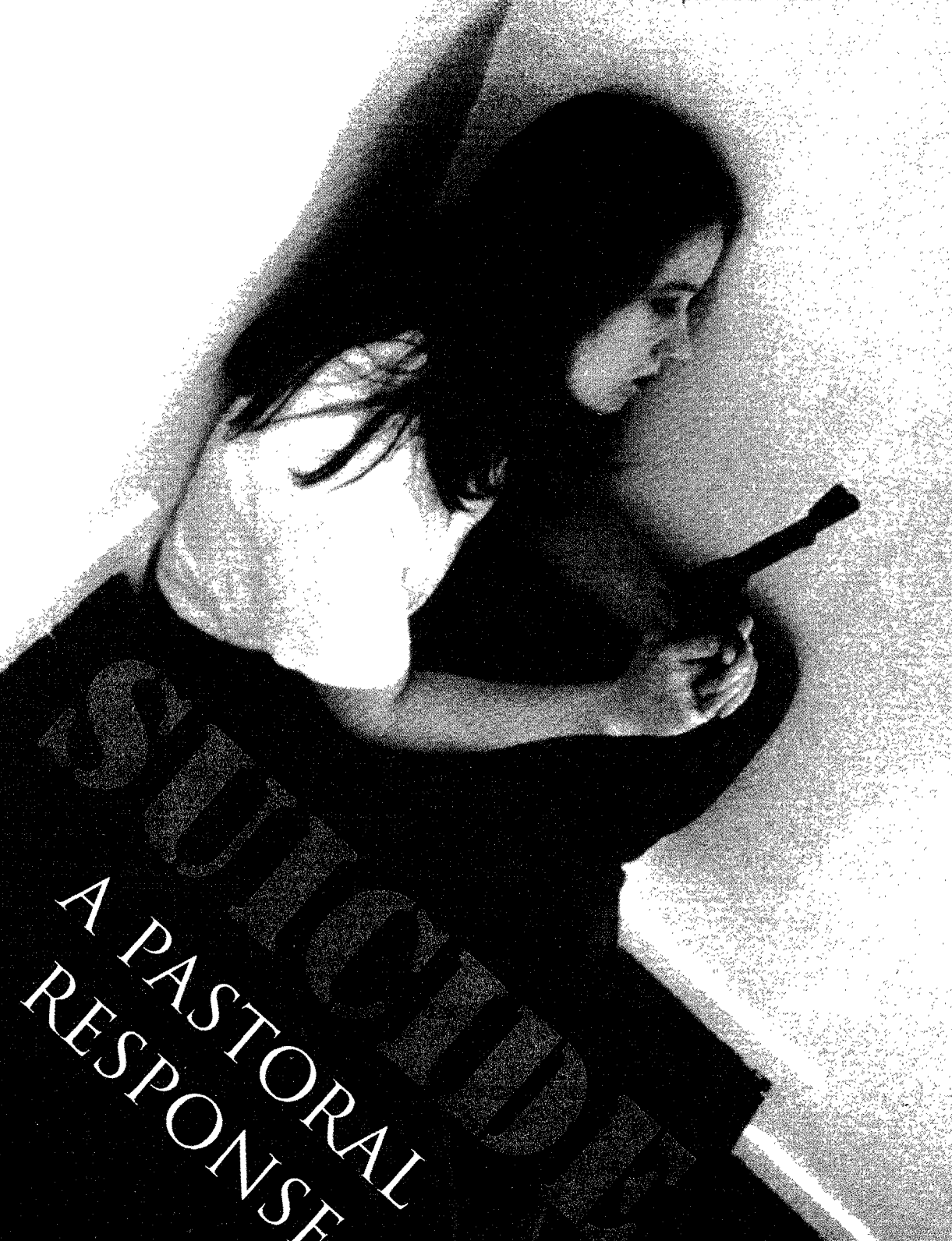
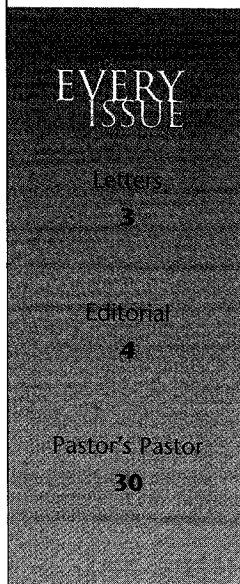


MINISTRY

International Journal for Pastors September 2005



IS SUICIDE
A PASTORAL
RESPONSE



Affirmation and anticipation

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James A. Cress

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MINISTRY

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THE ARTICLE ON FAITH AND SCIENCE LED ME TO THINK THAT THERE WOULD BE A STEP TOWARD RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC AND LITERALIST BIBLICAL VIEWS OF CREATION.

Faith and science

The article on faith and science (March 2005) led me to think that there would be a step toward resolution of the conflict between scientific and literalist biblical views of creation. The article offered no such resolution.

The inspired writer of Genesis did write in a scientific manner, but he addressed the message to people whose view of creation was that of a dome over a flat earth. He was correct in his view of the cosmos, but according to ancient science. The ancient view taught that there were waters above the dome and waters under the earth. There were layers of heavens about the dome. The word for heaven is plural in Genesis 1, in the Noah stories, and also in the New Testament. Textbooks are available with more detailed descriptions of this ancient understanding of the cosmos.

Such was the science of the ancient world. It makes sense to me that the inspired writer accommodated God's message to the ancient world view. I do not think that our belief in a trustworthy Bible is at all diminished when we accept this insight. I believe that today the same writer (or rather the same Holy Spirit) would deliver the divine truth in the context of a modern view of the cosmos.

—John C. Melin, retired Lutheran pastor,
Toms River, New Jersey.

Editorial note: *We are all in a continuing quest when it comes to these things. Please continue to follow upcoming articles wrestling with these issues (see Ron Carter's article on page 12).*

Rehabilitating the fallen pastor

With interest I have followed the articles of Dr. Miroslav Kis (January, March, May, July, September, and November 2004; January and March 2005), regarding pastors and the sin of adultery/abuse. Kis has defended his position biblically. In response to Kis, Mark Carr (June 2005) speaks about rehabilitation of the pastors who have failed in this area.

How does one know when rehabilitation is adequately finished? Is it the completion of coursework? Is it a series of counseling sessions of a prescribed duration? Would jail time be enough rehabilitation?

Does rehabilitation include restitution? Restitution is a biblical practice. Does restitution require the offending pastor to pay back any monetary settlement the church has had to make with the victim? Does restitution pay for the counseling fees of the victim or reimbursement of the tithe dollars used to fund the steps to healing for the victim? Does restitution somehow recover damages for the wounded spouse? How does a guilty pastor restore what

he has taken from the church he was leading? How does he restore to his own wife and children the trust that he has so glibly shattered?

What if the victim is a minor? What does restitution look like to or for someone who will be undeniably injured for the rest of her/his life? What does it look like to her parents?

How does one restore the effectiveness of innocent, hard-working pastors whose ministry is stained by the broad brush of poorly informed public opinion when one of us succumbs to these temptations? There is also a victim for which no restitution is really possible and that is the Gospel itself.

I don't mean to be harsh, and I do make it a practice to offer ongoing support, friendship and even advocacy for my fellow pastors who have made inappropriate choices. However, I have spent too much time in recent years with victims and their families to simply treat this matter as casually as I once did. When a pastor is compromised in this arena, his implicit leadership and integrity are pretty much gone forever and that is just reality. Even those who are restored rarely if ever get out from under the cloud of their past abuses.

—Thomas Lemon, via email.

Editorial note: *Let's try to integrate all of the critical aspects involved in these*
continued on page 15

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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.

Goodbye

WILL EVA



By the time you read this editorial, I will have, a month or more ago, left the editorship of *Ministry*, having returned to pastoral work and my new assignment as associate pastor of the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Maryland, U.S.A. I'm enthusiastically looking forward to working with Senior Pastor Jerry Lutz, the pastoral staff, and of course the wonderful people who make up such a dynamic congregation.

It is coincidental that ending my time at *Ministry* with this September issue marks a tenure of exactly 10 years with the magazine.

I am particularly thankful for the opportunity I have had to work with those around me, and very especially for the two indomitable others in our editorial office, Julia Norcott and Sheila Draper. They have been invaluable under the sometimes daunting circumstances that have naturally come to our editorial staff of three. I also thank each of our reader family for your friendship and loyalty during my editorship. Also, the collegiality I've had in working with Pacific Press and everyone there has been nothing but a pleasure.

Since the news of my resignation has spread, people have been asking why I would choose to leave the magazine to go back to pastoral work. They are, I think, especially mystified by the fact that I am voluntarily leaving a relatively "prestigious" position with "such a wide sphere of influence," to return to the work of an associate minister on the congregational level. In answering this "why" question and in writing this final editorial, I hope I'll be forgiven for mak-

ing my remarks quite honest and a little more personal than usual.

When comparing all of the more "formal" arenas of ministry that flourish in the Church these days, I believe that pastoral-evangelistic ministry is more reflective than many others tend to be of the prototype lived out so compellingly by Jesus and emulated in the life of the New Testament community. Bit by bit I've come to the now defining conviction that for me at least, the further I move away from local pastoral ministry and its essential spirit, and the longer I remain removed from it, the more likely I am to experience a fading of my original, primal call to the kind of overall servant-leadership that is fundamental to what I see to be genuinely effective Christian ministry.

To say it more frontally, when practicing other forms of more "corporate" ministry, I find myself all too susceptible to the siren calls that come from my own desires for prestigious position and the sense of power—much of it a mirage—that is natural to our human hearts. I am certainly not saying that being in pastoral ministry makes one immune to the "position virus" which brings in its train so much that is fraudulent in Christian ministry these days. It seems to me that I am simply more like-

ly to pick up the bug when I do ministry in a "corporate" environment.

For me, being in this milieu (and I must again emphasize that I speak only for myself) has not been helpful to my personal spirituality, and alarmingly, I have found that I have even tended to lose touch with the deep-down fundamentals of my faith and even my humanity.

When this virus strikes, we are initially quite blasé about the reason for the spiritual headaches we suffer, or why our missiological joints have begun to stiffen. Typically speaking, we therefore tend not to take any particular action. But our very inaction is one of the primary symptoms of the presence of the viral infection as it finds a place in our spiritual bloodstream. Our false sense of immunity to such maladies is another.

It is with these kinds of things in mind, and others, that I have chosen, I think under the leading of God, to take the direction I have.

I have to say that my degree of personal and corporate concern escalates further when I observe that things merely strategic and administrative seem to be incrementally eclipsing things prophetic and visionary, and the prophetic voice, so crucial to the life of a spiritual organism, no longer seems able or allowed to meaningfully address our administrative initiatives in the way it was actually designed to.

In other words, even the sensibly restrained prophetic voice among us has, it seems to me, been neglected and devalued as other more shrewd voices are given the floor. In some quarters, perhaps where it's most needed,

the prophetic has come to be perceived as out of place. In such settings, prophetic words tend to be pictured as inappropriate, unwise, irritating, and productive of a group discomfort that no one should have to put up with in an organization as respectable and able-bodied as our own.

So yes, by moving I am seeking to make a statement which I believe is highly important to our here and now: that pastoral ministry, with all its ups and downs, with all its immense challenges and visceral struggles, and especially as it faces an implied devaluation among us, is nevertheless by all means where it's at! It is in pastoral ministry, more than in any other, that the prophetic voice is more likely to be heard, even though we would all confess our great need for a more potent expression of it among us as pastors and evangelists.

And yes, I am blatantly seeking to

encourage those pastors who might be wondering about themselves and their calling and whose hearts and sense of pastoral call may be a bit unsteady by some of the prevailing winds that blow through the Church.

While all this may sound noble, I have to be honest and confess that there are also practical, negative dynamics that have prompted my resignation. But I believe deeply that God has used these dynamics to guide me out of where I was providentially led ten years ago and into what I'll so gladly be doing among the outstanding people of the Spencerville congregation and its surrounding community.

At the recent General Conference Session in St. Louis, my colleague, Nikolaus Satelmajer was re-elected as an Associate in the Ministerial Association and has been appointed editor of *Ministry*. James A. Cress, Ministerial Association Secretary of the General

Conference, will serve as executive editor.

Further, I have to say publicly that it is of great importance to the future of the magazine that an additional editor be added to the magazine's staff. This is something I've shamelessly asked for in the last few years! I sincerely hope that this will have been done by the time you read this. Such an appointment would make the whole editorial enterprise much more viable, especially when it comes to the crucial matter of further internationalizing the magazine. (For a fuller update on these matters, see Jim Cress's exposé, "Affirmation and Anticipation," on page 6.)

As I say goodbye, I pray with a full heart that God will be with Jim and Nik and any others who might come to the magazine. I pray that the continuing influence of *Ministry* will reach more helpfully and inspirationally into the lives and souls of all of us who make up the Magazine family. ■

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Affirmation and anticipation

Following the recent General Conference session, we take opportunity to affirm the ministry of several colleagues who are departing our staff and to welcome others.

For example, this issue of *Ministry* is the final product of the decade-long tenure of the editorial team of Willmore D. Eva and Julia Norcott. Will, who is returning to pastoral ministry as associate pastor of the Spencerville, Maryland church has brought a professionalism to his task which has emphasized both spirituality and scholarship. I express personal appreciation for the excellence with which Will has pursued every undertaking over the 25 years in which I have been privileged to associate with him.



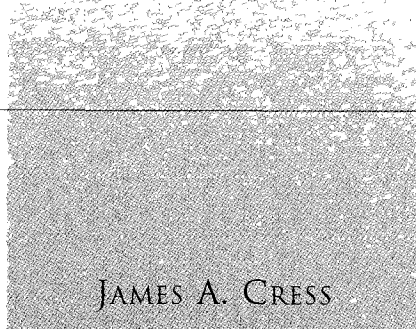
Our readers can expect that Julia Norcott's future pursuits will be accomplished with the same thorough eye for detail and preciseness that has contributed to her management of the magazine. Our staff heartily extends best wishes to both these individuals.



Even as we reflect with appreciation on these past accomplishments, we also look forward with keen anticipation to new editorial leadership under the direction of Nikolaus Satelmajer. Most of our readers already know Nik through his dynamic leadership of Ministry Professional Growth Seminars, a vision for professional development which he pioneered to bring the best continuing educational opportunities to pastors by satellite downlink.



Born in Yugoslavia of German parents, Nik immigrated to the United States as a teenager and has served the denomination, both here and in Canada, as a pastor, church administra-



JAMES A. CRESS

tor, college campus chaplain, scholarly writer, and adjunct professor of practical theology.

Nik's vision for greater internationalization will bring *Ministry* to an ever-widening readership among Adventist ministers as well as pastoral colleagues of many denominations. Watch for greater inclusion of pastors from a global perspective in both planning and production of our journal.

Anthony Kent, who has been elected Associate for continuing education and interaction with clergy of other denominations, comes to this assignment from serving as Ministerial Secretary of the South Pacific Division.



Coupled with his strong evangelistic and nurturing background, Anthony's has the unique capability of contextualizing ministry within the cultural milieu of those he serves. I have watched him interact with and instruct pastors in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Kenya, as well as readily relating to pastors in Australia or North America. He is also known for expanding opportunities to fellow ministers for personal growth and skill development.



We also bid farewell to Joel Sarli, who honored our request to continue his responsibilities through to the GC Session even though he had

retired earlier. Through the years, I have associated with no better personal counselor, warmer friend, or wiser colleague. Joel began his ministry as one of the Brazilian King's Heralds, pastored in Brazil and served as dean of South America's theological seminary, and pastored in Canada and the United States. I appreciate Joel's legacy of developing dynamic resources for training local church elders.

Jonas Arrais, who has previously served in the South American Division's Ministerial Association, has been elected to fill the assignment of Associate for local church elders. Jonas' role also includes publication of our quarterly magazine, *Elder's Digest*. He has already impressed his colleagues with exciting plans which will build on our solid base to expand encouraging, empowering resources for training and equipping local church elders.



Jonas has a strong background in team ministry and will demonstrate, by his leadership as well as through his teaching, the essential meaning of pastoral leaders and lay elders working together for more effective service.

Two of our associates, Peter Prime (Evangelism and Church Growth) and Sharon Cress (Pastoral Spouses and Families), were re-elected to continue their vital functions of nurturing and motivating pastoral excellence and clergy family care.



Our resource production coordinator, Cathy Payne, will continue to develop and deliver practical products.



Please pray for our entire team as we move forward in appreciation for God's leading in the past and anticipation of His blessings for the future. ■

The suicide of a teenager: a pastoral response

Andrew J. Weaver
and John D.
Preston



Andrew J. Weaver, Ph.D., is a United Methodist pastor, a clinical psychologist, and director of research for The HealthCare Chaplaincy, New York City.



John D. Preston, Psy.D., is professor of psychology at Alliant International University in Sacramento, California.

Jacob Butler was 16. Life, so he thought, did not treat him fairly. He did not make the high-school football team. His girlfriend broke up with him. For the most part he felt lonely and left out. One night, just past one o'clock in the morning, he took a loaded pistol, left his home using his father's car, drove around for several hours, drinking beer and calling friends on his cell phone. Then Jacob went to the high-school parking lot, pointed the gun at his head, and pulled the trigger.

Janet and Kevin Butler were in shock and disbelief over the sudden and traumatic death of their only child. It was incomprehensible and horrifying. They were unable to read, watch television, or talk for more than a few minutes before the recollection of their son's death would impinge upon their thoughts.

For weeks, they found themselves looking into Jacob's bedroom, expecting that he had come back during the night. They felt as though they were just going through the motions of their daily lives and none of it could be brought to much sense.

After the funeral they told their pastor that they felt as if they were having a nightmare and that if only they could wake up from it, they would find that nothing had happened.

The process that follows an unexpected and violent loss of a loved one can take years. Sudden death is especially difficult for those who are left behind because there is no warn-

ing, no time to prepare for it. This is especially true in the case of suicide.

Approximately 30,000 people commit suicide each year in the United States. Assuming an average of four survivors in each immediate family, 120,000 new survivors are created annually, or 1.2 million each decade. If extended family members and close friends directly affected by the death are counted, the number of survivors is in the tens of millions. Every faith community contains someone who has been affected in a personal way by suicide.¹

Survivors' common emotions

Although each person's grief experience is unique, there are common emotions among survivors of suicide. The most immediate response is shock, numbness, and a sense of disbelief.

Many people experience dramatic swings from one emotional state to another. Feelings may include depression and anger at the deceased for dying—especially for doing so through suicide. Then there is guilt about what the survivor might have done to prevent the death, along with irritability, anxiety, and extreme sadness.

In their intense grief and shock, some survivors say that they are afraid that they may go insane. Others become suicidal themselves as a result of their deep depression.

Some survivors may experience physical symptoms, such as gastrointestinal upset, lack of energy, sleeplessness, appetite disturbances, and pain in different parts of the body.

Parents, especially mothers, who lose a child to suicide are at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), further complicating the grieving process. Intrusive thoughts, nightmares, reminders of how the child died, and distress at holidays and other family events are the most commonly reported parental symptoms.

In a study of mothers and fathers who lost a child in a violent death, 22 percent of the mothers and 14 percent of the fathers continued to have PTSD two years after the deaths.²

Denial, feelings of shock, guilt, anger, and depression are part and parcel of any grief reaction, but the self-inflicted death of a child greatly intensifies these responses in the experience of the surviving parents. A son or daughter's suicide raises painful questions, doubts, and fears. The knowledge that one's parenting was not enough to save one's child

and the fear that others will judge one to have been an unfit parent may raise intense feelings of failure.

Suicide is different from other deaths in several ways. Surviving parents experience feelings of rejection and abandonment, which separate them from others who mourn the death of a loved one. It is common in the grief process for survivors to search for reasons for the suicide. Survivors attempt to piece together various reasons why a person chose to end her or his life.

Before they can begin to accept the loss, survivors must deal with the reasons for it—and with the gradual recognition that they may never know what happened or why.

Talking about the death with others allows survivors to revise it in ways that make it more tolerable and to impose order on their experience—this is part of the healing process.

Some suicides are associated with bipolar illness, schizophrenia, or psychotic depressions in which the disorder and the suicidal behavior are not the result of conscious intent or willful planning. In these circumstances, suicidal acts can be impulsive acts that occur in response to hallucinations (e.g., voices telling the person that they are worthless and must kill themselves).

These conditions are the result of severe neurochemical dysfunctions and should not be construed as being due to anyone's fault or even seen as the person's actual choice (much in the same way that an epileptic seizure is not a choice, but simply a malfunction in the nervous system).

Warning signs

In many instances, there are warning signs of a person's intention to commit suicide. However, some individuals disguise or code their plans so that even trained professionals miss the clues.

Occasionally there are no signs of suicide potential, and a person's decision becomes a puzzle that cannot be solved. The grip of the "what-ifs" of

suicide can begin to loosen only as a survivor begins to accept the idea that the loved one's choice to kill himself or herself was that person's alone.

The primary reason young people kill themselves has to do with major depression—one of the most pervasive emotional problems of adolescents. Experts estimate that about one in twenty teens has significant depressive symptoms.³ Such estimates are questionable because such depression is generally underreported. Teenage depression is therefore undertreated and dangerous (about 15 percent of young people with an untreated major depression commit suicide).

Two-thirds of adolescents who take their lives use firearms. Individuals who take their lives are primarily trying to get rid of overwhelming emotional pain. At the time of the suicide, they have no hope that the hurt will ever disappear. The desire to eliminate their pain is greater than the will to live; this is by far the predominant motive behind suicides. A major depression can constrict awareness of the feelings of others to the degree that one focuses only on one's own intense inner pain. Those who take their lives seldom realize how much their death will hurt others.

It must, however, be acknowledged that at times suicides do occur as an act of anger directed toward another person (e.g., committed as a way to strike out at another person by way of inducing guilt). When this occurs, the suicide victim may leave a note that clearly reveals their intent. This, of course, creates the highest distress and conflict for the surviving family members.

Combating the stigma

Faith communities can play an important role in combating the stigma associated with suicide. Suicide is not a question of morality but a psychological and medical issue. There is increasing evidence that both depression and suicide have a biological component—an imbalance in brain chemistry that significantly alters

mood. Decreased levels of serotonin repeatedly have been found in the fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord of those who have attempted or committed suicide.⁴

Taking one's life may be understood in terms similar to addiction disorders, which has moved in public understanding from being seen as a moral weakness to being recognized as the medical and psychological problem that it is. A person commits suicide because he or she feels so desperate that this fatal act is seen as the only way to relieve the depression and intense emotional pain.

Unfortunately, suicide is often viewed merely as evidence of personal and familial failure. Society's judgment may be that the family somehow provoked the death. Shame and stigmatization cause some family survivors of suicide to withdraw and isolate themselves. They may have difficulty sharing their feelings because of the fear of experiencing further pain and shame.

Researchers have found that family members who lose someone to suicide are blamed and avoided more often than are the relatives of people who have died under other circumstances. This attitude may reinforce the guilt and self-blame that may already affect suicide survivors, increasing their isolation and their difficulty in sharing their feelings.⁵

Clergy are called upon to play a variety of roles as persons move through the grieving process after suicide. They are often anchors of hope for survivors. Pastors must be supportive, nurturing, and helpful in the creation of rituals to deal with the grief. They also need a realistic and honest approach to the experience of loss as they help guide persons through this painful time.

There are special times when pastors and members of the faith community need to give particular attention to survivors, such as the anniversary of the death and during the major holidays, especially during the first year of mourning. Clergy can

Resources in the United States

- ◆ *American Foundation for Suicide Prevention*; 120 Wall Street, 22nd Floor, New York, NY 10005; (888) 333-2377; www.afsp.org
- ◆ *Compassionate Friends*; P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522; (877) 969-0010; www.compassionatefriends.org
- ◆ *Depression and Bipolar Support Alliances*; 730 North Franklin Street, Suite 501, Chicago, IL 60610; (800) 826-3632; www.dbsalliance.org
- ◆ *Friends for Survival*; P.O. Box 214463, Sacramento, CA 95821; (800) 646-7322; (916) 392-0664; www.friendsforsurvival.org
- ◆ *National Foundation for Depressive Illness*; P.O. Box 2257, New York, NY 10116; (800) 239-1265; www.depression.org
- ◆ *National Mental Health Association (NMHA)*; 2001 N. Beauregard Street, 12th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22311; (800) 969-6642; www.nmha.org
- ◆ *National Suicide Foundation*; 1045 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10028; (800) ASF-4042.
- ◆ *National Suicide Hotline*; (800) SUICIDE (784-2433).
- ◆ *National Youth Crisis Hotline*; (800) 448-4663; *Children's Rights of America*, 500 Sugar Mill Road, Building B, Suite 220, Atlanta, GA 30350; www.1800hithome.com
- ◆ *Samaritans of Boston*; 654 Beacon Street, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02215; (617) 536-2460; www.samaritansofboston.org
- ◆ *Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (SAVE)*; 9001 E. Bloomington Freeway, Suite 150, Minneapolis, MN 55420; (952) 946-7998; www.save.org
- ◆ *Suicide Information and Education Centre (SIEC) and Suicide Prevention Training Program*; Suite 320, 1202 Centre Street SE, Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2G 5A5; (403) 245-3900; www.suicideinfo.ca
- ◆ *Survivors Helping Survivors*; St. Luke's Medical Center, 2900 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53215; (414) 257-7222
- ◆ *Yellow Ribbon Suicide Prevention Program*; P.O. Box 644, Westminster, CO 80036-0644; (303) 429-3530; www.yellowribbon.org

Helpful Books

- ◆ Iris Bolton and Curtis Mitchell, *My Son . . . My Son: A Guide to Healing After Death, Loss, or Suicide* (Atlanta: Bolton Press, 1994).
- ◆ Trudy Carlson, *Suicide Survivor's Handbook: A Guide for the Bereaved and Those Who Wish to Help Them* (Minneapolis: Benline Press, 1995).
- ◆ David C. Clark, *Clergy Response to Suicidal Persons and Their Family Members* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1993).
- ◆ Carla Fine, *No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).
- ◆ Barbara D. Ingersoll and Sam Goldstein, *Lonely, Sad and Angry: A Parent's Guide to Depression in Children and Adolescents* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).
- ◆ Gerald D. Oster and Sarah S. Montgomery, *Helping Your Depressed Teenager: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995).
- ◆ Andrew Weaver, Laura Flannelly, and John Preston, *Counseling Survivors of Traumatic Events: A Handbook for Pastors and Other Helping Professionals* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003).
- ◆ Adina Wrobleksi, *Suicide Survivors: A Guide for Those Left Behind* (Minneapolis: Afterwords, 1994).

also invite bereaved parents to get together from time to time simply to talk and share feelings. Pastors can mobilize other caring people to surround survivors with supportive, loving relationships. Additionally, clergy can encourage bereaved parents to participate in grief support groups.⁶

Pastors, church leaders, and others can educate a congregation by providing factual information about teen depression and other mental health issues. There is considerable societal bias against those with mental illness, which is one of the reasons adults and young people are reluctant to admit to being in distress or to seek help. Educating the faith community about adolescent depression can decrease bias and increase advocacy

for mental health services for teens.⁷

It must be emphasized, however, that some of those who take their lives have been suffering from serious mental illness for a number of years. In a real sense, the factors over time that lead to a person taking their own life have been set in motion long before the suicide.

Preventing someone who has suffered for a long time from serious mental illness (e.g., major depression) can be like trying to stop a runaway train hurtling down a mountain. As the train reaches the bottom, it races at high speed, making the odds of stopping the tragedy very slim.

Many therapists and clergy encounter suicidal people who have been in deep anguish for years. At

times, despite the best efforts of family, friends, pastors, and mental health workers, such individuals do kill themselves. ■

1 *National Strategy for Suicide Prevention (NSSP), Summary 2001*, www.mentalhealth.org/9/05/01.

2 S. A. Murphy, T. Braun, L. Tillery, K. C. Cain, L. C. Johnson, and R. D. Beaton, "PTSD Among Bereaved Parents Following the Violent Deaths of Their 12- to 28-Year-Old Children: A Longitudinal Prospective Analysis," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 12, no. 2 (1999): 273-291.

3 W. M. Reynolds, "Depression," in *Handbook of Adolescent Psychopathology*, V. B. Van Hasselt and M. Hersen, eds., (New York: Lexington Books, 1995), 297-348.

4 J. Fawcett, and K. A. Busch, "The Psychobiology of Suicide," *Clinical Neuroscience* 1 (1993): 101.

5 D. Ness, and C. Pfeffer, "Sequelae of Bereavement Resulting From Suicide," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 147, no. 3 (1990): 279-285.

6 D. C. Clark, *Clergy Response to Suicidal Persons and Their Family Members* (Chicago: Exploration Press, 1993).

7 D. A. Brent, K. Poling, B. McKain, and M. Baugher, "A Psychoeducational Program for Families of Affectively Ill Children and Adolescents," *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 32 (1993): 770-774.

Suicide affects us all

Marty Thurber



Marty Thurber is pastor of the Fargo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Fargo, North Dakota

Most of my friends are alive today, but one is not—he killed himself. I wish I'd seen it coming. I missed it. I know I'm not trained to spot suicidal intentions. I'm not at fault for 100 reasons. I know all these things and believe them. I don't feel guilty; I do feel sad.

My friend was a pastor. He was full of passion, enthusiasm, and drive, and he was results oriented. We used to talk about our churches to try and make them better. We talked over our problems, what we might try to do to change things. We would complain about the things we thought were wrong but could not change.

One day, while we were standing in front of his church, he pulled a pistol out of his leather briefcase and handed it to me. With my military background, a pistol in my hands was not an unusual thing. I held it, admired it, and aimed it with the thought of returning it to the bag after a small performance designed to impress him that I knew how to handle a gun.

Maybe he let me see it because he thought I'd be impressed or not too shocked at a pastor with a gun. The truth is, however, that I was shocked but didn't say so. Perhaps he wanted to make a statement or even drop a hint about his intentions. I don't really know why he showed me the gun. But as far as I know, the same gun I held that day he later

used to end his life, and if I'd known his final purpose, I'd have taken his gun from him that day.

Could he have found another way to end his life? I'm sure he could have. Could we have found a way to prevent this tragedy? I don't know. We might have. What I do know is that from now on I will do all I can to prevent this tragedy from happening again.

I read a statistic recently. Someone dies from suicide every 17 minutes. About three people an hour. Put faces with those numbers and that's a lot of pain.

Patterns

The important thing is that had I known, I could have taken action. As I look back at the moments we had together, I see some things that happened as a pattern.

A few days before his death, we hung out together at meetings we were attending. They were sponsored by our church headquarters. They were no more unusual or different from any we had been to before. But he was different; he was nostalgic, pensive, pining for better things. He told me about trouble at home with his wife and children. He loved them but didn't see how things were going to work out.

The hopeless feelings he had about his family seemed to spill over into the other areas of his life, especially his work as a pastor. His discouragement with his church was even greater. I didn't know what to say, much less what exactly to do. I listened; I can listen well, at least to the words. But even though I listened, I still didn't hear suicide in his words.

We went to lunch together at a favorite Mexican buffet. He had been there many times before, and he reminisced about the numerous times he had been there with the other pastors and church leaders. He seemed to be glad we were there together, and I enjoyed listening to his stories.

After lunch we went over to the house of one his old friends. I had never met him, but my friend had told me about him. They talked about old times, the way things used to be. The friend was an artist of sorts. His home intrigued me. It seemed to be a cross between a cabin and a cow pasture! It had wide open spaces and narrow spaces; you could feel the up and down of it all, the closeness and the distance all at the same time. I felt as if we were in a refuge, a hideaway. As I look back on that visit, I think we went there so my friend

could say goodbye; one friend to another, saying thanks, saying goodbye. It was safe for my friend in that place. It could be the last place he felt like the person he wanted to be.

As they reminisced, looking in the rearview mirrors of their memories, none of us looked through the front window to see what was, in fact, coming up. In a few days, my friend would be dead. He went home, apparently more depressed, more certain about his lack of a future, and there he took up the gun designed to kill, and killed himself.

I didn't know he could do that. I was stunned. I felt alone. I lost my composure and cried for a while. I racked my brain for the signs. I fought off the fear that I had failed him. I played the week over like a videotape in my head.

What would I do differently today? I'm not sure. I have some ideas, some things I would look for and ask about. Though I'm a pastor, I'm no expert on suicide. I don't want to recommend anything that is packaged as a complete guide to helping someone with suicidal thoughts or tendencies. Just the same, here are some things I would do:

I would not be afraid to ask someone about their future. What are their dreams? Their hopes and plans? A person who is drifting, aimless, and hopeless would catch my attention. If they were living in the past, looking for the good back then and seeing little good now or in the future, my antenna would send me signals of significance.

I would start thinking about how they

| | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| Warning Signs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Depression ◆ Substance abuse ◆ Previous suicide attempts or plans ◆ Anything that can lead to loss of identity or hope | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Family history of suicide ◆ Family troubles ◆ Severe illness |
| | <p>◆ "Preventing Adolescent Suicide: The Role of the School," in <i>Journal of Adventist Education</i>, Oct/Nov 2000. There is a more detailed list of warning signs there. <http://www.ssd.org/Education/jae/articles/jae200063012205.pdf></p> <p>◆ "The Bible and Suicide," an article by Angel Manuel Rodriguez giving some biblical background to the tragedy of suicide. <http://www.adventistreview.org/2004-1511/story4.html></p> | |
| Books | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ John Hewett, <i>After Suicide</i> (Christian Care Books, 1980). ◆ Earl Grollman, <i>Suicide: Prevention, Intervention, Postvention</i> (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988). | |

were going to cope or get through their depression. If they had no plans, no thoughts, no way of getting through, no friends, no help, I would start asking about their plans perhaps to get away, to gain perspective, to recharge.

When I realized they had no place set aside for such reorientation, *I'd start searching with them for their solution*, an escape plan that wouldn't end in suicide. I think most people at this stage have thought about their suicide and have some plan to go through with it.

I suspect that at some time in everyone's life, they have thoughts of leaving this world, but most of the time we don't dwell on these things too long. We don't make plans to carry it out.

In my friend's case, if I could do it over again, I'd ask him about what he

was actually going to do and how he was going to get through. If he could not convince me that he had some hope, I'd have switched gears and asked the tough questions. I'd have asked him about his despondency and his thoughts of ending it all.

At least I believe I'd have done something like that. Since that day, I listen much more closely; my radar is almost always on now.

I believe it's my job to help people hear the voice of God. God's voice is hope. Hope when all is lost. Hope when all is dark. Hope when all is fear. For "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out" (John 1:5, TEV).

I will remember that next time a friend shows me a weapon and talks about his past. Hopefully, God's voice will be heard. ■

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Should Adventists consider evolution?

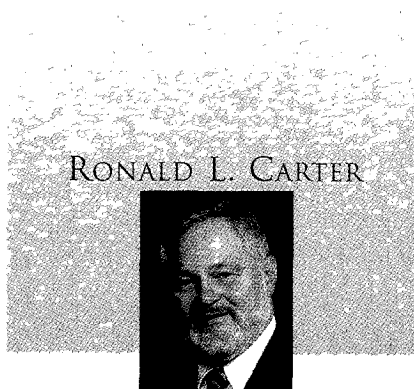
Editorial note: This is the fourth in an extended series of Ministry articles. They are presented in no particular order. These articles were first presented as papers at the Seventh-day Adventist Faith and Science Conferences of 2001 through 2004. This article has been adapted for Ministry and edited with the Ministry reader family in mind.

No scientific theory has changed human thinking more than Darwin's theory of evolution. For some, evolution provides the primary organizing principle of life, its origin, and the mechanisms for complexity. For others, evolution is the greatest threat to belief in God, causing legions of believers to question or lose faith in Scripture. Pastors too frequently hear individuals say they can no longer believe in biblical creation or a universal flood because of the theories of contemporary science. Thus, evolutionistic thinking is seen by many as an enemy to Christian faith that should not be considered by the believing community.

Our witness: thoughtful and accurate

How should Seventh-day Adventists consider the claims of evolution? A thoughtful study of evolution by the church seems necessary for two reasons.

First, Adventists believe that careful study of both nature and Scripture can lead one to God. Imbedded in the science of evolution are realities that appeal to reason and that are compatible with and can provide insights into God's interaction with His creation (e.g., God's grace in providing mechanisms for survival in a changing ecology through time; processes that are consistent with Scripture and the *great controversy* motif). The proper interaction of faith and reason is central to a sustainable commitment to God. We cannot



accept or reject views regarding science or faith ignorantly or apathetically.

Second, it is our responsibility to give an account of our faith to the world, and we will be benefitted by developing an appropriate, reasonable, and correct apologetic of our beliefs. For meaningful dialogue among our members and for a positive influence in the world, we must have an accurate, mature understanding of the theories of modern science, its rules and methods, whether we agree with them or not. We must be able to use the language of science credibly and properly.

A problem: evolution has many meanings

In the study of evolution it is particularly difficult to communicate precisely because the key terms describing and qualifying evolution are numerous and changing, with unique meanings within opposing schools of thought or between scientific subspecialties.

Evolutionistic thinking may be seen to consist of four related and overlapping notions: process, mechanism, theory, and philosophy.

Evolution as process. Evolution as process simply means inherited (genetic) change within populations over time (generations). Few Adventists reject the idea that humankind has changed since creation. Since the Fall these changes have continued, being passed on genet-

ically. They have been and continue to be influenced by the ever-changing environment. Acceptance of such post-creation change is essentially an acceptance (if partial) of the process of evolution but need not be attached to any one theory of evolution.

Evolution as mechanism. Evolution as mechanism involves five principles: (1) Life begets life; living organisms produce offspring that are very similar to their parents. (2) Even though descendants resemble their parents, extensive variation, primarily due to new mutations and genetic recombination, exists among offspring. These variations are the raw material of evolutionary change. (3) Organisms have the potential to reproduce exponentially, yet in nature population size tends to be in balance (most exceptions are anthropogenic). (4) Due to resource limitations, disease, competition, and stochastic factors, not all organisms survive. (5) Those animals that, on average, produce a greater number of descendants in future populations are described as the most "fit."

These five observations form the core of Darwin's theory of evolution, or differential survival due to natural selection. Mechanisms of evolutionary success (fitness) are measured by the number of viable offspring produced in succeeding generations. Fit or adapted organisms are not necessarily those that meet some human standard of performance or perfection. The processes and mechanisms of evolution are descriptive and need not be seen as synonymous with a particular theory or philosophy, yet they are cornerstones in the theory of organic evolution.

Evolution as theory. Scientific theory is a well-substantiated explanation of some aspects of the natural world—an organized system of accepted knowledge that applies in a variety of circumstances to explain a specific set of

phenomena. The theory of evolution applies insights and observations from process and mechanism to the past (for example, the fossil record) and attempts to reconstruct the best (most parsimonious and naturalistic) account of the history of life.

Due to the inherent limitations in the more history-oriented natural sciences (such as absence of repeatability, incompleteness of the fossil record, and lack of direct observation for most events), all theories of evolution through time will remain primarily inferential and speculative. However, these theories often suggest logical ways to interpret the data and suggest testable experiments on plausible processes and mechanisms that may have happened in the past.

While there are several competing theories of biological evolution, neo-Darwinian theory is the best known and emphasizes small genetic changes that over time add up to species diversity originating from a single tree of life (gradualism). Other theories of evolution emphasize different elements (such as polyphyletic vs. monophyletic origins, or earth origins vs. panspermia), and still others emphasize different mechanisms (gradual vs. punctuated; or stochastic, or selection driven, or directed evolution).

Evolution as philosophy. Evolution as philosophy plays a central role in philosophical naturalism. Naturalism rejects any explanations inaccessible to the methods of science and must be explicable by known material mechanisms in the universe. It rejects all notions of God or divine purpose. Some believe that philosophical naturalism is becoming the religion of science.¹

A basic question facing the church is How can we best communicate to the world that we reject evolution as philosophy, along with the many theories of organic evolution, while at the same time we remain open to the processes and mechanisms of evolution that are demonstrable?

Many have attempted to use the terms *micro* and *macro* to signal these distinctions, yet these terms are problematic.

Problematic terms: micro and macro

Creationists often use the term *microevolution* in a nontechnical sense to refer to any level of biological change that is deemed biblically safe or acceptable. The term *macroevolution* is then used to describe levels of evolution that seem unacceptable to our belief (i.e., deep taxonomic change—reptiles to mammals or production of new features like feathers).

Science defines *microevolution* as genetic (allelic) change within populations, or beneath the level of the species, and does not include the formation of new species. Species are groups of organisms that naturally interbreed or are defined by having all their members distinguishable (diagnostic features) from all members of another species.

Macroevolution is an ambiguous term. Its many definitions fall into two categories: those that emphasize taxonomic quantity (any change producing new species) and those that focus on the quality of change (new adaptive strategies, new structures, new body plans).

Biologists who study evolution at or above the species level view the production of new species (speciation or cladogenesis) to be examples of macroevolution. Paleontologists working with hard tissues (bones rather than genes) and often incomplete fossil records tend to look at evolution more in terms of an overview of the history of life. Their definitions of macroevolution emphasize major changes in form or structure (*bauplan*) and see macroevolution dealing only with largescale morphological changes, requiring long periods of time and producing modifications that lead eventually to the formation of higher taxonomic groups.

Due to the ambiguity of the terms, some creationists recommend that we not use the word *macroevolution* even though its meaning includes speciation, which they accept as demonstrable and

allowed within a literal reading of the Bible.

At this point, there is a significant dilemma for the church. When we communicate with students in the biological sciences the acceptance of only microevolution (change below the species level) and at the same time reject macroevolution, we give the impression, implicitly, that we as a church accept the concept of "fixity of species," and this stance has drawn the most intense antagonism against creationists.

The label of "fixity of species" is often automatically given to short-age creationists and characterizes them as being scientifically illiterate. Since Adventism has long accepted speciation, should we allow ourselves to be misunderstood in one area merely so that we are not misunderstood in another area?

Some suggest that neither *micro* nor *macro* should be used and that we should not even use the word *evolution* in any favorable light. Others have found the term *macroevolution* apologetically beneficial because it allows them to shed the claims of fixity of species and to be technically accurate within some schools of thought, but, if that is done, it is incumbent on them to be most cautious and stipulate which definition of *macroevolution* is being used.

Strengths of evolution

If we are to consider the theory of evolution and its various meanings, we should be willing to understand its claims and strengths. The following list presents what I believe to be evolution's strongest appeal.

- ♦ Evolution as science appeals to reason and claims to be a self-correcting, honest, open, and nonauthoritarian approach to pragmatic truth.

- ♦ Evolution makes useful predictions that help us to understand patterns of diversity in nature.

- ♦ Mechanisms of microevolution are observable and measurable.

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♦ Patterns of speciation appear to follow patterns along natural corridors such as land bridges, and island dispersal patterns through valley pathways and around ecological barriers.

♦ Living and ancient organisms are found distributed geographically close to their proposed fossil ancestors, regardless of their habitat or specific adaptations. Examples: marsupials (with one exception) inhabit only Australia while placental mammals are virtually absent in Australia.

♦ Evolution accounts for fossil transitional forms: a range of transitional fossil forms linking dinosaurs (reptiles) and birds, and reptiles to mammals. Fossil whales exist that have legs (some appear to have had the ability to move about on the land, others did not), thus showing a macroevolutionary connection between land mammals and whales.

♦ Vestigial forms (pythons, legless snakes, have vestigial pelvises beneath their skin, and some lizards have rudimentary, nonfunctional legs underneath their skin).

♦ Evidence from molecular sequence comparisons using both genes known to be under selection and sequences from nonfunctional DNA sequences (pseudogenes, endogenous retroviral genes, and mobile genetic elements) when analyzed

to show patterns of common descent (cladistics) show patterns of copy errors that are consistent with phylogeny rather than ecology or design.

Weaknesses in theory of evolution

As a trained biologist, I respect the science of evolution but find the following weaknesses of the theory to be substantial.

♦ Much of the logical strength of evolutionary theory comes only after one accepts its primary *a priori* assumption that all organisms are related by descent and that there is only one "true" tree of life starting with a single (or perhaps a few) ancestor type. These assumptions limit the possible scenarios that will be seriously proposed.

♦ Ancient evolutionary relationships are historical and, therefore, can never be conclusively confirmed or refuted by scientific methods.

♦ Much of macroevolution (macro in the paleontological sense) is based on incomplete data (missing or partial fossils and the absence of soft tissue for DNA analysis).

♦ Many evolutionary explanations are difficult to test because they are prone to the so called "just so stories" that assume that what is in nature must

be adaptive now or in some previous setting.² In many ways evolutionary theory has become too comprehensive, providing contingency explanations for nearly any possible biological outcome and, therefore, irrefutable.

♦ Fossil transitions between many of the putative primary branches in the tree of life are not consistent among data sets (morphology often contradicts molecular sequences, and sequence data from one gene often tells a different evolutionary scenario from a different gene in the same organism).

♦ Evolutionary theories of the origin of life (abiogenesis) are poorly supported by empirical scientific data.

♦ The theory of natural selection does not explain well the evolution of irreducibly complex structures.

♦ Theories of evolution are not independent of human politics and bias.

♦ The theory of evolution has become dogma and a religion for many of its proponents.

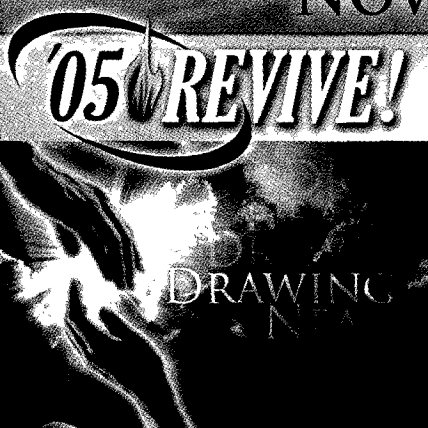
♦ Current evolutionary theories (i.e., sociobiology) claim to be capable of answering not only the how questions but the why questions. Philosophically speaking, this claim is an especially weak position when it automatically excludes possible answers simply because they are outside the possibility of scrutiny by the scientific method.

Conclusions

Should Seventh-day Adventists consider evolution? To sustain a faith-based relationship with God, I believe that we must seriously and thoughtfully consider all challenges to our beliefs. When doing so, however, we should not be intimidated by or easily swayed by human philosophies or by the claims of science, for knowledge is limited by human reason, politics, and the requirements of the scientific method.

We must be humble about discoveries in science as well as those in theology. We must realize that we don't understand many things and must, therefore, be open to all truth. While being open to things revealed through science and the mind, we must be unambiguous about our commitment


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and reliance on faith in the Bible and the leading of the Spirit. Some things will always require commitment without having all the answers, whether, by nature, they are scientific or spiritual. Given the ambiguity of the word *evolution*, it is particularly important that we be clear about our definitions.

In addition, we should be charitable to others as we discuss these issues. We can't assume that someone who speaks in support of evolution necessarily supports atheism or theistic evolution.

Students who have become knowledgeable about evolutionary processes and mechanisms can be disappointed when parents and pastors reject any form of evolution just because of what the word could mean without considering the way they are attempting to use it. We may genuinely help the conversation by using terms correctly and, most importantly, recognizing that much of what is being described as evolution may in fact be about processes and mechanisms that can be accepted within a biblical postcreation model.

How we treat each other is often more important than how we treat ideas. Too often we claim that evolutionists are unreasonable or are primarily motivated by a desire to reject God. Evolutionary theories require much faith in naturalism, but they are also not unreasonable. They should be treated professionally for what they are while remembering that just because something is reasonable, it does not necessarily mean that it is correct.

As creationists we must avoid making dogmatic statements or doing apologetics by vibrato.

Should the church consider evolution? I hope so. Shall we adopt it? I hope not; not as philosophy nor as a theory of origins. ■

Ronald L. Carter, Ph.D., is dean of the school of science and technology, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

Letters continued from page 3

struggles. If we were expected simply to pay back all we owed as a result of any of our failures and sins, when would enough be enough?

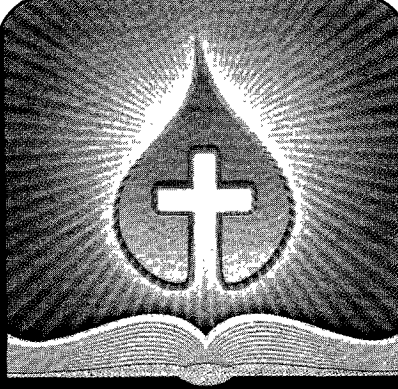
On church growth

We appreciate the fine research done by Monte Sahlin (March 2005) and his partners on church growth. But the article's statistics are facts, not conclusions. We have to use our judgment and common sense to draw conclusions from statistical facts. It seems to me that some of the conclusions reached in the report of the study might be erroneous. Just two examples: Sahlin points out that fast growing churches have more than one church service each Sabbath, whereas stable or declining churches have only one. Does this indicate as seems to be implied that having two church services causes growth? Isn't it more logical to conclude that it is the growth that causes the need for multiple services? He also suggests that fast growing churches find funds for hiring more church staff. Does adding more staff cause church growth or does the growth lead to more funds and the need for more staff?

And just one minor quibble. The author uses the word "reveal" in the title of the article and several times again in the text. Many years ago when I was writing a doctoral thesis at a secular university, I used that term. My mentor/major professor objected to my using it. Said he, "Revelations come from God through His prophets; I don't think you are either one." Of course he won the point.

—Charles H. Tidwell, Sr., Collegedale, Tennessee.

Correction: *The biographical sketch accompanying Stan Patterson's article "Pastoral Ministry: Management or Spiritual Leadership" (July/August 2005) mistakenly proclaimed Stan as possessing a Ph.D. degree. While Stan is well on the way, he does not yet have this degree. The editorial office regrets having jumped the gun!* ■



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Praying With Your Spouse

Here are some ideas for beginning a more effective prayer life with your spouse.

Be willing to collaborate. You may be unaccustomed to the type of prayer your spouse suggests. Try not to expect conformity only to your idea of how prayer time will be. Instead, approach your venture as an exploration of the richness each of you can contribute.

Be sensitive to each other. No matter how compatible you are in other areas of your marriage, if sharing prayer is new territory, you will need to communicate your expectations with each other. If your spouse feels inadequate, ask, "How's it going?" and ask the Holy Spirit to direct you into a relationship that is comfortable for both.

Don't judge your prayer time. Be careful not to compare your experience with rapturous prayers you have heard, read about, or imagined. Each day that you honor God as a couple, in whatever form best suits your personality, is a successful prayer time. The process is more important than the product!

Renew your commitment. When you miss a prayer time together, simply begin again. Be sure you don't keep a scorecard of missed sessions which turn into "spouse accusations."

Relax. We neither "arrive" nor become "experts." Jesus asks us simply to come as children. While it can be difficult to be vulnerable, when you make the choice to pray together, you will see your relationship deepen with God and with each other.

—Annette Eckart, *Marriage Partnership*, Summer 2003, pg. 15

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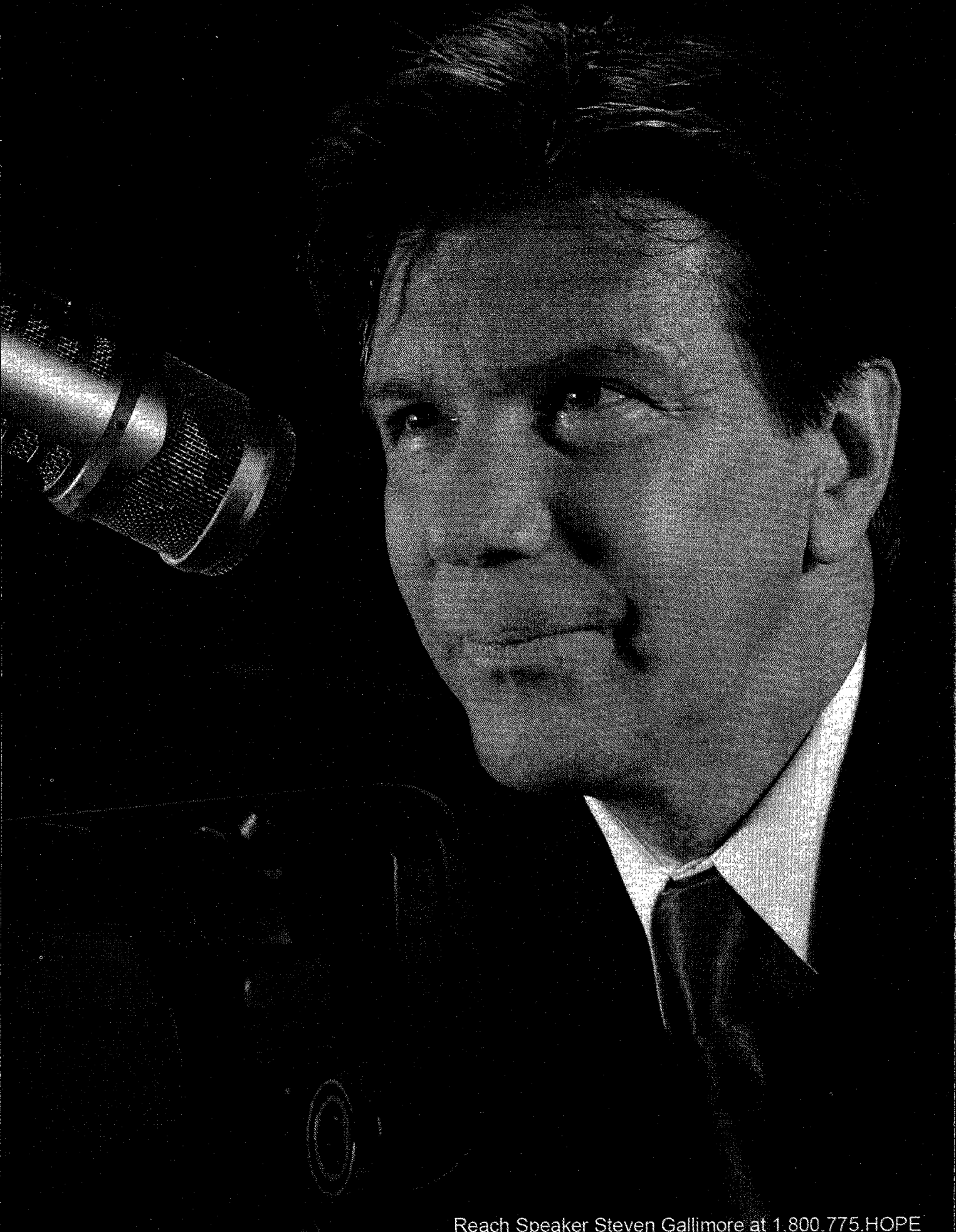
1 M. Ruse, "Is Evolution a Secular Religion?" *Science* 299 (2003): 1523, 1524.

2 ———, *Mystery of Mysteries: Is Evolution a Social Construction?* (Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

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Preparing the funeral

Drexel C. Rankin



Drexel C. Rankin, D.Min., is a minister in the Disciples of Christ Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

The death of a loved one rips away the facades of life and causes deep pain within the souls of those who remain. I see and feel relationships acutely when I am in the presence of death. It is both fearsome and wonderful.

A happy marriage, a solid bank account, and a sense of control over life offer some sense of stability in life. But such assets also set the stage for a particularly difficult adjustment to the death of a spouse or other loved one.

It is fearsome to sit with a family whose child has died tragically before reaching the prime of life. It is fearsome to minister to a husband whose young wife has died of cancer and left him with two small children—especially when he has a marginal relationship with the church and little more than a passing acquaintance with God. It is fearsome to bring God's comfort to those who suffer.

Yet, it is also wonderful to bring God's comfort in times of loss. Part of what I attempt to do with the people I minister to in these hours is to glorify God, bring assurance of the presence of God, speak the Word of God, and confirm Christ's promises of abundant life into the lives of those who mourn.

Although our faith and confidence in the gospel of the resurrection sustains us, there is a deep sense of emptiness when those whom we love pass away. Even when comforted by deep faith, there is still a hollow place in life

when a loved one is gone.

Sometimes funeral arrangements are made easily. At other times, they are quite difficult. Two different processes could help the family and the minister in those preparations.

Confidential file

Most ministers already will have confidential files of information about parishioners. When I complete a call on a church member, I immediately write data about that person in my personal, confidential log book: family information, interests and hobbies, interesting anecdotes about the person's life, and beliefs that the person has expressed during my call. Doing this takes a bit of time following the visit, but it is invaluable for future calls or for funerals.

Most ministers are computer literate in the twenty-first century. Storing such information on the computer with a confidential password to retrieve data is a far better way than having it in a log book that might become accessible to others.

I note the date of my pastoral call in my personal copy of the church directory. When I make a future call on this person, I look in the directory and find the dates of previous calls and review the information in my log book prior to my visit.

I prepare the funeral in the same manner. By looking back in my calling log or accessing information on the computer, I am able to retrieve a great deal of information that I may have forgotten over a period of several years.

Another version of the confidential record is a questionnaire completed by an individual. This tool could also be valuable to the minister and family at the time of death. A confidential file in the church office containing certain basic information regarding the person, his or her desires at the time of death, and requests regarding his or her own funeral or memorial service would help the family in making difficult decisions. This information could also be given to family members. Either way, it benefits the officiating pastor in funeral preparation. This record could contain:

- ◆ the name, address, and phone number of the nearest relative
- ◆ member's occupation, place(s) of employment and years employed at each
- ◆ organizations to which he/she belongs(ed)

- ◆ choice of funeral a home
- ◆ whether the funeral will be held at the funeral home or at the church
- ◆ any funeral pre-arrangements
- ◆ is the cemetery preferred; has a lot been purchased?
- ◆ burial, cremation, or donation of organs
- ◆ open or closed casket, if burial
- ◆ location of the will
- ◆ executor of estate
- ◆ safety deposit box location
- ◆ memorial gifts or flowers
- ◆ designation of memorial gifts (church or favorite charity)
- ◆ preferences of hymns or scriptures to be used in the service
- ◆ other specific requests

Gathering such information should provide for the wishes of the deceased, rather than forcing family or friends to make those difficult decisions at the time of death.

When my mother passed away several years ago, she had most of her funeral arrangements finalized and had an insurance policy that covered the costs of the funeral. The only decision I had to make was the rental of a limousine for the transportation of family members.

Prearrangements by an individual are very helpful to family members and to ministers. They save precious time and energy, especially if there are several children who, otherwise, might be conflicted about decisions.

The family interview

Although I may have sufficient personal information about the deceased, I attempt to have a personal interview with the family in the time immediately following first viewing and preceding the arrival of visiting friends at the funeral home. One half hour is usually the minimum amount of time needed for this period of remembering.

I inform the family on the previous day that I will want to spend some time talking about their loved one, asking them to recall any anecdotes, beloved poems or songs, or other

remembrances of the deceased when I meet with them on the day of visitation. They are, then, able to consider those questions and give them some forethought over a 24-hour period.

This brief interview with family helps me to understand the things that are most important to the family at the time of the funeral. This is in keeping with my belief that the funeral service is for the living, not the deceased.

This process also becomes a catharsis for the family and helps them move through their grief by remembering. As they sit and talk with me, more and more stories pour forth as a son's tale leads to the recollection of another incident by a daughter. The grief is temporarily relieved as they tell of their precious memories.

One letter of thanks that I received following a recent funeral indicates the appreciation that families have for this time of remembering.

"Thank you for suggesting the remembering session. It meant a lot to us. Your comments at the service were uplifting and positive. After several years of moving through the effects of what Alzheimer's disease does to an entire family, it was good to close Mother's life in that manner."

Most times, I will share these stories and certain key words describing the deceased near the beginning of the funeral message. It is a time for relating turning points, struggles, joys, and heartbreaks that I have learned from listening to the family. This is not pretense or dishonesty. It is simply a time to remember and relate the life that has passed from us. Most people appreciate candor and humanness, especially at times like this.

When this is a life that God has impacted, these stories and words glorify God and illustrate His presence in

one's life. This is different from "sermonizing" or pressuring people into an altar call at a funeral service; it is storytelling at its best, truth that is translated into a person's life.

Glorifying God

I understand that the funeral service, like any service of worship, should focus upon God and glorify Him. Could a minister actually forget this important aspect of the funeral service? Yes, it is quite possible merely to make a secular event of this service in which an obituary is read and a few memories recalled.

If the person has been a strong Christian, it is most appropriate to hold the service in the church sanctuary. In that setting, we sing hymns together. Often, a solo is sung or the choir provides a special anthem.

At some point in the service, it is necessary to speak a word for the Lord—to tell of God's presence and read words of God's comfort from the Scriptures. It is an opportunity to speak of God's provisions beyond death, to assure listeners of God's great love that always seeks us.

Sharing the good news of an always-seeking Shepherd who brings the lost home is part of glorifying God. When we have done all we can, we can trust that our loved one is cared for in God's compassion. "Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ" becomes the focal point and the conclusion of the message.

With this glorious message and from the church setting, we then commend the person to God's keeping, acknowledging that God's love in Christ now provides "a new home, not made with hands that is eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1, author's translation). ■

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Sharing the good news with the world:

an interview with Luis Palau

Derek J. Morris
and Luis Palau



Luis Palau is an internationally known Christian evangelist, speaker, and author from Portland, Oregon.



Derek Morris, D.Min., is senior pastor of the Forest Lake Academy Church in Altamonte Springs, Florida.

Derek Morris: Where did you discover your passion for sharing the good news with the world?

Luis Palau: It goes back to my childhood. I spent the first years of my life in Buenos Aires, Argentina.² Even as a child, I remember going to Sunday School and church. I memorized Scriptures, sang the songs, prayed the prayers. I remember singing many hymns in our church, which appealed to the lost and also called us as Christians to go and preach the good news. The preaching at our little church of 120 members was so biblical, so passionate. The preachers would tell stories about people dying without Christ.

I remember one illustration about the sinking of the *Titanic*. When the ship was sinking, some people were singing hymns and others went down screaming, not knowing the Lord. Those sermons, those dramatic stories, made an impact on me. I was 12 years old when I made a formal commitment to Jesus Christ.

My earliest memories of my parents are of my dad standing on a street corner giving his testimony and my mother playing a harmonium. My parents taught me by example that a Christian goes out and preaches the gospel. When I was about six, I went into my dad's office, which was attached to the house. It was early one winter morning. He was on his knees by his desk, covered in a poncho. I asked him what he was doing. He told me

that he was reading the Word of God. And then for some reason, he said to me, "I'm reading the book of Proverbs. When you grow up, you should read it every day."

My father died when I was ten years old, but I never forgot his counsel. As a teenager, I began to read a chapter from the book of Proverbs every day. I believe that the counsel from Proverbs, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has saved me from a million troubles.

When I went off to boarding school, I discovered that many of my fellow students were without Christ. I felt a deep sadness, even as a young man, at the lostness of my school friends.

R. A. Torrey, in his book *How to Work for Christ*, mentions that one way to get a passion for the lost is to read what the Bible says about the present state and eternal destiny of the lost, and to commit to pray for them.³ I began to pray for the lost even as a teenager and I was convicted that the greatest work for the Christian was to fulfill the Great Commission.

DM: Your father certainly had a profound impact on your life even though you were only ten years old when he died. That is a real inspiration to Christian parents. As you look back over your life of sharing the good news with the world, who else has been an important mentor to you?

LP: First of all, the apostle Paul has been an important mentor to me. He suffered for the name of Jesus. He was beaten and put in jail. During my early years in Argentina, there was persecution. When the elders held tent meetings, people would throw stones at us, insult us, and try to burn down the tents. So reading the life of the apostle Paul, who also suffered persecution, was an inspiration to me.

Second, I heard the stories of great Christian men and women through the ages. The missionaries would loan us biographies and my mother would read to us. I heard about David Livingstone, who went to Africa, and Hudson Taylor, who went to China.

A man whose testimony had a great impact on my life was George Mueller. I feel like I've met him! I still read about his life from time to time when my faith needs strengthening. I remember reading George Mueller's journal and that was a great inspiration. I also remember the story of a young man who was preaching in the pub district in Glasgow. The

drunks would make fun of him. An old gentleman was listening to this young man. When the young fellow was about to leave because of the mocking of the drunks, the old gentleman tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Keep at it, laddie. God loves to hear men speak well of His Son." I learned from that story that even if no one responds, we must commit ourselves to speaking well of God's Son.

I was also influenced by Charles Spurgeon. The day I was baptized in water, my mother gave me a biography of Charles Spurgeon. That great preacher started preaching at age 16, which I found inspiring. I was 17! Spurgeon's stories and sermons were so powerful. I also read *The Check Book of the Bank of Faith*.⁴ Spurgeon inspired me to preach the gospel!

DM: When you share the good news with the world, many people ask the same question that a Philippian jailer asked almost two thousand years ago: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30, NIV). How would you answer?

LP: You can't ever beat John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (NIV). There is the good news in a nutshell. You can't get any better than that. And then there's 1 Corinthians 15:1-6. We tell the basic story of the love of God, who wants us to have eternal life. That's good news! We deserve to perish. We are condemned because of our sinfulness, but God, in His love, wants to rescue us. On the cross, Jesus paid the price for our sin and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. That's the good news. An evangelist has one job: to proclaim the good news. Simply stay with the basic good news. Lift up Jesus Christ.

DM: In recent years, you have pioneered a new approach to reaching the masses with the good news. Share with us the concept of the festival.

LP: About five years ago, we decided to totally change our approach to sharing the good news with the world. While the message is sacred and does not change, the methods that we use to present the message must be flexible. Cultures change. Societies change. We used to call our meetings "crusades." Now we call them festivals.

Our first U.S. festival was held in Portland, Oregon. Instead of dressing formally as preachers usually do, we all went casual. We held the festival at a park. No choir on the platform. No piano or organ. We put a food court around the park.

For the children's area, we went to one end of the park. We had Veggie Tales and face painting. We provided a children's evangelist who gave the children an explanation of the good news and an opportunity to surrender their hearts to Jesus. Then at the other end of the park we had skateboarding and BMX bikes. We will soon be adding motocross. Many of the national motocross champions are born-again believers in Jesus Christ. They put on exhibitions and give their testimonies. Then a skate evangelist gives those young people the good news. We also have a Sports Zone, where athletes come and show the kids how to pass, how to tackle, how to play basketball. Then they also share their testimonies.

At about 5:00 p.m., we open up the main platform with well-known contemporary Christian musical groups like dcTalk and Jump5. Then at about 7:30 p.m., I present the gospel formally. The good news has already been presented 8-10 times by then! But I share a formal gospel presentation and give a simple invitation.

We have hundreds of trained counselors—"friends of the festival"—who assist those making decisions. And then, more music! In some cities, we even close with fireworks! The festivals are youth-oriented, though family-centered. It's the same old good news that has never changed, but the festival approach is new.

We also have a special time for seniors the Saturday prior to the climactic weekend. We bring a special guest like Pat Boone. During the week, we have luncheons for businessmen, for influential women in the city, for CEOs. It's a very intensive week to ten days. When we're done, no one in the city will be able to stand before Christ and say, "I never heard the good news."

DM: In the past five years, you have conducted these festivals in many parts of the world. I understand that in your hometown of Buenos Aires, close to a million people participated in the Festival of Hope in February 2003. And just in the past two years, you have conducted festivals in the United States, England, Argentina, Fiji, and Peru.

LP: That's right. Some of my colleagues have also held festivals in Africa and India. This coming year we're going, God willing, to China.

DM: God is certainly blessing your ministry in remarkable ways and enlarging your territory for His glory! What can the local church pastor do to help fulfill the Great Commission to share the good news with the world?

LP: In the local church, we must center everything we do on Jesus Christ, His cross and His resurrection. That is at the core of the good news. The local church pastor can also give people an invitation to take the step of faith.

Many people admire the good news, and technically believe in Jesus Christ, but they have never taken a step of faith in repentance, trusting Jesus Christ and receiving Him by faith into their hearts.

So the local church pastor can give an invitation for people to accept Christ, even if there is only one person present who needs to make that decision. We can also disciple people to share their faith in the coming

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The heart of historicism

Hans K. LaRondelle



Hans K. LaRondelle, Th.D., is professor emeritus of systematic theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Historicism is a concept of prophetic interpretation. It needs to be defined carefully before we can discuss its validity and boundaries. LeRoy E. Froom provides us one definition of historicism: "the progressive and continuous fulfillment of prophecy, in unbroken sequence, from Daniel's day and the time of John, on down to the second advent and the end of the age."¹

Froom's definition implies a certain theological exegesis, which he fails to identify as the guideline for his understanding of what constitutes a fulfillment of prophecy. A truthful fulfillment should correspond to the intended meaning of the prophet, and thus requires an exegesis of Scripture in its literary and historical context. Even the Cross is not self-explanatory and needs divine interpretation (see 1 Cor. 1:22-25; 15:3; Rom. 3:25, 26).

This leads us to ask for the biblical origin of historicism; that is, for the prophetic revelation that periodizes history in successive epochs which lead up to the establishment of the kingdom of God. That origin, it is universally agreed, is the apocalyptic book of Daniel, whose visions repeatedly proceed from his own time to the end of world history, with a consistent focus on salvation history.

Daniel's covenant focus in prophecy

With increasing emphasis, Daniel affirms

that "the God of heaven," who rules world history, is the God of his "fathers" (Dan. 1:1, 2; 2:20-23; 3:28; etc.). Daniel bases his view of history on Israel's redemption history. Chapters 7-12 especially sharpen the focus on Israel, on her sanctuary worship in the "holy city," and on its devastation by Israel's sacrilegious enemy (8:11-13; 9:25-27; 11:44, 45). Michael is sent to Daniel with the message, "Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come" (10:14, NIV). Daniel's prophecies focus on Israel as God's covenant people and on their future experiences. Daniel himself thus provides the theological criterion by which a fulfillment of prophecy must be assessed.

Jesus mentions Daniel by name (Matt. 24:15) and affirms his salvation-historical perspective when He applies Daniel's prophecy of the violent death of the Messiah and of Jerusalem's consequent destruction (Dan. 9:26, 27) to the imminent fall of Jerusalem in His own generation (Matt. 23:36; 24:15; Luke 21:20-22). Jesus continuously stresses the Christocentric focus of the church age in His farewell speech of Matthew 24, when He predicts the coming of false christs and the persecution of His elect (see verses 4, 9, 14, 23, 24, 27, 30, 31).

Paul also refers to Daniel's prophecy of an oppressor and deceiver of the covenant people, when he applies Daniel 8 and 11 to a fulfillment during the church age in "the temple of God" (see 2 Thess. 2:4-8). By the expression, "the temple of God," Paul did not mean the material shrine in Jerusalem but rather the institutional church (see 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-21).²

On the basis of these New Testament applications of Daniel's prophecies to the church age, the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* concludes: "Historicism as a method of interpretation is found in the Bible itself, and it provides the key for the interpretation of the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation."³

What then is this hermeneutical "key" that Scripture itself provides? It is a "key" that needs to be carefully defined through a responsible exegesis of Scripture so that all believers can be aware of the biblical norm for interpreting prophecies and of the truthfulness of our historical applications.

Not only Jesus and Paul but also John's writings re-orient Daniel's covenant people

theologically to the God-sent Messiah and to His people, and consequently to their persecuting enemies (see 1 John 1, 2; Rev. 12–14). Accordingly, fulfillments of prophecy during the church age must be determined by their Christ-centeredness. That Christological center of prophecy is the “key” the Bible itself provides to unlock the truthfulness of a historical fulfillment. Only fulfillments that pertain to Christ and His new-covenant people will increase our knowledge of Daniel and Revelation (cf. Dan. 12:4).

The New Testament criterion in historicism

How does one assess the truthfulness of the different historicist applications of the past? Those traditions have to be tested on the grounds of their exegetical truthfulness in accordance with the biblical perspective of history. Regarding any “fulfillment” of the predicted apostasy, or of the true remnant people, or of the cosmic signs during the church age, the New Testament insists from start till finish on a Christocentric fulfillment in relation to the new-covenant people of God.⁴ This theological qualification of a true fulfillment of prophecy should be acknowledged as the primary responsibility of historicism.

A second point of concern to be taken seriously is the possible misuse of earlier historicist traditions when these are appealed to as the final interpreter of prophecies. If we profess the *sola Scriptura* principle that the Bible interprets itself, how can we at the same time claim that “history” as such “is the true and final interpreter”?⁵

Israel’s prophets, Jesus, and His apostles all relate their promises and warnings to God’s covenant people or to their enemies. In short, Bible prophecy is fundamentally different from secular soothsaying in its focus on salvation history: past, present, and future. The visions of both Daniel and John reveal this broader theological perspective that connects all predictive prophecies in one coherent framework of Messianic redemption as its biblical

criterion for fulfillment (see Dan. 2:44, 45; 7:27; 12:1–3; Rev. 5).

John’s Apocalypse sums up the proclamation of the risen Christ: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” (Rev. 22:13). This sovereign title of the risen Lord proclaims that Christ is the meaning for human history, being the “Alpha” of Genesis till the “Omega” of Revelation.⁶

The salvation-historical perspective

Our trust in the proper exegetical foundation of “historicist” interpretations of Scripture cannot be taken for granted. To give account for our prophetic interpretations is a biblical mandate to accept individual responsibility for their truthfulness (see 1 Peter 3:15). Paul places all Spirit manifestations in the church under the need for testing on their truthfulness: “Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1 Thess. 5:20, 21, NIV).

Of critical importance for establishing a truthful fulfillment of prophecy in history is the crossing over of the old-covenant people of God to the new-covenant people of Christ Jesus. This *cross point*, marked by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the “fullness of time” (Mark 1:15; Gal. 4:4), has crucial hermeneutical significance in determining a true fulfillment. That is to say, the beginning of the Messianic age transforms the biblical definition of the Israel of God into a Messianic Israel, and consequently also the definition of her antagonists, as the book of Acts testifies (see the application of “Israel” and her enemies of Psalm 2 in Acts 4:23–28; 13:32, 40, 46–48).

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter proclaims that Joel’s prophecy of the fullness of the Spirit of God has been fulfilled in the Christ-believing Jews at Jerusalem (Joel 2:28–32). Here Peter publicly introduces the new paradigm of a Christocentric fulfillment of the end-time prophecies. Filled with the Spirit of God, he declares that now the

“last days” have begun (Acts 2:17), because the risen Messiah has been enthroned in heaven as the Lord of Israel (Acts 2:33, 36). Later he adds that these days will last until Jesus shall return in glory to accomplish the “universal restoration” (Acts 3:21, NRSV; *apokatastasis pantôn* was the Jewish expression for the Messianic “Jubilee Year” for the restoration of all Israel; Acts 1:6 has its verbal form⁷).

If salvation history is the focus of apocalyptic prophecies, we must test and purify historicism by the biblical perspective of covenant history. We need to define historical “fulfillment” in accordance with the cosmic controversy theme in Daniel and Revelation. The New Testament hands us the Christological norm by which we are to test every historical application of prophecy. Applying this Christ-centered norm engenders credibility to our public proclamations of the divine intentions of prophecy.

If we are disinterested or uninformed by the biblical covenant history, we cannot assess the truthfulness of past historicist claims. It is our duty as Christian interpreters to re-examine our method of prophetic interpretation and application, and to define a conscious and consistent Christocentric hermeneutic.

Historicism needs the disciplined reflection of exegetical and systematic theologians for its own theological and exegetical credibility. Bible truth is not established by a majority view of pious interpreters but by a truthful, contextual exegesis of Scripture. This calls for a cooperation of all theological disciplines of the church so that all seekers after truth may experience a progressive understanding of prophecy, based on the gospel principles of the New Testament.

The acute identity crisis of historicism in 1844

We can benefit from the way William Miller (1782–1849) defined one of his basic “rules” of interpreting apocalyptic symbols in a purely rationalistic way: “How to know when a

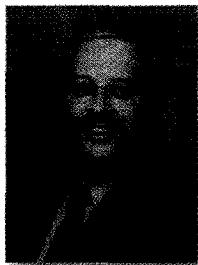
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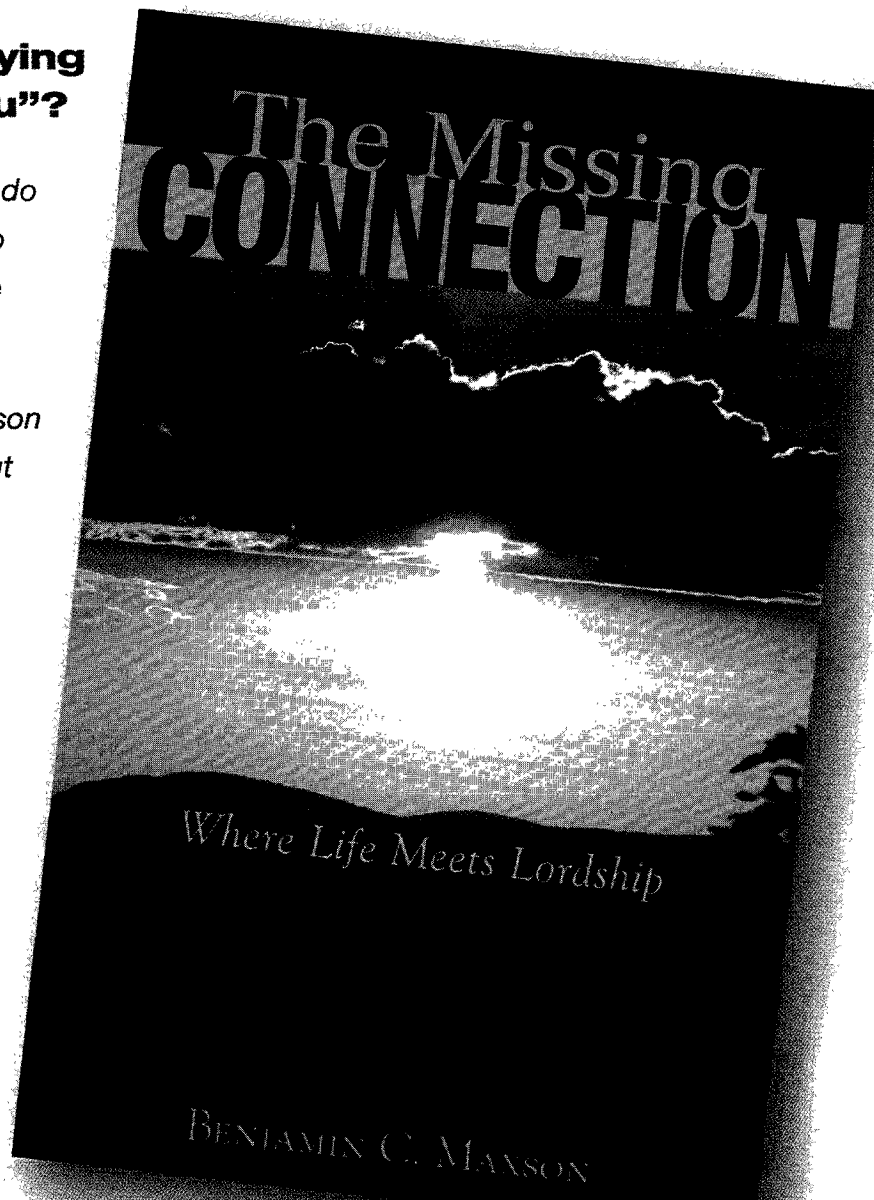
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word is used figuratively," asks Miller. "If it makes good sense as it stands, and does no violence to the simple laws of nature, then it must be understood literally; if not, figuratively."⁸

Using the concordance-style approach, Miller listed all possible meanings of a phrase, such as the "sanctuary," and then chose one he found in the New Testament: a spiritual application of the sanctuary to the "church." Thus he concluded for Daniel 8:14, "'Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed or justified,' means the true sanctuary which God has built of lively stones to his own acceptance, through Christ, of which the temple of Jerusalem was but a type . . . ; [quoted Phil. 3:20, 21]. We see by these texts . . . that the spiritual sanctuary will not be cleansed until Christ's second coming; and then all Israel shall be raised, judged, and justified in his sight."⁹

Miller interpreted the sanctuary "cleansing" of Daniel 8 as God's work of cleansing or "justifying" His "*spiritual sanctuary*," the true believers in Christ, by a visible execution of God's judgment and a literal resurrection of all believers. Miller united Daniel 8 then with the first angel's message of Revelation 14 that announced: "the hour of His judgment has come" (Rev. 14:7). Miller did not consider the New Testament application to the new covenant temple *in heaven* (Heb. 8:1, 2; Rev. 15:5-8), because it needed no "cleansing" in his thinking. Miller saw the church in need of a cleansing from *false worship*, which Daniel had described in Daniel 7:25 and 8:11-13. He concluded: "Therefore, when this last abomination of desolation shall be taken away, then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."¹⁰ With this understanding of a "worship" cleansing Miller expressed accurately the concern of Daniel's judgment vision, in which true and false worshipers shall be separated for eternity (7:26, 27; 12:1-3).

Regarding the "fulfillment" of the specific time period in Daniel 8, Miller stressed that the "2,300-day" prophecy covered the entire spectrum of

Daniel's "vision," which he reckoned from 457 B.C. till "about the year A.D. 1843." He assumed that the period of the "2,300-days" ended with the Second Coming. Delimiting the Second Coming to a fixed year brought the excitement to prepare for the imminent advent of Christ, but ended with their great disillusionment. When Miller's logical deductions and date-settings failed both in 1843 and in 1844, an acute crisis in historicist interpretation occurred.

The Millerite movement exploded in various factions. In the aftermath, conflicting approaches to typology and to the prophetic time periods gave rise to different apocalyptic movements that renewed the imminency expectations, such as the "Watchtower Society" (since 1931 known as Jehovah's Witnesses), Seventh-day Adventism, and Dispensationalism, and These religious movements identify themselves by contrasting claims of prophetic interpretation and by new date-settings for expected fulfillments of prophecy.¹¹

One of the perceived weaknesses of historicism is the "inability of its advocates to agree upon the specific fulfillments of the prophecies."¹² This assessment oversimplifies the problem by overlooking some common agreements of historicists since the early church in their understanding of imperial and papal Rome as fulfillment of Daniel's visions (in chapters 2 and 7).¹³ The critique remains valid, however, in regard to some sensational, private interpretations that attach prophetic significance to current political events.

Such popular claims elevate current events as the guiding norm for prophetic interpretation. In spite of speculative interpretations, the new apocalyptic movements expressed their sincere longing for restoring the Christian hope and the simple Christian life of the apostolic church. Unfortunately, such imminency expectations of Christ's advent were based on some problematic calculations of Daniel's prophetic time periods.

The creation of Adventist historicism

Seventh-day Adventism claims to continue Miller's historicist approach. But *how* did Adventist pioneers improve the Millerite historicism by their new understanding of the "great controversy" theme of Scripture? What was the better understanding of "fulfillment" of Daniel (8) and Revelation (14) that gave them such absolute certainty that its dogmatic exegesis also was elevated to the mark of identity of the remnant of prophecy? Does not the book of Revelation provide its own identity hallmark of the remnant church of Jesus?¹⁴

The Adventist pioneers believed in an enlightened understanding of prophecy after Miller's misinterpretation. Nevertheless they retained Miller's final date, October 22, 1844, on the assumption of the truthfulness of the "year/day" symbolism and the connections of Daniel 8 and 9. They changed, however, the promised "cleansing of the sanctuary" (Dan. 8) from God's apocalyptic cleansing act of the church (W. Miller) to Christ's ongoing cleansing process in the heavenly sanctuary since 1844 to His final judgment ministry.

The judging process of the faithful dead was now added to Christ's redemptive ministry for the living (Hebrews 8; 9), and was conceived as Christ's enlarged ministry in heaven. There remained an "open door," and "forgiveness of sins was offered to men through the intercession of Christ in the most holy" (Ellen G. White¹⁵). This exegetical construct of a two-phase ministry of Christ became the new theological norm for Adventist historicism, a pillar or landmark doctrine that provided an ecclesiological identity, the concept of "present truth" and "fulfillment" in their prophetic interpretations.

Ellen G. White further paralleled the "cleansing" of Christ's ministry to a new responsibility and task of the church: "While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are

being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth. This work is more clearly presented in the messages of Revelation 14."¹⁶

Her coordinating of the heavenly "cleansing" and the church's cleansing of its worship of God expressed her view that Daniel 8 and Revelation 14 were closely related. The developing Adventist understanding of the sanctuary's cleansing aroused a new imminency expectation. Israel's ritual "cleansing" of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) was used to add urgency to the judgment ministry of Christ. It foreshadowed the final blotting out of sin from the universe.

The required searching of heart by Israel once a year, in preparation for the final act of removing all their sins from the camp through the "scape goat" (Lev. 16:20-22) was seen as a prophetic type to be applied with peculiar force to the final generation. It implied to them that God was preparing a ritually and morally cleansed people with His "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary.

For that reason Adventists restored the creation Sabbath in their worship of God, and integrated the immutability of God's covenant law in their historicist interpretation of prophecy (of Dan. 7:25). They felt called by God to complete the Protestant Reformation. LeRoy Froom explains this Adventist sense of mission: "Then these down-trodden truths that have such vital relationship to the judgment hour and its immutable standard, the law of God, will again be lifted up under the banner of last-day reformation and restoration. Then, according to the prophetic promise, at the time of the cleansing of the sanctuary its provisions will be vindicated and restored to their rightful place."¹⁷

The Adventist struggle for the priority of the gospel

The priority of apocalyptic interpretations in the Adventist self-understanding never intended to over-

rule or obscure the "everlasting gospel." Ellen White tried to keep the apocalyptic teachings united with the gospel preaching, warning against the threat of a Christless historicism: "Ministers should present the sure word of prophecy as the foundation of the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. The prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation should be carefully studied, and in connection with them the words, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'"¹⁸

However, the sad fact remains that the "formative" years of Adventism (1844-1888) did embody a neglect of the centrality of the gospel of justifying grace when it came to proclaiming this end-time witness. Doctrinal beliefs about the law of God, a pre-Advent "investigative judgment," and the appeal to leave apostate Christianity as the end-time "Babylon" became the dominant truths through which people tended to identify the "remnant" church, while the gospel tended to suffer neglect.

The Advent movement was absolutely convinced it was a "movement of destiny," raised up to fulfill the prophecies of Revelation 12:17 and 14:6-12. Yet it was not united on fundamental Christian beliefs, such as the Holy Trinity, the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, and even on "righteousness by faith" as the way of salvation. By its deliberate isolation from historic Christianity, Adventism developed its own doctrinal belief system independent from the historic Christian creeds. Adventist indifference to the Protestant Reformation Confessions led periodically to a crisis about what is *Christian* in Adventism, especially in regard to the affirmation of the basic Protestant axioms *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, and *sola Scriptura*.¹⁹

In 1888 a revival of the apostolic gospel was initiated at the Minneapolis General Conference session by two young editors, A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner. Conservative leaders questioned, however, whether this new gospel emphasis was a legitimate part

of the "third angel's message" of Revelation 14, and perceived it as a threat to the distinctive beliefs of Adventism: the law and prophetic interpretation.²⁰

Ellen White responded forcefully that their new focus on the apostolic gospel was a "precious message to His people" which the Lord had sent "in His great mercy."²¹ She recognized that the law and the gospel were finally presented in their true biblical relationship, "binding up the two in a perfect whole."²² She explained: "It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. . . . It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure."²³

She went so far as to declare that this new "uplifting" of Jesus and His merits gave the denomination its predicted "loud cry" message that would bring with it the outpouring of the Spirit of God, as portrayed in Revelation 18:1.²⁴ Her counsel became: "*Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world.*"²⁵

The biblical connection of the apostolic gospel and apocalyptic interpretations remains the critical issue for Adventist historicism. Is the gospel allowed to have a transforming influence on our apocalyptic interpretations? If the gospel priority is overlooked in prophetic interpretation, the pitfall of literalism can hardly be avoided. Literalism, recognizable by its *ethnic* and *geographic* Middle East applications of prophecy, immediately usurps the primary place of Christ as the decisive norm for prophetic interpretation. This modern hermeneutical threat calls for renewed vigilance by each generation to safeguard the priority of the everlasting gospel in apocalyptic interpretations (see Rev. 12:17; 14:12; 20:4).

The task of honest examination of

Adventist historicism through a sound exegesis of Scripture has only begun. The core issue remains a definition of the New Testament principles of Scripture interpretation that apply equally to fulfilled *and* unfulfilled prophecies. Such a testing of our traditional assumptions and applications can lead to a more biblical and credible proclamation that will stir the hearts again. Some leading Adventist theologians have begun to reaffirm the motivating principle of Protestantism: *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*, meaning “a reform which is never completed once-and-for-all, but which is renewed and reapplied from generation to generation in the light of Scripture.”²⁶ ■

- 1 L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* [PF] (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1950), 1:22, 23.
- 2 See H. LaRondelle, *Light for the Last Days* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2000), chapters 1 and 2; also G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), ch. 8.
- 3 *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1996), 698.
- 4 See H. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2001), chapters 5-7.
- 5 See Froom in 2 (1948):795.
- 6 See E. G. White in *Review and Herald* 8, 1897; quoted in *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (1957 ed.), 7:434.
- 7 See Robert B. Sloan, *The Favorable Year of the Lord: A Study of Jubiliary Theology in the Gospel of Luke* (Austin, Tex.: Schola Press, 1977).
- 8 In P. G. Damsteegt, *Foundations of SDA Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977), 299.
- 9 W. Miller, *Evidence from Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ about the Year 1843* (Boston: B. Mussey, 1840), 41, 42.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 55 (italics added).
- 11 For Seventh-day Adventism, see George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), 55-58.
- 12 S. Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 36.
- 13 See Froom, 1:458-464, 897-899; 2:529-532; 3:255-259.
- 14 For a study on the prophetic hallmark of the remnant in Revelation, see LaRondelle, *Light for the Last Days* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2000), 177-187.
- 15 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 429, 430.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 425.
- 17 Froom, 4:1155.
- 18 White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 148 [1915].
- 19 See the analysis by G. R. Knight, *A Search for Identity*, chapter 5. Also L. L. Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), chapter 4.
- 20 See N. F. Pease, “The Truth as It Is in Jesus: The 1888 General Conference Sessions, Minneapolis, Minn.,” *Adventist Heritage* 10 (1):3-10.
- 21 White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), 91.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 94.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 92.
- 24 See Knight, 109.
- 25 White, *Gospel Workers*, 156 (italics added).
- 26 A. C. Thiselton, as quoted in N. R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2003), 657; also F. Guy, *Thinking Theologically* (Bern Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1999), 126, 150; and especially R. J. Poehler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching* (P. Lang 2000), Reihe A, Band 3, 111-123.

Sharing the good news continued from page 21

week when they go to their office, factory, or other workplace.

The local church pastor can also organize events that facilitate the sharing of the good news. Our festivals are simply large events that make it easier for people to invite their friends, neighbors, and relatives to hear the good news.

The local church pastor can also prepare the church to welcome new people who, as a result of the festival, will be looking for a church home.

One local church that participated in the “Beachfest” in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, had 900 new people come to their church and 600 have already been baptized!⁵

DM: How do you respond to critics who accuse Christian evangelists of using manipulation and pressure tactics?

LP: I have noticed some television evangelists who appear to use coercion and manipulation. But I think the greater danger today is not that we use too much pressure. Today we are so politically correct that we may hesitate

to give any invitation at all. When we present the good news, the Holy Spirit brings conviction.

We don’t need to play games with people’s emotions. We need to remember that we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). We have been appointed to represent Jesus Christ. This is not a game. This is not show business. We are here to present good news. We are called to proclaim the Truth, not to manipulate phony forced decisions. How many people make decisions is strictly in the hands of the Lord and the Holy Spirit.

DM: As you reflect on your ministry, what indispensable daily habits help you to stay focused?

LP: First, spend time alone with God every day. That keeps you tender. It keeps you from becoming cynical or discouraged. I meditate on the Cross and on Christ’s resurrection. That helps me to stay focused. Second, I read the daily newspapers and news journals. I want to be informed about what is going on in the world. G. Campbell Morgan said that a pastor should have the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. I read about the lost, about their empty, self-delusional goals,

their self-destructive behavior. That also helps me to stay focused on my mission of sharing the good news.

When I was a teenager, I vividly remember making a commitment to Jesus Christ. I went to conferences every year, and in enormous letters above the platform was just one word: “Go!” And I remember singing this song: “O Jesus, I have promised to serve Thee to the end. Be Thou forever with me, my Master and my Friend. I shall not fear the battle if Thou art by my side, nor wander from the pathway if Thou wilt be my Guide.” And I said to the Lord, “I promise, Lord.”

Even now, years later, I get shaken up when I talk about it because I sensed the Holy Spirit say, “Luis. You promised. Now go!” And the Lord has blessed tremendously as I have shared the good news with the world.⁶ ■

1 www.reachingyourworld.org

2 Luis Palau’s thrilling life story is recorded in *Calling America and the Nations to Christ* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994).

3 R. A. Torrey, *How to Work for Christ: A Compendium of Effective Methods* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1901).

4 Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Check Book of the Bank of Faith: Precious Promises for Daily Readings* (Fort Washington, Penn.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1957).

5 “Beachfest” in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, attracted 300,000 participants in the spring of 2003. There were over 10,000 decisions for Christ during that festival.

6 Learn more about the Luis Palau Evangelistic Association at www.palau.org.

The General Conference meets in St. Louis: a historic milepost

When I first attended a General Conference session in 1966 in Detroit, Michigan, two large communication outbursts close to the venue caught my attention: the first one was a colorful billboard on a just released movie, *Dr. Zhivago*, based on Pasternack's portrayal of Lara's struggle for human freedom and dignity. The second one, more humble and its message widely distributed through handbills, called upon the Adventist delegates meeting inside the Cobo Hall to ensure that their church cash the promisory note of Genesis 1, particularly verse 26, guaranteeing equality, dignity, and opportunity to all believers—black and white.

The movie held no attraction for me, although I later ploughed through Boris Pasternack's Nobel-prize-winning novel with great enthusiasm. But from 1966 on I watched, sometimes with joy, sometimes with disappointment, my church's stance to walk the talk and live the faith that the redeemed and the remnant indeed constitute an inclusive, global, united, and loving community ready for translation at the imminent Second Coming to live with their one Lord, one God. The church's journey toward that goal has not been easy or at the speed desired by thousands like me who at times felt excluded from the global community of the gospel.

The 58th General Conference session concluded on July 9, 2005, in St. Louis will go down as one of the great historic convocations of the global church, now some 16 million strong, now ready to fully embrace oneness in talk and walk. Historians defined four previous sessions as mileposts in the church for various reasons. The 1863 session saw the infant church put on its global organizational cloak, unique in its departmental and mission structure. The 1888 session defined the theology of the infant

JOHN M. FOWLER



Church, as it bathed Adventism in the blood of Jesus and clothed it with the gospel's only garment—that of righteousness by faith. The 1901 session fine-tuned the organizational structure, and several succeeding sessions concentrated on that structure in order to balance between the urgency of the global mission and organizational authority, a task to which perhaps the 59th session in Atlanta, Georgia, will again return; 1980 moved the organization into theological maturity and unity by voting the 27 Fundamental Beliefs that are crucial to the essence of Adventism. Not a creed, but this statement defined our beliefs in God's creation, revelation, redemption, saving message, redeemed community, and eschatological purposes.

Can we now dare say the 58th session at St. Louis will go down as a historic milepost in Adventist mission and its preparation for the imminence of the Lord's coming? Yes, and for three reasons.

A more inclusive church

First, more than any other session before, the 58th session has shown to the world that Adventism is truly an inclusive and global church. Previous sessions did take some small steps, token in nature and hesitant in speed. The last session in Toronto leaped forward with the first African, Matthew

Bediako, as the second officer of the world church. But look at St. Louis; it was a stride toward globalization both in participation and appointments. Speakers for the morning and evening devotionals represented every continent. The Nominating Committee, at the speed with which it completed its business, sent two messages to the delegates: there was a Spirit-filled smoothness in the deliberation and completion of its work; and there was an intentional march to make the church truly global, a call that was issued in the opening message by President Jan Paulsen, himself a non-North American. This did not mean that North America's significance was not appreciated, but its contribution to the development of a worldwide church is now a reality. The session, for the first time in the history of the church, appointed a woman and an Afro-American, Ella Simmons, the provost of La Sierra University, as a vice-president of the General Conference—sending a message to the world that God and His church values every person to fulfill a definite role in its mission. A second appointment was equally significant: Rosa Banks as associate secretary of the world church. Other appointments also crossed the frontiers: nine vice presidents represent seven countries; six in the secretariat represent five countries; six in the treasury represent three countries; the departmental positions likewise were filled from around the world. Truly, a global accomplishment—a significant arrival from the Cobo Hall of 1966. God moves and moves mysteriously His wonders to perform!

Transformed to serve and lead

Second, service and servant leadership were much the tone of the St. Louis session. Consider the theme, "Transformed in Christ." In previous ses-

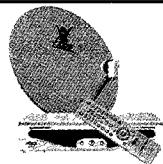
sions, the Church had chosen the imminence of Second Coming, unity, witness to all the nations, hope that never dims, etc. Each served a purpose. What motivated the leaders to choose the theme of the current session? I put the question to Elder Jan Paulsen, the newly-elected president. His answer was simple and direct: "The Lord we worship must be seen in the transformed lives we lead and in the unselfish service we render. I want a Church without frontiers—inclusive in fellowship, mission-minded in life and service, transformed by the grace, love and power of the living Lord." The apostle Paul, who concluded his grand presentation of righteousness by faith with a call that believers should not be "conformed to the world" but "transformed" in order to reveal "the perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2), would have said a loud amen to this session's theme that calls for a life of service and servant leadership.

The General Conference leaders, in planning the 58th session, intentionally devoted considerable time for this theme to penetrate the mind and soul of the delegates so that as they disperse back to the ends of the earth, the mission of Adventism will take on a new focus: a life that lives by its faith, and life that witnesses for what it believes. Beginning with Sunday, the session devoted each day 90 minutes for presentation and discussion on profiling the Adventist leadership: its fundamental characteristics, its motivations, its style, its directions, its empowering. Can an Adventist leader afford to be a political or economic or technological supremo? Or must he or she renounce leadership as defined by the world and echo, reecho, and live by the words of the One who said, "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

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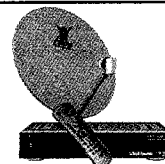


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The church, statisticians project, will have some 50 million members by 2020, and about 85 percent of them have been members for less than 15 years. The church of the future is a young church—demanding of its leaders character, integrity, humility, vision, and faithfulness.

How shall we develop that kind of leadership? The question leads to the third significance of St. Louis, the voting of a new statement of fundamental belief.

Growing In Christ

The new statement calls for members and leaders alike to grow in Christ—in a life of prayer, study, worship, witness, spiritual warfare. In other words, it is a call: to take up the towel and wash some lowly feet, to share the bread and wine of community, to take up the cross and walk that lonely path, to celebrate the risen Lord, and to hope for the new dawn that will forever bring a transformation that will be our eternal reward.

The inclusion of this new statement of belief rounded up the theological agenda of the Church to emphasize that we are not simply a people of doctrine but of living the doctrine, that our ecclesiology transcends structure and organization to embrace community of faith, worship, and service, that our hope consists not just the certainty of the second coming of Christ but letting that hope transform our life here and now so that every Adventist community around the world becomes a reflection of the life and mission of the Lord who gave Himself for us.

Thus the call of St. Louis—for inclusiveness, for servant leadership, for a sanctified life in Christ—will mark the 58th session of the General Conference as a historic milepost on the way to the kingdom. ■

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Another page of herstory

A few years ago an executive minister from the Southern Baptists and I were comparing church polity challenges. He told of their denominational incongruity which allows women to be ordained but forbids them to serve as senior pastors. I responded that Adventists assign women to serve as senior pastors—even of major congregations—but forbid them ordination.

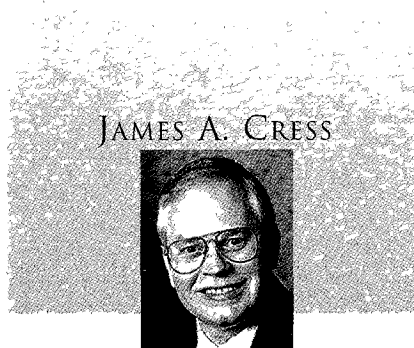
We both concurred that eternity seems short in comparison to the years needed to effect change of deeply-ingrained positions on women in spiritual leadership and then moved on to other topics of comparative religion and hierarchical differences.

Then the 58th Session of the General Conference (St. Louis, Missouri, USA) came along and moved the issue of women in church leadership dramatically forward without the topic of ordination even becoming a debate.

Thanks to the vision and courage of our President, Jan Paulsen, and his two fellow officers, Matthew Bediako and Robert Lemon, along with a nominating committee which sensed leadership's encouragement to utilize women, the session elected females to serve each of our denomination's major officer groups.

The ratio of women members to elected officers is still not huge—about 70 percent of church members are female while these recent elections raise our percentage of women officers only to about ten percent.

Nevertheless, a clear message has gone forward with the election of **Ella Simmons** as General Vice President, **Rosa Banks** as Associate Secretary, and **Daisy Orion** as Associate Treasurer of the General Conference. Perhaps it is now time for our divisions and unions (a few of which previously had elected women officers) to look more intention-



ally at the pool of available and capable women when nominating candidates for officer-level positions. While we affirm that "herstory" has taken a giant leap forward for Adventists with these elections, we still have a long way to progress until each candidate for office is selected on the basis of qualification, not gender. I believe in affirmative action and I believe we have begun a correct thing.

Even as only eternity and other articles will fully affirm the leadership of so many outstanding women, I eagerly continue the emphasis of my previous article, "Impacted by Herstory" (January 2005), by affirming the spiritual help with which women leaders have impacted my own life and ministry.

Admittedly, many of these are personal testimonies about individuals you may never meet. Nevertheless, they represent the ongoing, day-by-day spiritual impact that women make in our homes, churches, schools, and society.

For example, **Rose Otis**, **Dorothy Watts**, **Ardis Stenbakken**, and **Heather-Dawn Small** have each brought unique skills as Director of Women's Ministry and, too often, have seemingly stood alone in challenging the church to include women at every level of activity and in every variety of ministry.

On a more personal impact level, I recall several teachers who helped me

understand that God uses whoever will allow the Holy Spirit's effective ministry to move them, and the church, forward. These include **Genevieve McCormick**, friend, mentor, and believer in the art of the possible whose pastoral spouse, daughter-in-law, **Betty McCormick**, worked with Sharon and me for several years. Likewise, **Wanda Brace**, **Carolyn Luce Kujawa**, **Dorothy Remington**, **Virginia Taylor**, **Auda Hiebert**, and contemporary educator-minister colleagues, **Kathy Tompkins**, **Wendy Pega**, **Cynthia Gettys**, and **Andrea Luxton** represent the finest educators anywhere.

Pastoral spouses who have endured with extraordinary grace great challenges for their health, their assignment to difficult locations, or the needs of their extended family, include **Barbara White**, **Irja Haapasalo**, **Hepzibah Kore**, **Elaine Sheppard**, **Adriana Bocaneanu**, **Evonne Baasch**, and **Maurine Allen**.

And there are friends who can start me laughing just by entering the room. **Sylvia Baldwin**, **Kay Winter**, **Della Keele**, **Ann Holland**, **Roslyn Guenin**, or **Muriel Indermuehle** (the only individual I know whose famous cookies are so tasty that I eagerly won the bid to purchase a dozen for US\$65.00 at a school fund-raising auction).

Then I remember and salute the organizational and spiritual leadership of **Connie Starkey**, director of human resources for the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, who effectively held that entire conference staff together when my brother, David, and four other leaders were killed in last December's tragic airplane crash.

An U.S. political slogan of the 1970s said, "Woman's place is in the house . . . and in the Senate!" Please allow me to paraphrase with gratitude, ". . . and in the church!" ■

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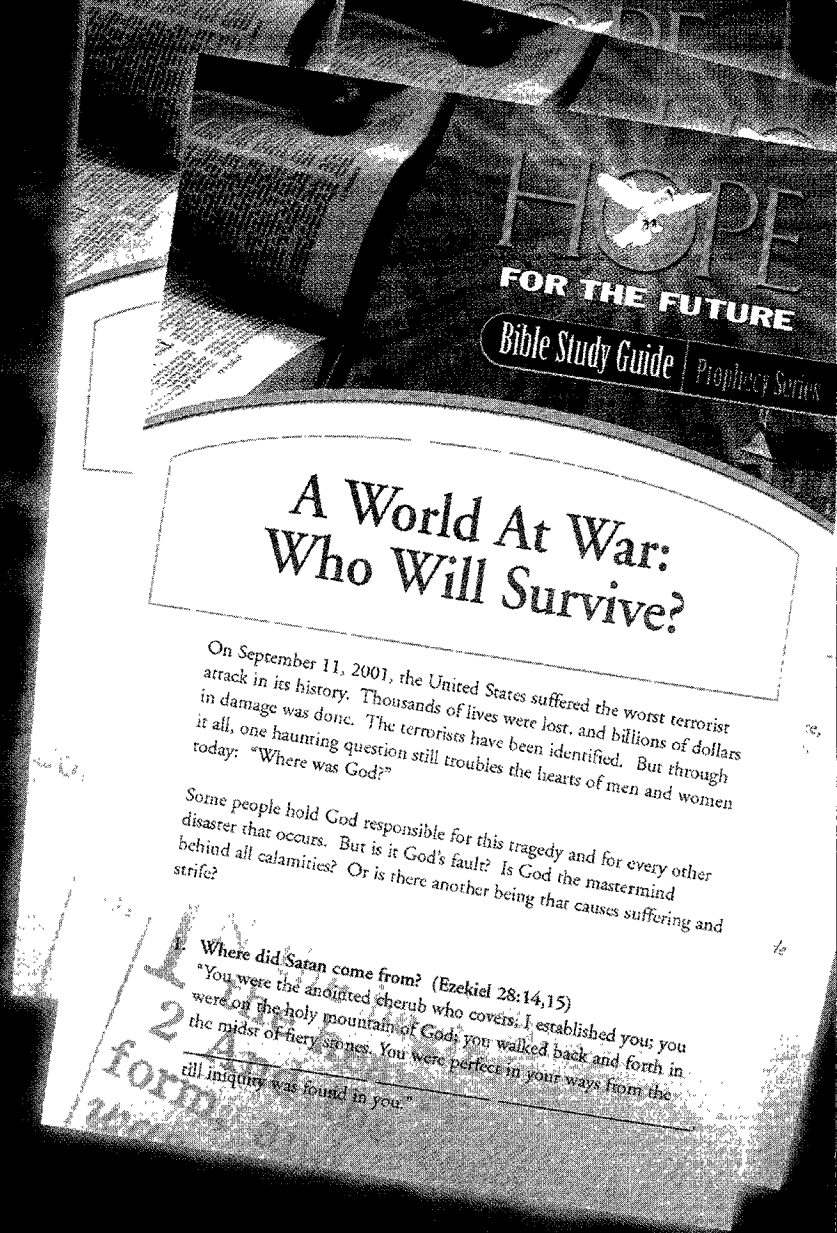
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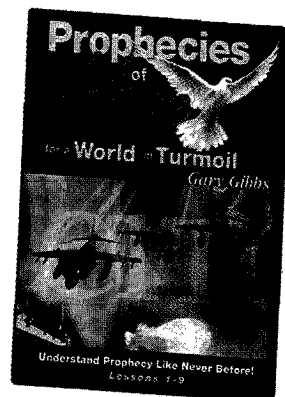
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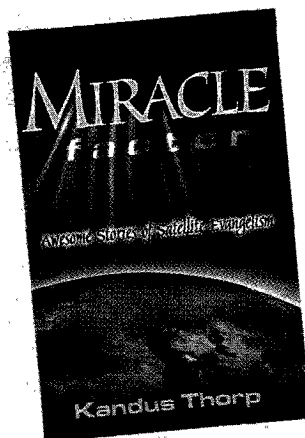


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