

# Adventist Review

January 17, 2013

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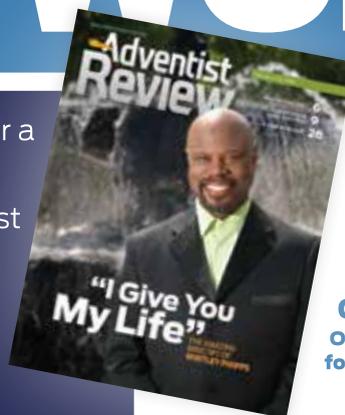
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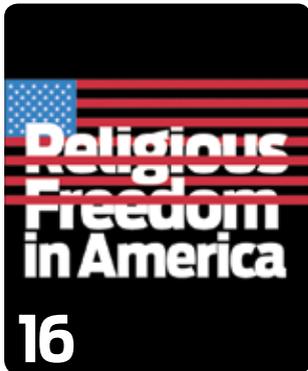
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**Dokimazo**

» I am writing regarding Delbert W. Baker’s “Dokimazo 2012” (Dec. 27, 2012). Beautiful! This zinged right into my soul. Please convey my respect for Baker’s being a Spirit-filled man of God. For the first time in ages I am going to have New Year’s resolutions, and they will be as he suggested. My spiritual life always needs fine tuning by God.

Thank you, once again, for another excellent article.

**REBECCA WHITED**

*Escondido, California*

**Turning Christmas From Blue to Merry**

» I read with great but unpleasant amazement the editorial “Turning Christmas From Blue to Merry” by Carlos Medley (Dec. 20, 2012), wherein Medley promoted Christmas and gave some hints about how Adventist churches in North America celebrate it. Medley even urged us to continue to celebrate Christmas in

more exciting ways.

As an Adventist, I have abundantly researched and come to terms with the fact that Christmas has pagan origin and, hence, should not be observed by Adventists. I also know very well that Adventists do not celebrate Christmas not because we do not believe in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, but for the way and manner Christmas came to be. Little wonder that Scripture urges us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

I’m at a loss as to why an Adventist press would be used to promote something that is clearly evil. Could it be that the Adventist Church is no longer one in faith, teaching, doctrine, beliefs, and hope? Do some beliefs vary from locality to locality?

**NWOKO N. SUNNY**

*via e-mail*



**Finding Their Way**

» A hearty “Amen!” to Ashley Batiste’s article “Finding Their Way” (Dec. 20, 2012). I too am a recent college grad-

uate and can relate to the frustrations and difficulties of young adults in our church today. Our generation faces an unraveling society, an increasingly complex and unpredictable world, and a struggling economy, among other difficulties—and we need the stability, support, and encouragement of our church families.

The church greatly emphasizes evangelism and is quite successful at bringing in people of diverse faiths, but what about our own “flesh and blood”? What about reaching out to and cherishing our own “lost generation” of young believers? Many of our church’s primary leaders and founders were young adults, many just in their 20s—and probably so were Jesus’ disciples when they began their ministry with Him.

We young adults love our faith and our church: many of us do desire to be involved, to have more of a role in our church, and to be entrusted with greater responsibility. Please give us the opportunities to do so! Remember the prophecy in Joel 2:28, 29: that the young and old will unite together, anointed by God’s Spirit—to have the same visions, dreams, and mission.

Yes, special church programs and committees have their place, but what we crave even more is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to saturate each believer’s heart—that we may truly love, support, and care for each other in the body of

Christ. I beseech each church member, young and old, to look for the things that unite us—not tear us apart. This may be the “lost generation”—but by God’s grace we can be “found” again!

**SARAH SINZ**

*Lodi, California*

**The Mathematics of Salvation**

» While Cliff Goldstein, in “The Mathematics of Salvation” (Dec. 20, 2012), is correct that victorious living by the Christian from any point onward cannot compensate for past sins, he stops short of citing the entire passage from *Steps to Christ* that indicates how the perfect obedience required by the law is to be attained. Following the sentence Goldstein quoted, Ellen White continues:

“More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So you may say, ‘The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’ Galatians 2:20 [KJV]. So Jesus said to His disciples, ‘It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.’ Matthew 10:20 [KJV]. Then with Christ working in you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works—works of righteousness, obedience.

“So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast.



We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us” (*Steps to Christ*, pp. 62, 63).

In other words, the perfection required by the law for salvation is not attained simply by substitutional righteousness. Transformative righteousness is part of the equation too. The former applies to the past, which is why White says in the statement Goldstein quoted, “Sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous” (p. 62). Notice it doesn’t say, “Sinful as your life may have been, and is always destined to be on this earth.”

**KEVIN D. PAULSON**

*Berrien Springs, Michigan*

## The Church in Winter

» In response to Bill Knott’s editorial “The Church in Winter” (Dec. 13, 2012), I would add this inspired comment as to where we as the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, leaders and laity alike, stand in God’s eyes: “When the testing time shall come, those who have made God’s Word their rule of life will be revealed. In the summer there is no notice-

able difference between evergreens and other trees; but when the blasts of winter come, the evergreens remain unchanged, while other trees are stripped of their foliage. So the falsehearted professor may not now be distinguished from the real Christian, but the time is just upon us when the difference will be apparent. Let opposition arise, let bigotry and intolerance again bear sway, let persecution be kindled, and the halfhearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in days of prosperity” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 602).

**HOWARD LOEWEN**

*Berrien Springs, Michigan*

## Not in Isolation

» I just read “Adventist Church Grows in North America, Finances Stable” (Dec. 13, 2012), by Mark A. Kellner. I did not grow up in the Adventist Church, but was baptized into the church eight years ago. I have

noticed how difficult it is to be part of the group when I did not grow up Adventist or attend Adventist schools. I have seen this contribute to the revolving door we have in that we bring them in one door and they leave through another.

When it was stated that the “mother division” was redoubling efforts to raise enrollment in Adventist schools, I cringed. One of the biggest issues with Adventist culture I have seen is that it revolves around Adventist schools. If you did not go to an Adventist school, you are ostracized. When the children are in the school, everything is fine. Take your kids out, and you are persona non grata.

My wife and two daughters attended various Adventist schools and public schools during the years. Putting my two girls back into public school was scary, but has turned out to be the best decision. My girls go to public school and witness to others on many occasions. Several neighbors have attended church because of my girls witnessing to them. I have not seen this with children going to Adventist schools.

Respectfully, if the “mother ship” is successful, I believe we all lose. . . . Jesus said we are not to be of this world,

but we still live in it. Unfortunately, our schools can contribute to us not even being in the world, and isolating us from those who need Jesus.

**JOHN SECHLER**

*Littleton, Colorado*

## Draper Valley Vineyard Ad

» I have seen this ad before in one of our periodicals, and it always pains my heart (see Draper Valley Vineyard advertisement in the Nov. 22, 2012, *Adventist Review*). We have to live “in the world,” but not “of the world.” This ad falls under the “appearance of evil,” which we should shun. Healthy juice does not need to be disguised as fermented wine. Do you really think that Jesus would approve of this ad running in a paper that represents our church?

**HELEN HUFFAKER**

*Las Vegas, Nevada*

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**We welcome** your letters, noting, as always, that inclusion of a letter in this section does not imply that the ideas expressed are endorsed by either the editors of the *Adventist Review* or the General Conference. Short, specific, timely letters have the best chance at being published (please include your complete address and phone number—even with e-mail messages). Letters will be edited for space and clarity only. Send correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; Internet: [letters@adventistreview.org](mailto:letters@adventistreview.org).

“I beseech each church member, young and old, to look for the things that unite us—not tear us apart.”

—SARA SINZ, *Lodi, California*



Lael

Caesar

Daniel had no  
need or appetite  
for pagan  
manufactured  
purpose.

## Purpose

### **PURPOSE IS A MATTER OF THE HEART. AT THE CHRONOLOGICAL STAGE**

of teenage youth, and the psychosocial place of geographic and familial dislocation, Daniel's heart had purpose. Dragged in forced marches across the Arabian desert in Babylon's chain gangs of war-violated Judeans, his soul and body aching from exposure, starvation, brokenheartedness, and the loss of homeland, Daniel's heart still spoke with clarity. He may have wept when he remembered Zion (see Ps. 137:1), and wondered at the meaning of it all, but tragedy would not muffle his purpose.

When Ashpenaz' servants interrupted his early-morning cell devotion with friends who found in him inspiration and leadership worth following, Daniel was ready. Eunuchs led the motley slave crew away from prison filth toward a world of unimaginably better things. The young tyrant who had ravaged their homes and land, ensconcing Yahweh's Temple treasure in Marduk's house, would now ensconce them with himself in Babylon's place of privilege and palace society. His careful scrutiny and background checks had qualified them for destinies higher than their fellows. They would not be daubing pitch with the rest of Nebuchadnezzar's human import traffic, or slave at baking blue bricks for Ishtar's gate. Instead, as selected recipients of royal favor they were being drafted to study in the kingdom's prep school, stand in the imperial court, socialize with royal stargazers, sip the intemperate sophistication of Babylonian Bloody Marys, and savor capital foie gras pâtés. Wonderful to relate! Royalty had designed a purpose for their lives.

Too late for Daniel. He had no need or appetite for pagan manufactured purpose. Independently of torture or scholarships, he had already determined the course of his living, and neither inconvenience nor serendipity would chart his course. "To purpose" is to have and live with purpose. It is to live with a made-up mind. Daniel's "purpose" was a verb that spoke principle to his appointed overseer [Melzar in KJV] in words that flowed from already firmly fixed purpose. For Daniel had purposed to be pure (Dan. 1:8).

A millennium and a half before, providence had bequeathed him the model of another victimized teenager, the subject of forced migration from the land of his fathers and his God. Not by invasion, but at the hands of cruel brothers whose callous calculation had determined his economic value as the price of a slave. The grief and terror of Nebuchadnezzar's captives had once overwhelmed Joseph too, until purpose supplanted panic. As his captors' caravans trended ever south, Joseph's eyes had strained to look upon his father's receding tents, and "his thoughts turned to his father's God."<sup>1</sup> In that terrifying circumstance Joseph resolved "that the God of his fathers would be his God."<sup>2</sup>

Daniel chose the Joseph road. He would neither be fazed by youth, victimization, and dislocation, nor by invitations to the liberation of indulgence. He "purposed in his heart" to be pure. Half a millennium later another young Jew gave to purpose its ultimate meaning: He would not "fail nor be discouraged, till he [had] established justice in the earth" (Isa. 42:4, NKJV).<sup>3</sup> Now the world waits for His orders.

Another millennium and a half went by, and it was Martin's turn to purpose in his heart for Jesus against the lords of Rome. Martins and Daniels, Ruths and Esthers, still know today that public decree and persecution's cruelties may do no more than touch the body. The vagaries of circumstance must never define soul purpose. *Purpose is a matter of the heart.* ■

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

# A Wave and a Greeting

**LAST JULY ONE OF OUR NEIGHBORS DIED. IN THE FINAL FEW WEEKS OF** his life Wilbur joked to his wife, Ann, “When I die, you’re going to have to hire six guys to serve as my pallbearers.”

When I went to Wilbur’s interment at Arlington National Cemetery, the reception area was packed with friends, neighbors, and family members. And later at his home neighbors dropped by to share a bite and a favorite memory about Wilbur. Most of the memories had to do with one thing: in pleasant weather he and Ann used to sit out on their front porch and wave at the people who drove by.

If you walked past their house, well, that was another matter. Wilbur always called out a greeting, and a verbal exchange would follow that might last from a few seconds to a few minutes. It wasn’t unusual to see in front of their house dog-walkers, parents with baby strollers, or people just out for a bit of fresh air. If Wilbur and Ann were on their front porch, you got a greeting.

I’ve been thinking about that recently as different ideas are floated for reaching people with the gospel. I mean, here we are, blessed with an ideal message about a wonderful Savior and a glorious future; a message that is mostly ignored.

Maybe those of us who have a heart for sharing the gospel with others should begin by being friendly to the people we see every day: neighbors, coworkers, friends, people behind the counter and across the desk. Maybe we should spend less time trying to convince them that they are wrong and more time demonstrating something of the love of Jesus.

It starts with just a wave and a friendly greeting. ■



Stephen  
**Chavez**



## What’s in Your Pocket?

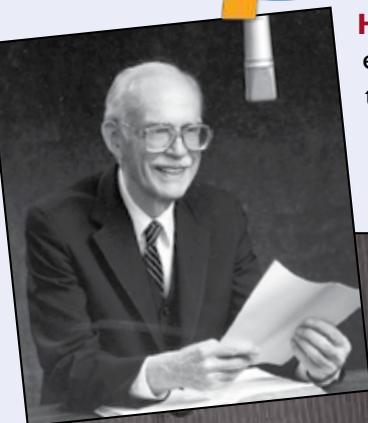
**H.M.S. RICHARDS** had a vision. Preaching evangelistic meetings was satisfying, but not enough. “When I first began pondering the vast possibilities of preaching Christ to the world through the medium of radio, it was a ‘forward-in-faith’ move,” said Richards. “I was holding evangelistic services when the opportunity opened for me to broadcast the nightly meetings.”

The opportunity was too hard to resist, but it would take money. While preaching one evening, he asked his congregation if they would be willing to sponsor such an endeavor. If yes, they were to slip their contribution into his left suit pocket. To his surprise, that first night’s pocket came to \$220 (equivalent to \$3,000 in 2012) allowing him to launch “The Tabernacle of the Air” in Long Beach, California.

Lisle Sheldon, a close associate of Pastor Richards’, remembered: “For at least 10 years that I know of, that left pocket was a radio pocket. Even when nothing was said about it, I have seen Harold Richards after a meeting reach down into it and draw out [checks], bills, and sometimes a whole handful of dimes, nickels, and pennies.”

The rest, as they say, is history. In 1937 the broadcasts continued to reach a wider audience. On January 4, 1942, Fordyce Detamore called out the greeting “Hello, America!” as the *Voice of Prophecy* radio program began coast-to-coast broadcasting for more than 89 stations. To read more about this ministry or to share in its support, visit [vop.com](http://vop.com).

Taken from James R. Nix, *Memorable Dates From Our Adventist Past* (1989), and the *Australasian Record*, May 4, 1953, pp. 4-6.





## WORLD CHURCH

# Religiously Unaffiliated “Nones” Swell to 1.1 Billion Worldwide, Study Says

*Third-largest group behind Christians, Muslims, represents missional challenge, observers say.*

By **MARK A. KELLNER**, news editor

**OF THE** 7 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.

“Unaffiliated doesn’t mean non-religious,” said Rick McEdward, Global Mission Religious Study Centers director for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. “The data that is being reported suggests strongly to me there is a growing group of people disassociating themselves from institutional religions, but are looking for new avenues of vitality and growth; the question is How does the church meet that need?”

For Seventh-day Adventists, McEdward said, the challenge is to “have [those] who have a real, vital connection with God on a daily basis, who are willing to share the narratives of their lives . . . , sharing their views with love and compassion, to be part of a transformative community of faith.”

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 10 people worldwide identify with a religious



ANSEL OLIVER/ANSA

**MAN OF MISSION:** Rick McEdward is director of the Global Mission Religious Study Centers for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He hopes to empower church members with more resources to reach out to friends of other faiths and beliefs.

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 analysis of more than 2,500 censuses, surveys, and population registers, the Pew study finds 2.2 billion Christians (32 percent of the world’s population), 1.6 billion Muslims (23 percent), 1 billion Hindus (15 percent), nearly 500 million Buddhists (7 per-

cent), and 14 million Jews (0.2 percent) around the world as of 2010. In addition, more than 400 million people, or 6 percent, 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 percent 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 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. ■

—with information from the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life

■ AFRICA

## Hope4U Magazine Launches Across Africa

*Adventist World-sponsored project to help Pathfinders raise funds*

By **TOR TJERANSEN**, Norwegian Union Conference media director, reporting from Nairobi, Kenya

**HOPE4U**, A brand-new outreach magazine aimed at young people in Africa was launched on Sabbath, December 1, 2012, in events held in Nairobi, Kenya, and in Lusaka, Zambia.

At the 2,000-member-strong Kenyatta University Seventh-day Adventist Church on the campus of Kenyatta University, a public university in Nairobi, Claude Richli, associate publisher of *Adventist World*, was the key speaker as

the *Hope4U* magazine was launched.

Richli told students of the inception of the magazine and urged them to use the new witnessing tool to reach out to fellow students on the campus.

Kenyatta University has 43,000 students of whom 2,500 are Seventh-day Adventists.

Richli worked for a number of years as associate secretary of the East-Central Africa Division, and has been one of



PHOTO: TOR TJERANSEN

**HOPE FOR AFRICA:** Chelangat Lilian Kirui (23), a student majoring in public health, with the new *Hope4U* magazine after its launch at the Kenyatta University Seventh-day Adventist Church, Nairobi, Kenya, on December 1, 2012



PHOTO: TOR TJERANSEN

**NEW VENTURE:** *Hope4U* magazine copies displayed during worship at the Kenyatta University Seventh-day Adventist Church, Nairobi, Kenya, on December 1, 2012. The publication is designed to help young Seventh-day Adventists in Africa raise money as well as bring the Adventist message to more people in a region where interest is very high.

the driving forces behind the creation of the 32-page magazine geared toward an African readership.

Thirty-five thousand copies have been printed of the first issue of the magazine, which is printed in four colors throughout. In Kenya young people in literature clubs will sell the magazine. Mary Kigundu is organizing distribution coordinators at the various university campuses around Nairobi. She is delighted to see a magazine of this quality being made available to the young people in Africa.

“The main vision behind *Hope4U* is to put a tool in the hands of young people for systematic witnessing, and at the same time give them an opportunity to earn some money to help meet their educational needs,” Richli said.

In Zambia special *Hope4U* magazine events took place in four different churches across Lusaka: Central, University, Chelston, and Chilanga Seventh-day Adventist churches were the locations where special guests preached in the morning and led a dedication/launch program in the afternoon.

The following day, December 2, was the first *Hope4U* day for thousands of Pathfinders, ambassadors, and students in the Central Zambia Conference to go out and sell the 18,000 copies they received. Enthusiasm matched expectations for this project, which will enable young Adventists to share their faith while earning some money.

One of the participants in the launch, Geoffrey Mbwana, a general vice president of the Seventh-day Adventist world

church and a former East-Central Africa Division president, expressed enthusiasm about the project.

“I believe *Hope4U* can and will play a significant role in strengthening our youth spiritually, nurture our members, and reach out to our non-Adventist neighbors with the message of hope,” Mbwana wrote in an e-mail. “I was impressed with the kind of reception given by the church members and the youth. With appropriate leadership and coordination on the ground, I believe this initiative will succeed.”

At the end of 2010 there were 718,000 Seventh-day Adventists worshipping in Zambia; 680,000 people were recorded as members in Kenya. ■

—with additional reporting by Jean-Luc Lézeau, Adventist Review

■ UNITED STATES

## After School Shooting, Adventist Leaders Offer Condolences

*Wilson, Jackson offer messages of sympathy, hope.*

By **ADVENTIST REVIEW STAFF**

**LEADERS OF** the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church and its North American Division have each offered messages of condolence to the families, friends, and neighbors of those killed in the December 14, 2012, shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

General Conference president Ted N. C. Wilson, writing from Germany, where he was traveling on official business, said, “The tragic killing of young children and others in Connecticut fills us with great sympathy and enormous sadness.”

“On behalf of the world family of Seventh-day Adventists, we share our profound sympathy and condolences with the families who suffer such terrible loss,” Wilson added. “We are praying for the parents, students, teachers, and the rest of the affected community.”

Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division, whose territory includes Connecticut, said, “Our hearts



**MEMORIAL:** White balloons decorate the sign for the Sandy Hook Elementary School as a Connecticut state trooper stands guard at the school's entrance, Saturday, December 15, 2012, in Newtown, Connecticut. One day earlier a gunman killed his mother at their home and later walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School and opened fire, killing 26 people, including 20 children.

ache over yet another senseless shooting within the past few weeks. We pray that God's Spirit will break through the ghastly shadow of death to bring comfort and support to those who are grieving and broken.” ■



**FREEDOM QUEST:** Representatives of the Seventh-day Adventist Church meet with São Paulo, Brazil, state governor Geraldo Alckmin, center. At left is Edson Rosa, the Adventist Church's religious liberty director in South America; at right is John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department director for the General Conference.

■ SOUTH AMERICA

## Adventists Call for More Global Religious Freedom

*Planning continues for May 2013 event in Brazil.*

By **FELIPE LEMOS AND LUCAS ROCHA**, *South American Division*

**GERALDO ALCKMIN**, São Paulo state governor, welcomed the Seventh-day Adventist Church's top public affairs leader December 10, 2012, five months ahead of a large-scale celebration of religious liberty that the church will sponsor.

John Graz, director of the General Conference's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, visited with state and city leaders recently to finalize preparations for the World Festival of Religious Freedom, scheduled for May 25, 2013, in São Paulo, Brazil's largest city.

The city of São Paulo's vice mayor, Nadia Champion, said she welcomed the coming event "with great enthusiasm."

Champion said, "São Paulo is the most suitable place to welcome people who bring this message of tolerance and

religious freedom as a value important to modern society."

While Graz and local Adventist Church leaders complimented Brazil on its religious freedom, they also urged Brazil to do more. In a speech to church leaders in Brasilia the previous week Graz called on national leaders to speak out more on issues of religious freedom in international forums, such as the United Nations. The rise of Brazil politically and economically would give the country more influence in such forums, Graz said.

"Today at least 70 percent of the world's population lives in countries with serious religious restrictions," Graz told attendees in the Brasilia Higher Education Institution auditorium.

He also highlighted the Adventist

Church's attempts to support two members imprisoned on unfounded charges in the West African nation of Togo. South America has had a large rate of participation in awareness campaigns for the two men. Graz said Brazil could be even more "politically engaged" on behalf of religious freedom.

So far, Brazil has enacted strong measures supporting religious freedom in the diverse nation. Luigi Braga, general counsel for the Adventist Church's South American Division, praised existing legal measures, including a dedicated telephone line that allow people to report abuses of religious freedom and other human rights offenses.

This year's religious freedom festival is the second such event. A similar one was held in Peru in 2009. The event's coordinator, Edson Rosa, public affairs and religious liberty director for the South American Division, said such festivals help raise awareness about the importance of tolerance for different ways of worship. The large-scale celebrations also offer thanks to countries that protect religious liberty, he said. ■

## NORTH AMERICA

## **Lifeglow, for Visually Impaired, Ends Run; New Magazine to Follow**

*Christian Record had produced periodical for 29 years.*

By **RAJMUND DABROWSKI**,  
*Christian Record Services, reporting  
from Lincoln, Nebraska*

**AFTER 29** years of serving visually impaired readers, *Lifeglow*, a bimonthly, large-print magazine published by Christian Record Services, concluded its successful run in mid-November.

Christian Record's large-print magazine is receiving a new design and format treatment beginning with the January-February 2013 issue. It will become known under a new title, *Light*, according to *Lifeglow*'s editor for the past seven years, Bert Williams.

*Lifeglow*'s target audience, which will continue as *Light*'s audience, is interdenominational Christians who are legally blind, Williams explains. The majority of recipients are not members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a denomination that established Christian Record in 1899.

*Lifeglow* has a circulation of 14,000, and as with all Christian Record's subscription publications, the magazine is available free of charge.

Agewise, many readers—though not all—are toward the older side of the age spectrum. This is largely because the majority of people who are legally blind have age-related diseases such as diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration.

“Senior citizens in the twenty-first century are a different breed than those of even 50 years ago,” he asserts. Wil-



PHOTO: RAJMUND DABROWSKI/CRS

**FINAL ISSUE:** Bert Williams, editor of *Lifeglow* magazine (left), inspecting the final issue under this title with CRS production manager Russell Thomas (right).

liams explains that “past memories are certainly a part of their experience, but they also, to speak in general terms, are more attuned to the times and forward-looking. The magazine’s content includes articles that provide Christian encouragement, comfort, and reflection, and there are also materials intended to inform, challenge, and contribute to personal growth.” The magazine informs its readers about disability

issues, general health, and a wide array of other topics—both current and spiritual. Readers are also offered ever-popular crossword puzzles.

Recent issues of *Lifeglow* have focused on special themes. The September-October 2012 edition was a special issue on religious freedom. Prior to that, the July-August issue focused on themes from the Old Testament Scriptures, with articles by Ray McAllister and Dexter Thomas, both of whom are serious Bible students with doctoral degrees, and both of whom are blind.

The final *Lifeglow* issue features meditations from three Christian pastors (an Adventist, a Lutheran, and an Episcopalian) on Christ’s incarnation.

Looking at the folding machine spewing the final issues of *Lifeglow* into a ready-to-post pile, Williams observed, “I don’t have a lot of nostalgia about it, probably because by nature I tend to look ahead rather than back. Since becoming editor I’ve just been thinking about how to make future issues the best they can be. That will certainly be our goal with the new magazine.” ■



PHOTO: RAJMUND DABROWSKI/CRS

**FINAL ISSUE:** “*Lifeglow Magazine*” ended its 29 years under this title with the November/December 2012 issue. A new version is to appear under a new title, “*Light*.” Both are publications of Christian Record Services for the Blind, a Seventh-day Adventist ministry to the visually impaired.



## WE NEED YOU

We are looking for brief submissions in these categories:

**Sound Bites** (quotes, profound or spontaneous)

**Adventist Life** (short anecdotes, especially from the world of adults)

**Jots and Tittles** (church-related tips)

**Camp Meeting Memories** (short, humorous and/or profound anecdotes)

Please send your submissions to Give & Take, *Adventist Review*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600; fax: 301-680-6638; e-mail: marank@gc.adventist.org. Please include phone number, and city and state from which you are writing.

## ADVENTIST LIFE

At Joshua Seventh-day Adventist Church in Texas, at least one child is recruited each Sabbath to sing “God Has a Plan for My Life” just before the children’s story. Three-year-old Kevin volunteered one Sabbath and brought more attention than usual as he sang:

“God has a pwan for my wife;  
God has a pwan for my wife;  
I just can’t wait to see  
What’s in store for me, for  
God has a pwan for my wife.”

—LISA WARD, JOSHUA, TEXAS



## CAMP MEETING MEMORIES

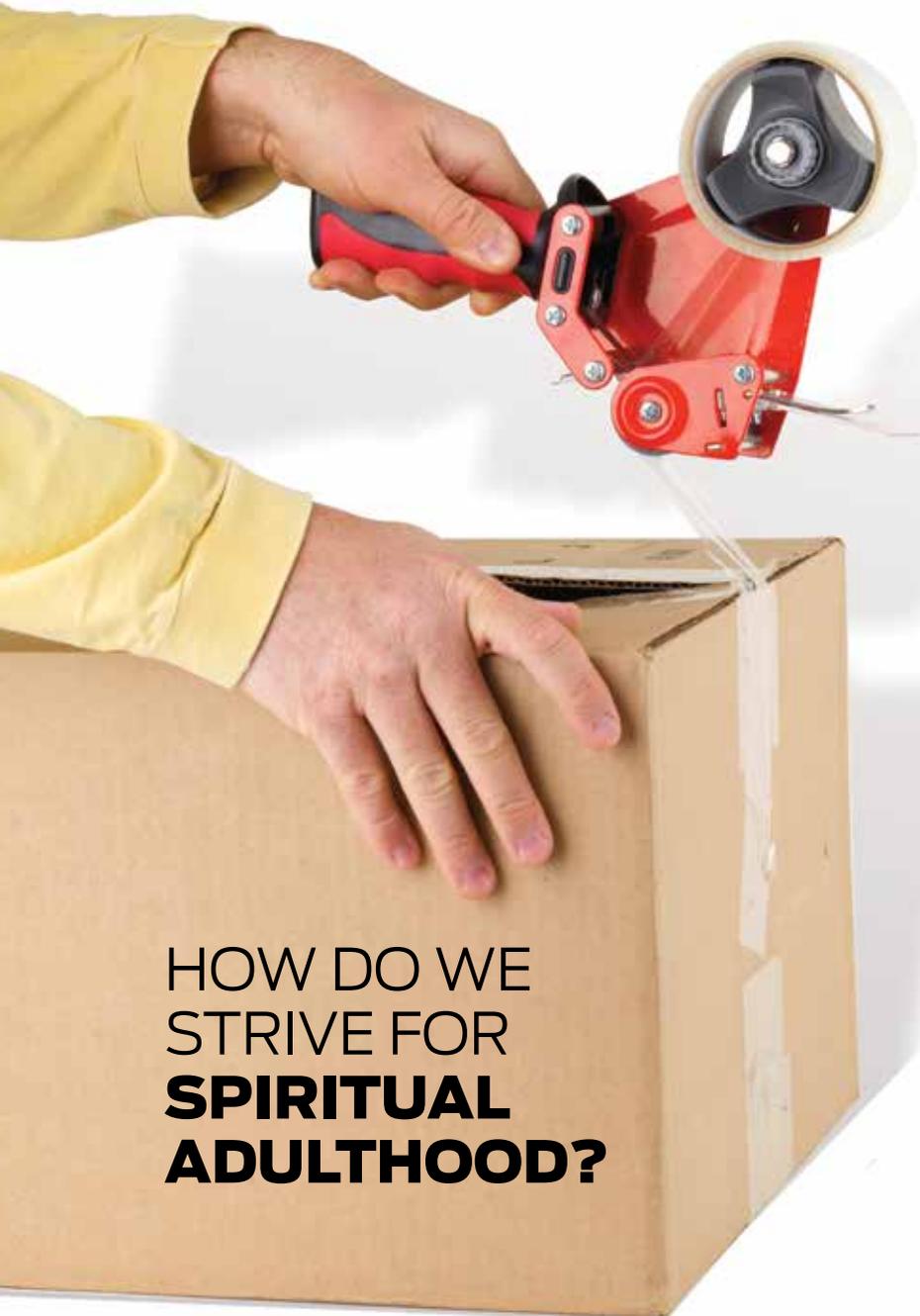
In August 2012, while we were at Mvurwi camp meeting, the unexpected happened. It was when the evening speaker, evangelist Mavezere, was about to make a “call” that someone shouted “Snake! Snake!” from the rocky terraces. The youth, who had been warned earlier to sit at the front to avoid mischief, came running toward the pulpit as if convinced by the sermon to turn to the Lord without delay.

It was later realized that someone had fallen asleep during the sermon, had a nightmare, and thus shouted in his sleep. When he was aroused by the noise of the other youth running for their lives, he also ran in horror. Fortunately, only minor injuries were incurred.

I came up with a warning to avoid future error: “Sleeping may be hazardous to your health!”

—THOMAS CHITOWE, GURUVE, ZIMBABWE

# Putting Away Childish Things



HOW DO WE  
STRIVE FOR  
**SPIRITUAL  
ADULTHOOD?**

BY LINDSEY GENDKE

**W**hen I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me” (1 Cor. 13:11).

In almost any culture the world over, the attainment of a certain age immediately confers on individuals the title of “adulthood.” At least, at a certain age, individuals are suddenly granted “adult” privileges, as well as certain implied responsibilities that, at their age, are only reasonable. Those who say that they just don’t “feel” like going to school, keeping a job, or paying their rent are censured because they “are old enough to know better.” But those who duly acknowledge their adulthood take particular, often meticulous, care to fulfill their “adult responsibilities.”

My question is this: Are Adventist youth who call themselves Christians, myself included, placing the same level of priority on our spiritual maturation?

In a church in which an estimated 50 percent of youth are leaving the organization,<sup>1</sup> the answer seems to be no. But most of us don’t need statistics to tell us that.

## Personally Speaking

All through my early 20s I struggled to have personal worship each morning, because I knew “I should be doing it.” My problem was, though, that I just didn’t *feel* like doing it. Not surprisingly, my feelings for God, as well as my desire to attend or serve in church, were lukewarm at best.

But at age 25 I hit a crisis and didn’t know where else to turn. Finally, for the first time in my life, I resolved to have morning devotions every day, no matter what. I concluded I had nothing to lose.

As my crisis persisted, so did my morning devotions. Within a few months what had started as indifferent eyeing of the adult Sabbath school lesson turned into ravenous reading of God’s Word. Relying on God to bring me out of my crisis, I increasingly found

Bible promises that spoke to me. With the peace of resting in God’s promises came the desire to serve Him, not only in church, but in every facet of my life.

## What I See

I am troubled by a persistent apathy I see in some young adult Adventists. It is the same apathy I faced not long ago. To clarify, I am troubled that I see so-called Christian young adults placing visible priority on jobs, families, and various hobbies without placing similar or greater priority—if any priority at all—on spiritual things.

What, for instance, would be the result if our adult Christian performance were evaluated the same way as our job, school, or parental performances? Would we be fired, expelled, or found to be “unfit” keepers of the Christian title?

Reflecting on these questions would have us desperately seeking: What does it mean to become a man or woman in Christ? What does it mean to “put the ways of childhood behind [us]” so we can truly reach spiritual maturity?

## What God Requires

In a nutshell, God wants His people—those who profess to love and follow Him—to do what He says. “If you love me, obey my commandments” (John 14:15, NLT; cf. verses 21-23).<sup>2</sup> But much like modern civil laws, this injunction is not an inconsequential suggestion. Throughout the Bible, God is clear: His people must obey and have eternal life, or disobey and perish (Deut. 30:16-18).

This may seem a little harsh, and even hard to understand, as it was for Thomas when he asked Jesus, “How can we know the way?” (John 14:5). Without realizing it, however, Thomas was really asking, “How can I get to heaven?” or, for the purposes of this discussion, “How can I live out what You’ve already told me to do?”

As Jesus explained, the key to His own success, and the same key that allows the Christian to keep the commandments, is abiding in the Father: “The Father who dwells in Me does the

works” (John 14:10, NKJV).<sup>3</sup> “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5, NKJV).

On this topic, clearly addressing her readers as mature Christians capable of choosing their own behavior, Ellen White wrote: “As Christ lived the law in humanity, so we may do if we will take hold of the Strong for strength. But *we are not to place the responsibility of our duty upon others, and wait for them to tell us what to do. We cannot depend for counsel upon humanity.* The Lord will teach us our duty. . . . If we come to Him in faith, He will speak His mysteries to us personally.”<sup>4</sup>

## “THE CHOICE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH IS ONE EVERY INDIVIDUAL MUST MAKE FOR THEMSELVES.”

Although this passage suggests that mature individuals make an initial choice to follow God, the Bible ultimately says that abiding and obedience must come from the Holy Spirit (John 14-17). In 1 John the themes of obedience, abiding, and the Holy Spirit are finally shown to be inseparable: “Those who obey God’s commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the [Holy] Spirit he gave us lives in us” (1 John 3:24, NLT). All told, it seems the only part that “mature” Christians play in this interchange between obedience and love is some kind of choice. But what does that look like today?

For me, it was making the choice to connect with God daily—no matter what.

## Gaining the Victory

Perhaps at present we cannot all enter into worship and obedience with our hearts completely in it. At first I couldn’t. But if we Christians faithfully

keep what we know to be right, He will give us not only a genuine “heart” experience on earth, but much more.

As Israel camped on the borders of Canaan, preparing to receive God’s inheritance—much as we who, today, are camped on the borders of spiritual Canaan—Moses addressed the nation as intelligent “adults,” fully capable of making the right choice: “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. . . . The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it” (Deut. 30:11-14).

The choice given the Israelites that day is the same choice we have today: “Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses” (verse 19, NLT).

The choice between putting away childish things and becoming Christian “adults,” the choice between life and death, is one every individual must make for themselves.

And just as Moses proclaimed then, God exhorts today: “Oh, that you would choose life. . . . You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. . . . If you love and obey the Lord, you will live long in the land the Lord swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (verses 19, 20, NLT).

For me, eternal life is privilege enough. What is your choice? ■

<sup>1</sup> Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

<sup>3</sup> Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), p. 668. (Italics supplied.)



LINDSEY GENDKE WRITES FROM KEENE, TEXAS.

The background of the page is a stylized American flag with red and white horizontal stripes and a blue canton with white stars. The title "Religious Freedom in America" is written in large, bold, white, sans-serif font across the center of the stripes.

# Religious Freedom in America

BY NICHOLAS P. MILLER

**T**he recent presidential election showed how complicated the religious liberty landscape in America has become.

It unfolded a bit like a disorienting game of musical chairs: Catholic bishops defended religious liberty like old-fashioned Protestants; Evangelical Protestants supported a Republican presidential ticket that stumped for prayer in schools and government support for religion, sounding like pre-Vatican II Catholics; and President Barack Obama, a self-professed Christian with a Muslim-influenced upbringing, proffered secularist positions on

abortion and gay marriage that were contrary to those religious traditions.

President Obama's victory means that secularist values will likely become even more of a concern for religious liberty and institutions during the next four years. This challenge to religious freedom from the Left will ensure that agitation from the Evangelical Right and the Roman Catholic Church will also intensify, as they seek to protect religious freedom and to promote a special role for Christianity in our society. The net result will continue to be challenges to genuine religious liberty from both the political Left and the Right.

# WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR THE COUNTRY? **FOR THE CHURCH?**

## Going to Extremes

Given the political climate, challenges from the Left will be most immediately pressing. Adding to the pressure on religious freedom, three more states, Washington, Maryland, and New Hampshire, joined several states that have now legalized same-sex marriage. Initiatives passed in Colorado and Washington legalizing marijuana use and, in Maryland, vastly expanding casino gambling.

Faith-based schools and colleges, both Catholic and Protestant, have sued the government over the requirement to provide contraceptive coverage in their private health insurance plans, including paying for drugs that induce abortions.

Where same-sex marriage is legal, religious institutions, including Seventh-day Adventist ones, have come under pressure to adopt sexual lifestyle policies for employees and students that are contrary to their understandings of Scripture. Commercial institutions have fewer protections than not-for-profits. Already companies such as Hobby Lobby and Chick-Fil-A have come under media and legal pressure to

conform their practices to the mores of the secularist Left.

In another disturbing development—and a portent of things to come—California in October enacted a law to make illegal any attempt by a licensed counselor, therapist, physician, or health worker to provide counseling to modify or alter same-sex attractions to any person under the age of 18, even if that person desires such counseling. This legal development should dash any thought that same-sex marriage regimes will

with mixed results. But whatever the eventual outcome, this is an indicator of the Left's desire to legally suppress those elements of the church's morality and practice that conflict with secularist values.

A very real danger, of course, is that the Left's pressure on religious institutions will provoke a backlash from the Right, one that itself could endanger religious freedoms. Indeed, suppression by majority religions of minority religious rights is what the Adventist prophetic message envisions. We cannot

## SECULARIST VALUES WILL LIKELY BECOME EVEN MORE OF A CONCERN . . . DURING THE NEXT FOUR YEARS.

operate in a “live-and-let-live” manner.

Churches in California can still *teach* and *preach* biblical views of sexuality, but Christian counselors—including pastors with counseling licenses—are forbidden from helping the church's young people to actually *live* and *practice* those beliefs.

The law is under legal challenge, so far

ignore the very present and real danger to religious freedoms because of our concern about a predicted future danger. To do so endangers the church's witness to the present age, and our moral authority in future conflicts.

## A Historical Survey

How should the Adventist Church

respond to these challenges and their potential backlash? History can help us shape an answer to this question.

In recent years arguments about religious liberty, and the culture wars in general, seem to have proceeded on a two-sided basis. There are a series of issues—abortion, same-sex marriage, faith-based funding, gambling casinos—with two apparently possible positions, one for secularists, and the other for “faith communities.”

But the two-sided nature of this discussion is a recent development. It trended this way in the mid-1970s and 1980s, as Protestants began to make common cause with Catholics, first over the issue of abortion, then on issues of religion and education. The trend has been toward pushing for greater government support for religion and religious viewpoints.

The recent conflict over the Affordable Care Act mandate requiring religious institutions to provide coverage for contraception, including abortifac-

ting to prominence in the progressive era of the 1910s and 1920s, symbolized by the rise of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). This group has deeper roots, though, going back to Thomas Jefferson and the philosophies of the French Enlightenment.

On the right were Christian republicans, made up of an uneasy coalition of Catholic groups seeking state funding for parochial schools and evangelical groups supporting Bible reading in the public schools (King James Version only, please), Sunday blue laws, and religious tests for political office. These Christian moralists had their roots in the Puritan theocrats of New England and the Anglican establishments of Virginia and the South. They were images of the magisterial Protestantism of Europe, with a church supported by the state, where dissenting groups were regulated and often suppressed.

But there was a third group, whom we can call dissenting, or free-church, Protestants. This group opposed the

course and debate.

Always a minority in Europe, these dissenting groups were largely unable to guide European political arrangements. But these Baptists, Anabaptists, and Quakers, and eventually Methodists and Scotch-Presbyterians, became politically controlling in a number of American colonies: first in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and later in Virginia, New York, and the Carolinas.

These free-church groups grew explosively during the Great Awakening revivals of the 1740s. By the time of the republic’s founding, they were politically ascendant in most colonies outside New England. Thus, when the federal constitution was framed, its church-state philosophy reflected that of the dissenting Protestants, and not that of either Puritan republicanism or French Enlightenment thought.

Much of the modern-day conflict over the constitution and religious liberty comes from partisans trying to remake

the American founding in either the image of a Jeffersonian secularism or a Puritan Christian republicanism. The dissenting Protestant posture, Adventism’s true birthright, is increasingly overlooked, even by Adventists.



## HOW SHOULD THE ADVENTIST CHURCH RESPOND TO THESE CHALLENGES AND THEIR POTENTIAL BACKLASH?

cents, has highlighted the historic Protestant position on keeping matters of religious conscience free from the will of the state. The irony, of course, is that it is primarily Catholics reminding Americans of their Protestant heritage.

That they must do so goes to show that we have lost sight of something important in our recent “faith versus secularism” arguments. For most of American history, from the founding through the 1950s and 1960s, there was a more nuanced dialogue that involved at least three points of view.

On the left were the secular liberals,

practice of the state provision of resources to religious groups, and also insisted that churches should be free from state oversight or control. This group represents the real ancestors of the Adventist church-state view.

These dissenting Protestants did not reject all state involvement with morality. But they believed that issues of public morality should be legislated in light of the natural moral law, not scriptural injunction. Their colleges taught courses in “moral philosophy,” required study for all students to provide a foundation for public moral dis-

### A Prudent Position

In our own midst we have growing numbers who either want to join arms with the Religious Right, and call for prayer in schools and the Ten Commandments on our public buildings; or to ally with the Left and dismiss all morals legislation, such as protection of marriage and family, or restrictions on pornography, abortion, or gambling as violations of the separation of church and state. Neither position is consistent with either our dissenting Protestant or Adventist heritages.

We Adventists are nervous when poli-

ticians start to talk about morality. Somehow we feel that the political and the moral realms should be entirely disconnected. But this is truly impossible, at least for any government that is to be concerned with justice.

As Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle understood so long ago, every government worth having must be concerned with what is just, and what is just is bound up with what is good, and what is good is inevitably a question of morality. The state should stay out of *spiritual* morality, but notions of public health are directly affected by *civil* morality, which moral philosophy studied.

Ellen White identified moral philosophy as one of the three most important things that Christian students should study. She wrote, “The plans devised and carried out for the education of our youth are none too broad. They should not have a one-sided education, but all their powers should receive equal attention. *Moral philosophy*, the study of the Scriptures, and physical training should be combined with studies usually pursued in schools.”\*

It was the judicious use of moral philosophy that allowed Ellen White and other pioneers to advocate for social moral issues such as abolition of slavery, temperance reform, and the prohibition of alcohol. They could do this while still upholding the separation of church and state because they distinguished between spiritual and civil morals. To survive the coming religious liberty challenges, Adventists have to learn to do the same again.

How would a recovery of the dissenting Protestant view help guide Adventists in the religious liberty challenges ahead? It would counsel us to keep out specifically Christian arguments based entirely or primarily on appeals to Scripture. But moral arguments that appealed to common moral experience and human reason would be appropriate.

It would disapprove of state funding to overtly religious institutions, something secularists would appreciate. But it would prevent the state from burdening religious entities with regulations

contrary to their religious teachings, such as the contraceptive/abortifacient insurance coverage requirement found in the Affordable Care Act. The faith-based community would appreciate this.

State-official-led prayer and worship services or rituals would be out-of-bounds, a position secularists would applaud. But references to a divine being, a Creator, even a God, would not be *verboten*. Notions of the natural moral law revolved around the philosopher’s God, which was not considered a product of sectarian religious thought. Even the ardent separationist Thomas Jefferson referred to the “Creator” in the Declaration of Independence. But it was a Creator understood in the light of the “self-evident” truths of nature, of moral philosophy, not those of special revelation.

Issues of abortion and gay rights would require a careful, nuanced approach. The Religious Right’s moral absolutism would give way to a more fine-grained analysis that would weight competing moral concerns, the hallmark of a reasoned moral philosophy. The state could recognize the moral weight of life at its various stages, but also recognize other moral values, such as quality of life, and justice for victims and the oppressed.

Abortion on demand and as a method of birth control could be restricted; but when the life and health of the mother was at risk, or the pregnancy was a result of coercion and rape, these countering moral concerns might be given weight. Such an approach would be consistent with the biblical moral framework, which highly values life, but considers it in a matrix of other concerns, including justice, human dignity, even social order, as shown by its allowance of capital punishment for a variety of crimes.

In the area of gay rights, society could recognize the importance of providing close personal relationships with support and protection. Values of privacy and equal treatment would counsel against discrimination of gays in public benefits or the workplace. But the importance of religious freedom would

allow religious institutions—both places of worship and educational and health institutions—to preserve their values in relation to sexual conduct.

This approach would also recognize the moral value of protecting the goals and ends of the child-raising unit of a mother and a father, and reserve its full approval for such relationships. Such an approach may allow for civil unions for tax and insurance purposes, but it would limit marriage and the right to raise children to heterosexual couples based on moral arguments about the purposes of procreation and the rights of children to benefit from the special care provided by a mother and a father.

Other moral issues, such as gambling, marijuana and drug use, and violence and sex in the media, could be restricted, even outlawed; based, again, not on scriptural injunctions, but on studies showing the harmful effects of these things on communities and children. It would be a world that would fully satisfy neither secularists nor Christian America advocates. But it would take into account most of their central concerns and provide a common public language of moral discussion.

## More Than a Game

At its best the recent game of religious liberty musical chairs may trigger a revival of America’s true Protestant heritage, one embraced by our own pioneers, both American and Adventist. If this happens, this odd political parlor game of the recent election may have been very worthwhile indeed. ■

\* Ellen G. White, *Christian Education* (Battle Creek, Mich.: International Tract Society, 1893), p. 210. (Italics supplied.)



**NICHOLAS P. MILLER, J.D., PH.D.,** IS AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY AND DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS LIBERTY INSTITUTE AT ANDREWS UNIVERSITY IN BERRIEN SPRINGS, MICHIGAN. HIS BOOK, *THE RELIGIOUS ROOTS OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT: DISSENTING PROTESTANTS AND THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE*, HAS JUST BEEN RELEASED BY OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

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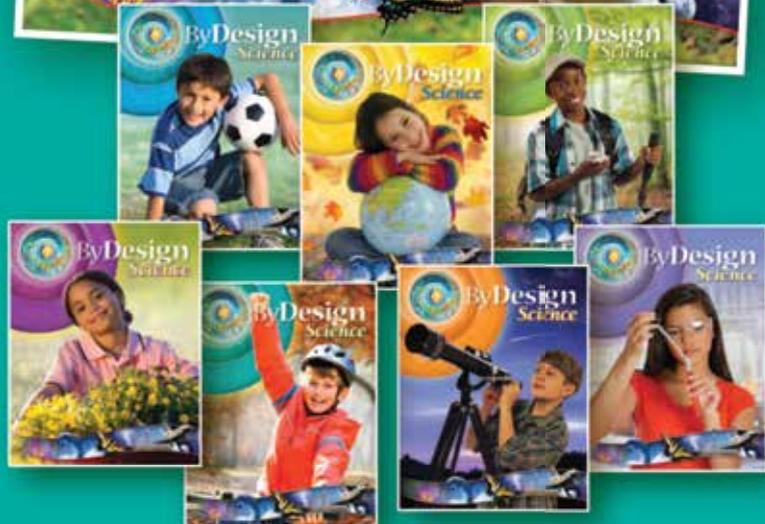
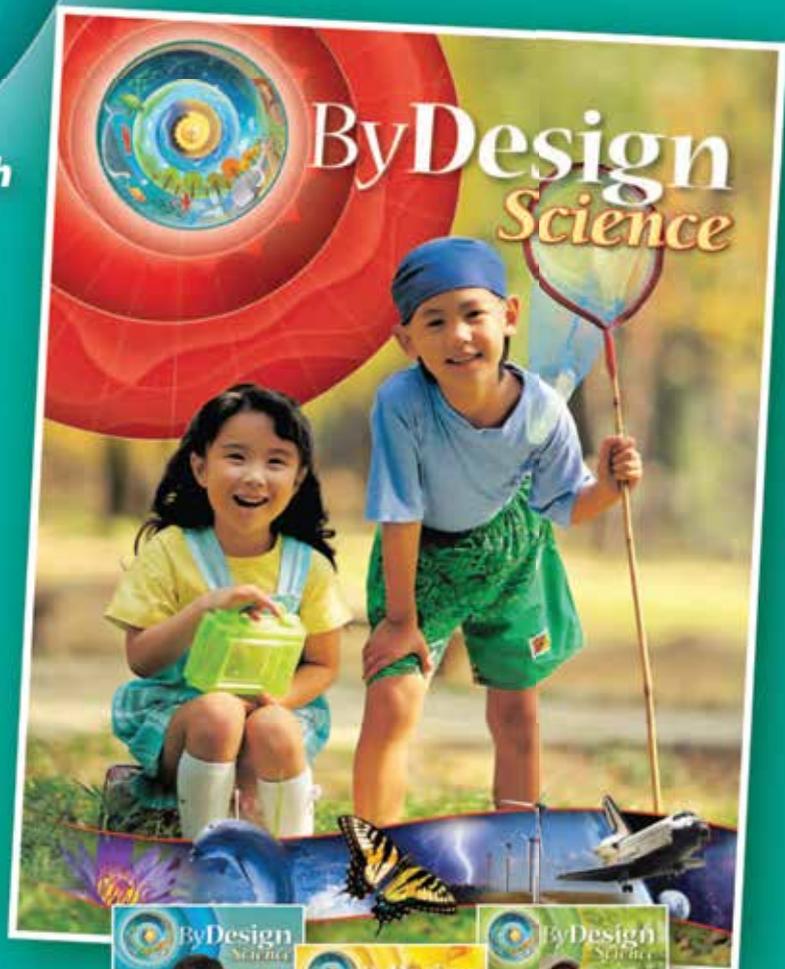
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# Is Nothing Sacred?

**WHEN EDITING *LIBERTY* MAGAZINE IN THE 1990S, I PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE** about police who bugged a confessional booth in a Roman Catholic church. Everyone found it appalling, including the court, which threw out the evidence garnered by the eavesdropping device. Please! Even we at *Liberty* were offended.

But why? We're Seventh-day Adventists; we don't believe in confessional booths. We see them as part of the ecclesiastical usurpation perpetrated by the little-horn power of Daniel 8, in which it "set itself up to be as great as the commander of the army of the Lord" (verse 11). The confessional is another manifestation of what Paul warned about as "the secret power of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:7). From our perspective, the confessional booth is no more "sacred"—in that it was hallowed by God—than a fruit stand.

We often hear about the "sacred," but what does that mean? In India the faithful come to the Karni Mata Temple in hopes of being blessed by the 20,000 kabbas that live there. Kabbas are rats, which worshippers regard as such sacred creatures that it's considered a supreme blessing to eat from the same bowls the kabbas do.

All through history communities, cultures, and faiths have deemed objects, places, or people as "sacred." So what? Are the Mormons' "sacred" undergarments sacred because Latter-day Saints think so? Is tobacco sacred because Ojibwe communities in America believe it is? Herodotus wrote about a tribe, the Callatians, whose sacred duty demanded that children eat the corpse of a deceased father. In ancient Egypt cats were sacred, even worshipped as gods (in China about 4 million "Egyptian gods" get eaten every year).

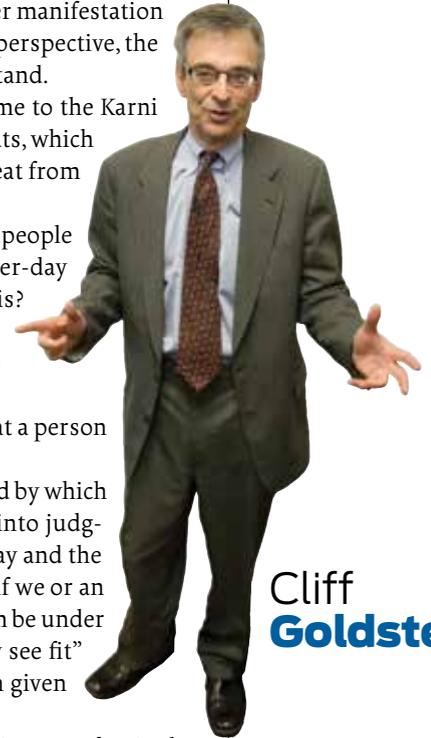
Who, though, can condemn these people or their practices as wrong, or prove that what a person or a culture believes is "sacred" isn't?

You can't, unless you believe in absolute truth in a transcendent metaphysical standard by which everything is judged . . . such as what the Bible teaches. "For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil" (Eccl. 12:14). "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse" (Gal. 1:8). "You are not to do as we do here today, everyone doing as they see fit" (Deut. 12:8). "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

These verses, and others, shred any nonfoundationalist worldview that denies the existence of a single foundation or edifice for truth, because nonfoundationalism argues instead that contingent, cultural, and social contexts alone determine what is true, sacred, and moral. If people believe that kabbas are sacred, what justification do we have to tell them that they're wrong? And if one culture teaches you to love your neighbors, another to eat them, who determines which one is superior (we know which one a nonfoundationalist would prefer to raise a family in, though)?

Nonfoundationalism refutes itself anyway. To deny the existence of a metanarrative, a grand overarching story that explains reality (such as the great controversy), is to affirm a metanarrative that explains reality—in this case that reality is contingent, cultural, relative. If one accepts the premise of no overarching story, shouldn't that same one regard nonfoundationalism as just one more overarching story? A nonfoundationalist would have to deem their nonfoundationalism as another chauvinist, imperialistic, oppressive, and judgmental "regime of truth" (Michel Foucault) to be discarded. Nonfoundationalism promotes its own totality and overarching reality, but because it rejects any overarching reality and wages war "against totality" (Jean-François Lyotard), it is self-refuting and, hence, incoherent.

Scripture presents about as firm a foundationalist worldview as imaginable: one God, one Savior, and one name under heaven to be saved. This doesn't mean that police should be bugging confessional booths; it means only that the stalls are no more sacred than kabbas or the ancient "Egyptian gods" who torture and then eat them. ■

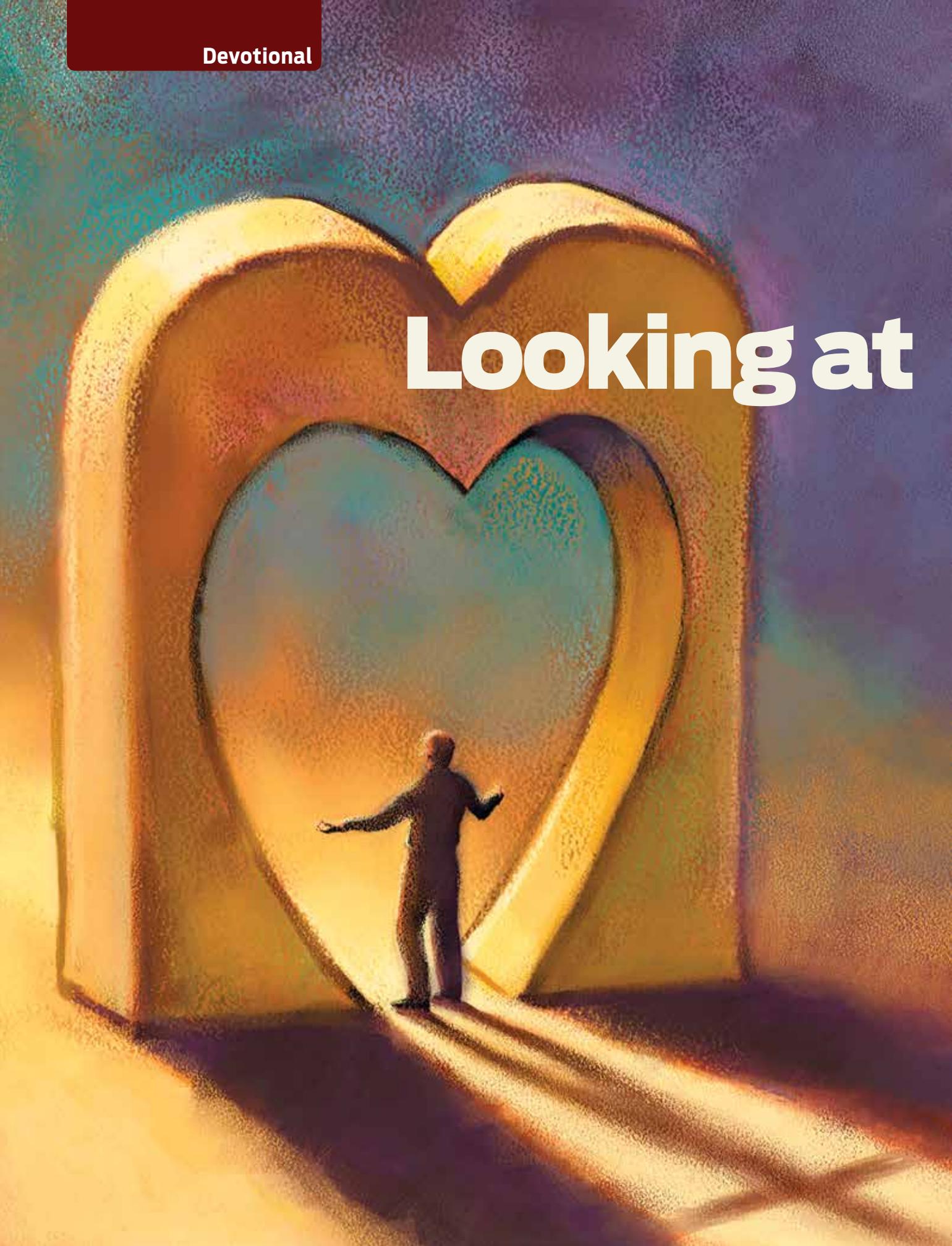


Cliff  
Goldstein

**CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN** IS EDITOR OF THE *ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDY GUIDE*. HIS LATEST BOOK, *SHADOW MEN*, IS AVAILABLE FROM SIGNS PUBLISHING IN AUSTRALIA.

Devotional

# Looking at



# A FIRM FOUNDATION FOR LASTING REFORMATION

## God's Law, Again

BY VARA PRASAD DEEPATI

**R**ecently I was struck by this commanding statement: “The law of God is the foundation of all enduring reformation.”<sup>1</sup> Simply put, revival and reformation, and obedience to the law of God, go together; and *a call to revival and reformation is a call to obey God's law*. Because Bible writers understood this, they could say: “The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul” (Ps. 19:7). Not surprisingly, commandment keeping dismays the devil. He has tried to change God's law (Dan. 7:25), and is still doing his best to destroy those who keep it (Rev. 12:17).

A question arises: How can negative prohibitions (against murder, adultery, etc.) lead to “a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death,” “a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices”?<sup>2</sup> How can “Don't, don't, don't” develop in anyone “a beautiful character that is in harmony with all that is pure and holy and undefiled”?<sup>3</sup> Differently put, what does obedience to God's law actually involve?

### Jesus' Great Answer

To the lawyer's question “Which is

the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus responded, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart,’” and “‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:36, 37, 39, 40). His words provide three principles to understand what obedience to God's law involves—(1) obedience to the Bible, (2) avoiding evil and doing right,

the Old Testament's: “Love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom. 13:10). As some have said, 2 = 10 = 39 = 66: Two love principles summarize the Ten Commandments, for which the Old Testament and the whole Bible provide fuller explanation.<sup>4</sup> Thus, any call to obedience to God's law is a call to obey the whole Bible. The Bible is “the grand stimulus, the constraining force, that quickens the physi-

## THE DECALOGUE AS A WHOLE IS BUT AN OVERALL SUMMARY ON SOUND CHARACTER.

and (3) love to God, others, and oneself.

### To Obey God's Law Is to Follow the Bible

Referring to love for God and neighbor, Jesus said, “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments,” a reference to the entire Old Testament. These two principles of love are quite clearly seen in the Ten Commandments, the first four dealing with love for God, and the last six, love for one another. And New Testament concerns are the same as

cal, mental, and spiritual powers, and directs the life into right channels.”<sup>5</sup> These words certainly describe an experience of revival and reformation.

### Obedience Is More Than Avoiding Wrongdoing

Multiple Bible writers highlight the truth that the law, despite appearances, is “DO, and Live.”<sup>6</sup> David writes: “Turn from evil and do good” (Ps. 34:14). Isaiah invites Judah and Jerusalem: “Cease to do evil; learn to do good” (Isa. 1:16,

17, NKJV).<sup>7</sup> And Amos encourages Israel: “Seek good, not evil. . . . Hate evil, love good” (Amos 5:14, 15). Paul invites his church members to “hate what is evil; cling to what is good” (Rom. 12:9), and to “hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21, 22).

Jesus’ entire ministry seems to emphasize that the righteous not only avoid evil but promote good as well. A classic example is the good Samaritan story (Luke 10:29-37), in which Jesus, while commending the good Samaritan who had compassion on the half-dead traveler, implicitly condemns the Levite and the priest for failing to do likewise.

That commandment keeping involves both “do’s” and “don’ts” may be understood from the Decalogue itself. Along with eight “don’ts” against other gods, graven images, etc., the commandments include two “do’s” on the Sabbath and parental respect. Moreover, the Decalogue’s first “don’t” against having other gods implies its own “do”: You shall have Me. According to Alexander Maclaren: “The prohibition [no other gods] has little force on us; but the positive command which underlies it is of eternal force. We should rather think of it as a revelation and an invitation than as a mere command.”<sup>8</sup> Commandment keepers not only refrain from worshipping false gods—they worship the true God: the very point of Elijah’s Mount Carmel confrontation with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:16-45) and also of the first of the three angels’ messages (Rev. 14:7). Our final section articulates several positive implications of the Ten Commandments.

### Positive Principles

Our Lord’s second love commandment involves loving our neighbor as ourselves. Love for self here does not stand for selfishness, but means taking good physical, mental, and spiritual care of oneself. Luke’s description of Jesus’ life demonstrates to this effect.

“Jesus increased in wisdom [mental] and stature [physical], and in favor with God [spiritual] and men [social]” (Luke 2:52, NKJV), which is synonymous with our best definitions of true education: “the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.”<sup>9</sup> So that while commandments 1-4 and 6-10 may have distinct foci, the Decalogue as a whole is but an overall summary on sound character.

The table below shows how an experience of intimate relationship with God (first commandment) enables a person to meet all commandment requirements. The God who requires obedience is the God who empowers, working within us to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). “When a soul receives Christ, he receives power to live the life of Christ.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the longed-for reformation is the commandment keeper’s natural experience as they obey all of God’s Word in their dedication to doing good for self, for neighbor, and for God.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 8, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 1, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1955), p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> A clear understanding of the fourth commandment (Ex. 20:8-11)—“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy”—involves a look at the relevant material in the entire Bible. For example, Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 16; Isa. 58:13, 14; Matt. 28:1; Mark 2:27; Luke 4:16; Rev. 1:10.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 458. (Italics supplied.)

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White letter 89, 1898.

<sup>7</sup> Texts credited to NKJV are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Maclaren, “Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers,” *Maclaren Expositions of Holy Scripture*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Numbers*, reprint (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), pp. 100, 101.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1900), p. 314.

\* Calling upon the name of the Lord is an Old Testament concept of acceptable worship, understandable as grateful response to God’s grace.



**VARA PRASAD DEEPATI** IS A PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY AT SPICER MEMORIAL COLLEGE, PUNE, INDIA.

Negative Prohibitions (Ex. 20:3-17)		Positive Principles
1	You shall have no other gods.	intimate worship relationship with God; total surrender to God
2	You shall not worship graven images.	constant communion with God; prayerfulness
3	You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain.	calling on the name of the Lord; gratefulness*
4	You shall not do any work on Sabbath.	keeping the Sabbath holy; rest, joy, assurance
5	You shall not dishonor father and mother.	honoring father and mother; respectfulness
6	You shall not murder.	gentleness
7	You shall not commit adultery.	purity of life
8	You shall not steal.	generosity
9	You shall not bear false witness.	honesty
10	You shall not covet.	contentment

# Family Ministries

## AS A HOMILETICS PROFESSOR I HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF TEACHING MEN AND

women from the U.S. and around the world. I'd like you to see two sides of their stories. First, many have sacrificed almost everything to be in the Master of Divinity program. Because they are unsponsored by a conference, they must study and work at menial jobs while their spouses also work, sometimes two jobs, and raise the children. Because of their financial hardships, their children have often attended public schools. However, when they graduate and are hired to serve churches, they are required to promote Christian education although their children have attended public schools. To address this disparity, a small group of us have started an initiative called "First the Blade." Once a month these children are invited to a program featuring Adventist heritage lessons. Tax-deductible funds are also solicited to assist families who put their children in our schools. To date, we've given \$8,565 in scholarships. It's our goal to sponsor all their children in public schools to receive a Christian education.

And there's another side to my students. Some of their testimonies during preaching sessions are inspiring, such as that of Tjatur Purnomo, a pastor from central Java, Indonesia:

"In 2001 a young man, not a church member, asked me to visit his family because his parents were always fighting. My wife and I visited his family. In my first visitation we met his mom and brothers. I introduced myself, and this family was very happy with our visit. His mom is a Christian, but his dad is a strict Muslim. At that time her husband was not at home, and she told me that they had a big problem because they have different beliefs. This woman told us that one day when she was fighting with her husband, he took her Bible and said, 'This Bible is the main source of our fighting.' So he took it to the back of their house and threw it into the fire and went away.

"She didn't know that her husband had thrown her Bible into the fire, and after a half hour of their fighting, she looked for her Bible. She wanted to read it to get peace and comfort, but she couldn't find it. She looked everywhere until she found her Bible in the blazing fire. She was very shocked, so she reached in and grabbed the Bible out of the flames. It was amazing! The Bible wasn't burnt after a half hour in the fire. She took the Bible and said, 'God! You are amazing!'

"She gave me the Bible and said: 'Pastor, this is the evidence that what I am saying is true.' I held the Bible. I could smell the smoke on it. I examined it carefully, and it was clean—no singed pages or scorched cover. That day she asked me, 'Can we study more about this Bible?' I was still spellbound when I answered, 'Yes! Absolutely!' I immediately started Bible studies in her home, and the great thing is that we used the amazing Bible. Eventually I met her husband, but he didn't want to join us. He just saw what our activities were. I continued to visit and study with this woman, using the Bible that wouldn't burn.

"For a couple of months I directed the Bible study for the family, and it was a miracle when suddenly the husband who had tried to burn the Bible came to me and said: 'I threw the Bible into the fireplace. The Bible didn't burn, but now it's burning me. Can I study the Bible with you?'

"I was amazed again. 'Oh, yes! Absolutely,' I agreed without hesitation. 'You can join with me and your family to study the Bible.' One year after we studied the Bible together, this man was baptized on a Sabbath day, and that Sabbath he was baptized alone. He was the first Adventist in that area. One year after his baptism his wife, his children, and his neighbors were baptized too. Twenty-two people from his area attend our church every Sabbath because of his witness for Jesus. Now I am happy because one of his sons is a pastor of one of our churches."

The power of God is incredible, and Jesus still saves! ■

**HYVETH WILLIAMS** TEACHES HOMILETICS AT THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.



Hyveth  
**Williams**

BY MARTIN PROEBSTLE

It is midnight—somewhere on a road. An eerie silence seems to be palpable. The family should have long since come to rest. Yet the completely unfathomable happens. God attacks, and Moses' life is at risk.

This utterly mysterious event is described in Exodus 4:24-26: "At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him

goodbye to Jethro (Ex. 4:18), and, together with his wife and their two sons, set out for Egypt (verse 20). They came to "a lodging place," which was probably an overnight stay in the open, for Zipporah quickly had a sharp stone at her fingertips. The accompanying donkey echoes other stories that exhibit the "deadly donkey motif": Abraham

# Divine

## FINDING GOD IN

### A DIFFICULT TEXT

and sought to put him to death. Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it and said, 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me!' So he let him alone. It was then that she said, 'A bridegroom of blood,' because of the circumcision" (ESV).<sup>1</sup>

Nothing in the text prepares us for what is happening here. After 40 years Moses seemed to have finally escaped his assassins, "for all the men who were seeking your life are dead," so at least God assured him (Ex. 4:19; cf. Ex. 2:15). However, this very same God was now "seeking his life," although He had just commissioned him to go to Egypt. Is God capricious? Why did God want to kill Moses? And why did Zipporah's deed avert the impending disaster?

#### Eyewitnesses and Crime Scene

Following his divine call, Moses said

and Isaac (Gen. 22:3, 5), or Joseph's brothers, who at a lodging place (same word as in Ex. 4:24) were terrified when they discovered the money as they wanted to feed their donkeys (Gen. 42:26-28; 43:21). Sometime in the future Balaam, riding "by God's order" on a female donkey to Moab, will be stopped by the angel of Yahweh who is ready to kill him (Num. 22).

#### Perpetrator

The Hebrew explicitly says that Yahweh wanted to kill Moses. For the first translators this was too scandalous. Instead of "Yahweh," they read "angel of the Lord" (Greek Septuagint), "messenger of Yahweh" (Aramaic Targumim), or even "Mastema," a chief demon or Satan (Book of Jubilees). Such renditions intended to take the edge off the text.

#### Sequence of Events

The problems of the text reside in its

apparent ambiguity. In the Hebrew original, subject and object are not clearly spelled out (cf. NKJV). Whom did Yahweh want to kill, Moses or his son? Whose feet were touched by the severed foreskin? Who was called “bridegroom of blood”? Did Zipporah save Moses because he was uncircumcised or because one of their sons was uncir-

firstborn. “Touching” (same word as in Ex. 4:25) the doorposts with the blood of the Passover sacrifice saved the firstborn from Yahweh (Ex. 12:13, 22, 23). Similarly, when Zipporah touched Moses with blood, it saved him from Yahweh’s judgment. This illustrates the vitally important role of blood (Ex. 24:8; Lev. 17:11). The connection between the

informing Moses that a confrontation with Pharaoh that will culminate in God killing Pharaoh’s firstborn son (Ex. 4:21-23) awaits him.

### Motive

The question of motive is most important. Let’s start with God’s actions. There are a number of biblical instances in

# Assassin?

cumcised? Or did she save Moses’ son?

A close reading provides helpful circumstantial evidence.

**Evidence 1—circumcision:** Zipporah “cut off her son’s foreskin” (Ex. 4:25). Even if Moses is not mentioned by name in verse 24, the object of Yahweh’s attack should be Moses and not one of his sons, since Moses was also the main character in the previous section (verses 18-23).

**Evidence 2—“bridegroom of blood”:** This expression indicates that Moses’ feet had been touched, for the Hebrew word “bridegroom” does not refer to blood relatives but to a husband (Isa. 62:5) or other affinal relatives (Judges 19:5; 2 Kings 8:27).

**Evidence 3—blood on Moses:** Zipporah touched Moses’ genitals (euphemistically called “feet,” [see Judges 3:24; 1 Sam. 24:3; 2 Kings 18:27]) with her son’s foreskin. This symbolic act and the particular phrase she used (“bridegroom of blood”) conferred some kind of protection upon Moses. The verb seems to foreshadow the final plague in Egypt and the concurrent rescue of Israel’s

assassination attempt of Moses and the tenth plague is not accidental, considering that just before the nighttime incident we find a divine pronouncement

which God is said to have killed people. When and why does He kill?

The table below illustrates the seriousness of sin. It is then all the more surpris-

Person—Whom Did God Kill?	Motive—Why Did God Kill?
all flesh (Gen. 7:10)	wickedness (Gen. 6:5-7)
Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19)	grave sins (Gen. 18:20)
Er (Gen. 38:7)	wickedness (Gen. 38:7)
Onan (Gen. 38:10)	hindrance of offspring (Gen. 38:10)
firstborn of Egypt (Ex. 12:29)	Pharaoh’s obstinacy (Ex. 7:13, etc.)
Pharaoh and his army (Ex. 14:28)	persecution of Israelites (Ex. 14)
parts of the people of Israel (Ex. 32:35)	golden calf (Ex. 32:35)
Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:2)	unauthorized fire (Lev. 10:1, 2)
Korah’s men (Num. 16:33)	rebellion (Num. 16:3)
Canaanites (Joshua 10:11)	iniquity is complete (Gen. 15:6)
Abiram and Segub (1 Kings 16:34)	curse (Joshua 6:26)
Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:7)	irreverence (2 Sam. 6:7)
firstborn of Bathsheba and David (2 Sam. 12:18)	David’s sin (2 Sam. 12:14)
Ahaziah’s embassy (2 Kings 1:10-12)	Elijah’s capture (2 Kings 1)
Bethel’s boys (2 Kings 2:24)	mockery of God’s prophet (2 Kings 2:23)
185,000 men in the Assyrian camp (2 Kings 19:35)	mockery of God (2 Kings 19:21-28)
Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 10)	lie to God (Acts 5:4)

ing that God sought Moses to kill him. This must have been because of a very serious offense. So what was going on?

*Evidence 4—a “sharp stone” that “cut”:* It is important to note that the Hebrew verb *karat*, “to cut,” is used in Exodus 4:25 to describe the act of circumcision. Elsewhere in the Old Testament the Hebrew term *mul* is used (it also appears in verse 26 in a nominal form). The verb “cut” is employed here because it is typically used in expressions describing the “making” of a covenant. Its use here signifies that a covenant relationship is involved. The act of circumcision pertains to the status of Moses’ family in relation to the divine covenant with His people. Circumcision, the visible covenant sign between God and His people, was so significant that a person who actually belonged to Israel but would not get circumcised had to be *cut off* from God’s people (Gen. 17:14).

There is also a connection between Moses’ return to Egypt and Israel’s entry into Canaan (Joshua 5:2, 3). Only these two incidents describe a circumcision with flint knives. The younger generation was still uncircumcised, although their fathers themselves had been circumcised and knew about its commandment (Lev. 12:3). Before the new generation could begin the divinely ordained conquest of Canaan, they needed to enter into the divine covenant by circumcision. Similarly, Moses needed to circumcise his son and exhibit the covenant sign in his family before he would lead Israel out of Egypt. Touching Moses’ genitals with circumcision blood seems then to be a symbol for Moses’ reinstatement into God’s covenant.

Thus his son’s circumcision saved Moses’ life.<sup>2</sup>

*Evidence 5—Zipporah:* Zipporah was the only person who, in the right moment, could perform the circumcision. It is absolutely unique in the Bible that a woman performed the ritual of circumcision. And so after his mother, Miriam, and Pharaoh’s daughter, it was once more a woman who saved Moses’ life. Evidently Moses was paralyzed by the divine threat so that he could not perform the circumcision himself. Only

Zipporah was active. Showing her presence of mind, she assumed the role of the mediator between Yahweh and Moses, and her action saved the day. Her deed provides the final evidence, for how did she realize what needed to be done? Zipporah must have known why God acted so strangely and that He was aware of their family circumcision problem. She likely was involved in the neglect to circumcise her son, if she was not the cause herself.<sup>3</sup>

### Failed Assassination or Successful Warning?

Undoubtedly, if God really would have wanted to kill Moses, He would have done so. Instead the text mentions that Yahweh *sought* to kill him. What does

## ZIPPORAH MUST HAVE KNOWN WHY GOD ACTED SO STRANGELY AND THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THEIR FAMILY CIRCUMCISION PROBLEM.

this *seeking* mean? Certainly not that God’s first attempt was foiled. Rather God’s seeking to kill Moses alleviates the divine visitation. God opened a window of opportunity in which humans could act. “It is therefore not to be understood that Zipporah thwarts a single-minded divine intention for death; rather, she moves into the temporal spaces allowed by God’s seeking.”<sup>4</sup>

God’s intention was to teach a lesson. In this regard Moses’ experience resembles Jacob’s wrestling match at the Jabbok. There are a number of verbal and motif parallels that are hardly incidental: (1) “meet” (in the Pentateuch only in Gen. 32:17; 33:8; Ex. 4:24, 27); (2) “touch” (Gen. 32:25, 32; Ex. 4:25); (3) both happened at night on the way “home”; and (4) subsequently the main character kissed his brother who came to meet him

(Gen. 33:4; Ex. 4:27). When God stood in Moses’ way, He apparently wanted to send him off, like Jacob, with a blessing.

### Closing Argument

The scenario can be envisioned as follows: Before Moses could enter the life-or-death struggle in Egypt, God needed to confront him, for Moses and Zipporah had not committed themselves totally to the covenant with God. They had not circumcised their son. Only after Moses had faced God Himself and the situation was rectified could he face any enemy, including Pharaoh himself.

This incident is an important divine illustration teaching us the seriousness of getting involved with the living God. We are called to dedicate ourselves totally and wholeheartedly to God in every aspect of life. God would do anything for the sake of Moses, even if it involved putting Moses’ life at risk. God *did* win—and so did Moses. Therefore, the final verdict about God should be “not guilty.” ■

<sup>1</sup>Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup>Some suggest that the son was circumcised *instead* of Moses, who himself was uncircumcised to conceal his Hebrew identity in his baby years. However, there is simply no evidence for this. Moses had been kept three months at home before he was entrusted to God and put on the Nile (Ex. 2:2). The traditional rite of circumcision on the eighth day could have easily been carried out. This might be the reason the daughter of Pharaoh knew that the foundling was a Hebrew baby (then again, which babies could be found on the Nile?). Besides, Moses’ parents most likely belonged to the faithful ones in Israel. According to rabbinic tradition, Moses was even born circumcised (Midrash Exodus Rabbah 1:20).

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, (*Patriarchs and Prophets* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890], pp. 255, 256) held exactly such a view: “Yielding to the persuasion of his wife, he [Moses] had neglected to perform the rite of circumcision upon their youngest son. He had failed to comply with the condition by which his child could be entitled to the blessings of God’s covenant with Israel; and such a neglect on the part of their chosen leader could not but lessen the force of the divine precepts upon the people.”

<sup>4</sup>Terence E. Fretheim: *Exodus: Interpretation* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 1991), p. 79.



**MARTIN PROEBSTLE, PH.D.,**

TEACHES THEOLOGY AT BOGENHOFEN SEMINARY, AUSTRIA. HE IS MARRIED TO MARIANNE AND ENJOYS TWO ENERGETIC TEENAGERS AT HOME.

# The Adventist Tipping Point

## THERE'S A MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF JESUS WHEN HE SEEMS NOT TO KNOW

what to say: “As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes’” (Luke 19:41, 42). Jesus’ sentence starts one direction, then wanders off—as though there’s no point in continuing.

If, figuratively speaking, Jesus were to look across the Adventist Church, what would He say? Would He view us the way some of the outside world still seems to view us: as a bastion of legalism? Heavy facial expressions as we trudge around thinking we can work our way to heaven? (“We don’t need a Savior; we’ll take care of it.”)

Perhaps in years past there was some element of that. When I was in college, a speaker came to campus and said his passion was grace. To be honest, his messages felt like water on parched ground.

But if the dry winds of legalism have now mostly blown through, what has replaced them? A healthy life of faith that combines true joy in Christ with careful choices about what we allow into our minds and homes? Or something else?

In my view our church’s biggest threat is no longer legalism (though it still exists)—it’s secularism, materialism, the world. This is the thief that now comes to “steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10) the abundant life in Christ.

In his book *The Tipping Point* Malcolm Gladwell explores the moments when culture tips—then spreads like wildfire. The tipping point, he explains, has everything to do with the leaders of a given culture—even if they don’t realize they’re leaders. For example, in New York in the mid-1990s Hush Puppies shoes suddenly got wildly popular because a small group of cool kids in the East Village and Soho started wearing them. The “30-dollar shoes” went “from a handful of downtown Manhattan hipsters and designers to every mall in America in the space of two years” (p. 5).

If you’re a natural leader (whether you want to be or not), the decisions you make *will* shape the culture of those watching you. So who are the Adventist Church’s cultural leaders right now?

Our church culture today is shaped largely by natural leaders who are good, solid people, who you’ll see once a week at church and several times a week at Little League fields, who know all the latest films and shows, who believe we have “the truth”—which primarily means worshipping on Saturday—but who may be among the 50 percent of Adventists who never study the Bible individually. Their children grow up to be natural leaders with God-given gifts, but they don’t even consider full-time ministry. Instead, they choose prestigious or lucrative careers and become good, solid citizens and church members—like their parents.

So Adventists, how different are we from anyone else? Would it be fair to say that even as we recognize that the most gifted leaders in our Bibles were exactly the ones God called to ministry leadership—Moses, David, Daniel, Peter—most of our best and brightest today don’t even consider ministry leadership because that’s not where our church culture is anymore?

We should be careful not to replace a culture that majored in minors with one that minors in majors: the transforming grace of Christ, our distinctive Adventist message, the abundant life. Our standards should be higher than those of any legalists because we understand that our behavior doesn’t determine our salvation, so why not aim high? Rather than living a mostly secular life with some sacred around the edges, we should be living a mostly sacred life with the secular relegated to the edges. Our church culture can be tipped, but only if our most natural leaders decide to lead.

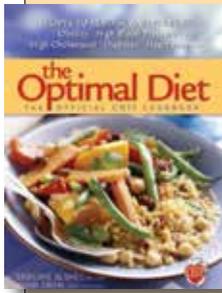
“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace . . .” ■

**ANDY NASH** IS A PROFESSOR AND PASTOR AT SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY. HE’S LEADING A FAMILY-FRIENDLY TRIP TO ISRAEL IN MAY, AND CAN BE REACHED AT [ANDYNASH5@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ANDYNASH5@GMAIL.COM).



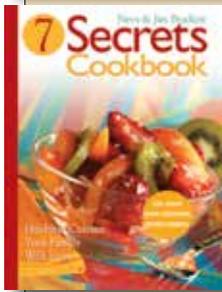
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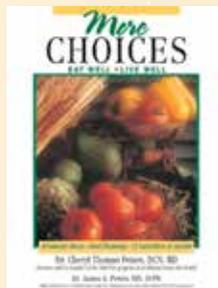
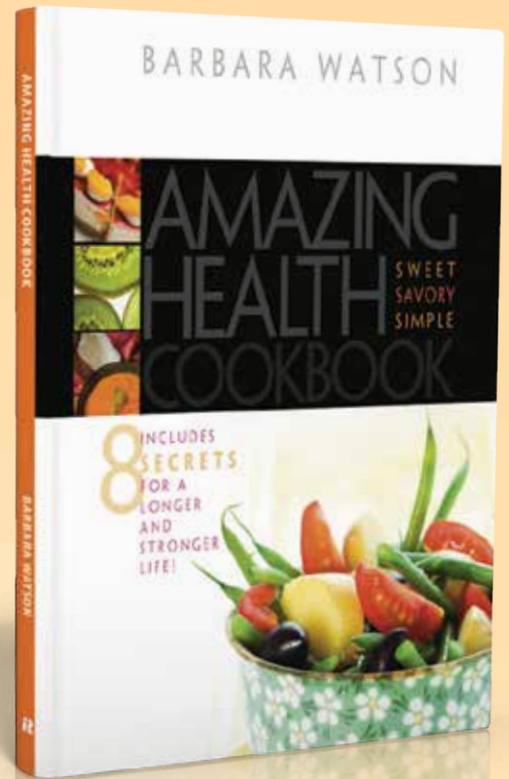


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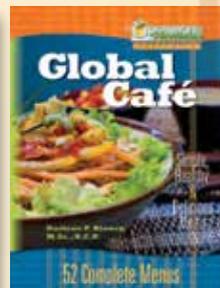
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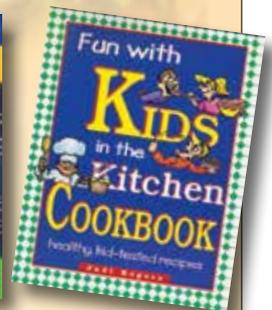
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**Review & Herald**

# My Father Sang to Me

**MANY EDUCATORS ENUMERATE THE BENEFITS OF PARENTS READING TO** their children. My personal experience exemplifies the positive impact of singing to our children as well.

My father died March 9, 2010, at the age of 94. Shortly after that I underwent surgery with no guarantee that I would survive, and found myself reviewing my own life and comparing it to that of my dad.

I was much younger than my father was when he died, and I had not accomplished the things my father had during his lifetime. Yes, I had graduated from college and received a bachelor's degree. My father didn't get past eighth grade. But that's not the type of accomplishment I'm talking about. What I'm referring to are the truly important things of life.

My father was steadfast in providing for his family. He rose early each morning to go to work in a dirty, noisy factory because he loved us. Sometimes he worked a second job stocking shelves at a local grocery store. He also was a committed Christian. He never failed to take time for prayer and reading God's Word. Fellow employees recognized the Christian values he held.

My dad was especially devoted to his children. Often he had to work late in the evening for his second job, but my brother and I would stay awake just so we could see him. Dad would kneel beside our beds and pray for us, and sometimes he would sing to us. He had a beautiful deep voice, and we loved hearing it. Many times his singing helped us to fall asleep.

My father loved the old hymns, probably because he remembered singing them in church along with his brother, sister, and parents when he was young. One of his favorites was "In the Garden," and as he sang this hymn I felt as if I was there with him in that garden, walking with Jesus.

Another favorite was "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." My dad's love for Jesus, his personal friend and Savior, was evident when he sang the verses of that hymn. Even as a young child, I knew that my father had heard Jesus' call, "O sinner, come home," and had invited Jesus to rule his heart. I longed for that same experience.

My dad also loved "The Old Rugged Cross." Tears were in his voice as he sang about Jesus being nailed to the cross, and I can remember tears welling up in my own eyes when he would sing that song to me.

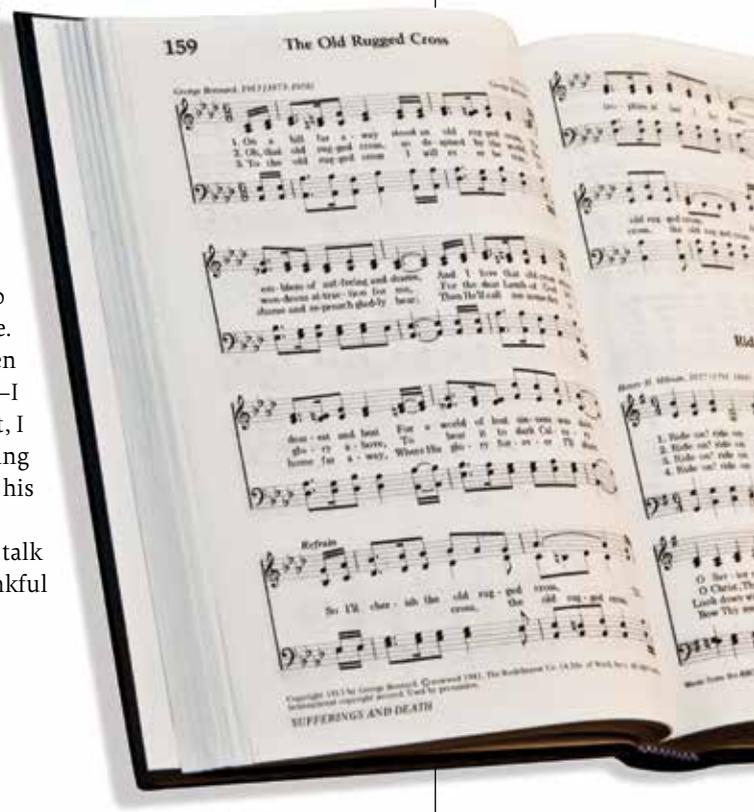
I was out of state visiting my son when I heard that Dad had been diagnosed with a brain tumor. Initially the prognosis was six months to a year, but only a short time later my sister called and advised me to come quickly. The tumor was very aggressive, and if I delayed, she said I likely wouldn't see him alive again. So I immediately made flight arrangements.

When I arrived at his bedside, Dad gripped my hand tightly. I stayed with him that evening after everyone else had left. I talked to him and told him what a difference his prayers had made in my life. I also assured him that I remembered the hymns he sang to us when we were kids. Then—even though my voice is not as good as his—I sang to him. Before he slipped into his final sleep that very night, I sang to him the songs he had sung to me as a boy. I know the last thing he heard was my singing to him, and the next thing he will see is his blessed Savior.

God is so good! I am thankful to God that I was able to see and talk and sing to my dad before he passed away. But most of all, I am thankful that my father sang to me as a child. ■

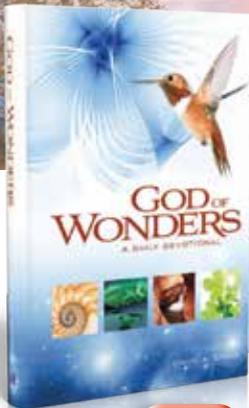


**STEVE R. MORRIS** IS A FREELANCE WRITER LIVING IN MICHIGAN.



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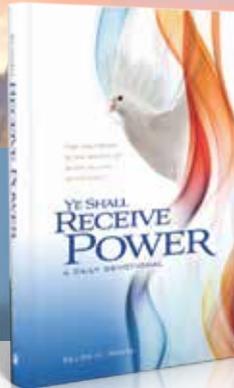
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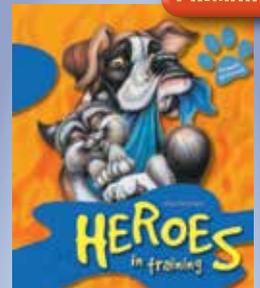
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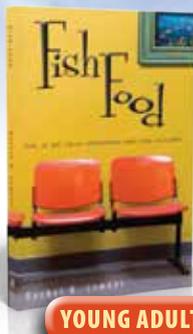


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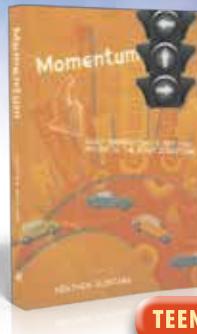


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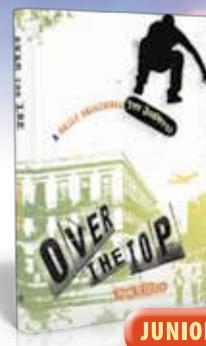


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