

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez Retires

BY EKKEHARDT MUELLER AND
GERHARD PFANDL

Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, director of the Biblical Research Institute since 2002, stepped into semi-retirement at the end of June.

Dr. Rodríguez began his denominational service as a church pastor in Puerto Rico. Prior to joining the Biblical Research Institute as an associate director in 1992, he had served as president of Antillean Adventist University in Puerto Rico and as academic vice president at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas. He is the author of over three hundred published articles and book reviews and more than a dozen books in Spanish and English, such as *Future Glory*, *Jewelry in the Bible*, *Spanning the Abyss*, and *Esther: A Theological Approach*. He is editor of the series “Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology” of which the first volume, *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*, was published in 2009. Since 1995 he has written a monthly column for the *Adventist Review*.



Many Significant Contributions

But his writing activity was only part of his work for BRI. As Adventism’s top theologian, his tremendous learning has blessed the world church through countless Bible conferences, ministers’ meetings and church seminars. He has taught intensive courses in many of our seminaries and universities around the world and has led many informative tours of the Middle East. Under Rodríguez’s leadership, the number of scholars at BRI increased from four to five, BRI began a quarterly newsletter, the Institute library tripled its holdings, and BRI published four substantial books, as well as several manuscript releases, and held in 2006 an international Bible conference in Turkey for the scholars and theologians of the church. Dr. Rodríguez was the biblical-theological voice in many committees, not afraid to speak up when needed, but always doing it in a gentle and polite way. He articulated the Church’s position within the Church as well as to many others, including adherents

of other world religions. He also skillfully chaired the semiannual meetings of the Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRI-COM), occasionally challenging the approximately 40 scholars and theologians including some administrators to think further and deeper.

In apologetics, Rodríguez’s aim went beyond the defense of truth. One of his greatest strengths was in attempting to foresee future developments and prepare the church for these challenges. He was intentional about the role and the activity of the Bibli-

cal Research Institute, understanding the needs of the church and its theological problem areas. He also realized that some Adventist doctrines needed further clarification and therefore research. He felt, for instance, that the topic of ecclesiology had to be addressed, especially, but not only, Adventist remnant theology. He foresaw a future leadership challenge and urged that a process of accountability be established. He saw the danger of congregationalism at various levels of the church and recognized that well-known topics such as creation and the Sabbath had to be readdressed. He was concerned with the training and supervision of pastors and addressed issues of abuse. He met and debated with liberal and ultra-

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Leadership Changes at BRI

On July 1, 2011, Artur Stele assumed his responsibilities as director of the Biblical Research Institute, in addition to his work as a General Vice President of the General Conference. In his vice-presidential role, Artur chairs the Nurture and Retention Committee and is advisor to the Adult Bible Study Guide. He also serves



as vice chair of the Geoscience Research Institute board, the Faith and Science Council, and the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education. His role as director of BRI includes general oversight of the work of the Institute, the various division-level Biblical Research Committees (BRCs), and chairing the Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRICOM) on which he previously served as a member for more than ten years. Among the priorities for the current quinquennium, Artur will chair the committee reviewing the church's statement of fundamental beliefs and clarifying belief number six in light of the "Response to 'An Affirmation of Creation'" approved by the 2010 General Conference session.¹ He will also oversee more than fifty International Bible and Mission Conferences.

Born in the 10/40 Window in Kazakhstan, and initially educated as a pharmacist. Artur completed a B.Th. degree at Friedensau, Germany during communist times, and worked as a pastor in various churches of the former Soviet Union, including at Zaoksky Theological Seminary. He earned an M.A. in Religion in 1993 and a Ph.D. in Old Testament in 1996 from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. His dissertation dealt with the resurrection in Daniel 12. From 1988 to 2000, he served at Zaoksky Theological Seminary as professor of Old Testament and Archaeology, academic dean, and Seminary president until his election as president of the Euro-Asia Division, a position he held until his recent election last year to serve as a vice president. Dr. Stele is fluent in Russian, German, and English. His wife Galina has a D.Min. in Mission Studies, also from the Seminary at Andrews University. Their son, Alexander, is the financial manager of the Hope Channel Euro-Asia.

Many of the Institute's day-to-day operations will now be handled by Ekkehardt Mueller who was recently appointed as deputy director of BRI and worked closely with Ángel Manuel Rodríguez for almost fourteen years. He was the editor of the BRI newsletter from its incep-

tion until 2008 and organized the Second International Bible Conference in 2006. Ekkehardt will also coordinate symposia worldwide and assist the BRI director in overall management of the staff and the development of strategies and plans for BRI. We welcome both Artur Stele and Ekkehardt Mueller to their new responsibilities.



Clinton Wahlen, BRI

¹See Gerhard Pfandl, "Creation Debate in the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Reflections* 31 (July, 2010): 4-6 for the relevant statements and discussion.



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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conservative theologians and church members as well as with representatives of independent ministries. In various ways he contributed to the ongoing process of preserving and shaping the theology of the Adventist Church.

Theological Unity a Special Concern

A special concern of his was and is the theological unity of the Church. In order to foster this unity he challenged the leadership to establish Biblical Research Committees within several world divisions. These committees, with the Biblical Research Commit-

tee, work closely with BRI to further theological unity in a diverse worldwide church.

BRI will miss his preeminent voice, which always demonstrated concern for the well-being, mission, and message of the Church and a genuine love for the Church. We are consoled by the prospect that Dr. Rodríguez's well-deserved retirement will include further scholarly activity as he will remain a member of the Institute on a half-time basis and will continue to support the Church and

his colleagues here in various ways.

Ekkehardt Mueller is the deputy director and Gerhard Pfandl is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute.

Under Rodríguez's leadership, the number of scholars at BRI increased from four to five, BRI began a quarterly newsletter, and published four substantial books.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Personal Tributes to Ángel Manuel Rodríguez

Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez has been an exceptional spiritual, pastoral and academic leader as director of the Biblical Research Institute. God has worked through him to be Christ-centered, balanced, engaged, patient, amiable, mission-driven, broad-minded, willing-to-listen, and most of all, committed to the prophetic message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are delighted that Dr. Rodríguez will continue to assist BRI on a part-time basis even during his retirement. Through God's blessing, he has advanced this precious movement by touching the lives of many pastors, teachers, and members in a very meaningful way as the church shares the three angels' messages with the world announcing Christ's soon coming.

**Pastor Ted N. C. Wilson
President, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists**

It has been a privilege and a blessing for me to know Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez since the nineties, when I was appointed a BRICOM member from the Euro-Asia Division. It was always rewarding to hear Ángel present a paper, hold a seminar or speak to pastors, teachers and church administrators. The Euro-Asia Division was blessed by his visits and his written work. Dr. Rodríguez loves the Lord and His Church! The good news is that he is not leaving BRI. He will continue to be a vital and vibrant part of the Institute! —
Artur Stele, Vice President, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and Director of the Biblical Research Institute

I have worked with and under Dr. Rodríguez for thirteen years. All these years were very rewarding.

Why? Because Dr. Rodríguez had an exemplary way of guiding and challenging his team as well as creating harmony and a smile here and there. While mentoring those that were new to the Institute, he treated his associates with great respect. Although he was undoubtedly the boss, he remained a colleague among colleagues. He allowed us to speak our minds. He always had an open ear, willing to listen to our questions and suggestions, and if he saw light in them used them and incorporated them in his work. He affirmed us in what we did and encouraged us to grow professionally. We read his papers, evaluations, and responses critically, and he did the same with ours. He also took interest in our personal lives and was willing to share some of his burdens. In all this, he became a dear friend, and what would one wish

more than to labor with someone who is a good friend? May his years of retirement be the most fruitful ones of his career. — *Ekkehardt Mueller, Deputy Director of the Biblical Research Institute*

Firm, scholarly, uncannily insightful, and conservative; yet gentle, considerate, humble, and creative. By vocation visible; yet retiring (no pun intended); witty and funny; yet dignified.

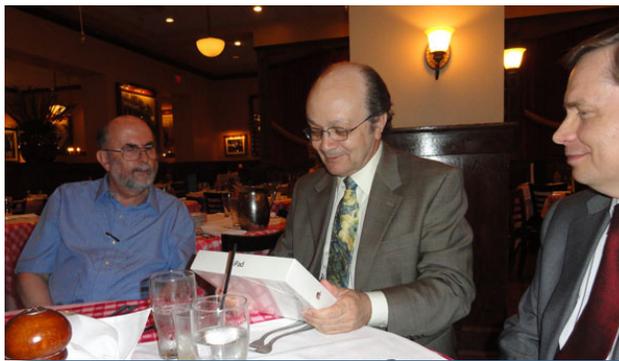
These, and many more, are the rare combinations of traits that have won my admiration for Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, whom I will forever consider as colleague, counselor, confidant, friend and mentor. It is perhaps pointless to write here about his abilities and achievements as Director of the Biblical Research Institute. But

for the benefit of posterity, we would be remiss not to mention Ángel's passionate commitment to his vision of the role of the Institute for the message and mission of the church, making clear that BRI is at once authoritative, yet not authoritarian. And few have the ability to communicate that delicate balance as Ángel does. He will be sorely missed, but not too deeply, knowing that he continues the journey with us in a different capacity, hopefully, for the foreseeable future. — *Kwabena Donkor, Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute*

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez is a gentleman and a scholar. It was my privilege to work with him for the last twelve years and I am pleased to know that he will continue working for BRI on a part-time basis. He is not only one of the top scholars of the church but a genuine Christian who loves the Lord and the Adventist message. Even when he disagreed with someone on theological issues he always remained the Christian gentleman. Because I am a few years older than Ángel, he told me some time ago that I cannot retire before him. Now that he is stepping down I am free to retire at the end of the year. So, thank you, Ángel, for twelve wonderful and blessed years at BRI. May the Lord richly bless you as you continue to serve Him. — *Gerhard Pfandl, Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute*

It has been a wonderful privilege for me to work with Ángel since my coming to BRI in 2008. I have learned so much from him in such a short time that I confess being a little envious of my colleagues who have had a much longer tenure here and more opportuni-

ties than I to learn from him. Ángel exemplifies what it means to be “a gentleman and a scholar.” I have seen it expressed countless times, even in extremely delicate and challenging situations. He has challenged us all to excellence, in collegiality, productivity, fairness, discernment, candor, and tact. Ángel, as we look to the future, your continuing on at BRI in a part-time capacity will be greatly appreciated. — *Clinton Wahlen, Associate Director of the Biblical Research Institute*



At the farewell for Ángel Manuel Rodríguez.

Ángel, it has been a privilege to work with you during the past 6½ years. I have appreciated your kindness, admired your wisdom and enjoyed your sense of humor. You were not only a boss but also a friend. Thank you for all you taught me. I am a better person from having known you. — *Brenda Flemmer, Administrative Assistant, Biblical Research Institute*

Flemmer, Administrative Assistant, Biblical Research Institute

I first met Ángel on the campus of Andrews University back in the 70s. We attended the same church – Berrien Springs Spanish Church – where he was my Sabbath School teacher. I was truly impressed with his deep insight and vast knowledge of God's word. Little did I know that I would have the opportunity to work with him later in life.

It has truly been a privilege and a great blessing for me to work with Ángel for the past twelve years. He has been a very kind and understanding boss. He always placed his trust in me and knew that I would meet my deadlines accordingly without having to micromanage the process. I have valued this trust so much!

Ángel's knowledge of the Bible has been remarkable. His kindness in dealing with people, even amidst conflicts, has been a testament to true Christianity.

Thank you, Ángel, for all you have taught me. I will truly miss you here at BRI. May God continue to bless you in your preaching and writing. Happy retirement!

— *Marlene Bacchus, Desktop Publishing Specialist/Webmaster, Biblical Research Institute*

I was commissioned by Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez to create a database of Adventist scholarship from hundreds of professional articles and papers stored in the Biblical Research Institute office. In the process I read many research papers authored by Ángel. I came to the conclusion that it was impossible to properly summarize Ángel's theological thought since his intellectual curiosity was boundless and overflowed into many fields from inter-religious aesthetics, theology and science,

theological aesthetics method, religion and liturgy, and Latino/a theology. All of us have been awakened by the legacy of this creative and fecund scholar. — *Rex D. Edwards, BRI Research Assistant*

Ángel, thank you for your careful stewardship of the Biblical Research Institute these many years. You have carefully protected the theology of our church and its theological positions, yet you have done so with an open mind, open to new insights, even change, when past positions no longer could be defended. However, in the end the teachings of our church and the role of Scripture in our life and faith have been confirmed by your work. God bless you and your family in the years ahead. — *Niels-Erik Andreasen, President, Andrews University*

When George Reid left BRI we were concerned, but Ángel fitted into the position easily and so ably. Ángel made us all feel comfortable and welcome. I appreciate his burden for integrating even the theologically-developing Divisions into the mainstream of Adventist theological discussion. We thank him from the bottom of our hearts, and wish our paths to cross again and again. — *Gordon Christo, Executive Secretary, Southern Asia Division*

Through the years it has been my pleasure and delight to work with Ángel. His warmth and collegiality are treasured and his contributions to the theological strength and mission of our Church have made a difference. I wish him well on his retirement and look forward to the numerous projects and contributions he will continue to make. — *Denis Fortin, Dean and Professor of Theology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University*

Ángel has for many years been a spiritual and theological mentor to me. I can't think of anyone who has influenced me more in the past twenty years than has Ángel. He is a great theologian and a man of character and integrity.

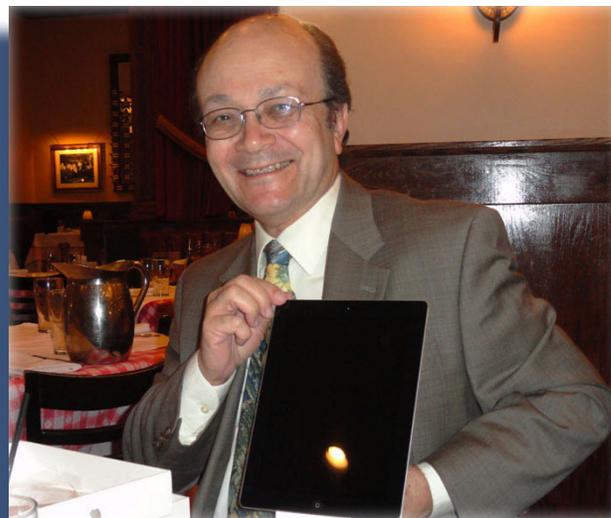
He will be sorely missed by a lot of people but, perhaps, none more than by me. — *Clifford Goldstein, Editor, Adult Bible Study Guide*

Ángel, how incredible to see some people who have earned the right to retire at such a young age! I want to thank you for many things. God has given you a clear and perceptive mind and abilities of a scholar, concealed in a pastoral heart. Your appreciation of systematic theologians, historical theologians, Christian ethicists, and philosophers as much as Old or New Testament theologians is a rare blessing. In addition, you have served the leadership of this church and have assumed the role of an ambassador to other denominations. Thank you for watching carefully the trends inside and outside of the

church, and responding with effectiveness and style. In spite of all of this, you have been our friend, colleague, and brother. It is time now for the roses, cruises with your wife and family, and snoozes in an armchair or a hammock. — *Miroslav Kiš, Chair, Department of Theology and Christian Philosophy and Professor of Ethics, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University*

Over the past decade I have gotten to know Ángel as a wise, personable, warm, and gifted friend and colleague. He is always ready to listen and to take time. His leadership at BRICOM has been much appreciated. I will miss a friend whose door was always open and whose incisive questions have often led me to think beyond the obvious. Blessings to Ángel as he continues to serve his family and his church in a somewhat changed constellation. — *Gerald A. Klingbeil, Associate Editor of Adventist Review/Adventist World magazines, Research Professor of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University*

The service of Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez has meant to me inspiration to delve into the Word of God deeper, motivation to go further even in spite of seemingly insurmountable challenges, and a vision for what God can do through truly dedicated, humble, but proficient scholars. The unique way he managed to balance academic rigor, down-to-earth pragmatism, and a joyful, peaceful spirit, will always be an example to follow. — *Dr. Barna Magyarosi, Education and Family Ministries Director, Euro-Africa Division*



An iPad for Ángel Manuel Rodríguez's active "retirement."

I appreciate the spiritual and academic leadership that Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez gave to the worldwide Church as Director of BRI. I am particularly grateful to him for taking up the African Project which explored

solutions to unique African theological challenges. His voluminous written materials and enthusiastic presentations validate and advocate the rare jewel of integrating scholarship and faith. His interpersonal relationship illustrates Christian practice and is greatly appreciated. May the Lord continue to bless him for the immense contribution which continues to share hope, affirm faith and uphold loyalty to Scripture. — *Brempong Owusu-Antwi, Vice Chancellor, Adventist University Of Africa*

I have always appreciated Ángel's warm and welcoming attitude toward everyone he deals with, even when the topic of conversation is challenging. But what I have particularly appreciated is his willingness to follow the truth no matter where it leads. His openness to Scripture does not end at defending what he already believes; he has always been open to truth, no matter what the cost, and that has been a great inspiration to me. — *Jon Paulien, Dean, School of Religion, Loma Linda University*

A twinkle in the eye, a sage comment or question, remembering the name of a child or family member, standing firm but courteous about core issues. No one can do these things like Ángel can. He will be greatly missed both personally and organizationally. — *John Reeve, Assistant Professor of Church History, and Teresa Reeve, Assistant Professor of New Testament Contexts, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University*

Ángel has been an exemplary Adventist scholar who defends the truth biblically. In addition, he is a great motivator to young scholars to involve themselves in uplifting the Bible. — *Richard Sabuin, Dean, AILAS Theological Seminary*

It has been my privilege to know and work with Ángel Manuel Rodríguez on BRICOM during the last five years. I first met Ángel when he was Academic Dean at Southwestern Adventist College (now University). He has always been friendly and thoughtful in our work together. One of the things I appreciate most about him is the way he pushes BRICOM to critically look at issues

and to make valuable suggestions on tough issues. Ángel, I value your friendship and the wonderful intellectual and spiritual treasure that you have been to BRICOM and the wider Adventist Church. May God bless you in your retirement. — *Tom Shepherd, Professor of New Testament Interpretation and Director of the Ph.D./Th.D. Programs, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University*

Dr. Rodríguez, when I was a new student at Southwestern in 1991 you took the time to look over all my research paper proposals for Old Testament – finally helping me settle on Daniel 8 and the vertical dimension of the little horn. You also reminded us that there are only two types of sermons: horizontal, shallow ones and vertical, deep ones. I appreciate your patience, wisdom, and kindness – none were invested in vain. Thank You! — *Ingo Sorke, Chair, School of Religion, Southwestern Adventist University*

Ángel. Thank you for being there for your far-flung junior colleagues. I have really appreciated your support and your vision for nurturing not only the obvious areas but also the forgotten ones. More power to you as you change gears and focus, but retain the passion you have for a soon-returning Saviour. — *David Tasker, Field Secretary, South Pacific Division*

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez's contributions to the Seventh-day Adventist Church could scarcely be overestimated. His writing skill, gentle but strong leadership and most of all his fidelity to Scripture have been a wonderful blessing to us all. — *Cindy Tutsch, Associate Director, Ellen G. White Estate*

Puerto Rico is a small island, but the Lord has taken from the least to glorify His name. Dr. Ángel Manuel Rodríguez is loved, admired and revered by several generations of lay members, pastors, administrators and scholars that have been inspired by his ministry. Gracias y la gloria sea para Dios Siempre! — *Efraín Velázquez, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary*

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

The Divisiveness of Theology

BY EKKEHARDT MUELLER

Before discussing the divisiveness of theology we have to define theology. D. F. Wright understands it as “teaching about God and his relation to the world from

creation to the consummation, particularly as it is set forth in an ordered, coherent manner.”¹ Along these lines we would suggest that in order to gain knowledge about God and enter into a relationship with him it is necessary to be engaged in theological thinking, that is, to look at and study what God has revealed to humanity. Doing theology is a privilege and an ongoing process which may lead those involved to an ever deeper under-

standing and greater appreciation of God and salvation and a vibrant relationship with Him. Ideally, theological thinking is not only done in isolation, but all believers are involved in this process, even though the church has employed specialists, who have been trained in theology and biblical studies.

The Problem of Doing Theology

Yet it is no secret that theology—whether done by church members, church administrators or professional theologians/scholars—has the potential to create tensions. It may even be divisive. Doing theology and coming to certain convictions on which one acts may

Doing theology and coming to certain convictions on which one acts may fracture human relationships, bring about disunity, and polarize or even split churches and society.

fracture human relationships, bring about disunity, and polarize or even split churches and society.

This can be substantiated by a look at history and our present world situation. The Arian controversy in the fourth century A.D. dealing with the divinity of Christ and the Trinity left victors and those who were defeated. The birth of Protestantism came about by a return to Scripture and an intense seeking for God and led to a break-away from the Catholic Church which started the counter-reformation. The Anabaptists disagreed on certain doctrines with the Roman Church as well as with Protestantism and were persecuted by both groups. Acting on theological convictions has fragmented Christianity into numerous denominations.

But even in the NT one finds theological tensions. Following the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), conflict arose between some groups clinging to the Mosaic law, including circumcision, and others teaching that Gentile Christians are not generally bound by that law. Behind the debated issue loomed the larger one, namely salvation by faith in Christ or salvation through the observation of the law (Gal 2-5). This conflict helped the church to define more clearly its biblical position. However, not always was the outcome positive. “Disputes as to meanings quickly gave rise to separations and schisms within the Christian community. This is already apparent in the books of the

NT, especially the epistles, in which theological argumentation is deployed in order to distinguish between truth and error . . .”²² For instance, the Johannine letters inform us about different perceptions of who Jesus was and the battle of the apostle for the full humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ (see 1 John 2 and 4; 2 John). In this case, theology had become divisive but the apostles did not pull back in order to please the opponents and strike a compromise. Heresy had to be confronted by theology, even if it meant that false positions had to be exposed and a split of the church might possibly follow.

Today, there are not only enormous tensions between world religions; but also within each of the three monotheistic religions, namely Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Even within most of their denominations these tensions are manifest and can erupt in strange decisions or even violent acts against those who hold different theological positions. For instance, Pope Benedict XVI’s decision to readmit to the official Roman Catholic Church, among others, the ultraconservative bishop Richard Williamson, who denies the extent of the Holocaust, has not only complicated the church’s relations with the Jews and caused criticism from leading figures in the arena of politics, it has also led people to leave the Catholic Church in disappointment.

W. Jeanron points to the spectrum of current theological methods and asks the question: “Can there be any claim to unity when there is no unified framework of communication?”²³

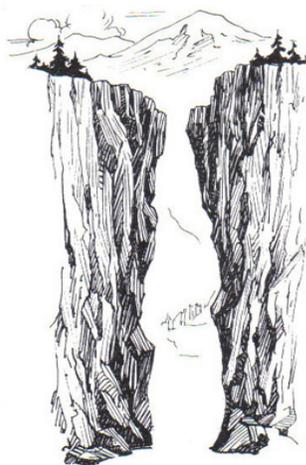
In addition to its potential divisiveness, Andrew Linzey points out other dangers associated with doing theology: Theology, which is a human enterprise, may not only claim too little, at times it may also claim too much, such as theological fundamentalism which “absolutizes human agency, authority, or creed above that of God.”²⁴ A third danger is parochialism. Although theology should serve the needs of the church, service must not become servility. “. . . this service slides into servility if it becomes

bound to the maintenance of religious or Christian positions *per se* rather than to the seeking out of God’s truth.”²⁵

Options for Doing Theology

If doing theology can be problematic and even divisive, how should we relate to it? There are a number of options, though some may not be realistic:

1. Refrain from doing theology and get involved in a kind of spirituality that avoids doctrinal concerns or in practical issues such as mission outreach, humanitarian aid, or care for our ecosystem.



Courtesy of Pearson Scott Foresman

2. Leave theologians free rein.⁶ Assign doing theology to the specialists only and allow them to use whatever hermeneutical approach they see fit.
3. Allow the leadership of the church to make decisions by using administrative processes with little or no theological input.
4. Encourage all groups of the church to become involved in studying Scripture and doing theology and keep a balanced approach in which all are listened to and decision making is not left in the hands of a few individuals only.

The advantage of the first option is that something is being done and Christianity is kept down-to-earth.

People do not get stuck in never-ending debates about non-essential theological minutia. The disadvantage of this approach is that spirituality and practice may not have a solid biblical foundation and that what is being proclaimed and/or experienced deteriorates into emotionalism, traditionalism, relativism or pragmatism and falls short of being the biblical message. How can believers stop thinking about God and studying his Word that helps them fine-tune their involvement with humanity, evaluate their methods and the outcome of their labor, and gain new insights?

The advantage of the second option is that trained specialists are dealing with important theological concepts. They are aware of the challenges posed by culture, the biblical material, and the various interpretations or theological positions on the subject matter, and they can deal with the issues in a responsible way. Some would regard it as an advantage that average church members and administrators would not have to get involved in the interpretation of Scripture and in theological thinking in a deeper way. But this very point turns out to be a great loss and disadvantage. Accepting option two would hand over to theologians and biblical scholars the sole responsibility for doing theology and rob God's people of exercising their divinely given privilege as a universal priesthood of believers to share in the wonderful task of doing theology. Although theologians and biblical scholars are trained in their fields, they are neither infallible nor free from the temptations to follow current theological fashions, to submit to the majority view in the scholarly world, or to subscribe to philosophical presuppositions for studying Scripture that are questionable from a biblical perspective.

Option three asks church administrators to make

decisions without theological input from others, i.e., to make decisions on pragmatic rather than theological bases. The advantage of this approach resembles the advantage of option one. It may even seem to be an effective approach. Decisions can be made quickly. Administrators may be able to stem the tide of heresy with which the church is always wrestling. But the price is quite high.⁷ Although it may be a fast process, the results may not stand the test of time and may even lead in a wrong direction and not be owned by the church. Such an approach may be an attempt to tame theology. But who says that church administrators are automatically right, while the church's theologians are automatically wrong and must be treated with suspicion? If important decisions are made without the input of the theologians and scholars of the church, the danger is that sooner or later decisions will no longer be based on biblical teachings and the church will become a business enterprise with the president mutating into a CEO. Secular methods and practices may be used and dissenting opinions may be shunned. Another danger is that administrators might avoid making any decisions on theological matters and opt for a smorgasbord

of opinions within the Church that could cripple or even hinder the proclamation of the church's message and the carrying out of its mission.

The fourth alternative has the disadvantage that many believers may not be interested in participating in a common theological journey.⁸ In addition, the process is long and more cumbersome, and a mere majority vote may not be the solution to all problems. However, the disadvantages are outweighed by allowing the entire church to get involved, thereby avoiding oligarchic or autocratic church governance. It may also contribute to a feeling of ownership.

Among the options listed here (and there may be more) the fourth seems to be the most desirable one, since it comes the closest to biblical teachings on the nature of the church. This may also be the traditional position among Adventists. To do no theology can hardly be an option for Adventists. To assign theology to trained personnel is not much better. The same is true of assigning all power to church leadership. If, therefore, we cannot avoid doing theology but, to the contrary, must get involved, the questions are, What is the price? and How do we do this in a responsible way, especially since the divisiveness of theology is sometimes necessary and good and sometimes unnecessary and harmful?



Courtesy of Paruakurpiu

The Price of Doing Theology

So what is the price to pay for doing theology? Doing theology requires:

- the willingness of the individual to get involved in this learning experience.
- time, prayer, study, living out one's convictions, and some training which is provided by the Adventist Church, for instance through Bible study classes on Sabbath morning, Bible study groups during the week, and various seminars on church and conference levels.
- an individual and yet also a communal approach, because, as Christians, we are not islands, unconnected to others but part of Christ's body, the church.
- acceptance of certain paradoxes in Scripture without attempting to solve them: for instance that there is one God, and yet three persons in the Godhead; we are already saved and yet not finally saved.
- at times be willing to suspend judgment and live with certain questions. For this, humility and modesty are needed.⁹ We do not know everything, not even all that is knowable. However, we do understand the answers to the crucial questions of life given us by Scripture and that these answers are trustworthy and reliable.
- acknowledgment that opinions on the interpretation of some biblical passages and theological topics may differ among church members and theologians which, however, do not call into question Adventist fundamental beliefs. Examples are the interpretation of difficult apocalyptic passages such as Daniel 11 and whether Jesus had Adam's pre-fall nature, post-fall nature or a combination of both.
- recognition that some theological tensions need to be addressed because they rise to a serious level that may lead, if left unresolved, to a fundamental change of the Church's position and to open conflict. Examples of such issues are the Church's position on creation as opposed to theistic evolution and the issue of homosexual practice. Some matters are secondary and can be left alone, at least for the time being.

Summing up what we have said thus far, tensions seem to be unavoidable when people get into theology. Yet for believers not to think theologically is not a desirable option either. We cannot worship God and *not* reflect on him. Working and thinking, spirituality and theology are not opposed to each other; ideally they go together.

How can we do theology in a responsible way?

Theological tensions may not necessarily be wrong, if there is a willingness to work them out and find biblical solutions. It is not a sign of a weak or lifeless church to have an ongoing theological dialogue.¹⁰ On the contrary, it may suggest healthy engagement with matters of faith. It would be disastrous for administrators to stifle all discussion on theological matters, not to allow questions to be raised about the reasons for our positions, or not to appreciate the need for better and more comprehensive interpretations of biblical passages and of our theological teachings, preferring to focus instead solely on practical matters.

On the other hand, unnecessary theological conflict may cripple and paralyze the Church and produce different factions. As the early church had to fight heresies that went against the Word of God, so the church of our days has to confront teachings that cannot be substantiated by Scripture. When confronted with false teachings about major biblical doctrines, Jesus, Paul, and the apostles were clearly divisive by not allowing for pluralism within the church (Matt 10:34-36; Gal 1:8-9). While some discussion on theological matters is normal and healthy, promulgation of outright heresy must be rejected. This is where apologetics as a theological discipline comes in and has its rightful place (Phil 1:16; 1 Pet 3:15).¹¹ As Gordon R. Lewis writes, "if knowledge is necessary to faith then defense of truth is 'indispensable to Christian outreach.'"¹²

Doing theology is important for the life and the mission of the church and should never be abandoned. "Even in God's kingdom there will no doubt be more to learn. Some have envisioned heaven as endless school without the pain of quizzes and exams."¹³ But there is a price to pay. This price is to live with certain tensions, to continue listening to each other, and to defend biblical truth.

Doing Theology and the Adventist Church

1. Suggestions of a General Nature

The question is not whether or not there will be theological tensions but how to deal with them and how to do theology in a responsible way within the Adventist Church, trying to avoid unnecessary tensions. Here are some general suggestions:

Stay away from the extremes. Just as it is not helpful to stress theology and disregard Christian life, it is equally not helpful to stress practice and downplay theology. Both the ivory tower of theology as well as pure pragmatism have to be shunned. In some circles it has become commonplace to make negative remarks about theology. "Every so often," writes Roy Adams, "at camp

meetings and other gatherings, one can hear demagogic aspersions of theology: ‘We don’t need theology,’” a speaker might say. ‘All we need is Jesus!’ Uttered with passion and conviction, the comment usually brings choruses of amens, if not also applause.”¹⁴ Such an approach may

It is not a sign of a weak or lifeless church to have an ongoing theological dialogue.

have a negative affect on church members. Leaders have lamented that Adventists can no longer be regarded as Jesus’ people of the Book. Commenting negatively on doing theology may discourage church members from studying Scripture for themselves and thinking about matters of faith, leading them to assume that it is not important. Even a comparison of theology to the “weightier” matters of practical Christian living may send a wrong message. On the other hand, those interested in theology may continue their studies and distance themselves from those who make negative remarks about theology. This also can contribute to a polarization within the church. Adams suggests: “As practical as life itself, it’s [theology that] keeps us from being tomfooled or manipulated by the misguided and the unscrupulous. It forms the bedrock upon which we anchor everything else.”¹⁵

Do not compartmentalize. The Bible does not separate sound teaching from the Christian life and walk. The apostles stressed growth in knowledge (Phil 1:9; Col 1:9-10; 2 Pet 3:18) which has cognitive and relational aspects. We need to avoid creating dichotomies between theology and practice or spirituality,¹⁶ doctrines and mission, theologians and administrators, those with formal training in theology and those without formal training. Mutual respect allows people to flourish, feel appreciated, and be creative. Persons who are labeled may feel rejected, bitter, and be unable to reach their full potential.

Affirm both theology and the Christian life. The *doing* of theology is as essential as its *practice* (mission outreach, caring relationships, humanitarian assistance, etc.). Theology forms the foundation. Practice builds on this foundation. One without the other will not do. It is true that theology can be wrong and destructive,¹⁷ but so can practical approaches. Questionable approaches to theology or practice do not permit us to discard one or both of them. Instead they encourage us to do it right. We must affirm both theology and practice. Adams writes: “The speaker who gets up on the platform *wearing theology for all to see* turns me off. But the speaker who stands there, axe in hand, murdering theology, kills me too.”¹⁸

Do Not Shortcut Theological Differences by Reverting to Power. While outright heresy must be dealt with and, in the long-run, may need to be removed from the body of Christ, dialogue should take place first. It should not be assumed that a certain office makes the office-bearer quasi-infallible. The early church did not handle theological disagreement by just turning to ecclesiastical power. Such an approach was used later and prepared the way for a strict hierarchical system of church governance and the papacy.

2. More Specific Suggestions

But what would help us more specifically within the Adventist Church to avoid unnecessary tensions and battles?

Consent to the Adventist framework of doing theology.

This Adventist framework includes:

- accepting the self-testimony of Scripture on divine revelation, inspiration, and biblical authority.
- accepting Scripture as the primary source for theology. Scripture is the measuring rod with which all other sources such as general revelation, extra-biblical prophecy, culture and personal experience are being evaluated.¹⁹
- being Bible-oriented rather than being purely a philosophical, sociological, psychological or scientific enterprise.²⁰
- doing exegesis and theology using methods derived from Scripture and in agreement with its nature.
- doing theology with a definite goal, namely a better understanding of God and his plan of salvation (which can be communicated to others) and a deeper relationship with the Lord. Therefore, Adventist theological thinking is practice-oriented without being pragmatic in the negative sense.²¹
- a Christ-centered theology.²² All truth must be related to Jesus and the full biblical message accepted.
- theological reflection in the context of the great controversy and with a clear eschatological emphasis.
- systematic theological thinking that describes, analyzes, and organizes biblical doctrines by drawing on the entire Bible. Adventists are not opposed to reasoning. But, while we treasure reason as a gift from God, we also recognize that human reason is fallible and must be sanctified.²³
- theological thinking that takes into account contemporary questions and challenges and tries to respond to them. Just because culture shapes human beings to a large extent does not mean

that Scripture is culturally conditioned and not directly applicable to our situation, at least in most cases.

Do not concentrate on one theological issue only.

There should be an awareness of the danger of riding theological hobby horses. Be able to distinguish the essentials from the less important or even obscure issues and focus on the former rather than on the latter. Otherwise there is a danger of becoming unbalanced.

Be tentative with your conclusions. It is better to submit a “suggestion” and be willing to be corrected rather than to be dogmatic about one’s own insights²⁴ and to share them widely before others have evaluated them.

Acknowledge that Adventist theological thinking is not done in isolation. Results of one’s study should be shared with persons of experience to get input. It is of great importance to listen to others carefully and with an open mind.

Exhibit kindness and a Christlike attitude at all times.

Do not harshly criticize those with whom you disagree and certainly do not mock them, but show kindness and Christian charity. Those who seem to be adversaries need to be taken seriously. Most have certain points that can and should be appreciated.

Conclusion

While theology is needed, at times it can be unnecessarily divisive. Following the above-mentioned guidelines may be a first step toward a solution of this problem. If those involved in doing theology agree with each other concerning basic presuppositions and methodological approaches to Scripture, the danger of their theologies becoming divisive is considerably reduced. In addition, a good dose of humility and respect for others is desirable. In the Adventist church, decisions on theological matters are not made only by administrators or only by theologians or even by both groups together but by the entire church.²⁵ We repeat: Theological thinking is a privilege and is a necessary and ongoing process which may lead those involved to an ever deeper understanding and a greater appreciation of God and salvation.

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¹D. F. Wright, “Theology,” in *New Dictionary of Theology* (ed. S. B. Ferguson, D. F. Wright, and J. I. Packer; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988), 680.

²S. W. Sykes, “Theology,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (ed. Alan Richardson and John Bowden; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 567.

³Werner G. Jeanrond, “Theological Method,” in *A New Handbook of Christian Theology* (ed. Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1992), 486.

⁴Andrew Linzey, “Theology,” in *Dictionary of Ethics, Theology, and Society* (ed. Paul Barry Clarke and Andrew Linzey; New York: Routledge, 1996), 820.

⁵Ibid.

⁶A related suggestion may be to create a small body of scholars and theologians, a kind of magisterium, and let them make all important theological decisions.

⁷Cf. *Understanding Christian Theology* (ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck; Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 1136.

⁸Richard Rice, “Theology as Topical Bible Study,” *Spectrum* 29/2 (2001): 64.

⁹Linzey, 820.

¹⁰Cf. Jan Paulsen, “Heavenly Mission of Hope: Christ’s Mission Is Our Mission,” *Adventist Review*, September 24, 2009, 3.

¹¹Cf. Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2003), 172-173.

¹²Gulley, 173.

¹³Rogers E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999), 611.

¹⁴Roy Adams, “In a Time of Confusion,” *Adventist Review*, November 2000, 19.

¹⁵Adams, “In a Time of Confusion,” 20.

¹⁶Rice, 69, states: “Theology needs to find ways to get at the experiential connection between belief and life.”

¹⁷Roy Adams, “Grappling With Destiny,” *Adventist Review*, April 25, 2002, 24.

¹⁸Adams, “Grappling With Destiny,” 25.

¹⁹Therefore, we cannot agree with the principle *prima scriptura*, as suggested by Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1999), 137, but uphold *sola scriptura* and *tota scriptura*. The implications of Guy’s approach become more evident on pp. 144, 146.

²⁰Ángel Rodríguez, “Doing Theology in the Adventist Church: Role of the Theologian,” unpublished paper, February 2003, 7.

²¹Cf. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 24.

²²This should not be confused with the Christological principle employed, for example, by Martin Luther.

²³Cf., Frank Hasel, “Theology and the Role of Reason,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 4/2 (1993): 172-198.

²⁴Cf. Rodríguez, 18.

²⁵Cf. Rodríguez, 15.

“The Word of God strikes at every wrong trait of character, molding the whole man, ... leading him to bring the Spirit of Christ into the smaller as well as the larger duties of life. It teaches him to be unswerving in his allegiance to justice and purity, and at the same time always to be kind and compassionate.” – Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 130.

Further on the Time Prophecies of Daniel 12

BY GERHARD PFANDL

In recent years a number of Seventh-day Adventists have begun to apply the time prophecies in Daniel 12:5-13 to the future. Rejecting the traditional Adventist understanding,



Courtesy of Pedro Simao

which places the 3½ times, the 1290 days and 1335 days as prophetic time periods in the past, they claim these periods are to be understood as literal days still to come.

A previous issue of *Reflections* dealt with a number of these proposals.¹ However, a more scholarly attempt

to interpret the time prophecies in Daniel 12 as literal days is made by Samuel Nuñez, a Th.D. graduate of Andrews University. In his 1987 doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Vision of Daniel 8*, he made a systematic study of the different methods used in the interpretation of the book of Daniel. In 2006 Nuñez also published a book on the prophecies of Daniel in Spanish. Prior to its publication, he sent me an English version of chapter four which deals with the time prophecies in Daniel 12. Though at times fairly technical, the chapter exhibits a detailed knowledge of the text. On page 42 he says, “It is the linguistic and textual evidence that permits us to conclude that the days of Daniel 12:11 and 12 should be understood in a literal way.”² In evaluating his views we will consider the literary structure of Daniel 10–12 as well as some linguistic and hermeneutical issues.

Literary Structure of Daniel 12

One main pillar of Nuñez’s argument that the 1290 and 1335 days in Daniel 12:11-12 are literal time periods in the future is the literary structure of Daniel 10–12. While literary structures are helpful in analyzing biblical passages, the interpreter needs to be aware of the subjective component in establishing a literary structure. In regard to Daniel 10–12, Nuñez, in harmony with most Daniel scholars, divides the text into three sections:³

Daniel 10:1-21 Two supernatural beings and Daniel’s dialogue with Gabriel

Daniel 11:1–12:4 Gabriel’s predictive discourse

Daniel 12:5-13 Two supernatural beings and Daniel’s dialogue with Michael

What is puzzling in this chapter is the fact that when Nuñez discusses the text he ignores this literary structure and begins his analysis with Daniel 12:1, i.e., he takes the last part of Gabriel’s discourse and combines it with the final section to form a new literary unit (the present chapter 12) which he then analyzes.

We need to remember that chapter and verse divisions are not part of the original text. The division into chapters, for example, was only established in the thirteenth century A.D. Since Nuñez’s focus is the time of the end, why did he not begin his analysis in 11:40 where, in the text, the time of the end begins? The reason is simple, if he had started in 11:40 one main pillar of his argument would not exist.

Nuñez proposes the following chiasm as representing the structure of the passage:⁴

- A Stand up, time (12:1)
- B Everlasting or forever (12:2)
- C Everlasting or forever (12:3)
- D Many, knowledge (12:4)
- E Daniel (12:5)
- F End of the wonders (12:6)
- G Surely, after a time, times, and half a time. And as soon as . . . all these wonders will be finished (12:7)
- F’ End of these wonders (12:8)
- E’ Daniel (12:9)
- D’ Many, wise (12:10)
- C’ Days, time (12:11)
- B’ Days (12:12)
- A’ Stand up, days (12:13)

This chiastic structures looks very impressive, but it is not as compelling as Nuñez wants us to believe. For example, there are several time references in Daniel 12 (vv. 1-3 and 11-13). Yet, he ignores the time references in verses 4 and 9 (time of the end). The name “Daniel” also appears in verse 4 not just in verses 5 (E) and 9 (E’). The Hebrew verb ‘amad “stand” appears not only in verses 1 (A) and 13 (A’), but also in verse 5 “there stood [*’omdim*] two others.”

Thus the chiastic structure is not as solid as it seems; and, if one takes into account that the “time of the end” section begins in 11:40 and not in 12:1, the chiastic structure disappears altogether. It is interesting to note that Nuñez uses Daniel 11:40-45 when he explains

Daniel 12:11 (pp. 29, 35, 36, 40, etc.), but not when he establishes the literary structure of the “time of the end” section of Daniel.

Linguistic Issues

Some linguistic matters treated by Nuñez raise a variety of issues.

1. The preposition lamed (l) in Daniel 12:7. Nuñez claims that the preposition lamed in Daniel 12:7 should be translated “after” rather than “for.”⁵ He therefore translates the answer to the question in Daniel 12:6 (“Until when shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?”) as “Certainly it will be after a time, times, and half a time” (12:7);⁶ but is this answering the question? The interrogative “Until when . . .?” expects an answer beginning with “until” or “for” not “after.” Notice the similarity of these verses with other passages using the same terminology:

Isaiah 6:11 Then I said, “Lord, how long?” (*‘ad matay*) And He answered: “Until (*‘ad*) the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant . . .”

Daniel 8:13-14 Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, “How long (*‘ad matay*) will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?” And he said to me, “For (*‘ad*) two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.”

Daniel 12:6-7 And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long (*‘ad matay*) shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?” Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time (*lmo‘ed*), times, and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished.

Nuñez is correct in stating that sometimes the temporal use of *l* can be translated by “after.”⁷ But is this the case in Daniel 12:7? The prepositional phrase *lmo‘ed* appears five times in the book of Daniel (8:19; 11:27, 29, 35; 12:7) and thirteen times elsewhere in

the Old Testament. In these latter cases, it always has the meaning of “at, within, for,” or “according to the appointed time.” In Daniel 8:19; 11:27 and 29 it has the meaning “at the appointed time” or “it refers to the appointed time,” and in 11:35 *lmo‘ed* can be translated as “for a time appointed” or “until the time appointed.” Thus, not once does *lmo‘ed* mean “after.” Of course, this does not mean that it cannot have this meaning in 12:7. However, in Daniel 7:25 we have the Aramaic equivalent to “a time, times, and half a time;” and there the context clearly indicates that the saints would be persecuted by the little horn for a time, times, and half a time, a prophecy which has *already met its fulfillment*.

Since the shattering of the power of the holy people in 12:7, which lasts for 3½ times, seems to be thematically the same as the persecution of the saints in 7:25 which also lasts for 3½ times, it is difficult

to see why the preposition *l* in Daniel 12:7 should be translated “after” rather than “for.”

2. The referent of “wonders” in Daniel 12:6.

Nuñez claims that the “wonders” in Daniel 12:6 refer to God’s salvific work on behalf of His people, i.e., the destruction of the king of the North in 11:45 and the liberation of the people of God in 12:1, rather than to the blasphemous words of the “King of the North” in 11:36 or to the incredible destruction of the little horn in 8:24. The reason he gives is that the latter two texts use the verb *pala’* whereas 12:6 has the noun *pele’*.⁸

First it needs to be noted that the term “wonders” does not appear anywhere in 11:45 or 12:1. Secondly, in Daniel 8:24 and 11:36 the verb is a feminine participle used as a noun. Furthermore, as Hamilton, who is quoted by Nuñez, has pointed out, there is no difference in meaning between the noun and the verb. In the book of Psalms, for example, “both refer to God’s wonders, either in a general sense, or in a specific historical antecedent.”⁹ While the noun *pele’* generally refers to God’s acts or words, in Lamentations 1:9 it refers to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, as Hamilton has pointed out.¹⁰ Thus, the statement that the noun *pele’* “is always used in the context of the acts or words of God”¹¹ and therefore cannot apply to Daniel 8:24 or 11:36 is special pleading and not supported by the larger context of Scripture. If it is argued that God used the Babylonians to punish Jerusalem, we have to respond that whatever God allows he does (Isa 45:7), including the activities of the little horn.

To my knowledge, every commentator on Daniel, whether liberal or conservative, applies *pele’* in Daniel 12:6 to the activities of the little horn in 8:24 and also to

The Sabbath/Sunday issue is an important element in Adventist eschatology, but never before has anyone identified the Sabbath with the tamid.

the activities of the King of the North in 11:36.

3. Literal or Symbolic Days? Nuñez claims that the 1290 and 1335 days in Daniel 12 are literal days because the word *yom* “day” in the Old Testament (when accompanied by a numeral) always means literal days, referring to Ezekiel 4:5, 6 to prove his point.¹² While it is true that for Ezekiel the numbers referred to were literal days (lying 390 days on the left side and 40 days on the right side), it is precisely this passage that shows that the 390 and 40 literal days symbolized 390 and 40 years, “I have laid on you a day for each year” (Ezek 4:6). Daniel and Revelation are apocalyptic books and, in contrast to Genesis 1 for example, the days in these apocalyptic prophecies are symbolic and not literal as Revelation 12:6, 14 show.

Hermeneutical Issues

A fundamental principle of biblical hermeneutics is that “scripture interprets scripture, one passage being the key to other passages.”¹³ In Daniel 8, 11 and 12 we find two key phrases repeated:

Daniel 8:11

He even exalted *himself* as high as the Prince of the host; and by him **the daily sacrifices were taken away**, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.

Daniel 11:31

And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then **they shall take away the daily sacrifices**, and **place there the abomination of desolation**.

Daniel 12:11

And from the time *that* **the daily sacrifice is taken away**, and **the abomination of desolation is set up**, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days.

Nuñez agrees that in Daniel 8:11 and 11:31 the taking away of the daily sacrifices (*tamid*) and the setting up of the abomination of desolation refer to events during the 3½ times of Daniel 7:25 which are now past.¹⁴ In Daniel 12:11, however, he sees the taking away of the daily and the setting up of the abomination of desolation as events in the future. He does this on the basis of the structure of Daniel 12 which he established at the beginning of the paper. But, as we have seen, the structure he finds in Daniel 12 is not as solid as he would like it to be.

On pages 33, 34 and 37 Nuñez identifies the *tamid*

“the daily” or “the continual” as the “continual service” of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, which has been the Adventist position for a long time. However, the “daily” that is taken away in Daniel 12:11, according to Nuñez, is primarily the Sabbath. He arrives at this conclusion in the following way:

What does it mean that the “continual service will be put aside”? Did we not say that it refers to the redemptive ministry of Jesus in the Heavenly Sanctuary? How then could the eschatological Christian Rome

Daniel 12:5-13 provides explanations for the whole vision of 11:2–12:4 not just for the last few verses.

put aside or remove this ministry that operates in the Heavenly Sanctuary? To understand this issue we must settle, in the first place, that the ministry of Jesus in the Heavenly Sanctuary is focused on the atonement of sin and the worship of God. In the second place, we must see that Jesus’ ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is performed in conformity to the principles of the law of God and on the basis of his sacrifice. Based on these facts, we can assert that the “continual service” will be put aside when the “king of the North” casts away the law of God and Jesus’ ministry, by imposing in a universal and obligatory way a religious day of observance which will be contrary to the Ten Commandments of God.¹⁵

Consequently, he identifies the “abomination of desolation” as Sunday.¹⁶ This is a curious mixture of different concepts. The Sabbath/Sunday issue is an important element in Adventist eschatology, but to my knowledge never before has anyone identified the Sabbath with the *tamid*.

Nuñez claims that “Ellen G. White applies the expression ‘abomination which causes desolation’ of Matthew 24:15 to the idolatrous standards of the Roman army and the future imposition of a false day of rest.”¹⁷ This is not quite correct. What Ellen White actually says is this:

As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation, in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath, will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains.¹⁸

She compares two signs: as the siege of Jerusalem was a sign for the Christians then, so Sunday laws will be a sign for the faithful at the time of the end to leave the cities. Nowhere in the context does she even refer to the expression “abomination of desolation.” In the book *The Great Controversy* she identifies the “abomination of desolation” as the Roman standards.¹⁹

Basic Structure of Daniel’s Visions

The basic structure of Daniel’s visions indicates that the visions are always followed by explanations.²⁰

Daniel 2	→ vision (31-35)	– explanation (36-46)
Daniel 7	→ vision (1-14)	– explanation (15-27)
Daniel 8-9	→ vision (1-12)	– explanation (13-26; 9:24-27)
Daniel 10-12	→ vision (11:2-12:4)	– explanation (12:5-13)

Thus Daniel 12:5-13 provides explanations for the whole vision of 11:2–12:4 not just for the last few verses. The fact that the “man dressed in linen” says to Daniel, “Go Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end” does not imply, as Nuñez claims, that Daniel wanted to know more about the events of the time of the end.²¹ The phrase *’acharit ’elleh* “the end of these things” in Daniel’s question “My lord, what shall be the end of these things?” (12:8) is not simply asking what will happen at the end of time, but what is the conclusion of all these wonderful things of which he has been told. One of the meanings of *’acharit* is the “end” or “conclusion” of a transaction or event, e.g., Prov. 25:8; Isa 41:22.²² Daniel wanted to know what the end, the outcome, the result of all the wonderful things he had heard would be.

Conclusion

Daniel 12:5-13 parallels 8:11-14 and 11:31. A detailed explanation of this passage in light of these parallel verses has appeared in an earlier issue of *Reflections*.²³ In short, only in 12:11 is a specific time given for the taking away of “the daily” (referred to also in 8:11 and 11:31). This removal of the daily or continual ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary began with Clovis in 508 through the joining of civil and religious powers (the Franks and the Papacy). In a recent publication Heinz Schaidinger, documenting the historical fulfillment of these prophecies, concluded that “In 508, the partnership of throne and altar, the ‘abomination that

makes desolate,’ began. Clovis fought for the church, and the church served Clovis.”²⁴

While no beginning point is mentioned for the 1335 days, the context seems to imply that it began at the same time as the 1290 days, putting its fulfillment in 1843-1844 with the preaching of the first angel’s message. Significantly, this is also the final year of the 2300 day-year prophecy of Daniel 8 which opens to view, by contrast with the activities of the little horn, the true ministration of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

The Adventist interpretation which places the fulfillment of these time prophecies during this crucial period of 1843-1844 remains the best solution to the enigmatic words of Daniel 12:5-13.



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¹See Gerhard Pfandl, “The Time Prophecies in Dan 12,” *Reflections* 4 (October 2003): 5-7 for a description and an evaluation of these proposals.

²Since I do not read Spanish, my evaluation is based on the English manuscript sent to me.

³Samuel Nuñez, “The Sign of the End of the World,” 3-4.

⁴*Ibid.*, 8-9. On page 161 in his book *Las profecias apocalipticas de Daniel* (Mexico: Datacolor Impresores, 2006), the chiasm is slightly modified but is still limited to Daniel 12:1-13.

⁵Nuñez, “Sign,” 18.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*, 16.

⁹V. P. Hamilton, “*pālā*’, be marvellous, wonderful,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (ed. R. Laird Harris, et al.; 2 vols.; Chicago: Moody, 1980), 2:723.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹Nuñez, “Sign,” 16.

¹²*Ibid.*, 42.

¹³Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, 581.

¹⁴Nuñez, “Sign,” 29.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 37 (italics his).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁸Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, 464-465.

¹⁹Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 26.

²⁰See Pfandl, 5.

²¹Nuñez, “Sign,” 44.

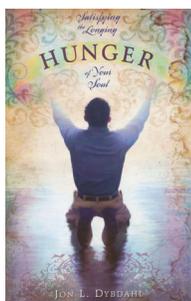
²²Andrew E. Hill, “*’ah’rīt*,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. William A. VanGemeren; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1997), 1:362.

²³Pfandl, 6-7.

²⁴Heinz Schaidinger, *Historical Confirmation of Prophetic Periods* (Biblical Research Institute Release 7; n.p., 2010), 33.

“Our position has been one of waiting and watching, with no time-proclamation to intervene between the close of the prophetic periods in 1844 and the time of our Lord’s coming.” – Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, 36.

BOOK NOTES



Jon L. Dybdahl, *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of Your Soul* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2008), 144 pp., including a selected bibliography, US\$12.99.

Jon Dybdahl's book addresses a legitimate concern, namely the spiritual life of church members and their relationship to God. To be precise, how does one experience God?

The author makes many good and helpful statements. In some places the book inspires readers, while in others it raises a number of questions.

Dybdahl argues against a top-heavy, rational Christianity and thus—with a certain justification—also against the one-sided emphasis on doctrine, ethics, and biblical theology. But, as a result, these areas of Christian living and thinking seem to be left behind. Missing, it seems, is a synthesis between cognitive theology and spirituality. For example, in his last chapter he writes, “While I would never deny that theology and ethics are important, they cannot stand above the role of the heart and the centrality of love” (132). This sounds as though subjectivity triumphs over the objective word. The impression appears to be given that when the “spiritual disciplines” are observed, everything is in order and the relationship to God is guaranteed. However, Adventists do not read the Bible and especially the New Testament in such a one-sided manner (see the discussion about milk and solid foods in Hebrews 5-6).

Throughout the book there is a tendency to affirm that spirituality is present in various Christian denominations and even gives a positive appraisal of spirituality in world religions, though the author does make a distinction when it comes to meditation. He says, “We must also be careful not to belittle or denigrate traditions or emphases different of our own. The body of Christ profits from all traditions, and we must celebrate them in others . . .” (116). That could be understood to mean that Adventists should accept mysticism and every possible spiritual approach without evaluating them. In other words, the book seems in places to be ecumenical and pluralistic. In addition, does not the Adventist understanding of the nature of man, which sees body, soul, and spirit as a whole entity and denies the natural immortality of the soul, also have consequences for spirituality? Should not this issue be discussed as well?

The treatment of the “spiritual disciplines” strongly reminds one of Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* that likewise contains both good and questionable material. This work is repeatedly quoted and may

disturb some readers. There are a number of statements in Dybdahl's book that could be misunderstood: the author recommends *lectio divina* (62), the use of spiritual leaders (“spiritual guides,” 136), the “Jesus prayer” according to the Russian Orthodox tradition, that can be used as a mantra (52),¹ the breathed prayer (52), prayer and meditation over art objects or visual media (53), visualizing, etc.² Warnings about excessive or questionable practices are practically non-existent. Furthermore, according to the author, growth in spiritual disciplines should be evaluated (135). The final chapters are more psychologically oriented. To be sure, the author attempts in places to work biblically but may still fall short of doing justice to the biblical text. Overall, it seems that the biblical material is marginalized. The diagram on page 109 lists under “Christian Theist” God, angels, the social sciences, karma, magic, and the natural sciences; the choice of vocabulary as well their descriptions on page 105 could raise problems for the audience.

What is really missing, even in the detailed bibliography that encourages readers to buy various books, are Adventist authors,³ a description of Adventist “spirituality” and Ellen G. White's comments on this subject, for example, in *Steps to Christ*. Missing also is a discussion of how Sabbath keeping, Bible discussion in Sabbath School, prayer meetings, as well as the Adventist practices of baptism, footwashing, and the Lord's Supper affect the spiritual life of church members. The call in Rev 14:7 to worship the creator God is not heard in this book. In other words, as a specific Adventist contribution to spirituality this book clearly falls short.

Although the topic is important, the overall impression is that this book needs major improvements in various places.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

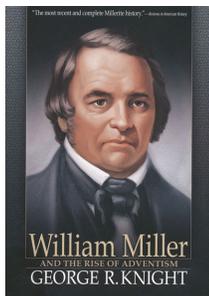
¹Dybdahl, 52, quotes the prayer as follows: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” More simply, “Jesus, have mercy on me” or “Have mercy on me.”

²Cf. Bill Cork, “On Contemplative Prayer”; online: <http://spectrummagazine.org/blog/2010/10/31/contemplative-prayer>; accessed June 13, 2011.

³See now a dissertation that deals with Adventist spirituality and especially with Ellen G. White: Zoltán Szalos-Farkas, *A Search for God: Understanding Apocalyptic Spirituality* (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2010).

George R. Knight, *William Miller and the Rise of Adventism* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 2010), 336 pp., US\$21.99.

This volume is a reprint of *Millennial Fever* (1993) with some updates in the last chapter. George Knight, formerly professor of church history at the Seventh-day



Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, is one of Adventism's leading historians and a most prolific author.

The fifteen chapters of the book are divided into three parts: Moving Toward the Year of the End [1843-4], The Year of the End, and Moving Away from the Year of the End. Chapter one

sketches briefly the historical background to the rise of Millerism, setting the stage for what follows. The next four chapters provide biographical sketches of William Miller, Joshua V. Himes, Josiah Litch, Charles Fitch and several other Millerite leaders.

The second part chronicles the events during 1843 and 1844, including the 1844 spring disappointment, the true midnight cry at the Exeter camp meeting in the month of August, and the great disappointment on October 22, 1844. The third section describes the aftermath of the great disappointment; the rise of the spiritualizers and other aberrant Adventist groups, the Albany conference in 1845, and the appearance of Sabbatarian Adventists.

The concluding chapter, "Millerism at 170," briefly traces the history of the six denominations that arose out of the Millerite movement. It analyzes the "why" of the success of Millerism and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the largest of the churches spawned by the Millerite movement, and suggests that, in spite of the tremendous growth of the Adventist Church, all is not well with it. He points out some of the challenges facing the church, such as loss of faith in its distinctive doctrines, and concludes with the warning that "to deny its

prophetic heritage is a certain way to kill its 'millennial passion'" (p. 290).

Knight's book is a well-written, comprehensive history of the Millerite movement portraying its promoters not as heretics or lunatics, but as people eagerly waiting for the imminent return of Jesus. The author dealt with the material more in a topical way rather than purely chronologically which at times results in some overlap of material. Nevertheless, the book is essential reading for those interested in the Millerite movement and the rise of Sabbatarian Adventists. It draws heavily on primary sources, each chapter has copious endnotes, and a fairly detailed index makes it easy to check on specific events or people.

In the last chapter, Knight looks at factors contributing to the success of Millerism and the Seventh-day Adventist Church, one of which is "its sense of prophetic mission and the sense of urgency generated by that prophetic understanding" (p. 283). While this is certainly true for both movements, in the case of the Seventh-day Adventist Church God's guidance through the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White was even more important. Unfortunately, this factor is missing in Knight's book. Without the input of Ellen G. White's ministry the Seventh-day Adventist Church today would probably be an insignificant Christian church like the Advent Christian Church with its 25,000 members worldwide, or have long ago ceased to exist like the American Evangelical Adventist Church both of which trace their origins back to the Millerite movement. The fact that the Seventh-day Adventist Church today has more than 17 million baptized members is one of the evidences of God's leading in the history of this church.

Gerhard Pfandl, BRI

WORLDWIDE HIGHLIGHTS

New In-Depth Study on the Book of Revelation

Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller, deputy director of the Biblical Research Institute, has written an in-depth study of the book of Revelation in German. *Der Erste und der Letzte: Studien zum Buch der Offenbarung* (*The First and the Last: Studies in the Book of Revelation*) was published in the series *Adventistica* by Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2011. The book has three sections. In addition to the introductory

questions (author, time, purpose, etc.), the first section deals with the macro and microstructure of the book and the recapitulation principle in Revelation



4-11. The second section contains exegetical studies on the seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, the two witnesses in Revelation 11, and the beast in chapter 17. The third section deals with such theological studies as the Christology of Revelation, the Second Advent, the ecclesiology of the book, the remnant, Babylon, and the sanctuary in the book of Revelation. Because the Peter Lang edition is no longer available, a second printing of the 472-page book is now available from Bogenhofen Seminary in Austria for €19.10 at www.adventistbookcenter.at. It is hoped that the book will soon be available in English.

Symposium Seeks Better Understanding of the Holy Spirit

More than 300 theologians, administrators, and pastors gathered in Iguassu Falls, Brazil for the ninth annual Biblical-Theological Symposium of the South American Division, May 19-23, 2011, to seek a better understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Twenty-nine presenters from a dozen countries examined the topic in six main areas: Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Adventist History, Systematic Theology and Applied Theology. The lead speaker for each area surveyed the topic, followed by several presentations focused on sub-specialties within these areas. Each block concluded with the presenters fielding questions. The division Biblical Research Committee plans to publish these presentations in Portuguese in a book on the Holy Spirit.

Jiří Moskala, Professor of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis and chair of the Old Testament department at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews



University, opened the symposium with an overview of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. “The Holy Spirit is a very humble person,” he said, denying the idea that the Spirit is merely the power of God. The Spirit is God’s special gift, calling Eze. 33:25-27 “the gospel par excellence.” John McVay, President of Walla Walla University, surveying the role of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, said “the Apostles could testify about the life, death, resurrection and ascension. What happened next had to be given by the Holy Spirit.” Connecting the dots, McVay pointed to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost as the assurance of the exaltation and coronation of Jesus in heaven.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, attending the symposium for the last time in his capacity as director of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), set out an ambitious agenda for theologians of the church in the years to come. “It is not enough,” he said, “to believe that the Holy Spirit is a person.” Touching on issues ranging from inspiration to the latter rain, he said more work needs to be done for us to *establish biblically* our understanding of the latter rain, encouraging the gathering to pray for the Spirit of wisdom. On the final day of the Symposium, Rodríguez was recognized with a standing ovation for the support and contributions he has made to this annual event over the years. Others from BRI also giving strong support to the Symposium by presenting papers on the topic were Ekkehardt Mueller, Kwabena Donkor, and Clinton Wahlen.

Delegates also approved a statement of consensus affirming that the Holy Spirit “is the third person of the Godhead,” and a “co-participant” in the work of creating and sustaining the world and redeeming humanity. It also affirms that the Holy Spirit respects the free will of individuals and that the church is dependent on the Holy Spirit for the completion of the gospel mission. A more detailed report of the symposium may be found online at <http://www.adventistworld.com/article.php?id=1039>.