

## PURPOSE

*Reflections* is the official newsletter of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference. It seeks to share information concerning doctrinal and theological developments among Adventists and to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. Its intended audience is church administrators, church leaders, pastors, and teachers.

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## NEWS AND COMMENTS

### HOMINID FOSSILS: LUCY NO LONGER A HUMAN ANCESTOR

In their recent article “Gorilla-like anatomy on *Australopithecus afarensis* mandibles suggests Au. *afarensis* link to robust australopiths”

(*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* [USA] 104 (2007):6568-6572) the authors Y. Rak, A. Ginzburg, and E. Geffen point out that a fossil skull of *Australopithecus afarensis* (same species as “Lucy”) reveals a morphological link with the robust australopithecines instead of the genus *Homo*. The fossils’s mandibular ramus, where the lower jaw attaches to the skull, is nearly identical to that of the gorilla and the robust australopithecines and quite different from other primates. A similar morphology is apparent in a specimen of *Australopithecus africanus*. This discovery removes *Australopithecus afarensis* from the direct



ancestry of humans. Another fossil species, *Ardopithecus ramidus*, has the same type of mandibular ramus as humans and many other primates.

Comment: Removal of *Australopithecus afarensis*, and probably all members of the genus *Australopithecus*, from the ancestry of humans, is not unexpected. Although the humans and australopithecines have numerous similarities, there are enough anomalies in the data to suggest they are not as closely related as generally thought.

James Gibson,  
Geoscience Research Institute

### THE 1888 MESSAGE STUDY COMMITTEE: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

One of the most active independent ministries in the church is the 1888 Message Study Committee, under the leadership of Robert Wieland. Their activities have divided churches and created doctrinal confusion in several parts of the world. We have tried to alert church members and pastors concerning the dangers of their soteriology (the teaching of salvation) through seminars and articles on our website. Their teachings on the meaning of the death of Christ do have a negative impact on several of our doctrines. The soteriology one embraces will determine what one believes in other areas of Christian doctrine.

We have occasionally received letters from church members who had been involved in the activities of that group, thanking us for those materials and indicating that they have come back to the message proclaimed by the world church. We are

now sharing with you the testimony of a person who was president of the 1888 Message Study Committee for five years, who decided to examine carefully the teachings that he was supporting and, to his surprise, found them to be erroneous. He authorized us to print his letter, addressed to me, in the *BRI Newsletter*. We do this in order to keep you informed about what is taking place in this particular independent ministry and hopefully to encourage our workers not to proclaim the message of a particular group within the church, but the biblical message God has entrusted to our global church.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, BRI

Dear Dr. Rodriguez:

As you may be aware I am a pastor in the Pennsylvania Conference and have served as president of the 1888 Message Study Committee for more than five years. As a result of my own personal investigation of the writings of Jones and Waggoner, Ellen White, and Scripture, I have concluded that we as a Committee have misinterpreted and misrepresented, in significant respects, the Message that Jones and Waggoner brought to the Church in the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference and during the ensuing years.

We have conveyed the impression in our publications and seminars that every soul comes into the world in Christ and therefore is legally justified with eternal life placed in their hands which can only be lost by spurning that which one presumably already possesses. I find no evidence for these propositions in the overall context of the writings of Jones and Waggoner, especially during the years 1888-1896. Neither do they exist within the writings of Ellen G. White and Scripture.

I have further concluded that these teachings of the Committee leave the listener with a false sense of assurance leading to presumption. From my own study on these subjects I have written a rather extensive critique of the “in Christ” motif and the Committee’s concept of legal justification which I have attached to this email. If you find any value in the critique, please feel free to add it to the other documents on the BRI Web Site dealing with the teachings of the Committee.

From John W. Peters  
Formerly President of  
the 1888 Message Study Committee

## PREDESTINATION, FOREKNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

The topic of predestination has a long and checkered history in Christian theology. From the days of Augustine

and Pelagius in the early fifth century until today, predestination has consistently been understood as God’s decree concerning the salvation of individuals. Hence, predestination is defined as “God’s choice of individuals for eternal life or eternal death,”<sup>1</sup>

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while election describes the selection of those who receive eternal life rather than eternal death.<sup>2</sup> All the different views on the subject of predestination are in reality variations of the two basic positions represented by Augustine and Pelagius;<sup>3</sup> and both positions present predestination as the cause of salvation. It is when predestination is understood as God’s direct choice of people for salvation that the contentious issue of God’s foreknowledge and human freedom is raised. What are some of the critical issues in this debate and how should a Seventh-day Adventist relate to them? Bruce Reichenbach likens the question of predestination to a puzzle and identifies the major pieces of the puzzle to be human freedom, divine sovereignty, omnipotence, omniscience, God and time, and providence.<sup>4</sup> All of these issues are relevant and provide perspectives on the two fundamental concepts--predestination and foreknowledge. We will only focus on these two concepts.

### I. *Predestination as the Cause of Salvation*

The key point in predestination as it is generally taught is that predestination is the cause of salvation. The Augustinian tradition comes to the conclusion that predestination is the cause of salvation on the basis of its view of original sin. It is held that the fall of humanity was so devastating in its effect that from an original situation where humans had the ability to refrain from sin (*posse non peccare*), they are now no longer able not to sin (*non posse non peccare*). Therefore, if humans will be saved, it must be an action of God. To avoid sin and choose good, human beings have to have God’s grace. This grace works irresistibly and in concert with a person’s will in such a way that while he or she is free to choose and do good, he or she does so only if and when God grants a person that freedom. Hence salvation becomes a matter of God choosing discriminatorily to give grace to some while denying it to others.<sup>5</sup>

Although it does not readily appear so, the opposing tradition also makes predestination the cause of salvation. The difference is that whereas in the Augustinian tradition predestination is a discriminatory, sovereign act of God, in the Pelagian/Arminian/open tradition God predestines those whom he foreknows will believe. But it is still predestination and it becomes a problem due to its association with foreknowledge.

## II. God's Foreknowledge and Human Freedom in Salvation

The question of God's foreknowledge as an aspect of divine omniscience raises problems for classical theology.<sup>6</sup> Augustus Strong defines omniscience as "God's perfect and eternal knowledge of all things which are objects of knowledge, whether they may be actual or possible, past, present, or future."<sup>7</sup> The issue is how to relate this

*The issue is how to relate divine foreknowledge to belief in free will and human responsibility.*

knowledge to belief in free will and human responsibility. It is an acute problem because Protestant theology tends to identify foreknowledge with predestination.<sup>8</sup> Such theism

forces God's foreknowledge to take on the nature of an 'eternal present'—the past, present, and future are rolled together in an eternal present. The practical implication of this view is that one is not permitted to make a separation between what God knows at a point in time and what He does with or about that knowledge in the future. In other words, what God knows is as good as done. When this kind of foreknowledge is linked to predestination either in the Augustinian/Calvinistic tradition or in the Arminian sense a serious problem arises for human freedom and responsibility.<sup>9</sup> If what God knows is as good as done, as they say, then any notion of free will and human responsibility is negated.

## III. Predestination and Foreknowledge in the Bible

It is impossible to examine all the data in the Bible on this subject in this brief paper.<sup>10</sup> We will selectively focus on passages that speak directly to these two concepts and address them in the context of the issues mentioned above.

*Predestination: A Decision about a Planned Activity.* The biblical term from which we derive the noun predestination is *proōrizō* which means to preordain. Used in connection with *proginōskō* (to foreknow) and *prothesis* (plan, decision) in Romans 8:28-30 and 1 Corinthians 2:7, God's predestination is described as "an activity of his with men directed towards their fellowship with him."<sup>11</sup> It is God's decision "to bring about a certain event or state of affairs at a future time,"<sup>12</sup> without reference to destiny.<sup>13</sup> The significance to understanding predestination as an activity is that it envisages a beginning point which runs a course until its goal is achieved.

*Predestination: Beginning Point.* Ephesians 1:4 shows that the decision about predestination as a planned activity occurred prior to and independent of creation. Does this then mean that predestination being prior in time to creation necessarily required the creation and sin which happened subsequently? The answer is no; and how this

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all fits together leads to our understanding of the nature of foreknowledge.

*Foreknowledge: Prior to Predestination.* Romans 8:29 shows clearly that predestination presupposes foreknowledge but the two are different. The latter is an epistemological phenomenon; the former an activity of God. Foreknowledge is a certain attribute or capacity in God; and it is this attribute that provides the ground for, or enables the act of predestination. Foreknowledge inevitably gets linked and confused with predestination when the God of the Bible is interpreted as the Aristotelian immovable, immutable, timeless God.<sup>14</sup>

*Predestination: Comprises Theoretical and Historical Aspects.* In 1 Corinthians 2:7, we find God deciding, theoretically, at a time before human time to do something subsequently and historically in human time. There is from the biblical point of view a sequence in predestination. Predestination moves from theoretical conception to historical implementation.

*Predestination: The Goal.* As an activity predestination has the goal of restoring humanity. Ephesians 1:4, 5 speaks to this issue. The word *eklegomai* is used but we are told that the *ek* in *eklegomai* "should not be taken as if it emphasized the selection of a small group out of a larger; it does not have this sense in Lk 9:35; 23:35. Election and predestination in our passages are not related primarily to individual salvation but to God's purpose."<sup>15</sup> It is important to observe that Ephesians hints at the formal manner in which the goal of predestination is attained. The election (*eklegomai*) is not attained in an absolute, automatic manner. Election is relational in nature because it is done "in Him."

*Predestination: The Efficient Means.* As an activity, predestination requires an efficient means to achieve its goal. In 1 Peter 1:18-20, Christ's blood is identified as the means needed. Significantly, Christ's role in this matter was foreknown before the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:18-20). Therefore, both the goal (Eph 1:4) and the means (1 Pet 1:18-20) of predestination were put in place before the beginning of creaturely time. But Christ's blood is not the only instrumental means for predestination. In 2 Thess 2:13 Paul informs the Thessalonians that God has chosen them from the beginning to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. Here is a picture of the Spirit's involvement in person to person relationships leading to belief in the truth as it is in Christ towards salvation.

*Predestination: Effected in History.* Ephesians 1:9-10 demonstrates the outworking of predestination in history. The plan (mystery) which God purposed in Himself from the foundation of the world is revealed to men. The plan envisaged an appropriate time (*kairos*, the fullness of time) when it will be dispensed or put into effect (*eis oikonomian*). History is the stage where it all plays out.

*Predestination and the Individual.* In Romans 8:29 Paul gives a clear sequence of salvific activities based

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on God's foreknowledge: predestination, call, justification, and glorification. Although at first sight it appears the individual has no part to play in the sequence of activities, it is significant to note that the text presupposes a loving response of the individual to God's offer of salvation (see v. 28).

*Summing Up the Biblical Data.* The scriptural data on predestination as presented above may be summed up as follows: The biblical God, being the kind of God who knows the end from the beginning (Isa 46:9-10), decided to create the world, knowing that there will be the fall. The Bible does not tell us why God still decided to create in spite of this knowledge. Because of His foreknowledge He decided upon (predestined) a plan, an activity through which the fall will be remedied. This plan, although hatched before creation, to be carried out in human history, was not implemented until a certain time was fulfilled (Gal 4:4). The plan envisaged redemption and restoration only 'in Christ,' His life, death, and resurrection, through the enabling and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Since God's foreknowledge of future events does not mean He predetermines every future event, all are genuinely free to respond to His plan positively or negatively. No destiny of individuals is fixed from eternity on the basis of God's decision (predestination). Hence, predestination is not in the technical sense a cause of salvation; predestination is the context within which God has made salvation graciously possible based on individual choices. This summary of the biblical data could be helpful to Seventh-day Adventists when approaching the issue of predestination.

#### *IV. Distinguishing the Biblical View from the Arminian View*

The Augustinian/Calvinistic approach that individual salvation is not conditioned by free choices is distinctly different from the biblical data given above. But how is the view given in the summary above different from the Arminian view? There is a continuum in the Arminian view where on the one end it is maintained that God knows ahead what will occur in the world and is never surprised. On the other end there are Arminians such as Clark Pinnock who hold that human freedom is incompatible with divine foreknowledge. Pinnock limits divine foreknowledge to only that which is knowable. He writes, "Free actions are not actions which can be known ahead of time. They literally do not yet exist to be known. God can surmise what you will do next Friday, but cannot know it for certain because you have not done it yet."<sup>16</sup>

To the extent that "conditionality"<sup>17</sup> is the key distinguishing feature about the Arminian view, the summary of the biblical position given above could be seen as Arminian. But the biblical view ought to be distinguished in some key respects. First, however predestination is defined in the Arminian sense, it should be maintained that biblically the concept does not entail the causal fixation of individual destiny. Second, although God knows those who will be saved based on His knowledge of individual choices, this foreknowledge should not be defined along the classical understanding of omniscience, i.e. what God knows He has forordained. Third, the view that God does not know future actions runs contrary to biblical data—the idea compromises the entire biblical genre of predictive prophecy.

#### *Conclusion*

The Bible teaches a doctrine of predestination which is based on God's foreknowledge of individual future choices. Basically, predestination is God's decision to put in place a plan to save His yet to be created world. The nature of God's knowledge of the future does not have to be understood in strict analogical terms to human knowing (open view) or along classical Greek philosophical lines. God's ability to know events that have not yet occurred in a way that does not condition outcomes is perhaps the key unresolved problem in predestination. But isn't this capacity that which distinguishes Him as God?

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<sup>1</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990), 908.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>See David Basinger and Randall Basinger (eds.), *Predestination and Freewill* (Downers Grove IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 10-14. Basinger organizes the alternative views around the notions of specific sovereignty (akin to the views of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin) and general sovereignty (akin to the open view of God and process theology).

<sup>4</sup>Bruce Reichenbach, "God Limits His Power," in *Predestination and Freewill*, edited by D. Basinger and R. Basinger (Downers Grove IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 101.

<sup>5</sup>Robert A Peterson and Michael D. Williams, *Why I Am Not An Arminian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 29.

<sup>6</sup>Classical theology in this paper refers to the theology that attempted to combine Greek philosophy with Christianity, such as we find in the theology of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>7</sup>Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (n. p.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1907), 282.

<sup>8</sup>Disputing the Arminian view of foreknowledge as the basis of predestination Erickson takes the position that foreknowledge means more than advance knowledge and includes the idea of favorable disposition or selection, *ibid.*, 356. See also, on Rom 8:29-30, Matthew Black, *Romans: The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 119, where foreknowledge is interpreted as choice or election; and F. F. Bruce,

*Romans: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 166, where foreknowledge is said to connote electing grace.

<sup>9</sup>Clark Pinnock, “God Limits His Knowledge,” in *Predestination and Freewill*, edited by D. Basinger and R. Basinger (Downers Grove IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 138, is correct in his critique of the classical Arminian position when he observes: “I agree with strict Calvinists that Arminians, if they wish to be consistent, must rethink the traditional doctrine of omniscience as well as omnipotence.”

<sup>10</sup>For a discussion of relevant biblical texts see Peterson and Williams, 67-91.

<sup>11</sup>P. Jacobs and H. Krienke, “proorizo,” in Colin Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 696.

<sup>12</sup>Chad O. Brand, *Perspectives on Election* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 74.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>The timeless God in the Aristotelian sense is incapable of participating or intervening in the flow of history.

<sup>15</sup>Ernest Best, *Ephesians: International Critical Commentary* (London: T & T Clark, 1998), 119.

<sup>16</sup>Basinger and Basinger, 157.

<sup>17</sup>Conditionality is the notion that God’s predestination is conditional upon human decisions.

Kwabena Donkor, BRI

## FOCUS ON SCRIPTURE

### HOMOSEXUALITY IN ROM 1:26-27

While a number of Christians hold that Romans 1:26-27 describes homosexuality and rejects it in all its forms, considering it to be sin, others acknowledge that the passage is dealing with homosexuality but they claim that the issue in Paul is idolatry and pederasty, and that Paul could not have taken in account sexual orientation as we know it today. Furthermore, it is argued that the reference to nature should be understood in the following way:

In describing homosexuality as ‘against nature’ (Rom. 1:26 KJV), Paul does not condemn homosexual orientation or any committed mutual relationship. Instead, he condemns perversion of what comes naturally. It is ‘against nature’ for homosexuals to practice heterosexuality or for heterosexuals to practice homosexuality. Paul does not condemn people for having been born homosexual, nor does he condemn the homosexual orientation (inversion).<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the issue is hardly whether or not Paul in Rom 1:26-27 addresses homosexuality and considers it to be sin; this can be taken for granted. The issue is whether or not homosexuality in Romans 1 includes all forms of homosexuality and has a universal scope.

#### I. The Historical Context

The ancients did not only know what has been called “contingent homosexuals” (people who are not true homosexuals such as teenagers and adults that are bored with heterosexuality and get involved with members of the

same sex) and most probably “situational homosexuals” (people who for the lack of heterosexual encounters resort to homosexual acts) but had also some idea or concept of “constitutional homosexuality” (homosexuality which is said to be permanent and may be part of people’s constitution). At least the notion that a person is attracted to the same sex because of his or her constitution is found in Plato’s androgynous myth.

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In this myth Plato explains that primal man was dual. He had four hands, four feet, two faces and two privy parts, that is, like two people back to back—the faces opposite directions. Some of these dual, primal creatures were male in both parts, others were female in both parts and yet others (a third sex) part male and part female. These primal creatures were so strong that they became insolent, attacking the gods. Because of their continued insolence, Zeus divided these dual four-legged creatures into two-legged creatures. A dual male became two males, a dual female two females and the male-female (androgynous) became a male and a female. On this basis he accounts for the differing sexual desires apparent in society, for each creature searches out its own or opposite kind, according to its original orientation. When dual parts encounter each other they fall in love. By the creation of this myth Plato attempts to explain the attraction some men and women have for persons of the same sex.<sup>2</sup>

It is hardly possible that Paul, who was an educated man and who even quoted Greek authors (e.g., Acts 17:28; Tit 1:12) would not have known Plato’s myth and the concept of innate homosexuality. Therefore, to suggest that Paul was referring to violent or exploitative homosexuality or pederasty only but not to permanent caring one-partner same-gender relationships because they supposedly were not known at his time, cannot be proven.

A. C. Thiselton declares: “Paul witnessed around him *both* abusive relationships of power or money *and* examples of ‘genuine love’ between males. We must not misunderstand Paul’s ‘worldly’ knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>

#### II. The Literary Context

The context of Rom 1:26-27 is universal in nature. While Romans 1 shows that all Gentiles are sinners—and Paul presents a catalogue of vices (Rom 1:21-32)—and Romans 2 points out that the Jews are also sinners, Romans 3 concludes that all people are sinners and all are dependent on God’s grace, as revealed in Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf. Romans 5 elaborates on the fact that all of us have been slaves to sin but in Jesus are free from it. Paul’s argu-

ment is not limited to humanity in the first century A.D. but encompasses people at all times, while dealing with

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creation, the fall, sin, and salvation. Therefore, the list of vices which includes ho-

mo s e x u a l

activity is not limited to a special period of time but is applicable also today. Since Paul does not distinguish different forms of homosexuality he seems to reject all cases of same-gender sex.

The background for the discussion of homosexuality in Romans 1 is creation. In Rom 1:20 the creation of the world and God's created works are referred to. Evidently Paul's argument is that God can be known through creation. But although the Gentiles "knew God, they did not honor him as God" (Rom 1:21). God was replaced by gods which were no more than images of created beings, whether humans or animals. The list of animals, the mention of humans, and the concept of "likeness"/"image" suggest that Rom 1:23 echoes Gen 1:24-26. Rom 1:25 points out that the Gentiles worshiped created things instead of the creator. Furthermore, Rom 1:26-27 seems to echo Gen 1:27 by concentrating on the same terms, namely "male" (*arsēn*) and "female" (*thēlu*), instead of using the terms "man" and "woman." Since creation is so clearly referred to in the preceding verses, homosexuality must be understood in the context of creation. "Idolatry and same-sex intercourse together constitute an assault on the work of the Creator in nature"<sup>4</sup> no matter which form of homosexuality it is. The creation account points out God's intention for man and women, which is monogamous heterosexual marriage.

### III. Analysis of the Text

Rom 1:26-27 states that God allowed people to exercise their free will even if it is shameful and may lead to self-destruction. After a description of lesbianism, male homosexuality is addressed. The term "use/function/relation" is found in the NT in Rom 1:26-27 only, but in this setting it must be understood as sexual relation/intercourse. The last part of verse 22 mentions the punishment that these sinners receive.

The argument that the phrase "the natural intercourse" and its opposite "against/contrary to nature" in Rom 1:26-27 are describing what is natural to an individual is unsubstantiated. Nowhere is the

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term *phusis* used in such a sense. In Romans itself the noun is found seven times;<sup>5</sup> however, the phrase *para phusin* occurs just twice (Rom 1:26; 11:24). In Rom 11:24 there is

a wild olive tree "by nature" (*kata phusin*). From this wild olive tree branches were cut off and "against nature" (*para phusin*) grafted into the cultivated olive tree. *Kata phusin* means to exist in harmony with the created order. *Para phusin* on the other hand, refers to what is in contrast to the order intended by the Creator.<sup>6</sup> This understanding corresponds with Rom 1 where creation is the background for the discussion of idolatry, homosexuality, and other vices. Here, activities and behavior described as being "against nature" imply a negative moral judgment. "... homosexual practice is a violation of the natural order (as determined by God)."<sup>7</sup> This includes all forms of homosexuality.

Although Paul lived several hundred years after the giving of the law through Moses, obviously this law is—in his opinion—still applicable to NT times. The mention of the adult-adult homosexual intercourse in verse 27 is dependent on Lev 18 and 20. Paul goes even a step further by including female same-gender activity which was not mentioned in the OT. Dealing with the objection that Romans 1 "identifies a temporary Jewish purity rule rather than a universal moral principle" De Young insightfully remarks: "God cannot consign the Gentiles to punishment for breaking a Jewish purity law."<sup>8</sup> Since God punishes people who practice homosexuality, the laws of Lev 18 and 20 must have a moral quality and be universal in nature.

The fact that Paul adds lesbianism to male homosexuality supports the point that Paul considers all homosexual relationships as sin. "Lesbian intercourse in antiquity normally did not conform to the male pederastic model or entail cultic associations or prostitution."<sup>9</sup> It was not exploitative. Therefore, non-exploitative but caring homosexual partnerships are included in the sins mentioned in Rom 1.

That Paul was not so much concerned with coercion in a homosexual relationship can be derived from Rom 1:27: "... men ... burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." Obviously in such a homoerotic union, both partners lust for each other. Both of them are responsible for their actions, and both of them receive the penalty. God is not so unfair that he would punish a young boy who has been forced to play the female in a homosexual relationship, whether by being raped or by being forced into a pederastic relationship.

Homosexuality in Romans 1 is not limited to a certain time, culture, or to certain homosexual forms only. Homosexual practice is sinful behavior.

### IV. Implications

By pointing out that all forms of homosexual activity are sin, our passage warns us not to get involved in such behavior. If we are already involved, we are called upon to give it up. In 1 Cor 6:9-11 Paul records that Christians had experienced such a change. However, Romans 1 and its context does not call us to hate, despise, blame, or ridi-

cule sinners. All of us have sinned and need the salvation offered to us by Christ.

Therefore, Adventists respect all people whether heterosexuals or homosexuals. They acknowledge that all human beings are creatures of the heavenly Father who loves them and who are valuable in His sight. Adventists are

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opposed to scorning or abusing homosexuals. They love sinners but separate themselves from sin. Adventists are called to support prevention of homosexuality and to care for homosexuals; which in some cases may include to follow Jesus' advice outlined in Matt 18:15-20 in order to save them for the kingdom of God (1 Cor 5:1-5). Adventists support change, and they support those who are struggling.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup>James B. De Young, *Homosexuality: Contemporary Claims Examined 16 in the Light of the Bible and Other Ancient Literature and Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2000), 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ronald M. Springett, *Homosexuality in History and the Scriptures* (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, 1988), 97-98.

<sup>3</sup>Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 452.

<sup>4</sup>Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 78.

<sup>5</sup>Rom 1:26; 2:14, 27; 11:21, 24, 24, 24.

<sup>6</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, The Anchor Bible, Volume 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 286, suggests: "... in the context of vv 19-23, 'nature' also expresses for him [Paul] the order intended by the Creator, the order that is manifest in God's creation or, specifically in this case, the order seen in the function of the sexual organs themselves, which were ordained for an expression of love between man and woman and for the procreation of children. Paul now speaks of the deviant exchange of those organs as a use *para physin*."

<sup>7</sup>James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1988), 764.

<sup>8</sup>De Young, 159.

<sup>9</sup>Via and Gagnon, 80.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. "Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality." General Conference Executive Committee, October 3, 1999, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

## SCRIPTURE APPLIED—A BIBLE STUDY

### WHY BAPTISM?

When people love each other, wanting to spent the rest of their lives together, and are committed to each other, they get married. In the same manner, when people love Jesus, wanting to follow Him as His disciples, and are committed to Him, they get baptized.

## I. The Meaning of Biblical Baptism

Ceremonial washing occurred in the OT. John the Baptist introduced a baptism of repentance (see Matt 3) which was also accepted by Jesus and practiced by His disciples.

- Baptism has to do with repentance of sins and with dedicating one's life to Jesus - Matt 3:2, 5-6, 11; Acts 2:38
- Baptism has therefore to do with cleansing and is a sign of accepting forgiveness and salvation - John 13:10; Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 6:11
- Baptism is by water and the Holy Spirit, depicting death to sin and bringing about newness of life - John 3:3, 5; Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:17
- Baptism is a public act of confessing Christ and believing in Him - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16
- Baptism has to do with discipleship and allows Jesus to live His life in His followers - Matt 28:19; Gal 2:20

## II. Jesus and Baptism

Christian baptism is rooted in Jesus who Himself was baptized and who gave the commission to baptize those who desire to become God's children. However His own baptism was not a baptism of repentance; He was baptized as our example.

- Matt 3:13-17 - Jesus' baptism is the example that we should follow. What happened at His baptism indirectly happens with any person who is serious about following Christ and who is being baptized.
- John 3:22; 4:2 - Jesus through His disciples baptized people.
- Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16 - Jesus wants people to be baptized.

## III. Practical Considerations

### 1. The Mode of Baptism

Baptism is by immersion.

- The Greek verb *baptizō* and others words of the same family are used in the NT to denote baptism by immersion.
- That people went into the water and came up out of the water again supports immersion - Matt 3:16; Acts 8:38-39

- Baptism is a symbol of - Col 2:12  
being buried with Christ.  
A burial is a complete  
and not just a partial  
interment.

## 2. Prerequisites for Baptism

The Book of Acts continuously stresses the sequence of hearing the proclamation of the gospel, believing in Jesus, and being baptized. Exceptions confirm the rule and are due to special circumstances. Nevertheless, hearing and believing always precede baptism.

Acts 2:37-41	Hearing, believing, repenting, being baptized, receiving the Holy Spirit
Acts 8:12	Hearing, believing, being baptized
Acts 8:34-39	Hearing, believing, being baptized
Acts 10:44-48	Hearing, receiving the Holy Spirit, being baptized
Acts 18:8	Hearing, believing, being baptized

Believing in Jesus includes the entire gospel. Therefore, people were baptized in the name of Jesus after they had heard the proclamation of the message and accepted it. This is not possible with infants.

Acts 19:1-7	Renewed baptism because the first was inadequate
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## 3. Entrance into the Church by Baptism

Although people are baptized because they believe in Jesus, they are also joined to “His body” which is the church.

Acts 2:41-42, 46-47	Those who were baptized were added to the church.
1 Cor 12:13	They form one body.
Heb 10:24-25	One cannot be a Christian in isolation.

## IV. Benefits of Baptism and Responsibilities

Benefits are described, for instance, in Acts 2:38-39; Matt 3:11, 16-17; 1 Cor 12:7-13

- Belonging and relationship: Beloved sons and daughters of God
- Members of the community of Christ
- Forgiveness of sins, salvation, eternal life
- Receiving the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts

Benefits lead also to responsibilities. They include:

- The use of one’s natural and spiritual gifts for Christ’s cause
- Becoming active in a local church
- Fulfilling the missionary task given by the Lord

## V. Baptism and I

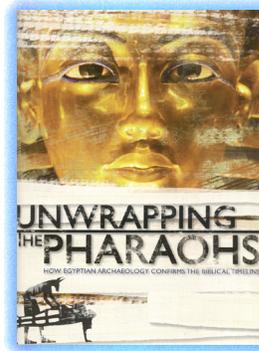
We are challenged as Paul was when he met Jesus: “And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). We decide to follow Christ’s example.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI

## BOOK NOTES

John Ashton and David Down, *Unwrapping the Pharaohs: How Egyptian Archaeology Confirms the Biblical Timeline*. Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2006. 221 pp. with DVD. US\$34.99.

This vividly illustrated book is written by David Down, who considers himself to be an archaeologist, and John Ashton a member of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute who specializes in food and nutrition research. It is currently being sold at Adventist Book Centers across North America together with their magazine *Diggings*. The central hypothesis of the book and of the magazine is that readers will “see how



“see how discrepancies in biblical and secular chronologies are easily reconciled” (back cover). Most Bible students would agree that this is a noble goal. The authors attempt to resolve these issues by suggesting a new understanding of Egyptian chronology. But, in fact, there is little that is new in their proposal. Ashton and Down seek to accomplish this daunting task by simply mixing the chronologies of David Rohl, Peter James, Immanuel Velikovsky, and Donovan Courville—chronologies which are, in fact, not in agreement with each other. Unfortunately, in doing so, the authors have already led readers down a road that will neither provide secure correlations with the Bible nor a sound basis for understanding history. This short review can only address a few of the many problems and issues encountered in the proposed chronology.

*Egyptology*. According to the chronology of Rohl (as adopted by Ashton and Down, pp. 174-175) Ramses II is to be dated 350 years later than conventional chronology, i.e., to the time of Solomon. Rohl equates Ramses II with the Shishak of Scripture who invades Jerusalem in 925 B.C. (1 Kings 14:25-26). But this correlation fails for several reasons. It is impossible to collapse 350 years of well documented history. One cannot simply eliminate dynasties and say this is a “simple solution.” There are major consequences to such shifting. Ramses II’s son Merenptah gave us the first mention of Israel outside of the Bible. He claims to have invaded Canaan sometime before his fifth

year. Down and Ashton state that Merenptah is referring to the invasion in 722 B.C. by Sargon, king of Assyria (2 Kings 17:6; p. 178). But this is impossible. It is Merenptah *himself* who claims to have defeated Israel. There is no reference to Assyria anywhere in this text. Instead Merenptah claims, “Israel is laid waste, its seed is not.” Israel at that time was an enemy of Egypt. The Merenptah stela containing this reference is accompanied by reliefs at Karnak clearly depicting the king himself going forth in battle against the cities of Ashkelon, Gezer, Yenoam, and the people of Israel. Captives are brought back to Egypt. Importantly, Gezer is captured by Merenptah. But if Ashton and Down’s chronology is followed, Gezer would be captured *after* the Bible describes it had been presented as a dowry to Solomon’s wife, an Egyptian princess (1 Kings 9:15-16; see Hasel, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 296 (1994): 45-61; idem., *Domination and Resistance* [Leiden: Brill, 1998] 257-271; idem., *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 116 (2004) 75-81). No trained Egyptologist or Assyriologist would conceive of attributing Merenptah’s campaign to the Assyrians hundreds of years later. In fact, just on the wall opposite the Merenptah reliefs at Karnak, a certain Shoshenq I of the XXII Dynasty is described as invading Judah and Israel in 925 B.C. He left a victory stela at Megiddo in Israel and mentions several of the key cities in Judah and Israel by name as he commemorates his campaign at Karnak. This is the clearest synchronism to Shishak of the Bible. There is little need to look elsewhere (see Kitchen, *Third Intermediate Period of Egypt* [Aris & Phillips, 1996]).

*Assyriology.* From Mesopotamia we have fixed dates from 910-612 B.C. given in the so called Eponym Lists (Millard, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire, 910-612 BC*, Helsinki, 1994). At the tenth year of Assurdan II the list states that a solar eclipse occurred in the month Shivan (May/June). The tenth year of Assurdan III is dated to 763 B.C., and a solar eclipse did actually occur in Mesopotamia on June 15, 763 B.C. But Rohl’s proposed new chronology leaves no room for the Assyrian kings Salmanassar I, Tukulti-Ninurta I, and Tiglath-Pileser I, who together covered a period of 106 years. In the years attributed to them by the new chronology Assyria was ruled by other kings. From Tiglath-Pileser I till Assurdan II the Assyrian royal list names nine other kings. Most of them were succeeded by their sons; at least there were six generations of kings, who in the conventional chronology ruled from 1077 to 935 B.C., i.e., 142 years. In all, the new chronology fails to fill in a period of 270 years for Assyrian history.

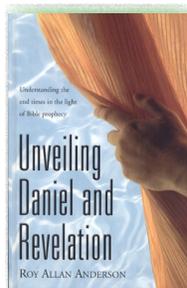
*Archaeology.* According to the Bible, the Philistines were a major source of conflict during the reign of Saul and David. As an archaeologist I have worked extensively at several Philistine sites such as Ashkelon and Ekron. Rohl does not say much about the Philistines, and for good reason. The Philistines utterly destroy his revised chronology

and, by extension, that of Ashton and Down. In fact Ashton and Down cite no sources on the Philistines after 1985. Yet the most important and revolutionary work on the Philistines has been done since that time— in the last 20 years. According to the revised chronology of Rohl, the Philistines would come onto the scene around 800 B.C. during the re-dated reign of Ramses III, but Ashton and Down here insert Velikovsky’s date placing the Philistines all the way down to the Medo-Persian empire in the time of Esther. Either way, Saul and David would have absolutely no one to fight, including Goliath, because they lived literally hundreds of years before the Philistines came into existence.

Rohl dates the occupation at Jericho following the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze IIB period. He then equates this phase to the rebuilding of Jericho by Hiel of Bethel (1 Kings 16:34). But this is incorrect, the next occupational phase at Jericho following the Middle Bronze dates to the Iron I period. There is, in fact, no evidence for occupation at Jericho in the Late Bronze IIB period.

It must be emphasized that *Unwrapping the Pharaohs* was written by amateurs who have no formal training in archaeology, much less Egyptology. Today, the data from the ancient Near East that bears on these questions requires careful training so that the discipline has become increasingly specialized. Scholars not only study several complex ancient languages and the material these cultures produced but also zero in on specific time periods and geographical areas. In any discipline, theories and hypotheses must be evaluated on the basis of known facts, in this case weighing the results of two centuries of research. In addition, archaeological research annually uncovers new, valid data that illuminates the history of the Bible, but the understanding of that history is wholly dependant upon the backbone of history-chronology. Sadly, despite such exciting and truly new confirmation that could have been cited and illustrated in this handsome volume, the “new” chronologies of Rohl, James, Velikovsky, and Courville advocated in this book fail to take these into account and ignore cogent critiques by trained experts in the field. Rather than providing correlations that are “easily reconciled,” this book and the magazine *Archaeological Diggings* (which it advocates) causes major confusion and difficulties for biblical correlations and the understanding of ancient history.

Michael Hasel, Southern Adventist University and  
Curator of the Lynn Wood Museum



Roy Allan Anderson, *Unveiling Daniel and Revelation*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006. 383 pp. US\$19.99

This commentary on Daniel and Revelation is an attractively bound reprint of R. A. Anderson’s books *Unfolding Daniel’s Prophecies* and *Unfolding the Revelation*. That Anderson wrote these books in the 1960s, when the cold

war was at its height, is evidenced by the fact that he prefers to identify the king in Daniel 11:36 with the atheistic French Revolution and the king of the North in verse 40 with a worldwide atheistic government rather than with the papacy; though he is careful to point out that “we cannot be dogmatic on certain details of these prophecies” (p. 166).

His commentary on Daniel follows, by and large, the interpretation of U. Smith and the Adventist Bible Commentary. The ten horns are ten Germanic tribes and the little horn comes out of one of the four horns in Daniel 8:9 (pp. 52, 106). Most Adventist interpreters today recognize that the little horn comes out of one of the four winds; and the number 10 is best taken as a round number (e.g. Gen 31:7; Num 14:22; 1 Sam 1:8; etc.) indicating that the one Roman Empire was destroyed by many Germanic tribes (12-15 all together). The “latter days” are interpreted as the end of the ages (p. 131) though the Hebrew expression is simply an idiom for the future which could be the time of the conquest of Canaan (Gen 49:1), the days of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities (Deut 49:1), or the age of the Messiah (Hos 3:5).

The commentary on Revelation again follows the Adventist historicist interpretation found in U. Smith and others. The seven churches (Rev 2-3) and the seven seals represent seven periods in church history, the throne-room vision in chapters 4 and 5 refers to the investigative judgment, and the seven trumpets unfold “history from the military aspect” (p. 263) with the Visigoths, the Vandals, the Huns, and Odoacer’s removal of the last Roman Emperor covering the first four trumpets. While the interpretation of the seven churches and the seven seals has remained basically the same, the throne-room vision in chapters 4 and 5 is now seen by many Adventists as the inauguration of Christ’s ministry rather than the investigative judgment, and the trumpets in Revelation 8 and 9 are interpreted more along spiritual lines rather than military ones. Thus the first four trumpets are seen as judgments on Israel (A.D. 70), Rome (A.D. 476), and the church (in the form of increasing apostasy).

Revelation 12 is an important chapter for Seventh-day Adventists, particularly verse 17. Anderson, in his one page commentary on the text, majors, unfortunately, on the commandments of God; the “testimony of Jesus” or the “spirit of prophecy” is mentioned only in passing, although he frequently cites from the writings of Ellen White.

“The earth helped the woman” is seen as a reference to archaeology (p. 294) rather than to America as a safe haven for those persecuted in the Old World. However, archaeology did not blossom until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, long after the close of the 1260 years during which the woman (the church) was persecuted. Another item to be taken *cum grano salis* is Anderson’s claim that *Vicarius Filii Dei* “Vicar of the Son of God” is one of the pope’s official titles (p. 306). While this title has been used at various times, his official title is *Vicarius Christi*

(Vicar of Christ).

Some of Anderson’s translations of the names of the seven churches are also questionable, e.g., the name Smyrna is not synonymous with myrrh (p. 200). While “sweet smelling” would certainly fit the church in the second century, the reality is that the etymology of Smyrna is unknown. The same is true of Thyatira which Anderson translates as “sacrifice of contrition” (p. 208).

A misprint or mistake is the name *Bab-ril* as “gate of God” (p. 325). Babylon in Akkadian (Babylonian) was *bab-ili* (sg.) or *bab-ilani* (pl). One other mistake is the absence of references for some of the quotations used (e.g., pp. 119, 309, 311, 314, 344, etc.).

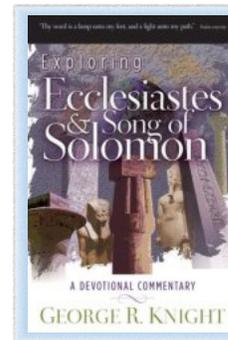
The preface by H. M. S. Richards and the introduction by R. A. Anderson are both from the earlier book on Daniel. The editor, for some reason, left out the preface and the introduction to the book of Revelation. Nevertheless, all in all, this volume is a useful introduction to the historicist interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, highlighting the historical background of the prophecies. Its readability and the helpful lay-out with its many subheadings make this book attractive to Adventists and non-Adventists.

Gerhard Pfandl, BRI

George R. Knight, *Exploring Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon: A Devotional Commentary*. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006. 234 pages. US\$16.99.

*Exploring Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon* is the fourth volume in the Exploring Series but the first Old Testament easy-to-use devotional commentary in that series which is especially addressed to church members. This publication contains an interpretation of two biblical books: Ecclesiastes (143 pages) and Song of Solomon (89 pages). It is an excellent combination, because it is important to connect intimate and passionate love with wisdom, as divine insights are needed to appropriately conduct oneself in the sphere of human sexuality.

The commentary is well organized and neatly structured; chapters are clearly subdivided, and main issues covered. Principle thoughts are highlighted. Each biblical book is interpreted according to sections which usually do not correspond to the chapters as found in Scripture. The book of Ecclesiastes has 20 sections which are divided into three major parts: meaninglessness introduced (1:1–3); meaninglessness demonstrated and advice given (1:4–12:7); and meaninglessness transcended (12:8–14). The book of Song of Songs is divided into ten sections with four principal parts: preliminary matters (1:1); moving toward intimacy (1:2–3:5); marriage day (3:6–5:1); and aftermath (5:2–8:14). Each biblical book in this exposition



has an introduction, main body, and conclusion.

Ecclesiastes resonates with a search for the meaning of life in a postmodern world. It is also an “Adventist” book, because only in Ecclesiastes and in the Three Angels’ Messages of Revelation 14:6–13 are found closely tied together crucial “Adventist” themes such as creation, fearing God, keeping His commandments, eschatology, giving glory to God through a right lifestyle, and divine judgment.

*Exploring Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon* is not an original commentary, and it is not built on a new original translation. Knight consulted many outstanding biblical commentaries on both biblical books and skillfully included their jewels in his exposition. His contribution is in choosing the best and putting them into his existential perspective. His interpretation of tensions and paradoxes in the biblical material of Ecclesiastes is profound.

Knight’s exposition of Song of Songs presents a well-balanced and respectful perspective on human intimacy and marriage. He rightly associates passionate sexual love with married heterosexual couples and makes it clear that this kind of intimacy belongs only in marriage. At the center of the Song of Solomon is the wedding ceremony which includes the imagery of the first night spent together in love. Virginity is praised by the husband. Within the boundaries of marriage, passion of sexual intimacy is not something sinful, shameful, or degrading, but beautiful and commendable, because it is a joyful celebration of the Creator’s gift of love to humans which needs to be lived according to the creation order. Emotional sexuality is good and belongs to a healthy and happy marital life. The true attitude toward sexuality must be informed by biblical ideals.

In the conclusion of the book, Knight provides a three-ingredient formula for a happy marital life: (passionate) desire for each other; plus commitment (faithfulness); plus (unselfish, self-sacrificing) love; and he rightly stresses the indispensable role of community in building a healthy

marriage and its social dimensions.

There are some points which should have been included in this publication. Knight should have explained more clearly why he thinks that the identification of the author of these two biblical books does not affect his exposition. It is this reviewer’s conviction that the author would gain tremendous insights, if he would identify Solomon as the author and intertwine his life’s contradictory experience into their historical background. Knight’s commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes should elaborate more on the theme of creation and “the fear of God” motif with which the book culminates. Lacking is an elaboration on the eschatological and cosmic motif present in chapter 12:1–7 (see, for example, C. L. Seow’s commentary on Ecclesiastes). Consultation of Jacques Ellul’s publication *Reason for Being: A Meditation on Ecclesiastes* would have helped the author to underline those passages which deal with the vertical dimension and point to eternal values. Word statistics need to be slightly adjusted, because the key word *hebel* meaning “vapor,” “vanity,” “breath,” or “meaningless” occurs in Ecclesiastes 38 times (not 30 times); and this term is employed in the Old Testament 73 times and not 64 as is stated on page 20.

Apart from these suggested improvements, the volume is a very valuable publication and serious students of the Bible can gain excellent insights from it. It is not using theological jargon and is not technical. Knight has a masterful ability to simplify theological issues, expand them, and drive crucial points home in a fine readable form. This is why his devotional commentary is reader-friendly and easy to follow and yet has a sense for details. It is helpful for all who would like to acquire a deeper understanding of the meaning of life and experience passionate love in their marriages according to God’s ideal.

Jiří Moskala, Andrews University

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