup>26</sup> She repeated the same counsel to another minister.<sup>27</sup> Closely connected with this thought, from her perspective, was the need for relevant application. “It is not enough for ministers to present theoretical subjects; they should also present those subjects which are practical.”<sup>28</sup> Elaborate discourses “display self.” Instead, “true piety, a close connection with God, and a daily, living experience in the knowledge of Christ, will make eloquent even the stammering tongue.”<sup>29</sup>

The best example, for Ellen White, of clear and practical sermons was the

ministry of Jesus Christ. He remains the true Model for every preacher by His example of having a clear point along with relevant application. “Christ,” furthermore, “sought to make His teachings interesting.”<sup>30</sup> She admonished Adventist ministers to do the same.

This combination of the practical along with the doctrinal<sup>31</sup> aspects meant, at times, shortening the length of the sermon. “You talk too long and weary the people,” she remarked to one long-winded minister.<sup>32</sup> On another occasion she urged against “long praying” and “long preaching” that wearies the saints.<sup>33</sup> Ellen White was reacting against the long sermons of the Puritan era that could last 90 minutes to two hours. By 1868, she advised that sermons should be less than an hour<sup>34</sup> and by 1896 counseled that sermons should not exceed 30 minutes.<sup>35</sup> Children are especially vulnerable to “tedious remarks.” Shorter messages have a “happy influence.” “Too much talk will lead them [children] to loathe even spiritual instruction, just as overeating burdens the stomach and lessens the appetite, leading even to a loathing of food. The minds of the people may be glutted with too much speechifying.”<sup>36</sup>

Ellen White not only believed in avoiding long messages but offered practical advice on sermon delivery. She had a great deal to say about the use of the voice; it is summarized in a posthumous compilation, *The Voice in Speech and Song*. She consistently urged people to use the diaphragm to project their voice—during an age before sound systems. “The action should come upon the abdominal muscles,” she frequently told young ministers. “The lungs and throat should be the channel, but should not do all the work.”<sup>37</sup>

The minister should vary the pitch of the voice, but not overdo it.

Some destroy the solemn impression . . . by raising their voices to a very high pitch, and hallooing<sup>38</sup> [shouting] and screaming out the truth. . . . But if the voice is toned right, . . . it will produce a much better impression. . . . But this

loud hallooing—what does it do? It does not give the people any more exalted views of the truth and does not impress them any more deeply. It only causes a disagreeable sensation in the hearers and wears out the vocal organs of the speaker. The tones of the voice have much to do in affecting the hearts of those who hear.<sup>39</sup>

Not only the tone but the pace was also important. She counseled another minister not to “speak hurriedly.”<sup>40</sup> Altogether the tone, pitch, and pace need to be “melodious.” The best example of such a use of the voice was Jesus Christ, whose teaching was both “impressive and solemn,” yet His voice was “melodious.”<sup>41</sup>

While White certainly had a great deal of counsel regarding the logistics of preaching, she felt the most important aspect was the sacred nature of preaching. From her perspective, preaching encompassed the entire life of the minister: before, during, and after the sermon. “Our words, our actions, our deportment, our dress, everything, should preach.”<sup>42</sup> Adventist ministers should not let themselves in any way detract, or distract, from the focus of their message: to uplift Jesus Christ and draw people to Him.

The sacred nature of preaching naturally leads to Ellen White’s counsel about the transformational nature of preaching.

## Transformational preaching and appeals

One of the sternest admonitions by Ellen G. White, in my estimation, was directed to William C. Gage, who, in 1871, was the foreman of the Review and Herald Publishing Association.<sup>43</sup> While she complimented him on his ability to “talk fluently and make a point plain,” she pointed out that “his preaching has lacked spirituality.” She furthermore noted that as he spoke, “his appeals have not touched the heart with a new tenderness.”<sup>44</sup> Repeatedly, Ellen White appealed to ministers to make sure that the message had first

transformed their own life.<sup>45</sup> Once ministers allowed this transformation to take place in their own hearts, the “soul should be all aglow with the spirit of the truth you present to others.”<sup>46</sup> The message in the pulpit will be consistent with the life of the messenger. The term Ellen White repeatedly used to describe this was that ministers become “living epistles.”<sup>47</sup>

Every sermon should convict the heart and draw the listener to Christ. The listener should “sense that ‘Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.’” She urged Adventist ministers to present Jesus before the people in a way that would melt the heart. “The very tones of the voice, the look, the words, should possess an irresistible power to move hearts and control minds. Jesus should be found in the heart of the minister.”<sup>48</sup> The gospel message confronts people, and therefore ministers should avoid preaching “smooth” messages to make the people feel good.<sup>49</sup> Instead, as Jesus is uplifted, people become convicted of sin and their need for Jesus.

A sense of the divine presence, through the Holy Spirit, makes the act of preaching a “sacred work.”<sup>50</sup> Ministers should not engage in this work until they can truly appreciate the value of a soul to God. In that mind-set, as a minister proclaims the Word, listeners in turn will have their convictions deepened “and the question will be raised: ‘What shall I do to be saved?’”<sup>51</sup> One of the hallmarks of Ellen White’s preaching was her consistent appeals for people to change their behavior through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.<sup>52</sup> “The preaching of the word,” she wrote in 1875, “is ordained of God to arouse and convict sinners.”<sup>53</sup> Every opportunity is a “golden opportunity” to invite someone to change his or her life. Some preachers may not meet their “hearers again until the great day of God.”<sup>54</sup>


“I tremble,” Ellen White wrote, “when I consider that there are some ministers, even among Seventh-day Adventists, who are not sanctified by the truths which they preach.”<sup>55</sup> Such ministers only harm God’s work if they could see themselves as Heaven does.

“I have been shown,” she warned, “that there is a decided lack with some who preach the word.”<sup>56</sup> Ministers who seek to preach in their own strength will ultimately fail. Instead, according to Ellen White, they must recognize their need and seek God with a spirit of humility. Only then can God bless their meager efforts. Transformational preaching always begins in the lives of ministers as they wrestle with Scripture and seek to live it out in their own lives. Out of that transformational experience, they can, in turn, invite others to experience the same. This brings power to preaching.<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusion

I have wished that we could have an audio recording of Ellen White’s preaching. However, there are numerous stenographic reports of her messages that give a flavor for what her sermons were like. One thing is certain: her messages were clear, biblical, practical expositions that uplifted Jesus Christ. Frequently her messages came with an appeal for people to know Jesus Christ personally.

Preaching, Ellen White believed, was and always will remain a sacred responsibility. When a person enters the “desk”—a nineteenth-century term for a pulpit—they stand on holy ground. Ministers derive their authority not from their position, but from the Word of God that is proclaimed. This message must be internalized in order to both be clear and have a practical application.

Ellen White firmly believed that the ability to proclaim God’s Word was an essential requirement to be an Adventist minister. At times she rebuked ministers who did not have this gift and urged them to remain active in their church but pursue a different livelihood. The work of the minister “to warn the world of a coming judgment, is as much more important [work] than that of the common workman as eternal things are of more consequence than temporal.”<sup>58</sup> 

1 Ellen G. White, Letter 32, 1875.

2 E. Brooks Holifield, *God’s Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 121–27. Holifield notes that the Millerite revival was particularly open to

allowing women to preach.

- 3 In 1870, Ellen White spoke at the Tipton, Indiana, camp meeting. James White described "two ladies" who met Ellen White at the train station when she arrived. One was a Friend and the other a Methodist. "They stated," wrote James White, "to Mrs. W[hite] that no religious influence had ever made so deep an impression on the people of Tipton, as the speaking [by Ellen White] upon the camp-ground on first-day. They also stated that there had been in that place decided opposition to public speaking by women. They both had advocated it, and felt, on first-day P.M., while Mrs. W[hite] was speaking, that much was at stake, and they prayed while she was speaking that the Lord would help her. These earnest, yet truly modest women, reported a great change in the public sentiment of that place." James White, "Western Tour: Incidents by the Way," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 1, 1870, 156.
- 4 Grace Jacques White, as told to Judy A. Howard, "My 'Special' Grandmother," *The Youth's Instructor*, Dec. 5, 1961, 13.
- 5 G. I. Butler, "The Lapeer, Mich., Camp-Meeting," *Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath*, Oct. 13, 1874, 126.
- 6 According to James White after the 1876 New England camp meeting in Groveland, Massachusetts: "Mrs. W[hite] dwelt on her favorite theme, Christian Temperance." James White, "The Camp-Meetings," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Sept. 7, 1876, 84.
- 7 "A fitting counterpart . . . was sister White's discourse . . . upon the subject of . . . Christian temperance. The wide range which this subject takes in the use of tobacco, tea, coffee, and extravagance in dress, was set forth with force and freedom" (Butler, "The Lapeer, Mich., Camp-Meeting," *Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath*, Oct. 13, 1874, 126). Incidentally, as G. I. Butler summarized and reflected on her talk, he observed that "women would be better prepared to stand by the side of their husbands as counselors, and even to take part with them in political matters, would they disenthrall themselves from the slavery of fashion, which . . . leaves them no time to study the weightier matters of life" (Ibid.). James White also briefly mentions the incident: James White, "The Temperance Movement," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 5, 1877, 12. For an overview of Ellen White's temperance work, see Ernest H. J. Steed, "Temperance," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin & Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2013), 1209–1211.
- 8 James White, "Western Tour: Trip up the Mississippi," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 5, 1870, 21.
- 9 D. A. Delafield, *Ellen G. White in Europe, 1885–1887: Prepared From Ellen G. White Papers and European Historical Sources* (Washington, DC:

Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1975), 118.

- 10 Ibid., 40.
- 11 Ibid., 122.
- 12 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948) [hereafter abbreviated as "White, 2T"; "White, 3T"; or "White, 4T"], vol. 2, 617.
- 13 White, 3T, 234.
- 14 White, 4T, 318.
- 15 White, 3T, 212, 213.
- 16 *Ministry*, Oct. 1976, 6, 7.
- 17 White, 3T, 228.
- 18 "These sermons of Christ furnish ministers believing present truth with discourses which will be appropriate on almost any occasion" (White, 3T, 214, 215).
- 19 White, 4T, 269.
- 20 White, 3T, 228.
- 21 Ibid., 233.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 R. Edward Turner, *Proclaiming the Word: The Concept of Preaching in the Thought of Ellen G. White* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), 30. Turner argues that Ellen White formulated her understanding of preaching after the 1880s. A study of Ellen G. White's counsel on preaching from the 1870s shows that she had a well-developed understanding and theology of preaching a decade earlier.
- 24 Jud Lake, "Preaching," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, ed. Denis Fortin & Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2014).
- 25 Marcos Blanco, "Early Adventists' Homiletical Principles and the Expository-vs-Thematic Sermons Discussion," term paper, Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies, 2013.
- 26 White, 2T, 544.
- 27 Ibid., 616.
- 28 White, 3T, 257.
- 29 White, 4T, 313, 314.
- 30 White, 2T, 580.
- 31 White, 3T, 237.
- 32 White, 2T, 543. See also Delafield, *Ellen G. White in Europe*, 136, where she similarly admonished A. C. Bourdeau to shorten his sermon too.
- 33 White, 2T, 617. Ellen White does not give a specific length for praying or sermons. It does appear to have been her practice, generally speaking, for a sermon not to go more than 40 minutes.
- 34 Ibid., 117. This counsel was a part of *Testimony for the Church, Number 16*, which became available for circulation in August 1868. See *Advent*

*Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 28, 1868, 88.

- 35 Ellen G. White, Letter 1a, 1896.
- 36 White, *Child Guidance: Counsels to Seventh-day Adventist Parents* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), 34.
- 37 White, 3T, 311.
- 38 The term comes from the sport of hunting, to urge hunting dogs on.
- 39 White, 2T, 615.
- 40 White, 3T, 311.
- 41 White, 2T, 617.
- 42 Ibid., 618; see also White, 3T, 66.
- 43 In "Testimony No. 21" (White, 3T, 9–130) the first section, "An Appeal for Burden Bearers," identifies a "Brother B." Internal evidence within the testimony: he is described as the "foreman" (23) who was sick after indulging in a pleasure trip to Chicago (19), but not to be confused with Uriah Smith (who is mentioned by name as also recently sick on page 18). This description clearly describes William C. Gage who was the foreman at the Review and Herald Publishing Association at that time.
- 44 White, 3T, 31.
- 45 Ibid., 204, 238.
- 46 Ibid., 227, 228.
- 47 She uses this term in her counsel to both young as well as veteran ministers. Cf. White, 3T, 31.
- 48 White, 3T, 32.
- 49 Ibid., 257.
- 50 Ibid., 238.
- 51 Ibid., 32.
- 52 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 283–292; see also Horace John Shaw, "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Speaking of Mrs. Ellen G. White, a Pioneer Leader and Spokeswoman of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (PhD diss., Michigan State University, 1959), 350; and Turner, *Proclaiming the Word*, 102.
- 53 White, 4T, 118.
- 54 Ibid., 313, 316.
- 55 White, 3T, 31.
- 56 White, 2T, 501.
- 57 White, 2T 498–522. This is the general thrust of this overall testimony titled "Address to Ministers," first published in August 1870 (see publication notice, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 2, 1870, 56).
- 58 White, 3T, 243.

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## LETTERS

Continued from page 4



some stage near the end, but let's not worry about projecting into the future.

Predictive prophecy is given to us so we may recognize the time we are in, not to write scenarios for the future.

—Andrew Ostapowicz, Sydney, Australia

## The transforming power of Sabbath School

I applaud you for publishing the article by Ted Hamilton ("Growing in Grace: The Transforming Power of Sabbath School"—December 2013).

For the past 11 years, I worked with our local Sabbath School superintendent to see what could be done to rejuvenate Sabbath School; she, particularly, worked very hard. We didn't really get it to the point we both wanted it. However, some progress was made. It is worth all the effort we give it and then some.

I conclude that the key to rejuvenating Sabbath School lies in the quality of teaching that happens. Reading the quarterly doesn't cut it. Droning on or pushing an agenda doesn't either.

Opening the Word and making it live will. When we had dynamic teaching, the people came; when we didn't, people no longer attended the class.

I applaud teachers who focus on knowing God personally and not just understanding technical teachings and specific texts, although they are important. Turning a class into an action unit is good, but I don't think it will accomplish the job that excellence in teaching will.

—John Glass, email



Igor Lorencin, PhD, is the principal of the Adriatic Union College, Maruševec, Croatia.



# Babylonian mentality:

## *With whom do you bank?*

We find the figurative and/or conceptual usage of “Babylon” mostly in the book of Revelation, particularly in the second part of the book, which deals with the final events of earth’s history. The term is used six times. Where does the writer of the book take the term *Babylon* from?

The book of Revelation, though written in Greek, is permeated with the language of the Old Testament. It speaks of the great deeds of God in the past.<sup>1</sup> God was faithful to His people in the past, so it is sure that He will be faithful in the future as well. John, the author of Revelation as a book, intends to encourage the endangered and persecuted people of God. In his wish to encourage early Christians, the writer points them to the events, places, and concepts of the Old Testament.

### Old Testament Babylon

One of the defining moments in the Old Testament history was the Babylonian exile. The children of Israel were enslaved, and the Exile was one of the toughest experiences for the people of God (Jer. 50:33). Yet God stands up in their defense: “A drought on her waters! They will dry up. For it is a land of idols, idols that will go mad with terror” (v. 38).<sup>2</sup> Idolatry was Babylon’s main offense: creating its own religion and seeking salvation without the Creator God. This offense was also true of Old

Testament Babylon’s predecessor in the early pages of the Bible, Babel, which had an alliance of people with one goal—building “a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens” (Gen. 11:4) and thus challenging God Himself.

### New Testament Babylon

When the apostle John, in Revelation, uses the term *Babylon*, he recalls that background. He mentions it for the first time in Revelation 14 but develops the concept in Revelation 17. There we have a picture of a great prostitute who sits on many waters (Rev. 17:1). These waters represent “peoples, multitudes, nations and languages” (v. 15) that support the end-time Babylon. Further, that great prostitute is described as “sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns” (v. 3). These seven heads represent seven kingdoms through which God’s people were oppressed and persecuted throughout history.<sup>3</sup> The great prostitute is a religious power working in tandem with secular powers and nations of the world that support her. John visually describes her demise as being burned up with fire (v. 16), as was the decree concerning prostitutes in the Old Testament times (Lev. 21:9).

### Future fall of Babylon

Revelation 18 presents another picture of Babylon’s fall—a picture of

the destruction of the city. In addition, we are confronted with the reasons for her fall. Observing the sins of Babylon may help us identify areas through which she will be active: “With a mighty voice the angel shouted: ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries’ ” (vv. 2, 3).

This text gives three reasons for the fall of Babylon:

1. All the nations have drunk Babylonian adulterous wine.
2. The kings of the earth have committed adultery with Babylon.
3. Merchants of the earth grew rich through the luxuries of Babylon.

What could the drunkenness of the nations represent? The Old Testament Babylon led astray the world of its time with wine: “ ‘Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord’s hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad’ ” (Jer. 51:7). The wine that leads astray could be false teachings, philosophies, ideologies, or religions. In the background, the political and religious activity of Babylon exists.

So, Babylon is accused because it has led astray the inhabitants of the earth instead of pointing them towards the only true Ruler, the Creator God.

What about the second point—adultery? In the Old Testament, a faithful wife represents God's people, while an adulterous wife symbolizes religious unfaithfulness. Going to other gods is presented as an act of adultery: "At the end of seventy years, the LORD will deal with Tyre. She will return to her hire as a prostitute and will ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth" (Isa. 23:17). Babylon was also adulterous and had created its own way of salvation without the Creator God. Kings of the earth, as political figures, are adulterous. We are dealing here with the religious dimension, while the political dimension of the kings should not be neglected.

Finally, the third point of condemnation of the end-time Babylon raises the aspect of finances. We might possibly forget about God and rely on our own

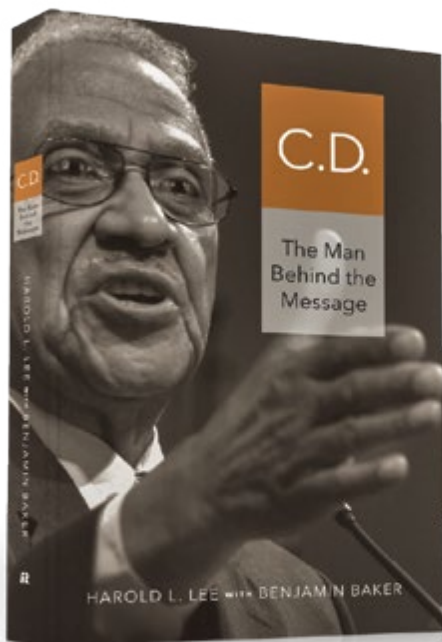
wisdom when it comes to finances, but this easily leads to pride, as in the case of Tyre: " 'By your wisdom and understanding you have gained wealth for yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries. By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud' " (Ezek. 28:4, 5). Babylon has created a system that uses others for personal gain. In that financial system are many "merchants" who are getting " 'rich from her excessive luxuries' " (Rev. 18:3). The sin of Babylon is getting rich on account of the poor and powerless. With this third point, the financial aspect comes into focus.

### End-time Babylon

In this threefold condemnation of Babylon we have political, religious, and financial aspects. The financial level is the one with which all of us are confronted on a daily basis. Since we cannot escape financial dealings in today's world, we all may be easy

targets. Interestingly, Revelation 18 emphasizes finances. Babylon uses all these aspects to attract, gain, and lead astray the nations of the earth. The deception will be great. Thus, we can say that the end-time Babylon will be a global alliance with the support of political, religious, and financial powers of today's world. They will join together to achieve material gain and profit. In their dealings, they will break the commandments of God, be immoral, and work against God Himself.

We are here dealing with an alliance in which many political, religious, and financial powers of the end time join together so that each one of them might achieve some personal gain. When was the world more global and connected than today? Despite all the differences, when has it functioned more as a unit than today? When have events on one end of the earth influenced the events in other parts more than today? In today's world we have all that is needed for the end-time Babylon to become a



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reality. Observing the attitude of the political, religious, and financial powers of today, could it be that the Babylonian alliance is a reality already?

### Financial aspect of the end-time Babylon

The financial aspect of the end-time alliance is the most prominent aspect in Revelation 18. Kings, merchants, sea captains, and sailors all cry because of Babylon's downfall: " 'Woe! Woe to you, great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!' Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' " (vv. 16-18).

The financial profit that they have made through their alliance with Babylon is no more. The most

interesting detail is that it will all happen in a single day. There were times when global events needed decades to develop, but today we are witnessing the fragility of the global economy. In the last couple of years, we have witnessed the disappearance of large financial institutions like Lehman Brothers, and their downfall happened literally in one day. The fall of the World Trade Center towers resulted in a different political climate within a single day. Today we are painfully aware that economic breakdown in one part of the world influences the rest of the world. That is why the Bible warns us, so that we will not find ourselves together with those who have invested in the wrong bank when it happens.

When the predicted major economic collapse occurs, the kings of the earth, politicians, and merchants " 'will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: 'Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through

her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!' " (v. 19). They are crying because of the downfall of Babylon, as well as over their own destiny. They are sorry for Babylon, because there is no longer the system that made their immoral gain possible by oppressing the weak and powerless. This will happen suddenly, so whoever was planning to straddle the fence will be taken by surprise by the sudden events. Only those who accept the call to exit that Babylonian system today and practice God's way are secure.

### Call: "Come out of her"

God's people of the Old Testament received a call to exit Babylon (Ezra 1:1-4), but only a small number of people came out. The majority had begun to enjoy it there; they accepted the Babylonian mentality and decided to stay there, and history has devoured them.

Revelation 18:4 sends a call to the end-time people of God to exit Babylon: " 'Come out of her, my people, so that

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you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues.’ ” We are called not to accept the Babylonian mentality that takes advantage of the weak and powerless or to run for unfair gain and profit but to base our dealings on the principles of God’s kingdom. In the end-time crisis, our minds can be in the mentality of Babylon or in the mentality of God. Do we want to invest in the Babylonian bank, or in God’s bank?

## Call of Jesus

With reference to economic exploitation and mismanagement implied in the concept of Babylon, we should turn to Jesus. On earth Jesus spread the values of His kingdom. He would never join people who were using others for personal gain, who were unjust or immoral. When He was asked concerning financial gains and alliances, He said: “ ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’ ” (Matt. 6:19–21).

Can we survive without any treasures on this earth? We need balance in our activities. We must earn our living and take proper care of our families and ourselves. But when we start living only for earthly material, temporary things, we can easily lose sight of God. In such circumstances, we easily start breaking some of God’s commandments. It becomes easy to enter the mind-set of Babylon and join the Babylonian system that brings personal gain and profit by stepping on the weak. God calls us clearly: “Come out of her!” He calls us to invest in His bank. Jesus was very radical in His statements, “ ‘Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also’ ” (Luke 12:33, 34).


Babylon offers her own way of life and salvation through human achievements. Ever since the tower of Babel, people were tempted to rely on their own achievements and turn away from the Creator God who is the Source of all power. The Babylonian system creates an outlook in which people are arrogant, self-sufficient, immoral, and godless. The Bible clearly predicts a downfall of that system. Whatever people might build in their own power does not have a future without God.

## Call to God’s city

The opposite of the city of Babylon in the book of Revelation is God’s city—the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21; 22).<sup>4</sup> This is the city that God prepares for His faithful, and they will get it for free. While the political, religious, and financial powers of today’s world invest their efforts in building their city and system, leading astray the inhabitants of the earth, God is preparing something qualitatively much better, and He offers it entirely for free. “ ‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’ ” (John 10:10).

God invites us to invest in His bank and into life with Him. The downfall of

the Babylonian system is a fact, and only a matter of time. The book of Revelation warns those who live in the Babylonian setup that the downfall will be sudden. In today’s world in which political, religious, and financial authorities are afraid for the future, there are important questions: Who do you bank with? How do you invest your time? Where is your mind?

When the end comes, the writer of the book of Revelation does not want us to join the cry of the kings, merchants, and sailors but wants us to join in the song of the redeemed: “ ‘Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed’ ” (Rev. 15:3, 4). 

1 Jon Paulien, *The Deep Things of God: An Insider’s Guide to the Book of Revelation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2004), 34, 35.

2 Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture is from the New International Version of the Bible.

3 Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 515.

4 For further development of that topic, see Igor Lorenčin, *Dekodiranje Apokalipse* (Maruševac, Croatia: Adventistički Teološki Fakultet, 2009), 125–134.

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Gordon E. Christo, PhD, serves as executive secretary, Southern Asia Division, Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India.



# In prosperity and adversity

Jesus declared that it is harder for a rich man to enter heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle (Matt. 19:24, Mark 10:25, Luke 18:25). Several theories have been presented to explain what Jesus meant. Two are (1) the “eye of a needle” was the small door set in a huge city gate. Yes, a camel could be forced through such an opening, but it would be quite an accomplishment. (2) Jesus was playing with sounds of two Greek words—*kamelos* and *kamilos*. The first means “camel,” and the second denotes a thick rope used to fasten a ship to the dock. Either Jesus meant it was as difficult for a rich person to enter heaven as to squeeze a camel through a door was for humans, or it was as impossible as threading a thick rope through the eye of a needle.

We usually imagine Jesus referring to rich people such as the young ruler who had “great possessions” and approached Him seeking salvation. But the disciples knew that He really meant the lesson was for each of us. Matthew 19:25 says they were greatly astonished. They asked, “Who then can be saved?” (KJV) Who of us would be willing to liquidate all our assets and distribute the money to the needy? We could have more easily accepted His instruction if He had asked us to dispose of our surplus. But everything? He could not be serious, could He?

## The danger of things

Instead, a study of Jesus’ teachings indicates that He warned about the perils of material prosperity for everyone.

## What are these dangers?

1. *Material prosperity takes one’s focus away from heaven.* Jesus taught that it was not possible to worship God and wealth at the same time (Matt. 6:24). He observed, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (v. 21, NKJV). So if one pursues wealth, it follows that interest in God will deteriorate.

2. *It keeps one selfish.* In explaining the parable of the sower, Jesus referred to the “deceitfulness of wealth” and clarified it by indicating that one would never be satisfied but would see further things (Mark 4:19, NIV). We desire a nicer house, a fancier car, and a little higher salary. We never have enough and seldom arrive at a point where we think, *Now I have enough. I can start giving away.*

3. *It encourages a false sense of security.* Jesus narrated a parable of a rich fool who thought to build bigger and bigger barns and then take life easy, eating, drinking, and making merry. He reminded His hearers that death could come suddenly and wreck all of their plans (Luke 12:16–21). A person with limitless money grows to believe that he or she can deal with any situation. They do not need to ask God for it because they can buy it.

## Job’s prosperity

Job was perfectly prosperous. His possessions are described in perfect numbers—sevens and threes, and fives and fives that add up to tens—of exact whole numbers in hundreds and thousands (Job 1:3). Everything speaks of

success beyond imagination. He must have owned extensive fields for his hundreds of oxen to plow. His sheep would have provided wool, meat, and milk. The camels and donkeys would have served to transport his goods near and far. He was the richest person in the East. One can imagine what would be needed today to be labeled the richest person in their half of the world.

Despite his wealth (though Satan would say, because of it), Job was religious. Not only does the narrator describe him as perfect and upright, but God employed the same adjectives to describe him (vv. 1, 8). We might call him a saint. Job functioned as a priest for his children—sacrificing on their behalf, perchance they had sinned (vv. 5, 6). At the end of the story, Job functioned as a priest for the three friends who visited him, and God accepted his mediation on their behalf (Job 42:8, 9).

God rejoiced in Job’s scrupulous and meticulous service. When Satan came to His heavenly court, God proudly drew attention to His model subject with faithful service to God. Satan scoffed at Job’s loyalty and accused God of manipulation. Of course, Job would be faithful to God. This was a matter of expediency: Job serves God and God takes care of Job. Satan charged that if God removed the protective hedge around Job and exposed Job to disasters that his loyalty would vanish. The important image here is the “hedge.” Invisible but real, the hedge filtered out threats and only allowed things that contributed to Job’s prosperity and well-being (Job 1:10) to come in.

God granted Satan permission to change the situation. Job had by this time lost his possessions and children. Job could not have known that God had restricted Satan in that he was not to take Job's life. We can assume that, if given the chance, Satan would have afflicted him with the worst disease possible, ending in death. To have taken Job as close to death as was possible would have suited Satan's purpose best; Job himself declared that he had escaped by the skin of his teeth (Job 19:20). At this point, no good thing was coming his way, to such an extent that Job described himself fenced, cornered, and unable to escape from calamities. Like Satan, he employed the imagery of a hedge, but this one accomplished the opposite, filtering out everything good and allowing only evil to access him.

## Job's success

In tennis, the players change sides to neutralize any advantage one half of the court may hold. Although both sides of the court are constructed to be as identical as possible, players often have a preferred side from which they feel they perform better. On some amateur tennis courts, the advantage can be significant, which means those on the better side of the court have great advantages over those on the bad one.

For the first part of his life Job had everything in his favor. Whatever he attempted succeeded. His wealth multiplied in the absence of setbacks. Satan accused God of holding Job to the good side of the court and not requiring him to change to the bad side. "Naturally, Job will win," Satan snickered. "You have got it all fixed." And he challenged God to move Job to the bad side of the court and see how he would falter and fail. God practically had no choice. He could not keep Job playing on the good side only and still proclaim him a champion. He had to call Satan's bluff.

Job, of course, won the first set playing from the good side. He had no idea he was changing sides. Behind his back, the court was rearranged. The net,

what he called the hedge, changed in character, and he found himself battling the odds as disaster after disaster befell him and his fortunes suffered until he was reduced to abject poverty.

But this match was not about prosperity but about maintaining faith in God. And Job won by saying, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21, NKJV).

Job won the set, and God pointed it out to Satan. Job should have been restored to the other side at this point. But Satan had a further charge. The hedge was still there. God was still protecting Job. God could not uphold Job as a champion until Satan was given full freedom to test Job's faith.

So Job stayed on the bad side and was exposed to the full fury of Satan's attacks. In the first series of tests, Job only had to deal with losing what he had gained. Job realized that what had been taken away had been given to him earlier as a bonus. He had come into the world naked and was willing, if he had to, to go out the same way.

In the final round, Job was tested by Satan; he took away his health, something he had been born with and arguably had a right to. Job responded, after being queried and scolded by his wife, "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10,

ESV). If we accept blessings, we ought to accept not only the removal of blessings but even curses.

## True champions

Praise God that most of us have been allowed to play on the good side for so long. Yet, the story of Job reveals that remaining faithful and loyal to Him in such situations has little merit. On the other hand, there are many who find themselves playing with challenges—business misfortunes, loss of a job, death of a loved one, lingering disease, and failures of all sort. Winning is not about prosperity or adversity but about maintaining faith in God. One can be on the better side and still lose. Prosperity can lead to a disrupted relationship with God. Similarly, one can be on the bad side and still win. This depends on one's faith in and loyalty to God.

Whenever we find ourselves playing from the bad side of the court, or even if we get the occasional bad bounce, we need to be alert to the probability that we are being tested like Job. We cannot be declared true champions unless we can win despite adversity, unless we have been tested to the uttermost. We have to be able to declare like Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:14). Then God can declare us winners. 📖

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# How to **increase the power of your preaching** through stories

**J**esus is perhaps the greatest Storyteller in history. He told stories not to entertain crowds, not to carry on a philosophic dialogue with seekers and skeptics, and not to establish a name for Himself as the Transmitter of knowledge and wisdom. He told stories—simple and elegant—to reveal the nature of God, the problem of sin, and God’s redemptive mission. Jesus was the Great Communicator of the deep and abiding lessons in the plan of salvation in simple and understandable forms.<sup>1</sup> He spoke the language of the people and showed keen understanding of their pains and pleasures.<sup>2</sup> As a Master Teacher, He taught theology that was rooted in day-to-day life and experiences rather than in abstract and abstruse theories. Although His stories and sayings were vivid reflections of everyday life of the period<sup>3</sup> in which He lived, they still carry a timeless value to our own time.

Although parables predate Jesus, no one used parables more “consistently, creatively, and effectively as He did.”<sup>4</sup> Parables played such a significant part in His teaching that one-third of His teachings were in this form, and they were Christ’s favorite mode of teaching.<sup>5</sup> There are several reasons why Jesus

used parables as a primary mode of His teaching. Robert Stein mentions three: (1) to conceal His teachings from those outside; (2) to reveal and illustrate His message to His followers and to those outside; and (3) to disarm His listeners.<sup>6</sup> Other reasons include provoking and challenging His listeners’ thoughts and also allowing them to make the connections for themselves through His vivid illustrations and images of the love of God.<sup>7</sup> Ellen White, perhaps, says it best: “Jesus sought an avenue to every heart. By using a variety of illustrations, He not only presented truth in its different phases, but appealed to the different hearers. Their interest was aroused by figures drawn from the surroundings of their daily life. None who listened to the Saviour could feel that they were neglected or forgotten. The humblest, the most sinful, heard in His teaching a voice that spoke to them in sympathy and tenderness.”<sup>8</sup>

## Stories and their functions

Time was when teachers communicated with devices such as word pictures, metaphors, and stories, unlike the abstract reasoning and verbal prose of the Greek tradition common to Western education today.<sup>9</sup> Scholars of narrative

theology inform us that God the Father is a Storyteller. A survey of the 66 books of the Bible reveals that one-third of the books use story as the primary genre of communication, and those 22 books account for half the Bible.<sup>10</sup>

What does all this mean to us? It means that to be effective in telling our generation about God and His love, we must learn the simple art of storytelling to connect our hearers with the great truths about God. Note some of the powerful qualities stories have to transmit the message of the gospel:

- Stories have the power to entertain by grabbing our attention, involving our emotions, and stirring our imaginations to fresh thinking.
- Stories create a sense of community by building bridges between people of the past and those of the present, and between one people group and another.
- Stories teach us great truths simply and effectively and show us how to live and think.
- Stories are enduring—we may forget theories, but rarely forget stories.<sup>11</sup>

Once upon a time, God incarnated as a Storyteller—the Word—which is the

lesson from John's theology of the Word of God (John 1:1–3, 14).<sup>12</sup> That is to say, God is not a notion, He is a Person. "God is not concept; God is story. God is not idea; God is presence. God is not hypothesis; God is experience. God is not principle; God is life."<sup>13</sup> However, before He embarked on His mission of telling stories, Jesus first listened to stories.<sup>14</sup> Although He must have had lots of stories to tell about the kingdom above, He first took time, actually 30 of the 33 years of His life, to listen to the stories from His community. It was in this matrix that His theology was shaped, a theology that was deep yet simple, divine yet enfleshed. His theology was His story, and His story was His theology.<sup>15</sup>

## Stories, values, and the media

Stories define our reality. How do we determine what is good and bad, right and wrong, friend or foe, person and nonperson? The stories we heard from childhood shaped our worldviews and determined for us what was acceptable conduct and what was not. Once upon a time, parents and the elderly in the community told stories to young children. Some stories were historical, others were mythical, while others were simply bedtime stories. The strange thing is that we have never forgotten those stories.

Who's telling the stories today? Hollywood, telenovelas, and the Internet, and the results are there for all to see. The media powerfully and purposefully directs the values and morals of society today.

In the light of this growing trend, is there something Christians can do? Although the church has achieved a lot in transforming the beliefs and behaviors of people everywhere, there is still much to do; and much can be done through storytelling. Here are some areas where Christian storytelling can help advance the cause of the gospel.

1. *Use stories in your preaching to help cultivate a positive and joyous attitude to life.* Without a Christian attitude to life, church members, in times of

crisis or conflict, revert to pre-Christian practices and habits, thus not providing room for the sanctifying power of God in their lives. Annette Simmons, in her book *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins*, explains that stories have the power to change reality.<sup>16</sup> Stories we heard as children taught us to fear ghosts, spirits, and darkness. In other words, one can so paint a picture in the mind of a listener that it can trigger many emotions: pain, anger, sorrow, empathy, fear, and joy. Unfortunately, churches today place more value in abstract, theoretical, and rational methodologies for teaching doctrines. As a result, despite the fact that the minds of many are convicted of the truth, the hearts have remained unconverted. The role of emotions has thus been disregarded in the work of conversion. The result is spiritual dissonance—convinced heads, but untransformed hearts. Salvation and the kingdom must be represented as the Master Communicator did, in stories that touched the hearts and transformed the lives of hearers. While narrative preaching is important, appropriate stories leave indelible moral and doctrinal emphases on the mind.

2. *Use stories to speak about the salvation story in simple, understandable language.* When speaking about eternal life, the kingdom of God, and unseen spiritual realities, Jesus often began with the phrase, "The kingdom of God is like . . ." Then came a story or an illustration that the hearers in that communal context could identify and connect with. Even in the Old Testament times, whenever God sent a prophet with a message for His people, this message was often delivered in metaphors, illustrations, word pictures, and object lessons, never in complex philosophical constructs that only the trained or elite could understand. Nathan needed only a story to bring King David to a shocking realization of the gravity of his sinful conduct (2 Sam. 12:1–14). A rational logical exposition on sin may never have achieved that effect.

3. *While propositional methods have their place, try narrative and illustrative*

*witnessing whenever you can.* Too often, witnessing takes a propositional form. This is not strange considering the fact that most ministers and educators are trained in an educational pattern rooted in dialectics or philosophy. But that is not the only mode in which learning takes place or truth can be taught. Postmoderns can be reached as we change our language and method of doing ministry by employing "faith stories, testimonies, public drama, role-plays, and skits"; thus we can communicate the gospel story boldly, knowing that it "has an inherent and innate power."<sup>17</sup>

4. *Try media presentations to enhance witnessing.* Perhaps electronic media—television and the Internet—stand as the most powerful communication tools to convey and influence popular opinion and action today, as witnessed by the recent political movements across northern Africa. The Arab Spring revolution is a graphic reminder of the power of the electronic media to bring about political and social change. Television, Internet, YouTube, Facebook, and other social media are largely responsible for worldwide changes in attitude to such matters as sexual orientation and same-sex marriage, for instance. How has the church handled these powerful electronic media in accomplishing its primary mission? On the one hand are those who employ these services to preach the gospel effectively, promote their ministries sincerely, and raise funds for constructive global projects. On the other hand are those who have turned the television into a medium to demonize and condemn people as sinners bound for hell, make people live with a guilt complex, and amass wealth for questionable purposes. While the potential for good and evil are present in mass media, it cannot be denied that television is one of the greatest forces of globalization that has created a common culture among youth all over the world. Has the church done anything to utilize this great communication opening?

The History Channel produced a series on the Bible that was a huge success and led people to ask whether



these stories were actually in the Bible, with some persons even stating that they never knew the Bible was so exciting. Yet, this was not an initiative of any church, but by Hollywood. Could it be possible that the Lord is nudging us in a direction we have always been reluctant to go, and like Peter, we are reacting by saying, “Not so, Lord” (Acts 10:14, KJV). While there is reasonable concern about obsession with fiction, Christ’s method should be the model.

5. *Relate your preaching to current events and stories familiar to your audience.* The church has a duty and responsibility to get more involved in the activities of our respective communities. Until we learn the stories that define their hurts, worries, pleasures, and needs, we will continue to speak above their heads. But the moment we understand their stories and can connect those stories with God’s salvation story, transformation will occur. Passion will be kindled, and hunger and thirst satisfied.

6. *Make the best of the metanarrative of the great controversy to provide a relevant context for your preaching.* Within this grand narrative

of the cosmic conflict is a series of stories: the role of the Godhead, the Son particularly, in the drama of the ages that has raged between God and Satan; the mind of Satan at work; the consequence of unbridled ambition; the fall of the first humans; the result of divine submission in the Person of the Son to redeem the fallen humanity; the role of God’s covenant people and the contours of their history; the Cross and the Resurrection; the mission of the church; and the final events of the cosmic victory over evil. The biblical metanarrative does not focus on lust and deceit, envy and revenge, such as what constitute the themes of many popular sitcoms viewed by millions around the world; it focuses on unconditional love and unparalleled self-abnegation. But which story is heard louder and better? In the law courts, as lawyers quickly learn, the best story wins. If indeed the best story wins, as was demonstrated by Christ as He shared glimpses of the Father with the people of His day, the question we need to ask ourselves is, What stories are we telling? Perhaps what it requires is for Christian witnesses to

spend more time in reflection on how to illustrate, or present, the gospel in appealing forms. ▮

- 1 Simon J. Kistemaker, *The Parables: Understanding the Stories Jesus Told* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1980), 13.
- 2 Gary M. Burge, *Jesus, the Middle Eastern Storyteller: Uncover the Ancient Culture, Discover Hidden Meanings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 16.
- 3 David Wenham, *The Parables of Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 13.
- 4 Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories With Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 37.
- 5 Burge, 19.
- 6 Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1981), 33–35.
- 7 Wenham, 14.
- 8 Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), 21, 22.
- 9 Burge, 15, 16.
- 10 John A. Beck, *God as Storyteller: Seeking Meaning in Biblical Narrative* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2009), 1.
- 11 Ibid., 2, 3.
- 12 John Navone, *Seeking God in Story* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990), 185.
- 13 C. S. Song, *In the Beginning Were Stories Not Texts: Story Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 7.
- 14 Navone, 184.
- 15 Song, 18.
- 16 Annette Simmons, *Whoever Tells the Best Story Wins: How to Use Your Own Stories to Communicate With Power and Impact* (New York: Amacom Books, 2007), 3.
- 17 Carlos C. Roberts, *Christian Education Teaching Methods—From Modern to Postmodern: Teaching the Faith to Post-moderns* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2009), 10, 11.

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## Living in God’s strength

There are times in life when we are forced to recognize that we are not powerful enough to do what needs to be done. We find ourselves needing physical, emotional, and spiritual strength that we do not have. It may be that we need the strength to endure pain, to face fear, or to make difficult decisions. It may be that we need strength to love those who have not loved us. It may be that we need the strength to say “No” or the strength to say “Yes.” We may need the strength to be people of compassion and integrity in times when the cost is very high and the benefits are not clear to us.

But through prayer and the Word, we have a message of hope: God is

strong and loving. In love, knowing our need, God offers to be our strength. “Do not fear, for I am with you,” God says; “do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you” (Isa. 41:10, NIV). To let God be our strength means to “let God be God” in our lives. This daily exercise comes when we learn to trust Him completely.

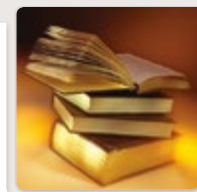
“A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. . . . Talk

and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him. . . . Rest in God. He is able to keep that which you have committed to Him. If you will leave yourself in His hands, He will bring you off more than conqueror through Him that has loved you.” \*

—RAQUEL ARRAIS SERVES AS ASSOCIATE WOMEN’S MINISTRIES DIRECTOR, GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS, SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES.

\* Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), 70–72.

*Revival*  
and  
REFORMATION



## C. D.: The Man Behind the Message

by Harold L. Lee with Benjamin Baker, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013.

This biography is a tribute to one of the greatest evangelists and soul winners in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Like many others, I stand in awe of Elder C. D. Brooks and the abilities conferred on him by the Lord. He and his wife, Walterene, are two of the most gracious people alive and reflect characters refined by their connection with Jesus.

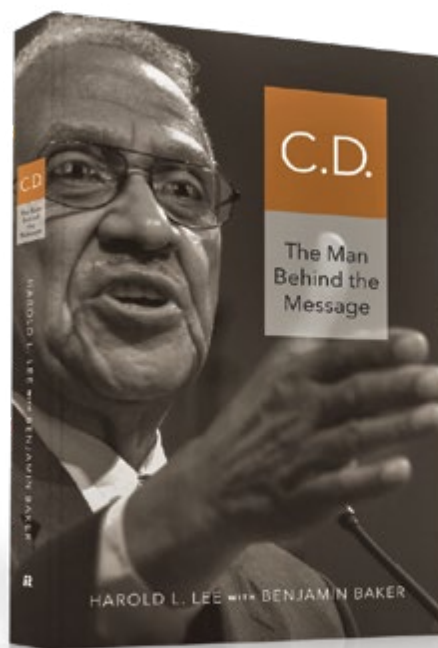
More than 20 tributes in the opening pages of this biography provide compelling evidence of the impact of this great preacher's life and ministry. Mark Finley shares the following testimony: "Some people's ministries leave a mark, others leave a legacy. C. D. Brooks has a left a legacy on the lives of thousands of preachers and tens of thousands of church members and hundreds of thousands of viewers of the *Breath of Life* telecast. His unique blend of humility, brilliance, and deep spirituality has impacted countless lives" (4). Ella Simmons adds her testimony: "There are many ways to describe Elder C. D. Brooks, of which few could be adequate. When I hear his name, there is one description that comes to mind: It is that man of God of whom Ellen White spoke who will not be bought or sold, who in his inmost soul is true and honest, who does not fear to call sin by its right name, whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, that man who will stand for the right though the heavens fall" (3). Past president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Jan Paulsen, states, "For all of his many accomplishments, Elder Brooks is, first

and foremost, an unfailingly gracious, faithful, and gentle man of God—and for this, I honor him" (5).


These testimonies confirm that C. D. Brooks epitomizes the Christian who knows that which he believes and is willing to say it with directness and grace. His fidelity to the Bible as the Word of God is fundamental to his perspective on how the church can best proclaim the message of salvation in Christ. He has shown all of us what it means to preach the Word in season and out of season, through the power of the Holy Spirit, giving thousands of people a new lease on life.

He pioneered the media ministry appropriately called *Breath of Life*, bringing to television, and later to the Internet, the powerful three angels' messages pointing to Christ's soon return. Indeed, the great objective of his life has been to point people to the promise of eternal life through the life, death, resurrection, and high-priestly ministry of Jesus—the One he loves supremely as Savior and Lord.

*C. D.: The Man Behind the Message* records the amazing ways in which God spoke to C. D.'s mother, Mattie Brooks, helping her to set her son on a pathway of lifelong service to God. When he was a young man, he wanted to become a dentist, but God had other plans. Instead of C. D. working on the mouths of others, God has touched his mouth to powerfully proclaim the eternal truths of God's Word. This spiritual journey



began early in his life and has taken him to the farthest corners of the globe.

In this book, you will find thrilling stories of God using this powerful preacher to blaze new trails in evangelism, church organization, and human relations. You will also learn how to lean on God in various circumstances and find encouragement for your life and walk with Jesus. Ultimately, as you read about the life and ministry of C. D. Brooks, you will be inspired to rededicate your life to Jesus and to tell others of His saving grace. 

—Reviewed by Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the world church of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

## ► Theology of Ordination Study Committee

**Columbia, Maryland, United States**—The General Conference Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) held its third weekly meeting January 21–25, 2014, in Columbia, Maryland—a short drive from the General Conference headquarters. The denomination is in the midst of a five-year process of studying the biblical foundation of the theology of ordination and how it relates to gender and the implications if women were to be ordained.

The five-year process was established following a pledge at the denomination's General Conference Session in 2010 to examine ordination. Each of the Adventist Church's 13 world divisions has formed its own Biblical Research Committee and delivered its recommendation to the TOSC.

The January meeting featured presentations on theology and descriptions of options for moving forward in worldwide unity regarding ordination as it relates to gender. Much of the discussion focused on the issue of "headship." Papers from all meetings are available to view on the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research Web site at [www.adventistarchives.org/ordination](http://www.adventistarchives.org/ordination).

**Artur Stele**, TOSC chair and director of the denomination's Biblical Research Institute, told delegates that the time for researching and studying of the issue had come to an end. "From now on we're going in a new direction. From now, including the June meeting, we'll be looking for solutions," he said. Stele continued, "These meetings



have featured frank—even very frank—descriptions of the positions on both sides of this matter. I believe that everyone who has participated in this process has come with a genuine desire to find out what the Word of God teaches and how we can identify solutions that allow the church to stay focused on its worldwide mission. I've been gratified to see a growing sense of camaraderie and understanding as we've moved through this process."

At the final TOSC meeting in June, it's expected that the committee will make recommendations for the denomination's Executive Committee meeting at Annual Council in October 2014. From there, a recommendation will likely be made for the agenda of the 2015 General Conference Session. [ANN]

## ► Leona Running, long-time biblical scholar, passes away

**Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States**—**Leona Glidden Running**, 97, professor emerita of biblical languages at Andrews University, died on January 22, 2014, in Berrien Springs, Michigan, after nearly six decades of service to the Seventh-day Adventist

Theological Seminary and Andrews University.

**Niels-Erik Andreassen**, president of Andrews University, shared the following statement: "During her long and productive life Dr. Running broke new ground in the University and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was the first female professor at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Takoma Park,

Maryland, and later here at Andrews. She was the first Adventist woman to earn a doctorate in Ancient Near Eastern Studies (Johns Hopkins University), with a specialization in ancient Syriac texts. She overcame the grief of losing her husband early in life and built her exemplary academic and professional calling. Following her retirement she continued to share her linguistic skill with graduate students (Syriac, Egyptian, Akkadian, Hebrew, Aramaic, and almost any other language these students cared to learn). And she served the University with her editorial talents, improving a good many of its publications over the years. . . . She was an inspiration to many and an example to us all."

**Jiří Moskala**, dean of the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Theological Seminary, says, "Dr. Running holds a special place in the








hearts of her Old Testament and seminary colleagues and former students, who greatly appreciated her mentoring during their seminary years. She was the first woman professor at the SDA Theological Seminary and was indeed a woman of remarkable skills and influence. . . . We praise the Lord for her life and faithful ministry!”

**William Shea**, a close colleague, estimates that “Leona assisted more students in writing doctoral dissertations than any other faculty member of Andrews University. She has probably touched the educational lives of more Seventh-day Adventist ministers than any other woman except Ellen White.”

Running began working for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in 1955, teaching Greek and Hebrew. At the time, the president of the seminary was skeptical about a woman’s ability to teach male students and male students’ willingness to be taught by a woman. She began teaching on a trial basis, but in 1956 she was granted regular status and, shortly after, full tenure. When the seminary was moved from Maryland to Michigan in 1960, Running came with it, continuing on as a valuable and dedicated professor of biblical languages.

For many years Leona collected articles, journals, and books on women

in ministry. She donated the collection to the Center for Adventist Research in the James White Library ([www.andrews.edu/library/car/collection/Running,%20Leona%20Running%20Women%20in%20Church%20and%20Society%20Collection.pdf](http://www.andrews.edu/library/car/collection/Running,%20Leona%20Running%20Women%20in%20Church%20and%20Society%20Collection.pdf)).

She retired from teaching at age 65, but for 21 years she continued to teach Egyptian, Akkadian, and Syriac in the seminary, finally quitting in May 2002. At the May 2012 commencement ceremony, Leona was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Andrews University. [Patricia Spangler/ Andrews University] 

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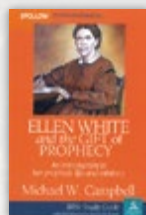
## iFollow Bible Study Series

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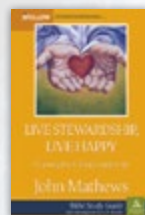
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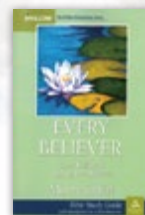
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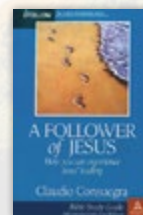
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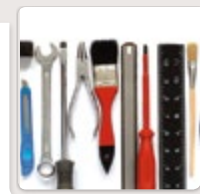
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# A church pastor's dream list

**T**wenty-five years ago I served as pastor of a large metropolitan church. At first glance, this church was a magnificent edifice with a large one-of-a-kind pipe organ; a three-tier sanctuary; and two 30-foot-high motifs, imported from Italy, depicting the three angels of Revelation and the Second Advent. However, in contrast to its beauty and dignity, the church lacked the basics for encouraging members and the community to come and be part of the congregation.

Although it had seating for 1,400, there were only 150 parking spaces; while it had a pastoral staff of five, its office complex had only one office; and despite it being easily seen from the road, there was no way for a person to enter the facility from the other side of the parkway.

If you are currently looking at constructing a new facility, here are six basic elements that it needs.

## 1. External signage

The church sign should identify the church in large, high-contrasting lettering that can be easily read by passersby. A number of church signs that I have seen display the church name in colors and hues that are nearly identical with the background. I have been amazed by the number of Seventh-day Adventist churches that do not spell their denominational name correctly, such as no hyphen between “Seventh” and “day” or capitalizing the “D” in “day.”

## 2. Entrance to the facility

Adequate lighting of the church's name is needed (as well as for important entrances). The street number must appear in large letters that can be seen easily from the road.

The entrance(s) should be convenient from the street and well marked. Having a covered entrance for a minimum of two vehicles to unload their passengers is a must for weather conditions and for special occasions, such as funerals and weddings.

## 3. Parking

Parking space should be adequate for the largest event you will ever have at your church. Designing the parking to be convenient for visitors and members to gain access to the various entrances of your facility is a real plus. Providing special parking spots for visitors, including parking spots for families with small children and pregnant mothers, is a great way to welcome newcomers. Trees and shrubs are an added bonus, along with a walkway between the rows of parked vehicles.

## 4. Storage

Inadequate storage rooms result in, probably, the biggest “nightmare” for deacons and deaconesses. In many cases, the church building committee fails to include a room to store the chairs and tables used for fellowship lunches. This problem extends to the Sabbath School rooms, which never seem to have satisfactory cupboards, particularly in the lower divisions, for all the soft toys, flannel kits, books, and boxes of handout items. A child-sized toilet in the bathroom near the classroom is also a bonus.

A special closet for whiteboards, projectors, TV stands, and other audio equipment is often overlooked. The deaconesses would praise any building committee that included a large walk-in compartment with shelves for the items churches use, such as tablecloths,

flower vases, and Communion materials.

When planning each room for your new facility, the thinking should be “storage, adequate storage, and more storage.” Even then, down the road, you will probably be saying, “I wish we had more storage.”


## 5. Small rooms

Often much of what happens in the local church involves small groups, be they working committees, social groups, musical ensembles, or spiritual circles. Providing rooms of various sizes makes individuals feel more at home and saves on utility costs. Sometimes having a large room that can be divided by two or three moveable walls can provide for a number of functions and groups. Remember, the majority of church work is conducted in small rooms.

## 6. Church office space

Every church needs a professional office space. This should include a reception area with a secretarial desk and adequate space for computers, printers, and other office equipment. A separate copy room is very helpful, with lots of table space for assembling bulletins, for instance.

The building should include two or three pastors' offices even if your church currently has only one pastor. Evangelists and Bible workers will need these rooms when you conduct evangelistic series. The pastoral offices should be designed to face the secretary/receptionist's office, divided from it by a double-paned glass wall to keep the conversations private.

The little things—the attention to details—make a church feel more like a home, which will encourage individuals and families to return again and again. 

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