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Remembering and learning from our past: An interview with Archives, Statistics, and Research

Derek J. Morris and Willie E. Hucks II

David Trim, Rowena Moore, and Benjamin Baker answer questions about what they call "a three-legged stool—archives, statistics, and research" that represents a department at the General Conference headquarters.

Phoebe: Was she an early church leader? Darius Jankiewicz

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COVER—Clockwise from top left: New Orleans General Conference Session, 1985; Japan Missionary College students, 1906; Unknown portrait; British Adventists, W.E. Read, Arthur S. Maxwell, Roy Allan Anderson, L.H. Christian., delivering a petition against Sunday Laws, 1931; Morning Star riverboat, Mississippi, circa 1898; Nurses at Maluti Adventist Hospital, in Losotho, 1950s; Eagle Lake, Minnesota Camp Meeting, 1875; Native Americans appealing for a teacher, circa 1918; First three ordained missionaries in Korea, circa 1910; G.I. Butler, S.N. Haskell and J.N. Loughborough, 1915; Group of African Adventist ministers, circa 1935; Adventist Family Health Clinic, 2010; Black leaders at the General Conference, 1946; Ana Stahl on the Luzeiro mission boat in Brazil, circa 1935; Workers at the Review and Herald Publishing Association office, circa 1897.

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"We should today, more than ever, be confident in our prophetic calling, in our prophetic message, and with greater certainty in our prophetic identity as clearly described in Revelation."

The remnant church

The article titled "The Remnant Church" (February 2013) by Gerhard Pfandl concisely summarizes the prophetic identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Like John the Baptist who heralded the First Advent, we, too, are called by God to herald the second advent of Jesus. This special message is both one of hope and warning. Also, like John, there may be rejection, persecution, and suffering for those who proclaim it with similar conviction.

We should today, more than ever, be confident in our prophetic calling, in our prophetic message, and with greater certainty in our prophetic identity as clearly described in Revelation. In this excellent article, Dr. Pfandl does this with humility and without arrogant exclusivity. However, it is also without apology or reservation. Amen.

—Lonnie Mixon, Collegedale, Tennessee, United States Gerhard Pfandl alludes to, but does not fully elucidate Revelation 1:2 as he begins his article "The Remnant Church." The article attempts to connect in traditional fashion "the testimony of Jesus" to the ministry of Ellen G. White. He does make his case in a secondary sense I feel, while missing the primary point.

At the very beginning (Rev. 1:2), John, as a prophet, does see his work as a part of the "testimony of Jesus" but more specifically "the testimony of Jesus" being the content of what Jesus showed him. "[S]ignified it by his angel unto his servant John, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw" (Rev. 1:1, 2, KJV; italics added).

"Even to all that he saw" would naturally refer to the content of the book of Revelation. Thus, this is "the testimony of Jesus" in context. The next verse confirms this. "Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear... and keep the things that are written here."

At the end of Revelation (Rev. 22:7, 10), Jesus Himself refers to "The sayings of the prophecy of this book" as His "testimony." I think it is a disservice to Christ and exegetically missing the point to apply this to Ellen G. White. Such an interpretation can logically reopen the abusive potential of regarding Ellen White's words as authoritative as the words of Jesus Himself. I believe she would not want or stand for this.

—Darrel Lindensmith, pastor, Fargo, North Dakota, United States

Clarification of position

I wish to respond to the article in the February 2013 *Ministry*, "A Job for Superman? A Call to Clarify the Role of the Adventist Minister," by David J. Cook and Ryan L. Ashlock. In that article, I am extensively referred to regarding my position on the role of the pastor. First, I wish to thank them for continuing the discussion of a much needed subject in the Adventist Church on the role of the pastor. However, I feel that I need to clarify my position since what was presented in the article concerning me is not totally accurate.

There is a strong temptation when one recites history to assume that one is arguing to replicate history. That, unfortunately, is the stand taken in the article, but is not my position in any way. This is the twenty-first century and not the nineteenth. We cannot go back as a denomination to the pastoral role of the nineteenth century. To do so would cause irreparable harm. I have tried to make that position clear whenever I present this subject. What I advocate is that we examine the historical evidence to discover those principles that guided the early Adventist Church in choosing

Continued on page 24



The beauty of history

y friend and former editor of Ministry, Nikolaus Satelmajer, and I often jokingly discussed the importance (or nonimportance) of properly understanding history and its meaning for the present. Satelmajer, a historian, would chide me as I feigned my lack of interest in past events. Of course, I do know the significance of recalling the past, ever keeping in mind the words of George Santayana, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

I apply these words to myself both personally and professionally, remembering that I (as do we all) have a history. I am proud of certain elements of my past, while there are other portions of it I would gladly erase, if that were possible. But this editorial does not feature me; rather, my comments highlight my church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whose one hundred and fiftieth anniversary we celebrate this year. My church was born in May 1863 in Battle Creek, Michigan, United States.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church possesses a rich history that encompasses the founding of the church in the United States and then spreading to Europe, Australia, and around the globe. In more recent years, we have witnessed meteoric growth in Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. This expansion now counts for more than 17 million adherents among its membership. Over the years, the church has experienced both organization and reorganization in an effort to more effectively and efficiently conduct its main business of proclaiming the three angels' messages of Revelation 14; and it does so through its various institutions, such as churches, educational entities, medical establishments, and publishing houses. When many think of Adventism, they think of our distinctive and Bible-based teachings. Our understanding of Scripture was not conceived in a vacuum; rather, this was born from days and nights of serious and intense study and later developed through a series of Bible conferences. Wrestling with Scripture has produced the 28 fundamental beliefs that define the theological beliefs of Adventists.

Without a doubt, there are some less than stellar portions of Adventist Church history, and those troubling realities Ministry features, in this month's lead article, an interview that my colleague Derek Morris and I conducted with the director of the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR), David Trim, and his capable team of associates. ASTR serves as the church's repository of history; and taking a walk through their offices in the GC building inspires the observer with a sense of the significance of our church's history. As you read this interview, I believe you

"Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard."

have been played out on the corporate level of the denomination. This should surprise no one since humans have always been, since the inception of the Adventist Church, involved in the governance and everyday life of this entity. But I have always maintained an appropriate pride in this church into which I was born, whose preachers and teachers molded me, and whose teachings have formed the basis of my theology and worldview. This pride grew when, as a teenager, I attended my first General Conference (GC) session in 1980 in my hometown of Dallas, Texas, United States. Although the worldwide membership was significantly smaller than it is today, I felt that I was a part of a beautiful worldwide body. And that excitement has only grown in light of the GC sessions I have attended since then and as a result of having the humbling honor of serving the world church in my current capacity.

In an effort to highlight the sesquicentennial of the Adventist Church,

will catch a glimpse of the beauty of our historical past in much the same way that I experienced a fascination with it when I first took a class in Adventist Church history during my undergraduate studies. More than that, I hope you will catch the vision that God has a missionary present and a glorious future for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, its imperfections notwithstanding.

The words of Ellen G. White ring true: "During ages of spiritual darkness the church of God has been as a city set on a hill. From age to age, through successive generations, the pure doctrines of heaven have been unfolding within its borders. Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theater of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts."²

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

¹ George Santayana, *Reason in Common Sense*, vol.1 of *The Life of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 284.

² Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 12.

Derek J. Morris, DMin, is editor of *Ministry*. **Willie E. Hucks II, DMin,** is associate editor of *Ministry*.





Remembering and learning from our past: An interview with Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR)

Editor's note: David Trim, director; Rowena Moore, Yearbook editor; and Benjamin Baker, assistant archivist, serve as members in the Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research for the world church of Seventh-day Adventists, headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

Derek Morris (DM): We have been counseled, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history." How does your department at the General Conference help us remember God's leading and teaching in our past?

David Trim (DT): This is one of the strongest affirmations by any Christian leader regarding the importance of Christian history and a particular denomination's unique history. There's also an important point in it that we must not miss. You know, the statement is often just read as, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us." But it also says, "and His teaching in our past history."

What is His teaching? What are the things we have learned? This is a wonderful statement on multiple levels. I do think, collectively, there is a lot more we must remember, because, in a sense, we have forgotten vast parts of our history and the Lord's teaching in that history as well.

So, we as a collective team are preserving the record of our history.

That is a large part of the archives. Of course, that's only one leg of a three-legged stool—archives, statistics, and research. But the archives and the records part are absolutely crucial. So we work to both conserve and preserve the documents and to perpetuate institutional memory.

We are also increasingly doing research on the documents. There are the two sides to the documents: the conservation side, taking documents in; and the more active side, which is saying, "What can we learn from them?" Thus, we are trying to make research a priority now.

Willie Hucks (WH): The Seventh-day Adventist Church celebrates—if that is the proper term to use—its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary in 2013. What are some events that will commemorate the founding of the church?

DT: I would say "commemorate" is the word I would use rather than "celebrate" because if we could somehow go back to 1863 and tell all those people gathered in Battle Creek, "We're still going to be here in 2013," it would cause some consternation and a lot of disappointment. On the other hand, none of us know the hour or time of His coming and God has unquestionably led in our church, and so we can certainly mark and be thankful for that leading. In terms of the events, the chief global event is May 18, which is the closest Sabbath to the actual one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the General Conference (GC), which has been set aside to be a worldwide day of prayer, remembrance, and recommitment to the shared movement.

The Annual Council of world church leaders last October voted to call every local church to get involved. This could be a profound moment of unity as we collectively look back. We should also recommit ourselves to mission because the General Conference, above all, was especially founded for the purpose of mission. That's very clear in the records of that first session. It was founded to further the outreach of the church.

Also, a number of divisions are going to be organizing their own events. We're looking to provide them with resources. For example, my colleague Benjamin Baker is working on providing

photographs. We have a wonderful photographic collection; the Ellen White Estate, Andrews University, and Loma Linda University also have very good collections, parts of which are very familiar and get used all the time, and parts that are ignored. So, we're trying to provide resources to divisions,

What are some of the most important statistical records that are kept here in the General Conference?

Rowena Moore (RM): The main statistical record we use and produce is the *Yearbook*. For the 2013 *Yearbook*, for instance, we will use the second

people have moved. You may find them in another part of the world.

It's interesting to trace where people are and see what departments are in different fields. Some fields have very few departments; others have many departments and multiple ministries and services. You can see how fields



unions, and local churches as they have their own events.

The other key event that the GC is sponsoring is an exhibition that will focus on the first approximately 60 years of the church—from 1863 to 1922. That will be located here in the General Conference complex. We are also working to create a traveling version that divisions can have in their own territory[ies]. It will be replicas of the original documents and photographs. There will also be a Web site with resources.

DM: We talked about archives, but you also oversee statistical records.

quarter 2012 statistics from the annual statistical report, compiled in our department by Kathleen Jones, for churches and membership and the mid-2012 population of the countries around the world. So when you look at the *Yearbook*, you get a feel not only for the churches and members, you see all the countries that we are in as well. We also update the maps each year with new realignments of conferences or unions.

The Yearbook is different from the statistical report because you see names. You are able to compare Yearbooks year to year and see to where are reaching their constituents and the nonchurched in broader ways. It gives a lovely capsule of the church.

Now, you might think, I know we have a medical work, but I'm not sure what it entails. If you turn to the health care section, you will see hospitals around the world. There will be clinics, nursing homes, and retirement centers, and also children's homes and orphanages. You will be able to see that this really is a worldwide church. We are diversified in many ways.

And we have only a fraction in the Yearbook of our schools because we do not list our elementary schools. For 2013, we'll be showing accredited secondary schools. We probably have as many nonaccredited schools as we do accredited. But again, it gives you a view of the church that you don't get in the pew on Sabbath morning, particularly if you have never worked for the church.

DT: Thus, if there's a pastor trying to give his [or her] church members a sense of what does the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church mean, he or she will have the resources. And there's also a Yearbook Web site, www.adventistyearbook .org, and a directory Web site, adventistdirectory.org, that enables you to find local churches and schools. There's also a statistics Web site, which is adventiststatistics .org. There, you can download a lot of information. I like to think that possibly we are unique, or certainly very unusual, in that we make our key information and documents, both historical and contemporary, freely available to anyone who can access the Internet.

If someone sees a broadcast on television or the Web

about Adventists, he or she can go online and discover a huge amount of accurate information about us from these Web sites. In adventiststatistics .org, you can download historical statistics for any field, union, division, or a combination thereof, since the church was founded. They are downloadable as spreadsheets for analysis. The key statistical records we collect are the number of church members, local churches, companies, and employees broken down into the different categories: ordained ministers, commissioned ministers, licensed ministers, those who hold minister of teaching credentials, administrators, those who have a missionary license or credential, and employees who have no particular credential. All of that data is on the Web site.

RM: One of the nice things about the archives' Web site is that you can check on your family history. We have had so many people thank us because they have been able to go on the Web site and



find information on relatives. If someone was a pastor, for instance, they can look for his name, not only in the Yearbook but written up in different union papers over the years as he moved around the church. You can do searches for your church's history, to see who pastored over the years or when your church was inaugurated. There's a wealth of information on the archives' Web site. People get really excited when they are shown what is there and how to access it.

WH: How does your department contribute to the mission of the Adventist Church?

DT: Obviously, we do not, as a department, conduct evangelistic series,

and so forth. We provide important resources, though. We help the church by providing background information for historical theological decisions. We have been requested, for example, to do two substantial reports for the Theology of Ordination Study Committee on Adventist practice and attitudes, both on

> ordination and on women's ordination. Drawing on both statistics and the archives, we also contribute to policy decisions on how the church is organized. For instance, we were involved in the recent reorganization of the work in the Middle East and North Africa. I was asked to ascertain whether church structure had any impact on missions. And my suspicion was that it wouldn't. I was surprised to see overwhelming evidence that the way the church organized itself actually did have a major impact on mission. And a project we're working on at the moment is looking at church growth in the Japan Union. In this work, we bring together both history and statistics; statistics are much more meaningful in a historical context.

> For instance, if you look at two years' statistics, what

do they tell you? Oh, look. The membership has increased! But does that mean anything? You will want to look at ten years, twenty years, thirty years, because then you can see trends. So, we very much see ourselves as contributing to the mission of the church in terms of informing decisions about how we organize and how we use and deploy resources.

Benjamin Baker (BB): I work on the archives side of Archives, Statistics, and Research, and enjoy focusing on the Web site. Local pastors can visit www.AdventistArchives.org and find information of great interest.

First of all, there [are] resources historical, theological, and



anecdotal—for your parishioners. More and more, the pastors are expected, even required, to be knowledgeable—maybe more knowledgeable than they are able to be. You can point your parishioners there.

We also possess theological resources, should a church member ask things like, "What is it Adventists believe about the Trinity?" We might have information that can assist. We also possess resources for missions. We

have all the mission quarterlies since they were first published a hundred years ago and the Sabbath School quarterlies as well, which often have mission resources. There [are] a huge number of stories and photographs so that if somebody asks, "Where can I find a different mission story that everybody hasn't heard before?" it doesn't take a huge amount of work to find something.

DM: You earlier mentioned researching things like church growth in Japan and the topic of ordination and women's ordination. Is there other significant research that you are planning on over the next few years?

DT: Yes. One of the things we are working on is a book for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary—an illustrated history of

the church. We hope that it will be a refreshing combination of the familiar and quite unfamiliar. It will draw from the exhibition we are preparing.

Recently, we were also asked by the Fundamental Beliefs Study Committee if we had any documentation on how the current wording on belief number six was adopted. Actually, we had hundreds of pages of documentation.

It is incredibly well documented about how all of the fundamental beliefs were drafted. Creation is a very vexed topic. And exactly how our church reached its fundamental beliefs and what the issues were, I think, is going to come up again. So we anticipate doing a search on that.

Another area is the relationship of the different levels of organization in our church; the relationship between the conferences, unions, divisions, and the General Conference. The discus-

Benjamin Baker

sions over this year have shown that there is a fair amount of misunder-standing on this topic, partly because our organization is complicated. So the GC now has, for the first time, a budget for research that can improve the effectiveness of mission, ministry, and administration.

So there are several large projects planned at the moment. And one of

our jobs, when the research teams with whom we've contracted deliver their reports, is to ask, "What does this mean for world church leaders and even division church leaders?" Systematizing those kinds of findings will be interesting and challenging.

WH: If someone has information—artifacts or other materials—they think will serve historical benefit, can they contribute to Archives, Statistics, and

Research?

DT: We're always happy for people to approach us and then we can say, "Yes, we'd be interested in that," or "Perhaps you might like to send that to . . ." If anyone is in any doubt, err on the side of keeping rather than throwing away because one reason so much has been lost is because some of it was just never kept. If it isn't of historical value, we will let them know.

BB: And they can contact us through our Web site. The adventistarchives.org site has a form that they can use to contact us. And we would much rather that people check before they discard.

DM: I want to thank you for a very helpful overview of the ministry of Adventist Archives, Statistics, and Research. And it has

helped us see that there are some very valuable resources for pastors. And these Web sites will tremendously help not only pastors but other lay leaders as they seek to reaffirm the mission of the church and complete the work we have been asked to do.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or visit www.facebook.com/MinistryMagazine.

^{*} Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1915), 196.

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Phoebe: Was she an early church leader?

y all accounts, the epistle of Romans is a masterpiece of Christian apologetics where, in a brilliant and logical manner, the apostle Paul lays out the case for the Christian belief of salvation through Jesus Christ alone. This belief was instrumental in the rise of the Christian community of believers called into existence purely through God's gracious love. While clearly rooted in the Old Testament idea of the "people of God," this was a new community and, as such, it powerfully challenged the various forms of racial, cultural, gender, and economic discrimination so prevalent in first-century Judaism and the larger society. Toward the end of the letter, in chapter 12, Paul lays down the ground rules according to which this new community should function. There we find that self-sacrifice and self-denial are essential elements of the Christian life, that each member of the body of Christ is to function according to the spiritual gifting bestowed by God, and, finally, that agape love is to be the primary value guiding the life of the community. Chapters 13-15 build on the groundwork established in chapter 12, and then chapter 16 concludes the book of Romans.

In this final chapter, Paul issues a series of greetings to both men and women, all of whom he considers his "co-workers in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3; see also Phil. 4:3).1 Among the many individuals listed in this chapter, Phoebe, whom Paul refers to as "our sister," receives special recognition (Rom. 16:1, 2). Not only is Paul's discourse on Phoebe the first and longest in the chapter but also the words and allusions he uses to describe her and her ministry hint at the remarkable stature this woman had among the early Christians. For these reasons, Phoebe has fascinated Christian writers throughout the centuries, most of whom have written in an environment unfriendly to the ministry of women. Origen (c. A.D. 184-253) wrote that "this passage teaches two things at the same time: As we have said, women are to be considered ministers in the Church, and . . . ought to be received in the ministry."2 A century or so later, the "golden-mouthed" John Chrysostom (c. A.D. 347-407) noted, "For how can the woman be else than blessed who has the blessing of so favourable a testimony from Paul, who had also the power to render assistance to him who had righted the whole world?"3 After the fourth century A.D., however, such statements became rare, as the Christian church moved towards a male-dominated ministry in the church.⁴

The role of Phoebe in early Christianity has been hotly debated throughout the centuries, ranging from views suggesting that her ministry was nothing more than that of a helper (or

patron) of the apostolic task, to those ascribing to her a significant ministerial role. As we shall see, this debate often influenced the biblical translations of the Greek words used by Paul to describe the ministry of this remarkable woman. In this article, I will focus on three aspects of Phoebe's ministry that flow from the text of Romans 16:1, 2: her ministry as a diakonos; her role as the letter bearer to the Romans; and finally, her role as a prostatis, which literally translates as "the one who stands before."

Phoebe as a deacon?

In Romans 16:1, Paul writes of Phoebe: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me."

There has been much discussion in Christian literature with regard to the word servant, which is a translation of the well-known Greek word diakonos, also translated as "deacon." The concept of a deacon was familiar to first-century society, referring primarily to household service; and in the New Testament, diakonos, at times, was used in conjunction with another Greek term, doulos, or slave. 5 Reading the word diakonos from a modern-day perspective often obscures the fact that, in Paul's day, the position of the servant was considered to be the lowest in society—people who were the menials and lackeys of the day. Thus, there exists a tension between the modern, ecclesiastical understanding and use of the word deacon and the ancient diakonos. It is this term as well as the word doulos, however, with all their cultural connotations that Christ adopted to describe His own ministry (Mark 10:45). Following Jesus' example, Paul used the words diakonos and doulos to describe Christ's ministry when he wrote in Romans 15:8: "For I tell you that Christ has become a servant [diakonos] of the Jews on behalf of God's truth" (see also Phil. 2:7 where Paul refers to Jesus as doulos). Paul repeatedly used the same word to describe his own ministry and that of his coworkers (see, e.g., 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:1; 6:4; 8:4).

Thus, we find it remarkable that just a few sentences later, in Romans 16:1, Paul refers to Phoebe as diakonos, essentially equating her diakonia (or service) with that of Christ as well as his own apostolic ministry. Also noteworthy is that the word diakonos in this passage is used in its masculine rather than feminine form.⁶ At that stage of Christian history, the Greek term for deaconess had not yet been coined. The distinctly feminine form diakonissa did not appear until the fourth century. Be that as it may, Paul's calling Phoebe a deacon appears to make her ministry as equally important and valid as that of other early church leaders, such as Tychicus (Eph. 6:21), Epaphras (Col. 1:7), and Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6). Otherwise, why would Paul use such a term in reference to a woman and create intentional misunderstanding?8

It must be pointed out, however, that in contrast to Paul, who functioned as diakonos in service to the entire church, Phoebe's diakonia seems to be specifically tied to the local church of Cenchreae. Being the only time the New Testament links such service directly to the local church suggests, for some commentators, that Phoebe was most likely involved in some sort of

recognized ministry or held a position of responsibility within her local house church.9 The case for Phoebe's functioning as such seems strengthened by Paul's use of another Greek word, ousa (being), which occurs together with the noun diakonos. The phrase indicating her as being a deacon denotes some sort of leadership position. Thus, it could be stated that Phoebe was probably the first recorded local church deacon in the history of Christianity. 10 This being so, Paul's exhortation to bishops and deacons, found in 1 Timothy 3, would apply equally to Phoebe as to any other church leader of early Christianity.11

Phoebe as a courier?

Careful exegetical, historical, and linguistic studies have led many commentators to conclude that Phoebe was actually the person whom Paul chose to deliver his letter to the Roman house churches. 12 While, to our modern eyes, the text is more implicit than explicit, Paul's words appear to be a recommendation for a letter bearer written according to first-century custom. 13 The purpose of such a recommendation was to introduce the letter carrier to the congregation in Rome. Paul's letter to Philemon serves as another example of a similar recommendation, with Onesimus also functioning as a letter bearer.14 If Phoebe was indeed the carrier of the letter to the Romans, it would be natural for Paul to introduce and recommend her because she was obviously unknown to the believers in Rome. Being Paul's coworker and emissary, it is also probable that Phoebe read the letter to many Roman congregations and was able to provide commentary on everything that could have been misunderstood, thus providing needed clarifications. Additionally, knowing Paul well, she could provide the house churches of Rome with information regarding his personal needs and travel plans. 15 All this raises a question: why would Paul make such a culturally questionable decision as choosing a woman to be his emissary? It is conceivable that Phoebe had proven herself to be a respected and trustworthy church leader and whom Paul could entrust his message of salvation to the Gentile world. As one scholar commented, "'Phoebe carried under the folds of her robe the whole future of Christian theology.'"¹⁶

Phoebe as a leader (prostatis)?

Romans 16:2 provides us with one more important piece of information about Phoebe that often tends to disappear in translation. There Paul calls Phoebe prostatis, literally, "the one who stands before." The New International Version renders the text this way: "for she has been the benefactor [prostatis] to many people, including me." Other versions translate the word variably as "patron" (ESV), "succourer" (KJV), "helper" (ASV; NASB), "she has been helpful to many" (NLT), or even "good friend" (TEV). There are, however, some translations that render prostatis as "leader" (YLT), "respected leader" (CEV), or "defender of many" (Emphasized Bible of J. B. Rotherdam, 1872).

The translators' disposition towards rendering prostatis as "helper" or "patron" appears to flow from a widespread conviction that Phoebe was nothing more than a rich woman who supported Paul and other missionary workers financially. This conclusion seems to be supported by the fact that, in antiquity, there existed women who, while they could not hold any public office, offered their patronage and financial help to various causes. Furthermore, the passage ends with "including me." According to these translators, if prostatis had meant more than being a "helper," it would have meant that at times Paul would have allowed others to exercise their gift of leadership in his presence and possibly even submit to their authority. This, according to hierarchical thinking, would not have been possible, as Paul would have outranked everyone in his presence (even in matters of local church governance), and particularly

However, this kind of reasoning does not resolve the problem of why

Paul would use the word *prostatis* in his description of Phoebe if he could have simply called her a boethos, "helper" (Heb. 13:6) or said that she was sumballo polu, "being of great help" (Acts 18:27). Perhaps Phoebe was more than just a rich woman who desired to support the missionary work financially. To determine the veracity of this line of reasoning, we must follow the line of evidence that would unlock the meaning of the word prostatis.

The best way to begin is to look for the same word used in other passages of the New Testament. Unfortunately, prostatis happens to be a hapax legomenon, that is, it occurs only once in the New Testament as a noun. To discover the meaning of *prostatis*, we must thus look beyond the New Testament to sources such as the Septuagint, which was Paul's Bible,18 and other ancient Greek literature as well as related words throughout Paul's writings.

The masculine form of prostatis occurs more than once in the Septuagint. First Chronicles 27:31 lists Jaziz the Hagrite as one of the prostates or chief officials of King David's court. The same word is also listed in 1 Chronicles 29:6 where prostatai (plural of prostates) were "the officials in charge of the king's work." Similarly, 2 Chronicles 8:10 and 24:11 use the word to designate "King Solomon's chief officials," who were given charge of workers and/or money. The English Standard Version renders 2 Chronicles 8:10 this way: "And these were the chief officers of King Solomon, 250, who exercised authority over the people." When the word is used in the Septuagint, therefore, it tends to signify some kind of leadership function.

Prostates also frequently appears in ancient nonbiblical literature. For Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), it designated a person who stood before others as a "democratic leader" or "protector of the people."19 Subsequent historical evidence testifies to the existence of specially selected persons in many Greek cities who functioned as champions or defenders of the poorer citizenry. These people were charged with

protecting citizens against the attacks of the chief magistrates in power or the richer classes. They would also defend the underprivileged in courts and functioned as guardians of peace and constitutional liberty.²⁰ Prostates was also known to be a common term used among the Greeks for presidents of various secular or religious associations.21 The same term could also be applied to defenders or champions of Greek cities in times of need or warfare.²² At times, entire cities were considered as prostates of other cities or regions. For example, between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C., Sparta and Athens jostled for the position of the leading city (prostates) in the region and the protector of peace.²³

Evidence from ancient inscriptions indicates that in Egypt and, eventually, in Rome the word prostates had already become a word of choice for synagogue leadership among Diaspora Jewry prior to the birth of Christ. In this way, prostates functioned as an equivalent of the Hebrew rosh ha-knesset (the head of the synagogue).24 Inscriptional evidence also indicates that in Rome prostates served as a technical term for the leader or president of the Jewish community.²⁵ We can reasonably assume that Paul, being a Hellenistic Jew and growing up in the Diaspora, was thoroughly familiar with the Greek concept of the prostates as the champion, defender, or presiding officer of the community. This would also mean that when the Christian leaders in Rome received Phoebe, they were aware that she was a Christian leader in her own standing.

The most interesting line of evidence, however, suggesting that Phoebe might have been much more than just a helper, comes from Paul's own writings. While prostatis as a noun occurs only once in the New Testament, its other forms, such as proistemi, appear several times. The first time prostatis appears in the New Testament in another form is in Romans 12:8 in Paul's list of gifts from the Holy Spirit: "if it is to lead [proistamenos], do it diligently." Speaking of elders, Paul encourages the Thessalonians

"to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you [proistamenous] in the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:12). Most importantly, in 1 Timothy 5:17, Paul uses the verb form of *prostatis* when he writes, "The elders [proestotes presbuteroi, i.e., "those elders who stand before"] who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching."

How is it, then, that most versions seem to water down this important word prostatis and view Phoebe simply as a "helper"? Why not, following the Contemporary English Version, use "respected leader"? The most likely answer to these questions is that perhaps the translators may have felt uncomfortable with a notion that a woman could carry any leadership or presiding role in the early Christian church. We believe it conceivable that Phoebe may have been an important leader among the ancient Christians, who led a congregation in Cenchreae and served so well that Paul was willing to let her run the affairs of the church in his presence and entrusted to her the precious epistle of Romans to carry to the Christians in Rome.

A careful reading of Romans 16:1, 2, thus, offers us a new glance at this remarkable woman who appears to be a close associate of Paul in spreading the gospel of Christ; who served as a leader of her house church in Cenchreae; who, despite all the dangers associated with travel on Roman roads, accepted the task of carrying the message of salvation to the Roman church; and who was recognized by Paul and others as a Christian leader in her own right. 🚺

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture passages are from the New International Version.
- 2 Origen, Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, bks. 6-10 of The Fathers of the Church, tr. and ed. Thomas P. Scheck (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002),
- 3 John Chrysostom, "Homilies on Romans 30.2," in The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841), 478.
- 4 Gerald Lewis Bray, ed., Romans, vol. 6 of Ancient Commentary on Scripture, New Testament (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press,
- 5 Although the words diakonos and doulos carry different meanings



- in literature, they were often used by both Paul and Jesus interchangeably. See, e.g., Matt. 20:25–28; 22:1–14; Mark 10:43–45; Phil. 1:1; and 1 Cor. 3:5. In Col. 1:7 and 4:12, Epaphras is called diakonos and doulos respectively. Cf. Murray J. Harris, Slave of Christ: A New Testament Metaphor for Total Devotion to Christ (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 179. For a thorough discussion on the differences between the words diakonos and doulos, see Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, ed., Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), s.vv. "diakonos," "doulos."
- 6 This fact should put to rest the argument taken from 1 Tim. 3:2, 12 regarding Paul's statement that bishops and deacons must be "the husband of but one wife" to mean that only men can function as hishops or deacons.
- 7 The technical term diakonissa appears for the first time in Christian literature in canon 19 of the First Council of Nicaea. There are no known earlier versions of the term. Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, The First and Second Letters to Timothy, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000) 286
- 8 Denis Fortin notes the inconsistency in how various versions translate the word diakonos in reference to Phoebe. While most translators have no problem with translating the word diakonos as "minister" in reference to Paul and other early leaders in the church, no translation uses the term in reference to Phoebe. Only the words servant, deacon, or deaconess are used. Fortin sees this as a "strange bias against women in ministry." Denis Fortin, "Was Phoebe a Deacon, a Servant, or a Minister?" Memory, Meaning & Faith (blog), April 25, 2010, http://www.memorymeaningfaith.org/blog/2010/04/phoebe-deacon-servant-or-minister.html.

- 9 James Dunn, Romans 9-16, vol. 38B of Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1988), 886, 887; Kevin Giles, Patterns of Ministry Among the First Christians (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1989), 56
- 10 Dunn, Romans 9-16, 887
- 11 At the same time, warns James Dunn, it would be anachronistic to read into the New Testament our understanding of an established office of episcopate or diaconate "as though a role of responsibility and authority, with properly appointed succession, had already been agreed upon in the Pauline churches." Ibid.; cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, Romans, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 787.
- 12 The notion that Phoebe was, in fact, Paul's courier has been strongly affirmed in contemporary exegetical literature on Romans. See, e.g., ibid., 786.
- 13 For a careful study of Christian passages of commendation and their comparison with contemporary non-Christian examples, see Chan-Hie Kim, Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation (Missoula, MT: University of Montana Press, 1972), 50–60; also see Harry Gamble, The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 44,84, 85
- 14 Chan-Hie Kim, Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation, 120–134.
- 15 Arland J. Hultgren, Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 569.
- 16 Quoted in Brenda Poinsett, She Walked With Jesus: Stories of Christ Followers in the Bible (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishers, 2004), 192
- 17 Although the New Testament indicates that the original apostles

- carried a special authority within the community of faith, this does not preclude the possibility that, once established, local communities had freedom to govern themselves without external interferences.
- 18 Calvin J. Roetzel, The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context, 5th ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 20–24.
- P. J. Rhodes, A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 447, 97.
- 20 Abel Hendy Jones Greenidge, *A Handbook of Greek Constitutional History* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 188.
- 21 Margaret H. Williams, "The Structure of Roman Jewry Reconsidered: Were the Synagogues of Ancient Rome Entirely Homogenous?" Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 104 (1994): 138; cf. Franz Poland, Geschichte des griechischen Vereinswesens (Leipzig: Zentral-Antiquariat der Deutchen Demokratischen Republik, 1967), 363–367.
- 22 Peter Liddel, "Democracy Ancient and Modern," in A Companion to Greek and Roman Political Thought, ed. Ryan K. Balot (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 138.
- 23 Kurt A. Raaflaub, The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 169; cf. Töru Yuge and Masaoki Doi, Forms of Control and Subordination in Antiquity (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 575.
- 24 Joseph Modrzejewski, The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 96; cf. Erich S. Gruen, Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans (Cambridoe: Harvard University Press, 2002). 115.
- 25 Williams, "The Structure of Roman Jewry," 138.

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A sample prayer for revival and reformation

In the prayer of Jesus while He was at Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–39), we learn the following principles for an effective prayer life for revival.

First, others should join with you in prayer. Jesus, the Master of the universe, prayed with His disciples when He was faced with the great assignment of saving our world. We must also be ready to pray in groups to sustain the vibrancy needed for our prayer life.

Second, seek a place away from distractions, where your heart can be in tune with God while praying. From the above text, Jesus went to Gethsemane. Revival is delayed when we allow worldly distractions during our time of intimacy with God.

Third, a "burden" must be developed to have an effective prayer life. As soon as Jesus got to Gethsemane, He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with Him (vv. 37, 38). He began to tell them His overwhelming trouble—a burden for the salvation of the world.

Fourth, there are the words "going a little farther . . . As important as building a prayer life with like minds is, an individual responsibility also arises. Each person should take



personal responsibility for his or her prayer life to birth a godly revival.

Fifth, the last part of verse 39 tells us that we need to pray for God's will to be done. Doing so may lead us into places we never imagined.

Through it all, let us always pray for revival.

—ABIOYE OLUDARE DAVID, MA, IS
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The false security of sincerity

hinking and writing about human virtues is a time-honored tradition.¹ Plato suggested that every human being ought to possess the four cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, courage, and justice. Buddha embraced the need to renounce the world. Various Bible writers also listed virtues that God's followers should manifest in their lives. For example, Paul urged the Corinthians to seek the virtues of faith, hope, and, above all else, love.

History has demonstrated, however, that humans are not content with virtue lists from the past. What Plato and Paul urged as central virtues in their respective days may not necessarily be the primary values held by people today. In some societies, temperance may be replaced by self-expression, courage may lose ground to tolerance, and faith may even be seen as evidence of childishness rather than virtue.

During my lifetime, it seems that sincerity is one of the virtues gaining in global popularity. According to the dictionary, a sincere person possesses "honesty of mind or intention" and a "freedom from hypocrisy." There is a growing consensus that thoughtful, loving people should not get caught up in needless debates over differing beliefs and views of truth. "After all, because we will never agree, why bother?" many would say. "What really counts is that we are sincere about what we believe."

I noticed this pattern of thought as a pastor, and I continue to see evidence of it among the students in the Christian university where I teach.

Recently, the reality of this "sincerity" trend was illustrated by an informal survey I distributed to students in two of my religion classes. I provided them with a list of four qualities: purity, orthodoxy, sincerity, and faith. Then, I asked students to rank those qualities based on what they thought God would most want to see in us. The response was overwhelming. Students believed that God valued sincerity more than He desired purity or orthodoxy.³

I would agree that there is something comforting about the notion that belief and purity of life do not matter as long as one shows sincerity. Such a view sounds open-minded, inclusive, and even kind. But is it safe, prudent, or wise to believe this about sincerity? Is this virtue really *that* virtuous? And if not, how might a pastor dialogue with someone who has elevated sincerity to the top of his or her virtue rankings? I would suggest initiating a conversation that explores at least four truths regarding sincerity.

God wants us to be sincere

First of all, while we may question the elevation of sincerity as a chief virtue, the Bible clearly teaches sincerity (or wholeheartedness) is a

trait God highly prizes. In 1 Chronicles 28:9, David urged his son, Solomon, to " 'acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion.' "4 Luke describes the earliest believers in Jesus as meeting and eating together "with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:46). In 1 Timothy 3:8, Paul lists sincerity as one of the necessary requirements for church leaders. In James 3:17, wisdom from heaven is described as "impartial and sincere." Beyond these explicit references, the authors filled the Bible with stories that demonstrate the value of sincerity and an undivided heart before God. One of Jesus' greatest criticisms of the religious leaders of His day was that they were hypocrites and lacked sincerity (see, e.g., Matt. 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 28).

Clearly then, sincerity is indeed an admirable quality that God would desire of all of us. God can save sincere people who may be ignorant or confused about what is right and true. But can we appropriately elevate sincerity to the point that we could conclude that what we believe does not matter as long as we are sincere?

Sincerity is elusive

From my perspective, true sincerity is much more difficult to achieve than we may at first suppose. The appeal to sincerity rather than correct belief is *not* a movement away from ambiguity to

peaceful confidence. Instead of making things simpler or easier, the call to sincerity is an incredibly high standard that poses a problem for us.

According to Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" If the sinful human heart is so deceitful, perhaps retreating from debates over "beliefs" and "truth" to the safety of sincerity may not be safe at all. Even if sincerity was all that mattered, how could we know whether or not we were fully sincere? It is a sort of slippery virtue; one that we find difficult to

at the wedding, they would have vehemently—and sincerely—denied that this was the case. Their mixed motivations were present yet subconscious, so, at the time, they could not even see that their vows were less than totally sincere. Clearly, our human judgments about sincerity are not very trustworthy.

Sincerity isn't good when it stands alone

The view that beliefs don't really matter as long as I am sincere may also arise from the assumption that sincerity

with the chief of the island, he noticed a Bible in the chief's home and realized that missionaries had already visited the island. In disgust, the merchant mocked the chief, saying, "What a shame...that you have listened to this foolish nonsense of the missionaries." The chief faced the trader and said.

Do you see the large white stone over there? That is a stone where just a few years ago we used to smash the heads of our victims to get at their brains. Do you see that large oven over there? That

How many times have we thought we were sincere about something, only to realize later that we had deceived ourselves and that our motives were not as pure as we had first believed?

fully and consistently possess or even define.

How many times have we thought we were sincere about something, only to realize later that we had deceived ourselves and that our motives were not as pure as we had first believed? Marriages, for example, typically begin with two people who honestly feel that they have found a soul mate. The husbands and wives willingly take vows of fidelity and pledge faithfulness to each other for the rest of their lives. They are sincere. However, if we were to visit those couples a few years later, we would find that some of the marriages had already ended. Further conversation would bring about a confession from many that, in hindsight, they now recognize that they got married, at least partly, to please parents, ease loneliness, satisfy their desire for physical intimacy, avoid problems at home, or perhaps to enjoy financial security. If someone had suggested this to them stands alone as a quality that can exist as a virtue on its own. Actually, this is not the case at all.

Bible authors demonstrate this reality in a number of biblical passages that use the word sincere. Paul, writing to believers in Corinth, confesses that he fears that their "minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).5 Notice that sincerity has an object-Christ. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul describes sincerity as "sincere faith"; in 1 Peter 1:22, Peter depicts sincerity as "sincere love for your brothers." In each case, sincerity has a worthwhile focus. "Sincere and pure devotion to Christ" is virtuous, but sincere and pure devotion to Caesar, alcohol, or violence, is not. If we remove the worthwhile focus, sincerity ceases to be a virtue.

Missiologist K. P. Yohannan tells the story of a trader who landed on one of the islands of the Pacific for the first time. As this merchant began to talk is the oven where just a few years ago we used to bake the bodies of our victims before we feasted upon them. Had we not listened to what you call the nonsense of those missionaries, I assure you that your head would already be smashed on that rock and your body would be baking in that oven.⁶

What made the difference for the chief? I suspect we would agree that there was a powerful and positive change in the chief's life, but that change did not involve a movement from hypocrisy to sincerity. Instead, the difference came when the chief decided to believe sincerely something new, something different, and something better. In short, sincerity must be focused on something or someone *good* in order for it to remain a virtue. So, to the person who says, "I am sincere," we might gently ask, "Sincere about what?"



Sincerity is not a substitute for belief

Those who elevate sincerity as a supreme virtue likely do so in an attempt to avoid the petty, divisive battles over differing beliefs—battles that often destroy community. We hope that if we are all sincere, then all will be well. I believe this impulse is a good one. The problem, however, is that pressing this point can lead down a path that common sense cannot follow.

Instead, common sense suggests that beliefs do matter because what we know and believe guide our behavior. The connection between belief and behavior—and the importance of that connection—can be illustrated by an almost unlimited number of examples.

On April 26, 1986, the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Soviet Union released radiation that killed more than 4,000 people and disabled more than 70,000 others. The cause of the disaster was not a lack of sincerity on the part of the Soviet nuclear experts. Instead, they were testing one of Chernobyl's four reactors and honestly, wholeheartedly, believed they would be able to control the rate of fission. They were wrong. An uncontrolled chain reaction took place and the reactor exploded. We should recognize the importance of noting that these experts were not evil people. They were not trying to poison the environment and kill their families and the townspeople living nearby. They were sincere. But their sincerity did not protect them from the drastic consequences of their misguided belief that eight boroncarbide rods would be enough to control the nuclear chain reaction.7

Those acquainted with medical history are aware that, even into the first half of the nineteenth century, well-meaning doctors in much of the world regularly examined and treated multiple patients without washing their hands. They used instruments that had not been sterilized and wore the same surgical gowns throughout the day despite the buildup of blood and pus from prior procedures. These doctors were sincere in their desire to help patients, but they did not know

how infections were transmitted. It was not surprising, then, that deadly infections spread wildly among those who had undergone surgery. Amputations had a mortality rate of between 40 to 45 percent. Puerperal fever (an infection of the uterus at the time of childbirth) killed nearly one in five new mothers in some hospitals.⁸

How many of us today would want one of those surgeons operating on us? How many of us would say, "Well, as long as the doctor is sincere, I don't care what they believe about the transmission of infection—or what they know about human anatomy, even. What they believe doesn't matter!" Would we say the same thing about pilots: "It doesn't matter if they believe the air traffic controller, as long as they sincerely want to fly me back home"? How about a teacher, politician, or accountant? We certainly want them to be sincere, but we also want something more.

In our daily lives, we expect people around us to be aware of the knowledge available to them. In short, we expect them to know and believe that which is reasonable and then sincerely live in harmony with those beliefs. To do otherwise is irresponsible—even foolish.

One need not look far to find people today who are fervently and sincerely devoted to a religious ideology. Their sincerity is admirable, but their beliefs may lead them to actions such as strapping explosives onto their bodies and then detonating those explosives in the middle of unsuspecting crowds. Jesus Himself warned against blind religious passion when He told His disciples that the day would come "when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God' " (John 16:2). Sincerity certainly is not enough. What we believe matters.

An appeal for godly sincerity

Throughout the Bible, we see God's efforts to instruct carefully His children on the best way to live. As the psalmist said, "I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life,"

and "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Ps. 119:93, 105). It may not always be easy to understand God's guidance. Believers will not always agree on every point of doctrine, but we are expected to search the Scriptures prayerfully and humbly so that each of us can stand as one who "does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Abandoning this task as unnecessary while trumpeting the virtue of sincerity does not offer a solution. The struggle to understand rightfully God's guidance, and then sincerely follow it, is a high and noble calling.

In 1 Peter 1:21, 22, the importance of belief, obedience, and sincerity are drawn together in beautiful unity. There the apostle writes to the church, reminding them that, through Christ, "you believe in God." Peter then continues, "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart."

I believe Peter would make the same appeal to us. May our belief in God lead to obedience, which will then be expressed in sincere, heartfelt love for others. If we lived like this, we would be happier, better people. The world would be a happier, better place too. I believe that sincerely.

- 1 This article draws heavily from a chapter I wrote in Always Prepared: Answers to Questions About Our Faith, eds. Humberto M. Rasi and Nancy J. Vyhmeister (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2012). That chapter was entitled "Does It Really Matter What I Believe as Long as I Am Sincere?"
- 2 New Webster's Dictionary, 2003 ed., s.v. "sincerity."
- 3 The two classes surveyed included a lower division course with 40 completed surveys and an upper division course with 43 completed surveys. Of the 83 returned surveys, 71 students ranked sincerity either in first or second place. Only nine students ranked purity in first or second place, and only six placed orthodoxy in first or second place. The survey was taken in Feb. 2010.
- 4 All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible
- 5 In all cases, italics are supplied for emphasis.
- K. P. Yohannan, Revolution in World Missions (Carrollton, TX: GFA Books, 2003), 111, 112.
- 7 Judith Newman, "20 of the Greatest Blunders in Science in the Last 20 Years," *Discover*, Oct. 1, 2000, accessed Apr. 9, 2010, http:// discovermagazine.com/2000/oct/featblunders.
- 8 Discoveries in Medicine, "Antisepsis," accessed June 28, 2012, http://www.discoveriesinmedicine.com/A-An/Antisepsis.html#b.

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Adventists and ecumenism

or some conservative Christians, the term ecumenical has become a distasteful word. That attitude has all too often led to a doctrinal and relational intolerance in reference to other Christians. The resultant apathy and disinterest toward other Christians are justified on vague theological grounds, such as "standing for the truth" or "avoiding compromise." But, too many times, such apathy represents simply an unwillingness to move beyond the familiar and predictable of our comfort zones. Or worse, it can be motivated by a sense of elitism or even bigotry toward other Christians. To avoid these barriers to fellowship, we need to think carefully about our view of God's church in both its visible and invisible aspects.

Caution, however, is needed in approaching this topic. A careful study of our history and teachings will show that there is a positive ecumenism and a problematic ecumenism. The positive is about practical, on-the-ground, issue-oriented fellowship, support, and caring between Christians. The negative is a more formal, ideological search for doctrinal and institutional unity. Let us consider both.

A positive ecumenism

Many Adventists would be surprised to learn that our fundamental beliefs recognize the validity of the ecumenical church. The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that ecumenical literally means "universal," as in the universal church. Our statement of belief number 13,

"The Remnant and Its Mission," begins as follows: "The *universal church* is composed of all who truly believe in Christ." This statement recognizes that Christ has faithful believers in many places, including the spectrum of Christian denominations.

Many Adventists would want to be sure to add the lines that follow in belief number 13: "but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."2 Indeed, we believe in a special role for a visible remnant with a special message and mission. But never have we taught that the reality of this remnant negates the existence of the ecumenical, universal, invisible church. To the contrary, our pioneers recognized that, as Ellen G. White put it, "[t]here are true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion."3

Seventh-day Adventism and the ecumenical movement

A good argument can be made that the nineteenth-century Advent movement was one of the first truly ecumenical movements of modern times. William Miller was a Baptist, but he preached his Advent message in churches of many denominations. Initially, those who became Adventist did not leave these churches but, in many places, were eventually forced out.

As the movement grew, it had representatives from almost all American denominations—Methodists, Baptists,

Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and those from the Christian Connection. After the disappointment of 1844, the Advent movement that became the Seventh-day Adventist Church was composed of former members of these churches.

Some hold the view that our founders sat in a room with a Bible and put together an entirely new set of beliefs and practices, rebuilding a New Testament church from scratch. The reality is that early Adventists took beliefs and worship practices from a variety of groups, pressed them through a biblical filter, and adopted and adapted those that met the biblical test. Indeed, some of our worship practices are not mandated or even described in the Bible but have been adapted from our Christian friends. These include midweek prayer meeting, Sabbath School, camp meeting, the order of the divine service, hymn singing, offering appeals, quarterly Communion, and many other factors affecting our worship and witness practices. Seventh-day Adventists are themselves the result of a truly biblical ecumenical movement.

The three angels' messages and ecumenism

Some would insist that with the preaching of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, beginning in the late 1840s (including the second angel's message that Babylon is fallen), there can be no more association with other Christian

churches as they make up fallen Babylon. This was simply not the understanding of our pioneers. Rather, they were active in making common cause with other Christians on points of shared concern, most notably, antislavery, temperance reform, and religious liberty.

Ellen G. White spoke to her largest audiences in non-Adventist settings, speaking on behalf of temperance reform and prohibition laws to groups of Christians from various churches. She also spoke in the pulpits of churches of other denominations. Moreover, she used biblical commentaries and religious books written by other Christians after 1844, calling some contemporary non-Adventist commentaries among her "best books."

Urging Adventist pastors to be involved in a personal, ecumenical work of common cause and fellowship, White wrote, "Our ministers should seek to come near to the ministers of other denominations. Pray for and with these men, for whom Christ is interceding. A solemn responsibility is theirs. As Christ's messengers we should manifest a deep, earnest interest in these shepherds of the flock." Two points

deserve to be particularly noted. First, we should pray "for and with" these other pastors. To say "with" shows concern not just for outreach but also for fellowship. Second, we should note her acknowledgment that these other ministers are "shepherds of the flock." This phrasing is a recognition that these ministers of other denominations are also watching over "the flock" of Christ.

How is this to be understood in light of the second angel's message about the fall of Babylon? The fourth angel of Revelation 18 indicates that Babylon has finally and fully fallen when it has made common cause with the commercial and civil powers of the world, and used civil force for religious ends. Ellen G. White and the pioneers understood the fourth angel's message to still lie in the future and that, in the meantime, Babylon, while falling, continues to house faithful Christians and churches with whom we can and should fellowship. Only when these Christians use the power of the state to persecute those with whom they disagree on spiritual matters is this point reached.6

If one studies it contextually, it is evident that, even in our day, the message

of the fourth angel still resides in the future. In light of this, many Adventist pastors are involved, and more should be, in local ministerial associations and in visiting and praying with pastors from other denominations. These associations and relationships can also serve as the basis to work together on issues of community concern, such as religious liberty, creation and evolution, racial harmony, and issues of civil morality, such as family and marriage.

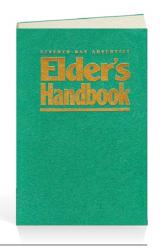
This underscores the point that practical ecumenism is a local matter, involving issues of social justice and concern. Social justice rooted in the light of the gospel and Christ's advent was the basis of historic Adventist ecumenical efforts. Antislavery, temperance reform, and religious liberty were efforts aimed at protecting and uplifting the poor, weak, young, and marginalized. Adventists need to be recalled and reinspired to this kind of issue-oriented ecumenical effort.

Negatives in ecumenism

There were also limits to early Adventism's ecumenism, particularly with the more formal ideological

Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook

Nowadays, elders in the church do more than greet people at the door—they preach sermons, go visit with people, and hold the church together in more ways than one. The *Seventh-day Adventist Elder's Handbook* was created specially by the General Conference Ministerial Association to help those most important to our churches—the elders. Emphasis is given to the role and function of the elder according to biblical principles of organization and leadership. Each chapter ends with a study guide to help process the information and facilitate group discussion.





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© 2013 Pacific Press® Publishing Association Please contact your ABC for pricing in Canada. Prices subject to change. 35550146 ecumenism. One very vivid historical example of this reservation was the World Missionary Conference of 1910 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Adventists attended this event and participated in the meetings, but they were unwilling to join in the dividing up of the mission field between various denominations.⁷

This refusal to cooperate in missions may seem narrow, sectarian, and even arrogant, but we can hardly argue that the Lord did not bless the results. Without this refusal, it is unlikely that Seventh-day Adventists would become the most widespread Protestant denomination in the world, with more than 17 million members in more than 200 countries, running the most widespread Protestant educational and medical systems in the world. We humbly recognize that God's power causes small and weak things to accomplish much, and must be ever mindful of the warnings associated with boasting that we are "rich, and increased with goods" (Rev. 3:17, KJV). God has blessed in allowing us today to be the fastest growing denomination in North America, as Adventist emigrants from overseas continue to swell our ranks here.

This growth does not prove we were right, although a lack of growth would likely indicate we were on the wrong track. The important questions are, Why did Adventism resist this dividing up of the mission field? What principle caused, and might it also limit, our involvement in the formal ecumenical movement today?

The ideological ecumenical movement can be defined as an attempt to make visible the already existent, invisible, universal church of Christ. This is a profound theological and institutional project and one that Adventists find difficult to fully join.

The Sabbath and ecumenism

A foundational reason for this difficulty centers on our belief in the seventh-day Sabbath. The Sabbath provides practical, historic, prophetic, and theological barriers to our fully joining the modern ecumenical movement.

First, as a practical matter, our distinct day of worship creates a barrier to worshiping regularly with other Christian groups. Other Christians can tinker with liturgy, ritual, music, and homily and worship comfortably together. But a central commitment of our worship is that it takes place on a day when few others worship. In the short term, this could be finessed for special occasions. We could attend worship on both Saturday and Sunday for special events or others could join us on Saturdays. But it presents a real problem for longer-term fellowshiping relationships, as most people cannot afford the time to attend worship services on both Saturdays and Sundays.

Second, our keeping of the Sabbath has given us a great sensitivity to the plight of religious minorities who have been persecuted for holding beliefs outside the mainstream. Anti-Semitism has a long and unfortunate history in Europe and America, and often the target of that bigotry has included the practice of Sabbath keeping.

After the start of the Reformation, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics united in their persecution and killing of Anabaptists for their minority beliefs. Some Anabaptists kept the seventhday Sabbath and were targeted for persecution because of this practice. In late-nineteenth-century America, Adventists were fined and even jailed for violating Sunday laws.8 It was believed that pressure could be applied to minority groups to embrace beliefs held by the majority, or perhaps to minimize beliefs not held by the majority. Given this history, when Christians begin to gather in groups and propose uniting on common points, Adventists become nervous.

Indeed, Adventists believe prophecy indicates that, at some point in the future, certain worship practices of the majority will be enforced through law. We are thus sensitive, maybe at times overly so, to projects that wish to seek unity by playing the game of doctrinal or theological minimization. We hold core beliefs, such as the Sabbath, that history shows to be vulnerable to being minimized.

Third, we find an inherent theological authority in the Sabbath. We believe that the Sabbath is not just a day of the week but also an expression of the loving authority of God. The Sabbath reminds us that He created us for love. And it reminds us, in a unique way, of His authority as Creator. How is the Sabbath a unique reminder of this authority? Some of the Ten Commandments are arrived at by civil society apart from the Bible, such as its laws against theft, murder, and adultery. But the seventh-day Sabbath can be arrived at only through the special command of God.

The science of physiology can tell us that humans function better and are healthier with a rest day out of every seven days. But it cannot tell us that the best day to rest is the seventh day. Thus, in keeping Saturday holy, one carries a special mark of submission to God's loving authority. In the Sabbath, creation, love, and authority are brought together in one expressive worship symbol.

Adventists do *not* believe we are saved by keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. But we do believe that the keeping of it is a special acknowledgment of God's loving authority, in contrast to other human authorities, whether tradition, a magisterium, or the will of a majority. Formal ecumenism tends to say, at least in practice, that those things that are important to the majority should be important to everyone. Thus, the authority of the group tends to determine what the important doctrines are and how they are defined.

Is that not how all statements of belief are formulated? True, but at the Adventist table, there remains a commitment to treating Scripture as the ultimate authority, the norm by which all other claims of reason, history, and experience are judged. As we look at today's Christian denominations, we see a wide variety of approaches to doctrinal and teaching authority. There are different views on the role of tradition, the importance of a teaching magisterium, and Bible study methods,



such as the higher critical method, which Adventists place beneath the authority of Scripture.

For Seventh-day Adventists, the ultimate authority of God speaking in the Bible through the Holy Spirit to a community committed to keeping the weekly reminder of that authority, makes us unwilling to fully join with groups who would place ultimate authority either in tradition, creeds, a priesthood or magisterium, or some kind of majoritarianism within the Christian community.

Conclusion

The Millerite movement, as an example of a truly biblical ecumenical movement, we can applaud. It was based on a pursuit of biblical truth, with a commitment to its ultimate authority as worked out by the Holy Spirit in a community of believers. We believe that such a universal, ecumenical movement will recur before Christ's second coming and that it will encompass "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6, NKJV). We pray that my church, your church, and many other churches will have the humility and love to be a part of that movement. In the meantime, we should share our God-given gifts and insights with each other, not settling for a superficial or surface unity, but letting the Spirit guide us to a genuine, biblically based unity of His making. V

- 1 Seventh-day Adventists Believe (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2006), 181; italics mine.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ellen G. White, Evangelism (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 234; italics mine
- 4 In his book Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1998), Herbert E. Douglass describes Ellen G. White's speaking career before non-Adventist audiences. In chapter 12, "The Sought-for Speaker," Douglass gives details of her speaking to audiences of tens of

- thousands of non-Adventists. In a section entitled "Non-Adventist Audiences" he documents her speaking in non-Adventist pulpits. In a letter to her son Edson White, written on January 1, 1900, she requested that he send to her in Australia "four or five volumes" of Bible commentaries written by Presbyterian expositor Albert Barnes, one of the most popular Protestant biblical commentators of the nineteenth century. In the letter, she describes these books as being among her "best books." See Ellen White, letter 189, 1900.
- 5 Ellen G. White, Counsels for the Church (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1991), 313.
- 6 See Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), 603-605.
- 7 See F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. "Edinburgh Conference," and George Knight, introduction to Historical Sketches of Foreign Missions (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005), xviii-xxvi.
- 8 For Anabaptist Sabbath keeping and persecution, see George H. Williams The Radical Reformation (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2000), 272; Bryan W. Ball, The Seventh-Day Men (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 37; W. L. Emmerson, The Reformation and the Advent Movement (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983), 73-75; for descriptions of Seventh-day Adventists in the nineteenth century being arrested, convicted, and imprisoned for their Sabbath-keeping convictions. see William A. Blakely, American State Papers and Related Documents on Freedom in Religion (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1949), 457-512.
- 9 Neil Nedley, Proof Positive (Armore, OK: Neil Nedley, 1999), 504.

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Dealing with doctrinal issues in the church: Part 2

he first Jerusalem Council, described in Acts 15, has been the subject of numerous scholarly studies. In this article, we will look at these deliberations as a model of how the early church dealt with controversial doctrinal issues. We also argue that our church today can learn from this model on how to deal with our disputes on doctrine and/or practice as well.

Setting the stage

One of the problems the early church had to face was that some Jewish Christians had come from Judea to Antioch and taught, "'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved' " (Acts 15:1).2 Luke reported that, as a result of this teaching, "when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question" (v. 2). Coming to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas brought a report to the church and its leaders in Jerusalem of what God had done with them in the conversion of the Gentiles (vv. 3, 4), but "some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them [the Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses' " (v. 5).

Thus, the basic issues facing the early church at the Jerusalem Council were

twofold: (1) Should Gentiles become Jews in order to become Christians? (2) What Jewish practices beyond the moral law of the Ten Commandments were required for these Gentiles? Ellen G. White summarized the problem: "The Jewish converts generally were not inclined to move as rapidly as the providence of God opened the way.... They were slow to discern that all the sacrificial offerings had but prefigured the death of the Son of God, in which type met antitype, and after which the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation were no longer binding."³

An assembly of representative church leaders

In response to the disputed theological issue regarding the Gentiles' relationship to the Jewish ceremonial law, "the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter" (v. 6). This verse specifically mentions the "apostles and elders" who met together with Paul and Barnabas and leaders sent from the church at Antioch, but verse 12 speaks of "all the multitude/ assembly [plēthos]" and verse 22 of "the apostles and elders, with the whole church." Ellen G. White clarifies that this assembly involved "delegates from the different churches and those who had come to Jerusalem to attend the approaching festivals."4 She also wrote, "At Jerusalem the delegates from Antioch met the brethren of the various churches, who had gathered for a general meeting."⁵

Here is a model that gives biblical justification for Ellen G. White's statement regarding the authority of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in general session: "God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority."6 At the same time, the basic principle of gathering representative leaders for a general assembly to deal with a theological issue also applies to appointed assemblies held in regional settings and less formal occasions than the General Conference in session.

Frank and spirited discussion of the issues and clarifying presentations

At the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, there was much "disputing," dispute" (KJV, NKJV), "debate" (ESV, NASB), and "discussion" (NIV) (v. 7). The Greek noun *zētēsis*, in the context of this verse, probably refers to "engagement in a controversial discussion, debate, argument," but the term can also mean "a search for information, investigation" (as, e.g., in Acts 25:20). Ellen G. White states that the basic question at issue "was warmly discussed in the assembly."

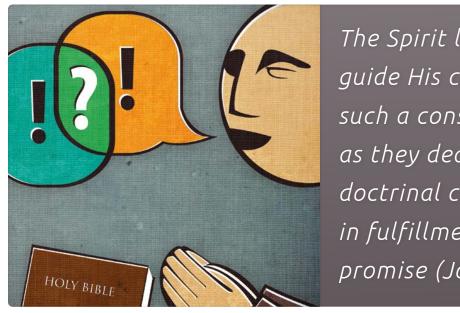
Along with the spirited discussion, debate, argument, and/or investigation,

Peter gave a presentation from his experiences and theological perspective. He alluded to his own encounter with Cornelius (described in Acts 10), when God Himself had directed that Gentiles hear and accept the gospel from his preaching. Peter "argued that since God had established such a precedent within the Jewish Christian mission 10 years earlier—though it had not been recognized by the church as such—God has already indicated His approval of a direct Gentile outreach. Thus Paul's

Personal reports and testimonies of the Holy Spirit's working

According to Acts 15:12, after Peter had given his presentation, "all the assembly fell silent, and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles" (ESV). An important part of the Jerusalem Council was listening to reports detailing the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit, through

ecclesiastical authority in which the church, empowered in the freedom of the Spirit, is able to reach back into the Old Testament (OT) witness and select those portions of the OT still relevant to the current situation. Then, with that same authority of the Spirit, move beyond other portions of the OT that are no longer applicable, and even add new stipulations not contained in the OT. In other words, the New Testament (NT) church, and by implication the church today, supposedly has



The Spirit longs to guide His church into such a consensus today as they deal with doctrinal controversy, in fulfillment of Jesus' promise (John 16:13).

approach to the Gentiles could not be branded as a deviation from the divine will." Peter asked the council members, "'[W]hy do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" (Acts 15:10). 10 And he concluded with this theological statement: "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we [Jews] shall be saved in the same manner as they [the Gentiles]" (v. 11).

A spirited discussion, earnest investigation, and public presentations of evidence—wrestling together with issues of theological controversy—are as appropriate today, in our appointed council sessions, as they were in the Jerusalem Council.

Barnabas and Paul, among the Gentiles.¹¹

So, in our dealing with doctrinal controversy today, we should present reports and personal testimonies of the Holy Spirit's working through council members and others in relation to the issue under discussion.

However, the report of the Holy Spirit's work did not end the proceedings of the Jerusalem Council. The next step, often overlooked in most discussions of Acts 15, is perhaps the most crucial part of the process.

Testing and verification by the witness of Scripture

It has sometimes been claimed that Acts 15 provides a model of

the authority—by rejecting some OT instructions and adding new ones—to determine the best path to unity.

Such a position, however, does not square with Acts 15. The Jerusalem Council did allow for vigorous debate (vv. 7–12), but the deciding factor was Scripture. James's concluding statement was based upon an exegesis of OT passages. In Amos 9:11, 12, he found the answer to the issue of whether Gentiles had to become Jews to become Christians: they did not. 12

They found, too, in Leviticus 17; 18 the biblical basis for deciding which ceremonial laws applied to Gentiles. The intertextual linkage between Acts 15 and Leviticus 17; 18 is not apparent on the surface; but as one looks more

closely, the connection between the relevant OT passages and the situation in the Jerusalem Council becomes evident. Acts 15 lists four prohibitions for Gentile Christians given by the Jerusalem Council: "that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled [i.e., with the blood coagulated and not drained away],13 and from sexual immorality [porneia]" (Acts 15:29). One cannot fail to notice, upon close inspection, that this is the same list, in the same order, as the four major legal prohibitions stated in Leviticus 17; 18 to be applicable to the stranger or alien as well as to native Israelites. In these OT chapters, we find (1) sacrificing to demons or idols (Lev. 17:7-9); (2) eating blood (vv. 10-12); (3) eating anything that has not been immediately drained of its blood (vv. 13-16); and (4) various illicit sexual practices (Lev. 18).

Numerous scholars have recognized this intertextual connection. ¹⁴ In this clear case of intertextuality, the Jerusalem Council undoubtedly concluded that the practices forbidden to the uncircumcised stranger or alien in Leviticus 17; 18 were what should be prohibited to uncircumcised Gentile Christians. What was required of the Gentile "strangers" in the OT was still required of them in the NT.

Thus, Scripture ultimately provided the basis for the church's decision regarding practice. Such an ultimate test by the Word of God is, obviously, crucial for any contemporary proceedings dealing with controversial doctrinal issues.

Emergence of a Spiritled consensus

As the study and application of Scripture proceeded, a consensus began to emerge under the guidance of the Spirit and the leadership of the apostles, as made apparent from the Jerusalem decree: "The apostles, the elders, and the brethren" (Acts 15:23); "it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord" (v. 25); "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us" (v. 28). Ellen G. White elaborates on the

process at this stage of the council's proceedings, highlighting the "careful investigation of the subject" by those present: "James bore his testimony with decision—that God designed to bring in the Gentiles to enjoy all the privileges of the Jews. The Holy Ghost saw good not to impose the ceremonial law on the Gentile converts; and the apostles and elders, after careful investigation of the subject, saw the matter in the same light, and their mind was as the mind of the Spirit of God."15 White further describes the consensus: "The council moved in accordance with the dictates of enlightened judgment, and with the dignity of a church established by the divine will. As a result of their deliberations they all saw that God Himself had answered the question at issue by bestowing upon the Gentiles the Holy Ghost; and they realized that it was their part to follow the guidance of the Spirit."16

This consensus was articulated by James, the brother of Jesus, who presided over the council (v. 19). The Spirit longs to guide His church into such a consensus today as they deal with doctrinal controversy, in fulfillment of Jesus' promise (John 16:13). It must be recognized that the first Jerusalem Council unity (consensus) did not mean uniformity (of practice). It appears that the consensus reached by the early church was not the conclusion that was expected as the process began, but came as a surprise to those involved as the Spirit led them to a deeper understanding of Scripture. The Spirit may well surprise us again.

Formal decision and circulation of the council's action

The consensus reached by the council was formalized in writing (vv. 23–29) and circulated among the churches (vv. 22, 30; 16:4). Ellen G. White makes clear that the decision on the issues discussed, once made by the council, "was then to be universally accepted by the different churches throughout the country." There was no need for a vote by the church membership at

large: "The entire body of Christians was not called upon to vote upon the question. The 'apostles and elders,' men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches."18 Despite some resistance among Jewish Christians, "[t]he broad and far-reaching decisions of the general council brought confidence into the ranks of the Gentile believers, and the cause of God prospered."19 Such formal decision and public pronouncement of church action is applicable today in such venues as Annual Council and the General Conference in session.

Universal authoritative status of the council's decision

Some claim the Jerusalem Council decision was only advisory, not binding, because Paul considered its ruling as a nonissue in his dealings with food offered to idols (1 Cor. 10:19-33). But such readings overlook both the wider NT data and the OT basis for the Jerusalem Council's ruling. According to Acts 16:4, in Paul's journeys after the Jerusalem Council, he and Silas considered the rulings of the council as binding: "Now while they were passing through the cities, they [Paul and Silas] were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe" (NASB).

Paul did not change his basic position in his counsel to the Corinthians. Rather, he apparently recognized that the OT basis for not eating food offered to idols was found in Leviticus 17:7-9, which prohibits the sacrificing of food to demons or idols. Paul seems to have understood the intent of this OT passage that formed the basis of the Jerusalem Council prohibition, and thus correctly upheld the prohibition against offering food to idols or demons (1 Cor. 10:20, 21). At the same time, he recognized that Gentile Christians not personally offering food to idols would not be going against the OT prohibition (and hence, against the Jerusalem Council ruling based upon

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that OT prohibition) if they ate food that, unknown to them, someone else had offered to an idol (vv. 25-27). Within the overall parameters of the Jerusalem Council ruling, moreover, Paul allowed for a difference of practice based upon one's individual conscience and the conscience of others (vv. 27-29).

Conclusion

Acts 15 reveals that the church, in its assembly of representative members, may indeed speak with binding authority upon the whole church, as that authority is based upon the Written Word.²⁰ This chapter also provides a paradigm for dealing with doctrinal controversy, a paradigm that the Seventh-day Adventist Church may well follow when facing controversial issues. Some of these principles apply only to Annual Council or the General Conference in session; most, though, have relevance for the special divisionwide conferences and other councils in their wrestling with doctrinal issues. \textstyle \text

1 See, e.g., the bibliography in Joseph Fitzmyer, The Acts of the Apostles, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 549.

- 2 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New King James Version.
- 3 Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), 189
- 4 Ibid., 190. The reference to "elders" in v. 6 has been interpreted by many to refer only to the local elders of the Jerusalem church, but it may also include local elders of the various Christian churches (cf. Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17; Tit. 1:5).
- 5 Ibid., 191, Cf. ibid., 196: "The council which decided this case was composed of apostles and teachers who had been prominent in raising up the Jewish and Gentile Christian churches, with chosen delegates from various places. Elders from Jerusalem and deputies from Antioch were present, and the most influential churches were represented."
- 6 White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 261,
- 7 Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 3rd ed., ed. Frederick Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), s.v. "ζήτησις."
- 8 White, The Acts of the Apostles, 191.
- 9 Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles," in John and Acts, vol. 9, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 445.
- 10 Ellen G. White clarifies, "This yoke was not the law of Ten Commandments" but rather "the law of ceremonies, which was made null and void by the crucifixion of Christ." The Acts of the Apostles, 194.
- 11 For elaboration on the reports and testimonies of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, see White, The Acts of the Apostles, 192-194.
- 12 For discussion of how James's interpretation is in harmony with the meaning of Amos 9:11, 12 in its OT context, see especially R. Reed Lessing, Concordia Commentary: Amos (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2009), 575-578, 586-590.
- 13 The Greek adjective pniktos, usually translated as "strangled" or "choked," actually refers precisely to the situation described in Lev. 17:13-16. See H. Bietenhard, The New International Dictionary of

New Testament Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 1:226 (hereafter NIDNTT), s.v. "πνικτός": "The command [of Acts 15:20, 29] goes back to Lev. 17:13 f. and Deut. 12:16, 23. An animal should be so slaughtered that its blood, in which is its life, should be allowed to pour out. If the animal is killed in any other way, it has been 'strangled.'" Cf. H. Bietenhard, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 6:457 (hereafter TDNT), s.vv. "πνίγω, ὁποπνίγω, συμπνίγω, πνικτός": "The regulations in Lv. 17:13 f. and Dt. 12:16, 23 lav down that an animal should be slaughtered in such a way that all the blood drains from the carcass. If it is put to death in any other way, it 'chokes,' since the life seated in the blood remains in the body."

- 14 For scholarly concurrence and further discussion, see Richard M. Davidson, "Which Torah Laws Should Gentile Christians Obey? The Relationship Between Leviticus 17—18 and Acts 15" (paper, Evangelical Theological Society 59th Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, Nov. 15, 2007). Cf. H. Reisser, NIDNTT (1975), 1:497-501, s.v. "ποργεύω": and F. Hauck and S. Schulz, TDNT (1968), 6:579-595. s.vv. "πόρνη, πόρνος, πορνεία, πορνεύω, έκπορνεύω."
- 15 Ellen G. White, The Story of Redemption (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 307.
- 16 White, The Acts of the Apostles, 196.
- 17 Ibid., 190.
- 18 Ibid., 196.
- 19 Ibid., 197.
- 20 Acts 15 is an illustration of the principle set forth by Jesus regarding the authority of the church in Matthew 16:19: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven'" (NASB). As the NASB correctly translates the perfect passive participle of the verbs for "bind" and "loose," what the church decides is not independent and arbitrary, but its "binding" and "loosing" is dependent upon recognizing what already "has been bound" and "has been loosed" in heaven, as revealed in Scripture through the

LETTERS

Continued from page 4



the itinerant model and then, from those principles, develop a role for the Adventist pastor in the twentyfirst century. Those principles I have consistently advocated are the health of the church, a nonpastoral dependency, and a mission-centeredness. I have suggested ways that this might be done, but none of them has been to re-create itinerant pastors. That would be an impossible lifestyle for most pastors today.

At the present time in North America, there are many churches that are run totally by laypeople, and they are much like the churches of early Adventism. However, we have discovered that these churches are never able to move beyond 100 in attendance. It is purely a small-church model. Larger churches absolutely need a local pastor serving in the equipper role in order to grow past 100. Our problem in Adventism is that we subsidize small churches to have pastors, taking tithe away from the large churches. As a result, our large churches are unable to grow because they are not adequately staffed. My position is that you need a resident pastor for every 125-150 people in attendance. However, those pastors are operating in the trainerequipper mode, not in the caretaker mode. They supervise, but only provide care in the more difficult cases, as Moses did with the Jethro model. Most of their time is spent helping members in their respective ministries.

I have also advocated large districts of these multiple church districts in order to free up the resources to adequately staff the large churches, especially those in the cities. Also, this freeing up of the resources would allow money to be allocated to church planting as well, which no longer receives adequate funding and thus hinders the advancement of the Adventist Church.

Actually, the authors and I are not as far apart as they think I am. My biggest concern is that pastors do not lose their evangelistic function. We cannot ignore our Adventist heritage or the counsels of Ellen G. White on the pastoral role, but we must apply that knowledge on a principle basis, not a replication model. Any pastoral role model we advocate must be based on biblical and Adventist historical roots, not on the models of other denominations.

-Russell Burrill, professor emeritus, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

Roger Hernandez, MDiv, is the Ministerial and Evangelism director for the Southern Union of Seventhday Adventists, Decatur, Georgia, United States.



Leadership with vision

hen my wife and I celebrated our twentieth wedding anniversary, I pondered what gift to give to her on such a momentous occasion. This idea came to me: I would give her less of me! I would go on a diet and exercise regimen, and by the time our anniversary date came around, she would be able to see the difference. This concept started with a personal vision of what could be. I could get in shape. I could feel better. All this was possible.

Vision, simply defined, encompasses being able to "see it before you see it." Before every great invention, accomplishment, transformational idea, someone had vision. Someone "saw it before he or she saw it."

One of those biblical leaders with vision was Saul's son Jonathan. First Samuel 14 centers on a compelling story of vision implementation, which has practical applications for leaders. This incident happened at a time when Israel was in bad shape. The Philistines had them on the run. The people were demoralized. The king was distracted. Their enemies were destroying them.

Share it with the right people

"One day Jonathan said to his armor bearer, 'Come on, let's go over to where the Philistines have their outpost.' But Jonathan did not tell his father what he was doing" (1 Sam. 14:1).¹

If you had a plan to attack the enemy, would it not be logical to share that information with the king? Yet Jonathan chooses not to tell his father,

the king. He shares this plan only with his trusted armor bearer.

You have to be careful with whom you share your vision. Some people will get upset. Some will oppose your dream. Some will laugh at your concepts for visioning the future. Some will question your wisdom. When I told my friends that I wanted to lose weight, I thought I would get unanimous support. Instead, people said, "You are crazy." "You won't do it." "I tried, but I quit." You show up with a fistful of dreams like balloons, and you are greeted with a handful of straight pins!

Do not expect everyone to be able to see your vision. That is why it is yours! Others may not necessarily understand your foresight because it was not their vision to begin with.

Opposition does not mean your vision is not worth pursuing. While you do not want to be reckless and irresponsible, you do want to step out in faith. Most great ideas were initially opposed or dismissed, so if you are convinced that God has given you a vision you can take criticism in stride. Criticism can help you: it can be the sandpaper to polish the work of art you are building with God. At the same time, do not let criticism stop progress; for whatever God blesses, the devil attacks.

Get going

"Meanwhile, Saul and his 600 men were camped on the outskirts of Gibeah, around the pomegranate tree at Migron. Among Saul's men was Ahijah the priest, who was wearing the

ephod, the priestly vest. Ahijah was the son of Ichabod's brother Ahitub, son of Phinehas, son of Eli, the priest of the LORD who had served at Shiloh" (vv. 2, 3). No one was aware that Jonathan had left (cf. v. 3).

Three groups are camping under the pomegranate tree—and all of them should have a part in a vision to defeat the enemy. There is King Saul, who should have a plan to wipe out the adversary. With him are his soldiers, who should implement Saul's vision; Ahijah, the religious leader, should confirm that vision. They all should have something to do. But they do not.

The demoralized leaders sit under the pomegranate tree feeling sorry for themselves while Jonathan, a young person, takes action. But no one is aware that Jonathan leaves. While those in authority sit around regretting their previous defeats, the new generation is moving on.

Jonathan prefers death to inactivity. He thinks a better plan is to attempt something and fail than to do nothing and succeed. The greatest enemy of the church these days is not worldliness but laziness. God calls us to do something. More important than discussions, charts, ideas, opinions, words, or desires, is action.

What you say is not as important as what you do. *Opinionology* (a word I coined, meaning "to share with others the opinions no one else is asking you for") does not come as a spiritual gift.

During the time I was pastoring a certain church, we had a church soccer team that we hoped would build



community and make friends, and I always got to play. As the game got going, so did the crowd. Everyone had an opinion. I thought that hearing some misguided soul yell, "Take the pastor out; he's horrible!" was an interesting message. At halftime, people from the crowd would come into our huddle and offer unsolicited advice, strategy, and ideas. Not only were they very straightforward about what we should be doing, they became upset if we did not play the way they prescribed.

Is that not a lot like the work of the

from God, you are not a tiny bit apprehensive, then that vision probably does not originate with God. If you already knew you could do it, why would you need God? But if you wait for the fear to subside before attempting something great, you probably never will do it. A visionary will attempt great things regardless of fear.

Jonathan's faith motivates him to act; he says, "Let's go!" But concealed in his faith is a crisis of doubt: "Perhaps the LORD will help us," he says. As part of His plan, God sometimes allows us to

it's more effective when we involve others. There is a small word, with big power, and that word is and. It is one thing to say, "It's me." It is altogether another thing to say, "It's me and my church." What we sometimes fail to understand in this polarized society is that we need each other. Unity multiplies impact.

God created us for community. God emphatically shares that a vision should be given to the leader first but not exclusively. A right vision, shared with the right people, at the right time, for the right reason, will accomplish more, in less time. In this life, we need mentors—wise people to whom we can listen. They have experience and can help you find ways to deal with your present situation. We also need friends, those caring people upon whom we can lean. They might not have all the answers, but knowing that they are there for you makes a difference.

In order to finish the work God has entrusted to us, we need everybody. Traditional and contemporary, men and women, youth and adults, first and second generations, accredited colleges and self-supporting ministries, lay members and paid denominational employees. We are one church. When we attack each other, this creates confusion in our youth, discouragement in our members, and delay in our progress.

A visionary will attempt great things regardless of fear.

church? Many watching, complaining, and advising, but few actually working. Sometimes it seems like 20 percent of the congregation does 80 percent of the work.

God does not expect us to do everything, yet He does expect us to do something. Action inspires your followers, develops your strengths, and catches God's attention. Perhaps you have, on your computer right now, the blueprint of the next big idea for your organization. What stops you from implementing it? Instead of waiting around for the right circumstances, change your circumstances. They might not erect a statue of you, but your Creator will smile. So do something!

Manage your fear with faith

" 'Let's go across to the outpost of those pagans,' Jonathan said to his armor bearer. 'Perhaps the LORD will help us, for nothing can hinder the LORD. He can win a battle whether He has many warriors or only a few!' " (v. 6).

Some fear is natural and even healthy. If, before you act on a vision

experience trepidation before triumph so we will understand that, at the end of the day, it's not about us.

Early in my ministry, I heard this line that has shaped the way I do ministry. "What are you doing that if God is not completely involved and comes through in a big way, this will absolutely and utterly fail?" Many of the things we do we could do without divine intervention. What have you attempted in the last year that took you outside your comfort zone? What risk, without being reckless, have you proposed to the people you lead? What innovative, daring, out-of-the-box idea have you implemented? Use God's paintbrush and repaint with vivid colors. Do whatever it takes to rediscover His passion for your life. You were meant for bold passion.

The power of many

"'Do what you think is best,' the armor bearer replied. 'I'm with you completely, whatever you decide' " (v. 7).

Jonathan understands that while we find it easier to do something alone,

Conclusion

My journey to a lighter me progresses positively. I see less of me when I look in the mirror. My wife has also noticed the change. I am not where I once was, but I am definitely not where I want to be. I see myself improving every day.

My prayer today centers around God giving you a clear vision, helping you to develop a sustainable plan, and continuing to guide you as you lead people to see this before they see it.

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¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New Living Translation.



Adventists in Mongolia poised for growth

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Mongolia Mission Field acquired five new properties in 2012, positioning the still-nascent regional church to expand its community services and church infrastructure.

Only established in Mongolia's modern era since the early 1990s, the denomination has 24 congregations and nearly 2,000 members. Thanks to international support, recent capital investments in land, church buildings, and plans for community centers, the church is poised for more significant outreach, and, church officials hope, membership growth.

"Mongolia has a bright future, but we believe that if we don't take this opportunity now to establish our school and health centers, later on could be too late," said **Elbert Kuhn,** director of the mission field, based in Ulaanbaatar, the country's capital.

Kuhn said the mission field plans to build as many as 15 community centers in the country during the next four years. "The church must be relevant for its members but for the community as well," Kuhn said. "We want to make a difference where we are established."

Evangelism outreach slowly yields results. A dedication ceremony of an Adventist church in the Övörkhangai Province in October 2012 was the first time an Adventist congregation was officially organized in the country in eight years.

In 2012, the mission field acquired a 600-square-meter plot of land in the Khentii Province, east of the capital,

Room to grow: Mongolia Mission Field staff with a recently acquired building. New church properties are positioning the denomination in Mongolia for more outreach opportunities. [Photos: ANN]

and a 500-square-meter lot in the Arkhangai Province, west of the capital. The mission field also purchased a lot and a building in Erdenet, the second-largest city by population.

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, Adventist work among Mongol people began in 1926 by Russian missionaries operating from Manchuria, China. A few years

later, an American missionary worked to establish a mission headquarters and a clinic. He returned to the United States in the late 1930s, and World War II prevented further work in the region.

Adventist work was not reestablished in Mongolia until the early 1990s after the end of Socialist rule, which opened the country to religious expression. Volunteers from Adventist Frontier Missions, a supporting ministry, came to Mongolia in 1992, and the Adventist Church's Mongolia Mission Field was formally organized in 1997.

Christianity is relatively new in Mongolia. About half of Mongolians are Buddhist, and more than a quarter are atheist. Shamanism beliefs are also widespread. The society today, though, is largely secular, Kuhn said. Under earlier Soviet influence, the government conducted campaigns to dissuade young

people in the region from participating in religious activities. That influence remains.

"We want to try our best to ground our church by preparing local leaders who can take care of the church themselves as soon as possible," Kuhn said.

—Sarah Deblois, Mongolian Mission Field, with additional reporting by Ansel Oliver, Adventist News Network

▶ Religiously unaffiliated "nones" swell to 1.1 billion worldwide, study says

Of the seven billion people living on earth, an estimated 1.1 billion—or 16 percent of the total—are not religiously affiliated, a December 2012 study finds. Relating the Christian gospel—and the Seventh-day Adventist Church's message—to that population may become a missiological challenge. The "nones" (those without formal religious affiliation) may or may not know about such concepts as God and would require additional effort to evangelize.

The religious affiliation data comes from a demographic study conducted



by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life of more than 230 countries and territories. The study finds more than eight in ten people worldwide identify with a religious group. The report estimates "there are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe," representing 84 percent of the world population.

"Based on an analysis of more than 2,500 censuses, surveys, and population registers," the Pew study "finds 2.2 billion Christians (32% of the world's population), 1.6 billion Muslims (23%), 1 billion Hindus (15%), nearly 500 million Buddhists (7%) and 14 million Jews (0.2%) around the world as of 2010. In addition, more than 400 million people

(6%) practice various folk or traditional religions, including African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions, Native American religions and Australian aboriginal religions. An estimated 58 million people—slightly less than 1% of the global population—belong to other religions, including the Baha'i faith, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Taoism, Tenrikyo, Wicca, and Zoroastrianism, to mention just a few.

"At the same time, the new study by the Pew Forum also finds that roughly one-in-six people around the globe ... have no religious affiliation. This makes the unaffiliated the third-largest religious group worldwide, behind Christians and Muslims, and about equal in size to the world's Catholic population. Surveys indicate that many of the unaffiliated hold some religious or spiritual beliefs (such as belief in God or a universal spirit) even though they do not identify with a particular faith."

The findings were contained in "The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010," Pew said. This effort is part of the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures project, which analyzes religious change and its impact on societies around the world.

RESOURCES

Ambassador for Liberty: Building Bridges of Faith, Friendship, and Freedom



by Bert B. Beach, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2012.

Bert B. Beach was born in Switzerland in 1928. His parents were American missionaries in Europe. The Seventh-day Adventist Church they served then was only 65 years old with a membership of approximately 275,000. Today, our membership exceeds 17 million. The author's life spans the church's history, growth, and development. In this, he is somewhat unique.

During this period, Dr. Beach, arguably more than any other Seventh-day Adventist, has been "building bridges of faith, friendship, and freedom."

This book is organized into three sections: (1) Being: his developing as a person; (2) Doing: the story of his lifework; and (3) Thinking: working out the difficult task of how to live the life that pleases God.

This book is well worth reading by church members, educators, administrators, pastors, and leaders. The author has filled each of these roles and has sensible counsel to impart in each category.

He shares his personal failings, not in the least the occasions when he has hurt others. He is modest about his achievements and honors. Beach has rubbed shoulders with significant world figures: protestant archbishops, Popes John XXIII and Benedict XVI, royalty, and presidents of many countries—always as an ambassador and bridge builder for his Lord and church.

Solomon observed that he who has friends must show himself friendly (Prov. 18:24). Here, the author has excelled. A friend remarked to me, "He has grown wiser, wittier, and more winsome."

Beach teaches by precept and example. The book's final chapter, *The Revived Spiritual Life*, is worth the price of the book for the condensed wisdom and spiritual truth within. Of great value in this story of Bert Beach's life is how the Christian can have fellowship with those of different faiths without being judgmental, critical, offensive, or holier than others while being true to one's own beliefs and giving a witness of Christ.

Ambassador for Liberty is an enjoyable read, reflecting the life and work of the author in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the God he serves. As he puts it, "I don't need extraordinary abilities or great occasions to work for God, and neither does anyone else" (179).

—Reviewed by Patrick Boyle, MA, a retired pastor living in Watford, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom.

Preaching from the past:

A minister's guide to online resources on Adventist history

n their sermons, preachers often refer to both the history of God's people—ancient Israel—and the early Christians of Acts and the epistles. The trials and tribulations of the Hebrews and early Christians provide invaluable instruction and guidance to parishioners.

On a less frequent basis, pastors include the history of their own respective denominations in their sermons. However, God is just as active in His church today as He was in Bible times.

Weaving experiences and lessons from denominational history into sermons demonstrates the continual providence of God, and discerns His moving in recent times. This provides parishioners with assurance, purpose, and meaning and can assist in illuminating the lessons of Scripture.

Numerous sources on Seventh-day Adventist history can be easily accessed on the Internet. Below are the best Web sites on the church's past, which will yield rich material and illustrations for sermons, talks, devotionals, and lectures.

www.adventistarchives.org/DocArchives.asp

Operator: General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

This site boasts approximately two million pages of free, downloadable materials on Adventist history. Available are hundreds of photos, maps, charts, Yearbooks, Sabbath School quarterlies, every major Seventh-day Adventist periodical as well as a selection of complete books.

www.whiteestate.org/

Operator: Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

The White Estate has done much to make the writings of church cofounder Ellen G. White available to browsers. The Web site features answers to frequently asked questions, brief introductions to Ellen White and Adventist pioneers, a kids' section, a television program, hundreds of photographs, and apps. The White Estate also debuted an additional Web site with Ellen White's writings available in multiple languages (https://egwwritings.org/). Everything is free.

www.andrews.edu/library/car/index.html

Operator: Center for Adventist Research (CAR), Andrews University

The Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index (http://www.andrews.edu/library/car/sdapiindex.html) holds tens

of thousands of articles from Adventist periodicals, most of which can be read and downloaded directly from that site. The Seventh-day Adventist Obituary Index (http://www.andrews.edu/library/car/sdapiobits.html) is where one can quickly find out the life dates of individuals and read their obituaries. CAR also contains an extensive photo collection (http://www.andrews.edu/library/car/photosearch.html).

http://archives.llu.edu/cdm/

Operator: Loma Linda University (LLU)

The LLU Digital Archive offers Adventist Heritage, the only periodical dedicated solely on Adventist history, available for download (http://archives.llu.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/advhert). The Digital Archive additionally features hundreds of photographs and interesting artifacts from yesteryear.

www.adventistreview.org/

Operator: Adventist Review

The flagship journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, this daily updated site has scores of searchable articles on Adventist history.

http://library.puc.edu/adventist/sda_resources.shtml

Operator: Nelson Memorial Library, Pacific Union College

This Web page primarily directs to other sites, although Gary Shearer's bibliographies are extremely helpful to those searching for books, articles, and dissertations in a particular area of Adventist and general history (http://library.puc.edu/heritage/bib-index.shtml).

www.oakwood.edu/goldmine

Operator: Oakwood University (OU)

The OU Goldmine contains dozens of documents ready for download on Seventh-day Adventist history with an emphasis on the black experience.

www.adventistheritage.org/

Operator: Adventist Heritage Ministry

The photographs of original Adventist buildings and locales are the strength of this Web site. Visits to these historic spots can be scheduled here. They also have a well-equipped resource store.



www.adventisthistory.org.uk/documents.php

Operator: British Union Conference (BUC)

BUC provides a rich resource on Adventism in the United Kingdom and Ireland, replete with photographs, documents, and useful links.

http://blacksdahistory.org/

Operator: Center for Ethnic Adventist History Studies

This site specializes in black Seventh-day Adventism with resources, downloadable documents and books, videos, time lines, statistics, rare photographs, and an extensive obituary section. Also of note are their monthly features.

www.aplib.org/

Operator: Adventist Pioneer Library

The strengths of this Web site include its short but informative videos and concise, written biographies on Millerite and Adventist pioneers.

http://news.adventist.org/

Operator: Seventh-day Adventist Church

Although this site focuses on breaking news, the reader will find that, of course, old news is history. Here you will find archives of news broadcasts, photos, and stories.

www.youtube.com/user/SDAArchives

Operator: General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

This YouTube channel features the popular "This Week in Adventist History" segment in both its entirety and trimmed into clips by subject.

https://twitter.com/GCArchives

Operator: General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research

Following the tweets of the church's archivist means being treated to daily doses of Seventh-day Adventist history.

Because of the vast resources freely available regarding Adventist history, ministers can, more ably and conveniently than ever, include in their talks vignettes and episodes from our past that demonstrate the Lord's leading.

"We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."* M





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(Review and Herald, January 3, 1907).

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^{*} Ellen G. White, Selected Messages (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1989), bk. 3, 162.

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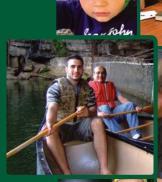
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