

Editor's Note

These are unusual times and we have decided in this issue to address two important questions related to the current financial crisis. Some ask how the church is handling its finances during the present global financial turmoil. Though circumstances and practices necessarily differ in other parts of the world church, a reassuring overview of how church entities in North America are managing funds is provided by GC Treasurer Robert E. Lemon. Another article looks closely at inspired counsels related to money and the end times, pointing out that things will get far worse than they are now and casting doubt on the insinuation made by some that financial ruin is upon us and that now is the time to sell everything. We hope that you will find this material both timely and helpful.

Church Finances and the Financial Crisis

BY ROBERT E. LEMON

Pick up almost any magazine or newspaper, or turn on the television or radio, and it is almost certain that you will find news about the financial markets and current economic



situation. In my thirty-some years of working for the church, I cannot remember a time when all the normal economic theories seemed to be of so little help. Questions arise constantly regarding the investment of both church and personal funds. Where can one put money so it is safe? Why would the church have any funds in stocks when they seem so risky? Are my retirement funds safe? We need to make sure that we're not spending more time worrying about our earthly investments rather than making investments where the markets do not decline (Matt 6:19-20).

We are frequently asked what types of investments are best. Usually the questions

are asked with a focus on the riskiness of the investment without consideration of the anticipated time frame for use of the funds. Stocks are much more volatile and go up and down with the business cycles and so are risky investments for money that will be needed in the short term. But over a longer time frame where the growth of the investment is important they can become a very good investment. The General Conference's investment policies at one time were primarily directed at defining what investment instruments (government securities, bonds, large cap stocks, etc.) were appropriate for investing funds held by denominational organizations for various purposes. In recent years, the policy has been shifted toward evaluation of the time frame over which the funds will be invested and the role investment returns play in fulfilling the purposes for which the funds are held. Our investment policies remain conservative and call for well-diversified, prudent investments with social screening to eliminate industries not in keeping with our principles.

We get questions on both sides of the issue of investing in stocks: Why do we invest any tithe and offerings in stocks when the markets may go down and we may lose money? Or, on the opposite side, Why are we so conservative and invest so little in stocks when they could provide more income for the Lord's work? The General Conference's funds are conservatively invested with approximately 12% in equities (stocks) and 88% in fixed income (government securities, bonds, time deposits, etc.). The North American Division retirement funds which do not belong to, but are held in trust by, the General Conference have a much higher percentage in equities due to the longer time frame for use of these funds.

We tend to think of risk as the possibility of losing some or all of the original amount invested. That should be the primary concern when the funds are for church building projects, operating funds to be used within the next year or two, or funds held in trust for others. But there is also an opportunity cost which must be considered – that is, what the funds could have earned if they were invested in a way that, over longer time periods, have provided

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EDITORIAL

Doctrinal Leadership

The modern systems of communication facilitate the transfer of dysfunctional doctrinal and theological views from one part of the world to another. Church members with access to the Internet can navigate for hours in an ocean of web pages containing distortions of our message and sensationalist expositions of our eschatology which do not contribute at all to their spiritual development. I am referring to websites of individuals or groups that, while claiming to be Adventist, promote positions that are not representative of our message and mission.

Furthermore, there are occasions when such individuals are invited to speak to our congregations and in camp meetings, leaving behind them confusion, conflicts, and in many cases disrespect for pastors and leaders. They support most of the Adventist message but their main interest is to promote their own peculiar views and to obtain the financial support of church members through selling their books or through donations. Often those who invite them do not know them well enough to anticipate the danger. What can you do to protect your field from these spiritual predators?

First, motivate church members to spend more time studying the Bible. If they know the truth they will develop spiritual discernment that will enable them to distinguish truth from error. We need to bring the Bible back to the life of the church not only in the exposition of our message but also in our daily Christian experience.

Second, we should hear from our pulpits messages that will contribute toward grounding our church members in our message and mission. Proclaim the gospel in the context of the end-time message of the Adventist church and under no circumstances allow the pulpit to become a forum for doctrinal and theological controversies. In churches where different and contradictory doctrinal views co-exist, church growth and spiritual vitality are languishing and are almost non-existent. A church that is vibrant and active is a church with clear

biblical and doctrinal convictions and consequently ready and willing to share them.

Third, before you invite a speaker to your field, find out who this person is and what she or he is promoting. Ask the person to send you their materials and, since most of them have websites, examine what they have on their websites. Sometimes their websites are deceptive, giving you the impression that they are faithful Adventists when in fact they hold views to the contrary. You can also ask them to provide you a list of places where they have been invited to speak and then contact the pastors or church leaders in some of those places. This will take time, but you should be careful or otherwise you may regret it.

Fourth, it is important to keep church members informed about websites where they can find trustworthy information about our message (e.g., www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org and www.whiteestate.org). This should be done on a regular basis through the means of communication available to you.

I understand very well how difficult it is to keep individuals who promote their own peculiar and divisive message away from our churches. In fact, some of them may be retired ministers or may even work for the church. I can only encourage you to do all you can to make sure that you know enough about them to hinder them from damaging the unity of the church in your respective fields.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, BRI

PURPOSE

Reflections is the official newsletter of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference. Published quarterly, it seeks to share information concerning doctrinal and theological developments among Adventists and to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. Its intended audience is church administrators, church leaders, pastors, and teachers.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Articles for Theological Focus, which address current issues that are important for Adventist theology, are written at the invitation of BRI and should not exceed 2,500 words. All invited submissions should follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* in general matters and *The SBL Handbook of Style* for more specialized questions, including abbreviations of primary and secondary sources and the transliteration of ancient texts according to the general-purpose style. They should be sent by e-mail as word processing document attachments to the editor at brinewsletter@gc.adventist.org.

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Church Finances and the Financial Crisis

(continued from page 1)

higher returns. Retirement funds, endowment funds, and depreciation funds for replacement of buildings would be examples of funds with rather long time horizons that have a very high opportunity cost if invested too conservatively. One hundred dollars invested in more secure and less volatile fixed income investments (91-day T-Bills) on December 1, 1986 would have increased by approximately \$171 through November 30, 2008 having earned an average of around 5% per year. That same \$100 invested in stocks (the S&P 500 index) would have increased in value by \$855 through December 31, 2007. Even with the decline of 38% in the S&P 500 during 2008 the increase would still be \$495 through November 30, 2008. So the opportunity cost of investing in fixed income instruments instead of stocks over that twenty-two year period, even with the recent major decline in the stock markets, would be approximately \$324 – that is more than three times the initial investment! It would take considerably more tithe and offerings to fund the retirement plans than is normally provided by fixed income investments if some of the funds were not invested over a longer time period with the expectation of a higher rate of return. Also, student endowment funds could support far fewer students over the long term if invested too conservatively.

We could wish that the Lord would provide a Urim and Thummim to use when making investment decisions, but we know it would not be good for the church or for us personally. It would be too easy to start depending on exceptional earnings and even to use the information for personal gain and miss out on eternity.

There can be a temptation to try to become investment advisors to our members or organizations even when we are not qualified. It is not wise for pastors or leaders to get involved in promoting investment schemes or investment opportunities. Great harm has been done to God's work by leaders who have involved themselves in this way. As pastors and leaders we need to keep our eyes focused on things of eternal value.

Robert E. Lemon is the treasurer of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Faith and Finances in the End Times

BY G. EDWARD REID

The lure of riches has apparently always been a stumbling block for people,



even Christians. The New Testament frequently cautions us against the desire for wealth. Jesus said, “You can’t serve God and money” (Matt 6:24). And Paul warns that “the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim 6:10, 17) and that “in the last days men will be lovers of money” (2 Tim 3:1, 2). Obviously, these passages underscore the perils of our times. But what does Ellen White write about money in the end time? Here is an overview.

National Ruin?

In response to the economic crisis of the last four months of 2008 many have expressed the idea that “national ruin” is upon us. However, all of the relevant statements by Ellen White state that national ruin follows national apostasy – referring to the spiritual apostasy of enforcing Sunday observance.¹

We are told that “those who hold the reins of government...

are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis.”² In this context she states that Sunday observance is encouraged

to restore “divine favor and temporal prosperity.”³ So, even though there is a financial crisis now, according to Ellen White, things will get much worse after the national Sunday law suggested by Revelation 13 comes into force.

It is interesting that many of those who point to the downturn in the economy as a sign of the end have counseled what people ought to do to “survive,” when, in actual fact, the counsel should be how to do the work of warning the world of an approaching God.⁴

Ellen White makes clear that money will be a major factor in the end-time scenario and that Satan’s strategy is to lead people “to lay up their treasure here and fix their affections upon earthly things” so that means will not be available for “the upbuilding of Christ’s kingdom.”⁵

The devil knows that if he can keep us focused on money it will separate us from God and eternal life. God’s strategy is to allow poverty to come on the world so that men will trust in Him rather than their money: “The very means that is now so sparingly invested in the cause of God, and that is selfishly retained, will in a little while be cast with all idols to the moles and to the bats. Money will soon depreciate in value very suddenly when the reality of eternal scenes opens to the senses of man.”⁶

Faithfully Responding to the Financial Crisis

What do genuine Christians do in response to the

Rather than counsel people how to “survive” the financial crisis we should counsel them how to warn the world of an approaching God.

financial crisis? Do we hunker down in survival mode? No, in fact, just the opposite is true.

- *Our giving will increase.* “In the last extremity, before this work shall close, thousands will be cheerfully laid upon the altar. Men and women will feel it a blessed privilege to share in the work of preparing souls to stand in the great day of God, and they will give hundreds as readily as dollars are given now.”⁷
- *Our giving will prepare us for heaven.* Bible-believing Christians know that someday soon everything on this earth will be burned up at the second coming of Jesus (2 Pet 3:10). So they put their money into God’s cause so it will do some good before getting burned up. “The work of God is to become more extensive, and if His people follow His counsel, there will not be much means in their possession to be consumed in the final conflagration. All will have laid up their treasure where moth and rust cannot corrupt; and the heart will not have a cord to bind it to earth.”⁸
- *Our giving will put God and His kingdom first.* The counsel from God’s Word is more valid than ever. Put God first and stay in covenant relationship with Him. “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the

firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine” (Prov 3:9, 10). And Jesus counseled those who were concerned about food, clothing, and shelter. “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt 6:33).

Most important of all, we need to ask God for wisdom to help us make good earning, saving, and spending decisions: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean



not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov 3:5, 6).

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¹See *Last Day Events*, p. 134.

²*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 13.

³*The Great Controversy*, p. 590.

⁴*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 228.

⁵*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 472-73.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 63; cf. p. 240.

⁷*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 40.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 60.

Genomes, Genes and Junk DNA

BY TIMOTHY G. STANDISH

The discovery that genomes contain far fewer genes than expected has aggravated a problem recognized a generation of scientists ago: if there are so few genes, why do humans and many other organisms have so much DNA in their genomes? Only 3% of the 3 billion nucleotide letters in the human genome actually coded for proteins. Thus, most of our genome codes for nothing, or so it once seemed. This DNA that does not code for proteins was dismissively referred to as “junk DNA” and a number of prominent Darwinists and their followers jumped on the “junk DNA” bandwagon claiming that it was exactly what the messy process of Darwinian evolution predicts.¹ Susumu Ohno, who is widely credited with coining the term “junk DNA” put it this way:

The earth is strewn with fossil remains of extinct species; is it a wonder that our genome too is filled with the remains of extinct genes?²

Some went beyond the idea that “junk DNA” is a legacy of our evolutionary past, a sort of molecular trash midden that can be excavated to gain information about an organism’s evolutionary past. For example, Richard Dawkins, the proselytizing atheist and uber-

Darwinist, co-opted junk DNA as *prima facie* evidence in support of his reductionistic “selfish gene theory” of evolution:

Biologists are racking their brains trying to think what useful task this apparently surplus DNA is doing. But from the point of view of the selfish genes themselves, there is no paradox. The true “purpose” of DNA is to survive, no more and no less. The simplest way to explain the surplus DNA is to suppose that it is a parasite, or at best a harmless but useless passenger, hitching a ride in the survival machines created by the other DNA.³

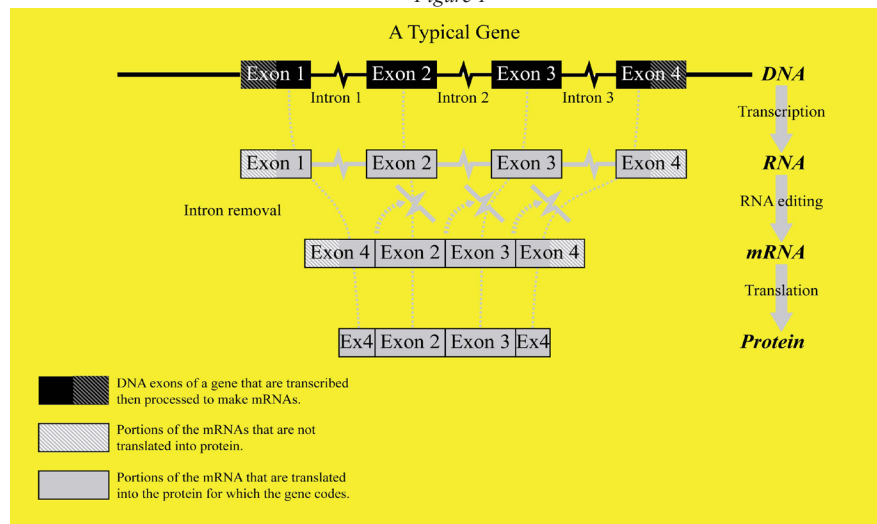
The functionlessness of junk DNA led Dawkins to taunt creationists with the suggestion that they “might spend some earnest time speculating on why the Creator should bother to litter genomes with untranslated pseudogenes and junk tandem repeat DNA.”⁴ And yet, as a better understanding develops, genomes appear far more elegant than originally appreciated and apparently predicted by some Darwinists. Darwinism can accommodate design evident in genomes in the same way that other evidence of design is accommodated; by calling it “apparent” design rather than real design. Still, discovery of function in “junk DNA” calls into question Dawkins’ “selfish gene” speculation along with many other ideas dependent on significant amounts of DNA

actually being functionless. Further, if Darwinism explains functionality in “junk DNA” just as well as it explains functionless DNA, then it is reasonable to conclude that at least sometimes it concurrently explains everything and nothing.

In the old understanding of genes, Beadle and Tatum’s Nobel Prize winning “one gene, one enzyme (protein)” concept prevailed.⁵ Because humans produce more than 100,000 proteins and there appear to be less than 25,000 genes,⁶ at least some genes must be capable of producing more than one protein. How might this be achieved?

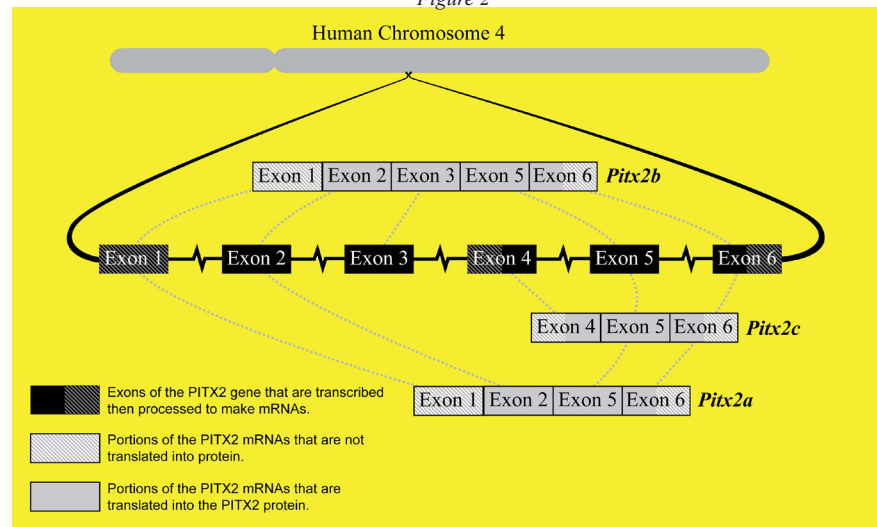
Most genes in humans and other organisms with complex cells (as well as some genes in bacteria) are made up of DNA segments called “exons” separated by intervening segments called “introns” (see Figure 1). When the protein that

Figure 1



In most complex organisms, a typical gene is composed of multiple parts only some of which actually code for a protein. The protein coding parts, called “exons” are usually separated by intervening segments called “introns.” When the information coded in a gene is to be used to make a protein, the DNA is first transcribed into RNA which is then edited to remove the introns. This edited RNA, now called mRNA, then carries the information that is translated by complex cellular machinery into a protein.

Figure 2



The human *Pitx2* gene is composed of 6 exons separated by 5 introns. Joining different exons together in RNA transcripts of *Pitx2* and using different transcription and translation start sites results in several different proteins from this single gene. In this illustration, exons and introns are not drawn to scale. In the actual gene, exons vary significantly in size and introns make up the bulk of the gene. Unique mRNAs are shown for PITX2A, B and C after processing to remove introns and other RNA.

initially imagined. While genes are less numerous than expected, they are very complex in their structure, expression and associated control systems. Information to control how genes are to be expressed has to come from somewhere. Some of that information may be imbedded in the genes themselves, but much of it clearly lies outside genes and in the DNA once thought of as leftover rubbish from the sloppy evolutionary process. To the surprise of many, much of what was once dismissed as “junk DNA” is now turning out to play a vital role in the normal function of genetic systems. As long ago as 1994, my colleague Jim Gibson, commenting on a specific class of junk DNA called “pseudogenes” noted: “[T]he argument that particular DNA sequences must not have a function because we haven’t

a gene codes for is going to be made, the first step involves making an RNA copy of the gene. This RNA transcript is then edited to remove the introns so that the protein coding exons are contiguous in mRNA. It is the mRNA that carries information out of a cell’s nucleus to molecular factories called ribosomes that translate the mRNA information into specific proteins. By joining different protein coding exons from the same gene together, different mRNAs can be made and different proteins result.

The human *Paired-like* homeo-domain transcription factor 2 (*Pitx2*) gene illustrates how RNA processing works to create several different proteins from one gene. The PITX2 protein plays a role in proper development of the head, eyes and other things.⁷ *Pitx2* is composed of six exons separated by five introns (Figure 2). By joining exons 1, 2, 5 and 6 together, the mRNA for a version of PITX2 called “Isoform A”, or PITX2A, is created. Joining together exons 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 makes PITX2B mRNA and exons 4, 5 and 6 makes PITX2C. Changing parts of the protein presumably impacts how PITX2 interacts with other molecules.⁸ There are many further interesting complexities involving *Pitx2*, but the point of this example is that a single gene can be used to make multiple different proteins. If that is the case, regulatory mechanisms are necessary to ensure the right proteins are constructed using the right genes.

What does this have to do with “junk DNA”? Genomes are now understood to be far more dynamic than

discovered any function for them is an argument from silence. To conclude that pseudogenes are junk DNA seems premature.”⁹

Premature it was, both to hastily arrive at the conclusion that DNA not coding for proteins must do nothing and that this somehow supports evolutionary ideas while calling creation into question. Over the past few years “junk DNA” has yielded a treasure-trove of information about how genomes operate. The complex

Much of what was once thought to be “junk DNA” has been found to have essential functions.

occupying at least one third of the human genome.¹⁰ That is a lot more than the 3% of the human genome that was thought to be functional only a few years ago. Various small RNA transcripts appear to be involved in regulating every step in protein production. These short RNAs appear to come from all over the genome, not just areas coding for genes. In fact, it is becoming apparent that at least 70% of the genome is transcribed into RNA¹¹ and that both strands of the double stranded DNA molecule are commonly transcribed, not just the strand that codes a protein.¹²

Even some genes that were once thought to be broken remnants of once functional genes, the pseudogenes Gibson was referring to, have been found to have essential functions. For example, one of these “pseudogenes” appears to be essential for egg formation in mice.¹³ Discovering that some pseudogenes have a function is genuinely surprising and shows how much we still have to learn about genomes. If pseudogenes have vital

functions, this calls into question the logic used when invoking pseudogenes and

other “junk DNA” as evidence of common ancestry.

Old arguments against a wise and good Creator God based on the false assumption that genomes are primarily leftover litter from the process of evolution are no longer tenable. That is not to say that all DNA must be perfectly functional and that we must understand that function. Some degree of degeneration in genomes since the fall is to be expected, but exactly how much remains open to question. Revisions in our

understanding of how genomes work reveal an awe-inspiring level of sophistication in their design, even if some parts may be broken. It turns out that control mechanisms encoded in “junk DNA” are as important as the genes they regulate and that humans, along with all other living things, really are “fearfully and wonderfully made.”¹⁴

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¹For a detailed discussion of the history of this argument and why, from a Darwinian perspective, it is weak, see T. G. Standish, “Rushing to Judgment: Functionality in Non-Coding or Junk DNA,” *Origins* 53 (2002): 7–30.

²S. Ohno, “So Much ‘Junk’ DNA in Our Genome” in *Evolution of Genetic Systems*, ed. H. H. Smith (Brookhaven Symposia in Biology 23; New York: Gordon and Breach, 1972), 366–70.

³R. Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (rev. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 45. Note that this quote is not altered from the first edition of the *Selfish Gene* printed in 1976 and that the entire book can be viewed online at: http://macroevolution.narod.ru/gene/index_2en.html.

⁴R. Dawkins, “The ‘Information Challenge’: How Evolution Increases Information in the Genome,” *Skeptic* 7 (1999): 64–69.

⁵George W. Beadle and Edward L. Tatum each shared one quarter of the 1958 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, the remaining half awarded to Joshua Lederberg for his discoveries related to bacterial genetic recombination.

⁶Despite publication of the human genome, estimating gene numbers in the genome is still an estimation, not an actual count of the genes. These estimates are based on certain assumptions that may or may not be valid. For a recent example of estimating gene numbers that includes certain evolutionary assumptions and comes up with a remarkably low estimate see M. Clamp, B. Fry, M. Kamal, X. Xie, J. Cuff, M. F. Lin, M. Kellis, K. Lindblad-Toh, and E. S. Lander, “Distinguishing Protein-coding and Noncoding Genes in the Human Genome,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 104/49 (2007): 19428–19433.

⁷P. J. Gage, H. Suh, and S. A. Camper, “The Bicoid-related Pitx Gene Family in Development,” *Mammalian Genome* 10 (1999): 197–200.

⁸P. Lamba, T. A. Hjalt, and D. J. Bernard. “Novel Forms of Paired-like Homeodomain Transcription Factor 2 (PITX2): Generation by Alternative Translation Initiation and mRNA Splicing,” *BMC Molecular Biology* 9 (2008): no pages. Cited 3 Dec 2008. Online: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2199/9/31>.

⁹L. J. Gibson, “Pseudogenes and Origins,” *Origins* 21/2 (1994): 91–108.

¹⁰C. Zhang, W.-H. Li, A. R. Krainer, and M. Q. Zhang. “RNA Landscape of Evolution for Optimal Exon and Intron Discrimination,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 105/15 (2008): 5797–5802.

¹¹M. Pheasant and J. S. Mattick, “Raising the Estimate of Functional Human Sequences,” *Genome Research* 17 (2007): 1245–1253.

¹²RIKEN Genome Exploration Research Group and Genome Science Group (Genome Network Project Core Group) and the FANTOM Consortium, “Antisense Transcription in the Mammalian Transcriptome,” *Science* 309 (2005): 1564–1566.

¹³O. H. Tam, A. A. Aravin, P. Stein, A. Girard, E. P. Murchison, S. Cheloufi, E. Hodges, M. Anger, R. Sachidanandam, R. M. Schultz, and G. J. Hannon. "Pseudogene-derived Small Interfering RNAs Regulate Gene Expression in Mouse Oocytes," *Nature* 453 (2008): 534-38. E-published April 10, 2008: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/nature06904>.

¹⁴Psalms 139:14 KJV and NIV.

SCRIPTURE APPLIED

The Holy Spirit: Divine Friend and Advocate

It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to have a spiritual life. Yet there are sometimes misconceptions about the Holy Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit and what is His work?

I. Images of the Holy Spirit

Just as the Father and the Son are described with images, so also is the Holy Spirit. These images include fire (Acts 2:3), water (John 7:37-39), rain (Isa 44:3), wind (John 3:8), oil (Isa 61:1), a dove (John 1:32), a seal (Eph 4:30), and a pledge (2 Cor 5:5).

II. The Holy Spirit in Salvation History

1. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was active at Creation (Gen 1:2). He came upon prophets and kings (Num 24:2; 1 Sam 16:13) and gave special abilities to the craftsmen who worked at the temple (Exod 31:3-6; 35:30-33). He would renew the hearts of human beings (Eze 11:19; 36:26-27) and be poured out on them (Joel 2:28-32). The Messiah would be filled with the Holy Spirit (Isa 11:1-5; 42:1-2).

2. Jesus and the Holy Spirit

Luke 1:35; Matt 1:18-20	The Spirit was active in Jesus' incarnation.
Luke 3:21-22	The Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism.
Luke 4:1	The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted.
Luke 4:14-15, 17-21	The Spirit was active in Jesus' preaching and teaching ministry.
Matt 12:28; Acts 10:38	The Spirit empowered Jesus' healing ministry.
John 20:22	The Spirit was Jesus' gift after His resurrection.

3. The Holy Spirit and Pentecost

At Pentecost, Jesus' promise to give the Spirit to the church was fulfilled. Since then the third person of the divine Trinity is present within the Christian church (Acts 2:38).

What is new about Pentecost?

- Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is clearly revealed as a divine person separate from the Father and the Son.
- Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is given abundantly to all believers and not just to a limited group.
- Since Pentecost, the role of the Holy Spirit consists of being the representative of Jesus. Also, because the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son, He is also a representative of the Father.

Peter explained that, in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, the prophecy found in Joel 2:28-32 was being fulfilled (Acts 2:14-36). However, if one reads Joel 2:30-31, there is also a clear end-time dimension to the prophecy.

III. The Holy Spirit is God

Acts 5:3-4	The Spirit is called "God."
1 Cor 3:16; 6:19	The Spirit fills the Church just as God filled the temple.
2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21	The Spirit is the Author of Scripture.
Matt 12:31-32; 28:19	The Spirit is worshiped as God.
Heb 9:14	The Spirit is eternal.
Matt 1:20	The Spirit is holy.
1 Cor 2:10-11	The Spirit is omniscient.
Rom 8:2; Gen 1:2	The Spirit gives life and was present at Creation.
Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14	The Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son, together comprising the Trinity.

IV. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 13	Human roles describe the Holy Spirit (helper, counselor, advocate).
1 Cor 12:7-11; Eph 4:30; Acts 13:1-4; 16:6-7	Human characteristics are attributed to the Holy Spirit (mind, will, feelings, actions). He is not a mere power.
John 14:16-17; 16:7	The Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus and the Father will remain with us.

John 16:7-11, Matt 12:31-32 John 3:5-6; Titus 3:5	The Spirit brings conviction into the world. Believers have rebirth and baptism by the Spirit.
Eph 1:13-14; 4:30	The Spirit dwells in believers.
John 14:26; 16:13	The Spirit illuminates believers.
1 John 3:24; 1 Pet 1:2; Gal 5:22-23; 6:8	The Spirit enables obedience and sanctification.
Rom 8:26; Acts 9:31	The Spirit intercedes, comforts, and helps.
Acts 1:8; 4:31	The Spirit enables witnessing.
1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30; Rom 12:6-8; Eph 4:11	With the Spirit come spiritual gifts.
Matt 10:19-20	The Spirit assists persecuted believers.

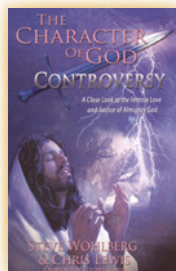
V. Conclusion

Jesus is the model Spirit-filled person. He has shown us what it means to live a life under the Spirit's control—an abundant, fulfilling, and goal-oriented life. Because He has saved us and has sent us the Spirit, we also can be people of the Spirit and enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the great Giver: He points us to Jesus; He brings about our rebirth; He produces His fruit in us and provides us spiritual gifts. But the Giver is more important than His gifts. The gifts are to be used; the Giver is to be worshiped. We are His dwelling place, a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19), through Whom we are most intimately connected with God. We are dependent on Him. Without the Holy Spirit there is no spiritual interest and no spiritual life. Once the Spirit has been poured out on the church, He is not taken back. Therefore, we can rejoice and we can be confident. We can even pray for a more intense infilling of the Holy Spirit and accept it by faith (Eph 4:30; 5:18; Luke 11:13). It is not only we who will benefit, but also those with whom we associate and for whom we labor.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

BOOK NOTES



Steve Wohlberg and Chris Lewis. *The Character of God*. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2008. 160 pp. US\$13.99.

In response to the controversy within the church over the character of God, Pacific Press has released a new book co-authored by TV evangelist Steve Wohlberg and Chris Lewis, a surgeon at Loma Linda

University. In nine chapters with questions for reflection and conversation after each chapter, the authors set out to refute the claim that because of His love God doesn't kill or directly punish evil. Sin punishes itself, it is said, or Satan does the punishing as soon as God removes His protective hand.

Long ago Ellen White wrote, "It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy" (GC 569). The book *The Character of God* seeks to demonstrate that God's character is a blend of love, mercy, holiness, and justice. And His justice demands the punishment of sinners; thus God's wrath against evildoers is not a passive withdrawal of His protection but an active dealing with sin and sinners.

After describing the fall of Satan in heaven (ch. 1) and the revelation of God's character to Moses in Exodus 34 (ch. 2), the authors use the golden-calf episode in Exodus 32 to show that the death of the three thousand men (v. 28) was the result of God's direct order. Moses told the Levites, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.' So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses" (vv. 27, 28). In addition, the authors quote Ellen White who wrote, "Those who performed this terrible work of judgment were acting by divine authority, executing the sentence of the King of heaven" (PP 324).

In the same chapter (ch. 3), Wohlberg and Lewis explain the often-cited statement of Ellen White who said, "God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself" (COL 84). While this seems to support the God-does-not-kill position, the authors explain that because all those who are destroyed have refused the offer of mercy, therefore, their death is their own fault (p. 45). And it is in this sense that they understand Ellen White's statement in *Christ's Object Lessons*.

God-does-not-kill advocates claim that the wrath of God "merely means that the Lord decides to stop restraining the fury of nature, or the effects of sin upon sinners, or the machinations of the devil himself" (p. 51). While it is certainly true that God at times expresses His wrath by hiding His face and removing His protection (Deut 31:16, 17; Rom 1:24-28), this does not mean that He always responds in this way. In the case of the Sodomites, for example, God gave them up to their sexual perversions, but after a time He also punished them. The Bible says, "Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens" (Gen 19:24). It was clearly God's action that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Wohlberg and Lewis cite several other biblical cases of God's direct action in the punishment of sinners (pp.

58-63): (1) Nadab and Abihu – After they had offered profane fire contrary to God’s specific instructions, “fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD” (Lev 10:2). It was the LORD who sent the fire, not Satan; (2) Ananias and Sapphira – They lied to Peter and fell down dead (Acts 5:5, 10). It is evident that their death was not due to natural causes. Commenting on their death, Ellen White wrote, “Infinite Wisdom saw that this signal manifestation of the wrath of God was necessary to guard the young church from becoming demoralized” (AA 73); (3) Herod – The Bible clearly states that “an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died” (Acts 12:23). In each case, “God acted justly against willful, blatant sin” (p. 63).

Other chapters in the book deal with the law of God as the standard by which the lives of men will be tested in the judgment (ch. 5); with the death of Jesus as our Substitute (ch. 6); and what the righteousness of Christ means for us individually (ch. 7). The last two

chapters deal with the close of probation (ch. 8) and the final judgment (ch. 9). The seven last plagues after the close of probation are declared to be “the seven bowls of the wrath of God” (Rev 16:1), His judgments (16:9) over which He has power (16:9). And at the executive judgment after the millennium “fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them” (20:9). In other words, “the final retribution comes ‘from God’ not from sin, sinners, or Satan” (p. 148).

The Character of God is a well-written volume that takes Scripture and the writings of Ellen White seriously. It presents a consistent picture of God and is not afraid to deal with tough questions. It deals comprehensively with God’s character, His love, mercy, and righteousness, as well as with His justice and wrath. While not all readers will agree with the conclusions reached, every minister and church member confronted with the God-does-not-kill argument will benefit from a prayerful study of this book.

Gerhard Pfandl, BRI

WORLDWIDE HIGHLIGHTS

New Ellen G. White Resource Available

The “White Estate Digital Resource Center” is an important new research tool being made available on DVD in January 2009 to all 18 Ellen G. White Estate branch offices, research centers, and study centers worldwide. It contains the written replies to inquiries made to the Ellen G. White Estate from the early 1930s to the present (17,203 pages) as well as document files covering a wide range of theological, historical, and practical topics (15,911 pages). Development of the resource began at the Bogenhofen Seminary, Austria, through the creative vision of three theology students: Markus Kutzschbach, Stefan Serena, and Denis Kaiser. The students worked under the supervision of Frank M. Hasel, Dean of the Theological Seminary and Director of the Ellen G. White Study Center at Bogenhofen. Additional materials have been added to it by the Ellen G. White Estate at the Adventist Church World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, U.S.A. “This new resource opens up vast possibilities to the scholar and pas-



tor as well as to the individual church member,” according to Hasel.

The DVD is just the first step in a more extensive project. To meet the rapidly-changing needs of today’s church, the White Estate has contracted with Kutzschbach and Serena (among others) to develop a new, user-friendly, highly interactive, state-of-the-art website. Planned for beta release early in 2009, the website’s resources will make study of the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White easier and more enjoyable. Also planned is an online searchable global database of all the Ellen G. White books in as many languages as can be obtained, with links to Bible references (in various languages) and cross-references within her writings. It will also allow the text to be exported easily in various formats to PDAs, smart phones, CDs, etc. “The most important aspect of the global database,” observes Frank Hasel, “is that it offers the possibility of a unified and manageable language database of all of Ellen White’s books that can be constantly updated as more materials are made available.”

In the future, the database could also facilitate low-cost, on-demand printing and distribution of Ellen White’s writings in various languages. Sev-

eral world divisions have requested the production of a multi-language CD-ROM of Ellen G. White's Complete Published Writings. According to Elder James Nix, White Estate director, "The creation of this global database will enable our office to respond to these requests and to prepare a new Ellen White multi-language CD-ROM for worldwide distribution."

New Book Answers Questions on the Spirit of Prophecy

The Gift of Prophecy: The Role of Ellen White in God's Remnant Church
by Gerhard



Pfandl has recently been published by Pacific Press. The book answers questions that have been raised about the gift of prophecy, giving "succinct, unambiguous, compelling answers to the very questions I have heard from God's remnant people around the world," writes Cindy Tutsch in the book's Foreword. These include: How necessary is the human herald in the process of salvation? Is speaking in tongues a genuine gift of the Spirit? In what way does God communicate His messages to prophets? What is the nature of Ellen White's authority? Was every prediction she made fulfilled? What about the charge of plagiarism and the misuse or misinterpretation of her writings? Tutsch adds, "I have found Dr. Pfandl's explanation about inspiration as clear and understandable as anything I have encountered in my quite extensive reading about the prophetic gift and particularly about Ellen White's ministry." The purpose of the book, according to Pfandl, is twofold: to respond to recent attacks against the gift of prophecy and to share with a new generation the blessings that God has given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church through Ellen

White's prophetic ministry. The 128-page book consists of thirteen chapters and costs US\$11.99.

New Book Clarifies the Concept of the Atonement



The subject of the atonement has become a controversial one in contemporary Christian theology. The topic itself is extremely important because the work of Christ for the redemption of the human race is the theological center of Scripture. In, *Spanning the Abyss: How the Atonement Brings God and Humanity Together*, Ángel M. Rodríguez, BRI director, provides a careful discussion of the biblical evidence. He shows that, although the Bible approaches the topic from a multiplicity of angles, the substitutive interpretation of the death of Christ remains central in biblical soteriology. It serves to explain how the sacrifice of Christ on the cross reveals the glorious love of God for a fallen race. The book is the companion volume for the recently completed Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide by the same author entitled "Atonement and the Cross of Christ." Published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, the 155-page book costs US\$10.99.

Adventists Take Leading Role at Inaugural Meeting of New SBL Consultation

An exciting new development within the structure of the Society of Biblical Literature annual meetings is the "Sabbath in Text, Tradition, and Theology" consultation which met for the first time on Monday, November 24, 2008 in Boston. The consultation, which combines topics from both Christian and Jewish perspectives, is co-chaired by Michael Chernick of Hebrew Union College and Tom Shepherd of Andrews University. Adventist scholars featured prominently in the inaugural meeting. The goal of the consultation, according to Shepherd, "is to foster an open and rewarding dialogue between Jews and Christians on this important religious institution." Three Adventists presented

papers at the morning session, which centered on the theme of "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch": Ross Winkle of Pacific Union College and Gerald Klingbeil and



Mathilde Frey of the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies. Baruch Schwartz from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was a respondent. The second session focused on "The Origin and Meaning of Sabbath" and featured papers by Jiří Moskala of Andrews University and Nikolaus Satelmajer, Editor of *Ministry*. A paper was also presented by Jeffrey Stackert of the University of Chicago Divinity School. The full papers, summaries of which were given at the sessions, may be obtained from Tom Shepherd, co-chair, at trs@andrews.edu. The respective themes for 2009 and 2010 are "The Sabbath in Second Temple Judaism and the time of Jesus" and "The Sabbath in the Second Century C.E. (Jewish and Christian sources)."