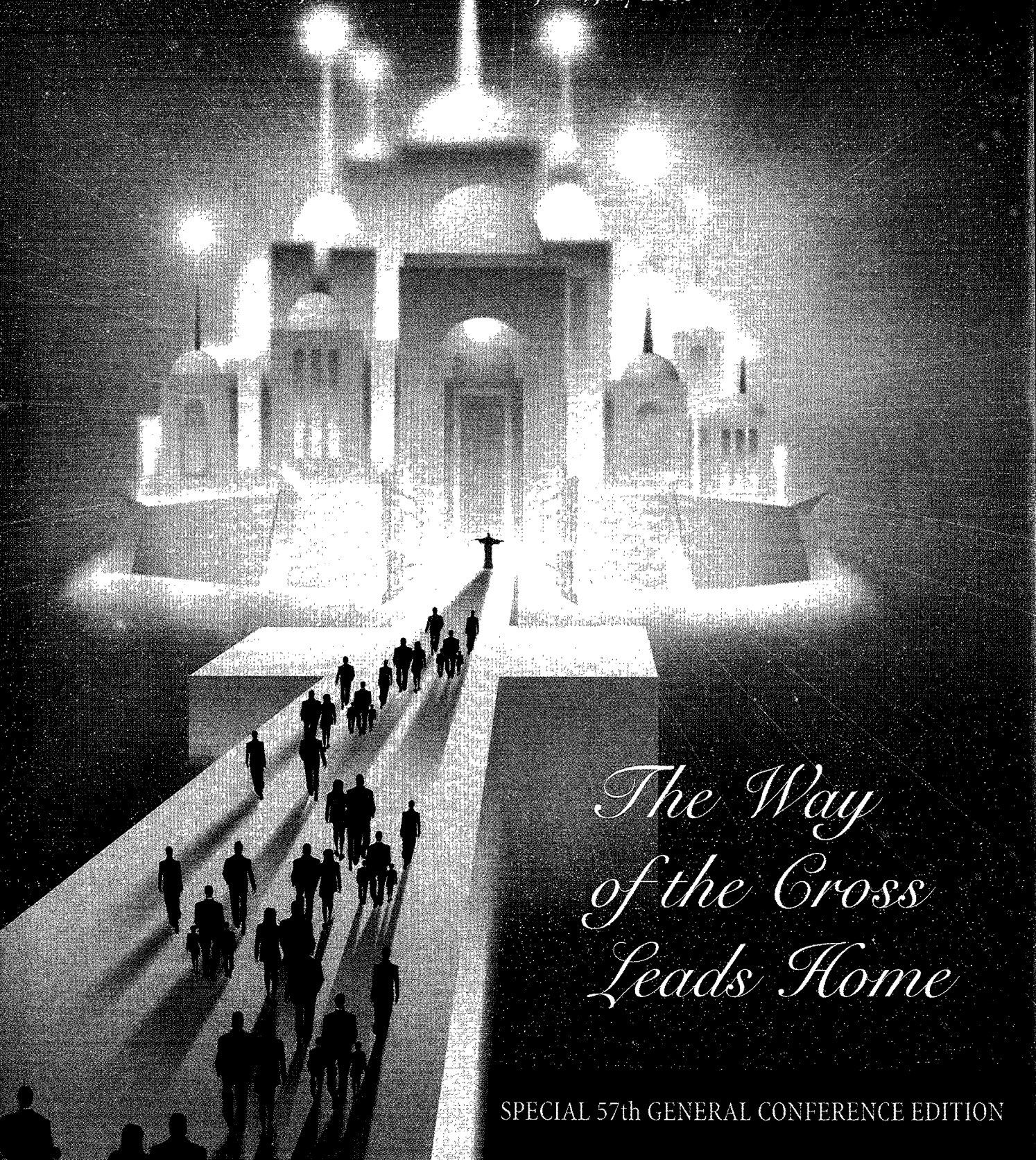


Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

June/July 2000



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of the Cross
Leads Home*

SPECIAL 57th GENERAL CONFERENCE EDITION

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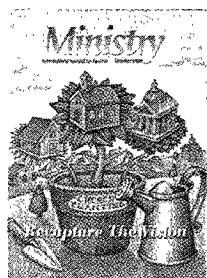
Generation gap in the church

I read with interest the questionnaire associated with Townend's article, "Can Disparate Generations Coexist in the Church?" (August 1999). My interest turned to shock when I got to question 13. Although I am well over 50, my gap is not with the students, but with the majority (63 percent) of my fellow "oldies."

Can anyone explain to me how you can be a Seventh-day Adventist without being a Christian? In my simplistic reasoning one would not only have to be a Christian, but would have to be among the most dedicated and sincere Christians to be convicted of the truths embraced by the Adventist Church.—Rod Leiske, Moxee, Washington.

Evangelism and church planting

I agree with Pastor Gladden ("Evangelism and Church Planting," October 1999) that we should develop a greater evangelistic thrust through sensible church planting. But I cannot agree with



Gladden that we assign our best pastors to do the work. A well-known "best pastor" in our conference has openly confessed to me that he could not do what I am doing. His gift is in one area, mine is in another. I could not take that pastor's place and he would not fit in my place. God has placed us where our gifts suit the task. However, the task is not necessarily that of the "best minister." Of the three church plants in which I have been involved the successful plant is

based on a dedicated member couple. My role is that of resource provider, source of encouragement and of spiritual renewal. My experience has shown that a church plant takes place when a consecrated pair or more of missionaries enter an area. This team works on the basis that they are excellent personal workers who make friends and witness to their Father and Savior. They then move into an evangelistic setting where the Spirit teaches, convicts, and leads people to the foot of the cross.

Gladden also suggests that we look to the demographics of an area to plant a church. My understanding is that the area is not the important issue. These days people make their friendships and relationships on the basis of who they are working with or meet at the shops. Neighbor friendships are not so common. What counts is not the friendly estate but the person. I would call for our conferences to identify members with the specific gifts to plant a church. They should then be linked into small groups of two or three dedicated families, trained for service and then asked to work in a specific area. These people would then be teamed up with a pastor who would support them.—Peter Jeynes, Kendal, Cumbria, England.

Sermon grammar

Maylan Schurch's article "Brush Up Your Sermon Grammar" (December 1999) is the first of its kind I have read in a professional ministry journal! Many pastors think proper usage is not important, but it is. I appreciate your calling us to a higher standard.—Stephen Gifford, president, Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Alvarado, Texas.

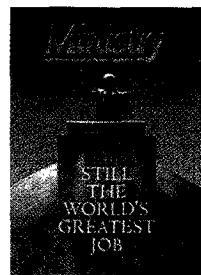
Afraid of the gospel?

I was moved by the cover story "Are We Afraid of the Gospel?" by Stuart Tyner (December 1999). Through the years I have been perplexed as to why, when the gospel is preached, the result for some has been a loosening of commitment to the Sabbath and other aspects of the practical Christian life.

I have come to the conclusion that when the ancient prophets, as well as Jesus, John the Baptist, Peter, and Paul preached, there was a word that was included that is often absent in the presentation of the gospel today: *repentance*. That word makes the gospel functional in the life of the believer. It is just as futile to accept the gospel without repentance as it is to try to repent without accepting the gospel.—Dick O'Fill, Orlando, Florida.

Appreciation

I just finished reading and re-reading several articles from *Ministry* and I'm writing to say thanks for all you do to make *Ministry* a practical, inspiring, and thought-provoking journal. I especially appreciated "Why the Seventh Day?" (Will Eva, July and September 1999), "Things That Matter," (Will Eva, December 1999), "Are We Afraid of the Gospel?" (Stuart Tyner, December



1999), and "A Fresh Look at the Dynamics of Inspiration" (Richard Coffen, December 1999 and February 2000). I found it a bit ironic that the editorial "Things That Matter" and

continued on p. 58

Free Subscription

If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.



June 29–July 8 marks the assembling of the fifty-seventh General Conference Session of the Seventh-day

Adventist Church, in Toronto, Canada. In celebration of this landmark event, *Ministry* has prepared this special edition, venerating the promised verity of the second coming of Jesus our Lord.

In connection with this majestic theme I have a modest pinch of memory from boyhood. I recall my father singing a particular song during family worship on Friday evenings. As all four of us sang, my mother playing the piano, I would watch him through the corner of my eye. Even though I was not conscious of the significance of what was happening as I stole my glances, there was something unquestionably alive that came over him in his singing of this song. He would try to maintain his inherited sense of decorum. But by the time we got a little way into the opening verse, all the old song said and meant would take over him. His face and his voice would take on a particular, unselfconscious ardor as he sang:

*"I saw one weary, sad, and torn,
with eager steps press on the way,
Who long the hallowed cross had borne,
still looking for the promised day;
While many a line of grief and care,
upon his brow was furrowed there;
I asked what buoyed his spirits up,
'O this!' said he—the blessed hope!"*

A transforming expectation

The "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) is a transforming longing that surges intensely in the soul that has come to know it and believe in it.

Without a doubt, this quality of anguished, yearning hope is part of what the Spirit has placed in the hearts of all who have given them-

The blessed hope

W I L L E V A

selves to this expectation. Once the reality of the promise of all promises has brushed against our hearts and taken root, those who in it hear the voice of the Lord can never be the same again. For we seem to hear for ourselves Jesus' own eloquent pronouncement, "I will come again" (John 14:3, NASB).

Simply embracing the implications of the promise, feeling its full impact and believing it, alters our worldview in a way that nothing else can. It is indeed a stupendous and a radical thing to allow into the individual heart, let alone into the being of a world community.

Looking back

Looking back across the centuries we can see it still new and fresh. The sublime, impassioned voices go back far into an ancient antiquity of conviction and sing more sublimely today in the souls of those of us closer than ever to the moment of truth. The voices sing to us of a sacred pact God has with us humans. They even sing from the heart of the cauldron of this planet's severest trial: "And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:25-27, NASB).

And the poet-prophets, whether referring to the first or the second coming of Jesus, or both, picked up on the celestial vow of our God: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be

glad . . . Before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth" (Psalm 96:11-13). "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. . . . And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:8, 9).

And there was the pivotal moment when, having finished His salvation work on earth, Jesus was taken up from His disciples, and "two men . . . in white" (Acts 1:10) were sent to speak to their bewilderment and ours: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (verse 11).

The prophet John ends the written canon with: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15, NASB), and finally, "Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (22:20).

The blessed hope has, throughout all the ages been the most precious anticipation of the followers of the Lamb. From dungeons and torture, in writing and in preaching, in chaos and crisis and perhaps best of all, in the mundaneness of the everyday life of the commonest of Christians, the blessed hope has continued to restore, encourage, and transform.

John Calvin urged believers "not to hesitate, ardently desiring the day of Christ's coming as of all events most auspicious." "Has not the Lord Jesus carried up our flesh into heaven? and shall He not return? We know that He shall return, and with what expedition," said John Knox. And Nicholas Ridley affirmed that "the whole world without doubt—this I do believe, and therefore I say it—draws to an end." Martin Luther said, "I persuade myself

verily, that the day of the judgment will not be absent full three hundred years. God will not, cannot, suffer this wicked world much longer."²

Keeping the hope intact

Discovering this predictive assertion in Luther is interesting, bringing up a collection of conflicting thoughts and feelings in me. Luther's time calculation regarding the judgment and the second coming of Jesus, though an admirably moderate one, does tend to walk on the edges of a despoiling tendency that has plagued the ebb and flow of Christian history and particularly that of the Seventh-day Adventist community. Luther said that he believed "verily" that because God could not possibly endure "this wicked world much longer," God would intervene with judgment within three hundred years. The fact is that along with a host of other apocalyptic calculators, Martin Luther was simply wrong in his forecast.

Though, in the light of biblical prophecy, we may know that the end is always "near, even at the doors," since the first coming of Jesus we have indeed been living in the time of the end and that "He that shall come will come and will not tarry," nevertheless we are wrong when we attempt to assign specific time limits to the hour of the eschaton.

In answer to the "when" question of His disciples, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3, NASB) Jesus said explicitly and repeatedly, that "no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son, but the Father alone" (verse 36, NASB).

This is not an obscure verse in the Bible that can be interpretively manipulated to accommodate our desire to produce a specific time for Jesus' coming. Looking carefully at the simple narrative structure of Matthew

24, it is clear that Jesus, in the light of His disciples' question, considered it a priority to emphasize the need for the Christian disciple to always "be ready" exactly because they (we) would never know beforehand the actual time of the parousia (read again verses 36, 39, 42, 43, 44, and 45, along with the thrust of the parable of the ten virgins in 25:1-13).

Reading Matthew 24, one can see that the only way of knowing when Jesus is to come is by properly reading the signs He describes and not the apocalyptic prophecies with calendar in hand. The nature of these signs

Once the
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hearts and taken root, those who
in it hear the voice of the Lord
can never be the same again.

seem to be purposely designed to take us only so far—a genuinely healthy distance, spiritually speaking—in our attempts to calculate to any exact degree, the actual "when" of Jesus' arrival.

The motive for stopping so abruptly in the midst of this editorial celebration of the blessed hope to take up this question of predicting the time of the Second Coming, is not of course to find fault with Martin Luther, or to bring up a discordant argument of some kind. The point is to insist that the most sincere and informed Christians are subject to making assertions that are ill-founded and above all, in the long run,

seriously damaging to the blessed hope which struggles to find a foothold in the hearts of those searching for a worthy hope.

We may be justly concerned that all of the time setting that has gone on among Adventists, let alone across the centuries of Christian history, has had a way of blunting our faith in the blessed hope. Time setting has a way of boldly robbing struggling people of one of their most precious possessions: the sense of certainty they have in the glorious appearing of our great God. What a potent way of turning an upward gaze into a downward spiraling skepticism, or of converting an otherwise open heart into bold cynicism.

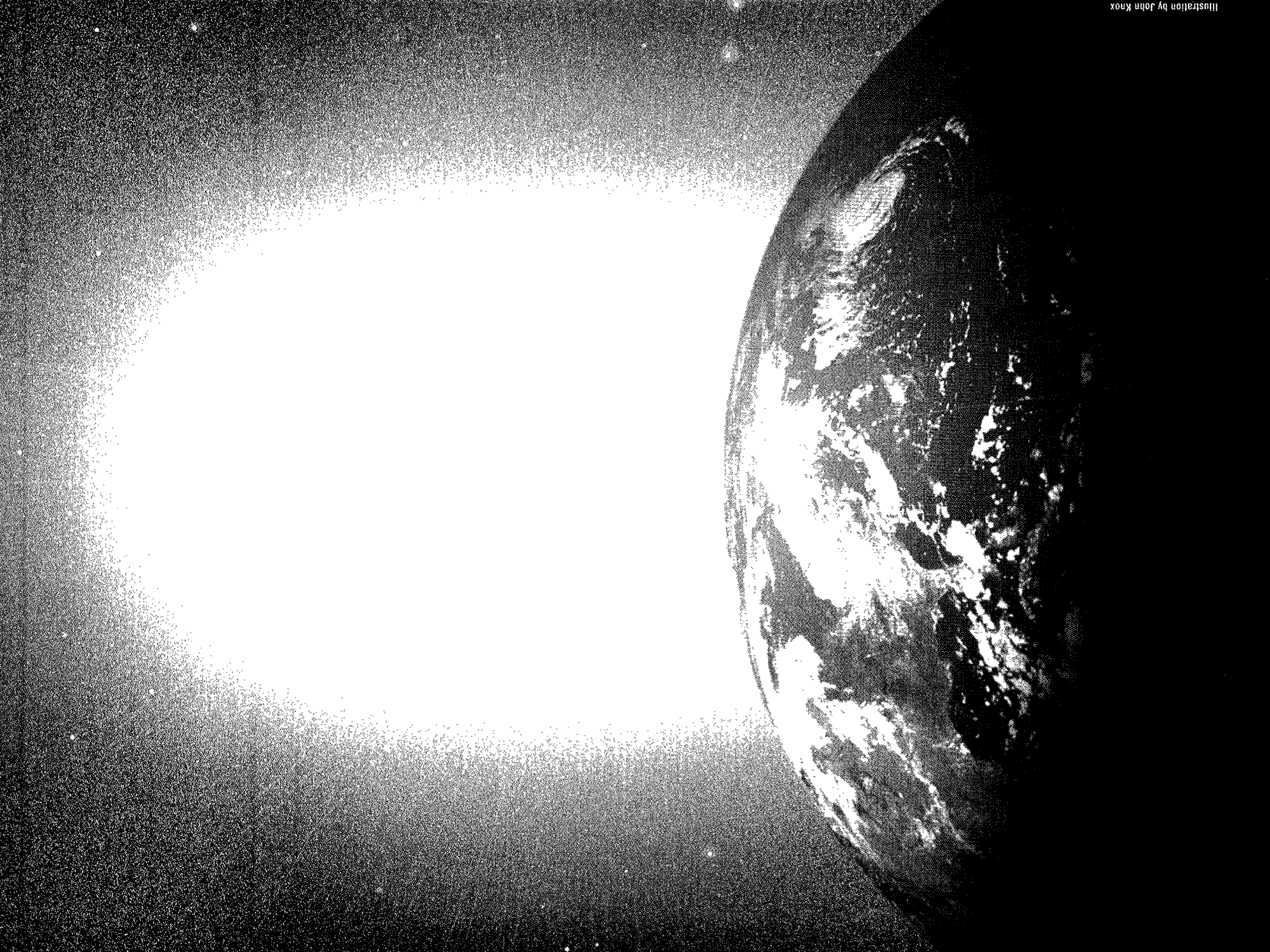
Someone who had lived in the fall-out of more than one agonizing time-setting episode wrote the following out of the crucible of those experiences: "It [truth] will never develop in any line that will lead us to imagine that we may know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power. . . . There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time."³

Let us revel in the blessed hope. Let us glory in it, be transformed by it and allow it to fashion our outlook with an upward concentration. Let us move with wisdom and a living, present faith, nurturing a solid, urgent, and true hope among us, so that we will all justly stand in the long line of witnesses, true to the blessed hope of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This special celebrative issue of *Ministry* is dedicated to this vision. ■

¹ Annie R. Smith, *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), 441.

² Quotes in this paragraph are cited from Daniel T. Taylor, *The Reign of Christ on Earth: or, The Voice of the Church in All Ages*, as found in Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1888), 302-304.

³ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1 (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 188.



THE RETURN OF JESUS:

The God who is coming

The Old Testament contains numerous references about God actually appearing to human beings, either in dreams (Gen.20:3), through a messenger (Judges 6:11), or in personal manifestations of His presence—called theophanies (*theos* [“God”] and *phaino* [“appear”]) (Exod.19:9).¹



Angel Manuel Rodríguez, Th.D., is the associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland.

God usually comes as a warrior to fight and to judge the nations, or to deliver His people from the power and oppression of some enemy power (Isa. 30:27; Mic. 1:3, 4; 3:1, 2; Zech. 14:5-11).

The intervention of God in human history was eagerly awaited by His people; in fact, on many occasions it provided them their hope for the future. The manifestations of God to individuals, or to the people, were particularly impressive because they were often accompanied by extraordinary phenomena in the natural world, as well as by a display of God's glory and power. Those interventions of God in history, though unusual, nevertheless served as models for His future eschatological manifestation in human affairs.

Christ's return: The theophany

From a Christian perspective we could suggest that those earlier theophanies were precursors to the great and glorious coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ at the eschaton. In many ways they were a pallid reflection of the unprecedented display of glory that humans will witness at Christ's return. The Scriptures testify that Jesus will come back in the splendor of His divinity. He said to the disciples that the Son of Man will come “in his Father's glory with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38, NIV). Shortly before the Crucifixion He prayed, “Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5). The glory of the pre-incarnated Son is the same glory that will be displayed by Him at the Second Coming. Peter refers to that event as the time when Christ's “glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:13). His glory was concealed during the Incarnation under the veil of human flesh, and for now it is still concealed in heaven, but at the end it will be fully revealed to the world.

In the Bible the glory of God often refers to His character (John 1:14) and to His unique nature, which distin-

guishes God from the created world. There is simply no one like Him because there is no other Creator; everything that exists is part of His creation.

But His "glory" also refers to the brightness of the impenetrable light that surrounds His person (1 Tim. 6:16). That same glory belongs by nature to the Son of God and will be revealed, as never before, at the Parousia. In that glorious theophany all other theophanies find their full significance in a manner that transcends human imagination.

The occasional use of the term "epiphany" in the New Testament, to designate the return of our Lord, supports the view that Christ will return to the planet and display the glory of His divinity. In 1 Timothy 6:14 Paul uses the phrase "the appearing [*epiphaneia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 2 Tim. 4:8); in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 the terms "epiphany" and "parousia" are combined to designate that same glorious event. The Greek term *epiphaneia*, in secular Greek, referred to the outward appearance of a person but in religious contexts it designated the appearance and intervention of the gods on behalf of humans.² Interestingly, in the New Testament, it exclusively refers to the appearance of Jesus at the Incarnation (2 Tim. 1:10), and particularly to His manifestation at the Parousia. His presence is indeed a religious epiphany, the manifestation of God in human flesh at the Incarnation and "the glorious appearing [*epiphaneia*] of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ," at the Second Coming (Titus 2:13, 14a). One is led to conclude that "the early Church saw in the incarnation of Jesus Christ as well as in his second advent the final parousia, the personal realization of the promised 'coming of God'" ³ announced in the Old Testament.

Titus 2:13, 14 refers to the "glorious epiphany" of the One who is coming, "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." His coming can be described as glorious because the One who is returning is in fact "our great God and Savior."⁴ Although He is still human at His coming, Christ's glorious divinity

shines through His human nature in all its unprecedented purity and power. Again, when Jesus comes the second time, the human race will witness the most powerful and glorious theophany ever seen on our planet. Our God and Savior will explode into our time and space in all His glory. This will indeed be the consummation of all previous theophanies.⁵

Christ's theophany transforms nature

The uniqueness of the theophany of Christ at His second coming can be better grasped by contrasting it with those

The return of
our God and Savior in glory
will break the mold of all
previous theophanies in that it
will be witnessed by every
human being on earth.

recorded in the Old Testament, which were geographically limited in their extent. For instance, He appeared to Abraham near the trees of Mamre (Gen. 18:1), to Moses in the wilderness (Exod. 3:1), and partially at least to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai (19:16-18). Even God's surpassing presence in human form in Jesus was limited to Palestine.

Often the manifestation of the presence of the Lord was accompanied by the sound of trumpets and by extraordinary natural phenomena: The ground was shaken and there were thick clouds and fearful fire (19:18, 19). Nature seemed to have been totally unable to contain the awesome presence of the Creator as He came to visit it.

In contrast with these localized ap-

pearances, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ at the eschaton transcends geographical boundaries and encompasses in a mysterious way the totality of earth. This universal dimension was absent in all other theophanies recorded in the Bible, making it the consummation of God's presence in this world. When God's visible presence is felt within this world, the theophanic elements mentioned in the Bible acquire universal dimensions. The earthquake affects every mountain and island of the world (Rev. 6:14), the sound of the trumpet reaches every corner of the planet (1 Thess. 4:16; Matt. 24:31), and fire envelops the earth (2 Peter 3:10). Nothing escapes the upheaval of nature at the moment of the return of our great God and Savior.

The intention of the visible presence of God within nature is to transform it, and to redeem it from the oppression of sin. His manifestation within nature may take the shape of fire, but it is a purifying fire. For Moses, the bush was on fire, but in the process it was incorporated by God into the realm of the holy (Exod. 3:4-5). At the manifestation of Christ's divine power, the fire of His presence engulfs nature, not to destroy it but to redeem it. Paul indicates that through the eschatological theophany, creation "will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

Christ's theophany is inescapably visible

Secondly, the apparitions of God recorded in the Bible were experienced by a limited group of people. Abraham, Moses, and the Israelites encountered His presence in personal ways, but also Job (38:1), Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13), Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-4), and others. Most of the time, the presence of the Lord was manifested only to individuals. But undoubtedly, the greatest theophany recorded in the Old Testament took place on Mount Sinai, when "Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. . . . The

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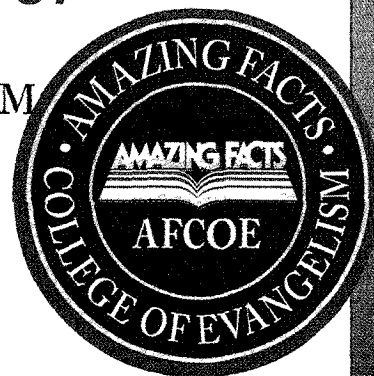
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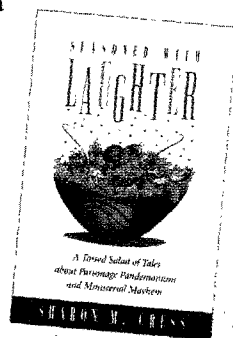
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whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of trumpets grew louder and louder" (Exod. 19:17, 19). That day the Lord appeared "in the sight of all the people" (19:11). This time God appeared not only to the leaders and mediators of the people but directly to the totality of the religious community. No other nation had had a close encounter with their gods like the Israelites had with theirs (Deut. 4:32-34).

Yet the return of our God and Savior in glory will break the mold of all previous theophanies in that it will be witnessed by every human being on earth. Jesus stated that "all the nations of the earth . . . will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30). John conveys, in crystal clear language, the global display of Christ's divinity at the Parousia: "He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him" (Rev.

1:7). That theophany will be the greatest saving show of light and sound ever experienced by any human being; the glory, the light, and the sounds of heaven intersect the darkness and cacophony of a sinful planet. Sinners will be shaken to the core of their being as they see the Crucified One coming back—dressed now in the splendor of the same glory He had with the Father from eternity (Rev. 6:15). He will be seen by His enemies as the Divine Warrior whose sole presence is powerful enough to defeat and destroy them (2 Thess. 2:8). At the sight of such a Warrior the forces of evil will lose their will to fight, and possessed by terror they will unsuccessfully seek a place of refuge to hide them from the universal manifestation of God at the Second Coming. There is no way to escape the visible presence of God because there is no place on the planet where it is not

forcefully felt; at that moment there is no hiding place for sin and unrepentant sinners.

The visibility of such theophany engulfs the planet in an explosion of light that makes the presence of Jesus real and visible and moves the redeemed to shout, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us" (Isa. 25:9). They will have an unparalleled encounter with God. Then, one of the deepest longings of the human heart—to see the Creator and Redeemer—will be fully satisfied. The Divine Warrior will be seen by them not as an enemy but as the One who is coming from His heavenly dwelling to liberate them from the oppressive presence of evil. To see Him is to experience the consummation of the freedom He gave them during His first advent.

Christ's theophany and permanent re-unification

Third, biblical theophanies are limited by time constraints. God appeared in a visible way to individuals for a short period of time. There were both elements of encounter and elements of separation, a coming together and a departure. Consequently, there was not in those theophanies a permanent re-unification of God and humans in a face-to-face relationship. The plan of redemption had not yet reached its ultimate goal. But at the second coming of Jesus, the plan of salvation will be fully realized and His presence among His people will be visible and permanent.

Paul points with visionary eye to the Parousia and equates it with the moment when "we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thess. 4:17). Transformed by the power of God manifested in the person of His Son, His servants are then enabled to exist in His very presence. This theophany is not simply another theophany. Instead, it defines our new mode of existence—free from the power of death, ushered into the realm of the eternal, and bringing all separation to a radical end (1 Cor. 15:51-54). Living permanently in the immediate visible presence of God will no longer be the unexpected, extraordinary, and

transitory experience it has been, but rather the normal, permanent state of things in our new existence.

Paul makes it clear that the Great God who is coming is the One "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness" (Titus 2:14). It is when the mortal is clothed with immortality that human nature is finally divested of the enslaving power of wickedness and set free to love in purity of heart. Yes, humans will be able to express love in an effortless way, free from the distorting presence of sin in their nature.⁶ Entering eternity with God requires this fundamental transformation of human nature because the heavenly realm is ruled by the purity of divine love which was incarnated in the One who is coming.

Conclusion

Christians joyfully anticipate the eschatological coming of the Son of God to our planet. The God who comes is the same who was crucified for us but now appears for us as the Divine War-

rior who confronts the forces of evil and defeats them by the power of His presence. The encounter between God and nature will result in the transformation of the natural world, its final incorporation into the glorious freedom of the children of God. It is through Christ's appearing that human nature will experience ultimate freedom from the inward corruption of sin, introducing the redeemed ones into a permanent vision of God, of which all previous ones have been faint symbols. ■

¹ On the subject of "the coming of God" in the Old Testament see, Horst Dietrich Preuss, "Bô," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), 44-49.

² Rudolf Bultmann and Dieter Lüthmann, "Phaino," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9, Gerhard Friedrich, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), 8. P. G. Müller writes, "The word in secular Greek already indi-

cated the appearance of the saving deity and the experience of the saving act. But it also designated the cultic presence of the god-like ruler of the Hellenistic-Roman state cult" ("Epiphaneia appearance," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2, Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds. [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991], 44).


³ Müller, "Epiphaneia," 44.

⁴ The phrase "our great God and Savior" refers only to one person, Jesus. In Greek whenever a noun has a definite article and is united to an indefinite noun by the conjunction *kai* ("and"), the two nouns designate the same person or thing. Besides, the thought expressed in verse 13 is carried on in verse 14 where the subject of the sentence is a singular pronoun referring to Jesus ("who gave himself . . ."). See George W. Knight III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1992), 323.

⁵ Cf., Fritz Guy, "The Future and the Present: The Meaning of the Advent Hope," in *The Advent Hope in Scripture and History*, V. Norskov Olsen, ed. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1987), 217, 218.

⁶ See Guy, "Meaning," 223.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SECOND COMING

The climactic event of biblical verity is the Second Coming, when Christ returns to judge the world and to vindicate both His dead and living elect.



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The common creed of Western Christianity, the Apostles' Creed (c. 700), states that Jesus Christ "rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty, *thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.*"¹ Orthodox theologians all agree on this doctrine. One evangelical scholar affirms, "It is the basis of the Christian's hope, the one event which will mark the beginning of the completion of God's plan."² This high evaluation of the second advent or parousia of Christ is justified in the light of Paul's inspired declarations: "He [God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).*

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

"This [deliverance from oppres-

sion] will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1:7-8).

The brief statements in Paul's letters intend to reassure the new believers of Christ's original promise. "I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3, emphasis added). "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done" (Matt. 16:27). He even placed His return in the awesome setting of the great Day of Yahweh, when He identified His Parousia completely with the coming of Israel's God: "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other" (Matt. 24:30-31; cf. Isa. 27:12-13; 43:5-7; 56:8). The return of Christ is the book of Revelation's central theme (Rev. 1:7), and it portrays His coming repeatedly as the climax of vari-

HANS K. LARONDELLE

ous series of future events (see Rev. 6:12-17; 14:14-20; 19:11-21). This partial review reveals the second advent of Christ as an essential of the New Testament faith.

The foundation of the Parousia: The resurrection of Christ

Without the glorious return of Christ, His own promise of "the renewal of all things" (Matt. 19:28) would collapse. More than that, the purpose of the first coming of Christ would be seriously jeopardized, if not totally lost. With compelling force, Paul argued the unbreakable unity of the believer's present and the believer's future salvation in Christ: "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith . . . if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (1 Cor. 15:13, 14, 17-19).

The apostle based the certainty of our hope in eternal life, that is, of the resurrection of the dead, squarely on the bodily resurrection of Jesus. About the historical reality of Christ's resurrection Paul had no doubts. The risen Lord had clearly spoken to him on the road to Damascus and called him to be His witness and apostle (see Acts 26:15-18), an experience with far-reaching significance for the zealous Pharisee. He considered Jesus' resurrection from the dead as the beginning of the promised resurrection of the saints, foretold by Israel's prophets (see Job 19:25-27; Isa. 26:19; Dan. 12:2). Wrote F. F. Bruce: "Since God had raised Jesus from the dead, he would assuredly raise all his people in due course—more specifically, at Jesus' parousia, his advent in glory."³ Paul illustrated this spiritual connection by calling the risen Christ "*the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Cor. 15:20, emphasis added). This image reminded them of the appointed feast: when a sheaf of the first grain of the harvest was offered to God,



the entire harvest was holy. Paul explained: "If the root is holy, so are the branches" (Rom. 11:16). In other words, Christ's resurrection guarantees the future raising of all "those who belong to him" (1 Cor. 15:23).

Paul further placed the significance of Jesus' first coming in the larger framework of all salvation history, declaring: "*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive*" (1 Cor. 15:22, emphasis added). Here Christ is revealed as the second Adam, the new Father of the human race, who has determined the future of mankind "much more" than did Adam, just as eternal life is "much more" than death (see also Rom. 5:14, 15). In Christ we may "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2), because "Christ was raised from the dead" and "death no longer has mastery over him" (Rom. 6:9). The raising of Christ from the dead is clearly the indispensable foundation of all Christian faith and hope.

Reassurances of the risen Lord Jesus

The gospel is not based merely on the empty tomb of Jesus, but also on the surprising appearances of the risen Lord to His disciples (see John 20; 1 Cor. 15:5-8) and on His outpouring of God's Spirit on them (Acts 2:1-4). Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, based his stirring message to Israel entirely on the resurrection and ascension of Christ to heaven. His point was to explain the significance of the visible outpouring of God's Spirit on the Christ-believing Jews, in the progressive unfolding of the divine plan of salvation (see Acts 2:32, 33). Peter announced that the outpouring of God's Spirit, as foretold by Joel (2:28), had now become a present reality because of the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Jesus as the Lord and Messiah in heaven (Acts 2:36). Its fulfillment was not imaginary or without evidence: the Spirit of prophecy was signally restored in Israel as the sign of the Messianic age, a reality so overwhelming and convicting that about three thousand Jews were baptized that day (Acts 2:41). Hendrikus Berkhof explains: "It is only due to the appearances of the risen Jesus that despair gave way

to a new and unusually strong faith. Therefore the resurrection may be called the decisive redemptive event . . . the Christian faith stands or falls with the resurrection."⁴

In short, Christian faith in general and Christian faith in the Parousia particularly is not based on some ideology or moral philosophy, but on undeniable historical facts and powerful realities demonstrated in Christ. After Pentecost, Peter's faith remained oriented to the

C
hristian faith
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personal coming of Christ: "He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets" (Acts 3:21). The promise of the angels at Jesus' ascension confirmed the Christian hope: " '*This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven*' " (Acts 1:11, emphasis added). No invisible, spiritual, or secret advent is predicted here, but rather His visible and personal return from heaven.

Early Christian worship and the blessed hope

At His last supper, Jesus made the solemn promise: " 'I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on *until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom*' " (Matt. 26:29, emphasis added). The connection Jesus set here between the Lord's Supper and the coming Messianic banquet makes each Communion service an anticipation of the Second Coming. Paul recognized this forward-looking aspect of the Lord's Supper, when he wrote his instruction: "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death *until he comes*" (1 Cor. 11:26, emphasis added). This valuable link of the Lord's Supper with His promised return is often lost by a one-sided emphasis on the atoning death of Jesus. Paul concluded his letter to the Corinthians with an ancient Aramaic prayer, which New Testament scholarship believes was part of the earliest Aramaic-speaking church: "*Mara-natha!*" meaning "*Come, O Lord!*" (1 Cor. 16:22, emphasis added). Oscar Cullmann comments: "We know that all worship in early Christianity was considered an anticipation in the present of the Kingdom of God . . . This connection between present and future reality . . . represents the peculiar character and greatness of the early Church's worship."⁵

This forward-looking attitude of the original Christian worship is evident in the apostolic letters. In his earliest letter (A.D. 50), Paul reported that the church in Thessalonica had truly "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, *and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath*" (1 Thess. 1:9, 10, emphasis added). At the end of the first century, long after Pentecost, John ended the book of Revelation with this personal assurance of the risen Lord: "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'" John responded immediately: "*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus*" (Rev. 22:20, emphasis added). The Advent hope was a living hope that determined the faith and worship of the early church.

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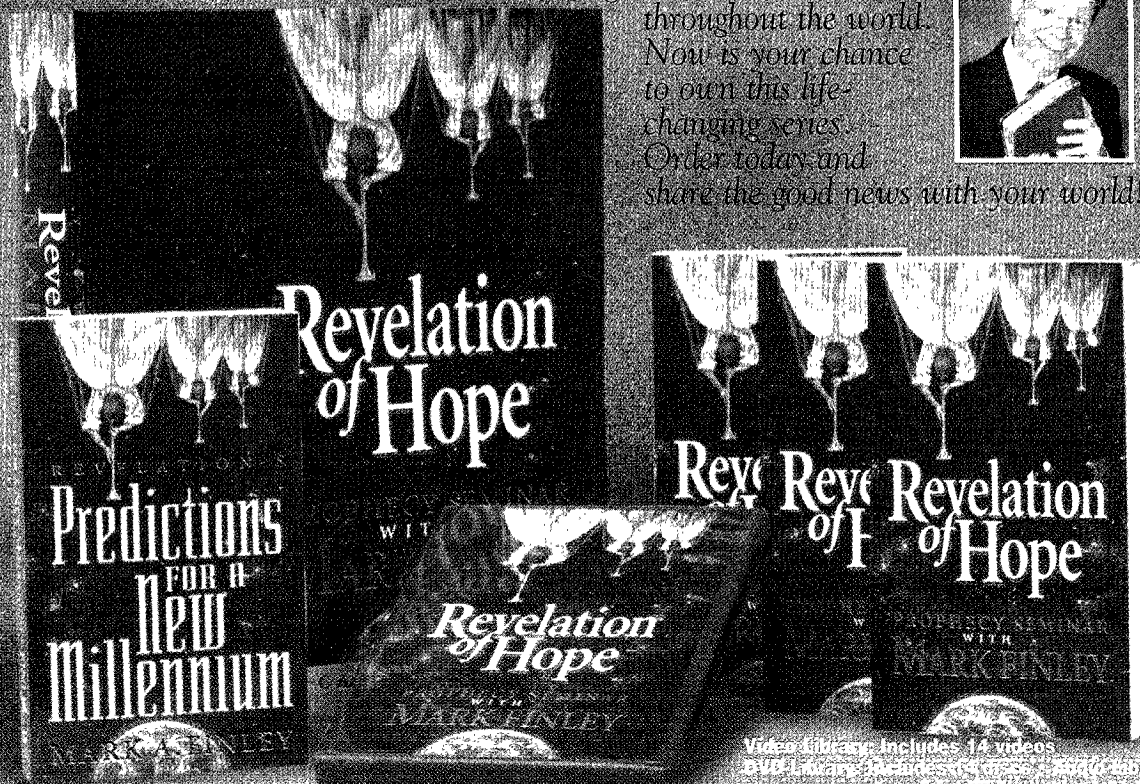
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The sanctifying power of the Christian hope

The apostles did not teach the Second Coming as an isolated dogma but as a vital truth that was to shape the believer's life. Hope in the Parousia was to be experienced as a sanctifying power that would prepare them with confidence for the advent of Christ. Paul implied that sanctification, like justification, was both a prerequisite and a guarantee of glorification, when he stated succinctly: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27, or translated: "Christ in you, the hope of a glory to come" (NEB). This phrase indicates again an organic link between present and future salvation. In Christ there is in essence only one salvation, to be realized in a present and a future phase. The future is assured in the present redemption by one and the same faith in Christ. Paul explained this assurance of salvation in a masterly way: "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you" (Rom. 8:11). What an assurance, anchored in a living faith and experience with Christ! The Christian may already now taste "the powers of the coming age" (Heb. 6:5). Bruce clarifies: "Inwardly they already enjoyed a foretaste of the coming resurrection life—eternal life—because they were united by faith to the risen Christ, incorporated in him."⁶ This makes all Christian believers citizens of heaven, from where they eagerly await the glorious appearing of their Lord (see Phil. 3:20-21; Tit. 2:13). This "blessed hope" transforms the behavior of believers here and now.

When John saw how a new Greek philosophy, called Docetism, began to infiltrate the church and to undermine practical Christianity, he urged his churches in Asia Minor to "continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28). He then pointed to their moral obligation: "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 John

3:3). Clearly, Christian hope requires a Christ-centered, Christlike life.

Peter is known as "the apostle of hope," because he emphasized that God "has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you . . . until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5). He stressed, however, specific Christian qualities that are essential for entering the eternal kingdom of Christ: goodness,

The apostles
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Coming as an isolated
dogma but as a vital truth
that was to shape the
believer's life.

knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (see 2 Peter 1:5-11). His appeal was therefore: "Since everything will be destroyed in this way [by fire, volume 10], *what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming*" (2 Peter 3:11, 12, emphasis added). The eager expectancy of the Second Coming was and still is an urgent motivation to remain in Christ and to become more Christlike.

A panoramic view of the Parousia

The way Jesus Himself had described His return in the glory of God in Matthew 24:29-31, and later amplified by

His portrayals in the Apocalypse, reveals that the parousia of Christ will consummate the prophecies of the Day of Yahweh of Israel's prophets. No passage in the Gospels is more saturated with allusions to Israel's prophetic language than Matthew 24:29-31. In fact, "nowhere else in the New Testament is there a parousia scene composed of six apocalyptic motifs as we find in Matt 24:29-31."⁷ This is a theophany, the Day of the Lord, the Son of Man in Daniel 7, the cosmic signs, the clouds of heaven, and the gathering of the elect. This observation gives Jesus' portrayal of His return a unique theological significance. It focuses all the apocalyptic signs on the person of Jesus and on His parousia. None of these signs and manifestations were intended as mere symbols. All people will see, hear, and feel the dramatic manifestation of the Parousia. "To move his readers into an overwhelming feeling of reality,"⁸ is the intentional meaning of Matthew's Christocentric eschatology. His parousia portrayal in Matthew 24 "blossoms as an apocalyptic flower on the trunk and branches" of Israel's prophecy.⁹

What this short review shows is that, far from being a mere appendix, afterword, or footnote to faith, the second coming of Jesus, the Second Advent, remains the great hope of all who, through Jesus, have any hope at all. ■

* All Scripture citations are from the New International Version.

¹ J. H. Leith, *Creeeds of the Churches* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), 24.

² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House), Vol. 3, 1985, 1186.

³ F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 304.

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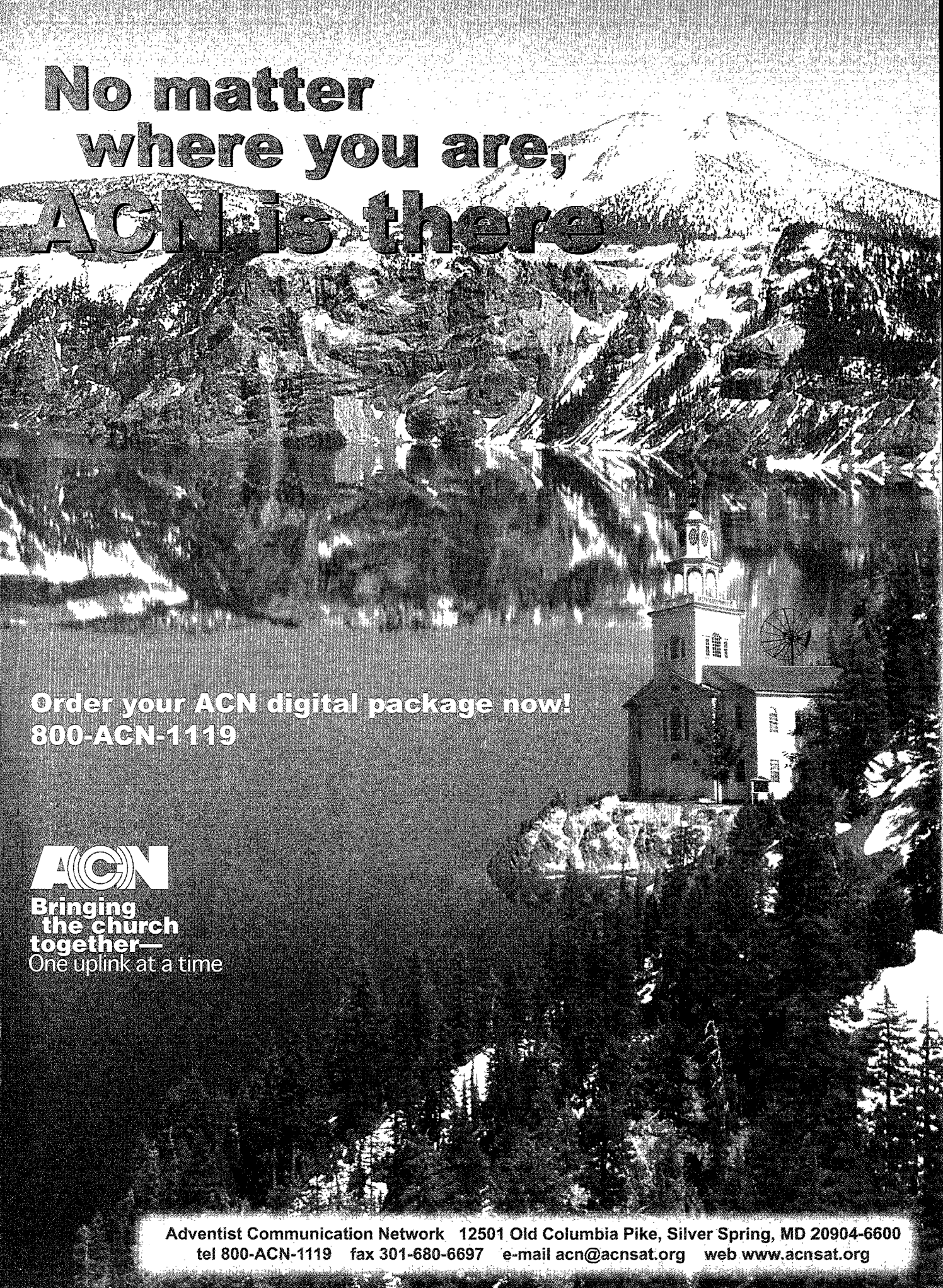
⁵ O. Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 211.

⁶ Bruce, *ibid.*, 304, 305.

⁷ Ki K. Kim, *The Signs of the Parousia* (Seoul, Korea: Korean Sahmyook University) Mon. Doct. Diss. Series, vol. 3, 1994, 364.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 392.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 393.



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INDICATORS OF THE END TIME:

Are “the signs” really signs?

Though most evangelical Christians are familiar with the biblical concept of “signs” of the End, they are less sure about what to make of these “signs,” particularly in the light of the wild and sensational claims that have accompanied the new millennium.



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How can Christians distinguish true signs from false ones? Are all these “signs” really signs? In short, will we ever know with absolute certainty that the return of Jesus is at hand?

Signs of the age

Many world events that Christians take as signs of the End are “signs of the age” instead. Rather than pointing to the date of the Second Coming, they confirm that Jesus’ predicted return at the end of the age is secure. They encourage us to believe that if Jesus knew the character of the whole age in advance, He will not be mistaken about the event that brings it to a close.

When the disciples asked Jesus (Matt. 24:3) about the “sign” of His coming and the end of the age, He replied, “‘You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. *Such things must happen, but the end is still to come*’” (Matt. 24:6 NIV, emphasis mine). Wars and rumors of wars made great signs of the End in Jewish apocalyptic,¹ but in Matthew 24 they do not herald the End; they are, instead,

part of what life is like *before* the End.

“‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. *All these are the beginning of birth pains*’” (Matt. 24:7, 8, emphasis mine). Wars, famines, and earthquakes do not signal the End—but the beginning! The disciples asked for a sign of the End, Jesus gave them signs of the age. These “signs” were not intended to stimulate speculation regarding the date of the End; they were, rather, to remind us of Jesus’ words, which encourage us to be watchful and ready for the End *at all times* (Matt. 24:42-44).²

The signs have been with us

If wars, earthquakes, and famines are signs of the age, then many “signs of the End” have been with us from the beginning of the Christian age. There were false messiahs already in Jesus’ day (Acts 5:36, 37), and plenty more in the approach to A.D. 70.³ While peace characterized Palestine in A.D. 31, there were “wars and rumors of wars” throughout the A.D. 60s. There were famines (Acts

11:28), earthquakes (Laodicea in 60 A.D., Pompeii in 63, Jerusalem in 64, and Rome in 68⁴), and heavenly signs.⁵ The New Testament contains abundant accounts of persecution, false teachers, and false prophets.⁶ Paul could even claim that the gospel had gone to the world within his lifetime (Col. 1:23; Rom. 1:8; 16:26). It is no wonder, then, that the apostles believed that they were living in the last days (Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:2; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:18).

The normalcy of the End

Compounding the issue is the question of just how unusual the events of

the End will be. There is no question that New Testament descriptions of the final days are momentous. People develop strange diseases, rivers and seas turn to blood, and humanity is subject to "global warming" of searing proportions (Rev. 16:1-9). Nations are angry (11:18) and confused (Luke 21:25), and the world is seriously divided over issues of faith (Rev. 17:14). Unusual events take place in the sky and earthquakes, storms, and disasters become more severe (Luke 21:26; Rev. 6:12-15; 16:18-21). There is the deceptive confusion caused by competing claims to truth (Matt. 24:24-27; Mark 13:19-23; 2 Thess. 2:8-12; Rev.

13:13, 14) and direct demonic intervention (1 Tim. 4:1). Social unrest and contempt for faith increase (2 Tim. 3:1-5).⁷ The people of God suffer greatly from persecution (John 16:2; Rev. 13:15-17; 16:4-7; 17:6). Other considerations could be given as well.⁸

However, both Jesus and Paul portray the last days as somewhat normal times, in spite of all the spectacular events.⁹ Like before the Flood (Matt. 24:37), people will pursue their normal round of eating and drinking; even weddings will not be postponed (Matt. 24:38). As in the days of Lot, there will be buying and selling (Luke 17:28),



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which suggests that the basic economic structure of the world remains. Planting and building continues (Luke 17:28). Most people seem to have no premonition that the End is upon them (Matt. 24:39).

In fact, Paul wrote that the terrible destructions associated with the Second Coming itself (see 2 Thess. 1:5-10) will come when people are proclaiming "peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5:2-3). To many, the last days may seem like a golden age of peace and prosperity. The troubles, disasters, social disruptions, and persecutions of the end time will be on the radar screen, but will not seem out of proportion to normal times. The majority, perhaps the vast majority, will be surprised to see the End come when it does.

We, therefore, should be cautious in our broad and confident pronouncements regarding current events. But at the same time we must remember that the same text assures us that God's true people will not be surprised (1 Thess. 5:4-7). The normalcy will seem that way only to those without the eyes of Christian faith.

Signs can be hard to read

It has never been easier to stay informed about world events. With the Internet and all kinds of other commu-

nication media we can quickly amass much information. But this access poses several problems. For one thing, we must distinguish between sound information and what is simply someone's empty speculation bouncing from computer to computer. We must become familiar with a news source's track record, biases, and reasons for offering the information it does. Christians must be slow to accept the latest report or conspiracy theory, especially when reliable filters like major news organizations of church publications are silent on the subject.

But even when information is reasonably solid, it is imperative to look at the evidence from all sides. Those who emphasize the nearness of the End love to talk about rising crime statistics, catastrophic earthquakes and floods, wars and rumors of wars, imminent economic collapse, and declining morality. But credibility is severely damaged when we ignore solid contrary evidence. For example, many sincere Christians have been predicting imminent economic collapse since 1982. The irony is that the last seventeen years have witnessed the greatest economic boom in the history of the human race.

But what if your information is unquestionably solid, balanced, and carefully verified? You still have to determine whether it is of any spiritual signifi-

cance. Just because events are taking a course that reminds us of a particular prophecy, it doesn't mean that this particular event is what that prophecy was pointing to. Just because former American President Bush proclaimed a New World Order, it doesn't prevent a new world disorder from being just around the corner; and even if this New World Order came, it doesn't mean it's the eschatological one we've been expecting. We damage the credibility of all preaching about the End when we use inaccurate information, are selective in our use of solid evidence, or make exaggerated claims that are inappropriate to our level of expertise.

True signs of the end of time

Adventist expectation has tended toward the sensational. We have cried "wolf" too many times during the last one hundred and fifty years. Many have become weary of hearing about the "signs." But the subject of end-time signs cannot be ignored. The same chapter in which Jesus says that no one knows the day or the hour (Matt. 24:36) also offers indications as to when the coming is near (verse 33). But what is "near" in actual time? A day? Year? Decade? Century?

In A.D. 95, the author of Revelation considered Jesus' coming to be near (Rev. 1:3; 22:10,12). So, a Western chronological understanding of "nearness" is clearly false in light of the passage of 2,000 years since the New Testament was written. From an Eastern perspective, nearness seems to be much more a state of mind than a chronological datum.

But is there any sense in which the coming of Jesus is chronologically nearer now than it was in the first century? Of course. Note this comment on the wording in Matthew 24:33, 36: "One saying of the Saviour must not be made to destroy another. Though no man knoweth the *day* nor the *hour* of His coming, we are instructed and required to know when it is near"¹⁰ (emphasis is part of the quote). For this writer, Ellen White, the coming *was* near because by her day the time prophecies leading to the time of the End had been fulfilled.

Seventh-day Adventist students of Daniel and Revelation know that while the "last days" truly began in New Testament times, the time of the End is a much more recent phenomenon.¹¹ With the passing of the great time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, we now live in the time of the End. So these are not just ordinary times. The year 2000 is much closer to the End than the year 1000 was. From the Bible's prophetic outlook we know that since 1798 and 1844 this world's history is writing its final chapter. Though we cannot know with certainty that this is the final generation—we certainly know that things can wind up very soon.

Though current events should not be used to encourage date setting, we are certainly living in times like those the Bible associates with the End. Knowledge is increasing with breathtaking rapidity (Dan. 12:4). The Internet and satellite broadcasting make it possible for the whole world to hear the gospel quickly (Matt. 24:14). Unprecedentedly far-reaching divisions among nations are rife; weapons of mass destruction, not heard of just a few years ago, are in increasingly unstable hands. Rebellion, profanity, perversions, and violence seem to have an omnipresence and potency unparalleled in human history (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

The "signs" are here indeed.

The question for us is, How do we accurately, and responsibly, interpret them? ■

¹ An excellent summary of the early Jewish perspective on signs can be found in D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 271-276. The Jewish understanding of signs, which the disciples of Jesus would have shared, was based on the Day of Yahweh passages in the Old Testament. It was felt that the near approach of the End would be marked by wars, wickedness, earthquakes, famines, and heavenly portents, among other things. Jesus is not inventing the concept of signs, He is moderating their impact on the disciples.

² Jesus does seem to give a measurable sign of the nearness of the End in Matthew 24:14. The End will come when the gospel has been preached to the whole world. Yes,

the gospel must be preached to the world before the Lord comes, but it is not the kind of sign you can base a calculation on. After all, Paul had the impression that this sign had been fulfilled already in his day (Col. 1:23). The only sign that meets the disciples' intention is the "sign of the Son of man" in Matthew 24:30. But this appears to be the literal glory that surrounds Jesus Himself at His coming. Those who wait for this sign will be too late.

Jesus' response to His disciples is disappointing to me in a way. It would seem easier for us if He would have given us all the details about the End, and the events leading up to it; then we could line them all up, see exactly where we are, and know when we have to get ready. But apparently that wasn't Jesus' purpose. Apparently that wouldn't have been the best thing for us. What then was His purpose in this chapter? He gives us that in Matthew 24:42. "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (emphasis mine).

³ See the accounts in Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*.

⁴ On ancient earthquakes see A. Hermann, "Erdbeben," in *Reallexikon fuer Antike und Christentum*, edited by Theodor Klauser, vol. 5 (Stuttgart: Anton Heirsemann, 1962), 1070-1113. Note especially the list of first-century earthquakes on page 1104. It is reported that the quake in Jerusalem damaged the newly finished temple, just before the Roman sieges began in A.D. 66: G. A. Turner, "Earthquake," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, revised edition, edited by Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:4, 5.

⁵ See the account that Ellen White drew from Josephus in *The Great Controversy*, 1911 ed. (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1950), 29.

⁶ Note evidence for heretical movements within the church of the first century in 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, 2 Peter, 1 and 2 John, Jude, and Revelation 2, 3 (note 2:20 especially).

⁷ A careful examination of this text, of course, would include it among those mentioned earlier that indicate the "last days" as a present reality in New Testament times. Paul instructs his readers to "have nothing to do" with people already acting in this way. The "sign" of apostasy and social unrest has been with us from the beginning of the Christian era.

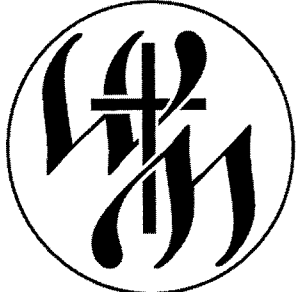
⁸ For an analysis of current events in the light of the New Testament picture of the end time see Jon Paulien, *The Millennium Bug*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1999), 9-43 and *What the Bible Says About the End-Time* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1994), 139-159. Samuele Bacchiocchi is offering an ongoing analysis of end-time signs at the following listserv: sbacchiocchi@qtm.net.

⁹ Roy Adams, "The Final Days—Normalcy," *Adventist Review*, April 21, 1994, 4.

¹⁰ *The Great Controversy*, 371.

¹¹ Seventh-day Adventists understand the time of the End to have begun at the time of the relatively-recent events surrounding the French Revolution. For a scholarly study of the distinction between the last days and the time of the End, see Gerhard Pfandl, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel* (Berrien Springs, Mich: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992).

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THE SECOND COMING:

Knowing and not knowing

When addressing a group of ministers, Fred Craddock used a metaphor to illustrate what is essential for Christian living.



John S. Nixon is senior pastor of the Oakwood College Church in Huntsville, Alabama and associate director of the North American Division Ministerial Association.

We tend to think, Craddock said, that giving our all to Jesus is like taking a thousand dollar bill and laying it on the table. "Here's my life Lord, I give it all to you." The reality of Christian life, he said, is not that way. Instead, God sends us to the bank in order to cash in the thousand dollar bill for rolls and rolls of quarters and we go through life putting out fifty cents here and twenty-five cents there. Living the life of faith is not always glorious or dramatic; it is mostly mundane. It is done day by day, in little acts of love, twenty-five cents at a time. It is one thing to go out in a blaze of glory for God; it is a much harder thing to be faithful day in and day out, enduring to the end.

Craddock's illustration presents a challenge for believers in the Advent. To hold on to the promise of the Second Coming is a test of faith's endurance. If every generation of believers since the Ascension has expected Christ to return in their time, why hasn't He? What do we do with the urgency inherent in the Advent message? How are we to live joyfully and expectantly in the face of apparent delay?

The tension

The Second Coming prophecy as found in Matthew 24 incorporates three

end-of-the-world scenarios—the flood of Noah (the end of the antediluvian world), the destruction of Jerusalem (the end of Israel as the chosen nation), and the *Parousia* (the end of Satan and the reign of sin). The fulfillment of the first two prophecies serve as a guarantee of the fulfillment of the third.

But as Jesus masterfully weaves the three prophecies into one, two conflicting principles of eschatology emerge, creating a tension between that cannot be fully resolved. Though our inclination is to try and resolve the tension—the contradictory things inherent in the prophecy must remain. Believers are called, not to rationalize the prophecy of the *Parousia*, but to live, by faith, even with the tension found within it.

The first of the two conflicting principles is certainty. Jesus said, "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door" (Matt. 24:32, 33, NIV). The fig tree points to an occurrence in the natural order, used as a sign of the certainty of our Lord's return. It is a potent symbol.

The fig tree was one of the most common trees in Palestine. Jesus and the disciples may have been sitting under one

JOHN S. NIXON



Photograph by Dennis Crews

as He spoke these words. When the branches of the tree become soft with sap and begin to bud, summer is fast approaching. The natural order confirms the promise of something to come. By pointing to the fig tree Jesus meets us at our level, the level of facts that anyone can verify. When we witness the changes in the fig tree, we know certainly that they portend a specific change in the season. As surely as summer follows the signals observed in the fig tree, the second coming of Jesus follows the phenomena He identifies in Matthew 24.

But as Christ draws the analogy, He does not make nature equal with the Word of God. The fig tree is only a sign of the validity of the promise. The promise is staked on something greater than something created. It is staked on what caused creation to be. The sun rises in the East and sets in the West; grass is mowed down and grows back again; rivers flow; clouds give rain; salmon swim upstream; and, “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease” (Gen. 8:22). But more sure than all these put together, is the invincible word of God, the word that called it all into being. The God who cannot lie has spoken, and He has said, *Jesus is coming again*.

The reason the promise cannot fail is not because we believe it. The promise is sure because God is God and He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim. 2:13). The Bible’s first word is “in the beginning God” and in Matthew 24 we are assured, “in the end God!” The world did not come about by accident and it will not end by accident either. We have certainty because the promise is staked on God.

But there is also an opposing reality clearly expressed in the prophecy. “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matt. 24:36).

This element completes the teaching and reveals the inherent tension. There is a paradox of certainty and uncertainty. Jesus promises a sure return, but its time is undisclosed. The believer knows *what*, not *when*. And it is clear that this element of uncertainty is the

design of God, intended to create a particular response in the servant of God: “‘Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come . . . So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him’ ” (Matt. 24: 42, 44).

The paradox of the promise creates a unique posture for the church. The *what* is certain, the *when* obscure. And just as the certainty stands up against

Salvation

*history reveals, as a constant,
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our doubts, so the uncertainty resists our investigations. The time of the Lord’s return is not just undetermined—it is indeterminable.

The peril of not knowing

Salvation history reveals, as a constant, that believers are commanded to live with the peril of not knowing. In key areas of our relationship with God, we are called to walk by faith without sight. We don’t need to believe in what we see. Some things we have to accept without full understanding.

When God called Abram to leave everything he was sure of and follow Him, it was a clear command, but it was given in the mists of not knowing and in the hazes of ambiguity. Abram did not know where he was going and God did not tell him. The land he had been promised was still not his on the day Abraham died. He lived in tents throughout his life and experience with God. The only land he ever owned in his lifetime he had to pay for, the field bought from the Hittites for a family burial ground (Gen. 25:9, 10).

Job never did get an explanation for his afflictions or an answer to some of his deepest questions. When God finally responded to His servant, He was the One asking the questions—“ ‘Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me’ ” (Job 38:3). And the servant of God remembered his proper place, “ ‘I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth’ ” (40:4).

The Hebrew boys did not know whether God would intervene to save them from the Babylonian furnace. Their duty to God was clear enough, but how much it would cost them was hidden.

All these demonstrated a steadfast faith in God without full knowledge of many crucial facts. Yet their ignorance did not inhibit their faith; on the contrary, it enhanced their faith. And their testimony showed the heroic nature of their confidence in God. “ ‘But even if he does not [save us],’ ” they said, “ ‘we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods’ ” (Dan. 3:18). “ ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him’ ” (Job 13:15). “ ‘And he went out, not knowing where he was going’ ” (Heb. 11:8, NASB).

Certainty and uncertainty are part and parcel of Christian living, and of the Second Coming promise in particular. If either of these elements is omitted from the prophecy, the force of Christ’s teaching is lost. The truth of a promise fosters hope, the uncertainty of the time of its fulfillment is a summons to watchfulness, endurance, and faith.

The believer therefore lives in a state of expectancy, anticipating an event that must come at some time, and may arrive

at any time. The tension between the knowing and the not knowing, the certainty and the uncertainty, keeps us at our spiritual peak. It is the life of faith that calls for constant listening, a life that is dynamic, not static.

The daily walk

Here is where the necessity of relational Christianity is emphasized. Jesus Christ is not a creed, He is a living Person. The only way to know Him is to be in fellowship with Him day in and day out, moment to moment. We cannot learn a few doctrines, and then put our trust in those doctrines. The only way to know what God is going to do next is to be walking with God so that when He speaks we will hear Him and when He moves we will know it.

We must not be surprised at the challenge of our faith. If our convictions are true, we expect them to be challenged. It is deep within the nature of the walk of faith for that faith to be tested and thus to grow and prove itself.

The coming of scoffers does nothing, nor can it do anything to weaken the force of the promise of God itself. On the contrary, their coming serves only to strengthen the promise, since the prophecy predicts their coming. "In the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this "coming" he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation'" (2 Peter 3:3, 4).

The evil of the scoffers is in rationalizing the promise. By making their logic the measure of the validity of God's Word, they fall into a snare. They have not the humility to remember that empirical knowing is only one way of knowing and that all truths, especially the most profound and far-reaching, simply cannot be demonstrated in the way they expect them to be. Then, seeking to justify their skepticism, they exaggerate the facts: "'Everything goes on as it has,'" they say. Peter casts doubt on the sincerity of their motives when he says, "they *deliberately* forget . . ." (verse 5, emphasis mine).

The promise of Christ's return is

based on faith in the Word and promise of God. By its nature it cannot be merely a matter of rationality. It is certainly not irrational to believe it, but this is clear only to those who believe the word of promise.

Jesus is coming soon. There is an urgency to the message that is not determined by our clocks and calendars. We cannot judge the infinite God by the dictates of finite time—"With the Lord a day

Jesus is coming
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infinite God by the dictates
of finite time.

is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Peter 3:8).

The promise calls us to accept it on the basis of the trustworthiness of the word of the One who gave it, and with it, accept that God leads in many paths that are, along with many other things, obscure to us. But the paths are not obscure to God and because our ultimate trust is in Him, we await joyfully the fulfilling of His word in the fullness of time.

Look at God's track record. Though, when it comes to the fulfillment of His promises, there always seems to be a tarrying, the One who is Sovereign and

Omnipotent always has fulfilled the sure word of His promise. Again, the promise is absolutely sure, it is the time of fulfillment that is beyond our knowing, until the time of realization.

Conclusion

When I was a boy we used to ride the subway to church every weekend. There were five of us who traveled with our father in the New York City underground. I will never forget the day he left us on the train. We had stopped at the station where we transferred from one train to another. As the doors of the "A" train opened, Dad ran across the platform leaving all of us behind. He had never before done such a thing.

As we raced behind him in near panic, we soon saw the meaning of his apparent abandonment. The "GG" train was about to leave the station without us, the conductor pressing feverishly on his lever. But there was Dad, standing in the only gap holding open the doors for us to follow. And so we safely boarded, one and all, under the wings of our father's outstretched arms.

In the same way, Jesus has left us behind to prepare a place where we can be together forever. And though we are not alone because of the abiding presence of the Comforter, we long to see our Savior in person and look into His face. But God requires that in faith we run after Him, following Him where we cannot see, and believing in Him in situations we cannot explain or fully understand.

When Dad bolted through the subway doors, we didn't know what he was doing, but we knew enough to follow him. And Dad knew we would follow. For children there is no other choice. With Christians it is the same. We may not know why Jesus has not returned already or when He will return, but we do know Jesus. We may be confused sometimes. The ways of Jesus may be mysterious to us, but His character is no mystery. We know Him to be a faithful and dependable Master, One who loves us, is true and unchanging. He will keep His promise to us to come again. Ours is to be watchful, faithful, and ready, never doubting that He will do just as He has said. ■



ADVENTIST APPROACHES TO THE SECOND COMING

Eschatology sells! Translated into more than fifty languages, Hal Lindsey's *Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) sold over 35,000,000 copies.



George R. Knight, Ph.D., is professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Part of Lindsey's appeal was his emphasis on the nearness of the Second Advent. Readers were excited when he predicted that the Secret Rapture would happen in 1981, followed by the seven-year tribulation and the visible return of Christ in 1988.

How did the author of the best-selling nonfiction book of the 1970s arrive at such specific information? His key text was Matthew 24:34: "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Defining a biblical generation to be 40 years, Lindsey concluded that all these things would take place within 40 years after the founding of modern Israel in 1948.¹

Edgar Whisenant, picking up on a portion of Lindsey's fame, provided his readers with *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988* (between September 11-13 according to his calculations). While Whisenant's tract sold only a measly 2,000,000 copies, it did have a profound impact on many believers. Paul and Jan Crouch's "Praise the Lord" TV

program, for example, ran prerecorded broadcasts on the Rapture during those fated days of September 11-13 rather than produce the program live for those dates. The message was aimed, of course, at those "left behind."²

Track 1: Eschatological excitement

Seventh-day Adventists have not lagged behind other evangelicals in yielding to the temptation to engender untoward eschatological excitement and date setting. In fact, two of the three founders of the movement were date-setters. The influential Joseph Bates sparked time-setting excitement in 1850 by interpreting "the seven spots of blood on the Golden Altar and before the Mercy seat" as representing "the duration of the judicial proceedings on the living saints in the Most Holy." Because each spot supposedly stood for a year, Christ's heavenly ministration would last seven years. He would return in the clouds of heaven in October 1851—seven years after the Millerite disappointment.³

The *early* James White, for a time also held to an Adventism that “nourished” itself primarily on eschatological excitement and date setting. In September 1845, for instance, he firmly believed that Jesus would return in October 1845. At that point in his experience he argued that an Adventist couple who had announced their marriage had “denied their faith” in the Second Advent. Marriage was “a wile of the Devil. The firm brethren in Maine who are waiting for Christ to come have no fellowship with such a move.” That view, he later claimed, was held by “most of our brethren,” since “such a step seemed to contemplate years of life in this world.”⁴

Although Bates and White later moderated their date-setting tendencies, that spirit would continue in Adventism, as seen in the 1893 General Conference session. At that session A. T. Jones and W. W. Prescott whipped the delegates into a fever of excitement, claiming that the end was imminent and that the conference would not close without an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The denomination, Prescott argued, had failed in not fully accepting Christ’s righteousness at the pivotal 1888 General Conference session. Using Christ’s illustration of the unfruitful tree, he pointed out that Jesus did not cut it down at the end of three years. In mercy, He gave it a fourth year. It had been four years since the 1888 session. The time of decision had arrived.⁵

Never in the history of post-Millerite Adventism had there been such an air of expectancy, such an eschatological excitement, as at that session. The basic foundations of that excitement rested on three elements:

(1) agitation regarding Sunday legislation that the Adventists interpreted in the light of Revelation 12:17-14:12,⁶

(2) certain statements from Ellen White regarding the beginning of the Loud Cry and “the time of peril” being upon the church,⁷ and

(3) the full acceptance by Jones and Prescott of the prophetic ministry of Anna Rice. While the first two of those items deserved serious consideration and

an adequate interpretation, the third was problematic through and through.

What would have happened if Jones had been allowed to use all the powerful “spiritual gifts” at his fingertips during the 1893 meetings? A few weeks earlier he had approved of Anna Rice as a prophet. In the midst of the General Conference Session, he had received a testimony from her that he desperately wanted to present to the assembled delegates. The General Conference president, however, had forbidden him to read it publicly. Jones, therefore, could only

Although

Bates and White later moderated their date-setting tendencies, that spirit would continue in Adventism.

hint that great things were coming. “Thank the Lord,” he told the delegates, “he is not going to be content much longer with one prophet! He will have more. He has done a wonderful work with one. And having done such a great work with one, what in the world will he do when he gets a lot of them.”⁸ It must have grated upon Jones’s impulsive nature to be restricted from using his most powerful tool to bring about the latter rain.

What about the 1893 experience? While some claim that the failure to accept Jones’s excitement was one of the central failures of Adventism,⁹ what the denomination actually missed out on were the charismatic excesses that would eventually surface in the Anna Rice crisis of early 1894, brought on through Jones and Prescott’s leadership.

Those errant leaders had proved anew that it is always possible to stir up people to extremes by the manipulation of data related to the second advent of Jesus.

That tendency is far from dead. Twentieth-century Adventism has seen quite a multitude of contenders stirring up dubious excitement based on false interpretations of end-time prophecy. Some, for example, generated enthusiasm for the Second Coming in 1944 on the centennial of the Millerite disappointment. Others saw the date as 1964. After all, didn’t the Bible say that the last days will be like the days of Noah. And didn’t Noah preach for 120 years before the Flood arrived?

The last years of the twentieth century witnessed the circulation of theories related to the year 2000 and the beginning of the seventh millennium as the great heavenly sabbath. One of the most successful excitement generators of the 1990s was a book “demonstrating,” on the basis of six completed millennia, that the Second Advent was just a few “prophetic seconds” away. Though rejected by an official church reading committee because of seriously problematic interpretations, the book was still printed and distributed by a major Adventist publishing house. Of course, it was a best seller. *Its success in the Adventist market was not in spite of its problems but because of them.* Many Adventists, in line with dispensationalists such as Hal Lindsey, still base their religious enthusiasm on excitement rather than solid biblical data.

The moral of the story should be clear by now. It is relatively easy to stir Adventists up eschatologically. Sensationalism is the “stuff” of such an achievement.

Track 2: Responsible living in the interim

The third founder of Adventism stood over against the early Joseph Bates and James White on the issue of date setting and placing an *overemphasis* on eschatological excitement. In 1851, for example, Ellen White rose to combat Bates’s teaching that Christ would come that October.

“Dear Brethren,” she penned, “the

Lord has shown me that the message of the third angel [of Revelation 14:9-12] must go, and be proclaimed to the scattered children of the Lord, and that it *should not be hung on time; for time never will be a test again*. I saw that some were getting a *false excitement* arising from preaching time. . . . I saw that this message can stand on its own foundation, and that it needs not time to strengthen it. . . .

"I saw that some were making every thing bend to the time of this next fall—that is, making their calculations in reference to that time. I saw that this was wrong, for this reason: *Instead of going to God daily to know their PRESENT duty, they look ahead, and make their calculations as though they knew the work would end this fall, without inquiring their duty of God daily.*"¹⁰

That was not the first time that Ellen White wrote against time setting. From as early as 1845 she had repeatedly warned that time was no longer a test and that every passing of a set date would weaken the faith of those who had put their hope in it. Her reward for taking such a position was to be accused of "being with the evil servant that said in his heart, 'My Lord delayeth His coming.'"¹¹

It needs to be emphasized in Ellen White's 1851 statement cited above that she not only argued against the "*false excitement*" generated by date setting, but that she twice emphasized the *present duty* of believers over against excitement. Beyond that, she stressed that the preaching of the third angel's message of Revelation 14 implied a process rather than a point of time. Even her first vision in December 1844 hinted that the heavenly city might be a "great way off."¹²

Ellen White moved not only Bates away from his date setting excitement and toward a more responsible ministry as he awaited the Second Advent, but she did the same for James White. After all, the anti-marriage young preacher of 1845 married her on August 30, 1846! The reason for his transformation helps one understand the ongoing tension between eschatological excitement and present duty. As the Whites saw it, "God had a work for both of us to do, and he

saw that we could greatly assist each other in that work."¹³

Thus between October 1845 and August 1846 the ground had shifted in the thinking of James and Ellen White. They had perceptively moved away from the immediacy perspective of the date setters to fully grasp the occupy-till-He-comes horn of the Adventist tension. Their marriage is an impressive symbol of that ground shift. They had a work to do. As a result, they took the first step toward the institutionalization of Adventism. If the end was not to come as soon as they first expected, they needed to take adequate steps to prepare themselves for service in the interim.

But they had not given up their Advent faith. Marriage for the Whites became a necessary means for the furtherance of the Advent message. On the other hand, their marriage also pointed to their acceptance of the continuity of time.

As it turned out, marriage was only the first step in the Whites' task of placing Adventism on a more permanent footing. Repeatedly they led out in creating stability in Adventist ranks so that the sounding of the third angel's message would be supported by an adequate institutional base. Yet at every step they had to combat those fixated on the immediacy pole of the Advent hope.

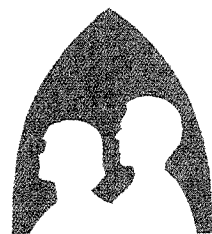
One example of this has to do with the establishment of Adventist schools. The immediacy wing of the church argued that such a move showed a lack of faith in the nearness of the Advent, because schooling implied that children would have time to grow up and use their education. James White replied that "a well-disciplined and informed mind can best receive and cherish the sublime truths of the Second Advent." His wife agreed. "Because time is short," she penned in her first publication on education, "we should work with diligence and double energy."¹⁴ In their response to responsibly occupying the time until the eschaton, the Whites continued to maintain a sense of immediacy. With each step in the institutional development of Seventh-day Adventism they sought to put the denomination on a firmer base so that it could preach the nearness of this world to come.

Living in the tension between excitement and responsibility

Under the leadership of James and Ellen White the denomination developed a full array of denominational institutions aimed at engendering responsible action that would be carried forward until the Second Advent. Yet there is a sense in which failure was built into the very success of their actions. In

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short, in order to preserve the message of the imminent coming, institutions based on continuity and semi-permanence had to be erected. But in that very process subtle and not-so-subtle transformations took place. As Michael Pearson puts it, "the survival of 'the remnant' has been ensured by the mechanism of institutionalization, but that which has survived appears to some to bear little resemblance to the original." Or, as American social historian Edwin Gaustad noted, "While expecting a kingdom of God from the heavens, [the Seventh-day Adventists] work diligently for one on the earth."¹⁵

Perhaps the temptation to move away from the immediacy wing of the Advent tension and toward the occupy-till-I-come end of the spectrum is best illustrated by John Harvey Kellogg, the developer of the influential Battle Creek Sanitarium and Adventism's premier "kingdom builder" at the beginning of the twentieth century. In order to get the funding and recognition that he needed, Kellogg progressively shifted from the immediacy emphasis of Adventism, eventually finding that emphasis both a bother and an embarrassment.¹⁶ The same temptation continues to be an ever-present possibility, especially for those Adventists whose focal point is social outreach.

Yet those Adventists who argue that social outreach is important to Adventism are not wrong.¹⁷ They are quite in harmony with the conclusion of Christ's great eschatological sermon of Matthew 24 and 25. Whereas 24:1-41 encouraged Christ's followers toward the expectancy end of the eschatological tension, 24:42-25:46 directed them to the waiting and occupying aspect of the tension. Matthew 24:48, 25:5 and 25:19 specifically indicate that it would be a "long time" before the return. At the same time the entire passage provides five parables on how Christians should live during the interim between the Ascension and the Second Advent. Whereas the first three parables in the sequence place the emphasis on watching (24:42-25:13), and the fourth (the talents) emphasizes working while watching

(25:14-30), the final one (the sheep and the goats, 25:31-46) emphasizes the social concern and the nature of the working that will be found in Christ's followers as they await His return. Thus the "Adventist" tension is built into the very structure of the Olivet Discourse.¹⁸

The temptation for Adventists in the future will be the same as for those in the past; that is, to gravitate toward either the immediacy end of the spectrum or the occupying end. That reality has continued to cause problems in the denomination. While those at one pole

In their
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of the tension get so concerned with their social involvement that they are tempted to spiritualize their interpretation of the Second Advent and at times sound almost postmillennial, those at the other pole have a "faith" that is nurtured upon periodic excitement but largely fails in the daily task of living "Christianly" in the interim.

The ideal, of course, is to live responsibly in the interim. John Wesley was once asked how he would spend the day if he knew it was his last. He replied that he would just go through with the program of preaching, visiting, and caring that he already had on his agenda for the day. In the long run, though this notion might not sell as many books as does Hal Lindsey, it is the only way for Christians to live as they await the Advent. ■

¹ Robert G. Clouse, Robert N. Hosack, and Richard V. Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual: A Once and Future Guide* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1999), 127, 128.

² Ibid., 125.

³ Joseph Bates, *An Explanation of the Typical and Anti-typical Sanctuary, by the Scriptures* (New Bedford, Mass.: Benjamin Lindsey, 1850), 10, 11.

⁴ James White, "Watchman, What of the Night?" *The Day-Star*, Sept. 20, 1845, 25, 26; idem, "Letter to Bro. Jacobs," *The Day-Star*, Oct. 11, 1845, 47; [James White and Ellen G. White], *Life Sketches: Ancestry, Early Life, Christian Experience and Extensive Labors, of Elder James White, and His Wife, Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1888), 126.

⁵ W. W. Prescott, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 1893, 105; cf. 39, 65, 384, 386, 504).

⁶ For more on the contemporary Sunday law crisis, see George R. Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy: The Case of A. T. Jones* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1987), 75-88.

⁷ Ellen G. White, "The Perils and Privileges of the Last Days," *Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1892, 722; Ellen G. White to William Ings, Jan. 9, 1893.

⁸ S. N. Haskell to E. G. White, Jan. 4, 1893[3]; A. C. Rice to A. T. Jones, Feb. 21, 1893; C. McReynolds to L. T. Nicola, Mar. 22, 1894; A. T. Jones, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, 1893, 153. For a fuller discussion of the Anna Rice crisis see Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy*, 89-116; idem, *A User-Friendly Guide to the 1888 Message* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1998), 125-132.

⁹ Robert J. Wieland, "Letters," *Ministry*, June 1988, 2; Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short, *1888 Re-examined*, rev. ed. (n.p.: 1888 Message Study Committee, 1987), 91.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, "Dear Brethren," *Review and Herald Extra*, July 21, 1851, [4]; italics supplied.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1945), 22.

¹² Ibid., 14, 15.

¹³ [J. White and E. G. White], *Life Sketches* (1888 ed.), 126, 238.

¹⁴ W. H. Ball and James White, "Questions and Answers," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 23, 1862, 29; Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 3, 159.

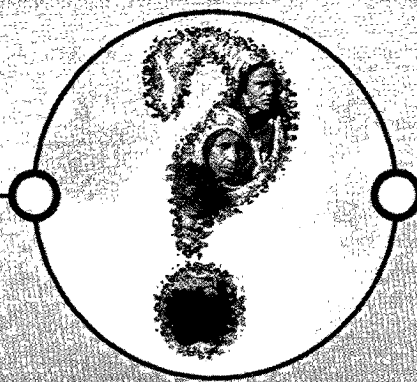
¹⁵ Michael Pearson, *Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-day Adventism and Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 26; Edwin Scott Gaustad, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 115.

¹⁶ For more on Kellogg's approach, see Richard W. Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1970); George R. Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: Adventist Mission Confronts the Challenges of Institutionalism and Secularization* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1995), 152-163.

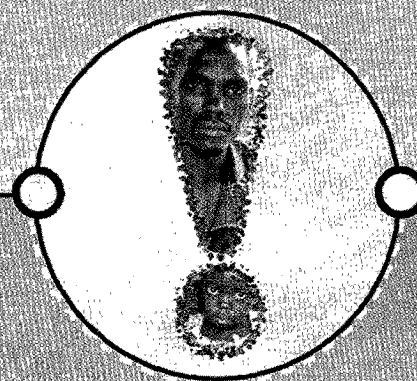
¹⁷ See, for example, Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (London: Macmillan and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

¹⁸ For a fuller discussion on the tension in Matthew 24 and 25, see George R. Knight, *Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1994), 234-250.

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THE SECOND COMING AND THE TIME OF TROUBLE: A great time to be alive

How often I've heard this sentiment expressed: "I hope Jesus doesn't come during my lifetime. I'd never make it through the time of trouble!"



Calvin Thomsen, D.Min., is senior pastor of the Azure Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church, Azure Hills, California.

Considering the various presentations regarding "the time of trouble" that precedes Jesus' second coming, it's no surprise that many people dread Christ's return. In fact, I vividly remember the potent impact that teachings about the time of trouble had on me as a child. After the lights were out and my brother and I were supposed to be asleep, we tried to outdo each other with tales of beastly torment such as high-tech torture machines, creative uses of acetylene torches, and pliers that could pluck one's fingernails one by one.

Those childish imaginings were frightening enough. But in some ways it can be even harder on an adult. After all, I now have much more to lose: a house, equity, retirement savings, a wife, two

children. I find it hard to look forward to hiding in caves or getting my checkbook and ATM card shredded because I won't worship the beast. I know that the Bible compares last day upheavals to labor pains. But, given a choice, I think I'd rather opt for some sort of cosmic epidural—birth without pangs.

The time of trouble in the Bible

The specific phrase, "the time of trouble," occurs only in Daniel, who predicts "a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time" (Dan. 12:1). Matthew 24, (with parallels in Luke 21 and Mark 13) refers to wars, earthquakes, famines, upheavals in nature, and other such crises accompanying the time of the end. Jesus

CALVIN THOMSEN

tells the disciples that they will be delivered up to tribulation, hated and even killed for His sake (verse 9). He also speaks of a “desolating sacrilege” (verse 15), an entity Bible commentators see as a persecuting antichrist. In language that parallels Daniel 12, Christ foretells “great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now” (verse 21). These troubles are referred to as “birthpangs” (verse 8).

Some of the most vivid depictions of earth’s final afflictions appear in John’s apocalypse: graphic imagery of persecutions, of a fierce beast power who plots the death of those refusing to worship him, of bowl after bowl of divine wrath, and of bloody strife that will precede the great day of the Lord. As trumpets sound, winds are unleashed, plagues commence, the powers of evil marshal against the righteous and the cry goes up, “How long O Lord?”

Other Bible writers also refer to great trauma before the final restoration of all things. Jeremiah, like Matthew, uses the language of childbirth to describe the anguish of God’s people before the final reconciliation. After describing a man in agonized labor Jeremiah exclaims, “How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it.” (Jer. 30:7, NIV) While the immediate context is of return from Babylonian exile, many Bible scholars see a wider reference to the struggle before the great gathering of the Messianic age and also the time of trouble that just precedes the second coming of Jesus.

Scriptural teachings about the time of trouble or tribulation follow a larger biblical pattern that emerges throughout the portrayals of salvation history. The birth of a new or renewed order is always preceded by a period of trauma

and chaos. This period of upheaval and chaos can be seen as both a divine judgment on those who reject God and as the liberation of God’s faithful ones.

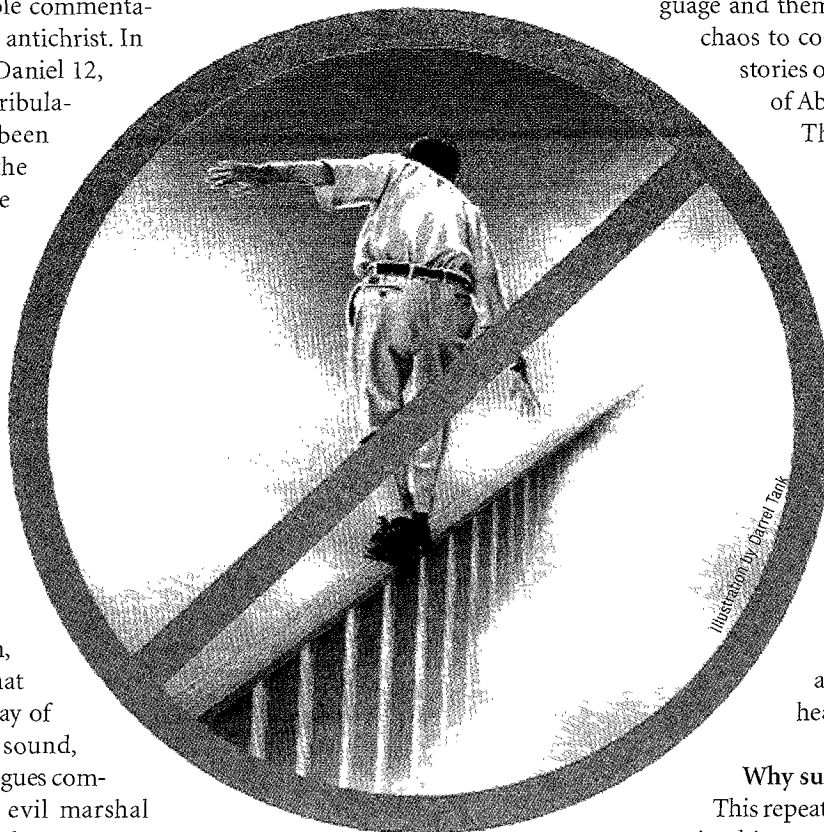


Illustration by Daniel Tank

Before it is
all over everybody alive will
have made a decision about
whom they will worship.
Everybody is shouldered off
the fence by these
happenings. Multitudes offer
allegiance to the beast
creature while a remnant
worship the Creator God.

Though the multitudes reject God, a faithful remnant who follow God at any cost, are ultimately saved.

The Creation story provides a language and themes that unfold in such chaos to cosmos transitions as the stories of the Flood, the journey of Abraham and the Exodus.

The final tribulation is seen to follow these motifs introduced earlier in scripture. General transitional motifs include the darkness of a world in rebellion, blowing winds, drying up of waters, deceptive temptation, pain of childbirth, plagues and divine judgment, the faithfulness of a remnant and the ultimate liberation of God’s people, and the birth of a new heaven and earth.¹

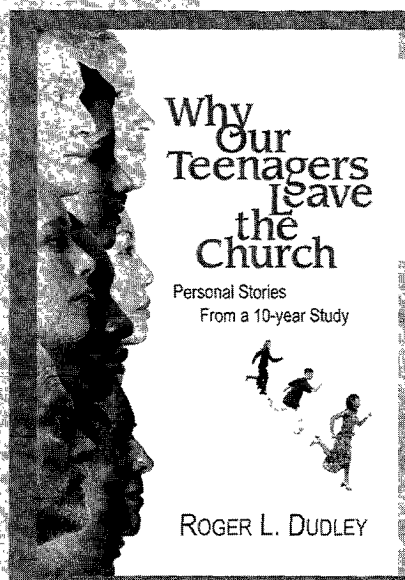
Why such trouble?

This repeated cycle throughout salvation history raises a logical question. Why not skip the trauma and go straight to deliverance?

I can venture an answer only by noting the nature of the deception known as sin. This cycle was set in motion by one who is described as “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). From the beginning, the rotten core of sin has been enshrouded in the seductive promise of a glittering deception. Sin—rebellion against and autonomy from God—is presented as a fulfilling, life-enhancing alternative. God is presented as a withholding, untrustworthy being who can hold His creatures in submission only by death threats (Gen. 3:1-5) or bribery (Job 1:1-12).

Throughout human history God has revealed Himself in response to the lie. He dramatically parts the Red Sea and leads Israel to safety. He establishes covenants, thundering from Mount Sinai, and sends water gushing from a rock while manna appears on the

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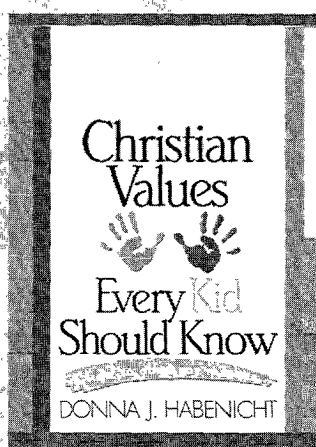
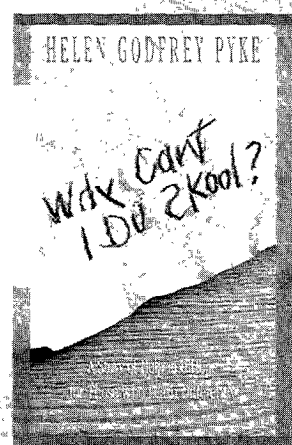


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ground. He speaks through a succession of prophets. Then in His greatest act of self-revelation, He sends His own Son. Pierced hands outstretched on the cross dramatically demonstrate the depth and intensity of God's love and His desire to keep faith with His children. An empty tomb certifies His power over death and every human dilemma.

Seemingly, any of these demonstrations, especially the cross, would be enough to puncture the illusion of Satan's original lie. The existence of God, the character of God, the love of God and the true consequences of sin—these and more are etched out powerfully by God's working in history. But strangely, the lessons are all too often lost on the rebellious human race. True, the dazzling power of the sin illusion occasionally flickers and dims in the face of some particularly disturbing evil. But amnesia sets in quickly or people even use such displays of sin at work as evidence against God.

But there is something different about this final, tempestuous series of events. While earth's history has certainly been punctuated with episodes of horror, God has patiently blunted the full impact of sin's destructive power. But here finally at the end of the age, once and for all, God must lift the restraint and expose the true reality that is the dark underside of the cosmic rebellion.

While this lifting of restraint is an act of divine judgment and revelation, like all manifestations of "the wrath of God," there is a component of "letting alone" (Rom. 1:18, 24, 26, 28) so that the true principles of God's enemy and the natural outworking of the sin principle are revealed. "Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose."²

Before it is all over everybody alive will have made a decision about whom they will worship. Everybody is shouldered off the fence by these happenings. Multitudes offer allegiance to the beast creature while a remnant worship the Creator God. As the world polarizes, a

stark clarity emerges. The seductive principles that have mesmerized most of the world are revealed as horrific, destructive lies. The trustworthiness of God is vindicated. And the cycle ceases. The fallen planet is ultimately restored. The old order passes away, never to return.

The Time of Trouble—A time of hope and assurance

The outcome of this time may be positive, but most still dread the thought of going through it. I would like to advance the revolutionary thought that it may, in fact, be the greatest time in history to be alive. And I say this not

This repeated
cycle throughout salvation
history raises a logical
question. Why not skip the
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deliverance?

simply clinging to the thought, true as it is, of some future in which all that is wrong will finally be made right. It isn't just a matter, either, of taking heart in assurances that bread and water will be supplied (Isa. 33:16) or that the guardian angels will shield us from the looming threats that could snuff us out in an instant. The real glory of this time lies in the paradoxical truth that God's presence will become especially real and, dare I say it, especially joyful to us during these exacting days. Here are some reasons why I think this way.

First, it's worth noting the surprising and hopeful twist that pervades the biblical passages that foretell last day upheavals. In fact, none of them seem particularly preoccupied with trouble.

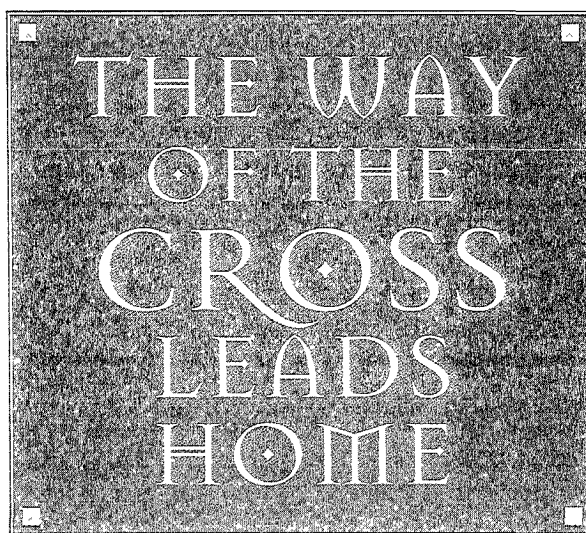
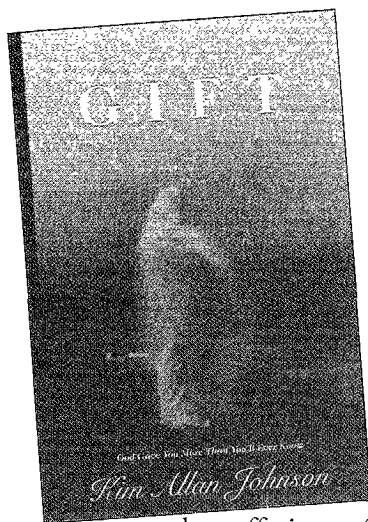
Instead, the emphasis is on deliverance and triumph. While Daniel predicts a great time of trouble, in context the trouble itself, as he describes it, looks like a brief aside. Daniel's depictions burst with affirmations of hope and deliverance. The saints of the Most High are pictured not as beaten down with suffering but instead they are seen in their joyous, liberated state as shining "like the brightness of the firmament" (Dan. 12:3).

Jesus foretells a variety of birth pangs in the Olivet Discourse. But, He interrupts His own description of wars and world upheaval to say, "see that you are not alarmed" (Matt. 24:6). He also promises that "for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened" (verse 22). The most significant sign of His coming is not trouble but the preaching of the gospel to the whole world (verse 14). And the comparison to the days of Noah when people are caught up in pleasure and prosperity suggest the general tone of much of earth's closing history will be that of deceptive prosperity, not merely endless trouble.

Revelation, the book that presents the most horrific imagery of earth's final upheavals, bursts with songs of praise. The most significant imagery is not of beasts or plagues or bloodshed but of singing saints and a triumphant Lamb.

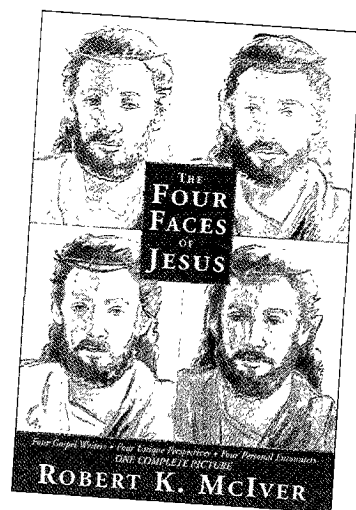
Second, I think that God's promises will come alive for us in a way most of us haven't even begun to imagine. A key passage exposing this theme is found in Romans 8. In the face of tribulation, distress, and persecution we are "more than conquerors through him who loved us" (verse 37), and that there is absolutely "nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (verse 39, NEB). We can take heart also in the assurance of Jesus—"In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:32).

Some of the Psalms, originally vital expressions of faith in the face of experiences such as David's flight from Saul, may become even more luminous in the face of earth's final tribulations.



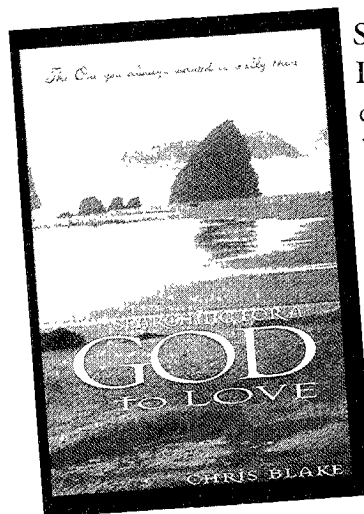
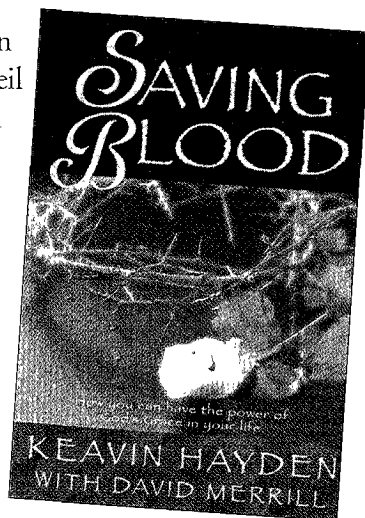
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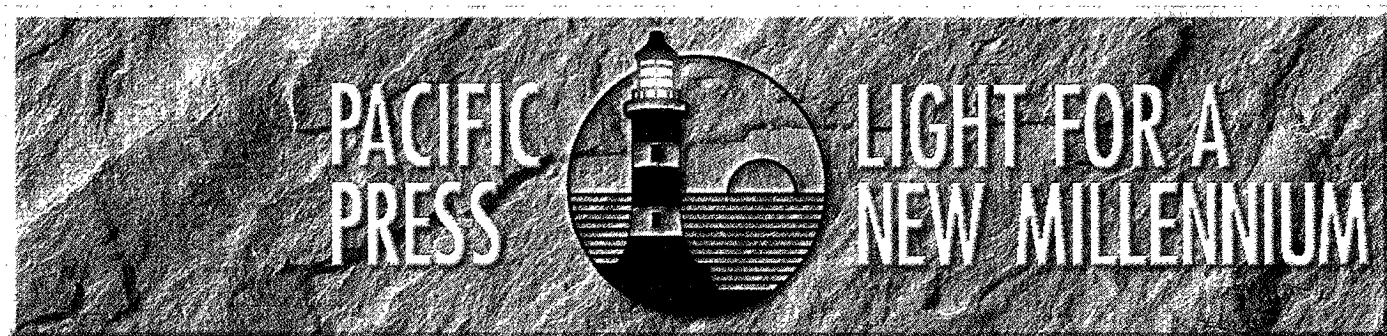


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Psalm 27:5, for example, affirms that “he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble.” Assurance is also found in Psalm 32—“You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance” (verse 7, NIV). Psalm 59:16 (NIV) portrays God as “my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.” Psalm 138:7 (NIV) expresses a similar thought: “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me.” Psalm 91 depicts God as “‘my refuge and my fortress’” (verse 2, NIV). The psalmist promises that God “will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge” (verse 4, NIV).

Third, I believe that we will experience, a unprecedented sense of purpose and vitality during this time. Ask anybody to describe the moments of life when they felt most alive and a clear pattern emerges. We talk about the times of challenge, the times of adversity, the times when we have been stretched to the limit. Veterans gather to share their war stories. Athletes tell of the harrowing ski run or the agonizing race. Regardless of the arena, the pattern is the same. We celebrate the crucible, not the easy chair.

And when we aren’t in the crucible we seem to seek meaning by making crises out of trivia. A thoughtless driver who cuts us off, a bad hair day, a domestic tiff, a difference with somebody at work, a dinnertime interruption by a rude telemarketer, or a dead battery on the car can seem life-dominating.

But the day comes when suddenly, in the face of earth’s final upheaval, the host of annoyances recede into nothingness. Life comes into focus. Every other issue is swallowed up by the big issue, the one truly important issue—the matter of ultimate allegiance. Who is worthy of our worship? Is Jesus truly Lord or not? Is He Lord of our lives? As during this awful time we experience His Lordship in new and powerful ways, as the “latter rain” of the Holy Spirit drenches us, and a host of distractions fall away, I believe there will be a life and vitality we have never known before.

Fourth, we will experience profound personal transformation during this time. Seventh-day Adventists have referred to the final, personal struggle of God’s people before they are liberated as “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” This is a reference to an inner struggle, not with the beast and the external powers of evil, but with and within ourselves. The purpose of this time goes beyond the unmasking of Babylonian evil “out there” and confronts us with the ways in which it has taken root inside our own hearts.

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that is the dark underside of
the cosmic rebellion.

Jacob’s night of struggle is a fitting metaphor because in the heavy blackness of night he suddenly feels the hand of a stranger upon him. In fear and desperation he struggles to the point of absolute exhaustion. For a hopeful moment, he gets a new surge of energy. The stranger cries for freedom before the rising sun. The stranger touches his thigh. Jacob collapses in excruciating pain. When, in the light of dawn, he comes limping out to meet Esau, he might give the appearance of having been diminished by his night of struggle. But he is not diminished—he is transformed. The new name bestowed upon him is a fitting recognition of this. Thus, when comparing

Jacob’s time of trouble to the time through which, in the end, those loyal to Christ must walk, it has been described as “the best answer to their petitions”³ for cleansing and transformation.

Finally, we must never lose sight of the fact that all these tribulations are but a great prologue to something stupendous. They are but a prelude to a future of joy beyond our wildest imagination. Although we have seen happy mothers with their babies on the other side of childbirth, we haven’t seen Christians on the far side of the time of trouble. But John gives us a glimpse of those who gather on the sea of glass singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. The Redeemed, in triumphant chorus overflow with praise toward the worthy Lamb who was slain (Rev. 5).

The song of triumph

And that song of triumph can begin well in advance of our actual arrival in heaven. In the words of theologian Walter Wink: “The celebration of the divine victory does not take place at the end of the book of Revelation, after the struggle is over. Rather, it breaks out all along the way. . . . We have here no sober pilgrims grimly ascending the mount of tears, but singers enjoying the struggle because it confirms their freedom. Even in the midst of conflict, suffering, or imprisonment, suddenly a hymn pierces the gloom, the heavenly hosts thunder in a mighty chorus, and our hearts grow lighter.”⁴

As trouble approaches, let the song begin. ■

Unless otherwise noted, scriptural quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

¹ For a discussion of the language and cycles of salvation history see Jon Paulien, *What the Bible Says About End-Time*, (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1994).

² Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1911), 614.

³ *Ibid.*, 631.

⁴ Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1992), 321.



THE SECOND ADVENT AND THE “FULLNESS OF TIME”

In the summer of 1980, a watershed conference at Glacier View, Colorado,¹ examined an attempted refutation of the key pillars of Seventh-day Adventist prophetic interpretation.



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In the aftermath of that momentous meeting, a number of my ministerial colleagues left the Adventist Church. One of these, my closest theological friend, brought me a stack of books and said, “I dare you to read these and stay an Adventist!” As I read, questions that I had never considered before struck at the heart of the historic Adventist understanding of prophecy in general, and of the 2300 days in particular. Deciding to study the issues carefully, I determined to go wherever the truth took me, even if that were, indeed, out of the door of the Adventist Church itself.

So began long months of wrestling with Scripture and agonizing in prayer. I was not alone, either; many colleagues, and others throughout the world church, persevered in plumbing the depths of Scripture in order to test the prophetic underpinnings of Adventist eschatology. I am deeply indebted to many whose insights helped me greatly,

particularly to the Daniel and Revelation Committee, which had been appointed by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to grapple with issues raised at Glacier View and elsewhere. Out of the decade of their deliberations in the 1980s came seven precious volumes of research that helped change my life.²

Another Round

My testimony concerning the results of the past two decades of biblical study is straightforward: I have become overjoyed as I have seen, ever more clearly, that the historic Adventist prophetic interpretations dealing with the last days can stand the closest investigation. Point by point the objections and questions in my mind have steadily melted away like hoarfrost before the sun light of Scripture.

Little did I know right after Glacier View that almost twenty years later

I would, at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, be privileged to teach these prophetic verities. At the same time, little did I realize that many of the same objections to the Adventist understanding of the end-time prophecies would resurface twenty years later. In a new round of barrages, books and videos have been widely distributed, punctuated by the personal appearances of former SDA pastors, all attempting to dismantle the prophetic basis of Adventism. The arguments of twenty years ago are recycled, while the powerful research of the Daniel and Revelation Committee and others since 1980 is almost totally ignored.

The basic questions have the same burning relevance now as twenty years ago: Where are we in relation to the “fullness of time” before the second advent of Christ? What is the nature of prophetic interpretation? How reliable is the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14? What about the starting date for the 2300-day prophecy? Can we still maintain the historical position in light of the apparent long delay of Christ’s return? Is the day-year principle valid? And, finally, What do these prophecies say about the nearness of Christ’s return?

Investigating the Judgment

One of the Adventist prophetic teachings most widely rejected is that of a pre-advent, investigative judgment of God’s people. Critics have charged that this interpretation is based exclusively on a single text, Dan 8:14, and that this text has been misinterpreted by wresting it out of context.

In the first volume of the Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, a now retired associate director of the Biblical Research Institute examined at least 28 different Old Testament passages *outside* of Daniel, all of which deal with judgment from the sanctuary³. Twenty out of these 28 passages concerned judgment of God’s people and many clearly involve the aspect of investigative judgment from the heavenly as well as the earthly sanctuaries.

There are numerous other biblical passages where the sanctuary is not spe-

cifically mentioned as the place of judgment, but where God’s *procedure* is indicated for dealing with His people before executive judgment is meted out. In fact, the Bible reveals that *God’s regular procedure* in dealing with humanity before ending the probationary time of a given individual or people is to first conduct an investigative judgment, throwing open all the books, as it were, so that it can be seen that He is just and fair before pronouncing the verdict and executing judgment.

We find God using this procedure from the first entrance of sin, in Eden.

The arguments
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totally ignored.

When in the cool of the day God comes to Adam and Eve after they have sinned, He initiates a legal trial or investigative judgment before pronouncing the verdict and sentence. Liberal Protestant scholar Claus Westermann points out that after the Fall God comes for a “legal process,” a “trial,” a “court process.”⁴ Adam and Eve are placed on the witness stand, given opportunity to testify, and in their testimony perjure themselves and finally reveal their culpability before God pronounces them guilty.

Yet in the heart of that judgment is the first gospel promise (Gen 3:15). God’s investigative judgment is not to see whom He can damn, but whom He

can save. As much as anything else, the judgment is a message of God’s grace and mercy.

The process continues in Genesis. God comes for a legal investigation before He brings the Flood (Gen. 6:1-13). The same procedure is described in His coming down to investigate at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:5-7) and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20, 21). In each of these cases, biblical scholars of a variety of persuasions have recognized that a legal trial procedure, an investigative judgment, is involved⁵. God comes to investigate, not because He needs to know, but to reveal that He is fair and just in all His dealings. In each case, however, there is at the heart of the judgment God’s grace, revealing His desire to save those under examination.

This legal procedure is often given a technical name in the Old Testament—a *rib*, or covenant lawsuit; it regularly consists of a divine legal *investigation* of the evidence before sentence is pronounced and judgment meted upon God’s professed covenant people, such as is done in the covenant lawsuits or investigative judgments described by Hosea and Micah upon the Northern Kingdom, and that of Malachi in the post-Exilic period.⁶ A covenant lawsuit or investigative judgment is also clearly present in the New Testament with regard to Israel in A.D. 34 before their close of probation and divine executive judgment.⁷

The Ezekiel parallel

Perhaps the most dramatic and illuminating of the examples of an investigative judgment of God’s professed covenant people appears in the first ten chapters of Ezekiel. John the Revelator’s extended citations and allusions to Ezekiel 1-10 in his portrayal of God’s dealings with His people in the last days hints that the events surrounding the end of probationary time for the Judean monarchy may be a type of God’s antitypical procedure for dealing with His people before the final close of their probation. And what was God’s procedure in Ezekiel’s day, in the closing years of Judah’s history before the curtain was pulled, before executive judgment was

meted out? The procedure was an investigative judgment conducted from the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary!⁸

Ezekiel reveals not only the divine procedure before the close of probation, namely an investigative judgment, but also God's desire to save His people. Over and over in Ezekiel, the Lord cries out, "Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live." (Ezek. 18:31, 32; 33:11, RSV).

One can also read between the lines and see similar characteristics in the way God leaves the temple at the conclusion of the investigative judgment. Ezekiel 10-11 shows that the celestial chariot does not simply rush away as it had come. The glory of the Lord slowly mounts up from its place of investigative judgment over the ark in the Most Holy Place, moves to the threshold of the temple and pauses. Then in His chariot, the Lord slowly moves across the courtyard, and pauses once more at the east gate of the temple precincts. He then slowly ascends in His throne and

crosses the Kidron Valley, pausing again one last time—now on the Mount of Olives, just as the Son of man six centuries later, weeping over Jerusalem, paused as well. It is as if the Lord is loathe to close the investigative judgment, as if He is waiting for all to repent, to turn, and to live.

Confirming evidence for the investigative judgment

What do all these biblical examples illustrating the patterns of God's procedure in judgment have to do with the "fullness of time" before the second advent of Christ? I believe the first prophet in history to explicitly describe the Second Advent brings clarity on this point. Enoch, who lived in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesies about the Parousia: "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to *execute judgment on all...*" (Jude 14-15, NKJV, emphasis added). The second advent of Christ is clearly a time of cosmic executive judgment.⁹ If God is consistent, acting at the end of time as He has

throughout history, then the executive judgment at the Second Advent will also be immediately preceded by an investigative phase. Thus, if we could know *when* that cosmic investigative phase begins, we would have a clear sign that we are nearing the executive judgment of Christ's second coming.

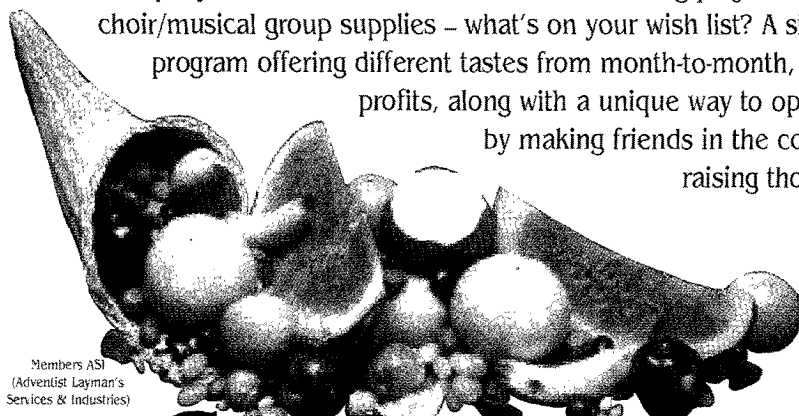
In fact, just as God's executive judgments throughout history regularly were preceded by an investigative phase, Daniel reveals that the same thing happens at the end of earth's history. The book of Daniel not only indicates the *existence* of a pre-advent cosmic investigative judgment—it also reveals *when* that judgment would begin. Daniel 7 clearly indicates that a cosmic investigative judgment on behalf of the saints immediately precedes the executive judgment upon the "little horn"¹⁰ power and Christ's reception of the kingdom.¹¹ And the parallel chapter, Daniel 8, indicates *when* this final Day of Atonement judgment, or cleansing of the sanctuary, would begin: after 2300 "evening-mornings."¹²

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This historicist Adventist interpretation simply builds upon the foundation of the early church and the Reformation. The historicist view of prophecy was the view of the early church and of all the Reformers, although today most other major denominations except Seventh-day Adventists have abandoned this position in favor of counter-Reformation systems.¹³

Yet only the historicist view of prophecy does justice to the whole of Daniel. The preterists must say that prophecy failed, and the futurists must posit a gap where none exists. But the historicists can be consistent with the whole sweep of the prophetic time prophecies, moving from the prophet's day to the eschaton.¹⁴

The year-day principle is crucial in the historicist interpretation. This principle was also widely held by Reformation theologians. Adventists have traditionally supported the year-day principle from Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34, only two texts, and both outside of Daniel. Skeptical of such an approach even before the Glacier View Conference, I still remember my euphoria as I read the DARCOM volumes,¹⁵ which show not two or three lines of evidence—but 23 different biblical reasons that validate the application of the day-for-a-year principle to the time prophecies of Daniel as well as Revelation. And most of this evidence is from the book of Daniel itself!

I also still rejoice in the confirmatory evidence for the dates regarding the 2300-days and 70-week prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9. God preserved crucial papyrus manuscripts buried for over 2000 years on a little island in the middle of the Nile River; the discovery and translation of these double-dated Elephantine papyri from the fifth century B.C. helped confirm that the date of Artaxerxes's first decree was 457 B.C., as Adventists have believed, and not 458.¹⁶ Further lines of biblical and extra-biblical evidence have been forthcoming, which show why this decree and not some other, marked the beginning of the 70 weeks and the 2300 days.¹⁷

No less stirring is the confirmation

of the ending date of the 2300 days-years, October 22, 1844. I have heard it said that the Adventist pioneers were simple and unlearned, without the intellect or the sophistication to do responsible biblical study. Although most of the pioneers did not have the advantage of higher theological education, and certainly did not have all the light, in my reading from the more than 1000 pages of pioneer articles related to the prophetic interpretation of the 2300 days,¹⁸ I have been amazed at the way God guided those humble, teachable men to such profound and reliable conclusions.

The fact that
the final judgment has already
begun is the most
unmistakable sign of the
nearness of the Second Advent.

The date of *October 22, 1844* is such a case in point. Scholarly detractors from the Seventh-day Adventist teaching claim that the Adventist pioneers chose a date for Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) that was proposed by an obscure Jewish sect, the Karaites, rather than taking the date accepted by the mainstream rabbinic tradition, which in 1844 came a month earlier than October 22. The truth is that this move proves just how studious the pioneers actually were. They found that the rabbinic method of calculating the beginning of the religious year was based upon fixed cyclical formulas for adding a second 12th month to bring the lunar calendar in line with the solar calendar. The procedure is linked to the Spring equinox, *not* to the Judean barley harvest moon stipulation given in Scripture, and

thus often sets the festival dates one month too early. Only the Karaites, who rejected all rabbinic tradition and accepted *sola Scriptura*, still preserved in 1844 the biblical method of reckoning the festival dates, thus arriving at October 22 as the correct date for the Day of Atonement.¹⁹

How interesting, too, that most of the Karaites outside of Palestine had abandoned the biblical method of reckoning by 1844, and that shortly after 1844 even the Karaites in Palestine ceased to use this method. I'm thankful God kept a "remnant" faithful to the biblical method—at least until 1844! And I thank God for His leading of our pioneers in solidly founding this doctrine upon Scripture, not tradition.

I have also been interested to learn that in the last several years the Karaites in Israel have once again begun to calculate the beginning of the year by the biblical method, adding an extra twelfth month when necessary so the barley will be ripe to wave at Passover time. It so happens that the beginning of this past Jewish year (A.D. 1999-2000) presented a calendrical situation almost identical to that of 1843-1844, and according to the Karaite firsthand examination of the barley in Israel, it was necessary to add a "leap month"—even though according to rabbinic reckoning no extra month was added. Thus the Day of Atonement this past year, figured according to the biblical way of reckoning, came during the last part of October, not in September, just as it did in 1844.²⁰ This is contemporary corroboration for the Adventist pioneers' correct calculation of the Day of Atonement in 1844.

For those who may still be skeptical about the Karaite calendar calculations, I also rejoice that God has recently raised up another witness to the accuracy of the date, October 22, 1844. By the study of Babylonian astronomical and mathematical data, it is now possible to arrive at the precise date for the Day of Atonement in 457 B.C. and by mathematical calculation to establish the modern equivalent for this date in 1844. This study was recently undertaken by William Shea and clearly demonstrates by

mathematical and astronomical reckoning independent of the Karaite calendar, that *October 22* is the correct date for the Day of Atonement in 1844.²¹ We have a sure and firm foundation for our faith.

The Adventist interpretation of the date indicated by the text of Daniel 8:14 is solid, and so is the interpretation of the *significance* of this date. There is not space for a detailed exegesis,²² but I note here that the word for “cleansed” in Dan. 8:14 is *nidaq*, which in Hebrew has nuances that can only be encompassed by at least three different English expressions: “set right/restore,” “cleanse,” and “vindicate.” This breadth of meaning provides the solution to the three problems set forth in the previous verse (Dan. 8:13): the removal of the “continual” ministry in the sanctuary, the “transgression that causes horror,” and the “trampling” of sanctuary. The “continual” mediatorial ministry of Christ needs to be “restored/set right”; the transgression in the sanctuary needs to be “cleansed”; and the trampling of sanctuary and host, which defamed the character of God, calls for “vindication” of God and His people. There are separate Hebrew words for each of these ideas, “set right,” “cleanse,” “vindicate”—but only *one* Hebrew word can simultaneously encompass all three, the word *nidaq*. Here is the wholistic message of the investigative judgment encapsulated in a single word.

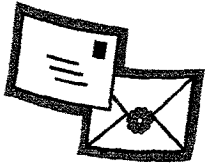
The good news of Judgment

The doctrine of the cosmic investigative judgment before Christ’s second advent is the theme of numerous other biblical passages outside of Daniel,²³ including the “everlasting gospel” of the first angel’s message in Revelation 14:6, which includes these words: “the hour of his judgment *has* come!”

It has *already* come! While it is a fearful time to those who have neglected and rejected the provisions made for their salvation, for those in Christ the investigative judgment is a reason for rejoicing. The investigative judgment is the revelation to the universe of the saints standing before God. It does not

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put the salvation of God’s people in jeopardy.

Since 1844, God’s saints can joyfully proclaim, “It’s finally here!” Since the death of Abel the blood of the martyrs has been crying out, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?” (Rev. 6:9, 10, RSV). At last the fullness of prophetic time has come. Just as in the first century, “when the fullness of the [prophetic] time [*chronos*] had come” (Gal. 4:4, NKJV), God sent forth His Son to do His redeeming work on earth, so at the time of the end when the “fullness of time” arrived,²⁴ the Son of Man “came to the Ancient of Days” to do His work of investigative judgment and then to receive the kingdom (Dan. 7:9-14). That work of final judgment has begun. Yom Kippur is here. Satan is finally to be silenced, the truth can finally come out vindicating God and His people.

The fact that the final judgment has already begun is the most unmistakable sign of the nearness of the

Second Advent. The Day of the Lord has arrived, and it was announced on earth by cosmic signs—a great earthquake, the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars, just as biblical prophets and Jesus Himself predicted (Joel 2:30, 31; Isa. 13:9, 10; 34:4; Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24, 25; Luke 21:24, 25).²⁵

But, some may reply, “1844 is a long time ago! Does the investigative phase of the judgment have to take that long for God?” No, it doesn’t. The inspired evidence is clear that He could have come within a few short years after 1844, if His people had been faithful in giving the three angels’ messages to the world. The whole world would have been warned, and Christ would have come again.²⁶

Many are tempted to get discouraged by such a long apparent delay. But I find every day of God’s “delaying” His coming another evidence of His awesome love for this world, not wanting any to perish. In the antitype of the microcosmic investigative judgment of Israel as portrayed by Ezekiel and six centuries later by the Gospel writers,

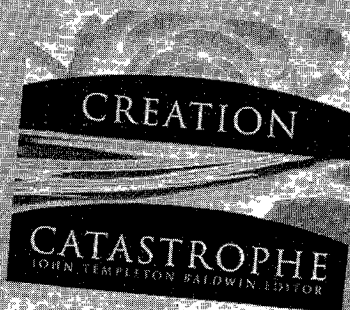
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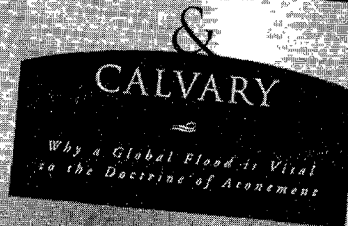
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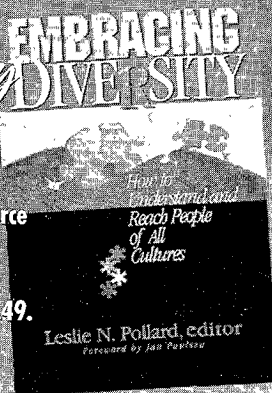
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Christ is now, as it were, pausing on the Mount of Olives, with tears in His eyes, not willing to end probationary time for His people if there is just one more who will "turn and live" (see Eze. 18:32). He longs to gather together His children like a mother hen gathers her chicks (see Matt. 23:37). He has not slacked on His promises, but is amazingly patient, not willing that anyone should perish (see 2 Peter 3:9).

Conclusion

It's been a long time since Glacier View. Many good people have left us since then. At the same time, many good people have stayed, convinced by the clear testimony of Scripture that our message is what we have been taught it is: present truth. No doubt, more challenges will come, and more good people will leave. Undoubtedly, more people will study the Bible and, convinced from the overpowering evidence revealed in that Word, stay faithful to these truths, and to the Lord who has graciously given us this message to proclaim to a dying world. ■

¹ For a report of the background to, and proceedings of, this conference, see the "Special Sanctuary Issue" of *Ministry*, October 1980, and Frank Holbrook, ed., *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 5 (Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), appendices D and E (217-233).

² These volumes are called the Daniel and Revelation Committee Series.

³ W. H. Shea, "Biblical Parallels for the Investigative Judgment," *Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1982), 1-24.

⁴ Claus Westermann, *Creation*, translated by John J. Scullion (London: SPCK, 1974), 96.

⁵ For example, regarding Sodom and Gomorrah, T. F. Mafico, "The Crucial Question Concerning the Justice of God," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 42 (1983): 13, points out that "Yahweh came down to make a judicial investigation" (emphasis supplied).

⁶ The word *rib* explicitly introduces the covenant lawsuits of Hosea and Micah: Hosea 4:1; Micah 6:1, 2. Sometimes the prophets use a synonym, *mi'pat* ("judgment"), as in Malachi 3:5; Ezekiel 5:8, etc. The recent scholarly literature on the covenant lawsuit is immense. For introductory discussion, starting bibliography and numerous biblical examples, see James Limburg, "The Root [rib] and the Prophetic Lawsuit Speeches" *JBL* 88 (1969): 291-304; the article on *rib* in the *Theological Wordbook of the*

Old Testament, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, and Bruce Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980) 2: 845-846; and Kirsten Nielsen, *Yahweh as Prosecutor and Judge: An Investigation of the Prophetic Lawsuit (Rib-Pattern)*, JSOT 9 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978).

⁷ See William Shea, "The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27," *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 80-82.

⁸ See William Shea, "The Investigative Judgment of Judah, Ezekiel 1-10," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981), 283-291; Shea, *Selected Studies*, 13-20; and Richard Davidson, "The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel," *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Institute of Archaeology, 1997), 71-93.

⁹ God executes judgment at His second coming by dismantling the final confederacy of the False Trinity, thus putting an end to the system of the little horn or Babylon; by resurrecting or translating the righteous; and by destroying the wicked. Of course, then comes a review judgment during the millennium, followed by the final executive judgment, where the wicked including Satan and his angels receive punishment "according to their works."

¹⁰ Identification of the "little horn" of Daniel and the "antichrist" and Babylon of the NT with the papal system is another point in which the Adventist interpretation is upholding the almost unanimous position of Reformation scholars. My own personal count isolates some 170 different characteristics of the "little horn"/antichrist/Babylon described in Scripture, and only the papacy matches all of these characteristics.

¹¹ See especially William Shea, "Judgment in Daniel 7," *Selected Studies*, 94-131.

¹² See especially, Gerhard Hasel, "The 'Little Horn,' The Heavenly Sanctuary and the Time of the End: A Study of Daniel 8:9-14," *Symposium on Daniel*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, ed. Frank Holbrook, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 378-461.

¹³ See LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946-1954), passim.

¹⁴ For examples of the contrast between these three main schools of prophetic interpretation, see Shea, *Selected Studies*, v-vi, 25-55 (regarding Daniel 8) and Gerhard F. Hasel, "Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks," in *Seventy Weeks*, 3-63 (regarding Daniel 9).

¹⁵ Shea, *Selected Studies*, 56-93.

¹⁶ This evidence is written up by Siegfried Horn and Lynn Wood, in *The Chronology of Ezra 7*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1970); summary in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 3:100-104.

¹⁷ See especially Arthur J. Ferch, "Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy," in *Seventy Weeks*, 64-74; and William Shea, "The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27," in *Seventy Weeks*, 84-108.

¹⁸ Paul A. Gordon, ed., *Pioneer Articles on the Sanctuary, Daniel 8:14, the Judgment, 2300 Days, Year-Day Principle, Atonement: 1846-1905* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1983); synthesized in *idem*, *The Sanctuary, 1844, and the Pioneers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983).

¹⁹ For a discussion of the Karaites and their continuation of the biblical method of calendrical calculation as opposed to the rabbinic departure from the biblical method, see Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 2: 196-199; 4: 792-797.

²⁰ See the data and discussion by Israeli Karaites in several articles on the subject posted on the Internet at the following website: <karaites@netvision.il>.

²¹ See Shea, *Selected Studies*, 132-137.

²² For a detailed study of the meaning of Daniel 8:14, see Hasel, "Daniel 8:9-14," in *Symposium on Daniel*, 378-461; on the specific meaning of *nidaq*, see Richard M. Davidson, "The Meaning of *Nidaq* in Daniel 8:14," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 7/1 (1996): 107-119.

²³ See, for examples, Leviticus 16 and 23:28-32; Malachi 3:1-5; Matthew 22 (especially verse 11); 25:1-13; Hebrews 10:25-31 (note also the implication of investigative as well as executive future judgment also in Heb. 4:12, 13; 6:4-8; and 9:23, 27, 28); Revelation 11:1-3, 18, 19; 14:6 (note also the implication of pre-advent investigative judgment in the sequencing of Rev. 6:10; 18:4-8; and 19:2).

²⁴ Note that Jesus Himself alludes to the "fullness of time" concept with regard to the time of the end. He explicitly refers to the "times" of Daniel 7:25 in His Olivet discourse in Luke 21:24 (same word in the Greek of Luke and the LXX of Dan. 7:25), and in the same verse alludes to the "trampling" of Daniel 8:10, 13 (again the same Greek root word in both). This is immediately followed by the description of the "signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars." He thus implies that when the fullness of the prophetic time given in Daniel 7 and 8 is completed, the end-time cosmic signs will begin. The book of Revelation also indicates this fullness of time concept: after alluding to the time prophecy of Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, John states that "time [chronos] shall be no more" (Rev. 10:6).

²⁵ The Lisbon earthquake of 1755 is considered by seismologists as "the largest shock ever," the "greatest known earthquake" (see G. A. Eiby, *Earthquakes* [New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1980], chapter 11); the "Dark Day" of May 19, 1780, is referred to in Encyclopedias as the "Great Dark Day," and has not been equaled in intensity in North America since; likewise the Leonid meteor shower display of Nov. 13, 1833 has not been matched since in extent and duration. These cosmic signs came at the right time—"the first two 'in those days' of the 1260-year ascendancy of the papacy (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2; 12:14; 13:5) but 'after that tribulation' had ceased in about 1750 (Mark 13:24), and all of them before 1844 and the start of the antitypical 'Day of Atonement.'"

²⁶ See, e.g., Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 695, 696; *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1898), 633, 634.

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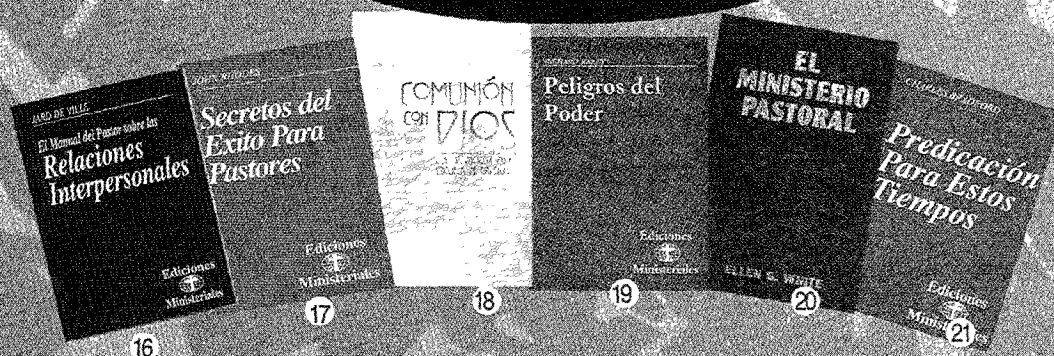
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THE SECOND COMING:

THE CERTAINTY OF AN

APPOINTMENT WITH CHRIST

Comfort one another with these words,” wrote the apostle Paul in what is perhaps the first of the New Testament writings (1 Thess. 4:18*).



John M. Fowler, Ed.D., is the associate director of education at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and a consulting editor for Ministry.

Why comfort? What words?

The church at Thessalonica faced some serious theological and emotional problems. When the gospel reached them through the work of Paul, they “received the word . . . with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6). Their faith was known everywhere (1 Thess. 1:8), even as they “turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

But time has a way of testing the best of saints, and the believers at Thessalonica were no exception. Theological affirmation and emotional reality seemed to have come to odds with one another, rocking the faith of the believers of that infant church. Once they had been convinced of the certainty of Jesus’ coming again, but now they were plagued with the reality of what was happening around them. Saints waiting for the “Son from heaven” were dying one by one without seeing the fulfillment of that ultimate hope, and the emotions of the

believers were torn. Death has a way of raising the most disquieting questions, and for the Thessalonian congregation the question had become pressing, What about the second coming of Jesus? Is it in fact real?

The apostle faces the issues head on. First, he takes up the emotional dilemma. In the trauma of death Christians must not “grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13), he says. A Plato may see in death a release from the pain and corruption of life and a doorway to a new life.¹ A Seneca may issue a call to self-discipline in the face of death, in as much as “the decisive hour [of death] is the body’s last, but not the soul’s.”² A Hindu may see in the endless possibility of reincarnation a comfort to the grieving.³ But not Paul. To him, grief must be placed within the perspective of Christian hope—and that hope is anchored in the certainty that the “dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16). There indeed lies the Christian comfort.

But when will the dead in Christ rise? Paul’s answer is clear: “For the Lord

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himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds *to meet the Lord in the air*; and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17, emphasis mine).

Our appointment

To meet the Lord in the air. That is our appointment. The second coming of Jesus is God's climactic appointment with the saints of all ages—the dead and the living. From Eden, saints of all ages have looked forward to this appointment. The Greek for “meet,” *apanteo*, is packed with power and significance; it connotes the return of a conquering hero. The Hero of all ages, the King of kings, the Sovereign of the universe is returning, and His subjects will meet Him in the air. Jesus is not the Ruler of any one kingdom or one part of the earth. He is the Sovereign of the cosmos, the Lord of heaven and earth, arriving to take His own that His own may be with Him forever—beyond the reach of sin, beyond the pain of death, beyond the presence of sin.

That appointment in the air is the “blessed hope.” History is marching toward that cosmic event—“the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). When that appointment becomes a reality, the words of our Lord proclaimed hours before the Cross will be fulfilled: “Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go and prepare a place for you? *I will come again* and will take you to myself, that where I am there you may be also” (John 14:1-3, emphasis mine).

When it comes to the certainty of this appointment, the Scriptures leave us with no doubt. From the moment Adam and Eve crossed the forbidden frontiers, from generation to generation since then, God's people have looked to the skies for the descending of the Savior and for the ultimate fulfillment of their hope.

This expectation is not “a mere hypothesis, a postulate, or the projection of human guesswork. It is and remains a response based on the Word and the sure promises of God. ‘According to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells’ (2 Peter 3:13).”⁴ To a study of this promise we turn—its grounding in the biblical witness, its relationship to the kingdom, and its implications for the Christian life.

The Second Coming and the biblical witness

Enoch, eighth from Adam, spoke of that appointment and saw the Second Coming as a carrying out of God's judgment and a vindication of His character

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(Jude 14-15). Job saw in it the ultimate redemption: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth” (Job 19:25). Isaiah predicted a day of victory for God's people when “He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth” (Isa. 25:8). On that day, the redeemed will shout for joy: “‘Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation’ ” (Isa. 25:9).

Micah saw the establishment of

God's holy mountain forever (Micah 4:1-5). Zechariah viewed the Second Coming from the perspective of God's sovereignty (Zech. 14:9). Joel spoke of a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit enabling a universal witness by the young and old in preparation for the coming of the Lord (Joel 2:28-31). Zephaniah focused on the coming of the Day of the Lord which will bring about judgment upon evil and the final redemption and restoration of God's remnant to dwell in safety (Zeph. 2; 3:9-20). Daniel saw in Nebuchadnezzar's multimetal image the march of this world's history toward its culmination in the second coming of Christ—the rock that crushes all human systems, opening up the way to the establishment of God's eternal kingdom (Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45). Almost all the Old Testament books speak of this final culmination of history in the establishment of the eschatological kingdom of God and the cosmic triumph of righteousness in the great controversy between God and Satan.

To the disciples, the return of Jesus was no cunningly devised fable (2 Peter 1:16). It was based on irrefutable evidence. The disciples were eyewitnesses of the life of Jesus. They saw Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. They saw Him walk the Sea of Galilee. They saw Him raise Lazarus. They saw Him feed the five thousand. They saw Him command the powers of nature. Just as these events were real, so was His promise, “I will come again” (John 14:3), and His ability to keep that promise.

Jesus prophesied many events while on earth. He said He would be betrayed by one of His disciples (Matt. 26:21) and denied by another (verse 34). He predicted a scattering of His followers (John 16:32). He expected to be raised from death on the third day (2:19-22). He predicted the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the powerful witness of the early church (16:7-15). He revealed Heaven's plan for the building of the *ekklesia* (Matt. 16:18). He prophesied the destruction of the temple and the desolation of Jerusalem (Mark 13:2; Luke 19:41-44). He also said that He would come again.

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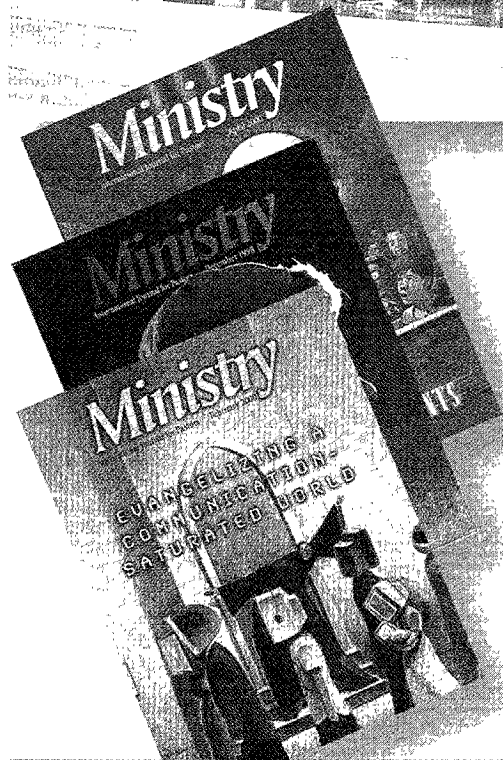
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To the disciples, only one of these prophecies remained unfulfilled—the return of Jesus. Everything else happened as He had predicted. They were eyewitnesses not only of the life of Jesus but also of the fulfillment of His prophecies. What's more, even as the disciples stood with disappointment at the sight of their resurrected Lord ascend up into heaven, having accomplished the redemptive mission of the Father on the Cross, they received God's direct assurance through angels who said: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

This same Jesus who was born in Bethlehem when Caesar ruled the Roman Empire (Luke 2:1). This same Jesus who said He had come to do His Father's business (verse 49). This same Jesus who came into Galilee, preaching the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14). This same Jesus who during the governorship of Pilate was crucified outside of Jerusalem and rose again the third day. This same Jesus whose mission represents God's invasion of history in time and space (Gal. 4:4) in order to atone for sin and open a way for sinners to be redeemed back to God. This same Jesus who is real, personal, and no myth. This Jesus who once walked this earth will return again in the same way as He went up—visibly, audibly, personally, verifiably, and purposefully.

Is it any wonder, then, that the disciples had no doubt at all that Jesus would return? Is it any wonder at all that the last promise of the risen Jesus is, "Surely, I am coming soon" (Rev. 22:20)? Is it any simple matter that the Bible offers to every Christian the climactic prayer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (verse 20)?

Thus from its very inception, the Christian church looked to the second coming of Christ as the event that would complete Christian redemption (Heb. 9:27, 28), test Christian patience (James 5:7, 8), ensure judgment (2 Tim. 4:1), encourage Christlikeness in the believer (1 John 2:28; 3:2), usher in res-

urrection and translation (1 Thess. 4:16, 17), guarantee a reunion with the saints of all time (see 1 Cor. 15:51-58), confirm the reward of the community of faith (1 Thess. 4:16, 17), lead to a cosmic conflagration and a forging out from the wreckage of time an eternity of triumphant joy (2 Peter 3:10-13; cf. Isa. 65:17, 18), inaugurate the millennial reign in heaven (Rev. 20:1-6), and usher in the kingdom of God (11:15; 12:10).

This joyous event underlying Christian hope, faith, and destiny is not a "pie in the sky by and by" as Karl Marx

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once ridiculed Christian claims for the future. Nor is the Second Coming an optimistic view of history that affirms the spiritual presence of Christ in the church and ensures a gradual realization of the kingdom of God, as liberal theology would assert. The biblical witness denies any suggestion rejecting the visible return of Christ or any argument equating the Second Coming to a gradual betterment of society. The biblical teaching on eschatology requiring a personal return of Christ is not a myth requiring demythologizing, or the need of adopting an attitude which says let's

"take the Bible seriously, but not literally."⁵ No, in the face of overwhelming scriptural evidence for a literal, physical, and verifiable return of Christ, how could we take the Bible seriously without taking its greatest anticipation literally? As Denney so clearly argues: We cannot "call in question what stands so plainly in the pages of the New Testament—what filled so exclusively the minds of the first Christians—the idea of a Personal Return of Christ at the end of the world . . . if we are to retain any relation to the New Testament at all, we must assert the personal return of Christ as Judge of all."⁶

But what did Jesus Himself teach regarding His second coming?

The crucial link between the first and second coming

Christ's promise "I will come again" (John 14:3) resolutely affirms a second coming as distinct from a first coming. Hebrews underscores this distinction clearly: "Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb. 9:28). He who will come the second time is the One who has already come. The mission of the first coming was accomplished at the Cross, whereby His death Jesus bore the sins of the world and where God has reconciled the world unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). The mission of the Second Coming is not to atone for sin, but to gather into His eternal kingdom those who "are eagerly waiting for him."

The Olivet discourse of our Lord (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) specifically speaks of the Second Coming in terms of a universal gathering of His disciples "from the ends of the earth" (Mark 13:27) into the kingdom of God. It is the harvest time (Mark 4:29; Rev. 14:15). His coming will be preceded by various signs including the worldwide proclamation of the gospel (Matt. 24:14). Just prior to His coming will be a great tribulation (Matt. 24:15, 16) and conditions of spiritual apathy and deterioration (Matt. 25:37-39; Luke 17:28-30). These and other

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signs are given not to work out a chronological time line as to when Jesus will come, but to keep God's people in a state of preparedness. The time of His coming is known only by the Father, not by anyone else—not even the Son (Mark 13:32, 33, 35). Watchfulness and readiness are the Christian's perpetual response to the promise of the Parousia.

The fact of His coming is certain—literal, glorious, sudden, and universally visible (Matt. 24:27-31; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7). The time of His coming is not known and is hidden in the mind of God (Matt. 24:36, 42). The hiddenness of the time does not nullify the oughtness of His coming; nor should it encourage time setting on one pretext or the other. It only challenges the Christian to be a watchful citizen of the kingdom of grace now, and a hopeful citizen of the kingdom of glory to come.

An understanding of the kingdom of God makes this distinction and the closeness between the first and the second comings of Jesus even more clear. Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15) and announced that the “kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:21). He also taught His disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10). Throughout the Gospels, we note Jesus' teaching that the kingdom of God is already here (Luke 7:21; cf. Matt. 12:28; 11:12, 13; 4:23; 9:35; 13:11) and not yet here (Matt 6:10; 8:11; 19:28; 24; Mark 13, Luke 24)—a present reality and a future prospect, an experience as well as a hope. Some have found these sayings regarding the nature of God's kingdom confusing, but “Jesus' message is that in his own person and mission God has invaded human history and has triumphed over evil, even though the final deliverance will occur only at the end of the age.”⁷

The “already” settles the finality of the kingdom. Christ has ushered it into history: “The kingdom of God's grace is now being established, as day by day hearts that have been full of sin and rebellion yield to the sovereignty of His love.”⁸ The “not yet” assures the physical end of evil and the establishment of the new earth: “The full establishment

of the kingdom of His glory will not take place until the second coming of Christ to this world.”⁹ The one assures the other; and both balance one another.

Peter was sure of the eschatological, “eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11) because he was sure of the saving work of Christ. “By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).

To illustrate the linkage between the first and second comings of Christ, consider a World War II analogy. In March 1945, the allied landings in Normandy effectually sealed the fate of that war. The victory on the beaches on “D-Day” sent signals around the world that the allied forces would be victorious. But not until several months later would V-Day come, bringing about the end of the war. D-Day may be compared to Calvary and V-Day to the Second Coming.¹⁰ The analogy is not perfect but illustrates the point. The Cross assures the decisiveness of the victory over the evil one. It was through the Cross and the Resurrection that the decisive battle was won. “This then means that the hope for the future can now be supported by faith in the past, faith in the already concluded decisive battle. That which has already happened offers the solid guarantee for that which will take place. *The hope of the final victory is so much the more vivid because of the unshakably firm conviction that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place.*”¹¹ The war may go on, the groaning for deliverance (Rom. 8:21) may still be heard, and hope must yet await its fulfillment “in the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), but there can be no doubt that the end of the war, the ultimate deliverance, and the joyous fulfillment of hope have been assured in the decisive victory of the Cross.

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Conclusion

It is our privilege to possess a confident anticipation of our appointment with God when Jesus comes—of us achieving the final completion of the journey to the kingdom that began when we accepted the good news of the Cross. It is the Man of the Cross who is returning as the Lord of glory. The same Jesus who defeated sin and Satan on Calvary is soon to descend in the clouds of heaven to crush sin, death, and Satan from the face of the universe.

In the light of our appointment it is crucial to follow the call of Paul to “throw off the deeds of darkness and put on our armor as soldiers of the light. Let us behave with decency as befits the day” (Rom. 13:12, 13, NEB). We may live in the midst of darkness, but through the eyes of faith we must ever be able to keep the approaching dawn in view and live so that we will not be taken by surprise.

The Second Coming must keep us awake and sober (1 Thess. 5:6), and must force us to self-examination, that we may discover “what sort of persons [we] ought . . . to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God” (2 Peter 3:11, 12).

That is what matters in the end. Even

as we hope and wait, we live responsibly and lovingly, readily reflecting the character and mission of the coming Lord.

The appointment in the air is not far away. ■

* All Scripture passages in this article, except as otherwise noted, are from the Revised Standard Version.

¹ Jacques Choron, *Death and Western Thought* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 47-52.

² Ibid., 70.

³ *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita* (New York: The New American Library, 1964), 36-38.

⁴ G. C. Berkouwer, *The Return of Christ* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 10.

⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Scribner, 1943), 2:50.

⁶ James Denney, *Studies in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976; reprinted from 1895 edition by Hodder and Stoughton, London), 239.

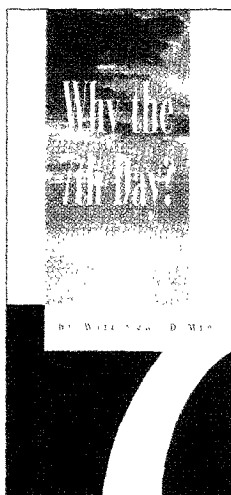
⁷ George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 67-68.

⁸ Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1956), 108.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1962), 84.

¹¹ Ibid., 86, 87.



Why the Seventh Day?

- ♦ Did the gospel rest Jesus introduced at His first advent make the rest of the seventh-day Sabbath of Eden and Sinai obsolete?
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Letters

continued from p. 3

the article "Are We Afraid of the Gospel?" were followed immediately by an ad for the book *Jewelry in the Bible*. But if you keep articles like this coming, I don't really care what you advertise. I also read articles on preaching, the gift of prophecy in our day, clean and unclean meats, and several others. I appreciate the fact that you are willing to push the envelope a bit beyond where many Adventists normally go. I enjoyed my reading so much I won't let my next *Ministry* gather dust before I read it.—Mark Bresee, pastor, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

♦ You did all of us a great service to present those three articles on inspiration and the authority of Scripture (Richard W. Coffen's "A Fresh Look at the Dynamics of Inspiration" [December 1999] and "Thy Word is a Light Unto My Feet" [February 2000] and Ekkehardt Mueller's "The Revelation, Inspiration, and Authority of Scripture" [April 2000]). For many readers, they developed new paths of thoughts.

I was somewhat surprised with

the editor's note that Mueller's article contained "some alternative approaches to those presented in Coffen's articles." Mueller seemed to be more complementary than an alternative. Both writers had different purposes—Coffen was more concerned about building a bridge between those who tend to downplay the authority in the Writings (Bible and/or Ellen G. White) because of the human factors and those who may take a more rigid view of the authority of the Writings by not recognizing the limitations of the human factor.

Both writers properly recognized the divine/human dynamics in the revelation/inspiration process. Coffen's use of the light metaphor complements my metaphor of the ellipse that is highlighted in my recent book, *Messenger of the Lord*, chapters 22 and 23 especially. It seems to me that whenever we propose a model of biblical inspiration, it should correspond closely with Ellen White's own experience of divine inspiration.

I am glad that Mueller raised the question as to whether "inspiration really worked the same way in all prophets . . . [because] the processes are not necessarily identical." Of course, he is not pleading for degrees

of inspiration which is always a trip into subjectivity; nevertheless, it is a fair observation.

Mueller's interesting assertion that "a biblical doctrine of inspiration must be derived from the Bible and the Bible alone" puzzled me somewhat. With all we know of how revelation/inspiration worked in the ministry of Ellen G. White, far more information than we can derive from biblical writers, do we not find in her experience deeper insights into how the process worked, whether through Moses, Isaiah, Paul, or White? What in her experience runs contrary to what we can glean inductively or deductively from the study of biblical prophets?

Using the *sola scriptura* principle was exactly one of the main arguments that early Adventists used to convince others of the genuineness of the prophetic ministry of Ellen White. That same argument could easily have been used by Paul and his associates when their contemporaries worried that Paul was not canonical and thus not under the authority of the *sola scriptura* principle. The same human limitations we see in White's prophetic ministry mirror the same limitations we see in biblical writers and vice versa. On the basis of logic as well as of comparison between White and biblical writers, it seems to me, one must assume that the level of authority is the same.

I am not suggesting in the slightest that Mueller is drawing a difference in the quality or degree of authority between biblical writers and White. I am only saying that some could tweak what is written and come off with that impression.

Mueller's treatment of "Jesus' position on Scripture" is the best I have ever seen in print. If I had seen it before the second edition of *Messenger of the Lord* had been printed, I would have incorporated it with a clear reference to its creator.—Herbert E. Douglass, Weimar, California.

♦ I just want to take a moment to express my deep appreciation for the

Pastor's Pastor article entitled "The Racist Within Me" (February 2000). It is very courageous to express your convictions on such a sensitive issue so clearly.

I pledge my support and pray that leadership of our church will join this vital crusade.—G. O. Martinborough, vice president, Inter-American Division, Coral Gables, Florida.

Worship and praise

After 28 years in the ministry I have concluded that statistics may help grow numbers in the church membership, but I don't think they work well for the end result and that is eternal life. Our major problem is that we are always looking to the world for ways to increase numbers. We have compromised in many ways and don't have much to show for it here in North America.

Twenty-seven years ago I attended the North American Lay Advisory held in Atlanta and spent a whole week sitting on a committee appointed to come up with some catch for getting us into homes and arranging Bible studies. We concluded that "Christ's method alone" (*Ministry of Healing*, 143) was the best method. At my church we sing from the new hymnal and at times we go further back to one of the older books and sing some of those early hymns that stir the soul like none other. But is it music that lifts me to the throne of God or is it the gospel? Today one of my younger elders preached his very first sermon. The music was from the hymnal and the message was the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone! No one left early and everyone felt the presence of the Holy Spirit.—Jim Cox, pastor, Cohutta, Georgia.

♦ John Solomon ("Worship and Praise," February 2000) makes a valid point regarding the importance of a mixture of traditional hymns and contemporary music in our worship services. Unfortunately, there was no caution as to the type of contempo-

rary music to be introduced. In the minds of many, the term "contemporary music" is synonymous with religious rock. There are some beautiful contemporary praise songs that are suitable for worship but his emphasis on drums and the need for a "beat" suggests that he might be recommending the off-beat rock rhythm of much of today's modern music.—Arnold N. White, retired pastor, Redding, California.

Editor's note: *The central point of Solomon's article was not to advocate a particular form of church worship or music, but to help pastors as they work with their congregations in bringing about desirable change in the worship practices of a congregation. It is not the objective of Ministry to advocate extreme forms of worship or worship music, but rather to bring about meaningful worship of the Lord.*

Reaching our children

Sharon Cress's "The Jewels of His Kingdom" (March 2000) is the most complete and comprehensive statement I have ever read on the

importance and methods of rearing our children in the church. I plan to share this article with everyone I can to increase the effectiveness of our ministry in this area.—Cecil F. McKee, Huntsville, Texas.

♦ I was greatly impressed by Sharon Cress's article. I was especially fascinated by the illustration of the zebras. I never heard of that before. How very practical for us who work with little ones to stress the importance of the early years of childhood, which so often is neglected.—Margaret Nathaniel, Southern Asia Division, Hosur, India.

April 2000 issue

The well-written article by Roy Naden was timely. His analysis of the basis for trust in the local congregation was right on and desperately needed in the churches with which I am acquainted.

The *Ministry* team are sounding the trumpet well! (Even though some of the authors do not write as I would on some issues.)—Tom Stafford, Battle Ground, Washington. ■

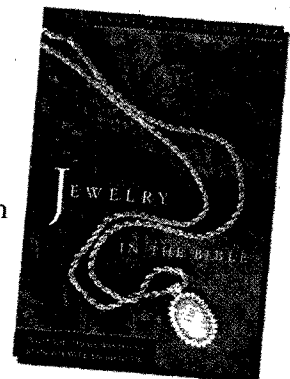
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Thirty years ago, June 7, Jesus gave me the greatest gift beyond His saving grace. Sharon became my partner in marriage, ministry,

mischievous, and mission.

Because Sharon likes flowers, I often plant rose bushes to commemorate our anniversary. If our garden had sufficient, I would plant another thirty roses as a growing testimony to our years together. She will settle for less, but I have ordered twelve new bushes which I anticipate will soon be filled with blossoms.

Before you conclude that I've got "good husband" down pat, let me assure you that there are times when Sharon deserves roses and gets thorns from her over-extended, self-absorbed spouse. Every day does not bring roses, accolades, or I ashamed to admit, even compliments and gratitude.

Notwithstanding, I've made some observations through the years which I share as a tribute to my love for Sharon as well as an encouragement for you.

Opposites attract. The proverb states more truth than fiction. Sharon and I are opposite in every measurement of personality, temperament, or working styles. Despite this, or perhaps for this very reason, our Father has fulfilled his creative promise to "make a helpmeet." This Biblical concept means two completing halves of a whole rather than an individual created to run errands for the other.

Opposites are still opposites. Neither conversion nor marriage changes basic personality. A converted extrovert does not become an introvert and a spouse does not change from thinking to feeling modes of processing decisions just because their partner is different. One of our most challenging marital tasks, even after thirty years, is to value and

Thirty roses

JAMES A. CRESS

utilize each others strengths rather than ridicule or despise that which is so different from ourselves.

Irritants remain. Growing together does not guarantee perpetual harmony. Each other's traits which frustrated us back in courtship days, frustrate still. Recently, Sharon and I strenuously argued an issue which we thought we had thrashed to resolution before our wedding. However, if we focus on our partner's positive characteristics, it really is possible not to notice each imperfection every day.

Fight fair. A magnet on our refrigerator says, "*Marriages are made in heaven; but so are thunder and lightning.*" I doubt the veracity of those who claim never to utter harsh words. Differences are both a reality and a strength for marriages. Remember, the opposite of love is not hatred, but indifference. So disagree strongly; but establish some ground rules. Stick to the issue at hand rather than battles of yore. I'm speaking of verbal interchange only. Violence, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or verbal, has no place in Christian homes. Afterwards, reunite to enjoy peacemaking.

Don't forget to laugh. Sharon, in a manner unlike any other, can identify the humorous or ridiculous in even the most complex situations. She helps me process trauma by chuckling over human foibles or bizarre circumstances that, otherwise, would overwhelm. There is little that we cannot face if we can laugh ourselves through the crisis.

Time is vital. Laughing together means sufficient time together—vacations, days off—to relax enough to enjoy each other. Once when I had extended an already-lengthy itinerary, I returned with a gift that I believed

might compensate for my absence. When that gift ended up at a garage sale, it clearly showed my presence at home was more desired than any gift.

Don't meet tears with logic. Too many men want to "fix" problems when all our spouses really need is a sympathetic ear. Listening and embracing are often more effective than jumping to either conclusions or actions.

Good marriages demand three partners. We need Jesus to enjoy a happy home. To the extent that we include our Lord, our marriage prospers. To the extent that we neglect his Word, His will and His presence, we falter. The chance of our success depends more on our commitment—God included in a covenantal relationship—than on whatever appears momentarily convenient

Ministry comes from surprising sources. Sharon studied homemaking. Do colleges still offer Home Economics degrees? Reality made her a minister. Our first conference president, Henry Carubba, saw potential where neither of us had even thought to search. As a evangelistic assistant, colporteur, Bible instructor, and pastor, Sharon developed skills in soul-winning, nurture, and administration which have expanded our team ministry.

Thirty years is not sufficient. Our first year together sometimes seemed never-ending as we struggled to accommodate each other in the reality of shared space, interactive time, and renegotiated roles. Sometimes we questioned even the basic sanity of two individuals who had been so certain of our love now stretching just to survive.

Three decades later, I wonder where the years evaporated as I conclude that Sharon is so fascinating that we must share eternity together!

Thirty years are nothing in view of eternity. I am so grateful for my spouse. I am so thankful we are almost home! ■

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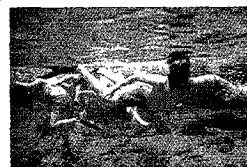
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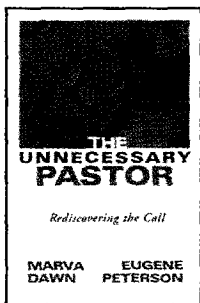


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BOOK REVIEWS

The Unnecessary Pastor, by Marva Dawn and Eugene Peterson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2000). Paperback.



256 pages. ISBN 0-8028-4678-5. US\$14.00.

Pastors are called to equip those they serve with faith and skills for living the gospel way in the midst of a culture

that is increasingly non-Christian. But forces—both subtle and obvious—in that culture can domesticate pastors, too, and pressure them toward fulfilling false expectations for charisma and success, numbers and power. How can pastors be strengthened for resisting those false goals, for maintaining the freedom to be unnecessary according to the world's criteria?

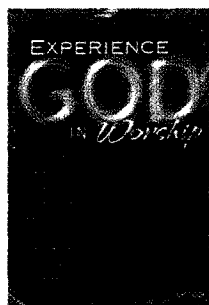
In this volume, two of today's most respected authors help pastors recover their gospel identity and clarify their vision of Christian leadership. Eugene Peterson and Marva Dawn reconnect pastors with biblical texts that equip them to be countercultural servants of the gospel. In his chapters Peterson explores 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, drawing from them scriptural images for pastoral identity. In alternating chapters Dawn turns to Ephesians for instructions to churches seeking to live faithfully against societal rules.

Packed with encouraging insights from experienced practitioners, this book is a must for anyone involved in church leadership or for anyone now preparing for ministry.

Experience God in Worship, Published by Group Publishing, Inc., Loveland, Colorado, 2000.

In the heart of every pastor and

worship leader is the desire to see people draw close to God . . . to truly experience His presence in their lives.



Not surprisingly, that's why many people come to church, too. They want to come together with other Christians to learn more about God and

experience His reality. It is no wonder, then, that worship is such an important part of every church service. This book brings together perspectives on the future of worship from some of the most respected worship leaders and pastors. By exploring this broad range of worship styles, pastors and worship leaders will discover fresh and innovative approaches. They will find ideas that will inspire and motivate them. The worship models may be from different traditions, but they deliver insights that will help achieve the ultimate goal of people experiencing God in worship.

Discover how to create worship models for every generation . . . and still allow each group to joyfully worship God through music, tradition, and more.

Anticipation: Waiting on Tiptoes for the Lord, by Hyveth Williams (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific



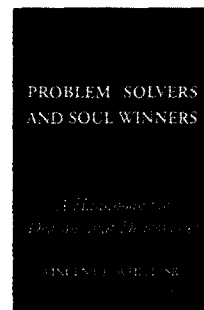
Press® Pub. Assn., 2000). Paperback. 255 pages. ISBN 0-8163-1789-5. US\$13.99.

While society spins at a maddening pace, addicted to speed, where are those who are "waiting," as on tiptoes, for God? In this new book, Pastor Hyveth Williams uses an

engrossing combination of humor, scholarship, and personal experience to illustrate the power of living in *anticipation* of the Lord's return.

If you ever grow weary of waiting on God to come through, *Anticipation* will help you find your second wind so you can run and not get weary, walk, and not faint.

Problem Solvers and Soul Winners: A Handbook for Deacons and Deaconesses, by



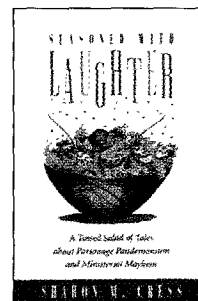
Vincent E. White, Sr. (Huntsville, Alabama: AVA's Book Publishers, 1999). Paperback. 88 pages. US\$14.95.

This book outlines clearly the duties of deacons and deaconesses. As a pastor you will be pleased by its concept to empower deacons and deaconesses to become problem solvers and soul winners. For church elders who are searching for practical how-to tools to assist in working with the deacons and deaconesses, this book is for you. This is the first book of its kind that shows how to apply the nine-step problem-solving process in the framework of the social systems approach during membership visitation. Buy it for a reference or as a training manual.

Seasoned with Laughter, by Sharon M. Cress, Published by the Ministerial

Association of the General Conference, paperback, 106 pages, US\$6.95.

Seasoned with Laughter is a collection of tales about parsonage



pandemonium and ministerial mayhem. This collection of parsonage humor is a fun read and also is a missionary endeavor to raise funds for equipping pastoral spouses with the tools needed to spread the gospel in neighborhoods all over the world.

S H O P T A L K

Net '96 Graphics

Pastor John Blake, coordinator of the Alberta Conference deaf ministry, in cooperation with Advent Digital Media of Vancouver, Washington, has prepared a special adapted Easy English edition of the NET '96 CD-ROM computer graphics.

The CD-ROM contains all the NET '96 graphics, but about 85 percent of the texts have been changed to use an Easy English version.

Some of the title slides have also been changed to Easy English. The CD was originally prepared to use in deaf ministry. However, it is now also available for anyone who would find Easy English helpful in evangelistic or sermon presentations.

The CD contains the original NET '96 texts and pictures, placed side-by-side for comparison with the Easy English adaptations. This is done in Microsoft PowerPoint, and each slide is also included in plain JPEG format as in the original Advent Digital CD. An excellent free viewer, image adapter and public presenter [IView32.exe] is also included, so that it is not absolutely necessary to have PowerPoint.

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If you already have a licensed copy of the NET '96 CD-ROM, then this special edition is available for \$50 postpaid in the North American Division (extra postage for other countries). If you do not have it, then the CD is available along with a regular NET '96 CD set for US\$200.00 through the Alberta Conference Deaf Ministry Department, 37541 Highway 2, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada T4E 1B1.

Pastor Jeff Jordan, a deaf pastor in the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, has taken this CD-ROM as his base, and in October/November 1999 gave a full "live" 20-lecture series of evangelistic meetings in American Sign Language. This full signed series is now available on ten video cassettes for US\$80.00 plus shipping.

For further information contact: Pastor John Blake, 30 Country Ridge Close, Lacombe, Alberta T4L 2H1; phone: 403.782.4255 or email: <canadiandm@attcanada.net>.

The hi-tech church

Church fund raising is always a big need for every church! Church ministries can use technology to reach donors and other constituents who are not able to leave their homes to attend church. Some may want to use chat rooms to give members an opportunity for online dialogue with the pastoral staff and even special guest speakers.

Some ministries are beginning to use the Internet to build relationships by delivering audio and video streaming capabilities. The Internet is the least expensive way of communication in the current market. To increase the efficiency of their contact with donors and clients, organizations can create Web sites to post online brochures and newsletters, a calendar of events, capital campaign updates, and an immediate way for people to respond to direct-mail letters.—Douglas R. Rose, Grand Prairie, Texas. ■

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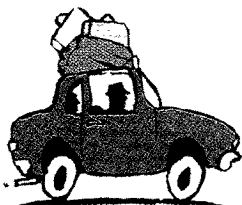
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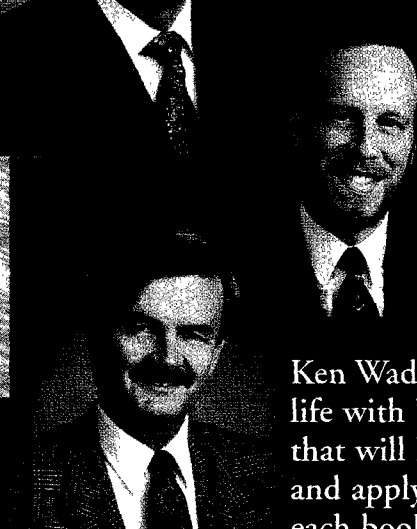
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