

# Why I'm Glad for the ATS

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Not long ago I had a taste of good "old-time religion."

In response to an invitation from a friend, I attended the first General Meeting of the Adventist Theological Society. I found a group made up of Seventh-day Adventists from all walks of life. They spent many hours, from Thursday night to Sunday morning, September 7-10, 1989, attending sessions in the chapel of the Mid-America Union headquarters. I heard hearty singing, the study of God's Word, discussions, prayer, and earnest testimonies.

The presentations, studies, and sermons directed attention to the Word of God and the assurance of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. The atmosphere was pleasant and Spirit-filled. It reminded me of the time I had first attended a Seventh-day Adventist meeting, thirty years before.

The Baden-Powell Memorial Hall in Ghana, that night thirty years before, was packed. Every seat was taken and all the standing room was jammed. The choir sang beautifully. The smiling ushers were dressed in white.

Then as Evangelist Earl Cleveland presented his subject, "A Day When Money Will Be Thrown in the Streets of Accra and No One Will Care to Pick It Up," the crowded hall was hushed. We heard that God's prophecies had been fulfilled to the letter. We saw the evangelist, holding his open Bible in his left hand, point to it with his right hand and declare, "Brothers and Sisters, this is the Word of the living God. It is the Bible. The basis of Christian faith and doctrine is the Bible, the Bible alone."

That presentation thirty years ago was an answer to my prayers and search. It led me to study further and to become a member of this "Thus saith the Lord" denomination.

In harmony with that experience, this recent ATS weekend in Lincoln brought me new confidence in the Word of God and a new assurance in the salvation made possible through the blood of Jesus.

My joy in Lincoln was intensified by the fact that these days it's not uncommon to meet so-called Christians who measure their scholarship by the depth of their doubts about the plain teachings of the Bible. Many of our young people leave Africa to take "higher studies" in the West, only to return with their faith diminished. Some return doubting even if there is a heaven.

But I was pleasantly surprised in Lincoln to find top scholars and teachers from several Adventist institutions of higher learning expressing confidence in the Word of God and in the blood of Christ. I was delighted, too, to see the wide spectrum of people present, from North America and overseas. Although different nationalities and races were present, there was an impressive spirit of unity and love.

I was glad that in its quest to encourage sound conservative Bible scholarship and interpretation, the ATS does not limit membership to scholars. Too often, scholars isolate themselves as though they alone had the answers. What we need rather is harmonious interaction and involvement of every talent in order to carry out the global mission God has assigned this church.

We "older Adventists" sometimes miss the refreshing spirit of earlier years. In West Africa our people constantly remind us that this or that "is not what happened during the time of Gibson, Clemonds, or Hyde." In North America I have learned that some of our older brethren shed tears of joy after hearing a plain-truth message.

The "old-time religion," with its trust in the Bible as the Word of God and in Jesus Christ as our Saviour, is what God's people most need today. Let's have more of it.

God bless the ATS.