

Perspective Digest

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Being an Account of ATS's First International Bible Conference, a Welcome, and an Adieu (The President's Page)

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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE



E. Edward Zinke

How can you tell when a Bible conference has been a success? I suppose that when it's international and more than 500 ministers come, you might say at least that it's off to a good start. Having theologians present from Austria, Columbia, France, Argentina, the Czech Republic, Bahamas, the United States and the host country, Mexico, was impressive. Add evidence that the Holy Spirit was present, and there's reason to say, "Praise the Lord!"

The conference, held June 17-22 on the Montemorelos University campus in Mexico, was sponsored by the Adventist Theological Society in conjunction with the Inter-American Division, the university, and the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference. In one respect, the venue seemed unfortunate. For

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the past two years, northern Mexico has suffered from a severe drought. Cattle are dying, and some farmer/ranchers are finding it necessary to migrate to other areas. On Sabbath, June 22, delegates and others took time out from the worship schedule to plead with the "Master of ocean and earth and sky" for rain.

Late that afternoon, as I was giving the concluding address, a cool breeze moved through the church. Then, against a rolling chorus of thunder, lightning slashed through water-heavy clouds, and the rains came. We were to meet after the meeting for a group picture. The location had to be changed; our planned meeting spot was under a veritable lake! What a spiritual and physical blessing we received at the conference!

This first international Bible con-

ference sponsored by ATS may also have been the *most* international held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While other Bible conferences have had international theologians present, they have been manned primarily by theologians from North America and the host country. In addition to the eight countries contributing theologians at Montemorelos—a ninth, from Brazil, could not secure a visa—an additional 12 countries were represented, if one counts country of origin, education, and service.

Particularly helpful in all phases of the conference were Israel Leito, president of the Inter-American Division; Jaime Castrejon, division ministerial secretary; Ismael Castillo, president of Montemorelos University; Eloy Wade, chairman of the school of theology at the university; and the presidents of the Mexican Union conferences, Armando Miranda Conchos (North) and David Javier Perez (South).

And what a fellowship we enjoyed! The pastors were universally receptive and giving. And the theologians they listened to and questioned, without exception accepted the Bible as the Word of God and the norm for theology and life. The dialogue was rich, rewarding, encouraging, and informative. The opportunity to share and to build upon the strength and disciplines of each other provided an electric climate of

creativity, oneness, and fellowship. Perhaps the rain that deluged the area was not the only rain that fell that Sabbath afternoon.

So blessed was the experience that ATS has decided to convene an international Bible conference with an even broader representation of Adventist theologians. If among them are some who do not take seriously the Bible as the Word of God, perhaps the “rain” shall fall again to water parched hearts. Surely the hunger for Bible truth that characterized the Montemorelos delegates challenges all who call themselves theologians to examine their relationship to the *Theos* of theology.

It's a challenge I shall continue to take to heart as I turn over the presidency of ATS to a fellow theologian and friend, Richard Davidson. He, too, is a man who places a premium on relationship with Christ. You'll find his article in this issue—“Then Was *This* Christian ‘Glad and Light-some’” (see pages 51-63)—filled with assurance of God's gracious forgiveness.

Dick is among the foremost biblical scholars within the church. He himself has gone through the baptism of conversion from critical thinking to biblical thinking. Skilled in his understanding of the history of method in biblical interpretation, he continues to make contributions not only in this area but also in sound hermeneutics and the literary

beauty of Scripture. He has enhanced our understanding of the books of Leviticus and Daniel as well as the sanctuary message. His teaching ministry as J. N. Andrews Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary has enriched the lives of many pastors, and his influence encircles the globe through the many Th.D. students who have been touched by his life. His wife, Jo Ann, has just finished her Ph.D. comprehensives for a degree in systematic theology. She'll be writing a column for *Perspective Digest*, while Dick will be writing "The President's Page."

As I review the achievements of the society, I find much to be thankful for. Just eight years ago we haltingly and fearfully sought a forum

for biblical dialogue within the church. Today the society plays a vital role in the spiritual and intellectual development of many Adventists. Instrumental in the society's continuing success are Randy Younker, assistant professor of Old Testament and biblical archaeology, at the seminary, who has picked up the demanding role of Gerhard Hasel as vice-president of publications; and Frank Holbrook, editor of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society (JATS)*, from which many articles in *Perspective* are digested. I've introduced Dick Davidson, who carries a heavy load apart from his presidency. Honorable mention goes to Roland Hegstad for his time, energy, skill, and devotion to the task of launching this digest. □

GOALS OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

- To affirm the centrality of the cross
- To reaffirm the surety of the Word
- To confirm the Spirit of Prophecy
- To seek revealed truth
- To consider principles of interpretation
- To investigate unsettled questions
- To fellowship with believers
- To pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

See page 47 for information on how to become a member of ATS and to receive its publications.
