

Elder's Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

Number Three



Jesus
the Focus of 1844

Jesus the Focus of 1844

■ JOEL SARLI

In spite of the fact that 1844 is the central point in tracing the prophetic identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the real focus of 1844 is Jesus as our High Priest interceding in the heavenly sanctuary in behalf of every believer.

According to the interpretation of Daniel 8:14 and Revelation 14:6-12, two events took place almost simultaneously in 1844. One event took place in heaven and the other on earth. In heaven, according to the book of Hebrews, Jesus moved from the Holy Place to the Holiest or Most Holy Place. This began His pre-advent judgement and special intercession in behalf of His people. On the earth, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Advent Movement was brought about with the specific responsibility of preaching the "everlasting gospel unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev 14:6).

This year the Adventist Church celebrates 150 years of history. But as we celebrate such an event let us not forget two realities. First, the Adventist Church came into existence by the direct intervention of Jesus. Second, she fulfils her mission under His direct assistance. "For without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

In this special issue, *Elder's Digest* joins millions of Adventists around the world praising

God for what Jesus has done. Let us regain the vision of our prophetic identity and mission and with the power of the Holy Spirit move on, overcoming the obstacles and making the dreams of the Global Mission come true in our time for the glory of God.

It is good at this point in our history, after 150 years of operating our church program, to read again the words of confidence that the servant of the Lord spoke so many years ago. It is good to refresh in our memories our commitment to the Lord as individuals and as a church. "In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.

"We are debtors to God to use every advantage He has entrusted to us to beautify the truth by holiness of character, and to send the messages of warning, and of comfort, of hope and love, to those who are in the darkness of error and sin." E.G. White, *Life Sketches*, page 196.



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“I Saw the Lord”

✠ JAMES H. ZACHARY

Isaiah walked through the crowded streets of Jerusalem with a heavy heart. His nation faced great trouble. Storms of war threatened from the north. The young man made his way to the Temple. Before the Lord he poured out his heart in prayer.

And God answered. He always does.

The veil of the Temple seemed to be drawn aside. In vision Isaiah saw the glory of God. “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a very high throne. His long robe filled the Temple. Burning heavenly creatures stood above him. Each creature had six wings. They used two wings to cover their faces. They used two wings to cover their feet. And they used two wings for flying” (Isa. 6:1, 2).*

Try to capture the glory. The high throne, the person of God, the robe filling the Temple, and the heavenly angels.

Then the Temple echoed with praise for God: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of heaven’s armies. His glory fills the whole earth” (verse 3).

Fear clutched at Isaiah’s heart as the sound of their voices moved the posts of the building and the smoke of their tribute filled the Temple.

“I saw the Lord.” The power, the righteousness, and the love of God filled the mind of the youth from then on.

Like Isaiah, elders need to take time daily to

“see” the Lord. Morning by morning we need to look at the life of Jesus by meditating upon the Gospels or His life in *The Desire of Ages*. We must stop the rushing flow of life’s duties to learn about the greatest Life that ever lived.

Isaiah saw the Lord. Then he saw himself. What a contrast! We cannot truly see ourselves until we see the Lord. With the building shaking and the glory of God almost blinding him, Isaiah cried out in agony, “Oh, no! I will be destroyed. I am not pure. And I live among people who are not pure. But I have seen the King, the Lord of heaven’s armies” (verse 5).

I am reminded of another man who came to the Temple—Herod’s Temple. “The tax collector stood at a distance when he prayed, he would not even look up to heaven. He beat on his chest because he was so sad. He said, ‘God, have mercy on me. I am a sinner!’” (Luke 18:13).

God always answers this prayer immediately. The publican was accepted, forgiven, and declared righteous by the Lord Jesus.

We see our spiritual condition most clearly after seeing the Lord. How dangerous to compare ourselves with others! We will come up with false high marks for ourselves when we do. But when looking upon the Lord of glory, the best of us will cry with Isaiah and the publican, “I am a sinner; Lord, have mercy on me.”



✠ JAMES H. ZACHARY

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Picture the young Isaiah at the Temple weeping in penitence before the King of the universe. Then the Lord summons an angel to take a live coal off heaven's altar. Flying swiftly to the side of the youth, he touches the lips of Isaiah. What joy comes to him as he hears the words of the angel: "Look. Your guilt is taken away because this hot coal has touched your lips. Your sin is taken away" (Isa. 6:7).

When Jesus takes away our sin with its guilt and shame, peace and joy fill the heart.

"I saw the Lord." This experience at the Temple transformed the life of Isaiah. There he heard the call of God: "Whom can I send? Who will go for us?" (verse 8).

Isaiah came face-to-face with the priorities of his God. All of heaven is deeply involved in a gigantic rescue mission for Planet Earth. This is

the work of the heavenly angels and the three Members of the Trinity.

Still before the Lord, Isaiah said, "Here I am. Send me!" (verse 8).

Isaiah spent the rest of his life in the service of the Lord. And while the northern nation of Israel felt the severe blows of divine justice, Judah responded to the preaching of this gospel prophet who saw the Lord that day in the Temple.

How much each elder needs to see the Lord each day. How much we need to see our great need. How much we need the healing grace of the gospel to bring peace to our hearts. How much we need the vision of the divine task that God has for each one.

May we daily see the Lord.

* Bible texts in this editorial are from *The Everyday Bible*.

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Why Ophelia Couldn't Wait

E C. MERVYN MAXWELL

"Daddy, could I be baptized tonight? Please?"

"It's already late, you know, Ophelia, and we have twelve long miles (19.2 kilometers) to ride in an open sleigh before you can get to bed!"

"I know, Daddy, but I really would like to be baptized before we go home!"

"Do you realize that the lake is probably frozen around the edges, and that we would have to travel two or three cold miles (5.2 or 4.8 kilometers) there and back?"

"Yes, but that's all right," the girl responded. "I can take it."

Twelve-year-old Ophelia and other members of her family had been attending a series of revival meetings. As the ministers preached Ophelia knew she loved Jesus and wanted to be a true Christian as long as she lived.

Seeing her resolution, a minister in the group turned to a friend and asked, "Elder, would you mind going out to the lake with Ophelia and her father and baptizing her?"

"I'll be glad to do it," the good man replied. Thereupon Ophelia's Daddy accompanied her to the icy water and witnessed her baptism in the dark. They arrived home at a very late hour—chilled through, no doubt, but very happy in the Lord.

Let me tell you a little bit more about Ophelia

and her Daddy. Her Daddy was Hiram Edson. He became quite famous among Seventh-day Adventists in the early days. Mr. Edson was a hardworking farmer and fine layman preacher. Back in 1844, Hiram Edson had been one of the people who expected Jesus to come to earth on October 22, 1844.

The Bible said that Jesus in 1844 would "come" to a special wedding and to the judgment, and almost all Christians in those days believed that the wedding and the judgment would happen down here on the earth. So when the Adventists came to understand that Jesus would come to the marriage and the judgment in 1844—which was right!—they supposed that He would come to the earth in 1844. And oh, how they looked forward to His coming.

Ophelia was only a baby in 1844. But as she grew, she heard her parents tell the story often. She heard them tell how friends had come to their house to wait together for Jesus to come to the earth on October 22, 1844. Her Mother and Daddy had been especially eager for Jesus to come because they wanted Him to resurrect Ophelia's older brother and sister who had died.

The older boys in the group doubtless wanted Jesus to come before another winter appeared because like most boys they didn't like to feed and



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milk cows on cold winter mornings.

Ophelia's parents and friends expected Jesus to come back to earth some time during the day, maybe first thing in the morning, or at noon, or anytime before the sun went down. But Jesus didn't come and they got worried. They told themselves that Jesus surely would come by midnight. The littlest children got too sleepy to stay awake. Ophelia herself, as I told you, was only a baby. But the grownups stayed awake. Ten o'clock came and went. Eleven o'clock. Still Jesus didn't come. But they believed He would surely come by midnight. The clock began to strike midnight. "Jesus surely will come before it stops counting twelve..." they thought. One, two, three, ... nine, ten. "Oh. He has to come!" But the clock finished striking twelve, and Jesus didn't come. He didn't come.

The grownups cried out loud. They were so very disappointed. Probably some of the children woke up and cried too.

In the morning, Ophelia's Daddy took some of his friends out to the barn to pray. While they prayed, he began to feel much better. He became sure that one of these days God would explain

their disappointment and would show them what Jesus really did on October 22, 1844.

Ophelia's Daddy felt so much better after praying that he said to his friend Mr. Owen Crosier, who was staying at their house at the time, "Owen, let's go and cheer up the other disappointed people."

And that's what they did.

About the very time they started taking a short cut across the farm, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, explained the disappointment to Ophelia's Daddy. Suddenly he understood that the Bible doesn't say Jesus was to come to earth for the special marriage and the judgment, but He was to go to the Most Holy Place in heaven and have the special marriage and the judgment there and only after He had "come" to heaven's Most Holy Place would He then "come" to the earth.

That's the story about Ophelia Edson, who was a baby during the Great Disappointment and who learned to love Jesus so much that when she was twelve she was willing to be baptized in an icy lake in the winter.

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1844 – The Seal of Authenticity of the Adventist Church

✠ CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN

I'll never forget the thrill of emerging from the darkness of agnosticism, skepticism—even spiritualism—into the light of the Three Angels' messages. The Lord lifted me from sin, from death, from the alienation and emptiness that suffuses a life estranged from God—and elevated me not only into a knowledge of Jesus, but into Adventism, into present truth, into the most important movement since the Protestant Reformation.

Yet all was not well in Zion. I joined Adventism amidst rumblings, rumors, and rebellion—though, in my newborn innocence, most of it passed me by. Oblivious, I was a smiling baby unaware of the bitter lessons of life. I had been an Adventist three months when a friend told me about a SDA professor out West who denied the 1844 investigative judgment.

“Who cares?” I replied.

I had seen the charts, had read about 1844, and believed it because Ellen White believed it, and I believed in what she believed. But who cared? All I ever talked about my first six months as an Adventist was the mark of the beast, anyway. I gave dozens of studies on the mark of the beast. I told everyone about the mark of the beast. I even wrote graffiti on bathroom walls about the mark of the beast. 1844? It seemed irrelevant.

In early 1981, I arrived in my first Adventist community. Here, the rumors about 1844 and the sanctuary controversy did more than rumble—they roared! It was the conversation at breakfast, lunch, dinner, and between meals. Though I didn't understand what the hoopla was about, I knew one thing: *Nothing would shake me.*

But then people confronted me with questions: How do you get an 1844 investigative judgment out of Daniel 8:14? How do you know that the day-year principle is valid? And, if valid, why apply it to the 2300 days? How do you tie Daniel 8 and 9 together? Why is there no verbal link between the word for *cleansed* (which only the KJV uses) in Daniel 8, with the word for *cleansed* in Leviticus 16, which has a different Hebrew root? How do you know that the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8 aren't 1150 days, not 2300 days, as at least one translation has it? Can't you see how the book of Hebrews puts Christ in the second apartment long before 1844? Is not Antiochus Epiphanes the little horn of Daniel 8? And by the way, did you know how much Ellen White really copied?

I had no answers, and those whom I expected to have them—didn't either! People everywhere attacked the doctrine, or at least expressed skepticism about it. I felt like the doctor in *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a TV movie I had



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seen as a child. Aliens descended upon a town and took over the people's minds. Though the people looked and talked the same, they had become aliens. The doctor's family, friends, almost the whole town, had been taken over. Everywhere the doctor turned, one after another, the people were "converted." He didn't know whom to trust, where to turn. He was the only one who escaped.

But I didn't escape! I became one of them. I no longer believed in the 1844 investigative judgment. I just couldn't get it out of the Bible, and the implications of that conclusion staggered me! I never realized, until then, just how much of our message is linked to 1844. Instantly, my faith in the Adventist message crumbled.

The first thing that absolutely had to go was Ellen White. If 1844 is not biblical, Ellen White belonged in the same class as Mary Baker Eddy and Joseph Smith.

I questioned the idea of Adventism as the remnant church. If 1844 wasn't biblical, the church wasn't either.

I began to wonder about just how important the law, particularly the Sabbath, really was.

I started to question—even the mark of the beast!

Was my whole experience with God a fluke too?

I poured out my soul in prayer, pleading for truth. If this message was not true, I wanted out. I hadn't been an Adventist that long, the church didn't mean that much to me then, plus I never really liked being a vegetarian either. My aggressive search for truth led me to Adventism, but if the search was to lead me somewhere else—I was ready.

I went back to where the problem started—this 1844 thing. If I couldn't get it out of the Bible—without any Ellen White (at that point she had become about as authoritative to me as was the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*)—I would pack my bags and go back to Israel, where I was living when I first became a believer in Jesus. Simple logic told me that if 1844 is not biblical, Adventism was a cult.

So I prayed, I studied, I buried myself in my Bible. I sought for an understanding of truth, because I knew the direction of my whole life, possibly even my eternal life, was at stake. And I used no Ellen White.

A few weeks later, I finished. My conclusion: *If you were to use the Old Testament—without the New—you would have as much evidence for*

an 1844 investigative judgment as you would for Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah!

Before, when I had read Daniel 8, I couldn't imagine how anyone could see the judgment; but now, after my study, when I looked at Daniel 8, I couldn't imagine how anyone could not see the judgment!

I had suddenly been born again—*again!* The doubt, the uncertainty, the heaviness lifted. I felt as if I had been cured from a disease. I was more convicted of Adventism than I had been when I first came to the Adventist community, and only now did I realize just how weak my grounding had been.

Instantly, all the doubt about Ellen White vanished. I thought, "Surely, that old woman knew exactly what she was talking about!" Since that time, I have never questioned Ellen White as a prophet; instead, my confidence in the 1844 truth has allowed me to see her as one of the greatest prophets of them all!

My understanding of 1844 gave me a new experience with Jesus, with Adventism, and with the spirit of prophecy. Once I saw just how biblical 1844 was, I knew that this church was everything it claimed to be, and all the doubts about the law, the Sabbath, everything—were obliterated.

Despite apostasies, despite our Laodicean malaise, despite scandals, despite anything and everything that happens within the church itself, the 1844 teaching proves beyond question that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy and our message is present truth. The 1844 judgment—more than the state of the dead, the Sabbath, the second coming—establishes the validity of Adventism. All those other doctrines are accepted by some other people, but Adventists are the only people who have the 1844 investigative judgment truth. Until you see the truth of 1844, realizing that Adventists are the only ones who teach it, you will never fully understand our calling, our purpose, or our mission.

I had been forced to learn the message or leave it. For me, there was no middle ground. And how thankful I am that the same God who took me from not even believing in God, to believing in God; who took me from all the world religions, to Christianity; and from all the denominations within Christianity, to Adventism—how thankful I am that He saved me from that apostasy.

Jesus in the Hebrew Sanctuary

E LESLIE HARDINGE

The sanctuary is the most extensive illustration of the plan of salvation found in Scripture. A thorough study by scholars will find embedded in the structure, priesthood, sacrifices, cleansings, and festivals more than 200 symbols and types. This article reveals Christ in the sanctuary building.

To show His delight in being near His people, Jehovah suggested to Moses, "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8; cf. 29:45).

Modeled on the heavenly sanctuary, the tabernacle on earth was Israel's textbook of God's redemptive activities. A study of its types and symbols revealed the functions to be carried out by Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, "which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:2).

Jehovah had displayed His mighty power to the ancient nations and freed His people from their cruel Egyptian masters. By cloud and fire Jehovah led His sons and daughters across the Red Sea into the seclusion of the desert, providing bread and water and shelter for their daily needs.

When they camped at Horeb, the Master Teacher, none other than Christ, educated them amid the mountain solitudes. He summoned their leader, Moses, to Sinai's summit for special instructions.

On the mountaintop the Father and the Son stood side by side, within a circle of eternal light into which no human might enter unbidden. They proclaimed Their law to Moses in the language of humanity.

Moses spoke with God as with a friend (see Ex. 33:11). Can you imagine what a talk they had? I imagine that through Christ the Father talked of what was closest to His heart—the gift of His Son for the salvation of His lost family. Jesus unfolded the steps He would take to redeem the rebellious and restore fellowship.

During six weeks of communion, the Great Teacher revealed to Moses each phase of His plan for human salvation. To clarify these truths for after generations, He embedded them in the lovely model of the tabernacle. This structure should stand in the heart of Israel's camp. By means of its enclosed court and symbolic furnishings, sacrifices and festivals, He provided vehicles for truths otherwise incomprehensible. It would hold the oracle of the law.

David understood (Ps. 29:9, margin), and Paul later agreed (Heb. 8:1ff.), that every facet of the sanctuary was designed to glorify God. The sanctuary would keep before His people the hope that one day Christ would stand in His celestial tabernacle as their advocate and judge, and by His death save penitent souls from eternal death.



E LESLIE HARDINGE

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God commanded Moses to construct this pavilion using the most lavish materials and best talents of the people. Moses received precise plans for making this tent of meeting (Ex. 25:40) that was to be the hub of Israel's daily life, and patterned after the heavenly tabernacle (Heb. 8:5).

The Israelite's gifts for the tabernacle were freewill. So, too, is the plan of salvation a sacrifice and gift of love.

In the same spirit in which the people of Israel contributed materials and talents for the tabernacle, the virgin mother surrendered herself to form the body of the Son of man, the true tabernacle (see Luke 1:34-38).

Christ the Temple

The sanctuary's meticulous conformity to God's requirements pointed to the obedience of Jesus, whom it represented when He "pitched His tent" on earth. Christ's human body was the tabernacle in which God displayed His character and mission. *His body was the real temple* (see John 2:19-21). The Christian who imitates his Lord is typified by the tabernacle: "Ye are the temple of God" (1 Cor. 3:16; cf. verse 17; 6:15-20). The Christian is to become "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22), allowing the Light to shine through his life.

The Court of the People

The sacred court was rectangular in shape, made up of two squares. The altar of burnt offering was placed at the center of the eastern square. A veil separated it from the second square and the tabernacle. The court of the tabernacle was the place of justification. Here was the place of forgiveness, cleansing water to wash away guilt, and the blood of the sacrifice to pay the ransom.

1. *The court curtains were of "fine twined linen" (Ex 27:9, 38:9).* In the language of the Bible fine linen symbolizes the Saviour's righteousness that He shares with His disciples (see Rev. 19:8). Its loose weave formed only a symbolic barrier, and one that invited entry. In the whisperings of the wind through these curtains the voice of the Spirit sang, "Jesus is your righteousness. He will enclose you in the sacred quiet of His shrine. Come inside."

2. *God provided only one way into the court.* This single entry stressed that there is only one Way (John 14:6; see Heb. 10:20) "under heaven given among men" (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the way, the only door (John 10:7), to holiness. He is the

"author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). There was likewise only one entry veil to both apartments of the sanctuary.

The Tabernacle: The Holy Place and the Most Holy Place

The tabernacle, located 10 cubits from the court's western wall, was divided into two apartments (the holy place and the Most Holy Place) by a veil that hung from four golden pillars.

1. *Christ, the light of the world.* In Scripture God has often chosen fire or light to represent Himself (Heb. 12:29; John 1:8). Since the sanctuary was without windows, the source of illumination in the holy place was the seven-branched candlestick, representing Christ, the *light of the world*. When the glorious and bright *Shekinah* (God's presence) resided in the Second Apartment, where the ark of the covenant was kept (the Most Holy Place), its *radiance* spilled into the holy place.

After the Fall the Lord "tabernacled" in *Eden's flaming sword* to express His love and constancy in accepting and guiding His first family. "He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep [preserve] the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). *Placed* means "put in a tent," from which comes the Hebrew word *shekinah*. The way to the tree of life must be traveled by every saint who would eat its fruit to enjoy immortality. To help them on their journey, the Spirit has provided the *sword of inspired light* (see Heb. 4:12). Christ, the "light of the world" (John 8:12), tabernacled among us (John 1:14), reflecting the glory of God (Heb. 1:3).

These symbols of the presence of the Angel of the Lord united with the radiance glowing between the cherubim on the mercy seat-throne. The people called this the *Shekinah*, to describe "the One who dwells in a tent."

Other samples of light and fire representing God's presence can be found in the Bible:

a. The leading light of the cloud by day and fire by night brooding above the tabernacle (see Ex. 40:38), as the Spirit had done over the waters at Creation (Gen. 1:2).

b. The bow of many-colored splendor slashing the dark stormy clouds after the flood (Gen. 9:8-17).

c. The burning bush (Ex. 3:1-6).

d. The fire coming down on the sacrifice at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:24, 30-40).

e. The tongues of fire at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

2. *The 12 loaves of bread and the goblets of unfermented wine.* Christ is the bread of life (John 6:35); "he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (verse 54, RSV; read verses 53-58).

3. *The altar of incense.* The merits and intercession of Christ rose with the prayers of the saints (see Rev. 8:4).

4. *The floor—the bare earth.* The Lord placed His shrine as close to the ground as possible to call attention to His condescension. He loved His people so much that He wished to lodge as close to them as He could reach.

5. *The portability of early sanctuary.* God designed the tabernacle to be dismantled and reerected easily. During the 40 years of wilderness wandering the Israelites moved it some 50 times. The luminous symbol of Christ's presence soared high above the people at the head of the procession, telling them when to move and when to camp. The tabernacle was also a type of the Christian church. His church today is to live for Him in the wilderness of daily life.

6. *The ark of the covenant.* The ark symbolized God's throne and was the most important symbol of His presence. The ark was the only piece of furniture in the Most Holy Place.

7. *The ultimate reality.* The life and death of

Jesus are the ultimate reality that the sanctuary illustrated.

The Cure for Sin: Divine Sacrifice

The Lord provided forgiveness of sin, and restoration. Pointing to the real Sacrifice through the animal sacrifices, He assured the people that "the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them" (Lev. 4:20). These victims represented the death of Jesus, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

God promised a Redeemer, a sinless substitute who would take the sinner's place and bear the death penalty for his guilt. Heaven would accept His sacrifice, and impute the robe of righteousness to the pardoned sinner. A Royal Priest would mediate and restore the repentant to covenant fellowship. The luminous way to the tree of life would be kept open for all who chose to walk in it. The serpent's head would be crushed. These gospel truths streamed like beams of the rising sun from the opening of the drama of redemption, reaching noontime glory with the Sun of righteousness dispelling the darkness of the fallen world at Calvary and on the Resurrection day!

REFLECTION

The Perfect Church

I think that I shall never see
A Church that's all it ought to be:
A Church whose members never stray
Beyond the Strait and Narrow Way:

A Church that has no empty pews,
Whose Pastor never has the blues,
A Church whose Deacons always "deak,"
And none is proud, and all are meek;

Where gossips never peddle lies,
Or make complaints or criticize;
Where all are always sweet and kind.
And all to other's faults are blind.

Such perfect Churches there may be.
But none of them are known to me.
But still, we'll work, and pray and plan,
To make our own the best we can.

—Selected

1844—Is It Biblical?

■ MARTIN WEBER

Four provable assumptions lead to a compelling conclusion.

Did anything special happen in heaven in 1844? Some Seventh-day Adventists, even pastors, are unconvinced that Jesus began a final phase in His high priestly ministry.

Many would-be defenders of the faith rush to the rescue with Ellen White quotations. In respect for her prophetic gift, however, we do well to take her own counsel and stand upon the solid rock of *sola scriptura*. If 1844 is not an authentic prophetic landmark in Scripture, then let's pull the extrabiblical plug of artificial life support and then respectfully lay it to rest. If, however, our theology about 1844 is supported in Scripture, then let's support it ourselves and enthusiastically proclaim it.

One fact recognized by all is that the year 1844 as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy stands or falls on the 2300-day time span of Daniel 8:14. This article focuses on four assumptions that, if legitimate, affirm our historic interpretation of the 2300 days/years of Daniel 8:14. If:

1. one apocalyptic day equals one literal year, and
2. Daniel 9 explains the mystery of Daniel 8, and
3. the 490 years of Daniel 9 are cut off from a

longer time span of 2300 years, and

4. the starting date for that 2300-year prophecy is 457 B.C., then the year 1844 must be biblically authentic. That fact established would vindicate the claim of Seventh-day Adventists to be a prophetic movement of destiny.

Much is at stake as we examine these four assumptions, one by one.

1. **One apocalyptic day equals one literal year.**

Adventists did not invent this principle of prophetic interpretation; 450 years ago it was the historic position of the Protestant reformers. Even some Catholic and Jewish scholars interpreted Daniel's 2300 days as 2300 literal years.¹ As documented a generation ago by the late Adventist scholar LeRoy E. Froom and substantiated more recently in the seven-volume Daniel and Revelation Committee series from the Biblical Research Institute, there is both historic precedent and scriptural support for the day/year principle. The fact that most commentators of the past 150 years have forsaken their own heritage of historicism is no reason for us to follow them over the cliff into futurism or to plunge into the stagnant pond of preterism.²

So the day/year principle was not the invention of overeager Millerites in the nineteenth century,



■ MARTIN WEBER

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nor was it merely an exegetical ace up the sleeves of pope-hating reformers in the sixteenth century. Solid biblical scholarship supports the conviction that a day in apocalyptic-time prophecy equals a literal year. And we don't need to replicate the proof-texting heroics of our Adventist pioneers! Far more convincing is contextual evidence.

For example, the context of both chapters 7 and 8 of Daniel negates the notion that their time spans could be literal. Chapter 7's little horn emerges from the fourth world empire in the sixth century A.D. and survives till the time of the judgment and the Advent; verse 25 shows that the period of "a time, two times, and half a time" (RSV) must extend over most of those many centuries. *This would be impossible if only three and a half years were intended.*

Moving into Daniel 8, we see in verse 17 that the 2300 days of verse 14 extend from the restoration of the sanctuary, which would happen in the fifth century B.C., until "the time of the end"—a span of about 2300 years. Its fulfillment is specifically aligned with the latter days, the time immediately preceding the final proclamation of the gospel by the "wise" (see Dan. 12:3,4). Critics overlook the fact that Daniel 8:17 when linked with Daniel 12:3-13, conclusively shows that the 2300-day prophecy covers many centuries.

William H. Shea of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute has done extensive analysis of time prophecy as it relates to the day/year principle.³ Particularly fascinating are his scholastic safaris into the Old Testament poetic writings⁴ and the post-Qumran interpreters.⁵ Shea bolsters his case for the day/year principle by suggesting: "At this time in our church history when our attention has been called to some of the doctrines of the Reformers, such as justification and righteousness by faith, we would do well to heed their principles of prophetic interpretation also."⁶

2. Daniel 9 explains the mystery of Daniel 8.

Chapter 8 of Daniel closes with the aged prophet in deep distress. Horrified at the atrocities that the trampling little horn would inflict upon God's people, His sanctuary, and His truth, the elderly prophet faints. By the time he recovers, the angel is gone, leaving Daniel "astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it" (Dan. 8:27).^{*} We should note that the only element of the Daniel 8 vision yet unexplained was its *timing*.

A decade or so passes with the timing of that tribulation still a mystery. Then we come to Daniel

9, which opens with a reference to Jeremiah's prediction that Jerusalem's desolation was supposed to last 70 years (see verse 2). Only a couple of years remained before that scheduled restoration, yet nothing seemed to be happening. Was the deliverance delayed? Perhaps so, because along with the pledge of restoration for Jerusalem, Jeremiah had warned that God's promises were conditional upon the cooperation of His people (see Jer. 18:9,10). As Daniel witnessed the continued wickedness and "open shame" (Dan. 9:7) of his people, he feared that God indeed might decide to delay their deliverance.

In that context, the elderly prophet fervently prayed with "fasting, sackcloth, and ashes" (verse 3). With one of the most heart-touching supplications of all Scripture, Daniel pled the mercy of God for sinners. He poured out his heart in concern for the "desolate sanctuary" (verse 17). Then he added: "*Do not delay, because Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name*" (verse 19).

Despite the desperate situation, Daniel's supplications were mingled with hope and even confidence. He knew that God loves His people and is ever eager to forgive. Furthermore, the Lord had commanded Gabriel to "give this man an understanding of the vision" (Dan. 8:16). *This mandate to Gabriel was yet unfulfilled*, leaving the 2300 days and the desolate sanctuary shrouded in mystery.

Suddenly the answer came. Gabriel appeared again and announced: "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. . . . So give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision" (Dan. 9:22, 23). Since the prophet's prayer for understanding had involved the timing of the promised restoration, Gabriel begins with an explanation of time: "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place" (verse 9:24).

What vision was Gabriel referring to? *The only possible answer is the vision left unresolved by the previous chapter.* Thus the explanation of Daniel 9 solves the mystery of Daniel 8. As noted by Gerhard F. Hasel,⁷ there is a compelling connection between the two chapters.

3. The 490 years of Daniel 9 are "cut off" from the longer time span of 2300 years.

This point is both crucial and easily demonstrated. While most translations of Daniel 9:24 use words such as "determined" (KJV, NKJV) or "de-

creed" (NASB, NIV, RSV), the translation could just as easily—and quite accurately—be given as "cut off." William Shea notes that "analysis of Hebrew writings such as the Mishnah reveals that although *chathak* can mean 'determine,' the more common meaning has 'to do with the idea of cutting.'"⁸ Ancient rabbinic literature employed the word as "amputated."⁹ "The well-known Hebrew-English dictionary by Gesenius states that properly it means 'to cut' or 'to divide.'"¹⁰

More than a few classical Christian commentators concur with historic Adventist interpretation here. Consider Phillip Newell's commentary, for example: "The Hebrew word used here . . . has the literal connotation of 'cutting off' in the sense of severing from a larger portion."¹¹ The *Pulpit Commentary* is in accord that "determined" as already indicated, means "cut off"¹² The lexicon in *Strong's Concordance* supports the same conclusion. Seventh-day Adventists are justified, then, in seeing the 490 years of Daniel 9 as cut off from the larger time span of the 2300 years in Daniel 8.

The only question left is when to start the prophetic countdown. Daniel 9:25 said it should commence with the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. What year did that happen?

4. The 2300-year prophecy started in 457 B.C.

Archaeology now documents the Adventist timetable for the historic decree to rebuild Jerusalem. Accordingly, a recent Zondervan book widely advertised and acclaimed among evangelicals, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, sets 457 B.C. as Daniel 9's prophetic starting date (although the author attempts no connection with Daniel 8).¹³

Actually, before the twin Jesuit heresies of futurism and preterism undermined biblical historicism, many respected scholars of various backgrounds during the last millennium placed the starting date for the 2300 day/year prophecy in the fifth century B.C.¹⁴ Among Catholics, "about 1292 Arnold of Villanova said that the 2300 days stand for 2300 years, counting the period from the time of Daniel to the Second Advent. . . . Better known to most church historians is the illustrious Nicholas Krebs of Cusa, Roman Catholic cardinal, scholar, philosopher, and theologian, who in 1452 declared that the 2300 year-days began in the time of Persia."¹⁵ "In the century after the Protestant Reformation, many Protestant expounders from English theologian George Downham (died 1634) to British barrister Edward King in 1798, declared the number 2300 involved the same number of years. John Tillinghast (died 1655) ended them at the

Second Advent and the 1000-year reign of the saints. Tillinghast was *the first to assert the 70 weeks of years to be a lesser epoch within the larger period of the 2300 years.*"¹⁶

John Fletcher, an associate of John Wesley, in 1755 interpreted the cleansing of the sanctuary as a restoration of truth from papal error at the end of a 2300-year period that began with Persia.¹⁷ And Johann Petri, a German Reformed pastor, "in 1768 introduced the final step . . . leading to the inevitable conclusion and climax—that the 490 years (70 weeks of years) are the first part of the 2300 years. He began them synchronously, 453 years before the birth of Christ—terminating the 490 years in A.D. 37, and the 2300 years in 1847. . . . Soon men on both sides of the Atlantic, in Africa, even in India and other countries, began to set forth their convictions in similar vein."¹⁸

Those who seek to dismantle the prophetic platform of Seventh-day Adventists should pause and consider that if we deserve censure for our interpretations, so should the illustrious company of biblical scholars who gave us our prophetic heritage. We are simply carrying their torch.

Clarifying those confusing decrees

At this point some would protest that the actual wording of the command of Artaxerxes I of 457 B.C., makes no explicit mention of any order to rebuild the city of Jerusalem in fulfillment of Daniel 9's starting point. This threat to Adventist interpretation disappears when we consider that *the decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem was actually a combined unit of three decrees linked as one that culminated in the year 457.*

The first of these decrees by Cyrus the Great in 538 (or maybe 537) permitted the Jewish exiles to resettle in their homeland and empowered them to build for God "a house in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:2-4). The second decree came around 519 from Darius I, confirming Cyrus' original decree (Ezra 6:1-12). So under Cyrus the rebuilding began, and it was finished under Darius (Ezra 6:15). However, it was Artaxerxes who restored, or "adorned" (Ezra 7:27) the completed Temple. This third decree (Ezra 7:11-26) put the crowning touch on the first two, for it commissioned Ezra to appoint judges with full political and religious authority. *Not until this final order was Jerusalem restored as the national capital. This explains why the three decrees are listed as a single unit in Scripture: "They finished building according to the command of the God of Israel and the decree [singular] of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia" (Ezra 6:14).*

To illustrate this, imagine that Cyrus began building a car and Darius finished its construction, but not until Artaxerxes issued the vehicle registration certificate could the car be of use. And so we must date Jerusalem's rebuilding and restoration from the order of the third king.

We must remember that the desolation of Jerusalem involved much more than the destruction of buildings, and so the Daniel 9 prophecy included restoration as well as rebuilding. The privilege of Jerusalem to administer God's laws had been lost, so the restoration of the city required the reinstating of civil and religious government. This at last was accomplished in the decree of Artaxerxes in the year 457 B.C., a date we have noticed is acknowledged by evangelical scholarship.

In conclusion: *It is true* that (1) one apocalyptic day equals one literal year; (2) Daniel 9 explains the mystery of Daniel 8; (3) the 490 years of Daniel 9 are "cut off" from the longer time span of 2300 years; and (4) the starting date for the 2300-year prophecy is 457 B.C. Therefore, the year 1844 in Bible prophecy must be legitimate—and by extension, the authenticity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a prophetic movement of destiny.

1844 must be biblical

Jesus launched His mission as Messiah in A.D. 27 *right on schedule*, to "seal up vision and prophecy" in Daniel 8/9 regarding the reliability of the predicted time scale. In the midst of the seventieth week of years, Christ was "cut off" on the cross—*right on schedule*. He then ascended to heaven's sanctuary to mediate the benefits of Calvary's once-for-all sacrifice, and at the end of the 2300 years in 1844—*right on schedule*—He began the final phase of His celestial ministry.

Everything has happened just as the Bible said it would, in harmony with our historicist heritage. For us Adventists, this means we can have full confidence about God's leading in our message and our mission. And for the world, people need to know what we have to share.

In this article we have reviewed both scriptural and historical testimony regarding the year 1844 and also confronted questions about this landmark of Bible prophecy. The evidence is clear for all who have eyes to see it and a heart to believe it. Perhaps it all comes down to intellectual honesty and spiritual commitment—qualities that will not be lacking in God's final remnant.

* Unless otherwise noted, all texts are from the New American Standard Bible.

¹ See LeRoy E. Froom et al., *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1957), pp. 309-316. See also chapters 4, 12, and 23 in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe... a Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Silver Spring, MD.: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1988).

² Put simply, "futurism" is the belief that the bulk of Bible prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. At the opposite extreme, "preterism" teaches that most prophecies met their fulfillment in time past. "Historicism" holds that prophecy has had an unfolding fulfillment throughout history, leaving room for its grand culmination in the future coming of Christ.

³ See William H. Shea, *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982), pp. 56-93. Shea's book is one volume in the Daniel and Revelation Committee series, compiled by the Biblical Research Institute and available at Adventist Book Centers. Perhaps all Adventist pastors would do well to purchase and read the gold mine of exegetical information, particularly in volumes 1 through 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 93.

⁶ William H. Shea, "The Year-Day Principle in Prophecy," *Pacific Union Recorder*, Sept. 22, 1980, p. 2.

⁷ Gerhard Hasel notes that whereas "the normal designation for 'vision' in Daniel is the term *hazon*," the word used in 8:16 and 8:26, 27 is *mar'eh*. Significantly, it is *mar'eh* that appears again in 9:23: "understand the vision." "Different scholars have recognized a link between chapters 8 and 9 because of the usage of this term." (Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Audition About the Sanctuary," in Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Daniel* [Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986], p. 437.) See also Gerhard F. Hasel, "Revelation and Interpretation in Daniel," *Ministry*, October 1974, pp. 20-23.

⁸ Shea, "The Relationship Between the Prophecies of Daniel 8 and Daniel 9," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, editor Arnold Wallenkampf, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), p. 242. Cited in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe ...*, p. 330, n. 40.

⁹ Jacques Doukhan, "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9: An Exegetical Study," *Sanctuary and the Atonement*, p. 263f, n. 11.

¹⁰ Gesenius, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scripture*, trans. Samuel P. Tregelles (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, reprint ed., 1950), p. 314. Cited in *Seventh-Day Adventists Believe ...*, p. 323.

¹¹ Cited in Desmond Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1978), p. 225.

¹² *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H.D.M. Spence (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1950), Vol. XIII, p. 218.

¹³ Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982). See p. 290.

¹⁴ *Questions on Doctrine*, pp. 309-316.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 312. Emphasis by author.

¹⁷ LeRoy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1954), Vol. II, p. 688.

¹⁸ *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 313.

If God Were the Church Elder

■ L. C. COOPER

Any local church officer will tell you that the hard part of church leadership is not giving the opening prayer or announcing the special music. The challenge of leadership comes from those experiences that involve human relationships. For example, two members disagree sharply over a little incident. The incident is insignificant, but the disagreement isn't. Words and actions are misunderstood. Feelings are easily disturbed. Tension heightens. Suspicion discolors every viewpoint.

Much of any leader's time is spent in dealing with the highly sensitive matter of human relationships. Correcting, advising, counseling, encouraging, supporting, and sometimes confronting. Every church leader has no doubt asked himself/herself the question "How would Jesus deal with this situation? What can I learn from Him that will guide me in sorting out this problem?"

Scripture contains considerable counsel in the matter. Some of the clearest evidence comes from understanding the way God deals with us. Application of His principles to personnel problems brings a new dimension to leadership. Perhaps the following six points will serve to introduce a Christian approach in dealing with human relationship problems.

1. *He expresses constant goodwill towards us.*

God has a high regard for His people. Weak and sinful though we be, He does not abandon us. We are loved not because we are worth much. We are worth much because we are loved. He is interested in our welfare, not in His authority. When He disciplines us He does so with a view to our development, not our destruction.

2. *He does not treat us as we deserve.* This idea is difficult to accept. Most Christians have a firmly held opinion about the absolute justice of God. And justice means that sooner or later wrong is punished, and right is rewarded. They feel all human behavior is weighed in the unerring balance of heaven and dealt with according to its merits or deficiencies. Psalm 103:8-14 must be taken into consideration when we shape our picture of God's justice.

It may, in fact, be a great injustice to Him if we view God as a cold, impartial, unfeeling judge of human conduct. It might be more correct to say that God "makes mistakes" consistently—on the side of mercy. The human condition cannot bear absolute justice. We would all cease to exist if justice were applied. In dealing with our weakness and our sins, God is not trying to get even with us.

3. *He takes the initiative to reestablish harmony.* How opposite this is to normal human conduct. It is more natural for us to wait until



■ L. C. COOPER

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the erring person sees the seriousness of his or her mistake and then comes for forgiveness and reconciliation. Suppose someone offends me by a word or action. I am innocent, hurt, and humiliated. I expect, and may even demand, that the person concerned come and give an apology. Until he or she does, there will be a barrier to our relationship. After all, how can I allow someone to spoil my name?

Note how sharply God's behavior contrasts with human tendency when wrongs have been committed. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8, NIV). When a breakdown in harmony occurred between us and God, He did not retreat and wait for us to make things right. He Himself took the initiative to restore the relationship, even though He is the one who was wronged.

4. *He forgives us readily.* A sinner does not need to come crawling to Jesus and beg for forgiveness. It is His desire to forgive. A desire that had been expressed even before we realized our need or searched for it.

Forgiveness is a gem in human nature, just as it is one of the most beautiful attributes of God. Impossible as it may seem, forgiveness enables us to rewrite history. The forgiveness of God is described as so complete that we become, in His sight, as though we had never sinned. Is it possible for human forgiveness to be like that? Is it practical?

Does forgiveness become less valuable because of the ease with which God dispenses it? If we readily and quickly forgave each other, would this encourage more sin? Academic discussions about forgiveness might provide answers to that question. However, the person who experiences forgiveness knows its power to immunize against repeated offense. Forgiveness awakens love, respect, and devotion.

5. *He knows our weaknesses.* One of the contributions of the Roman Empire to modern civil law is the concept of equality. It is often distorted to convey the idea of equal punishment or equal reward for certain acts. Equality, however, is not an arbitrary thing determined by some policy or code book. Circumstances differ; people are not all the same. A parent may discipline one child by the use of words. A second child in the same family may not understand discipline unless it has a physical manifestation.

In His dealings with us God takes into consideration the uniqueness of our background and

individuality. He knows where (and when) we were born (see Ps. 87:6). He knows our frailties (see Ps. 103:14). He does not allow us to be tempted beyond that which we are able to bear (see 1 Cor. 10:13). He shapes His treatment to fit the situation and the individual. His policy book is not an inflexible document.

6. *He is committed to loving us.* One of the dominant characteristics of God revealed in Scripture is that He has bound Himself to us by an oath and a covenant (see Heb. 8:10). Ellen G. White observes that in the gift of Jesus Christ to this world God has identified Himself with us by ties that are never to be broken (see *Steps to Christ*, p. 72). It is our appreciation of His constant and steadfast love that motivates the spiritual life. In a similar manner, it is the constant atmosphere of human love and respect that enables the best of human relationships to flourish. Love, joy, and peace are the great motivators of the soul.

I doubt that any of us will ever know the reality, in this present earth, of seeing Jesus preside over a meeting in which we deal with the resolution of problems involving human relationships. But if we could participate in that experience, the principles identified in this article would no doubt be in full display. Having reflected on His style of leadership and handling of people, perhaps we can do no better than follow the pattern when we sit in the chair of leadership.

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Securing the Co-operation of the People

■ ELLEN G. WHITE

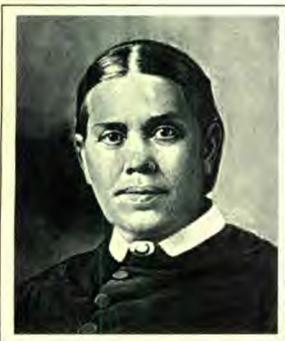
Although Nehemiah bore a royal commission requiring the inhabitants to co-operate with him in rebuilding the walls of the city, he chose not to depend upon the mere exercise of authority. He sought rather to gain the confidence and sympathy of the people, well knowing that a union of hearts as well as hands was essential to success in the great work which he had undertaken. When he called the people together on the morrow, he presented such arguments as were calculated to arouse their dormant energies and to unite their scattered numbers.

They knew not, neither did he tell them, of his mournful midnight circuit while they were sleeping. Nevertheless that very circumstance contributed greatly to his success. He was enabled to speak of the condition of the city with an accuracy and minuteness that astonished his hearers, while the actual contemplation of the weakness and degradation of Israel, deeply impressing his heart, gave earnestness and power to his words. He presented before the people their condition as objects of reproach among the heathen. The nation once so highly favored of God as to excite the terror of all surrounding countries, had now become a byword and a hissing. Her religion was dishonored, her God blasphemed.

He then told them how, in a distant land, he had heard of their affliction, how he had entreated the favor of God in their behalf, and how, while praying, the plan had been formed in his mind, of soliciting permission from the king to come to their assistance. He had asked God that the king might not only allow him to go to Jerusalem, but invest him with authority and render the help needed for the work. His prayer had been answered in such a manner as clearly to show that the whole thing was of the Lord. And having laid the matter fully before them, showing that he was sustained by the combined authority of the Persian king and the God of Israel, Nehemiah put to the people directly the question whether they would take advantage of this favorable occasion and arise with him and build the wall.

This appeal went straight to their hearts; the manifestation of the favor of heaven toward them put their fears to shame. With new courage they cried out with one voice, "Let us rise up and build."

The holy energy and high hope of Nehemiah were communicated to the people. As they caught the spirit, they rose for a time to the moral level of their leader. Each, in his own sphere, was a sort of Nehemiah; and each



■ ELLEN G. WHITE

Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A prolific writer, she produced more than 100,000 pages by the time she died in 1915. Her work continues as a prophetic voice within the Adventist Church. This article comes from *Southern Watchman*, March 29, 1904.

strengthened and upheld his brother in the work.

There is need of Nehemiahs in the church today—not men who can pray and preach only, but men whose prayers and sermons are braced with firm and eager purpose. The course pursued by this Hebrew patriot in the accomplishment of his plans is one that should still be adopted by ministers and leading men. When they have laid their plans, they should present them to the church in such a manner as to win their interest and co-operation. Let the people understand the plans and share in the work,

and they will have a personal interest in its prosperity. The success attending Nehemiah's efforts shows what prayer, faith, and wise, energetic action will accomplish. Living faith will prompt to energetic action. The spirit manifested by the leader will be, to a great extent, reflected by the people. If the leaders professing to believe the solemn, important truths that are to test the world at this time manifest no ardent zeal to prepare a people to stand in the day of God, we must expect the church to be careless, indolent, and pleasure-loving.

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■ RUSSELL BURRILL

Imagine a church on fire with the power of the Holy Spirit. What would such a church look like? Would it look like *your* Seventh-day Adventist church? How would it be different?

In my mind's eye, I can picture such a church—a church fully partaking of pentecostal power. The Holy Spirit is being poured out super abundantly, and people are flocking to the church from all directions. The members are alive with the gospel of Christ. Their services are not dead formalism, but are alive with Holy Spirit's power as members share week by week what Jesus has been doing in their lives. Each Sabbath the church is rejoicing over new people who have come to know Christ through the ministry of the laity. In this imaginary church, every member has a ministry. There are no idlers, for to be a Christian in this church means to be involved in meaningful ministry for the Master. Love, joy, and peace are seen in the members of this church as they reflect the character of Christ to their community. And the community responds to the demonstration of real love. As a result, the church is known as the one place in the community where one can find love and acceptance.

Don't you wish your church were like this? Who wouldn't want to be a part of such a church! The world would break the doors down trying to get in. If you had lived in the first century, this

would have been a normal church. Yet here at the end of the twentieth century we would view such a church as abnormal and unusual. This need not be, for it is God's desire that His church at the end of the age be as dynamic and alive, as loving and caring, and as involved in ministry, as was the first-century church. What, then, is God's role for the laity in His church?

The priesthood of all believer

God's ideal for His people is found in the garden of Eden. Here, unencumbered by sin, God's initial creation held face-to-face communion with their Maker. Nothing separated Adam and Eve from intimate communion with God. In the cool of the evening, Adam and Eve entered into direct discussion with the infinite God of the universe. That's our God—the God of relationships.

Then that relationship was broken. Adam and Eve distrusted their Maker and sinned. One of the consequences was the loss of that intimate communion with God they had enjoyed. No longer did they enjoy their original Edenic relationship with God; no longer could their descendants approach God directly. Instead, a system of intermediaries was introduced. Chosen ones interceded on behalf of the people, since they no longer had face-to-face communion with God.



■ RUSSELL BURRILL

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Initially the first-born became the intermediary; later, the patriarchs; and finally, at the Exodus event, the priests.

Old Testament priests performed two tasks that the people were unable to perform for themselves; First, they served as intermediaries—as go-betweens. When ancient Israel sinned, they did not directly approach God for forgiveness. Instead, they brought a lamb to the priest, who took their sacrifice into the sanctuary. Second, the priests performed ministry for the people. The common people were not allowed to enter the sanctuary, but the priests were admitted. The high priest alone could venture into the Most Holy Place, and he could do that only once each year.

Thus, the functions of intercession and ministry were reserved exclusively for the priests doing Old Testament times. Yet this was not God's ideal. It was only a stop-gap measure provided for a time until Christ could come and restore what Adam had lost. Remember, in Eden each person had the privilege of direct communion with God and direct ministry for God. No one needed the services of a mediatorial priest; they were "priests" themselves.

When Adam sinned, this privilege was lost to the human race. In God's plan, the redemptive ministry of Christ was to restore the Edenic relationship to those redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Calvary ended the Old Testament priestly system and restored the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

This is the joy of new life in Christ. Because of His redemptive ministry, the believer has direct access to God and all the rights of the ministry. No longer is direct access and ministry to be the exclusive domain of the clergy. The privilege of living in the New Testament era is that every Christian can be his own priest. Note how John the Revelator glories in this new status for the believer: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen" (Rev. 1:5, 6, NIV).

"And they sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made

them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9, 10, NIV).

Note particularly the connection between the redemptive ministry of Christ on the cross and the restoration of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The New Testament announces in unmistakable terms the restoration of that which Adam lost—the privilege of every believer to be a priest before God. The death of Christ on Golgotha's hill has ended forever the priestly class. Christ has broken down every wall, including the wall that separated the clergy from the laity. In Christ's kingdom there is only one class—the priestly class into which all believers are born when they accept Jesus Christ as their Redeemer.

The apostle Peter, writing to Gentile Christians scattered throughout the Roman empire, declares all believers to be the royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5; 9, NIV).

According to Peter, all Christians belong to the priesthood. In the New Testament, the church does not *have* a priesthood—it is a priesthood. The priesthood of all believers is the only authorized priesthood in the New Testament. Here we have the full restoration of that which Adam lost. All God's children now have direct access to God, and all God's children have right to ministry. That right has been fully established by Christ's redemptive ministry.

Since every believer is a priest, Peter declares that each believer must now offer a spiritual sacrifice to God. This sacrifice he claims is their rightful service as believers. What is this sacrifice that the believer must offer? The apostle Paul answers that question clearly in Romans 12:1 (NIV): "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship."

The sacrifice that Christians are called to offer is not bulls, goats, and sheep, but their bodies, which they give in loving ministry for the Master. Paul maintains that this is their reasonable service.

According to Paul and Peter, ministry is not only the right and privilege of every New Testament believer, it is a natural result of being a Christian. The New Testament church could not even imagine a Christian who was not involved in ministry. It was inherent in the theology of the first Christians. It was their right and privilege because of Christ's death for them.

Somehow in this modern age, we have largely divorced ministry from basic Christianity. The idea has gained acceptance that it is possible to be a Christian and not be involved in ministry. Ministry, some have even dared to claim, is the responsibility of the clergy, and even some clergy have cautioned lay people to avoid entering their domain. Performing ministry, however, is not the prerogative of the clergy alone; it is, instead, the rightful domain of all believers. That right was the legacy of Christ's death on Golgotha's hill. Limiting ministry to clergy is totally foreign to the New Testament church.

It was impossible for New Testament believers not to be involved in meaningful ministry in harmony with their spiritual gifts. In fact, the whole context of Romans 12 is discussion of spiritual gifts. The involvement of every member in ministry in harmony with their spiritual gifts was the norm for the first-century church, and this likewise must become the norm of God's last-day church.

Implications of "Every Member a Priest"

Adventists have always believed in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Like all Protestants, we have accepted this teaching as part of our Reformation heritage. Yet even the Reformers failed to see the full significance of accepting this doctrine. Some saw it in theory but failed to put it into practice.

The most basic implication of accepting this doctrine is the understanding that every believer has direct access to the Father through Jesus Christ. There is only one Mediator between us and God—Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5). No Adventist would think of going to his or her pastor and asking for forgiveness of sin. Any pastor who attempted to grant such forgiveness would no doubt lose his credentials. It is anathema for us even to think of going through any mediator except Christ to receive forgiveness of sins because of our strong belief in the doctrine of the priest hood of all believers.

Yet the mediatorial service between God and the people was only one of the duties of the Old Testament priest. As we have seen, the Hebrew priest also performed ministry for the people because they were unable to perform it for themselves. This is the part of the doctrine the Reformers saw but failed to fully implement in the church. Yet early Adventism actually implemented part of the doctrine. Tragically, modern Adventists have failed to recognize its signifi-

cance. And it is this second aspect of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers that we desperately need to restore of we are serious about finishing the work of God.

If every member is a priest, then every Christian really is a minister and therefore has a ministry to perform. Once people accept the New Testament teaching of the priesthood of all believers, they must accept the fact that priests, all believer have a ministry, and all must discover their ministry or be regarded as unfaithful Christians.

This understanding of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers helps eliminate artificial distinctions that have arisen between laity and clergy. Since every Christian is a minister, clergy do not have a higher standing with God than laity. Clergy prayers rise no higher than laity prayers.

Sadly, many lay people have viewed their pastors as being on a higher spiritual level than they, simply because of their function as clergy. If we correctly understand the priesthood of all believers, we will realize that there is no difference in status between clergy and laity. We are all on the same level. However, there is a functional difference between laity and clergy. However, at this point, let it be clearly stated that the function of the laity, biblically, is the performance of ministry. Whenever people are performing ministry, they are acting in the capacity of laity—even if they belong to the clergy!

The New Testament church functioned with the equality of clergy and laity, since it recognized every believer as a priest. Thus, this doctrine—with all its ramifications—means that we as a church must once again recognize the Christian life as a ministry. And this ministry is the sole right of all believers.

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How to Give the Pastoral Prayer

✠ PENNY SHELL

The pastor or worship leader frequently asks an elder or other layperson to give the pastoral prayer, a sacred and vital part of the worship service. This prayer should be prayerfully planned and reverently presented.

Many people feel uncomfortable when asked to give the pastoral prayer in a worship service. The following guidelines may enable them to contribute effectively to the worship service through prayer. Those already comfortable giving a pastoral prayer can learn ways to refine and develop their ability.

The goals of these guidelines are:

1. To enable you to recognize your ability to create a pastoral prayer.
2. To help you feel more comfortable with giving a pastoral prayer.
3. To help you create a prayer that can be used in your home congregation.

Consider the following questions as you plan your pastoral prayer.

1. What have you heard in a pastoral prayer that you liked?
2. What have you heard that you didn't like?
3. Why do some people find it difficult to give a prayer?
4. Do men and women pray differently? Is that good?

5. How does the pastoral prayer differ from the invocation? from the benediction?
6. What is the difference between public and private prayer?
7. What is inclusive language? Think of some samples.
8. Is it better to use *Thou* or *You* when referring to God?

Public Prayer and Private Prayer

Similarities:

1. Both grow out of meditation with God.
2. They require a proper mix of humility and boldness.
3. They grow out of knowledge of the local situation.
4. Both can include times of silence.

Differences:

1. Public prayer is written down and reworked. (If prayers weren't written down, we wouldn't have many of the Psalms.) Private prayer is spontaneous and stumbling.
2. Public prayer is shared; private prayer is not.
3. Public prayer talks of concerns of the group. Private prayer focuses on concerns touching the life of the individual.
4. Public prayer is related to the occasion/the



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worship. Private prayer focuses on what is meaningful to the personal life.

5. Public prayer is often organized. Private prayer tumbles out as it comes to mind.

Suggestions for Improving the Pastoral Prayer

1. Relate the prayer to things that people are already thinking about: the weather, the season, the holiday, national and international events.
2. Relate the prayer to the sermon, the hymn, or the Scripture reading. Referring to the section of the worship service just preceding or following the prayer works well.
3. Reflect on and borrow familiar words, but rework them to fit the day. Some familiar words come from hymns, Scripture, and Spirit of Prophecy writings.
4. Use inclusive language as much as you can. This means to include all of the audience in your prayer. Avoid using the term *man*; generically use *human* or *person* instead.
5. If you use *Thee* or *Thou*, be consistent. If you use *You*, then follow through with it for the whole prayer.
6. Get involved with your prayer before the service—experience it as a sincere expression of your heart. Don't lose the spirit of it as you wait to pray.

Analysis of the Lord's Prayer

Parts

Purposes

1. *Our Father which art in heaven.*

Naming.

Naming God in a way appropriate to the occasion. Describing God or indicating God's place.

2. *Hallowed be thy name.*

Praising.

Praising God, giving worship, and paying tribute.

3. *Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
In earth as it is in heaven.*

Envisioning.

Asking for intervention in our daily lives. Seeking grace. Stating what "should be" for God's sake.

4. *Give us this day Our daily bread.*

Needing.

Presenting our earthly needs for individual, group, and broader concerns.

5. *And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.*

Confessing.

Confessing and asking for forgiveness.

6. *And lead us not into Temptation,
But deliver us from evil.*

Hoping.

Presenting spiritual requests for guidance.

7. *For thine is the kingdom,
And the power,
And the glory, for ever.
Amen.*

Trusting.

Expressing trust in God's power and provisions.

7. Write your prayer on a 4 x 6 card, which is quieter than rustling paper at a microphone. The card is easy to hold behind your Bible or hymnal. Leave room for requests.
8. Ask the pastor or head elder to notify you of requests for prayer and of needs or celebrations. Write them down.
9. Modulate your voice slightly lower than usual. Speak slowly, clearly, and meaningfully. Avoid being dramatic.
10. Often remember the pastor and the pastor's family in the prayer.
11. Consider printing the prayer in the bulletin for the congregation to read together or responsively.
12. Occasionally use silence, but make clear to the congregation the purpose of the silence.

Preparation

Spiritually prepare yourself. Prayer is created

best in prayer. If at all possible find a time and place where you will not be disturbed. Sit quietly and let the swarms of troubling, demanding thoughts of your daily life fly around your head like bees and finally drift away. Sit without attempting any creativity at first. Let three or five or more minutes drift by while you let peace settle around and within you. Then let the Lord know your need, and ask for a blessing.

See yourself as one of the congregation. When you are relaxed and ready, turn your thoughts to the congregation or group for whom you will pray. Think of their needs and the situations you all face. Turn to the parts of the Lord's Prayer and begin to write. (See the analysis of the Lord's Prayer in the block that accompanies this article.)

Rework your prayer for smoothness and clarity. Try saying your prayer out loud. Do you stumble? Rework it. Stay *inside* your prayer as you practice reading it out loud. If you become distanced from the feelings of the needs and praise, your voice will betray you.

Sample Pastoral Prayers

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace:
We come to honor Your name in worship
that we may better honor You in our
daily living.

Bless us with a sense of Your loving,
strengthening presence during this
service.
Bless Pastor _____ to help us think about
_____.

Give us this day those things we need:
[special requests].
Forgive us our wrongs as we forgive
others who wrong us.
Strengthen us to live better lives. For You
are the One who is full of the power of
love that we would reflect in Jesus'
name.
Amen.

Our mighty Saviour and merciful God,
We worship Thee, for Thy love to us is
great.
We come before Thee in our Sabbath clothes
that cover our selfish hearts.
We confess that we did not do all for Thee or
others or even ourselves that we had
hoped to do this week.
Please forgive the angers, fears, doubts, and
apathy that often separate us from
Thee.
Wash away our guilt in Thy precious blood.
[Special requests.]
Give strength to Elder and Mrs _____ in
their ministry to this church.
Whether large or small, our faith reaches
out to Thee, knowing
Thou hast cleansed and blessed us accord-
ing to our need. In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Elder's Job Description

■ W. FLOYD BRESEE

With an enlarged understanding of God's intended role for the local church elder, and with an increasing ratio of church members per salaried minister, the Adventist Church today needs and welcomes the strengths and gifts of its elders as never before. Each's elder's job description is determined largely by five factors: (1) size of the congregation, (2) availability of the pastor, (3) the plan of pastor and congregation for involving elders, (4) the elder's gifts, and (5) the elder's willingness to work.

Because the work of local church elders varies so dramatically, the preparation of a single job description to fit all is virtually impossible. Thus, this job description is divided into three parts: work common to elders in *all churches*, work unique to elders in *large churches*, and work unique to elders in *small churches*.

All Churches

Many of the following tasks have biblical precedent as being part of the elder's job description. Not every elder is interested or gifted in every area, but every pastor and congregation should make these jobs available:

1. *Serve as principal lay leader of the congregation* (Acts 20:17, 28, "overseers, to

shepherd the church").*

2. *Live an exemplary Christian life before the congregation* (1 Peter 5:1-4, "being examples to the flock"). What people think of Christ probably depends less on what church leaders say about Him than on what people think of them as they say it. You must *be good* before you can *do good*.
3. *Support and teach sound doctrine* (Titus 2:1; 1:9, "sound doctrine"; 1 Tim. 3:2, "able to teach").
4. *As principal lay leader, give support to all church programs and encouragement to their leaders.*
5. *Participate in some kind of church outreach.* If leaders don't, chances are that members won't either.
6. *Serve on the church board.*
7. *Lead in worship.* Every elder should study worship. Since they give the main worship prayer more often than even pastors, elders should work to become specialists in public prayer.



■ W. FLOYD BRESEE

Floyd Bresee was secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1985 to 1992. Since his retirement he and his wife, Ellen, have been living in Tabernash, Colorado. Dr. Bresee continues to be active in church work, writing, and meeting various speaking appointments all over the world.

8. *Resolve congregational conflict.* You have likely been in the congregation longer than the pastor and are a fellow layperson. You should better understand conflicts within the congregation. Resolving conflict was part of the job description of Old Testament elders. Only problems that elders could not solve were to be brought to “Pastor” Moses (Deut. 1:13-17, “Hear the cases between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother”).
9. *Counsel members.* Members may not have chosen the pastor as their leader, but they did choose you. You have their confidence and should be available when they seek counsel.
10. *Be hospitable, both at church and at home* (Titus 1:6-9, “For a bishop must be . . . hospitable”). Elders and their families are nearly always in the mainstream of the church’s social structure. You are in a special position to help integrate new and friendless members into the life of the congregation.
11. *Love all your members—especially the least lovely* (Acts 20:17, 28 “Take heed . . . to *all* the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers”).
12. *Visit.* Perhaps your gifts and interests may lead you to specialize in visiting non-members, young members, former members, discouraged members, members of your Sabbath school class, shut-ins, etc.
13. *Take Communion to shut-ins.*
14. *Pray for and anoint the sick,* alone or as an assistant to the pastor (James 5:14, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church”).
15. *Pastor the pastor and the pastoral family.* They need it, and if elders don’t do it, chances are no one will.
16. *Be the pastor’s teammate.* God gave Moses a job description for the 70 elders (Num. 11:16, 17, “They shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not

bear it yourself alone”). Pastors and elders are partners in ministry. Publicly support the pastor’s program. No pastor is good at everything, but every pastor is good at something. Elders should encourage pastors to delegate to elders and other members those areas where the pastors are weak, so pastors can better serve the congregation by specializing in their strengths. Share the pastoral load by committing at least a few hours weekly to church work.

Large Churches

Typically, elders in large congregations do not directly oversee the whole church program as in a small church. However, they should be given responsibility for some portion of it.

- L1. *Serve as the pastor’s representative with responsibility for some assigned area of the church program.* For example: Sabbath school, youth ministry, church school, evangelism, visitation, worship committee, finance, chair board or other committee, etc.
- L2. *Be platform assistant.* Either organize the platform party for the worship service, or participate on the platform.
- L3. *Be a member of the board of elders.* In the early New Testament church, the elders met together to encourage church leaders and to solve the church’s most perplexing problems (Acts 15:1-29; 16:4; 21:18-25). The board of elders should be the pastor’s support group. It is an excellent body in which to originate church plans, and should provide an intimate, confidential, wise sounding board where church problems of an intimate nature can be discussed without their hurting people by becoming public knowledge.

Small Churches

The authority and responsibilities of elders in small churches are very broad. Their job description is nearly the same as that of a pastor, too large to be enumerated here in detail. The work of these elders, however, should always be done in cooperation with the pastor and in consultation with the church board. *Most of these duties are carried out only in the pastor’s absence.*

S1. *Plan and lead the services of the church.*
This includes not only the Sabbath worship services and prayer meeting, but possibly Communion and even funeral services.

S2. *Preach.*

S3. *Call and chair business and board meetings.*

S4. *Give general oversight to the stewardship program of the church.*

S5. *Promote programs passed on to the church by the pastor or the denomination's various entities (see Acts 11:29, 30).*

*Bible texts in this article are from the New King James Version.

ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS

Send us your church administration and theology related questions. In this column the Ministerial Association Staff will answer as many of them as space permits.

Did Moses Really Write Genesis?

Question:

I have been told that the art of writing was not known until long after the time of Moses. How, then, could Moses have written the first five books of the Bible?

Answer:

Ponderous volumes have been written to prove that Moses could not have written any books, because, it was thought, the art of writing was not known in his day. Recent discoveries have exploded all of these theories.

In the British Museum in London are 81 of the hundreds of famous Tel el Amarna tablets, which were discovered at a place by that name in Egypt. They were written in cuneiform characters, and date from about the time of Moses and Joshua. They are letters written from officials in Palestine to the government of Egypt.

In the same museum may be seen a replica of the Black Stele, more than seven feet high, discovered by J. de Morgan at Susa in December, 1901. It contains the written laws of King Hammurabi, who lived several centuries before Moses and may have been a contemporary of Abraham. We read in Genesis 14:9 of a king named Amraphel, who is thought by some to be Hammurabi.

Jesus, speaking of Moses, said, "He wrote you this precept," (Mark 10:5), and "He wrote of me." (John 5:46). Now we know that the art of writing was known not only at the time of Moses, but centuries before. The books ridiculing the Bible are now relegated to the dustbin of false theories. The Bible has been scientifically vindicated, and we can say with the Psalmist: "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever" (Psalm 119:160).

Trends That Should Be Guarded Against

■ R. ALLAN ANDERSON

A preacher once told of holding an evangelistic series in a convent's court he had rented. The resident nuns occasionally stood at their windows and listened. When he noticed them, he made it a special point to condemn "the beast." Is this God's way of evangelism? Does giving prominence to the more astonishing doctrines bring lasting results?

We frequently see men go through a program of subjects that may last for weeks or months. The people are gripped. The evangelist startles them, and they eagerly drink it all in. The preacher goes through "the series," and when he comes to the end, he has presented deep truths. But the people have not been able to understand them in the time allowed. But they have been startled. There has been no way of escape. They have felt compelled to act, and the impulsive ones have acted.

Then after finishing his work, the evangelist leaves them, just as a farmer does when he stuffs bags full of produce, ties them around the neck, and puts them in storage. Often a church is organized out of the company of new believers. The delicate work of nourishing them is left to an inexperienced church elder. Perhaps the preacher had used all the simpler prophecies that the church elder could ably handle. There seems little left for this poor man but to depend upon certain periodicals that come to him from time to time.

What is the result? The spiritual life of the people wanes, and they fall by the way. This is not because the preacher was unfaithful, but because of the unfortunate method he used in winning these people.

Still more deplorable is the fact that a large portion of the original interest raised has been left to wither away. The attendees who did not possess an impulsive disposition have returned to the dead churches they had left when the message came to them. But the preacher had denounced everything as heretical that did not line up with the truth. He made the fall of Babylon very prominent, perhaps applying the fall to a lack of spirituality. A cleavage has been made, and these people have become critics of both the ministers and the churches in the vicinity. This is a pity and quite out of harmony with the instruction given by the Spirit of Prophecy.

The method of work I have just outlined as a course to be avoided cannot promote good feeling with ministers of other denominations. By following it we isolate ourselves from them, and they become antagonistic. I refuse to have anything to do with any debate or newspaper controversy. I am sure that these are not the Lord's methods.

We have a glorious truth, but let us make it *evangelical first*. If souls are being brought to God to the ring of the old-time gospel, even those who have no sympathy with our denomination will respect a soul-saving work, and we shall have more friends than enemies. It is the greatest joy of my life to kneel beside other ministers, many of whom come to our meetings, and pray with them. Of course we have some opposition, and must expect it; but let us work in a way that will compel the respect, if not the love, of the other ministers in the community. How can we hope to reach them with this truth unless we adopt a method of kindly approach?

■ R. ALLAN ANDERSON

R. Allan Anderson (1895-1985) was a well-known evangelist, teacher, and author. He was an editor of *Ministry* for 16 years.

The Clear Word: A paraphrase to nurture faith and growth.

■ A Book Review by MARTIN WEBER

A review of the book, The Clear Word: A paraphrase to nurture faith and growth, by Jack J. Blanco, printed and distributed by Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, 2nd printing, 1994, 1425 pages, Hardcover, \$29.95.

A useful new Bible study tool—when properly used—is available to Seventh-day Adventists: *The Clear Word*, prepared by Jack Blanco, head of the religion department at Southern College. To benefit from *The Clear Word*, we must understand its place among the various translations, paraphrases, and commentaries on the Bible.

Not many lay people read the original Hebrew and Greek. For them, the next best thing in Bible study is a literal English language translation such as the *King James Version*, the *New King James Version*, or the *Revised Standard Version*. Perhaps the best conservative literal translation is the *New American Standard Bible*.

If you are willing to risk some accuracy to gain readability, try a “dynamic” version such as the *New Testament* by J. B. Phillips. Rather than being a strict translation of the Greek and Hebrew words themselves, dynamic versions are somewhat interpretive because they translate phrases as well as words in the context of ancient culture. Nevertheless, dynamic versions are genuine translations, and some are quite conservative and generally reliable, such as the *New International Version*.

The next class of versions is the paraphrase, which does not hesitate to sacrifice accuracy for the sake of easy reading. The most popular paraphrase is *The Living Bible*, which is not a translation—nor does it claim to be. The authors of biblical paraphrase express in their own words what they believe the text might mean. They aren’t bound by strict rules of interpretation as translators are. Paraphrases make for interesting devotional reading but are not sufficiently reliable to teach doctrine.

Some paraphrases take such liberties with the biblical text that they are more like personal commentaries. An example of this is *The Message* from

Navpress. Even greater liberties are taken in the “Cotton Patch” Version, which substitutes the names of Southern American towns for Galilee villages. This type of paraphrase/commentary freely ventures beyond the meaning of the text by introducing thoughts not suggested by the original languages.

Where does *The Clear Word* fit into the picture? Since the author relies heavily upon extra-biblical sources, particularly the writings of Ellen G. White, it’s more of a paraphrase/commentary than a real Bible. For example, he speaks of Adam and Eve wearing robes of light in the Garden of Eden. Nothing in the original text remotely suggests this; there is nothing regarding garments of light upon which to base even a loosely worded paraphrase. Thus *The Clear Word* is a commentary based upon information from Ellen White—which is fine, so long as we don’t treat it as Scripture. The author explains this in his preface.

Nevertheless, there has been considerable confusion and misuse of this study tool. One reason for this was the title of the first edition: *The Clear Word Bible*. The word “Bible” has now been removed. Another challenge is the verse-by-verse format of *The Clear Word*, which makes the text appear as a Bible translation rather than as a paraphrase/commentary. Contributing to that misperception is the absence of footnotes to document extra-biblical sources.

To minimize the potential for confusing *The Clear Word* with an actual Bible, we recommend that it not be used in preaching, in Sabbath school teaching or in Bible classes. Such use would be a serious stumbling block to nonmember visitors who may already associate Adventists with cults like the Jehovah Witnesses who design their own Bibles to teach their strange beliefs. Seventh-day Adventists have no such problem; we can teach all our doctrines out of real Bibles familiar to Christians everywhere.

To summarize: *The Clear Word* is actually not a Bible but a paraphrase/commentary that, when used properly, can enrich one’s devotional study and can be recommended in that way.

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