

**FOR THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS:
REPAIRERS OF BROKEN WALLS AND
RESTORERS OF GOD'S JUSTICE**

Adventist Society for Religious Studies
Presidential Address 2009

ZDRAVKO PLANTAK
Washington Adventist University
Takoma Park, Maryland

Angela and God's Healing Justice

I will begin with the story of my mother's childhood. Angela Loesching was born in 1931 in Eastern Europe to two blind parents—a father blind from birth and a mother who lost her sight as a consequence of the Spanish flu at the end of World War I. Together they raised Angela and her sister Victoria on their own, which meant that Angela had to grow up quickly; her parents could not even teach her to walk. When she was three years old, Angela would go to the neighbors to fetch the milk that her mother would then give her to drink as her main diet. Her father, a teacher of Esperanto, and her mother, a poet, also owned a small brush-making company. Eventually they purchased a street-corner shop that raised them out of abject poverty to survival levels.

As a seven-year-old child, Angela noticed that everyone in school had ironed clothes except for her, so she learned to iron so as not to appear different from the others. Academically, she was a gifted child, learning Hungarian, Modern German, and old Gothic, Esperanto, and Serbo-Croatian. Her school planned to send her to Budapest to study at the University as an exceptional child, but World War II interrupted this adventure and she was sent instead to Austria with her family as a refugee during the Russian surges in 1944. During the seven-day train journey the Russians and Germans bombed the train several times. In one instance, God placed Angela in a position to save the entire train of refugees. The train had stopped in Mursko Sredisce, now a part of Slovenia, and while they were waiting Angela went to play in the woods nearby. A partisan woman with a machine gun approached and told her to tell the engineer to let another train go ahead of them. The train that passed by was bombed and as a result many perished. However, Angela and her fellow passengers were saved and continued on their journey to the refugee camp.

For the rest of the war, Angela was "safe" in the refugee camp situated deep in the Austrian Alps. However, the lack of food and clothing meant that the entire family was starving and freezing. One day, some of the refugee children, including Angela, went sledding and skiing in the Alps. Even though

she was barefoot, she enjoyed the adventure. Kind people, however, took pity on her and gave her a pair of shoes.

In July 1945, the Löesching family was sent back to the former Yugoslavia, where they were settled for eighteen months in a camp for German *Folksdojcers* in Gakovo, a foul place not unlike the concentration camps of the previous war years. From a beginning population of 18,000 only 9,000 survived this death trap. They were treated with hatred and contempt physically, emotionally, and mentally.

During their internment, Angela was often seriously ill. She first contracted stomach typhus. Though she survived, her father died from the same disease. Angela, just under fifteen years of age, had to prepare her dear daddy's body by wrapping it in a sheet, putting it into a wheelbarrow, and taking it to a pit with 500 other bodies for mass burial. She even climbed down after the corpse to lay it out in an orderly manner. In the blackness of that night, she then had to struggle for several hours to climb up the wet, steep walls of the pit to avoid being buried alive. Soon after her father's burial, she contracted an epidemic typhus, with excruciating headaches that would not stop for days. Her mum also suffered from typhus at the same time. Then her eleven-year-old sister Victoria contracted "water sickness," swelling until she died in horrific pain after five weeks of suffering. During the last stages of her sister's illness, Angela developed a third typhus called "Pjegavac," or what is now known as Scrub Typhus or *Boutenneuse Fever*. This one was the worst of the three, and she had to go into isolation. Out of 361 patients only two survived; she was one of the two. On the night Victoria lay dying, Angela could hear her mother call for her to come and be with them, but Angela was delirious and could not stand up to go to her younger sister.¹ The next day she had to pull herself out of bed to bury her sister, and then a neighbor who, out of desperation, had killed her newborn twins with needles and then committed suicide.

Not only did Angela survive disease, but three times she also avoided being sent to Siberia by sleeping in a chicken shed or inside the bread-baking oven or by hiding all night in the top of a leafy oak tree. All these things happened before Angela married my father, when she was just two months shy of seventeen.

My father shared his Christian faith with Angela and her mother and she became a Seventh-day Adventist. She found that somehow, miraculously, this Adventist faith was a balm to heal her open wounds; *that* faith, pregnant with hope and shalom-like leaves for the healing of the nations, soothed her open sores and bleeding wounds that were so deep that, even though now healed on the surface, they continue hurting yet today.

¹As I spoke to her today on her 78th birthday, my mum told me that because of that inability to comfort her mum and sister, in the moments of her dying, terrible feelings of guilt persist until the present time.

No, Angela's life was not suddenly brilliant and rosy following her marriage and acceptance of Christianity. A year after they married, and six weeks after my mother delivered my sister, my father was called up to serve for three years in the army in an unknown territory more than 600 miles away on the Macedonian, Greek, and Bulgarian borders. This was 1948, the tensest time of the Stalin-Tito conflict when Yugoslavia refused Russian control of the Balkans. Angela was just shy of eighteen years old when she was left penniless with a newborn baby and a blind mother in the aftermath of World War II. So she took her newborn baby on her back, went to the *kolleboz* of the Communist agricultural company called Ekonomija and, falling on her knees, begged for work so that the family could have some food. She worked with a small baby on her back until my dad returned from the service.

The Adventist Church helped her at that time by giving her milk for the baby and providing her with wood to burn during the bitterly cold winters. Our church community, with all its faults, became the body of Christ. It became in a small, but tangible way what Isaiah describes in chapter 58: "a well-watered garden, a spring whose waters never fail, . . . a repairer of broken walls and restorer" of social justice. Indeed this became the Sabbath of delight for a broken young girl who experienced a community that acted as leaves for the healing of wounds—a community that practiced the fasting that was loosing the chains of injustice, untying the cords of the yoke, sharing food with the hungry, providing the poor with shelter, clothing the naked, spending itself on behalf of others, and satisfying the mental, emotional, and yes, even physical and material needs of the oppressed.

Why this personal story? I believe that our stories shape us and they give us theological center and meaning. If Angela could be healed out of the utmost despair and pain of the horrors of this sinful world—horrors that are almost unimaginable to my generation—and if she could persist in raising all three of her children (and four grandchildren) to work in the Seventh-day Adventist ministry today, then God's restoration and reparation of the world are real. That is the point that I would like to share with you today.

Prophetic Living

I have argued elsewhere² that today's church must have a much more prophetic role in the present age and that looking more closely at the biblical prophets

²Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martins, 1998); idem, "Adventist Basis for Human Rights," *Spectrum* 27 (1999): 16-29; idem, "A People of Prophecy: Recovering the Biblical Role of the Prophets," in *The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Douglas Morgan (Silver Spring, MD: Adventist Peace Fellowship, 2005): 21-34; and idem, "The Role of the Biblical Prophets: ADRA in the Midst of the Prophetic Community," *Adventist Development and Relief Agency International Reflections: A Journal for Study and Reflection on Development Issues from a Christian Perspective* 1/1 (2002): 33-48.

would give us a much-needed clarification as to how that prophetic role must be accomplished: less through our apocalyptic and time-line warnings and chart-ticking (in)securities, and more in the way that the biblical prophets accomplished their tasks—through imaginative visioning and social activism in the socioethical, political,³ and economic senses, especially as they fought for the poor, the alien, the widow, and the orphan, for the least of the social, political, and economic strata that suffered the worst injustices. Furthermore, I have made in several places a strong call for our two major theological tenets—the Sabbath⁴ and the soon coming of Christ—to become significantly more socioethically relevant, and have argued that the richness of this theological heritage should give us much greater interest in the “other,” whose human dignity, human rights, and human aspirations should be supported. Our Sabbatical attitude should include not only weekly Sabbaths that equalize us all before God, but also annual Sabbaths that specifically call for social justice and are a moral call toward that great jubilee year that not only the Levitical and Deuteronomistic texts point to, but that Jesus of Nazareth furthermore utilizes in explaining his mission in the inaugural messianic proclamation.⁵ The teaching of the Second Coming is indeed about the hope that we, in the time between the first and the last coming, proclaim not only by evangelism, but by occupying until Jesus returns and, as referenced at the end of his Olivet Discourse (Matt 25), by doing to the least of his sisters and brothers in social and moral terms what we would do if it were Jesus himself on the receiving end of those actions.⁶

Eschatological Living as Prophetic Living

There is one further point with which I have wrestled for several years now and through which I have, I believe, found a more helpful and satisfying conclusion. So far, I have been calling for more imaginative prophetic living, and I continue to think that this is a special calling for any prophetic community, especially a remnant prophetic community.⁷ However, I also

³Political theology that is not politicizing or getting involved into party politics but a theology of the market place or what is also known by the phrase “public theology.”

⁴Zdravko Plantak, “There Should Be No Poor,” *Adventist Review* 179/44 (2002): 10-11.

⁵See, e.g., Deut 15 and Lev 25. Also compare with Jesus’ announcement of “the year of the Lord’s favor” in his Nazareth manifesto in Luke 4:18-21.

⁶A similar point was often raised by Mother Theresa, who claimed that she could never have worked in the slums of Calcutta with the poorest of the poor if she did not think that when she was washing the sores of the lepers or holding a dying child, she was actually doing this to Jesus.

⁷For further discussion, see Zdravko Plantak, “A Prophetic Community Today:

now advocate for what I term “eschatological living.” The seer in the book of Revelation receives a vision of how the new world looks, directing our eyes to the lush garden with plenty of water springing and flowing freely and energizing the trees that give fruits in frequent cycle and produce leaves that are so therapeutic and homeopathic that they serve for the healing of the nations (Rev 21–22, see esp. 22:2). My difficulty with this picture was that I always thought of it in terms of the post-Eschaton and therefore did not try to reconcile it with the invitation to the moral community of Christ here and now. Yet eschatological living urges us to take seriously the aspirations of the New Jerusalem and project it to the eschatological living of today: *that* living now is informed by what is soon to come.⁸ In some way, as South African scholar Adrio König argued in his remarkable book, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Towards a Christ-Centered Approach*, our view must reject on one hand “a completed and [on another] a one-sidedly futuristic eschatology in favor of an eschatology in the process of being realized.”⁹ He suggests that “full eschatological reality requires . . . a realized eschatology (“for us”), an eschatology being realized (“in us”), and an eschatology yet-to-be-realized (“with us”).”¹⁰ König then unpacks what he means by this middle stage of “eschatology being realized” between the first and the second coming of Christ:

In the New Testament, God’s children are sometimes called strangers and pilgrims in the world (Heb 11:13ff; 1 Pet 2:11). It is even said that their citizenship (Phil. 3:20-21) and treasure (Matt. 6:20) are in heaven, and that they aspire to a realm above (Col. 3:2). But this estrangement between God’s children and the world is due to the fact that God’s children are already (at least partly) renewed, while the earth is still old and “lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Our alien status on earth is therefore temporary. It implies not that we are destined for some place other than earth, but rather that the old, unrenewed earth does not suit us yet. That is why the expectation of a new earth is a living hope for the faithful.¹¹

Imaginative Visionaries and Social Activists for the Third Millennium,” in *Exploring the Frontier of Faith: Festschrift in Honour of Dr. Jan Paulsen—Congratulatory Edition*, ed. Reinder Bruinsma and Borge Schantz (Lueneburg: Advent-Verlag, 2010), 139-155.

⁸For further discussion, see Charles Scriven, *The Promise of Peace: Dare to Live the Advent Hope* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2009), 20-33 and 72-84. A similar point is raised by Sigve K. Tonstad, “For the Healing of the Nations” (unpublished paper presented at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, New Orleans, November 20, 2009). Tonstad, 9, concludes: “In this text [Rev 22:2] the healing that belongs to the lush land of the future has broken in on the arid land of the present.”

⁹Adrio König, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Towards a Christ-Centered Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 147.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., 236.

And that is why, having been born into a new life¹² and renewed by the living waters of the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-40),¹³ we are already living the life that we are hoping for. Thus we implement the principles of the kingdom of grace because we soon expect there to be a new earth and a New Jerusalem in the kingdom of glory.¹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann expresses it succinctly, noting that “Time after the [first] coming of Christ must be seen as ‘fulfilled but not yet completed time.’ It is no longer the time of pure expectation, nor is it as yet the eternal present of the time of completion. That is why Christians live between the ‘now already’ and the ‘not yet.’”¹⁵ This “future-made-present” creates new conditions for possibilities in history, it becomes the ultimate in the penultimate, and creates a reflection of the possibilities of the “future of time in the midst of time.”¹⁶ N. T. Wright, in his book, *Surprised by Hope*, speaks similarly, proposing that there is

a sense of continuity as well as discontinuity between the present world (and the present state), and the future, whatever it shall be, with the result that what we do in the present matters enormously. . . . It was people who believed robustly in the resurrection . . . who stood up against Caesar in the first centuries of the Christian era. A piety that sees death as the moment of “going home at last”, the time, when we are “called to God’s eternal peace” has no quarrel with power-mongers who want to carve up the world to suit their own ends. Resurrection, by contrast, has always gone with a strong view of God’s justice and of God as the good creator. Those twin beliefs give rise not to a meek acquiescence to injustice in the world but to a robust determination to oppose it.¹⁷

¹²E.g., Rom 6:4, and other NT texts, on “new life,” “life in the Spirit,” being “in Christ.”

¹³Jürgen Moltmann suggests that, through his Spirit, “God now already sets present and past in the light of his eschatological arrival, an arrival which means the establishment of his eternal kingdom, and his indwelling in the creation renewed for that indwelling” (*The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004], 23).

¹⁴These two phrases about the Kingdom of Grace and Kingdom of Glory are borrowed from Ellen G. White and are based on the biblical concepts of the “Kingdom of God being at hand” and the “Kingdom of God being in you.” For more on this topic, as well as the larger discussion regarding the theological richness of the debate in the larger Christian and Adventist communities on the concept of the kingdom of God and its two realities, see Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martins, 1998), 168-184.

¹⁵Moltmann, 11.

¹⁶Ibid., 22.

¹⁷N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 26-27. Wright, 192, furthermore, suggests that “to work for that intermediate hope, the surprising hope that comes forward from God’s ultimate future into God’s urgent present, is not a distraction from the task of mission and evangelism in the present. It is a central, essential, vital, and life-giving

I have become fully convinced that the biblical imagery of the leaves that are given for the healing of the nations in Rev 22:2 are indeed leaves that must be applied to our eschatological living here and now. I have no doubt that this image is linked to previous passages in the prophetic and wisdom literature and to several other metaphors used to call a community of God-fearers to prophetic living laden with social justice and concern for the underprivileged and the most vulnerable.

Echoes of the wisdom poetry of Ps 1 penetrate the vision of the seer: “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever [the righteous] does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.” The righteousness that we strive for in this life is similarly described as the final righteousness of the new world order that God establishes when his will is finally enacted on earth as it is already fully realized in heaven. The tree in Ps 1, whose “leaf does not wither,” seems to bear some connection to the original Edenic Tree of Life: “As the tree situated in the garden of God served to confer everlasting life to the primal couple, so the psalmist’s tree is the sign and symbol” of blessedness and happiness for the individual.¹⁸ Similarly, Pss 52 and 92:12-13 and Prov 11:30 and 15:4 explicitly associate the Tree of Life with righteousness and the healing properties of speech. Willem A. VanGemeren indicates that “Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm, and shares many features common to the Book of Proverbs.”¹⁹ On numerous occasions in Proverbs, righteousness and wickedness are described with powerful imagery, thereby becoming terms that contain such essential “elements of the psalmic vocabulary”²⁰ that we cannot neglect the contrast that, for instance, Prov 29:7 paints about them: “The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.”²¹ The righteous, who are planted like trees with deep roots and nourishing supplies of ever-flowing water, are the

part of it.” See also Scriven, 25, who suggests that if Jesus “was the root meaning of a faith lived in the light of hope, then *radical* hope requires attention to the needs of today.” In other words, “the future has *present* relevance—it colors my life right now.” (ibid., 76).

¹⁸William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: John Knox, 2002), 60.

¹⁹Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 5 (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1991), 52.

²⁰James Luther Mays, *Psalms: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 46.

²¹For further discussion, see Zdravko Plantak, “Wisdom Tradition on Poverty,” *Adventist Development and Relief Agency International Reflections: A Journal for Study and Reflection on Development Issues from a Christian Perspective* 1/1 (2002): 48-65.

kind of people who care for the socially and economically disadvantaged. They are not like Isaiah's "oak tree with fading leaves, like a garden without water" that will be so dry that it will burn "with no one to quench the fire" (Isa 1:30-31). William P. Brown suggests that tree symbolism in Psalms "underscores YHWH's creative power to bless, recalling the shalom of the primordial garden."²² It appears that Isaiah develops this metaphor further and adds additional parallel similes to paint a fuller theological canvass of the community that is watered by God and which, consequently, produces God's justice and enacts God's righteousness.

The community of Isa 1, which is called to repentance from meaningless worship and evil Sabbath assemblies (vv. 10-15) because they do not "seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow" (vv. 17, 22-23), becomes "like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water," so dry that it burns without being able to be halted (vv. 30-31). The anger of God is against those who have ruined God's vineyard (God's people, Isa 5:7), because "the plunder of the poor is in [their] houses [because they are crushing God's] people and grinding the faces of the poor" (Isa 3:14-15). As a viculturist and botanist, God plants his vineyard on a fertile hillside, takes care of it, and expects its fruit to reflect the gardener's loving touch and restorative powers. However, those of the spiritual vineyard and "the garden of his delight" (Isa 5:7) lack social justice and do distressful things. They are so materially possessed and commercially driven that they add "house to house and join field to field till no space is left," and they stay alienated and alone in their "fine mansions" (vv. 7-9).

Then a shoot comes from the stump of Jesse and from his root a Branch bears fruit. The Spirit of the Lord is on the Branch in order to judge the needy with righteousness and to give to the poor of the earth with justice (Isa 11:1-2:4-5). "Righteous branch' wields power to implement justice and, thereby, bring about peace and prosperity for his people"²³ and for the nations.²⁴ The prophet proclaims that "a remnant [is called to once more] . . . take root below and bear fruit above" (Isa 37:31-32), an invitation to deep-rootedness that results in fruit-bearing trees and ever-green branches.

Isaiah's most elaborate explanation of these metaphors is found in chapters 58 and 61. Here again is a reminder of how, in a sun-scorched

²²Brown, 74. Brown explores the significance of the metaphor of "tree" in Psalms and its significance at the beginning of the Psalter, comparing it to other biblically significant passages throughout the Jewish Scriptures. See also Sylvia Keesmaat, "The Beautiful Creatures: Trees in the Biblical Story," *TheOtherJournal.com* (July 16, 2009) (<<http://theotherjournal.com/article.php?id=837>>).

²³Ibid., 69.

²⁴Tonstad, 5-7, makes important connections between Isa 11 and Rev 22, especially in the context of the plural term "nations."

land, YHWH satisfies the need of his community and strengthens their frame. He makes his Sabbath-keepers to “be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins, and will raise up the age-old foundations, you will be called repairers of broken walls and restorers of streets with dwelling” (Isa 58:11-12). Just like the tree in the New Jerusalem that expresses God’s magnificence, Isa 61:3-4 describes the community of believers, who “will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated.” This indeed is the splendid picture of the community of faith serving as leaves for the healing of the world, as those who loose the chains of injustice and share their food with the hungry; who provide the poor vagabonds with shelter and clothe the naked.²⁵ Their light will break forth like the dawn and their healing will quickly appear. The healing of the well-watered garden and the spring whose waters never fail (vv. 7 and 11) is identified in terms of “spending yourself on behalf of the hungry and satisfying the needs of the oppressed” (v. 10).²⁶ This behavior is also the way the sheep on the right hand at the entrance to the celestial Jerusalem are told that the deeds they have done for others are considered as being done to Christ himself, who was on the receiving end with “the least of his brothers and sisters” (Matt 25). Isaiah’s called community is not dissimilar to Jeremiah’s righteous person, who “will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green” (Jer 17:8). Nor is it unlike Jesus’ proposal that “whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, the living water will flow from within him” (John 7:38).²⁷ It is like Ezekiel’s vision “of a great river [that] is depicted issuing from the temple to fructify the land”²⁸ that the seer of Patmos replicates with modifications in Rev 22.

²⁵See the excellent discussion on justice and righteousness in Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets: An Introduction* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 1:195-221; and Steve Monsma, *Healing for a Broken World: Christian Perspectives on Public Policy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 46-61.

²⁶Similar metaphors abound in the prophets such as Amos 5:24, where “justice rolls on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream.”

²⁷Verse 39 adds “By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive,” further showing how the healing of the nations through the well-watered gardens and trees rooted in God could and should give its effect between Jesus’ first and second comings. The elements of Jesus as our temple, from whom the living waters flow, and the role of the Holy Spirit in that process after Jesus’ resurrection are important themes that need to be further unpacked in a future study on eschatological pneumatology.

²⁸Brown, 68.

Conclusion

G. K. Chesterton once wrote, “If small seeds in the black earth can become such beautiful roses, think what the heart of a human being can become on its long journey to the stars.”²⁹ In our present eschatological living, we must live as resurrection people between Easter and the Eschaton, when Easter will become completed in the final coming of Christ. In view of this, the present-day followers of Christ, motivated by the vision of the seer of Patmos, do not passively wait for Jesus to return to the earth and establish a just society. Rather we become in the present moment the hands and feet of Christ, acting in such a way that we are already doing the bidding of Christ by becoming that well-watered garden envisioned by the poet, prophet, and the seer. We act here and now as righteous, green-leaved trees that work for justice on behalf of the poor. We are called today to be watered by the Holy Spirit that flows from under the temple of Ezekiel’s prophecy—the temple that we no longer need because Jesus became our temple after the first Easter. We become, with the help of the Spirit, streams of ever-flowing waters of justice and in so doing God accomplishes through us the reparation of broken communities and the restoration and rebuilding of justice.³⁰ In simple terms, our prophetic calling and living must also become our eschatological living. In what way will we become leaves for healing in our ailing national and international communities? At the closing program of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre in 2006, Robina Marie Winbush asked, after noting that “God is transforming the world,”

Are you willing to be a leaf on the tree of life, whom God uses for the healing of the nations? Are you willing to resist bowing down to the temporal gods of exploitation and domination and allow your life and your churches to be used for the healing of the nations and transformation of the world? Remember that the power and strength to be a leaf does not belong to you. It is a result of being attached to the tree of life whose roots are watered by the river of life that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb.³¹

²⁹G. K. Chesterton, cited in Maisie Ward, *Return to Chesterton* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1952), 137.

³⁰Scriven, 77, refers to this type of living as “the practice of hope,” “a hope grand and daring enough to motivate adventurous action today.” See also Douglas Morgan, “Identity Without Insularity: Lewis Sheafe, Matthew Strachan, and the Threeness of African American Adventists” (unpublished paper presented at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, New Orleans, November 20, 2009); and Roy Branson, “Healing of the Nations: Mission of the Adventist Pioneers” (unpublished paper presented at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, New Orleans, November 20, 2009).

³¹Robina Marie Winbush, “For the Healing of the Nations” (www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/4-messages-other-statements-sermons/sermons/robina-marie-winbush-closing-sermon.html).

C. S. Lewis comes to a similar conclusion, noting that “In our world today Jesus Christ [the Lion] is on the move. He is real; he is present. His redeeming, reconciling, healing work is progressing. But he had also not yet come in his full power and glory. That lies in the future. Until that day Christians are called to be Christ’s instruments for reconciliation and healing in a broken world.”³²

That God is “on the move” is clearly obvious in many stories that surround us. My mum’s story is just one example that God is healing individuals and communities throughout the world. Angela still hurts both physically and emotionally; she is not fully healed. Neither is our world fully healed, but the Divine Mover is seeking to heal the entire world with his grace and love. He especially calls his people to help bring healing to the wounded of his beloved community. Thus we are called to pray and eschatologically live Jesus’ radical prayer: “Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done on earth as it is [already] in heaven” (Matt 6:10).

³²Monsma, 42.