

## Messiah Stone Scrutinized

BY CLINTON WAHLEN

Media attention has recently spotlighted a sensational interpretation of what has been dubbed “Gabriel’s Vision” and “a Dead Sea Scroll on stone.”<sup>1</sup> Israel Knohl, Professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, claims that



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the 87-line Hebrew inscription, which has been dated by Ada Yardeni and Binyamin Elitzur to the late first century B.C.,<sup>2</sup> reflects a pre-Christian, Jewish belief in a messiah who would die, rise again after three days, and be exalted to heaven.<sup>3</sup>

Knohl’s reading of this tablet raises a number of questions, not the least of which is why a similar messianic conception by Jesus would be so unintelligible to the twelve disciples. It could be argued that if the idea of a dying messiah was current the disciples were unwilling to accept it in reference to Jesus,<sup>4</sup> or that such a notion was not widespread. The impression given by the four Gospels is that Jesus’ death was seen by onlookers as proof positive against any messianic claim.<sup>5</sup> Knohl, while not directly addressing such questions, understands Jesus’ reference to Ps 110 (Mark 12:35-37) as a rejection of the triumphant messiah model in favor of one that “involves suffering and death.”<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, like several other sensational “discoveries” in recent years, the messiah stone is unprovenanced. That is, instead of being excavated by archaeologists, who would then be able to confirm where it came from, verify its authenticity, date the inscription, and locate other clues that could shed light on the group that produced it, the stone was uncovered by traders and sold through the antiquities market to David Jeselsohn, a Swiss-Israeli collector. Further, the Hebrew text on which Knohl’s reconstruction is based is fragmentary at critical junctures and there is no agreement on what it actually means. As with the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves, the widely divergent readings and resultant translations show just how problematic the work of reconstructing such a text can be. Even when there is agreement on what words are to be reconstructed, differing opinions on their relation can lead to opposite conclusions as to what the text actually means.<sup>7</sup>

The main points at issue are portions of lines 16 (“My servant, David, asked from before Ephraim [?]”), 19 (“in three days you shall know...”), 21 (“this bad plant”), and 80-81 (“In three days ..., I, Gabri’el ...[?], / the Prince of Princes, ..., narrow holes (?) ...

[...]...”).<sup>8</sup> It should not be overlooked that lines 80-81 on which Knohl’s suggestion depends the most, are particularly difficult to decipher as the verbs are illegible. His translation of these lines is: “by three days live....”<sup>9</sup> Then,

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## EDITORIAL

I would like to begin my work as the new editor of *Reflections* by paying tribute to our colleague and friend, Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller, who created this newsletter five years ago and has served as editor since that time. He will continue making a contribution through his regular Bible Study feature and occasional articles and editorials. *Reflections*, read by Bible teachers, church administrators, and pastors throughout the world church, has consistently expanded and enriched the church's theological and doctrinal understanding. As the church grows, so do the challenges to theological unity in an increasingly divided world. Our subscription list is growing too and we want to encourage you to write to us, let us know what you especially appreciate about *Reflections* as well as how it might be improved.



You will probably notice some changes in this issue, especially in the upper left-hand corner of the front page. There you will see the Biblical Research Institute's slightly updated logo, depicting the Scriptures as our source of light and wisdom. The design of *Reflections* has been correspondingly updated as well.

Each issue will feature an editorial by one of the scholars at the Biblical Research Institute, affording a more direct line of communication from BRI to you, our readers. There is also a new section which facilitates communication from our readers to the BRI and the rest of the world church. It is called "Worldwide Highlights" which contains news items of theological happenings relevant to the world church. These are necessarily brief so as to include include a larger number in each issue.

We at BRI appreciate your reading of *Reflections* and welcome your input. Please, take a moment to write to us and let us know how we can better serve you. Also, we encourage you to visit our website, [www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org](http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org), where you will find additional free resources as well as books and other publications which can be ordered.

Clinton Wahlen, BRI

## Messianic Stone Scrutinized

(Continued from page 1)

by an ingenious connection of the first reference to three days with Ephraim as a suffering and dying messiah (mostly based on ideas in later Jewish traditions)<sup>10</sup> and "this bad plant" (line 21) with a "wicked" and "false" messiah, Knohl argues that the person to whom Gabriel speaks "live/be resurrected!" is also a messianic figure (151).

While Knohl's hypothesis is carefully-argued, each of his major points is speculative. First, the reconstructions of "Ephraim" and "live" are questionable.<sup>11</sup> Another serious problem is his reading of the text in the light of Jewish traditions clearly documented only hundreds of years after the time of Jesus (ca. AD 400-650).<sup>12</sup> Finally, Knohl's linkage of widely separated and partial lines of text into one coherent idea rests on many unproved (and largely unprovable) assumptions about the identification, meaning and connections of words in this inscription.

It is much easier to make headlines with sensational claims than to convincingly demonstrate the truth of those claims. Upon closer scrutiny, the stone nowhere makes reference to a messiah of any kind, good or bad. Nor is the reference to three days clearly a reference to resurrection. In fact, the number three is mentioned a total of at least twelve times in this short inscription, including references to three prophets (lines 15, 70), three saints (line 65), three shepherds (line 75), and (probably) three

### PURPOSE

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

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

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

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signs (line 79). Too much weight is placed on the reference to “three days,” a stereotypical period of time mentioned no less than 42 times in the Hebrew Bible (more than twice as often as references to “forty days”). There are just too many gaps in the text and too many points at which Knohl’s hypothesis rests on gratuitous assumptions about what the text reads and what the text means. While Jesus seems to have referred to OT prophecies of a suffering messianic figure (Mark 10:45; Luke 24:25-27), the messiah stone provides no compelling evidence for a pre-Christian, Jewish tradition of a dying messiah resurrecting in three days.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, “Ancient Tablet Ignites Debate on Messiah and Resurrection,” *New York Times*, July 6, 2008; online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/06/world/middleeast/06stone.html?th=&emc=th&pagewanted=all>

<sup>2</sup> Ada Yardeni and Binyamin Elitzur, “Document: A First-Century BCE Prophetic Text Written on a Stone; First Publication,” *Cathedra* 123 (2007): 155–66 (in Hebrew).

<sup>3</sup> Israel Knohl, “‘By Three Days, Live’: Messiahs, Resurrection, and Ascent to Heaven in Hazon Gabriel” *JR* 88 (2008): 147–58. He claims that the stone confirms his hypothesis that “the character of the Messiah son of Joseph and the tradition of his killing were created in the late first century BCE or the early first century CE” (149); see idem, “On ‘the Son of God,’ Armilus, and Messiah Son of Joseph,” *Tarbiz* 68 (1998): 13–38 (in Hebrew with an English abstract); idem, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> So William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 33.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Markus Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 55.

<sup>6</sup> Israel Knohl, “The Messiah Son of Joseph: ‘Gabriel’s Revelation’ and the Birth of a New Messianic Model,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 34, no. 5 (September/October 2008): 58–62, 78 here 62.

<sup>7</sup> For an example of this in connection with 1QS IV.21–22, see Clinton Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels* (WUNT 2/185; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 46.

<sup>8</sup> Yardeni’s Hebrew transcription and English translation of the text used here may be found online at <http://www.bib-arch.org/images/DSS-stone-hebrew.jpg> and [http://www.bib-arch.org/news/dssinstone\\_english.pdf](http://www.bib-arch.org/news/dssinstone_english.pdf) respectively (brackets hers). Her drawing of the inscription may be found at: <http://www.nfc.co.il/upload-Files/848324000835419.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Ada Yardeni has recently agreed with Knohl’s reconstruction of this word (online: <http://www.daylife.com/photo/0fnO1pW0512yC>).

<sup>10</sup> Esp. *b. Sukkah* 52a; *Pesiq. Rab.* 36; *Sefer Zerubbabel*.

<sup>11</sup> “Ephraim” does not appear to be the only possible reading, according to Yardeni. With regard to “live,” Knohl reconstructs the Hebrew verb as *kh yh*, arguing its equivalency to *khyh* on the basis that *aleph* appears in 1QIs<sup>a</sup> as a vowel, though this form of *khyh* is not established in any extant Hebrew text outside of this postulated use in the messiah stone.

<sup>12</sup> Knohl also refers to *T. Benj.* 3.8 but to what extent this and other portions of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* derives from Jewish, Jewish-Christian or Gentile-Christian origin continues to be debated as the “testaments” found at Qumran (e.g. 4Q215, 4Q541) do not show a clear connection to these traditions.

## THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

# Universal Legal Justification and Vicarious Atonement

BY STEPHEN BAUER

Like the first-century church, Adventism has varying theories of the doctrine of salvation circulating in its midst. One theory currently in circulation is the doctrine of Universal Legal Justification [ULJ], advocated by the 1888 Study Committee and Jack Sequeira. The core of ULJ appears to be the assertion that Christ’s death has actually altered the legal standing of all humans with God. ULJ asserts that all humans were forensically justified in His sight prior to any exercise of faith in Christ by the individual. Hence, justification by faith is reduced to being the subjective *realization* of one’s standing with God which is already established. ULJ stands on two theological pillars: The mechanism by which Jesus bears our sins, and the doctrine of man. If either of these pillars prove faulty, the doctrine of ULJ will be undermined. ULJ is theologically complex and intricate. Hence, in the scope of this article, I can only briefly consider the first issue, how Jesus bears our sins.

How does Jesus actually bear our sins? Both the 1888 Study Committee and Jack Sequeira reject a vicarious atonement model. Vicarious atonement means a one-for-one representation, in which Christ is understood to personally represent you individually on the cross as your personal representative and substitute. Christ thus bears our sins through a transfer of sin from sinner to substitute, as seen in the symbolism of the Mosaic sanctuary. It is this model of vicarious representation – especially the concept of the transfer of sin – that is rejected by the 1888 Study Committee and Sequeira.

In a short article in the 1888 Study Committee newsletter, an unspecified author opines,

It is interesting that the word “vicarious” appears nowhere in the Bible, nor did Ellen White use it in any of her books. The Bible does not teach vicarious substitution, but a shared substitution. There is a big difference! The former is the evangelical idea, the latter is the 1888 message idea. There has been much confusion and even misrepresentation on the part of sincere people. A clear statement of the Bible idea follows.<sup>1</sup>

What then follows is an excerpt from Jack Sequeira in which he asserts,

The concept of substitutionary atonement presently taught by evangelical Christianity, as well as within Adventism, does not take us far enough in understanding the profound truth

of the atonement, especially as taught by the apostle Paul. . . . Christ did not die so that in exchange we might live; rather he died as us in order that we might by faith share in His death and resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

Sequeira speaks of vicarious substitution as the concept of exchanged experience while “shared” or “actual” substitution teaches the concept of a shared experience between Christ and man.<sup>3</sup> Thus, he says Christ dies “as us” in contrast to dying for us. Elsewhere, Sequeira better explains the grounds of rejecting the vicarious model, by appealing to Roman Catholic criticism of the Reformation gospel. “As the Catholic theologians pointed out, it is a fundamental principle of all law, God’s or man’s, that guilt or punishment cannot be transferred from the guilty to the innocent, nor can the righteousness of one person be legally transferred to another.”<sup>4</sup>

Sequeira is using arguments designed to overthrow the gospel preached by Luther and other Reformers with its vicarious atonement model. By contrast, Ellen White makes strong and enthusiastic remarks concerning Luther’s recovery of the gospel.<sup>5</sup> By using Sequeira to make a fuller explanation, the 1888 Study Committee *de facto* becomes dependent on Sequeira’s deeper points of argument.

While it is true that Ellen White never uses “vicarious” in any of her *books*, she does use the term in a *Review and Herald* article, and this singular use is of great significance:

Christ came to reveal to the world the knowledge of the character of God, of which the world was destitute. This knowledge was the chief treasure which he committed to his disciples to be communicated to men. The truth of God had been hidden beneath a mass of tradition and error. *The sacrificial offerings which had been instituted to teach men concerning the vicarious atonement of Christ*, to teach them that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, had become to them a stumbling-block. All that was spiritual and holy was perverted to their darkened understanding.<sup>6</sup>

Notice that for Ellen White, the sacrificial system of the Old Testament was designed to teach men about “the vicarious atonement of Christ.” Furthermore, her affirmation of the vicarious nature of the atonement came in 1892, four years after the events of 1888 in Minneapolis. It seems odd that if the 1888 message was built on changing the central model of the atonement from

vicarious representation to an alternative view, that Ellen White would still be affirming the vicarious model of atonement four years later. Perhaps she recognized that the original 1888 message advocated a vicarious model of the atonement, unlike the present self-styled practitioners of the 1888 message.

E.J. Waggoner seems to affirm the vicarious nature of the atonement in his open letter to GC President G. I. Butler, published in late 1888 shortly after the General Conference session. In his response to Butler, Waggoner argues, “Paul says that the preaching of the cross is to some people foolishness, or absurd, and I have often heard people ridicule *the idea that the death of one person could atone for the sins of another*. They call such an idea absurd, yet to you and me it is perfectly consistent with reason.”<sup>7</sup> Notice Waggoner’s use of the language of vicarious representation: “*the idea that the death of one person could atone for the sins of another*.”

Waggoner’s support for the vicarious model of atonement is openly demonstrated thirty pages later. Waggoner asks, “Again; why was Jesus baptized? He said that it was ‘to fulfill all righteousness.’ We may not say that it was simply as an example; for that would be really *denying the vicarious nature of the atonement*.”<sup>8</sup> Waggoner is clearly concerned that Butler’s position would undermine “the vicarious nature of the atonement.” Why would Waggoner be so concerned about undermining the vicarious nature of atonement if his Minneapolis message was based on abandoning the vicarious model for another? This is most interesting for if Waggoner advocated vicarious atonement in 1888, how is it that his name is now associated with a rejection of the vicarious model? The answer may lie in the fact that Waggoner changed to a more pantheistic model of the atonement by 1900.

In his 1900 volume, *The Glad Tidings*, Waggoner argues that Christ bears sin continuously instead of once for all on the Cross. Waggoner comes to this conclusion by arguing that all things are under the curse, which brings death, and yet all things still live. Waggoner concludes, “Therefore, the fact that we see life everywhere . . . is positive proof that the cross of the Crucified One *is there bearing it*.”<sup>9</sup> Later he adds, “Christ is crucified in the sinner, for wherever there is sin and the curse, *there is Christ bearing it*.”<sup>10</sup> Notice that Waggoner’s language is one of a present, ongoing bearing of sin by a personal presence of Christ in the sinner. In addition, the crown of thorns is asserted to represent Christ as bearing all of nature’s weakness due to sin. Christ thus must be in all of nature bearing sin to keep it alive.<sup>11</sup> Christ bears sin primarily through a personal presence in the ontological substance of man

***Sequeira uses arguments designed to overthrow the gospel preached by Luther and other Reformers, with its vicarious atonement model.***

and nature, throughout history. The pantheistic overtones of this atonement model are obvious, but come naturally when sin is treated more as an infused substance than the reining power of Romans 5-7.

Waggoner's new model of how Christ bears sins is significant. This is because it is the pantheistic Waggoner who has abandoned the vicarious model of atonement he held twelve years earlier. It is suggestive that the 1888 Study Committee, in their rejection of the vicarious model of atonement, may be patterning their doctrine from the later Waggoner while trying to sift out the pantheistic elements. It seems, however, that it was precisely Waggoner's pantheistic tendencies that caused him to abandon the vicarious model and join forces with Kellogg. Ellen White responded to Kellogg's view of Christ being in sinners and in nature by saying, "in *Living Temple* the assertion is made that God is in the flower, in the leaf, in the sinner. But God does not live in the sinner. The Word declares that He abides only in the hearts of those who love Him and do righteousness. God does not abide in the heart of the sinner; it is the enemy who abides there."<sup>12</sup> These comments seem equally contrary to Waggoner's pantheistic assertions in *Glad Tidings*.<sup>13</sup> By refuting Kellogg as being contrary to Scripture, Ellen White brings us to another question: What insights can be found in Scripture about vicarious substitution?

Christ, describing His mission, said that a man can show no greater love than to "die *for* his friends" (John 15:13). This is remarkably similar language to His earlier comment, "and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:15). "For" is not the conjunction *hōs* (as) but, rather, is the preposition *hyper* (for). In these two passages, as well as in other places, Christ depicts His death as a death *for*, that is, *in place of* us, not *as* us. When one lays down his life for friends, he is not dying *as* them or *with* them. He dies *for* them, and presumably, would die for one friend, not just two or more friends. Likewise the shepherd is ready to die, not *as* His sheep or *with* His sheep, but *for* His sheep – whether one sheep or many sheep. Both friends and sheep are saved from dying by the friend or shepherd who dies for them. Hence there is a clear inference favoring a vicarious understanding of the death of Christ as a personal replacement, the one dying in place of His friend to save the friend's life.

Paul, in Romans 5:7, mirrors Christ's teaching by making an analogy of the death of Christ for us using an explicitly vicarious illustration. "Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man—though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die." Here we have a direct, one-for-one substitution being presented—a vicarious death. *One dies for another individual*. This sets up the

exclamation in verse eight that Christ died *for* us while we were still His enemies. The use of "for" (*hyper*) leaves no doubt that Christ was not dying *as* us or *with* us, but *for* us, in our place, like the one who would die for the good man. Verse 7 leaves no other option than the vicarious model for how we interpret v. 8.

Having surveyed some issues centering on vicarious substitution, let us now turn our attention to the transfer of sin. We have seen that rejecting the vicarious model brings an accompanying rejection of the concept of transferring sin. What happens to the doctrine of the sanctuary if the transfer of sin is rejected as being illegal and unethical?

The sanctuary doctrine, which is well-supported biblically, is grounded in the principle of the transfer of sin from sinner to substitute.<sup>14</sup> For example, Ellen White explains the basic elements of the Sanctuary in terms of a transfer of sin:

Day by day the repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle and, placing his hand upon the victim's head, confessed his sins, thus *in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice*. . . . As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>15</sup>

Elsewhere she notes: "The most important part of the daily ministration was the service performed in behalf of individuals. The repentant sinner brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle, and, placing his hand upon the victim's head, confessed his sins, thus *in figure transferring them from himself to the innocent sacrifice*."<sup>16</sup> She also applies the concept of the transfer of sin to the Lord's goat on the Day of Atonement.<sup>17</sup> Ellen White applies the transfer model to our sins and Christ: "The Lord imputes unto the believer the righteousness of Christ and pronounces him righteous before the universe. *He transfers his sins to Jesus*, the sinner's representative, substitute, and surety. Upon Christ He lays the iniquity of every soul that believeth. 'He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' (2 Cor 5:21)."<sup>18</sup> By contrast, it is argued by Sequeira and the 1888 Study Committee that such transferral is illegal and unethical.<sup>19</sup> It thus seems that to deny the transfer of sin is to squarely contradict the early SDA sanctuary doctrine, especially as articulated by Ellen White. Without the transfer of sin in a vicarious representation model, the sanctu-

### ***Christ and Paul both use vicarious models to explain substitution.***

ary doctrine which launched the SDA Church cannot remain a viable belief. It must either undergo significant modification<sup>20</sup> or be discarded. The jugular vein of ULJ is the rejection of the vicarious model of atonement and the corresponding teaching of the transfer of sin from sinner to substitute. ULJ then, is at bottom, an argument attempting to reinterpret how Jesus bears our sins and is an attempt to replace the transfer mechanism and vicarious model of atonement with an alternative mechanism for bearing sin and an alternate atonement model.<sup>21</sup>

It seems clear that the rejection of the vicarious atonement model raises perplexing challenges to the perspectives of both Scripture and Ellen White. Christ and Paul both use vicarious models to explain substitution, while Ellen White asserted that the Old Testament sanctuary service was intended to teach the vicarious model of atonement. The first pillar upon which ULJ is dependent appears to have some serious structural deficiencies that require further investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous, "Glad Tidings," *1888 Study Committee Newsletter* (May-August, 1999), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Sequeira, *Saviour of the World* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1996), 134-135.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Jack Sequeira, *Beyond Belief* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1993), 40. The arguments on pp. 39-40 are heavily dependent on Catholic criticisms of the Reformation gospel as being unethical. The whole chapter is devoted to disproving a vicarious model of atonement in order to replace it with the corporate model, which is the basis of the doctrine of ULJ. Sequeira cites Deut 24:16 and Ezek 18:1-20 without any exposition. We cannot here address the exegesis of these texts. See *idem*, *Saviour of the World*, 84, for a similar assertion against vicarious representation, but without reference to Catholic theology.

<sup>5</sup> For example, GC 157; *ST* June 21, 1883; EW 224-225; COL 78.

<sup>6</sup> *RH* November 1, 1892 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>7</sup> Ellet J. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians* (Oakland, Calif.: n.p., 1888), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Waggoner, *Galatians*, 47.

<sup>9</sup> Ellet J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings* (Oakland, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1900), 85 (emphasis supplied). The full argument is found on pp. 84-91.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 89 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>12</sup> White, 1SAT 343.

<sup>13</sup> On Waggoner's transition in his view of the atonement, see Woodrow Whidden, "Universal Legal Justification in the Writings of E. J. Waggoner," *Reflections*, no. 22 (April 2008): 6-9. I have not researched the exact timeline of this development, but have merely observed the significant difference in the contrasting positions published by one man twelve years apart. The significance is in the differing positions, not in examining the process of how rapidly such a change occurred.

<sup>14</sup> See the seven volumes produced by the Daniel and Revelation Committee, published by BRI.

<sup>15</sup> GC 418, 421.

<sup>16</sup> PP 354 (emphasis supplied).

<sup>17</sup> PP 354; GC 420.

<sup>18</sup> 1SM 392 (emphasis supplied). Interestingly, Ellen White ties this individualized, in-the-present declaration of justification to 2 Cor 5:21. While the next sentence affirms that "Christ made satisfaction for the guilt of the whole world," she goes on to indicate that justification and salvation are conditioned on the sinner's faith response: "Although as sinners we are under the condemnation of the law, yet Christ by His obedience rendered to the law, claims for the repentant soul the merit of His own righteousness. *In order to obtain the righteousness of Christ, it is necessary for the sinner to know what that repentance is which works a radical change of mind and spirit and action.*" Two paragraphs later she adds "Christ pardons *none but the penitent*, but whom He pardons He first makes penitent. The *provision made is complete, and the eternal righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of every believing soul.* The costly, spotless robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has been *provided for the repenting, believing sinner*" (*ibid.*, 393-394, emphasis supplied). It thus seems abundantly clear that for Ellen White justification is not something that happens in the past, but rather occurs at the present time when a sinner believes in Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> Sequeira, *Beyond Belief*, 39-40; *idem*, *Saviour*, 84.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Jack Sequeira, *God's Show and Tell: The Plan of Redemption in the Sanctuary* (no publishing data given), 5-7. Sequeira applies the sanctuary typology to Christ himself. Christ does not minister *in* a sanctuary in heaven. He is the sanctuary who is in heaven. Any concept of fulfillment in a building in heaven is rejected. This seems quite contrary to Heb 9-11 and to Ellen White's views in EW 42, 252, 254; Ev 222; GW 22, 26; GC 420-422, 429.

<sup>21</sup> Heb 4:2 declares that the "gospel" was preached to the ancient Israelites but did them no good as it was not "mixed" with a response of faith. How was the gospel preached to them? Heb 8-10 makes a solid case that the concepts of the gospel were conveyed in symbols and types. The author of Hebrews frames the argument that since certain things happened in the earthly type, we know that certain things must happen in the antitypical ministry of Christ (Heb 9:13-14, 23). The fundamentals of the gospel are depicted in the sanctuary and Paul asserts that salvation by faith is indeed an Old Testament doctrine (2 Tim 3:15).

**“Christ pardons none but the penitent, but whom He pardons He first makes penitent. The provision made is complete, and the eternal righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of every believing soul. The costly, spotless robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has been provided for the repenting, believing sinner” (1SM 393-394).**

## SCRIPTURE APPLIED

# Is Jesus God?

The first coming of Jesus posed a problem for those being confronted with Him. The question was: Who is this Jesus? Is He only human or is He also divine as He claimed? And, if so, how are we to understand God? Is God one, are there several Gods or do we find a plurality of divine persons in one God? This third view is suggested by Scripture. It is essential to have a clear understanding of who Jesus is, in order to have a proper relationship with him. This is not just an academic question but a very practical issue having to do with our salvation.

## I. The Divinity of Jesus

### 1. Jesus Is Called God

John 1:1-3, 14

John 20:28

Heb 1:8-9

Col 2:9

Mark 2:5-11

Jesus, “the Word,” is God and Human

Jesus is called “My God”

Jesus is God and anointed by God

Jesus is the fullness of the Deity

Like God, Jesus Forgives Sins

### 2. Jesus Is Eternal

Rev 1:8 (Father); 1:17-18 (Son); 21:6 (Father); 22:12, 13, 20 (Son)

John 8:58-59; Isa 43:10-13; Exod 3:14

Mic 5:2

Isa 9:6

Heb 1:8

Both Father and Son are “Alpha and Omega”

Jesus is the I Am

Like the Father, Jesus is Eternal (Ps 90:2, 13)

Jesus is called the everlasting Father

Jesus’ throne is everlasting

### 3. Jesus Is Yahweh

Matt 3:1, 3; Isa 40:3

1 Cor 10:4; Exod 13:21

John 12:37-41; Isa 6:1-3

John 6:46; Gen 17:1, 22; 35:9-13; Exod 6:2-3

John 19:37; Zech 12:10, 1, 8

Preparing the way for Jesus/Yahweh

The spiritual rock is Jesus/Yahweh

The glory of Jesus is the glory of Yahweh

Abraham, Jacob, and Moses saw Jesus

Jesus/Yahweh is pierced

### 4. Jesus Is Worshiped

Matt 28:9

Heb 1:6; Rev 5:8-9, 12-14

1 Cor 1:2

John 14:14

Acts 7:58-59

Like God, Jesus is worshiped on earth

Jesus is worshiped by angels and in heaven

Christians call on the name of Jesus

Christians are to pray in the name of Jesus

Stephen prays to Jesus

## II. Problematic Texts

### 1. Rev 3:14—Jesus, “the Beginning of God’s Creation”

It is claimed that Jesus was God’s first work of creation.

- The Greek word (*archē*) can be translated “beginning,” “origin,” “first cause” or “ruler.” The Father himself is called the “beginning” in Rev 21:6. The same title is used for Jesus in Rev 22:13. Jesus is *not* the first created being but is Himself the Creator.

## 2. Col 1:15–Jesus, “the Firstborn of All Creation”

Since Jesus is called the “firstborn,” it is argued that he was born.

- According to v. 16 everything is created by Jesus. Therefore, He cannot Himself be a created being.
- The Bible writers sometimes use “firstborn” in a special way. David, though youngest, is called the firstborn—Ps 89:20, 27. The second line of the parallelism tells us that this title means “most exalted king.” The firstborn was the leader of a group or tribe, the priest of the family, and received twice the inheritance of his brothers. Sometimes, the idea of being born first did not play a role. Jacob (Gen 25:25-26 and Exod 4:22) and Ephraim (Gen 41:50-52 and Jer 31:9), though not born first, are also “firstborn.” More crucial than birth order was the special rank and dignity of the person given the title “firstborn.” Jesus, is called firstborn not because He was the firstborn of Mary but because of all creation, His is *the* birth that matters most and because He holds the exalted position of King of kings over all creation.

## 3. John 1:1-3–Jesus as God

It is claimed that there is a distinction in quality between God the Father, who is the Almighty God, and Jesus, who is only *a* god. John 1:1 reads: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with *ho theos*, and the Word was *theos*.”

- The Greek term for God—*theos*—is found with the article (*ho theos*—“the God”) or without the article (*theos*—“a god” or “God”). In John 1:1-3 the Father is named *ho theos* whereas the son is called *theos*. Is it justified to claim, based on this observation, that the Father is God Almighty whereas the Son is only *a* god?
- When the term *theos* is used for the Father, it is not only used with the article but oftentimes also without the article—*theos* (even in the very same chapter: John 1:6, 13, 18; see also Luke 2:14; Acts 5:39; 1 Thess 2:5; 1 John 4:12; and 2 John 1:9). Jesus is also *the* God, *theos* with the article (Heb 1:8-9; John 20:28). In other words, whether “God” has the article or not has nothing to do with their nature as deity.
- Had John always used the definite article with *theos*, it would mean that there is only one divine person: the Father would be the Son. In John 1:1, in order to talk about two separate persons of the Godhead, John had no other choice than to use *ho theos* (God with the article) and the next time to employ *theos* without the article. The absence of the article is not a valid argument against the equality and unity of the Father and the Son.

## 4. John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9–Jesus, the One and Only Son

It is suggested that the word *monogenēs* points to a literal begetting of Jesus and should be translated “only begotten.” Like “firstborn,” it is important to see the word’s range of meaning.

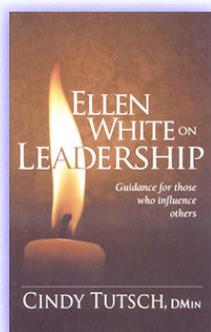
- The same term occurs also in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38 and points to an only child.
- Isaac is called Abraham’s *monogenēs* son in Heb 11:17. While Isaac was not Abraham’s only son, he was unique as Abraham’s “son of promise.” In light of these verses, together with the references in John and 1 John (the only other verses in the NT that use the Greek term), we conclude that “only” or “unique” is better than “only begotten” as a translation of *monogenēs*.
- The normal term for begotten, *gegennēka*, is found in Heb 1:5 and points either to Christ’s resurrection or incarnation.
- Perhaps the other evangelists did not use *monogenēs* because *agapētos* “beloved” is another way to translate the same Hebrew word (see Mark 1:11 in connection with Christ’s baptism). The two words may sometimes be close in meaning.

## III. Conclusion

Jesus is God as the Father is God. We understand Him to be equal with the Father in quality but not in function. The Son is to be honored as the Father is honored—John 5:23. A wrong understanding of the Son can lead to misunderstanding the way of salvation (see 1 John 4:1-3). Had God offered even his best created being as a sacrifice for lost humanity yet not offered Himself, humans, angels, and the inhabitants of the universe might question His love and misunderstand the real motivation for obedience. In giving His Son, the Father also gave Himself because Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are eternally one. Understanding the nature of Jesus helps us to understand the how we are saved and why we must accept Him as our Savior and Lord.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

## BOOK NOTES



Cindy Tutsch. *Ellen White and Leadership: Guidance for Those who Influence Others*. (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2008). 159 pp. US\$16.99.

Cindy Tutsch is one of the associate directors of the Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Md. This volume makes an important contribution to the field of Christian leadership and to the study of the writings of Ellen G. White. This is not only a study of what Ellen White had to say about leadership, but a comparative analysis of White's understanding of Christian leadership and what writers on the topic are saying today. The results are significant. Tutsch found that White anticipated much of what we find in today's leadership theories, that at times her counsel opposes them, and that in some instances her leadership principles are unique. The decision to refer to such leadership theories was based on the fact that "practical leadership literature in the genre that we know today was virtually nonexistent in the time of Ellen White" (p. 145).

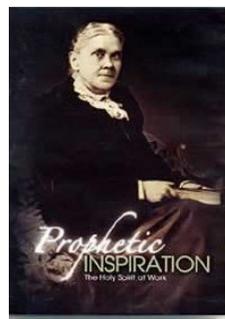
Tutsch defines a Christian leader as "anyone who uses his or her influence to promote Christ" (p. 7). This general definition leads her to conclude that any Christian is called to be a leader. She finds in the writings of Ellen G. White a set of core values for Christian leaders that includes the need of the Holy Spirit, Scripture study, character development, and prayer. The moral authority of the leader is grounded in the servant leadership exemplified by Christ which, if carefully followed, could prevent the abuse of authority. There are also practical discussions dealing with how to develop proper human relations particularly in the areas of race, gender, age-inclusiveness, mentoring, and caring for the poor. The last chapter addresses the permanent value of Ellen White's counsel on leadership and includes discussion of some of the issues that we face today. Particularly useful is the discussion of the qualifications of leaders. Throughout the book Tutsch relies quite heavily on quotations from Ellen G. White, adding little commentary. These quotations are carefully chosen to illustrate the principles promoted by White. We also find examples from the life and experience of Ellen White illustrating how she applied these leadership principles in her own work as a Christian leader.

A summary chapter provides a more analytical overview of Ellen White's counsels on Christian leadership, pulling the book together with clarity and ethos. It includes a very valuable discussion of Ellen White's theory of leadership which is based on personal accountability to God and doing everything "as unto the Lord."

Her theory finds its point of departure in the person and ministry of Jesus and the work of the Spirit while incorporating an overarching worldview of the cosmic conflict.

This volume will be useful to church leaders at every level of church administration as well as to Christians who are seeking to lead others to the Lord. Hopefully it will motivate others to explore and enrich the topic even more at a time when Christian leadership has become a vital issue in the growing Adventist church.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, BRI



"Prophetic Inspiration: The Holy Spirit at Work" (DVD), South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Wahroonga, NSW, Australia.

The early history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was heavily influenced by the ministry of Ellen G. White (1827-1915).

Through her ministry, God guided the fledgling church and protected it from many pitfalls. On the basis of her visions the educational and medical institutions and the health food work of the church were established, and wherever and whenever her counsel was followed the church prospered. Nevertheless, not long after her call as the Messenger of the Lord to the church, and ever since, critics from inside and outside the church have cast doubt on her ministry and have questioned her prophetic gift. In recent years, a number of websites have sprung up that feature these criticisms, questioning her inspiration and her role in the church.

The Media Center of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists in Australia is to be commended for the production of a two-hour DVD to counteract these attacks on Ellen White's inspiration. A number of biblical scholars and church historians, primarily from Australia, respond positively to these attacks by looking at what the Bible has to say about prophetic inspiration. The DVD is divided into the following five sections: (1) Ellen G. White – A Genuine Prophet; (2) The Role of Ellen G. White – Relationship to the Bible; (3) Prophets are Persons – God Speaks Through People; (4) How Inspiration Works – The Biblical Model; and (5) How to Test a Prophet – Biblical Criteria.

Due to the nature of the attacks, the DVD focuses heavily on the human element in the process of inspiration, both in Scripture and in Ellen White's prophetic ministry. It emphasizes that the biblical prophets and Ellen White were fallible human beings whose writings contain genuine discrepancies, but that these discrepancies are minor and do not detract from their messages. By exploring the nature of inspiration in Scripture, showing that biblical writers at times used uninspired

sources and employed helpers in writing down the divine revelations, the DVD helps the viewer to better understand why Ellen White used uninspired source material and secretaries to help her write down what God revealed to her.

The DVD repeatedly emphasizes that God meets people where they are; that the prophets, as well as Ellen White, were imperfect human beings with weaknesses; that they were children of their times and cultures, who had to grow in their understanding of God's plan for mankind. Nevertheless, God used them; their messages were of divine origin and therefore trustworthy and reliable. The Bible, it is said, is an infallible revelation of God's will and fulfills the purpose for which it was given, in spite of certain discrepancies in the biblical text. Such discrepancies in minor details, representing the human element in the inspiration process, are inconsequential, the viewer is told.

Inconsequential on this DVD is certainly Ray Roenfeldt's slip of the tongue that Luke received revelations from God. Not so inconsequential is the quote from

George B. Caird who wrote, "The prophet before all else is a man, and it is by the heightening of his normal human faculties that he attains his depth of insight. But like all men he is fallible. He may imperfectly understand the word spoken to him. He may lack the interpretive ability to make clear what he has seen." The revelation-inspiration process is not simply the heightening of the normal faculties of the prophet; it is much more than that. And what a prophet may lack in natural ability God can supply so that the prophet can correctly convey God's message to His people.

The DVD is not afraid to tackle some of the difficult issues in the writings of Ellen White, such as the shut door, the Israel Damon affair, and the amalgamation of man and beast; though not everyone will agree with the way these issues are handled and the answers it gives are definitely not inspired. Nevertheless, the overall message of the DVD comes through loud and clear: prophets are fallible human beings, but their messages have an infallible divine character.

Gerhard Pfandl, BRI

## WORLDWIDE HIGHLIGHTS

### Historic Steps Forward for AUA

The Adventist University of Africa (AUA) for a number of years now has offered master's programs in leadership and pastoral theology on the campuses of Babcock, Baraton, and Solusi University. AUA was established to train leaders for the world church who are committed to the exposition of the Adventist faith in the context of Africa and African culture. Two staff members of the Biblical Research Institute, Drs. Kwabena Donkor and Gerhard Pfandl, have taught courses in systematic theology on the above named campuses for AUA.

On May 9, the Kenya Commission on Higher Education granted AUA a Letter of Interim Authority, expressing satisfaction at the progress of the university and challenging the institution to research issues related to the impact of Christianity in Africa. The interim charter provides recognition and accreditation of AUA programs as a private university in Kenya and paves the



Signing the letter of interim authority is the Chairman of the Kenya Commission on Higher Education with Dr. Pardon Mwansa, GC Vice President, looking on.

way for the eventual granting of a full charter. And on August 24, Elder Jan Paulsen, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, took part in a ground breaking ceremony for several major buildings on the campus of AUA in Nairobi. This phase of the campus development includes construction of a modern multi-floor library facility with lecture theaters and seminar rooms. Also planned are housing complexes for students and faculty.

### **Adventist Presence and Influence at SBL Meeting**

The Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) fosters biblical scholarship on a global scale and attracts scholars from around the world to its major congresses to present and discuss the latest research, exchange ideas, network, and renew friendships. The wide spectrum of theology represented at such gatherings and the predominance of liberal viewpoints has not prevented Adventist scholars from attending and exerting a positive influence in some quarters. Tom Shepherd of Andrews University chaired the Mark Group for a number of years. Beginning this year, he and Michael Chernick of Hebrew Union College (a non-Adventist institution) will co-chair a new consultation on the “Sabbath in Text, Tradition, and Theology.” Adventist scholars from such diverse places as Australia, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, and South Africa attended the twenty-

sixth International SBL Congress held at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, July 6-11, 2008. Several Adventists also presented papers there, including four faculty members from the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS): Yoshitaka Kobayashi, Richard Sabuin, Gerald Klingbeil, a member of BRICOM, and his wife Chantal. Adventist participation in such meetings can help break down the prejudice that sometimes exists toward our church as well as provide a prominent platform for communicating our views to other Christian scholars.

### **Bible Symposium in Zambia**

A Bible symposium for all the pastors of the Zambia Union Mission took place in April at an Adventist facility near Zambia Adventist University. Topics presented included Christ in the Book of Revelation, the good news about the judgment, challenges to Adventist theology, interpreting Scripture, and the remnant in Revelation. Ekkehardt Mueller, representing BRI, was among the presenters. There was a wonderful spirit of unity among the attendees, and the conference was very well organized. Spouses were also invited and their meetings addressed the challenges faced by the pastor’s wife.

Attendees heard the marvelous story of the providential way in which the church acquired the land and, most recently, was granted university status. When church leaders approached the government to request recognition for the college, they were encouraged to apply for university status—which was subsequently granted. Thus Zambia Adventist University became the first privately owned and operated university in Zambia, receiving recognition even before the Catholic university received it. The church in Zambia is advancing rapidly, thanks to the commitment, mission emphasis, and diligence of more than half a million members in a country of approximately 11 million.