

Editor's Page

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The God Who is Dead vs. the God Who Acts

The 1950's and 1960's witnessed the re-emergence of an idea that had been circulating among western philosophers and theologians going back at least to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who occasionally used the phrase "God is dead" in his writings to reflect increasing unbelief in God in his time. Most of these scholars were viewing the Bible as an object that can best be understood by a modern, "outside" view informed by contemporary science and philosophy. Numerous books were written on this topic from a variety of perspectives with the apogee of the discussion being reached in a famous *Time* magazine cover dated April 8, 1966. This issue was famous for its stark black cover with the words in bold red letters asking "IS GOD DEAD?" The issue stunned many Americans.

There were, of course, objections and counter arguments to the claim that God was dead. One of the respondents was G. Ernest Wright, a professor at Harvard and widely considered to be the dean of American Biblical Archaeology. He decided to answer this challenge by penning a counter view entitled *The God Who Acts*. In this book, Wright argues that the Bible is best understood by taking an "insiders" view by trying to discover the intent of both the original authors and the audience for whom they wrote—the ancient Hebrews. Wright makes the case that the Bible was intended to be a record of how the Hebrew God acted in the lives and events of His people, the Israelites, throughout their history. The Bible is a record of a Living God who acted in the lives of His people—it is a record of God's history with His people. Moreover, a

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proper biblical theology can only be understood by recognizing the historical foundation of this record for the people of God.

While Wright's book did not receive the attention it deserved, being somewhat drowned out by the plethora of material being produced on this provocative topic at the time, its claims were profound and, I believe, still relevant today—perhaps even more so. Once again, the West—especially in the United States—is seeing a decline in the belief of God. We read that more and more young adults are rejecting the “faith of their fathers” and are turning to more secular philosophies or pursuits to provide meaning for their lives. This trend is particularly evident in the increasing antagonism towards traditional religion in various forums including the secular media. It is not simply a skeptical reaction of those beliefs on an intellectual level, but the descent into outright ridicule of belief in God or Christ as the source of salvation. Christians are increasingly finding themselves becoming more defensive about their beliefs.

I would like to think that one of the goals of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* is to challenge this growing skepticism of our society towards not only the teachings of Jesus Christ as the source for human salvation, but the very existence of God. May this challenge inspire our writers by showing that there is indeed a living God behind the Word who has not only acted in our history, but who is actively engaging the world in the present by entering into our time-space continuum and engaging us on a daily basis. I trust the articles in this issue will contribute to seeing the Living God who acts both in the world and in our daily lives.

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