

## Do We Need *Adventist* Megachurches?

BY CLINTON WAHLEN

Megachurches have become big business according to *Forbes* magazine: raking in over \$8.5 billion a year in the U.S. alone. Defined as churches with over 2,000 attendees a week, the average megachurch income was \$6.7 million in 2007. The Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, the largest megachurch in the U.S., boasts a budget of \$70 million and weekly attendance of 43,500. Leasing the former home of the Houston Rockets basketball team, the church spent \$95 million just to make the facility *feel* like a church, putting wall-to-wall carpet underneath the 14,000 seats. “Twin waterfalls book-end a stage that rises and falls before a circling gold globe and a pulpit.”<sup>1</sup> Even the financial crisis seemingly has not had much of an impact on these churches.

Of course, large churches are not new. They have long been established in the major cities and many great European cathedrals have seating capacities over 10,000. St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, for example, can potentially seat 13,800 while St. Peter’s in Rome has a capacity of 29,000.<sup>2</sup> The largest megachurch in the world is the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul led by David Yonggi Cho. Founded in 1958, the church has a total seating capacity of 25,000 and now claims a current membership of about 800,000.<sup>3</sup> But is bigger really better? Are more members, more money, more capabilities always “more” or is something lost in the process?

More to the point, how should we as Adventists relate to the megachurch movement? This raises an even more basic question: what is “church”? Is it something we “do,” somewhere we “go,” or something we “are”? All

these definitions—as worship, as a building, as a congregation—and more have been given. What did Jesus intend by “church” (*ekklēsia*, Matt 16:18; 18:17) and what does the NT mean by the term? These questions are increasingly crucial in an age where the church has been struggling to remain relevant to the world around it.

### The Biblical Concept of “Church”

How the term *ekklēsia* came to mean “church” is debated.<sup>4</sup> In the New Testament it may refer to a local congregation or, more comprehensively, to the church as the totality of Christians everywhere. The word is used over 100 times in the Septuagint, usually as a translation of *qāhāl* (“assembly,” e.g., Deut 9:10),<sup>5</sup> the Hebrew term that seems to be behind the Christian usage.<sup>6</sup> In its most basic sense, therefore, the church is a gathering of people in a particular place.<sup>7</sup> Is its size important?

From its earliest beginnings, the church was conceived along the lines of a spiritual family (Mark 3:31-35; Matt 23:8; John 8:34-36) so that terms such as “brothers,” “sisters,” and “little children” could be used affectionately to refer to fellow church members who have close fellowship with one another.<sup>8</sup> Gatherings in

homes, already an important aspect of Jesus’ ministry, continued to be important as venues for the church (e.g., Rom 16:5, 23; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phlm 2; 2 John 10). While some might argue that this practice may have been merely out of convenience or necessity, the importance of the family as a metaphor for the church, even in connection with church officers (1 Tim 3:4, 5, 12), suggests this was not the only or even a determinative factor. Other images such as “little flock” and “remnant” likewise suggest a small number.<sup>9</sup>

The largest “Christian” gatherings in the New  
*(continued on page 3)*



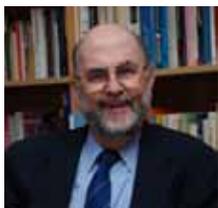
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## EDITORIAL

## Beyond Atlanta



The fifty-ninth General Conference session in Atlanta is now history. The high point of the session was Elder Ted Wilson's sermon on the last Sabbath of the conference. In the presence of about 70,000 members he delivered a programmatic and impressive sermon titled "Go forward not backward" in which he addressed

some of the important issues and challenges facing the church, including a reaffirmation of our doctrine of the remnant.

From the beginning, the idea that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy has been important to our identity as Adventists. The rise of the Advent movement has been seen as the fulfillment of the prophesied remnant in Revelation 12:17, "And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (KJV). Of course, this identification of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with the remnant does not mean that only Adventists will be saved. God has his children in all Christian churches. Therefore, at the end of time, the call will go forth, "Come out of her [Babylon], my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Rev 18:4). Any charge of exclusivism is, therefore, completely misplaced.

Not long ago, the Biblical Research Institute published a book that explores further the biblical and theological concept of the remnant.<sup>1</sup> Written by a number of authors, it takes a thoughtful and comprehensive look at this very vital subject.

As a church, we have never taught that only Adventists will be saved. Just as Israel's election was not an election to be an exclusive people of saved individuals but an election to service, so the remnant church is not an exclusive club of saved individuals, but a church with a specific mission. We believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's visible end-time church that is charged with the task of proclaiming the *Three Angels' Messages* to a dying world and prepare it for the Second Coming.

If we are only part of the remnant, as some believe, the question needs to be asked, how do the signs of the remnant church in Revelation 12:17—keeping the commandments and having the testimony of Jesus—fit any other Christian church? Which of the other churches keep all the commandments and have the genuine prophetic gift in their church? I do not know of any other church.

To reinterpret Revelation 12:17, in the way that some translations do, making the text say that the remnant "keep God's commandments and maintain *their* testimony for Jesus" (NLT, italics mine) is highly problematic exegetically, as a thorough examination of the text itself<sup>2</sup> and a comparison with most other English translations show. There is an ample exegetical basis for our traditional view of this passage, that the Seventh-day Adventist Church did not come into existence by accident or through human effort, but is the prophetically foreseen remnant church of Revelation 12:17, raised up by God to proclaim

the "everlasting gospel" in these last days as Heaven's final appeal before Christ's return. In spite of criticism from within and without, this understanding will continue to be held and proclaimed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church beyond Atlanta.

Gerhard Pfandl, BRI

<sup>1</sup>Ángel M. Rodríguez, ed., *Toward a Theology of the Remnant* (Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1; Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 2009).

<sup>2</sup>See Gerhard Pfandl, "The Remnant Church and the Spirit of Prophecy" in *Symposium on Revelation—Book II* (ed. Frank B. Holbrook; DARCOM 7; Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 295-333.



## Reflections

*Reflections* seeks to share information concerning doctrinal and theological developments among Adventists and to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. Its intended audience is church administrators, church leaders, pastors and teachers.

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Testament that number in the thousands are those of Jesus teaching and feeding the multitudes (Mark 6:44; 8:9) and on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). However, these were unique, unrepeatable gatherings, as was the assembly on one occasion of more than 500 witnesses to the resurrection (1 Cor 15:6). The fact that megachurches divide their members into much smaller groups reflects the importance of close fellowship that is not possible once a church grows beyond a certain size. This is also why Jesus considered a not overly large circle as His “church” (which included a significant contingent of women followers, Luke 9:2-3) who also heard many of His teachings. The twelve, on the other hand, were being disciples—prepared for leadership—and it is to these that Jesus entrusted instruction not given to the larger group. We see a similar pattern in Paul’s training of leaders who would oversee the congregations he established and who spread the gospel to the surrounding areas.

### A Closer Look at Megachurches

Rather than following the biblical model, megachurches “have become like corporations, competing for market share by offering social centers, child-care programs, first-class entertainment and comfortable, consumer Christianity.”<sup>10</sup> Of course, there is nothing wrong with meeting societal needs, but as churches become

***Is bigger really better? Are more members, more money, more capabilities always “more” or is something lost in the process?***

mega-sized there is a tendency for the pastors to see themselves less like “shepherds of the flock” and more like CEOs whose job is to cast the vision and motivate people to carry it out.<sup>11</sup> The Yoido Full Gospel Church lists 698 pastors (171 of which are ordained), 19 regional sanctuaries, and 151 prayer houses.<sup>12</sup> This is really a denomination disguised as a church. In order to preserve the element of fellowship and discipleship, it is divided into more than 25,000 “cell groups” or congregations averaging about 30 members each.<sup>13</sup>

Authors of the most thorough study to date of megachurches in America attribute their rise to a chang-

ing American culture in which megainstitutions are increasingly prevalent, thus making “more appealing” the megachurch form of church organization: “Since the 1950s, hospitals, schools, stores, factories, and entertainment centers have all grown to megaproportions; therefore why shouldn’t churches?”<sup>14</sup> These authors also enumerate many positive characteristics of the megachurch, including intentionality in ministry, a clear congregational identity and mission, and “professional-quality” worship services that



are entertaining. But, because of size, the megachurch also scripts member involvement, institutionalizing every aspect of church life from greeting and seating to indoctrination and involvement. “Nothing is left to chance.... The megachurch assumption is that contemporary individuals do not interact unless forced to and are relative strangers to those they meet.”<sup>15</sup> In addition, in order to appeal to the contemporary culture “there are low, and often almost no, boundaries between where the church’s ministries start and the world’s influences end. The distinctions between secular and sacred are often minimal at best.”<sup>16</sup>

One unlikely critic of the megachurch movement is David Platt, who was once described as “the youngest megachurch pastor in history.” He writes in his recent book: “Soon I realized I was on a collision course with an American church culture where success is defined by bigger crowds, bigger budgets, and bigger buildings. I was now confronted with a startling reality: Jesus actually spurned the things that my church culture said were most important.”<sup>17</sup> Further, he argues, “success in the kingdom of God involves moving down, not up.”<sup>18</sup> Platt pondered his time with churches in difficult parts of the world where it is dangerous and costly to be a Christian in comparison with the plush and plump life of his new megachurch: “I could not help but think that somewhere along the way we had missed what is radical about our faith and replaced it with what is comfortable. We were settling for a Christianity that revolves around catering to ourselves when the central message of Christianity is actually about abandoning ourselves.”<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Platt still serves as senior pastor of the Church at Brook Hills with a weekly attendance of 4,300.<sup>20</sup>

### Adventists and the Megachurch Movement

What are we to make of the megachurch movement and what lessons can we learn? First, relatively

few Adventist churches in North America fit within the megachurch category. The Hartford Institute for Religion Research, which maintains a database of megachurches in the United States, lists only eight Adventist churches. Their average weekly attendance ranges from 1800 to 3000, but all of these are either connected with or located in close proximity to Adventist institutions.<sup>21</sup> Judging from membership records, ten other Adventist churches may enjoy an average weekly attendance that could qualify them as a megachurch, but again most if not all are connected to large Adventist institutions.<sup>22</sup> And in these institutional settings, such large churches have much to offer. Furthermore, they do not fit the megachurch pattern described by Hartford—an observation that points up a major flaw of the study. While the study recognizes that megachurches are not monolithic (i.e. they come in many different sizes and exhibit widely different personalities and practices), the statistical analysis tends to flatten out the sizeable differences among them. So, for example, many established mainline churches that are very large bear little resemblance to the megachurch pattern the study describes. The same could be said of large Adventist churches connected with institutions. These are not really megachurches in the Hartford mold. It would have been better for the researchers to analyze *separately* the different *types* of megachurches, rather than lump them together.

There have been only a few deliberate Adventist attempts to grow megachurches and none have been successful. They have only divided and decimated existing congregations and have sometimes broken ties with the denomination altogether.<sup>23</sup> Why can we not point to a single example of a truly *Adventist* megachurch? Various factors, including local and specific ones, are no doubt involved in these cases. However, there are more fundamental forces at work too. The notion that methods and practices can be theologically neutral is a myth. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the methodology churches employ *always* springs from theology. The two are inseparable and each directly affects the other. So we need to consider the theological factors at work in the megachurch movement as well as other reasons for concern.

**1. Generic message.** In order to attract the most people the message is tailored to avoid offense and underscore the themes all Christians share. “Thus doctrine should be downplayed, especially if it is distinctive and may lead those we want to reach to feel uncomfortable or excluded.”<sup>24</sup> Sermons may tend to avoid or seriously dilute topics important to Adventists like the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the Spirit of Prophecy, the state of the dead, and the health message. Many lifestyle values are also

virtually ignored as “eighteenth-century holdovers.”<sup>25</sup>

**2. Little real evangelism.** Some large churches may grow by drawing Adventists from other congregations. This is nothing new—over a hundred years ago Ellen White mentioned this phenomenon, lamenting the threat it posed to the prosperity and even the life of smaller churches:<sup>26</sup> “It would be vastly better for their children, for themselves, and for the cause of God if they [Adventists] would remain in the smaller churches, where their help is needed, instead of going to the larger churches, where, because they are not needed, there is a constant temptation to fall into spiritual inactivity.”<sup>27</sup> Even the pastor of one of the largest churches in America wonders whether megachurches are “just taking people from other churches because we have a cooler church.”<sup>28</sup>

**3. Spiritual decline.** As the statement quoted from Ellen White indicates, larger congregations encourage inactivity because, as churches grow larger, only a select few are willing and/or considered capable enough to actively lead out. Worship begins to take on more elements of “performance,” especially with the growing prevalence of videotaping or even live streaming of worship services. Ellen

White likened Adventists in these large churches to thickly-planted trees that become “dwarfed and sickly” because they have no room to grow. They also act as “dead weights,” increasing the burdens on those who are active.<sup>29</sup> Even “the youngest megachurch pastor in history” questions the focus in many large worship services: “When we gather in our church building to sing and lift up our hands in worship, we may not actually be worshipping the Jesus of the Bible. Instead, we may be worshipping ourselves.”<sup>30</sup>

**4. Erosion of sacred funds.** Very large facilities are not only expensive to buy or lease, they are even more expensive to operate. Comfort costs money. That is one of the reasons most megachurches hold four or more services over two or three days.<sup>31</sup> According to *Forbes* magazine, only about 25% of total megachurch income is spent on ministry/mission work; the rest covers salaries and building costs.<sup>32</sup> With greater size comes greater wealth but also many more expenses simply for infrastructure and operation and thus the tendency to feel that a greater share of the offerings need to remain at the local level. One Adventist pastor now even argues that some tithe monies are best kept there.<sup>33</sup>

**5. Minimizing standards for baptism.** Two tendencies which often reinforce each other in order to secure larger numbers: the identification of “core” doctrines from among our 28 fundamental beliefs as if the other beliefs were not as crucial and the idea that baptism into Christ is separate from church membership. But,

*Is “church” something we  
“do,” somewhere we “go,” or  
something we “are”?*

by definition, the fundamental beliefs are just that: what Adventists consider of fundamental importance to faith. And Paul is clear that there is just one baptism, which is baptism into Christ's body the church (Eph 4:4-5; 1 Cor 12:13).

**6. Profanation of worship and even of the Sabbath.** If “the distinctions between secular and sacred are often minimal at best”<sup>34</sup>—and this observation may largely explain why some efforts at “contemporizing” worship seem offensive to many Adventists—then the essence of worship itself is being changed, even “profaned” (i.e. cheapened and secularized). In such a case, we must ask, with Platt, whether we are still worshipping God or whether we are merely worshipping ourselves. And if worship is more profane than holy, then are we really keeping the Sabbath holy? Further, if keeping the Sabbath holy appears to be less of an issue in certain places, I would not be surprised if it turns out to be in some way related to our recent experimentation with contemporary worship forms.

### Conclusion

As tempting as it might be to consider megachurches as evidence of success, there are many reasons to give us pause. Despite the obvious attraction of large facilities, resource-rich worship services, and the reassurance of “strength in numbers,” these gains are frequently more than offset by serious theological problems and other drawbacks, including fewer *active* members, cannibalization of smaller churches, and the tendency to aim for the least common denominator. The following insightful statement provides much food for thought:

It is the virtue, intelligence, and piety of the people composing our churches, not their numbers, that should be a source of joy and thankfulness.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jesse Bogan, “America’s Biggest Megachurches,” *Forbes*, June 26, 2009; online: [http://www.forbes.com/2009/06/26/americas-biggest-megachurches-business-megachurches\\_slide\\_2.html](http://www.forbes.com/2009/06/26/americas-biggest-megachurches-business-megachurches_slide_2.html). Churches with a weekly attendance over 10,000 have also been labeled “gigachurches.”

<sup>2</sup> Larger seating capacities (25,600 and 54,000 respectively) are given in Frank Eugene Kidder, *The Architects' and Builders' Handbook: Data for Architects, Structural Engineers, Contractors, and Draughtsmen* (17<sup>th</sup> ed. enlarged; New York: Wiley, 1921), 1654, but assume an area of only 19.7 inches square per person (about 2.7 sq. ft.). These capacities have been recalculated based on five square feet (about 0.5 sq. m.) per person.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. David Yonggi Cho Profile, “The Church in Yoido and Its Phenomenal Growth”; online: <http://english.fgtv.com/drcho/Pro->

[file4.htm](http://english.fgtv.com/yoido/History3.htm); accessed September 8, 2010. For the seating capacity see “History. III. The Church at Yoido”; online: <http://english.fgtv.com/yoido/History3.htm>, accessed September 14, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> As a Greek technical term, the word refers to a voting assembly of free men to conduct civic affairs (cf. Acts 19:32, 39-40).

Important works include: R. Newton Flew, *Jesus and His Church: A Study of the Idea of Ecclesia in the New Testament* (London: Epworth, 1938); Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (NTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2004); Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Church in the New Testament* (London: Burns & Oates, 1974); Raymond F. Collins, *The Many Faces of the Church: A Study in New Testament Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Used with a similar meaning is *synagōgē* (Lust, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, 182). *Qāhāl* appears in the Qumran materials as a self-reference (e.g. 1QSa II.4 “the assembly of these,” 4Q448 B.3 “the whole assembly of your people”).

<sup>6</sup> So (variously explained) Jürgen Roloff, *EDNT*, 1:411; Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), 78-79, pointing out similarities as well as the significant differences between the Christian notion of “church” and the numerous voluntary associations or clubs of the Roman empire.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Raymond F. Collins, “Church, Idea of the,” *NIDB* 1:643-55, citing, e.g., 1 Thess 1:4; 2:14; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1: The church is “those who have been called and chosen as a result of the preaching of the gospel, which they had accepted” (644).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 645, 652, 655.

<sup>9</sup> On the origins of the Christian notion of remnant see Clinton Wahlen, “The Remnant in the Gospels” in *Toward a Theology of the Remnant* (Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology 1; Silver Spring, Md.: Biblical Research Institute, 2009), 61-76.

<sup>10</sup> David Brooks, “The Gospel of Wealth,” *New York Times*, September 7, 2010, A25.

<sup>11</sup> S. Joseph Kidder, “The Biblical Role of the Pastor,” *Ministry*, April 2009, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Yoido Full Gospel Church, “Organization”; online: <http://english.fgtv.com/yoido/Organization.htm>; accessed September 8, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Lee Siew Hua, “Megachurch: S.Korea.”

<sup>14</sup> Scott Thumma and Dave Travis. *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America’s Largest Churches*. J-B Leadership Network Series. 2007, 14. The first chapter of the book is available online: [http://media.wiley.com/product\\_data/excerpt/77/07879946/0787994677.pdf](http://media.wiley.com/product_data/excerpt/77/07879946/0787994677.pdf); accessed September 14, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Multnomah, 2010), 2. His book is on the *New York Times*’ bestseller list (No. 4 in their “Paperback Advice” section on September 9, 2010). Contrast Cho’s view that “individual large churches are like little pebbles to Jesus” (Lee Siew Hua, “Megachurch: S.Korea,” *The Straits Times*, July 17, 2010; online: [http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/World/Story/STIStory\\_554639.html](http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/World/Story/STIStory_554639.html); accessed September 8, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Platt, 80.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Brooks, A25.

<sup>21</sup> Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Megachurch database listed by denomination; online: [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/cgi-bin/mega/db.pl?db=default&uid=default&view\\_](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/cgi-bin/mega/db.pl?db=default&uid=default&view_)

[records=1&ID=\\*&sb=2](#); accessed September 8, 2010. Database compiled by Scott L. Thumma, Professor, Sociology of Religion/Web and Distance Education. The eight churches listed by Thumma (with attendance/membership figures) are: Loma Linda University Church of SDA (3000/5931), Collegedale SDA (2800/3289), Forest Lake SDA (2500/3622), Atlanta Berean SDA (2500/3294), College View SDA (2200/2135), Sligo SDA (2000/2983), Campus Hill (2000/1412), Walla Walla City SDA (1800/842). The above membership information was obtained from Sherri Ingram-Hudgins and Barbara Trecartin of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD) on September 9, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> In addition to the eight churches listed by Hartford, the NAD database (see previous note) has the following churches with more than 2000 members: Pioneer Memorial (3596), Chicago Shiloh SDA (3279), Atlanta Maranatha (3032), Keene SDA (2988), Oakwood University Church (2828), La Sierra University Church (2694), Walla Walla University Church (2376), Azure Hills SDA (2056), Detroit City Temple SDA (2024), and Arlington SDA (2010). In email correspondence (dated September 13, 2010), Thumma indicated that his figures for Adventist congregations are from 2004 and that he plans to survey these other Adventist churches also for the next update of the database.

<sup>23</sup> Ed Christian, “Why Don’t Adventists Grow Megachurches?,” *Adventist Review*, October 16, 2003, 13. One example of a 1,000 member congregation is given in Jay Gallimore, “Can the Church Be ‘Relevant’ and Thrive? (part 1),” *Ministry*, April 2003, 17. Other examples may be found in the experience of the Adventist churches experimenting with congregationalism mentioned in

Alita Byrd, “The Year of SDA Congregationalism,” *Spectrum* 26/4 (January 1998): 3-10, some of which now hold regular Sunday services.

<sup>24</sup> Gallimore, 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:184.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:198.

<sup>28</sup> Bogan, “America’s Biggest Megachurches.”

<sup>29</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:244; 2:114. In the Battle Creek church many were “fast becoming withered branches” (*ibid.*, 116). According to the “Membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Battle Creek Michigan as it stood April 15, 1894,” the total was 1,521. By the time of the “1901 Directory of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Battle Creek Michigan with Sabbath School and Societies,” p. 6, the membership totaled 2,050, also noting that “the usual Sabbath congregations number about 2,000.” Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Brooks, A25.

<sup>31</sup> Scott Thumma, Dave Travis, and Warren Bird, “Megachurches Today 2005: Summary of Research Findings,” 2; online: <http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/megastoday2005summaryreport.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> See J. David Newman, “Tithe—Sacrificing the Sacred Cow: Squeezing the Local Church,” *Adventist Today*, Fall 2009, 11-17, whose opening sentence is: “Church growth is suffering in North America because local churches are not allowed to spend tithe.”

<sup>34</sup> Thumma and Travis, 16.

<sup>35</sup> White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:31-32.

## THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

# Is There a Pre-Advent Judgment of God’s Loyal People in Daniel 8:14?

BY ROY GANE

George Knight’s warning in his new book, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*,<sup>1</sup> of Adventism’s progressive loss of vision and consequent slide to impotence in fulfilling our mission is on target, and so is his biblically-balanced call to recapture holy urgency that focuses on and cooperates with Christ’s end-time, love-centered Gospel commission (especially the Three Angels’ Messages of Rev 14:6-12, and I would add the Elijah Message of relational reconciliation in Mal 4:5-6).<sup>2</sup> However, I would like to dialogue a bit with something he said about Daniel 8:14 and, in the process, strengthen somewhat his overall message.<sup>3</sup> After affirming his belief that prophecy was fulfilled in 1844, Knight goes on to say that he cannot find an investigative or pre-Advent judgment of the saints in Daniel 8:14, only a judgment on the little horn and a “cleansing of the sanctuary in relation to that power at the end of the 2300 days.”<sup>4</sup> He also finds a pre-Advent judgment against the

“little horn” and for the saints in Daniel 7,<sup>5</sup> but is only able to see it beginning in 1844 on the basis of the parallelism between Daniel 7 and 8.<sup>6</sup>

## The Context of Daniel 8:14

Knight is certainly right about the two-edged judgment in Daniel 7, the existence of a strong parallel between chapters 7 and 8, and the need to arrive at conclusions through solid interpretation that does not jump to conclusions by reading one text into another. It is true that the parallel between the chapters is enough to link the pre-Advent judgment (chap. 7) with the cleansing of the sanctuary (chap. 8), so that the timing of the latter applies to the former. But what is in Daniel 8:14 itself? Is it true that it mentions only an end-time pre-Advent judgment on the “little horn,” but has no investigative or pre-Advent judgment of the saints?

Actually, Daniel 8:14 itself does not explicitly mention the “little horn” either. It says only: “And he said to me, ‘Until 2,300 evening(s)-morning(s); then a sanctuary will be justified’” (my translation). This doesn’t sound like a complete thought because it answers the question in verse 13: “Until when is the vision (that includes) the regularity and giving the desolating rebellion, and a sanctuary, and trampling a host?” (my translation). So justifying a “sanctuary” at the end of 2,300 “days” (v. 14) solves the problem summarized in verse

13. We cannot understand the meaning of justifying the sanctuary without grasping the nature of the problem it is intended to address.

The problem in verse 13 has four parts: (1) the “regularity” (or “daily”), (2) giving the desolating rebellion, (3) a sanctuary, and (4) trampling a host.<sup>7</sup> But this cryptic list does not tell us much by itself. What has happened to “the regularity” and “a sanctuary”? Who is responsible for the “desolating rebellion” and for “trampling a host”?

Verse 13 is abbreviating, referring back to key points of “the vision” described in Daniel 8:1-12.<sup>8</sup> In light of the interpretation later in the chapter (vv. 15-26), the vision covers the periods of Medo-Persia (vv. 3-4, 20), Greece/Macedonia, and its four Hellenistic kingdoms (vv. 5-8, 21-22), which are superseded by another, greater empire symbolized by a younger “horn” that starts small but expands horizontally on earth as a political power and then vertically up toward heaven as a religious force (vv. 9-12, 23-26).

In verse 13, “Until when is the vision...?” means: What is the ending point of the vision as a whole (starting from the time of Medo-Persia), when the evils perpetrated by the “little horn” will be redressed? Key evils include (in the order of the summary in v. 13):

- (1) Removing the regularity (regular worship/ministry) from the prince of the host of heaven, i.e., Christ (v. 11; cf. Josh 5:13-15).
- (2) Rebelliously giving/appointing another host against “the regularity” (Dan 8:12).
- (3) Overthrowing the site of the sanctuary that belongs to the prince of the host, i.e., Christ (v. 11).
- (4) Trampling some of the host of heaven (v. 10).

The “little horn” quite obviously sticks out, but where are the loyal people of God (= saints/holy ones) in all this? The “holy people” are in v. 24 (cf. v. 25) portrayed as objects of destruction by the power which the horn symbolizes. Since the holy people belong to the God of heaven and therefore to the prince of the heavenly host, it appears that destroying them literally expresses the same thing as trampling some of the host of heaven (v. 10; cf. v. 13). In any case, Daniel 8 explicitly identifies two opposing parties: (1) the rebellious “little horn” power; and (2) God’s faithful people, whom the horn persecutes.

We have found that Daniel 8:14 answers a question regarding a scenario (v. 13) that is unpacked in the rest of the chapter, both earlier in a vision and later in its interpretation. So all of Daniel 8 informs verse 14: “Until 2,300 evening(s)-morning(s); then a sanctu-

ary will be justified.” Now we know what this means: At the end of a long period of 2,300 “days” (obviously much longer than literal days) reaching from the Medo-Persian period through to the end of the period of domination by the “little horn” power, a sanctuary will be justified. This end-time event (vv. 19, 26) will remedy problems caused by the “little horn,” which has disrupted worship of the true God, set up an opposing, counterfeit worship system, attacked the place of Christ’s sanctuary, and harmed some of Christ’s subjects.

### Nature of the Judgment in Daniel 8:14

How could justifying a sanctuary tackle all those issues? It is true that overthrowing the site of God’s sanctuary is only one of the horn’s crimes, but its other felonies also interfere with the sanctuary because that is where God’s loyal subjects regularly direct their true worship. In fact, the “sanctuary” (literally “[place of] holiness” in Dan 8:14) refers to the temple in heaven, the headquarters of God, representing His administration, just as “the White House” represents the administration of the President of the United States or “the Kremlin” represents the administration of the Russian Federation. So justifying God’s “sanctuary,” a real place where He resides in heaven (Ps 11:4; Rev 4),

comprehends nothing less than vindicating His holy form of government, as opposed to the system of the “little horn.”

“Be justified” (Niphal of *tsdq*) in Daniel 8:14 is legal language, indicating a judicial process which demonstrates that God’s administration, represented by His sanctuary, is in the right.<sup>9</sup> The same

Hebrew verb (in other stems) is used in other legal contexts (including with God as Judge) referring to judgment in one’s favor (e.g., Gen 38:26; 44:16; Deut 25:1; 2 Sam 15:4; 1 Kgs 8:32; Ps 51:4 [Heb. v. 6]; Isa 5:23; 43:9, 26). Obviously the outcome of vindicating God’s government would be good for the “holy people” (v. 24), who are His loyal subjects. But the result for the “little horn” power is decidedly negative: Condemned by the justifying of God’s sanctuary, it is ultimately “broken”/destroyed by no human power, that is, by God Himself (v. 25).<sup>10</sup> This execution of judgment implies a prior, pre-Advent process of investigation/demonstration, which Daniel 8:14 describes in terms of demonstrating that God’s administration is in the right.

Looking at Daniel 8 by itself, we have found that in this context the end-time justifying of God’s sanctuary (v. 14) involves a process of justice that results in benefit to His faithful people but condemnation of

***We cannot understand the meaning of justifying the sanctuary without grasping the nature of the problem it is intended to address.***

rebels. So there is a judgment involving the “saints” here after all, even though the text does not say it with these words.

The Day of Atonement background to Daniel 8:14 is unmistakable, indicating a typological relationship: the Day of Atonement type points forward to the end-time judgment antitype. The Day of Atonement was Israel’s judgment day, when ritual purgation of God’s earthly sanctuary represented vindication of His justice in reaffirming the loyal (Lev 16:29-31) but condemning the disloyal (23:29-30) among His nominal people. Those whose sins had already been forgiven at an earlier stage of atonement (4:20, 26, 31, 35, etc.) and who showed continuing loyalty on the Day of Atonement (16:29, 31; 23:26-32) were morally “pure” (free from any impediment to the divine-human relationship) as a result of the cleansing of the sanctuary (16:30).<sup>11</sup> We are starting to find that there is more in Daniel 8 than immediately meets the eye, including a judgment that involves God’s loyal people.

Daniel 8 does not detail the investigative process by which the Lord’s “holy people” are deemed to be

***The Day of Atonement background to Daniel 8:14 is unmistakable, indicating a typological relationship.***

such and by which the “little horn” is found irredeemably guilty of high treason. But the chapter’s lurid litany of the horn’s crimes makes the charges against it clear. On the other hand, the behavior of the “holy people” is not spelled out: The emphasis is not on what they do, but on the Prince to whom they belong (Dan 7:13-14; cf. 9:25; 1 John 5:11-13). Nevertheless, the fact that they and the horn are on opposing sides implies that the Lord’s people are doing just the opposite of the work done by the little horn, by holding to true worship focused on the Lord’s true sanctuary (cf. Heb 8:1-2).

**Relation of Daniel 7 and 8**

As Knight recognizes, it is in Daniel 7 that the process of judicial investigation (for created beings) and demonstration (by God, who needs no investigation) is described in some detail. He also acknowledges the strong parallel between Daniel 7 and 8 (referring in 8:1 back to the vision of chap. 7), showing the correspondence between the pre-Advent judgment and the cleansing of the sanctuary respectively. A table can strengthen this important point:

<b>Daniel 7</b>	<b>Daniel 8</b>
Lion	
Bear	Ram (= Medo-Persia; v. 20)
Leopard	Goat (= Greece; v. 21)
Monster	Little Horn: growing horizontally
Little Horn	Little Horn: growing vertically
<i>Pre-Advent Judgment (vv. 9-14)</i>	<i>Cleansing of Sanctuary (v. 14)</i>

Daniel 8 repeats the same historical period covered by Daniel 7 (except Babylon, which had almost ended and so was no longer relevant). The empires are the same and the nature of the problem of the “little horn” power is the same. The fact that the same symbol is used (although the horn in Daniel 8 includes horizontal expansion by pagan/imperial Rome in v. 9) reinforces the tightness of the parallel. After the horn’s depredations, there is a divine solution in each chapter, which rules in favor of the holy ones and against the power that has oppressed them.

The matching prophetic profiles in Daniel 7 and 8 (cf. cleansing the sanctuary as a work of judgment in Lev 16, 23) show that the pre-Advent judgment and the justifying of God’s sanctuary are different ways to

describe *the same event*: Vindication of God before His created beings through an end-time Day of Atonement judgment that demonstrates His justice in condemning the disloyal but saving His loyal, holy people.<sup>12</sup> This tightens the connection between Daniel 7 and 8 and confirms that the event beginning at the end of the 2,300 prophetic “days” involves us, as the SDA pioneers found.<sup>13</sup>

*We* have the privilege and responsibility of taking God’s *last* Gospel invitation to *the whole world* (Rev 14:6-12) during the *last* phase of atonement, when Christ is doing a *special work for us*. What could be more important and urgent than that? This is the largest undertaking in human history, and it is totally impossible by human effort alone. Like never before, we must

earnestly seek and receive the power of the Holy Spirit from Christ (Acts 2; cf. Joel 2), where He is ministering right now in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, 55). The Spirit freely and lavishly pours into our hearts the divine gift of love (Rom 5:5), the power that impels us to unselfishly and sacrificially break out of our little boxes to reach precious people for Christ so that they can have a better opportunity to be rescued and enjoy eternal life.

Let us keep on responding to Knight's challenge to explore, live, and proclaim our apocalyptic vision instead of neutering it!

Roy Gane is Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary



<sup>1</sup>George R. Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2008). See the review by Gerhard Pfandl in *Reflections* 27 (July 2009), 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>On the connection between the Third Angels' Message and the Elijah Message, see Roy Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment? The Good News About Christ's Work in the Heavenly Sanctuary* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 2006), 126-128.

<sup>3</sup>I could also briefly point out that Hebrews 9:4 is not mistaken regarding the location of the incense altar (contra Knight, 72). The holy of holies is "having a golden altar of incense" (NAS95) in terms of *function* (cf. 1 Kgs 6:22—"that belonged to the inner sanctuary"), even though it was located in the outer apartment (Exod 30:6). Also, the Greek term *parabolē*, "parable" in Hebrews 9:9 describes the analogy in the immediate context of this chapter, which is not strict sanctuary typology; the word does not characterize sanctuary typology as a whole (contra Knight,

73-74). See Clinton Wahlen, "The Pathway into the Holy Places" (Heb 9:8): Does it End at the Cross?", *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 11 (2008) 47-51.

<sup>4</sup>Knight, 68.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 69.

<sup>7</sup>On the translation and structure of Daniel 8:13, see Roy Gane, "The Syntax of *Tēt V*...in Daniel 8:13," in *Creation, Life, and Hope: Essays in Honor of Jacques B. Doukhan* (ed. J. Moskala; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 2000), 367-382.

<sup>8</sup>The word "vision" in v. 13 is *hazon*, which introduces the vision proper in vv. 1-2 and occurs several times more in connection with its interpretation (8:15, 17, 26; 9:21, 24).

<sup>9</sup>The Niphal is a passive form of the verb *tsdq*, which means, "be (in the) right" or "be just" (Job 9:15, 20; Ps 19:10; 51:6; 143:2; Isa 43:9, 26, etc.). In Job 4:17, one who is "just" (*tsdq*) before God is "pure/clean" (verb *thr*) from blame, that is, "vindicated."

<sup>10</sup>Cf. 2 Thess 2:8—destruction of the "lawless one" at Christ's Second Coming.

<sup>11</sup>On the judgment dynamics of the Day of Atonement, see Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 305-333. Compare the way Jews still observe Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, as a day of judgment according to rabbinic tradition (Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* [Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000], 128-129).

<sup>12</sup>See Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment?*, 40-45.

<sup>13</sup>On Daniel 8 and the good news of the end-time judgment (including relatively simple exegetical steps to 1844 and answers to objections to SDA interpretation), see further Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment?* and sources cited there. For more detailed analysis of the Hebrew text of Daniel 8:9-14, see Martin Pröbstle, "Truth and Terror: A Text-Oriented Analysis of Daniel 8:9-14" (Ph.D. diss.; Andrews University, 2006).

## SCRIPTURE APPLIED

### Sunday or Sabbath?

Sometimes things are different from what they seem to be at first glance. There are, for example, optical illusions. A book of adventure stories reports that certain areas in a desert were marked by poles so that travelers and caravans would not get lost. However, there were also so-called pole men who displaced the poles. Travelers followed these false poles. When they were exhausted and perplexed they were attacked and robbed of their belongings by these people. Deception!

Christianity at large keeps Sunday, but the Bible calls the Sabbath God's day of rest.

#### Arguments in Favor of Keeping Sunday Holy

- (1) The Ten Commandments state: "Keep holy the Sabbath day."

- (2) For God all days are equal.
- (3) The Lord's day mentioned in Scripture is Sunday.
- (4) The calendar was changed. We do not know which day is Sabbath.
- (5) We celebrate Sunday because we remember Christ's resurrection.
- (6) The law and therefore also the commandment to keep the Sabbath are abolished.
- (7) The early church celebrated Sunday.
- (8) Sunday is part of the church's tradition.

#### Arguments Reviewed

(1) *The Ten Commandments state: "Keep holy the Sabbath day."*

This sentence is not found in Scripture. The Sabbath commandment is worded differently and specifies the seventh day as the Sabbath, not just any day (Exod 20:8-11). However, the sentence is found

in catechisms.

**(2) *For God all days are equal.***

If this were the case why did God give the fourth commandment? Jesus kept the Sabbath and urged the correct way to keep it holy (Luke 4:16; Mark 2:23-28)? Why did Jesus wish that Christians would observe that day if it does not matter (Matt 24:20)? America's Independence Day cannot be moved from July 4 to July 5 without losing its meaning, nor can the Sabbath simply be moved from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

**(3) *The Lord's Day mentioned in Scripture is Sunday.***

The term is found in Revelation 1:10. A unique Greek term is used to describe the day as specifically belonging to the Lord (as also in Exod 20:10). A similar expression, translated "the Day of the Lord," describes God's day of judgment (2 Pet 3:10; Joel 2:1, 11), but only the Sabbath does God call "My holy day" (Isa 58:13). Jesus called Himself the Lord of this day (Mark 2:28). John calls Sunday "the first day of the week" (20:1, 19). Not until the second century in Rome did the term "the Lord's day" begin to be used by church fathers to refer to Sunday.

**(4) *The calendar was changed. We do not know which day is Sabbath.***

James Robertson from the U. S. Naval Observatory wrote already in 1932: "... we have had occasion to investigate the results of the works of specialists in chronology and we have never found one of them that has ever had the slightest doubt about the continuity of the weekly cycle long before the Christian era.... There has been no change in our calendar in past centuries that affected in any way the cycle of the week." When Pope Gregory XIII made a change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar the order of days was not affected. In 1582, Thursday, October 4 was followed by Friday, October 15. In case the weekly cycle had changed before Christ, we can assume that Jesus would have told his contemporaries which day the Sabbath really was.

**(5) *We celebrate Sunday because we remember Christ's resurrection.***

Neither before nor after His resurrection did Jesus command the keeping of Sunday in remembrance of His resurrection (see His last words before his ascension in Matt 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; and John 20-21). Instead Jesus expects his disciples to keep the Sabbath also in the future (Matt 24:20). It is not the *day* that memorializes Christ's resurrection but baptism and the Lord's Supper (Rom 6:3-6 and Col 2:12; 1 Cor 11:23-26). Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) is the Creator, and He has instituted the Sabbath (Col 1:15-16). He alone has

the authority to change or abolish the Sabbath commandment. Nowhere has He done this.

**(6) *The law and therefore also the commandment to keep the Sabbath are abolished.***

Christians more or less keep the Ten Commandments. The problem is that many take liberty with the fourth commandment or declare this among all the others as ceremonial in nature. However, the Sabbath commandment is not ceremonial but a reminder of creation and liberation. Jesus did not transgress the Sabbath commandment (John 8:46); otherwise he might have been stoned to death (Num 15:32-36). In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus pointed out the real intention of the law (Matt 5:17-20). While the Bible knows different laws, the Ten Commandments are still valid (Rom 7:7, 12; Jas 2:10-13). There is a new covenant in the New Testament, but this new covenant is based on the Old Testament covenants and includes the *internalization* not abrogation of God's law (Heb 8:10). On the other hand, Daniel predicted that a power would come and change times and the law (Dan 7:25).

**(7) *The early church celebrated Sunday.***

Traces of Christians keeping Sunday can be found in the mid second century AD but not in the New Testament.

**John 20:19, 26** The meetings of the disciples were not worship services. The disciples hid, because they were afraid of their enemies.

**Acts 20:7-8, 11** This is a farewell meeting. According to Jewish reckoning the day begins and ends with sunset (Lev 23:32). If the Jewish reckoning is used here, it was Saturday night, and Paul set out on his journey on Sunday. According to Roman reckoning the day begins and ends at midnight. If this method is used here, it was Sunday night. The breaking of bread took place on Monday. Neither option supports the sanctification of Sunday. Furthermore, even today churches have meetings during the week without keeping the respective day holy. See also Acts 2:46.

**1 Cor 16:2** The money should be laid aside at home. A worship service is not pictured here.

**Col 2:16** The text has to be understood in its context which deals with different heresies (verses 8, 18, 20-23). It may be that the Sabbath mentioned

in v. 16 was observed in the wrong way or Paul may have ceremonial Sabbaths in mind (see Lev 23:26-32) which foreshadowed the plan of salvation and were fulfilled in Christ.

#### (8) *Sunday is part of the church's tradition.*

The sun was worshiped already in ancient times. In the Roman Empire the unconquered sun god (*deus sol invictus*) was worshiped. In AD 321 Emperor Constantine issued the first official Sunday law. But already before that time a great number of Christians observed Sunday, sometimes in addition to Sabbath. Reasons for observing Sunday may have included the desire to differentiate themselves from

Jews and to enable Gentiles to become Christians more easily. Only after 321 was keeping Sunday enforced by civil and, later, church laws.

However, Jesus rejected traditions when opposed to the will of God (Matt 15:3, 9, 14).

#### God's Sabbath and Me

In his love God has given us the Sabbath in order to bless us richly. Jesus observed this day. Peter calls us to follow Christ's footsteps (1 Pet 2:21). Jesus is our Savior. He is also an example for us. We decide to follow him and keep the day that he himself kept.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

### BOOK NOTES

David C. Jarnes, compiler. *We Have This Hope: Timeless Adventist Sermons*. 2 vols. Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 2008. 384 pp. US\$35.99.

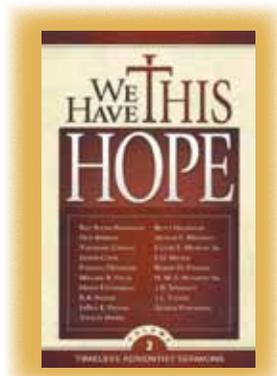
In two volumes of approximately 200 pages each, David C. Jarnes has put together sermons of prominent Seventh-day Adventist leaders. The first volume comprises a collection of sermons covering the period from the beginnings of the Advent movement in the nineteenth century, to about the middle of the twentieth century. The second volume contains sermons from the middle to late twentieth century. No less than thirty preachers are represented in these pages. Among the pioneers are William Miller, James and Ellen White, J. N. Andrews, Uriah Smith, and A. G. Daniells. More recent sermons include those of Roy Allan Anderson, Arthur S. Maxwell, H. M. S. Richards Sr., LeRoy E. Froom, Henry Feyerabend, and Dick Barron. Between the two volumes the sermons cover several topics including salvation, law and gospel, the second advent of Christ, the Sabbath, heaven, family life, the mission of the church, and how to deal with difficult life circumstances. In bringing these sermons together, Jarnes wishes them to have at least a threefold impact on readers: a "deepened respect for the dedication of our spiritual forebears, renewed conviction regarding the truths they proclaimed, and increased inspiration to live for Christ as we await His return" (vol. 1, p. 10).

It would seem to be expecting a bit much from readers to gauge the dedication of leaders by reading their sermons. Yet Jarnes seems to come close to achieving his goal. Whether one has in view the dedication of

the leaders to the mission of the church or to particular aspects of the message to which they were drawn, the passion expressed in these sermons cannot be missed. Such is the case with Mrs. S. M. I. Henry's sermon on "Woman's Work," where one gets a palpable sense of her burden regarding the role of women in spreading the message of the church. A. T. Jones' and E. J. Waggoner's sermons, on "The Third Angel's Message" and "Letter to the Romans" respectively, clearly display their dedication to the topic of righteousness by faith. And Glenn A. Coon's "Divine Delight" demonstrates his strong conviction about the role of "God's psychology" in keeping the youth in the faith, an approach worth pondering today.

Not only are many of the sermons, such as Coon's, relevant today, reading these sermons appears to inspire a needed corrective to some contemporary Adventist sermonizing. The skill with which these leaders made doctrinal truth practical in the sermons needs revisiting and re-learning. Haskell's piece on "The Study of the Bible" creates a thirst to study the Bible; W. W. Prescott's "The Second Advent: The Keynote of the Message" casts the Sabbath and Sanctuary doctrines in a loving, winning light; and Roy Allan Anderson's "God With a Face," demonstrates the practical value of the doctrine of the incarnation.

On a final note, the compiler of "We Have This Hope" does not tell us, or perhaps cannot tell us, to what extent his collection of sermon topics is a fair representation of Adventist preaching. For those sermons in which a doctrinal focus can be discerned, slightly less than half of our fundamental beliefs are represented. More than a third of the sermons deal with salvation and the second advent. Even the Sabbath is the exclusive



focus of just one of the thirty-four sermons. Topics such as the judgment beginning in 1844, the gift of prophecy, the millennium and even what happens at death remain untouched. Whether or not this is reflective of Adventist preaching in general, it does make one wonder just how comprehensively and persuasively our message is being conveyed from the pulpit.

This much seems clear from the collection: the practicality of even the doctrinal sermons, together with the emphasis on Christ and righteousness through faith, highlights the gospel and truly inspires confidence to live for Christ. H. M. S. Richards Sr.'s "How God Justifies Ungodly People," William Fagal's "God's Blind Spot," and indeed the rest of the sermons not specifically mentioned in this review are timeless and invaluable. "We Have This Hope" inspires hope and confidence in Christ and builds confidence in the Adventist message.

Kwabena Donkor, BRI



Bryan W. Ball, *The Seventh-Day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800*. Cambridge, U.K.: Clarke, 2009), 468 pages. US\$57.50.

Bryan W. Ball was Head of the Religious Studies Department at Newbold College, England, Principal of Avondale College, Australia, and President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South Pacific. Dr. Ball is a church historian with particular interest in English Puritan theology. Other books by Dr. Ball include: *The English Connection: The Puritan Roots of Seventh-day Adventist Belief*; *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660*; and *The Soul Sleepers*.

This volume is the revised edition of *The Seventh-Day Men* that was originally published in 1994 by Clarendon Press, Oxford. The new material contained in the revised edition is found primarily in the twenty-six pages of the introduction to the second edition and in appendix six that contains additional notes to the second edition.

*The Seventh-Day Men* is a meticulously researched book. The more than 300 primary sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as the more than 250 secondary sources listed in the bibliography, testify to the thoroughness with which the author approaches the subject. The book has ten chapters and six appendices. The more than 400 pages of text, with extensive bibliographies for the two editions of the book, and two indices, one for place names and the other for persons, will continue to make this volume the standard

reference work on Sabbatarianism in Great Britain for many years to come.

The first chapter briefly records the history of Sabbath keeping from the early church to the time of the Reformation. The author traces the origins of the English Sabbatarians back to the Celtic churches in Ireland and Scotland during the Middle Ages. He also found some connections between the Lollards (followers of John Wycliffe) and the later appearance of seventh-day views.

Chapter two focuses on the contributions of the two most prominent English Sabbath keepers in the seventeenth century—John Traske (1585-1636) and Tehophilus Brabourne (1590-1662). While Traske was primarily a preacher who in 1619, under pressure from the authorities, gave up Sabbath keeping, Brabourne was a prolific author whose books provided a theological basis for the Saturday Sabbath.

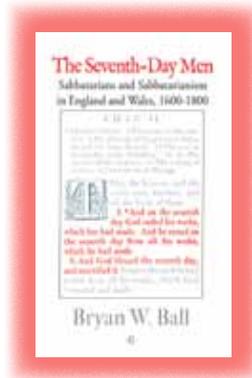
Chapters three and four trace the history of the best known Sabbath-keeping churches in London: the Mill Yard, Bell Lane, and Pinner's Hall churches. Most of their members had Baptist ancestors who were Calvinists. The Bell Lane Church "became known as the mother church of Seventh-day Baptists in North America" (p. 107), because it was from that church that Stephen Mumford in 1664 brought the Seventh-day Sabbath to Rhode Island.

The remaining chapters tell the story of the Sabbatarians in England and Wales between 1600 and 1800 and discuss the reasons for their decline during the eighteenth century. Appendix one traces their history in Ireland.

The decline of Sabbath keepers and Sabbath-keeping churches in Great Britain occurred in the wider "context of a general decline in Nonconformity and Dissent during the eighteenth century" (p. 312). The effects of rationalism, deism, empiricism, and the Enlightenment were keenly felt in the churches during that time, but it was more the lack of structure and ethos among Sabbatarians that hastened their demise. Most

of their congregations lacked church buildings and not a few of their members were open to fanaticism and extremism of various kinds. The author records the story of one woman "who tore the New Testament from her Bible, vowing she would need only the Old Testament for her salvation" (p. 319). Many were argumentative, overbearing, and contentious.

Sabbatarian congregations flourished when they had good preachers and good pastoral care; when this was lacking the churches languished. Some preachers served seventh-day and first-day congregations, but such divided ministries did not work because the seventh-day



congregations usually received less care than the first-day congregations. By the end of the eighteenth century, Sabbatarianism had virtually disappeared in Great Britain.

*The Seventh-Day Men* is a perfect example of historical scholarship. It contains a wealth of detailed information drawn from a wide variety of primary sources and makes an important contribution to our understanding of Nonconformity in Great Britain.

The introduction to the second edition contains some new names and localities where Sabbath keepers existed (p. xvi), and it points out some of the lacunae

and misinformation found in previous works dealing with the topic (p. xiv). Some readers may be interested in learning that William Whiston, the translator of the works of Josephus, was an “Arian in theology and a Sabbatarian by conviction” (p. xxix).

Anyone interested in the religious history of Great Britain, as well as in the history of the Sabbath in general, will find this volume a welcome addition to the topic.

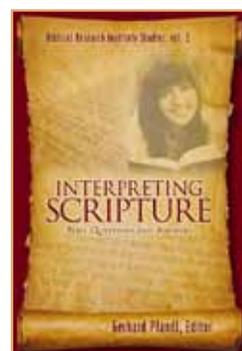
Gerhard Pfandl, BRI



## WORLDWIDE HIGHLIGHTS

### New Book Answers Difficult Bible Questions

Have you ever wondered why Christian scholars interpret Scripture in so many different ways?



Did the Lord really harden Pharaoh’s heart? What does “the smoke of their torment ascends forever

and ever” mean? And what is the sin against the Holy Spirit? The book *Interpreting Scripture* gives clear, concise, biblical answers to these and more than one hundred other questions concerning the Bible and its teachings.

The forty-nine authors who contributed to this volume are all highly qualified Seventh-day Adventist scholars who share the conviction that the Bible is God’s inspired and authoritative Word. Coming from many countries and cultures, they share a common commitment to Christ and His church. Although each chapter is a signed article, they have all

been reviewed and revised by the members of the Biblical Research Institute Committee, a group of about forty scholars and administrators from around the world. Hence, no part of this volume is the work of a single author. The individual chapters and the book as a whole profited from this cooperative approach.

The book is written for all church members who, at times, struggle to understand certain verses and who would appreciate some assistance, but will also be helpful for pastors and Bible teachers as it represents an important reference for understanding some of the most difficult biblical passages.

*Interpreting Scripture* has 496 pages and costs \$14.95. Orders can be placed by email ([FlemmerB@gc.adventist.org](mailto:FlemmerB@gc.adventist.org)), phone (1.301.680.6790) or fax (1.301.680.6788).

### Comprehensive Book on the Trinity and the Doctrine of God

This latest book by Ekkehardt Müller, associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, *Die Lehre von Gott* (“The Doctrine of God”) is an excellent introduction to a subject which has not received much attention in Adventist circles. In 308 pages, its fifteen chapters cover a wide range of topics germane to the title. In chapter one, Müller provides a historical survey on how the doctrine of God has been dealt with in church history and defines the issues. The next six chapters address the issues of inspiration, revelation, and the names and attributes of God in the Bible. Chapters eight through ten concern the Trinity and in chapters eleven and twelve the divinity of Jesus and the person and work of the Holy Spirit are considered. The next two chapters address the problem of suffering and the modern trend of using inclusive language for God. The last chapter is a sermon on loving God. The book includes a convenient glossary in which words like deism and ontology are explained.



In light of recent attacks on the Trinity in the church, this book makes a vital and timely contribution to the defense and explanation of this doctrine. It is hoped that an English translation of the book will appear in the not too distant future. In the meantime, all who are able to read German are encouraged to secure a copy of this book from Bogenhofen Seminary, 4963 St. Peter, Austria.