



Reflections

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PURPOSE

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

NEWS AND COMMENTS

WELCOME TO OUR NEW COLLEAGUE

In the October, 2003 issue you were able to see two pictures of the BRI staff. At that time George Reid, the former



director of BRI, had retired, but continued to help us on a part time basis. The search for a new BRI staff member proved difficult and time consuming, but finally, we found Kwabena Donkor. He has accepted the call to serve as an associate director of BRI, and we wish to extend a very warm welcome to him and his wife Comfort as they join our BRI family. Donkor is a native of Ghana and has pursued his studies there as well as in the United States. He is a genuine Seventh-day Adventist Christian. His Ph.D. is from Andrews University in the area of Systematic Theology. Kwabena Donkor is still a pastor in Canada while waiting for his green card from the U.S. government.

WORLD SURVEY ON ADVENTIST SABBATH OBSERVANCE

On December 10, 2003, at Andrews University, May-Ellen Colón successfully

defended her doctoral dissertation entitled *Sabbath-Keeping Practices and Factors Related to These Practices Among Seventh-day Adventists in 51 Countries*.

I. Purpose of Study

Although she sought to provide a strong biblical foundation for the biblical Sabbath-keeping principles listed in her questionnaire, the focus of her dissertation was not on the dogmatics and apologetics of the Sabbath, but on the spirituality of the Sabbath. The definition of spirituality used in this study is “the lived experience of Christian belief.”¹

The Adventist Church has always taught that all of the Ten Commandments should be kept by putting them into practice in real life. But do Adventist church members move beyond teaching to genuinely practicing and experiencing the Sabbath commandment in their personal lives? And what factors influence these practices? To really understand “the state of the church” these questions need to be addressed. With this in mind, Colón’s purpose was to examine Sabbath-keeping practices and related factors among Seventh-day Adventists on an international level. The related factors included actual beliefs in biblical principles, motivations, practices, and Sabbath attitudes.

Another goal was to highlight the fact that biblical principles of Sabbath-keeping are applicable across all cultures.

II. Methodology

The Sabbath Observance Exploratory Survey (SOES) was administered to Seventh-day Adventists representing five geographical areas (Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Euro-Africa Division, Euro-Asia Division, Inter-American Division, and North American Division). It was available in five languages (English, French, German, Russian, and Spanish).

The study had a literary bias, for probably only literate Adventists filled out the SOES. Also, inactive Adventists generally were not studied. The study provides “snapshots” of pockets of Adventists in various geographical regions.

The results were based on 3,221 usable surveys returned from 51 countries. Respondents were mostly long-time Adventists—1,714 males; 1,419 females; 1,233 of whom were Adventist church leaders (administrators, pastors, or teachers); and 1,901 laity.

III. A Sample of Conclusions from the Study

- (1) The data show that there is surprising cross-cultural unity of belief in biblical Sabbath-keeping principles. The Sabbath is a major unifying dynamic in the Adventist Church.
- (2) Practices of Sabbath-keeping varied between leisure, non-restful, spiritual nurturing, routine secular, and special relational activities. A large proportion of responding Adventists is involved in spiritual nurturing activities on Sabbath and only a few engage in routine secular activities.
- (3) There is considerable unity on Sabbath practices, but there are greater cultural differences with leisure activities on Sabbath (e.g., camping, boating, etc.) and special relational activities (e.g., fellowship, special food and treats, special niceties, such as use of candles, flowers, etc.).
- (4) There is room to grow in the area of Sabbath practices. Participation in Sabbath School and church is high; however there was less participation in other spiritual activities such as preparation for Sabbath, service, and missionary work. Also there was low emphasis on providing special niceties on Sabbath.
- (5) The highest motivation factor reported was God-focused intrinsic, which seems very good, and the weakest motivation was extrinsically people-focused. The motivations tested in the study are not mutually exclusive—for they all can have their place in positive Sabbath-keeping.
- (6) The level of agreement with God-focused beliefs in biblical principles (e.g., rest from work/

secular concerns, Bible study, Christian service/witness, etc.) appears to be the best predictor for Sabbath-keeping practices.

IV. Sample Recommendations – Implications

- (1) Since the data indicate that the Sabbath brings stress to many in church leadership, a way needs to be found to reduce it for church leaders on Sabbath. The intense Sabbath routine of many church leaders clearly compromises their Sabbath rest and joy.
- (2) Evangelists, pastors, and teachers need to go beyond proving which day is the right Sabbath, and what is proper Sabbath theology, moving converts *intentionally* into the experience of true Sabbath rest in Jesus and into *intentional* “how-tos” that can help make the day a holy delight and joy.
- (3) The data suggest that women identify especially with the relational aspects of the Sabbath. The Adventist Church ought to find a way to engage female leadership in the relational aspects of the Sabbath. For example, deaconesses could lead out in some relational activity during the Sabbath—in a way that everyone is expected to participate.
- (4) More emphasis is needed on how to make Sabbath an attractive, delightful, joyful, and memorable day so that families will hail it with joy.²

May-Ellen Colón,
Sabbath School/Personal Ministries

¹E. G. Cousins, “What Is Christian Spirituality?”, in B. C. Hanson (ed.), *Modern Christian Spirituality: Methodological and Historical Essays* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 41.

²For further information you may contact the author at colonm@gc.adventist.org.

THOUGHTS ON FREEDOM, FAITH, AND FEAR

Although the Scriptures approve of restraining “evil doers” (Rom 13:3-4), it is clear that limits exist in the exercise of such power. Even governments under trying circumstances must be constrained in the way they wield it. The biblical obligation of the ruler is to “do justice” (1 Kings 10:9). While there are disagreements over precisely how justice should be administered, universally agreed-upon principles should be followed: (1) The accused must have access to a full and fair court hearing to ensure he is indeed guilty. It cannot be just to imprison someone who has not committed a crime. (2) Wherever prisoners are held, they must be treated

humanely. (3) It is inherently unjust for governments to target an entire religion or race because of the evil actions of a very small minority of its members.

I have good reasons to take a particularly keen interest in security. After all, I work in a building flanked by the Senate Office Buildings on one side, the U.S. Capitol Building on another, and the U.S. Supreme Court on the other, and along with my family, I live on Capitol Hill. If things go wrong, I have a lot to lose. But our interest in security cannot blind us to our dedication to justice. Indeed, justice is no enemy of security. Withholding of fair trials from those accused of crime does not protect against future attacks. Refusing to extend the protections of the Geneva Convention to those captured on the field of battle does not ensure security. And using religion or race as a proxy for suspicion is bound to fail.

It is fair to say the government's most important role is to punish evil doers in a manner that is just. Society's dedication to justice therefore cannot be fleeting fancy that survives only in times of peace and prosperity. Indeed, only by remaining true to these basic principles of justice can we ensure that our efforts to secure ourselves do not destroy the civilization that we are striving to protect.

James D. Standish,
Public Affairs and Religious Liberty

ELLEN WHITE AS A THEOLOGIAN

Although Ellen White never attended a theological seminary, nor did she write a systematic theology, there is no doubt that she wrote in the framework of a theological system, and through her visions contributed significantly to Adventist theology. While all our doctrines are solidly based on Scripture, Ellen White's prophetic ministry has provided guidance, insights, and theological discernment that have helped the church to come to a better understanding of biblical truths.

I. *Theological Discernment*

It is well known today that Ellen White relied on a number of historical and theological sources in writing her books. While she at times borrowed words and phrases, as well as structure and patterns from other writers, her theology was her own.

For example, in writing on the topic of inspiration-revelation she used material from Calvin Stowe's *Origin and History of the Books of the Bible* but modified it to bring it into harmony with the light she had received from God. Calvin Stowe wrote, "It is not the words of the Bible that were inspired, *it is not the thoughts of the Bible that were inspired*; it is the men who wrote the

Bible that were inspired." In Ellen White's writings this sentence reads, "It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired" (ISM 21).

Although using largely Stowe's wording Ellen White's theology is significantly different. She understood inspiration to apply to the thoughts of the writers, which Calvin Stowe denied. Ellen White believed only the words receive the impress of the human mind, Calvin Stow taught that the thoughts also receive the impress of the human mind.

David Neff, who has made an extensive study of the parallels between the Ellen G. White material and Calvin Stowe's book, came to the conclusion that "there are significant differences between the theories of revelation presented by Dr. Stowe and Mrs. White" and that "there is sufficient evidence to conclude that in this manuscript Mrs. White was not appropriating another man's ideas."¹

II. *Theological Openness*

While holding firmly to the basic Adventist doctrines, "the landmarks" as she called them,² Ellen White was always willing to accept new light. "The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people," she said, "is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation."³

During the early decades of our church most of our leaders, including James White, were anti-Trinitarians. Ellen White herself made one or two statements that could be interpreted as anti-Trinitarian. In the context of her description of the fall of Satan, for example, she wrote, "The great Creator assembled the heavenly host, that he might in the presence of all the angels confer special honor upon his Son . . . The Father then made known that it was ordained by himself that Christ, his Son, should be equal with himself; so that wherever was the presence of his Son, it was his own presence."⁴

This statement cannot refer to Christ being less or different from the Father in nature since she says on the same page that "He was one with the Father before the angels were created." Whatever she meant when she wrote this, in the course of time she received more light which eventually led to her very clear Trinitarian statements at the turn of the century.

First, in 1897 she wrote, "In Him [Christ] was life, original, unborrowed, underived,"⁵ and then in 1905 she wrote a warning to our workers connected with the medical work in which she unambiguously endorsed the Trinity doctrine. "The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifest" she stated, "the Comforter that Christ promised to send after He ascended to heaven, is *the*

Spirit in all the fullness of the Godhead,” therefore, “*there are three living persons of the heavenly trio.*”⁶

Only someone who believed the Trinity doctrine would speak of “three living persons of the heavenly trio.” While most of the pioneers were anti-Trinitarians, Ellen White, on the basis of divine revelations, guided the church towards the Trinitarian position.

III. Preventing Theological Error

A number of times the Lord through the ministry of Ellen White saved the church from serious theological errors:

- (1) *The Sabbath Conferences.* The doctrinal framework of the denomination was largely hammered out in 1848 during a series of long weekend gatherings known as Sabbath conferences. At these conferences many different views were put forward, “hardly two agreed” Ellen White wrote. “Some were holding serious errors, and each strenuously urged his own views, declaring that they were according to the Scriptures.”⁷ Yet, invariably, when the weekend was over, there was unity of belief. Why?

In addition to earnest and extended Bible study and prayer the conferences saw the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit; but this intervention did not come until the participants had gone as far as they could go. “When they came to the point in their study where they said, ‘We can do nothing more,’ the Spirit of the Lord would come upon me. I would be taken off in vision, and a clear explanation of the passages we had been studying would be given me.”⁸

- (2) *Righteousness by Faith.* Until 1888 most Adventists thought that righteousness acceptable to God, with the help of the Holy Spirit, could be achieved by obedience to the commandments. In other words, sanctification was seen as the basis of salvation. Then at Minneapolis E. J. Waggoner taught that (a) Man’s obedience can never satisfy God’s law; (b) Christ’s imputed righteousness alone is the basis of our acceptance by God; and (c) we constantly need the covering of Christ’s righteousness, not just for our past sins.

In spite of strong opposition from the leading brethren, Ellen White supported Waggoner. “The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones” she wrote.⁹ When she was asked what she thought of the message of Waggoner and Jones, she replied: “Why, I have been presenting it to you for the last forty-five

years--the matchless charms of Christ. . . . When Brother Waggoner brought out these ideas in Minneapolis, it was the first clear teaching on this subject from any human lips I had heard, excepting the conversations between myself and my husband. I have said to myself, It is because God has presented it to me in vision that I see it so clearly, and they cannot see it because they have never had it presented to them as I have.”¹⁰

She never wavered in her commitment to the message of righteousness by faith. “It is the third angel’s message in verity” she wrote in 1890.¹¹

- (3) *Pantheism.* At the beginning of the twentieth century Dr. H Kellogg, through his book *The Living Temple*, attempted to introduce pantheism into the church. At the 1903 Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee the issue was discussed for a whole day. When Elder A. G. Daniells returned to his home in the evening he found two messages from Ellen White waiting for him. “No one can imagine,” recounts Daniells, “the eagerness with which I read the documents that had come in the mail while we were in the midst of our discussions. There was a most positive testimony regarding the dangerous errors that were taught in *The Living Temple.*”¹²

The next morning as he read these messages to the assembled delegates the tide was turned. “Your message came on just the right day” he wrote to Ellen White, “a day earlier would have been too soon. I read it to the council yesterday, and it produced a most profound impression.”¹³ Why did the messages come when they did? In her reply Ellen White told him that in a night vision she saw a ship approaching an iceberg and heard an authoritative voice crying out “Meet it.” The ship collided with the iceberg but it survived. “Well I knew the meaning of this representation,” she wrote, “I had my orders. . . . This is why you received the testimonies when you did.”¹⁴

Conclusion

Much more could be said, but the point has been made: God through the ministry of Ellen White provided the church with vital counsel not only in the areas of health, education, organization, and mission but also in the area of theology. Without God’s leading, this church it is likely that it would no longer exist or be another small church like the Advent Christian Church (25,000

members) which also grew out of the Millerite movement. While nothing and no one can take the place of Scripture, the role and position of Ellen White in the church is still of vital importance for the theological unity and harmony in the church.

Gerhard Pfandl, BRI

¹David Neff, "Ellen White's Theological and Literary Indebtedness to Calvin Stowe" (Unpublished manuscript, Ellen G. White Estate, DF 389-C).

²She identified as landmarks the cleansing of the sanctuary, the three angels' messages, the commandments of God, the Sabbath, and the non-immortality of soul. (CW 30).

³Ibid., 35.

⁴*Spirit of Prophecy*, 1:17, 18.

⁵ISM, 296.

⁶Ev 614-615.

⁷LS 110.

⁸ISM 206, 207.

⁹TM 91-92.

¹⁰Sermon, Rome, New York, June 19, 1889 (5MR 219).

¹¹Review and Herald, April 1, 1890 (Ev 190).

¹²SBIO 298.

¹³Ibid., 299.

¹⁴Ibid., 301.

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

Mel Gibson's film "The Passion of the Christ" has triggered a number of quite different responses. The film focuses on Jesus' twelve hours before his death, climaxing in his crucifixion. Languages used are Latin and Aramaic. Subtitles are in English or other modern languages. The film is unique insofar that it has reached places where Christian films normally are not shown. Those who watch it are moved, shocked, and oftentimes in tears. The film has been called the most realistic production dealing with the suffering and death of Jesus. Mel Gibson is a devout Catholic who has built a three million dollar church in which the worship service follows the old and traditional Tridentine rite with Latin as the language used in the mass.¹

But even within Christianity the production has not remained undisputed and unchallenged. Billy Graham supposedly said that he was "moved to tears", and added "I doubt if there has been a more graphic and moving presentation of Jesus' death and resurrection, which Christians believe are the most important events in human history."²

Pope John Paul II blessed Jim Caviezel, the Roman Catholic actor who played Jesus, and the Vatican rejected criticism that the film contains latent antisemitism.³

A webpage suggests: "Mel Gibson's artistic masterpiece restores the lost dimension of the suffering of

the Christ in a very graphic manner . . . For centuries the Protestants have taken pride in presenting an empty cross, emphasizing the resurrected Christ over the passion of Christ. In fact, several Protestant groups have discounted the observance of Good Friday (the day for remembering the Lord's death) and emphasized Easter Sunday (the day remembering the resurrection of Christ from the grave). Historically, much of the Protestant church has de-emphasized the use of images altogether. Of all the denominations of Christianity the Roman Catholic Church has done the best job of preserving the passion of Christ within its art. It is out of this rich tradition Mel Gibson comes." Mel Gibson's film is called "God's instrument."⁴

On the other hand, the Protestant Church in Germany does not recommend the film. The church criticizes that the film lacks in theological depth, is characterized by brutality, and puts the emphasis on the physical suffering of Jesus.⁵

The Roman Catholic New Testament scholar R. Zwick denounces the film as "old wine in the new hoses-force, horror and splatter cinema." He states that the film focuses on the passion of Jesus only and neglects the importance of Jesus' proclamation and works. Furthermore, it resembles a work of Clemens Brentano, of the 19th century, in which the author summarized the mystic sufferings of the nun Anna Katharina Emmerick.⁶ A number of Adventists, including a local conference, have also commented on the film.⁷

The main points of criticism found in the present literature are:

- (1) The film connects the Catholic understanding of the Eucharist/mass with a Catholic understanding of Christ's suffering. Mel Gibson himself commented on the continuous non-bloody sacrifice of Jesus in the Eucharist as a "real representation" or realization of his suffering.⁸ The film shows what the Eucharist is all about.
- (2) The film contains a number of historical inaccuracies, even errors. For example, Satan occurs in visual form.
- (3) It highlights the role of Mary and portrays her in many scenes and to an extent far beyond the biblical picture of Mary.
- (4) It is characterized by relentless brutality. Therefore, the film is rated *R* which means that it should not be viewed by audiences under 17 years of age if not accompanied by a parent or an adult guardian.
- (5) The film may contain traces of antisemitism.⁹

Clearly the film places the emphasis on the physical suffering of Jesus. Adventists do not deny this bodily aspect and the horrible physical pain Christ suffered, but

they stress even more the spiritual nature of his suffering. Interestingly the Gospels do not go into detail describing Christ's torture and his physical pain when he died on the cross. The question is, should we?

Ellen G. White in commenting on the suffering of Christ declared: "With amazement the angels beheld the infinite love of Jesus, who, suffering the most intense agony of mind and body, thought only of others, and encouraged the penitent soul to believe. . . Upon Christ as our substitute and surety was laid the iniquity of us all. . . The guilt of every descendant of Adam was pressing upon His heart. The wrath of God against sin . . . filled the soul of His Son with consternation. All His life Christ had been publishing to a fallen world the good news of the Father's mercy and pardoning love. Salvation for the chief of sinners was His theme. But now with the terrible weight of guilt He bears, He cannot see the Father's reconciling face. The withdrawal of the divine countenance from the Saviour in this hour of supreme anguish pierced His heart with a sorrow that can never be fully understood by man. So great was this agony that His physical pain was hardly felt. . . It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father's wrath upon Him as man's substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God. . . In the thick darkness, God veiled the last human agony of His Son."¹⁰

What should be done? Christian publishing houses including our own are offering literature on the life and passion of Jesus. Some can be contacted with questions of a spiritual nature. Adventist pastors have begun to conduct seminars and evangelistic campaigns dealing in a more balanced and in a biblical way with the importance of Jesus' life and death and our salvation. This is a helpful approach. People may be open to hear more about Jesus today. Let's use our chances!

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

¹See, <http://sueddeutsche.de/kultur/artikel/607/28579> on March 16, 2004.

²<http://www.hollywoodjesus.com/passion.htm> on March 16, 2004.

³See, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,114313,00.html> on March 16, 2004.

⁴<http://www.hollywoodjesus.com/passion.htm> on March 16, 2004.

⁵See, <http://sueddeutsche.de/kultur/artikel/113/28085> on March 9, 2004.

⁶http://www.herder-korrespondenz.de/service/diese_woche/artikel/index_html?onlstrnr=556&beitrag_nr=485342

⁷See, e.g., <http://www.misda.org/News.cfm/ViewNews.cfm/ViewNews.cfm/10100> on March 8, 2004.

⁸See, <http://sueddeutsche.de/kultur/artikel/607/28579> on March 16, 2004.

⁹See, http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/endtimeissues/passion_of_christ2.html on March 5, 2004.

¹⁰Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Pacific Press, 1898), 752-754.

FOCUS ON SCRIPTURE

REMNANT OF HER SEED: REVELATION 12:17

The Advent movement is a uniquely-called movement with a special message based on Revelation 14. Although some may feel hesitant to say so, I believe we can with certainty say that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God's remnant people. This is not based on any boastful pride, but on Biblical authority. We are not better than anyone else, but Christ has given us the last warning message for a dying world.

Revelation 12:17 in conjunction with Rev 14 portrays the central core of the Seventh-day Adventist message and our roots as a people. From the first part of chapter 12 we know that the "dragon" is the devil and the "woman" is God's church. Verse 17 goes on to say that the devil "went to make war with the remnant of her seed." The rest of the verse forthrightly states that they are those who (1) "keep the commandments of God," and (2) "have the testimony of Jesus Christ." These characteristics identify the "remnant" as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world. By the great cleaver of truth He has cut them out from the quarry of the world and brought them into connection with Himself. He has made them His representatives and has called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation. The greatest wealth of truth ever entrusted to mortals, the most solemn and fearful warnings ever sent by God to man, have been committed to them to be given to the world . . ." (7T 138).

Keep the commandments of God. Although most Christians would say they accept the Ten Commandments, the central commandment that is ignored is the Sabbath Commandment which is the sign of God's creative and redemptive power. It shows that he created the earth in six literal 24 hour days and points back to Genesis 1 and 2 indicating that the history of the earth and its chronology is short. We are *Seventh-day* Adventists, a unique people with a unique sign and a unique message. However, it is only possible to keep the commandments of God through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

The testimony of Jesus. Revelation 1:2 and 9 refer to John's reporting of the "word of God" and the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 19:10 clearly identifies the "testimony of Jesus" to be the "spirit of prophecy." The Seventh-day Adventist Church with God's messages spoken through his messenger, Ellen G. White, qualifies as the "remnant of her seed." God spoke through

Ellen White to provide his last-day Advent movement with the theological, spiritual, and practical guidance necessary for the proclamation of the unique message of Revelation 14. The Spirit of Prophecy in its entirety is to be prayerfully read, believed, shared, and implemented through the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“We must follow the directions given through the spirit of prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should now occupy” (8T 298).

As Seventh-day Adventists we are to point people to Jesus, to turn our eyes on him, to realize that he is the center of everything we believe in and proclaim. “The more continually we fix the eye of faith on Christ, in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered, the more our faith grows . . .” (HP 127).

God is using the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a mighty way today. In spite of the failings, sins, and deficiencies of his people, he changes their hearts and those of others who are introduced to him through the witness of his “remnant.” All over the world he is adding to his “remnant” people. What a wonderful family to belong to: God’s remnant people saved through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ preparing themselves for his soon Second Coming.

Ted N. C. Wilson,
General Conference

SCRIPTURE APPLIED—A BIBLE STUDY

CERTAINTY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD?

There are so many uncertainties in our world. We do not know how secure our jobs are. We are not protected against fatal illnesses, attacks by terrorists, war, and disaster. But we can be sure about our relationship with God and the gift of everlasting life.

I. *It Is Possible to Have Assurance of Salvation*

1. *Common Misunderstandings*

- (1) Some people think that only sinless persons can know that they are saved. Imagine what could have happened after the prodigal son had returned home: The next day father and son have breakfast together. Accidentally the son hits a glass of orange juice. The juice spills over the table cloth. The glass falls to the floor

and bursts, and the son starts swearing. Would the father send him back to the pigs? Hardly. He may tell him that at home such a behavior is not acceptable, but the son remains a son. Likewise, a person who has been saved is not a sinless individual, but someone whose goal is not to sin.

- (2) Others follow the motto: “Once saved, always saved;” it does not matter much how you live after you have been saved. Rev 3:11 rejects such an idea.
- (3) Still others believe that certainty of salvation depends on emotions. If you feel that you are saved, you are saved; if not, bad for you. But the sick man at the Pool of Bethesda obeyed Jesus’ command before feeling that he was healed. Certainty of salvation has to do with faith. Feelings are secondary (Heb 11:6; Rom 1:17).

2. *Persons Who Had this Certainty*

- (1) Moses - Exod 32:32 (for the “book” see Rev 20:15)
- (2) Peter - 1 Pet 5:1
- (3) Paul - 2 Tim 4:7, 8
- (4) Christians in Ephesus - Eph 2:8
- (5) Christians in Colossae - Col 1:12-14

Some may argue that we cannot compare ourselves with these persons. But they were sinners like we are: Moses was a murderer; Peter betrayed Jesus; Paul persecuted Christians; and the believers in Ephesus and Colossae were not sinless (Eph 4:25-32; Col 3:2-13).

3. *God’s Wish with Regard to Certainty of Salvation*

We want certainty in all areas of life. What about our salvation? The Bible offers us wonderful assurance:

- (1) John 3:16, 36
- (2) John 5:24
- (3) John 20:30, 31
- (4) Rom 8:1
- (5) 1 John 5:11-13 - It is God’s will for us of to have assurance of salvation.

II. *Certainty of Salvation Is Needed*

1. *The Importance of Certainty of Salvation*

- (1) Assurance is necessary in order to have the right relationship to God. It allows us to let go of all attempts to save ourselves. Instead of having religious stress we can love, thank, and trust God.

- (2) Assurance is necessary in order to have the right relationship to fellow humans. We do not help them through good works and our testimony in order to receive some points that would count toward our salvation. Our ministry is selfless.
- (3) Assurance is needed for our own psychological well-being, e.g., to experience joy, fearlessness, and serenity.
- (4) Assurance is needed when it comes to dying (2 Sam 23:1-5).

2. *How to Find Certainty of Salvation?*

Acts 16:31 - "What must I do to be saved." "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

Five steps may be helpful:

- (1) Recognize that God loves you and has a plan for your life (John 3:16; 10:10).
- (2) Accept that you are a sinner and cannot save yourself. As sinners we are separated from God, have to expect death, and cannot bridge the chasm which exists between God and us (Rom 3:23; Isa 59:2).
- (3) Recognize that in Jesus Christ God has prepared the only way out of our dilemma. By dying in our place Jesus has bridged the chasm (Rom 5:8; John 14:6).
- (4) Accept Jesus as Savior and Lord (John 1:12; 6:47-48, 54) by faith (Acts 16:31; Eph 2:8-9). Invite him to take complete control over your life.
- (5) Rely on God's promises, not your feelings. If you have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, trust the divine promise that you now have everlasting life (1John 5:11-13). Maintain your relationship with the Lord by daily talking to him in prayer and listening to his Word, by seeking the fellowship of the believers and talking about Jesus to others.

Conclusion

Why shouldn't we now in our prayer invite Jesus into our lives? Assurance of salvation is a priceless gift and treasure.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

BOOK NOTES

Ken Wade, *Journey to Moriah*, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2004, 143 pp. \$11.99.

In *Journey to Moriah*, Ken Wade promises to take the reader on a journey of faith based on Abraham's spiritual experience. Beginning with the move of Terah,

Abraham's father, from Ur to Haran, the attention subsequently shifts to Abraham's call in Genesis 12 until his ultimate triumph of faith on Mt. Moriah. On the whole, Ken Wade delivers on his promise based on careful attention to the text that reflects his life-long admiration of the patriarch Abraham.

Approaching the story with a desire to discern more than what lies on the surface of the text, the author brings out spiritual lessons that may not be immediately obvious to the casual reader. The biblical text is immensely illuminated in this regard by historical and archaeological reports that are deemed relevant to the cultural context of the story. Many readers will find this aspect of the book extremely helpful. It is all part of the author's attempt to help the reader see the story through the eyes of the patriarch. Some readers, however, may find it somewhat unsettling when on occasion Ken Wade builds on archaeological and historical insight to make conjectures that seem to go beyond the facts. Possibly, equally unsettling are instances when the author wonders aloud about the possibility that the text may not reflect the way things actually were. A case in point concerns the ages of Abraham and Sarah when they set out on their journey. On the whole, however, *Journey to Moriah* makes a spiritual, refreshing and insightful reading.

Kwabena Donkor,
Ontario Conference

Richard Lehmann. *Commentaire de la Bible: Apocalypse de Jean. Tome II*. France: Faculté adventiste de théologie, 2002, pp. 1-162. np.

Richard Lehmann is one of the best known European Adventist theologians. He taught for many years in the faculty of theology at the Adventist Seminary in Collonges-sous-Salève, France. Until recently he was the President of the Franco-Belgian Union Conference, but at the present time he is retired working as the president of the Seminary in Collonges. Did I say retired?

This is the second volume of his commentary on the book of Revelation. The first volume covered chapters 1-3, and this one covers chapters 4-8:1. The commentary, is characterized by a careful reading of the biblical text in dialogue with the rest of the Scripture and with Adventist and non-Adventist exegetes. Lehmann argues for a historicist interpretation of Revelation as the best approach to the book and proceeds to use this method in his exegesis and interpretation of the visions of the throne (Rev 4-5; the enthronement of Christ) and the seals (chaps. 6-8:1). Recapitulation is presented as characterizing not only apocalyptic thinking but also as part of the Hebrew mentality. He correctly finds the use of recapitulation in the messages to the seven churches and the vision of the seven seals.

In his analysis of the text Lehmann pays attention to the structure and other literary features of the book without overlooking the message and the fulfillment of its prophecies within the flow of history. This is important at a time when there is a tendency among some Adventists to overemphasize the literary beauty of the text and the development of the plot in the book while placing little emphasis on the historical fulfillment of the prophecies recorded there. For Adventists the book of Revelation is about God's plans for his people throughout the Christian era with particular emphasis on the

end-time remnant. Lehmann strengthens that position and provides significant insights for its support and development.

In this volume the exegetical task is accompanied by a pastoral concern in which the message of the book is made relevant for the believer. Therefore, the pastor as well as other church members will find here useful material to nurture their faith in God's message for these last days. We look forward to the next volumes in the series.

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