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To Know Christ and to Be Found in Him: Our Identity and Mission
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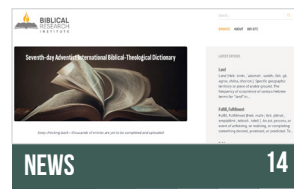
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To Know Christ and to Be Found in Him: Our Identity and Mission

Keldie Paroschi, BRI

Identity Crises

There are moments in life when we are faced with the question of our identity.¹ Who are we really? Think of the person who, after years of hard work and personal sacrifice, unexpectedly loses a job that had become central to who they are. Or a cancer diagnosis that leads to reordering one's whole life around this illness. And then there is the unimaginable loss of a child, resulting in the immediate disruption of a central part of one's identity and sense of purpose. In moments like these, how does one begin to rebuild their sense of self? Is there something stable about our identity that can ground us, despite the chaos of life?

Aside from personal crises of identity, in our world we are bombarded with mixed messages that lead to confusion regarding who we really are. There are voices all around us, whether on social media, news broadcasts, podcasts, at church, school, or work, trying to tell us who we are or who we should be. It is difficult to discern who to listen to or who is right, especially when the message does not align with our feelings.

We live in a world broken by sin, and sin breaks our connection with God, with others, and even with ourselves (Gen 3:7–13; Isa 59:2; Eph 2:12–14). This brokenness and disconnect leads to confusion about our personal identity as well as to confusion about the gospel message and our role as witnesses to the world. With this in mind, this brief article will explore the importance of comprehending our identity in Christ and the repercussions of this identity for the Adventist message and mission.

Our Identity in Christ

Paul was one of the brightest young minds in Judaism of his day, having achieved so much already at a young age. He describes his former self as smart, confident, zealous, righteous, and blameless (Phil 3:4–6). But that proud, overconfident sense of self resulted in actions driven by feelings of anger and rage as he persecuted those who followed Jesus (Acts 26:11).

Once he met Christ, however, everything changed. Blinded by the bright light, he asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The reply came: “I am Jesus whom *you* are persecuting” (Acts 26:15).² In His answer to Paul, Jesus identified who Paul was in connection to Himself. “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” Jesus’ words demonstrate that He sees Himself as one with His people—what happens to them, happens to Him.³ His answer reveals that our identity is not separate from Him, but found in relationship with Him. In that moment, Paul began to see that understanding who Jesus is was the key to understanding who he was. In the same way, understanding the person of Christ is the key to understanding who we are. We were made to be connected to Him.⁴ Paul understood that this encounter with Christ completely transformed his understanding of his own identity. He no longer lived for himself, but having crucified his own self with Christ, it was now Christ who lived in him (Gal 2:20).

That our identity is found in connection to our Savior God is a common theme all throughout Scripture. Jacob’s struggle with God marked a turning point in his life: he was no longer the deceiver, but Israel (Gen 32:22–28). His identity and the identity of an entire nation after him would now be defined by their relationship to God. After living for forty years in the desert, the hesitant and insecure Moses asked God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exod 3:11). God made it clear to him that it was not about him, his skills or capabilities, but about who God was, the great I AM (Exod 3:14). Similarly, Midian’s oppression of Israel left Gideon fearful and in doubt. But when the angel of the Lord appeared to him, he said, “The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor” (Judg 6:12). It was not Gideon’s bravery and strength that would win them the battle, but the Lord working through him and his army.

In the New Testament this relationship becomes more explicit and focused on Jesus Christ. In Colossians 3:3–4, Paul writes, “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” This passage again demonstrates that our true identity

is found in Christ.⁵ He is our life, and we are hidden in Him. Because He died on the cross, we have been freed from the slavery of sin (Rom 6:6–7). Because He rose again, we have been given new life and will one day rise again to be with Him for all eternity (Rom 6:4–5; 1 Cor 15:20–22). Because He ascended to heaven, we have an advocate who speaks on our behalf before the heavenly courts (Heb 4:14–16; 1 John 2:1). Because He is the Head of the church, we have a family to call our own (Rom 12:4–5; Eph 1:22–23; Col 1:18). His story is our story. His death is our death, His life is our life, and His victory is our victory.

If our identity is found in Christ, some might wonder whether this means that we lose our uniqueness and individuality, with an identity imposed on us by our Creator. In reality, because Christ is our life, when we are disconnected from Him, we also lose sight of who we really are, becoming lost and confused about our identity. But when Christ is allowed to shine through us, our true, unique identity shines the brightest. A stained glass window is formed out of pieces that are unique in color, shape, and size. But only when light shines through it is its true beauty revealed. It comes to life. In the same way, “when Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4). Our individuality is not lost, but rather fully revealed. We become who God created us to be, with all of the unique characteristics that He created in us. In Him, we become complete (Col 2:10 NASB).⁶ When we exalt Christ and allow Him to shine through us, that is when we find our true identity.

Finding one’s identity is intimately connected with finding one’s purpose in life. When Paul encountered Christ on the road to Damascus, he not only understood who he was in connection to Christ, but he was also given a new mission: to be a servant and a witness for Christ (Acts 26:16).⁷ From being a persecutor of the name of Jesus, Christ appointed him to serve and testify about His name to the Gentiles, witnessing of the true life that is only found in Christ. Only a real, life-changing encounter with Christ can turn timid disciples into bold missionaries, or a persecutor of the church into one of the greatest apostles who sacrificed everything for the gospel.

When Christ truly transforms our life and we understand everything that He has done for us, we cannot do otherwise than to share the life-giving power of the gospel with others, spreading the light of Christ everywhere we go. When we find our true identity in Christ, we also find our purpose in life: to witness about the One who made us who we are, allowing Him to shine bright so that others might also find themselves in Him. Our identity and our purpose are found in exalting Christ.

Adventist Identity

But how does our identity in Christ relate specifically to *Adventist* identity? According to Scripture, some people will attempt to take Christ’s place and to distort who He is and what He has done for us. Paul, for example, warned the Corinthian church about how even the most sincere and devoted Christians may be led astray by people who proclaim a different Jesus or a different gospel (2 Cor 11:3–4; cf. Gal 1:6–9). Jesus also taught that in the end times “many will come in my name, saying ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray” (Matt 24:5), if possible, even the elect (Matt 24:24). The book of Revelation also talks about deceptions and distortions of the gospel that will increase near the time of the second coming (Rev 13).

If our identity is found in Christ, and if His story is our story, then it is important to know the truth about who Christ is and what God is doing through Christ for us. Our Adventist message aims to uphold the truth about Christ found in Scripture and to preach the everlasting gospel, giving God the glory, and worshipping Him who made heaven and earth (Rev 14:6–7). As Mervyn Maxwell wrote, “Seventh-day Adventism is basically a message about Jesus.”⁸

When we remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Exod 20:8), we are declaring that Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath, our Creator and Redeemer (Mark 2:27–28). He is the one who sustains us, who gives us rest, and who longs to be in a relationship with us. When we honor the Sabbath, we give honor and glory to God and experience what it means to delight in the Lord (Isa 58:13–14).⁹

When we teach about the state of the dead, we are sharing the truth about Christ who is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25). Death is an enemy (1 Cor 15:26), but Christ has conquered that enemy and one day death will be no more, neither will there be mourning or crying or pain (1 Cor 15:54–55; Rev 21:4). He promises that those who believe in Him will not perish but will be given eternal life (John 3:16)—life that is glorious, abundant, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, just as He had always intended for us (1 Cor 15:42–45).¹⁰

When we preach about the sanctuary, we are sharing the message about Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), our High Priest and the only Mediator between God and men (1 Tim 2:5). He is able to save those who draw near to God through Him and always lives to make intercession for us (Heb 7:25). He alone is holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens (Heb 7:26).¹¹

When we talk about the spirit of prophecy, we are calling attention to how the Holy Spirit has testified about Christ through the prophets (Luke 24:25–27;

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Acts 3:18, 21–24), from the time of the Old Testament all the way through to our days with the ministry of Ellen G. White. We are called to listen to the prophets of God (2 Chron 20:20; Amos 3:7) who have the testimony of Jesus (Rev 19:10 NKJV; cf. Rev 22:9).¹²

When we live according to an Adventist lifestyle, we are glorifying Christ in our bodies, whether we eat or drink or whatever we do (1 Cor 10:31), because we were bought with a price and want to honor Him who dwells in us (1 Cor 6:20). Because He is holy, we are also called to be holy (1 Pet 1:16; cf. Lev 11:44).¹³

And when we preach about the soon coming of Jesus (Rev 22:12, 20), we are sharing the truth about Christ as the victorious King, who is coming soon to vindicate His people and claim them for Himself (Rev 19:11–16). He is also the righteous Judge who will execute judgment against those who reject Him and will eliminate all evil forevermore (Acts 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1, 8). Then the whole world will declare that He is King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16).¹⁴

We believe that Jesus is indeed coming soon (Rev 22:7, 12, 20)¹⁵ Our unique prophetic understanding of where we are in salvation history places us in the final chapters of the fight between good and evil (Rev 10, 13–14). It is an important message, because of the confusion about who Jesus really is. It is a life-changing message, because knowing Jesus changes our outlook on life and on the world. And it is an urgent message, because we know that time is short.

If our Adventist message is a message about Christ, then our mission is to exalt Him and to let Him shine through our message about Him. As Ellen G. White writes,

Jesus is the living center of everything. Put Christ into every sermon. Let the preciousness, mercy, and glory of Jesus Christ be dwelt upon until Christ is formed within. . . . Let us gather together that which our own experience has revealed to us of the preciousness of Christ, and present it to others as a precious gem that sparkles and shines.¹⁶

Our unique Adventist message of Christ and His soon return leads us to be His witnesses engaged in the everyday mission of sharing the truth about Christ. Because identity and purpose are so closely related, our Adventist identity is intimately connected to mission. Whether that mission is reflecting Christ in our words and deeds, whether it is telling our personal story to coworkers and friends, whether it is feeding the hungry and showing love to those who need it, or whether it is one's professional calling as a minister or a missionary, we are called to join in this mission of exalting Christ in

the world, sharing His great love for us and proclaiming the eternal gospel to every nation and tribe and language and people.

Conclusion

To say that our identity is found in Christ does not mean that we are cured of all our personal moments of self-doubt and confusion. It is normal for us to feel lost sometimes or out of place at different points in our lives, disconnected from ourselves or from others. But when Christ becomes our life, He gives us the certainty of His faithful presence and His love for us. He fills us with a sense of value as children of the Most High God. If our relationship with Him is strong, He fills us with peace and contentment, regardless of our external circumstances. There is nothing quite as incredible as realizing that the Creator of the universe loves you and knows you by name, that He understands you and makes you a better person. In Him, we have a place, an identity, a purpose, a life filled with meaning.

Unless we truly know Jesus and unless Christ is at the center of our identity, all of our efforts to preach the gospel will be in vain. It is in Christ that the true power of the Adventist message resides. To know Christ deeply and to know the power of His resurrection, to gain Christ and to be found in Him (Phil 3:9–10)—it is in this relationship that our true identity and mission are grounded.



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Endnotes

1 A slightly modified version of this article was first presented on July 9, 2025, at the General Conference Session in St. Louis, MO, as a plenary presentation for the delegates of the General Conference, as part of the *I Will Go Strategic Plan* of the General Conference for the next quinquennium 2025–2030.

2 All biblical quotations are from the ESV, unless otherwise indicated.
3 David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 299.

4 As Klyne Snodgrass puts it, “The most important thing that can be said about humans is that we are created in the image of God. This is an all-consuming assertion about the origin of the body and the source of identity, and is a foundation for all theology. If we are created in the image of God, we are not the origin of our own existence, we cannot explain ourselves, and we are not the ultimate source of our own identity. We are the result of action by Another; our identity is a gift of grace; and we mirror and point

to Another.” *Who God Says You Are: A Christian Understanding of Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 54–55.

5 According to Joel Green, Paul’s use of *syn* (or *en*) *Christō* “express[es] ‘my’ existence, the persistence of personal identity, in profoundly relational terms.” *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 178, 180.

6 Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are*, 93–100; and Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 181.

7 D. Flemming, “Mission,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2023), 704–706.

8 C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell It to the World* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1976), 51.

9 See, e.g., Sigve Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 19–293; and Jo Ann Davidson and Marcos De Benedicto, “The Sabbath as an Invitation to Delight,” in *The Sabbath in the New Testament and in Theology: Implications for Christians in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Ekkehardt Mueller and Eike Mueller (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2023), 583–605.

10 See, e.g., John C. Brunt, “Resurrection and Glorification,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen, Commentary Reference Series 12 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 347–365.

11 See, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary: Experiencing God’s Presence in Shadow and Reality* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2022), 493–638.

12 See, e.g., Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “The ‘Testimony of Jesus’ in the Writings of Ellen G. White,” in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, ed. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, Biblical Research Institute Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 227–243.

13 See, e.g., Miroslav M. Kiš, “Christian Lifestyle and Behavior,” in Dederen, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 675–723.

14 See, e.g., Richard P. Lehmann, “The Second Coming of Jesus,” in Dederen, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 893–926.

15 Laszlo Gallusz, “How Soon is ‘Soon’? Reading the Language of Eschatological Imminence in the Book of Revelation,” in *Eschatology from an Adventist Perspective: Proceedings of the Fourth International Bible Conference, Rome, June 11–20, 2018*, ed. Elias Brasil de Souza and Denis Kaiser (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2021), 279–293.

16 Ellen G. White, “Recount God’s Dealings,” *Review and Herald*, March 19, 1895, 177.

ARTICLE

Navigating Differences of Opinion in the Remnant Church

John Bradshaw¹

Linguists—those who study the structure and development of language—say that the phrase “cat got your tongue” came into use after sailors who were flogged with a cat o’ nine tails would be rendered speechless in the wake of their punishment. The “cat” got their tongue.

“Bury the hatchet”—meaning to end a quarrel or conflict and become friendly—originated because, during negotiations between Puritans and Native Americans, men would put away their weapons, making them inaccessible. In some instances, weapons would literally be buried—hence, “bury the hatchet.”

In the late nineteenth century, people would stuff woolen socks into the horns of their gramophones, which at that time did not have built-in volume control. That is why we have the phrase “Put a sock in it.”

It has been suggested that the phrase “Fight like cats and dogs” was first used after a board meeting at a Seventh-day Adventist church. With church members unable to get beyond their disagreements, the board meeting in question descended into chaos. When this pattern repeated with numerous arguments in church foyers, at conference executive sessions, and in church parking lots, the phrase “fight like cats and dogs” became a well-established part of the English language.

While that may not be an entirely accurate recitation of history (or is it?), disagreements are a fact of life. And that’s not all bad. Nowhere does the Bible say that all believers in Jesus must view every last issue in precisely the same way. But in an age of rage, it is imperative that God’s people discover how they may disagree while maintaining the Christian demeanor which is to characterize the church. It must be possible

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for people to see things differently and still be followers of Jesus. The church that is unable to achieve that balance will quickly become spiritually impotent. Ministry will be suffocated, and the mission of the church will be impeded.

Unity in the Church

Unity in the church is not optional. Paul wrote, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:10).² Notice that Paul “pleaded” with the church in Corinth to seek unity.

It is my studied belief that, generally speaking, Seventh-day Adventists do not disagree well. This may be because Adventists place a premium on truth, understanding that error is never harmless, and that the great apostasy in the world today is based on spiritual deception. We want to be right, because to be “wrong” clearly has serious consequences (read Revelation 13–14 if you’re in any doubt). But what appears to be less appreciated is that a person can be “right” theologically while being wrong spiritually. The gospel is given by God that we may become more like Jesus. That important detail is overlooked by people who, well, fight like cats and dogs. Ellen G. White wrote, “If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties.”³ That “if” has proven to be the undoing of many a professed believer in Jesus.

And in an age when people are radicalized by a news media that is partisan, angry, and disrespectful, it is perhaps no surprise that church members often reflect the rancor and animosity they both focus and feed on. When White wrote, “Daily the church is being converted to the world,”⁴ she was contemplating not only doctrine, but also attitudes. The harsh demeanor favored by the news media impacts the hearts and minds of God’s people. There are reasons we have been instructed to be separate from the world (see 2 Cor 6:17).

Issues That Divide Us

Consider various issues that have caused divisions in Adventism in the last few years and you will recall that the subject of women’s ordination split congregations, separated friends, and, for a time, sucked almost all of the proverbial oxygen out of the Adventist room. People were pitted against each other, while vast amounts of time, energy, and resources were consumed and diverted from the core mission of the church.

Some will claim that women’s ordination was (or is) a very important issue and needed to be discussed.

Whether that is so or not is not the point I’m addressing. It could be said, the more important the issue, the greater the need for unity. In this case, an issue that has for some years been under discussion became a lightning rod, a cause célèbre, and in numerous circles, a test of orthodoxy. Again and again it was not discussed kindly. The key for Christians is figuring out how to navigate topics without allowing them to become wedge issues, or a drag on the forward momentum of the church. In a church that values truth and doctrinal purity, a church that believes it was brought into existence to share a vital message with the entire world, certain deviations, distractions, and disagreements can be viewed as being of the utmost importance. They are not. Of utmost importance is the proclamation of the gospel, and reflecting the character of Jesus.

The drinking of alcohol, LGBTQ, the validity of 1844, the nature of inspiration, and the role of the Spirit of Prophecy are all legitimately consequential subjects. But there can be a very short distance from “defending the truth” and “standing up for what’s right” to simply fighting like cats and dogs.

Remembering Jesus’ Words

Before we open our mouths in discussion or debate about any issue, we must remember that Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35). Four chapters later, Jesus prayed to His Father “that they may be one, as We are” (John 17:11). This is not the biblical equivalent of flyover country. These statements are as important as any Jesus made.

He went on to petition heaven “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21). Jesus then repeated that same thought twice in the next two verses. Clearly, this mattered—matters—to Him. “He prays that His disciples may be one, even as He and the Father are one; and this unity of believers is to be a testimony to the world that He has sent us, and that we bear the evidence of His grace.”⁵ Don’t miss that. Unity among believers testifies to the world that we have been sent by God. How do you think we’re doing with that? Christians must learn how to disagree, must learn to see an issue from differing perspectives, while still manifesting the character of Jesus.

The blueprint for resolving interpersonal differences in a church context is found in Matthew 18.

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him

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alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. (Matt 18:15–17)

The entire process as outlined by Jesus is redemptive. Issues between believers are to be resolved personally. If the attempt at reconciliation is not successful, outside counsel is solicited. If the situation is still at an impasse, and if the issue at hand rises to such a level, the church is to be involved. Then, if there is no satisfactory resolution, the person is to be treated like an unbeliever. This does not mean that the person should be shunned. Rather, the offending party should be related to with great grace, with a sincere concern for that person's salvation.

And such matters should be kept confidential. Solomon wrote, "The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor" (Prov 11:9). Even if the other person is wrong—perhaps, *especially* if the other person is wrong—every attempt should be made to protect that person's dignity. Bitterness and malice should have no place in interpersonal disagreements. If someone has offended you, the world does not need to know. Granted, it can be challenging to be gracious when you are convinced the person you are dealing with is wrong. That is where seeing the big picture is helpful.

Things to Remember When Disagreeing with Each Other

The Bible tells us that all things work together for good (Rom 8:28), and that the battle—any battle—is not ours, but God's (2 Chr 20:15). Beyond disagreements, disputes, and annoyances, followers of Jesus remember that He will soon return, that sin and sinners will be no more, and God's eternal kingdom will be established and will never pass away. *That* is what is most important. When confronted by theological opposition, or when opposed in a church board meeting, you may imagine you have lost a battle. However, God does not call us to win battles against other people, or to prove how right we are in every circumstance. As two poets from Dartford, England, wrote in the late 1960s, "You can't always get what you want."⁶ Remembering that, and choosing not to keep a record of wins and losses, will deflate many a tense situation.

How does one relate to a person who views Sabbath-keeping in a different light? What is a person to do about a church board that makes poor decisions? How are church members to relate to conference leadership

after apparently objectionable positions are taken? How should Christians address the division or the General Conference when it seems they are on the wrong side of an issue?

The simple answer is: with grace. In every instance, such issues are God's responsibility. And every saint of God must be open to the possibility that they might not be on the right side of the issue themselves. Regardless of the question under discussion, there is no possible way any person has all of the information regarding what has taken place. If you weren't in the meeting, or part of the discussion, it simply isn't possible that you can see a matter as God sees it. "But this person said . . ." means you have one side of the story. "But then I heard the church leader say . . ." You may have done so, but what else did the church leader say, and in what context? A friend of mine once told me there are at least three sides to every story: "my side, your side, and the truth." Because no person is capable of fully understanding a situation, it is imperative that a follower of Christ is exceedingly careful about what is said, and, more importantly, how it is said.

There are numerous reasons for concerned, conscientious church members to struggle with issues within the church. White once wrote that the church "may appear as about to fall."⁷ Presently, we see factions and splinter groups creating real confusion within the body of Christ. White went on to say, "The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat." Then she added, "This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place."⁸ Those who walk out of the doors of the church, drinking from broken cisterns as they follow this or that clique, are walking away from the remnant. We hope and pray for their return, but, for many, withdrawal from the church is permanent. And that is a tragedy.

Reasons Why People Disagree

Part of the reason for fighting among church members is, simply, a critical spirit. Converted people don't fight. Converted people don't go on the warpath, spread gossip, publicize the church's problems, or choose to embarrass people. A genuine experience with Jesus would lower the temperature of many a discussion or disagreement.

During His ministry, Jesus was followed constantly by those trying to find fault with Him and destroy His ministry. On a visit to His hometown, people among whom Jesus grew up attempted to throw Him from a cliff and end His life. The One who created the world was betrayed, unfairly charged, handed over as a criminal to actual criminals, tortured, abused, insulted, humiliated,

and yet never once defended Himself on the internet. If Jesus can act like that, surely His followers can also.

White in *The Desire of Ages* states,

Jesus did not contend for His rights. Often His work was made unnecessarily severe because He was willing and uncomplaining. Yet He did not fail nor become discouraged. He lived above these difficulties, as if in the light of God's countenance. He did not retaliate when roughly used, but bore insult patiently.⁹

Let that sink in.

Children are taught that some behavior simply isn't appropriate. We don't raise our voices. We don't criticize. We don't embarrass others. We don't try to expose and shame people. Some types of behavior are just wrong, and it betrays the Bible when a church member claims to have light and truth and yet acts like a devil.

How to Deal with Private Information

The church has been significantly impacted by the radical shift in attitudes prompted by the rise of the internet. Before the worldwide web, one person might talk with another in the parking lot of the church about how the music at camp meeting has changed over the years. But now, points that lived and died in a conversation are made virtually immortal by that same person posting a video online, complete with a sensational thumbnail and outlandish claims. And because social media can act like a drug, the thrill of knowing your post has been viewed by five hundred people, then five thousand, and then ten thousand only adds fuel to the egotistical fire. Heroes of hate can be created overnight. The internet acts like an echo chamber, giving people the opportunity to gain sympathy and sympathizers from every corner of the planet. Those who use the internet to criticize and belittle the church are neither your friends nor Jesus' friends. They are damaging the church, which is the apple of His eye. "Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theater of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts."¹⁰

White also states, "The church is God's fortress. His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. Any betrayal of the church is treachery to Him who has bought mankind with the blood of His only-begotten Son."¹¹ Dissatisfaction with fellow church members, or disputes on matters of lifestyle, doctrine, or church governance, should never lead a person to cause disruption in the church. If God's people could learn the

art of selflessness, deference, and cooperation, the church would be in a healthier position.

However, if I discovered someone's mother was a prostitute, I would not tell that person. I certainly would not tell the world. If, for some reason, I felt God was prompting me to break the bad news, I would be sure to tell the affected person only. I would do so delicately, and I would do so privately. I would not post the text of that awkward conversation where all could read it.

To be clear, I am not opposed to the sharing of a point of view, even if some deem it a contrary point of view. I am opposed to airing the church's dirty linen publicly, because I believe the Bible is opposed to airing the church's dirty linen publicly. I am opposed to harsh, public criticism. I am opposed to tearing down, when God has called every one of His children to be builders, not destroyers. I am opposed to portraying the church in the worst light before church members and non-church members. Those whose faith is on shaky ground often suffer irreversible harm from being exposed to unloving criticism. Thinking people are able to discern that if the church is terrible, they are better off not being a part of it.

And, yes, this is, by its very nature, a somewhat subjective discussion. Who is to say whether Subject A should be discussed openly? To paraphrase another contemporary poet, it's important to "know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, and know when to run."¹² As a general rule, if you're in any doubt, don't share it with others or post it online. The second aspect is the manner in which something is shared—the motivation for sharing. You say "up," I say "down," and we disagree. So far, so good. But when you say "up," and then I tell the world that you are in apostasy, I am on very thin ice. Nothing can be gained by amplifying disagreements. Jesus never, ever did so. To answer the question directly, the Holy Spirit is the arbiter of what should be shared. Adventists proclaim the everlasting gospel, which states, in part, "Fear God and give glory to Him" (Rev 14:7). 1 Corinthians 10:31 applies to more than diet. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." If it doesn't give glory to God, the subject should never see the light of day.

Paul's counsel to the church in Corinth was direct.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I

Navigating Differences of Opinion in the Remnant Church

am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal? (1 Cor 3:1–4)

When we line up behind this figure or that figure, when we choose sides in a church spat, when we go to war rather than earnestly seeking the peace that comes from following the will of God, we are simply giving evidence that we are carnal, and that we are not being led by the Holy Spirit.

When the Church Makes Mistakes

The church will make mistakes. Leaders will make mistakes. A local congregation is a complex organism, let alone a conference of churches. The complexity of a world church is almost unfathomable. Few can appreciate the challenges faced by church leaders. It should be no surprise that no church leader ever batted a thousand in decisions made.

If the world sees a perfect harmony existing in the church of God, it will be a powerful evidence to them in favor of the Christian religion. Dissensions, unhappy differences, and petty church trials dishonor our Redeemer. All these may be avoided if self is surrendered to God and the followers of Jesus obey the voice of the church. Unbelief suggests that individual independence increases our importance, that it is weak to yield our own ideas of what is right and proper to the verdict of the church; but to yield to such feelings and views is unsafe and will bring us into anarchy and confusion. Christ saw that unity and Christian fellowship were necessary to the cause of God, therefore He enjoined it upon His disciples. And the history of Christianity from that time until now proves conclusively that in union only is there strength. Let individual judgment submit to the authority of the church.¹³

Satan sought to destroy the unity in the early church, knowing that if unity continued to exist, he would be powerless to check the progress of gospel truth. He tried to introduce elements of disunion into the church.¹⁴

The question of unity in the face of disagreement is a call to practice righteousness by faith. Jesus promised us that “in the world you shall have tribulation” (John 16:33). He said, “A man’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Matt 10:36), and that His people would “be hated by all for My name’s sake” (Luke 21:17). But He also said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for

righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:10). Not persecuted when they are wrong and make a fool of themselves, but persecuted for living in right relation to God. Jesus gave no room for retaliation and discord.

Should Issues Be Swept under the Carpet?

Before anyone gets the impression that I am suggesting certain issues can be swept under the carpet, or that every issue can be resolved and Kumbaya can always be sung, the reality is, that is not reality.

When the late Australian theologian Dr. Desmond Ford chose to take aim at biblical positions held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he and his followers were on a collision course with the inevitable. Should people have agreed with Dr. Ford? Obviously, no. But should Ford have been treated with kindness? Yes, and he was. However, open opposition to the church and its teachings is not something that should be entertained. The damage done by Ford’s heresies was immense. While teachers of falsehood should be treated with kindness, their views should not be permitted to affect or infect the body of Christ. Those who do not agree with the core teachings of the church and do not want to coexist with the church without promoting their errant doctrinal positions would be better off associating with another body of believers.

When seventeen-year-old school student William Webb Ellis picked up and ran with the ball during a game of soccer in England in 1823, a new sport was born, named after the school where the incident allegedly occurred. Ellis did not force his new game on others. Instead, those who wanted to join him in playing rugby did so, while those who wished to continue playing soccer continued playing soccer. Those who are unhappy with the teachings of Adventism have a God-given right to be so inclined. However, those who are faithful to the biblical teachings of the Adventist Church are under no obligation to entertain schismatics.

The ability, or inability, to navigate differences with a Christian demeanor is a matter of eternal consequence. If Christian believers cannot maintain their Christian experience when they feel a church leader or fellow church member has let them down, there is little chance, excepting repentance and conversion, that they are going to be able to successfully navigate “a time of trouble such as never was” (Dan 12:1). Congregations that couldn’t handle COVID without baring their fangs should not think that the mark of the beast issue will be, for them, clear sailing.¹⁵ This is not to minimize the seriousness or difficulty of the issue being faced. But too many Christians appear to feel that being right allows them to act like devils. It does not. We would do well to keep in mind that one reason God allows challenging questions

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to confront the church is that we might see what truly dwells in the heart.

Disappointments and hurts are real. At times, pastors let down their congregations. That's not good. The nominating committee might overlook you for a position you feel you should fulfill. That can be unpleasant. A faction in the church may wish to revamp the worship service in a way you are convinced is unpleasing to God or irrelevant to your community. There's no denying that can be a real challenge. Feelings can fray under such circumstances. But grace is given so that Christians can rise above their challenges and reflect the character of Jesus always. "Walk in the Spirit," Paul wrote, "and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal 5:16).

A friend of mine, called to pastor a large and somewhat influential church in a major city, had high hopes of leading the church to greater ministry effectiveness. However, it became evident after a time that his ministry wasn't appreciated. When his employer explained that, in his opinion, the pastor and the church were not a good fit for each other, my friend realized the painful truth: he was being fired. No impropriety. No theological incompatibility. Certain influential church members simply didn't like him. And, just like that, he was out of a job.

Nine months before he was due to retire, another pastor friend had his employment terminated. Again, there was no question of inappropriate behavior on the part of the pastor. His church members loved him and he was preaching from the Bible in harmony with church teachings. But finding himself on the wrong side of an apparently vindictive employer, the man was fired. Just like that.

Yet neither pastor fled to the internet to plead his case. Neither pastor created a video explaining his side of the story. Neither pastor emailed supportive church members to explain how leadership had got the issue badly wrong. They simply leaned on the Lord, followed His leading, and moved on. That is not to say it would be inappropriate for a pastor to appeal, to speak to church leaders, or to seek to right a wrong. To do so would not be wrong. There are processes for addressing wrongs—for good reason. However, chumming the church waters in an attempt to gain support or sympathy has never been Jesus' way.

The only atheist among my group of close friends in high school would often regale us with stories of his mother's frequent visits to fortune tellers. While preaching one Sabbath I met a man who, it turned out, was my friend's uncle. "What are the chances," I thought, "that my atheist high school friend would have Adventists in his family?" What I learned is that my friend's parents had once been Seventh-day Adventists. In fact, his father had studied for the ministry, but had somehow fallen out

with the church over an employment matter. He and his wife raised their four children entirely without reference to God. Once a worker in ministry, my friend's mother died just weeks ago a committed spiritualist. Her son, my friend, is an atheist to this day. Whether my friend's dad was right or wrong, or whether the church got it right or wrong, is not ultimately what matters. Any obstacle can be overcome by God's grace. What matters is that anger and bitterness only lead in one direction.

Some Final Thoughts

Ellen G. White wrote,

All need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit; all should refrain from censuring and disparaging remarks, and draw near to Christ, that they may appreciate the heavy responsibilities which the co-workers with Him are carrying. "Press together; press together," are the words of our divine Instructor. Unity is strength; disunion is weakness and defeat.¹⁶

But what about "standing up for the truth"? One should always stand for the truth. But a person who cannot stand up for the truth while reflecting the character of Jesus would be better off sitting down. It must be possible to disagree without being disagreeable. By all means, go to the microphone at the conference executive committee and have your say. Express your dissatisfaction with the status quo if you feel prompted by God to do so. Write a letter to the conference president if you must. Speak to the pastor in the foyer after church if that is your Spirit-led burden. Discuss touchy issues with fellow church members if God places it on your heart to do so. But do so in a way that leaves no one in any doubt about the genuineness of your Christianity, and that leaves people feeling richer for having encountered you.

As riots raged in Los Angeles in May of 1992, Rodney King, who in March of that year had been beaten by Los Angeles police officers, spoke at a press conference and asked a now-famous question: "Can we all get along?" It is a question worth reflecting on now. Can we all get along? Fortunately, it is not all bad news in the church. There are many happy Christians and many healthy churches. But in a church, it only takes a spark to get a fire going.¹⁷ And as the saying goes, we ain't seen nothing yet. Trying times await Christian believers. "None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict."¹⁸ John asked a searching question when he wrote in Revelation 6:17, "Who is able to stand?"

The Christian who considers the cross of Jesus will learn to live in total reliance upon Him and will manifest

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His Spirit. At Calvary, Jesus died an ignominious death, that we might live a glorious life. Heaven gave all on the day when the sun refused to shine. The nails in Jesus' hands and feet, the crown of thorns on His brow, the spear plunged into His side, and the pain and shame and rejection He endured all ask us to allow Jesus more fully into our lives. In the shadow of the cross, Jesus prayed the prayer that undergirds all prayers when He said, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Not my will but yours. Not I, but Christ. Death to sin and self will allow the Holy Spirit to have complete reign in the life of any believer. Those who wish to see Jesus return will first see Him on the cross, and with hearts melted by the immense love of God, will permit Him to live His life in them.

As they look to His return, rather than fight like cats and dogs, believers in Jesus may, instead, get on like a house on fire.

John Bradshaw

Director,
It Is Written



Endnotes

- 1 John Bradshaw is the director of *It Is Written* and was a keynote speaker at the 62nd General Conference Session in St. Louis, MO, in July 2025. He gave this presentation at the ASI convention in Florida, on August 1, 2025. The oral character of the presentation is retained.
- 2 All biblical quotations are from the NKJV.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882), 119.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1900), 316.
- 5 Ellen G. White, *My Life Today* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 252.
- 6 Sir Michael Jagger and Keith Richards, "You Can't Always Get What You Want," 1969.
- 7 Ellen G. White, *Maranatha* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 203.
- 8 White, *Maranatha*, 203.

- 9 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 89.
- 10 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 12.
- 11 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 11.
- 12 With acknowledgment to the late Kenny Rogers.
- 13 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1881), 4:19.
- 14 White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 88.
- 15 Please note I am not advocating a position regarding COVID. Rather, I am addressing the spirit or attitude demonstrated. What one believes on an issue is one thing; *how* they express that belief is another.
- 16 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1900), 6:292.
- 17 With thanks to Kurt Kaiser, composer of "Pass It On."
- 18 Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 594.



What Does Jesus Mean When He Says We Are to Be “Perfect?”¹

Tom Shepherd

“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”—Matthew 5:48²

How can human beings be as perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect? God is a sinless being; since the fall, human beings are sinful creatures by nature (Eph 2:3). In what way can they ever be perfect as the Father is perfect? What does Jesus mean?

The Sermon on the Mount

The powerful words of Jesus in Matthew 5:48 form the conclusion of the second section of the Sermon on the Mount. The entire sermon is Matthew 5–7, but this section extends from 5:17 through 5:48. The section divides into a preamble in which Jesus insists that He did not come to abolish the law and the Prophets; rather, He came to fulfill them. This preamble is followed by a series of six contrasting statements, or antitheses, in which Jesus quotes an Old Testament verse or a traditional saying, with the form, “You have heard that it was said . . .” followed by the contrast, “But I say to you . . .” (Matt 5:21–22, NKJV).

He tells us to be perfect as He is, in the same manner. We are to be centers of light and blessing to our little circle, even as He is to the universe. We have nothing of ourselves, but the light of His love shines upon us, and we are to reflect its brightness. “In His borrowed goodness good,” we may be perfect in our sphere, even as God is perfect in His.³

One might suppose that an antithesis would suggest a rejection of the Old Testament idea, replacing it with a new teaching from Jesus. On the contrary, Jesus in each case deepens the application of the teaching of Old Testament Scripture. He thereby illustrates His insistence that His purpose was not to do away with the Old Testament maxims, but rather to demonstrate the depth and far-reaching application of God’s ancient commands.

Loving One’s Enemies

The last of the antitheses is in Matthew 5:43–48, dealing with the question of loving one’s enemies. Jesus quotes a portion of Leviticus 19:18, “You shall love your neighbor,” but evidently appends to it a traditional statement, “and hate your enemy.” Jesus then counters this statement with His famous maxim that we are to love our enemies and pray for our persecutors. The Master goes on to state that carrying out these actions toward our enemies results in us being or becoming sons of our Father in heaven, “for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” Loving enemies, then, is to emulate the action of God.

Jesus goes on to express a contrast to God’s magnanimous actions by referring to those who love only those who love them, or love only their brothers. This behavior, He says, is no better than what tax collectors and the Gentiles do, people generally thought to be outside the purview of biblical religion. We are thus given a contrast of behaviors and groups—God with love, care, and concern for both good and bad people, on the one hand, and tax collectors and Gentiles with concern and love only for themselves on the other. All this is followed by our verse above calling disciples to perfection, even as their Father in heaven is perfect.

Understanding the context of Matthew 5:48 is essential for comprehending the meaning of the text. Within the last of the antitheses, perfection is defined not as the absence of defects, not as the rooting out of all moral failure, but rather as the extension of love to the group farthest from us—our enemies. Again, within the entire group of antitheses, the call to perfection in Matthew 5:48 does contain a sense of the deepest moral purity—for instance, redefining murder as hatred and adultery as the lustful look and negating the practice of both.

Faced with these superlatives, we might be tempted to simply give up on discipleship altogether or else to take the approach of the second century AD author of the *Didache* who alludes to this verse in chapter 6 verse 2 of his work, “For if you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you shall be perfect; but if you cannot, do what

you can.” Or we may go even as far as some who insist that Jesus did not mean what He said, perfection is impossible and besides that unnecessary, since the Christian is saved by grace.

The Meaning of “Perfect”

But we lose something deeply important if we take any of these “less than” routes. The Greek term for perfection in Matthew 5:48 is *teleios*, which means “perfect, without defect, complete, fully developed, mature, having obtained the end or purpose.”⁴ When a thing is full grown and has reached its goal, it is called *teleios* (perfect). The Christian life has a goal. It is pointed toward heaven. The upward call of the gospel is distinct (Phil 3:12–14). God accepts us wherever He finds us, but He never leaves us there. He takes us on a journey to Christian maturity. The command of Jesus expresses the fruition of that journey. To accept the command is to accept the journey and to walk within His will. The goal of perfection—of Christian maturity, of being like our Father in heaven—is given to us not to discourage, but to serve as our guiding star in a world of moral darkness.

Tom Shepherd

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Endnotes

- 1 This is a reprint of Tom Shepherd, “What Does Jesus Mean When He Says We Are to Be ‘Perfect’?”, in *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, ed. Gerhard Pfandl, Biblical Research Institute Studies (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2010), 2:267–269.
- 2 All biblical quotations are from the NASB, unless otherwise indicated.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1896), 77.
- 4 See William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), s.v. *teleios*.



Welcome to the *Seventh-day Adventist International Biblical-Theological Dictionary*!

Daniel Bediako and Keldie Paroschi, Editors

It is our privilege to introduce you to the *Seventh-day Adventist International Biblical-Theological Dictionary* (SDAIBTD), a project of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI). As its name suggests, this project is a compendium of biblical-theological entries to facilitate the study of Scripture and to enhance our understanding of biblical-theological concepts. The dictionary has long been in the making. It started in 2016 with Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller as its founding editor. At the 62nd General Conference Session in St. Louis in 2025, it was launched with some 1,500 articles out of what will eventually total about six thousand entries. The project is still in progress, and new articles will be added periodically as they become available. We hope to complete the SDAIBTD by 2030.

Adventist scholars and theologians from all parts of the world have contributed entries for the SDAIBTD. Through the two committees of the BRI—the Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRICOM) and the Biblical Research Institute Ethics Committee (BRIEC)—and the Biblical Research Committees (BRCs) of the world divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we have gathered over four hundred contributors who are specialists in the fields of biblical studies, systematic theology, historical theology, archaeology, and ethics.

Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church already has a capable Bible dictionary—volume 8 of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary Reference Series*, published in 1960 and revised in 1979—several reasons led to the production of a new dictionary. Apart from the fact that the current dictionary is out of print, it was felt that the church needed a more comprehensive and up-to-date biblical and theological dictionary, a need that is not met by the current dictionary. The older Bible dictionary focuses concisely on biblical names and important words with a special interest in archaeology, but the new SDAIBTD includes not only biblical names and words (nouns—names of persons, animals, places, plants, and objects; and verbs) but also covers theological themes and terms (e.g., election, holiness, substitution, Trinity), some historical movements or persons related to those movements (e.g., Anabaptists, Reformation, John Calvin, Martin Luther), as well as ethical topics, including contemporary issues (e.g., reproductive technologies, artificial intelligence). In addition, the SDAIBTD is

more detailed. For example, the term “covenant” is discussed in just about 640 words in the old dictionary; in the new dictionary, this term is treated in about 3,600 words. Furthermore, the new dictionary benefits from recent scholarship.

The SDAIBTD is biblically sound, informative, readable, and Adventist. Plus, it is easily accessible, as it is being published online. More than 1,500 articles of the SDAIBTD are already available on a new BRI website where articles can be searched alphabetically.¹ We believe that the SDAIBTD will serve the needs of everyone interested in studying more about the Bible and Bible-related topics. Scholars and theologians, pastors and teachers, as well as church elders and church members, will benefit from the SDAIBTD. From the meanings of biblical names to doctrinal issues and contemporary topics, the SDAIBTD will serve Bible students and facilitate a deeper understanding and appreciation of God’s Word.

Special thanks to the General Conference administration for sponsoring the project and to the assistant editors of the division BRCs, the writers, and the various committees that evaluate the entries.

Daniel Bediako

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Keldie Paroschi

Assistant Director,
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Endnotes

¹ Seventh-day Adventist International Biblical-Theological Dictionary, <https://dictionary.adventist.org>, accessed September 12, 2025.

BRI Participates in First Bible and Research Conference Held at Fulton Adventist University College, Fiji

Gina Wahlen, Adventist Mission

From August 19 to 23, 2025, the scholars of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) gave presentations at a Bible and Research Conference at Fulton Adventist University College, located in the Pacific Island nation of Fiji. Hundreds of students, pastors, and local church elders from across Fiji, with other invitees, attended the conference on the college campus.

At the invitation of conference organizers, all members of the BRI spoke for the event. This was the first time the entire BRI team visited Fiji, including the director, Dr. Elias Brasil de Souza; associate directors Drs. Daniel Bediako, Frank Hasel, Alberto Timm, and Clinton Wahlen; and assistant director Dr. Keldie Paroschi.

The five-day conference featured presentations covering a wide range of topics requested by conference organizers, including “Theology and the Mission of the Church,” “Adventist Identity,” “Biblical Hermeneutics and Its Challenges,” “The Doctrine of the Trinity,” “Dual Allegiance and Syncretism in the Adventist Church,” “The Attraction and Danger of Conspiracy Theories,” “Independent Ministries (Offshoots) and Their Activities,” “Theological Research and the Use of AI,” and more.

Each morning featured a devotional by one of the scholars, and time was allotted for very active question-and-answer sessions following the morning and afternoon presentations. The conference culminated on Sabbath with Dr. Elias Brasil de Souza presenting the morning sermon, “Understanding Adventist Theology,” followed by an extended question-and-answer session with the entire BRI team in the afternoon.

Scripture Foundational

Throughout the conference, Scripture was emphasized as the foundation of all Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. Reflecting on the impact of Fulton’s first Bible and Research Conference, Dr. Limoni Manu O’Uiha, dean of the School of Theology, stated, “We are so privileged to have the BRI here. The presentations are

good and relevant to our students, and they have touched on critical areas.” Dr. Elisha Marfo, dean of research and innovation at Fulton, who initiated and planned the invitation of the BRI, said there was a need to address issues connected with the independent ministries (there are twenty-four offshoot groups in Fiji). “We needed to find a way of dealing with that and came up with an agenda that most of the presentations would be about what the independent ministries were teaching. The topics also dealt with questions pastors, students, and members had.”

A Positive Impact

Professor Tabua Tuima, deputy vice chancellor, was pleased with the positive impact and blessing the conference was having on the wider area. “For our pastors in the field—Fiji plus other areas—these meetings have affirmed them in our worldview and interpretation, and that is why they are asking a lot of questions, which have been answered,” he said. During their visit to the campus, the BRI donated several recent BRI books to the school’s library. The BRI books will continue to be a blessing and will impact the research of students and teachers.

Fulton Adventist University College serves students from the South Pacific islands and beyond, and has a total enrollment of 1,594 students, with 665 on campus, and the remainder studying at extension campuses in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Kiribati.

Gina Wahlen
Adventist Mission



BRI Participates in First Bible and Research Conference at Fulton Adventist University College



Top: Biblical Research Institute team (photo source: Alberto Timm).

Middle: Biblical Research Institute team with the faculty of Fulton Adventist University College (photo source: Gina Wahlen).

Bottom: Group photo of conference participants (photo source: Gina Wahlen).



Index to Reflections

The first issue of *Reflections* was published in January 2003. Since then, we've published many articles. While it's possible to use Acrobat to simultaneously search all past issues of *Reflections* for one word or phrase, some readers have asked for a formal index. From now on, you will find a pdf index at the end of each newsletter that you can download.

If you wish to search simultaneously all past issues of the newsletter for one word or phrase in Acrobat, you must download all of the *Reflections* issues PDFs to one folder from the BRI website:

adventistbiblicalresearch.org/newsletters

Open any issue in Acrobat, and then press Shift + Command + F (Shift + Ctrl + F on Windows). In the Search window that appears, be sure that you click the radio button that says, "All PDF Documents in," and in the dropdown menu below that, choose the folder in which you placed your *Reflections* issues.

[Click here to download the Index](#)

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