

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Dissertation Projects DMin

Graduate Research

2011

Utilizing H.M.S. Richards' Sermons and Writings in the Development of Sermons that Focus on the Unique Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Preaching as Implemented at the Kress Memorial Church in Winter Park, Florida

Eric M. Doran
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Doran, Eric M., "Utilizing H.M.S. Richards' Sermons and Writings in the Development of Sermons that Focus on the Unique Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Preaching as Implemented at the Kress Memorial Church in Winter Park, Florida" (2011). *Dissertation Projects DMin*. 579.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dmin/579>

This Project Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertation Projects DMin by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

ABSTRACT

**UTILIZING H. M. S. RICHARDS' SERMONS AND WRITINGS IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SERMONS THAT FOCUS ON THE UNIQUE
ASPECTS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PREACHING
AS IMPLEMENTED AT THE KRESS MEMORIAL
CHURCH IN WINTER PARK, FLORIDA**

by

Eric M. Doran

Adviser: Nikolaus Satelmajer

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: UTILIZING H. M. S. RICHARDS' SERMONS AND WRITINGS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERMONS THAT FOCUS ON THE UNIQUE ASPECTS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PREACHING AS IMPLEMENTED AT THE KRESS MEMORIAL CHURCH IN WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

Name of researcher: Eric M. Doran

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Nikolaus Satelmajer, D.Min.

Date completed: April 2011

Problem

H. M. S. Richards maintains that Seventh-day Adventist preaching should be distinct from the preaching of others. What guidelines does Richards provide for determining what should be included in Adventist preaching, and how can those guidelines be integrated into the preaching at the Kress Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church?

Method

The books, articles, and sermons of H. M. S. Richards were researched for guidance on what Seventh-day Adventist preaching should include. On the basis of the

principles developed from Richards, twelve sermons preached prior to the research were evaluated. Twelve new sermons following Richards' principles were then written and preached at the Kress Memorial Church. The sermons were evaluated by two retired pastors and one evangelist from the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Results

The research from the study of Richards' books, articles, and sermons shows the importance of preaching the distinct doctrines of Seventh-day Adventism while maintaining a clear connection to Christ. The evaluations of the twelve sermons preached before the research revealed a lack of focus on doctrines that are important to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The twelve sermons prepared as a part of this project showed more intentionality in emphasizing Seventh-day Adventist doctrines and their connection to Christ. The study shows that one can be faithful to biblical teaching and its emphasis on Christ and at the same time communicate Seventh-day Adventist doctrines.

Conclusion

The research of H. M. S. Richards' sermons and writings leads to the conclusion that the Seventh-day Adventist message and mission demands intentionality in preaching. It is not only legitimate, but necessary to preach sermons that reinforce both the understanding of Scripture and the purpose for the existence of Adventism. Such preaching must maintain Christ as the source of salvation. For the spiritual health of the church such sermons should be scheduled into the preaching calendar.

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

UTILIZING H. M. S. RICHARDS' SERMONS AND WRITINGS IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SERMONS THAT FOCUS ON THE UNIQUE
ASPECTS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PREACHING
AS IMPLEMENTED AT THE KRESS MEMORIAL
CHURCH IN WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

A Project Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Eric M. Doran

April 2011

© Copyright by Eric M. Doran 2011
All Rights Reserved

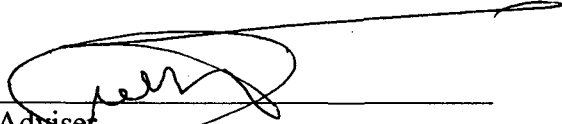
UTILIZING H. M. S. RICHARDS' SERMONS AND WRITINGS IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SERMONS THAT FOCUS ON THE UNIQUE ASPECTS OF
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PREACHING AS IMPLEMENTED AT THE KRESS
MEMORIAL CHURCH IN WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

A project dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry


by

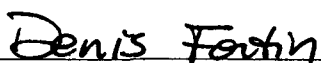
Eric M. Doran

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

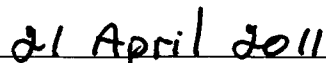

Adviser,
Nikolaus Satelmajer


Director, DMin Program
Skip Bell


James J. North, Jr.


Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
Denis Fortin


David Penno


Date approved

To Sandy, my best friend and partner in ministry
for your support, encouragement, and wisdom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES		viii
Chapter		
1. INTRODUCTION		1
Statement of the Problem		1
Statement of the Task		4
Justification for the Project		4
Description of the Project Process		5
Limitations of the Project		6
Expectations for the Project		6
2. A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE UNIQUENESS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PREACHING		8
Introduction		8
The Importance of Preaching in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.		11
The Gospel as a Fundamental Part of Adventist Preaching		12
Seventh-day Adventist Preaching and the Great Controversy		15
Proclaiming the Gospel in the Context of the Three Angels' Messages.		18
The Power of the Seventh-day Adventist Message		19
The Adventist Message and Mission at the Crossroads		20
3. PREACHING IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST LITERATURE		24
Ellen G. White and the Unique Task of Seventh-day Adventist Preaching.		26
Preaching and Sermons		27
Pastoral Responsibilities Include More Than Preaching		28
The Role of Preaching		29
Advice to Preachers		30
Knowing the Truth by Experience		31
The Message and the Messenger Bound Together		32
Preach on Important Themes		32
The Education of the Preacher		33
The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Purpose and Preaching ...		34

Seventh-day Adventist Preaching	35
The Centrality of Christ in the Seventh-day Adventist Message	38
Ellen White's Model for Seventh-day Adventist Preaching	39
The Urgency of Our Message	40
Distinct Adventist Preaching in the Literature	41
Carlyle B. Haynes	41
Haynes' Emphasis on Preaching Christ	43
Christ and Doctrine	44
The Transforming Power of Truth	45
Roy Allen Anderson	47
Preachers of the Word	48
The Discipline of Study	51
The Mechanics of Preaching	52
Preparation and Delivery	55
The Content of Seventh-day Adventist Preaching	55
Charles E. Bradford	59
The Importance of Preaching	60
People Our Priority	62
The Primary Sources for Preaching	63
A Theology of Preaching for the Seventh-day Adventist Preacher	65
To Make Jesus King	68
Steven P. Vitrano	68
Reconciliation	69
Transformation	73
Glorification	78
Restoration	78
Summary	78
George R. Knight	79
Knight's Personal Story	79
Evangelical vs. Adventist	81
Neutering	84
How Adventism Can Neuter Itself	85
The Adventist Understanding of the Apocalypse	88
Heading Into Legalism	89
The Power of the Apocalyptic Vision	90
The Fallacy of Straight Line Thinking	92
The Apocalyptic Vision in the Gospels	95
Neoapocalypticism	97
Summary of Sources	98
4. DEVELOPING PRINCIPLES FOR SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST PREACHING AS FOUND IN THE SERMONS AND WRITINGS OF H. M. S. RICHARDS	99
H. M. S. Richards: The Beginnings	100

H. M. S. Richards, The Evangelist	104
H. M. S. Richards as Radio Speaker	106
H. M. S. Richards on Preaching	107
Adventist Preaching to be Christ-Centered	108
Preaching That Leads to Decisions for Christ	111
Christ in Distinct Adventist Preaching	113
Two Ends of the Spectrum	114
Towards An Understanding of Distinct Seventh-day Adventist Preaching	116
Illustrations from Three of Richards' Sermons	117
What Is Wrong with the Ten Commandments?	118
God's Memorial	121
Where Do We Go From Here?	125
Summary of Richards' Sermons	129
5. A PROFILE OF THE PREACHING AT KRESS MEMORIAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH	133
H. M. S. Richards and Principles for Distinct Seventh-day Adventist Preaching	132
Evaluation of Sermons Preached Previously at Kress Memorial Church	132
Limitations of Evaluations	134
Results of Evaluations for Part 1	134
Conclusions from the Evaluations of Part 1	135
Results of Evaluations for Part 2	135
Conclusions from the Evaluations of Part 2	137
General Conclusions about the Preaching at Kress Memorial Church	137
6. PREACHING THE DISTINCT MESSAGE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL	138
Introduction	138
A New Preaching Method for Kress Memorial Church	138
The Methodology in Sermon Preparation for the 12 New Sermons	139
An Abstract of the 12 Sermons on Seventh-day Adventist Fundamentals	140
Evaluations of the 12 New Sermons	144
Implications from This Research for the Preaching at Kress Memorial Church	145
Suggestions for the 2011 Preaching Schedule	146
Conclusions: Intentionality in Preaching	147
Recommendations	149

Appendix

A. SERMON EVALUATION INSTRUMENT.....	150
B. GUIDELINES FOR BIBLICALLY SUPPORTED CHRIST CENTERED SERMONS	151
C. A PROPOSED PREACHING CALENDAR FOR 2011.....	152
D. SAMPLE SERMONS.....	155
BIBLIOGRAPHY	170
VITA	173

LIST OF TABLES

1.	Is This Sermon Christ Centered?.....	134
2.	Does This Sermon Address the Selected Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?.....	136

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In 1998, I was offered the opportunity to pastor the New England Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church in Stoneham, Massachusetts. The church was best known for its connection with a one hundred-year-old hospital that was a significant part of the Adventist church's history. The hospital went by three names during its existence. It was first known as The New England Memorial Sanitarium, then New England Memorial Hospital, and finally, Boston Regional Medical Center. Ellen White would also refer to the hospital as "the Melrose Institution."

Two weeks after I accepted the offer to pastor the church I was stunned by the news that the hospital had just declared bankruptcy. Within days the hospital was closed and the congregation—whose building was attached by a hallway to the back of the hospital—was in turmoil about its future. It would take two years and a trial in Boston Federal Bankruptcy Court to sort out what was going to happen to the New England Memorial Church. The court decision at first appeared to give the church what it needed and wanted. We had won the right to continue to worship on the property. Long conversations with lawyers would help us to face the truth that the only right we had won was the right to worship there. Someone else now owned the building, the property, the driveway, and even the power plant that gave us electricity. We had no control of any

part of the church campus. It soon became clear that even though the church had won the right to stay on the grounds, it was in our best interest to leave.

In what seemed like a very short period of time, the members of the New England Memorial Church went from worshiping in their own building to renting from the First Congregational Church of Woburn, Massachusetts. If New England Memorial had a history, their new landlord had a longer one. The First Congregational Church was founded by the eighth Puritan group to leave England and settle in the New World in the 1600s. And they were in their sixth meeting house which was on the National Registry as the largest wood structure in New England.

There was a strong sense of God's providence in leading us to this unique place of worship. But the providences of God would not stop there. Within months of beginning services at the Congregational church, they chose not to re-hire their own pastor. After an amazing series of conversations, I found myself preaching to the Adventists on Saturdays, and preaching to the Congregationalists on Sundays. The experiences that I had working with these two congregations were the highlight of my ministry. New England Memorial Church had lost everything and yet kept the faith—and the First Congregational Church with its 300 years of history had demonstrated true Christian generosity by opening its doors to us.

Being asked to preach at the Congregational church posed a serious question about what I would preach. And to answer the concerns about my preaching to a church that met on Sunday, I would reply "I know who I am and what I am. I am a Seventh-day Adventist, and I know what I believe." I saw this as an opportunity to give back to those who had opened their home to us, and I focused on the things that I knew we had in

common. But these circumstances helped me to understand even more clearly the strengths that we have as Adventists in the message we give to the world. The message we preach gives hope and courage, and gives intelligent answers to the questions people ask.

Preaching occurs on a weekly basis in Christian worship services around the world. While preaching itself is not unique to Adventists, there are elements of what we preach that are. H. M. S. Richards (1894-1985), a pioneer in religious radio broadcasting, and the founder of Voice of Prophecy Radio, says in his book *Feed My Sheep*: “We believe that there is a reason for this Seventh-day Adventist Church and for the Seventh-day Adventist preaching. If there is no reason, then why be different?”¹ The implication of what he says is that if what we preach is no different than what others are preaching, then we should stop pretending to be different and simply join the larger Christian community in the proclamation of the gospel. Richards is telling us that Seventh-day Adventist preaching needs to be unique. If that is the case, how is it to be unique? What distinguishes our message from the messages of others? And, in the context of this research, does Richards provide any help in determining what should be included in Adventist preaching, and if so, how do we intentionally shape the preaching menu to reflect the Adventist message and mission?

As the pastor of the Kress Memorial Church of Seventh-day Adventists, I am concerned that the majority of the sermons I have preached are doctrinally generic—sermons that could have been preached in any church. Evangelistic preaching directly addresses the doctrinal beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, for the

¹H. M. S. Richards, *Feed My Sheep* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 49.

sake of new members in the church, and for those who are studying to be members, I need to find a systematic method of embedding the core doctrines of Adventism into my sermons, reinforcing and reaffirming them throughout the year.

H. M. S. Richards is widely recognized in the Seventh-day Adventist Church as one of the most influential preachers in the denomination's history. His sermons, articles, and books continue to shape Adventist preaching today. If my preaching is to more intentionally reflect our distinct message, it is important to understand what Richards has to offer to help me accomplish that task.

Statement of the Task

The task of this project was to analyze the lectures and materials of H. M. S. Richards for guidelines in preaching sermons that are uniquely Seventh-day Adventist. An evaluation tool written on the basis of the guidelines discovered was used to evaluate twelve sermons preached prior to this project, and twelve sermons written for the project. The evaluations were conducted by retired Seventh-day Adventist pastors.

Justifications for the Project

H. M. S. Richards became one of the most influential preachers in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In his book *Feed My Sheep*, Richards offers the following description of Adventist preaching. "Real Seventh-day Adventist preaching should be the preaching of the gospel in the setting of the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs."² I believe that his writings and lectures offer guidance for preaching messages

²Richards, 51.

on Sabbath morning that make them uniquely “Adventist.” Richards’ materials needed to be carefully examined to determine these guidelines.

I was concerned that my preaching at Kress Memorial Church had become very general; that it had lost its distinctive Adventist flavor. I found in Richards’ material guidelines for making my preaching uniquely and distinctively Adventist.

Kress Memorial Church has added a number of new members in the last few years. There are also a significant number of people who are not yet Seventh-day Adventists who regularly attend church services. For both of these groups, it is important that the core principles of the Adventist faith be woven into the fabric of my preaching, so that what they have heard in evangelistic preaching or have learned in Bible study can be reinforced.

Description of the Project Process

Theological reflection focused on the unique task of Seventh-day Adventist preaching.

Selected literature on preaching in the Seventh-day Adventist Church was reviewed to determine what should be included in Adventist preaching. Ellen G. White’s writings were reviewed for information on the uniqueness of Adventist preaching, and what makes Seventh-day Adventist preaching distinct. Books and articles written by Seventh-day Adventist authors were reviewed regarding the content of sermons and the unique task of Adventist preaching.

Literature and materials written by H. M. S. Richards were reviewed to discover principles to shape the content of Seventh-day Adventist sermons, and to formulate guidelines for distinct Adventist preaching.

An evaluation team of retired pastors was assembled to critique twelve randomly selected sermons previously preached at Kress. These sermons were evaluated using Richards' principles.

Twelve sermons based on those principles were then written, preached, and critiqued by the evaluation team.

Limitations of the Project

There are varying opinions about what makes a sermon an "Adventist" sermon. There is also a variety of ideas as to what constitutes Adventism. There are 28 fundamentals that are points of common faith to all Seventh-day Adventists, some of which are shared with other Christian communities. There has always been vigorous debate among Adventists over what should be included as a part of Seventh-day Adventist faith and preaching. This project focused mainly on what H. M. S. Richards' thought made Adventist preaching unique, and what should be a part of Adventist preaching. Other selected authors were reviewed for supporting or contrasting ideas. In this research, the 28 fundamentals were the standard for Seventh-day Adventist doctrines.

Expectations for the Project

I believe that Seventh-day Adventists, like all Christians, have been commissioned to preach the gospel to the world. But at the end of time the proclamation of the gospel takes on a distinct nature—it becomes the gospel in the setting of the soon return of Christ. This is the context in which Seventh-day Adventists have been called to preach. Studying what H. M. S. Richards teaches about preaching has helped me to make

my preaching more intentionally “Adventist” in content. I believe that has helped me to more clearly preach the “Adventist” message.

CHAPTER 2

A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE UNIQUENESS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PREACHING

Introduction

Reflecting on my work in three different Seventh-day Adventist conferences I became accustomed to the fact that outside of the names, places, and weather, things were generally the same. When pastors met together for ministerial meetings, we dealt with stewardship, evangelism, camp meeting, and a variety of issues that were fairly common to each conference. What came as a surprise to me at one meeting was a statement by a fellow pastor describing the outreach of his church during the Sabbath morning services. He described it in terms of “minimizing the Adventism” in order to make it more “seeker friendly.” After that meeting, I grappled with what he might have meant. Was he talking about the order of the church service, or perhaps the style of the worship? Was he referring to what was in the sermon? What about “Adventism” did he feel he had to minimize in order to make the church more acceptable?

George Knight¹ in his book, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, talks about religious communities being made up of two kinds of members:

¹George R. Knight is a retired professor of church history at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and author of numerous books on Seventh-day Adventist history.

“believers and cultural adherents.”² This description highlights the fact that religious groups often take on a culture of their own, with practices, symbols, and even a language unique to that group. While the culture may be a normal part of building an identity, it can become a barrier to those not familiar with the cultural practices of the group. If that is what is meant by “minimizing Adventism,” then there might be validity in working to make it easier to welcome those who are not familiar with the “Adventist” culture. But questions need to be asked about what makes up the essential parts of Adventism that cannot be ignored or eliminated without compromising either our identity or our reason for existence.

The history of our church reveals the importance of maintaining our identity. Adventism went from being a numerically insignificant group of people in its early history to a church with a membership nearing twenty million in the twenty-first century. Knight hints at the reason for the growth when he says that Adventism “became strong by proclaiming that it had a prophetic message for our time.” He goes on to say that “it is that message repackaged for the twenty-first century that will give Adventism strength in both the present and the future.”³

H. M. S. Richards, founder of Voice of Prophecy Radio and a respected Adventist pastor and preacher, also felt that there were unique elements in the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that gave it power. Addressing the task of preaching in his book *Feed My Sheep*, he makes this comment: “We believe that there is a reason for this

²George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008,) 9.

³Ibid., 19.

Seventh-day Adventist Church and for the Seventh-day Adventist preaching. If there is no reason, then why be different? If there is a reason, we ought to have some things which others do not have with the same force and with the same power.”⁴ Richards argues for uniqueness and also maintains that this uniqueness must be reflected in Adventist preaching.

The existence of the Adventist Church is premised on the idea that it bears a “distinct end time” message. Richards reminds us that the Bible’s introduction of Jesus is that He came preaching, and that His message was based on four premises: a fulfillment of prophecy (“The time is fulfilled”), the inspiration of the Old Testament, a call to repentance, and a call to faith.⁵ The message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church contains those same elements based on Rev 14: a fulfillment of prophecy (“the hour of His judgment has come”), a belief in the inspiration in the Word of God, a call to repentance (“fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come”), and a call to faith in Christ (the eternal gospel).

We do not claim as Seventh-day Adventists to be the sole inheritors of the command to preach. Others were preaching the “Good News” a long time before us. We also do not claim to be preaching a new gospel. But there are distinctive elements, emphasis, and perspectives in our message that have been the source of both our power and our identity. It is critical to understand what those elements are, so that we do not inadvertently strip Adventism of its power, or more importantly its reason for existence.

⁴Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 49.

⁵Ibid., 11, 12.

The Importance of Preaching in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church began, interestingly, with an individual that never became a member of the church. The great Advent Movement⁶ began with the reluctant preaching of William Miller⁷ in the Baptist Church of Dresden, New York. As more speaking opportunities became available, and as Adventism (as it came to be known) gained momentum, Miller was joined by preachers like Joshua V. Himes, Josiah Litch, Charles Fitch, and others in proclaiming the soon return of Jesus.

It was in the atmosphere of spiritual zeal and fervor that accompanied the preaching of the Advent message,⁸ that the birth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church would take place. Preaching has been central to the growth and development of that church, and it will also be central to finishing the task of proclaiming the “judgment hour” gospel message to “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” (Rev 12:6 NKJV).

H. M. S. Richards, believing in the importance of preaching to the Seventh-day Adventist church, said: “Radio and television will do their work, but this Advent message will be finished in a blaze of light in the mightiest preaching this world has ever known. Let us never, never forget that.”⁹

So strongly did Richards feel about the role of preaching in the church, that he

⁶Historians see this as a part of the Second Awakening that took place in the United States during the early and middle of the 19th century.

⁷For additional information on Miller see R. W. Schwartz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), 31-52.

⁸William Miller began to preach that the second coming of Christ was near. With the encouragement of others, Miller eventually saw October 22, 1844 as the date of Christ’s return.

⁹Richards, 52.

believed that “ordination” was ordination to preaching.

The church is founded by the preaching of the gospel, and only by the preaching of the gospel. Therefore, in Christ’s call to these men, we read, “He called them and He ordained them to be with Him that He might send them forth to preach.”

Now, here comes my revolutionary contention, that there is no other reason for ordination under heaven than that. It is revealed here in Christ’s act of ordaining the twelve apostles in the plain statement that He ordained them to be with Him, and that He might send them forth “to preach.” There isn’t one word in this record, or in the record of the ordination of Paul and Barnabas, or any other place in the New Testament, that men were ever ordained for any other purpose than to preach the gospel and proclaim the message of salvation to men.¹⁰

Preachers and preaching were a part of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church even before it had a name. But if this “Advent” movement is to close in a “blaze of preaching,” it becomes even more critical to understand what the elements are that give our preaching power.

The Gospel as a Fundamental Part of Adventist Preaching

John the Baptist began his career as the first preacher of the New Testament by preaching along the shores of the Jordan River. When he was asked by the leaders in Jerusalem as to the nature of his mission, he responded by telling his questioners that he was neither the Christ nor Elijah, but that he was sent to prepare the way for the Lord. Upon seeing Jesus the next day, John would point at Him and express words that would become the bedrock foundation of all true Christian preaching: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). We fulfill the purpose of preaching for Christianity as we point to Jesus Christ as the Savior of humanity and make Him the center of every message.

¹⁰Richards, 114, 115.

After His resurrection, Christ Himself explained to the disciples what the substance of their message to the world would be: “Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things’” (Luke 24:46-48). Luke, writing in the book of Acts, records for us the commission that Jesus gave to the infant church just before His ascension to heaven: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The primary goal of the church as described in the book of Acts was to bear witness to Jesus Christ by preaching Him to the world. And they were so determined to accomplish that mission, that even hardship and opposition would not deter them. After being threatened by the leaders in Jerusalem, still “they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42). In fact, the persecution carried out by Saul who later would become Paul, was responsible for the spread of the gospel. The believers fled Jerusalem, and “those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). Persecution, rather than destroying the church or its witness, would ultimately be the cause for the preaching of the gospel to spread throughout the world.

Neither the commission given to the church, nor the purpose of preaching, has changed since the days of the apostles. If Seventh-day Adventists are to be faithful to the Bible in their preaching, then Christ is to hold center place in all that we say. In fact, Ellen White tells us that every point of truth we hold can only be understood in the context of the cross: “The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth

around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary, and in connection with the wondrous, central truth of the Saviour's atonement."¹¹

But if it is true that the cross sheds light on the teachings of the Bible, is it not also true that the teachings of the Bible spotlight and point back to the cross? In fact, the litmus test for any teaching should be its ability to be directly connected to Christ and the cross. One example is the Seventh-day Adventist perspective on conditional immortality. The fundamental problem with the idea that we have an immortal soul—outside of the fact that it is not biblical—is that it implies that immortality is not dependent upon our faith in Christ, but that we have it innately. Christ died on the cross so that “whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, NKJV). For those who accept the idea of an immortal soul, Christ is not needed for immortality—we already have it. Thus, in their view, accepting Christ as Savior only determines *where* we will live out that immortal life.

Another example is the nature of the law. If the law of God could be changed or abolished, as some have claimed, then Christ need not have died and the cross becomes unnecessary. Why would death be the penalty for violating a law that could simply be changed? It is precisely because the law of God is immutable and eternal, that humanity's violation of it becomes so significant, and that such a terrible price has to be paid to atone for the crime.

It is the light that streams from the Christ hanging on the cross that illuminates

¹¹Ellen G. White, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1955), 221.

and explains the teachings of the Bible. But like a surveyor, we should be able to stand at a particular teaching or doctrine, look through the lens of the scriptures and site Christ and the cross. And if the primary role of preaching in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to proclaim the Gospel, is it not also a significant part of that role, to proclaim those Bible truths that reveal Christ and amplify the cross?

I believe that one of the roles of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to restore truths that have been buried under tradition and superstition. Doctrines that misrepresent God and distort His character are to be corrected. Anything that clouds our view of the cross and of Christ is to be exposed and removed.

But it is the context of its preaching that is perhaps Adventism's greatest contribution. We preach in the context of the nearness of the coming of Christ, and the conviction that we are called to prepare people for His return.

Seventh-day Adventist Preaching and the Great Controversy

It is the book of Revelation that gives us the clearest picture for Adventism's message. Our message is painted against the backdrop of the war spoken of in Revelation that began in heaven and will be concluded here on earth. "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Rev 12:7-9, NKJV). Later on, it would be revealed to John that the animosity of the devil would be most especially directed at the last part of the church existing at the

end of time, “the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 12:17).

It was the Adventist pioneer Joseph Bates that would see in these verses a call to obey the commandments of God including the fourth commandment that enjoined the Sabbath. And according to Knight, he would be one of the first to link these verses in chapter 12 to chapters 13 and 14 in Revelation, and a struggle over worship and the Sabbath. “Thus from a study of the Bible, Bates developed the great controversy theology.”¹²

Whatever might have been the core of the great controversy theology, it came to include not just the Sabbath and obedience, but concepts that would be fundamental to the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Encapsulated in the theme of this doctrine are answers to questions about the origin of evil, where Satan came from, why he was allowed to exist, the fall of man, the cause of suffering, and God’s answer to the crisis.

Embedded even further into the heart of this doctrine is the freedom of choice that God has given His creatures, and His desire for an obedience that springs from our love for Him. It teaches that love cannot be forced or compelled. It must be given freely, by choice, or it is not love.

The theme of the great controversy also teaches that the freedom to choose has incredible power for good or bad. The law of consequences is a law that even children begin to learn at a very young age. God gave His children the freedom to choose, but that freedom carried with it terrible consequences. And every time someone is struck down

¹²Knight, 43.

by disaster or taken by disease, we are reminded of the bad choices made by Adam and Eve.

I have found that one of my greatest assets in preaching is the great controversy. In ministering to those who have lost loved ones, I have found it incredibly powerful that I can tell the grieving that this is not what the Lord wanted. He did not intend that we would go through this terrible loss. The reason we are here is because humanity was given the freedom to choose, and our parents chose the path of disobedience.

The good news is that the Lord did not leave us to perish in our sin. At the fall of Adam and Eve, God revealed the plan “foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:20). In His infinite love, provision had already been made to meet the emergency of sin. The cross would become the focal point of revealing the love of God, and giving again the appeal to choose Him.

While the theme of the great controversy is not strictly unique to Seventh-day Adventists,¹³ no other group has spent nearly as much time endeavoring to comprehend and explain the issues of this conflict. But whenever tragedy strikes or disaster comes, our answers make sense, and deal effectively with fundamental questions. More than that, it vindicates the character of God and reveals that He is a God of love, and is not responsible for the suffering that sin has caused. The theme of the great controversy is

¹³Matthew Henry reveals that he has a basic perception of the war between Christ and Satan in his comments on Luke 10:18. Here he interprets what he thinks Christ might have been saying to the disciples in these words: “Some have given another sense of this, as looking back to the fall of the angels, and designed for a caution to these disciples, lest their success should puff them up with pride: ‘I saw angels turned into devils by pride: that was the sin for which Satan was cast down from heaven, where he had been an angel of light I saw it, and give you an intimation of it lest you, being lifted up with pride should fall into that condemnation of the devil, who fell by pride,’ 1 Tim. 3:6.” Henry maintains a similar position in his comments on Isa 14:13, 14. See *Matthew Henry’s Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991).

one of the best tools for preaching that we have.

Proclaiming the Gospel in the Context of the Three Angels' Messages

I was once asked whether I believed in a “finished gospel.” In answering, I said that it depended on what was meant. If it meant that Christ died once for all humanity and that His death was a complete atonement for sin, then yes I believed in a “finished gospel.” But then I asked a question of my own. When is the work of salvation done? Some would say “at the cross.” My contention is that receiving the benefits of the plan of salvation is not done until we are standing in the gates of heaven, and know that we are finally home. The longing for and expectation of the second coming of Christ to take us home is at the very core of our existence as Seventh-day Adventists. The purpose for the gospel will not be accomplished until the Lord welcomes us back to our Eden home, and gives us access to the Tree of Life.

We see our preaching of the gospel as a fulfillment of the prophecy given in Rev 14:6, 7: “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.’” The proclamation of the gospel at the end of time is given in the context of the judgment hour, a call to obey the commandments of God, and the nearing of the return of Jésus.

Joseph Bates¹⁴ would be one of the first Adventists to see in these verses a symbol of the people of God going forward to proclaim the last warning message to a lost world.

But later, Ellen White would add her emphasis in these words:

These three angels represent the people who accept the light of God's messages, and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth. Christ declared to His followers, "Ye are the light of the world." To every soul that accepts Jesus, the cross of Calvary speaks: "Behold the worth of the soul.' Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.'" Nothing is to be permitted to hinder this work. It is the all-important work for this time, and it is to be far-reaching as eternity.¹⁵

It is within the context of this threefold message that the Seventh-day Adventist preaching of the cross gains power. We preach the message of salvation through Christ knowing that time is running out, that the hour of the judgment is here, that the loyal children of God will obey His commandments, and that Jesus is coming back soon to take His children home.

The Power of the Seventh-day Adventist Message

When the attacks took place on the World Trade Center buildings, there were well-known Christian ministers that stood in front of television cameras and gave half-hearted attempts to speak to the issue of God's sovereignty and will, and then said: "We don't know why these things happen." The events of 9/11 gave Seventh-day Adventists a golden opportunity to stand up and assure people that God is not the author of suffering. He is not the one responsible for the tragic loss of life. The Great Controversy helps us to explain the war behind the war; the battle between Christ and Satan that began in heaven

¹⁴Joseph Bates is considered one of the co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He would become one of the foremost promoters of the Sabbath doctrine.

¹⁵Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, January 25, 1910, par. 5.

and has been continued here on earth. We can talk effectively about the freedom of choice that God gave to His children. The circumstances we find ourselves in are the result of the choices made by Adam and Eve to step on to the path of disobedience—a path that their children have also chosen. We can speak to God’s solution to the problem—the gift of His Son to pay for the guilt of humanity, restoring to us the opportunity to choose again. The Adventist message is a message of hope and assurance, taking in the biblical prophecies warning of tribulation prior to the coming of Jesus. And our message speaks to the finish of the work of redemption when we will stand in the gates of the New Jerusalem and be welcomed home by our Redeemer.

Rather than minimizing the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I think that we are called to maximize those parts of our message that have given us an explanation for the things that are going on around us. Looking at what is taking place in the world, our answers make sense. While God does not *need* our help in anything, He has chosen to communicate His message and His truth through His representatives here on earth. Whatever methods we might use to reach people for Christ, it would be foolishness to abandon the elements of the Seventh-day Adventist faith that have given force and power to our message.

The Adventist Message and Mission at the Crossroads

George Knight in his book *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* expresses his concern that if Adventism loses its “apocalyptic vision,” it will lose its reason for existence.¹⁶ He gives an honest account of our history, and the fact

¹⁶Knight, 11.

that we became more concerned about preaching a series of doctrines rather than preaching Christ. Somewhere along the way, we lost the connection between the cross and those things that we taught.

As we come full circle and recognize the centrality of Jesus and the cross, the tendency of some has been to minimize the “apocalyptic” part of our message as if it is inconsistent or irrelevant to the gospel. Knight clarifies this issue and points us in the right direction in this comment:

The struggle for a balanced Adventism has been at the center of the historical development of Seventh-day Adventist theology. Over time we have oscillated between overemphasizing those aspects of our belief system that make us Christian and those that distinguish us as distinctively Adventist. Today we have in the church what I call the Adventist Adventists, who see everything the denomination teaches to be uniquely Adventist and groan a bit when we call ourselves evangelical. On the other extreme are those Adventists that we can describe as Christian Christians. Those at that pole of the denomination are overjoyed to be evangelical and shy away from Ellen White, the eschatological implications of the Sabbath, the heavenly sanctuary, and so on. Fortunately, in the middle we find some who might be styled as Christian Adventists, whose Adventism finds meaning in the evangelical framework that we share with other Christians.¹⁷

In 1890, Ellen White would write that “as a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain. We must preach Christ in the law, and there will be sap and nourishment in the preaching that will be as food to the famishing flock of God.”¹⁸

The materials presented in the book *Feed My Sheep* were actually presented by H. M. S. Richards as a lectureship on preaching in 1957 at Washington Missionary College. His emphasis on the gospel in our preaching came just forty-three years after

¹⁷Knight, 13.

¹⁸Ellen G. White, “Christ Prayed for Unity Among His Disciples,” *The Review and Herald*, March 11, 1890, par. 13.

the death of Ellen White. That emphasis may very well be an indication that as a denomination we were still coming out of a tunnel of Christ-less preaching. It was a needed correction to the tendency of merely emphasizing the doctrines of the church and leaving out the gospel. But is it not also possible that we face an equal and opposite danger of thinking that emphasizing the gospel does away with the need for the distinct apocalyptic message of Adventism? The Seventh-day Adventist church has been called a “movement.” It is reflective of the idea that we are moving towards a conclusion—an end. Our preaching points to the fulfillment of prophecy and the return of Jesus to take us home. If we are not careful, we could end up entering another tunnel of *pointless* preaching—preaching that is no different than anyone else’s.

The challenge for us as Seventh-day Adventists is to see Christ in our entire message—to see Him as the center of the messages given in Rev 12-14. Knight calls this perspective *Neoapocalypticism*, and he makes this powerful point:

Neoapocalypticism does not shy away from the great controversy scenario set forth in Revelation 12 through 14. Instead, it recognizes that the center of the struggle is not mere outward obedience but a heart relationship with the Creator God. Such a relationship leads to total allegiance in a worship that overflows into a daily life of love that is partially expressed in the keeping of all of God’s commandments. Thus neoapocalypticism does not put forth a message of legalism, but one of true worship that takes God at His word. After all, it is the Christ of the Revelation who forcefully claimed that at the end of time He would have a people who are

1. Patiently waiting for His return;
2. Keeping God’s commandments while waiting;
3. Maintaining a faith relationship with God through Him (Rev. 14:12).¹⁹

The last book of the Bible is called “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:1). It would be too easy to limit our understanding of Christ to the easy parts of Scripture—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But we have a responsibility to all of God’s Word. If

¹⁹Knight, 106.

Christ is the source of Revelation, then there is more that He intends to reveal about Himself in the message of this book, and we are faced with the hard task of sorting out and understanding that message. More importantly, I believe that it is that apocalyptic message that will give Adventism power as it proclaims the gospel to the last generation of earth's history.

CHAPTER 3

PREACHING IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST LITERATURE

By the time I began my studies at Andrews University, Dr. Edward Banks was already retired from teaching at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Because he still taught a few classes, I got to know him just well enough to greet him on the sidewalk occasionally. It would not be until my first pastoral district that I would come to know him as a friend. Planning a retreat for married couples in my church, I discovered that Dr. Banks and his wife Letah were considered the pioneers of *Marriage Enrichment* in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The weekend we spent together would become the basis of a long-time friendship.

Months after the weekend, I received a package in the mail with a document that had been written by Dr. Banks entitled “Sermon Types and Designs”¹. It was the first “book” on preaching that I had in my library that had been written by a Seventh-day Adventist. It would not be long before I discovered *The Preacher and His Preaching*² by I. H. Evans, and *The Divine Art of Preaching*³ by Carlyle B. Haynes, two well-known Seventh-day Adventist writers. Interestingly, both of those two books were published by

¹Edward C. Banks, “Sermon Types and Designs,” Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1980, Photocopied.

²I. H. Evans, *The Preacher and His Preaching* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1938).

³Carlyle B. Haynes, *The Divine Art of Preaching* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1939).

Review and Herald Publishing just one year apart—Evans in 1938, and Haynes in 1939. Afterward I discovered *Feed My Sheep*, a transcription of lectures on preaching given by H. M. S. Richards in 1957 at Takoma Park, Maryland. That series of lectures by Pastor Richards would be the start of the annual “H. M. S. Richards Lectureship on Preaching.” Roy Allen Anderson’s lectures in that series in 1963 would become the book *Preachers of Righteousness*⁴. Charles Bradford’s book *Preaching to the Times*⁵ published in 1972 was another collection of lectures given in the same series.

There have been others who have written on the topic of preaching that have helped to shape an Adventist perspective of the task. One of the first and foremost was Ellen G. White. *Ellen White on Preaching*, a compilation of her comments on preaching prepared by C. Mervyn Warren, was published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association in 2010. This compilation puts in one place some of Ellen White’s most significant statements on the task of the preacher.

Additions to the Seventh-day Adventist library on preaching would come through articles published in *Ministry* magazine, as well as books published by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. In 2000 the Ministerial Association published a book written by Steven Vitrano entitled *Preaching the Four Faces of Salvation*.⁶ While not strictly on the subject of preaching, it presents a good picture of the full message of salvation preached by the Adventist church. Another

⁴Roy Allan Anderson, *Preachers of Righteousness* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1963).

⁵Charles E. Bradford, *Preaching to the Times* (Hagerstown, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1970).

⁶Steven P. Vitrano, *Preaching the Four Faces of Salvation* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000).

book written in 2008 by George Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*,⁷ again does not directly address the topic of preaching. This book is important to note however, because it addresses the importance of the unique Seventh-day Adventist message and its relevance to the future of Adventism.

It is not possible in this chapter to give a complete perspective on everything ever written by Seventh-day Adventists on the topic of preaching; a few of the individuals mentioned will be looked at carefully, especially in the discussion of the content of Adventist preaching. Because of the prophetic authority she carries in the church, Ellen G. White's comments will be reviewed in some detail. A brief analysis of the books written by Carlyle B. Haynes and Roy Allen Anderson will be conducted because of their recognized contributions to preaching in Adventism. The books written by Bradford, Vitrano, and Knight will be referenced for their emphasis on the distinct message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Ellen G. White and the Unique Task of Seventh-day Adventist Preaching

From the beginning of its history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has seen the writings of Ellen G. White as Spirit-led guidance on how to fulfill its mission and purpose. Her inspired wisdom provided insight in matters of spiritual growth and development as well as instruction in how to conduct evangelistic outreach. The church's efforts to establish schools and health institutions all over the world are directly traceable to the influence and encouragement of Ellen White. She impacted in many ways the

⁷Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*.

formation and future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Likewise, she had much to say about ministers and their function.

Preaching and Sermons

Searching the writings of Ellen White on the topic of preaching is a rather daunting project. Using the *Legacy of Light* CD from the Ellen G. White Estate resulted in finding 6,517 records with some derivation of the word “preach” and fifty records with derivatives of the word “sermon.” Those records included everything from reminding us that “men will believe, not what the minister preaches, but what the church lives,”⁸ to telling us that “the most difficult sermon to preach and the hardest to practice is self-denial.”⁹ Clearly, White saw “preaching sermons” in much broader terms than just what happened in the pulpit on Sabbath morning. She saw sermons defined not only by what preachers said, but by how they lived. Preaching was not only an intellectual process of presenting theories, but it entailed sharing that which had transformed the heart of the preacher. The following statement is representative of the relationship she sees between the mind and the heart of the preacher.

The servants of God must have the truth in the soul. Said the angel: “They must get it warm from glory, carry it in their bosoms, and pour it out in the warmth and earnestness of the soul to those that hear.” A few that are conscientious are ready to decide from the weight of evidence; but it is impossible to move many with a mere theory of the truth. There must be a power to attend the truth, a living testimony to move them.¹⁰

⁸Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Review and Herald, 1909), 21.

⁹Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1947), 29.

¹⁰White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:113.

Pastoral Responsibilities Include More than Preaching

Ellen White also provided a reality check to those who think that the pastor's primary responsibilities are fulfilled in the pulpit. After the preaching is done, there is still more to do. The sermon was to be followed by further training that was both theoretical and practical.

The best help that ministers can give the members of our churches is not sermonizing, but planning work for them. Give each one something to do for others. Help all to see that as receivers of the grace of Christ they are under obligation to work for Him. And let all be taught how to work. Especially should those who are newly come to the faith should be educated to become laborers together with God.¹¹

There should be less preaching, and more teaching. There are those who want more definite light than they receive from hearing the sermons. Some need a longer time than do others to understand the points presented.¹²

Ellen White even indirectly addressed an issue that is a more current phenomenon in the Adventist Church—that of believing that the sole reason for coming to church is to hear a sermon. After talking about God's claims on every member to be involved in ministry for others, she makes this statement in *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 365:

Many who profess to be Christians neglect the claims of God, and yet they do not feel that in this there is any wrong. They know that the blasphemer, the murderer, the adulterer, deserves punishment; but as for them, *they enjoy the services of religion. They love to hear the gospel preached*, and therefore they think themselves Christians. Though they have spent their lives in caring for themselves, they will be as much surprised as was the unfaithful servant in the parable to hear the sentence, "Take the talent from him." Like the Jews, *they mistake the enjoyment of their blessings for the use they should make of them* (emphasis mine).¹³

It should not be read into any of these statements that Ellen White thought that the

¹¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:82.

¹²Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 407.

¹³*Ibid.*, 365.

role of the preacher was unimportant. These statements are presented to offer a balance in discussing the importance of preaching. They are a reminder that true spirituality is not found merely by sitting in church listening to sermons, however edifying they might be. The apostle James defines faith in terms of ministry to others: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (Jas 1:27). The church’s existence is not defined by being fed or attending meetings. Its existence is defined by ministry to the world in which it exists.

The Role of Preaching

What then, is the rightful role of preaching? Perhaps a good point at which to start is the commission given in Acts. As Christ is preparing to ascend to heaven, He is asked by the disciples whether He will now establish the kingdom. He responds, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; *and you shall be witnesses to Me* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:7, 8, emphasis supplied). The early church was given responsibility for bearing testimony to Christ—to His teachings, ministry, life, death, resurrection, and glorious return. That testimony was the substance of their gospel message—the “good news.”

One of Ellen White’s defining statements about the church states:

The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will

eventually be made manifest, even to “the principalities and powers in heavenly places,” the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10.¹⁴

If the purpose of the church is to be “God’s appointed agency for the salvation of humanity,” then preaching is also an integral part of God’s salvation plan. She expected the minister to understand the significance of that task.

We are never to forget that Christ teaches through His servants. There may be conversions without the instrumentality of a sermon. Where persons are so situated that they are deprived of every means of grace, they are wrought upon by the Spirit of God and convinced of the truth through reading the Word; but God's appointed means of saving souls is through “the foolishness of preaching.” Though human, and compassed with the frailties of humanity, men are God’s messengers; and the dear Savior is grieved when so little is affected by their labors. Every minister who goes out into the great harvest field should magnify his office.¹⁵

Warning was also given that the devil would work to make the sermon of no effect—to steal away God’s intended blessing in the message.

It is Satan’s settled purpose to cut off all communication between God and His people, that he may practice his deceptive wiles with no voice to warn them of their danger. If he can lead men to distrust the messenger or to attach no sacredness to the message, he knows that they will feel under no obligation to heed the word of God to them. And when light is set aside as darkness, Satan has things his own way.¹⁶

Advice to Preachers

H. M. S. Richards relates the story of an encounter between his father and Mrs. White on Sabbath morning just as the worship service was beginning. H. M. S. Richards would have been about five years old, and Ellen White would have been in her early seventies. Just as his father (H. M. J. Richards) was getting ready to speak, the door to

¹⁴Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 9.

¹⁵White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 5:300.

¹⁶Ibid.

the church opened and Ellen White, her son Willie, and her assistant Sarah MacInterfer walked in. Immediately he asked Mrs. White up to the platform to speak. She declined, indicating that if God had given him a message, she wanted to hear it. After the service, she pulled him aside and told him that she had been blessed by his message. She went on to tell him that if he continued to strain his voice as he had in the sermon, he would die a young man. “Later he said, ‘In those 15 minutes, I learned more about how to speak, how to breathe, than I did in all my courses in preaching in Battle Creek College.’”¹⁷

Ellen White’s advice to preachers would extend well beyond proper vocalization to encompass everything from cautions about the use of humorous anecdotes in the sermon¹⁸, to making the message clear and simple.¹⁹ Listed are some of the significant principles she wrote to Adventist pastors about preaching:

Knowing the Truth by Experience

She wrote frequently about the need for preachers to live by example the things they preach, and to be “converted” themselves.

Ministers should first feel the sanctifying influence of the truth upon their own hearts and in their own lives, and then their pulpit efforts will be enforced by their example out of the desk. Ministers need to be softened and sanctified themselves before God can in a special manner work with their efforts.²⁰

Not all who preach the truth to others are sanctified by it. Some have but faint views of the sacred character of the work. They fail to trust in God and to have all their works wrought in Him. Their inmost souls have not been converted. They have

¹⁷Robert E. Edwards, *H. M. S. Richards* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 33, 34.

¹⁸Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962), 318.

¹⁹White, *Gospel Workers*, 170.

²⁰White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:237, 238.

not in their daily life experienced the mystery of godliness. They are handling immortal truths, weighty as eternity, but are not careful and earnest to have these truths inwrought in their souls, made a part of themselves, so that they shall influence them in all they do. They are not so wedded to the principles which these truths inculcate that it is impossible to separate any part of the truth from them.”²¹

The Message and the Messenger Bound Together

Closely related to the conversion of the preacher, is Mrs. White’s injunction not to allow the quality of a sermon to be judged merely on technique or structure. While she did give advice on these issues, she saw the effectiveness of the sermon as inseparable from the preacher’s spiritual relationship to Jesus Christ. That relationship, empowered by the Holy Spirit, was the key to successful preaching. In fact, the danger of focusing on technique alone, without the relationship, was that we risk directing the hearers to ourselves rather than to Christ.

No man is qualified to stand in the sacred desk unless he has felt the transforming influence of the truth of God upon his own soul. Then, and not till then, can he by precept and example rightly represent the life of Christ. But many in their labors exalt themselves rather than their Master, and the people are converted to the minister instead of to Christ.

I am pained to know that some who preach the present truth today are really unconverted men. They are not connected with God. They have a head religion, but no conversion of the heart; and these are the very ones who are the most self-confident and self-sufficient; and this self-sufficiency will stand in the way of their gaining that experience which is essential to make them effective workers in the Lord’s vineyard.²²

Preach on Important Themes

In one statement quoted in the book *Pastoral Ministry*, Ellen White revealed that

²¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:334.

²²White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:527.

she was concerned about not wasting time on minutiae.

Flowery discourses will not be sufficient to feed the soul of the famishing child of God. The following desire will give a voice to the longing of many a heart that is fed on what are called “smart sermons.” An intelligent man remarked, “O that my pastor would give me something besides pretty flowers, and brilliant periods, and intellectual treats! My soul is famishing for the Bread of Life. I long for something simple and nourishing and scriptural.” Daniel Webster gave utterance to these forcible words: “If clergymen in our day would return to the simplicity of gospel truth, and preach more to individuals and less to the crowd, there would not be so much complaint of the decline of true religion. Many of the ministers of the present day take their text from St. Paul, and preach from the newspapers. When they do so, I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts, rather than listen. I want my pastor to come to me in the Spirit of the gospel, saying, ‘You are mortal. Your probation is brief; your work must be done speedily. . . . You are hastening to the bar of God. The Judge standeth before the door.’”²³

The Education of the Preacher

Ellen White was an advocate of training and education when it came to preaching. She felt that it was a necessary preparation in meeting the arguments against truth that would come. Even continuing education would be urged as necessary.

Some young men who enter the field are not successful in teaching the truth to others because they have not been educated themselves. Those who cannot read correctly should learn, and they should become apt to teach before they attempt to stand before the public. The teachers in our schools are not accepted until they have passed a critical examination and their capabilities to teach have been tested by competent judges. No less caution should be used in the examination of ministers.²⁴

We see the need of encouraging higher ideas of education and of employing more trained men in the ministry. Those who do not obtain the right kind of education before they enter upon God’s work are not competent to accept this holy trust and to carry forward the work of reformation. Yet all should continue their education after they engage in the work. They must have the Word of God abiding in them. We need more cultivation, refinement, and nobility of soul in our laborers. Such an improvement as this would show results in eternity.²⁵

²³White, *Pastoral Ministry*, 188.

²⁴White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:406.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 5:584.

Even after the formal training was over, she expected us to continue the learning process by being well read, and by continual Bible study and prayer. It was a concern to Ellen White that many were not able to give an answer for the things that they believed.

Ministers should devote time to reading, to study, to meditation and prayer. They should store the mind with useful knowledge, committing to memory portions of Scripture, tracing out the fulfillment of the prophecies, and learning the lessons which Christ gave to His disciples. Take a book with you to read when traveling on the cars or waiting in the depot. Employ every spare moment in doing something.²⁶

I have been shown that many who profess to have knowledge of present truth know not what they believe. They do not understand the evidences of their faith. They have no just appreciation of the work for the present time. When the time of trial shall come, there are men now preaching to others who will find, upon examining the positions they hold, that there are many things for which they can give no satisfactory reason. Until thus tested they knew not their great ignorance. And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe; but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness.²⁷

Sister White addressed many other issues in preaching such as the length of a sermon, the organization of material and the method of delivery. And while it is not possible here to be exhaustive about everything that she wrote on the topic, it is clear that she was committed to the importance of preaching in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church's Purpose and Preaching

To understand what Ellen White thought should be preached from the pulpits of the Adventist Church, you would have to look carefully at why she believed this church was here in the first place. She saw the Seventh-day Adventist Church as having been commissioned by God for a special purpose at the end of time.

²⁶White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 4:412.

²⁷Ibid., 5:707.

Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world. By the great cleaver of truth He has cut them out from the quarry of the world, and brought them into connection with Himself. He has made them His representatives, and has called them to be ambassadors for Him in the last work of salvation. The greatest wealth of truth ever entrusted to mortals, the most solemn and fearful warnings ever sent by God to man, have been committed to them to be given to the world.²⁸

It is in the context of the last days of earth's history, the time just before the return of Jesus, that the mission of Seventh-day Adventists becomes clearer and more urgent.

In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the Word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import--the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.²⁹

Ellen White had a firm conviction that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was called by God to the mission of preparing people for the return of Christ. If you were to distill the fundamental purposes of Adventist preaching from her writings, it would boil down to just a few critical items: first, pointing people to Jesus as Savior and Lord, and second, preparing them for heaven. And in many ways, it seems as if these two points of evaluation form the basis of determining what is either good or bad about the content of sermons preached in the church.

Seventh-day Adventist Preaching

What is clear from her writings is that Ellen White was deeply committed to the distinct message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Repeatedly, she warned about attempts to change or blur what had come to us through earnest Bible study and prayer.

²⁸White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:138.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 9:19.

Messages of every order and kind have been urged upon Seventh-day Adventists, to take the place of the truth which, point by point, has been sought out by prayerful study, and testified to by the miracle-working power of the Lord. But the way marks which have made us what we are are to be preserved, and they will be preserved, as God has signified through His word and the testimony of His Spirit. He calls upon us to hold firmly, with the grip of faith, to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority.³⁰

No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are, is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world.³¹

Given the strength of these references, it is important to see how Ellen White defined the “landmarks of truth.” There is one statement that was written in 1889, the year after Jones and Waggoner’s presentations on righteousness by faith that is significant. It was a response to the idea that the message of righteousness by faith was a departure from the old landmarks. However, it defines in general terms what Ellen White thought were the essential elements of Seventh-day Adventist teaching and doctrine.

The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God’s people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels’ messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, “The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God’s law. The non immortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks.³²

In the September 11, 1888 issue of the *Review and Herald*, Ellen White addressed the issue of unity in the church, and keeping minor disagreements out of the forefront.

³⁰Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1946), 52.

³¹White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 6:17.

³²White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 30.

When she referenced truths that were critical to our faith, she used the term “testing truths.”

A noble, devoted, spiritual worker will see in the great testing truths that constitute the solemn message to be given to the world, sufficient reason for keeping all minor differences concealed, rather than to bring them forth to become subjects of contention. Let the mind dwell upon *the great work of redemption, the soon coming of Christ and the commandments of God*; and it will be found that there is enough food for thought in these subjects to take up the entire attention (italics supplied).³³

As she would continue to speak and write about the unique message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White would come to see the “three angels’ messages”—with emphasis on the third and final angel’s message—as encompassing all of the distinctive aspects of the final warning to be given to the world.

The truth for this time, the third angel’s message, is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, meaning with increasing power, as we approach the great final test. . . . The present truth for this time comprises the messages, the third angel’s message succeeding the first and the second. The presentation of this message with all it embraces is our work. We stand as the remnant people in these last days to promulgate the truth and swell the cry of the third angel’s wonderful distinct message, giving the trumpet a certain sound. Eternal truth, which we have adhered to from the beginning, is to be maintained in all its increasing importance to the close of probation.³⁴

Not only were these truths to be proclaimed to a world that needed to hear them, but they were to be repeated and reinforced in the minds and hearts of new converts.

If those who knew the truth and were established in it were indeed in need of having its importance kept over before them and their minds stirred up by the repetition of it, how important that this work is not neglected for those newly come to the faith. Everything in the interpretation of the Scripture is new and strange to them,

³³Ellen G. White, “The Work of the Minister,” *Review and Herald*, 11 September 1888, par. 8.

³⁴Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell and wife, 13 August 1900, Letter 121, 1900, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

and they will be in danger of losing the force of the truth and receiving ideas not correct.³⁵

The Centrality of Christ in the Seventh-day Adventist Message

This leads to what may be one of the most important aspects of how Ellen White saw the distinct Seventh-day Adventist message. She saw all of the fundamental teachings of the church as anchored in Jesus Christ. She also firmly believed that no sermon should ever be preached where Christ wasn't the center and focus of the message.

It should be the burden of every messenger to set forth the fullness of Christ. When the free gift of Christ's righteousness is not presented, the discourses are dry and spiritless; the sheep and the lambs are not fed. Said Paul, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." There is marrow and fatness in the gospel. Jesus is the living center of everything. Put Christ into every sermon.³⁶

In fact, Ellen White thought that the fundamental truths of the Bible could only be understood correctly in the light of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary.

The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption--the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.³⁷

These words parallel what Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:2: "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." The apostle knew that the answer for many of the problems in the church at Corinth would be found only in Christ

³⁵Ellen G. White to John and Julia Corliss, 25 December 1886, Letter 60, 1886, Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

³⁶Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970), 182.

³⁷White, *Gospel Workers*, 315.

and the cross. To Ellen White, the great Bible truths that have been the special burden of the Seventh-day Adventist Church can only find real meaning in the context of “the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.”

Ellen White’s Model for Seventh-day Adventist Preaching

A model of preaching that fit what Ellen White felt was important for the Seventh-day Adventist Church would emphasize the distinctive doctrines that make up the core of the three angels’ messages in the context of salvation through Jesus Christ. A sermon on the Sabbath would no longer be just about the Sabbath, but the Sabbath in the context of the cross of Calvary. Preaching on the judgment would ultimately be about redemption in Jesus Christ. A sermon on what happens at death would be a sermon about immortality only through faith in Jesus. Even the Bible prophecies that have played a large part in the history and mission of Adventism are to be understood in the context of the cross. “Ministers should present the sure word of prophecy as the foundation of the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. The prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation should be carefully studied, and in connection with them the words, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”³⁸

Making every sermon point to Jesus Christ and the cross of Calvary is a task that takes prayer, thought and intentionality. The questions to be asked as we begin to prepare our message are: What is the topic of this sermon? And, how does it glorify Jesus and point to Him as the Savior of humanity?

³⁸White, *Evangelism*, 196.

“The cross, the cross of Calvary presented again and again, plainly dwelt upon in every discourse, will prove the life-healing balm, will reveal the beauty and excellence of virtue.”³⁹

The Urgency of Our Message

The motivation for distinct Seventh-day Adventist preaching isn't merely to maintain a separate identity, or to justify our existence. What we do as a church is seen in the context of the conclusion of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Satan is on the ground endeavoring to keep people asleep and entranced. He is doing all he can to blind them to the real issues: to keep them from hearing the final message of warning and to turn them away from Christ. Adventists see their mission as alerting people to the impending crises and proclaiming the message of salvation. They see their mission as preparing others to meet Jesus when He returns. Every sermon ought to be preached with the goal of reaching someone for Jesus. Merely conveying information is not the purpose of preaching. Winning the hearts of men and women to Jesus, and preparing them to go home with Him is.

All heaven is astir, engaged in preparing for the day of God's vengeance, the day of Zion's deliverance. The time of tarrying is almost ended. The pilgrims and strangers who have so long been seeking a better country are almost home. I feel as if I must cry aloud, homeward bound! Rapidly we are nearing the time when Christ will come to gather His redeemed to Himself.⁴⁰

We are now living in the closing scenes of this world's history. Let men tremble with the sense of the responsibility of knowing the truth. The ends of the world are come. Proper consideration of these things will lead all to make an entire consecration of all that they have and are to their God. . . .

³⁹Ellen G. White, *The Voice in Speech and Song* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988), 315.

⁴⁰White, *Evangelism*, 219.

The weighty obligation of warning a world of its coming doom is upon us. From every direction, far and near, calls are coming to us for help. The church, devotedly consecrated to the work, is to carry the message to the world: Come to the gospel feast; the supper is prepared, come. . . . Crowns, immortal crowns, are to be won. The kingdom of heaven is to be gained. A world, perishing in sin, is to be enlightened. The lost pearl is to be found. The lost sheep is to be brought back in safety to the fold. Who will join in the search? Who will bear the light to those who are wandering in the darkness of error?"⁴¹

Reading statements such as these should humble us as we realize the magnitude of our responsibility. Whatever topic we choose to preach on, whatever passage we expound on, if salvation in Christ is not the center of that message, then we have profoundly failed in our task. It is possible to make someone a Sabbath keeper, but if Christ is left out, we have not made them a Christian.

Distinct Adventist Preaching in the Literature

In order to define Adventist preaching, I will be referring to a select but important group of Adventist preachers and authors. They are important not only because they were and are well known, but because they speak clearly to the unique Adventist message and mission.

Carlyle B. Haynes

Carlyle Boynton Haynes (1882-1958), a well known Seventh-day Adventist evangelist and pastor, was also a prolific writer authoring forty-five books and numerous articles. He served as an administrator in the church, notably as the director of the Adventist War Service Commission during both world wars helping Seventh-day

⁴¹Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 23, 1895; *Idem.*, *Evangelism*, 16.

Adventist young people maintain their non-combatant status in a time of conflict.⁴² Later it would be a natural fit for him to become an advocate for Adventists who did not want to become part of the growing labor union movement in the United States as the church's Secretary of the Council on Industrial Relations.⁴³

His book *The Divine Art of Preaching* would come out of his work preparing a training manual for evangelists. Beginning the manuscript by talking about the evangelist's primary role as a preacher, he found that he could not stop with one chapter. Before he had finished, twenty-one chapters had been written on preaching, and the intended book *Living Evangelism in Action* was pushed aside for *The Divine Art of Preaching*.⁴⁴

Haynes emphasized the importance of preaching by saying that "all that the minister has to do among men centers in preaching. That is his chief business."⁴⁵ He offered this plea: "I appeal to our ministers, licensed and ordained, in field or departmental service, in administrative or institutional capacity, to our ministerial students and ministerial interns, to give special attention to preaching. Make it the chief feature and factor of your ministry."⁴⁶

He believed it to be possible for every preacher to improve. With study and

⁴²Register of the Carlyle B. Haynes Collection, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, October 2006.

⁴³Richard W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979, 515.

⁴⁴Haynes, *The Divine Art of Preaching*, 11.

⁴⁵Ibid., 15.

⁴⁶Ibid., 20.

effort, preachers could enjoy more success. “In whatever class you who read these words may be, I bring you a word of encouragement and good cheer. Whether you are above the average, just average, or below the average, you can be better, some of you much better. And at once!”⁴⁷

Haynes would emphasize devotion and commitment both to seeking a closer relationship with God through prayer and to becoming a more determined Bible student.⁴⁸ He encouraged faithfully setting aside time for regular study saying that “the minister of the closing message will, therefore, look upon himself as a student now, and a student always. He will not be satisfied with his attainments. He will not be contented to put together a few quotations from good books, or string together a few clippings, and call it a sermon. He will be ever reaching forward to the things that are before him”⁴⁹

Haynes Emphasis on Preaching Christ

Haynes’ views on what should be included in Seventh-day Adventist preaching begin with Christ as the center. In the chapter entitled “Preaching Christ and His Cross,” he says, “The innermost secret of effective preaching is to present Christ and His atonement for sin. This is to be the one supreme burden of all that we preach to men.”⁵⁰ He then quotes Paul in 1 Cor. 2:2, “For I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.”

Magnifying Christ as Savior and Lord is the only kind of preaching that God has

⁴⁷Haynes, 25.

⁴⁸Ibid., 29.

⁴⁹Ibid., 42.

⁵⁰Ibid., 71.

promised to bless, according to Haynes.⁵¹ That does not mean that saying the name of Jesus in the sermon every ten minutes makes it a Christ-centered sermon. He suggests that we need to be cautious about forcing “unnatural interpretations on God’s word for the purpose of constantly introducing the name of Christ.”⁵² Having offered that caution, Haynes goes on to give several examples in the writings of Paul, where in dealing with particular problems in the churches, Christ is continually preached.⁵³

Christ and Doctrine

In chapter eight, “Preaching Doctrinally,” Haynes tells us that preaching Christ does not preclude preaching on the doctrines of the Bible. He then defines those doctrines in terms of how they relate to Christ:

The preaching of Christian doctrine, especially in these days, should be full and explicit. It should comprehend within its circle the whole mystery of Christ, in His person, His offices, and His work. It should be so well rounded and complete and comprehensive that it takes in His creative power, His mediation, His sovereignty and superintendence, His worship in all its multiplied forms and services, His revealed truth in the Scriptures, His incarnation, His ministry, His power, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His intercessory and priestly ministration, His law, His gift of eternal life, His judgship, His coming again, and His everlasting kingdom.⁵⁴

Haynes then gives us a review of the distinct Seventh-day Adventist doctrines and connects them to Jesus Christ:

There is no true doctrine of the Scripture separated from Christ. In its presentation, therefore, it should be connected with Him. Consequently, it is in the light that flows from Calvary that we are to present instruction to men on every doctrine and phase of the threefold message. This will leave nothing out. It will cover

⁵¹Haynes., 72.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid., 72, 73.

⁵⁴Ibid., 93.

the Bible, the law, the Sabbath, the nature and the destiny of man, life only in Christ, the sanctuary and its cleansing, the judgment, the second coming of Christ, baptism and the ordinance of humility, the Lord's supper, spiritual gifts, tithing, stewardship; Indeed, everything connected with the love of God, the work of Christ, the ministration of the Spirit, in every department of privilege, duty, promise, and hope.⁵⁵

Referring to those who preach only on favorite doctrines or passages, Haynes warns that we need to preach faithfully the whole message.

We are under solemn obligation to declare our testimony without concealment, not forcing testing truths into undue prominence, indeed, but not daring to suppress or withhold them in their Scriptural connection. We are wisely to adapt our statements to the spiritual capacities of those to whom we preach. But we are not to omit anything that belongs to the truth of God for today.⁵⁶

The Transforming Power of Truth

In chapter nine "Preaching Practically," Haynes becomes more specific about the connection between Christ and Bible truth. He does not settle for Christianity being merely an intellectual assent to the truth. It must change the life and reshape the heart.

It is rather transformation into the image of God. It is being like-minded with Christ. It is not merely the acceptance of the *teaching* of Christ. It is the acceptance of the *life* of Christ. Genuine religion demands not merely an external profession of our allegiance to God, but an inward life devoted to His service.⁵⁷

Truth must be infused into the life as well as accepted by the understanding. It must regulate the will as well as direct the creed. Not only must it cast the opinions into a new frame, but it must cast the heart into a new mold. It is a transforming, as well as an intellectual, principle. It changes the tastes, gives activity to the inclinations and, together with a new heart, produces a new life.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Haynes, 93, 94.

⁵⁶Ibid., 95.

⁵⁷Ibid., 103.

⁵⁸Ibid., 104, 105

Practical Christianity, then, is just the actual operation of Christian doctrine in the life.⁵⁹

Haynes then illustrates the transformational properties of key doctrines. The “sanctuary question” is not to be preached merely as a doctrine, but as a means of change. The “spiritual meaning” of the sanctuary should lead to the truth “that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you . . . therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”⁶⁰

The “investigative judgment” is not properly understood unless it leads us to cry with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Ps 139:23, 24.”⁶¹ The “cleansing of the sanctuary” should lead to the prayer, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Ps. 51:2.”⁶² The message of the “second coming of Christ” from this perspective, becomes a compelling power to live godly lives.⁶³

From Haynes’ point of view, preaching is not just for conveying information, but for conversion, for transformation and ultimately salvation.

We must seek to make our sermons more than intellectual efforts, more than orthodox declarations, more than something merely to please the ear or to give entertainment to the mind. We must make them such as the Spirit can use to save a soul, to feed men hungering for the bread of life, to encourage and refresh pilgrims who are weary and

⁵⁹Haynes, 105.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., 105, 106.

⁶²Ibid., 106.

⁶³Ibid.

fainting, to bind up hearts that are broken and bleeding, and to bring lost souls home to God.⁶⁴

Despite its age, Haynes' book *The Divine Art of Preaching* is a classic in Seventh-day Adventist preaching. It is well worth having as a part of one's preaching library. It is also interesting to note that this book was far from the last thing he had to say about preaching. In 1951 the Review and Herald Publishing Association published a report of the addresses and panel discussions of the 1950 pre-session council of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. One of the presentations given was by Carlyle B. Haynes. One paragraph in that presentation gives a powerful example of the centrality of Christ in the teachings of the Bible:

It is not preaching Christ merely to manage to use Christ's name on an average of once every ten words of the sermon. Christ cannot be adequately, effectively, rightly preached merely by saying His name. It must be explained who He is, what He has done, what He is now doing, what He proposes to do, and what He means to man and the world. And all of that cannot be done without explaining creation, the Sabbath, the nature of man, the sanctuary, the incarnation, the virgin birth, the atonement, the sacrificial and expiatory death, the resurrection, the ascension, the intercessory priesthood, the nature of sin, the law of God, the way of salvation, and the coming again of the world's Redeemer. That is doctrinal preaching—and that is, or should be, Christ-centered preaching.⁶⁵

That is about as good a definition of Christ-centered, Seventh-day Adventist preaching as can be found.

Roy Allen Anderson

Roy Allen Anderson (1895-1985) was born in Melbourne, Australia, and received

⁶⁴Haynes, 108.

⁶⁵Haynes, "Preaching the Full Message," in *Aflame for God: Addresses and Panel Discussions of the 1950 Pre-session Council of the Ministerial Association, San Francisco, Calif.* Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1951), 139.

his education at the Australasian Missionary College in New South Wales, Australia. He did graduate work at the University of Southern California, and graduated with a D.D. from Andrews University.

He began his work for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in pastoral ministry in Australia in 1918. In 1920, he assumed responsibilities in the ministerial department for the church in New Zealand. From 1930 on, he was a pastor and well-known evangelist in London, England. In 1936 Anderson came to the United States to serve as an evangelist in the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists until 1938 when he began teaching at La Sierra College in Riverside, California. Later in life he accepted the position as the associate secretary of the Ministerial Association of the Adventist world church. In 1950 he became the secretary of the Ministerial Association. During that time, he also edited *Ministry* magazine.⁶⁶

In May of 1962, Dr. Anderson participated as the guest lecturer for the H. M. S. Richards Lectureship on Preaching at Columbia Union College. “The stated theme of the lectures was ‘Expository Preaching in the Adventist Church.’”⁶⁷ His book *Preachers of Righteousness* published in 1963 is a transcript of his lectures.

Preachers of the Word

In Anderson’s first lecture, “Redigging the Wells of Expository Preaching,” he defines what it means to be a preacher as “one who can draw back the veil that hides the

⁶⁶Edwin Francis Buck Jr., “A Study of the H. M. S. Richards Lecture-ship with Emphasis Upon Some of the Basic Elements of Persuasive Preaching,” 1968, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI, 13.

⁶⁷Ibid.

face of God, one who has the authentic touch to make the unseen real.”⁶⁸ He then defines the source of the preacher’s power as being the Word of God. “And everything being equal, the more of that Word there is in the sermon, the more moving will be its message. That is why expository preaching is so vital.”⁶⁹

Dr. Anderson points to men such as Luther, Knox, Wesley, and Spurgeon as being men who changed their worlds because they preached the Word of God. “Their sermons were more than spiritual palliatives for troubled minds. They were mighty revelations of God, and they came bashing forth in fiery splendor from the Scriptures. The Reformers were primarily expository preachers. In their hands the Bible came alive and the pulpit became an authoritative voice.”⁷⁰ Using the biblical analogy of the wells of Abraham being filled up by the Philistines, Anderson says that we need to dig again in the wells of God’s Word.⁷¹

He placed a high priority on preaching using the example of the early church and the decision of the apostles to re-organize the church so as to not be distracted from the ministry of the word.

Were we to examine our own program, we might find that like those early leaders we may be putting our emphasis on other things. Much is expected of us today. Pastors have to function as administrators, financiers, counselors on domestic problems, specialists in religious education, and of course, experts in public relations. Though all these areas of service are good, it is as preachers of the Word that we build our churches. There never was greater need for real preaching.⁷²

⁶⁸Roy Allen Anderson, *Preachers of Righteousness* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1963), 15.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid., 16.

⁷¹Ibid., 20.

⁷²Ibid., 23.

But real preaching comes as a result of the Word of God coming alive in our own hearts. In Anderson's view, real preaching comes only from those that are on fire for God.

To have the power of God in our message, His Word must first become a living, flaming thing in the heart of the preacher. It must lay its warm hand upon us, bringing with it the unction from Heaven. If our hearts are aflame, then our people will recognize the leaping forth of the fires of God. Aim to be real preachers, brethren, not just talkers or lecturers. Philosophy and logic are as ice, but Bible religion is fire. It has been well said that the sermon gets to be a sermon, and is saved from being a lecture, by being made and delivered in the Holy Ghost.

When we have prepared the sermon and set down the outline, then it must come off the paper and get into our hearts, for only that sermon which has moved the preacher will move the people.⁷³

Real preaching also comes from earnest prayer. Dr. Anderson, using the story of Elijah raising the little boy to life in 1 Kgs 17 as an analogy, says that just as Elijah prayed over the lifeless form of this child, we are to take our sermon to the Lord and pray.

Brethren, when we have done our best in preparation, then we must take our sermon outline of bones and sinews and go to the place of prayer. Stretch yourself upon that undelivered sermon until it comes alive, until its eyes open and look into your very soul. Dare we come before our people with a dry, lifeless treatise? Preaching is witnessing. But how can we bear witness to what we have neither seen nor felt?

"It is not argument we need so much as unction. A burning heart soon finds a flaming tongue," said Spurgeon. "How glorious are the words of him whose lips are blistered by the fires of God!" We have been called to be preachers of righteousness. Then let us pray that the fires of love will be kindled on the altar of our poor hearts. Then our witness will be with power.⁷⁴

⁷³Anderson, 42, 43.

⁷⁴Ibid., 44.

The Discipline of Study

While Anderson was a supporter of education, he knew that the preacher had to have more. The preacher had to have a call from God and be a person of vision,⁷⁵ two things that could not be “educated” into him. For Dr. Anderson, these came only as we traveled through the “desert” of trial and experience. As examples of those who were changed and prepared by their experiences to proclaim God’s message, Anderson talks of Jonah in the fish’s belly,⁷⁶ and Moses spending eighty years in the desert with difficult people.⁷⁷

Other examples include Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Luther,⁷⁸ all people who faced challenges and difficulties—who spent time in the desert learning of God before they were qualified to do what He had called them to do.

Look where you will, the story is ever the same. Those through whom the Lord has done anything worthwhile have had to pay a price, not only in personal loss and suffering, but in diligent, self-sacrificing study and application. The Word of God has heights yet unsealed, depths yet unplumbed, and beauties beyond our comprehension.⁷⁹

According to Anderson, the distinguishing characteristic of the great preachers of Christianity was that they were earnest students of the Bible. Talking about G. Campbell Morgan, one of the most well known expository preachers of the twentieth century, he related the fact that Morgan would read the book he was about to analyze fifty times

⁷⁵Anderson, 45.

⁷⁶Ibid., 46, 47.

⁷⁷Ibid., 48.

⁷⁸Ibid., 50, 51.

⁷⁹Ibid., 52, 53.

“before putting pen to paper.”⁸⁰ Morgan along with other well known preachers like Charles Spurgeon, Joseph Parker, and Dwight L. Moody, all had one thing in common—they had no formal training or academic degrees. They were taught by the Word of God. While Anderson was quick to deny any disparagement of education, he forcefully presented the concept that it took more than an academic degree to make a preacher. “Our authority as preachers comes not from the *classroom*, but from the *prayer room*, when before the open Word of God we let the Spirit of truth lead us into the depths of divine revelation and truth.”⁸¹

The real path of learning according to Anderson was the desert path of trial, difficulty and earnest searching of God’s Word. “If we would be real preachers of righteousness, we must be prepared to pay the price. Do not shun the desert, for it is there we get the vision of our task and of God’s provision through His abounding grace.”⁸²

The Mechanics of Preaching

It is in the context of study that Anderson outlines the necessary steps of effective expository preaching.

1. Indefatigable study—His emphasis is on the fact that as expositors of God’s Word, we need to know thoroughly the passage we are going to preach on. “Live with the scripture until you begin to feel identity with it. Take the book or the chapter you are

⁸⁰Anderson, 59.

⁸¹Ibid., 62.

⁸²Ibid., 69.

going to use: read it over and over until it becomes a part of you, until you begin to think God's thoughts after Him."⁸³

2. Find Christ in the Scriptures—"When we realize that 'the whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ,' we will find a new inspiration in our study."⁸⁴

3. Condense the Facts—In Anderson's view, this is the process of making the passage comprehensible to the congregation. As an example of this principle, he references the preaching of G. Campbell Morgan who took the book of Ruth and condensed it to three points: The Choice of Virtue, The Virtue of Faith, The Reward of Faith.⁸⁵ To hold people's interest, it takes technique and brevity.⁸⁶

4. Use Both Analytical and Synthetical Methods—Anderson gives the analogy of dissecting a flower and putting it back together again. The dissecting would be the analysis of the flower—the putting it back together would be the synthesis. His point is that a sermon must never be just a dry analysis of a Bible passage, but rather a "pastoral" application of truth to the life.⁸⁷

5. Dramatize the Story—The exposition of Scripture is understood best when "it is focused on a person or a nation." In other words, the mere reciting of doctrine without illustrating it in the lives of the biblical characters will make the message dry and tasteless. Truth is most clearly comprehended when explained against the real life

⁸³Anderson, 76, 77.

⁸⁴Ibid., 77.

⁸⁵Ibid., 82.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., 83.

experiences of others. The Bible's narrative is given to us in detail precisely for that reason.

In this section of his book, Anderson does something that is quite helpful in illustrating this point. He shows how specific doctrines can be explained and expounded on by using the stories of Bible characters. As an example, the doctrine of the origin and destiny of sin is explained against the backdrop of Absalom rebellion against King David.⁸⁸

6. Relate Ideas to Their Context⁸⁹—It seems almost self-explanatory that an expository sermon must give careful consideration to the context of the passage being used.

7. Present Important Things First—Anderson says that people will remember “what is put in the forefront.” The vital points of what we are going to say must be stated at the beginning.⁹⁰

8. Relate the Message to Some Current Problem⁹¹—From Anderson's point of view preachers need to do more than just relay interesting information. “Fellow preachers, we face the most perplexed generation of all history. Men need more than pious platitudes, witty wisecracks, or flowery eloquence. Bewildered men and women everywhere are asking, ‘Is there any word from the Lord?’ We have been called to a prophetic ministry.

⁸⁸Anderson, 83-86.

⁸⁹Ibid., 86.

⁹⁰Ibid., 87.

⁹¹Ibid.

We are called not as prognosticators, but interpreters.”⁹²

Preparation and Delivery

Anderson gives significant advice about the preparation and delivery of the sermon—that it should be prepared “in an atmosphere of prayer and deep Bible study, and should have the earmarks of revelation or spiritual illumination.”⁹³ He goes a step further, however, by stating that the sermon must not only be “thought out, but wrought out in the heart of the preacher.”⁹⁴

Three principles are then offered for effective delivery:

1. Capture the interest—“Every good sermon has in it an element of surprise: some fresh approach, something new and vital.”⁹⁵
2. Speak with simplicity—“The secret of a winsome ministerial style is to have something to say and say it clearly and as interestingly as you can.”⁹⁶
3. Preach evangelistically—“The real objective of all preaching is to save sinners.”⁹⁷

The Content of Seventh-day Adventist Preaching

According to Anderson, the content of Seventh-day Adventist preaching centers

⁹²Anderson, 95.

⁹³Ibid., 103.

⁹⁴Ibid., 120.

⁹⁵Ibid., 121.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

on the cross of Christ. To emphasize this point he offers this quote from Ellen White:

The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster . . . Every truth in the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary. I present before you the great, grand monument of mercy and regeneration, salvation and redemption-the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.⁹⁸

It should be noted that in another book written by Anderson, *The Shepherd Evangelist*, he spells out the relationship between many of the distinct doctrines of the Adventist church and the gospel in very powerful words.

At the cross we see God making the supreme sacrifice for man, not man making a sacrifice for God. Before God asks us to do anything for Him, He has already done everything for us. And He did it in the face of man's bitterest hostility. This wonderful news, this infinite love, is the very heart of the everlasting gospel. And it is this gospel we are to take to the world.

When we preach, our messages should be so full of Christ that if people were to take but a square inch from our sermons, they will be led to "behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." We have been commissioned to make plain the great facts of redemption-a redemption which began in the mind of God away back in eternity past, but which will be complete when sin is finally obliterated from the universe. Great subjects such as the incarnation of God in human flesh, His all-sufficient sacrifice, His priestly ministry in the holy of holies, our sanctification and obedience through His indwelling Spirit, the power, purpose, and imminence of our Lord's return, the final annihilation of the kingdom of darkness, the restoration of the eternal kingdom of glory, and eternal fellowship in the family of heaven these are God's all-embracing message for this generation.⁹⁹

To Anderson, the cross of Calvary was central to the great controversy between Christ and Satan. In crucifying the Son of God, "the arch rebel revealed his true nature. Any sympathy heavenly beings might have had for Lucifer was broken, and broken forever."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Anderson, 124.

⁹⁹Roy Allen Anderson, *The Shepherd Evangelist* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950), 402, 403.

¹⁰⁰Anderson, *Preachers of Righteousness*, 128.

In looking at the problem of sin, God's "decisive deed" at Calvary makes all of the classic answers worthless.¹⁰¹ It is clear that the solution to the problem of sin lies outside of ourselves and *in* the message of the gospel. "To proclaim that gospel we must preach the cross in the context of the world's sin. While showing the hatefulness of sin, we must also show God's judgment upon it. By the death of His Son God has judged sin forever. To preach in any other way is to miss the whole purpose of redemption."¹⁰²

Anderson explained his emphasis on the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the context of expository preaching. When it comes to specific passages of the Bible, Adventists have always been "somewhat expository."¹⁰³ Those passages are, of course, the apocalyptic portions of Scripture such as Dan 2, 7, and 8—Matt 24 and Luke 21—Rev 12, 13, 14, 20, and 21. His criticism of Adventist preaching is that outside of these passages, there is very little attempt at expository preaching.¹⁰⁴ And yet in the context of evangelism, it is that very kind of preaching that he thinks is the most effective.

Having had opportunity to observe and participate in these many types of evangelistic and pastoral ministry, I am convinced that expository preaching is by far the most productive and consolidating method of evangelism. The results are more lasting, for the converts are molded by the power of the Word rather than by the persuasion of the preacher.¹⁰⁵

What also has to be kept in mind when looking at Anderson's perspective on Adventist preaching is that he saw that task in the context of evangelism.

¹⁰¹ Anderson, 129.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 151.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 154.

I have found the expository method to be actually more successful, even in evangelism, than the mere presentation of a set of doctrines. *And evangelism is the very heart of the ministry.* Nothing is so important or as thrilling as the winning of men and women to the Lord Jesus Christ through the study of the Word (emphasis mine).¹⁰⁶

As an example of expository preaching and the doctrines of Christianity, Anderson uses the book of Hebrews. From his perspective many of the great doctrines of Christianity could be taught from this book and he would spend between four to six months studying it in his sermons.

Every doctrine of the Christian faith is touched upon in this epistle. For example, there are at least ten great doctrines referred to in the first chapter. The personality of God, the inspiration of Scripture, the incarnation of Christ, His atoning sacrifice, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to the Father, His exaltation to the throne, His reinstatement in the Godhead, the destiny of our world, and the ministry of angels are all touched upon in these first fourteen verses. And every succeeding chapter is filled with wonderful truth. In some ways this epistle could be called the deepest book in the Bible.¹⁰⁷

The challenge in what Anderson writes in his book is to look at the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in a new way. While there is a place for sermons that marshal all of the texts on a specific doctrine together to make a topic clear, there is a power in taking a book of the Bible, or a specific passage and expounding the truth that is there in that portion of God's Word.

What is also important to note in Anderson's view of preaching, is that our task is not merely one of being a good preacher. The preacher was also to be a teacher—teaching the Word of God.

Exposition and application are always intertwined. "The modern illumines the ancient, while the ancient enlivens the modern," says Dr. Andrew Blackwood. The expository preacher, then, is not essentially an orator, but definitely a teacher—a teaching preacher.

¹⁰⁶Anderson, 152.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 154, 155.

“Go ye into all the world, and preach,” “teaching them,” was our Lord’s great commission. Though Jesus was the Prince of preachers, He was known by the title Teacher more than any other. “He opened his mouth, and taught them.” Matthew 5:2.¹⁰⁸

Anderson’s book, *Preachers of Righteousness*, is a call to a deeper level of preaching. It is a call to look at the doctrines of Seventh-day Adventism through the lens of expository preaching—to be teaching preachers. More fundamentally, it is a call to teach Jesus Christ in everything we preach—to shape every sermon on the basis of how He is revealed in the passage of scripture we are going to use.

Charles E. Bradford

Charles Bradford was the last of eight children born to Robert and Etta Bradford. His father being a pastor prepared him for the nomadic life of ministry. When he began his education at Oakwood College, his intended career was not ministry, but medicine. But during his last year of college, W. S. Lee, the Week of Prayer speaker, had been invited to preach at one of the Protestant churches in the community. On his way to the church he happened to walk past a basketball court where several young people, including Bradford, were shooting baskets. Lee asked, “Anybody like to go with me and have the prayer?” Bradford was the one who responded. It was after the service that Pastor Lee asked him if he would join him as an intern in the Arkansas- Louisiana Conference. After working with Lee in an evangelistic series, the path was set for ministry. At the time of his retirement, Bradford had served the Seventh-day Adventist Church for forty-one years as pastor, evangelist, departmental leader, conference president, and as the first African-American president of the North American Division. In between various departmental positions, he would often return to pastoral ministry, saying that “pastoring a church is no

¹⁰⁸Anderson, 75.

step backward.”¹⁰⁹ In 1972, the Columbia Union asked Bradford to be the speaker for the H. M. S. Richards lectureship on preaching. The book *Preaching to the Times* is the outgrowth of those lectures.¹¹⁰ The discussion of his views on the unique task of Seventh-day Adventist preaching is gleaned from those lectures.

The Importance of Preaching

Emphasizing the importance of preaching in the church, Dr. Bradford refers to the pulpit as the prow of “the good ship Zion.”

Like the prow of the ship the pulpit leads on, gives direction and guidance and determines to a large extent its destiny. Let there be no downgrading of its role and function, for the fortunes of the vessel and those on board are bound up with that “pulpit is the prow.” And let not the preacher abdicate his responsibility. Let him stand faithfully, with assurance, in that pulpit, and point the way.¹¹¹

Very quickly, Bradford moves to the unique importance of Seventh-day Adventist preaching. The Seventh-day Adventist preacher needs to have a grasp of the times without being submerged in the “thought forms” of his day, or becoming “a mere reflector of the culture. We are to be a prophet to the times.”¹¹²

To a great extent our style is determined by this tradition. The Seventh-day Adventist preacher must give his message in the setting of time, eschatologically with apocalyptic overtones. “The time has come.” Our *raison d’être* is the prophetic forecast recorded in passages such as Revelation, chapters 12, 14, 18; Daniel, chapters 7, 8, 9; and Isaiah, chapter 58. At the right time in history, the decisive moment, at a signal juncture, *kairos*, a people arose with the message to meet the needs of that hour.”¹¹³

¹⁰⁹Stephen Chavez, “Brad’ A Life of Service,” *Adventist Review*, <http://www.adventistreview.org/2000-05/story1.html> (accessed September 14, 2010).

¹¹⁰Charles E. Bradford, *Preaching to the Times* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1975).

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

So important is this unique message of Seventh-day Adventism, that for Bradford, “it is the only justification for organizing our activities along separate lines on a global basis.” Our message is a prophetic message based on where we are in time.

To the Adventist preacher time can best be described as a line between two eternities with definite points of beginning and ending. He views time as that measured-off portion of eternity when God pauses to deal with the sin problem. Measured, I say, by epochs and seasons and generations. His understanding of the prophecies leads him to believe we are in the last measured-off section of that line, the time of the end. As far as he is concerned the news analysts, philosophers, sociologists, and political scientists describe the times and record helpful data, but only the prophets can interpret the times.¹¹⁴

Dr. Bradford further defines Adventist preaching by linking it with the three angels’ messages of Rev 14:6-12. “As in England all roads lead ultimately to London, so in Adventist preaching and theology, all sermons and doctrines wind up somewhere in the neighborhood of this threefold message.”¹¹⁵ The “apocalyptic vision” as he calls it, is what “mobilizes and motivates the citizens of the New Jerusalem.”¹¹⁶ In fact, according to Bradford, it is the three-fold message of Revelation that defines Adventism itself—not just its preaching.

This vision made us the people that we are. Before we had anything we had the vision—before we had institutions, and organizations, and even a system of doctrine. It was this vision that drove the pioneers to their knees and to their Bibles to know the will of God, to seek to understand it more perfectly. If we lose this vision we have lost everything the imperative to holy living, motivation to courageous deeds, and the incentive to mobilize for spiritual warfare.

Our preaching is not based upon the human situation or on the ebb and flow of the tides of history, past or current. Our message is simple—the kingdom of God is on its way—*Adventus*.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴Bradford, 19.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 20.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 22.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

The Adventist preacher, according to Bradford, is to be scanning the horizon for signals, and interpreting those signals by God's Word. "The safety of the inhabitants of the city and the eternal salvation of many outside the city depends on the word that you, by the mercy of God, are commissioned to give."¹¹⁸

People Our Priority

Bradford reminds us that people are our main business. This is where the visitation of the church family comes into play. As we visit, we are to listen for areas of need and concern. Doctrinal points of view that should be clarified become the guidance on what we preach. "Widespread doctrinal deficiency in the congregation is cause or opportunity for the preacher to instruct, not in hit-or-miss fashion, but to the point."¹¹⁹

Visitation is not to be limited to members of the church, however. Being a part of the community and getting to know the people around us is all a part of our responsibility. "But visitation should always be with a purpose. It should not degenerate into aimless conversation. It should not be allowed to drift without point. We are to study to be workmen who need not be ashamed. We should be specialists in communicating with people."¹²⁰ The relationships that come out of visitation are the keys to effective preaching, because they give us understanding and empathy.

People are our stock in trade. We cannot avoid interpersonal relationships with our flock. We must not take up the visitation ministry with an air of clinical detachment. We must have warmth in our souls. Bishop Palmer is right when he says, "Effective preaching grows out of sympathetic understanding. Empathy is an imperative for

¹¹⁸Bradford, 25.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 26.

¹²⁰Ibid., 27.

preaching that is worthy of the gospel.” The preacher who carries out such a visitation program will never be at a loss for sermons, and his sermons will be like arrows that go straight to the mark.¹²¹

The goal of what we do is always communication. When we work on relationships we are building ability and credibility in communicating that which God has given us to communicate. Relationships imply an authentic compassion for others that is reflected in our preaching. In Bradford’s words, “The message comes through the man, not over and around him.”¹²²

The Primary Sources for Preaching

Bradford acknowledges openly and “‘heartily’ that the source for the Seventh-day Adventist preacher is the Bible first and foremost. . . . It seems almost unnecessary to say it, but say it I will at the risk of seeming prosaic, Seventh-day Adventist preachers need to study the Bible more. Please note I did not say study about the Bible.”¹²³

Lamenting that many of us receive the message “second hand,” and that we do not do enough study of the Bible for ourselves, Bradford suggests that the best thing that could happen for many of us is to have “our libraries stolen for awhile until we learn how to search the Scriptures.”¹²⁴ Bringing it even more to the core of the issue is the reminder that “The Bible must be something more to the preacher than a hunting ground for texts, it must be food for his own soul.”¹²⁵ “The preacher must be able to declare what he has

¹²¹Bradford, 28, 29.

¹²²Ibid., 31.

¹²³Ibid., 36.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid., 37.

personally found. 'Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart' (Jer. 15:16, RSV)."¹²⁶

Secondary to the Bible is the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy. Bradford suggests that it would be a "soul building adventure" to read the Bible and the Conflict of the Ages series together, and that the Spirit of Prophecy is without peer when it comes to "illuminating and amplifying the Scriptures."¹²⁷

In addition to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, Bradford refers to other sources such as biology and astronomy. We should set up a reading program to "include fields of study other than our own."¹²⁸ The purpose of this study is the "mastery of sources." Bradford reminds us that we are not to study for the sake of sermons alone. Quoting P. T. Forsyth he tells us to 'read at the fountainheads.'

What are the fountainheads at which the Seventh-day Adventist preacher must fill his cup? Revelation/Inspiration and its streams and branches: divine communication, prophecy, history, Christology, and the Godhead: angels and demons, Paul's principalities and powers. Soteriology: Creation and the Fall, the nature of man, the law of God, sin, the plan of redemption, atonement, eschatology, apocalypticism, ecclesiology, and all that subsumes under this great division: God's purpose for man, the kingdom of God, the nature of the church, the church as servant, spiritual gifts, mission, the lordship of Christ, et cetera. But it has fallen to modern church to have its problem focus on ecclesiology.¹²⁹

Bradford points to this statement of Ellen White as providing a framework for the focus of Seventh-day Adventist preaching:

¹²⁶Bradford, 37.

¹²⁷Ibid., 39.

¹²⁸Ibid., 41.

¹²⁹P. T. Forsyth, 1848-1921, Congregational minister and later principal of New College, London, quoted in Bradford, 41.

The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The non-immortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary.¹³⁰

A Theology of Preaching for the Seventh-day Adventist Preacher

All through Bradford's book, he writes specifically to the Seventh-day Adventist preacher. He suggests that we need a theology of preaching, "Or better still, an approach to preaching that will serve Seventh-day Adventist purposes."¹³¹ It is towards the end of this book that he comes closest to providing a theology of preaching that fits the Adventist preacher, and it begins with mission.

A clearly defined theology of mission should permeate our preaching. Idle, uninvolved saints must not be given comfort in their inactivity. We must challenge them Biblically to heartily enter into their priestly witnessing responsibilities. Ultimate goal, perfecting the saints, equipping for witnessing, preparing a people, are all intimately bound up together.¹³²

The theology of Seventh-day Adventist preaching is further explained in the context of the "Remnant." In the chapter entitled "To Preserve the Remnant," Bradford references Isa 1:9, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we

¹³⁰Bradford, 43,

¹³¹Ibid., 54.

¹³²Ibid., 132.

should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.” But God has a purpose in the saving of the remnant.

Yahweh preserves His name in the earth through a man, a family, or a nation. Wars may ravage the land; because of disobedience, plagues may fall; political calamity and national upheaval may threaten Israel’s existence as a nation; but a remnant is always saved. A holy lump, a righteous branch, a single stalk remains, keeps the covenant, and this is enough for Yahweh to begin all over again.”¹³³

It is in the preservation of this remnant that Seventh-day Adventist preaching finds its greatest fulfillment. It is reflected in God’s own purpose towards this “holy lump.”

To put it in a sentence: Yahweh brings the remnant out, separates them, instructs and teaches them, distinguishes and identifies them, gives them a philosophy to live by, keeps them conscious of their relationship to Him, and then, secure in His love and sensitized to His will, sends them out into the world as light bearers, evangelists, teachers of righteousness.¹³⁴

In Bradford’s view, an important goal of Adventist preaching is the preservation of the remnant. Our preaching is to make the remnant “self-aware—to prevent an identity crisis.”¹³⁵ For the remnant to lose its identity—is for it to lose its sense of mission and purpose. “This is precisely why our preaching must be to the point. It must not only have good content but real point and purpose. The Adventist preacher must know what he is about. His mission is to preserve the remnant. He must understand what is needed to achieve this end.”¹³⁶

It is in this critical responsibility that the Adventist minister is to know what he is

¹³³Bradford, 135, 136.

¹³⁴Ibid., 136.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

doing and why. To fail in understanding his role in this task “is to be unable to fill his Heaven-assigned role when the remnant is threatened.”¹³⁷ And the attack according to Bradford is going to be focused in part, on two points.

The informed Seventh-day Adventist preacher knows at which point the strongest attack of the enemy will come. John says it will be on the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. The people must understand that the law of God is a wall of protection while the Spirit of Prophecy is the eye of detection. Satan would rob the church of both, and leave her to flounder, unprotected and without guidance, amid the plethora of doctrinal heresies and well-camouflaged sophistries of the age. We are therefore willing to do serious work in preparing weapons of offense and defense for our people so that they can meet the issues. Our goal should be to wall the people in with light. Our Christ-centered present-truth messages should be pillar of cloud and fire to the marching remnant.”¹³⁸

Using Israel’s exodus from Egypt as an example, Bradford says that “the preservation of the remnant depended on discipline, separation, and law (in this context the total corpus of the revealed will of God).”¹³⁹ Maintaining separation is critical to preserving the identity and purpose of the remnant. Preachers—as watchmen on the walls, are given the responsibility of watching the flocks and preparing them for the attack that will come.

Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood. . . . Fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things. . . . Therefore be alert. . . . I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up (Acts 20:28-32, RSV).

Another point of attack on the remnant that Bradford references is the doctrine of the sanctuary. “The people need to hear expositions on the authentic sanctuary doctrine,

¹³⁷Bradford, 136.

¹³⁸Ibid., 137.

¹³⁹Ibid., 136.

and the relationship between its cleansing and the purification of a people.”¹⁴⁰ He says that we must not be scared away from the topic by the “caricatures” that others use to attack Adventism on this doctrine. Bradford also says, “The faithful teaching-priest cannot sidestep the vital issues involved here.”¹⁴¹

To Make Jesus King

In a very powerful conclusion to his book, Bradford refers to the coronation of King David. Thousands of people thronged Hebron shouting, “David is king, David is king, long live the king!” As the remnant, we are here to herald the coronation of Jesus Christ as Lord and King. “Our first business, our consuming ambition, should be to bring men to submit to our King in loving obedience. As the hearts of the people in David’s day were turned toward the man of God’s own choosing, so in all our preaching and teaching today we seek to turn every heart toward the desire of all nations.”¹⁴²

While just about every Seventh-day Adventist writer on the topic of preaching has emphasized the importance of making Jesus Christ the center of our preaching, no description has so forcefully expressed this task as these words. We are participants in the coronation of the King of kings.

Steven P. Vitrano

Steven Vitrano, in his book *Preaching the Four Faces of Salvation*, makes it clear right at the beginning that it is not a book on the process of preaching, but on the message

¹⁴⁰Bradford, 138.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Ibid., 142.

of preaching.¹⁴³ A summary of it is included here because it speaks to the substance of the Bible's full message of salvation. While not writing specifically to the Seventh-day Adventist ministry, Vitrano, as a preacher and professor of homiletics at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University, gives us a clear overview of what the full gospel message should include. While the primary emphasis of most Christian preaching is justification by faith, there is a more complete message of redemption revealed in Scripture. Vitrano describes this full message in four phases—Reconciliation, Transformation, Glorification, and Restoration.

Reconciliation

The full message of the Bible begins with understanding the condition of humanity. The story starts with Adam and Eve in the garden, given the freedom to choose. They were warned of the consequences of disobedience. “From the start, Adam and Eve needed to know that actions are followed by consequences: consequences that are life-affirming and therefore good, and consequences that are life-denying and therefore evil.”¹⁴⁴

They chose to disregard the command of God and took that which He had instructed them not to take. The consequences of their choice were:

1. A broken relationship with God
2. The beginning of a relationship of fear
3. Human relationships damaged

¹⁴³Vitrano, *Preaching the Four Faces of Salvation*, 4.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 10.

4. The joy in sharing the power to create human life gone (pain in child birth)
5. Human character becomes depraved
6. Death (returning to the dust of the ground)
7. Immortality was denied to humanity¹⁴⁵

Even though God reveals His desire to restore humanity, it cannot be an instantaneous restoration. First, what assurance could Adam and Eve give that they would be obedient to the Lord's commandments in the future? And second, how does God forgive their sin and yet uphold the laws of cause and effect?¹⁴⁶ A hint at the answer to this crisis comes in God's prophecy to Adam and Eve in Gen. 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." The good news of this prophecy is first that man would not be totally under Satan's control—there would be enmity between humanity and the devil. And second, the "Seed" of Eve would ultimately destroy Satan. But the reversal of the damage done by Adam and Eve's sin is a process.

Christ comes as the fulfillment of the prophecy made to Adam and Eve. And in Him, "God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19). That reconciliation is possible because Christ covenants Himself to pay the price of our sins. His death on the cross provides satisfaction for the guilt of humanity's sin. According to Vitrano, Jesus provides satisfaction for three things:

1. He satisfied God's wrath against the violation of the laws of life, the consequence or "wages" of which is death the denial of life. A life-affirming God is angered by behavior that is life-denying; it is unacceptable. Having said this, we must avoid

¹⁴⁵Vitrano, 12, 13.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., 14.

portraying God as inherently vindictive or vengeful.¹⁴⁷

2. He satisfied God's justice. A life-affirming God is not willing that the whole universe should suffer the consequences of life-denying behavior. He cannot affirm the life of creatures made in His image who find pleasure in rebelling against His life-affirming law.¹⁴⁸

3. In His life, He did succeed where Adam and Eve failed. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (as quoted above). His whole life was a life of obedience even unto the shedding of His blood in death. Thus, He provided the satisfaction that Adam and Eve could not give, the assurance or satisfaction that those who belong to Him will never rebel against God and in due course will be given immortality. Only thus could God ever be justified in restoring mankind to the Edenic ideal.¹⁴⁹

The message that comes to us from Scripture itself is the "Good News" of God's willingness to restore the relationship lost because of sin by sending His own Son. While this restoration is based entirely on the justification provided by Christ on the cross, clearly implied is the human response to that justification. After quoting Rom 3:21-26, Vitrano has this to say:

Observe how this passage clearly reveals the divine initiative: 1. God put Jesus Christ forward as an expiation by His blood. 2. He provides justification for all by His grace as a gift, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 3. In His forbearance He passed over former sins. 4. What God has done proves and manifests His righteousness.

Then notice how the passage also clearly reveals the human response: 1. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. 2. The expiation which God put forward is to be received by faith. 3. God justifies him who has faith in Jesus.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷Vitrano, 23.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 24.

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 29.

But faith is more than just mere belief. “Saving faith is relational.”¹⁵¹ Vitrano points to Paul’s words in Rom 4:3-5 where the original word *pisteuo*, translated “faith” elsewhere, is translated “trust” here. Vitrano defends this translation in the context of Paul’s use of Abraham as an example of faith.

When God told Abraham to go, he went. He didn’t know where he was to go but he went anyway. When God told him he would be the father of many nations even though his age and the age of his wife made it humanly impossible, no distrust or disbelief made him waver concerning God’s promises. He was fully convinced that what God promises He is able to fulfill. *Saving faith is unconditional trust.*¹⁵²

It is faith that brings justification for the believer. But faith brings more than justification—it brings about the restoration of the broken relationship. “We can walk with Him. We can talk to Him as to a friend. We can weep with Him and rejoice with Him as we share with Him our sorrows and our joys. We can go to sleep at night in full assurance that whether we live or die, we are at peace with the one who has made us and redeemed us.”¹⁵³

The restoration of the broken relationship involves not only the reception of the Holy Spirit, but our adoption as the children of God. The empowerment of the Holy Spirit and our new status as the sons and daughters of God bring: “1. A new nature, *or a radical change in disposition or a turning to God in love and commitment*, and 2. Divine power, *or a radical change in ability to live in keeping with God’s will.*”¹⁵⁴

From Vitrano’s perspective, God’s efforts at reconciling us to Himself involve the

¹⁵¹Vitrano, 31.

¹⁵²Ibid., 33.

¹⁵³Ibid., 36.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 37.

restoration of the relationship we had with Him before the fall of Adam and Eve.

Everything is to be put back the way it was, not only in our status before Him, but in our daily walk with Him. Restoration to our relationship with God is reflected in our confession of Him, not only in our faith, but also in lives lived in faithful obedience to Him. But that is more clearly reflected in Vitrano's next chapter.

Transformation

“If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished” (1 Cor 15:17, 18). In no way trying to diminish the importance and centrality of the cross, this statement by Paul indicates that there is more to salvation than just the cross. If salvation is based solely on the death of Christ, then His resurrection would make little difference in our status. Paul is indicating that the death and burial of Jesus is not all there is to the plan of salvation. Without the resurrection, it is not complete. “If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we have been reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Rom 5:10). The gospel message must include not only the death and burial of Christ, but also His resurrection. It is in the resurrection life of Christ that the power of transformation comes.

Vitrano points to passages in the New Testament that indicate that while we are saved by our faith in Christ, the process of “being saved” continues on in the life of the Christian.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18).

It is clear from the context that Paul is writing to those who have been saved. He is writing, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name

of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” (v. 2). If they have been saved, why does he say, “To us who are *being saved*”? Is there a difference between “have been saved” and “being saved”?¹⁵⁵

Other New Testament writers make similar statements to Paul’s such as this one from 1 Pet 2:1, 2: “So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander. Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that you may *grow up to salvation*” (emphasis mine).

In the context of these and other passages, Vitrano raises a valid point as to the difference between “having been saved” and “being saved.”¹⁵⁶ The answer comes in understanding the nature of the restored relationship with God. “And we all with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

Notice that the word “changed” in the text just quoted is a translation of a Greek word from which we get our English word “metamorphosis.” This same word is used in a dramatic passage found in Romans 12:1, 2: “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed (*metamotphousthe*) by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”¹⁵⁷

Transformation or sanctification, according to Vitrano, is what “being saved” is all about.¹⁵⁸ The outcome of a restored relationship with the Lord is that “we are to

¹⁵⁵Vitrano, 45.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., 46.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

grow up,’ ‘grow in grace,’ ‘come to maturity,’ ‘to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.’”¹⁵⁹

Sanctification *attends* reconciliation, as clearly indicated in the previous chapter of this book and in passages such as Hebrews 10:10 (“And by that will we *have been sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all”) 1 Cor. 1:2 (quoted above).

Sanctification also *follows* reconciliation, inherent in Christian growth. “May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).¹⁶⁰

Vitrano makes it clear that throughout the Bible, God’s ideal for His children is spiritual growth and maturity. That is not always an easy process. It involves discipline. Using Paul’s reference to the “race” in 1 Cor 9, Vitrano says that “salvation is not only a matter of coming to the race; it is also a matter of running in the race.”¹⁶¹ But the discipline is in yielding ourselves to the Lord. “Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Rom 6:16, RSV).

The admonition is to “yield yourselves to God.” This is something we *choose* to do. If we had not the freedom to choose, how could we “yield ourselves”? It is also clear from the text that this is not something we do just once, but rather it is something we continue doing (the Greek verb indicates continuous action); it is central to Christian living because without yielding to God we cannot obey. It is His Spirit that empowers us, not the law.”¹⁶²

Christ empowers us through His Spirit for obedience. But obedience to the law does not bring salvation. Salvation is always by grace through faith. But here is where

¹⁵⁹Vitrano, 47.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ibid., 50.

¹⁶²Ibid., 51.

the discussion begins in earnest. If the law does not save us, what is its purpose? “The Law is holy and just and good, but it cannot save. Its function is to inform us of sin and condemn us when we sin. This is just as true in reference to transformation as it is in reference to justification.”¹⁶³

Vitrano reminds us that without the law, there is no transgression or condemnation for sin. If there is no condemnation for sin, there is no need of grace or salvation.¹⁶⁴ In Rom 7, Paul talks about two laws—the law of God and the law of sin and death. It is the law of sin and death that Paul wishes to be released from—not the law of God. A little later on in Rom 7, Paul introduces a third law—the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He says that this law sets him free from the law of sin and death.¹⁶⁵ It sets him free because it is through the indwelling Holy Spirit that we do what we could not have done before: we fulfill the “just requirements of the law.” This comes, according to Paul, because we have been set free through Christ from our slavery to sin. Vitrano makes it clear, however, that our freedom to choose is restored and remains intact.

To be in Christ is to have the freedom to “set our mind.” It is a freedom that Christ provides in keeping with the freedom of choice that God will not take from us because we were made in His image. It is that freedom that is so beautifully portrayed in Paul’s formula for salvation found in Philippians 2:12, 13: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³Vitrano, 55.

¹⁶⁴Ibid, 55, 56.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 57.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 58.

Vitrano says that the first part of the formula is our responsibility. “In choosing to be in Christ, to abide in Him, we are empowered to walk according to the Spirit.” “The second part of the formula is God’s responsibility.”¹⁶⁷ Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Christian walks through life on the Lord’s terms, not his own.

The path of the Christian is one of obedience to Christ in all things. It is obedience to His teachings, to His Word, and to His commandments.¹⁶⁸ The principle that motivates all of this and defines true Christianity is a love relationship with Jesus. “In Christian love (*agape*) there are at least two indispensable characteristics: *affection* and *commitment*. ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’”¹⁶⁹

Vitrano reminds us that the terms that we often use in discussion, and most times separate for the sake of discussion, are not meant to be pulled apart from each other. Justification and sanctification come together in the life of the Christian. “While our salvation begins with justification (when we are reconciled to God by faith) followed by transformation, the two coexist throughout the salvation experience.”¹⁷⁰

Vitrano offers this advice for daily walking the Christian walk:

1. Begin the day “in Christ” and “set your mind on the things of the Spirit.”¹⁷¹
2. Throughout the day, grow in the knowledge of God’s will and learn how to

¹⁶⁷Vitrano, 58.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 64-67.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., 84, 85.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 92.

¹⁷¹Ibid., 94.

cooperate with Him when dealing with temptation.¹⁷²

3. At the end of the day, accept God's forgiveness.¹⁷³

Glorification

Dr. Vitrano reminds us that one day the promises of Christ's return will be fulfilled. The sky will be filled with a glorious light and the graves will be opened, and the children of God will gathered together for their heavenly home.¹⁷⁴ Evil will be judged and the Lord will be vindicated in His dealings with sin and rebellion. But going to heaven is not the end of the plan of redemption.

Restoration

The salvation that God provides does not end until everything is restored to what He intended it to be. Talking of the redeemed in heaven, Vitrano says, "but heaven is not 'home.' They belong on earth. God knows that, and it is His plan and purpose to restore what was lost in Eden."¹⁷⁵ This earth, once the place of rebellion, will become the place the rest of the universe calls heaven. It will be the setting for the throne of God and the holy city, New Jerusalem.

Summary

Early in his book, Dr. Vitrano tells us that his book is really a Bible study.¹⁷⁶ The

¹⁷²Vitrano, 95.

¹⁷³Ibid., 98.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 102.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 118.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 5.

book is so densely filled with Bible references that any attempt at summarizing it inevitably leaves out important material. And while Vitrano does not say that he is addressing directly the distinct message of Seventh-day Adventism, he reminds us that the full message of salvation is not complete until we are back in Eden. Full atonement for sin was accomplished at the cross. But the plan of redemption only finds completion when we are home again.

George R. Knight

George R. Knight brings to the discussion of the distinct message of the Adventist preacher the unique perspective of a historian. A retired professor of church history at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Knight has written many books, including the Adventist Heritage series, books on Ellen White, and served as editor and contributor to a devotional Bible commentary series. The book *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* reflects his concern that Adventism is losing its sense of vision and purpose. In endeavoring to answer the question, *Why be Adventist?*¹⁷⁷ Knight also highlights the distinct nature and message of Seventh-day Adventist preaching and why it is important to the future of the church.

Knight's Personal Story

He begins this book by talking about his conversion to Adventism, his subsequent defection from the church, and his return. After becoming a pastor and promising to be the first "perfect Christian," he struggled for eight years. In his words, "I was as messed

¹⁷⁷Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*, 7.

up as ever. And so were the churches I pastored.”¹⁷⁸ He turned in his ministerial credentials and resigned from the ministry. For six years he studied philosophy and “wandered in a far country.”¹⁷⁹

It would take a conversation with a Jewish university professor to help Knight realize that “all religious communities consist of two sorts of members—believers and cultural adherents.”¹⁸⁰ As he was beginning to grasp the difference between the two, he received an unexpected visit from a former Bible teacher. “That day I met Jesus in the person of Robert W. Olson. When he left I told my wife that he had what I needed.”¹⁸¹

Knight would go on to say:

[Fourteen] years after I had become an Adventist, I became a Christian. To put it another way, my Adventism got baptized. At that point I became spiritually active in Adventism again. It wasn't because Adventism's theology was perfect that I reconnected, but because its theology was closer to the Bible than that of any other church that I was aware of. In short, I was and am an Adventist by conviction rather than by choice.¹⁸²

It was this journey that Knight says left him with three “inescapable” questions. “What is the meaning of life both personally and universally? Why be a Christian? Why be a Seventh-day Adventist?”¹⁸³ Knight's book really focuses on answering the third of these questions. This question and the answers we provide are critical to the future of the

¹⁷⁸Knight, 8.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., 9

¹⁸¹Ibid.

¹⁸²Ibid., 9, 10.

¹⁸³Ibid., 10.

Adventist church and speak to the unique message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its importance.

Evangelical vs. Adventist

For Knight, the discussion on the uniqueness of the Adventist church began with dialogues about the church's educational institutions. In 2007, he presented a paper entitled, "The Missiological Roots of Adventist Higher Education and the Ongoing Tension Between Adventist Mission and Academic Vision." In the question and answer period after the presentation he made the point that "if Adventism loses its apocalyptic vision, it has lost its reason for existing as either a church or as a system of education."¹⁸⁴

If Seventh-day Adventist institutions are Christian only in the sense that they have Jesus and the evangelical gospel, then any good evangelical school will do. And with that one stroke we have removed any compelling reason for Seventh-day Adventist schools to exist. Even though they might be good institutions, no one can say that they are necessary ones. There is a difference between being a good school and having distinctive importance as an institution.¹⁸⁵

If Knight's rationale applies to Adventist institutions, does it not apply even more fundamentally to the church itself? If the eschatological elements that brought the Seventh-day Adventist Church into existence were to be abandoned, have we not abandoned the things that give us our reason for existence?

Looking at the history of Adventism, Knight suggests that one of the hardest tasks of the church has been to aim for balance—understanding our Christianity, and also understanding our unique calling and heritage.

¹⁸⁴Knight., 11.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

The struggle for a balanced Adventism has been at the center of the historical development of Seventh-day Adventist theology. Over time we have oscillated between overemphasizing those aspects of our belief system that make us Christian and those that distinguish us as distinctively Adventist. Today we have in the church what I call the Adventist Adventists, who see everything the denomination teaches to be uniquely Adventist and groan a bit when we call ourselves evangelical. On the other extreme are those Adventists that we can describe as Christian Christians. Those at that pole of the denomination are overjoyed to be evangelical and shy away from Ellen White, the eschatological implications of the Sabbath, the heavenly sanctuary, and so on. Fortunately, in the middle we find some who might be styled as Christian Adventists, who's Adventism, finds meaning in the evangelical framework that we share with other Christians."¹⁸⁶

Knight refers to the fact that when Ellen White was alive, she expressed her concern that we had preached the law until we were as dry as the hills of Gilboa. He speculates that if she were alive today, she might be saying something quite different. She would be writing to her concern that many have "focused on grace so much that they have lost sight of the law altogether."¹⁸⁷

Knight, referencing the ministry of Christ, says that He "unabashedly and aggressively stood for something." Casting aside political correctness, He entered the world believing that He had a message that needed to be heard. His affliction was what some would have called "sanctified arrogance."¹⁸⁸ "He so believed in Himself and His politically incorrect message that He told 12 relatively unlearned men to spread it to the entire world. That commission staggers the normal imagination. Who did He think He was? And who did they think they were? *But they did it!*"¹⁸⁹

Early Adventism had the same "problem" that Christ had. It believed that it had a

¹⁸⁶Knight., 13.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 14.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

message that the world needed to hear. “It believed that it had *the* truth or *present* truth for its day. And it came to believe that it had a mission to all the world in spite of its smallness.”¹⁹⁰

Talk about sanctified arrogance! *But they did it.* Through dedicating lives and sacrificing means Adventism became the most widespread unified Protestant group in the history of Christianity. But undergirding that success were some politically incorrect understandings regarding *truth* and a sanctified arrogance that reflected on the shortcomings of other branches of Christianity and the importance of God’s last-day message.¹⁹¹

The sacrifices of not only means but lives came only because the early Adventists believed that they had a message from Revelation that the world needed to hear before Jesus returned.¹⁹²

Neutering

This is where Knight expresses the concern that is the focal point of his book—that in the early twenty-first century, Adventism is losing that “sanctified arrogance” that “made us believe that we had a message that the whole world must hear.”¹⁹³

The results? Shrinkage in the North American Division (and other developed world sectors of the church) in all four major groups—White, Black, Asian, and Hispanic. While the overall number of members is increasing, that growth is from immigration. A case in point is the fact that both the “White” and “regional” conferences in New York City are nearly entirely populated by members of Caribbean heritage. We are largely failing in reaching native-born Whites and Blacks in that great city, and in most other parts of the developed nations. The composition of the church in Great Britain and much of Europe indicates the same pattern.¹⁹⁴

Knight’s explanation for the problem is that “Adventism has to a large extent lost

¹⁹⁰Knight, 14.

¹⁹¹Ibid., 14, 15.

¹⁹²Ibid., 15.

¹⁹³Ibid., 14.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., 15.

the apocalyptic foundation of its message.”¹⁹⁵ It has effectively curbed its ability to reproduce (neutered itself) by abandoning what gave it power in its early history.

Protestantism gives us one of the best illustrations of this process in its own history.

The best example of religious neutering in the modern world is Protestant liberalism, which by the 1920s had divested itself of such “primitive” ideas as the virgin birth, Christ’s resurrection, the substitutionary atonement, miracles, the Second Advent, creationism, and, of course, a divinely inspired Bible in the sense that it had information from beyond the human realm that could be obtained from no other source but divine revelation.

Human reason came to the fore as the source of knowledge, doctrine became unimportant if not distasteful, and Jesus morphed from being a Savior who died in our place to being the best of good people and an example worthy of emulation. In the process, Christianity largely shifted from the realm of religion to that of ethics.

With those masterstrokes of the human intellect, Protestant liberalism effectively lost its distinctive Christian message. Or, to put it more bluntly, it had neutered itself.¹⁹⁶

The results of this, according to Knight, were plummeting membership for mainline Protestants. The average age of membership went up significantly, and morale fell.¹⁹⁷

The decline of Protestantism in America led to significant research, and the publication of books such as *The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity* and *American Mainline Religion*. It also led to one of the best known studies on the growth or decline of churches—Dean Kelley’s *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*. Kelley’s answer is, “*The conservative churches are growing because they stand for something*”¹⁹⁸ (emphasis mine). In contrast to the growth of conservative churches,

¹⁹⁵Knight, 15.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 17.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., 18.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

stands the decline of liberal Protestantism. If there is nothing to stand for, why stay? And that is exactly what happened. Large numbers of Protestants have left the mainline denominations. According to Knight, that is what is happening to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹⁹⁹

We as Christians should be standing for things that are not only true but also important for the times in which we live. And it is at that point that Adventism can make a contribution. It became strong by proclaiming that it had a prophetic message for our time. And it is that message repackaged for the twenty-first century that will give Adventism strength in both the present and the future.²⁰⁰

But according to Knight, we either have to have something of value to offer, or make better use of our time. *“Adventism cannot escape the dilemma between being meaningful or being neutered. It can’t have both.”*²⁰¹

How Adventism Can Neuter Itself

Reminding us that Adventism is deeply rooted in the apocalyptic messages of Daniel and Revelation, Knight says that there are three ways that Adventism can neuter itself.

1. **Beastly preaching.** This is essentially preaching the prophetic portions of Scripture without making clear the centrality and integral nature of Jesus Christ and the cross to the message. Speaking of his own preaching, Knight says:

I must admit to having done my own share of beastly preaching. But I early learned that if I couldn’t genuinely root my message in the love of God and the cross of Christ I didn’t have a Christian message. It was only beastly preaching, no matter how valid the topic, without that all important integration.²⁰²

Knight does not see apocalyptic preaching as a denial of Christ. In fact, he sees

¹⁹⁹Knight., 19.

²⁰⁰Ibid.

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²Ibid., 20.

Christ as “the centerfold of the apocalypse in both Daniel and Revelation.”²⁰³ But beastly preaching is the result of preaching Daniel and Revelation without putting Christ and the love of God at the center of the message.²⁰⁴

2. The second way that Adventism can neuter itself is by removing the lambishness of the lamb in Revelation.²⁰⁵ Knight reminds us that the lamb in Revelation five is described as a lamb having been slain, and that the saints have been redeemed by the blood of the lamb. “I would like to suggest that *the only thing Christianity has going for it is the Lamb of God who was slain* and whose blood paves the way for salvation through a method other than human effort. *Take away the Lamb who died on our behalf, and all you have is ethics*”²⁰⁶ (emphasis mine).

If the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is just about obedience to the law of God and not about salvation through Jesus Christ, then it becomes a religion about ethics and not about salvation. Christianity’s message is about the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29, NKJV).

3. Knight finds the third way that Adventism can neuter itself in Revelation’s symbols of the lion and the lamb. The two are linked together by the use of the term “the wrath of the lamb” (Rev 6:16). According to Knight, God’s wrath is a difficult topic for many Christians, and yet the Bible speaks clearly to the topic of God’s anger against sin.

Let’s not go astray here. God’s wrath is not an emotional anger comparable with human wrath. To the contrary, God’s wrath is a function of His love. God hates the

²⁰³Knight, 21.

²⁰⁴Ibid.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 22.

²⁰⁶Ibid., 23.

sin that continues to destroy the lives and happiness of His created beings. He is weary of dead babies, cancer, and blindness; rape, murder, and theft; holocausts, Rawandas, and Iraqs.²⁰⁷

There will come a time when God will call the suffering caused by sin to an end. If the gospel message is only that Christ died so that our sins could be forgiven and nothing more, then it is incomplete. The full gospel message is that the lamb “slain from the foundation of the world” will one day come as the “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” to end the sorrow and suffering caused by sin.

The apocalypse is about the end of sin and a new heaven and a new earth. The apocalypse is what Adventism is all about. *If all that Christianity has going for it is the slain Lamb, all that Adventism has going for it is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. An Adventism without the Lion is a neutered Adventism, just as a Christianity without the slaughtered Lamb is a neutered Christianity.*²⁰⁸

To Knight the real problem is that many Christians have lost the seriousness of God’s attitude towards sin.

We have forgotten the thunderous proclamations of Paul that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) and that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). *A neutered understanding of sin leads to a neutered Lamb and a neutered Lion. And all put together, they add up to neutered preaching and religious meaninglessness.*²⁰⁹

We have come to treat God as a rather “senile grandfather” in heaven who kindly looks away when we do something wrong. “The Apocalypse of John is a judgment on all such thinking.”²¹⁰

The Apocalypse of John is a judgment on the post-modern mentality that avoids any certainty in religious truth and seeks in its place a nebulous spirituality.

²⁰⁷Knight., 24.

²⁰⁸Ibid., 25

²⁰⁹Ibid.

²¹⁰Ibid., 26.

The Apocalypse of John is about a new heaven and a new earth.
The Apocalypse of John is about the Lamb and the Lion.
The Apocalypse of John is a call to Seventh-day Adventists to wake up not only to the beauty of the last book of the Bible, but to
(1) its power and forcefulness and
(2) its message for our day.²¹¹

In the context of these thoughts, Knight calls for a renewed effort to understand the apocalyptic vision of Adventism in the twenty-first century.

The Adventist Understanding of the Apocalypse

In chapter two of Knight's book, he traces the history of the Adventist understanding of Daniel and Revelation. That history takes us through the great disappointment of October 22, 1844 to the discovery of the Sabbath.

The Adventist understanding of the Sabbath was as much a part of understanding the books of Daniel and Revelation as it was of understanding the Ten Commandments. Joseph Bates was foremost in understanding the connection between the cleansing of the sanctuary in Dan 8:14 and the opening of the most holy place of the sanctuary in Rev 11. It is no surprise that Bates would link together these verses to the end of Rev 12 and its description of the remnant "that keep the commandments of God." To him, these chapters of Revelation were a clear call to keep the law of God, including the Sabbath of the fourth Commandment. In 1846 Bates published his findings in a little book entitled *The Seventh Day Sabbath: A Perpetual Sign*.

As Bates studied the verses in Rev 13 and 14, he began to see that there would be conflict over the issue of worship at the end of time between the dragon and the

²¹¹Knight, 26.

woman—or church. It was through this study that Joseph Bates developed the great controversy theology.²¹²

Part of his understanding of the great controversy was the three-fold messages of Rev 14 with its clear reference to the Sabbath commandment as well as its description of those who keep the commandments of God. “By January 1847 Bates clearly recognized that God would have a last day people who would preach the three angels’ messages right before the Second Advent. He had concluded that the evolving Sabbatarian Adventist orientation was a movement of prophecy.”²¹³

This was the message that would energize Sabbatarian Adventism. They had a message that the world needed to hear. God was calling a people into existence that would obey His Commandments.

Heading into Legalism

As these Sabbath-keeping Adventists began to preach this message, it is important to remember that they were preaching to a largely Christian population. “In such a world they saw little need to present grace to Baptists or prayer to Methodists. Such groups already had those things. What did they need? Those teachings, the logic ran, that they didn’t have, such as the Sabbath, the state of the dead, and the sanctuary.”²¹⁴

According to Knight, forty years of that kind of preaching brought about a “disjunction” between Adventists and the rest of Christianity. “And by the 1880’s we

²¹²Knight., 43.

²¹³Ibid., 44.

²¹⁴Ibid., 45.

discovered not only that we had become experts at arguing with other people, but that we could argue among ourselves.”²¹⁵

It would take 1888 and the Minneapolis conference on righteousness by faith for Adventists to see Jesus and faith in Him as being central to the messages of Revelation.²¹⁶

Soon after the Minneapolis meetings Ellen White made one of her most powerful statements on Revelation 14:12. “The third angel’s message,” she penned, “is the proclamation of the commandments of God have been proclaimed, but the faith of Jesus Christ has not been proclaimed by Seventh-day Adventists as of equal importance, the law and the gospel going hand in hand.” She went on to discuss the meaning of the faith of Jesus, which “is talked of, but not understood.” The faith of Jesus, she claimed, means “Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that He might become our sin-pardoning Saviour. . . . He came to our world and took our sins that we might take His righteousness. Faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus.”²¹⁷

In the words of Dr. Knight, “Adventism got rebaptized at Minneapolis in 1888 as church members began to see Jesus and faith in Him as its center.”²¹⁸

Knight goes on to emphasize that it takes more than a prophetic calling to be the people of God. Adventists need to understand that “God wants a people who love Him and serve Him from their hearts.”²¹⁹

The Power of the Apocalyptic Vision

Making sure that Christ is the center of our message is critical to it remaining true to the substance of the gospel. But Scripture itself includes the messages of the

²¹⁵Knight., 45.

²¹⁶Ibid.

²¹⁷Ibid., 47.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Ibid., 48.

apocalyptic. And it cannot be forgotten that the apocalyptic is what has given Adventism its power and its vision.

The greatest threat to Adventism today is that of losing its understanding of the big picture of apocalyptic, which has made it a unique and vital people. Early Adventists read Revelation 14:6 about proclaiming the everlasting gospel ‘to every nation and tribe and tongue and people’ and concluded that God had called them to take the messages of the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12 to all the world in preparation for the Advent pictured immediately following those messages (verses 14-20).

An understanding of that apocalyptic vision literally drove church members to sacrifice their lives and their money to spread what they called “the message.”²²⁰

Knight expresses concern that we have tried so hard to fit in with evangelical Christianity that “that we have forgotten who we are, forgotten what makes us unique, forgotten what gives our existence meaning.”²²¹

In a world that has endured Hitler and Stalin and Saddam Hussein, the beasts of Daniel and Revelation still have relevance. The apocalypse concludes with the coming of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. One day the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord.

It is in the context of the importance of the apocalyptic message that Knight gives guidance to the task of preaching a distinct Adventist message.

Thus while it is important to avoid beastly preaching, it is crucial not to forget the beastly highlights of the great controversy that run from Nebuchadnezzar through Persia, Greece, and Rome up to our day.

Connected to the beasts is the larger prophetic package related to Adventism's distinctive beliefs, such as the eschatological implications of the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the state of the dead, and so on—all presented from the perspective of the redeeming Christ who is central to the apocalyptic vision of John. Thus “not forgetting the beasts” includes the preaching of all of Adventism’s distinctive message in a Christ-centered apocalyptic context.²²²

²²⁰Knight., 53, 54.

²²¹Ibid., 54.

²²²Ibid., 57.

The Fallacy of Straight Line Thinking

In dealing with those who would be skeptical about the apocalyptic nature of Seventh-day Adventist theology, Knight reminds us that we have been preaching this message for a long time. It would be easy to adopt the attitudes of those who ask “Where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Pet. 3:3). In answer, Knight points to Rev 18.

Speaking of the fall of Babylon and world civilization, we read:

1. “In *one hour* has thy judgment come” (verse 10).
2. “In *one hour* all this wealth has been laid waste” (verse 17).
3. “In *one hour* she has been laid waste. . . . So shall Babylon the great city . . . be found no more” (verses 19-21).

The biblical picture is one not of gentle continuity into the future but of crisis and radical discontinuity in a rapid time frame that ushers in the final crisis.²²³

As an example of how quickly things can change, Knight uses the fall of communism and September 11. Social structures that we thought would take long periods of time to change were changed overnight. The truth is that the laws that we take for granted—the rights we think we have, can be erased in short order in a crisis.

A significant part of Seventh-day Adventist thought has been given to the final struggle of the great controversy. In many cases, fear of the “persecution” that is to come at the end of time was used by preachers to “milk” repentance and reformation. But as time has gone on, Adventists have become more and more cautious about hitting the panic button on last day events. Interestingly, as Adventism seems to be backing away from its apocalyptic vision of the future, others are picking up the theme.

While most of us Adventists are hunkered down in our bunkers not saying much on the topic anymore, such information vendors as *Newsweek* keep blowing a trumpet that sounds more and more apocalyptic. Here’s a few items from recent issues:

- “The Truth About Denial” highlighted the global warming issue, suggesting that we may see a few degrees Centigrade temperature increase. That might not sound

²²³Knight, 80.

like much until we realize that the last ice age was only 5° C cooler than present levels.

- “A New Way of War” asked, “How do you stop foes who kill with devices built for the price of a pizza? Maybe the question is, *can* you stop them?”
- “State of Anxiety” dealt with the implications of the political disintegration of Pakistan, one of the world’s nuclear powers. Bin Laden’s mission would certainly become more feasible with a nuclear boost.
- And then there was the full-page advertisement of the History Channel’s “2-hour television event” not-so-subtly titled “Life After People.” “Welcome to Earth Population Zero” ran the accompanying blurb.

Not being a prophet, I don’t know much about the future. But I am wise enough to realize that a multitude of present realities could jolt Planet Earth out of its course and create a worldwide social/political crisis.²²⁴

The point of this perspective is that a crisis of significant proportions has the power to bring change in “an hour.” Knight says: “In the light of the Bible, history, and current trends, please don’t tell me what can or cannot happen in the United States or anywhere else in the world. Straight-line thinking is a comfortable fiction rather than a reality in a fragile world.”²²⁵ Whether it is a hurricane striking New Orleans or an earthquake shaking Haiti, we live on a planet that has made no promises and given no guarantees. Scripture gives us a prophetic portrayal of what to look for in the future. It is that prophetic portrayal that gives the Christian hope.

It is Adventism’s faith in God’s leading and in His calling that will give it the strength it needs to face the challenges ahead. Knight refers us to what he considers to be Ellen White’s “most remarkable prophecy” recorded in *Early Writings*, pgs. 14, 15.

“While I was praying at the family altar,” she recalled, “the Holy Ghost fell upon me. . . . I raised my eyes, and saw a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were traveling to the city, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a *bright light set up behind them at the beginning of the path, which an angel told me was the midnight cry {i.e., the prophetic understanding that led to a fulfillment of prophecy in October 1844}*. This light shone

²²⁴Knight, 83.

²²⁵Ibid., 85, 86.

all along the path and gave light for their feet so that they might not stumble. If they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the city, they were safe. But soon some grew weary, and said the city was a great way off. . . . *Others rashly denied the light behind them and said that it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out, leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and lost sight of the mark and of Jesus and fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below.*²²⁶

Knight points out that there were other “Adventists” who came out of the Millerite movement of 1844. The American Evangelical Adventists and the Advent Christian Church between them would number at least 50,000 in 1845.²²⁷ These and other Adventists would reject their prophetic heritage and would all but disappear within the next 160 years.²²⁸ In contrast, Sabbath-keeping Adventists who were significantly in the minority would build on their prophetic heritage and grow to number almost 16 million by 2008.²²⁹ “At the present time two of the post-Millerite denominations have died, three are struggling to survive with a few thousand each, and the one that retained the apocalyptic heritage has prospered.”²³⁰

Knight concludes this chapter by reminding us of Ellen White’s statement in *Life Sketches*, page 196: “We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.” He then gives this powerful statement:

²²⁶Knight., 86.

²²⁷Ibid.

²²⁸Ibid., 86, 87.

²²⁹Ibid.

²³⁰Ibid.

- The book of Revelation is a call to neutered Adventists, and those about to be neutered, to wake up before it is too late.
- The book of Revelation is a call to preach the message that made Adventism a worldwide movement.
- The book of Revelation is a call to join forces with the Lamblike Lion who desires to mount His white horse and bring an end to the mess we call world history.
- The book of Revelation is a personal call to you and to me to preach a neoapocalyptic message that utilizes nineteenth-century insights, but is consciously relevant to the twenty-first century.
- The book of Revelation is a call to those who have ears to hear what the Spirit has to say to the church. May God help His church and its ministry. Amen!”²³¹

The Apocalyptic Vision in the Gospels

It is easy to forget that Daniel and Revelation are not the only places that we see an apocalyptic view of the future. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record the words of Christ describing the events leading up to His second advent. According to Knight, these passages “inform us about how to live the apocalyptic vision in daily life.”²³² The first part of that “living the apocalyptic vision” is watchfulness. We are to be expectantly waiting for Christ to return.²³³ In Matt. 24 and 25 there are five parables dealing with the lives of believers as they wait for the return of their Lord. A repeating theme is the delay of His return. Given the nature of the delay, “it behooves Christians to ‘watch,’ because they have no idea at what hour their Lord will return (verse 42)”²³⁴

But they are not to wait in idleness. The parables of the talents reveal that the Lord expects effort on our part in reaching others for His kingdom. “The lesson is clear.

²³¹Knight, 88.

²³²Ibid., 91.

²³³Ibid.

²³⁴Ibid.

Readiness for the return of Christ does not mean passively waiting for the event. Rather, readiness is responsible activity that produces results for the kingdom of heaven—results that the Master can see and approve of.”²³⁵

Matthew 25 gives what may be one of the most interesting scenes of the judgment found in the Bible. It is in verses 31-46 that the righteous hear the words, “for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” Puzzled, the righteous respond by asking, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” The Lord will respond by saying, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.”

The wicked are condemned for the exact opposite. They did nothing for the hungry or the naked or the sick. Therefore, they did nothing for Jesus.

Some would imply that this is a judgment of works, and not of grace. But Knight sees it not as salvation by works, but as the indicator of our connection to God.

It is the unconscious internalization of God’s love and its expression in daily life that is the one essential qualification for the kingdom of heaven. Such people have begun to live the principle of servanthood and greatness that has come up again and again in Matthew’s Gospel. Such people are safe to save for eternity because they have internalized the principle of love, *the* principle of the kingdom. And such people have developed through grace that “righteousness [which] exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.” Thus they are prepared to “enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).²³⁶

²³⁵Knight, 95.

²³⁶Ibid., 98.

Knight is quick to remind us, however, that the apocalyptic vision of the synoptic gospels is not in conflict with the vision of Revelation. They are both from Christ. But he tells us that Ellen White “never tired of reminding Seventh-day Adventists that many other people had a burden for social justice and a ministry to the poor and hungry, but that no one else was preaching God’s last apocalyptic message. That preaching, she held, was God’s special commission to Adventism.”²³⁷

Waiting faithfully for Jesus to come means using every method available to lead others to accept Him as Lord and Savior. Those methods may start with relieving hunger, or suffering, but it must always point to the one great hope of humanity, and that is Jesus Christ—crucified, risen, and returning to take us home.

Neoapocalypticism

Because of what seems to be a continuing delay, many in Adventism are turning to social justice and feeding the poor. But the only real answer to the needs of humanity is the return of Christ to re-create the earth and forever remove sin and suffering.

Our times need to hear what we might think of as a neoapocalyptic message that brings hope in Christ not only as the saving Lamb of God but as the returning Lion of the tribe of Judah, who will not only feed the hungry but abolish hunger, and who will not only comfort the grieving but eradicate death. The world has not only suffered too long but continues to suffer in spite of humanity’s best efforts. Neoapocalypticism is the preaching of the ultimate hope that puts all other hopes in the shade.²³⁸

This perspective is not legalism. It is recognition that Christ is the author of Revelation as much as He is the author of the Gospels. Revelation describes those who have their faith firmly planted in Jesus as their Savior from sin. But out of their love for

²³⁷Knight, 100, 101.

²³⁸Ibid., 104, 105.

Him, they recognize the call to obedience to all of His commandments.

Summary of Sources

Looking at the materials I have read and studied so far, I am struck by the richness of the material that has been available to the Seventh-day Adventist preacher. From the earlier writers such as Carlyle B. Haynes and Roy Allen Anderson to the later ones, Charles Bradford, Steven Vitrano, and George Knight, the consistent theme has been making Christ central to our message.

While the materials of the earlier authors are rich, it seems that the later writers reflect a “coming of age” in describing the importance of the distinct Seventh-day Adventist message. Bradford, writing in the 1970s, gives one of the most clearly expressed theologies of Seventh-day Adventist preaching—that of building and encouraging the remnant. Vitrano and Knight, while not speaking directly to the preaching task, help to define the distinct message of Adventism. Knight makes it clear that the Adventist preacher really needs to know what the book of Revelation says. In reading all of these books, I have felt compelled not only to refine my preaching to make sure that Christ is in the heart of every sermon, but to make sure that I know my Adventism well.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING PRINCIPLES FOR SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PREACHING AS FOUND IN THE SERMONS AND WRITINGS OF H. M. S. RICHARDS

Standing in the corner of the dining room in my home is an old floor model radio made by the Midwest Radio Corporation, a company that went out of business a long time ago. Midwest used to advertise the radio as “the radio with the most tubes.” It was given to me by my mother shortly after my grandfather, James Blaine Cummings, passed away. He and my grandmother Tressa had purchased it new in 1938.

Outside of being a real “art deco” classic, the radio has a major significance in our family history. “Mamaw” as we called my grandmother, for most of her life had been a faithful member of the “Emanuel Baptist Church” in Charleston, West Virginia. Shortly after purchasing the radio, she began to listen to a radio broadcast from a program called *Voice of Prophecy*. As she listened to Pastor H. M. S. Richards, she felt compelled to send for the Bible lessons. In an old notebook that I have, is testimony that it took more than a single set of lessons before she made her decision. There are at least three diplomas from The Voice of Prophecy World Wide Bible Correspondence School that are signed by H. M. S. Richards. Eventually she made her decision to become a member of the Charleston, West Virginia Seventh-day Adventist Church, making her the first Adventist in our family.

In 1979 while I was a student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

in Berrien Springs, Michigan, I had the opportunity to take a class in Broadcast Evangelism from Dr. James Chase Jr. It was one of the highlights of my time at the Seminary when Dr. Chase made arrangements for the students (only five in the class) to meet Pastor Richards. We sat for an hour talking to the man who not only had a significant impact on the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but had a significant impact on the direction of my family.

H. M. S. Richards: The Beginnings

In 1894, two things occurred that would become inseparably intertwined: Guglielmo Marconi began experiments with an induction coil and spark discharger, and H. M. S. Richards was born.¹ Marconi's experiments would lead to the invention of the radio. It would not be until the late 1920s that Pastor Richards would begin to experiment with radio to promote his evangelistic meetings. October 19, 1929 marked a major mile-stone with the first fifteen minute radio broadcast on station KNX in Los Angeles, California. The broadcast that would be repeated several times a week was paid for by the *Los Angeles Express* "as a perk for the advertising that Richards placed with them every week."² The first steps in using media broadcast as a means of proclaiming the Seventh-day Adventist message were being taken.

Richards was an extraordinary individual. Being the son of a pastor-evangelist (H. M. J. Richards), he grew up on the "sawdust trail." Many times, his bed consisted of a pillow and blanket in a box next to the organ that his mother played for the meetings.

¹Virginia Cason, *H. M. S. Richards—Man Alive* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1974), 4.

²Edwards, 126.

In fact, he is quoted as having said: “From the time I was born until I was ordained, there was never a summer when I didn’t smell canvas. I was in a tent as far back as I can remember.”³

Richards claimed that his first sermon was preached when he was just four years old. He had traveled with his maternal grandfather to St. Joseph, Missouri, to attend the funeral of his great grandmother Sylvester. In the living room of the family home, he noticed a bowl of oranges. He gave an impromptu sermon on the New Jerusalem and the great tree there that according to his young vocabulary “had oringins and oringins on it all the time.” Judging by the response, his first sermon was a success. He was given all of the oranges.⁴

If it is possible for preaching to be in someone’s genes, H. M. S. Richards may have possessed it. His father was a Seventh-day Adventist preacher, and his grandfather was a lay Methodist preacher.⁵ He would often say that “my father was a preacher, and his father, and his father, and his father, right back to Mr. Richards who traveled with John Wesley.”⁶ It must have seemed all but inevitable that he would follow the same path.

Richards began his work for the church early in life. When his family began to attend a small church in Loveland, Colorado, at the age of thirteen or fourteen he became the Sabbath School secretary and superintendent, as well as a deacon and elder.⁷ His first

³Edwards, 26, 27.

⁴Ibid., 28, 29.

⁵Ibid., 53.

⁶Richards, 38.

⁷Edwards, 51.

opportunity to preach would come in the summer of 1912 at the age of eighteen when he and his father held evangelistic meetings in Ft. Lupton, Colorado. Knowing that his son might feel apprehensive about preaching in front of his parents, H. M. J. Richards made arrangements to be away one particular Sabbath, and asked his son to preach for the afternoon meeting. Herald's sermon on angels seemed to be a failure from his own perspective, and he made the decision that he was not going to be a preacher. A few days later an elderly woman that lived alone approached him and told him just how much his sermon had meant to her. She could live with the assurance that angels from God were watching over her even when she was alone in her home. Whenever Richards would refer to the incident, he would exclaim, "Oh, how much that did for me."⁸

His first attempt at evangelism took place while he was still a student at Campion Academy in Loveland, Colorado. Between school terms, he and a close friend Kenneth Gant convinced the conference office to let them hold a series of meetings. They were sent to Holyoke, Colorado—a place, according to Richards, that the conference committee had never been. On arrival, they discovered that the tent they were to use was full of holes. It was a difficult series of meetings that would end with only one convert—"and she wasn't very bright," Richards would later recount.⁹ Interestingly, the conference would ask both he and Gant to hold meetings in Woodland Park where they would find more success with fourteen baptisms.¹⁰ He would continue on to participate in meetings in Ford, Colorado, and then in Pennsylvania.

⁸Edwards, 63, 64.

⁹Ibid., 66.

¹⁰Ibid., 69.

At first resistant to his father's suggestion that he go to college, H. M. S. Richards finally enrolled at Washington Missionary College in Takoma Park, Maryland (now Washington Adventist University) at the age of twenty two. He did not believe that he would be there long, so he took the classes he felt were the most important, "so that he could leave quickly and get back to work."¹¹ He already held credentials from the Pennsylvania Conference when the District of Columbia Conference Executive Committee voted him a full ministerial license in the fall of 1917. A few weeks later, he would be asked to supervise the Arlington and Ballston, Virginia churches "devoting Sabbaths and Sundays and such other time as he finds possible in connection with his school work."¹² His salary for carrying out his responsibilities would be \$5.00 per week.

In February 1918, Richards would take responsibility for the Capital Hill Church "for \$10.00 per week with the usual 20 percent bonus." He would be the pastor of the Capital Hill Church for the remainder of his time in college,¹³ and would be ordained on September 21, 1918 at the age of twenty four while still a student.

What seems clear about H. M. S. Richards is that however difficult his early experiences in preaching might have been, God gave him an ability to communicate. The fact that as a young college student he would wind up as the pastor of a church is proof that others recognized that ability.

¹¹Edwards, 79.

¹²Ibid., 81.

¹³Ibid., 82.

H. M. S. Richards, the Evangelist

Ministry has changed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church since the days when Richards was beginning his career. While it may be expected that pastors will do public evangelism as a part of their work today, it is unlikely that anyone would have made it into the ministry in Richards' day if he had not already conducted a series of meetings. Evangelism was a very large part of the church's existence.

Richards not only held evangelistic meetings while in school, but he continued to do so through most of his ministry. It may not be too far from the mark to say that he was an evangelist first and everything else second. Evangelism gave him not only an opportunity to refine his skills in reaching people with the message of Adventism, but it revealed a flare for creativity in advertising the meetings.

In April 1935, Richards wrote an article in *Ministry* magazine about evangelistic advertising. He wrote about the use of signs to be placed on the spare wheel mounted on the backs of the automobiles. He printed handbills with his name and picture included. "It helps, I think, in attracting an audience to know what the lecturer looks like. I believe that if we keep humble, this part will go along all right. We are nothing. We are not big men, but we have a big message, the biggest message on earth, and all these different methods of advertising are good."¹⁴

In one series of meetings, he initiated what he called "The Whispering Campaign."

In advertising one of our meetings we sent two young women to ride the elevators of the big hotels and department stores throughout the day, talking to each other in an interesting way about our meetings, . . . a "whispering campaign," rightly organized, has great possibilities. We must have the tongue of the learned and know how to use

¹⁴H. M. S. Richards, "Placards, Radio and Whispering," *Ministry*, April 1935, 20.

it. People can ride street cars and talk to their neighbors about these things. I believe there is a great field that we have scarcely entered here.

It was that creativity that would help Richards push the boundaries of what was possible in reaching people for Christ. It was also that creativity that would enable him to see significant possibilities in what others were calling a passing fad—radio. In the same ministry article, he writes, “For the last year and a half, I have been using the radio heavily, five solid hours a week, and naturally I mention my meeting every night.”

It is interesting to note that Richards had one very important characteristic in common with other well-known preachers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He, along with Carlyle B. Haynes, Roy Allen Anderson, Charles E. Bradford, and others, was an experienced evangelist. The expositions of these men on the distinct doctrines of Adventism were more than just an occasional occurrence. They had cut their preaching teeth, so to speak, explaining and defending the positions of Seventh-day Adventism.

Richards’ expertise in evangelism is best illustrated by the April 1934 issue of *Ministry*. This issue included a section entitled “The Better Workman—Improvement in Method and Technique.” The purpose of this section was to provide suggestions of evangelistic techniques that others were using that proved to be successful. In this issue, the methods of H. M. S. Richards were highlighted. Included were the topics for eighteen weeks of meetings held six nights a week.¹⁵ The list of topics included subjects that are part of the distinct message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—The Second Coming of Christ, Where and What Is Heaven? Why Does God Not Destroy the Devil? Spiritualism: Do the Dead Actually Appear? and Who Claims to Have Changed the

¹⁵Editorial, “Order of Subjects Followed by H. M. S. Richards,” *Ministry*, April 1934, 15.

Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday?—to name just a few. The article also indicated that in addition to the nightly meetings there were two radio programs each week in which Richards was the speaker. Any doubt that an evangelistic series could go on for eighteen weeks is dispelled by Robert Edwards in his biography, *H. M. S. Richards*. Edwards describes meetings held in Hollywood, California, that began in mid November of 1930 and ended April 5 of 1931.¹⁶ A shorter series of meetings was held for seventy-three nights in Visalia, California.¹⁷ That kind of evangelistic schedule makes the current five to six week series look paltry in comparison.

H. M. S. Richards as Radio Speaker

The early part of Richards' career would include evangelistic campaigns in various parts of the United States and Canada. As his ministry progressed, radio would be more strongly combined with his evangelism. But the sermons broadcast over radio were different from those used in a live evangelistic series. Some topics that were appropriate in one setting would not fit in the other. The June 1934 issue of *Ministry* included Richards' description of "The Tabernacle of the Air," an hour long program broadcast on KGER in Long Beach, CA.

I speak about forty minutes, and we usually sing but two stanzas of a hymn. We refrain from mentioning Catholics or Protestants over the radio, and I do not speak on the change of the Sabbath or the mark of the beast over the air. I announce that I will speak on those topics on a certain night, and ask the interested to send for literature on the subject.¹⁸

¹⁶Edwards, 130-132.

¹⁷Ibid., 115-117.

¹⁸H. M. S. Richards, "Our Tabernacle of the Air," *Ministry*, June 1934, 7.

On January 10, 1937, Richards would begin his radio ministry full time on the “West Coast Mutual Network” under the name *Voice of Prophecy*. His broadcasts would be once a week on Sundays between 5:30–6:00 p.m. Ten stations in the Don Lee Network chain would pick up the broadcasts at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays and at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesdays.¹⁹ Richards would continue his broadcast *Tabernacle of the Air* for some time even while beginning his work on the new broadcast.

H. M. S. Richards on Preaching

Researching the preaching of H. M. S. Richards leads to one disappointing factor. According to Eldyn Karr, communications director for Voice of Prophecy, outside of his radio sermons, not many of his sermons have survived.²⁰ Richards’ son Kenneth also confirmed that there are not many of his Sabbath morning sermons that still exist.²¹

In trying to understand his perspective on the unique task of Seventh-day Adventist preaching, we are left with three primary sources of information. First, we have many of his radio sermons, and his books—some of which were compilations of his radio sermons. Second, we have articles that he wrote for *Ministry* magazine (he was one of the most published and/or referred to individuals in the magazine.) And lastly, we have his presentations at the inaugural of the H. M. S. Richards Lectureship on Preaching held in 1957 published under the title *Feed My Sheep*.

Secondary sources that help in determining his thoughts on the preaching of the

¹⁹Edwards, 165, 166.

²⁰Eldyn Karr, telephone interview, September 27, 2010.

²¹Kenneth Richards, telephone interview, January 14, 2009.

distinct Adventist message include the following: Jonathan Gunther Penner's master's thesis written in 1958 entitled "The Radio Preaching of H. M. S. Richards" for Purdue University; dissertation of Edwin Francis Buck Jr. published in 1968 by Michigan State University entitled "A Study of the H. M. S. Richards Lectureship—With Emphasis Upon Some of the Basic Elements of Persuasive Preaching"; John Harold Hobart Mathews' D.Min. dissertation written in 1991 at Andrews University entitled "Towards Understanding Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Preaching"; Wilber Alexander's Ph.D. dissertation at Michigan State University published in 1962 entitled "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Speaking of H. M. S. Richards in Connection with the "Voice of Prophecy" Radio Broadcast of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

It would have been immensely helpful to see Richards' Sabbath morning sermons and how he applied his own principles to Seventh-day Adventist preaching. Lacking those kinds of examples, we still have what he wrote about the topic of preaching, and his radio sermons. Whether it was from a pulpit or over the radio, preaching was still preaching, and the main principles of what Richards saw as important should be presented.

Adventist Preaching to be Christ-Centered

What was very evident in the preaching of H. M. S. Richards from very early on was the centrality of Christ to his messages. *Ministry* records this report of a series of meetings held in Hanford, California in 1929 written by Henry De Fluiter.

The Lord has greatly blessed in the evangelistic effort conducted by H. M. S. Richards and C. C. Ellis, in Hanford, Calif. God is moving upon the hearts of the people as never before. The keynote of our meetings has been Christ in every phase of the message. We have not conducted a single meeting since the 13th day of January last [written May 20, 1929] in which Christ has not been made the central

theme of the discourse. It has been the old-fashioned gospel in the old-fashioned way. At our numerous altar calls, men and women have wept for their sins, and God has graciously forgiven.²²

An interesting article written by Richards in 1935 in *Ministry* discusses the need to make doctrinal sermons spiritual. The first step in reaching that goal is to make sure that our own hearts are spiritual. "I once heard Elder A. G. Daniels say that no man has a right to be a Seventh-day Adventist minister who is not a flame of fire."²³ And it starts with having the love of Jesus burning in our own hearts.

No sharp distinction should be made between spiritual subjects and doctrinal subjects. The word "doctrine" simply means "teaching;" and in 2 John 9 we read of "the doctrine of Christ," that is, the teaching of Christ. What right have we to go out and command Sunday keepers to keep Saturday? What right have we to go out and create confusion just to get people to believe the 2300 years ended in 1844? Unless Jesus Christ is in the Sabbath, I have no right to preach it; unless the 2300 days is simply a great ray of light focusing on the work of Christ, as a Christian minister I have no place for it in my work.²⁴

To Richards, making a division between "doctrinal" and "spiritual" sermons strips the doctrinal messages of their spiritual power. In giving titles to our messages, he thought that using the name of Christ every time was not necessary. "But every sermon ought to move upon the hearts of men to accept Jesus. Our presentation of Christ should be like a great picture studded with jewels, of which He is the center. The jewels are the doctrinal subjects we have to present, but He should always remain the center of attraction."²⁵

Later in the article, Richards quoted Ellen White's statement, "Of all professing

²²Henry De Fluiter, "The True Keynote," *Ministry*, August 1929, 10.

²³Richards, "Making Doctrinal Preaching Spiritual," *Ministry*, June 1935, 5.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world.”²⁶ Illustrating his point with the story of a lighthouse that fell twice until the words “Praise to God” were engraved into the stone at the top, Richards concluded his article with these words: “This profound principle is the secret of successful evangelistic preaching. The personal appeal of Jesus Christ must be there, and our lighthouse must be built on Him, through Him, and by Him. May God help us to preach Him. We preach not ourselves, but the Lord Jesus Christ.”²⁷

This emphasis would not change for Richards. Making Christ the center of our preaching would continue to be his focus for the duration of his ministry.

In June 1946, at the General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, three round-table discussions on evangelism were held. The discussions were recorded by stenographers and printed in *Ministry*. It is important to note that these words of Richards come ten months after the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the end of the World War II.

I believe in sticking very close to the cross and its Christ. I think this poor, shaken world is interested in Jesus, more so than ever before. People are looking for finality; they are looking for refuge. Every man who can think today wants some refuge, and Christ is that refuge. So I like to preach about Jesus and talk about Him in every theme. It seems to work.

I like to take as my first subject, “Christ, the Greatest Character of All Time,” or something like that. I believe that if we present the cross of Christ, even when we are talking about the atomic bomb, our presentation will be effective. I do not have any burden to tell people what they can read in the papers and the magazines like *Life*, *Time*, or *Newsweek*. But I do want to tell them what Christ means to us now as a place of refuge, and I think that the theme of Christ can be worked into a whole series.²⁸

²⁶White, *Gospel Workers*, 156.

²⁷Richards, “Making Doctrinal Preaching Spiritual,” 5.

²⁸H. M. S. Richards, “Christ, the Center of All Sermons,” *Ministry*, September 1946, 31.

In further comments at this meeting, Richards gives examples of how this principle can be applied to various biblical subjects.

Practically every topic can be centered in the cross in some form. When I speak on the judgment I touch on “That Ordained Man,” with text from Acts 17:31, “By that Man whom He hath ordained.” Jesus becomes the center of it. And personally, I am not much interested in the judgment unless Christ is there. If He is not there, I do not want to be there. I am not looking for justice; I am looking for mercy. “Christ at the Church Door” is the title I use for the Laodicean message to the churches.

These Christ-centered titles seemed to draw the people. Christ is then made the center of every sermon. hether it be prophetic, doctrinal, practical, or spiritual, Christ should be the center of all.²⁹

In 1958 Richards’ book *Feed My Sheep* was published. The book is a transcript of the lectures given at the very first H. M. S. Richards Lectureship on Preaching. It reveals a continued emphasis on the centrality of Christ to preaching.³⁰

As the foundation of our message we must take our stand on Calvary, where the shadow of a cross rose upon a lonely hill. We must point sinners to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. We must tell them how to become Christians—that they must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and then they shall be saved; that they must confess Him before men, so that He may confess them before our Father which is in heaven; that they must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, so that they may receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. In short, preaching is the proclamation of the gospel. Preaching is not mere lecturing. It is not mere talking. It’s gospel preaching or its not Christian preaching. Real preaching must come from a heart surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ.³¹

Preaching That Leads to Decisions for Christ

The reasons for making Christ central to our preaching, according to Richards, was to lead people to accept Him as Savior. It could be suggested from much of what Richards has to say about Adventist preaching, that preaching is always evangelistic on

²⁹Richards, “Christ, the Center of All Sermons,” 31.

³⁰Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 22.

³¹*Ibid.*, 55.

some level. Whether it is part of an evangelistic series or not, it should always be calling for a decision for Christ. He asks early in the book *Feed My Sheep*, “What are we doing for the souls of the lost who attend our regular services?”³² As an illustration of what could be done, Richards used the example of his grandfather who was a Methodist pastor.

My grandfather wasn't a great orator—he was just a godly man who talked out of his heart to the people. But every Sunday when he was finished with his sermon he would step to a little altar—you know in the Methodist church at that time there was an altar where those who were impressed to do so could come up and kneel, a “mourners” bench, or whatever you want to call it—and he would step down there and “open the doors of the church,” as he called it. He always did this if there was someone in the audience whom he didn't know, or if there was someone that he did know who was not converted. He didn't make any big emotional appeal, he just stepped down and said: “Now I am opening the doors of the church to anyone here who might desire to be a Christian. Isn't there someone here who wishes to respond to the gospel call and give his heart to Jesus? The church invites you. Please come forward and take my hand and become a member of the church.” He would do this Sunday after Sunday, and nobody would come. Then once in a while somebody would come. But grandfather opened the doors of the church every week.³³

This kind of preaching was not to exclude the great doctrines of the Bible, but to shape the preaching of those doctrines. Richards then suggests that we should commit to memory these words of Phillip Brooks: “No preaching ever had any strong power which was not preaching doctrine. . . . Preach all the doctrine that you know, and learn forever more and more, but preach it always, not that men might believe it, but that men may be saved by believing it.”³⁴

From Richards' perspective, preaching was always aimed at winning others to Jesus Christ.

³²Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 37.

³³Ibid., 38.

³⁴Ibid., 40, 41.

Christ in Distinct Adventist Preaching

Richards' emphasis on the centrality of the gospel and Christ to our preaching included a deep commitment to the distinct message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In fact, he saw it as the message for the last days and critical to understand for those who were waiting for Jesus to return. Our distinct message was to be preached, but preached in the setting of the "everlasting gospel."

All the principles of good preaching apply to Seventh-day Adventist preaching. We believe that there is a reason for this Seventh-day Adventist Church and for the Seventh-day Adventist preaching. If there is no reason, then why be different? If there is a reason, we ought to have some things which others do not have with the same force and with the same power. Why are we called Seventh-day Adventists? Because we emphasize the long neglected truth of the Sabbath, which we believe was to be revived in the latter days, and has been revived, and it to be a sign and symbol of God's remnant church. We are called Adventists because we emphasize the second coming of Christ, which all true Christians look for, in which they believe. But we emphasize it, and we believe that it is imminent, and we proclaim the signs of the times that show it to be near. Are we to cease emphasizing these things? No, a thousand times no!³⁵

Richards goes on to say that "real Seventh-day Adventist preaching should be the preaching of the gospel in the setting of the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs."³⁶ He saw the preaching of the Adventist doctrines as, in fact, preaching the doctrines of Christ.

Proclaim the everlasting gospel. This is no time to relax our preaching of the doctrines of Christ. This is no time to put the soft pedal on the distinctive present-day doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists. They become increasingly urgent as time goes on. The judgment-hour message is not out of date. It is more urgent now than at its beginning. The sacrificial atoning offering of Christ upon the cross is not out of date. It is more and more important and should be preached more and more as the modernistic tendencies in the popular churches repudiate the atonement. The priestly work of our Savior in heaven is not out of date. It becomes more and more important as that work draws near its completion. The downtrodden law of God is not out of date. It should be lifted up as a standard of righteousness. The Sabbath, "preached more fully," is not out of date. The warning against the beast and his image and his

³⁵Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 49, 50.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 51.

mark is not out of date. It should be proclaimed more fully as apostasy deepens. The message that says, “Come out her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4), certainly is not out of date, because it hasn’t gone forth in its fullness yet.³⁷

Two Ends of the Spectrum

In preparation for the first lectureship on preaching, Richards sent letters to approximately 500 pastors, leaders, teachers, and “a few dozen laymen”³⁸ in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. The letter was a query about the condition of preaching in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and what could be done to improve it. The responses that he received reflected a tension in Adventism between doctrinal preaching that many times was devoid of Christ, and generic preaching that had lost its connection to the distinct Adventist message. Reflecting concerns about losing the focus on Christ as the center of Adventist doctrine, Richards refers to this letter:

As one of our leading ministers has written me: “So many of our men feel that their sole responsibility lies in giving a set of doctrinal lectures and prophetic expositions, and driving as rapidly as possible toward the Sabbath and its acceptance, and then to the baptismal pool. But poor, sin-blighted lives, seeking for salvation from the guilt and power of sin, need all the aids that are possible to understand the power of the Christian life and the high privileges of Christian living through grace from our Savior. I feel that we violate the very clear principles that we should show others that we are Christians before we bring out the peculiar points of our doctrinal beliefs from which the popular churches have departed. We are to call men back to these principles. It’s a glorious privilege, but there is a tragic neglect in the uplifting of Christ in every presentation.”³⁹

A letter sent to *Ministry* magazine quoted by Richards in *Feed My Sheep* indicates the opposite problem for some Adventist preachers.

³⁷Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 52.

³⁸Ibid., 252.

³⁹Ibid., 53.

Seventh-day Adventists long to hear the truths preached that made them Seventh-day Adventists. Out in California someone wrote this, and it was published in the *Ministry* of March, 1957: "Six years ago I joined the Adventist Church, coming from another church. There we heard doctrines; but good though the sermons have been in the Adventist Church, they have been no different from sermons I could hear on Sundays in other Protestant churches. I feel starved for the Adventist sermons that brought me into the Adventist Church."-Page 21. I believe we ought to preach all the message in our churches.⁴⁰

Many of the letters that Richards received in preparation for the lectureship reflected the same concern that the distinctive message of Adventism was no longer being heard from Adventist pulpits.

Letter after letter rings with this conviction—we do not preach our distinctive message enough at the regular Sabbath morning services. They remind us that a generation of young people are growing up who never attended a protracted series of lectures on the doctrines of this message. We don't have many tabernacle efforts or tent meetings any more. These young people have never heard the proofs for the doctrines, the great message, the prophetic message. About all they know is that they go to church on Saturday and don't eat certain things. That's about all they know about the distinctive Adventist message. Our youth need to hear the reasons for Seventh-day Adventist preaching, the reason for the existence of the church and of their own convictions. When will they ever get such information if not at the Sabbath morning services?⁴¹

The answer to that problem was to see preaching in terms of having a role that is often neglected—a teaching role. The Sabbath morning sermon can be a source of encouragement and support. It can be used to warm the heart and strengthen the faith. But it must also continue to be an opportunity to teach the great truths of the Bible.

You teach them before baptism; they are baptized; then you continue to teach them after baptism. That is the teaching and feeding that must go on after they are in the church.

The messengers of Christ are to go everywhere, teaching all peoples, making converts of all peoples. Then follows baptism, but this is not the end, though it seems to be in the minds of many today. After baptism, again we read, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway."

⁴⁰Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 146.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 262.

Teaching, baptizing, teaching. Teaching before baptism, teaching after baptism. This teaching, this filling the mind and heart with the Word of God, is to be continued even unto the end of the world. As long as one does this work faithfully, Jesus says, “I am with you.” This is a special promise to those who feed hungry hearts with the Word of God.”⁴²

Richards, responding to another letter in his book, reminds us of the important balance that must be maintained by saying that along with the “almost universal demand that the truths and doctrines of Scripture be preached on Sabbath morning, including the second coming of Christ, life only through faith in our Redeemer, the Sabbath, the binding claims of the law of God, the writers of these letters say over and over again that we should stress the great fundamental doctrines of salvation.”⁴³

Towards an Understanding of Distinct Seventh-day Adventist Preaching

An understanding of Richards’ perspective on what Seventh-day Adventist preaching should be can be summed up in part by the following propositions:

1. *Seventh-day Adventist preaching should be first and foremost, Christ-centered.* It should present Him as the Savior of humanity and lift Him up as the “Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.” It is to be evangelistic in nature—calling for a decision to accept Him as Savior and to follow Him in life. It should present each doctrine in its connection to Christ and the cross.

2. *Seventh-day Adventist preaching should be true to the purpose for which the Adventist Church has been called into existence.* The church has been called to proclaim the gospel message in the setting of the judgment hour and the closing of earth’s history,

⁴²Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 207, 208.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 263.

to prepare people for the imminent return of Jesus, and to restore biblical truths that have been lost to Christianity that explain and clarify the cross and Christ.

3. *Seventh-day Adventist preaching should continue to teach and emphasize the fundamental doctrines of the church, not only before baptism but also after.* We are to reinforce the distinct message of Adventism

It should be noted that the last of these principles has more to do with the sermon schedule and intentionally reinforcing the distinct message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church than it has to do with sermon content. Since very few sermons that he preached on Sabbath mornings have survived, we cannot test his implementation of this principle. However, an application of this principle will be proposed later in this study, based on his suggestions.

Illustrations from Three of Richards' Sermons

Finding sermons by Richards to illustrate the first two principles is not hard. That he was committed to placing Christ as the center of his preaching is clear from a quick survey of the sermons we have in print. That he was committed to the distinct message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is also clear. To demonstrate the combination of the two principles, three sermons will be looked at that emphasize unique doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The first and second sermons "What Is Wrong with the Ten Commandments," and "God's Memorial" come from the small book *25 Sermons*, published by the Voice of Prophecy in 1955.⁴⁴ The third sermon, "Where Do We Go

⁴⁴H. M. S. Richards, *25 Sermons* (Glendale, CA: Voice of Prophecy, 1955), 115-121.

From Here,” comes from the book *Radio Sermons* published by Review and Herald Publishing Association in 1952.⁴⁵

What Is Wrong with the Ten Commandments?

Richards introduces this sermon by asking the question, if there is nothing wrong with the Ten Commandments, why do children not memorize them anymore?—or why are they not obeyed by everyone?—or why do so many Christians claim that they have been abolished? He reminds us that God spoke them from Mount Sinai Himself, and that they were written on tables of stone by His own finger. Richards then reads the Ten Commandments.

Following the introduction of the sermon, Richards has four basic points to make.

1. What God spoke at Sinai and wrote with His finger is perfect.

When speaking of earthly legislation, men often use the phrase “the majesty of the law.” And well they may, for the character of a government is determined by and embodied in the character of its laws. The words of divine inspiration in the Holy Bible uphold the majesty of the law of God, the Ten Commandments. It is a law of infinite perfection because God’s character is revealed in it. We read in Psalm 19:7: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.”⁴⁶

2. Richards’ second point begins the process of pointing us to the cross by reminding us that the law of God also has the purpose of revealing sin.

God’s Holy law marks every departure from righteousness. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. The Ten Commandments are not a code merely for the regulation of outward acts. They constitute a law of the heart, the foundation standard of righteousness established by God, the Creator, for those He has created. There is no impulse of the human soul not reached by God’s holy law. It is living “and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12.

⁴⁵H. M. S. Richards, *Radio Sermons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952).

⁴⁶Richards, *25 Sermons*, 117.

When we come face to face with this law of God, we hear in it the voice of God saying, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." 1 Peter 1: 16. Like a mighty searchlight it shines in our hearts and we must say, "Guilty," for all men "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23.⁴⁷

3. The third point in this sermon is that the law was not just for the Israelites but for everyone. According to Paul in Romans 4:15, where there is no law, there is no sin. But the fact that sin and death are referenced in the Bible before Sinai is proof that the law of God was "in force from the beginning."⁴⁸ If that is the case, then they were present before the Jews existed.

We must not let our minds be confused with the idea that it was only for the ancient Israelites that the Ten Commandments were given. They were to teach the truth to others. The New Testament says that it was greatly to their advantage that "unto them were committed the oracles of God" Romans 3:2. But they "received the lively oracles to give unto us." Acts 7:38. They were to be a light to the other nations, as we read in Deuteronomy 4:6, 7: "Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely, this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them?"⁴⁹

He reminds his hearers of Christ's words in Matthew 5 that He did not come to abolish the law and the prophets. James is then cited to emphasize the truth that to violate the law of God in any point makes one a transgressor of the law. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, 'Do not commit adultery,' said also, 'Do not kill.' Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:10-12 KJV. The implication of these

⁴⁷Richards., 117.

⁴⁸Ibid., 118.

⁴⁹Ibid., 119.

verses is that the law is still in effect, even for Christians.

4. While he has alluded to it before, it is here in the sermon that Richards begins to bring his message home to the gospel.

So, let us not argue against God; let us not deny His commandments; let us not say that they are done away, abolished, abrogated. The time will come when every mouth will be stopped and all the world will stand guilty before Him. Romans 3:19. The law of God convicts men of sin and it will drive everyone to Christ for pardon, the divine gift of grace, and the power to obey, if they will but accept the Word of God.⁵⁰

Richards sees the salvation offered through the gospel as not only providing forgiveness for the guilt of sin, but as providing power to obey the law of God.

It is because we are not naturally spiritual that we cannot keep a spiritual law. That is the trouble. Our lives, our hearts, have been defiled by sin. Man does not have the power in himself to live the perfect life. He looks into the mirror of God's holy law and sees there his mistakes, his faults, his sins. The mirror will not wash his faults, the mirror will not cleanse him. He must go somewhere else for that. According to justice he is to die, "for the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. But through the great gift of Christ who died for us on Calvary, God is able to be a just God and still "the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. Jesus met the full price of our condemnation. He gave His life for our sins, and His perfect life is put to our account, His righteousness is counted as ours.⁵¹

True to his own principles, Richards ends this sermon with an appeal:

Do you accept His grace? Do you accept His justification? Do it today. Yes, learn the Ten Commandments. And, as you look into that holy mirror and see your faults, turn to God in Christ. "Do we then make void the law through faith?" asks the apostle. Then he answers his own question: "God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Romans 3:31. And truly we do. The law is established in the heart of every believer who sees it perfect in Christ.⁵²

In this sermon, Richards maintains the integrity of the Ten Commandments and

⁵⁰Richards., 120.

⁵¹Ibid., 121.

⁵²Ibid.

their place and role in the life of the Christian, and yet upholds Christ as the key to salvation. In Jesus is not only forgiveness of sin, but grace to obey.

God's Memorial

A logical follow-up to understanding Richards' presentation of the Ten Commandments in the context of the gospel, is an understanding of his presentation of the Sabbath in the context of the gospel. His sermon "God's Memorial" addresses the topic of the Sabbath in approximately seven points. What is interesting to note in this sermon is that four times Richards quotes pastors and commentators from other faiths to support his points.

He introduces his topic by referring to the "troubled days of worldwide doubt and skepticism" that we are living in, and suggests that we "need to remember our Creator."⁵³ The means by which that is accomplished is the Sabbath. "On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh-day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" (Gen 2:2, 3, KJV).

John Peter Lange, the great Lutheran Bible commentator, reminds us that if we had no other passage than this, there would be no difficulty in deducing from it a precept for the universal observance of the Sabbath, the seventh day, to be devoted to God as holy time by all of that race for whom the earth in its nature was especially prepared.⁵⁴

Richards' first major point in this sermon is that creation was carried out through Christ in cooperation with His Father. "The Lord Jesus Christ was associated with the

⁵³Richards, *25 Sermons*, 129.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 129.

heavenly Father in the work of creation and, of course, in the rest of the Sabbath day.”⁵⁵

“Because of this, Jesus spoke of the Sabbath in these words: “Therefore the Son of man [that is, Christ] is Lord also of the Sabbath.” Mark 2:28. So you see the making of the Sabbath as a memorial of the creative power of God was a work of Jesus Christ, the active agent in the creation of this world and man and all things.”⁵⁶

The second point in this sermon is that the Bible not only tells us which day the Sabbath is to be observed, but how to observe the day. The Ten Commandments define the Sabbath as being observed on the seventh day—Saturday, not on Sunday as many assume. But it also to be observed “from even unto even”—sundown to sundown (Lev 23:32). “As we are reminded by F. W. Farrar, the great divine of the Church of England: ‘The Sabbath is Saturday, the seventh day of the week. It was to be kept; holy by consecrating it to God.’”⁵⁷

Richards’ third point is based on the wording of the fourth commandment that calls us to keep the Sabbath holy. Holiness is a religious and spiritual matter—not just physical.⁵⁸ “D. L. Moody saw this and said that this Sabbath question is a vital one for the whole country. He reminded us that if we give up the Sabbath, soon the church goes; and if we give up the church, the home goes; and as the home goes, the nation goes.”⁵⁹

The fourth point, addressing the issue that some raise that the Sabbath was just for

⁵⁵Richards., 129.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., 130.

⁵⁸Ibid., 131.

⁵⁹Ibid.

the Jews, Richards directs his listeners to Heb 4:9—pointing to the Sabbath rest for God’s people. He then points to Isa 56:6, 7, indicating that even the foreigners who came to Israel would keep the Sabbath. It would be a continual reminder of creation and re-creation.

Dr. Adam Clarke, the great Methodist commentator, reminds us that because this Sabbath commandment has not been particularly mentioned in the New Testament as a moral precept binding on all, some have presumptuously inferred that there is no Sabbath under the Christian dispensation. He reminds us that the truth is that the Sabbath is considered as a type of the rest in glory which remains for the people of God, and therefore the moral obligation of the Sabbath must continue until time is swallowed up in eternity.⁶⁰

In his fifth point, Richards gives a powerful illustration in what he calls “Bible surveying.”⁶¹ He makes three sub-points by quickly referencing three Bible verses about the Sabbath. His first verse is in Rev 1:10 where John says that he was in the spirit on the Lord’s Day. “Let’s drive a stake right here, as though we began to survey a straight line through Bible doctrines on this point: The Lord has a day” (Rev 1:10).⁶²

Richards’ second verse comes from Mark 2:28, where it says that “the son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” Christ is clearly the one who is being referred to as “the son of man.” This is where he drives his second stake. He ties the first two points together by reminding us that the Lord has a day, and that this day is the Sabbath.⁶³

Richards’ third stake is found in the creation story of Gen 2:2, 3 where God rests on the seventh day and makes it holy.

⁶⁰Richards, 131, 132.

⁶¹Ibid., 132.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

So right at the beginning of this world the Lord Jesus Christ, with the Father in creation, rested on the seventh day, blessed it, and sanctified it. Thus it is Christ's blessed, holy rest day. Now we have three stakes in our Bible survey: First, God has a day (Revelation 1:10); second, that day is the Sabbath (Mark 2:28); third, the Sabbath is the seventh day (Genesis 2:2, 3).⁶⁴

Richards' sixth main point is that the Sabbath is a call from Scripture to honor the creative power of God in Jesus Christ.

This is clear, plain, and Scriptural, and shows us from the Holy Word to honor the creative power of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, not only at the creation of the world, but in the re-creation of the human soul, for he that is in Christ Jesus is a new creation. Regeneration is re-creation, and the Sabbath is a symbol of this mighty, holy power of God in Christ.⁶⁵

In Richards' last main point of this sermon, he briefly introduces the topic of the "Third Angels' Message" found in Rev 14:6, 7. He tells his hearers that in a time when evolutionary theories deny the creative power of God, Rev 14 calls for a "worldwide revival of faith in God as Creator."⁶⁶ It is a Christian message, because it is described as the "everlasting gospel." But the burden of this message is "fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come." To Richards, this indicates the moral authority of God reflected in His law—the standard of the judgment. The message in Rev 14 is also a call to worship the Creator on the Sabbath—"And worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water."

Richards has focused on the gospel content of Rev 14. Now he focuses on the proclamation of this unique last-day message and the second coming of Christ.

Here is a worldwide call to the worship of God as Creator. This is a last-day message for, reading on two or three verses farther, we come to the prophecy of

⁶⁴Richards, 132, 133.

⁶⁵Ibid., 133.

⁶⁶Ibid.

Christ's coming in the clouds of heaven. It is a worldwide message to go to all nations just before the second coming of Christ. Notice, the words of this mighty message going to all mankind with the everlasting gospel are taken almost verbatim from the fourth commandment. It speaks of God's creative power in making the world and all things, and calls upon men to honor the Sabbath. Here, in almost the same words, we are told to "worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."⁶⁷

Those who are waiting for Jesus to return are described in Rev 14:12 as those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." In Richards' estimation, these two great things go together—the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.⁶⁸

The conclusion of this sermon focuses directly on Jesus Christ as Creator and Redeemer.

Every Sabbath is a memorial of Christ's creative power. Every Sabbath reminds us of His redeeming power. Let us honor, Christ by honoring His Sabbath. Let us rest on its holy hours. Let us worship God. Let us seek to teach His Holy Word to others. Let us do good and bring good to the hearts of men. Let us train our children to honor the Sabbath that Christ made. Let us honor the Sabbath of the Lord as we honor the Lord of the Sabbath.⁶⁹

This sermon is a model of simplicity in its defense of the Sabbath. It is built around very direct and clear passages of the Bible. But while it explains and proves the scriptural basis of the Sabbath, it repeatedly brings us back to the gospel and to Christ Himself. Its appeal to obedience to the Sabbath commandment is presented as obedience and allegiance to Christ.

Where Do We Go From Here?

At first appearance, this sermon seems to be about the second coming of Christ,

⁶⁷Richards, 133, 134.

⁶⁸Ibid., 134.

⁶⁹Ibid.

and our eternal home with Him. But as Richards progresses, it becomes clear that this is about the nature of our existence in heaven—will we be there as disembodied spirits, or will we be real physical people?

Richards begins this sermon with these probing questions: “Where do we go from here? In other words, does life have a meaning?”⁷⁰ In his estimation, if this life is all that there is to our existence, then “this life is as meaningless as running a sewing machine without a needle.”⁷¹ But if there is more to come, and this life is the preparation for the future, everything changes, and this life decides what happens to us in the next.

If we admit the existence of God, and if He is just, if virtue is better than vice, kindness better than cruelty, then there must be a future life. A just God must encourage righteousness and punish evil. But it is as clear as can be that such is not always the case in this life. Virtue is not always rewarded here; vice is not always punished. What we see in this life brings us no assurance that justice will always triumph or that right is superior to wrong. Therefore an adequate conception of a just and righteous God demands a life hereafter.

God’s character demands a future life, reason tells us that there must be such a life, but we are not left with this alone. What do the Scriptures teach?⁷²

After this introduction, Richards moves on to talk about what it was that Christ came to establish. He came first to establish a kingdom of grace that was to be accepted into the heart.

Christ establishes His kingdom in the heart of that man, his sins are forgiven, his life is changed, the Spirit of God dwells within him, the work of grace continues until he grows up into the fullness of Christ. Having finished his allotted span on earth, he will await the time when God will call forth the sleeping saints together “to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Then begins the kingdom of glory. First they were justified by faith, sanctified

⁷⁰Richards, *Radio Sermons*, 169.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

through the Spirit; now they are glorified at Christ's return. It is of this kingdom of glory that we speak today."⁷³

Christ Himself is the one who gives us the best view of what is ahead of the Christian. He has gone ahead of His children to prepare mansions for them and will come back to bring them home. In the New Jerusalem, God will dwell with His people on this earth re-created.

It is after this lengthy introduction that Richards gets to the meat of this sermon. "Now there are three questions, among others, that naturally come to mind when we speak of the hereafter: First, Will we be real beings or merely spirits, incorporeal? Second, Will we know each other there? Third, Will we remember?"⁷⁴

In answer to the first question, Richards begins at Genesis where Adam and Eve were created perfect, indicating that it is possible to live a sinless life in a body. He then references Phil 3:20-21, "For our citizenship [ARV] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." The resurrected Christ had a body and could communicate with the disciples.

They knew Him; they felt Him. He convinced them that He was not a ghost, a mere spirit essence. He had real existence. (John 20:20; Luke 24:36.) He ate food before them. (Luke 24:40-43.) There is just one difference noted—He could appear or disappear at will; He could become invisible to them, and He had the power to appear suddenly. (John 20: 19; Luke 24:30-36.) The glorious body of Christ's people in the hereafter will be like the body that Christ had.⁷⁵

⁷³Richards, 170.

⁷⁴Ibid., 171.

⁷⁵Ibid., 172, 173.

In answering the second question—will we know each other there, Richards highlights 1 Cor 13:12: “Then shall I know even as also I am known.” To him that means that we will know each other, and be known by others. Using Christ as an example again, he reminds us that Jesus was known by the disciples even after the resurrection. “The disciples knew Christ in His glorious body. So shall we know Him. Not only shall we know, but we shall be known.”⁷⁶

In answering the third question—will we remember, Richards reminds us that some things will be forgotten. Sin and the sorrow it has brought will be forgotten. The things that brought tears and sadness will be gone forever. But there are many things that will not be forgotten. The Savior and salvation will certainly not be forgotten.

Yes, indeed, the redeemed remember the Redeemer and what He did for them on dark Calvary. They remember the story of salvation. They remember the cross of their redemption. In Revelation 5: 9 we hear that great song before the throne, where the redeemed ones sing of Christ, the Lamb of God: “For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of -every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

They remember that redemption. They remember that sacrificial death. They remember the people. They remember the nations. They remember-ah, yes, how they remember!⁷⁷

Richards concludes that while there is much to forget, there will be much that we will never forget. It is here on this earth that the watching universe has seen the outworking of God’s grace, and the salvation brought about by the cross of Christ.

It is here on this earth that Christ died; it is here that men and women far from God have been recovered from the land of the enemy, have been saved by grace, have been delivered with a great deliverance. Then in that land of eternal life, they will praise their Redeemer. Yes, when we go from here, we shall be real people, knowing, remembering. So, “let not your heart be troubled.” John 14:1.

⁷⁶Ibid., 173.

⁷⁷Ibid., 174, 175.

“And so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4:17. By God’s grace, that’s our final destination that’s where we go from here!⁷⁸

Woven into this sermon are so many references to Christ and to salvation, that they touch almost every page. It is an intriguing perspective on the nature of our existence in heaven that actually helps to dispel the myths about the righteous being merely disembodied spirits in heaven. A good logical sermon to follow this one would be to discuss the biblical nature of death, and immortality being conditional on faith in Christ. The only thing that this sermon lacks is a definite appeal for a decision, although it could be argued that the appeal is implicit in the sermon.

Summary of Richards’ Sermons

Each of these three sermons from Richards is a good example of preaching on fundamental teachings of the church while making sure that the gospel is central. Christ is more than just a casual reference. He is made an integral part of each message. In fact, in the last sermon evaluated—“Where Do We Go From Here?” it would be impossible to extract Christ from that message and still have it make sense.

Richards concludes the book *Feed My Sheep* with these very powerful statements about the tasks of Seventh-day Adventist preaching.

Real preaching in these days is preaching Christ, preaching Christ in the Word and from the Word. It is preaching the everlasting gospel in all its fullness. It is preaching the message for this day and generation. It is preaching a complete message. It will bring no tame sermons, but fervent messages. They will not be too long. They will be practical. They will apply to the people. They will be clear and easily understood.⁷⁹

⁷⁸Richards, 175.

⁷⁹Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 445.

It [SDA preaching] will be the preaching of the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. It will be the preaching, and is the preaching, in which the preacher will hide behind the cross and uplift Jesus. It will cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matthew 25:6). Again, and at last, it will be the tongue of fire."⁸⁰

⁸⁰Ibid., 446.

CHAPTER 5

A PROFILE OF THE PREACHING AT KRESS MEMORIAL

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

On July 1, 2010, I celebrated the conclusion of my eighth year as the pastor of the Kress Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church. During this time, I have preached hundreds of sermons that have been relatively well-received. It was not until I began to evaluate these sermons in conjunction with my research on H. M. S. Richards, that I became concerned about three issues:

1. First, while my preaching has been Christ-centered on a general basis, I am not sure that I have intentionally looked at a passage or topic to be preached in terms of Christ's centrality to the message.
2. Second, while I see myself as committed to the distinct message and teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I have over-emphasized some doctrines and left others untouched.
3. Third, looking at the range of sermons I have preached in eight years, it is clear that I have not done enough to deliberately prepare a balanced preaching menu for the Kress Memorial Church—one that reinforces the unique message of Adventism in the context of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

H. M. S. Richards and Principles for Distinct Seventh-day Adventist Preaching

Studying the written materials of H. M. S. Richards yielded the following three principles of Seventh-day Adventist preaching:

Seventh-day Adventist preaching should be first and foremost, Christ-centered: It should present Him as the Savior of humanity and lift Him up as the “Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world” (John 1:29); it is to be evangelistic in nature—calling for a decision to accept Him as Savior and to follow Him in life; it should present each doctrine in its connection to Christ and the cross.

Seventh-day Adventist preaching should be true to the purpose for which the Adventist Church has been called into existence: To proclaim the gospel message in the setting of the judgment hour and the closing of earth’s history; to prepare people for the imminent return of Jesus; to restore biblical truths that have been lost to Christianity that explain and clarify the cross and Christ.

Seventh-day Adventist preaching should continue to teach and emphasize the fundamental doctrines of the church after baptism: To reinforce the distinct message of Adventism.

It is important to note that this last principle has to do with intentionally planning the sermon schedule to deal with the distinct doctrines of the Adventist church.

Evaluation of Sermons Preached Previously at Kress Memorial Church

To test the application of these principles in the sermons preached at Kress Memorial Church, the sermons preached between the years of 2007 and 2009 were

evaluated.¹ A number of the sermons were eliminated because they were short sermons (such as those for communion services, special programs, or holidays). Twelve were randomly selected from the remaining sermons to be evaluated.²

Based on the principles gleaned from Richards, an evaluation tool was constructed to be used by three retired pastors to critique the selected sermons. The evaluation was purposely kept simple, and intended to test for the presence of the first two principles—the third principle having more to do with the planning of the preaching year rather than with the content of the sermons. Two basic questions were addressed. First, is this sermon Christ-centered? Second, does this sermon address any fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? While Richards clearly believed that it was important to emphasize the distinct doctrines of Seventh-day Adventism, he saw the emphasis on Christ as being the most important. In that context, the evaluation instrument was more heavily weighted to test whether the sermons were Christ centered.

To give Part 1 of the evaluation a setting that would help clarify the process, a statement from Richards on what it means to preach Christ was placed at the top of the form. The evaluation addressed six aspects of being Christ-centered: (1) His eternal nature and deity, (2) Salvation through Christ, (3) His Sufferings and Death, (4) His resurrection, (5) His ministry to others, (6) His teachings. These aspects were rated as to

¹The sermons preached in 2010 were excluded by the fact that it was hard not to allow the research I was conducting to affect the way I was currently preaching. My intention was to evaluate sermons that were preached prior to the research.

²The process of randomization was arrived at by a phone conversation with a mathematician. The sermons for the selection process were shuffled 3 times and then arranged into 12 stacks of 6 sermons each (a total of 72 sermons). A single game die was rolled to arrive at the number of each sermon in each stack. If the same number was rolled more than once, I would roll again to make sure that I was not unconsciously holding the die in such a way as to skew the process.

how strongly they were reflected in that particular sermon with a grading of 0-10 (0 meaning not at all, and 10 meaning strongly).

Limitations of the Evaluations

An exhaustive evaluation of all of my sermons is outside of the parameters of this project. The evaluation of twelve sermons reflected in table 1, while not being exhaustive, provided enough of a sampling to indicate possible trends or gaps in preaching the distinct message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the context of Christ as our Savior.

Results of the Evaluations for Part 1

In reporting on the first part of the survey—Is this sermon Christ centered?—all three evaluators are shown in the table below with their scores separated by commas.

Table 1. Is this sermon Christ centered?

Sermon Number	His Eternal Nature and Deity	Salvation Through Christ	His Sufferings and death	His Resurrection	His Ministry to others	His Teachings
1	8,10, 10	6, 9,10	6, 8, 5	0 4 0	8, 4,10	8, 0, 5
2	0, 9, 0	10, 10,10	6, 6, 5	0, 0, 0	10,10,10	10, 10, 7
3	7, 3, 5	0, 0, 0	0, 7, 5	0, 0, 0	6, 8,10	10, 8, 5
4	10, 7, 10	8, 10, 9	6, 9, 5	0, 0, 0	8, 9, 9	10, 10, 5
5	8, 8, 5	10, 10,10	10, 9, 7	0, 7, 0	6,10, 5	8, 10,10
6	8, 4, 10	10, 10,10	8, 8, 5	0, 0, 3	4,10,10	10, 10,10
7	8, 9, 5	10, 4, 0	4, 0, 0	0, 0, 0	10, 9, 6	10, 9, 7
8	10, 0, 8	6, 2, 7	8, 5, 6	0, 0, 0	10, 0,10	10, 7, 5
9	8,10, 7	10, 10,10	10,10,10	6, 10, 7	8,10, 6	8, 10, 8
10	10, 0, 10	8, 10,10	8, 0, 3	0, 0, 2	8,10, 8	8, 10,10
11	10,10, 10	10, 10,10	8, 3, 5	0, 3, 0	8,10,10	8, 9,10
12	10, 4, 10	8, 10,10	0, 1, 5	0, 2, 0	10, 8,10	8, 9, 5

Conclusions from the Evaluations of Part 1

The evaluators gave higher scores predominately to—His Eternal Nature and Deity, Salvation through Christ, His Ministry to Others, and His Teachings. The last two are not a surprise since I enjoy preaching about Christ's interaction with others and about His teachings. The first category about the eternal nature and deity is also a topic of strong focus for me. Salvation through Christ is strongly present, but apparently sermons that address His suffering and death for humanity are not. Weakest of all are sermons that address the resurrection of Christ. It did not occur to me until looking at these surveys that I have spoken about the resurrection of Christ often in funeral sermons, but almost never on Sabbath morning—with the exception perhaps of the Sabbath before Easter.

Results of the Evaluation for Part 2

The evaluation of Part 2 was done as a checklist of fundamental Seventh-day Adventist doctrines that are referred to in the sermons rather than numerically scored as in Part 1. For the sake of this study, the list of fundamental doctrines is limited to the following:

1. The Great Controversy
2. The Remnant and its Mission
3. The Gift of Prophecy
4. The Law of God or the Sabbath
5. The Heavenly Sanctuary
6. The Second Coming of Christ
7. Death, Resurrection and New Earth

Guidance in arriving at this list was provided by George Knight's book *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*.³

Table 2 reflects how many of the three evaluators (0, 1, 2, or 3) saw a reference to that particular fundamental belief of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the sermon evaluated.

Table 2. Does this sermon address the selected fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

Sermon Number	The Great Controversy	The Remnant and Its Mission	The Gift of Prophecy	The Law of God or The Sabbath	The Heavenly Sanctuary	The Second Coming of Christ	Death, Resurrection and New Earth
1	2	2	3	1	1	1	0
2	2	2	2	2	0	0	0
3	2	0	0	0	0	3	1
4	3	0	0	0	0	1	2
5	3	3	3	1	1	3	3
6	0	1	1	2	1	0	1
7	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
8	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
9	3	3	0	1	0	3	3
10	2	1	0	0	0	1	1
11	3	2	2	1	0	1	2
12	3	1	2	0	0	2	1

The theme of the Great Controversy has always been important to me, so it is not a surprise that it is referred to often. The Gift of Prophecy, the Law of God or the Sabbath, and The Heavenly Sanctuary are referred to the least. Admittedly, I have not preached very many sermons that refer to the Sanctuary doctrine.

³George Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD. Review and Herald, 2000).

Conclusions from the Evaluations of Part 2

It is clear that this is where the third principle of H. M. S. Richards becomes important. I need to continue to teach and emphasize the fundamental doctrines of the church and to reinforce the distinct message of Adventism through the preaching calendar. I cannot continue to allow the incorporation of the distinct message of Seventh-day Adventism in my preaching to occur randomly.

General Conclusions about the Preaching at Kress Memorial Church

From an overall view of these evaluations, my preaching at Kress has been relatively Christ-centered and has emphasized some of the distinct aspects of the Adventist message. It cannot be claimed in either case, however, that it was deliberately planned to accomplish those tasks.

What is also not explicit in this particular view of the evaluations is the information gleaned from looking at the individual sermons and their scores. There were particular sermons where being Christ-centered was scored highly while there was virtually no trace of being distinctly Seventh-day Adventist. The opposite is also true. There were sermons that reflected a distinct Adventist perspective while being weak on making Christ central. What emerges from these evaluations is that there was not an intentional effort to link the centrality of Christ with the uniqueness of the Seventh-day message in my preaching. It will take intentional planning to make sure that the distinct message of Adventism is emphasized in the context of the centrality of Christ.

CHAPTER 6

PREACHING THE DISTINCT MESSAGE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL

Introduction

The insights that H. M. S. Richards provides for preaching clearly include presenting the distinct message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the context of Christ and the gospel. It involves more than merely sprinkling the name of Christ throughout a sermon. Seventh-day Adventist preaching should affirm and emphasize the distinct teachings of Adventism while making clear their connection to Jesus Christ—“the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29).

A New Preaching Method for Kress Memorial Church

Twelve new sermons were written and preached at Kress on distinct Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. The goal, however, was not just to preach on the distinctive doctrines of the church, but to show their connection to Christ and salvation, and to make an appeal for decisions.

Of the approximately 225-250 individuals who attend worship services, about 10 percent are not members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some attend because family members belong to the congregation, while others are there because they are studying Seventh-day Adventist beliefs or are in the process of becoming members of the church.

Lester Pratt, evangelist for the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, held evangelistic meetings Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights during the same time these sermons were being preached on Sabbath mornings. Looking at the schedule, we arranged for an appeal to be made on the Sabbath that the sermon on the remnant, entitled “A People of Truth,” was presented. Fourteen people came forward for baptism with several others making decisions later. Eleven of those who came forward have been baptized. At the time of this writing, six to eight other individuals are preparing for baptism in the near future.

The Methodology in Sermon Preparation for the 12 New Sermons

In preparing the 12 new sermons, the decision was made to write them against the background of the great controversy. H. M. S. Richards, writing about the blood of Christ, made this statement: “After nineteen hundred years the mark of the blood of Jesus Christ is on every stairway of progress in the Christian ministry, not only the emblem of the tragedy of sin, and of the great controversy between good and evil, but of the redeeming love that led our Saviour to the cross.”¹ It is the blood of Jesus that reveals the depth of the love of God for humanity and sheds light on how seriously He views sin. It also clarifies the issues of the great controversy—one of the foundational doctrinal positions of Seventh-day Adventists. Much of what Adventists believe about the world, God, and about themselves is built on an understanding of this struggle between God and Satan. More importantly, Adventists see this battle as an attack on Christ. The apostle

¹Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 351.

John writes in Rev 12:7-9 about the war that started in heaven:

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Generally, Seventh-day Adventists believe that Michael is another name for Christ—the eternal Son of God who is one with the Father.² This war was fought between Christ and His angels, and Satan and his angels. Lucifer, an angel of great glory, rebelled and left his place next to the throne of the Father. It was the authority of Christ that was the focus of the dispute. Ellen White describes the central issue in the great controversy: “To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels.”³

Every false doctrine is in some way a denial of Christ and His authority. Every true doctrine has as its center and focus Jesus Christ and salvation through faith in His sacrifice.

An Abstract of the 12 Sermons on Seventh-day Adventist Fundamentals

The sermons were grouped into several general categories. While all of the sermons were written against the backdrop of the great controversy, Sermons 1-3 were on

²While believing in the full deity of Christ, Seventh-day Adventists have pointed out that Michael may be another name for Christ, the second person of the Trinity. There are three verses that provide a link to the identity of Michael: (1) John 5:28—Jesus said that the dead will be raised by His voice; (2) 1 Thess 4:16—The voice of the Archangel will raise the dead; (3) Jude 9—suggests that Michael raised Moses from the dead. There are others that see Michael as referring to Christ such as Matthew Henry in his comments on Revelation 12:7, where he speaks of “Christ, the great Angel of the covenant.” See *Matthew Henry’s Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991).

³Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Takoma Park, MD: Review and Herald, 1958), 37.

the topic of the great controversy. Sermons 4 and 5 were on the Law of God and the Sabbath. Sermon 6 addressed the Sanctuary. Sermon 7 dealt with the nature of death and the hope of the resurrection. Sermons 8 and 9 were on the remnant church of God. Sermon 10 was an introduction to the Spirit of Prophecy. Sermon 11 was about the new earth and what God has in store for us. Sermon 12 was about the second coming of Christ.

Below is a brief description of each of the sermons:

The Supremacy of Christ:

Topic: Introduction to the theme of the great controversy

Connection to Christ: Discusses the eternal nature and deity of Christ, His role in the creation of heaven and earth and Lucifer's dispute of the supremacy of Christ.

Appeal: To re-commit ourselves to Jesus Christ

The Power of Choice:

Topic: Traces the causes of the great controversy and the reasons God permitted transgression to happen.

Connection to Christ: Christ the Creator was rejected first by Lucifer, and then by Adam and Eve, and yet He comes to save lost humanity.

Appeal: To accept salvation.

Loyalty to Christ:

Topic: Introduction to Three Angels' Messages.

Connection to Christ: As the Creator of heaven and earth, Christ is worthy of our worship.

Appeal: To remain loyal to Jesus Christ.

The Grace of God's Law:

Topic: The importance of God's Law

Connection to Christ: Since Christ is the one who wrote the Ten Commandments with His finger, obedience to the Ten Commandments is obedience to Christ Himself.

Appeal: To accept Christ as Savior.

Time Together With God:

Topic: Christ built the Sabbath into the weekly cycle at creation to make sure that we would have time together with Him.

Connection to Christ: Satan hates the Sabbath because it is a reminder of the creative power of Christ.

Appeal: To be loyal to Jesus by obeying His Sabbath commandment.

Our High Priest:

Topic: The heavenly sanctuary.

Connection to Christ: Satan attempts to redirect attention away from Christ in the heavenly sanctuary to earthly priests and earthly temples.

Appeal: To look to Christ who is ministering for us in heaven, and who understands us.

The Valley of the Shadow:

Topic: A Bible study on the theme of death.

Connection to Christ: The theology of the immortal soul is another denial of the prerogatives of Christ as the giver of eternal life.

Appeal: To those who want to say: "Lord, save me for your kingdom."

Who is on the Lord's Side?

Topic: Loyalty to God is revealed by obedience to His Commandments.

Connection to Christ: The battle of the great controversy is not only over the authority and place of Christ, but over the power and consequences of choice.

Appeal: To those who want to ask God to write His laws on their heart, and to be found among His “commandment keeping people.”

A People of Truth:

Topic: The Remnant (those who keep the Commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus)

Connection to Christ: Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life.

Appeal: For those who want to join the Commandment-keeping people of God waiting for Jesus to return.

Inspired Insights:

Topic: Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy

Connection to Christ: Gift of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus Christ. Christ is held up as the center of all truth. What we learn from Ellen White has value only as it helps us to understand Jesus Christ better.

Appeal: An invitation was made to learn more about Ellen White by reading two of her best known books, *Steps to Christ* and *Desire of Ages*, which were given out at the end of the service.

No More Rust:

Topic: The new earth

Connection to Christ: When Jesus returns the earth will be re-created, and we will be given eternal homes.

Appeal: For those who want to accept Christ as their Savior and be a part of this new earth that Christ is preparing.

The Blessed Hope:

Topic: The second coming of Christ.

Connection to Christ: The end of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

Appeal: For those who want to go home with Jesus.

Evaluations of the 12 New Sermons

The same evaluation process that was used for previous sermons was used for the 12 new ones. The evaluations revealed a more direct connection between the unique Adventist message and Jesus Christ. For example, the three sermons on the Great Controversy emphasized the supremacy of Christ in all things and called for a commitment to Him. The sermon on the Sabbath presented Christ as the Creator of heaven and earth. The sermon that dealt with the state of the dead, revealed Christ as the source of immortality.

Valid criticisms were offered, however, concerning the amount of material covered in a single sermon. The topics covered in *Our High Priest*, for example, would have been presented better in a series of sermons rather than in just one. The transcript of each message distributed at the end of the service was crucial to the effectiveness of the message. There was simply too much material for people to remember. It is clear that in the future, a slower pace of presenting these fundamental topics is needed.

Implications from This Research for the Preaching at Kress Memorial Church

First, my preaching at Kress has generally made frequent reference to Christ and salvation. It has become clear, however, that an intentional effort must be made to connect each sermon to Christ as our Savior. Every topic discussed, each passage used, should be looked at in terms of how it spotlights “the Lamb of God.” To guide in that process, I designed a simple form to help shape each sermon to be Christ-centered and faithful to the Seventh-day Adventist message and mission (see appendix, p. 154). The form is similar to the tool used in evaluating the sermons preached at Kress.

Second, not only does each sermon need to be analyzed for its revelation of Christ, but more opportunities need to be made to accept Him as Savior. One evaluator of the sermons preached at Kress before the project noted the absence of appeals. In language that Richards might use, the doors of the kingdom need to be opened more often.

Lastly, while not being devoid of references to the fundamental teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the preaching at Kress has not been carefully planned to include continued instruction on them. There needs to be deliberate planning in the preaching schedule for sermons that emphasize teachings that are important to the mission and purpose of the Seventh-day Adventist Church—always in the context of Christ and the cross. Because Seventh-day Adventists share many beliefs in common with other Christians, not every sermon will emphasize a unique doctrine of Adventism. To ensure that our reasons for existence as Seventh-day Adventists are not forgotten, however, the preaching calendar has to be developed to include an emphasis on fundamental teachings.

While this is not a theological treatise on the core beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, there are 28 fundamental beliefs that shape the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. First and foremost in importance are those that are shared with other faiths—such as the Godhead, the inspiration of the Bible and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Emphasis in this research has been given to those that are uniquely important to Seventh-day Adventists such as the great controversy, the remnant and its mission, the gift of prophecy, the law of God and the Sabbath, the heavenly sanctuary, the second coming of Christ, and the condition of man in death, the promise of the resurrection and the new earth. These doctrines can never be fully understood without viewing them through the lens of Calvary.

Suggestions for the 2011 Preaching Schedule

In preparing the church preaching calendar for 2011, consideration has been given to writing a series of sermons following the outline of the book *Steps to Christ* by Ellen White. A series such as this would address fundamental issues important to Seventh-day Adventists such as salvation by faith, obedience to the Ten Commandments, and sanctification. Each sermon would be from a biblical passage on the topic of the chapter and include supporting references. In conjunction with these sermons, weekly prayer meetings could be focused on a detailed study of the chapters in the book.

Another series of sermons preached in October could focus on Seventh-day Adventist history, Bible prophecy, and the certainty of the third angel's message. Such a series would include the topics of Christ's second coming, the heavenly sanctuary, and the mission of the remnant. October could be called "Adventist Heritage Month."

The appendix includes a proposed calendar for 2011 (page 155) with an attempt

to track the “28 Fundamental Beliefs” of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the right-hand column, the numbers that appear indicate which of the 28 fundamentals is being addressed.

As is the case with every church schedule, there will be changes reflecting unexpected circumstances and specific needs. It may not be possible to include all 28 fundamentals in the preaching calendar of a single year. However, the church year has to be looked at with an intentional effort to provide a balanced spiritual menu. Each successive church calendar could be designed to address a different aspect of the fundamentals of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The conclusion of each church year should probably include an assessment of what was presented over the previous year, and what needs to be presented in the year coming.

Conclusions: Intentionality in Preaching

I began this research looking for guidance on how to preach the distinct doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The project was based on concerns that my preaching had become generic and did not reflect Adventism’s unique perspectives. What I discovered was how important Jesus was to the heart of the Seventh-day Adventist message. I was forced to look at my past sermons, wondering if I could say that they were intentionally Christ-centered. For too many of them, the answer was no. What has become apparent to me about my sermon preparation is that the path between what is being presented and the cross needs to be better defined. This idea is most important when presenting beliefs that are uniquely important to Seventh-day Adventists. In H. M. S. Richards’ point of view, presenting the Law, the Sabbath, or Bible prophecy without explaining how Christ is central to these subjects is not acceptable Christian

preaching. “Preaching is not mere lecturing. It is not mere talking. Its gospel preaching or it’s not Christian preaching.”⁴ The great doctrines of the Bible are understood only when explained in the light of the gospel.

In looking at the original concern of addressing the unique message of the Seventh-day Adventism in my preaching, a similar problem was discovered. I spoke on a few topics frequently—such as the second coming of Christ and the new earth. Others, such as the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and the remnant, are virtually untouched. It became apparent that I did not have a method for consistently going through the fundamental beliefs of the church. My sermons tended to be too generic and perhaps too haphazard in addressing the beliefs of the church. It is crucial to systematically address all of the biblical teachings that are important to Adventism, including not only those beliefs that are in common with Christianity as a whole, but those that are of unique importance to Seventh-day Adventists.

Intentionality is the key element in all of this—intentionality in making Christ central to every message, intentionality in preparing the preaching calendar to address issues important to Seventh-day Adventist faith and mission, intentionality in preparing a balanced spiritual menu to preach from the pulpit.

In this study I have found that H. M. S. Richards provides both general assistance and sermon examples of making preaching Christ-centered and yet focused on Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. Looking at what he has to say about the mission and purpose of the Adventist message compelled me to ask questions about my preaching that I had not

⁴Richards, *Feed My Sheep*, 55.

thought to ask. This research has helped to make my sermons decidedly Christian and focused on the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Scripture and mission.

Recommendations

This has been a productive study because it has made me more focused in tracing the connection between what I preach and Christ. It has also made me more conscious of planning the preaching calendar to systematically include sermons on fundamental doctrines that are important to Seventh-day Adventists, and presenting them in the context of Christ.

What about my colleagues in ministry? While there is no way to dictate what they must do, I recommend that we communicate through our journals and publications the principles of emphasizing Christ in the context of the biblical message. Ministers' meetings could be used to focus on improving our preaching.

As I conducted my research for this project, I was surprised by the richness of the materials that are available to us. H. M. S. Richards' book *Feed My Sheep* is a powerful resource on preaching and is still available. It would be truly beneficial if books like *Preachers of Righteousness* by Roy Allen Anderson and *The Divine Art of Preaching* by Carlyle B. Haynes could be re-published. Continuing education funds from the local conference could be made available to encourage purchasing and reading books on preaching. While we refine our preaching skills, we should always remember that Seventh-day Adventists have been called to an important mission.

APPENDIX A

SERMON EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

“In Jesus Christ God is revealed to men. In Christ’s teachings, His works, His intercourse with others, His sufferings, His death and resurrection, He revealed God to men. None of these facts or events can be omitted in preaching Christ.” Feed My Sheep, page 193.

(Rate 0-10, with 0=not at all, and 10=strongly)

1. Is Christ an integral part of this sermon?
 - a. His Eternal Nature and Deity _____
 - b. Salvation through Christ _____
 - c. His sufferings and death _____
 - d. His resurrection _____
 - e. His ministry to others _____
 - f. His teachings _____

2. What distinct doctrines of the SDA church are reflected in the sermon? (X)
 - a. The Great Controversy _____
 - b. The Remnant and its mission _____
 - c. The Gift of Prophecy _____
 - d. The Law of God or the Sabbath _____
 - e. The Heavenly Sanctuary _____
 - f. The Second Coming of Christ _____
 - g. Death, Resurrection and New Earth _____

Suggestions for improvement:

APPENDIX B

GUIDELINES FOR BIBLICALLY SUPPORTED
CHRIST CENTERED MESSAGES

Title of the sermon:

Topic of the sermon:

Thesis statement of the sermon:

This topic's connection to Christ:

Scriptures used:

(Reminder: What do these passages mean in their original context? What do they mean to us today? How do they point to Christ?)

In what way will Christ be a part of this sermon?

- a. Salvation through Him _____
- b. His sufferings and death _____
- c. His resurrection _____
- d. His ministry to others _____
- e. His teachings _____
- f. His eternal nature and deity _____

What distinct doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will be reflected in this sermon?

- 1. The Great Controversy _____
- 2. The Remnant and its mission _____
- 3. The Gift of Prophecy _____
- 4. The Law of God or the Sabbath _____
- 5. The Heavenly Sanctuary _____
- 6. The Second Coming of Christ _____
- 7. Death, Resurrection and New Earth _____

APPENDIX C

A PROPOSED PREACHING CALENDAR FOR 2011

<u>Date</u>		<u>Sermon</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Jan 1	New Years Day	Starting Over	<u>1</u> God's Word
Jan 8	(Steps to Christ sermon 1)	Certainty in Christ	God's love
Jan 15	Martin Luther King (17th)	One People	<u>14</u> Unity
Jan 22	(Steps to Christ sermon 2)	Our Great Need	<u>9</u> Salvation
Jan 29	(Steps to Christ sermon 3)	Wanting Change	Repentance
Feb 5	(Steps to Christ sermon 4)	The Real Me	Confession
Feb 12	(Steps to Christ sermon 5)	So Many Broken Promises	<u>10</u> Change
Feb 19	(Steps to Christ sermon 6)	Because He Promised	Believing
Feb 26	(Steps to Christ sermon 7)	Do You Love Me?	<u>5</u> Holy Spirit
Mar 5	(Steps to Christ sermon 8)	Growing up	<u>11</u> Maturity
Mar 12	(Steps to Christ sermon 9)	Being a Blessing	<u>22</u> Testimony
Mar 19	(Steps to Christ sermon 10)	Before God's Open Word	Study
Mar 26	(Steps to Christ sermon 11)	The God Who Hears	Prayer
Apr 2	(Communion Sabbath)	His Broken Body	<u>16</u> Commun.
Apr 9	(Steps to Christ sermon 12)	Learning to Trust	Trust
Apr 16	(Steps to Christ sermon 13)	God is Good All the Time	Praise
Apr 23	Easter Weekend	His Empty Tomb	<u>26</u> Resurrec.
Apr 30		Guest	
May 7	Mother's Day Weekend	Mother's Letter	Faithfulness
May 14		I Never Knew You	To know Jesus
May 21		Guest	
May 28	Memorial Day	No More War	<u>8</u> Great Cont.

June 4		Why Are We Here?	<u>13</u> Witness.
June 11		Transparent	<u>13</u> Witness. 2
June 18	Father's Day	Our Real Father	<u>3</u> God's Love
June 25		The Father's Gift	<u>4</u> Christ
July 2	Independence Day	At His Table	<u>16</u> Commun.
July 9		Power Lines	<u>5</u> Holy Spirit 2
July 16		Authentic Christianity	<u>5</u> Holy Spirit 3
July 23		Guest	
July 30		Guest	
Aug 6		A Life of Service	<u>17</u> Love others
Aug 13		Teach Them	Christian Ed.
Aug 20		All I Have is Yours	<u>21</u> Stewards
Aug 27		Our High Priest	<u>24</u> Sanctuary
Sept 3	Labor Day	Love Changes Everything	<u>19</u> Obedience
Sept 10		God Not Time is Ruler	<u>20</u> Sabbath
Sept 17		Freedom in Christ	Sanctification
Sept 24		Wearing Dad's Shoes	Christ likeness
Oct 1	Advent month	Waiting For Us	<u>25,16</u> Comm.
Oct 8		Songs of Hope	Adv. Hymns
Oct 15		Where is Jesus?	<u>24</u> Sanctuary
Oct 22		Disappointed	<u>25</u> anniversary
Oct 29		We Have Work to Do	<u>12</u> Mission
Nov 5		Servant of God	<u>18</u> GOP
Nov 12		Worship Him	Rev. 14
Nov 19		What Has God Done?	Thanksgiving

Nov 26	Thanksgiving	Guest	
Dec 3		He Came Once	<u>25</u> 2 nd Coming
Dec 10		Gifts and Giving	Christmas #1
Dec 17		Adventists	all About Him
Dec 24	Christmas	Bells Are Ringing	Christmas
Dec 31		Walking With Jesus	New Year

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE SERMONS

Three Sample Sermons Prepared Using Principles Gleaned From H. M. S. Richards

SERMON 1

The Supremacy of Christ

by Eric Doran

Not long ago, I ran across some letters that were written by my mother who was a head nurse at a hospital to my grandfather. One letter dated December 29, 1959 begins this way:

Dear Pop,

It's now 12:30 a.m. at the hospital. I just had a cup of soup and some crackers. Thank you for the money you sent for Christmas. It helped to get a few things for the kids. I gave Bonnie and Jimmie money and told them to get what they wanted. Jimmie still has his. Bonnie got a pair of shoes and some things. I got Eric a sled. And Heather got a pair of roller skates and some clothes.

A little later in the letter, she mentions something that I actually remember:

"Bonnie brought a little black rabbit from school for Eric. Some of the boys had it and didn't want it. I wish she hadn't brought it. It is cute, but there is no place to keep it. It wets around and makes spills. Eric is handling it all the time. I put it down in the basement. I guess I will have to call the animal shelter."

Towards the end of the letter, she would make a statement that in retrospect would be quite significant.

"Well, we will soon begin another year. How they do fly. I wonder what this New Year will bring forth. Time is so relentless. It doesn't seem to wait for anything."

It wouldn't be long from writing those words that her life and ours would change. The increasing tremors in her hands would introduce us to a word that we would become intimately acquainted with--Parkinson's. At the age of 47, she would be diagnosed with a virulent form of the disease.

A while back, I got into a conversation with one of my sisters and told them that I don't really remember mom before she became sick. I was probably not quite 7 years old when she was diagnosed, and she spent most of the last 30 or so years of her life trying to understand what she had done wrong that God would let her get so sick.

It's really the question that many people have especially when tragedy strikes or disease makes itself known. Why? Why did this happen? What did I do wrong? Why is God punishing me? I am here to tell you today that suffering is not what the Lord wanted for us. The Bible makes it clear that responsibility for the sadness and tragedy that exists in our world does not lie at the feet of God.

Over the next few weeks, we will be looking at a biblical theme that provides answers to the questions people have. Most thinking people wonder why suffering exists.

Even Christians who express faith in God are often at a loss for why terrible things happen. When September 11 occurred I can remember hearing well-known Christian leaders standing before TV cameras, and stumbling over their words as they tried to say “We don’t know why these things happen. They are the mysteries of God’s providences.”

I believe that the Bible helps us to understand much of what is going on. I also believe that understood properly the Bible vindicates the character of God by making it clear that He is not the reason why we suffer. The tragedies of sorrow and death do not lie at His feet.

Where did all of this suffering and sadness come from? It is Christ Himself that gives us our first clue in Luke 10. It is in Luke 10 that Jesus sends out the 70 on their first missionary journey. When they come back, they are excited to tell the Lord about what happened. Luke 10:17 says, “And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” Jesus responds with these very interesting words in verse 18, “And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”

Where did Satan fall from? This is a passage that surprises many people. It comes as a bit of a shock to discover that Satan fell from Heaven—and that he comes from Heaven. But listen to another passage that confirms what Jesus said in Luke 10: Revelation 12:7, “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. 12 Therefore rejoice O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

Revelation again tells us that Satan came from heaven. There was a war that was waged between Michael and His angels and Satan and His angels. Michael is referred to as the Archangel in Jude 9, and yet Christ is spoken of in 1 Thess. 4 as calling the dead to life with the voice of the Archangel.

Now here is what I want you to remember: The Bible says in John 1 that “in the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God.”

Do not leave here today thinking that I just told you that Christ is an angel. He is God, eternal in nature and one with the Father, but the original words translated “archangel” implied authority over the angels.

In Matthew 13, Jesus, explaining the parable of the sower, says in vs. 41 “The Son of man (a term He uses for Himself) shall send forth *his* angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.”

The war that took place in heaven took place between Christ and Satan. The devil hates Christ, because it was Christ that defeated him in heaven.

When Jesus came to earth and lived as one of us, Satan directed all of his hatred to the Son of God, right from the beginning. When Jesus was an infant, Satan tried to use Herod's jealousy and fear to destroy Him. During His ministry, the devil used the jealousy and envy of the religious leaders to impede the work of Christ. Even the demons when they were confronted by the power of Jesus confessed who He was: Luke 4:41, "And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, 'You are the Christ, the Son of God!' And He, rebuking *them*, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ."

For the whole time Christ was here on earth, the war that began in heaven would be continued in Satan's opposition to the works and ministry of Jesus Christ. But we need to fill in a few more details. What were the issues that sparked the war in heaven? How did all of this begin?

There are a few main passages in the Bible that I believe give answers as to how we got where we are in this great struggle between good and evil. One of the most important passages comes to us from Isaiah 14. It begins with a proverb against the king of Babylon. As you read the Bible you discover that Babylon was used by the Lord to punish the people of Israel for their rebellion against Him.

Sometimes, when we disobey the Lord, we step outside the circle of His protection and He allows difficulties to come our way to awaken us to the fact that we are off the path of obedience to Him. Israel disobeyed the Lord, and Babylon was used to awaken His people to their need. But even though The Lord used Babylon to punish His people, they would not be let off the hook either. Babylon had a reputation for extreme brutality and cruelty. Isaiah 14 is a message to Babylon, but in this message God momentarily pulls back the curtain and reveals that there is another power at work besides human agencies.

In the beginning verses of Isaiah 14, God promises mercy to His people if they turn back to Him. He will restore them to their land. He then turns His attention to Babylon. Verse 3-5 says, "It shall come to pass in the day the LORD gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, 4 that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: 'How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased!' (Remember the image of Daniel 2—what was the first metal used for the head? Gold.) 5 The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers."

The Babylonian kings boasted that they would strip the forests, and leave the lands of their enemies a barren waste land. The prophecy says that the forests would rejoice over the fall of Babylon. It even says that those who had been killed by the Babylonian king would rise up to welcome them into the grave (Sheol in verse 9 is better translated "grave."). But then in verse 12 the nature of the whole passage changes. In these verses it's as if God pulls back the curtain and allows us to see who is behind the cruelty and the viciousness of the pagan kings.

Isaiah 14:12-15 reads, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *How* you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! 13 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' 15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

The war in heaven started over worship. Satan aspired to a position that didn't belong to him. He sought the honor and glory that belonged to Christ alone. Every monarch, every earthly power that seeks to be worshiped seeks that which belongs to God.

In 2 Thessalonians Paul talks about the rumors that Christ has already returned in these words: Verse 1 "Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, 2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. 3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4 who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

The spirit of antichrist is anything that presumes to authorities that belong to Christ alone. According to the gospel of John, Christ was the creator of heaven and earth. "All things came into being through Him." Everything, including the angelic hosts of heaven, is the result of His creative power. All of the created universe owes allegiance to their Creator.

But this angel, an angel of power and glory, presumed to take that which belonged only to the creator. He sought the honor and homage that belonged to the Lord. The Lord bore long with the rebellion of Lucifer. He worked to draw him back from the brink of destruction.

The book Patriarchs and Prophets (p. 37) talks about the beginning of evil, and describes the fall of Lucifer: "The Son of God presented before him the greatness, the goodness, and the justice of the Creator, and the sacred, unchanging nature of His law. God Himself had established the order of heaven; and in departing from it, Lucifer would dishonor his Maker and bring ruin upon himself. But the warning, given in infinite love and mercy, only aroused a spirit of resistance. Lucifer allowed his jealousy of Christ to prevail, and became the more determined" (this next statement is really the key that helps us to understand the issues of the Great Controversy). "To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator had become the purpose of this prince of angels. To this object he was about to bend the energies of that master mind, which, next to Christ's, was first among the hosts of God."

The war in heaven came to a head, and Lucifer the greatest of the angelic hosts, was cast out with his accomplices. They were cast out to the earth, and it was there that they gained recruits in their rebellion against God. Adam and Eve were tempted into disobeying God, and their transgression got them cast out of the Garden.

Look at the temptation in Genesis 3: 1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'you shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Do you remember what Lucifer said in Isaiah: "I will be like the Most High?" Satan tempted Eve on the same issue that caused him to be cast out of heaven--to

presume to a knowledge that belonged only to God. Satan has a hunger to be worshiped. He has an unquenchable thirst to receive the adoration and praise that belongs to God.

I am telling you, as you study the Bible it becomes clear that the spirit of antichrist is anything that denies Christ His rightful place. Christ is our God. He is our creator. He is the law-giver. He is our Savior. He is our High Priest.

But Satan comes along and disputes the place of Christ. Christ is God, but Satan comes along, and works to get us to disregard the Lord's requirements, to do what we want instead of what He wants—essentially to be our own gods. Christ is our creator, but Satan comes along and introduces the theory of evolution, and says that there is no God, No creator. Christ is the lawgiver, the one who at Sinai wrote the 10 Commandments with His own finger. But Satan comes along, and seeks to change the law of God, and even tries to abolish the one law that reminds us of Christ as our creator. Christ is our Savior, but here comes Satan telling us that guilt is a bad thing, and that we aren't really bad people, and that if we are good, we will find our way into the next life. Christ is our High Priest, the One who promises to hear our confessions, and give forgiveness on the basis of His sacrifice for us on Calvary. But here comes a whole system of human priests that claim to have the authority to hear confessions, and who command acts of penance to earn forgiveness.

It is Satan's purpose to dispute the supremacy of Christ in every way possible. He will work to keep us from knowing, and understanding Jesus. He distorts the truth, and makes us think that the Lord is responsible for the tragedy and sorrow in life. He will work to keep us looking in every other direction but Jesus for the answers to life. But we must not allow him to be successful. We must not abandon our allegiance to Christ.

In Acts 4, Peter and John were arrested by the religious leaders in Jerusalem and threatened not to preach in the name of Christ. Peter responded by telling them that Christ is "*the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.*" Then he says in verse 12, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

The Bible tells us that the devil's hunger to be worshiped will not stop until the end of time. In Revelation 13 and 14, true worship versus false worship—the worship of the Creator God versus the worship of the beast will be the central issue.

But Revelation also describes those who overcome by the "blood of the Lamb." They are those who cry out in Revelation 5:12, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

The devil will do everything he can to distract you from Jesus. He will do everything he can to break your loyalty to the Lord. He will work to destroy our confidence in Jesus and blame Him for the heartache we experience.

In Revelation 2, Christ is speaking to His church in Smyrna. He knows that they are going through terrible persecution for their faith in Him, but He gives them a challenge, and a promise. I believe that this challenge and promise are for us, too. Revelation 2:10 says, "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

To all of us today, I would say, don't be afraid of what is coming. Satan will do everything he can to break your commitment to Christ. But the promise is He will carry us through. The devil will hurt us, but Jesus will give us strength to overcome.

Christ is our savior. Be faithful to death, and He will give you a crown of life.

How many would like to make a re-commitment of their loyalty to Jesus today?

PRAYER

SERMON 2

The Grace of God's Law

by Eric Doran

A number of years ago, when I was pastoring in New England, I had spent a little time one morning at the church school connected with our church. As I was returning home, I was in a good mood. I had some spritely Christian music playing on the radio and was just cruising along in my pickup truck when I rounded a bend in the road and spotted two uniformed men standing on the side of the road.

Upon spotting me, they stepped into the road, and flagged me down. One of the officers came to the window and asked me, "Sir, how are you today?" I answered by saying "I am doing great." But then as the reality of what was happening began to hit me, I stopped and said, "Well, actually, I was doing a lot better about 5 minutes ago." Thankfully, he laughed. And when I got my paperwork back (also known as a ticket), he had exercised some grace, and written the ticket for a lower speed than I was actually doing.

You know, it's interesting how our relationship with the law changes depending on the circumstances. I don't know how many times I have heard people complain, and fuss over how the law is unfair, or that law enforcement officials are biased. On being stopped for a traffic violation, they will argue that they weren't going fast or that it wasn't that big a deal.

It is human nature to assume that what I want must be the right thing. Isn't it Proverbs 14 that says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

It is a very hard thing to separate what we want, from what we believe to be right. We tend to rationalize, and justify what we want. It takes a unique honesty, perhaps a sanctified honesty to look at things, not in terms of what we want, but in terms of what is right.

Some of you may remember that not long after Sandy and I moved here, on Thanksgiving night, I received a phone call from my brother to tell me that our sister, Cathy, had been killed in a traffic accident. She was a nurse, and was on her way back from work that night.

She had stopped at a traffic light, and when it turned green, she proceeded through the intersection, only to be broadsided, and literally ejected, through the side of the car. She was killed instantly.

The driver of the other car was a 16 year old boy, with a learner's permit. He wasn't supposed to be driving. The adult with him in the car had a suspended license. By law, neither one of them were supposed to be driving. And to add further insult, apparently, the young man saw the light changing and sped up to get through the intersection. By the time he got there, the light had already changed, but he was going too fast to stop. He blew through the intersection hoping that he would make it. Cathy never saw him coming.

Traffic laws exist for a reason. We may not always like them. We may not always agree with how they are enforced. We may be frustrated by how they are applied to our infractions of them (nobody likes getting a ticket). But no one understands better the importance of those laws than those who have lost loved ones to the carelessness of others.

Laws in general are an important part of the existence of society. Sometimes, people pass laws that are unfair and biased. And that is when people of a free and democratic nation have to stand up, and confront unfair and unjust laws. But you don't do that by becoming lawless, or by disregarding the laws of the land. You work within the framework of what is just and right to make changes in society.

I want to make a suggestion to you—whatever laws we have that are fair and just are a reflection of a greater law given to us by God Himself. On Sinai, God gave to humanity 10 principles that were meant to guide and protect us. They weren't arbitrary laws enacted by a dictator or the capricious musings of a power hungry monarch. The 10 commandments were given by a loving Creator for the well being and protection of His children.

They are clear, concise, and to the point. They clarify our obligations to God and our obligations to each other. In spite of their apparent simplicity, they reach deep into the very motivations of the human heart. They are so direct that even the simplest individual can get the point, and yet they address even the deepest needs of society.

The apostle James twice refers to the Law of God, as "the law of liberty" (James 1:25; 2:12). Understood properly, the Law of God doesn't restrict freedom, it enhances freedom. God has created a hedge of protection around His people, telling us that if we abide by His instructions—his guidelines—we can live in genuine freedom.

By the way, as Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in the full inspiration of the Bible. The Holy Spirit moved the hearts and minds of the Bible writers and they wrote into human language the things that had been revealed to them by the Spirit. The Bible writers wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

There is however, one part of the Bible written directly by God Himself. That part is the 10 Commandments. Exodus 31:18 tells us that the two tablets containing the law were written by the finger of God. It was almost too important to be entrusted to man to do. God wrote it out himself, with His own finger.

There is another very important point to make about the law. It is important to understand who it is who was speaking at Sinai, when the law was given. We have already looked at the passage in John 8, where Christ makes a direct statement as to who He is. Jesus is talking to the religious leaders, and says something that they find incomprehensible. John 8:56, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." 57 Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have

you seen Abraham?" 58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

The religious leaders knew exactly what He was claiming. They knew that he had just used the name by which God identified Himself to Moses. In Exodus Moses met God at the burning bush. After discussing the mission He has been assigned by the Lord, Moses asked this fundamental question: Exodus 3 13, "Then Moses said to God," "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

This is the name that Christ claimed for Himself. He is claiming to be the "I Am" of the Old Testament. And those who were listening to Him, in John 8, knew exactly what He was claiming. John seems to indicate that they were speechless. They were so outraged that they simply reached for the nearest stones. John 8:59 says, "Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

If Jesus is the "I Am" of the Old Testament, then He is also the creator of Heaven and earth. If Jesus is the "I Am" that met Moses at the burning bush, then He is the redeemer, and deliverer of Israel. If Jesus is the Great "I Am," then He is the one who at Sinai, spoke the words of the 10 Commandments, and wrote them with His finger on tables of stone. If He is the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Law Giver, then obedience to the 10 Commandments is obedience to Christ Himself.

Let's look for a minute at what the Lord wrote with His finger: Exodus 20:3-17 reads, "You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. 7 "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. 8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. 12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you. 13 "You shall not murder. 14 "You shall not commit adultery. 15 "You shall not steal. 16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

It is Christ Himself as the Creator of heaven and Earth that by His right lays out the principles of Right and Wrong. It is Christ Himself that as the "Great I Am" lays out for us the Laws of His government. To disregard the 10 Commandments is to disregard Christ Himself.

Now I want to make something clear. Salvation is always by faith. Paul makes it abundantly clear that we cannot earn salvation by obedience to the law. In Romans chapters 1 and 2, Paul consigns first the Gentiles, and then the Jews under the condemnation of the law. In other words, he is telling us that everyone has sinned. No one has given perfect obedience to the Law of God, except Christ Himself. Everyone else, Jew and Gentile alike, have broken the Law. And the only way that we could be justified by the Law, is to render perfect obedience and to have always rendered perfect obedience to the Law. OOPS!!!

Remember what Paul says in Romans 6:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” A little later on, Paul says in verse 28, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” The reason why he says this is that no matter how good I become, I cannot pretend that I did not sin in the past.

Paul tells us in Romans 6:23 that “the wages of sin is death.” There aren’t differing payment plans to deal with sin. The wages of sin isn’t death or working REAL HARD or giving big gifts to the church. That’s what the people of Christ’s day here on earth thought. If you give a big offering, everything is taken care of. If you are a sinner, then you are under a death sentence.

But Jesus came to pay the price for our sins. The apostle John, writing in his second epistle chapter two verses 1 and 2 says this: “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 And He Himself is the propitiation (reconciliation or payment) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” Christ paid the price for our sins. He bore the consequences of our guilt. He has reconciled us to Himself by offering His life on the cross. And we accept that gift by faith.

Christ has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. Romans 5:1, 2 says: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

But here is where many Christians make a mistake. They think that because we are saved by faith, apart from the works of the law, that obedience isn’t important. Paul himself, in Romans 3:31 responded to the idea that the law is somehow abolished by faith. Here is what he said: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

It is only the unthinking Christian, who can look at Jesus hanging on the cross, paying the penalty for our disobedience—paying the price for our sins our violations of His Law, and then say, “As long as you have faith, it doesn’t matter what you do.”

It is Jesus Himself that set the ultimate standard for our relationship with Him. John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” These words are more than poetry. They are more than just a catch-phrase. They are the basis of all true obedience.

Those who believe that they can serve Jesus and continue in the very things that brought Him to Calvary do not get it. When we see what the Lord had to do to pay the penalty of our sins, there is something wrong with us if our hearts are not melted by such infinite love.

Only the hardened heart can see the innocent Lamb of God, nailed to the cross, and not be moved by it. Those who claim to serve God but refuse obedience, are either deceived or deceivers. Read 1 John 2:3-5, “Now by this we know that we know Him, if

we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him."

We have been saying for some time that in the battle between Heaven and hell, Christ and Satan, that the devil hates Jesus. It is the purpose of Satan to dispute the supremacy of Christ in all things. Obedience to the Divine Law isn't about being good enough to get into heaven. It's about love. It's about whether we truly love Jesus or not. And the temptations the devil sends our way aren't about trying to spoil our record of obedience. They are about trying to break the hold of the love of God on our hearts. The devil doesn't care what or who we love, as long as we love that person or thing more than we love Jesus.

We look to the cross, and see Jesus hanging there for our sins. We look in faith, trusting that by His sacrifice, our sins have been forgiven. It is through faith in Jesus that we gain entrance into heaven. But the heart, won by the infinite love of Christ, is changed and transformed and sanctified.

When we see what our ill tempered words—our lustful thoughts—our angry jealous deeds have done to Jesus, we cry out, "Oh Lord, help me never to bring injury to your heart again! Help me to turn away from those things that made you suffer so. Lord, I want to glorify your name before the world. Help me to live for you."

Who would like to

1. Accept the salvation that Jesus offers?
2. Pray that the Lord empowers us to keep His Commandments?

PRAYER

SERMON 3

A People of Truth by Eric Doran

I want to begin today by telling you that I am grateful for the Bible's emphasis on the importance of the individual. We all know the words in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish but have everlasting life." I am grateful for the fact that in those words is a message of assurance to the "whosoever's."

Maybe you don't feel so important. Perhaps you don't figure very big in this world. But the assurance of Christ is that His Father is aware of even the sparrows that fall. The message is He is not only aware of you, but He knows everything there is to know about you—every secret battle—every unspoken anguish.

Last week we looked at Colossians 1 where it tells us that in Christ all things are held together. Verse 17 says: "And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist." The word "consist" in the original language has the meaning of "adhere"—or of "sticking together." In Christ, all creation is held together, *and yet He is aware of you and me.* Even in His ministry here on earth, Christ revealed a deep interest in the individual. Yes, He spoke to the multitudes. Yes, He fed the 5,000. But some of His most important

revelations of Himself were reserved for the individual. It is in His conversations with Nicodemus that we learn about “Spiritual Re-birth” and the workings of the Holy Spirit.

But it is another conversation with a single individual that I want to focus on for a few minutes this morning. The conversation takes place in John 4. Jesus is on His way through the country of Samaria, and stops to rest at Jacob’s well. The disciples have gone into the nearby village to purchase food, and Christ is left alone at the well.

It is then that John tells us that a woman of Samaria comes to draw water from the well. There at the well, Jesus enters into a conversation with this woman, and tells her things that He has told no one else.

What is so unusual about the conversation is, first, there was so much animosity between the Jews and Samaritans that they rarely had anything to do with each other. And second, it was considered inappropriate for a rabbi or teacher to talk to women—in part because of the apparent impropriety—and in part because women weren’t seen as worthy of serious discussions. It seems that Jesus wasn’t bound by social restrictions when it came to communicating the message of salvation. He talks to her about the Water of Life, and promises that the water He offers would become in her a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. It’s when she asks for this water, that Jesus sees the opportunity to bring conviction to her heart.

You know, before the Lord can bring us to salvation, He must convict us of our great need. John 4:15-18 reads, “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.’ 16 Jesus said to her, ‘Go, call your husband, and come here.’ 17 The woman answered and said, ‘I have no husband.’ Jesus said to her, ‘You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ 18 for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.”

Jesus loves us doesn’t He? But accepting Him means facing the real truth about our condition, and our sinfulness. Jesus can do nothing for us until we acknowledge our great need. In order for this woman to truly accept the water of life, the Lord must bring from her a confession of her guilt.

The Desire of Ages says that it was if a mysterious hand was turning the pages of her life. And for a moment, she tries to deflect the topic away from this uncomfortable topic.

John 14:19, “The woman said to Him, ‘Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. 20 Our fathers worshiped on this mountain and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

When the Babylonians destroyed Israel, they deported most of the inhabitants to other parts of their kingdom, and imported others to occupy the land. There were Israelites left in the land, but over time these became so intermarried and mixed with the pagan population that the true worship of Yahweh became corrupted.

These people were the Samaritans—and when Nehemiah, in the Old Testament, was allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city, and to rebuild the temple, the Samaritans volunteered to help, and were denied. This was the source of most of the bitterness that existed between these two groups.

The Samaritans even built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim that was itself destroyed. But the controversy still existed as to where the right place to worship was.

Let’s continue to read from verse 21, “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the

Father. (These words are interesting in the context of so many that believe that the temple in Jerusalem must be rebuilt.) 22 You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.” Jesus has shown this woman that He is free from prejudice. Now He must gently confront her prejudice.

I want you to listen carefully now, to these next words. 23 “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24 God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” Jesus says it twice. Those who worship God, must worship Him in what? Spirit and truth.

25 “The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.’ 26 Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am *He*.’” This is one of the only times when Christ openly acknowledges that He is the Messiah. And He doesn’t say it to the religious leaders or to the crowds. He says it to a single woman, with a more than questionable reputation, sitting on the edge of a well. But Jesus says that those who worship God will worship Him, not in Jerusalem, nor on Mount Gerizim, but in Spirit and in Truth.

You know brothers and sisters, there are many Christians today who claim to worship God in the Spirit. And what it means to worship in the Spirit has been translated into a host of ideas that range from the sublime to the ridiculous. But Jesus didn’t tell us that we worship God only in the Spirit—but that we worship God in the Spirit, and in the truth.

Now, in recent years, there has been a tendency for religious groups to de-emphasize the differences, and unite on common ground. And yes, when it comes to building relationships I believe that we start on common ground. I don’t believe that it honors God when I start a fight every time I open my mouth. But don’t underestimate the importance of the truth.

Since the beginning of the war in heaven—the Great Controversy, the devil has worked to distort the truth. And each distortion of the truth is in reality a distortion of the truth about Christ. Satan has worked to diminish the place of Christ everywhere he can. But the truth, rightly understood, will shine a floodlight on Christ and reveal Him in all of His glory.

It’s not enough to get together and sing some songs and utter a few praises to God. The Lord wants us to understand Him in truth. He wants us to follow Him, because we understand Him.

Do you remember that some time ago, I spoke about Christ’s desire to be seen in His glory—glory He had with His Father. John 17:24, “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me.” Jesus wasn’t interested in awing people with His brilliance, or frightening them with His power. His glory is His character. He wanted us to see Him in the truth of who He is. He wanted us to see Him with all of the misrepresentations and misunderstandings removed. Jesus wants us to see Him as He really is.

Ninety-nine percent of the reason why we study the Word of God is so that we can understand His will for us, and so that we can truly come to understand Him. There is a lot about God that limited, finite human beings will never understand. But God has chosen to reveal Himself in His Word. And He longs for us to come looking for Him.

There is a beautiful passage in Jeremiah 29. In this passage, God is longing for His people to turn from their sin, and to return to Him in repentance. He tells them, through the prophet, what He wants for them: verses 11-13, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. 13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”

God is looking for honest searchers after truth. He is looking for those who don't just take someone else's word as truth, but who search out the truth from God's Word for themselves. And the search for truth is not just the search for information, or the search for facts. The search for truth is the search for God Himself.

More specifically, the search for truth is the search for Christ, For Christ said, and “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” When we open up this book, we are searching for Jesus. We are trying to understand Him better. When we study the Word of God, we are learning, and partaking of Jesus.

In John 5:39 and 40, Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders, and He says, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” The process of studying truth in this book is the process of studying Christ Himself, because everything in it points to Him. Whenever we come to the Word of God with an honest desire to know the truth, we are drawn to Christ, because it's all about Him.

In the struggle between good and evil, Jesus is looking for people who want to follow Him. He says, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” And in the war between heaven and hell, Christ is searching for those who want to be loyal to Him—who are determined to follow the truth—who by faith will obey Him.

Last week, I referenced Revelation 12:17. It talks of Satan's warfare against the church—against those who are loyal to Christ. It describes them in these words: 17 “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Throughout Scripture, God's people are pictured as His bride. In fact, when Israel was unfaithful to Him, God would accuse them of infidelity—they had committed adultery with the pagan gods of the nations surrounding them.

But here, in Revelation 12, the woman is pictured as a chaste woman representing the Lord's faithful all through time. And when the devil attacks the church, she is hidden in the wilderness. It is then that Satan turns his wrath, according to chapter 12, to the “rest of her seed,” some translations say to the “remnant of her seed.” A remnant is the last part of something, the final piece of material. The dress is made, and only a remnant material is left.

Satan's warfare has been against Christ, from the beginning. But Christ is where he can no longer reach Him, so he turns his attention to the church, and finally to the last part of the church. And the warfare that he directed against Christ at the beginning, and against the church in history, he will most viciously direct against that final group waiting for Jesus to return.

Satan hates their loyalty to Christ. He hates that they are faithful to their Lord—and he works to break their hold on Jesus. But Revelation 14:12, giving a strikingly similar description of those waiting for Christ to return, uses these words: 12 “Here is the

patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

In both of these passages is given a picture of a people waiting for Jesus to come who have their faith firmly in Jesus, but who are keeping the commandments of God. They are worshiping the Lord, not only in the power of the Spirit, but they are worshiping Him in Truth.

They are not content to follow the traditions and teachings of men. They are not content to do something just because this is what their pastor told them to do. They are students of God’s Word. They are determined to dig the truth out of this book.

I have had people through the years say, “You can get whatever you want out of this book. You can make it say whatever you want it to.” My response is, “No you can’t. This book is defined by a beginning and an end. The truth can be found by those who are willing to search for it.”

Paul, writing to the believers in Thessalonica, talks about the coming of the antichrist, and then he talks about those who will be deceived. He says that their fall will be determined by either their love, or their hate of the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10 says, “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. 9 The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”

I believe that the most important thing any Christian can have is a desire—a hunger, to know and follow the truth. But let me make it even clearer: I believe that the most important thing any Christian can have is a hunger and a desire to know and follow Christ, because He is the way, the truth, and the life.

Now, I don’t believe that Seventh-day Adventists are the only Christians in the world. I believe that there are sincere believers that are studying God’s Word to know Jesus better, and I believe that Jesus claims them as His children. But I also believe that at the end of time there will be people waiting for Jesus to come who are obedient to Him in all things. They are loyal to Jesus, and out of their love for Him, they keep His commandments, including the fourth commandment that says, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all thy work, but the Seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.”

Through the years of my ministry, I have had the opportunity to study the Bible with a number of pastors from other churches. I have seen two become part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

I met Willie Boyd in Bridgeport, CT. He had been the associate pastor of one of the largest protestant churches in the city of Bridgeport. I met him after he had run into problems with the senior pastor.

When people came to the church, they would be baptized soon after coming, without a lot of preparation. Willie asked the senior pastor, “Don’t you think we should study with people before we baptize them?” Somehow the pastor saw that as questioning his authority and Willie was let go.

His wife’s grandmother was a Seventh-day Adventist and happened to be at a family get-together. As they visited, she turned to Willie and said, “Willie, you are so

smart, how come you don't get the Sabbath?" He kept his cool, but got home and told his wife that he was going to prove that old woman wrong.

After several months of studying the Bible to "prove the old woman wrong," he began to think that she just might be right.

It was not long after that that He and I met through a former member of his that had become a member of my church. For several months, he and I went nose-to-nose over the Bible.

At the end of the studies He said, "I have been praying, 'Lord, don't you have a people somewhere who want to follow the truth?' I believe I have found those people."

I baptized him into the church not long after that, and he has been a SDA pastor now for close to twenty years.

God is leading men and women to understand the truth.

One day while I was working at a church in New England, I received a call from Dennis Hardy. He asked if I was the pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and I said "yes." His immediate response was, "I want to be a member of your church."

He told me that when he was a young boy, his parents studied the Bible and came to the conclusion that Saturday was the Sabbath. They started to keep the Sabbath thinking that they were the only Christians who were doing so. They were Presbyterians. Not knowing what else to do, they kept the Sabbath and went to church on Sunday.

Dennis told me that one time he and his mother went to a funeral and heard the pastor say that the individual was now rejoicing with the Lord. His mother looked down at him and shook her head no. When they got home she found the Bible and showed him what it said about what happens to those who die—that they sleep until the resurrection. They never knew that there was a church that taught any of these things.

Dennis wound up going to Viet Nam in the Eighty Second Air-borne. When he returned home, he began to think about the things he had been taught as a child. It was then that he discovered that there was a whole church that taught the same things. It was then that he called and we began to prepare for baptism.

Jesus is calling men and women to the truth. He is calling them to follow Him because He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is calling you and me today to step out from the traditions of humanity to follow the clear teachings of His Word.

We have a number of individuals that are preparing for baptism in just the next few weeks. What about you? Jesus wants us to love Him. But He also wants those who love Him to step out and follow the truth.

Is there anyone here today who will step out in faith and determine to join the people of God waiting for Jesus to return?

PRAYER

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Roy Allen. *Preachers of Righteousness*. Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1963.

_____. *The Shepherd Evangelist*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1950.

Alexander, Wilber. "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Speaking of H. M. S. Richards in Connection With the 'Voice of Prophecy' Radio Broadcast of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI, 1962.

Banks, Edward C. "Sermon Types and Design." Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1980. Photocopied document.

Bradford, Charles E. *Preaching to the Times*. Hagerstown, MD: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1970.

Buck, Edwin Francis Jr. "A Study of the H. M. S. Richards Lecture-ship with Emphasis Upon Some of the Basic Elements of Persuasive Preaching." University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI, 1968.

Cason, Virginia. *H. M. S. Richards—Man Alive*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1974.

Chavez, Stephen. "'Brad' A Life of Service." *Adventist Review*. <http://www.adventistreview.org/2000-05/story1.html> (accessed September 14, 2010).

De Fluiter, Henry. "The True Keynote." *Ministry*, 10 August 1929, 10.

Editorial. "Order of Subjects Followed by H. M. S. Richards." *Ministry*, 15 April 1934, 15.

Edwards, Robert E. *H. M. S. Richards*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998.

Evans, I. H. *The Preacher and His Preaching*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1938.

Haynes, Carlyle B. *The Divine Art of Preaching*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1939.

- _____. "Preaching the Full Message" in *Aflame for God: addresses and panel discussions of the 1950 pre-session council of the Ministerial Association, San Francisco, Calif.* Washington: Review and Herald, 1951.
- Knight, George R. *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism.* Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2008.
- Matthew Henry's Commentary.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991.
- Mathews, John Harold Hobart. "Towards Understanding Distinctive Seventh-day Adventist Preaching." University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI, 1991.
- Penner, Jonathan Gunther. "The Radio Preaching of H. M. S. Richards." Purdue University, 1958
- Richards, H. M. S. "Christ, the Center of all Sermons." *Ministry*, 31 September 1946, 31.
- _____. *Feed My Sheep.* Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958.
- _____. "Making Doctrinal Preaching Spiritual." *Ministry*, 5 June 1935, 5.
- _____. "Our Tabernacle of the Air." *Ministry*, 7 June 1934, 7.
- _____. "Placards, Radio and Whispering." *Ministry*, 20 April 1935, 20.
- _____. *Radio Sermons.* Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952.
- _____. *25 Sermons.* Los Angeles, CA: Voice of Prophecy, 1955.
- Register of the Carlyle B. Haynes Collection, Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, October 2006.
- Schwartz, Richard W. *Light Bearers to the Remnant.* Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979.
- Vitrano, Steven P. *Preaching the Four Faces of Salvation.* Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000.
- White, Ellen G. *The Acts of the Apostles.* Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911.
- _____. "Christ Prayed for Unity Among His Disciples." *The Review and Herald*, 11 March 1890.
- _____. *Christian Service.* Takoma Park, Washington, DC: Home Missionary Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1947.

_____. *Counsels to Writers and Editors*. Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1946.

_____. *Evangelism*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1970.

_____. *Gospel Workers*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948.

_____. "Our Message." *Signs of the Times*, 25 January 1910.

_____. *Pastoral Ministry*. Silver Springs, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995.

_____. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958.

_____. *Review and Herald*, 23 July 1895.

_____. *Signs of the Times*, 25 January 1910.

_____. *Sons and Daughters of God*. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1955.

_____. *Testimonies for the Church*. 9 vols. Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1909.

_____. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962.

_____, to S. N. Haskell and wife, 13 August 1900. Letter 121, 1900. Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

_____, to John and Julia Corliss, 25 December 1886. Letter 60, 1886. Ellen G. White Research Center, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

_____. *The Voice in Speech and Song*. Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1988.

_____. "The Work of the Minister." *The Review and Herald*, 11 September 1888, par. 8.

VITA

Name: Eric M. Doran
Date of Birth: May 29, 1955
Place of Birth: Utica, NY
Married: June 6, 1976 to Sandra Finley
Children: Eric James (1984) and Jeffrey Wright (1987)

Education

1973-1978 Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Atlantic Union College
1978-1980 M.Div. from Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University
2007-2011 D.Min. in Preaching, Andrews University.

Ordination

1984 Ordination

Experience

2002-Present Pastor, Kress Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church
1999-2002 Pastor, New England Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church
1991-1999 Pastor, Lincoln, Providence, Wickford, Burrilville, and Attleboro Seventh-day Adventist Churches
1986-1991 Pastor, Brooklawn Seventh-day Adventist Church
1984-1986 Pastor, Courtland and Ithaca Seventh-day Adventist Churches
1980-1984 Pastor, Saratoga and Gloversville Seventh-day Adventist Churches