ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG

ADVENTIST REVIEW

JUNE 2025: PRAYING AGAINST ENEMIES? + PASTOR AND PAPA + THE UNEXPECTED GUEST + AT ANY COST + STEADFAST LOVE



UNCOVERED

A look at exposure and vulnerability in the investigative judgment

PAGE 18

IT IS WRITTEN®

Resources for PENTECOST 2025





It Is Written is your one-stop shop for Pentecost 2025 resources.

Find everything you need to help you prepare for, proclaim, and preserve a harvest during your proclamation event! From sharing books to Bible studies, Bible study card mailers, slides, and more, we have it all.



Visit It Is Written at the General Conference Session at booth #2127





Use code **15PC25** at checkout for **15% off** Pentecost 2025 resources, plus:

- *Spend $150 or more and get a free Black Tumbler*
- *Spend $300 or more and get 5 free Bible Study Guide sets*



itiswritten.shop
888-664-5573

Copyright © 2025, It Is Written, Inc. All rights reserved.

ADVENTISTREVIEW06/25 VOLUME 201 NUMBER 06

PHOTO BY ERIK VAN DIJK / UNSPLASH



FEATURES







18 **GOD'S INGENIOUS ANTIDOTE TO "PERFORMATIVE" RELIGION** | SHAWN BRACE
Reframing the investigative judgment

40 **REFLECTING CHRIST IN OUR DIGITAL COMMUNICATION** | FRANK M. HASEL
Seeing digital communication through theological lenses

46 **ADVENTIST CHURCH NEXT** | GERARDO OUDRI
We talk about church. We go to church. But do we know why church exists?

52 **DELIBERATIONS ON CHRISTIAN IDENTITY** | EKKEHARDT MUELLER
How do we know whom we belong to?

COVER PHOTO © JOKERPRO / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES

"There are people who don't claim to be Christ's followers but who really are because they've unknowingly responded to the overtures of His grace and chosen to orient their lives toward the good of others."

21

ARTICLES

26 **PRAYING AGAINST ENEMIES?**
OLIVIA VALENTINE
David prayed for judgment on his enemies. Should we?

28 **A FATHER'S PLACE**
ELLEN G. WHITE
Ever wish you could interview Ellen White? We did.

30 **PASTOR AND PAPA**
CHRISTIAN MARTIN
When the pastor is also your dad

34 **FATHERS ART**
SELECTED
Fathers depicted in art and text

36 **THE UNEXPECTED GUEST**
BRENDA KIŠ
The house was clean; the food was ready; but the guest wasn't.

44 **STRONG KIDS, STRONG FAITH**
LAVONNE LONG
Children's faith doesn't just happen; it needs to be nurtured.

56 **REFLECTING ON CREATIONISM**
RONNY NALIN
Despite claims, being identified as a creationist is a good thing.

60 **STEADFAST LOVE**
DANIEL PEI
There is One who loves the bride like no other.

72 **QUIET WITNESS ON A SECULAR CAMPUS**
SEBASTIEN BRAXTON
Called out of a public campus, only to return.

30



NEWS|OPINION

» Navajo Nation Radio Stations Are "Voices of Hope in the Desert," Leaders Say

» Mission to Inmates Leads to Conversions Across Paraguay Prisons

» Conference Highlights the 500th Anniversary of the Anabaptist Movement

» In Australia, Organization Celebrates 20 Years of Service

» Cuba Officials Visit Adventist Seminary, Highlight Long-standing Collaboration

» La Sierra-Rooted Ghanaian Adventist Church Celebrates New Home

» Shawn Boonstra Will Serve as an Associate Editor at *Adventist Review*









EDITORIAL

5 **JUSTIN KIM**
CECI TUERA CELA

DEPARTMENTS

7 **LETTERS**
67 **HOUSE CALL**

COLUMNS

25 **CLIFF'S EDGE**
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN

51 **BETWEEN WORLDS**
DAVID BURUCHARA

59 **THE PIONEERING PASTOR**
SHANE ANDERSON

65 **THINK AGAIN**
CHARISSA TOROSSIAN

ADVENTIST REVIEW

FOUNDED 1849. PUBLISHED BY THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS®

PUBLISHING BOARD
Ted N. C. Wilson, *chair*
Guillermo Biaggi, *vice chair*
Justin Kim, *secretary*
Audrey Andersson, G. Alexander Bryant, Zeno Charles-Marcel, Williams Costa, Paul H. Douglas, Mark A. Finley, James Howard, Erton Köhler, Geoffrey Mbwana, Magdiel Perez Schultz, Artur Stele, Ray Wahlen, Karnik Doukmetzian, *legal advisor*

EDITOR Justin Kim

ASSOCIATE EDITORS Sikhululekile Daco, John Peckham

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR Greg Scott

COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR/NEWS EDITOR Enno Müller

ASSISTANT EDITORS Beth Thomas, Jonathan Walter

FINANCE MANAGER Kimberly Brown

ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN Brett Meliti, Ellen Musselman/Types & Symbols

LAYOUT TECHNICIAN Fred Wuerstlin

COPY EDITOR James Cavil

OPERATIONS MANAGER Merle Poirier

EDITORIAL ASSESSMENT COORDINATOR Marvene Thorpe-Baptiste

SENIOR ADVISOR E. Edward Zinke

AD SALES Glen Gohlke

CIRCULATION/DISTRIBUTION Rebecca Hilde, Sharon Tennyson

TO WRITERS: Writer's guidelines are available at www.adventistreview.org at the bottom of the home page. Click on Submissions/Writer's Guidelines. For a printed copy, send a self-addressed envelope to: Writer's Guidelines, Adventist Review, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

E-mail: revieweditor@gc.adventist.org.

Website: www.adventistreview.org.

Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts in this issue are from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. All rights reserved. Bible texts credited to NIV are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Bible texts credited to NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations marked ESV are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version® (ESV®) © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. All rights reserved. ESV Text Edition: 2016. Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the *New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise noted, all prominent photos are ©Getty Images 2025.

The *Adventist Review* (ISSN 0161-1119) is the general paper of the Seventh-day Adventist® church. It is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Periodicals postage paid at Silver Spring, MD, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Adventist Review*, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353.

Copyright © 2025, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®.
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Twelve issues of the monthly *Adventist Review*, US$19.95, plus additional postage outside North America. Single copy US$2.00 plus shipping and handling.

To order, visit adventistreview.org/subscribe or send your name, address, and payment to: *Adventist Review* subscription desk, P.O. Box 5353, Nampa, ID 83653-5353

ADDRESS CHANGES AND SUBSCRIPTION QUERIES:
adventistreview@pacificpress.com or call 1-800-545-2449

ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES OFFICE: support@adventistreview.org

TRENDING

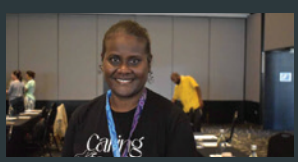
THE MOST SHARED STORIES ON ADVENTISTREVIEW.ORG LAST MONTH:

1



Shawn Boonstra Will Serve as an Associate Editor at *Adventist Review*
by Marcos Paseggi

2



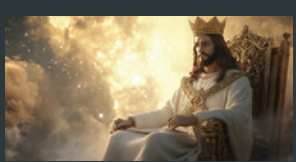
The Rookie Communicator, the White House Advisor, and the Grace of God
by Marcos Paseggi

3



American Apocalypse
by Dwight K. Nelson

4



A Republican Who Supports the Monarch
by Ian Sweeney

5



History Repeats Itself
by Justin Kim

BE INSPIRED.



Download the AWR360° app!

Inspiration and a full media library at your fingertips!

Download on the App Store

ANDROID APP ON Google play

visit: awr.org/apps

AWR360° CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Adventist World Radio 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Let's Connect! awr360 | awr360 | awr.360 | awr.org/videos | awr.org/apps



It was not the form of the publications that birthed our movement.

Ceci Tuera Cela

In his book *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* Victor Hugo described the architectural marvel of the Notre Dame Cathedral in four to five pages. The description's length was really irrelevant to the book's plot. After seeing the damage done to the cathedral during the de-religionization and riots of the French Revolution, however, Hugo sought to garner support for its restoration by relating and emphasizing its beauty.

In one passage the main antagonist, the archdeacon of Notre Dame, Claude Frollo, states in French, *Ceci tuera cela*, which means, "This will kill that." "This" refers to the printed book, while "that" denotes the church. Frollo continues later to insult the one who made printed books possible by calling Johannes Gutenberg, the creator of the printing press, a German pest.

Hugo through Frollo conveyed a certain anxiety of the times. The Notre Dame Cathedral symbolized not only the power of the church but also control over accessibility to knowledge, intellectual achievement, the art of handwriting manuscripts, the accumulation of truth in church libraries, the hearing of sermons from the pulpit, and, ultimately, the best of Paris.

The book symbolized not only the new technology of the printing press but also freedom of thought, universal access to knowledge, mobility of ideas and truth, potential for religious and political change, and an equalizing effect of opportunities to all classes, ending a class of people like Frollo himself.

Ceci tuera cela conveyed the anxiety that the changes the printing press would bring would destroy not only the architectural sophistication of the Notre Dame Cathedral but also of the church, Paris, Europe, and civilization itself. Books could be censored, changed, and redacted, but architecture was literally set in stone. The latter was seen as the highest form of art and communication, where beauty and truth effervesced into a building.

The church today lives in a similar era in which communication and culture are undergoing change. This change brings a similar *Ceci tuera cela* angst. With the advent of mobile devices, ironically it is the printing presses that are now under threat.

Yet while the church as a global missionary movement was started from these presses and the publishing ministry, it was not the form of the publications that birthed our movement. It was the ideas written in those printed pages—ideas that pointed people back to the plain study of His Word; ideas that pointed to the dependence on the righteousness of Christ; ideas that pointed up to our High Priest's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary; ideas that pointed forward to the second return of Jesus—that made the difference.

Today those same ideas remain potent, but can now take new forms and go further, through social media, digital platforms, videos, and podcasts. With artificial intelligence, holograms, neuro-linked communications, quantum computing, virtual and augmented realities, who knows how the message of soon-returning Savior could be communicated with fervor, love, urgency, and biblical accuracy to a dying world?

Frollo was wrong. This didn't kill that.

The anxiety of Notre Dame fading away in the wake of the printing press was premature. We still marvel at the forms of previous generations, walking around them with our mobile cameras and spending incredible amounts to repair them when burned. But we also must translate our message into forms for the next generation. We must constantly think of new ways and methods for the tried-and-true gospel message of the three angels to reach the world.

Notre Dame still stands. Books, magazines, and presses will continue. But how much further and more creatively should the Advent message spread in the upcoming years before Christ's soon return?

IGNITE EVANGELISM IN YOUR CHURCH IN 2025

LET AMAZING FACTS HELP!

Is your church participating in the North American Division's Pentecost 2025 initiative? If so, Amazing Facts International has the solution to help you succeed in your evangelistic campaign this year!

Turnkey, 15-Part Outreach Series!

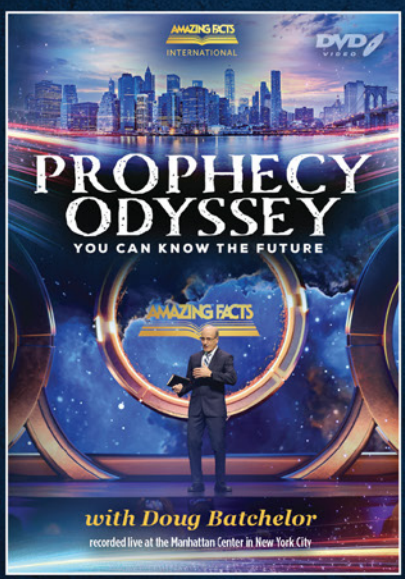


TURNKEY EVANGELISM

Prophecy Odyssey is a powerful, 15-part outreach series designed to engage and inspire today's audiences—it's a ready-to-go, complete evangelistic campaign that will help your congregation reach your community for Jesus!

PROVEN EVANGELISM

Featuring cutting-edge visuals and high-definition technology, *Prophecy Odyssey* is presented in Pastor Doug Batchelor's signature style, offering captivating insights into God's Word that will prepare seekers for baptism—making it a powerful tool to grow your church!



TOTAL EVANGELISM

From DVDs to Bible lessons, outreach guides, and customizable marketing resources, Amazing Facts has everything you need to host your 2025 series and invite souls into God's eternal kingdom!

No need to worry! Whether you're just hearing the news or are already praying about what to do, Amazing Facts has you covered.

AMAZING FACTS
INTERNATIONAL

Amazing Facts is not affiliated with Pentecost 2025, and this ad has not been endorsed by the NAD.

COME VISIT US IN BOOTH #527

amazingfacts.org/evangelism

INBOX

In these economically challenging days it makes sense to consolidate.
JOE

LOVED A MOTHER'S LOVE

I am so excited about the new ARt section of the *Review*! It is inspiring to see the beautiful and thought-provoking work created by various Adventist artists from around the world. I really loved Chileuwa Chinahu's *Mother's Love* acrylic painting, which was also on the cover of the May issue! It is a beautiful and powerful visual representation of the connection between mothers and their children.

Glenn-Mario Walden



BLESSED

Joe Reeves' article "The Prayers We Need Today" (May 2025) was a blessing to me. The very blessing I needed the day I read it.

Megan Trecartin

GRATEFUL

I am pleased and grateful for John Peckham's editorial "Do Justice, Love Mercy" (May 2025). His powerful reminder that this ideal is a "major teaching of Scripture" is much needed.

Charles Scriven

INTERESTING

I found David Buruchara's article "Numbing or Nourishing?" (April 2025) quite interesting. Are we choosing the right escape?

Rubis Deruth

LOOKING FORWARD TO IT

In "History Repeats Itself" (April 2025) Justin Kim highlights what to expect in the new *Adventist Review*. I can't wait to see it.

Riwata Azariah Aluta

In these economically challenging days it makes sense to consolidate *Adventist World* and *Adventist Review*. This, perhaps, could have been done earlier.

Joe

LESSON LEARNED

Ed Guthero's story "Blood on the Ice" (April 2025) shows us that God often uses the very gifts we fear we've lost to lead us back to Himself.

Good + Faithful

REMINDED

Being in the presence of God will always make us more loving and kind. "But They Had Been With Jesus," by Judith Gillis (April 2025), was a good reminder.

Rebecca Collins

PRAYER REQUEST

I appreciate the truth shared by Justin Kim in his editorial "The Curious Case of the Cyrenian" (April 2025). Please pray for me to be one of those who carry the cross of our Lord God, Jesus Christ.

Anusha Joshua

FORGIVEN

What a great reminder of this redeeming love that never ceases to captivate our hearts and minds in Charissa Torossian's "Look Up" (April 2025). I am forgiven!

Hillary Chivavava

OPPORTUNITIES MISSED

Shawn Brace poses a simple but life-changing question in "Would Your Neighbors Miss You?" (April 2025)! Ministry starts with those right next to us. We often miss those who need to hear about Jesus the most because we are always looking for the next big event to share the gospel instead of witnessing to our neighbors in the everyday things.

@hopechannelcanada

2025 GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

Official notice is hereby given that the sixty-second session of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will be held July 3-12, 2025, in the America's Center Convention Complex in St. Louis, Missouri, United States. The first meeting will begin at 2:00 pm, July 3, 2025. All duly accredited delegates are urged to be present at that time.

Ted N. C. Wilson, General Conference President
Erton C Köhler, General Conference Secretary



TUNE IN TO 3ABN®

FOR LIVE COVERAGE

OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE EVENT!

JULY 3–12, 2025

ATTENDING IN PERSON? STOP BY **BOOTH 627** TO CONNECT WITH YOUR 3ABN FAMILY. WE CAN'T WAIT TO MEET YOU!



"Every member, regardless of age, plays a vital role. It's that sense of unity and dedication that has sustained our mission."

Roshelle Fraser, p. 13



Radio studio of KDHH 89.5 FM, transmitting from Kaibeto, Arizona.

PHOTOS: PIETER DAMSTEEGT

NAVAJO NATION RADIO STATIONS ARE "VOICES OF HOPE IN THE DESERT," LEADERS SAY

FULL-POWER FM STATION LAUNCH HIGHLIGHTS THE SIGNIFICANCE AND POTENTIAL OF THIS MINISTRY.

PIETER DAMSTEEGT, NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION NEWS

On March 19, at precisely 4:24 p.m., the airwaves above Kaibeto, Arizona, came alive with a message of hope. Diné Adventist Radio's first full-power FM station—KDHH 89.5 FM—went live, reaching listeners across Tuba City, Kaibeto, and the Western Agency of the Navajo Nation. It was a quiet but powerful breakthrough for a project years in the making.

The first listener to respond was a woman en route to the hospital with her husband. She called to thank the station for "songs of hope" that encouraged her heart on a difficult drive.

That moment, and others like it, are exactly what the Diné Adventist Radio (DAR) team has been praying for since the dream was born five years ago. What began as a Sabbath afternoon conversation in a small



The KDHH radio station in Pinon, Arizona.

room in Window Rock, Arizona, has grown into a cross-conference, cross-cultural media ministry aiming to reach 90 percent of the Navajo population with the Seventh-day Adventist message of hope, health, and healing.

RADIO THAT REACHES

"After 100 years of Adventist work among the Navajo people, they are still an unreached people group," said Dale Wolcott, a pastor who has served across the Navajo Nation since 1990 and helped relaunch churches in Chinle and Window Rock. "Radio can reach places it would take missionaries years to reach."

The Navajo Nation covers more than 27,000 square miles across Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Many families live without internet, electricity, or television. But almost every household has a battery-powered radio.

That's why DAR matters, leaders said. With the recent FCC approval of KDHH and other pending licenses, DAR is building a network of three full-power and four low-power FM stations. Combined with ongoing weekly programming on major tribal stations (such as KTNN) and a live global stream, the network is positioned to touch lives across reservation lines, state borders, and even generations.

VOICES FROM WITHIN

At the heart of the project is a commitment to cultural authenticity. Most DAR programs are produced by Navajo Adventist members and friends, with content airing in both English and Navajo.

"We're trying to help keep the language alive," said Kenneth Kirtley, DAR's program director. Married into a Navajo family and seasoned by 23 years in commercial radio, Kirtley brings technical expertise and deep respect to his role. "Translating programs into Navajo is one of our biggest challenges, but it's also one of our greatest opportunities."

His personal investment runs even deeper. After praying through months of uncertainty, he left a stable career to join the DAR team full-time just days before his own self-imposed deadline. "If that wasn't a sign from God, I don't know what is," he said.

MIRACLES IN THE MARGINS

Dale Wolcott recalls a moment that captures the spirit of the project: "We were facing a $15,000 bill to clear land for a tower site when I got a call out of the blue. A man from Black Mesa was trying to reach another church but got my number instead."

It turned out that the man operated heavy equipment, and he offered to clear the land—for free—after Wolcott helped him and his longtime partner get married.

"The next week the site was cleared," Wolcott added.

Story after story like this fuels the team's conviction that God is at work.

WHAT'S NEXT

With KDHH now live, the team is preparing to launch KDHP in Pinon (equipment installed, power pending) and begin construction on the flagship Gallup station, which still needs $330,000 in funding.

Meanwhile, listeners are already responding. A recent program offering free GodPod devices loaded with bilingual content prompted 14 responses in just two minutes. Bible study requests continue to roll in from across the region.

And through it all, the DAR team keeps moving forward—producing new content, building relationships with tribal leaders, and praying for the resources, power lines, and personnel needed to reach the rest of the nation.

"We're already hearing from people in places where we don't even have churches," Wolcott said. "Radio is going to places we could never reach otherwise."

FROM STATIC TO SIGNAL

Wolcott, Kirtley, network manager Steve Pester, and a growing team of producers and volunteers continue working toward the dream: a network of fully Navajo-produced content, broadcasting 24/7 to the entire Navajo Nation and beyond.

"This is not just about launching a radio station," Pester said. "It's about being a voice of hope in every hogan, every truck, every quiet corner of the desert."

One signal is live. More are coming. The desert is listening.



Women from El Buen Pastor penitentiary who made the decision to be baptized. PHOTO: PARAGUAY UNION MISSION

MISSION TO INMATES LEADS TO CONVERSIONS ACROSS PARAGUAY PRISONS

MORE THAN 20 PEOPLE ARE BAPTIZED THANKS TO THE WORK INSIDE JAILS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

SHEYLA PAIVA, SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

More than 20 inmates were recently baptized following the work of prison ministries in Paraguay. Here are the testimonies of three women incarcerated: Patricia, Maria, and Marta.*

"My life before I met Christ was chaos. I lived my life in adultery and did not make good decisions," Maria shared. "Today I gave my life to the Lord, and I know that He will forgive all my sins. I've already noticed a big change in my life and in my family."

Martha added, "I used to do drugs, and I was addicted. I walked the streets aimlessly, and because of these decisions I lost my whole family. It was painful. Today I took a leap of faith and gave my life to God. I am happy to make such a decision!" she said.

Patricia also shared her story. "My baptism meant a lot; today I am a daughter of God. I belong to the family of heaven. I have made a conscious decision to give my life to Jesus," she said.

DECISIONS FOR JESUS

Like Patricia, Maria, and Marta, many stories of transformed lives emerged during the special Easter Week series "The Marks of Jesus" in Paraguay. Alberto Pirelli, Paraguay Union Mission evangelism leader, along with district pastor Adalgiso Junior and Henoc Carrillo as spiritual support, were part of a baptismal ceremony at El Buen Pastor penitentiary, a prison for women. On the other hand, Rafael Rossi, together with district pastor Gregorio Limenza, accompanied this ceremony in Tacumbú, a prison for men in the country's capital.

After several months of Bible studies, 13 women and eight men took the most important step of faith: accepting Christ as their Savior, renouncing sin, and following Christ's example in baptism. Meanwhile, more than 60 inmates continue to study the Bible as they get ready for a future baptismal ceremony.

Even though some prisons do not have adequate infrastructure, inmates, faithful to their commitment to study the Bible, gather under a shed and, sitting on the floor, take out their Bibles and study materials to continue their classes.

A MISSION WITH PURPOSE

In Paraguay, prison ministries have been working for many years to strengthen the spiritual life of those who are incarcerated, helping them to rediscover their purpose, regional leaders said. Prison ministries is present in several prisons across the country.

Carrillo is the coordinator of prison ministries in four prisons in Asunción. Every week he meets with more than 50 inmates to study "The Faith of Jesus" Bible course. "We have organized several initiatives to invite inmates to study the Bible," Carrillo said. "During the Breaking the Silence project, we held talks that created great interest. Later many were encouraged to continue studying."

Carrillo shared that many of the inmates were religious persons. "They already knew how to look up texts in the Bible and know Christian songs. However, at some point in their lives they strayed from Jesus' path. What they need today is a transformation, a change of life that can be achieved only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Knowledge is important, but the real challenge is the commitment to change and leave addictions behind," he said.

* Names are pseudonyms to protect the individuals' identity.



Regina Wenger, professor of history at Baylor University, was a keynote speaker for the conference.
PHOTO: KIMBERLY AGOSTO

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT

ANDREWS UNIVERSITY EVENT FOCUSED ON SHARED VALUES, BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH.

NICOLE DOMINGUEZ, ANDREWS UNIVERSITY, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

On January 21, 1525, in Zurich, Switzerland, a small group of Christians renounced infant baptism and were secretly rebaptized. This moment marked the beginning of the Anabaptist "rebaptizer" movement.

In honor of the 500th anniversary of this important event in the history of the Reformation, Andrews University hosted, from April 3 to 5, the "Anabaptist Conference: Living the Christian Life." The conference brought together Mennonites and Adventists to "reflect on the past, engage with the present, and envision the future of Anabaptist traditions, emphasizing their enduring impact on Christian faith, peacebuilding, and communal living."

Andrews University has a history of dialogue and collaboration with Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana, and the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana. Based on these connections, Andrews University chose to host a celebratory event and invite Mennonite colleagues from Goshen and AMBS. During the event the Anabaptist movement's emphases on discipleship, community, and peace were given center stage.

Event coorganizer Abner Hernandez, assistant professor of church history in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary (SDATS), shared that "the conference offered a profound occasion for theological reflection, historical remembrance, and spiritual renewal. Marking half a millennium since the rise of the Radical Reformation, the event underscored the enduring significance of Anabaptism for contemporary Christianity, particularly for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has inherited from the Anabaptist tradition a deep commitment to believers' baptism, the separation of church and state, and the primacy of Scripture."

After a welcome and brief introduction—which included an opening presentation by Jiří Moskala, dean of SDATS—the first keynote speaker, John Roth, gave an address titled "Looking Back: Renewal, Identity, and Authority in Early Anabaptism." This opening presentation set the stage for subsequent breakout conversations by establishing the history and impact of the early Anabaptist movement.

The second keynote speaker, Regina Wenger, a professor of history at Baylor University, examined the legacy of the Anabaptist movement in early education and its intersections with local communities. Her presentations highlighted how these theological movements influence daily life.

Throughout the weekend, scholars such as Denis Fortin, Yvonne Gameti Witherspoon, Heidi Campbell, and Trevor O'Reggio engaged with the historical significance of Anabaptism and how the Adventist and Mennonite movements adopted its principles. Central themes of the conference included pacifism, the Sabbath, the connection between Anabaptist ideology and social justice, and the evolution of the rich history of both the Adventist and Anabaptist movements.

Sabbath morning featured a panel led by Felix Cortez, where Jiří Moskala, David Boshart, Elizabeth Miller, Teresa Reeve, and Denis Fortin unpacked key Anabaptist scriptures. The conversation delved into the biblical foundations of faith.

The Sabbath worship service, led by David Williams, was titled "Re-Creating Community: Worship of Anabaptists and Adventists." After lunch, breakout sessions and plenary presentations resumed. John Reeve's closing plenary, "Bridging Centuries, Building Faith: Insights from the Anabaptist Conference," encapsulated the intent and impact of the conference.

Reflecting on the gathering, Hernandez remarked, "Attendees were inspired by the testimony of men and women who, at great personal cost, upheld biblical truth in the face of persecution. The conference served . . . as a call to renewed fidelity to the principle of *sola scriptura*—a principle cherished by the Anabaptists and foundational to Adventist identity and mission."



Roshelle Fraser, STORMCo team leader; Glen Neill, mayor of Bogan Shire; and Jeff Parker, Australian Union Conference Youth Ministries director.
PHOTO: *ADVENTIST RECORD*

IN AUSTRALIA, ORGANIZATION CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF SERVICE

STORMCO YOUTH VOLUNTEER TEAM KEEPS SERVING OTHERS WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED.

KEN LONG, *ADVENTIST RECORD*, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

The STORMCo team from Kellyville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, recently returned to the Australian town Nyngan for their twentieth visit, celebrating two decades of service, friendship, and meaningful community engagement.

Reflecting on the milestone, STORMCo team leader Roshelle Fraser shared, "We've had an amazing time connecting with the town of Nyngan for our 20-year anniversary. We love coming back each year to run our morning kids' club for 5- to 12-year-olds and to help facilitate the Nyngan youth program in the afternoons. We feel a deep connection to this community. Seeing familiar faces year after year is incredibly special, and the ongoing support we receive from local families means so much to us."

A SPECIAL CELEBRATION

To mark the occasion, leaders organized a celebration on April 13. Among those in attendance were the Bogan Shire mayor Glen Neill and Adventist Church leaders, including Alban Matohiti, Greater Sydney Conference (GSC) president; Dejan Stojkovic, GSC Youth Ministries director; and Jeff Parker, Australian Union Conference Youth Ministries director.

A special commemorative certificate, designed by STORMCo team member Kerri Long, was presented to Neill by Fraser and Parker in recognition of the community's support and shared journey with STORMCo over the years.

Neill congratulated the STORMCo volunteers for their years of service. It was a "big commitment to spend time in Nyngan, but it was great to see these young people taking the opportunity to help others, and I hope that our youth here get the same message," he said.

Josh Carnie, associate pastor of the Kellyville church, reflected on the guiding principles that have sustained the STORMCo mission: "STORMCo is built on five foundations: no agenda, no expectations, no walls, no limits, and no fear. When we enter a community, we listen first and then serve wherever there's a need—without expecting anything in return."

THE IMPACT OF STORMCO

STORMCo, which stands for Service to Others Really Matters, is a short-term adventure-based service program that focuses on building relationships and supporting communities. Since 2005 the Kellyville Seventh-day Adventist Church-led initiative has run free school holiday kids' clubs in Nyngan, growing to a team of 68 volunteers (55 of whom are teenagers), many returning year after year.

Each volunteer contributes both their time and resources, covering their own expenses with an additional AU$160 (about US$102) contribution. "Most of our volunteers come from Kellyville Seventh-day Adventist Church and Hills Adventist College," explained Fraser, who also serves as head of PDHPE (Personal Development, Health, and Physical Education) at the school. "The church community and our parents are incredibly generous, donating food and supplies to support our mission in Nyngan plus we spend quite a bit of money in the local community."

The spirit of service runs deep within the team, fostering not just community impact but also personal growth. "Every member, regardless of age, plays a vital role," Fraser said. "It's that sense of unity and dedication that has sustained our mission for 20 years. I love leading this group of young Christians who give their time and energy to serve in Nyngan. Their passion touches lives—both in the community and within our own team."



Maranatha leaders and Cuba Religious Affairs officials enjoy a light moment during the latter's welcome to Cuba Adventist Theological Seminary in Havana, April 18.

PHOTO: MARCOS PASEGGI, *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

CUBA OFFICIALS VISIT ADVENTIST SEMINARY, HIGHLIGHT LONG-STANDING COLLABORATION

"YOU GIVE US A LOT OF WORK," RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS LEADER JOKINGLY TELLS MARANATHA LEADERS.

MARCOS PASEGGI, *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

When Caridad Diego Bello, head of the Office of Religious Affairs of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, began her tenure more than three decades ago, she found a to-do list of pending projects coming down all the way from notes from Ernesto "Che" Guevara. One of them said, "Assess the possibility of authorizing Seventh-day Adventists to have a theological seminary."

Now, after her more than three decades working in religious affairs, Diego has attended multiple inaugurations and church events, including the Cuba Adventist Theological Seminary (CATS) groundbreaking ceremony in Santiago de las Vegas, Havana, in 1995. There she met former General Conference president Robert Folkenberg and former Inter-American Division president Israel Leito, who, she said, "always showed special affection for Cuba." Through the years Diego has worked with three Cuban Union Conference presidents, including Aldo Pérez Reyes, who has led the Adventist Church in the island for the past 15 years.

But through the regular changes of Adventist Church leaders, there has been one constant: her relationship and friendship with Maranatha Volunteers International president Don Noble and other ministry leaders. During all these years, regional church leaders shared, almost every Adventist Church project across Cuba has been facilitated and led by Maranatha.

A SPECIAL VISIT

On April 18, Diego and two other religious affairs officials stopped by once more to meet Maranatha and the country Adventist Church leaders. The visit, which took place in conjunction with a volunteer-based project rollout organized by Maranatha at the school, highlighted the long-standing collaboration between the country government and the Adventist Church organization and its lay-led supporting ministries.

"I want to thank each one of the Maranatha leaders and all of you for supporting the Adventist work in Cuba and, as a result, supporting the Cuban people," Diego said. "We have seen a church that is honest, sincere, [and] that follows values."

She also highlighted the reach of the Adventist Church in Cuba. "It's impressive," she said. "You are everywhere; there's no county you haven't reached!"

Noble welcomed the religious affairs team from the Cuban government. "It's so nice to see you again, after so many years working together," he told Diego and her team. "And we appreciate that each one of you has taken the time to visit us."

Pérez, on the other hand, stressed the positive interactions with the government. "We have a very good relationship, open communication, and we get along well. And . . . the relationship has been maintained for many years."

SERVING THE PEOPLE

During her remarks to the group, Diego emphasized how rewarding it is to know that CATS has grown and been used to train hundreds of Adventist pastors to serve across the island and beyond. "You [Adventists] give us a lot of work," she quipped. "But we want to keep working together."

Diego also called everyone involved to keep working on behalf of others. "It's not just giving from your leftovers but sharing all that you have," she told volunteers. "And this is what I see you doing here. . . . My wish is that when you leave, you might take a little bit of Cuba and its wonderful people in your heart."



Christon Arthur, president of La Sierra University, and his wife, Carmelita, congratulate the Riverside Ghanaian church members during the building dedication.
PHOTO: LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY

LA SIERRA-ROOTED GHANAIAN ADVENTIST CHURCH CELEBRATES NEW HOME

THE CONGREGATION LAUNCHED ON CAMPUS HAS GROWN AND NOW OWNS ITS CHURCH BUILDING.

DARLA MARTIN TUCKER, LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY, AND *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

It began as a small gathering under the trees on La Sierra University's campus back in June 2003—nine Seventh-day Adventist Ghanaian students and community members formed a Sabbath worship service, bound together by a shared faith, culture, and a desire to connect.

During the following six years their numbers gradually increased, first with the addition of spouses and other Ghanaian community members. The small group began holding Sabbath School classes in the La Sierra University Adventist Church and main worship services in various halls on campus.

In 2010 the group moved to the chapel at La Sierra Academy down the street from the university, and when its numbers totaled about 50 in 2015, the fledgling congregation moved into a nearby strip mall space. By 2024 their number had risen to approximately 80 members, and the congregation decided it was time to acquire their own church building.

A BUILDING OF THEIR OWN

After approximately a six-month search, they settled on an 8,922-square-foot church building in Redlands with a 200-seat sanctuary, classrooms, and dining room. With the assistance of the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SECC), the sale on the US$1.2 million property was completed in February 2025. On March 8 the congregation held a dedication service for their new house of worship with leadership and representatives from the conference, La Sierra and Loma Linda universities, the city of Redlands, the North American Ghanaian Seventh-day Adventist organization, and other special guests delivering messages of congratulations and support.

Presenters included La Sierra University president Christon Arthur and his wife, Carmelita; Loma Linda University Health president Richard Hart and his wife, Judy; Dan Smith, who led the La Sierra University church when the Ghanaian congregation met there; as well as Redlands police chief Rachel Tolber and mayor Mario Saucedo and his wife, Maria.

"It was an honor and a blessing to participate in the Riverside Ghanaian church's celebration of their new home," Arthur said following the service. "The focused drive, faith, and dedication of the students and Ghanaian community members . . . is such an inspiration. Their journey is representative of the university's mission, which we strive daily to pursue, of seeking truth, knowing God, and serving others."

In later comments, Smith recalled how Ghanaian students from La Sierra approached him when he was senior pastor of the university church more than two decades ago. "They had a dream, to plant a Ghanaian church," Smith said. "They were so deeply committed, so passionate, that I couldn't help offering to help in any way that we could.

"We allowed them to run their finances through us, but their worship, their outreach, their dream, was all them," he continued. "To see a church full of people who worship the Ghanaian way was a deep and rare privilege. And then to hear that this made 60 Ghanaian churches across North America—who knew?"

Samuel Adjei-Boadi, pastor of the Riverside Ghanaian church, noted, "This dedication, themed 'In His Presence: A Dwelling Place of Faith and Fellowship,' signifies more than just a new location. It marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in our church's history, filled with opportunities for expanded ministry and outreach to the Redlands community."



On May 1 Shawn Boonstra, a longtime public evangelist and media ministry director, was voted as the new associate editor of *Adventist Review*. PHOTO: VOICE OF PROPHECY

SHAWN BOONSTRA WILL SERVE AS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR AT *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

HE REPLACES JOHN C. PECKHAM, WHO RETURNS TO ANDREWS UNIVERSITY.

MARCOS PASEGGI, *ADVENTIST REVIEW*

Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders voted longtime public evangelist and media ministry director Shawn Boonstra as a new associate editor of *Adventist Review*. On May 1 the General Conference Executive Committee voted Boonstra to replace John C. Peckham, who after two years will return to Andrews University as an endowed professor and researcher.

Current *Adventist Review* editor Justin Kim referenced his mixed feelings as the team sees Peckham off. "We couldn't be sadder, yet prouder of John's recent appointment. . . . We will continue with his involvement at the *Adventist Review* and expand with partnerships with our denomination's best scholars." At the same time, Kim said the team is excited for Boonstra's arrival. "He brings decades of devotional, evangelistic, and doctrinal experience in writing, preaching, and ministry. We are fortunate that God has smiled upon us with two wonderful communication warriors of the Word," he said.

Boonstra was born in British Columbia, Canada, and followed political science studies before becoming a Seventh-day Adventist as a young adult. As a new Adventist, Boonstra soon began to share the newfound Bible truth. "I gave my first Bible study three weeks after my baptism; my first small campaign came three months later," he shared.

Those events would eventually launch a career as an Adventist pastor, public evangelist, and media public speaker, who, together with his wife, Jean, have led an estimated 100,000 people to be baptized into the Adventist Church. During the past 12 years Boonstra has been speaker/director of the Voice of Prophecy, after serving as speaker/director of It Is Written Canada (2000-2003) and It Is Written International (2004-2010), and associate Ministerial Association director of the North American Division (2011-2013).

Boonstra describes himself as "passionate about the Word of God and the endless ways in which it reveals Christ through our distinctive message." Because of his background, he states, he has "a deep understanding of how both Adventists and non-Adventists think." Boonstra says that in that sense he is "able to navigate nearly any worldview in order to find common ground and help people understand how [the Adventist] message offers a better approach to life."

During the past few years Boonstra has poured himself into creating easy-to-use resources specifically designed to facilitate successful outreach in churches across the North American Division—and training church members to use them. "The goal was to duplicate what my team was doing a thousand times over," he explained.

According to Boonstra, the Adventist distinctive message is "more relevant to the culture than ever," and he longs to share that awareness with other Adventists through print and publishing. Specifically, he said, "the *Adventist Review* is an indispensable touchpoint for a truly global church. From the beginning of this movement—even before our formal organization as a church—it has encouraged, exhorted, informed, and emboldened believers to go out and take the world for Christ." He added, "It underlines that we're all working together across the globe, exactly as predicted. . . . Nothing is more exciting than monitoring the pulse of a global movement raised up by God, contributing to its success, and keeping our people excited about message and mission. There are few vehicles as well suited to accomplishing this as the *Adventist Review*."



REGIONAL LEADERS DISCUSS CONTEXTUALIZATION, CHALLENGES TO MISSION IN EUROPE. More than 160 Trans-European Division (TED) leaders, pastors, church planters, and evangelists gathered at Newbold College of Higher Education (NCHE) in England for Engaged in Mission 150. The event provided a platform to celebrate achievements, acknowledge challenges, and reaffirm the commitment to the future of mission work in Europe. Organized jointly by the TED and NCHE over the weekend of April 25-27, the conference addressed theological and missiological challenges currently facing the TED.



URBAN CENTER OF INFLUENCE IN CAMBODIA CELEBRATES 44 BAPTISMS. Forty-four students were baptized at the Battambang Urban Center of Influence in Cambodia. The group has been officially welcomed as a newly organized company within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Cambodia Mission (CM). More than 100 individuals, including church members, and guests, gathered to witness the baptismal ceremony, which celebrated the public declaration of faith by the students. The center operates as a mission-driven hub offering various services to meet the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of the community.



FIRST MISSIONARIES TO INDONESIA AND TIMOR LESTE STEP OUT IN FAITH. Regional Seventh-day Adventist leaders held a commissioning service on April 15 for the first group of missionaries from Fiji who will serve in Indonesia and Timor Leste. The ceremony marked a significant milestone in regional mission outreach. During the service Fiji Mission president Nasoni Lutunaliwa reminded the missionaries of their divine calling to serve the Lord faithfully in the work He has entrusted to them.



ADVENTIST MEMBERS DELIVER MORE THAN 145,000 BOOKS ON MENTAL HEALTH. In a nationwide effort to share a message of hope and awareness about emotional health, the Adventist Church in Ecuador held a free distribution of the book *The Key to Change*, delivering 148,000 mission books across the country. The initiative focused on areas in which there is no organized Adventist presence. Thousands of church members joined the project. Adventist institutions such as Quito Adventist Clinic and Adventist Education Ecuador participated in the initiative.

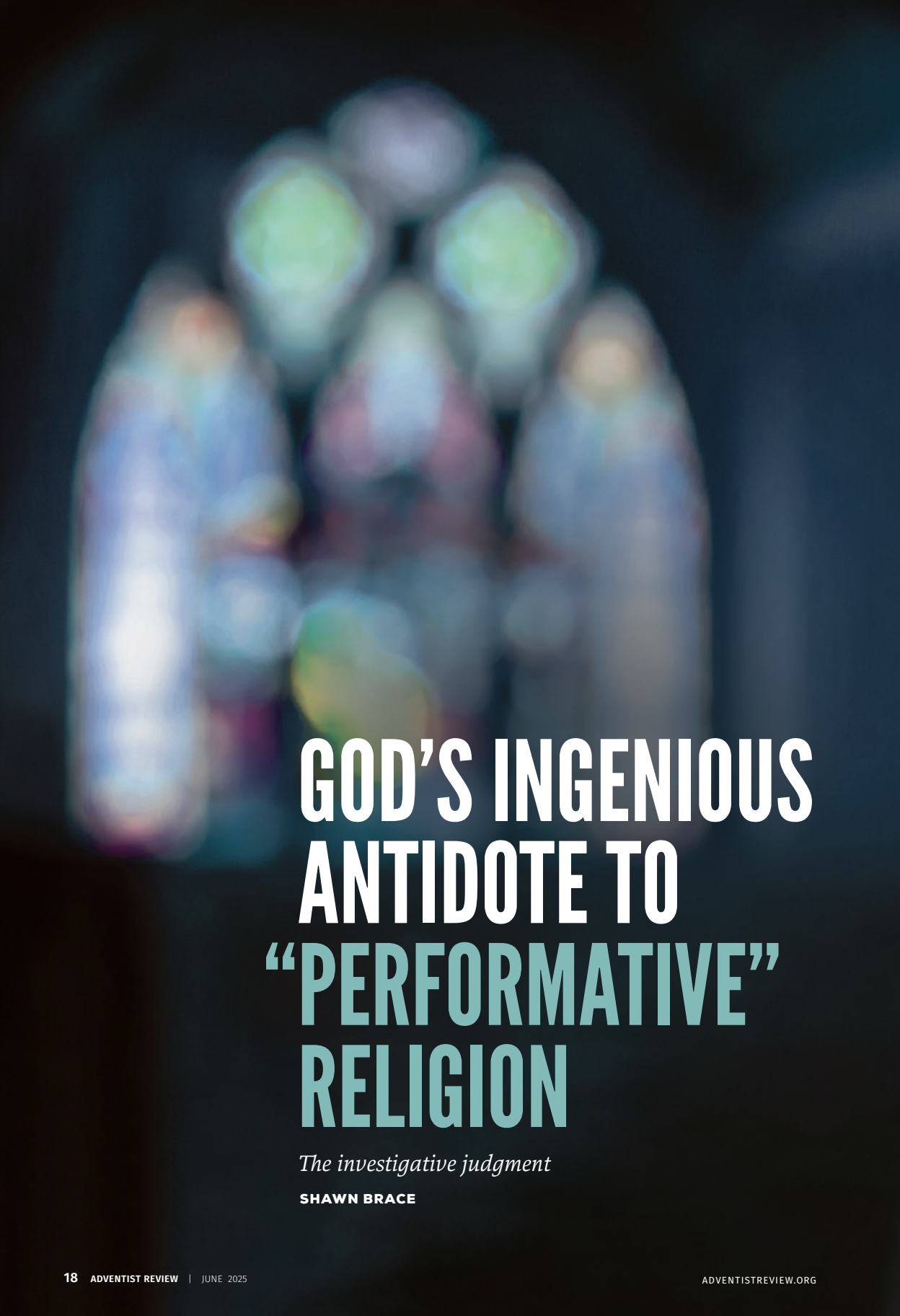


MISSIONWIDE CONVENTION EMPOWERS WOMEN. A missionwide Women's Convention in Bangladesh empowered women to serve God and the Seventh-day Adventist Church better. The event took place at the Adventist Maranatha Seminary from March 20 to 22. The convention highlighted the significance of women boldly raising their voices in faith and worship. Approximately 120 women from various districts and local churches attended the three-day event, which served as a dynamic platform for spiritual enrichment, fellowship, and personal development.



NURSING STUDENTS AND FACULTY RETURN TO FIJI TO SERVE THEIR MANA FAMILY. From March 22 to 30 a team of 19 students and five nursing faculty and staff from Pacific Union College (PUC), Angwin, California, provided physicals, well visits, and dental care to 311 patients in Mana, Fiji. Students checked patients' vital signs, monitored their glucose levels, and recorded medical history and complaints. With a dentist on duty, students assisted and learned how to give fluoride treatments and educated the community on oral hygiene.

ADVENTIST REVIEW MINISTRIES NEWSLETTER
To receive our weekly newsletter highlighting current news, inspiring stories, thought-provoking commentaries, engaging features, and other media, sign up today.
www.adventistreview.org/newsletter-signup



GOD'S INGENIOUS ANTIDOTE TO "PERFORMATIVE" RELIGION

The investigative judgment

SHAWN BRACE

I have a sobering admission, which may be a disturbing surprise coming from a Seventh-day Adventist pastor: a few years back I started to implicitly question the usefulness of the Adventist teaching on the investigative judgment.

It's not that I denied that it was true or biblical. It's just that I became ambivalent about the idea, struggling to see how it had any pragmatic value—especially as someone who's become increasingly convinced that our theology must address practical, real-life needs.

And then, suddenly, everything changed—in an entirely unexpected way.

It wasn't that I was attempting to figure out a way to solve my cognitive dissonance regarding a key teaching—perhaps *the* key teaching—of Adventism, trying to convince myself that a strange doctrine of the denomination that pays my salary was really true. I just happened to be looking for something else in the Bible, but found myself caught up in the glory of this astounding concept, unable to resist its amazing, beautiful, and relevant logic.

Truly, I didn't go looking for it. It came looking for me.

And now I see its glorious utility and usefulness as never before. Belief in the investigative judgment illuminates God's character of love and speaks powerfully to so many relevant concerns of our age. But it takes a certain gospel-centered framing of the teaching to appreciate these things—which is a framing I've never encountered before. So let me try my hand at doing that.

Belief in the investigative judgment illuminates God's character of love and speaks powerfully to so many relevant concerns of our age.

THE "GOOD NEWS" OF THE JUDGMENT

A few months back I decided to do a systematic review of every time the New Testament uses the word "gospel." It was a wonderful exercise, inspiring me afresh of God's wonderful work on our behalf.

There was one passage, however, that threw me for a bit of a loop. And it came from Paul—*of all people*—near the beginning of the book that has probably been more responsible than any other biblical book for grounding people in God's love.

There, in Romans 2, while explaining that everyone, Jew and non-Jew alike, is alienated from God and His ways, Paul drops this bombshell. He declares that there will come a "day" when "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." And then, almost anticipating our shock and mortification, he has the audacity to say in the very next breath that this news is "according to my gospel" (Rom. 2:16).

So check this out: right in the heart of Paul's powerful exposition on the gospel, where he repeatedly notes that salvation is by grace and obtained by faith rather than works, he tells his readers that there will come a "day" when God judges even "the secrets of men," and then he calls this the *gospel*—the *good news.* What's going on?

Actually, this isn't an isolated passage—from Paul or from other New Testament figures. Paul repeats this idea throughout Romans and elsewhere (see Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Tim. 4:1; Acts 17:31). Peter affirms it as

PHOTO: KATHLEENMADELINE / LIGHTSTOCK



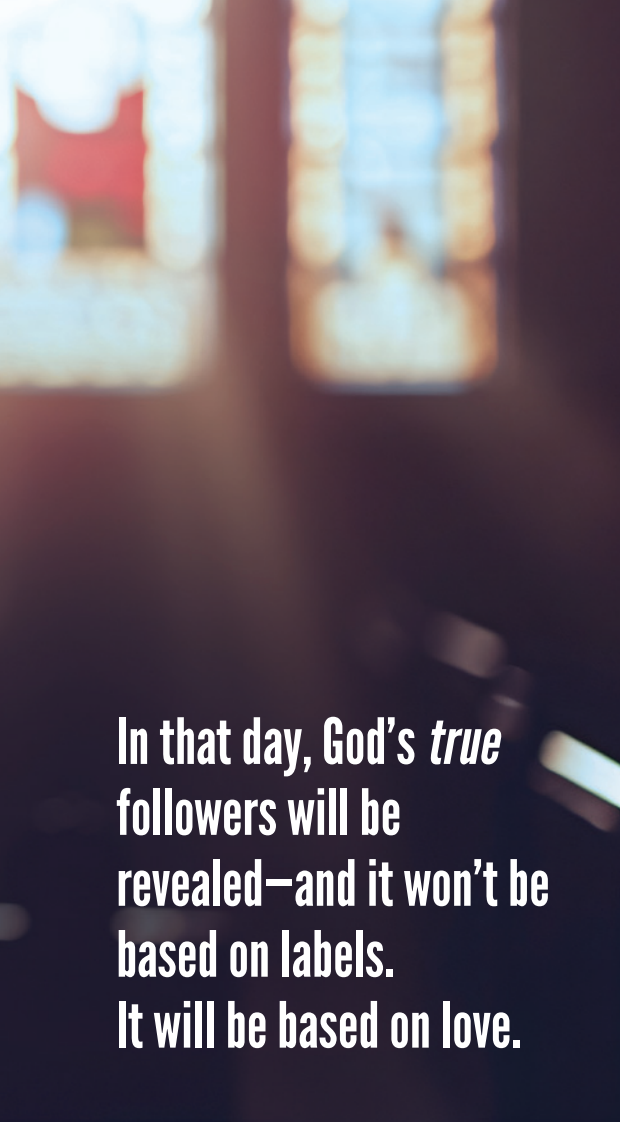
well (see Acts 10:42; 1 Peter 4:5, 17). And John, as Adventists well know, quotes an angel who proclaims that included in the "everlasting gospel" is the news of the "hour of [God's] judgment" (see Rev. 14:6, 7). And then, of course, there's Jesus, who also affirms the idea, even saying at one point that "nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light" (Luke 8:17).

It's hard to get around the New Testament witness: according to Paul and Peter and Jesus and John, there's a judgment that takes even our secret thoughts into account, and this is part of the *gospel* message. This is *good news*. No less than N. T. Wright, perhaps the most preeminent New Testament scholar in the world today, has recognized this dynamic as well—stubbornly insisting, even at the cost of fellow evangelicals calling him a heretic, that "there is, then, for Paul, a final judgment, and it will be 'according to works.'"[1]

But that sounds so scary! It sounds like bad news, not good news.

AN ANTIDOTE TO "PERFORMATIVE" RELIGION

One of the challenges that's plagued Protestant Christianity since the days of Luther and Calvin, as Wright has repeatedly pointed out over the course of his long career, is that we tend to read everything through the lens of an exclusively legal model of salvation. And we have a hard time getting away from this nearly irresistible vortex of a theme. As a result, we tend to think that the New Testament writers (especially Paul) were primarily interested in explaining how people can be "saved," as though God is, in Wright's words, a "distant bank manager, scrutinizing credit and



debit sheets."[2] But that's like thinking Paul is trying to give directions to Atlanta when he's really trying to give directions to Toronto.

Thus, when "how to get saved" is our framework, Paul's teaching in Romans 2 doesn't make sense—because it seems as if he's telling us that we're saved by keeping the law. The investigative judgment doesn't make sense either within this framework, because it leaves people with the impression that we pass the judgment because of our work rather than Christ's. But I'd submit that neither Romans 2 nor the investigative judgment are primarily trying to answer the question as to how people can be legally *saved*. Instead, they're addressing, among other things, the question of how the universe can be made *safe*. They're focused on how people, filled with the Spirit, can become, as Wright puts it, "genuinely human, genuinely free," learning to act "in ways which reflect God's image, which give him pleasure, [and] which bring glory to his name."[3]

And this is the genius of Paul's line of thinking. If you follow his logic throughout Romans 2, you'll notice that he's trying to establish the point that, in God's estimation, labels mean nothing. God has no favorites, Paul explains in verse 11, and it's not the "hearers of the law" who impress Him, but the "doers of the law" (verse 13). In other words, it's not those who, like the Jews, belong to the right group, who take on God's name thinking they have the inside track, that are truly His people. Simply put, God is interested, not in mere *proclamation,* but also *demonstration*.

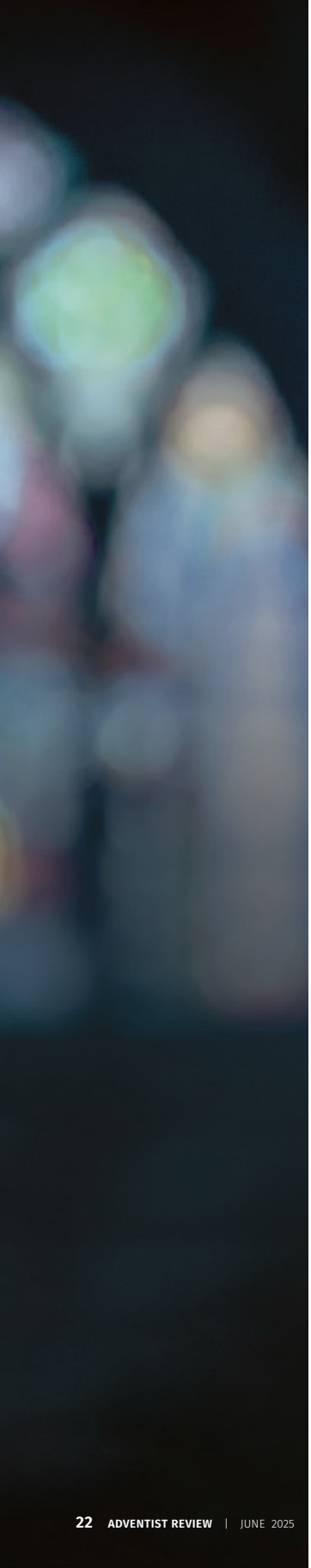
This is why Paul then goes on to say that there are many people who are wholly unaware of God's ways but who actually keep them because the Spirit has spoken to their hearts and formed them in love. Indeed, there are people who don't claim to be Christ's followers but who really are because they've unknowingly responded to the overtures of His grace and chosen to orient their lives toward the good of others (see verses 14, 15).

And all this will be made clear, Paul explains in the verse we already looked at, in the "day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel" (verse 16). In that day, God's *true* followers will be revealed—and it won't be based on labels. It will be based on love.

What I see Paul doing in Romans 2 is giving us an antidote to "performative" religion. He's assuring his readers that, among other things, no one will sneak into God's kingdom whose lives are characterized by toxic, abusive, and unsafe behavior—people who've acknowledged Christ with their lips, to borrow a famous line from Brennan Manning, but denied Him by their lifestyle (which has been the single greatest cause of atheism today, Manning adds).[4]

Indeed, there'll be no pretenders in God's kingdom—people who try to slide in on legal technicalities, saying the right prayers and repeating the right formulas, but who, because they've never allowed themselves to be fully vulnerable before God and healed by His love, are unsafe and toxic people.

PHOTO: MATT VASQUEZ / LIGHTSTOCK



We need to create spaces where we bring the investigative judgment into the present—in ways that are free from shame and centered on God's embracing love.

To be clear, I don't think that by talking about a judgment based on works, Paul (or Jesus or Peter) was trying to strike fear in the hearts of those who are humbly and genuinely (though imperfectly) trying to be kingdom people, as though their acceptance with God depends on perfect performance. He's not trying to explain a formula as to how sincere people can get "saved" legally by works. Just the opposite.

I think Paul's reflections were, mostly, intended to be a warning, a shot across the bow, to those who use the Christian name as a way to abuse and exploit others, and yet who think they're just going to skate into God's eternal kingdom without ever being exposed. It is, in short, largely a critique of those with religious "privilege," urging them to remember that everything will one day be brought to light. Indeed, a day of reckoning is coming, and judgment will begin, Peter would hasten to add, at the house of God (see 1 Peter 4:17).

In that regard, Paul's teaching dovetails perfectly with how early Adventists initially came upon the investigative judgment teaching in their study of the book of Daniel. There, in Daniel 7 and 8, the investigative judgment is introduced as a response, and the solution, to the corrupt and abusive work of the "little horn." In that sense the investigative judgment is God's way of speaking "truth to power," a way to confront religious authorities that use their power (and God's name) to exploit others and, in so doing, tragically denigrate God's reputation. And this is, I'd propose, a message that Christianity *desperately* needs—and a message that is deeply resonant with so many people who've suffered at the hands of Christians (especially Christian leaders) who've used the "gospel" as a cover for all manner of toxic and abusive behavior.

They've used the "blood of Jesus" as an excuse to be awful people. They've claimed to be "justified by faith" but never allowed that faith to truly transform them in ways that reflect God's image and honors the image of God in others. Gloriously, to those who've been beaten down and abused by such people, Paul clears his throat and says, "Folks, I have *good news*: God's kingdom won't be populated by unsafe and toxic people. Everything will eventually be brought to light, making it clear who's really in step with Jesus and who isn't."

FULLY KNOWN AND YET FULLY LOVED

As incredible as this insight was for me, it suddenly dawned on me that the practical application of this idea was equally beautiful and powerful. I could now see more of the relevance of the investigative judgment, and how it connects amazingly with the concerns of so many people today—especially those with a secular and post-Christian mindset.

After all, if Western society has been characterized by anything of late, it's been characterized by a deep commitment to *exposure* and

shining light into secret places. Modern culture has been zealously pursuing its own sort of investigative judgment, making sure everyone's skeletons are getting exposed—especially Christians who claim to be living on the moral high ground. To such people, God gives a big nod and says that He, too, is shining His light into the darkness, exposing all secrets. He's toppling pretension and confronting hypocrisy, exposing those who claim His name but haven't embraced His character.

At the same time, there's been an "emotional revolution" wherein people are extolling the importance and healing power of *vulnerability*. Mental health experts have noted that freedom often comes through being transparent and vulnerable—by owning who we are, rather than trying to pretend we're someone we're not.[5]

All this is, I'd submit, at the heart of the investigative judgment. Essentially, the investigative judgment is about *exposure* and *vulnerability*. Indeed, Paul, in Romans 2, points to a day when, whether we like it or not, we will *all* be fully exposed; we will *all* be vulnerable. We will return to the state Adam and Eve were in before they fell—when they were naked and fully exposed to the light. There will be no hiding.

The only question is whether we'll be unashamed, as Adam and Eve were before they fell, or ashamed, as they were after they fell, which caused them to try to hide and cover themselves up. And that question, I'd submit, will be determined by the degree to which we have practiced exposure and vulnerability ahead of time. After all, if we've already brought ourselves out into the light *prior* to the final judgment, there won't be anything to be ashamed of *then,* because we've pulled the rug out from under anyone who might try to bring something up that we haven't already acknowledged. We've already owned it all.

And this is where Christ's righteousness comes in. Only those who are grounded in Christ's righteousness, those who've embraced Christ's acceptance of them, can be exposed without soul-crushing shame. They don't fear vulnerability, because they know they're already, in Ty Gibson's words, "fully known" by God and yet "fully loved" by Him.[6] And if God's all-seeing eye has already seen our worst and yet He still loves us, why would we fear the gaze of anyone else—either now or later?

So those who are secure in God's love won't run away from the light and the judgment. They will run to it because they have nothing to hide that hasn't already been seen. Exposure, therefore, isn't bad news to those who've truly embraced God's love: Not because they're sinlessly perfect, but because they're refreshingly honest (which is why, by the way, the psalmists repeatedly looked forward to judgment).

But those whose religion is performative—those who use religion as a way to hide from God and from others, refusing to truly get vulnerable—will run away from the light. Only those who want to keep up pretensions and use religion as a way to impress some and control others are fearful of the judgment. Indeed, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus: "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:20, 21).

What this all means, it seems to me, is that we need to create spaces where we bring the investigative judgment into the present—in ways that are free from shame and centered on God's embracing love. We need to create spaces where it's safe to be vulnerable and transparent; where people can come out of the darkness and step into the light without fear of condemnation. In so doing, we are really being people of truth, teaching people to take off their masks—which is going to happen sooner or later anyway—and not to be afraid to tell the truth about themselves (and, equally, the truth about how God relates to them, despite their sin).

Simply put, of all people, Seventh-day Adventists should be the most open, transparent, and vulnerable people, because we believe everything's going to be brought into the light at some point anyway. So let's get on with it now. This is, I'd submit, what it means to recognize, proclaim, and live out the good news of the judgment.

[1] N. T. Wright, *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009), chap. 7.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Quoted at https://relevantmagazine.com/faith/ragamuffin-legacy/.

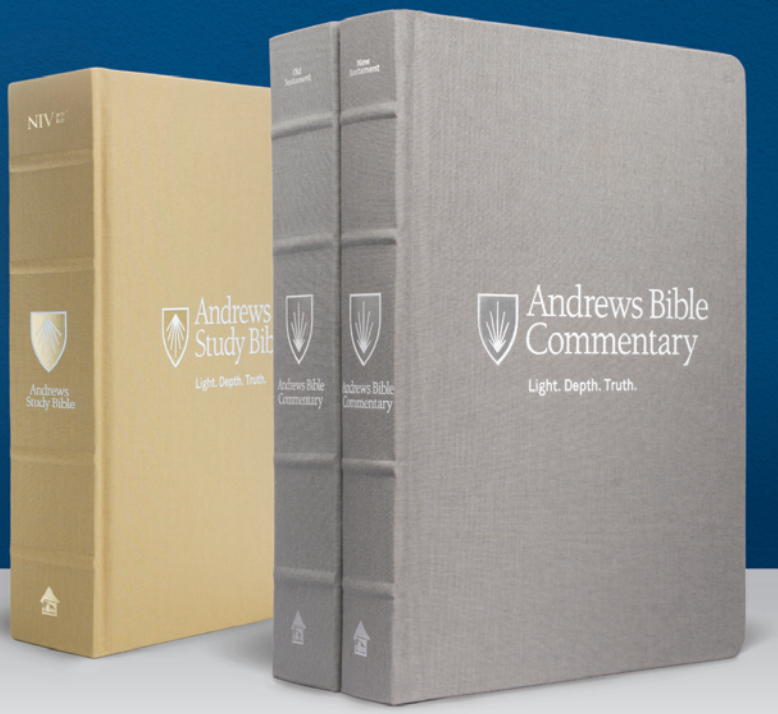
[5] See, among other resources, Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are* (Center City, Minn.: Hazeldon Publishing, 2010).

[6] Ty Gibson, *See With New Eyes: The True View of God's Character* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2000), p. 55.

Shawn Brace is an author, pastor, and church planter in Portland, Maine, who is also pursuing a D.Phil. in Ecclesiastical History at Oxford University.

Andrews Bible Commentary

The Adventist standard for the next generation



Enthusiastic readers say ...

"These commentaries are such a great resource for going deeper into God's word. Reading through portions of the Old Testament has helped me see more clearly the heart of God."

"The commentary is an easy read. I'm enjoying reading it cover to cover."

The *Andrews Bible Commentary* is the perfect companion to the ***Andrews Study Bible***.

The accessible commentary by the scholars of the church for the people of the church

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!

Adventist Book Center: 800-765-6955

Andrews University Press:
800-467-6369 *or*
universitypress.andrews.edu

Andrews University Press

THE MUNCHAUSEN TRILEMMA

Even logic needs faith.

Though the verse "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12) lives (as they say) rent-free in my head, I am so logically, rationally, and intellectually convinced of the Adventist message that, well, I *almost* don't need faith.

Notice—I said "almost." Not only do "the just" live by faith, but everyone does, and not only in religious matters. I believe that George Washington was the first president of the United States, but I've never dissected the assumptions, arguments, and leaps of faith that I take in order to believe it.

I recently came across the phrase "the Munchausen trilemma," named for Baron Munchausen, who extracted himself and his horse out of the mire by pulling on his own hair. The idea being, of course, that he really couldn't, because what he was pulling on to get himself out of the mire needed to get out of the mire as well. In the same way, the trilemma argues that we cannot really "prove" anything that we believe—from logic or math, along with religious beliefs or history or even what our senses tell us—apart from three dubious modes of thought: (1) circular arguments (assuming what you seek to prove); (2) regressive arguments (each proof requires another, ad infinitum); (3) dogmatic arguments (assumptions simply asserted as opposed to defended).

It's true: a certain amount of contingency, wiggle room, and doubt infects whatever we know (or think we know). Many times the contingency, the wiggle room, the doubt, is negligible, almost meaningless (except for philosophical musings). Maybe I am not sitting here at 2:52 a.m. writing this column but am still in bed, dreaming? Is it possible that George Washington wasn't the first president of the United States? I never met him in person, nor was I at his inauguration, and even if I were, maybe it had been staged to deceive me?

I know one bright fellow who not only denies the Apollo moon landing but gives some logical and reasonable arguments against it, which shows that logical and reasonable arguments can buttress almost any absurdity. It's simply the nature of not just belief, or of opinion, but of truth as well.

CLIFF'S EDGE
CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN



A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CONTINGENCY, WIGGLE ROOM, AND DOUBT INFECTS WHATEVER WE KNOW (OR THINK THAT WE KNOW).

And that is why, when it comes to my Adventist belief—which I am so logically, rationally, and intellectually convinced of—some faith is needed, even for the most obvious truths. But the amount needed, in contrast to the logic and evidence for it, is minuscule. From the existence of a Creator (perhaps the most obvious truth that I know); to trust in the Bible as the Word of God (lots of convincing evidence); to belief in Jesus' atoning death and resurrection (overwhelmingly validated); to the seventh-day Sabbath (a biblical no-brainer); to the dead sleeping until the resurrection (the only reasonable way to interpret the texts on death); and, finally, to the life and ministry of Ellen White (for which we have more than enough reasons to trust)—it's no wonder that I am so logically, rationally, and intellectually convinced of Adventism.

It would take more faith, in fact, for me not to believe it than to.

Clifford Goldstein is the editor of the *Adult Bible Study Guide*. His latest book is *An Adventist Journey*, published by the Inter-American Division Publishing Association (IADPA).

PRAYING AGAINST ENEMIES?

Vengeance is God's, not ours.

OLIVIA VALENTINE

I long believed that not only was it wrong to pray for the demise of our enemies, but that God wouldn't even answer such prayers. But as I followed the text of the day in Psalm 109 from the Sabbath School lesson last year, what I previously believed regarding prayers for (or even about) one's enemies was turned upside down.

THE PLEA FOR JUDGMENT IN PSALM 109

There are many other psalms in which the writer complains to God about what the righteous suffer at the hands of the wicked, praying for God to avenge him and protect him from going the way of the oppressor, lamenting about how life never seems to go his way, and asking why all he seems to get is rain while his enemy basks in undeserved sunshine. But Psalm 109 is unique in that it largely abandons the repeated cry found in other psalms of "Why me, God?" and instead screams for God's judgment.

As I read the passage, my mouth, already agape, opened wider as David pleaded with God to make his enemy's life a living nightmare. "When he is judged, let him be found guilty" (Ps. 109:7); "Let his days be few" (verse 8); "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow" (verse 9); "Let the creditor seize all that he has" (verse 11); "Let there be none to extend mercy to him" (verse 12); let his sins "be continually before the Lord" (verse 15). In plain terms, not only did David want his enemy and those dear to him to suffer—he wanted God to do it.

Whew. The introduction to the passage spoke to why David felt so bitter. He had been lied about, tormented without cause, and was at his wit's end—reason enough to want to inflict revenge, some would say. I was baffled. If David could so openly pray for the worst outcome for his enemy, had we then missed other opportunities to let God know exactly what we wanted to happen to those who had obvious malicious intent toward us, simply because we didn't know that we could?

WHAT JUSTIFIES SUCH PETITIONS?

Scripture teems with enough evidence to support all I had been taught growing up about not praying for the downfall of others, deserved or not. A simple flip of the pages will see Jesus admonishing His followers to turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:38-48), forgive (Matt. 18:21), and pray for our enemies in love (Luke 6:28). And the apostle James's admonishment to those lamenting that their prayers weren't being answered gives asking with evil motives as the reason for their quandary (James 4:3). So what would justify the petitions of David in Psalm 109?

For weeks I grappled with the question, reading commentary from various sources to see if there was something I had missed. Thankfully, I happened upon a 1994 article from the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, titled "Inspiration and the Imprecatory Psalms," by Ángel M. Rodríguez.* In his analysis of the imprecatory psalms, the author posits that some of the language used in these psalms mirrors the language used by God Himself in His pronouncements upon the wicked (Deut. 26:19, Isa. 13:11, 49:26, Jer. 30:16-20), and even to His people in times of apostasy (Lev. 26). Therefore, the strong language used by the psalmist could be interpreted as a hurt child's plea to an almighty Father, "Do what You have done before, and what You have promised to do to those that hurt the ones You love."

Additionally, despite all the things that David requests from God against his enemies, not once does David say to God, "*I* will [insert revenge here]." After all, the caution is plain in the same collection of the Psalms: "For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity" (Ps. 125:3). Knowing that trying to take matters into his own hands for what many would consider a "good reason" would not only make him guilty but leave him open to the judgment the Lord metes out on the wicked, he was left with only one place to go—to God, who says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Rom. 12:19; see also Deut. 32:35).

All of this helped to put things into perspective for me. Maybe the true essence of Psalm 109 is not attempting to use God as a *weapon* that we can wield around in the faces of those who make life uncomfortable for us, but more about knowing whom to run to when the attacks of those who mean us no good have become unbearable. The Person we can crawl to in seeming defeat; to cry, complain, and wallow in self-pity, even if just for a while, but knowing that, as the saying goes, "When they go low, we go high," so high, that our heavenly Father will fight and win on our behalf. Vengeance is His, after all.

* Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Inspiration and the Imprecatory Psalms," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 5, no. 1 (1994): 40-67, https://www.atsjats.org/angel-rodriguez-inspiration-and-the-imprecatory-psalms.pdf.

Olivia Valentine is a medical doctor and recent graduate of Montemorelos University in Mexico, with aspirations of serving others through public health and medical missions.



Psalm 109 is unique in that it largely abandons the repeated cry found in other psalms of "Why me, God?" and instead screams for God's judgment.

PHOTO: PRIXEL CREATIVE / LIGHTSTOCK



A FATHER'S PLACE

A heart-to-heart interview with Ellen G. White

What exactly is the father's position and responsibility in the home?

"The husband and father is the head of the household. The wife looks to him for love and sympathy and for aid in the training of the children; and this is right.

"The children are his as well as hers, and he is equally interested in their welfare. The children look to the father for support and guidance; he needs to have a right conception of life and of the influences and associations that should surround his family; above all, he should be controlled by the love and fear of God and by the teaching of His Word, that he may guide the feet of his children in the right way."

It appears then that a father occupies a rather prominent position.

"All members of the family center in the father. He is the lawmaker, illustrating in his own manly bearing the sterner virtues: energy, integrity, honesty, patience, courage, diligence, and practical usefulness. The father is in one sense the priest of the household. . . .

"The father represents the divine Lawgiver in his family. He is a laborer together with God, carrying out the gracious designs of God and establishing in his children upright principles, . . . which will enable his children to render obedience not only to their earthly parent but also to their heavenly Father."

Under what circumstances should a father transfer his duties to another?

"The father must not betray his sacred trust. He must not, on any point, yield up his parental authority."

"The father's duty to his children cannot be transferred to the mother. If she performs her own duty, she has burden enough to bear. Only by working in unison can the father and mother accomplish the work which God has committed to their hands."

"The father should not excuse himself from his part in the work of educating his children for life and immortality. He must share in the responsibility. There is obligation for both father and mother. There must

be love and respect manifested by the parents for one another, if they would see these qualities developed in their children."

What is the father's sphere of influence?

"A father must not be as a child, moved merely by impulse. He is bound to his family by sacred, holy ties."

"What his influence will be in the home will be determined by his knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. . . .

"The father is to stand at the head of his family, not as an overgrown, undisciplined boy, but as a man with manly character and with his passions controlled. He is to obtain an education in correct morals. His conduct in his home life is to be directed and restrained by the pure principles of the Word of God. Then he will grow up to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus."

Given a father's busy schedule, how important is the time spent with his children?

"The average father wastes many golden opportunities to attract and bind his children to him. Upon returning home from his business, he should find it a pleasant change to spend some time with his children."

"Fathers should unbend from their false dignity, deny themselves some slight self-gratification in time and leisure, in order to mingle with the children, sympathizing with them in their little troubles, binding them to their hearts by the strong bonds of love, and establishing such an influence over their expanding minds that their counsel will be regarded as sacred."

"Fathers, spend as much time as possible with your children. Seek to become acquainted with their various dispositions, that you may know how to train them in harmony with the Word of God. Never should a word of discouragement pass your lips. Do not bring darkness into the home. Be pleasant, kind, and affectionate toward your children, but not foolishly indulgent.

"Let them bear their little disappointments, as everyone must. Do not encourage them to come to you with their petty complaints of one another."

"Combine affection with authority, kindness and sympathy with firm restraint. . . . Become acquainted with them; associate with them in their work and in their sports, and win their confidence. Cultivate friendship with them. . . . In this way you will be a strong influence for good."

What advice would you give fathers on the type of relationship they should cultivate with their children, especially boys?

"The father of boys should come into close contact with his sons, giving them the benefit of his larger experience and talking with them in such simplicity and tenderness that he binds them to his heart. He should let them see that he has their best interest, their happiness, in view all the time."

"He who has a family of boys must understand that, whatever his calling, he is never to neglect the souls placed in his care. He has brought these children into the world and has made himself responsible to God to do everything in his power to keep them from unsanctified associations, from evil companionship."

"The father, as the head of his own household, should understand how to train his children for usefulness and duty. This is his special work, above every other. . . .

"The father may exert an influence over his children which shall be stronger than the allurements of the world. He should study the disposition and character of the members of his little circle, that he may understand their needs and their dangers and thus be prepared to repress the wrong and encourage the right."

How would you counsel today's fathers?

"To the man who is a husband and a father, I would say, Be sure that a pure, holy atmosphere surrounds your soul. . . . You are to learn daily of Christ. Never, never are you to show a tyrannical spirit in the home. The man who does this is working in partnership with satanic agencies. Bring your will into submission to the will of God. Do all in your power to make the life of your wife pleasant and happy.

"Take the Word of God as the man of your counsel. In the home live out the teachings of the Word. Then you will live them out in the church and will take them with you to your place of business. The principles of heaven will ennoble all your transactions. Angels of God will cooperate with you, helping you to reveal Christ to the world."

These excerpts are taken from *The Adventist Home*, pages 211-216, 220-223. Seventh-day Adventists believe that **Ellen G. White** (1827-1915) exercised the biblical gift of prophecy during more than 70 years of public ministry.

PHOTO: MONKEYBUSINESSIMAGES / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES



Christian with his father, Carlos.

PASTOR AND PAPA

Reflections on my father and my fatherhood

CHRISTIAN MARTIN

Christian with his son, Elijah, and daughter, Moriah.



Hello, my name is Christian Martin, and I'm a PK."

It may feel as if once we've heard one story of a pastor's kid, (PK) we've heard them all—the constant pressure to always lead, to be the model child; the internalized need to rise above the rest because others look to you as the standard.

Truth be told, the challenges sons and daughters of pastors face are very real. One of the common ones being identity struggles. "It is my father who is the pastor. My father is the preacher. My father is the chair of the church board. Not me." Yet from Sabbath School to Pathfinders, I knew I was primarily identified as the son of the pastor. And that identity brought with it high expectations, constant scrutiny, and the feeling of being both well known and yet, ultimately, unknown. This was my childhood.

Yet through it all, a grounding formative force that made a life-changing impact on me was my father's mentorship. How can I say this with confidence? Because after being raised as a pastor's kid, I chose to become a pastor myself. As it happens, I married Heidi, a pastor's kid herself. And consequently, we had children, and, you guessed it, we brought two more PKs into this world, Elijah and Moriah. And now it is my turn as a father to embrace the concept of paternal mentorship and practice it myself.

FATHERING THE HEART

One reality I grappled with early on as a parent was my dual role as a pastor and as a father. They are two similar yet very distinct roles. Similar in the sense that in both roles I function as an overseer. In the book of Acts, Paul admonished the elders of the church in Ephesus, "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). In other words, take responsibility to spiritually guide and shepherd the congregation by teaching, leading, and caring for the flock. In that sense, the role of a father is no different. For I am also called as a father to spiritually guide and care for my son and my daughter. Yet understanding the difference between the two roles is crucial. In fact, there is a bit of tension between being a public figure and being a private parent.

We all can easily appreciate what a public figure does. Week after week I watched my father, Pastor Carlos G. Martin, on the platform, preaching every Sabbath morning, teaching every Sunday night, leading in prayer every Wednesday night. He was, after all, the pastor of the church. But that was not all he was. He was also my father, eating with me during meals, playing outside with me on weekdays, reading a devotional to me on a Friday night, watching a football game with me on a Sunday afternoon, taking me to school in the early morning, and helping me with homework in the late afternoon. He was, after all, my father. And the beauty of it all is that I saw a consistency between the pulpit and the living room. My dad went beyond noticing what I did to addressing why I did it. He took time with me to understand the why of my heart—he fathered my heart.

When my father challenged me to memorize scriptures or read through the Bible, his emphasis was on transformation, not performance; our Friday night discussions as a family made that possible. When my father invited me to preach my first sermon as a teen, he provided an atmosphere of safety, not fear. He first gave me opportunities to speak during prayer meeting rather than at church on Sabbath morning. Rather than focusing


Christian and Elijah

on present performance, my father focused on future development. He was not merely playing the role of a father, but was authentically so. He knew the value of paternal mentorship. And as he fathered my heart, he helped me to believe right. Consequently, I came to have the same goal as a father myself, to disciple the heart of my own son and daughter to love God and others.

Today I have the same commitment to my job as a pastor as my father did more than 30 years ago. But thanks to his mentorship, I have become much more aware of the importance of a commitment to my family. While pastoring is easily a "24 hours a day, 365 days a year" kind of job, I came to value the weekly day that was set apart to be with my family. In our case, it was Mondays, a weekend transition and a time to renew my task of being an overseer of my most precious flock. Mondays meant going on the road and taking time for ourselves as a family. Little did I realize the impact that taking time to be a father would have on my children, who were quickly becoming teenagers.

GENTLE GUIDANCE

The power of presence in small but impactful moments is the essence of paternal mentorship. My father's invitation to go with him on home visits made a lasting impression on my life. The car ride became a moment for mentorship unlike any other. He would share his experiences, but I could tell he was more interested in hearing about mine. And though my father was not perfect, he was committed to modeling values and principles rather than merely lecturing about them. It is true that the way a father handles failure, stress, and church conflict can teach his children resilience and grace. In my imperfection I too am committed to providing godly guidance to my son and daughter, whose hearts I love.

My father's mentorship helped me shape a sense of self that was unique and therefore distinct from merely a "PK identity." My father, a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist and one who took pride in being part of a family legacy of denominational workers, became convicted that he could not, and must not, impose or put undue pressure on his son to become a pastor. My mother had some influence in his understanding of why this was crucially important. Our conversations focused on God's calling rather than specifically on a pastoral calling—exploring personal gifts, even if it meant I ended up outside pastoral ministry.

It was during a spring break mission trip to Mexico with Burton Adventist Academy from Arlington, Texas, that I sensed the call to pastoral ministry. On the trip I found myself in a pastoral role by default since I spoke Spanish. Needless to say, my father was overjoyed when I announced my decision to go into pastoral ministry, though that may be a huge understatement. Reflecting on my decision, I realize it was not because I felt pressured by parental expectations. Rather, my father's understanding, valuing, and affirming of who I was while at the same time guiding my strengths, passions, and personality to align with God's unique plan for my own life is what influenced me.

Today I see my own son's gifts and the desires of his heart, and believe that it is God who has been shaping them from his conception, as it is written, "Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand" (Ps. 139:16-18). My son's compassionate heart expresses itself time and time again in an eagerness to help the helpless in their time of need. And while I may have ambitions for him as a father, I know that it's our heavenly Father who gives time and opportunity for my son to discover God's will for his life. It is my responsibility, as a father and as a mentor, to train my son to discern the will of God for his life.

SPIRITUALITY LIVED OUT

And while paternal mentorship may include teaching life skills and practical tasks, it is more about strengthening the child's spiritual muscle through a lived faith that is more shown than spoken. I would go as far as to say that biblical discipleship is one of the greatest forms of mentorship whose fruit lasts for eternity.

Paternal mentorship through a lived faith includes intercessory prayers as spiritual leader of the home, and time in the reading and studying of the Bible as priest of the family circle. Some of my most precious memories include the times my son, at an early age, would take his own Bible and want to underline it as he so often saw me do. And while not knowing how to read yet, he could easily recognize the words "Jesus" and "God" in the biblical text. So I would select entire chapters for him, and he would carefully "read" through it and underline the name that is above every name (Phil. 2:9), and thus learn to engage with Scripture at an early age. Our daughter learned to do the same, and today, as teenagers, they both take time in the morning with Jesus. Oh, the joy of paternal spiritual mentorship!

While a parent must teach their children to navigate through the daily challenges of everyday life, there will be times that the children will see "behind the scenes" of church life, and it's not always pretty. It may include conflict, burnout, and betrayal. It is in these moments as a pastor that my intervention as a father is of utmost importance. Issues are often brutal, but paternal mentorship can offer honesty without insult or even negativity. This involves teaching the difference between God and God's people; understanding that the church is like a training school or a greenhouse, but it is also a hospital, a place where sick people can find healing. The situation may be most challenging, but if it's left unaddressed, the consequences can be devastating, leading to disappointment and disillusionment. It's no wonder Barna states that "two out of every five pastors (40 percent) say their child, age 15 or older, went through a period where they significantly doubted their faith."[1]

Paternal mentorship seeks to navigate through dark shadows and disciple their children to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus at all times, no matter what. First Peter 3:9 counsels us to be peacemakers, "not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing." And the blessing of paternal mentorship is truly one of great reward.

The joy of mentoring comes with tears and even pain. It often may feel as if it is all an uphill journey. As John Maxwell is well known for saying: "Everything worthwhile in life is uphill."[2] No achievement is accidental; intentionality is required. And when one gets back up again after taking a tumble, when small achievements are accomplished, victories gained, and prayers answered, it will be worth every single effort that was put forth. In more ways than one my father's mentorship continues to shape how I mentor my own son and daughter. Thus a legacy is born.

I thank God that I can testify of the formative power of paternal mentorship both in my experience with my father and, by God's grace, in the parenting of my own children. I encourage you to seek, in your mentorship, not perfection, but presence and love.

[1]Barna, "Prodigal Pastor Kids: Fact or Fiction?" Nov. 11, 2013, https://www.barna.com/research/prodigal-pastor-kids-fact-or-fiction, accessed Apr. 16, 2025.

[2]See, for instance, "Minute With Maxwell: UPHILL," Dec. 2, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=mxrf_FJYfgI, accessed Apr. 16, 2025.

Christian Martin is senior pastor of the Living Hope Seventh-day Adventist Church in Haymarket, Virginia, and with his wife, Heidi, hosts the *Wake Up With Hope* television series on Hope Channel.


Christian and Elijah

ARt

ARt features various original art created, written, and/or performed by Adventist artists.



DAD

BY DARCIE DENTON

This piece depicts a moment I shared with my dad that was originally captured via camera during a family gathering. It is one of 80-plus pieces that make up my first comprehensive body of work, *Memorial-ize*, which documents and celebrates the sacredness of the mundane.

Darcie Denton is a 26-year-old artist from the Chattanooga area who has had four solo shows and exhibited work throughout the eastern United States from 2019 to the present. Her artwork revolves around themes of sacredness and memory, and she explores these through paint, pastel, and other traditional media. She has also documented her experience as an artist for 10-plus years on primarily Instagram and YouTube to an audience of more than 80,000 followers.
Website: http://www.darciedenton.com
Instagram: http://www.instagram.com/_thatoneartist_
YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/thatoneartist

FATHERS

"Like arrows in the hand
of a warrior,

So are the children
of one's youth.

Happy is the man who has
his quiver full of them"
(Psalm 127:4, 5).

"The husband and father is the head of the household. The wife looks to him for love and sympathy and for aid in the training of the children; and this is right. The children are his as well as hers, and he is equally interested in their welfare. The children look to the father for support and guidance; he needs to have a right conception of life and of the influences and associations that should surround his family; above all, he should be controlled by the love and fear of God and by the teaching of His word, that he may guide the feet of his children in the right way."*

–ELLEN G. WHITE

* Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 211.

FATHER'S FATHER

BY TEMPLE NWAEJIKE

Temple Nwaejike is an artist from Aba, Nigeria.



For more Adventist art, visit **adventistreview.org/art**

Art featured in the **ARt** section is curated by Jonathan Walter, assistant editor of the *Adventist Review*. Creative works showcased do not imply an endorsement of all works by featured artists. To submit any type of Adventist original art, please contact **art@adventistreview.org**. Submission does not guarantee publication.



THE UNEXPECTED GUEST

BRENDA KIŠ



Everything was ready. The house was clean, the food was prepared, my heart was right. And then they arrived.

Brenda, there's a non-Adventist woman here at church who has asked if she could spend the day with us. She has a little girl. I told her I would need to call my friends first. Would you mind if they came with us for lunch?"

"No, that would be fine. It will be a tight squeeze, but bring them along."

In earlier days I would have bristled a bit at this disruption of my well-laid plans, but God had been at work, and now I actually looked forward to what He would do as I left everything up to Him. Who was this woman, anyway? Someone I could comfort and encourage? A new friend? A possible Bible study?

Instead of 10, we would now crowd the maximum 12 around our small dining table. The night before, I'd chosen my satiny deep-green tablecloth as a contrast with the stunning bouquet of white and burgundy carnations my husband had brought me to welcome the Sabbath, his tradition since our marriage years ago. Then I had placed our ivory wedding china, good silver, and soft lavender and green napkins at their places. But now the beauty of the table setting would be marred by extra unmatched plates and silverware. "Lord, I want to sacrifice beauty and order for the people You love," I prayed.

One of my friends and I rushed around before the others arrived, moving more chairs into place, making the appropriate rearrangements, and completing the salads. Everything was ready. The house was clean, the food was prepared, my heart was right. And then they arrived.

CHARITY TESTED

With my friends, a ponderous woman carrying a half-empty bag of chips and holding on to a lively 4-year-old girl emerged from the van. As the woman hobbled along, I noted her drooping eyelids and pouty mouth, her dirty, dishevelled clothing. Not quite what I had expected.

I hugged them all with a warm welcome and ushered them into the living room. The woman chose the loveseat for the girl and herself, plopping heavily into the cushions and crunching noisily on the chips. *Did she not know we were about to eat a gourmet potluck?* I wondered.

Shortly thereafter we gathered around the table and sang our Sabbath blessing. I tried to imagine what the woman was thinking. Now at last she could set aside the cheap chips for the nutritious and colorful food the rest of us had contributed. I anticipated her reaction and thanked God that we could share something worthwhile that she would probably never get to eat where she came from.

PHOTO: FOTODUETS / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES



But with sorrow (and some disgust) I saw her bypass many delicious dishes in favor of juice and bread. The little she did take was pushed around her plate. I'd opened a special jar of vegetable spread for the bread. "Do you have any butter?" she called out. "That's not lasagna!" she exclaimed unhappily at the vegetable version served. The apricot dessert was equally unacceptable because there was no ice cream involved. Nevertheless, we treated her with polite respect, attempting to include her in our conversations, occasionally managing to move her from her passivity. Several times when we brought God into the spotlight, she bellowed out a question that had nothing to do with the subject at hand, interrupting the speaker of the moment and polluting the spiritual atmosphere with the mundane.

"Lord," I breathed, now unhappy myself, "how am I supposed to treat this woman like Christ when she acts like anything but Him! She makes no expressions of delight at being included in our group, no compliments or thanks for the meal." When we moved back to the living room after everyone (almost everyone) was fully satisfied, she took her place, like a misplaced lump, on the loveseat, and resumed crunching her chips. My Christian charity was failing rapidly.

WHAT OF YOU?

Even though I gave her another unreciprocated warm hug when they left, there was nothing to make me think that this afternoon for her was anything but a break in her routine. While washing the dishes later, I pondered our brief time together. "Lord, You have something to tell me, don't You?" Then He "spoke":

"Ushered into the warmth of a Sabbath family gathering, this woman had no response of joy or gratitude. How is it when you come to My house?

"Offered a feast, she chose a famine. Do you feast on My love and promises—or go without, attempting to solve your own problems, dissatisfied with My ways?

"In the midst of sacred words, she blurted out her own comments as if she didn't hear what was going on at all. Are you oblivious to My voice as I seek to deepen our relationship?"

In that moment at the kitchen sink I saw myself in that woman, blasé about the privilege of knowing Christ, crunching on the crumbs of my substitute delights, putting my ideas out there regardless of who is speaking. Strangely enough, I now saw Someone Else in her as well, and I got the message.

"Whatever form You have to take in order to reach me, Lord, be my guest!"

Brenda Kiš writes from Berrien Springs, Michigan, where she seeks to serve God through spoken and written words.

PHOTO: MEDIAPHOTOS / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES

Sophia

just lost her husband

One of her most important questions is how to take care of her daughter and still make a significant impact on her local church. Her friend Susan has given her some ideas, but she's still navigating the details.

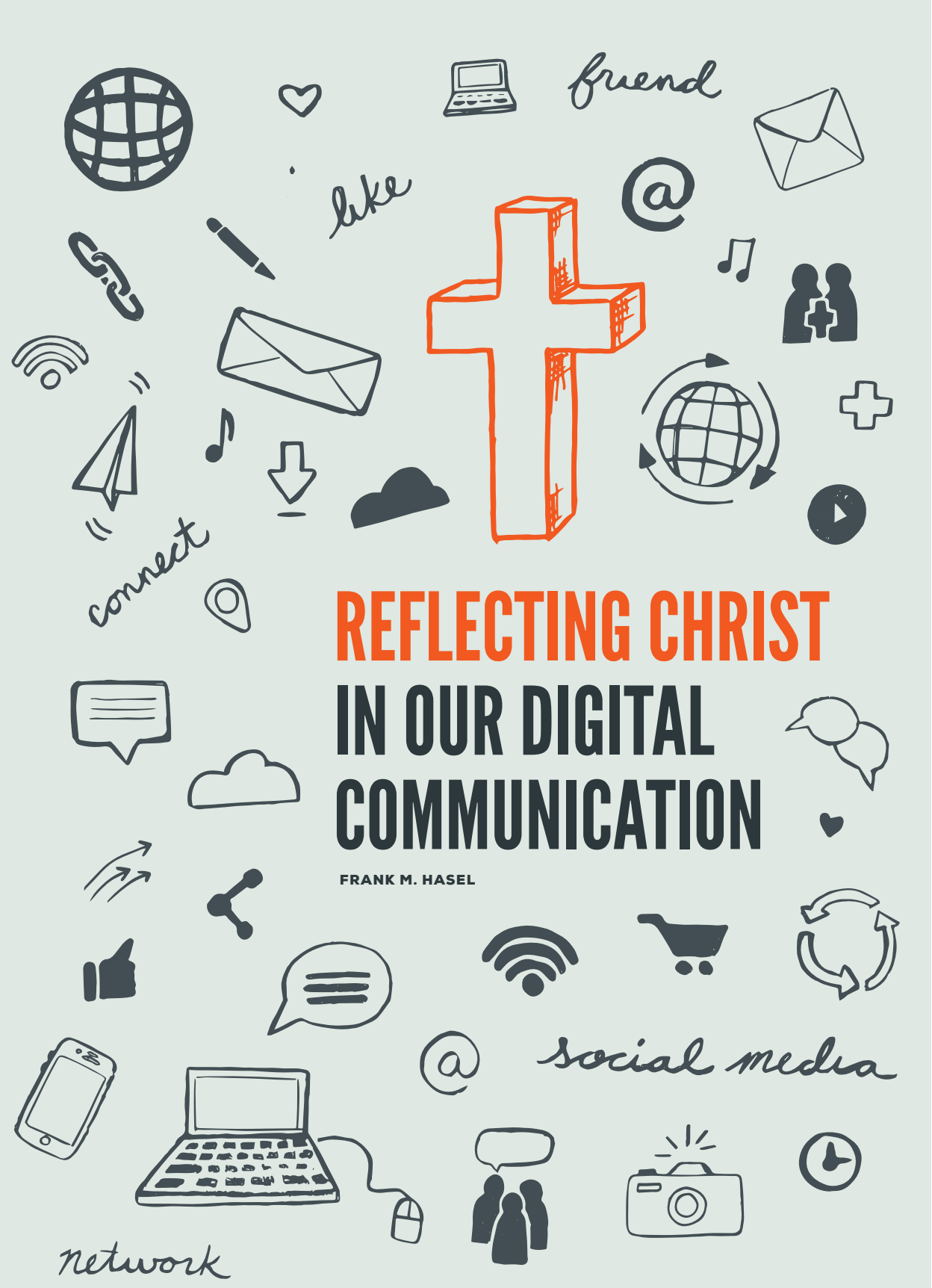
To learn more about Sophia's journey, scan the QR code or visit **willplan.org/Sophia**



Planned Giving & Trust Services

Experience the Joy of Giving

willplan.org



REFLECTING CHRIST IN OUR DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

FRANK M. HASEL

The internet has become a war zone. Digital innovations have revolutionized and transformed how we communicate with each other. Today digital communication is largely influenced by bots, and our social media interactions are increasingly informed by community-driven algorithms rather than by objective facts, truth, or ethical principles. While social media creates the illusion of personal connection, it often lacks the depth and quality of face-to-face communication—missing body language, physical presence, and the natural flow of in-person conversation. This has led to an increase of aggressiveness, outrage, disinformation, misinformation, and derogatory language that is divisive and disruptive to peaceful relationships. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians we must be mindful of how we engage in such digital conversations, ensuring that our communication reflects biblical values where we invite the presence of Christ into our digital spaces.[1]

THE CHALLENGE OF A POST-TRUTH ERA

In a time when "fake news," "alternative facts," and conspiracy theories are spreading rapidly, society has shifted away from objective truth and has fueled a culture in which personal belief and emotion often outweigh facts. For many, truth has morphed into subjective opinion and has degenerated into "truthiness," a sweet-sounding word that refers to a *seemingly* truthful quality that one *wishes* to be true, not because of supporting evidence, but because of a *feeling* that it is true or a *desire* for it to be true.[2] As Christ's disciples we are therefore called to embrace an ethical approach to communication that is rooted in biblical wisdom. Luke 10:27 reminds us to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. This means cultivating a mindset of truth, knowledge, and understanding in all our interactions—online and offline. A thoughtful, ethical communication reflects God's character and honors Him. As we navigate the digital age, here are a few principles that can help ensure that our digital communication reflects integrity, humility, and love, serving as a witness to God's character in a world that desperately needs God's qualities.[3]

CAREFULNESS

In both the digital and analog worlds our communication must be guided by carefulness. Scripture repeatedly urges us to be careful in our speech (Matt. 5:37; James 5:12). We are to practice what God has told us to do (Deut. 12:32; 2 Tim. 3:10), because our credibility and the authority of our message is at stake. Jesus teaches that faithfulness in small things will enable faithfulness in greater matters (Luke 16:10). We all know stories in which hastiness or carelessness has led to disastrous results. Careful communicators do not distort truth but seek accuracy, ensuring they do not hastily reach conclusions based on limited knowledge.

The biblical virtue of carefulness is especially crucial in digital communication, where information can easily be decontextualized and recombined. Copying and pasting content into a new context can distort meaning and even lead to plagiarism. Additionally, we need to be mindful that once something is online, it remains accessible virtually indefinitely. This permanence also necessitates great caution in what we share, ensuring we do not communicate misleading, irresponsible, or hateful information. Scripture repeatedly admonishes us to be careful in observing God's word (Deut. 4:6; 6:3; 28:58), and this principle applies to our digital interactions also. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, intellectual carefulness reflects our respect for God, our Creator and Redeemer. Faith is never sloppy or hasty, but honors God through meticulous and responsible thinking, research, and communication.

FAIR-MINDEDNESS

Bias pervades large parts of our world, from news to social discourse. Few are willing to consider perspectives that challenge their own. The Berean believers, in contrast, were praised for their noble-mindedness, as they eagerly examined the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). God, who judges impartially (1 Peter 1:17), calls His followers to do the same.

Fair-minded individuals prioritize truth over personal biases. They seek to understand differing perspectives and acknowledge their own

PHOTO: PRIXEL CREATIVE / LIGHTSTOCK

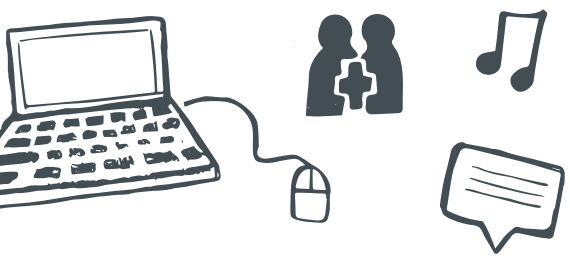
limitations. This does not mean abandoning convictions, but valuing truth above ego. Such fair-mindedness fosters better relationships and facilitates meaningful discussions. Fair-minded individuals are attentive listeners, which helps them build trust and engage in productive conversations.

In digital communication fair-mindedness is crucial. Instead of quickly reacting with emotional outbursts, we should first reflect and seek understanding. This requires time! Often inflammatory comments can be avoided when we allow time for a good night's rest rather than venting our feelings immediately. Instead of silencing or ridiculing opposing views, we should ask informed, thoughtful questions. By avoiding inflammatory language and derogatory comments, we can restore civility in discussions.

TRUTHFULNESS

To be able to communicate in a Christlike manner, we need an unwavering commitment to truth that is communicated with great love. Truthfulness strengthens community, affirms shared values, and builds trust. In the Bible, truth is linked with faithfulness and reliability. Providing truthful information respects others and enables sound decision-making. Truth is essential for harmonious relationships. Deception and half-truths, on the other hand, breed mistrust and aggression.

Honest communication ensures that information is not misused or distorted. The well-being of societies and the church depends on truth for informed decision-making. Communal life would falter without it. Such truthfulness reflects God's character. As followers of Christ, we seek to emulate His truthfulness, as commanded in the ninth commandment (Ex. 20:16). Digital communication, however, presents unique challenges to truthfulness. Words can be misinterpreted, and strong language can foster aggression, mistrust, and resentment. Upholding truth in digital spaces requires integrity and a commitment to honesty that is coupled with deep love in how we write and speak.



HUMILITY

Humility is often misunderstood. Intellectually humble individuals recognize that they are not the measure of everything; that they are dependent on something beyond themselves. Therefore they submit their thoughts to God's wisdom in obedience to His Word (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Cor. 10:5). They understand that truth is not self-made but divinely revealed.

Humble individuals prioritize truth over ego. They are open to learning and growth, making them pleasant to work with. Intellectual humility does not equate to a lack of conviction. Instead, it allows for deeper understanding and the ability to expand one's knowledge. Arrogant individuals, by contrast, resist learning and remain stagnant. To grow in knowledge, humility is essential, because it is the foundation of all true learning, and this will reflect how we communicate with others or whether we take ourselves as the measure of everything else.

CIVILITY AND DECENCY

Digital communication is often marred by inflammatory language and derogatory messages. People swiftly dare to *write* things on the internet that they would never *speak* personally into the face of another person. Such verbal aggression fosters disrespect and division. Coupled with misinformation and half-truths, the negative effects multiply. In a context of antagonism we are called to respond with civility and a spirit of kindness, recognizing that uncivil discourse leads to chaos and rebellion, whereas respectful dialogue promotes understanding and shalom.

Civility means not forcing opinions or belittling dissenting voices or making fun of people who hold different opinions. Instead of spreading doubt, hate, or misinformation, we should focus on what is honorable, just, pure, and commendable (Phil. 4:8). Our words should uplift and build trust rather than sow doubts or tear others down. Cultivating positive, respectful communication honors God and fosters a more constructive public discourse.

Ellen White knew about the blessings of such civility and decency in our communication when she writes: "Often, as you seek to present the truth, opposition will be aroused; but if you seek to meet the opposition with argument, you will only multiply it, and this you cannot afford to do. Hold to the affirmative. Angels of God are watching you, and they understand how to impress those whose opposition you refuse to meet with arguments. Dwell not

on the negative points of questions that arise, but gather to your minds affirmative truths, and fasten them there by much study, earnest prayer, and heart consecration."[4] Keep to the affirmative truths. Do not cherish controversy. Avoid bitter sarcasm. Share kindness instead, and focus on the good.

RESPONSIBILITY

Freedom of speech is often cited in defense of promoting questionable content or to legitimize disrespect and even rudeness. But public and digital discourse carries responsibility. Words—spoken and written—have power, influencing perceptions and triggering reactions. Digital communication amplifies this effect, as messages can reach vast audiences instantly and travel the world in mere seconds.

Jesus acknowledges that not everything should be shared at once (John 16:12), and John recognizes that some information was best left unrecorded (John 21:25). We too must exercise prudence in sharing what we know. Responsible communication considers the impact of our words, and the potential of words harshly spoken. We need to be mindful of how partial information can influence the reactions of the recipient. Awareness of these risks is essential in ensuring ethical and responsible communication.

By embracing carefulness, fair-mindedness, truthfulness, humility, civility, and responsibility, we can engage in ethical communication that honors God and strengthens relationships in both analog and digital spaces. This will enable us not just to be against any negativity we might encounter on the internet, but to help us to focus on the good things we stand for and support so that we can communicate them clearly and convincingly.

CONCLUSION

As followers of Christ, we are invited to practice an ethic of communication that exhibits carefulness, fair-mindedness, accuracy, truthfulness, honesty, humility, civility, decency, and responsibility. These virtues will not only enhance our communication in the digital age but also positively impact the way we relate to each other on a daily basis. Honoring these principles of communication can help make our interaction with others on social media platforms an expression of our "reasonable service" to God that is not "conformed to this world but . . . transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:1, 2). Such a living worship of God is closely tied to the character of our minds and the truthfulness of our words. How we honor God in our interactions on social media and the internet demands that our minds be fully engaged and that our lives and words exhibit the virtues we have described above.[5] When we practice those virtues of communication, our actions also will increasingly reflect God's goodness and character.

How we think and speak influences how we behave. If you are careful in what you write and say about me, if you begin to treat my opinions in a fair-minded way, if you are honest in your dealings with me, if your demeanor reflects truthfulness and humbleness, if you are kind and responsible in how you interact with me, it is only natural that your actual behavior toward me will also grow increasingly gracious. This is how God deals with each of us.

Imagine if our homes and workplaces, our classrooms, our schools, our churches, our communities, and our social media platforms were filled with people of such a character and attitude. What a blessing that would be! Imagine how the relationships and the atmosphere within the church and the world at large would change for the better if we all practiced this kind of interaction with each other and how our mission and outreach would benefit from it. God would be delighted, people would be attracted, and each one of us would be greatly blessed!

[1] I have reflected on this in greater detail in the article "Ethics of Communications in the Digital Age," *Reflections: The BRI Newsletter* 78, no. 2 (June 2022): 1-7, https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Reflections-78-April-June-2022.pdf.

[2] See *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "Truthiness," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/truthiness, accessed Apr. 3, 2025.

[3] Here I follow closely several of the inspiring ideas of Philip E. Dow, *Virtuous Minds: Intellectual Character Development* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2013).

[4] Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 302.

[5] For more inspiring thoughts on how biblical virtues can enrich our lives, see Frank M. Hasel, *Living for God: Reclaiming the Joy of Christian Virtue* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 2020).

Frank M. Hasel is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

STRONG KIDS, STRONG FAITH

Helping our children trust God in tough times

LAVONNE LONG

Parenting is so hard, isn't it? It's a job that I consistently make mistakes doing. I am always trying to do better, learn more, and make repairs with my kids through apologies.

Life is a lot different in 2025 for a middle schooler and high schooler. In an unpredictable world, what can we do as adults to help our kids build their faith in times of struggle? We *must* equip and provide tools for our children to find hope, strength, and peace through reliance on God.

WHERE DOES FAITH COME FROM?

Christian resilience comes from a trust in God and His plan for our lives. It isn't about self-reliance and personal characteristic traits. James 1:2-4 tells us, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."* When we have God in our lives, we can face struggles and find hope and peace. Philippians 4:13 tells us, "I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Nurturing our children's faith requires intentional effort, patience, and love. We need to build authentic relationships with them, provide solid biblical teaching, encourage prayer, and be positive role models for them. Let's unpack that a little bit more.



Building authentic relationships

The foundation of growing children's faith is building an authentic relationship with them. Authenticity fosters trust. This allows our children to open up and share their thoughts, doubts, and questions. Parents, take time to listen actively, understand their perspective, and respond with empathy and respect. By demonstrating genuine care and compassion, we can create an environment in which they feel safe to explore their faith.

Biblical teaching

To help our children grow in their faith, we must provide them with a solid biblical foundation. Encourage them to engage with Scripture regularly and explore its relevance to their lives. Plan a Bible study group or participate in youth programs in which they can discuss and learn about God's Word in a supportive community. By delving into the teachings of Jesus, they can gain wisdom, find answers to their questions, and develop a deeper understanding of God's plan for them.

Parents are role models

My husband, Tyler, is reading a really good book right now, and it talks about how important parents are in their children's lives—how they talk to, interact with, and react to them matters. We must show our kids in our actions how to respond to struggles. How does your faith shape your response to difficult situations? What are our kids learning from us? Responding appropriately is not always easy, is it? Here are three ways we can model a Christian response for our kids: openly pray as a family during hard times, express gratitude even in difficulties, and talk about how faith helps us personally.

PRACTICAL WAYS KIDS CAN RELY ON GOD DURING TRIALS

Pray

Prayer needs to be our first response, not our last resort. Encourage kids to talk to God about all their struggles and fears. Philippians 4:6, 7 tells us, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

It's easy for us all to say memorized prayers in the morning, before meals, and at the end of the day. So we try to be intentional about prayer in our home and to make it meaningful. We want our children to develop a prayer life of their own now, so that when they are adults and parents they can continue this essential spiritual discipline.

Nurturing our children's faith requires intentional effort, patience, and love.

We all have trials in our homes; trials are a part of this life. Are we getting frustrated, impatient, angry, and worrisome, or are we praying first? When our children see us turning to prayer first, they learn from a young age the importance of prayer and God in our lives to lead us. When children are struggling, offer to pray right then for help from God. Teach your children, by example, the power of prayer.

Memorize Scripture

Teach your children Bible verses for comfort and strength. There are so many to choose from. Google them, make flashcards, say them together, put them on the bathroom mirrors or on the refrigerator, and hang them on their bedroom doors. Here are three to look up: Psalm 46:1; Isaiah 41:10; and 2 Corinthians 12:9. You can add so many more.

Prayer journal

Prayer journaling has become popular in recent years. Let your children pick out a journal and tell them to write down their prayers to God. They can even keep track of their answered prayers. I still love looking back at my previous prayer journals and seeing where God answered my prayers.

Keep a family prayer journal, too. Write down all the evidence of God's work in your lives, especially during trials. This is something everyone can look back on and feel hopeful.

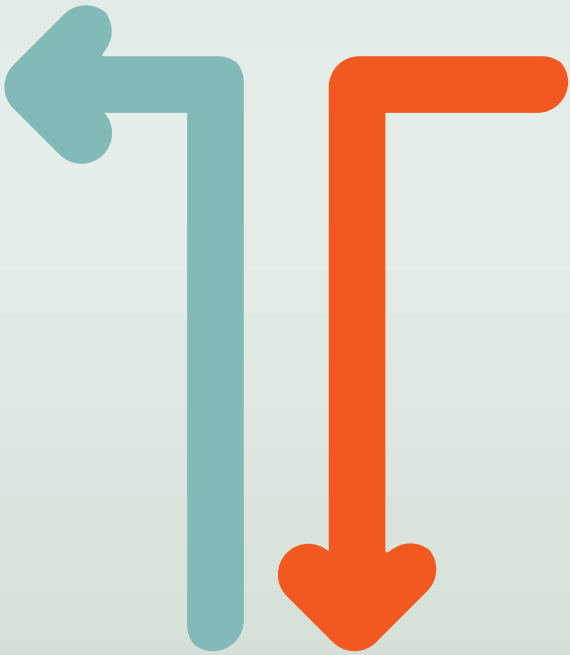
Remember, let's focus on God's promises, not just life's challenges. Struggles are temporary—and our kids need to understand this. A strong foundation of faith in God helps our kids face challenges and build resilience. We're all in this together. Above all, let's pray for our kids as we parent them to the best of our ability.

*Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

Lifestyle blogger **LaVonne Long** lives in Washington State, where she works at her children's school. She is married to Washington Conference outreach director Tyler Long.



ADVENTIST CHURCH NEXT



In the image of God

GERARDO OUDRI

After years of steady decline, a local church had to close its doors. A sign on the front door read: "Gone out of business; didn't know what our business was." What is the church's "business"? Why did God create the church? What does the church exist for? These are crucial questions related to *ecclesiology*, the study of the doctrine of the church. But why is this important?

ECCLESIOLOGY MATTERS

There are many reasons the doctrine of the church is of supreme importance. Here are three:

1. Because it matters to God. Paul speaks of the church as the body of Christ, a powerful metaphor that, among other things, points to the close connection between Christ and the church. According to Ellen White, "the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard."[1] Just think about that for a moment. God deeply cares about the church!

2. Because its future in the West appears to be bleak. For a good number of years now, Christianity has been rapidly losing adherents in the West. So much so that the continuity and future existence of the church in the West seems to be in jeopardy. Of course, in Christ we can always be hopeful. Yet, in light of Christianity's steady decline, having a clear vision of the church and its mission is crucial.

3. Because Adventist ecclesiology is a work in progress. While solid Adventist concepts on the doctrine of the church have been developed over the years, a lot still remains to be worked out.

Regarding this last point, in 1989 Adventist theologian Barry Oliver wrote: "An urgent need for the [Adventist] church to clarify its ecclesiological perspective still exists. . . . If the structures of the church are to reflect the theological dimensions of the church, more thorough ecclesiological work with reference to the uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist message and mission needs to be done. The church needs to integrate both ontological [regarding the nature of the church] and functional categories in its ecclesiology."[2] Similarly, in 2003 (about 15 years later) Adventist theologian Ángel Manuel Rodríguez echoed Oliver's point when he wrote: "The time may have come for the Adventist movement to reflect on and develop an Adventist ecclesiology that will clarify its very nature and that will facilitate the fulfillment of its mission."[3]

Oliver and Rodriguez coincide on two points: (a) to further develop the Adventist doctrine of the church is a *pressing need*, and (b) two key aspects should be considered: the *ontological*, what the church *is* in its most fundamental essence or nature; and the *functional*, what the church is called to *do*. Simply put, theological reflection about our Adventist understanding of the church's essence and practice is a must.

In light of Christianity's steady decline, having a clear vision of the church and its mission is crucial.

ADVENTIST ECCLESIOLOGY: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

A detailed history of the doctrine of the church in Adventism is beyond the scope of this article. In the chart (see page 48), however, I offer a brief historical overview of the major developments pertaining to Adventist ecclesiology, in five stages.

A detailed analysis of each of these stages is not possible here. Yet a few remarks are worth making. Looking at its historical development, the Adventist doctrine of the church has often been:

- *an inherited ecclesiology*: We have adopted and preserved many ecclesiological practices from other denominations. These practices are not necessarily wrong, but a biblical-theological view of the church from an Adventist perspective still remains to be fully developed.
- *conditioned by eschatology*: Our ecclesiology has tended to put a lot of emphasis on the concept of the "remnant." While the remnant is a key biblical component of the doctrine of the church, there is much more that needs to be considered.
- *sidetracked by pressing needs*: As theological crises have emerged, Adventist theologians have had to deal with the "urgent" matters, while other "important" issues have often been placed on the "back burner."
- *focused primarily on functionality*: historically, we have given priority to church structure and organization, but theological reflection about the nature/essence and mission of the church has been relatively scant.

CHURCH NEXT: *IMAGO DEI*

What are the next steps in our Adventist ecclesiological quest? How can the development of a robust Adventist ecclesiology be furthered? In this article I propose the concept of the image of God as a theological "north," taking into account the following premises:

1. Theological reflection begins with and is grounded in God, particularly as revealed in Christ (Heb. 1:1).

2. In Christ we see that God has a mission (John 3:16).

3. God calls the church to join Him in His mission.

4. The ultimate goal of God's mission is to restore His image in humanity. Hence:

5. The church exists to join God's mission of *imago Dei* restoration. I now briefly unpack these concepts.

PHOTO: PRIXEL CREATIVE / LIGHTSTOCK

Adventist Ecclesiology:
A Brief Historical Overview

PERIOD	STAGE	ECCLESIOLOGICAL EMPHASIS
1830-1844	1. Formative background	Inherited ecclesiological understandings and practices
COMMENTS: The Millerite movement is the background out of which the Adventist Church emerged. Church practices such as camp meetings, small groups, and the like were "inherited" from various Christian groups out of which our pioneers came. Since the primary focus at the time was Jesus' soon return, theological reflection on the doctrine of the church was practically nonexistent.		
1844-1863	2. Gestation of the Sabbatarian Adventist Movement	Remnant
COMMENTS: After the Great Disappointment a small group of Millerites went back to study Bible prophecies looking for answers, and, as they rediscovered a set of key biblical truths, they developed a strong sense of prophetic identity. They began to see themselves as the end-time remnant with a unique eschatological mission.		
1863-1913	3. Steps toward a worldwide organization	Organization and structure for mission
COMMENTS: After a couple of decades the Sabbatarian movement saw the need to organize formally. Not too long after its official organization in 1863, the Seventh-day Adventist Church quickly expanded to various parts of the world. This global advance demanded a structure that could support its growing missional needs.		
1913-1980	4. Functional Organization for Mission	Ecclesiology mainly untreated
COMMENTS: Once the worldwide structure was established, the church focused mainly on fine-tuning its functional organization for mission and its organizational operations at the church's various levels. No major theological study was done on the doctrine of the church during this long period.		
1980-Present	5. Incipient Adventist Ecclesiology	Steps toward an Adventist doctrine of the church
COMMENTS: In 1980 several fundamental beliefs related to the doctrine of the church (the church, the remnant, etc.) were created. Since then, a small number of books and studies have appeared, shedding light on this important subject. Much remains to be developed.		

THEOLOGY BEGINS WITH GOD (CHRIST)

Theological reflection should always be grounded in and revolve around theology proper: our understanding of God. While there is room to study various subjects in Scripture and develop a variety of doctrines (theology of the Sabbath, theology of the sanctuary, etc.), the basis and center of theology is God. Ecclesiology is no exception: the church must be theologically understood in light of who God is. Moreover, while God has revealed Himself to humanity in many ways, Christ is the clearest revelation of God (John 14:9; Heb. 1:1, 2). Hence, healthy theological reflection on the nature and function of the church (the body of Christ) needs to be grounded in a healthy theology of God and of Christ (Christology).

IN CHRIST = GOD HAS A MISSION

Christ is the central figure of the Bible, which includes a collection of stories portraying the history of God's plan of redemption. In its essence the Word of God is the story of God's actions and interactions with humanity, with the main purpose of rescuing the world from the sin problem. The Old Testament introduces the problem and proclaims the coming of the Messiah as the promised Redeemer. The New Testament declares Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises and prophetic announcements. Like pieces of a puzzle, every Bible story fits into this bigger picture of God's plan of redemption; the calling of the patriarchs, the Exodus, the sanctuary, the various covenants, etc., are all part of a bigger story, the story of God's mission, with Christ's life, death, and resurrection as the climax.

GOD CALLS HUMANS TO JOIN HIS MISSION

While God could have implemented His redemptive mission on His own, in His wisdom He chose to involve human

beings. In the Old Testament, Israel as a nation was called by God to be His priests on earth. Their calling and mission were clear: to reveal the only true God and His kingdom to the world. Likewise, in the New Testament God called and established the church, the "new Israel" (Jews and Gentiles together), to join Him in a new phase of His plan of redemption. After Christ's earthly ministry (life, death, resurrection, and ascension), the Holy Spirit was poured out, and the church carried out its calling and mission to expand God's kingdom on earth in preparation for its full establishment with the future second coming of Jesus.

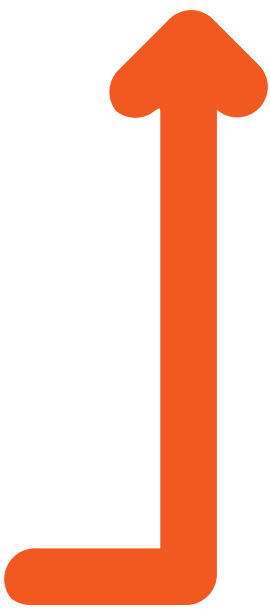
It is important to note that the mission is God's first, and then the church's. As Jürgen Moltmann wrote: "It is not that the church has a mission of salvation in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church."[4] Commenting on this, Gregg Allison writes: "Moltmann emphasizes the importance of understanding 'not that the church "has" a mission, but the very reverse: that the mission of Christ creates its own church.'"[5]

Summarizing what has been said so far, in order to think about the church theologically, the sequence proposed here moves from God as revealed in Christ, to Christ's mission, and then to the church. *God → Mission → Church.* In so doing, as we reflect theologically on the person of God we see that, in Christ, God has a mission, and in His wisdom He has decided to call human beings and make them coparticipants in His mission. The church, then, is called into existence to join God's mission.

The next logical and crucial question is: What is the ultimate goal of God's mission? Simply put, if the church exists to join God's mission, what is the "*telos*" (goal) of God's mission? This is not a minor question, because lack of clarity here results in the church confusing missional means with the end of mission. In fact, whenever I've asked a group of leaders or members what the mission of the church is, I always obtain a variety of answers: "the church exists to proclaim the gospel"; "the church exists to baptize and teach"; "the church exists to help the needy"; "the church exists for church growth," etc. These are all extremely important and have their role in the missional process, but they are not the end/goal of mission.

The problem with confusing means with ends is that at times we stop short of fulfilling God's mission. For instance, at times the mission of the church has been reduced to numeric and institutional growth. Just to be clear, as a pastor I am thrilled when people make the decision to be baptized, and I am equally excited when new churches are planted and new church buildings erected. But important as numeric and institutional growth may be, I believe these are missional means to the missional end, or missional steps leading to the ultimate goal. But what is that ultimate goal?

While God could have implemented His redemptive mission on His own, in His wisdom He chose to involve human beings.



THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF GOD'S MISSION: *IMAGO DEI* RESTORATION

Regarding Christ's mission, Ellen White writes: "*To restore in man the image of his Maker*, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—*this* was to be *the work of redemption.* This is the object of education, *the great object of life.*"[6] Clearly, to restore the image of God in humanity is *the* goal of the plan of redemption. And this is not an

It is by focusing on and knowing Christ in His fullness and all His beauty that the restoration of God's image in humanity is realized.

isolated quote. Quite the opposite: the concept of the restoration of God's image in humanity as the ultimate goal of Christ's mission appears multiple times in the writings of Ellen White.

White also talks about *how* this goal is to be accomplished: "*The knowledge of God as revealed in Christ* is the knowledge that *all who are saved must have. This* is the knowledge that *works transformation of character*. Received into the life, *it will re-create the soul in the image of Christ.* This is the knowledge that God invites His children to receive, beside which *all else is vanity and nothingness*."[7]

It is by focusing on and knowing Christ in His fullness and all His beauty that the restoration of God's image in humanity is realized. As Paul writes: "But we all, with unveiled face, *beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image* from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). This should be central when thinking through Adventist ecclesiology. How can we present and embody the most beautiful and accurate picture of Christ so that, as we personally and collectively contemplate Him, our lives are transformed into His likeness? This should be the goal of our doctrinal formulations, our preaching and teaching, our programming, and of everything we do.

ADVENTIST CHURCH NEXT: *IMAGO DEI*

It seems to me that . . .

- if God as a loving, relational being (1 John 4:8) created human beings in His image (Gen. 1:26-28), and . . .
- if sin distorted God's image in humanity, and . . .
- if Christ's mission is to restore God's image in humanity, and . . .
- if the church exists to join God in His mission of restoration, THEN . . .
- *everything we do in the church should be about* imago Dei *restoration.*

This should be, I suggest, the unifying *telos* (goal) and guiding north, not only to rethink theologically the *essence* of the church and the various aspects of our ecclesiology (mission, discipleship, community, leadership, authority, etc.), but also to guide our day-to-day institutional *functions* and congregational *practices.*

CLOSING THOUGHTS

So what is the church, and why does it exist? First, the church is the community of faith called by God, in Christ Jesus, moved by the Holy Spirit. Second, the church is called to join God in His mission to restore His image in humanity. At the center of the image is a Christlike character reflected in loving relationships toward God, our neighbor, ourselves, and creation. This is what the church exists for. In the words of Ellen White: "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.*"[8]

In essence, what should be "next" regarding Adventist ecclesiology? In my humble opinion, the Adventist Church "next" is to further develop our doctrine of the church making *imago Dei* restoration as the guiding north. May the Holy Spirit guide our theological reflection so that our ecclesiological formulations and ecclesial practices may continue to move in the right direction so that God's mission may be better accomplished.

[1] Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 12.

[2] Barry D. Oliver, "Principles for Reorganization of the Seventh-day Adventist Administrative Structure, 1888-1903: Implications for an International Church" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1989), p. 335.

[3] Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Adventist Ecclesiology: Introduction to the Project," p. 1 (shared by the author via email).

[4] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, p. 64.

[5] Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers*, p. 81.

[6] Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1903), p. 15. (Emphasis added.)

[7] E. G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 475. (Emphasis added.)

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 12. (Emphasis added.)

Gerardo Oudri is associate Ministerial Association director for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and a Ph.D. candidate in theological studies at Andrews University.

MEN ARE NOT FINE

The mentorship gap

There's an old joke that men have only two emotions: "fine" and "angry." One sure way to get them from being fine to angry is to keep asking them how they feel. But beneath this joke, like most, there's a sliver of truth: men in 2025 are *not* fine.

With June being Men's Health Month, it's a timely moment to reflect on the quieter struggles men face. Each year more than 40,000 men in the U.S. die by suicide, a staggering number that rivals annual breast cancer deaths.[1] Fourteen percent of young men aged 20-24 are classified as NEET, meaning they are not in education, employment, or training.[2] These are just a fraction of alarming statistics revealing how men are languishing in various spheres of life.

Seventh-day Adventist men are not immune. I've worked with men battling mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and pornography addiction. Some serve faithfully in church leadership, not knowing how to reconcile their mental health challenges with their spiritual responsibilities. The silence and shame around their suffering becomes a burden in itself.

One of the foremost researchers on men's issues, Richard Reeves, writes extensively about this, particularly in his book *Of Boys and Men*. One of his central insights is that many men struggle because of the absence of healthy male role models, starting from childhood.[3]

This absence shows up clearly in how young men today are looking for someone to emulate. Without present fathers or male mentors, they often turn to outspoken online influencers. Some of these figures offer helpful guidance, but many promote confusion, anger, or a distorted sense of masculinity. Without godly influences, young men are drawn to whatever feels strong, regardless of whether it be good or not.

Jesus steps into the gap for men today. He practiced a wholistic, relational form of mentorship that mirrored the discipleship model of the rabbis. He not only instructed His disciples. He walked with them. He allowed them to see both His strength and His sorrow. He modeled a masculinity that was compassionate, courageous, and rooted in dependence on God. This kind of man-to-man relationship is desperately needed today. Mentorship must be more than advice. It must include relationship.

The apostle Paul also understood this when he said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1, NIV). When he took Timothy under his wing, Paul didn't begin with written letters. Instead, he took "him along on the journey" (Acts 16:3, NIV). Men need other men to follow, not from a distance, but up close. That is why intergenerational men's ministry is vital. At every life stage we need men who show us how to live, serve, and suffer well, because it's hard to be what you can't see.

If you're a man reading this, I encourage you to pray and think about whom you can reach out to for support. It may not be just one person but a few who can make up your inner circle (Prov. 11:14). More important, consider men in your life you can take "along on the journey" and pour into, even in small ways.

BETWEEN WORLDS

DAVID BURUCHARA



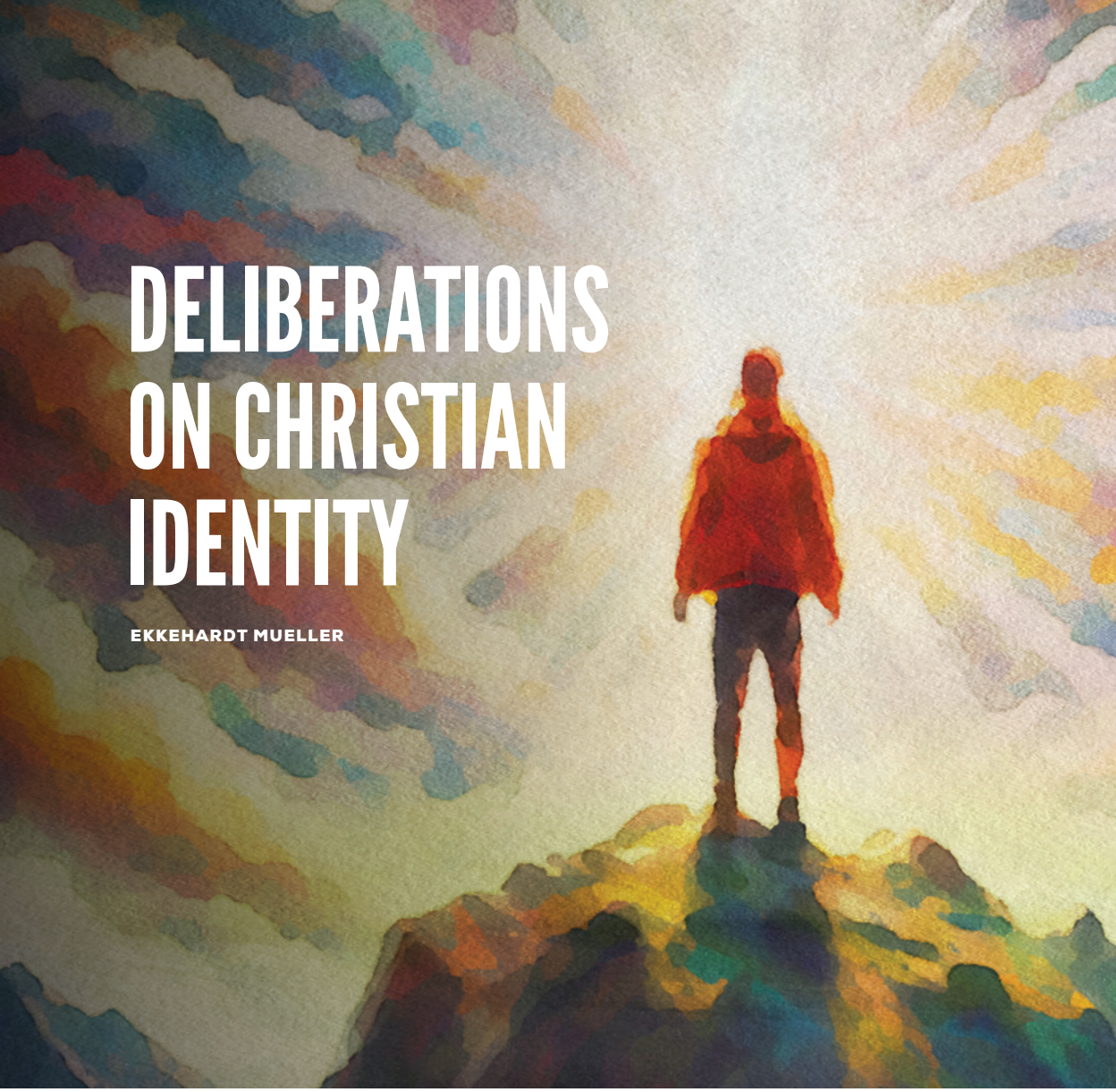
WITHOUT GODLY INFLUENCES, YOUNG MEN ARE DRAWN TO WHATEVER FEELS STRONG, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER IT'S GOOD.

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Suicide Mortality in the United States, 2022 (Provisional data)* [Data brief] (National Center for Health Statistics, 2023), https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr034.pdf.

[2] National Center for Education Statistics, *Indicator 24: Young Adults Neither Enrolled in School nor Working (NEET)* (U.S. Department of Education, 2023), https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/col.

[3] R. V. Reeves, *Of Boys and Men: Why the Modern Male Is Struggling, Why It Matters, and What to Do About It* (Brookings Institution Press, 2022).

David Buruchara, M.Ed., LMHP-R, is a couples therapist passionate about the intersection of mental health, relationships, and faith. He and his wife, Callie, reside in Virginia.



DELIBERATIONS ON CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

EKKEHARDT MUELLER

It was the 1970s when Brother V. W. Schoen from the General Conference paid a visit to Marienhöhe College in then West Germany, where I studied theology. I do not remember his sermons and lectures, apart from a story he told. He mentioned that when, during his travels, he was asked what nationality he held, he would answer "Adventist." This impressed me so much that I placed the word "Adventist" in metal letters on my briefcase. Whether that was helpful or not can be questioned, but throughout my life this experience has made me think about the issue of national identity, our Christian identity, and the influence and impact our culture has on us.

CULTURE

Culture can be understood as a framework of knowledge, customs, rituals, norms, and values, as well as attitudes, behavior, and actions. These have been transmitted to and accepted by one generation and passed on to the next. Culture consists also of traditions, religious beliefs, language, racial expressions, techniques, works of art, music, institutions, and much more.

Culture shapes persons, forms groups, and creates identity for communities and individuals. Its influence can be subtle or blatant. Typically, it is pervasive. We are enculturated through society, parents, teachers, and others, themselves



having been shaped by culture. Culture is not static and can change, not only over time but also within a generation as modern media and globalization may contribute to sudden shifts. While the term *culture* describes the overarching concept, many cultures populate our world.

Some aspects of culture are helpful and even necessary for societies, while others may be neutral. If not opposed to biblical principles and the gospel of Christ, they can be espoused by sincere Christians. However, there are also aspects of culture in conflict with God's will as expressed in His Word. They can be detrimental to a relationship with Jesus Christ and dangerous for fellow humans. From these Christians need to distance themselves. Overall, culture is a human construct. In its positive forms it is still tainted by sin, whereas in its negative expressions it seeks autonomy from God and is idolatry.[1]

One of the problems with culture is that it is subjective. "What is [considered] moral in one culture might be [considered] immoral or ethically neutral in another. For example, it was not [considered] immoral to kill a baby girl at birth or an aged grandparent who was nonproductive when it was impossible to obtain enough food for all; or wife lending among the Eskimo might be practiced as a gesture of hospitality."[2]

W. A. Bailey discussed the shift in Protestant translations of the sixth commandment from "You shall not kill" to "You shall not murder" because of cultural forces. She states: "People want to kill people, and they want biblical permission to do so. . . . Those who live in cultures that sanction killing in war and capital punishment are more likely to read the sixth commandment in a more limited way because it suits a culturally created worldview."[3]

Britannica's article on culture declares: "It is almost impossible to exaggerate the power and influence of culture. . . . It is powerful enough to hold the sex urge in check and achieve premarital chastity and even voluntary vows of celibacy for life. It can cause a person to die of hunger, though nourishment is available. . . . And it can cause a person to disembowel or shoot himself to wipe out a stain of dishonor. Culture is stronger than life and stronger than death."[4] While the last sentence may be partially true, it does not mean that people cannot make decisions different from the prevailing culture. But the point is that we need to notice how culture influences us, and evaluate such influences. For Christians, God and Scripture have priority over culture, and they are willing to be countercultural if necessary.

NATIONALISM

Culture produces nationalism, and nationalism in turn affects culture. Christian nationalism promotes a certain type of national identity. While it is defined differently by different people, mostly it is understood as "Christianity playing a dominant and institutionalized role in society."[5] Its adherents may attempt to control politics, the cultural

PHOTO: KILC32 / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES



life, and the social life. Christians affected by such a form of nationalism may assume that they need to help God establish or reestablish a Christian nation. Christianity and politics merge, and typically this is a negative development, leading to the oppression and persecution of others.

But the Christian church is not a Christian nation, and the kingdom of God is otherworldly. It is not about force and power. According to Jesus, it is about love, righteousness, mercy, purity in heart, and peacemaking (Matt. 5:3-11). God's church is a worldwide phenomenon, not a local or national movement. It shows the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-24) and in Christ, transcends human boundaries (Eph. 2:13, 14). "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

When Paul came to Jerusalem with the monetary gift of the Gentile-Christian churches, he was urged by the Christian leaders to follow the obsolete ritual law by purifying himself in the temple and paying for the purification of four other men under a vow (Acts 21:24). As he was in the court of the temple, Jews from Asia accused him of "attacking the fundamental symbols of Jewish national solidarity, *the people, the law* and the temple (cf. 6:13)"[6] and created a riot. As reason for their action, they mentioned (1) his preaching "everywhere against our people and the Law and this place," (2) that he supposedly had brought Greeks into the temple, and (3) that thereby the holy place had been defiled (Acts 21:27-29), which, however, was not true. The mob attempted to kill Paul, and the Romans interfered. Paul had to defend himself before the Sanhedrin. Jewish leaders agreed with assassins to get Paul killed. The conspiracy failed, but they brought charges against him before the Roman leaders Felix and, years later, Festus (Acts 22-26).

Several points suggest that Jewish leadership was preoccupied with religious nationalism just as today people are preoccupied with Christian nationalism: First, the division of the temple court into a court for the Gentiles, a court for the women, and a court for the Israelites to which others had no access is not found with the original tabernacle. Second, according to Isaiah and Jesus, the temple was supposed to become a house of prayer for *all* people (Isa. 56:3-8; Mark 11:17). But these statements militated against Jewish separation from other peoples and their feeling of superiority. Third, the Jerusalem temple, as a place of God's presence, had come to an end, indicated by the supernatural tearing of the curtain at Jesus' death (Matt. 27:51). But this sign was neglected by Jewish leadership. They held on to tradition. Last, while Stephen had been accused of speaking against the temple and the law (Acts 6:13), Paul was accused of the same issue, plus of preaching against the Jewish people because through his ministry Gentiles were converted. The narrative contains a strong political thread and warns us against falling prey to philosophies and wishful thinking that are shortsighted and do not reflect the biblical perspective on humanity in general and God's people specifically. Such nationalism can easily turn violent, as it happened with Paul. The major issue, however, is that the rejection of Jesus as Messiah and His way of life fostered religious nationalism.

IDENTITY

The term *identity* describes who and what a person and a group is. It also refers to what persons or groups think about themselves, and therefore has to do with self-perception and self-esteem. Identity points to characteristics, qualities, worldview and beliefs, and appearance of individuals or groups of people.

While the identity of individuals is quite diverse and changes over time, being affected and shaped by biological givens, ethnicity, race, citizenship, family, education, profession, social status, religious beliefs and practices, and various societal-cultural factors. And we must not forget the basic commonality of all humans as creatures of God, made in His image.

Neil Summerton has a point when he speaks about an identity crisis, because "a fundamental human problem in a fallen world is humanity's sense of loss of identity, security and land. Humanity



While Christians live in this world and have their human identities, they are citizens of the world above, pilgrims here while looking for the City of God to come.

. . . has become 'a fugitive and a wanderer' cursed to unfruitful territory and insecurity (Gen. 4:12, 14), cut off from the true source of its identity—relationship with its Creator. . . . Fallen humanity's characteristic response to this predicament is to build for itself a substitute identity and security, based on its own autonomous culture and polity."[7]

Paul was a Jew. He was also a Roman citizen. Educated in Jerusalem as a Pharisee, he was, nevertheless, a citizen of Tarsus, single, and multilingual. From a persecutor he had turned to become a teacher and missionary. But foremost, he was a follower of Christ. He had become a Christian. This name is not to be taken lightly, because in the biblical sense Christians are genuine disciples of Christ, willing to follow their Savior and Lord, believing what the Master believes, putting to practice what Jesus taught, sharing the good news, being willing to suffer, and aiming at glorifying God in whatever they do.

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

Larry Lichtenwalter declares: "The ultimate orientation for Christian identity is the Lord Jesus Christ. Some 90 times New Testament Scripture characterizes the reality of the believers' identity as 'in Christ' (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Rom. 6:11; 8:1; 12:5; 1 Cor. 1:30; 15:22; 2 Cor. 1:21). 'In Christ,' everything changes (2 Cor. 5:17). There is a new self-identity. Not earned, but divinely given. Not inside one's self, but intrinsically outside one's self in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ becomes one's defining self-identity."[8]

While Christians live in this world and have their human identities, they are citizens of the world above, pilgrims here while looking for the City of God to come. At times early Christians called themselves a "third race" to specify that they were neither Jews nor Gentiles but followers of Christ. Yet they form one church composed of people from all nations. They do not need to deny who they are, but their primary identity is found in Christ and in Him alone. Christ in them confronts and modifies their personal identities, their perspectives on cultural expressions and human worldviews, to make them more Christlike. They do not need to bring about a Christian nation, because they are a worldwide people and not a political movement. They do not need to follow cultural fads, because they know God's love, wisdom, and His approach to life.

Christ in us, as portrayed in Scripture, changes our relationship with God, others, and ourselves. If we want to get our priorities straight, if we want to find our primary identity in Christ, we can start with these five things. First, become more self-aware of who and how we are. Second, think deeply about Jesus, His teaching, and how to emulate His lifestyle instead of living a superficial life driven by ever-present media. Third, devote substantial time to God by praying and studying Scripture. Fourth, seek fellowship with sincere followers of Christ instead of remaining islands by ourselves. And fifth, share our faith and put it into practice. Adventist identity must be Christ-focused identity in the truest sense.

[1] Neil Summerton, "Identity Crisis? The Nation-State, Nationality, Regionalism, Language and Religion," *Themelios* 21, no. 3 (1996): 18.

[2] https://www.britannica.com/topic/culture, accessed Apr. 16, 2025.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[4] https://www.britannica.com/topic/culture, accessed Apr. 16, 2025.

[5] See https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/10/27/views-of-the-u-s-as-a-christian-nation-and-opinions-about-christian-n"ationalism/, accessed Apr. 16, 2025.

[6] I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1980), p. 367.

[7] Summerton, p. 18.

[8] Larry Lichtenwalter, "Christian Self-Identity" (unpublished paper, BRI Ethics Committee, September 2022).

Ekkehardt Mueller, now retired, was an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

PHOTO: KILC32 / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES



REFLECTING ON CREATIONISM

RONNY NALIN

What does it mean to be a creationist? Would I really want to be associated with something that, particularly in academia, often carries a pejorative connotation?

A Google search provides the following definition of a creationist: "A person who believes that the universe and living organisms originate from specific acts of divine creation, as in the biblical account."[1]

I like this definition. It is descriptive and neutral, avoids negative characterizations, and accurately reflects what, in my opinion, represents the essence of being a creationist. I would happily identify as a creationist based on this definition. It would be prudent, however, to dig a little deeper than a Google search and consider some of the important criticisms faced by the creationist paradigm.

CREATIONISM IS NOT SCIENCE?

The primary concern with creationism is summed up in the statement: "Creationism is not science." For example, the Geological Society of America (GSA), of which I am a member, explains in a position statement: "Creationism, creation 'science,' and intelligent design emerged from religious thought, and because they invoke supernatural phenomena, they cannot frame hypotheses that can be tested. Hence, all forms of creationism are not science."[2]

The fact that some aspects of creationism are not empirically testable and should not be considered science is not a bad thing in itself. In the words of Nobel laureate Richard Feynman: "If a thing is not a science, it is not necessarily bad. For example, love is not a science. So if something is said not to be a science, it does not mean that there is something wrong with it; it just means that it is not a science."[3]

At the same time, it is important to recognize that biblical creationism can indeed generate questions and hypotheses that can be and are being explored empirically.

Furthermore, the same demarcation argument used for

GARRETT PARKER

creationism (that *it is not* science) can be applied to naturalism if it asserts ontologically the nonexistence of God or His lack of interaction with the world. This is implicitly affirmed in the same GSA position statement: "Scientists do not and cannot claim to prove or disprove the existence of God or other major tenets of religious traditions."[4]

In practice, many scientists, Christian or not, adopt the more agnostic stance of methodological naturalism. This approach excludes divine (or supernatural) causation in reconstructing, observing, and predicting patterns and phenomena in nature, but does so without implying that metaphysical realities do not exist. I appreciate the consistency of methodological naturalism, particularly with the principle of the uniformity of laws, and its effectiveness when applied to the study of physical phenomena.

I confess, however, to an apprehension that such pragmatic compartmentalization may lead to a mental picture of reality as self-contained, in contrast to the biblical portrait of a relational, personal God, who is central to every facet of our life. If I could use an imperfect illustration, I worry that methodological naturalism could be akin to telling an orphaned child, "Your father may be alive, but for all practical purposes, live as if he is not, and as if he never was or never will be part of your life." But what if he was part of my life, or if he will be? What if he is trying to reach out to me?

If being a creationist means engaging with existential questions and coming to openly acknowledge a powerful God who is fully invested in His creation, then I want to be a creationist.

CREATIONISM LEADS TO LAZINESS OR SLOPPINESS?

A second negative claim about creationism is somewhat connected to the first, through the concept of divine agency. If divine intervention is accepted as a possibility, it could be conveniently invoked whenever we fail to fully understand natural features or phenomena. This tendency, known as the "God of the gaps" approach, can sometimes mask a lack of competence or effort, where simplistic explanations replace careful research. In the words of Scottish geologist Charles Lyell: "Never was there a dogma more calculated to foster indolence and to blunt the keen edge of curiosity than this assumption of the discordance between the ancient and existing causes of change."[5]

To respond to this charge, we must first clarify that being a creationist does not mean rejecting the idea of natural laws and regularities. Theologically, we understand that "God does not annul His laws or work contrary to them, but He is continually using them as His instruments."[6]

In fact, the regularities of the world find more meaning (the why of the laws) in accepting the reality of a Lawgiver and Sustainer. And when it comes to understanding the past, it may very well be that the "gaps" are owing to our limited comprehension of His laws, not to anomalies or suspensions in their functioning. We place these regularities in a context in which there exists Someone who not only has the power to work through them, but who is also greater than these regularities and established them.

As for the concern that belief in divine intervention leads to intellectual complacency, I take one biblical episode as my compass to define my posture toward God's action in nature. It is found in Simon's reaction to Jesus' command to fish in daylight: "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets" (Luke 5:5, NIV).

Like Simon's reaction, the creationist approach is not based on a blind and ill-informed effort. It does not dispense with study and hard work. But it remains open to listening and acting upon God's Word, recognizing that His power transcends our efforts.

Therefore, if being a creationist means to respect the process of rigorous observation and hypothesis development and testing, but in a context that is greater than mere naturalism, one should not be embarrassed about being a creationist.

CREATIONISM IS WEIRD?

Can the characterization of creationism as nonscientific and intellectually weak hinder fruitful interactions and active integration of a creationist within the scientific community? This question hinges on sociological considerations, because being a scientist also involves being part of a community.

Any ingroup-outgroup dynamic can be a recipe for tension and isolation, but there is another side to the coin. At its best, the scientific community

If being a creationist means being honest about what I don't understand, without giving up the search for truth all while recognizing that I am not God, then I am comfortable with being a creationist.

is inclusive. Consider, for example, this summary of the GSA position statement on diversity: "The Geological Society of America (GSA) is committed to constructing an environment in which all can thrive by building an inclusive, equitable, and accessible professional community that engages diverse students, professional and academic geoscientists, and the communities they serve."[7]

Mutual trust is built through respectful acknowledgment of differences and commonalities, exercised with tact and discernment. In the community of scientists we encounter kindred interests but also different worldviews. Professionally and relationally, this can be ground for growth and opportunity. So if being a creationist means to have a distinctive perspective within a community that shares a passion for the study of the natural world, then I value being a creationist.

CREATIONISM LACKS SOUND ANSWERS?

Science is so attractive because it is essentially positivistic. It promises a progression of enlightenment and ultimate explanatory power to make sense of all reality. I have felt the thrill of excitement when the evidence I study "clicks" with my understanding of earth history, but I am also mindful of major unresolved challenges still confronted by a creationist paradigm. Indeed, as many philosophers of science and scientists themselves understand, science as a whole has limits, and naturalism faces significant unanswered questions as well. But what should I think when I have no great alternatives to explain what others consider settled but, to me, remains problematic?

My first response is to experience a sense of finitude. I like the way Solomon puts it: "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end" (Eccl. 3:11). I don't read this passage as a call to quit seeking and learning, a capitulation to ignorance. Instead, by acknowledging the areas in which I lack understanding, I gain the right attitude for a divinely led journey of inquiry.

When I have only partial or unsatisfactory answers, I may be tempted to withdraw from the study of the natural world, which is the opposite of God's original plan for humanity. It was an enemy who first insinuated that God wants to limit our access to the fruits He created.

But there is also another lie spoken at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "You will be like God." A science without God—in which we claim to know everything—reminds me of this deception. As kings of a self-contained universe, we attempt to approximate immortality and divinity by mastering the knowledge of good and evil. To some, this fruit is attractive and desirable. But in the end it leads to very dark places.

So if being a creationist means to be honest about what I don't understand, without giving up the search for truth all while recognizing that I am not God, then I am comfortable with being a creationist.

AN INVITATION

Ultimately, from a Christian perspective, being a creationist means choosing to recognize Jesus Christ as the Creator of the world. Developing this conviction is a most profound experience. Like Peter, standing at the edge of his boat and seeing Jesus walking on water, one may feel the urge to say, "If this is true, tell me to come to You on the water." To the one ready for this journey, Christ will give a simple answer: "Come."

[1] Terms input in Google Chrome search bar: definition + creationist, accessed on Feb. 5, 2025. Source cited on Google dictionary box: *Oxford Languages*.

[2] GSA Position Statement, *Teaching Evolution*, p. 2, https://rock.geosociety.org/net/documents/gsa/positions/pos1_TeachingEvolution.pdf, accessed on Feb. 5, 2025.

[3] R. P. Feynman, *Six Easy Pieces* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), p. 47.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[5] C. Lyell, *Principles of Geology*, 1st ed. (1833), vol. 3, pp. 2, 3.

[6] Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890, 1908), p. 114.

[7] GSA Position Statement, *Diversity in the Geosciences*, p. 1, https://rock.geosociety.org/net/documents/gsa/positions/pos15_Diversity.pdf, accessed on Feb. 6, 2025.

Ronny Nalin, Ph.D., is director of the Geoscience Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

AT ANY COST

Reflections on J. N. Andrews and Adventist higher education 150 years later

Editor's note: *Below is a distillation of an August 24, 2024, sermon given at Pioneer Memorial church on the 150th anniversary of Andrews University (formerly Battle Creek College). Some elements of public oratory have been preserved.*

In September 1874, a mere month after the opening of Battle Creek College, John Nevins Andrews sailed to Europe as the first officially appointed Adventist overseas missionary. The proximity of the starting of both the college and Andrews' travels were not a coincidence. On the contrary, the reason we started Battle Creek College in the United States was the same reason J. N. Andrews left to go to Switzerland: *mission*, the mission of introducing people to Jesus Christ, sharing with them the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, and . . .

And here, precisely on this point, is where this 150th anniversary celebration galls me.

Please don't misunderstand! I'm thrilled at the chance to relive the stories of our pioneers and their bravery. But what galls me about this 150-year celebration is that it means *we are still here*. Jesus has not yet come. We are not yet in heaven. The work is not yet done.

And the question naturally comes: What would it take for this to change? I think the answer to at least part of that question lies in a single phrase: *At any cost.*

It was not cheap for J. N. Andrews to go to Europe. He literally sold everything, giving much of the proceeds for building Battle Creek College and using the rest for his mission expenses. He, in essence, said, "I will fulfill the mission Christ has given me, *at any cost!*" And back home those creating what would eventually become Andrews University said the same: "We will sacrifice! We will see this institution grow to become a sharp tool in God's hand for sharing Christ and the three angels' messages with the world—and we will do that *at any cost!*"

But today I wonder: Are we still doing this? Is the primary mission of Adventist higher education still the spreading of Jesus Christ and His gospel as found in the three angels' messages? I think the answer is a definite . . . sometimes! Sometimes, yes, we are doing this! But other times, not so much—or maybe, in some cases, no, not at all.



THE PIONEERING PASTOR
SHANE ANDERSON

JESUS IS COMING SOON! MAY WE DO ALL WE CAN TO PREPARE THE WAY.

Faculty, both here and at any Adventist institution, I plead with you: Make your graduates the smartest, most proficient they can be in their chosen fields! And never forget that one of the primary reasons you exist is not only to instruct, but *to equip students for the finishing of the work*; to equip students who will go out and give their all to fulfill the mission of spreading the gospel *at any cost! That* is why our forebears started this university! *That* is why we are here! And "at any cost" is the attitude that, by God's grace, will help guarantee there will never be a 200th anniversary of this august, much loved, impactful institution.

Is this not the hope that burns in our hearts? Then let us live it. Jesus is coming soon! May we do all we can to prepare the way.

Shane Anderson is the lead pastor of Pioneer Memorial church on the campus of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

STEADFAST *Love*

Jesus in pursuit of His bride





Love awakens love, and selflessness awakens selflessness.

TECHA TUNGATEJA / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS / GETTY IMAGES

This article was originally published online as part of our Sabbath School Reflections series. To read the weekly reflection, visit https://adventistreview.org/sabbath-school.

Throughout the Bible, marriage serves as one of the clearest illustrations of God's love. From God's covenant faithfulness to Israel to the tender imagery of a bridegroom rejoicing over his bride (Isa. 62:5) and the passionate longing expressed in the Song of Solomon, Scripture consistently uses the language of betrothal, pursuit, and unwavering love to help us grasp the depth of God's commitment to His people.

HOSEA AND GOMER: A LIVING PARABLE OF GRACE

Among the many images of God's steadfast love, the Old Testament story of Hosea and Gomer has always stood out to me. It is a love story, but not the kind we expect. It is raw, painful, and redemptive—a living parable of divine grace. Written more than 700 years before Christ, this story is one of the clearest foreshadows of the gospel. It illustrates the love that will be most fully revealed in Jesus—the true Bridegroom, who would come to rescue and restore His unfaithful bride.

Hosea, whose name means "salvation," was called to embody the message he preached. During a time of deep spiritual and moral apostasy, when Israel had forsaken God for lifeless idols, the Lord instructed Hosea to marry a woman who would be unfaithful to him. Her name was Gomer, meaning "completion." This completeness could be found in her oneness with her husband, but her wandering heart led

her away from the one who truly loved her, leaving her broken, enslaved, and lost. It is only through being reunited with Hosea that her name finds its true meaning. Similarly, we are made whole only when we are in Christ, our true Bridegroom.

THE POWER OF REDEMPTION

Gomer strayed, chasing after other lovers, just as Israel had turned away from the Lord to worship false gods. But Hosea's love did not waver. Even when Gomer had sunk to her lowest depths, Hosea sought her out. In an act of astonishing grace, he redeemed her for 15 shekels of silver and a measure of barley (Hosea 3:2). This was the price of a slave, yet Hosea was willing to pay it to restore his bride. The story captures the heartbeat of the gospel. Jesus is our Hosea, and we are Gomer. We have wandered far from Him, selling ourselves to lesser loves, bound by the chains of sin. Christ, however, did not leave us in our bondage. He came searching for us, and at the greatest cost—His own life—He redeemed us. We were incomplete, lost, and broken, but in Him we discover our true purpose.

This is the power of redemption. We are told that it is the goodness of God that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). Just as Hosea's unwavering love awakened something in Gomer's heart, it is the kindness and unselfish love of Christ, our Bridegroom, that draws us to Him. He neither forces our love nor abandons us in our waywardness. Instead He pursues us, redeems us, and lavishes His grace upon us until our hearts soften, and we turn to Him in love. True transformation happens when we are overwhelmed by a love that we do not deserve yet is freely given. His goodness not only saves us but also changes us, making us new, faithful, and whole in His love. Ellen White puts it so beautifully when she writes:

"The very first step in approaching God is to know and believe the love that He has to us (1 John 4:16); for it is through the drawing of His love that we are led to come to Him. The perception of God's love works the renunciation of selfishness."*

Love awakens love, and selflessness awakens selflessness. We are transformed by beholding the beauty of Jesus' character. Christ laid down His life to secure His people forever. This is the love story that has been unfolding since the foundation of the world. When Jesus walked on this earth, He referred to Himself as the Bridegroom (Matt. 9:15), alluding to the great wedding yet to come. His love was not distant or indifferent; it was the love of One who would give everything to unite with His beloved bride. On the cross Jesus sealed His love with His own blood, truly revealing the depth of His commitment to His covenant people.

THE GOSPEL IN THE WEDDING STORY

In ancient Jewish weddings the bridegroom would go to the bride's house to finalize the betrothal (engagement). This occurred after the dowry had been paid. The groom would then return to his father's house to prepare a place for his future wife. Once the preparations were complete, he would return to his bride's house for the wedding feast. Afterward he would take his bride to the place he had prepared.

Recognize the significance of this sequence in the gospel love story. Jesus left His Father's house in heaven to come to this earth to be united with His precious bride, the church. He paid the highest possible dowry by giving His life at Calvary. After His resurrection He returned to His Father's house to prepare a place for His bride. Meanwhile His bride remained on earth to prepare herself for the wedding. At the end of earth's history Jesus will return and will finally be united with His radiant bride. He will take her to the place He has prepared. John portrayed this very picture when he wrote some of his most famous words.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

This is marriage language! Jesus understood that it is easy for us to feel fearful, worried, and anxious. He says that our hearts should not be troubled. Instead of being troubled, our hearts should be filled with eager anticipation, like a bride preparing to meet her bridegroom.

THE BRIDE MADE READY

You see, Jesus is not only preparing a place for us but also preparing us for that place. This preparation is not just about outward readiness; it

involves a transformation of the heart. Through trials He refines our faith. Through His Word He renews our minds. Through His love He draws us closer to Himself. All those who trust in Him are being clothed in the fine linen of His righteousness. So while He prepares a place for us in His Father's house, He also prepares us for the joy of being there. Heaven is not just a destination, but a home for those whose hearts have been made ready. When He comes again, it will be not only to bring us to that place but also to bring us into the fullness of the relationship that He has longed to share with us. The more we draw near to Jesus today, the more our hearts are made ready for the day when we see Him face-to-face.

From Hosea's pursuit of Gomer to Jesus' pursuit of His people, the story of divine love has consistently pointed forward to one glorious moment, which we encounter in the end of the biblical narrative—the wedding of the Lamb. Revelation offers us a glimpse of that magnificent day.

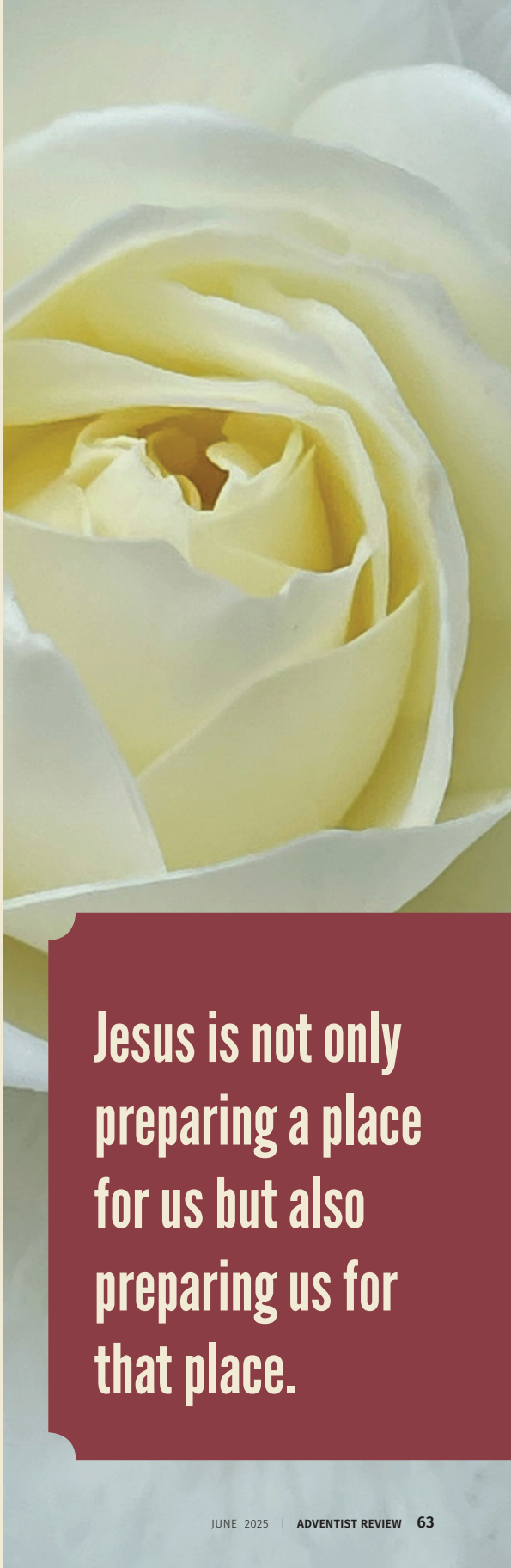
" 'Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.' And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" ' And he said to me, 'These are the true sayings of God' " (Rev. 19:7-9).

The bride has been made ready—not by her own merit, but by the love of the Bridegroom. Just as Hosea's steadfast love transformed Gomer, so too has the church been prepared by the unwavering goodness of Christ. It is His love that has drawn her, His righteousness that has clothed her, and His promise that has sustained her.

The story of redemption, woven throughout Scripture in the imagery of marriage, finds its ultimate fulfillment here. The One who pursued, redeemed, and prepared a place has now come to take His bride home. On that day the longing of every heart that His love has won will be satisfied as the bride stands before the Bridegroom, finally and forever complete.

* Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), pp. 104, 105.

Daniel Pel is a pastor and international evangelist who recently published his first book, *Stories That Transform—A Fresh Look at the Parables of Jesus.*



Jesus is not only preparing a place for us but also preparing us for that place.

JANINE ROBINSON

1888 Message National Conference 2025

IN SEARCH OF THE CROSS



Southern Adventist University

June 18–21 2025

Speakers

Dee Casper, Kris Eckenroth, Robert and Andi Hunsaker, Brian and Lyndi Schwartz, Todd and Patti Guthrie, David and Ida Otis, Kelly Kinsley, Michael Duncan, Jerry Finneman

For more info: 269-473-1888 | info@1888msc.org | 1888msc.org

RIGHT BEFORE THE VEIL

The beautiful significance of the altar of incense

Psalm 77:13 says, "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary." The sanctuary was a 3-D teaching tool, designed by God to show us how to come to Jesus, stay with Jesus, and be ready for Jesus when He comes. As a priest entered through the gate into the courtyard, he would walk past the altar, past the laver, and into the holy place, where he would see three articles of furniture. The table of showbread, representing God's Word, was on the north side. Opposite this was a seven-branched candlestick on the south. This symbolized our witness for Jesus, when our hearts are ignited with the oil of the Holy Spirit. Then right in front of the veil was the altar of incense. This altar symbolized the prayers of the saints that ascend with the sweet merits of Jesus' righteousness (Rev. 8:3).

In these three sacred articles of furniture we see represented three essential things to sustain our daily walk with Jesus. Namely, Bible study, Spirit-filled witness, and prayer. But have you ever stopped to think about the placement of the altar of incense?

It was right in front of the veil. On the other side of the veil, in the most holy place, was the ark of the covenant. This sacred chest had a special lid with two golden angels on it called the mercy seat, because it symbolized the throne of God. I love that this is the name given to God's throne; truly His throne is a throne of mercy, not marble!

The placement of the altar of incense, right in front of the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place, means that nothing brings us closer to God than prayer. Prayer is the opening of our hearts *to God*, not His secretary, or His inbox, but *to God* as to a friend.

Whenever I look at Jesus' life, I'm always impressed by how much He saw the need to pray even though He was perfect and the Son of God. He started His ministry in the wilderness, praying and fasting. Then He closed His public ministry in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross, praying as well. The Gospel writers tell us that Jesus withdrew to a mountainside to pray early in the morning and sometimes all through the night. If you've never known what it is to kneel where no human voice can be heard, beneath a tree or in the silent starlight, and look up to talk to God, you're missing something words can't describe; something a child of God should know. Jesus saw the daily need to pray and ask for God's direction and wisdom. And if *He* did, how much more should we? Nothing brings us closer to God than prayer. He is only ever a prayer away.

THINK AGAIN

CHARISSA TOROSSIAN



WHENEVER I LOOK AT JESUS' LIFE, I'M IMPRESSED BY HOW MUCH HE SAW THE NEED TO PRAY EVEN THOUGH HE WAS PERFECT AND THE SON OF GOD.

A teaching graduate from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, **Charissa Torossian** is passionate about presenting on the Bible and its relevance for our time.

IMPACT HOPE

"This trade isn't just a skill; it's my path to freedom."

Empower Young Refugees in Rwanda with Vocational Training at the Center for Hope!



The Center for Hope provides faith-based vocational and entrepreneurial skills to start a business and become self-reliant. This year-round program offers:

- Hairdressing
- Tailoring
- Agriculture
- Welding
- Culinary Arts
- And more to come!

$50 a month gives the opportunity for a young refugee to pursue a trade at the Center for Hope.

IMPACTHOPE.COM

INFO@IMPACT-HOPE.ORG | (503) 673-3905
P.O. BOX 28 GLADSTONE, OR 97027



ZENO L. CHARLES-MARCEL PETER N. LANDLESS

ARTIFICIALLY SWEET, NATURALLY SICK

What sugar substitutes are doing to your health

Q: Why are excess sugar and artificial sweeteners harmful to our health, and what are better alternatives?

A: In today's world, sweeteners are nearly impossible to avoid. They're hidden in processed foods, drinks, sauces, and even bread. Because excess sugar is harmful, artificial sweeteners have become popular, offering sweetness without calories. But these synthetic substitutes also carry risks, and better alternatives do exist.

Let's begin with sugar. Consuming too much—especially added sugars found in sodas, desserts, and packaged foods—affects more than just our weight. Studies consistently show that high sugar intake contributes to obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. It also fuels low-grade chronic inflammation.

One study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that added sugar increased the risk of heart disease—even in people who weren't overweight. Sugar disrupts how our cells process energy, and damages metabolic function. It also negatively affects the brain. Frequent consumption of sugary foods and drinks is linked to increased risk of depression and cognitive decline, resulting from inflammation and blood sugar instability. It can impair immune function and worsen conditions such as cancer and autoimmune diseases.

To avoid these effects but still enjoy sweet flavors, many people turn to artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame, sucralose, and saccharin. Though low in calories, these substitutes are not without concerns. Research published in *Nature* and *Cell* has shown that artificial sweeteners may disrupt the gut microbiome—an essential contributor to digestion, immunity, and mental health. Other studies suggest these sweeteners can increase cravings, confuse metabolism, and may even contribute to prediabetes in some individuals.

Thankfully, healthier options are available. The best approach is to gradually reduce both sugar and artificial sweeteners. This retrains your taste buds to appreciate the natural sweetness found in whole foods. Such fruits as apples, berries, bananas, and dates provide sweetness along with fiber, vitamins, and antioxidants. Start by cutting back gradually on both sugar and artificial sweeteners. This helps retrain your taste buds to appreciate the natural sweetness in whole foods. Small amounts of pure honey, maple syrup, or molasses can be used in moderation, especially when combined with high-fiber ingredients. Stevia, monk fruit, and agave are naturally sweet and are normally regarded as safe.

When sweetness comes in its natural, God-designed form—wrapped in fiber, nutrients, and balance—it can be a blessing, not a burden.

Instead of soda or juice, try sparkling water with lemon, mint, or cucumber, or herbal teas that are naturally sweet, such as licorice root or cinnamon blends. Baking at home with mashed bananas, applesauce, or pureed dates as sweeteners is another healthful option. In addition, eating more whole, unprocessed foods—vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains—can stabilize blood sugar and also reduce sweet cravings.

The key is not to fear all sweetness, but to respect it. When sweetness comes in its natural, God-designed form—wrapped in fiber, nutrients, and balance—it can be a blessing, not a burden. Choosing wisely today helps restore your energy, protect your body, and honor the temple God gave you.

Zeno L. Charles-Marcel, a board-certified internist, is the director of Adventist Health Ministries at the General Conference. **Peter N. Landless**, a board-certified nuclear cardiologist and General Conference Adventist Health Ministries director emeritus, is also a board-certified internist.



ADVENTIST REVIEW

DON'T MISS IT!

Starting in August 2025, we are excited to announce that *Adventist World* will continue on as *Adventist Review*. It will arrive with *Adventist Journey* for a few months during the rest of the year.

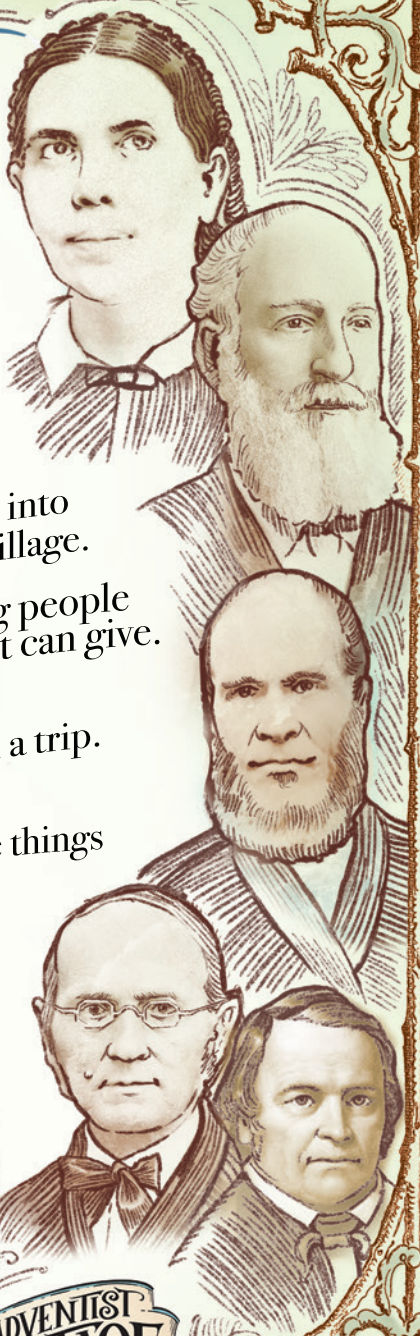
Beginning in January 2026, you can access all *Adventist Review* materials, such as global church news and Bible-based articles, by:

- Making adventistreview.org your homepage and seeing new posts daily
- Subscribing and "liking" the latest news and articles on Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter)
- Getting our weekly newsletter in your email inbox
- Receiving the print edition of the *Adventist Review* each month
- Looking out for new and different digital platforms that will be in various languages

If you want to subscribe to a print edition; already are a subscriber and want to manage your *Adventist Review* subscription; or simply don't know, you can:

- Visit my.adventistreview.org/
- Contact Pacific Press Publishing Association at 800-447-7377.

ADVENTIST HERITAGE MINISTRIES



How much do you and your family know about the Adventist pioneers?

Ever wonder about their passions and personal lives?

Relive their adventures with God and people of their times.

In several U.S. states you can step into their lives via their homes and a village.

Time is short. We and our young people need the inspiration such a visit can give.

AHM invites you to first visit adventistheritage.org and plan a trip. Then come!

God will speak to you through the things you see and hear and touch.

Experience our Seventh-day Adventist roots for yourself!

ADVENTIST HERITAGE MINISTRIES


Meta
Business Partner
TikTok
Marketing
Google
Ads
YOUR AUDIENCE
IS ONLINE.
LET'S REACH THEM.
Since 2016, Advent Digital Marketing has partnered with
organizations like Voice of Prophecy, Kettering Health, ASI,
AudioVerse, and more to reach millions through digital marketing.
Amplify your message online and make 2025 a breakthrough year.
VISIT ADVENTDIGITALMARKETING.COM FOR A FREE CONSULTATION

CONTINUED FROM P. 72

Then the hand of providence placed me in the path of the late Vernon Polite, at the time the dean of the College of Education. We first interacted when he noticed me wearing a suit to my work-study job for him. Besides the fact that it was laundry day and that I feared Northwest Airlines might lose my luggage, I explained to him that I was traveling that evening to Indiana University to give a talk on finding purpose in Christ. He then extended an invitation to deliver a brief invocation at the inaugural State of the African American Male Conference. Those 10 minutes proved pivotal, not merely for the event but for both our souls. Unbeknownst to me, that brief speech etched itself deeply into Prof. Polite's consciousness. Something was happening; the Spirit of God was moving.

Shortly thereafter, Prof. Polite found himself confronting a battle with cancer; his oncologist insisted he adopt a plant-based diet. Suddenly the threads of our relationship, woven by casual admiration and quiet respect, pulled tighter. He sought me out, inviting me to weekly lunches around campus as together we discovered restaurants serving plant-based cuisine. Each meal became sacred ground—quietly I ministered to his physical and spiritual hunger, conversations drifting naturally from recipes to redemption, from dietary healing to divine hope.

In the quiet ebb and flow of those lunches, the seeds of friendship and trust blossomed. The professor became my advocate, voting for my nomination for Eastern Michigan University's MLK Jr. Student Humanitarian Award for my work with Unbound. At the president's MLK Jr. birthday luncheon, having won the award, standing before faculty, community leaders, and peers, I was privileged to share, for 15 uninterrupted minutes, not only about humanitarian accomplishments, but about the underlying motivation of love driving us to excellence. In that audience sat the professor, heart profoundly moved, quietly affirming the investments he had privately made.

The culmination of God's patient orchestration became poignantly clear months later. I had graduated and moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to train student missionaries in the Boston area, when I received a call that Prof. Polite had suffered a stroke, silencing his voice and darkening his



EMICH.EDU

days. Yet, miraculously, in his silence, he asked to speak *only to me*. Over a tender phone call, thousands of miles apart, I prayed with my dear friend and mentor, gently leading him to surrender to Christ. Just days later he slipped peacefully into the sleep of death, his final breaths fragrant with the grace that had pursued him so faithfully.

When I returned later for his memorial, my heart overflowed with awe at the delicate, determined ways God moves among us, through us, and even despite us. On those secular campuses, God had manifested His presence in profound, tangible ways—not simply in grandiose public victories, but in quiet, individual triumphs like that of Prof. Polite, whose soul now rests secure in Christ.

Today missionary life on secular campuses is seldom marked by grand evangelistic crusades. More often it is the quiet witness of consistent love, patient dialogue, and gentle persistence in the mundane moments. Yet in those humble efforts the weight of glory descends unmistakably upon us, reminding us that our labors in the Lord are never in vain.

To have seen God move so clearly, drawing hearts from confusion to conviction, from darkness to divine light, remains one of my greatest privileges. And though there were countless miraculous encounters throughout my missionary journey, none remains more vivid, more sacred, than guiding Prof. Vernon Polite, friend and mentor, safely home.

Sebastien Braxton is CXO of Business Payment Systems, a digital payments company, and cofounder of Luminate World, a mobile app that helps you connect with Jesus while doing everyday tasks.



SEBASTIEN BRAXTON

QUIET WITNESS ON A SECULAR CAMPUS

I was neither seeking God, nor ministry, nor even answers when He found me. My conversion came in a secular college classroom, where I sat defiantly as an atheist, convinced that religion was merely an emotional drug to quiet the guilt of its adherents. Religion was for the duplicitous: angels Sunday morning but demons by night. Yet with remarkable clarity, the power of prophetic truth penetrated my skepticism, gently dismantling my doubts, and illuminating a new path through a four-hour Bible study on Daniel 2 and 7 from a young woman I had sat down with only because I found her pretty. Observing my love for history and thoughtful arguments against faith, she gave me a copy of *The Great Controversy*. Its pages conveyed ancient answers to my pressing heart questions. From this place came a call to ministry on secular campuses among students whose hearts, like mine, quietly yearned for deeper truths.

THERE IS A PECULIAR GRACE THAT ACCOMPANIES OBEDIENCE—A DIVINE ENERGY THAT LIFTS SIMPLE ACTS OF FAITH INTO SOMETHING MAGNIFICENT.

As the dust settled from my own transformation, my heart ached for my peers, young men and women ensnared in spiritual apathy, disillusioned by grandiose Southern megachurches, and craving authenticity and depth. Thus, I heard the divine whisper clearly: secular campus ministry was to be my field, and students my congregation. Accepting this call with trembling hands and a willing heart, I committed two years of my life to intense preparation, training with the Michigan Conference's public campus ministry missionary training program at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, before enrolling as a student at Eastern Michigan University.

SOMETHING WAS HAPPENING

There is a peculiar grace that accompanies obedience—a divine energy that lifts simple acts of faith into something magnificent. It was on those campuses that I experienced this firsthand, witnessing God orchestrate encounters and weave connections I could never have imagined. I recall visiting a student addicted to smoking, with the intent of inviting her to our stop-smoking seminar. During the visit she made it clear that she couldn't attend the meeting but asked me, "Do you know the steps? Could you walk me through them right now?"

Caught off guard but unwilling to turn her away with nothing, I coyly said, "Sure."

I proceeded to walk her through the ideas found in *Steps to Christ*, one of my favorite books, ending with prayer. She called the next day, excited that her desire for smoking was completely gone! Subsequently she began visiting our student church on campus, joined our fall spiritual retreat, and eventually answered an appeal to give her life to Christ. Praise the Lord!

While at Eastern Michigan University I initiated a service project called "Unbound," repurposing outdated textbooks to help universities abroad that lacked resources. What began as a humble logistical venture blossomed into a rich avenue of spiritual conversations and genuine relationships. Conversations with collaborators naturally turned to matters of faith, life, divine purpose, and eventually Bible studies.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 71

COME FOR A *Visit*



There is more than one way to check out Southern Adventist University:

- **Virtual visits** allow you to see our campus and gather information from the comfort of home.
- **In-person visits** give you the immersive experience of walking around on our tree-lined sidewalks, enjoying blooming flowers and shrubs, meeting people face-to-face, and soaking up the culture of campus.



Either way, you'll get a guided tour, faculty visit, and admissions consultation while having the chance to ask any questions you want. We can't wait to meet you!



Schedule today!

southern.edu/visit



1.800.SOUTHERN • enrollment@southern.edu • southern.edu/enrollment

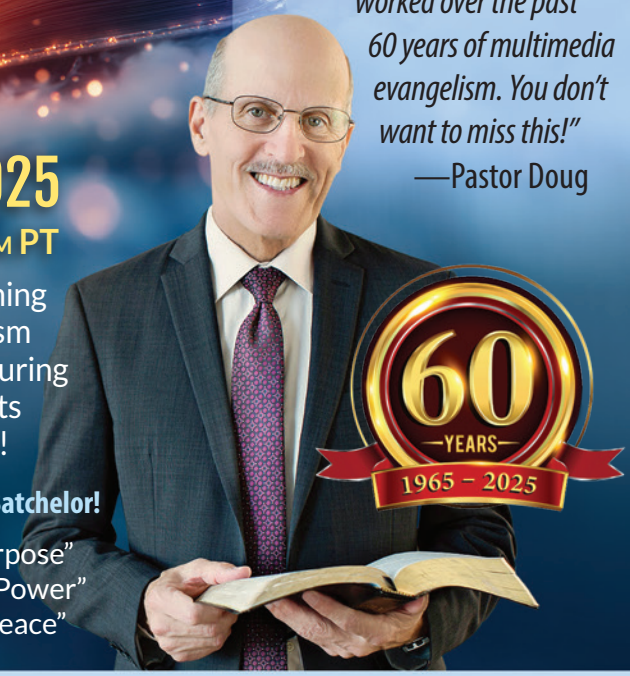
SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY
Power for Mind & Soul

AMAZING FACTS
INTERNATIONAL

60 Years of Miracles

Reaching the World for Christ!

"Friend, I hope you will join me for this inspiring weekend with Amazing Facts. We'll revisit the power of prophecy to change lives—and be inspired by the countless miracles God has worked over the past 60 years of multimedia evangelism. You don't want to miss this!"
—Pastor Doug



September 26 & 27, 2025

First presentation begins at 7:00 PM PT

Come celebrate 60 years of transforming lives through Amazing Facts evangelism during this special two-day event featuring powerful testimonies, inspiring insights from guest speakers, music, and more!

Includes a three-part Bible series with Doug Batchelor!

- **Friday, 7:00 PM PT** — "Prophecy: The Purpose"
- **Sabbath, 11:00 AM PT** — "Prophecy: The Power"
- **Sabbath, 3:00 PM PT** — "Prophecy: The Peace"

Join Us in Person!

Granite Bay Hilltop
Seventh-day Adventist Church
6605 Sierra College Blvd.
Granite Bay, CA 95746

Other Ways to Watch

AFTV, Facebook, YouTube

AFTV AMAZINGFACTSTV · LIVE · YouTube

Ready to see miracles in your own community?

Let Amazing Facts' 60 years of evangelistic expertise give you the confidence to get started!

- **AFCOE discipleship courses**
- **Bible School**
- **Turnkey evangelistic program**
- **Eye-catching sharing materials**

Learn more and get involved at **amazingfacts.org/60years!**