

FOLLOW THE BIBLE – END OF YEAR MESSAGE

Victor Hulbert, Communication Director, British Union Conference.



What a year! It started off with an attack on religion as bus adverts splashed the message, "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life". Christians responded positively. My favourite came from a wayside pulpit, "We believe there is a God. Now stop worrying and have a cracking Easter." What atheists thought would extinguish the Christian flame actually gave cause for celebration as the slogan became a talking point in school, pubs and workplaces across the country. It opened the door for witness.

What was more difficult was the media assault on origins with the Darwin Blitz in February. The bicentenary of his birth made for a plethora of programmes that put our origins as a species back millions of years with less than godly roots. Many Christians accepted at least some theistic form of evolution. For instance, The Revd Dr Philip Luscombe, Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge, and President of the Cambridge Theological Federation where he teaches Systematic Theology, Preaching and Religion and Science said, "Christians believe that God created the world. Charles Darwin gave the first successful scientific account of one important part of God's creation: how life developed from the simplest of forms into the extraordinary variety that we see around us."

That is something Adventists challenge. While many Christians root their faith in New Testament origins, Adventists take the larger 'great controversy' picture between Christ and Satan with our origins clearly laid out in the book of Genesis, our salvation assured in the Gospels and our hope for the future realised in the Book of Revelation. All 66 books of the Old and New Testaments play their part in telling the story and drawing us closer to the God of our Salvation. It is a message our churches, our pastors and our scientists have shared in seminars and outreach programmes up and down the country. That sharing has resulted in record baptismal figures and increasing faith.

As we draw to the close of 2009 many of our members will also be drawing to the close of their Bible Reading year. Articles in Messenger throughout the year have helped guide our understanding of key books and suggestions as to the best way to approach Bible study. But our "Follow the Bible year" is nearly over. What do we do now?

The disciple John writes towards the end of his Gospel, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. [John 20:30-31]. This is the same disciple who revelled in the 'Word become flesh'. Who said, "We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." [John 1:14] This is the disciple who found his life radically changed from being a 'son of thunder' to becoming 'the one whom Jesus loved'. His aim from then on was to tell the story. Tell it and retell it. Tell it in his Gospel. Reinforce it in his three letters. Celebrate it in the cosmic drama of the Book of Revelation.

In 'Following the Bible' this year I hope that you have found your life transformed in the same way as John – and being transformed you feel the same imperative to tell the story. The apostle Paul emphasises a similar message. Writing to his young friend Timothy he reminds him to "fan into flame the gift of God" reminding him that God did not give him a "spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self discipline." [1 Timothy 1:7]

Equally, having read The Book, do not keep it to your self. Read it again, and again – use a different reading plan, select a different version, but don't stop there. Choose in 2010 to also tell the story, share the message. Proclaim the good news.

[All Bible references are from the New International Version]