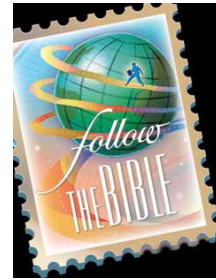


FOLLOW THE BIBLE MESSAGE [Don McFarlane, BUC President]



Flying from Baltimore, Maryland, to Huntsville, Alabama, for the funeral of Elder E E Cleveland on Tuesday, I found myself sitting beside a genial and talkative American. I soon learned that he had a PhD in engineering and was what could be described as a typical post-modern man. He attended church as a child but had reached the place in life where he did not trust organised religion of any kind. He described himself as spiritual but not religious and articulated a belief in God. "What God is or who God is, I do not know,



but I believe in a creative power and in intelligent design," he said, with the air of a man who was searching for meaning in life. In our hour-long conversation, before both of us decided to catch up with some lost sleep, he made one statement that had me 'jumping out of my seat.' "If all the people in the world stopped believing in God, He would cease to exist. God needs us as much as we need Him."

In a valiant attempt to appear calm and unruffled, I said, "That is a very interesting point. I never thought of it before. I need to put it in my pipe and smoke it." Nevertheless, we were able to agree on a number of points, one of which was that God is bigger than our finite minds can comprehend.

Knowing that we could not understand Him and the way He operates, God has revealed Himself to us in the Bible. The Bible lies at the very heart of Adventist beliefs and practice, so much so that we have been known as People of the Book. This appellation was worn proudly for several decades by a church for which doctrine needed to be tested by scripture and conduct directed by divine dictates. The growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church over the past decades has been closely associated with its adherence to what it considers to be God's revealed will in the Bible.

Being cognisant of the primary place of the Bible in the experience of each Christian and in the life of the church, the General Conference in Manila in October, 2008, launched an initiative dubbed "Follow the Bible", designed to stimulate a deeper interest in reading the Bible by church members. It features a multi-language Bible travelling to countries around the world, in Olympic Torch style, and large international gatherings to recommit to a study of God's Word. This special Bible will possibly be the most travelled book in the history of the world as it makes its global journey that will end in Atlanta, Georgia in June next year.

The good news for Adventists living in the British Isles is that this special Bible will be in the British Union this weekend, 12-14 September. Its presence in our field will be accompanied by a number of special services at Newbold College, in London, Birmingham and the Irish Mission.

We wrote to our pastors and other church leaders several months ago to encourage every local church to be a part of the "Follow the Bible" programme on Sabbath, 12 September. Some churches are planning to give out free Bibles to their community, in addition to an emphasis on the importance of Bible study during the course of the Sabbath. The least that is expected from each church is a sermon on Sabbath morning on the place of Bible study in the life of the Christian.

God needs a people in these challenging times who know what they believe. Without knowing what we believe, we will not know whom we believe. We may know of Him and have an idea who He is but we will fail to grasp the depth of His love, the magnificence of the provision of salvation He has made and the majesty of His character. Ellen White puts Bible study into perspective when she wrote, "The words of truth will grow in importance, and assume a breadth and fullness of meaning of which we have never dreamed. The beauty and riches of the word have a transforming influence on mind and character. The light of heavenly love will fall upon the heart as an inspiration. The appreciation of the Bible grows with its study. Whichever way the student may turn, he will find displayed the infinite wisdom and love of God (Christ's Object Lessons, p132).

I join you, our leaders, in praying that the hearts of God's people will be receptive to the Word on Sabbath.