

## Editor's Note

In view of questions that have been raised in some circles, this issue includes two items related to marriage and the family: (1) marriage vs. cohabitation (addressed in the following article) and (2) announcement of an upcoming conference on homosexuality (see Worldwide Highlights). The position of the Adventist Church on these questions is clear from fundamental belief number 23 on "Marriage and the Family" (<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>) and its official statement on homosexuality, affirming the Biblical position that "sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden" (see the full statement at [http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main\\_stat46.html](http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat46.html))

## Does Marriage Still Matter?

BY RICHARD M. DAVIDSON

Increasingly in many societies marriage between a man and a woman is looked upon as optional, with some considering cohabitation to be a reasonable alternative. Cohabitation may be defined as a sexual-emotional relationship



"in which two unmarried persons of the opposite sex share a living facility without a legal contract."<sup>1</sup> In 1960 less than half a million American couples were cohabiting; but by the year 2000,

the number had increased more than 1000%, to over 9.7 million people living with a different-sex unmarried partner (8.2% of all American couples).<sup>2</sup> More than two-thirds of all married couples in the U.S. now say that they lived together before getting married.<sup>3</sup> Cohabitation is even more prevalent in places such as Canada, Scandinavian countries, and France.<sup>4</sup> Once almost universally condemned, cohabitation has largely lost its stigma and has become a common practice in most Westernized countries.

There are three basic kinds of cohabitation, involving various reasons why unmarried couples live together:<sup>5</sup> (1) temporary or casual

cohabitation, as a form of dating; (2) cohabitation as a "trial run" for marriage, to test compatibility and/or solidify financial security; and (3) longer-term cohabitation that functions as a substitute for marriage.

When cohabitation became more popular in the early 1970s, social scientists predicted that the practice would strengthen marriage by providing experience in intimacy.<sup>6</sup> However, numerous scientific studies since the late 1970s have yielded consistent and substantive evidence for the opposite effect: premarital cohabitation is correlated with increased marital instability, higher risk of future divorce, and lower marital adjustment. Compared to those who married, cohabitators are statistically less happy with their relationship, less faithful to their partners, and less committed to and stable in their relationship. Cohabiting women are particularly vulnerable, with greater risk of physical abuse than in marriage. Children born to cohabiting parents are also more likely to suffer from physical abuse as well as general neglect.<sup>7</sup> The present article does not focus upon scientific research per se, but rather evaluates the practice of cohabitation and its effects in the light of Scripture.

## An Evaluation of Cohabitation in Light of Biblical Foundations

For Bible-believing Christians, all practices related to sexuality and marriage must be assessed with reference to God's original design for sexual relationships recorded at the beginning of the biblical canon (Gen 1-2), which constitutes the foundation for the rest of the biblical witness on human sexuality.<sup>8</sup> In this section we will contrast each component of the divine design for sexual relationships with the practice of cohabitation.

Genesis 2:24 provides a profound summary of God's will for sexual relationships:

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## EDITORIAL

## Revisiting Syncretism

On a recent visit to my native country, I was struck at how Christianity as I knew it was changing. Independent African churches have large followings, supposedly because they make Christianity



meaningful to indigenous Africans. Besides “revelations” and long, meditative periods of prayer in seclusion, these churches emphasize healing and the use of spiritistic powers. They strike a responsive chord because they resonate with the African worldview, but to others they come across as syncretistic. *Syncretism* generally refers to the

replacement or dilution of the essential truths of Christianity with non-Christian elements.

While the African church strives to become meaningful to its own worldview, its Western counterpart seeks to be “user friendly,”<sup>1</sup> making church life more flexible, understandable, and applicable—especially for newcomers. Included is a concern that the Christian message not “intimidate” potential worshippers. Two perspectives are discernible. For Stanley Grenz, the global context of cultural pluralism and postmodernism necessitates reframing the “question of truth.” He calls for a critical engagement “that takes seriously the postmodern condition and draws creatively from postmodern sensitivities for the sake of the advancement of the gospel in the world.”<sup>2</sup> David Wells, on the other hand, raises concerns about syncretism, perceiving that the character of evangelicalism is changing “because of its unwitting entanglement with a culture that, in its postmodern configuration, has the power to eviscerate the doctrinal substance of that faith.”<sup>3</sup> So it seems that African Christians risk syncretizing Christian theism with animism while the Western church risks syncretizing Christian theism with secularism.

Although syncretism is not a biblical term, the Bible shows an

awareness of and concern for this danger (Exod 23:31-33; Deut 18:9-14; Col 2:8-23; 1 Tim 1:3; 6:13; 1 John 4:1-6). Some, however, question whether we can talk about syncretism today. First, they say, syncretism in some circles encompasses every cultural aspect of the church and loses its analytic value. Second, some argue that characterizations of ideas and practices as syncretistic usually involve power-plays by theologians and missionaries. Third, in contemporary hermeneutical discussions the issue of objectivity arises: who can be the judge?

Still some things should be kept in mind. From the Biblical perspective, syncretism as defined above is wrong. Not all ideas and practices are consistent with the Christian message. To the extent that syncretism develops as a result of churches attempting to make their message relevant, this matter deserves even greater attention in our hermeneutical discussions. While care needs to be exercised not simply to label as syncretistic those practices and theological expressions we do not understand, we must also be careful that our cultural, theological, and personal subjectivities do not blind us to the normative standards clearly revealed in Scripture. This realization calls us to humility, sensitivity, and cooperative effort.

Kwabena Donkor, BRI

<sup>1</sup>See George Barna, *User Friendly Churches* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1991).

<sup>2</sup>Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2000), 22.

<sup>3</sup>David Wells, “Introduction: The Word in the World,” in *The Compromised Church: The Present Evangelical Crisis* (ed. John H. Armstrong; Wheaton: Crossway, 1998), 22.

### 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 [brinewsletter@gc.adventist.org](mailto:brinewsletter@gc.adventist.org).

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## Does Marriage Still Matter?

(continued from page 1)

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The introductory “therefore” [Hebrew *‘al-ken*] indicates that the relationship of Adam and Eve is upheld as the pattern for all future human sexual relationships.<sup>9</sup> This passage sets forth three essential steps when a man and a woman want to join their lives together, all of which are generally disregarded in the practice of cohabitation.

1. **Publically recognized exclusivity.** According to Gen 2:24, both man and woman<sup>10</sup> are to “leave” (Hebrew *‘azav*)—to make a public break from those

### ***Premarital cohabitation is statistically correlated with increased marital instability and a higher risk of future divorce.***

ties that would encroach upon the independence and freedom of the relationship, and to form an exclusive family unit publicly recognized and

respected by the couple’s families, the community of faith, and the society at large.

In contrast, those who cohabit are primarily concerned with their own private desires and disregard the divine mandate to publically “leave” in a way recognized and respected by their families, church, and society. The directive of exclusivity is often compromised by cohabitation: statistics reveal that cohabitators are less sexually exclusive than married persons, and the married who cohabited before marriage are less sexually faithful to their partner both before and after marriage.<sup>11</sup>

2. **Permanent, public, covenant commitment.** According to Gen 2:24, the man is to be “joined” (Hebrew *dabaq*) to his wife. In the OT this verb is regularly used as a technical covenant term for the permanent bond of Israel to the Lord.<sup>12</sup> In Gen 2 it clearly indicates a covenant context, i.e., a mutual commitment of the couple expressed as marriage vows in a formal covenant ceremony, paralleling the “oath of solidarity” and language of “covenant partnership” expressed by Adam to Eve in the presence of Yahweh as witness and officiant at their wedding.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the rest of Scripture many passages refer to marriage as a permanent covenant bond between husband and wife, ratified in the context of a public wedding ceremony and marriage vows.<sup>14</sup>

By contrast, cohabitation is only provisional and, for the present, lacking the essential element of a public, permanent, covenant commitment (“till death do us part”) between partners. Thus it is not surprising that premarital cohabitation is statistically correlated with increased marital instability and a higher risk of future divorce.

3. **Sexual intercourse only within a marriage relationship.** According to Gen 2:24, after the public wedding ceremony and marriage vows the man and woman are to “become one flesh.” This “one-flesh” union, referring primarily to sexual intercourse (see 1 Cor 6:16), by itself does not constitute marriage (see Exod 22:16-17), but is the means of consummating the marriage *after* the legal “joining” (the marriage covenant ceremony). Throughout Scripture, the Edenic design of legitimate sexual intercourse only within marriage is upheld as the divine norm.<sup>15</sup>

In stark contrast, at the heart of cohabitation is the premise that the unmarried couple is free to engage in sexual intercourse outside the boundaries of the marriage covenant relationship. In cohabitation there is passion without commitment. “Cohabitation engages a life-uniting act without a life-uniting intent. Such a lifestyle proves to be destructive of inner integrity of human personality.”<sup>16</sup> The one who engages in sex outside of marriage “sins against his own body” (1 Cor 6:18).

Besides the three basic steps in divinely-ordained sexual relationships as set forth in Gen 2:24, other facets of the divine blueprint for sexuality relevant to the issue of cohabitation are found in Gen 1-2, which may be summarized and contrasted with the practice of cohabitation and its negative effects (as documented in the research of social scientists cited above):

4. **Equality and dignity of the marriage partners.** God provided Adam an *‘ezer kenegdo*—an “equal counterpart” or “equal partner” (2:18). Throughout Scripture this equal partnership in marriage, and the elevated status of women, is upheld as God’s ideal (e.g., Eph 5:21-33).<sup>17</sup>

Given the availability of convenient sex for cohabiting males, without lasting commitment or legal protection of their female partner in the cohabitation, it is not surprising that cohabiting women are at greater risk of abandonment and physical abuse than those who are married.

5. **Whole-some and secure relationship without shame or fear.** Within the boundaries of marriage, Adam and Eve were free to be vulner-

able before each other without shame or fear: “they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed before each other”<sup>18</sup> (Gen 2:25). This implies a secure relationship where husband and wife can be safe in each other’s unconditional love and acceptance.

Cohabitation does not usually provide that safe and secure environment where the partners can be vulnerable to each other without fear or shame. Lacking a perma-

### ***Throughout Scripture, the Edenic design of legitimate sexual intercourse only within marriage is upheld as the divine norm.***

ment commitment, there is instability in the cohabiting relationship that often engenders insecurity and anxiety.

6. **Blessing and responsibility of children.** Within the stability and commitment of marriage, Adam and Eve were blessed to bring forth children: “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). “Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain. . .” (Gen 4:1). The special added blessing of children was a sacred responsibility, in which children were to be cared for and provided for within a committed and stable environment (Eph 6:1-4).

By contrast, children born to cohabiting parents are often at a great disadvantage: “Commitment and stability are at the core of children’s needs; yet, in a great proportion of cohabitations, these two requirements are absent.”<sup>19</sup>

7. **A sacred marriage relationship hallowed by God.** God Himself sanctified marriage by His presence as the divine Officiant at the first wedding (Gen 2:22-24). Marriage and the Sabbath come down to us as the two sacred institutions established by God in Eden.

By contrast, the practice of cohabitation has totally secularized the sexual-emotional relationship, stripping it of any sacred safeguarding by the sanctifying presence of God. The foundations of the sacred institution of marriage are steadily eroded as cohabitation replaces the “sacred ties that bind” with secular unions devoid of God’s special blessing.

Viewed in light of biblical standards for sexual ethics, the practice of cohabitation either rejects or misses the mark in all major dimensions of the divine plan for sexual relationships. At the most fundamental level, cohabitators disregard the divine “therefore” in Gen 2:24, exercising autonomy to follow their own desires apart from the divine will.

### Response of the Community of Faith to Cohabitation

While Pentateuchal legislation does not directly address the practice of cohabitation, it does deal with the foundational premise upon which cohabitation is based—the right for men and women to engage in sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Although pre-marital sexual intercourse did not carry the same severe punishment as many other sexual offenses, it nonetheless was taken seriously. The penalty included (1) a heavy fine that the man (who presumably initiated the sexual relationship and deprived the woman of her virginity) must pay to the woman’s father, and (2) the requirement that the couple face the consequences of their action by marrying with no possibility of future divorce (Deut 22:28-29), unless the father of the woman considered that such a marriage would be unwise, in which case they did not marry but the man paid the dowry to the woman’s father as if they had married

(Exod 22:16-17).<sup>20</sup> The force of this legislation was to discourage pre-marital sex, and to transition those who engaged in it into marriage (if advisable), with stipulations to insure the stability and permanence of their married relationship.

The only possible OT cases of actual cohabitation similar to current practice are the unions formed by Israelite leaders with pagan women upon Israel’s return from the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 9-10 and Neh 13:23-30).<sup>21</sup> These unions were probably not regular legal marriages, but a kind of “live-in arrangement” or “cohabitation which may eventuate in formal marriage.”<sup>22</sup> The swift and severe reactions of Ezra and Nehemiah against these sexual

unions probably stem from the fact that they not only constituted cohabitation, but also involved divorce of previous wives without due cause, and (especially) that they involved uniting with women who were practicing idolaters (in blatant disregard of Deut 7:1-5). One possible NT example of cohabitation is found in 1 Cor 5:1, but the relationship there described was also incestuous.

The church today can learn lessons from the biblical perspective on sexuality and marriage as well as from examples in the Bible of sexual practice that possibly involved cohabitation. We must uphold the biblical mandate that disapproves of any emotional-sexual relationship outside the institution of marriage. At the same time, in the spirit of the Pentateuchal legislation (and the gospel of Jesus Christ!), we need to act redemptively, encouraging cohabiting couples to accept the divine plan for sexual unions and, if such seems prudent, to move into a marriage relationship or refrain from cohabiting and from sexual activity outside of marriage. Scripture calls for a balanced approach by the church: to maintain the biblical standards while ministering with grace to the offenders.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Lee Cole, “Cohabitation in Social Context,” in *Marriage and Alternatives: Exploring Intimate Relationships* (ed. Roger W. Libby and Robert N. Whitehurst; Glenview, Ill.: Scott-Foresman, 1977), 67; see *ibid.*, 64-67 for other similar definitions.

<sup>2</sup>Pamela J. Smock and Sanjiv Gupta, “Cohabitation in Contemporary North America,” in *Just Living Together: Implications of Cohabitation on Families, Children, and Social Policy* (ed. Alan Booth and Ann C. Crouter; Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 55; Census 2000 Special Reports, “Married Couple and Unmarried-Partner Households: 2000,” 2 (cited 5 May 2009); online: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-5.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>Marie Hartwell-Walker, “Cohabitation: Issues that Affect Intimacy,” 8 April 2008, n.p. (cited 5 May 2009); online: <http://www.psychcentral.com/lib/2008/cohabitation-issues-that-affect-intimacy/>.

<sup>4</sup>Anne-Marie Ambert, “Cohabitation and Marriage: How are They Related?” (Contemporary Family Trends; The Vanier Institute of the Family, September 2005), 7 (cited 5 May 2009); online: <http://www.vifamily.ca/library/cft/cohabitation.html>. In the year 2000 the proportion of cohabiting couples was 30% in Sweden, 29.8% in Quebec (Canada), 24.5% in Norway, and 17.5% in France.

<sup>5</sup>See, e.g., Judith K. Balswick and Jack O. Balswick, *Authentic Human Sexuality: An Integrated Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999), 130-134.

<sup>6</sup>See studies cited in Balswick and Balswick, *Authentic Human Sexuality*, 134-135.

<sup>7</sup>See esp. the discussion and studies cited in Ambert, “Cohabitation and Marriage,” 8-16. The validity of these studies is now being questioned in some recent research and by supporters of cohabitation (see, e.g., Michael G. Lawler, “Quaestio Disputata—Cohabitation: Past and Present Reality,” *Theological Studies* 65 [2004]:623-629, and information found at the website [www.unmarried.org](http://www.unmarried.org)), but the general scientific consensus still supports the validity of research pointing to the overall negative effects of cohabitation as compared with marriage.

<sup>8</sup>For the exegetical basis of a theology of sexuality and marriage in Gen 1-2, see the author’s *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 15-54 (chapter 1; accessible without cost online at [www.hendrickson.com](http://www.hendrickson.com)).

<sup>9</sup>See Robert B. Lawton, “Genesis 2:24: Trite or Tragic?” *JBL* 105 (1986): 97-98; and Angelo Tosato, “On Genesis 2:24,” *CBQ* 52 (1990): 389-409.

<sup>10</sup>The text explicitly mentions only the man leaving, but the implication is that both are to “leave,” because in the culture of biblical times it was already assumed that the woman left her father’s house (Gen 24:58, 67; Ps 45:13-15; Song 3:6-11; Matt 25:1-13).

<sup>11</sup>Ambert, “Cohabitation and Marriage,” 13-14.

<sup>12</sup>See, e.g., Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; Josh 22:5; 23:8.

<sup>13</sup>See Walter Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone (Gen 2:23a),” *CBQ* 32 (1970): 532-542; and John K. Tarwater, “The Covenantal Nature of Marriage in the Order of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2” (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

<sup>14</sup>See, e.g., Gen 24:67; 29:22-25; Ps 45; Prov 2:17; Song 4:1-5:1; Isa 54:5, 10; Jer 7:34; 16:9; Ezek 16:8, 59, 60, 62; Hos 2:2, 16-20; Mal 2:14; Matt 25:1-13. For discussion, see esp. Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 280-312.

<sup>15</sup>E.g., Gen 29:23-25; Song 4:12; 6:9; Deut 22:13-21, 28-29 (cf. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 356-361, 567).

<sup>16</sup>Miroslav Kiš, “Seventh-day Adventist Position on Cohabitation,” Biblical Research Institute, 2001, p. 2 (cited 7 May 2009); online: <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/CohabitationandSDA.htm>.

<sup>17</sup>See discussion in Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 213-295.

<sup>18</sup>The Hebrew original is in the reflexive form: “not ashamed before one another.”

<sup>19</sup>Ambert, “Cohabitation and Marriage,” 16.

<sup>20</sup>See Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 359-361.

<sup>21</sup>See *ibid.*, 320-324, 417.

<sup>22</sup>Allen Guenther, “A Typology of Israelite Marriage: Kinship, Socio-Economic, and Religious Factors,” *JSOT* 29 (2005): 402, 405. Cf. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, 322 n. 64.

## THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

# Scripture and Conscience in Human Life

BY MIROSLAV KIŠ

## Nature and Function of the Conscience

At the deepest level of every human soul is the conscience, an active agent which the Greeks called *syneidesis*, meaning “knowing with” or “co-knowledge.” It is the quality that distinguishes humans from the rest of the creation,<sup>1</sup> the seat of moral thinking and judgment, the “inner witness” or “moral compass.” Its true nature can best be known by analyzing its functions.

### Extra-Biblical Views

Classical theology, epitomized in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, defines the conscience as the human mind making moral judgments. While reason discriminates between true and false, it is the domain of conscience to adjudicate questions of right and wrong. Based on Aristotle and the autonomy of natural human reason, the conscience can guide moral reasoning, actions, and decisions.

Kant calls conscience the *Categorical Imperative*, i.e., the inner impulse to do what should be done and avoid what should not be done, contending that human reason, as the source of morality, and conscience are both autonomous: “Even the holy One of the Gospels must first be

***The conscience is the “moral compass” that distinguishes humans from the rest of creation.***

compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize Him as such.”<sup>2</sup> According to Kant, conscience is not something we acquire. “When therefore it is said: this man has no conscience, what is meant is that he pays no heed to its dictates.”<sup>3</sup>

Sigmund Freud represents a third major non-biblical understanding of conscience, described as the “super-ego,” which develops very early as children internalize prohibitions imposed upon them by parents and educators. Freud considers the conscience “a repressive force, capable of doing great damage to the psychological health of the person” and that religious belief exacerbates the condition by giving universal validity to the deeply damaging claims of authority by significant others.<sup>4</sup>

As these views show, the human mind is capable of demonizing or divinizing human faculties. Our only real safety is the Word of God.

### Teaching of the Bible and Ellen G. White

While the word “conscience” is not found in the Old

Testament, the concept and function of it can readily be recognized. The Hebrew word *lev*, translated “heart,” often carries the idea of conscience, as in 1 Samuel 24:5: “David’s heart smote him for cutting off the skirt of Saul.” Other versions render it, “David was conscience-stricken” (NIV) and “David’s conscience bothered him” (NASB).<sup>5</sup> Additionally, various Old Testament passages describe human beings experiencing remorse, sorrow for sin, and the peace which comes when forgiveness is sought and received, all of which evince an active conscience (Ps 32:1-5; 51).

The Greek word *syneidesis* occurs 30 times in the New Testament.<sup>6</sup> In Romans 2:14-15, Paul indicates that the conscience is *innate* and *universal*. It is not the product of environment, training, habit, or education, even though it is affected by all of these.<sup>7</sup> The conscience has several important functions:

1. It helps us *choose* beforehand right rather than wrong.<sup>8</sup>
2. It *obligates* us to do what is right or restrain us from doing wrong.<sup>9</sup>
3. It *enables* us to *evaluate* our past actions (John 15:17-19).
4. It *causes inner restlessness and remorse* until we consent to make things right (Ps 32:3-5). As E. Brunner says, the original experience of responsibility most often occurs “after the event; it reaches consciousness as a sense of *guilt* about something in particular and immediately forms part of the profound sense of guilt as a whole.”<sup>10</sup>

According to Wolfgang Schrage, contrary to Aquinas and Kant, “conscience is by no means itself the voice of God. The verdict of conscience may be determined by the Holy Spirit (Rom 9:1)” and “may be identical with faith, but it is *not therefore autonomous, absolute or definitive* (1 Cor 4:4).” Schrage continues:

Furthermore, Paul sees the function of the conscience as more evaluative than directive and normative, even though it may precede an act. In any event, the conscience is not so much a guiding authority, establishing in its own right the substance of what is required, as it is a critical authority, using certain criteria to judge what people do or fail to do. What is to be done is prescribed not by conscience but by the commandments, or else the community is to determine it.<sup>11</sup>

### Conscience in the Bible

Both Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy recognize that the human conscience is vulnerable to many provo-

cations and pressures. Perhaps the greatest challenge is the temptation to act autonomously, that is, to be subject to no higher authority than oneself, as urged by Kant, which raises the question of what it means to be a free moral agent.

### As Free

The notion of absolute autonomy is alluring not least because Scripture affirms the freedom of one’s conscience (1 Cor 6:12). No one has the right to coerce another and God Himself is described as an Authority who calls rather than coerces (Hos 11:4). Nevertheless, even those who are free in Christ will defer to God’s absolute authority, as Paul shows by affirming Christian freedom on the one hand (1 Cor 6:12; 10:23; Gal 5:1) while boldly affirming, “I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquit-

ted. It is the Lord who judges me” (1 Cor 4:4). In other words, conscience judges our thoughts and actions (Rom 2:15), but it is not infallible.<sup>12</sup> It is trustworthy and truly free only when under the influence of divine grace<sup>13</sup> and subject to the divine will. At the same time, no human authority can force us to act in violation of our conscience, not even the church.<sup>14</sup> In harmony with the example and command of Jesus, the apostle Paul denies using his position to “lord it over” others (Matt 20:26): “We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statements of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor 4:2). Therefore, no church leader should ever seek to marginalize those who think differently from themselves or ingratiate themselves to people prior to elections. Such practices tend to rob people of their freedom.

The potential for abuse exists not only in church leadership roles but also in the family. Strong, overpowering influences upon children produce exactly the neurotic states of mind justifiably bemoaned by Freud. However, contrary to Freud, the conscience need not be repressive—in fact, it must not be so. Parents who act as despots are not acting in a Christian way. The religion of Christ is characterized by freedom of choice within a loving, forbearing, and nurturing environment (John 10:1-20).

### As Weak and Wounded

In 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, the question of Christian freedom is dealt with at length, but from a different angle. Paul calls upon his followers to relate sensibly and with care to those who are insecure in faith, weak, and impressionable (8:9-12). Some in Corinth refused

to eat meat offered to idols as a matter of conviction. Others, not having the same scruples, could eat idol food without their conscience bothering them, and so Paul instructed them, “If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any questions on the ground of conscience” (1 Cor 10:27). Nevertheless, Paul adds: “But if someone says to you ‘this has been offered in sacrifice’ then out of consideration for the man who informed you, and for conscience sake...do not eat it” (vv. 28-29).

These two chapters tell us much about conscience. First, a weak person’s sensitivities need not restrict the strong believer’s behavior—they may exercise their

***Popularity can lead us to become insensitive to our own sin.***

freedom on matters that would disturb those with a weaker conscience provided the latter are not present and no moral principle is compromised. These chapters also show that weakness of conscience is not sin. The weak are not to be reprimanded but *nurtured* by the strong. Least of all does the weak need “shock therapy” from another believer who would want to compel them to exercise their full “freedom” in Christ despite it violating their sensitive conscience. Such an approach compounds the problem by wounding an already weak person. Worse, it sins against Christ who died for the weak and the strong.

***A Moral Compass***

During the years I ran my watch-making business, a gentleman brought me a compass. He complained: “Since it fell, the needle does not point North anymore.” True enough, the needle was consistently and faithfully pointing towards the North-East not true North. Immediately upon opening it my suspicions were confirmed. “There is nothing the matter with the needle,” I reassured him.” The dial was shaken loose on impact, but I can fix that right now.” With the dial adjusted so that the “N” was squarely under the needle, and with two touches of fast drying glue to fix the dial to the casing, the compass became a trustworthy guide again.

This story illustrates something peculiar about conscience. While it is God’s gift to humanity to guide our moral conduct, it has a nature of its own and it is important that we listen to it at all times,<sup>15</sup> above the decrees of potentates (as in the case of Daniel), above the voice of the crowds (as Jesus did), above the dictates of a powerful church establishment (as did Luther). Yet, we must also keep in mind that, with all its stability and firmness, the conscience is vulnerable, malleable, and impressionable. Irrespective of whether we have a weak or a strong conscience, we can move the “dial” either

to the left or to the right of the truth and thus lose our moral bearings.

The good or clear (*agathos/kalos*) conscience results from living one’s life in reference to God (Acts 23:1; 1 Pet 3:21), being ready to fight the good fight with courage (1 Tim 1:19), being sealed in commitment through baptism (1 Pet 3:21) and prepared to “act honorably in all things” (Heb 13:18). But such a conscience can become “evil” (Heb 10:22) through compromise, careless acts or brazen sinful behavior.

The conscience can be kept blameless by worshiping the true God, by believing everything laid down by the law and prophets, by having a hope in God, and by taking pains to have our conscience clear (*aproskopos*, Acts 24:16). No one, however, not even the great apostle Paul, can let his or her guard down because conscience can be corrupted (Titus 1:15).

The conscience can also be pure (*katharos*, 1 Tim 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3). Paul charges “certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than divine training that is in faith,” but rather to aim at love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience (1 Tim 1:3-5).

***Seared through Hypocrisy***

Of particular significance is a “seared” conscience: “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron” (1 Tim 4:1-2, NASB). Another unique characteristic of conscience is that the “dial,” besides becoming loose

and thereby distorting the testimony of the moral compass, can also be riveted on askew. In either case, people can honestly be led to believe a lie and be lost.

***There is no depth so deep, no destruction so complete that Jesus cannot enter and recreate the conscience in complete goodness, blamelessness, and purity.***

In other words, those with seared consciences are not necessarily hardcore criminals, terrorists or atheists. Paul is speaking here of those who know the truth and the religious vocabulary; they have their credentials; but in practice they are unfaithful to their baptismal and leadership vows. Hypocrisy sears the conscience. We may look good and even be active and successful Christians whom no one would suspect of foul play; but the real person is behind the mask, behind the title or function in church and society. As people admire successful

leaders more and more, their faith in Jesus increasingly becomes vicariously dependent on human image and outward conduct, and they become more vulnerable to bitter disillusionment should the leader fall: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm...” (Jer 17:5).

The hypocrite is more unfortunate: outwardly they look okay, so no one thinks about ministering to them. And the more people esteem them, the less likely they are to seek help for fear of scandalizing their “fans.” Thus popularity leads a person to become insensitive to his or her own sin, until the conscience becomes as hard as a branding scar.<sup>16</sup> As the example of Judas illustrates, this condition makes it nearly impossible for anyone, even Jesus Himself, to produce change in the individual.

### Hope for All

Paul proclaims hope for the worst of sinners, that Jesus is “able to save absolutely” all who still have a willingness to come to Him for healing (Heb 3:25, NEB; cf. 3:7-15). There is no depth so deep, no seclusion so secret, no destruction so complete that Jesus cannot enter and recreate the conscience in complete goodness, blamelessness and purity—if only some sensitivity remains and we choose to respond to His voice.

To his Hebrew brethren Paul presents Jesus as the Lamb of God, far superior to animal sacrifices “which cannot perfect the consciences of the worshippers” (Heb 9:9) since they are only a parable or symbol of something far greater: the substitutionary death of the perfect and innocent Sacrifice. “For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (vv. 13-14).

This is the good news, indeed, the best news, as believers now have immediate access “by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh” (Heb 10:20). Unlike the veil, which blocked access to the mercy seat, Jesus is the link for us, outside and inside the most holy place, reaching out to bring us into His and our Father’s presence. He does not veil us from God but rather *includes* us into fellowship with Him. So then “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (vs. 22). This new way is so effective that not only are our sins and the memory of them ultimately removed, but the needle of our broken moral compass becomes reliable again.

### Conclusion

God has implanted a conscience, the seat of moral discrimination, in every human heart. When discon-

nected from God it is vulnerable and unreliable. But even a corrupt conscience can be made pure through the blood of Jesus. God is able not only to cleanse, but also to recreate the damaged and seared conscience, when in faith and contrition we come to God through the Veil of our Savior Jesus Christ (Heb 10:20). Joseph, though a slave, with no rights and no fatherly advice to guide him, but armed with an alert conscience resisted his master’s wife, even though no one else was there (Gen 39:11). Falsely accused, relegated to the lowest and most corrupt strata of Egyptian society, Joseph endured to the end: “He had the peace that comes from conscious innocence, and he trusted his case with God.”<sup>17</sup>

We have a high calling: “The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their innermost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.”<sup>18</sup> Let us be faithful to it!



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<sup>16</sup>V. Norskov Olsen, *Man, the Image of God* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1988), 69.

<sup>17</sup>Immanuel Kant, “Metaphysical Foundations of Morals,” in *The Philosophy of Kant* (ed. Carl J. Friedrich; New York: Modern Library, 1949), 193-194.

<sup>18</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason* (trans. Thomas K. Abbott; London: Longmans, 1909), 311.

<sup>19</sup>D. J. Atkinson, D.H. Field, A.F. Holmes, and O. O’Donovan, eds., *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 251.

<sup>20</sup>See also Gen 20:5; 1 Sam 25:31; 2 Sam 24:10; Job 27:6.; Ps 51:10.

<sup>21</sup>Christian Maurer, “*Synoida, syneidēsis*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich; trans. G. W. Bromiley; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 7: 902-906.

<sup>22</sup>A. M. Rehwinkel, “Conscience,” in Walter A. Ellwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 267-268.

<sup>23</sup>Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1964), 290, par. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ellen G. White, *This Day with God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1979), 153, par. 5; idem, *Our High Calling* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1961), 328, par. 4.

<sup>25</sup>Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1937), 157.

<sup>26</sup>Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 195.

<sup>27</sup>White, *Our High Calling*, 143, par. 2.

<sup>28</sup>Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality: Guidelines to Mental and Spiritual Health* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), 323, par. 5.



<sup>14</sup>Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1950), 293; see also White, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 327, par. 1; Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1947), 352.  
<sup>15</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (9 vols.; Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 4:62; White, *This Day with God*, 153, par. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Timothy Freiberg and Barbara Freiberg, “*Kausteriazō*,” in *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 226.

<sup>17</sup>Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1958), 218; see also 1 Pet 2:18-19.)

<sup>18</sup>Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1952), 57.

## SCRIPTURE APPLIED

### Stewardship of Time

People today have a problem with time. One hundred and fifty years ago, if a merchant from Chicago had to do business in New York, he may have had to spend an entire week, because it took him so long to get to New York and back again. Today he takes an airplane and arrives there in one or two hours. That means he has gained almost an entire week. But if we look at business people today, they do not have more time. On the contrary, so many people claim, “We have no time.” Such a statement is not entirely true, because an equal amount of time is given to us per minute, per hour, per day, per week, per month, and per year. However, it is true that the enemy who knows that he has only a short time (Rev 12:12) tries to keep us occupied. Nevertheless, we are responsible for how we spend God’s gift of time.

#### I. Ownership and Stewardship of Time

1. **Dan 2:21;** God is the Lord of time. He is in  
**Job 14:1, 5** charge, and we are dependent on Him and His decisions.
2. **Ps 31:15** Time and life are closely related. To spend time with someone means to give that person a part of my life and so time is extremely important. Believers commit their time to God and follow His advice in its use. Time can also be wasted and misused (as humanity did before the flood, Gen 6-7, and Felix who put off a decision for God, Acts 24:24-25).
3. **Col 4:5;** Our task is to make the most of  
**Eph 5:16** our time by using it wisely. This includes spending time with God and His church, as well as time with family, friends, and neighbors—being there for them and pointing them to Jesus. We can also

take time for meaningful work, unwinding and recharging, and physical exercise.

Since God is the owner of our time, we cannot remain unconcerned about how we use it. This fact calls us to prayer and the study of His Word. In Scripture God shares with us principles of how to use time. Details must be discerned through our daily walk with the Lord and by listening to His voice.

#### II. Some Principles for the Good Use of Time

The following list is not exhaustive but alerts us to some principles involved in the stewardship of time.

##### 1. Prayer

Rom 12:12;  
1 John 5:14-15;  
Dan 6:11

To pray means to seek communion with God and to enter into a dialogue with our Creator. Prayer allows us to step back, to find peace in turmoil and stress, and helps us to refocus and concentrate on what is really important in life. Apart from fellowship with God and a new perspective on life, prayer is also helpful in other ways. Taking time to pray helps us grow in our relationship with God. There may be periods in our lives, when we do not feel like praying, but even then it is good to tell God how we feel and thereby maintain contact with the Lord. Apart from the daily structured time that we spend in prayer, our thoughts may frequently go to God during the day in thankfulness and praise as well as in petition.

##### 2. Reading Scripture

Col 3:16;  
Acts 17:11;  
Josh 1:8

We need to take some time to read Scripture on a regular basis, at least once a day, because through Scripture God speaks

in a special way to us, keeping the channels of communication open. Scripture allows us to understand God, to meet Jesus, and to discern what is good and what is God's will for us.

### 3. Witnessing

Matt 10:32;  
2 Cor 5:20

Taking time to share our faith is beneficial to others, for they have a chance to get to know Jesus and/or understand Scripture in a deeper way. We too are blessed because speaking about God helps us to deepen our relationship with Him.

### 4. Service

Luke 10:25-37;  
Matt 5:7;  
Matt 22:37-39

Part of the Christian life includes serving others: family, friends, and neighbors. Showing love to our neighbors can come in many creative ways, from giving them homemade bread to watching their children and assisting them in difficult times. Service also includes involvement in various activities and responsibilities in the church.

### 5. Fellowship

Acts 2:46-47;  
Heb 10:24-25

Time spent with believers is very important. Typically we are stronger together than we are alone. In Christian fellowship we find support, encouragement, and our faith is strengthened. We can also be a blessing to our brothers and sisters.

### 6. Work

Gen 1:28; 2:15,  
19-20;  
1 Thess 4:11

Some consider work to be a curse, but it is a blessing to be able to achieve something. It provides satisfaction and fulfillment. Adam and Eve were involved in meaningful work even before the Fall. Although work has to some extent become burdensome (Gen 3:17-18), it still has positive aspects. It is even mentioned in the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:9-11) and Paul warns against idleness (2 Thess 3:10).

### 7. Rest

Mark 6:30-32;  
Exod 20:8-11

Scripture also speaks about rest—even an entire day of rest, the Sabbath. Rest is important for our health and for being able to function well. There must be a healthy rhythm between work and rest. The Sabbath is given once a week not only for recuperation but also for communion with God, service for Him, and fellowship with family and friends.

## III. Conclusion

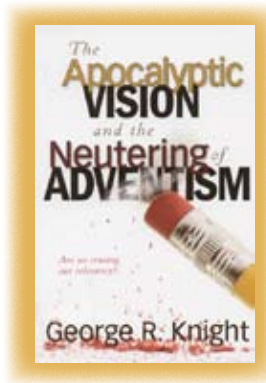
One of the most precious gifts we have received from God is time. We belong to God, and our time also belongs to Him. We are asked to use this gift in productive ways. God has also given us guiding principles about how to do this as faithful stewards. By following these principles our lives are enriched and glorify God. We also demonstrate that we are completely committed to the Lord, and that He in turn will guide us into a deeper understanding of Him and His plan for us.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

## BOOK NOTES

George R. Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008, 107 pp. US\$10.99.

In this small volume of six chapters, George Knight in his usually straightforward and somewhat acerbic style takes the church to task for losing its apocalyptic vision, by which he means the proclamation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. He



believes that “we have lost the sanctified arrogance that made us believe that we have a message that the whole world must hear” (p. 15). By aiming to become politically correct the Adventist church has managed to neuter itself and, consequently, begun to shrink in some parts of the developed world.

The best example of religious neutering, according to Knight, is Protestant liberalism. Once it shed such basic Christian doctrines as the inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth, and the substitutionary death of Jesus

it lost its distinctive Christian message and, as a result, the mainline churches in America began to lose millions of members. For example, between 1965 and the early 1990s the Presbyterian church's membership dropped 34% from 4.2 million to 2.8 million. Other liberal churches experienced similar or worse declines in membership. By seeking to be relevant to their culture they proved that "the shortest road to irrelevance is *mere* relevance" (p. 19).

While Knight decries "beastly" preaching, i.e., preaching that fails to put Christ at the center of the apocalyptic prophecies; he is also dead set against discarding our last-day-events messages in an attempt to be politically correct. "Apocalyptic rightly understood is the gospel" (p. 21), he says. He defends the historicist interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, yet he recognizes that we have not always presented the best interpretations of them. For example, in regard to Daniel 2 and 7 he correctly observes that to interpret the ten toes or ten horns only as European nations is too Eurocentric. The Eastern half of the Roman Empire should not be forgotten. He is also correct in pointing out that in Daniel 8 it is the little horn that is the focus of the judgment, but because of the parallelism of Daniel 8 with Daniel 7, where the focus is on the saints, the pre-advent judgment includes both—the saints and the little horn.

In the chapter entitled "The Fallacy of Straight-line Thinking and a Most Remarkable Prophecy" Knight reminds Adventists that the scoffers mentioned in 2 Peter 3:3 are increasingly found *inside* the church. Many Adventists are in danger of settling down to a comfortable earthly existence. Knight reminds them that the final events will be rapid ones, "in one hour your judgment has come" (Rev 18:10); and he recalls the rapid fall of communism in the late 1980s and the sudden changes in American society after 9/11 as historical examples of rapid change.

The book is easy to read and is a veritable goldmine of quotable quotes. However, Knight's claim that there is a conflict between the baptismal vow and the fundamental belief concerning the remnant church is not really valid. He says, "The baptismal vow speaks of Seventh-day Adventism as being the 'remnant church,' whereas the fundamental beliefs place the emphasis on a remnant message to be proclaimed to the world by that part of the end-time remnant already in the church" (p. 78). The emphasis in the fundamental belief may be on the message of the remnant, but the fact that it says, "in a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" clearly identifies the Seventh-day Adventist Church as this remnant.

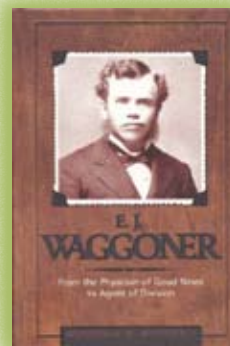
Also questionable is Knight's characterization of Daniel 2 as predicting "four and only four (rather than

five or six) political systems binding together the old Roman Empire (the area centered in the Middle East and around the Mediterranean Sea)" (p. 60). In what sense did Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece bind together the old Roman Empire? Rome never conquered the area of Medo-Persia proper; and the land of Babylon was only occupied by Rome for about ten years.

The sentence, "The problem of who to worship. . ." (p. 65) must have escaped the editor's notice. It should read "The problem of whom to worship. . ."

In his conclusion Knight writes, "*The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* is not a slow-paced 'scholarly' book. Rather it is a tract for the times and a wake-up call based on the gut-level feeling that Adventism is losing its way and the observation that many of its younger ministers and members have never heard the apocalyptic vision, while many of its older ones question whether they can any longer believe it or preach it" (p. 106). Unfortunately, there is no doubt that a loss of apocalyptic vision leads to a loss of missionary activity and as a result to a decrease of new members. According to the back cover of the book, the author considers this small volume to be the most important book of his career. It is certainly a volume that will challenge every minister and lay person who wants to take his calling and membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church seriously. *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* is a must-read book for every member concerned about the present state of the church.

Gerhard Pfandl, BRI



Woodrow W. Whidden II, *E. J. Waggoner: From the Physician of Good News to Agent of Division*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008. 375 pp. + 26 pp. appendices and index. \$22.99.

This self-styled "theological biography" on the life of Ellet Joseph Waggoner is the fifth volume in the Adventist Pioneer Series edited by George R. Knight. The author, Woodrow Whidden, is a well-known systematic theologian who taught for 18 years at Andrews University and currently teaches at the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies in the Philippines.

Waggoner is an enigma in Adventist history and theology. Up until now the only other published treatment specifically dealing with his life and views has been David P. McMahon's *Ellet Joseph Waggoner: The Myth and the Man* (Fallbrook, CA: Verdict Pub-

lications, 1979). The two authors take similar approaches: each focuses heavily on the development of Waggoner's theology, which results in less of a "biography" and more of a theological analysis of Waggoner. Each also seems to focus more on their own theological views, especially as they react to other interpreters of Waggoner's writings (e.g. see Whidden, 127; McMahon, 74). Whidden, as a trained systematician, is able to move far beyond McMahon's very basic analysis, especially McMahon's primary obsession with disproving the "myth" that Waggoner's understanding of justification went far beyond that of Martin Luther and other Reformers.

Whidden divides Waggoner's life into four sections: the early years (19-87), the 1888 General Conference Session and its aftermath (88-213), his tenure in Europe (214-312) and years of decline (313-75). One of the strengths of this volume is that Whidden highlights the role of Ellen White in E. J. Waggoner's childhood, adult years, and even after he left the denomination. Her interest extended also to his parents, and throughout the biography Whidden looks to this established relationship between White and the Waggoner family for familial patterns. The "prophetic laser beam" was used effectively against those who opposed Waggoner at the famous 1888 General Conference session (118) and still later against the pantheistic teachings of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, but Ellen White continued to "endorse" Waggoner as a "messenger" even after he crossed his own "theological divide" (261-312, 372-373), which raises questions about why Ellen White did not use the same "prophetic laser beam" to point out his aberrant theological views and whether she really knew what was going on (thus raising additional questions about the nature of inspiration and the authority of Ellen White that are not addressed in this volume).

One of Waggoner's greatest contributions, according to Whidden, was his understanding of the covenants (81-83, 162-168, 373). The controversy over the covenants occurred in the context of the 1890 Bible Institute where Uriah Smith emphasized the idea of "obey and live." Waggoner on the other hand looked past the traditional Adventist perspective to an *everlasting* covenant "of grace and grace alone." This had practical ramifications within Adventism on the understanding of how a person is saved: by obedience (Smith) or through the promise of God (Waggoner). Ellen White defended Waggoner's viewpoint on the covenants (165-167), pushing Adventism away from the dispensational perspective of the covenants embraced by Smith.

Whidden's primary aim is to trace Waggoner's theology of justification and sanctification by faith. Although he spends significant amounts of time on Waggoner's later views, I personally wished that the

author had spent more time analyzing his early theological views—especially what Waggoner taught at the pivotal 1888 General Conference Session. Whidden claims to rely on Clinton Wahlen's research about what Waggoner taught at the 1888 meeting, but in comparison with the analysis of other periods of Waggoner's thought Whidden spends relatively little space analyzing this momentous occasion. For those concerned with a snapshot of Waggoner's theology at this particular moment I recommend reading Clinton Wahlen, "What Did E. J. Waggoner Say at Minneapolis?" *Adventist Heritage* 13, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 22-37.

Whidden is strongest in his tracing of how Waggoner developed a mystical view of the atonement, ultimately blurring the lines between justification and sanctification. "When he concluded," the author notes, "that Christ could not sin because of His inherent deity, his concept would unfold in some problematic, even troubling directions" (210). Such a concept was the source for almost all of Waggoner's later errant theological and ethical paths. Whidden engages with the writings of Wieland and Short and the 1888 Message Study Committee as he seeks to demythologize the real 1888 message from Waggoner's later, mystical view of the atonement. He furthermore convincingly argues that the shift between Waggoner's earlier and later theological views occurred about 1891/1892; Wieland and Short argue that these "inspired" writings extended to the period in which Ellen White endorsed them (1895/1896). Whidden thus undermines the interpretative framework of Wieland and Short by showing that Waggoner's earlier writings better define the "1888 message" than his later teachings. Whidden also draws a surprising parallel with Desmond Ford (355), suggesting that every debate within Adventism about soteriology from Waggoner's day up to the present has been a reaction to either Waggoner or Ford. In the conclusion, Whidden analyzes Waggoner's positive legacy (364-365), along with a statement about what the 1888 message is not (365-369), affirming that God clearly used Waggoner but that even during the heyday of his presentation of righteousness by faith he was not infallible.

I recommend this book to Seventh-day Adventist pastors, thought leaders, and church members because the issues raised in this volume continue to have profound repercussions on Adventist theology and life today. Whidden has assisted Adventist studies by providing the most comprehensive treatment of E. J. Waggoner's teachings to date. Despite its flaws, serious students of the "1888 message" will find the copious footnotes a helpful launching pad for delving into the writings of Waggoner for him/her self.

Michael W. Campbell,  
Rocky Mountain Conference

## WORLDWIDE HIGHLIGHTS

### Inter-America's First International Bible Conference Held

All five scholars from the Biblical Research Institute, as well as theologians from Andrews University, Inter-American Adventist Theological Seminary, Linda Vista Adventist University, Loma Linda University, and Montemorelos University presented papers at the first division-wide Theological Symposium for Inter-America. More than five hundred pastors, administrators, Bible teachers, and students met on the campus of Dominican Adventist University in Bonao, Dominican Republic, May 7-9, 2009 for presentations and discussions focusing on the theme “Growing in Christ,” number eleven in the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s official statement of Fundamental Beliefs (<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>). In harmony with this theme, Pastor Israel Leito, IAD Division President in his Sabbath morning address, reminded the gathering that “Adventist theology is permeated by love and brings out the transformation of lives as a result.” Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, in remarks made during the closing ceremony, called the symposium “an important step and a good beginning.” He congratulated the leaders of the Inter-American Division, its union and various fields, and the university for organizing the symposium, adding, “I hope that similar events will be held in other parts of the world.” Franz Rios, who heads the Theology department at Dominican Adventist University, concurred: “We hope that this symposium can motivate Biblical research and as a result the church can experience a growing in Christ until the Lord comes in glory and majesty.” IAD and BRI leaders also inaugurated the new Centro de Investigación Bíblica on the university campus.



The symposium culminated with the attendees approving a two-page statement, which affirms the importance of this belief for the church’s mission and concludes: “Having affirmed the relevance of this belief for modern society in the context of the growing influence of spiritualism in the world, we rededicate ourselves to proclaiming to humanity by the power of the Holy Spirit the freedom that we have found in Christ, who enables us to grow in intimate communion with Him and with one another.”

### New Book on the Remnant Released

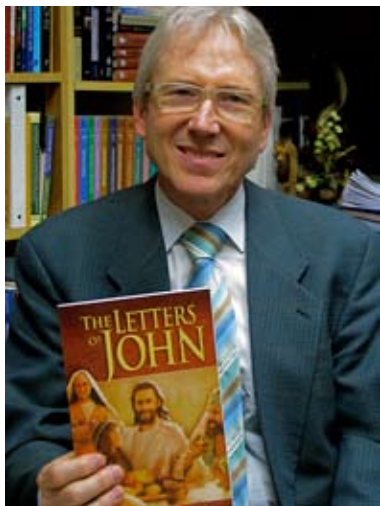
A groundbreaking new book has just been published by the Biblical Research Institute entitled *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*. “This is the first full theological and exegetical study of the remnant as it applies to Adventist ecclesiology,” says Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, the book’s editor. “It is so important that every Adventist should read it.” The book retails for \$10, including shipping and handling.

Nine Adventist scholars examine the remnant from a biblical and theological perspective, wrestling with such difficult questions as: Is there a coherent theology of the remnant in Scripture? Did Jesus gather a remnant? and Is there a remnant outside of Christianity? Four of the eleven chapters deal with various aspects of the remnant in the book of Revelation and an additional chapter examines the writings of Ellen G. White. There is also a concluding essay on “God’s Christian Church” by the editor. This volume constitutes the first in the series of eleven chapters. Including scriptural and thematic indexes it is more than 250 pages in length. The complete table of contents and details for ordering can be found on the BRI website at [www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org](http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org).



### **New Companion Book to the Epistles of John**

*The Letters of John*, written by Ekkehardt Mueller, is the companion book for next quarter's



Adult Bible Study Guide. Thirteen chapters comment on all three of John's epistles. Chapter 1 introduces the three letters of the apostle John, discussing to whom they were addressed, what problems they faced (somewhat similar to those addressed by the Gospel of John), why John wrote these letters, and the role of Jesus in them. Nine chapters comment on 1 John, followed by a chapter devoted to its important themes, including the Godhead, the

church, salvation, ethics, and future events. Both 1 John and 2 John combat heresy, especially in connection with the nature of Christ, affirming Jesus as the Son of God who has come in human flesh. A false understanding of Jesus also has repercussions on the concept of God, sin, and ethics. In the first epistle we find appeals, promises, a moving exposition on love, and the best statement on assurance of salvation in Scripture, while the second epistle furnishes information on how the church should relate to secessionists. By contrast, the problem confronted in 3 John is no longer theological error but the abuse of power in the church. Writing toward the end of the first century, the apostle wrestles already with the proper scope of church authority, which became a major problem in the second and third centuries and led to the establishment of the papacy and the strict hierarchical system of the Roman Church. Mueller's book shows how, in confronting vital issues, all three epistles speak to our present situation, mixing admonition with joy and a call to a more intimate walk with the Lord. Published by Pacific Press, the 128-page book costs US\$11.99.

### **Conference on Homosexuality Slated for October**

Andrews University will host a conference dealing with "Marriage, Homosexuality and the Church" from Thursday evening to Sabbath afternoon, October 15-17, 2009. Sponsored by a number of church institutions including the Biblical Research Institute, this conference will provide an opportunity for sound theological presentations and discussion of the Bible's teaching on homosexual practice, religious liberty and social implications of gay marriage, as well as dealing responsibly with issues of gender orientation in ministerial settings and counseling. "We think this conference will be useful and necessary in light of questions that have been raised and attempts made by some within the church to undermine the official Adventist position on homosexuality," says BRI director Ángel Manuel Rodríguez. Presenters include biblical scholars Richard Davidson and Roy Gane of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University and Robert Gagnon from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, professors of psychology Stanton Jones and Mark Yarhouse of Wheaton College and Regent University respectively, and Pastor Dwight Nelson of Andrews University. More information, including registration cost, is available at [plusline.org](http://plusline.org) (Event Registration) or by contacting Fran McMullen at [fran@andrews.edu](mailto:fran@andrews.edu) or 1-269-471-3541.