



REFLECTIONS

Theological Focus

Some Thoughts on the Inspiration of the Bible..... 1
 What is in Your Heart?: Lessons from a Biblical
 Character 3

Scripture Applied

Lessons from Daniel 6 5

Book Notes

The Love of God: A Canonical Model..... 7

News

Annual Council Appoint BRI Scholars for
 2016–2020..... 8
 Initiatives of the Biblical Research Committee
 of the Inter-European Division..... 8
 Initiatives of the Biblical Research Committee of
 the Southern Asia-Pacific Division 8
New Publication..... 9

THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

Some Thoughts on the Inspiration of the Bible

By Gerhard Pfandl

The word inspiration can have different meanings. An orchestra can give an inspired performance. Artists can speak about what inspires them. Athletes are inspired by their Olympic goals. In each case inspiration is something quite different from what the Apostle Paul meant when he said: “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16 NKJ)

Revelation and inspiration in the Bible belong together. While revelation refers primarily to the contents of God’s communication (Rev 1:1), i.e. the actual message; inspiration describes the means God used to communicate his message to sinful human beings, for example, in visions and dreams (Num 12:6) or by the “moving” of the Holy Spirit on the biblical authors. Peter says, “Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet 1:21 NIV). As a leaf is carried along by the wind, so the writers of Scripture were carried along by the Spirit, they could not control the Spirit, they had to proclaim the message from God.

When the prophet Balaam was hired by Balak, king of the Moabites, to “curse” Israel, he was promised earthly riches (Num 22:37). But when, under the inspiration, he tried to curse Israel, he could only proclaim a blessing (Num 23:7-10, 18-24). In Scripture, inspiration guarantees the accuracy of that which is revealed.

Because the Bible does not develop a full theory of inspiration, various views have arisen in regard to the nature of inspiration: (1) The intuition theory

defines inspiration as a heightened degree of insight. The biblical authors were religious geniuses but in principle no different from other great thinkers, such as Plato, Buddha or Mohammed. (2) The illumination theory allows for the working of the Holy Spirit, but only in heightening the biblical authors’ natural abilities. There is no special communication of truth, but merely a deeper perception of spiritual matters. (3) The plenary or dynamic view of inspiration has the Spirit of God imbuing the writers with the thoughts and concepts they are to pass on. This view allows the writer’s own personality to come into play in the choice of words and expressions. (4) In the verbal inspiration theory the Holy Spirit supplies not only the thoughts but also the words and expressions, albeit from the writers own vocabulary and background. (5) The dictation theory teaches that the Holy Spirit actually dictated the biblical books to the various writers. “This means that there is no distinctive style attributable to the different authors of the biblical Books”¹ In the last two theories the prophets and apostles can be compared to God’s pens rather than his penmen.

The first two views are generally held by liberal scholars. The dictation theory goes back to Philo and Josephus² and was held by a few Christians, but is rarely found today. However, it is often equated with verbal inspiration which is the commonly accepted view among evangelical Christians.

Inspiration - The Claims of Scripture

Any discussion about the inspiration of the Bible

must take into account what the inspired writers themselves said about it. In the Old Testament, the writers frequently claim to be recording the very words of God, for example, “Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying. . .” (Exod 25:1), or “The word of the Lord came to me, saying . . .” (Ezek 32:1). David said, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue” (2 Sam 23:2). According to H. M. Morris, there are about 2600 such claims in the Old Testament.³

The New Testament confirms the divine inspiration of the Old Testament. Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim 3:16). And Peter stated that “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

The same is true, of course, of the New Testament. Although the apostles do not claim inspiration as

inspired a prophet’s thoughts, not his or her words, except in texts where God’s words are actually quoted. That is, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the thoughts of the authors became the thoughts God wanted them to write down. God provided the thoughts, and the prophets, in relaying the divine message, supplied the best words in their vocabulary. In this way, the personality of the writers was not overridden, because each expressed in his own words what had been revealed to him. Although the prophet was human with sinful tendencies, the operation of the Holy Spirit guaranteed the truthfulness of the message as an expression of God’s will. Ellen White describes the process of inspiration by saying:

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. . . The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers. It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is defused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.⁴

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” (2 Tim 3:16).

frequently as did the Old Testament writers, it is clear that they did regard their messages as given by divine authority. Paul, for example, wrote, “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor 2:13), and “When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God” (2 Thess 2:13).

Paul also acknowledged the inspiration of other parts of the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 5:18 he quotes from both Testaments as Scripture. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The labourer is worthy of his wages.” The first part of the text is a quote from Deuteronomy 25:4 and the second from Luke 10:7. Similarly, Peter refers to the writings of Paul as Scripture when he says that in Paul’s epistles “are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15,16). In summary, the Bible clearly claims to be the inspired word of God.

Inspiration – A Definition

Throughout Scripture, the biblical authors claim to be inspired. But how does inspiration actually work? Paul tells us that the Bible was given “by inspiration” (2 Tim 3:16). The Greek word used literally means “God-breathed.” The NIV, therefore, translates: “All Scripture is God-breathed.” The idea here is that God through the Holy Spirit influenced the human authors in such a way that what they wrote became His word.

In contrast to the verbal inspiration theory, Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Holy Spirit

Nature and Authority

Such a view of the inspiration of Scripture makes the Bible unique in nature and authority. Though God used human beings to write the books of the Bible, they cannot be credited to them, but must be attributed to God. Because the contents of Scripture has its origin in God, it is endowed with reliability and trustworthiness. With the Psalmist the Christian, therefore, can say: “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path” (119:105).

I have yet to hear a man or woman say: “I was in a terrible state; I was a hopeless alcoholic, a disgrace to my family. I contemplated suicide. But then I began studying philosophy and science, and this completely changed me. Since then I’ve been happy as can be!” However, there are hundreds-of-thousands of people around the world who can testify that reading the Bible has changed their lives. That is because the Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is the same Holy Spirit who speaks through the Word to the heart of its readers. Not all will respond, but those who do will experience a transformation of their lives.

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¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 207.

² A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (King of Prussia, PA: Judson Press, 1907), 209.

³ Henry M. Morris, *Many Infallible Proofs* (San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publisher, 1974), 157.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:21.

What is in Your Heart?: Lessons from a Biblical Character

By Ekkehardt Mueller

Close attention to biblical characters can provide useful insights for preaching and teaching the Bible. This essay illustrates this claim by looking at the prophet Ezra. Israel had been in the Babylonian exile—according to Jeremiah it would last seventy years—and the Jews were allowed to return to their land under the Persian king Cyrus. But this happened only gradually, with different groups returning. Ezra 7 and 8 reports on the journey of one group that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. They left on the first day of the first month in the seventh year of Artaxerxes and arrived on the first day of the fifth month. Quite a journey! Today in an airplane it is a matter of one or two hours.

But the return of the Jews from the exile is mentioned here as the backdrop to better focus on Ezra as a person. We appreciate people who have helped shape our lives positively. We appreciate those who have set an example in loyalty, courageous behavior, and commitment to a good cause. Biblical characters are among them, and often are the first to be listed. Good lessons can be learned from biblical characters. One of them is Ezra. In Ezra 7:1–6 he is described as a priest and as “a scribe skilled in the law of Moses which the Lord God of Israel had given.” In verse 11 this description is repeated in other terms. Ezra is a priest and “a scribe, a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord.” The term “scribe” is repeated twice in verse 11. Some translations render the second occurrence as “skilled in” the words of the commandments of the Lord. With verse 12 the decree of Artaxerxes begins. Again Ezra is called “the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven.” However, most remarkable—in my opinion—is verse 10: “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice *it*, and to teach *His* statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

Lessons to be Learned

This text provides us with at least four insights.

1. *The Heart Counts*

Many people today do their job just because they have to do it. It may be difficult enough to find a job. So they are forced to take what they can get. They have to make a living and earn money. Some have the luxury of choice and find themselves a career that allows them to make themselves a name and/or to get plenty of money. Apart from the lucrative financial benefits, their heart may not be with their job.

Ezra 7 tells us that Ezra was a scribe by profession, but he was more than a professional scribe who did his job because it was his task to do it. Ezra was personally involved. It must have been his heart's desire to be familiar with the word of God. Ezra set his heart to seek the word of God, do it, and teach it. This phrase is primarily talking about commitment, devotion, and dedication. . The heart was not only the seat of emotions but also of the intellect. Thus the heart stood for the mind, will, and determination. Ezra “had ‘devoted himself’ to the three things mentioned”¹—studying, observing, and teaching.

The term “for” connects verse 10 with the preceding verse: “the good hand of his God was upon him.” Why? Because he had devoted his life to his ministry! His heart was in it! A job performed for a secular company may be done without much of personal involvement, although even then it is better to have a personal interest in what one is doing.

This is all the more so when what we do has to do with the kingdom of God. Halfhearted service, divided interest is not enough when it comes to God. “You cannot serve two masters.” “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” “Seek first God's Kingdom and his righteousness, and all the things important to life will be added to you,” Jesus said (Matt 6:21, 24, 33). Ezra's commitment was paired with God's blessing.

2. *Study Scripture*

Ezra felt it important to commit himself to literally “seeking,” that is, exploring and investigating, the

law (Torah) of Yahweh, which is the Word and also the law of God. The Word of God is like a mine which we can dig to find treasures. While some treasures are found at the surface, many are not. One has to dig and search, read and try to understand, compare one with another, and establish a biblical teaching.

Even a child is able to grasp the simple concept of how we can be saved. But the Scriptures also contain complex concepts and statements that challenge our mind and our lives; no wonder, we are dealing with issues that relate to God and surpass humanity. We are talking about human paradoxes and limitations of our understanding because we can reach out beyond our own dimension and get in touch with the transcendent Lord, the Infinite One. And yet reading and studying Scripture regularly comforts us, moves us, helps us to new insights, and brings us in contact with our Maker.

Study of the Word of God is a prerequisite for knowing God, His plan of salvation, and His will. It is the foundation of the Christian's life and our spiritual journey.

3. Practice What You Have Found

Searching and exploring does not achieve much, if we are only intellectually enlightened. While this is good, it is not good enough. Studying Scripture must affect our daily life. Ezra allowed this to happen. He practiced what he found. He lived the will of God, as can be seen later in the book. An uncompromising commitment to the will of God led to a change of behavior and attitude in Judah (mixed marriages); in modern terms we would say to revival and reformation. Christianity appears oftentimes as unattractive because its adherents are no different from the secular population. They are still as greedy and angry, as selfish and proud, as pleasure-loving and compromising as many others. It was not only Nietzsche, the atheist German philosopher, who said that Christians would need to look more like redeemed people in order for him to believe in their savior. Adherents of other world religions tell us the same thing.

There are plenty of Christian scholars and university professors who study and teach Scripture, but it does not make a difference. Why? Because they have not allowed the Bible to be the Word of God, and make a difference in their lives. They have not been changed themselves. They do not have a living communion with the Lord, a heart of compassion, peace in Christ, assurance of salvation. One has to do the will of God to experience growth and change. Ezra had set his heart on practicing the will of God, living with Him, obeying Him.

4. Teach What You Have Found and Practiced

Ezra taught the Word of God. In the Old Testament, teaching the law of God was a function of the priests and Levites. Ezra was a priest, and he fulfilled the task to which he as a priest had been called. But Ezra was also a scribe.

Scribes were sometimes professional secretaries and sometimes government officials. So scribes may have recorded decisions of the elders, court rulings, and marriage contracts. They may have also been in charge of various records, and have copied documents, including biblical documents. But for some their task was not exhausted in recording decrees or passing on traditions. They also taught the Word of God.

In NT times teaching had already moved to the scribes. They were professional theologians, Biblical scholars. Some of the most famous scribes at the time of Jesus were Gamaliel, Hillel, and Shammai. They interpreted the Torah and applied it to their situation. Later in Judaism, a teacher of Torah was called a rabbi. Ezra was at the transition point when the teaching office begins to pass from the priests and Levites to the scribes. This transition occurred after the Babylonian Exile.

We have to return to the three aspects of ministry to which Ezra was devoted: studying Scripture, living Scripture, and teaching Scripture. "These three aspects of ministry are interdependent. One called by God to teach must also study and obey."² Ezra "was not only a student of Scripture, but explicitly a practitioner and especially a teacher of its requirements . . . what he taught he had first lived, and what he lived he had first made sure of in the Scriptures. With study, conduct, and teaching put deliberately in this right order, each of these was able to function properly at its best: study was saved from unreality, conduct from uncertainty, and teaching from insincerity and shallowness."³

"The model teacher in Ezra is a doer. And the doer can be no mere demonstrator. He must *be* what he would have his disciples be."⁴ We today are the priesthood of believers. It is important that we practice what we find in the gospel; we also need to teach and pass it on to our children, non-Christians, and even Christians. In doing so it will become even more important, meaningful, and fresh for ourselves.

The Great Commission is addressed to all disciples and calls us, among other things to get involved in teaching: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:19-20).

Although some people in church are especially gifted with teaching, all of us in one way or another must teach. But teaching must be based on studying and practicing.

In Acts 19 a sad story is recorded, in which these three dimensions were not connected. Some Jews got involved in exorcism. They attempted to expel evil spirits from people. However, they did that in a strange way. They used a kind of formula and thought it would work. The formula was: "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." This formula is revealing. First, they think they can use a sentence like magic, and the desired outcome happens. It does not. Secondly, they have heard about Jesus and Paul, but they

do not seem to believe in Jesus and practice discipleship. The result is devastating: “the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?’ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding” (Act 19:15–16, NIV).

Conclusion

“Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). This was his call. He followed it. It is ours too today. We too—no matter what our profession or job—must devote ourselves wholeheartedly to:

1. Studying Scripture
2. Practicing Scripture
3. Teaching Scripture

As we do this, the Lord will bless us as he blessed Ezra and will make our ministry fruitful and our life meaningful. His gracious hand will be on us (Ezra

7:9). I hope to have shown in the above reflection how fruitful a close examination of biblical characters can be for biblical teaching and preaching, and for the devotional life as well.



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¹ Mervin Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 129.

² Breneman, 130.

³ H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, Word Biblical Commentary 16 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 93 (quoting Kidner).

⁴ McConville, “Ezra-Nehemiah and the Fulfillment of Prophecy,” *Vetus Testamentum* 36 (1986): 47.

Lessons from Daniel 6

By Ekkehardt Mueller

Freedom of conscience and religious liberty are constantly threatened in this world. Again and again there are persecution, imprisonment, and killing of people for their religious convictions. Daniel 6 describes such a situation. This chapter is the last chapter in the historical part of the book of Daniel; it deals with the time of the Medes and Persians. From chapter 7 on we will encounter the prophetic part of the book.

I. Discussion of the Chapter

1. The Historical Background

vv. 1–3 Under the Medes and Persians Daniel quickly rose high in rank. *What could the phrase “because an excellent spirit was in him” mean?*

- Wisdom, insight, knowledge
- Faithfulness and reliability
- Excellent administration and wise leadership
- Knowledge of God and knowledge of human nature

2. Intrigues of the Satraps

vv. 4–5 Intrigues happened constantly at royal courts and still happen today in governments and business. Daniel also became a target. He was being spied on. Result: it was found that he was innocent and righteous in every respect. His only vul-

nerability was his religion. Thus Daniel is a remarkable example for believers.

vv. 4–8 *How are the governors and satraps in verses 4–8 depicted?*

- Envious, ambitious, egotistic
- They wanted to get rid of Daniel.
- They were cruel and ready to kill anyone who would interfere with their interests.
- They flattered the king and obtained a law that was able to harm Daniel.
- They were hypocritical and conniving.
- They were not interested in whether or not a person was innocent.
- They used Daniel’s different religion to turn against him.

How would we characterize the king?

- He was flattered.
- He did not notice that the proposed decree was directed against Daniel, and may have been quite naïve at this point.
- Because the law of the Medes and Persians was considered to be unchangeable, by creating a new law the king got Daniel and himself in trouble.
- He was an absolute ruler who may not have cared much about human life.

v. 9 The decree was signed.

3. Daniel’s Reaction

v. 10 *What do we learn from Daniel's prayer life in the Book of Daniel (chapters 2, 6, and 9)?*

- For Daniel, praying was a necessity. He prayed regularly.
- Even under difficult circumstances Daniel turned to God in prayer with faith.
- For Daniel it was more important to pray than to live.
- Daniel's prayer consisted of petition, praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, and intercession.
- He experienced marvelous fulfillments of prayer.
- In spite of his many duties and all the stress that he may have had, he made time for prayer.
- Prayer may have been the key to his success.
- Daniel prayed regularly and retreated to a special place at specific times.

Why did Daniel continue to pray in such a way that he could be seen?

- It would have been a denial of his faith not to continue praying in the same way he did before.
- It would have recognized the king as the highest authority and lord.
- His connection to God was important to him, especially in a crisis.
- A secret refusal to obey orders would still have been a refusal to obey orders. He had nothing to hide.

Daniel was most likely more than eighty years old. How does old age relate to faithfulness to God?

- One can be faithful to God regardless of age. The temptations encountered by young people and the frailty of old age do not justify unfaithfulness.
- Daniel had already experienced God's interventions. They may have helped him to stand on God's side in the greatest crisis of his life.

4. The Governors before the King

vv. 11–13 After Daniel was spied out, he was accused. With the designation "prisoner" Daniel was degraded and made suspect as a rebel.

v. 14 Finally the king was able to notice the intrigue. He tried to save Daniel.

v. 15 The governors pressured the king to have Daniel executed, arguing with the indissolubility of the law.

5. Daniel and then the Governors in the Lions' Den

vv. 16, 20 *What do these verses reveal about Daniel?*

- Daniel was highly esteemed by the king.
- The king recognized Daniel as a servant

of God and expected from this God's help and Daniel's salvation.

- The king did not feel that Daniel's faith was a crime against his kingdom. Indirectly he praised him for his religion.
- Daniel did not serve God sporadically but constantly.

v. 17 The verdict was executed. Sealing had a double purpose: (1) The king wanted to prevent Daniel from being killed in a manner other than by lions. (2) The administrators of the kingdom wanted to prevent the king from saving Daniel.

v. 18 The king was stricken with sorrow.

vv. 19–20 Darius hoped that God would save His servant through a miracle. In some way, Darius recognized God.

vv. 21–22 *Daniel was alive and turned to the king. Why did Daniel claim to be innocent only after his salvation?*

- If he had claimed innocence before his execution, it could have been interpreted as fear and cowardice.
- It would not have helped anyway because he had transgressed the law.
- Attempts to justify oneself in such a situation create more problems. Jesus did not justify himself either.

Daniel attributed his salvation to God.

v. 23 His trust was rewarded. He was able to leave the lions' den, because the law did not demand death but the lions' den. *Why did God allow Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den and not save him right away?*

Possible answers:

- It should help the king to get to know the true God.
- Maybe God wanted to let Daniel have a new experience of His power.
- It happened so that we would be encouraged (1 Cor 10:6).

vv. 19–24 The liberation of Daniel from the lions' den was at the same time of his enemies' doom. This topic is also found in Rev 13–18: God's people are about to be killed (Rev 13:15); however, symbolic Babylon is being judged (Rev 18:6–7).

6. Darius' Confession and Decree

vv. 25–28 Daniel's God was made known in the Persian Empire. To some extent, Darius acknowledged this God. Daniel had a high position with the Medes and Persians.

II. Application

- Religious liberty is an important right. It is indirectly mentioned in the Old and New Testaments (see Acts 5:29). In many countries it is one of the basic human rights.

- However, religious liberty was and is seldom granted (as seen in human history from ancient Rome to the present). It is limited or non-existent in many countries.
- According to the book of Revelation religious liberty and personal freedom will again be threatened, and humanity will experience a situation similar to Daniel 6. This chapter provides guidelines for Christian behavior.
- Some of us still enjoy liberty. Therefore we can

freely pray (6:10), serve God and fellow humans (6:16, 20), witness about God (6:22), and study Scripture (9:2). We should take advantage of this situation.

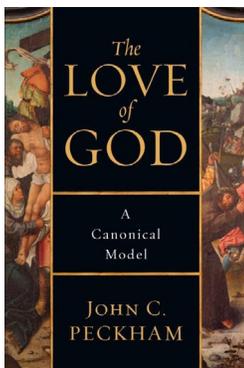
Conclusion

The Lord does not leave His people alone, even at the end of time when they have to go through “lions’ dens” and suffer the loss of religious liberty. They remain faithful in prayer and witnessing.



John C. Peckman The Love of God: A Canonical Model

(Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 295 pages.
US\$24.95



John C. Peckham is associate professor of theology and Christian philosophy at the Theological Seminary of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. The book is based on Peckham’s Ph.D. dissertation, which explains the scholarly and technical language of the book. It has nine chapters and three appendices.

The first chapter introduces the reader to the two prominent but irreconcilable theological models of the nature of divine love: (1) the transcendent-voluntarist model is the traditional Christian understanding of God’s love. It teaches that divine love for the world is sovereignly willed, unconditional, unmotivated, unmerited, freely bestowed, and manifested ultimately in Christ’s self-sacrifice; (2) the modern immanent-experientialist model is based on process theology which teaches that God is not omniscient or omnipresent, but part of the historical process, i.e., God is bound up essentially with the world and dependent on it. This model teaches that divine love is universal sympathy, i.e., God feels all feelings of the world, he is affected by it and changes accordingly.

In chapter two the author describes his methodology, the final-form canonical approach to systematic theology. This approach has a high view of Scripture, it acknowledges the dual authorship (divine and human) of the Bible, and uses the grammatical-historical method of exegesis. Then, in contrast to the two models in chapter one, Peckham introduces the reader to the foreconditional-reciprocal model of divine love. By foreconditional he means God’s “love is prior to all other love and offered to creatures prior to any conditions but not exclusive of conditions” (p. 66). That is, as far as God’s will is concerned his love is unconditional, but in regard to the ongoing God-world relationship it is conditional.

After a study of the biblical words for

love (chap. 3), the author in chapter four addressed the question, does God love freely and, if so, what does it mean? The foreconditional-reciprocal model posits that divine love for creatures is volitional. It is neither essential to God’s being nor essential to his existence. God freely loves humans and calls humans to freely love him in return. God’s love for the world takes place within the context of a bilateral, free volitional relationship.

The evaluative aspect of divine love is dealt with in chapter five. In contrast to the view that God’s love for his creatures is completely disinterested, the author believes that God delights and takes pleasure in his creatures and in response to negative circumstance may be displeased, vexed and grieved. Along the same lines is the question in chapter six, whether God’s love is emotionally responsive to human disposition and action? Yes, says Peckham, God’s love is emotional because he has opened himself up to reciprocal relationships with his creatures. The nature of this mutual love relationship is further explained in chapters seven and eight. God always initiates the love relationship with human beings and it is particularly enjoyed by those who freely reciprocate God’s love.

The last chapter summarizes and restated that God’s love is volitional, evaluative, emotional, foreconditional and ideally reciprocally within the context of the God-world relationship. This means God does not determine human actions, man and women determine their future. God is omnipotent but voluntarily limits the use of his power to allow his creatures freedom to make decisions that determine their future.

The Love of God may be the most scholarly and comprehensive book on the topic of God’s love. It addresses aspects of divine love Christians in general never consider. Does God chose to love, or must he love? Is God’s love emotional and

does it include enjoyment? Is God's love conditional, and if so, in what sense? These are some of the issues Peckham addresses in this volume. Frequently, God's love is confused with human love, but not in this book. Looking at the topic from different angles, the author has produced an original and careful theological interpretation of God's love in Scripture. As is to be expected from a scholarly volume, the author is

conversant with all the relevant literature and provides the reader with copious footnotes for further investigation. While the book does not make easy reading, it is a valuable resource for anyone interested in a better understanding of God's love for humanity.

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NEWS

Annual Council Appoint BRI Scholars for 2016–2020

The last Annual Council of the General Conference (Oct. 7-14, 2015) appointed the BRI scholars for the next quinquennium. Ekkehardt Mueller, Kwabena Donkor, and Clinton Wahlen will serve as associate directors. Elias Brasil de Souza was appointed as director. Frank Hasel from Bogenhofen was called as

associate director, and Artur Stele, who has served as the director during the last quinquennium, will continue to serve BRI as chair of the Biblical Research Institute Committee (BRICOM) along with his other responsibilities as one of the vice presidents of the General Conference.

Initiatives of the Biblical Research Committee of the Inter-European Division

The Biblical Research Committee (BRC) of EUD is one of the longest standing BRCs of the divisions of the world Church. Most likely it is also the most active one.

It has regularly organized Bible Conference for pastors in the division, although divided in three different locations. It has responded to request from the fields, was involved in drafting statements, led out in dialogues with Adventist theologians, and it has published books that were not only sold to church members, but also placed in public libraries for free.

The latest finished project was the one on marriage, published in French and German, which was given to BRI for publication, augmentation, and further development in English. Out of this project grew the larger project of BRI that deals with marriage (volume 1, published 2015), sexuality (volume 2, to

be published early in 2017), and marriage and family (volume 3, to be published in 2018).

After finishing the marriage book in French and German the BRC of EUD took on a new project that will be published in English in a book entitled "War and Military Service." This is a very timely issue. Many chapters are already written and need to be edited.

In the meantime, the BRC of EUD has taken on a new project, which deals with a theology of work. The title is "Adventist Voices on Work and the Economy." As in the past, EUD has invited scholars of other Divisions to help and write some chapters. While the finished product will be a production of the BRC of EUD, voices of other Divisions will be heard too. We commend EUD for these initiatives, which may become a blessing for the entire Church worldwide.

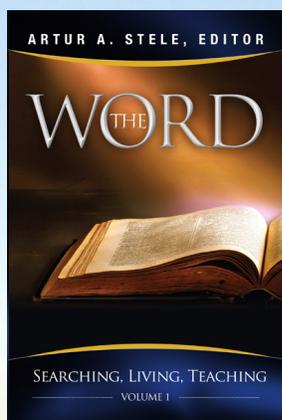
Initiatives of the Biblical Research Committee of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division

The BRC of SSD is a relatively young committee, but it is also quite active. It has worked on guidelines for Adventists being involved or planning to get involved in politics.

At the last meeting in November 2015 the topic for the meeting was Scripture and contemporary

events. The committee looked at contemporary interpretations of Daniel 11. Two papers were read dealing with this topic, one by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez and a second by Miguel Luna. There was also a brief mention of new interpretations of Revelation that include a focus on contemporary events.

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