

A Monthly Publication by the E. G. White—Seventh-day Adventist
Research Centre, Northern Caribbean University

Theme: "The True Spirit of Christmas"

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Hillary Clinton Tapes Adventist Video</i>	1
<i>From the Director</i>	2
<i>Thoughts About Christmas</i>	3
<i>Principles of Interpretation</i>	4
<i>Fascinating Facts</i>	4
<i>Questions & Answers</i>	5
<i>Talk-Back</i>	5
<i>Donations</i>	6
<i>Spirit of Prophecy Association</i>	6-7
<i>Director's Itinerary</i>	7

Would you like to send us
your questions or com-
ments on Spirit of Prophecy
matters? Please, contact us:

EGW-SDA Research Centre

Northern Caribbean
University,
Mandeville, Jamaica

Website:

<http://egw-sdaresearch.ncu.edu.jm>

E-mails:

egw-sdaresearch@ncu.edu.jm

martinhanna_ncu@yahoo.com

kchambers@ncu.edu.jm

Tel: (876) 523-2446-7

HILLARY CLINTON TAPES ADVENTIST VIDEO (ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK)

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-New York) expressed strong support of workplace religious freedom in a videotaped message for the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department.

"One of the things I admire most about Seventh-day Adventists, in addition to your faith, is your commitment to preach, teach and heal," Clinton said. "Your emphasis on educating and nurturing your fellow man is a model for all people of faith. And your network of schools and health care facilities put into action the tenets of those beliefs. For that is the calling to all of us, not just to believe but to act."

Clinton is among a number of co-sponsors of the **Workplace Religious Freedom Act (WRFA)**, a U.S. proposed law that **would extend employment protection to those employees who wish to observe particular days of worship**, overriding several court decisions that favour a more narrow interpretation of existing guarantees.

The Adventist Church alone receives more than 1,000 requests a year for help from members who have been fired or disciplined because their employers have refused to take the simple steps necessary to accommodate their faith.

"I personally appreciate the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in promoting religious freedom not just here, but around the world," Clinton said in the message. "I am particularly proud to join you in supporting the Workplace Religious Freedom Act." **Continued on page 4.**

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1: 35, KJV).

FROM THE DIRECTOR:

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

BY MARTIN HANNA

Ellen White was inspired by the Holy Spirit of Prophecy to direct attention to Jesus Christ during the Christmas season: **“On Christmas day** our hall was full. Many had come in from Sidney, Adelaide, Ballarat, and the smaller churches. **The Lord gave me much of his Spirit** in speaking of the first advent of Christ, when angels heralded his birth to the waiting shepherds and sang their glad songs over the plains of Bethlehem” (*Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, January 1, 1892).

The Holy Spirit of Prophecy, Who inspired the prophets (2 Pet 1:21), was also active in the incarnation of Jesus. One of the angels, who have the Spirit of Prophecy (Rev 19:10), announced that **the Spirit of God would overshadow Mary** so that she would give birth to the Son of God (Lk 1:35). **The Spirit was also present at His baptism**, descending upon Him in the form of a dove (Jn 1:32). Finally, **Jesus offered Himself** as a sacrifice for sin **through the Eternal Spirit** (Heb 9:14).

The Holy Spirit has not revealed the exact date of the birth of Jesus. However, the preaching of John just before the Baptism of Jesus took place in the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (Lk 3:1). Jesus was baptized at the approximate age of 30 years (Lk 3:23). Assuming that Luke used the Jewish way of calculating the years of Tiberius Caesar, Jesus could have been baptized in the autumn of AD 27. Calculating 30 years backward, we can identify BC 5 as the approximate year of the birth of Jesus. Interpreting the evidence from the four gospels as indicating 3 ½ years of public ministry (between the baptism and crucifixion of Christ) leads to the conclusion that Jesus died in AD 31.

Church tradition has led to the celebration of the birth of Christ on December 25. However, careful study leads us to conclude that this was not the actual birthday of Jesus. At the time of the birth of Jesus shepherds were watching their flocks in the fields at night without shelter (Lk 2:3). This would not have been the case in December when the night cold in Palestine is very piercing.

It is not likely that the decree to require people to return to their home towns for taxation would have been enforced in the winter (Lk 2:1, 3-5). It is even more unlikely that Joseph took his wife Mary on such a winter trip while she was far advanced in her pregnancy (Lk 2:1, 3-5). It is because the winters of Palestine are not mild that Jesus advised His followers to pray that their time of flight from persecution would not be in winter (Matt 24:20).

While we do not know the exact birthday of Jesus, the Holy Spirit reminds us that this wonderful event is of great importance to the Christian. The birth of Jesus as a human baby was the necessary prerequisite for His sinless human life, His atoning death as a man, and His resurrection in a glorified human body so that we too may be resurrected (1 Cor 15:21-23). The human birth of Jesus also sets the stage for His mediation for us as one touched with the feelings of our human infirmities (Heb 4:15). He was tempted in all points like humans are (Heb 2:17). Finally, this same human Jesus will return to the earth in the same humanity in which He left (Acts 1:11).

Unfortunately, **many people celebrate the birth of Jesus as though He were still a little child.** However, Jesus grew up! He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man (Lk 2:52). Jesus is no longer a baby! When we celebrate our birthdays we remember the passing of time. It is good for us to pray “Lord teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom” (Ps 90:12). At Christmas time, and at all times, we should remember the time that has passed since the birth of Jesus.

Let us include in our Christmas meditations the fact that Jesus died on the cross of Calvary for us! Watch Him hanging between heaven and earth. Note His back is chopped up by a cruel whipping. His hands and feet have been pierced with spikes. His body is naked, revealing how a spear has pierced his side as a soldier explored looking for signs of life. Take note as He gasps, with His last breath, words that wrap up human outrage and divine salvation: “It is finished!” (Jn 19:30).

Continued on page 3.

FROM THE DIRECTOR (continued)

Some people only go to church at Christmas time. **Shall we worship Jesus only as a baby and only at Christmas?** Joseph and Mary lost Jesus after they had participated in an ancient Jewish festival. Many today lose Jesus in the midst of celebrating the ancient festival of Christmas. When the Christmas parties end let us still remember to celebrate our Lord. When the Christmas drunkenness of the world gives way to New Year hangovers, let us still proclaim that Jesus was born and is coming again! Let us not be filled with wine but with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18).

Ellen White writes: **"If we keep Christmas at all**, we should show that we understand its significance. Instead of saying by our actions that we are putting Christ out of our minds and hearts, let us testify to men, to angels, and to God, that we remember our Redeemer, by following his example of self-denial for others' good" (*Signs of the Times*, December 8, 1887). **Be happy at Christmas**, and all the time. Be happy, not because of an ancient holiday, but **because Jesus has been born in our hearts through the Holy Spirit of Prophecy**.

HILLARY CLINTON TAPES ADVENTIST VIDEO (Continued)

Clinton commended Adventists for their particular emphasis on the family. **"I know the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a strong commitment to family--a commitment that is represented in how you observe the Sabbath together,"** she said. "With faith and strong families, and the freedom to allow faith to prosper, our people and our nation will be ready to embrace the future."

According to Standish, Director of Legislative Affairs for the Adventist world church, Clinton's support is welcome. "It is particularly satisfying when **we are able to communicate our message directly to national leaders,**" he said. "It is gratifying to hear **national leaders recognize the contribution our church is making** to advance the cause of religious freedom."

We're on the Web!

<http://egw-sdaresearch.ncu.edu.jm>

THOUGHTS ABOUT CHRISTMAS

"I entreat you, my brethren and sisters, **to make . . . Christmas a blessing to yourselves and others**" (*Reflecting Christ*, 373)

Let this Christmas-time and the entering in of a new year testify to the zeal of God's people (*Review and Herald*, December 18, 1888).

"**My Christmas** will be spent in seeking Jesus to be a welcome guest in my heart. His presence will drive all the shadows away."--Letter 51, 1880.

"Let us, upon the coming Christmas and New Year's festivals, not only make an offering to God of our means, but give ourselves unreservedly to him, a living sacrifice" (*Review and Herald*, December 26, 1882).

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION AVOID EXTREME INTERPRETATIONS

George Knight writes that: “Part of our task in reading Ellen White is to avoid extreme interpretations and to understand her message in its proper balance. That in turn means that we need to read the counsel from both ends of the spectrum on a given topic.

“A case in point is her strong words about playing games. ‘In plunging into amusements, match games, pugilistic performances’ she wrote, the students at Battle Creek College ‘declared to the world that Christ was not their leader in any of these things. All this called forth the warning of God.’ [This is] a powerful statement [that has]... led many to the conclusion that God frowns on *all* games and ball playing.

“[However, White wrote] ‘I do not...condemn the simple exercise of playing ball; but this, even in its simplicity, may be overdone’ (*Adventist Home*, 499). The problem as she set it forth in this moderating statement is not in the doing, but in the overdoing and misdoing of ball playing in both time and the complexity of arrangements that leads to difficulties in interpersonal relationships....In addition, she noted, the way people often play games does not strengthen the intellect or character, distracts minds from studies, and tend to make their participants lovers of pleasure more than of God (*ibid.* 499, 500).

“When we read the balancing and mediating passages on a topic, rather than merely those polar ones that reinforce our own biases, we come closer to Ellen White’s true perspective.” George Knight, *Reading Ellen White* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997), 73-74.

Avoiding extreme interpretations of Ellen White’s statements on Christmas. It is obvious how extreme interpretations would result if one read only the negative statements about Christmas written by Ellen White. A more balanced interpretation of the mind of the Holy Spirit is discovered when her positive statements are also read. For example, on the one hand, “the Bible does not give us the precise time [of the birth of Christ]” (*Adventist Home*, 477). However, on the other hand, “although we do not know the exact day of Christ’s birth, we would honour the sacred event” (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1889). Take note of the negative and positive statements below.

Negative statements: the perversion of Christmas. “There is no divine sanctity resting upon **the twenty-fifth of December**, and it is not pleasing to God that anything that concerns the salvation of men through the infinite sacrifice made for them should be so sadly **perverted** from its professed design [as Christmas has been perverted]” (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 9, 1884).

Fascinating Facts

Did you Know that...

On December 25, 1865, Ellen White received an important and extensive vision at Rochester, New York City. From this vision came counsels on health reform and the health institute, proper observance of the Sabbath, political sentiments, the danger of self-confidence, and counsels for her husband.

The EGW-SDA Research Centre has an interesting document on “**The Statements of Ellen White Regarding Christmas and Holidays Gifts**,” that you may purchase for J\$50.

“Let us remember that Christmas is celebrated in commemoration of the birth of the world’s Redeemer.”

Messages to Young People (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1930, 1958, 2002), 311

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question: Has Ellen White any statement regarding the 25th of December and Christmas celebration?

Answer: Ellen White wrote: "The twenty-fifth of December is supposed to be the day of the birth of Jesus Christ, and its observance has become customary and popular. But yet there is no certainty that we are keeping the veritable day of our Saviour's birth. History gives us no certain assurance of this. **The Bible does not give us the precise time**" (*Adventist Home*, 477). [However], "The 25th of December has long been commemorated as the day of Jesus' birth, and . . . **it is not my purpose to affirm or question the propriety of celebrating this event on this day**, but to dwell upon the childhood and life of our Saviour....**Although we do not know the exact day of Christ's birth, we would honour the sacred event.** May the Lord forbid that any one should be so narrow minded as to overlook the event because there is an uncertainty in regard to the exact time. Let us do what we can to fasten the minds of the children upon those things which are precious to everyone who loves Jesus. Let us teach them how Jesus came into the world to bring hope, comfort, peace, and happiness to all. . . . Let the hearts of all respond with exceeding joy for the priceless gift of the Son of God" (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 17, 1889).

Question: Shall we have a Christmas Tree?

Answer: Ellen White wrote in the *Review and Herald* on December 11, 1879: "Letters of inquiry have come to us asking, Shall we have a Christmas tree? Will it not be like the world? We answer, You can make it like the world if you have a disposition to do so, or you can make it as unlike the world as possible. **There is no particular sin in selecting a fragrant evergreen and placing it in our churches;** but the sin lies in the motive which prompts the actions and use which is made of the gifts placed upon the tree." She also counsels in the same article: "the tree may be as tall and its branches as wide as shall best suit the occasion, but let it boughs be laden with the golden and silver fruit of your beneficence, and present this to Him as your Christmas gift."

We welcome your questions and comments on Spirit of Prophecy matters. Please, send your comments or questions to the EGW-SDA Research Centre. (See address on page one).

Talk-Back

"I am very thankful that the centre is here at NCU. I love bringing my daughter here to read stories about Ellen White." **Haiyoung Kim**, Student, NCU.

"I feel the vision and what a powerful vision it is. I know the Lord is going to use this facility to further His work. I am impressed by what I see here. Tremendous work! I'll continue to pray for your progress."

John Barrett, Sendai SDA Church, Japan.

"We express you our congratulations for your website. May our Lord richly bless you in your objectives and works in this ministry."

Silvia Scholtuz de Rocher, Ellen G. White Research Centre, Argentina.

"Truly an excellent [web] site. Very good work. I enjoyed using your site."

Claudius Rodgers, Staff, NCU.



I'M SORRY GUY, I KNOW THAT YOU'VE GOT A GOOD HEALTH PLAN AND YOU GIVE OUT FREE GIFTS AND ALL, BUT JESUS REALLY DOES HAVE A MUCH BETTER PLAN

DONATIONS

One of our aims is to build up resources (books, periodicals, documents, etc) about the Spirit of prophecy and SDA Church history, including our history in Jamaica and the West Indies Union. We also collect negative and controversial materials. In this way the Centre can assist the church in responding to such materials.

We recognize that your aid is invaluable and we gladly receive your donations. For example, our Centre is in need of literature from independent ministries and movements, whether or not they are supportive of the SDA Church.

If you would like to donate books or other materials, please contact us at the address on page one.

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP PACKAGE!

Membership in the Spirit of prophecy Association may be maintained by a yearly membership fee of J\$1,000 or U.\$20. We encourage churches and institutions to consider sponsoring their Spirit of Prophecy Coordinators. Some members, called **Benefactors**, have donated more than the membership fee. Others maintain their membership by purchasing fascinating materials from our Document File.

You are welcome to window-shop by browsing through thousands of documents at our Research Centre. Alternatively, you may purchase the following J\$1,000 DISCOUNTED PACKAGED recommended by our Director:

- A Brief Biography of Ellen White \$ 60
- Charismatic Experiences in the SDA Church: Present and Future \$ 30
- Statements Regarding Christmas and Holiday Gifts \$ 50
- Statements Concerning Cancer \$ 25
- Was Ellen G. White a Plagiarist? \$ 40
- The Visions of Ellen G. White \$ 55
- Shall I Exercise the Right to Vote \$ 40
- The Bible and the Bible Only, Relationship to the Writings of Ellen G. White \$180
- Hermeneutics: Interpreting a 19th Century Prophet In the Space Age \$ 80
- Music: Its Role, Qualities and Influence \$140
- Ellen White Predictions \$ 45
- The Integrity of the Sanctuary Truth \$150
- Ellen G. White and the Role of Women in the Church \$105

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION (Continued)

“He [God] has concealed the precise day of Christ’s birth; that the day should not receive the honour that should be given to Christ as the Redeemer of the world” (*Adventist Home*, 477). **“Our holidays have been perverted** from their intended use. **Gifts** are lavished upon one another, and praise which should have been given to God, to whom all these things belong, is bestowed upon mortals” (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 11, 1879).

“Let the parents . . . say: ‘This year we will not expend money in **presents** upon ourselves, but we will honour and glorify God’ (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 11, 1888). **“It is a pleasure and gratification to exchange gifts** with our friends, but **are there not nobler and more glorious objects for which we may give our means, and thus do good** by shedding light upon the pathway of others?” (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 11, 1879).

Positive statements: the proper use of Christmas. “Let the several churches **present to God Christmas trees** in every church, and then let them **hang thereon the fruits of beneficence and gratitude-offerings . . . for the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ**” (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 9, 1884). **“God would be well pleased** if on Christmas each church would have a Christmas tree on which shall be hung offerings, great and small, for these houses of worship” (*Adventist Home*, 482). “Some have said to me, ‘Sister White, what do you think of this? Is it in accordance with our faith?’ I answer them, ‘It is [in accord] with my faith.’” (*Adventist Home*, 504).

“If we would give to the cause of our Redeemer one-half as much as we have bestowed upon our friends, we would do much good and receive a blessing for giving” (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 11, 1888). “Instead of following a selfish custom, and giving to those from whom presents will be expected in return, let us make our offerings to the Lord” (*Review and Herald*, Jan. 29, 1884).

However, “while urging upon all the duty of first bringing their offerings to God, **I would not wholly condemn the practice of making Christmas and New Year’s gifts** to our friends. **It is right to bestow upon one another tokens of love and remembrance** if we do not in this forget God, our best Friend. **We should make our gifts such as would prove a real blessing** to the receiver.” (*Review and Herald*, December 26, 1882).

We're on the Web!
<http://egw-sdaresearch.ncu.edu.jm>

THE DIRECTOR'S ITINERARY

December 11, 2003:
 Lecture: "Spirit of Prophecy Issues and Our Research Centre,"
 Camp Meeting, West Jamaica Conference.

December, 2003
 Class "Leadership Foundations".

Spirit of Prophecy, Vol. 1, No .5

Spirit of Prophecy Association News Letter
 Ellen G. White—Seventh-day Adventist (EGW-SDA) Research Centre, Northern Caribbean University.

Spirit of Prophecy is a news letter dedicated to the promotion of the biblical truth concerning God's revelation through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit of Prophecy. This news letter is published by the EGW-SDA Research Centre to equip the members of the Spirit of Prophecy Association to participate in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Editorial Staff: Martin Hanna, Director, Research Centre; Kerry-Ann Chambers, Administrative Assistant, Research Centre.

Supervisory Committee: Leon Wellington, Vice President, Spirit of Prophecy Coordinator, IAD; Ronnie Henry, Spirit of Prophecy Coordinator, WIU; Vassell Kerr, Dean of School of Religion and Theology, NCU; Nazrene Nathan, Resource Centre, WIU; Daniëto Murray, Vice President for Finance, NCU; Heather James, Librarian; Pastor Gary Fletcher. The Director and the Secretary are also members of this committee.

The Spirit of Prophecy Association:

Did you Know? The Ellen G. White—Seventh-day Adventist Research Centre at Northern Caribbean University has launched a **Spirit of Prophecy Association**. Members of the Association support and benefit from the activities of the Centre.

Activities at the Centre include collecting and preserving Ellen White's writings as well as other materials (supportive and critical) that are relevant to SDA theology and history. We also produce research, present seminars, and answer questions about Ellen White and SDA history and theology.

The **annual budget** of the Centre (**J\$ 6.5 million**) is largely funded by a partnership of the Inter-American Division, West Indies Union, and Northern Caribbean University. The Division provided the materials for the centre and provides the Director's salary and overseas travel budget. The Union and University fund most of our other costs.

To maximize our ability to serve you, **the Research Centre will raise J\$1 million** each year to supplement our budget. We will do this **by receiving donations of J\$1,000 or more** from those who become members of our Spirit of Prophecy Association.

There are three groups of members. **First, regular members** may be sponsored by an institution. For example, some Spirit of Prophecy Coordinators may be sponsored by their churches. **Second**, regular membership fees may be contributed by purchasing materials from the Centre. **Third**, fees or larger contributions may be donated to the Centre by **members who are called benefactors**.

Please fill out and send this coupon to the

**EGW-SDA Research Centre,
 Northern Caribbean University,
 Mandeville, Jamaica**

**egw-sdaresearch@ncu.edu.jm
 martinhanna_ncu@yahoo.com
 kchambers@ncu.edu.jm**

Telephone: (876) 523-2446-7

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

E-mail address: _____

(Place a check mark beside the statements that indicate your desire)

I would like to:

Become a member _____

Purchase materials _____

Donate J\$1,000 _____

Make a larger donation _____