<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWS</th>
<th>OPINION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice of Prophecy Radio Ministry Appoints Shawn Boonstra as New Director:</strong> Shawn Boonstra, who left Adventist media leadership for a number of years after directing It Is Written, will fill the venerable shoes of HMS Richards....</td>
<td><strong>Some Thoughts on the Book of James:</strong> Why does the New Testament Book of James seem so self-contradictory in style, as if written by two authors of far different points of view? Perhaps that's exactly what happened, says blogger Andy Hanson....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan for Dissolution Put Forward by California Adventist Media Center Board:</strong> The Adventist Media Center may be on its last legs, as ministry components such as It Is Written, The Voice of Prophecy, and Breath of Life seem prepared to disaffiliate with the California center....</td>
<td><strong>Dr. David Wilbur: Power and Illusion: Religion and Human Need. Part 11:</strong> Why have the once-brotherly disciplines of faith and science become such competitors, like teenagers fighting over top roost? Blogger Ervin Taylor says a lot has to do with those cantankerous little cousins known as &quot;Reason&quot; and &quot;Paradox.&quot;...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rock Star Prince: New Book Suggests His Music is Rooted in Adventist Faith and Upbringing:</strong> The world is belatedly recognizing the tremendous impact Adventist culture and faith have on rock star Prince.</td>
<td><strong>Community—Real or Not?:</strong> Living in a “Monastery of the Heart” is predicated on creating community while living in “the real world,” rather than cloistered in a convent or monastery. The transition can be tricky, writes devotional blogger Debbonnaire Kovacs....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
have had on some of the most creative popular musicians of the 20th and 21st centuries, such as "Prince."

Atonement Symposium
Part 3: Paulien's Conclusions: An "Atonement Spring" of sorts seems to have broken out on the West Coast, as prominent Adventist theologians have continued to speak out on the variety and coherency of Adventist atonement theology. The most recent voice is that of Dr. Jon Paulien of Loma Linda University....

Webinar to Focus on Demographic Trends that Challenge Adventist Education: A gripping challenge to Adventist private education is embodied in the demographic shift from primarily serving children of Caucasian families to reaching families of immigrant and ethnic origins....

SUBSCRIBERS' BONUS FEATURES

Oakwood and Dr. King: The Nation Remembers Dr. Martin Luther King's Speech "I Have a Dream": What few Americans realize is that virtually the same "I Have a Dream" MLK speech delivered at the Lincoln Memorial was presented more than a year earlier—at Oakwood College (now University).... Video excerpts of Dr. King's Oakwood speech linked (available to AT subscribers).
Victory Over the Beast, Chapter 4: The Everlasting Gospel: “Receive the gospel merely as information, and you will only become a better educated sinner,” writes Dr. Erwin Thomsen, in his book, Victory Over the Beast. Dr. Thomsen also tackles biblical terminology, such as reconciliation, propitiation, redemption, justification, and substitution. How do these connect with judgment and the Book of Revelation?...(available to AT subscribers)

Safe in Thee: Poet T.W. Humphries turns to prayer to affirm the caring grace of the Almighty in a world where safety is all too fleeting, all too rare....(available to AT subscribers)

This message was sent to ahc@andrews.edu from Adventist Today, Post Office Box 1135, Sandy, OR 97055-1135. Edit profile / unsubscribe - Forward to a friend
Voice of Prophecy Radio Ministry appoints Shawn Boonstra as New Director

Submitted: May 2, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team
The Voice of Prophecy board has appointed Pastor Shawn Boonstra as the new director of a ministry begun at the dawn of broadcasting in the 1920s by Adventist icon H. M. S. Richards. Boonstra is an associate director of the Ministerial Association for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America with responsibility for coordinating evangelism.

No newcomer to running a media ministry, Boonstra was director of the It Is Written television ministry from January 2005 to December 2010 when he resigned because of an unexplained “health challenge.” From 1998 to 2004 he worked for It Is Written Canada, first as an associate evangelist and then as director. He is 43, a Canadian raised in British Columbia where he graduated from the University of Victoria with a degree in political science. He decided to commit to gospel ministry after attending an It Is Written evangelism campaign and then went to Andrews University for theological training. He and his wife Jean have two daughters.

“Shawn has clearly demonstrated that he has a heart for ... reaching those who need to hear the messages of Christ’s love and redemptive power,” said Pastor Dan Jackson, president of the Adventist denomination in North America and chairman of the board for the Voice of Prophecy. In a 2006 campaign that Boonstra led in Phoenix more than 550 people were baptized, one of the largest such projects by Adventists in the last decade.
For the last year the Voice of Prophecy has operated without a director. In April 2012, Adventist Today reported that then director Pastor Fred Kinsey was fired by the board after leading the ministry for five years. Under Kinsey’s leadership, the Voice of Prophecy expanded the voices heard on the 15-minute daily and 30-minute weekly radio programs by adding women as speakers—Elizabeth Talbot, Willa Sandmeyer and Connie Vandeman Jeffery—and Mike Tucker, director of Faith for Today. Kinsey also led the ministry to become involved with social media including the introduction of the Voice of Prophecy iPhone app. Jeffery has been acting as primary spokesperson for the ministry in recent months.

“We are grateful for Fred’s ability to bring a diversity of programming to the Voice of Prophecy which allowed this ministry to continue to win souls for Christ,” said Jackson. “We also applaud his commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the role he played in communication ministry at the Division for many years,” he said. Kinsey was an assistant to the president of the NAD from 1999 to the summer of 2010.

"It is not surprising that Boonstra experienced health issues," a retired Adventist minister who has been involved with media ministries at various times during his career told Adventist Today. "It is my prayer that he manages his energy and stress better this time around. These guys are under enormous pressure to raise the money that it takes to keep these ministries going and deal with the hugh gap between what the donors want and what the general public wants; the people they are trying to reach."

________________________Share your thoughts about this article:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In | Register
Plan for Dissolution Put Forward by California Adventist Media Center Board

Submitted: May 2, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team

On Monday the board of the Adventist Media Center in Simi Valley, California, a suburb of Los Angeles, discussed the results of an evaluation and planning process that has been underway for two years. The center is an institution of the North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and a news release from the NAD said only that the plan was “reviewed,” while the denomination’s official news service, Adventist News Network (ANN) announced on May 1 that the plan had been recommended by the board.

ANN did hedge by stating, “Still unclear is when the proposal will be brought to the NAD [executive] Committee or what the division’s future plans are.” The somewhat ambiguous language reveals the long-standing tension behind the scenes between the center as a denominational institution and the various media ministries, many of whom started as autonomous initiatives and continue to behave like independent ministries in the crucial relationships they maintain with donors.

Adventist Today asked NAD communication director George Johnson if the plan described in the NAD news release had been voted by the board and was told that he was not making any additional comments. One explanation, another source told Adventist Today, is that the recommendation of the media center board will be reviewed by the NAD officers and union presidents before it is cleared for the agenda of the full NAD executive committee. The officer group usually meets in August and the executive committee has its annual meeting.
in the fall.

The plan calls for the six ministries based at the center to relocate and for the facilities to be sold. Adventist Today has been told that it is expected that the ministries will move to different locations instead of establishing a new joint facility. Once a final decision is made on the plan, the six organizations will have 12 to 18 months to make their moves, the plan states.

The plan, as described in the NAD news release, includes three additional points: (1) “Utilize the studio facilities at the Division offices for production.” (2) An “ongoing commitment to providing funding for the media ministries” on the part of the NAD with “funding levels … identified for each of the media ministries,” which evidently means line-item budget allocations from the NAD’s share of Tithe. (3) A “commitment to explore new possibilities for media development [which] anticipates a significant role for the media ministries in the future.”

Many of these ministries have largely switched from broadcasting on local radio and television stations to cable channels, satellite systems and the Internet. The research and brainstorming that went into the planning process made a major point of the need for Adventist ministry to move into the booming social networking media on the Web.

Essentially the same plan as is now being announced was initially voted over a year ago, as Adventist Today reported at the time. Over the past year the six ministries have had time to develop their individual plans and decide if they wish to continue as part of a single center or each go their own way.

There has been discussion of the wisdom of bringing the ministries together in one institution since the media center was set up in 1972. At the time H. M. S. Richards, the founder of the Voice of Prophecy radio program, protested privately when his organization was forced to sell its facilities in Glendale, California, and move onto a campus with the others. At the time, Faith for Today needed to move from New York City because of the increasing cost of doing business there and It Is Written was housed at the General Conference offices in Maryland, but lacked any production facilities.

When the GC leadership pushed the media ministries into the new center, there were high hopes for the fruits of collaboration and experiments with new approaches. In fact, little of that potential has been realized over the last 30 years in the view of current and former
staff who shared their opinions with Adventist Today. As early as 1987 media consultant Frank N. Magid conducted an assessment of the ministries and pointed out that as the founding figures left the scene, it would be difficult to continue to build audiences or raise sufficient funds.

In May 2011 the NAD convened a "media summit" in Ontario, California, and more than 100 communication professionals and staff from the media ministries listened to high-profile experts and discussed the implications of the fast-changing media context in America for Adventist media outreach. Since that time several additional studies have been done, including private interviews with stakeholders.

The Voice of Prophecy was founded as a radio program on a Los Angeles station in 1929. Richards was an evangelist in southern California and the GC committee had voted not to get involved with radio because some stations advertised alcoholic beverages and cigarettes. He told California congregations that he was not authorized to raise funds for a radio program, but that he had a "radio pocket" in his coat. Money was donated and the radio program began. At its height, it was heard on hundreds of stations across the U.S. and Canada. Richards retired in the late 1960s and his son, H.M.S. Richards, Jr., took over leadership of the program for three decades.

La Voz de la Esperanza (The Voice of Hope) began during the 1940s with a program in the Spanish language parallel to the Voice of Prophecy. It is released on radio stations around the world and the organization also produces television and Internet materials.

Faith for Today began in 1950 when television caught the attention of American families and was originally a drama on the ABC network with an Adventist pastor as the key character. It is the oldest religious broadcast on television today, and also produces Lifestyle Magazine, McDougal MD, The Evidence, as well as an Internet ministry, Mad About Marriage seminars around the country, a mobile device channel and community concerts.

It Is Written was founded in 1956 by George Vandeman who was at the time an evangelist based in the GC ministerial department. Breath of Life began more recently and long featured African American evangelist Charles Brooks. Both of these television programs use a more traditional approach that focuses on preaching.

Jesus 101 Biblical Institute is the newest ministry, a Christ-centered teaching series featuring Bible scholar and Adventist pastor Elizabeth Talbot. It offers Bible study for
seekers, church members, lay leaders and clergy.

A major function of all these media organizations has become the provision of programming for the several satellite channels that exclusively or largely carry Adventist content. They compete for donors and air–time with a number of other radio and television programs produced by Adventists in North America, some sponsored by local or union conferences in the denomination and some that are free–standing, private organizations.

The average member often thinks of these ministries as a single category and does not understand the organizational differences. This is especially true because all the media ministries, those sponsored by the denomination and those privately or locally organized, get the largest portion of their budgets from individual donors.

“The larger issues of how to best position the Adventist message in today’s media universe remain to be solved,” an expert who has taught media studies told Adventist Today. “Media is increasingly diverse, complicated and complex. There are now many thousands of ‘channels’ when you count Webcasting options and other new technologies. It is easy for a message to get lost in the noise and there is growing evidence the most people see and hear what they already believe and very few will tune in anything that is attempting to convince them of something they have not already bought into.”

Are media ministries an outdated concept? Adventist Today asked another media professional, and her response was, “Not if they are ministries. Ministry is what happens in a relationship with a person, not producing a recording or print materials or a Web page. Those media ministries that push their human assets onto the Web in a way that facilitates personal interaction, where their staff and volunteers are actually ministering to individuals will continue to have a viable role with a net of relationships. It is called ‘social networking,’ and by that I don’t mean just the well–known Web sites like Facebook. Ministry from the first century on has been mainly about social networking and if any media ministry that makes this paradigm the key architecture of their organization, will thrive.”
Rock Star Prince: New Book Suggests His Music is Rooted in Adventist Faith and Upbringing

Submitted: Apr 28, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team
A new book about the pop star Prince explores the connections between his childhood in an Adventist family and a number of his songs. Prince Rogers Nelson is widely known simply as Prince and has produced ten platinum albums and thirty Top 40 singles during his career. He owns a production company and has promoted the careers of a number of younger popular music stars.

The book is entitled I Would Die 4 U based on a line from one of Prince’s songs. It is written by Touré Neblett, using only his first name as his byline, a music journalist, critic of popular culture and television personality on MSNBC. It was published by Atria Books, a division of the major New York publisher, Simon & Schuster.

Prince has done more to connect with the largely unfulfilled spiritual needs of younger Americans than any other pop figure, Touré writes. “He packed his music with religious messages and gospel tropes but, more than that [he] was the best in history at articulating himself as a "Messiah figure." In fact, Toure’s interviews with people close to Prince revealed that they “wondered if he thought he was some sort of Messiah.”

In 2001, Prince joined the Jehovah’s Witnesses, but was raised a Seventh-day Adventist, often attending with his grandmother at Glendale Church, a historically African American congregation on Glenwood Avenue in Minneapolis. “Both of his parents believed in the strict
faith as did Bernadette Anderson, who took him in after he left home.”

“The teachings and iconography of Adventism show up repeatedly in Prince’s music, which I didn’t understand until I spoke with several Seventh-day Adventists,” Touré stated. “All the Adventists I spoke with said music is a crucial part of the Black Adventist experience. ... The list of successful Adventist musicians includes: Little Richard, Kirk Franklin, Brian McKnight and Pepa from Salt N Pepa.”

Touré said that the music was the most important part of the young Prince’s experience at church. He quotes Prince telling comedian and movie star Chris Rock, “a lot of the message was based in fear, what will happen to you if you do something and I don’t think God is to be feared that way. I think he’s a loving God.” Nonetheless, Touré found that many themes from Adventist theology are expressed in Prince’s music.

“Prince’s music is ... often concerned with the apocalypse and the Second Coming,” Touré wrote. The rock star’s Adventist background “unveils the real meaning of the refrain ‘May you live to see the dawn’ [and] also speaks to why he seems to be so evangelical, using his music to spread a message about Christ.”

In a song from that time entitled 1999, one of the lyrics Prince wrote was, “This morning when I woke up coulda sworn it was Judgment Day.” In the book, Touré observed, “The proximity of Armageddon in this vision is very Adventist. This gives new color, perhaps, to the lines, ‘Trying to run from the destruction. You know I didn’t even care.’ If Prince is looking forward to Judgment Day, then it’d make sense that he’d be sitting pretty, ready to go to Heaven, while others are running scared. So, in 1999, Prince sees others running from the apocalypse because they don’t know better, or because they fear death, but Prince doesn’t run and isn’t afraid because he knows what’s happening and he welcomes the end of days. ... The apocalypse ... would not be frightening for Prince, but could be thrilling. ... He sings, ‘Can’t run from Revelation, no,’ and he doesn’t want to.”

“Many Adventists believe that Judgment Day will be accompanied or preceded by war,” Touré explained. “The downward spiral of society is a typically Adventist perspective. They believe the world will get much worse before the Second Coming and that the return of Christ will usher in a millennium of peace. [This] perspective fits with Prince’s dour, hopeless, pessimistic, look-at-the-messed-up-world songs like America, Pop Life and Sign O The Times. Interestingly, there is a popular Adventist magazine named Signs of the Times.” Touré continued, “Prince gave us an album that shares the name of an Adventist
magazine, with a title track that speaks of the end of days scenario that would precede the return of Jesus. [Then] he pivots 180 degrees to create his most openly spiritual album to that point."

“All the Adventists I spoke with said one Prince song employs far more SDA language than any other: 7 from the Symbol album. ‘It’s about the end of time,’ one told me. ‘It is exactly what we have been taught from a young age.’” Touré quoted an interview with Adventist writer Jason Hines. “What Prince describes in 7 is particularly in line with Adventist eschatology. The entirety of Prince’s 7 is a description of this final battle … after the Millennium [when] the New Jerusalem will come to Earth.”

Touré stated that in this song “we hear the forces aligned with Satan, and White’s certainty that the Army of God will defeat them” in Prince’s lyrics, “They stand in the way of love. And we sill smoke them all.” Touré quoted Hines pointing out that the first verse begins with a common phrase from Revelation, “And I saw an angel come down unto me,” and that visions in Scripture are often associated with the appearance of angels.

“In this vision, Prince sees or hears ‘an Army’s marching feet,’ which refers to the army Satan is using to attack the New Jerusalem. Prince then says that they ‘lay down on the sand of the sea.’ Hines said he may be talking about laying on the shore by the sea of glass, which is said to be in the heavenly city. Then, Prince says, ‘Before us animosity will stand and decree that we speak not of love, only blasphemy, and in the distance six others will curse me.’ This is Satan’s army being evil, lying about them, and cursing them.”

“Other Adventists said the second verse is quite common in their teaching,” Touré continued, quoting now from the Prince song, “And we will see a plague and a river of blood.” These are specifically mentioned in Revelation, Touré points out, and then quotes again from Prince’s lyrics; “And every evil soul will surely die in spite of their seven tears.” The song goes on to describe the defeat of Satan’s army and the eternal bliss that follows. “This is totally SDA,” Touré quotes an Adventist hearing the recording.

“Prince has shown an obsessive affinity for the number 7 throughout his career,” Toure stated. In addition to the song 7, the writer listed 19 more uses of seven in titles, key refrains and even graphics from various Prince recordings. Young people in his generation often shortened the label “Seventh-day Adventist” to simply a “Seven” in common speech.

The media have reported that Prince is a vegetarian. In 2006 he was voted the “world’s
sexiest vegetarian” in the annual online poll conducted by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). The liner notes for his album Rave Un2 the Joy Fantastic featured a message about the cruelty involved in wool production.

When Prince became a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses he said he didn't consider it a conversion, but a "realization … like Morpheus and Neo in The Matrix,” referring to the science fiction movie that focuses on philosophical and theological issues from a postmodern perspective. He attends meetings at a local Kingdom Hall and occasionally knocks on people’s doors to discuss his faith. Prince has reportedly needed double-hip-replacement surgery since 2005 but won't undergo the operation unless it is a bloodless surgery because Jehovah’s Witnesses refuse to use blood transfusions. The condition is rumored to be aggravated by repeated onstage dancing in high-heeled boots. However, when Prince was interviewed in 2010, journalist Peter Willis said he believed the rumors of Prince needing double hip surgery to be unfounded and untrue because Prince appeared to be agile.

“The leaders of the denomination and the theologians may not be happy with the way Prince has expressed Adventist faith,” a veteran pastor told Adventist Today. “But the reality is that he has shared those concepts with many times more people than any of the denomination’s media ministries, publishing activities or evangelism campaigns. And that is the primary way in which faith is shared; it is outside the parameters of any training programs or media over which the organization has control.”

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In | Register
Atonement Symposium Part 3: Paulien's Conclusions

Submitted: Apr 27, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team

The same weekend that the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) convened a symposium on “the atonement” in Loma Linda, California, Dr. Jon Paulien, dean of the school of religion at Loma Linda University, preached on the topic at the University Church. Spectrum, the journal of the largest organization of Adventist academics, focused on his use of “golf clubs” as a metaphor to explain the variety of different Scripture concepts on the theme.

Paulien referred the congregation to his blog where he said that he made available a more detailed paper on the subject. He was evidently referring to the manuscript of a chapter he has prepared for a yet-to-be-published book being put together by a number of Adventist theologians and Bible scholars. The chapter is entitled, “Atonement—Accomplished at the Cross.” It states that the book will be entitled Salvation: Contours of Adventist Soteriology and edited by Martin Hanna, John Reeve and Darius Jankiewicz, all faculty members at Andrews University who played key roles in a 2010 symposium on the Arminian tradition and its contribution to Adventist faith.

The manuscript is 37 pages and heavily footnoted with all of Paulien’s sources and word study clearly detailed. It provides an important perspective on this controversial subject. At the end of the manuscript, Paulien summarizes his conclusions in eight points.

“(1) The English word for atonement is most closely related to the concept of reconciliation. Atonement provides the means and the incentive for human beings to become reconciled to God.
“(2) In the New Testament atonement is clearly focused on the cross, but in Hebrews the principle of the atonement continues in the heavenly work of Jesus Christ.

“(3) The human race is in great need of atonement, being unable to save itself. …

“(4) Although sin is a barrier between God and the human race, God does not require sacrifice in order to desire reconciliation with the human race, instead He Himself lovingly provides the sacrifice … needed to reconcile all to Himself.

“(5) Human beings are called to respond to God’s reconciling action with an action of their own.

“(6) Although God has given humans over to the consequences of their own sinful actions, He continually desires fellowship with sinful humans. His love provides all that they cannot perform in order for atonement to take place.

“(7) The atonement at the cross is not limited to some humans or even all humans, but in some sense affects the entire universe.

“(8) The New Testament offers a variety of models to explain the atonement. There was no attempt to set one view as normative over against the others and various models could be mingled in a single sentence or paragraph.”

Adventist Today could not obtain any information about the plans for publication of the book for which this manuscript was prepared. One source told Adventist Today that it will most likely be published by Andrews University Press.

________________________Share your thoughts about this article:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In | Register
Webinar to Focus on Demographic Trends that Challenge Adventist Education

Submitted: May 1, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team
The demographic changes that are occurring in Seventh-day Adventist schools in North America are ahead of the curve across the continent. The increasing diversity presents challenges and opportunities for elementary and secondary education. In order for Adventist schools to survive they must be able to deliver education to those least able to afford it.

A Webinar is scheduled for Wednesday, May 8, at 1:30 p.m. Pacific Time, 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time, that will present information about the current demographic trends, show the extent of the educational gap that exists among ethnic groups, and the unique role that Adventist schools can play in closing the achievement gap. It will also present the information about how other Christian schools are dealing with declining enrollments while recommitting to increasing enrollment among disadvantaged children. It will explore proposals for renewal and ideas to expand the reach of Adventist schools.

The presenter is Dr. Edwin I. Hernandez, senior program officer for the DeVos Foundation, an ordained minister in the Adventist Church who has served as an administrator for an Adventist university. He co-leads a philanthropic initiative called Believe2Become (B2B). The purpose of B2B is to eliminate the achievement gap for children living in four adjoining, under-resourced urban neighborhoods in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He oversees the research evaluation, data systems, communications and faith-based components of B2B. He also
serves as a research fellow with the Center for the Study of Latino Religion at the University of Notre Dame.

Interested individuals can participate from their computer anywhere they can access the Web. To register for the event or watch recordings of past Webinars visit:

www.lasierra.edu/crae

________________________Share your thoughts about this article:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In | Register
Some Thoughts on the Book of James

Submitted: May 1, 2013

By Andy Hanson

When discussing the book of James in our study group, I was struck by the apparent schizophrenia of its message. I heard the voices of two authors with diametrically different philosophies addressing problems within the Christian community. One author emphasized inclusion, forbearance, patience, and love. The other author warned his fellow Christians about the bad things that would happen to them if they didn’t shape up and pull together.

In my opinion, the author of the original letter believed that theological and political problems in the church could best be solved when Christians treated each other as friends.
Trials and Temptations

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

9 The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. 10 But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. 11 For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.
13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fullgrown, gives birth to death.

16 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Listening and Doing
19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 2

Favoritism Forbidden
1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here's a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?
5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? 6 But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? 7 Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,”[a] you are doing right. 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,”[b] also said, “Do not murder.”[c] If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Faith and Deeds

14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

20 You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”[e] and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.
25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

James 3

Taming the Tongue
1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8 but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Two Kinds of Wisdom
13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving,
considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

James 4

Submit Yourselves to God
1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, andpurify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

Boasting About Tomorrow
13 Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.” 16 As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. 17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

James 5
Warning to Rich Oppressors
1 Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you. 2 Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. 5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. 6 You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.

Patience in Suffering
7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

10 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, or you will be condemned.

The Prayer of Faith
13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. 19 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from
the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

The Original Letter

This version of James is a direct NIV copy of the words in James that I believe to be the original letter. I have omitted the words and verses that have been added by a writer far more influenced by Jewish law and tradition. If I had to guess, I would say that James, the brother of Christ, might have written this version. Obviously, the authority of the entire letter would be strengthened by his authorship.

I have omitted a few introductory prepositions when they begin verses. I have also bracketed fragments of sentences that were left hanging when I chose to attribute only part of a sentence to one or the other of the “James” texts.

James

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,
To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings.

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

13 When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;

17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom
will be blessed ...

14 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 17 The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

8 Be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

____________________Join in the discussion:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In | Register
Dr. David Wilbur: Power and Illusion: Religion and Human Need. Part 11

Submitted: May 3, 2013

By Ervin Taylor

This is Part 11 of the summary of Dr. Wilbur's book. It should be emphasized that all of the text in this series of blogs in bold font in the body of the text of the chapter summary has been kindly provided by Dr. Wilbur. If there are any of my own comments, they will follow in regular type.

Summary for Chapter 10: Religion and Science and Reason

Through most of history, religion and science were not in disagreement. In fact, most scientists were devoted followers of some religious tradition and considered nature a way to understand God. The remarkable development of what we call science in the last few hundred years has however given us new and vastly greater resources for examining claims about the natural world.

The Criteria of Belief

The difference between religious belief and scientific belief is not adequately described by assertions that religious belief is irrational. The most important difference seems to be the criteria for evidence. After centuries of refinement, science currently depends on the careful rational evaluation of publicly available evidence. Scientific understandings are always subject to revision but tend toward stability over time and are a universalizing force in a world where religion and culture tend to be divisive.

The provision of religious belief depends most clearly on the acculturation of the child. Other sources of religious conviction are ancient documents, venerated as having supernatural sources by the particular religious community—with origins that are always contestable. Another important source of religious validation may come from private...
personal events often called mystical. These frequently powerful experiences take one outside a normal, rational, conscious state. These out-of-body states are reported to occur among adherents of a wide variety of religious traditions.

The Reasons that Religious Beliefs Cannot Be Examined Critically

In our practical daily lives, we seem most likely to be successful if we mobilize rationality and a certain skepticism about things that seem unlikely. Surprisingly, in Christianity someone who asks for evidence is derisively called a “Doubting Thomas.” One explanation is that religious belief is, in effect, a kind of group loyalty just as our ancestors had for their hunter-gatherer tribes—protected by strictures and taboos. Another option is to refuse debate for what seems a weak position since many of us find religious “truth” neither obvious nor testable.

For many Christians and many Muslims, humor about their religious icons evokes great hostility probably because it tends to make the subjects more life-size and human.

The Religious Intellectual Quest

One form of religious quest is the inward journey to change the self. Monks, nuns and various renouncers or holy men are especially devoted to this quest to become changed or enlightened—-to be like Jesus or Buddha or . . .

Another religious quest is that of the theologian who spends his time trying to understand and justify his religious tradition and harmonize it with history and the rest of our intellectual world. This may involve some creativity but it is usually greatly constrained by the fundamental beliefs of the group. Religions may evolve over time to even be more tolerant and reasonable but this is unpredictable.

Religions have largely avoided studying the religious phenomenon itself—the real reasons for themselves in our world.

Paradox in Religion and Science
It is certain because it is impossible.

Tertullian
Rather than endorsing its apparent paradoxes, science seeks to understand and resolve them. Its paradoxes tend to result from limits of the models it has available rather than confusion about the phenomena.

Religion demands that the believer accept some seeming paradoxes such as Christianity’s one God but three persons. Devotees are supposed to eventually come to embrace these beliefs with confidence. Perhaps one reason religions do this is that sharing unlikely or absurd beliefs may strengthen feelings of community in the sharing group.

Attempts to Resolve the Conflicts of Religion and Science

Separate Magisteria

The late Stephen Gould wrote a book proposing that if religion and science would confine their commentaries to their areas of expertise, there wouldn’t need to be any conflict. Unfortunately, especially in the Christian world, there are ongoing disagreements based on ideas about the origin of life especially human life and about the “soul.”

Religion Trumps Science

Fundamentalist Christianity has taken the position that scripture is inerrant and is correct if it disagrees with scientific understanding. This has most clearly involved study of the past including such disciplines as archaeology, geology, paleontology and anthropology. Groups with a more mythic interpretation of their documents are spared this useless struggle.

Science Trumps Religion

This school would say that when religion finds itself locked in disagreement with science it needs to revisit its central myths and find enough plasticity there to remove the conflict.

Conclusion

The illusion is that good science and “true” religion are never in conflict since both come from God and are about God. The reality is that science is about the facts of the world and religion has been honed for millennia to serve human emotional needs. They are both powerful tools. Science has brought immense changes in the circumstances of human life with the implication that religion will somehow have to learn to live with
Comments by ET. In my view, this chapter is one of the most interesting in the entire book. I certainly agree with Dr. Wilbur’s statement that: “The difference between religious belief and scientific belief is not adequately described by assertions that religious belief is irrational.” To argue that some religious belief with which those of us who live in the West are acquainted may be considered irrational, we would first have to assume some system of rationality to be valid since being rational is very much tied to the what system of thought has come to dominate in a given society and cultural experience. Rather than argue that some Western religious concepts are irrational, it might be helpful to suggest that some are arational. Some religious ideas are not meant to appeal to the rational but to that part of human personality which we might call affective or emotional. How different individuals respond to religious-based statements meant to influence the affective part of human personality will, of course, vary greatly depending on different personality types. This is one reason that religious systems, such as that which has evolved within Adventism, which argue for universalistic truths, will always have serious problems since that type of system assumes that there is one “true” system of belief to which all humans should adhere.
Community—Real or Not?

Submitted: May 1, 2013

By Debbonnaire Kovacs

An interesting thing has been happening in our little “monasteries of the heart” group. The point of the book we are studying, Joan Chittister’s The Monastery of the Heart, is that one may practice many of the spiritual principles outlined by 5th century monk, Benedict of Nursia, while living an “ordinary” life in the everyday world, rather than moving to a convent or monastery. But it is also true that ordinary, everyday life tends to get in the way.

In my opinion, that’s one of the main arguments for not moving into a convent or monastery—I believe Jesus showed us that spirituality is meant to be lived out in the regular, argumentative, difficult, chaotic world, not closeted with others of like mind. But any monk or nun could tell you human nature is still present in the cloister, too.

In our case, what we’ve been weathering lately is that we feel less “together,” less communal and even less committed than we did at first. The group was intended to meet during the weeks of Lent, but some of us decided we wanted to continue to meet longer. Yet we find ourselves forgetting to pray together at noon, or praying but wondering if others are praying or if they care. . .

Naturally we are all aware that what matters most in prayer is that God cares and that we care. But community is what we were after. So it takes a little re-centering—a little extra effort. A little discussion and decision. . .
So it was with interest not unmixed with amusement that we opened to our next chapter this week: “Mutuality.”

[Community] cannot be accomplished without making some kind of connections— but connections alone are no guarantee that a real community will really form.

On the other hand, to become community in a Monastery of the Heart requires regular and meaningful interaction among the members. . .

It gives us the underpinning that enables us to go on when we’re tired, to go forward when we’re afraid, to go more deeply into the unmasking of the self when everything inside of us seems to have gone to stone, goes dry and dull and lethargic. . .

How can you see these principles at work in the relationships you live in? Can they work here at Adventist Today, too?
Share your thoughts about this article:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In | Register
Almost 50 years ago, on August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his now-famous “I Have a Dream” speech at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C. It seems unlikely that many humans, at least in the western hemisphere, have not heard of this speech.

What is less known is that a year and a half earlier, on March 19, 1962, King gave a very similar speech at Oakwood College, (now Oakwood University). In a video available at http://www.oakwood.edu/news/news-archives/259-2012-news/1563-ou-professor-remembers-martin-luther-king-jr, Tim Reid, of Huntsville’s WAY31 news, says that when King visited Huntsville that spring, Oakwood was the only venue which would allow him to speak. It was a seminal moment in the lives of hundreds who heard him.

Dr. Mervyn Warren, Dean of the School of Religion and Theology at Oakwood, remembers the occasion well. “To see him, to hear him in person, was one of the highlights of my life,” Dr. Warren says. He has saved mementoes, including a program signed by King, which he considers “an heirloom, something so historical and so important that it means forever—that the name of Dr. Martin Luther King and Oakwood university would forever be married together.”

Dr. Warren owns a vintage recording of the speech, part of which can be heard at the above link. It will immediately be clear how very similar the Oakwood speech was to the Lincoln Memorial speech. Warren even wrote his doctoral dissertation on King and his influence. He calls King “a national and international figure who was speaking as a conscience to the nation.”

Fifty years later, everything has changed. . . and nothing has changed. Or perhaps it would be better to say that everything has changed except human nature. There were millions at the time who were loving and compassionate and millions who were hateful. And millions more were simply “asleep at the wheel,” unaware of either the true feelings and beliefs that controlled their actions or of the facts of life as lived by those just down the road from themselves.

Within the denomination of Seventh-day Adventists, this is just as true. There are chilling stories of apathy or outright collusion in various atrocities and genocides, and stories of courage and compassion lived out at the risk of death. Sometimes our individuals and institutions have been part of the problem. Fifty years after “I Have a Dream,” fifty-one years after the same vision was cast in a gymnasium at Oakwood, let’s honor those who are and have been part of the solution instead. Let’s vow that we will walk in those footsteps. Ultimately, let’s walk in the footsteps of Christ, who also has a Dream bigger than we can imagine.

Dr. Warren’s book on Dr. King’s life, King Came Preaching: The Pulpit Power of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., may be found on Amazon.
The Everlasting Gospel

The Best News Possible

Jesus is coming soon! We all look forward to that great day when we will be forever with Him. But preparatory to His coming, the gospel must first be preached to the whole world, and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14). Because God loves people, and because He doesn’t want anyone to perish, He wants His church to engage in the work of proclaiming this gospel. To join with Jesus in this work, we must first know what the gospel is, and more importantly, experience personal salvation through the power of the risen Christ.

What is the gospel?

The gospel is not about our promises of trying to do better by trying harder. It is not about human behavior modification and character development; it is not even about our striving to imitate the example of Christ in order to gain heaven, but it is about the sufficiency of the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross to save us from our sins in a way that maintains the integrity of God’s character. “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel... by which you are saved. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:4).

The gospel is the good news, the announcement of God’s covenant offer to sinners that all the covenant benefits of Christ’s life, death, resurrection, ascension and intercession are now available to us as we by faith receive Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. The gospel declares that all of Christ’s goodness and merits, His entire life, are justly credited to us. We can, therefore, because of the gospel, now face the final judgment knowing that God has justly given us a judicial verdict of ‘acquitted’ in advance of that judgment. This is truly ‘good news!’

Great Christians have written about the incomparable greatness of God’s good news found in the gospel. Early Christian apologist, William Tyndale, wrote, “Euangelion, which we call gospel, is a Greek word, and signifies good, merry, glad, and joyful tydings, that makes a man’s heart glad, and makes him sing, dance, and leap for joy.” [1] Martin Luther wrote, “The gospel is like a breeze of fresh, mild, and cool air in the extreme heat of summer, a solace and comfort in the anguish of the conscience.” [2] Receive the gospel merely as information, and you will only become a better educated sinner. Receive the gospel as the power of God, and it will change your life.

The Gospel Is Necessary Because of the Judgment

Why is the gospel such a necessity for all human beings? Is it because we need to change our feelings toward God because our feelings have been based on misinformation about Him? Are
our feelings the core problem that alienates us from God? We are guilty of sin, not because we feel guilty, but because God says so. Recall the last time you were pulled over for speeding. When you saw those flashing lights of the police cruiser in your rear-view mirror, you experienced instantly some most uncomfortable guilt feelings. But you were actually legally guilty before you felt guilty. It is this objective guilt that God addresses in the good news of the gospel. “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel” (Romans 2:16).

The need for the gospel thus arises out of who God is. He is a God both of love and of justice. His justice demands that He cannot overlook sin as inconsequential. The gospel is necessary because there is more to salvation than saving us from the naturally-occurring consequences of our wrongdoing. Far too many people see the gospel merely as getting us “off the hook.” In speaking about the shallowness of this, P.T. Forsyth could with conviction write: “If we spoke less about God’s love and more about his holiness, more about his judgment, we should say much more when we did speak of His love…Without a holy God there would be no problem of atonement. It is the holiness of God’s love that necessitates the atoning cross…” [3]

Some sincere believers have suggested that talking too much about the judgment is only a way to scare people to come to Him. This, they point out, is not God’s way of salvation. But the Biblical idea of judgment assures us not only of future justice; it also gives us clearer picture of the love of God. Christian writer Trevin Wax rightfully observed that “the god who is truly scary is not the wrathful God of the Bible, but the god who closes his eyes to the evil of this world, shrugs his shoulders, and ignores it in the name of ‘love.’ What kind of love is this? A god who is never angered at sin and who lets evil go by unpunished is not worthy of worship. The problem isn’t that the judgmentless god is too loving; it’s that he is not loving enough” [4]

The necessity for the atonement arises, not so much out of our need for forgiveness and love, but out of God’s holy character. Ellen G. White urged us to “gather up the strongest affirmative statements regarding the atonement made by Christ for the sins of the world. Show the necessity for this atonement.” [5] Genuine conviction of sin is based on the holiness of God.

Oswald Chambers observes that…

“very few of us know anything about conviction of sin; we know the experience of being disturbed because of having done wrong things; but conviction of sin by the Holy Ghost blots out every relationship on earth and leaves one relationship only—“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned.” When a man is convicted of sin in this way, he knows with every power of his conscience that God dare not forgive him; if God did forgive him, the man would have a stronger sense of justice than God. God does forgive, but it cost the rending of His heart in the death of Christ to enable Him to do so. The great miracle of the grace of God is that He forgives sin, and it is the death of Jesus Christ alone that enables the Divine nature to forgive and to remain true to itself in doing so. It is shallow nonsense to say that God forgives us because He is love. When we have been convicted of sin we will never say this again. The love of God means Calvary, and nothing less; the love of God is spelt on the Cross and nowhere else. The only ground on which God can forgive me is through the Cross of my Lord. There, His conscience is satisfied” [6]
Gospel Vocabulary

The Bible employs a variety of terms to describe the meaning of the gospel and Christ’s death for sinners. The gospel as *good news* rests solidly on these actions of God in Christ to save us from the wrath of His final end-time judgment.

- **Reconciliation**—“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them…” (2 Corinthians 5:19). Reconciliation means that Christ’s death removed the alienation between God and man and restored us to fellowship with Him again.

- **Propitiation**—“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 5:10). Propitiation means that Jesus willingly absorbed God’s wrath toward sin. Propitiation did not change God’s feelings toward us, but it changed His treatment of us.

- **Redemption** - the payment of a ransom—“For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood...” (Revelation 5:9). Redemption means that Jesus paid a debt He did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay.

- **Justification** - to declare that guilty sinners are declared just, acquitted, through faith in Christ’s death for them. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1). Justification means that God treats us as though we have never sinned.

- **Substitution**—“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). Because He died as our substitute, in our place, and for us, this means we do not have to experience eternal death, separation from the Father. [7]

To comprehend the gospel in all its fullness, we must look at *all* of these Biblical terms. If we isolate any one of these terms from other terms, we distort both the gospel and the character of God in our attempts to write our own gospels in ways that are logically and non-offensively pleasing to our thinking, thus designing make-believe gods (idols) in our own image.

**Substitution: An Indispensable Gospel Word**

To be true to Scripture, we must not attempt to sanitize and lessen the sin problem by teaching that Jesus merely died to positively influence us to return to a previously stern and unapproachable God—unapproachable because we had believed that He was really like this. We may be tempted to jettison such terms as *substitution* and *propitiation*, because the principle of the substitutionary atonement may come across as “twisted…morally dubious…a form of cosmic child abuse” [8] All such attempts to make the gospel palatable to us, overlook the seriousness of sin—both as a fatal disease and as cosmic rebellion against God.

The concept of substitution goes to the root of the sin problem, as stated by both John Stott and
Ellen G. White.

“The concept of substitution may be said, then, to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man. Man asserts himself against God and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices himself for man and puts himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone.” [9]

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’” [10]

The Everlasting Gospel in Revelation

Though the term “everlasting gospel” occurs only once in the book of Revelation, nevertheless, this most inspired book also adds the words “victory” and “overcoming” to our gospel vocabulary. When we understand something about the times (in the late 1st and the early part of the 2nd centuries) and the circumstances of believers, we will appreciate so much more the gospel as good news. After Jesus’ ascension, the church had experienced phenomenal growth, but it had also faced intense persecution—both from the Roman government and from the Jewish authorities. Most of the apostles had died, and most not from natural causes, but from Satan-inspired persecutions. The apostle John alone was left, and was now in political exile on the island of Patmos. He had personally been there in the Upper Room as Jesus gave His covenant promise, “I will come again.” But Jesus had not returned, and John along with thousands of Christian believers would no doubt cry out in anguish, “How long, O Lord, till you return? How long will the injustices of this world continue? Everywhere we are unjustly being hounded and hunted down, and it just doesn’t seem fair, but Jesus told us it would happen. Can you not hear their prayers, Lord? What are you going to do about it?” It is when we understand this background to Revelation, that we will see how the contents of this book came to Christian believers of that time as truly “good news.”

Look, for instance, at the following circumstances, and see how the gospel was truly good news for God’s persecuted people at the time.

1. When the outlook is awful, the gospel gives them the upward look into the opened heavens. There the believers see the victorious Christ, not as a loser, but as the supreme, sufficient, and sovereign Ruler over the kings of the earth (Revelation 12:10, 11). As they see Christ as the enthroned King, they start to realize that there is so much more to their lives than what they actually see. The events transpiring in the heavenly realm are such good news to them.

2. The antidote for all their fears is found in the risen Christ who says, “Do not be afraid!” (Revelation 1:19). When terrorized by fear, the big shots of this earth cry for rocks and mountains to fall upon them, but the followers of the Lamb do not panic, because God has already securely sealed them.
3. The good news is that it is the slain Lamb who wins, even though Satan’s pseudo-trinity of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet appear so overwhelmingly strong in their persecution of God’s covenant people.

4. The good news is that in spite of weeping and tears, the Lamb/Shepherd is present as their comforter. (Revelation 7:16, 17).

5. The good news is that they have a new identity—the Lamb, who loved them, has washed away their sins and made them kings and priests. The world may regard them as being the lowliest of the low, but in heaven’s sight they are at the top, seated with their king, Jesus Christ, in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6,7).

6. The good news is that they have access to the headquarters of the universe. As they there, in both the most holy and holy places of the heavenly temple, participate in the worship of Jesus Christ, they receive from Him the benefits of the inheritance to which they are entitled because of Christ’s death. Even when they do not now see the results of their work, they can rest, and their works will follow them (Revelation 14:13).

7. Even now they are able to join the singing of the heavenly throng as they, like Paul and Silas, learn to sing songs in the midnight of their dark experiences.

Truly, the entire book of Revelation was good news to the believers at that time. Truly, this book can be good news to us, sometimes living under adverse circumstances similar to those of Christians in the early church. So often we lament that we are now living in the post-Christian era. The truth is that they lived in the pre-Christian era, and there was no widespread Christian culture on which to lean for support.

To Preach the Gospel is to Proclaim the Cross

The Apostle Paul boldly and unashamedly declared that the good news of the gospel resided in the crucified Christ. “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:17, 18).

The cross was not an unfortunate happening to a good man, Jesus, at the hands of wicked men, but its atoning purpose had always been the focus of the divine plan of the covenant of God before the foundation of the world.

‘The Cross did not happen to Jesus: He came on purpose for it. He is ‘the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.’ The whole meaning of the Incarnation is the Cross. Beware of separating God manifest in the flesh from the Son becoming sin. The Incarnation was for the purpose of Redemption. . .The centre of salvation is the Cross of Jesus, and the reason it is so easy to obtain salvation is because it cost God so much. The Cross is the point where God and sinful man merge with a crash and the way to life is opened—but the crash is on the heart of
“God” [11]

“Hanging upon the cross Christ was the gospel...This is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the hope for every believer. If we can awaken an interest in men's minds that will cause them to fix their eyes on Christ, we may step aside, and ask them only to continue to fix their eyes upon the Lamb of God” [12]

**How to Receive the Gospel**

Receive the gift of God’s salvation by receiving Jesus as your Savior. Read and believe these confessions of faith.

“I believe in Jesus Christ,
Who is the FULFILLMENT of God’s promises to me,
Who is the MESSIAH, the Son of God, my Savior, Who LIVED for me,
Who DIED for me, Who AROSE from the dead for me,
Who ASCENDED to intercede for me,
and Who shall RETURN for me,
and I am HIS forever.” [13]

This is the gospel by which we are saved, and it gives us every reason for hope and joy, because it has within it life-transforming power.

“The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us, but in our hearts and characters” [14]

The gospel is truly God’s good news that speaks to all our senses in multiple metaphors about God’s love. In his book, *Portraits of Freedom and Fellowship*, Dr. Ganoune Diop has captured something about the gospel as truly good news. [15]

- It is the joy of receiving a life jacket thrown to someone drowning.
- It is the taste of freedom to someone who is rescued from imminent and inescapable danger.
- It is the gratitude of a prisoner, sentenced to life for hideous crimes, now set free.
- It is the comfort of a person who swallows a deadly poison but who is given the life-saving antidote.
- It is the transformation of a person who is desperately ill and is offered a cure.
- It is the sigh of relief of a person who is suffocating and is offered oxygen.
- It is the hope for a better future to people facing bankruptcy who are forgiven all their debts.
- It is the amazement of people whose misdeeds are written on an incriminating document, impeccably edited to prove indisputable guilt, with every presumption of innocence.
pushed aside, but who discover that someone has destroyed this record of misdeeds and left no trace.

- It is reconciliation to people tired of waging wars, trapped in the diabolical circle of vendettas and vengeance.
- It is exuberance to a foster child being told that his parents have been found and are anxiously waiting for him to come home.
- It is the good news that neither the scars of an unmerited childhood nor the unwanted frustration in adulthood can be the ultimate factor in determining the shape of your present or future.
- It is the recovery of human dignity to those who have forgotten who they were.”[1]

Rejoice then in the completeness of the gospel as you receive God’s gift of salvation, totally based on the doing and dying of Jesus Christ. No longer is our identity based on our performance, or on our attempts to fix ourselves, but it is totally based on Christ’s performance as worked out in His redemptive work. Embrace your new identity of being “in Christ,” named as His very own son or daughter. This God-given identity will be your secure protection against all the deceptions of both Babylon and the beast.

Life Applications

Questions to Ponder

Have you always known the Gospel as good news? If not, why not?

As you think about the face of God, as He looks at you as you are right now, what do you see—a smile or a frown? What makes the difference?

What are some ways of living, in which you have trusted that you somehow would be able to impress God that you were worthy of salvation?

In your opinion, what are two significant Bible texts that present to you most clearly and succinctly the gospel? Why?

What is your personal track-record of witnessing to others? Do you truly share the gospel of good news?

Truths versus Lies

“Because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.” Colossians 1:5.

Replace the lies of the enemy with these truths that will set you free:

Lies of Satan: 

God’s Truth:
You must by your own good works earn God’s salvation so you can avoid punishment. There is no need to work for salvation and God’s acceptance because salvation is God’s gift to you, and the Judge is on your side. You will never be more loved by God than when Jesus died on the cross for your sins.

To keep you in line motivations of fear of failure and fear of punishment can be very effective. God’s love for you depends on your behavior and performance. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

(write out any other lies of half-truths that you have believed) (replace such lies or half truths with truths from Scripture).

Notes:

[6] Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest,
[13] Pastor Jim Ayars, Ph.D., Ventura Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ventura, CA.
Safe in Thee
By T.W. Humphries

Encamped on the floor are Thy knees, 
Hands pressed to heaven.

The pleasant aroma of love timid and redemptive, 
Power of prayer eternal.

Evil tempers, tempered, 
Kindness, patience and love.

The hallmark of my lamb like prayer to thee, 
Encircling me is the Holy Spirit, 
Floating upon Thy grand love, 
Feeling the magnificence of God.

Deliverer Divine, timid child am I, 
Confessing all from this prison life, 
Granted a mighty hand, 
Whose love knows no bounds.

From the depths of nature, 
Spring of life so epic, 
Grand canyons of time, 
Paying homage to His handiwork, 
Of ages past.
Safe in Thee Jehovah,
Against tempest wild,
Fear not O Lord,
My prayer is humble adoration,
And humble supplication.

Safety in you O Grand Architect,
Companion of life written on my heart,
Inscribed forever, never to part.

Wherever love fails in this life,
your passion is to draw nearer still,
So that I can be Safe in Thee.