

# **Gospel Gimmicks: The Foolishness of Preaching or the Preaching of Foolishness**

## **Endtime Issues No. 70**

**13 June 2001**

By Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, Ph.D  
Director, Public Campus Ministries, Michigan Conference

### **Editorial Comments**

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.  
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

### **Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:**

Words are inadequate for me to express my mixed feelings of guilt and gratitude in writing this editorial. On the one hand I feel a deep sense of guilt for failing to respond to the hundreds of messages you have emailed me in response to the last newsletter no. 69, dealing with questions raised over the use of beat music for worship. Rest assured that your messages have not been deleted. They are all waiting for an answer in my mailbox. On the other hand, I am encouraged by the content of your messages, most of which express genuine concerns over some of the new worship styles being introduced in Adventist churches.

Let me reassure you that I have read rapidly each one of your messages. In fact, I printed most of them and passed them on to my wife. She likes to know how you are reacting to my Bible Studies and alerts me, if I ignore an important message.. By God's grace I plan to briefly reply to each of them within the next few days (or weeks). Please accept my apologies for this delay.

Two major factors have contributed to my delay in replying to your messages as well as in preparing this newsletter. First, the Carolina campmeeting took me away from home for 10 days from May 27 to June 5. During this absence over 900 messages accumulate in my mailbox. Second, I have spent countless hours during the past few weeks endeavoring to place all my three seminars on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Lifestyle on PowerPoint slides.

During the past 10 days I have invested over 100 hours in preparing my fifth PowerPoint lecture, entitled "FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY: HOW IT CAME ABOUT." In this lecture I share the highlights of the five years of research conducted in Vatican libraries on the change from Sabbath to Sunday in early Christianity. It has been time consuming to locate and scan all the pictures of the places, people, archives, and documents, which are related to this research project.

This morning I received the latest package of excellent color pictures from Rome, Italy, which I plan to incorporate in my lectures. My heart is rejoicing at the thought of embarking now in a new phase of itinerant ministry equipped with visual aids that will help people appreciate more fully the beauty and relevance of our message for today. We live in a "visual society" that spends countless hours before their TV, and there is no reason why we should not make use of this marvelous technology to proclaim more effectively the timely truths of God's Word.

## A REPORT ABOUT THE CAROLINA CAMPMEETING

We often hear that campmeetings are a thing of the past, because in most instances they have become a major weekend rally. A decreasing number of Adventist families plan to spend at least part of their vacation at campmeeting. This means that usually only few hundred people attend the week-long meetings. On account of this fact I have declined several invitations to speak at campmeetings for a whole week. To invest a whole week of my time to minister only to 300/400 people at most, does not seem to me a good stewardship of my time, especially when on a weekend seminar I can reach twice as many people.

The Carolina Campmeeting that run from May 27 to June 2, 2001 at the breathtaking Lake Junaluska, NC, has changed my mind. What I witnessed there made me forcefully aware of the fact that there are campmeetings in North America which are very much alive. First of all the attendance at the Carolina campmeeting was much higher than I had been told. Well over a thousand persons attended the evening sessions during the week. People drove in for the evening message from several of the neighboring churches. Even the afternoon "Christian Lifestyle Seminar" was well attended. The "Harrell" auditorium that could seat 350 persons was packed at 2:00 p. m. with standing room only. Surprisingly, a good number of the participants were young adults.

What impressed me most about the Carolina Campmeeting was the eagerness of our fellow believers to deepen their understanding and experience of Biblical truths. They came to the campmeeting eager to grow in knowledge and grace. Few of them were deeply troubled by the latest attacks against our SDA beliefs, launched by former Adventist pastors and Bible teachers. An attractive young lady, a medical doctor, told me openly that after reading Dale Ratzlaff's books, she could no longer be an Adventist in good conscience. I spent sometime helping her to see some of the fundamental flaws of the so-called "New Covenant Theology." Then I urged her to read my book *THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE*, which exposes the major fallacies of Ratzlaff's arguments. She seemed to have regained the reassurance that she was looking for. This is what some are seeking for at campmeeting.

The reception and response of our Carolina believers surpassed my fondest expectations. I am glad that my wife was present to share this unforgettable experience. Our people never seem to stop approaching us to express their sincere appreciation for the messages presented. Truly I can say that my wife and I were deeply moved by such an unusual outpouring of gratitude. In all my itinerant ministry around the world, I can think of only one similar experience that I had at the South Queensland Campmeeting in Australia, about four years ago. There too, our people responded to the preaching in an overwhelming way. Every evening the tent was filled with over 3000 people, many of whom drove one or two hours from Brisbane to come to the meetings. Elder Chester Stanley, South Queensland Conference President at that time, told me on the way to the airport, that the attendance at that campmeeting was by far the best they ever had.

This brief report may serve to introduce Samuel Koranteng-Pipim's Bible Study on "Gospel Gimmicks: The Foolishness of Preaching or the Preaching of Foolishness." An important point of this study is that the exposition of Biblical truths with clarity and conviction can still draw people today, without having to recourse to entertainment gimmicks.

## A PLEA FOR TOLERANCE

One of the darkest chapter of the history of Christianity is the story of religious intolerance practiced by both Catholics and Protestants. Recently Pope John Paul II has apologized for the atrocities committed by Catholic crusaders and inquisitors toward Jews, Moslems, and Protestants. We applaud the Pope for his courage to offer this long overdue apology on behalf of the Catholic Church. We only wish that he had the courage to change those Catholic exclusivistic beliefs that foster religious intolerance. Such changes can hardly occur in the foreseeable future. An indication is the recent Vatican Declaration *Dominus Jesus*, which reiterates the traditional teaching that the Catholic church provides the sole sure path to salvation. This belief has played a major role in the suppression of "heretics." For an analysis of this document, see ENDTIME ISSUES No. 54.

### An Example of Catholic Intolerance

Incidentally, I just received today from Rome, Italy, an excellent photo of the marble statuary found in the Church of Jesus, the Home Church of the Jesuits. The statuary portrays a woman, representing the Catholic Church, treading under foot Luther and Hus, encircled by a snake, to indicate that they were sons of the Devil. On the one side an angel-child tears up the pages of the Bible these two reformers had translated in the common language of the people. This statuary, found at the main altar, under the imposing statue of Ignatius of Loyola (founder of the Jesuit movement) portrays more dramatically than volumes of words, the mission of the Jesuits movement to suppress "heresies." Would it not be nice if the Pope would take steps to remove both the teachings and the monuments that stand as a hallmark of Catholic intolerance?

Unfortunately, this does not seem to part of the Pope's agenda. In fact, last May 25, 2001, when John Paul met with the consultants and members of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, he urged resolute action against the growth of Protestant "sects" in South America. The Pope said: "It is necessary to pay special attention to the problem of sects, which are a serious obstacle to the evangelizing effort. . . . Resolute pastoral action is needed, to address this grave question." Is it not a contradiction for the Pope on the one hand to apologize for the past Catholic intolerance, and on the other hand to urge "resolute pastoral action" against the evangelizing efforts of Protestants in South America? This contradiction raises serious questions about the credibility of the Pope's apologies.

### Intolerance in the Adventist church

Intolerance, however, is not an exclusive Catholic problem. It is present in all religions and churches, including our own Adventist church. I was reminded of this fact today by an email message I received from an Adventist brother who was distressed by the fact that he could not buy Samuel Pipim's book, *MUST WE BE SILENT?* from his local ABC. The reason he was given is that the Conference President has instructed the ABC manager not to carry the book, because it is perceived to be divisive. The fact is that the book addresses in a dispassionate way some of the critical issues facing the Adventist church today. The tone of the book may seem to some readers too strong at times, but this is not a reason from banning it from the ABC. After all Adventists strongly believe in RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, inside and outside the church.

When I spoke with Samuel earlier today, he was distressed by this incident, because many of our church leaders have commended him for his courage to address in the book controversial issues from a biblical perspective. This example of intolerance did not catch me by surprise, because I have experienced similar forms of intolerance during much of my lifetime. Let me give you some examples.

As a teenager I faced the ire of Catholic priests and the Italian police during the six Summers I spent working as a Literature Evangelist. They chased after me all the time, threatening me with punishment for selling Bibles and the booklet *Step to Christ*, without

the official Catholic *imprimatur*–approval. I constantly had move from town to town, to avoid the search of priests and police. Later in my life I faced nasty forms of intolerance without our own community of Adventist faith.

In 1987 when my book *WOMEN IN THE CHURCH* came off the press, it seemed that hell broke loose. Our family suffered threats and acts of vandalism. I could write a book about it. All of a sudden I became a *persona non grata*. Most of our leading educational institutions would no longer invite me to speak. I had committed the unpardonable sin of publishing a book that articulates the Biblical role distinctions between men and women in the home and church.

Surprisingly, *WOMEN IN THE CHURCH*, which came out in a new edition few months ago, has been adopted as a text book by numerous theological seminaries. Most likely the book influenced the Southern Baptist Convention to reverse their decision on women ordination, since several of their seminaries order and use the book regularly for their classes.

It has been for me an uphill battle to regain the confidence of those who perceive me to be a divisive individual who thrives on controversy. The truth of the matter is that I abhor controversy, because I know all too well its emotional and financial cost. I enjoy the peace and solitude of my study where I spend an average of 15 hours a day. My wife teases me that I should have become “monk,” because I seem to thrive in isolation. In spite of my efforts to avoid controversy, I end up publishing books that stirs controversy.

A case in point is the latest symposium on *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC*, that came off the press on January 2000. I wrote the first 234 pages of this book, and six professional musicians of different nationalities contributed the remaining chapters. The book has been well-received by many Adventist thought leaders, like the members of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute. Even Dr. Humberto Rasi, the Director of the General Conference Education Department, commended me for the book, reviewed it favorably in *DIALOGUE*—a multi-language magazine for our Adventist college and university students—and even asked permission to publish an excerpt of the book in the magazine.

Yet, the fact remains that attempts have been made to prevent the circulation of *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC*. At the SEEDS conference on Church Planting, held on the campus of Andrews University (Fall of 2000), I was given clear instructions not to display the two books *WOMEN IN THE CHURCH* and *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC* at my booth. The reason I was given is that these books do not support the new Adventist philosophy of church planting promoted by SEEDS.

If this allegation is true, perhaps we need to re-examine this new philosophy. Should the Adventist Church adopt the Willow Creek outreach methods without discussion? Ignoring or silencing dissenting views, is not characteristic of our Adventist heritage. Our Pioneers came together for Bible Conferences to iron out differences. Usually, after much prayer, study, and open discussion, they developed a consensus. It may be well for us today to follow their worthy example.

Several churches in New Zealand and Australia had invited me last March 2001 to present my seminars. Unfortunately, all the invitations were cancelled under pressure from some leaders of the South Pacific Division. The reason appears to be the stand I took about four years ago against some rock music played at Stuart Point Campmeeting, of the North New South Wales Conference. The publication of *THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC*, may also have contributed to the decision taken against me.

In my previous newsletter I explained how that isolated incident at the campmeeting has been blown out of proportion. The fact is that I have preached in many churches where the beat of the “Praise Music” was distressing to me. Yet, I have tried to

deal with the issue gently, without being confrontational. I believe in being a builder, not a bulldozer.

The reason for reporting these unfortunate incidents, is TO MAKE A PLEA FOR MORE TOLERANCE IN OUR OWN ADVENTIST CHURCH. As Adventists we are committed to RELIGIOUS LIBERTY. In fact, we invest human and financial resources to protect our religious liberty. Perhaps the time has come to redirect some of these resources to protect the religious liberty of some of our fellow believers.

### **Intolerance Transcends Party Lines**

Experience has taught me that intolerance transcends party lines. It can be equally found among the liberal and conservatives. Least some think that I have an axe to grind with the liberals, let me share an experience that shows that conservatives can be intolerant too.

Last August 2000, I posted an essay on "Divorce and Remarriage" in the *ENDTIME ISSUES* no. 51. Ed Christian, the Editor of the *JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY* (published by conservative Adventist scholars), was impressed by the essay and asked permission to publish it. I was glad to grant him the permission. Ed worked for several days, editing the essay for publication. Eventually, he mailed me the galley proofs for my final approval, which I granted him immediately. Few days later, with deep regret Ed informed me that the president of the *ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY* had instructed him not to publish my article because my interpretation of the exceptive clause ("except it be for fornication" –Matt 19:9) differs from the traditional Adventist interpretation.

It goes without saying that I was distressed by this incident, especially since respected Adventist scholars told me that they had reached the same interpretation. For example, Jon Paulien, Ph. D., a highly respected seminary professor, openly told me that he examined the passage in question at the request of the GC Biblical Research Institute, and presented to the brethren the same conclusion as mine.

An Adventist journal that claims to be scholarly, cannot legitimately excludes an article that offer an alternative interpretation of a Bible text. We do not serve the cause of Biblical truth, by preventing an open examination and discussion of views that we find unacceptable. Ultimately, what makes us free is the knowledge of the truth, not the protection of church traditions (John 8:32).

It is with great pain that I have reported the above unpleasant examples of intolerance. The aim was not to criticize our Adventist church which I love and serve, but to make a plea for greater tolerance. May God grant us the grace to learn to disagree without becoming disagreeable to one another.

## **A TRIBUTE TO THE CAROLINE CONFERENCE LEADERS**

Within the context of a plea for greater tolerance in our Adventist Church, I cannot help but to pay a brief tribute to our Caroline Conference Leaders, especially Elder Ken Coonley, the President, and Dr. Ronald G. Schmidt, the Executive Secretary. These two men took the risk, not only to invite me to be the evening speaker at their campmeeting, but also to allow me to address controversial issues, both at the ministers' meeting in the morning and the seminar in the afternoon.

Often I am advised by our leaders not to discuss controversial issues in my public presentations and I respect their wishes. Elder Coonley and Schmidt, however, did not see any reason why I should not share my research on such sensitive issues as music, dress, drinking, and marriage. On each of these topics I have published a book presenting a Biblical perspective.

Elder Coonley openly stated that it would be beneficial for our people to hear the findings of my research, though some may not agree with it. In fact, I am not sure that Elder Coonley himself agrees fully with me. But that is besides the point. What deserved recognition is the fact that he felt that the faith of our people would be ultimately strengthened by becoming more knowledgeable about some of the issues we facing today.

The encouragement I received from Elders Coonley and Schmidt meant a lot to me. When the two brethren called me on Friday evening, June 1, at 7:15 p. m, to ask me if I would speak 45 minutes later at 8:00 p. m. in the main auditorium because Pastor Dwight Nelson was stranded in Atlanta, I could hardly let them down. After all they had been most gracious toward my wife and I. My back was hurting and a tooth was aching. I had been standing on my feet speaking the whole day. But the Lord gave me the strength. When I started speaking all the pain and fatigue disappeared. Thanks be to God for His enabling power and for church leaders like Elders Coonley and Schmidt who are willing to encourage the inquiry into Biblical truths, rather than to protect private agendas.

## **UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS**

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the seminars for the months of June, July, and August 2001. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area sometimes next year. All the weekends for 2001 are now taken. Each of the three seminars on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Lifestyle, are now presented with PowerPoint slides which give added realism to our message.

### **JUNE 15 TO 23: WISCONSIN CAMPMEETING**

Location: Camp Go Seek

For information call Wisconsin Conference office at (608) 296-2126

### **JULY 6-7: NEW YORK CITY DUNAMIS SDA CHURCH**

Location: 461 Montauk Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11208

For information call Pastor Canute Birch at (914) 771-6328

### **JULY 13-14: FIRST FIL-AM SDA CHURCH OF HOUSTON, TEXAS**

Location: 14520 Briarforest, Houston, Texas 77077

For information call Pastor Hus Bugayong at (281) 530-5960

### **JULY 20-21: HINSDALE SDA CHURCH IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

Location: 201 North Oak Street, Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

For information call Pastor John Rapp at (630) 323-0182

### **JULY 27-28: HOLLAND SDA CHURCH IN HOLLAND, MICHIGAN**

Location: 11279 Ottogon, Holland, Michigan 49423

For information call Pastor David Grams at (616) 395-0806

### **AUGUST 10-11: HOUSTON WEST SDA CHURCH**

Location: 2390 NW Sam Houston Parkway, Houston, Texas 77043

For information call Pastor Ottati at (281) 955-5110

### **AUGUST 17-18: SPOKANE VALLEY SDA CHURCH**

Location: 1601 S. Sullivan Road, Veradale, Washington 99037

For information call Pastor Stan Hudson at (509) 926-3500

### **AUGUST 25: GARDEN CITY AND SALISBURY IN BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA**

The location and contact information will be provided in the next newsletters. The details are yet to be finalized.

## **A THANK YOU FOR INVITING YOUR FRIENDS TO SUBSCRIBE**

Every week I receive a average of 100 new subscriptions from people who received an ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER from a friend. Thank you for sharing these Bible studies with your friends. Just let them know that all what they need to do to subscribe is to email me a request at: <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net> As a result of your promotional endeavors over 13,000 people are already benefiting from these Bible studies.

## **A PROPOSAL FOR A “NEW HYMNS CONTEST”**

Dr. Humberto Rasi, current Director of the GC Education Department, emailed a surprising message, in which he outlines a proposal for what may be called a “New Hymns Contest.” Let me share his message first, and then add few comments.

Dear Sam:

I have just read your latest e-mail bulleting, which carries on the discussion on music. I share with you the concern that we do not have many new hymns or religious songs with lyrics and music written by Adventists. It is difficult to believe that creativity has died.

Here is my suggestion to add a creative dimension to your crusade toward better Adventist music.

1. Create a contest to present awards to Adventists who compose the best singing hymns. Provide a decent prize: \$1,500 for first prize. \$1000.00 for second, and \$500 for third.

2. Select a group of qualified Adventist musicians committed to good music. Ask them to outline the characteristics that need to be satisfied and the deadline for submissions. Ask them also to serve as jury.

3. Select the winner, provide the awards, and list the award-winning pieces in your website.

You will go down in history... What do you think?

Regards,

Humberto M. Rasi  
GC Education Department  
102555.2215@compuserve.com  
Phone: 301-680-5061  
Fax: 301-622-9627

What do you think of Dr. Rasi’s proposal? To me it sounds great. The only problem that I see is that I am the wrong person to sponsor the context, because after all I am incompetent in the field of music.

The proposal will be taken far more seriously, if it were sponsored either by a General Conference Department dealing with worship, or by the Adventist Musicians Association. If some of the musicians who receive this newsletter, wish to become involved in this project by submitting concrete proposals, I would be glad to post their proposals in the future newsletters.

There are aspects of our message which are largely ignored in contemporary hymns. For example, we sing choruses about “God Reigns,” but what about “Jesus Intercedes.” The ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary is ignored in contemporary hymns, because the doctrine of the sanctuary is foreign to evangelicals.

On my part I welcome any initiative that could inspire our Adventists musicians and poets to work together and produce contemporary hymns that do justice to our faith and contribute to worship God in the beauty of holiness.

## A WORD OF INTRODUCTION TO THIS NEWSLETTER

This Bible study you are about to read is excerpted from Samuel Koranteng-Pipim's latest book, *Must We Be Silent? Issues Dividing Our Church* (640-pages). For information on how you can obtain your copy of the book or to read excerpts on the website, check: <http://www.bereanbooks.org> or direct your e-mail to the author at: [pipim@compuserve.com](mailto:pipim@compuserve.com)

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim recently earned a Ph.D in systematic theology, at Andrews University. He is a well-known in the church as a theologian, author, public speaker and revivalist. In addition to preaching extensively at camp meetings, ministerial conferences, churches, revival retreats and schools, he also teaches courses in theology and ethics at different Adventist seminaries around the world.

Currently, Pipim serves as the Director of Public Campus Ministries for the Michigan Conference. His office is based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he ministers to students, faculty, and staff at the University of Michigan. His goal is to reach out to both Adventist and non-Adventist students on the campus of the University of Michigan.

In a telephone conversation, Pipim informed me that as of this past January, he has established a church on the campus of the University of Michigan with 35 charter members. The attendance runs between 70 to 80 people on the Sabbath. Many of those who attend are non-Adventists young people.

What I admire about Pipim, is not only the fact that he shares my first name, but especially his passion for studying and sharing Biblical truths. While some today are trying to reach young people with "Gospel gimmicks," Pipim believes in filling the void of their life by sharing with them Gospel Truths. To use the very title of his article, Pipim believes in "the foolishness of preaching," and not in "the preaching of foolishness."

In reading this study, some of you may feel that sometimes Pipim comes across too strong. That may be true, but remember that he is a young writer who is passionate about what he believes. I am sure that in time he will soften his tone. This has been my experience. Fifteen years ago I was more militant about my convictions than I am today. Time and experience has taught me to be more irenic (peaceful) toward those I disagree with. It is part of the growing in knowledge and grace.

You should find this Bible study challenging and inspiring. While re-reading this study, my soul has been stirred. I sensed the need to become a better student and preacher of God's Word. I hope you will feel the same.

**ENDTIME ISSUES no. 70 – GOSPEL GIMMICKS:**  
**The Foolishness of Preaching or the Preaching of Foolishness**  
By Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, Ph.D  
Director, Public Campus Ministries, Michigan Conference

*“My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. . . . Now why go to Egypt to drink water from the Shihor? And why go to Assyria to drink water from the River?” (Jer 2:13, 18, NIV).*

Throughout Bible times, and ever since, the clear and persuasive proclamation of God’s Word has been the most effective medium to communicate God’s truth. The apostle Paul refers to the method as the *foolishness of preaching* (1 Cor 1:21).

Today, however, we seem to be moving away from simple Bible-based preaching to some rather ridiculous and sometimes bizarre gimmicks from the secular world. We may convince ourselves that there is nothing wrong with these gimmicks. But perceptive unbelievers, observing the way we are blindly mimicking worldly methods, may justifiably dismiss our message as the *preaching of foolishness*. Let me explain.

**Gospel Magician?** Recently I received an urgent e-mail from a Seventh-day Adventist graduate student at a public university in the United States. He urged me to share my views with him on “a troubling issue” that had arisen in one of the local churches of his conference. The issue relates to the plan by that local church to invite a “gospel magician” to be guest speaker for a week of prayer. The student expressed his concerns this way:

“I fear that in engaging in practices of magical tricks (that are also done by many secular magicians) we are blurring the line between what is good and what is not. Even though I do not necessarily believe that those engaged in sleight of hand are using any supernatural powers, I fear that the use of illusion to pass across some gospel truth is missing the point and only putting temptation before our children.

“The brethren in the church I referred to do not believe that this is a matter of black and white. They believe that those of us who are opposing this practice in the church (for children’s story) and in the church school (for both entertainment and now week of prayer) are ‘ultra conservatives’ and that we are looking for evil where there is none. I do not know if there is a very clear distinction between black and white in this case. For now (I am still hoping to do further study on this matter), I see it as ‘black’ because of the potential for evil and because it blurs the line between the good and the bad (these brethren even argue that the Bible is really not opposed to ‘magic.’) I feel that if the line we are dealing with is gray then we, as a church, need to keep away from it. We should shun all ‘appearance’ of evil.

“I do not know therefore whether the church has a position on this. I have been challenged to show from the Spirit of Prophecy or Bible where this practice is condemned. I have been reminded that the local conference has sponsored some of the church members to seminars and conferences for gospel magicians. I have also been reminded that there were Adventist gospel magicians (or gospel illusionists) performing during the Toronto GC Session. I am groping in the large sea of information and arguments out there to even get some principles I can apply in this matter. I have asked that this particular local church appoint brethren to study the matter and to get a forum to discuss it. I tried the same in the school board, but the overwhelming number of members of this school board ‘did not see’ anything wrong with the practice. I am preparing to face the church board but cannot go with simple arguments without a biblical reason. Any ideas?”

Few would have thought that a Seventh-day Adventist congregation would one day even consider employing a so-called “gospel magician” to communicate spiritual truth at a church meeting. Yet this is one more evidence of a growing trend to introduce into the church some biblically-questionable styles of worship and evangelism. The surprising

thing about this development is that an overwhelming number of members don't see anything wrong with it.

We have had gospel rock and praise dancing in worship services, gospel puppets, gospel clowns, gospel cafés/discos and gospel theatrics/dramas for our outreach to youth, young adults, and the “unchurched.” Now, it seems, we must have gospel magicians for our church services and weeks of prayer. By resorting to these “gospel gimmicks,” are we in danger of turning away from the *foolishness of preaching to the preaching of foolishness?*

In this article I will argue that in so far as gospel gimmicks accommodate the biblical religion to the tastes of unrenewed hearts, such contemporary methods evidence our welcoming of worldliness into the church. Even more, a reliance upon such worldly methods of communicating the gospel is misguided and contrary to the biblical teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

## **WORLDLINESS IN THE CHURCH**

The former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev reportedly told the following story to teach the need for vigilance.

At a time when there was a wave of petty theft in the USSR, the story goes, the Soviet authorities put guards at many of the state-owned factories. At one of the timber works in Leningrad the guard knew the workers well. The first evening, Pyotr Petrovich came out with a wheelbarrow and, on the wheelbarrow, a great bulky sack with a suspicious-looking object inside.

Guard: “Come on, Petrovich. What have you got there?”

Petrovich: “Just sawdust and shavings.”

Guard: “Come on, I wasn't born yesterday. Tip it out.”

Petrovich did, and out came nothing but sawdust and shavings. So he was allowed to put it all back again and go home. The same thing happened every night all week, and the guard was getting extremely frustrated. Finally his curiosity overcame his frustration.

Guard: “Petrovich, I know you. Tell me what you're smuggling out of here, and I'll let you go.”

Petrovich: “Wheelbarrows.”

While we may laugh at this story, we may also need to remember that in the arena of contemporary worship and outreach methods the laugh is on us as Bible-believing Adventist Christians. We have set up patrols to check for worldliness around us by developing our own schools, seminaries, radio and TV stations, publishing houses, book centers, etc. But the devil has wheeled worldliness and paganism right past our eyes into some of these institutions of our church. And many don't see it, let alone see anything wrong with it.

What is more, we are actually importing and actively promoting these questionable methods of worship and evangelism from both the secular world and from other religions and churches. In some instances Adventists have gone outside to study these methods at non-Adventist theological seminaries or have attended the training seminars on worship, soul-winning and leadership at Willow Creek and other inter-denominational, ecumenical, and charismatic organizations and churches. Yet we fail to recognize that when we fundamentally change our method of proclaiming spiritual truth, we change the message itself. And when we change the message of God, we change the God of the message.

Because these gimmicks compromise the credibility of our message, Adventists have been counseled against copying methods found in other churches.

**Our Temptation.** Throughout our history, there has always been a temptation for our ministers to pattern our practices after other churches. Ellen G. White warned against this in her day: “A new order of things has come into the ministry. There is a desire to pattern after other churches” (*Signs of the Times*, Dec. 27, 1899). She expressed her concerns about the influence of other churches on our ministers: “Some ministers are adopting the customs of other churches, copying their habits and manner of labor” (*ibid.*, May 25, 1882).

Warning of the dangers inherent in responding to other churches’ invitations to learn from them and employ their methods of labor, Mrs. White wrote: “They may desire us to unite with them and accept their plans, and may make propositions in regard to our course of action which may give the enemy an advantage over us” (*General Conference Bulletin*, April 13, 1891).

In embracing Mrs. White’s counsel, Seventh-day Adventists are not suggesting that they alone have the truth. The Word of God is clear that every human being in God’s world has at least a little light (Jn 1:9; Jas 4:17) and that God has revealed Himself in nature, history, human experience, and in many other ways (Ps 19; Rom 1 & 2; Heb 1:1, 2). Consequently, Adventists hold that some divine truth can be found in the secular world (whether atheistic or materialistic), in pagan and non-Christian religions, as well as in all Christian denominations—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Pentecostal. God is truth and the ultimate source of all truth. Wherever truth is found, we must embrace it.

**Present Truth.** Adventists, however, insist that whatever light can be found in other churches, they have also and much more besides. Believing that God has raised up their church as His end-time repository of truth, Adventists hold that they have the *present truth*, the *everlasting gospel* for these last days.

The issue, then, is not whether other faiths or churches have some truth. Instead, the question is whether our ministers ought to look to other churches for new light. Given our self-understanding as God’s end-time depository of truth, is it necessary for us to go to churches that are still living in spiritual darkness to discover new light or additional truth from them? If those churches represent “Babylon,” and if it is true that “Babylon is fallen,” how can we call upon our brothers and sisters in “Babylon” to “Come out of her, My people” (Rev 18:4), when we ourselves are now returning to “Babylon” to receive instruction from her?

**Broken Cisterns.** Centuries ago, the prophet Jeremiah spoke out against this tendency on the part of God’s people to mimic the gimmicks found in other faiths: “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water. . . . Now why go to Egypt to drink water from the Shihor? And why go to Assyria to drink water from the River?” (Jer 2:13, 18 NIV).

Ellen White explained why we must not drink from the broken cisterns: “We are in danger of making blunders in our missionary effort, in danger of failing to realize how essential is the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. A new order of things has come into the ministry. There is a desire to pattern after other churches, and simplicity and humility are almost unknown. Young ministers who desire to be original introduce new ideas and new plans for labor. They open revival meetings and call large numbers into the church. But when the excitement is over, where are the converted ones? Repentance for sin is not felt. The sinner is entreated to believe in Christ and accept Him, without any regard for his past life of sin and rebellion, and the heart is not broken. There is no contrition of soul. The professedly converted ones have not fallen upon the Rock Christ Jesus” (*Signs of the Times*, Dec. 27, 1889).

Earlier in our history, following the disappointment, Mrs. White warned our members not to seek “new light” even from denominations that had their roots in the Advent movement but had not accepted advancing truth: “The different parties of professed Advent believers have each a little truth, but God has given all these truths to

His children who are being prepared for the day of God. He has also given them truths that none of these parties know, neither will they understand. Things which are sealed up to them, the Lord has opened to those who will see and are ready to understand. *If God has any new light to communicate, He will let His chosen and beloved understand it, without their going to have their minds enlightened by hearing those who are in darkness and error*" (*Early Writings*, p. 124, emphasis mine).

She continued: "I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. *God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go*" (*ibid.*, pp. 124, 125, my emphasis).

In spite of these warnings, a growing number of our members and leaders "don't see anything wrong" with today's gospel gimmicks. We are adopting and actively promoting these worldly entertainment methods for our own worship and evangelistic services. Regrettably, those who raise concerns are mislabeled "ultra-conservatives." Why is this so?

## **WHY WE "DON'T SEE ANYTHING WRONG"?**

Granted, many within our ranks who are resorting to the various types of gospel gimmicks—gospel rock, gospel clowns, gospel cafés, gospel magicians, etc.—sincerely desire to see spiritual renewal in the church and want to attract new souls to Christ. Many who advocate such things are persuaded that God will use these modified forms of entertainment from other churches to win and retain young people in our own church. Without judging their motives and sincerity, I'd like to suggest a few other reasons why some of us don't see anything wrong with these contemporary innovations.

### **1. Desperation**

There are those of us whose witness and example as parents and teachers have been unconvincing to our young people. The youth have observed that while we rightly affirm "the Bible and the Bible only," many of us do not have a living experience with the Bible's divine Author. Baptism seems more a graduation ceremony than the start of a new life in Christ. Our identity as God's "remnant" church makes us complacent instead of inspiring us to fulfill our divine mission to the world. We assert repeatedly that "we have the truth," but very often the truth does not have us. Our preaching, teaching and evangelism may cram the mind with information without bringing about the deep soul searching and humility of heart that results in transforming the character. Our ethical positions on social issues reflect pragmatic concerns rather than fidelity to Scripture. And instead of our worship being reverently vibrant, it tends to be either dull and sterile or emotional and superficial.

Having observed the above inconsistencies and hypocrisies, many of our young people are restless to sever all links with what they perceive as hypocritical faith. Their parents and teachers, in sheer desperation to hold them in the fold, encourage every worldly fad, even if it means importing "gospel rock," "gospel clowns," or "gospel magicians" into the church.

Although some of us who fit this description may sense that these new forms of worship and outreach are incompatible with biblical Christianity, we find ourselves unable to oppose the methods because, in fact, we share the same worldly values and do practically nothing for the Lord. On the other hand, our children and students want to be active in the church. But the only way they know how is through different forms of worldly idolatry.

## **2. Weak Church Leaders**

Unfortunately, some of us pastors and church leaders are sometimes to blame for the introduction of gospel gimmicks into church. We appear to put popularity, job security, position, and the illusion of outward success above our duty to the Chief Shepherd. We seem to fear that if we were to take a stand against these forms of worldliness in our churches, we would create enemies and threaten our support among our constituencies.

In some instances, we have done less than we might have to lead our congregations in the direction of revival and meaningful evangelism. We seldom preach Bible-based messages. With hazy preaching and teachings paralyzed by uncertainty, our churches are dying. Consequently, when something *wrong* comes along in the name of evangelism and worship innovation, we have already forfeited our moral right to challenge it. We find it easier to jump on the bandwagon of what is *new* instead of courageously holding on to what is *true*.

## **3. Denial of Faith**

Another reason why we may not see anything wrong with gospel gimmicks is that some of us have embraced liberal higher criticism. Consequently we do not really believe in the efficacy of God's Word to draw souls to Christ and keep them in the faith. We also do not believe that ours is the end-time church of Bible prophecy to which other faiths should come for truth. To those of us with this view, our church is not the remnant, but only "part of the remnant." Although we may accept some aspects of our faith, such as the Sabbath and our health principles, in the honesty of our hearts we do not see the uniqueness of our message, the distinctiveness of our identity, the end-time dimension of our hope, and the urgency of our mission.

Ethical integrity suggests that if we have lost the faith and certainties of our pioneers and cannot regain them, we should resign from our denominational employment. But not all of us have the courage to do so. (Some announce their views only after retirement). So, in our desire to shed the "cult" and "sectarian" labels that have often been used to characterize Seventh-day Adventists, we actively import gospel gimmicks from both the secular world and other religions and churches.

## **4. Lack of Conversion**

There is another reason why some of us who advocate gospel gimmicks don't see anything wrong with them. Perhaps, unknown even to ourselves, we have never been fully converted. Our tastes and affections are still in the world. We are honest when we say that we see nothing wrong with these biblically-questionable innovations. This is because spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

Thus when the sanctuaries which were dedicated to the worship of a holy God are transformed into auditoriums to worship the god of entertainment, we do not see anything wrong. We may congratulate ourselves for finally coming up with "a contemporary church program that meets the needs of our generation." We don't realize that the God of this world has blinded us (see 2 Cor 4:4). Without a true conversion, there is no hope of changing our minds against the use of worldly methods in worship or evangelism.

## **WORLDLY ENTERTAINMENT TO COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL?**

It is often suggested that before we can reach the world with the gospel, we have to employ the world's methods to proclaim Christ's truth. But this reasoning is indefensible for at least two important reasons: (1) Worldly methods trivialize the message; (2) Worldly methods are contrary to biblical teaching.

### **1. Trivializing the Message**

Even if we are actually proclaiming the everlasting gospel, we trivialize and cheapen the importance of the message when we adopt the world's entertainment methods to communicate the truth. Entertainment is entertainment and is generally not taken seriously by the public as a vehicle to proclaim important messages. If we adopt entertainment elements such as rock music, drama, clowns, puppets, and magicians, our message will fail to make any real moral demand upon the hearers.

If it is true that rock music (disguised as praise music and praise dancing) is the most effective medium to reach young people today, why is it that math teachers and chemistry professors don't set their classes to heavy-beat and hip-swinging music? Why don't politicians employ clowns and illusionists to present their political messages?

Common sense tells us that these entertainment media are not the most credible methods to communicate serious messages. A doctor, meeting an apprehensive patient, does not dress like a clown in order to tell his patient that she has cancer. If a doctor who wants to be taken seriously does not resort to this kind of frivolity, isn't it folly to announce God's message of warning and judgment to a dying world by resorting to entertainment?

Jesus did not use the gimmicks of entertainment to proclaim his Sermon on the Mount. On the day of Pentecost, Peter did not set up a drum set or ask Mary to lead out in praise dancing to announce the resurrection of Jesus and His enthronement in heaven. And Paul did not persuade people on Mars Hill using gospel magicians.

We are self-deceived if we believe that drums, disco lights, costumes, illusions, and loud noises are capable of representing the infinite holiness and mercy of God to a lost generation. Those of us who resort to these worldly gimmicks can only do so because we serve a different god from the One the apostles worshiped.

The apostle Paul makes it clear that the preeminent method of proclaiming spiritual truth is by the spoken word. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. . . . Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor 1:21, 25).

## **2. Contrary to Scripture**

It is a mistake for us to think that the world will embrace our message when we use worldly methods. The New Testament tells us that when Christ came to the world, "the world knew him not" (Jn 1:10), for He was "not of this world" (Jn 8:23). What makes us believe that we can succeed where Christ failed?

Jesus Himself mentioned that Christians "are not of the world, even as I am not of it" (Jn 17:16; cf. vv. 9, 14). He stated emphatically that the works of this world are evil (Jn 7:7). He said that true believers are not of the world and prayed that they should be kept from its evil ways (Jn 17:14, 15). Because the Spirit of God stands against the spirit of the world (1 Cor 2:12), the gospel should not be presented in such a way as to be coupled with the standards of the world. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed . . . that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2).

The apostles also taught that "friendship with the world is hatred toward God" (Jas 4:4) and that the world "pollutes" the believer (cf. 1:27). Therefore, Christians are urged: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 Jn 2:15-16).

We depart from biblical teaching when we think that today's so-called gospel rock, gospel clowns, gospel magicians, and other forms of gospel entertainment can legitimately be employed to communicate spiritual truth. The Scriptures teach that the world is on its own, "without hope and without God" (Eph 2:12). Therefore, instead of borrowing worldly methods to reach the world, Christians are sent forth like the apostle Paul, "to open their

eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:18).

**Bait-and-Hook Evangelism?** It is often suggested that because most people—especially young people—don’t want to listen to the gospel, we have to “bait” them with gospel entertainment and gimmicks. Once we attract them by these contemporary methods, then we can “hook” them with the true message. The proof text to justify the use of worldly methods to reach people is Paul’s statement: “And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. . . . To them that are without law, as without law . . . that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:20-22). Thus, some argue, we must employ whatever people like to hear in order to get a hearing for the gospel.

But the context of the passage reveals that Paul was talking about *preaching* (see v. 16ff.), not the use of worldly methods of evangelism. The apostle stated that in his preaching and witnessing he always tailored his message to suit the level of understanding of his hearers. In other words, he always spoke *appropriately*. Therefore 1 Corinthians 9 does not teach that Paul employed or encouraged the “bait and hook” method for evangelism. On the contrary, he persuaded the people from the Word of God using preaching as his method.

Moreover, God’s end-time church has been divinely entrusted with the everlasting gospel. This stewardship is a great privilege. But it is also a solemn responsibility. For “it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor 4:2). The faithfulness to which the church has been called compels us to preserve the integrity of the message by preserving the method we employ to communicate it.

The apostle Paul therefore urges us not to try to “catch” people with the entertainment “bait” so we can “hook” them with the gospel. He writes: “For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile. But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness” (1 Thess 2:3-5).

Note the following two facts from this passage. First, the Greek word translated “deceit” (*plané*) means error. The ultimate issue on any subject should always be truth. “The Gospel is either true or it is not. Paul stakes his entire life on the truth of the Gospel. There’s a tendency in our day to judge values by the wrong standard. #Does it work?\* is often asked more than #Is it true?\* The test of the validity of the Gospel is truth. The danger in preaching to attract an audience is obvious. It is too readily disguised to provide solutions that work rather than truth that is to be confronted. The acid test for every sermon or Bible class must be: *Is it true?* If Christ is presented [merely] as a means by which we can be successful, happy, or whatever, we are betraying the Gospel of God. We are guilty of deceit and error even though we may be successful in drawing followers.”<sup>1</sup>

Second, the Greek word *dolos*, translated “guile” in 1 Thessalonians 2:3, means “trick” or “bait” (or “craft,” “subtilty,” or “decoy”). There is no place for trickery or manipulation in evangelism. Thus the NIV translates the passage as: “For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor *are we trying to trick you*” (my emphasis).

We must not employ “deceit” in the proclamation of the gospel. Our message must determine the method. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1 that when the Jews wanted to see miracles and the Greeks wanted to hear worldly wisdom, he refused to bow to their tastes and desires because God had commanded him to preach the gospel. Effective preaching is always the preferred biblical method to proclaim the gospel.

**Encouraging Youth Involvement.** We sometimes hear that the use of these contemporary methods of entertainment is the only way to involve young people in church life. Advocates argue that because young people have many wonderful talents and abilities, the church must give them “a piece of the pie”—just as was done for our youthful Adventist pioneers. They further claim that failing to allow them to employ their unique gifts in the worship and outreach activities of the church makes young people lose interest in the church.

This argument is not entirely accurate, nor is it biblical. It is true that many of our Adventist pioneers were young people. For example, James White began preaching at 23 and Ellen White was telling her visions publicly at 17. J. N. Andrews held evangelistic meetings at age 21, and by age 24 he had published 35 articles. Uriah Smith became editor of the *Review* at age 23, having already written a 35,000-word poem called “The Warning Voice of Time and Prophecy” that the *Review* published in installments the year before. What set these youthful pioneers apart from many of today’s youth is that they were *converted* and *studious Bible students*. As such, they would not bring themselves to using worldly entertainment methods in the Lord’s service.

Many of today’s young people have special gifts and abilities. But giftedness in performing certain functions does not necessarily mean those abilities should be employed in spiritual worship or outreach. The fact that a person can play a set of drums, or dance, or even perform magical illusions and acrobatics does not mean we need gospel rock, gospel dancing, gospel magicians or gospel acrobats in church. If this were the case, we would have to insist that gospel footballers and gospel baseball pitchers should use their special gifts during worship services. Rather, we must seek to encourage young people who are truly converted to use their gifts in ways appropriate to the worship service of the Holy God, while not putting them in positions that expose them too early to the dangers of spiritual pride and arrogance (see 1 Tim 3:6).

## **THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING, NOT THE PREACHING OF FOOLISHNESS**

The clear proclamation of God’s Word has always been the most effective method of communicating God’s truth. Because this method went contrary to the gospel gimmicks of his day, the apostle Paul referred to it as “the foolishness of preaching.” Adventist evangelist Carlyle B. Haynes has aptly illustrated the difference between preaching centered on the Word of God and preaching using the worldly method.

**Gospel Gimmicks.** Speaking to young ministers several decades ago, Haynes wrote: “I once attended a meeting conducted by a well-known Adventist evangelist who had achieved an outstanding reputation, and whom many younger ministers were consulting for suggestions to improve their work. Some were diligently copying this man’s manner of presentation. I had been out of the country for five years in mission work. Reports came to me regarding this man, who was looked upon as a successful winner of souls. His methods, which were certainly innovations among us, were the subject of much discussion.

“I was eager to get a firsthand look at this man and his techniques. My appointments brought me to the city where he was conducting an evangelistic campaign, and I made plans to hear and observe him in action. Mingling with the large number of people streaming in to the meetings, I sat in the middle of the audience, where I could see and hear without difficulty.

“The tabernacle was well lighted and decorated. . . . On the rafters above the platform were hung many lights, and on each side of the platform two spotlights centered on the preacher.

“There was music, much music—instrumental, vocal, choral, solos, duets, quartets, and two little tots who sang an amusing ditty which brought a round of laughter and a

handclap or two. Then came an impressive theme song, which many seemed to know and I had never heard. At its close the preacher entered in a sort of hush.

“He attracted everyone’s attention, including mine. I was not quite prepared for this. He could not fail to catch attention. Everything had apparently been done with that in mind. He was dressed in spotless white, with white tie, white socks, white shoes. Even the Bible he carried was bound in white. A woman at my back exclaimed breathlessly to her companion, ‘Isn’t he a honey?’ and I had to agree. He was indeed. From that first moment he was the focus of attraction. No one could hear, see, or think of anything else but that ‘honey’ of a preacher. His words were little noticed, yet no one moved his eyes from the speaker, and all heads swung around with him as he stood or moved about in the glare of the spotlights. . . .

“I didn’t listen, but I certainly looked. I couldn’t help looking. It was an impressive performance. What he said, I don’t know; but I can remember yet what he did as he skillfully moved about the platform. . . .

“Returning to my hotel room, I tried to recall what he may have read from the Bible. I could not remember his opening that beautiful white Bible at all. While I am sure he must have done so, I did not notice it. The last thing I remember passing through my mind before I sank into slumber was, ‘He certainly is a “honey.”’

“Traveling about the country for some months after that, I ran into a considerable number of white suits and spotlights. They broke out like an epidemic everywhere. The imitation ran its course, as epidemics do, and then subsided—I hope.

“I mention the incident only because I desire to contrast it with another experience that occurred while I was a pastor in New York City. For a number of years I had heard reports about the ministry of a great British expositor, George Campbell Morgan, pastor of London’s Westminster Chapel. He had been making annual trips to America for Bible conferences, but I had not heard him. I had, however, read all his books. . . .”

**Biblical Preaching.** Haynes continued his advice to ministers: “Learning that Morgan was coming to New York City to conduct a two-week series of studies in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, I was delighted at the prospect of hearing this great preacher and arranged my schedule so that I could attend these nightly meetings without interruption. They were to start on a Monday night which I thought to be a poor night to begin.

“I arrived at the church a half hour before the meeting was to begin. Knowing the church accommodated 2,500 easily, I had no worry about finding a seat. But I was wrong; the seats were all taken. The ushers directed me into the gallery, and fortunately one seat was left there. With a sigh of relief I sat down, astonished beyond measure that 2,500 people would turn out like this on a Monday night.

“The pastor and Dr. Morgan came onto the rostrum quietly and sat down. The congregation sang an old hymn, and during the singing I looked closely at the famous preacher. Never had I seen a more unprepossessing man in the pulpit. He was tall, lanky, awkward, and I thought I might hear his bones rattle if there were not so much rustling by the audience. His clothing was plain, and there was nothing conspicuous about him.

“After the pastor’s prayer and simple introduction, Dr. Morgan walked to the pulpit, opened the Bible—not a white one—and in a pleasing voice, but entirely without dramatic effect, read the Scripture passage and immediately began to explain it. I am glad that I examined him before he began speaking, for I never noticed him again during the whole hour. Instead, I was utterly absorbed and entranced at the meanings he was bringing out of the treasure-house of the Word of God. It was one of the most thrilling hours of my life. I had never experienced anything like it before. And it was repeated nightly for two weeks.

“Dr. Morgan had no graces of gesture, no spectacular delivery, and no eloquence in the usual sense. He used no charts, blackboard, pictures, screen, or gadgets of any kind. Nothing in his talk, movements, dress, or manner attracted attention to himself or diverted attention from the Bible. His tremendous power was in what he did with and by the Word of God.

“I was in another world in five minutes, not because of any elocution or oratorical ability. He talked quite casually and in a conversational tone, reading with deep reverence and impressive feeling the passage he was to explore. I forgot the people about me, forgot the church, forgot the speaker, forgot everything but the wonders of the world into which I had been led . . . .

“I went home dazed with wonder at the effectiveness of the Bible alone as the source of great preaching. . . .

“I want to impress upon you that such preaching is wholly within the reach of every one of you, the most powerful that any man can ever use. Throw away your accessories, discard your gadgets and pictures, discontinue your shows and playlets, stop relying on entertainment and theatrical displays, and get back again to the simple, plain, powerful exposition of the Word.

“When I returned home the night after Dr. Morgan’s first study, the prayer that burst from my deeply moved heart was, ‘O God, make me a preacher of Thy divine Word, and help me never to rely on anything else.’”<sup>2</sup>

May this be our prayer, also.

## Notes

1. Gary W. Demarest, *The Communicator\*s Commentary Series*, Volume 9, 1, 2 *Thessalonians, 1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984), p. 54.
2. Carlyle B. Haynes, *Carlyle B. Haynes Speaks to Young Ministers* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1968), pp. 31-36.

## Contact Information

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.  
Retired Professor of Theology and Church History  
Andrews University  
4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Phone (616) 471-2915 Fax (616) 471-4013

E-mail: [sbacchiocchi@qtm.net](mailto:sbacchiocchi@qtm.net)

Web site: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>

but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 1 Corinthians 1:18. Verse Concepts. Significance Of Christ's Crucifixion The power of Christ preaching Power Being Saved The Cross Being Lost Feeling Lost basketball Wisdom, Source Of Human. Folly, Examples Of Power Of God, Shown Confusion The Power Of The Gospel God, Power Of Spiritually Dead Power, God's Saving Reasons Why The World Hates Christians Fools, Characteristics Of.Â For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 1 Corinthians 2:1. Verse Concepts. preaching testimony ego Excellence.

American King James Version For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us which are saved it is the power of God. American Standard Version For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. Douay-Rheims Bible For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God. (18) For the preaching.--In the original the contrast comes out more strongly between this and the previous statement, the same phrase being repeated, thus, "For the word of the cross," in contrast to "the wisdom of more words" above. This is the word of real power.