

Chapter 20

Practices of Seventh-day Adventist Spirituality (Including Tithing) Among Teachers in Adventist Schools in Australia and the Solomon Islands

Robert K. McIver

Avondale University College

What Is Spirituality?

A search for peer-reviewed articles in the Proquest Central database that have the word “spirituality” in their title returned 6,573 results. If nothing else, this reveals that the concept of spirituality is one that can be invoked in a number of research contexts, and that it is a word flexible enough to encompass a wide range of diverse phenomena. For example, typical of many health-related studies, Büssing and Koenig (2018) compared the impact of spirituality on health outcomes by using a SpREUK scale. The SpREUK scale includes items that ask patients if they plan to seek spiritual/religious resources in coping with their illness, if they have a conception that they are connected with a higher source, and if they have the ability to reflect on what is essential in life (Büssing, 2015). This understanding of spirituality includes the concept of a higher power outside of the mundane world that can be a source of strength and comfort in difficult times. Makkar and Singh (2018) included meditation, yoga, reading books about self-development, spiritual singing, chanting mantras, and attending spiritual workshops as part of a spirituality scale that they were developing for measuring spirituality in India (see Makkar & Singh, 2018, Table 2). Otaeye-Ebede, Shaffakat, and Foster (2019) went so far as to speak of a “workplace spirituality”, for which they use the following pre-existing definition:

A framework of organisational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy. (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003, p. 13; Otaye-Ebede, Shaffakat & Foster, 2019)

Their view of spirituality highlights the inner emotional response employees may have to an organisational culture.

As reported by the Pew Research Center, many Americans distinguish between being spiritual and being religious. A report published on the internet in 2017 recounts the results obtained from asking American participants if they considered themselves to be (i) religious and spiritual; (ii) spiritual but not religious; (iii) religious but not spiritual; (iv) neither religious nor spiritual. The results showed that 27% considered themselves to be spiritual but not religious (Pew, 2017). A similar pattern may be observed in Australia, where about 1/4 of Australians reported that they were spiritual but not religious (Hughes, 2019).

Though not necessarily tied to religious commitment, spirituality is viewed by researchers as an attitude or belief that reaches beyond the mundane, and one that often involves a higher power or God. For example, the Spiritual Openness Scale (2018), developed by Eyer, Kapoor, Coombs, Jay, and Thorn, includes such items as "I often feel strongly related to a power greater than myself", and "My relationship to God is experienced as unconditional love" (Eyer, *et al.*, 2018, p. 893–94, Table 3).

Steensland, Wang, and Schmidt (2018) reported that the American public considered a deity or higher being to be an important aspect of spirituality. They asked 1,038 adults aged 18 years and over residing in the United States the open-ended question, "In a sentence or two, please describe what the term spirituality means to you". In the responses the four most common referent elements of spirituality were: (i) a monotheistic deity (41%); (ii) a higher being (22%); (iii) reference to organised religions (8%); and (iv) transcendence (7%) (Steensland, Wang, & Schmidt, 2018, p. 458, Table 2). In conservative Christian circles, such as in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is only to be expected that in addition to incorporating the idea of God, concepts of spirituality will involve attitudes or beliefs associated with the religious practices associated with Christianity. This is borne out by the research of the Australian writer, academic, and Adventist church pastor, Bruce Manners.

Seventh-day Adventist Understandings of Spirituality

Manners (2008) asked 78 Seventh-day Adventists in Australia and New Zealand, either in face-to-face interviews or in focus groups, “How would you define a spiritual person?” He discovered that respondents conceived spirituality in terms of a connection or relationship with Jesus, a devotional life that was a result of a spiritual connection with God, and of their relationships with others (Manners, 2008, p. 16, 18). None of this was unexpected, but he then made a very insightful and useful observation:

So, what could an Adventist model of spirituality look like? From the research there is a strong emphasis on what could be called “practical spirituality,” or defined as spirituality demonstrated in action, in doing—a part of our heritage. We have tended to promote and applaud action. (Manners, 2008, p. 19)

From the results of Manners’s sample it appears that spirituality for SDAs involves actions such as praying actively, reading the Bible, sharing their faith with others, or helping others less fortunate.

Barry Oliver, an Australian Adventist academic and administrator, explored the various times in life when one could experience personal spirituality. He noted that it was found, rightly enough, in moments when one was removed from the hurly-burly of everyday life (the spirituality of the desert), yet he also insisted that spirituality “must influence the journey of life and faith that we are walking day by day”, something Oliver describes as “spirituality in the modern world” (Oliver, 2005). Marek Jantos, another Australian Adventist academic, insists that “A meaningful spiritual existence is possible only in the context of a close and restored relationship with God, and in knowing our Creator, ‘the only true God, and Jesus Christ’ (John 17:3)” (Jantos, 2017). He also pointed out that “another distinctive quality of Christian spirituality is that it stands out as a dynamic spirituality, manifesting itself in service to others, in healing the sick, clothing the naked, and feeding the hungry (Matt. 25:31–46)” (Jantos, 2017).

Marcos de Benedicto began his exploration of spirituality by observing that “Spirituality may be described as the search for the ultimate meaning of life and a quest for finding a pleasant place for the self in the cosmos” (de Benedicto, 2006, p. 19). He went on to describe the metaphors by which Christians understand spirituality. They include “rescue, redemption, justification, ... healing, restoration, ... journeying, ... battle ... connecting ... contemplation

discipleship ... silence ... rest ... thirst ... feast” (de Benedicto, 2006, p. 19–20). The tools of Christian spirituality are prayer, study of the Bible, meditation, celebration, church attendance, and Sabbath rest (de Benedicto, 2006, p. 21–22).

John Dybdahl responded to criticism of his book, *Hunger: Satisfying the Longing of your Soul* (Dybdahl, 2007), in two articles which summarize and clarify his understanding of spirituality in a Seventh-day Adventist context (Dybdahl, 2015a & 2015b). He begins by making two observations: half of adult Americans think that Christianity is but “one option among many”; and “the influence of New Age is clearly widespread”. He then observes that in the area of “... spiritual life, or spirituality ... many voices speak, inviting people to practice various methods of experiencing the Divine” (Dybdahl, 2015a, p. 19–20). Dybdahl then outlines what he considers to be the “four basic concepts underlying biblical spirituality”: (1) there is a unique, personal Creator God who is active in the world; (2) humans are wholistic, created beings who have sinned and disrupted their relationship with God; (3) the world was created “good” by God, but has been devastated by human sin; (4) Jesus is the culmination and centre of God’s healing and restoring relationship with His people and His world (Dybdahl, 2015a, p. 20–21). He then says, “Since God is loving, gracious, and saving, He approaches humans with the offer of fellowship. The best response humans can make to this approach is admission of need and then worship” (Dybdahl, 2015a, p. 21). In Part 2 of his article, he notes that SDAs have the Sabbath, a symbol of “spiritual rest and salvation”, and because of their wholistic view of humans, they consider that “nourishing and caring for the body is caring for the soul. Properly cared for, the body is an ally supporting the spiritual life, not an enemy. Care for the body is part of spiritual life” (Dybdahl, 2015b, p. 21). His concluding prayer “is that the day will come when the truth and clarity of our doctrine will be vitally connected to the depth and fervor of our religious experience” (Dybdahl, 2015b, p. 23). For Dybdahl, spirituality is an internal experience of our religion, whereby we accept the gift of salvation from God and respond by worshipping him. The writings of Ellen White encourage him to listen for the will of God in quiet contemplation of the Bible (Dybdahl, 2015b, p. 22–23). Following the lead of Dybdahl, we now turn to the writings of Ellen White to discover what she says about spirituality.

Spiritual Practices Advocated by Ellen White

Pioneer, visionary, and prime mover in the establishment of many SDA schools and hospitals during the early years of the SDA Church, Ellen G. White had a very intense personal spiritual life. Her autobiographical writings such as *Life Sketches of James White and Ellen G. White 1880* (White, 1880) and “Experience and Views” in *Early Writings* (White, 1882) include frequent accounts of meaningful worship services, intense sessions of prayer, and of her own visionary experiences. She recounts, for example, that after returning home after hearing the ideas of William Miller, “... I spent most of the long hours of darkness in prayer and tears” (White, 1880, p. 10 [139]). She describes her state of mind as she began to understand the forgiveness of God: “My mind constantly dwelt upon the subject of holiness of heart. I longed above all things to obtain this great blessing, and feel that I was entirely accepted of God” (White, 1880, p. 18 [150]). She often experienced visions during times of prayer, often in times of communal prayer (e.g., White, 1882, p. 39 [23], 48 [32]).

Ellen White, like others who had looked for the return of Jesus on October 22, 1844, had been bitterly disappointed when he did not arrive. This shaped her religious life, and the lives of those around her. Beverly Beem and Ginger Hanks Harwood describe the experience of early Adventists in the following terms:

They abandoned social approval in pursuit of a life anchored by faith in the reliability of Scripture and prophecy, encouraged by manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and characterized by a deep and constant longing for union with God. Perceiving a radical separation between themselves and other Christians that they saw as having a system of beliefs without an accompanying zeal they pictured themselves as pilgrims headed for “Glory”. (Beem & Harwood, 2006, p. 171)

Throughout her writing career, Ellen G. White urged her readers to lead a life of regular prayer, Bible study, and attendance at church worships and other religious meetings. For example, she says, “If we would develop a character which God can accept, we must form correct habits in our religious life. Daily prayer is as essential to growth in grace, and even to spiritual life itself, as is temporal food to physical well-being” (White, 1889, p. 64 [93]). A whole chapter in her book, *Steps to Christ*, is written on the topic “The Privilege of Prayer” (White, 1892, p. 60–67 [93–104]).

In her book, *Education*, White writes of Bible study and morning and evening worship:

In arousing and strengthening a love for Bible study, much depends on the use of the hour of worship. The hours of morning and evening worship should be the sweetest and most helpful of the day. Let it be understood that into these hours no troubled, unkind thoughts are to intrude; that parents and children assemble to meet with Jesus, and to invite into the home the presence of holy angels. Let the services be brief and full of life, adapted to the occasion, and varied from time to time. Let all join in the Bible reading and learn and often repeat God's law. It will add to the interest of the children if they are sometimes permitted to select the reading. Question them upon it, and let them ask questions. Mention anything that will serve to illustrate its meaning. When the service is not thus made too lengthy, let the little ones take part in prayer, and let them join in song, if it be but a single verse. (White, 1903, p. 145–46 [186])

Nor does White restrict her exhortations to prayer and Bible study. She writes,

Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. (White, 1898, p. 313 [363])

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. (White, 1898, p. 59 [83])

As well as recommending contemplating the life of Jesus each day, White was moved to comment on the way that contemplating the beauties of nature draws her mind to adore and reverence “the God of nature”:

As we beheld the wonderful works of the Master Architect, feelings of reverence and awe were awakened in our souls, and we could but wonder how anyone can look upon such scenes and say, “There is no God.” I fail to comprehend how it is possible for any to be so bound about with narrow ideas as to look upon the works of God in nature, and not adore and reverence the God of nature. My heart was lifted up in praise to him as I viewed scenes which seemed calculated to bind the mind of the beholder to the infinite Creator. (White, 1886, p. 1)

As well as being intensely emotional, Ellen White's spirituality was also robust and active. "Love to Jesus will be manifested in a desire to work as He worked for the blessing and uplifting of humanity" (White, 1892, p. 50 [77–78]).

So those who are the partakers of the grace of Christ will be ready to make any sacrifice, that others for whom He died may share the heavenly gift. They will do all they can to make the world better for their stay in it. This spirit is the sure outgrowth of a soul truly converted. No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth cannot be shut up in his heart. (White, 1898, p. 51 [78])

Here in the very influential writings of Ellen White are many of the features that characterise SDA spirituality: prayer, Bible study, regular attendance at meetings, active sharing of the good news of salvation with others, and a burning desire to assist others and leave the world a better place.

SDA Practices of Spirituality: Regular Church Attendance

Several of the items in the "Employees of Adventist Organizations Survey" related to matters of spirituality (see Chapters 4, 9, and 15 for information about the survey and those that participated in it). As well as expected items such frequency of prayer (Q.56a), Bible study (Q.56c), attendance at meetings (Q.18, Q56b), and outreach to those of other beliefs (Q.56e), additional items were used that also appeared in the Pew Religious Landscape Survey. These included an item regarding meditation (Q.56d), another item regarding feeling a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being (Q.56f), and one on feeling a deep sense of wonder about the universe (Q.56g).

It has already been reported in Chapters 9 and 15 that 74% of the teachers in the Australian Union Conference (AUC) who participated in the survey reported that, "aside from weddings and funerals", they attend religious services once a week or more (see Table 9.4 in Chapter 9 and Table B.18 in Appendix B). Over half of the teachers in the Solomon Islands Mission (SIM) report that they attend services more than once a week, a further 9% state that they attend weekly, and 17% attend "Every time my work permits" (see Tables 15.4 and B.18).

There is a second point of comparison available for the church attendance of teachers at Australian Adventist schools. They attend church services much more frequently than is common in the Australian community. The comparative statistics for the Australian community are expressed in terms of attending a religious service once a month or more. Only 13% of the Australian community attend church once a month or more (Reig, 2020, 2).

SDA Practices of Spirituality: Prayer, Prayer Groups, Read Bible, Share Faith

Branch B of the survey included seven items designed to explore the spiritual practices of participants. The wording of the items was modelled on that used in the U.S. Religious Landscape Study of the Pew Research Center. This was done for two reasons: first, to enable the spiritual practices of teachers in Adventist schools to be compared with those typical of the wider population in which they work; and second, because the wording of the Religious Landscape Study was deliberately designed to be applicable to as wide a range of American Christian traditions as possible; the language would be accessible to Christians who could be, but may not be, SDAs (Branch B of the survey). It was reported in Chapter 9 that 86% of teachers in Adventist schools in the AUC that participated in the survey identified themselves as a Seventh-day Adventist; and Chapter 15 noted that 99% of teachers in the SIM did so. But the survey was designed also to be taken into institutions such as the larger Adventist hospitals where SDAs are in the minority in the workforce, so the wording was also chosen with these people in mind.

The items on spirituality were introduced by observation and request, e.g., “C56: People practice their religion in different ways. Please indicate how often you do or experience each of the following:” Participants were then asked to state whether they did or participated 0 = *Never*; 1 = *Seldom*; 2 = *A few times a month*; 3 = *A few times a week*; 4 = *Once or more a day*.

Four of the activities included in the items on spirituality relate to practices that have been identified earlier in this chapter as traditional practices of spirituality among SDAs. The wording which participants were asked to rate was as follows: “... how often do you ...”

- 56a: Pray outside of attending religious services
- 56b: Participate in prayer groups, Scripture study groups, or religious education programs

- 56c: Read Scripture outside of religious services
- 56e: Share your faith/beliefs with non-believers or people from other religious backgrounds

Tables 20.1 and 20.3 display frequencies and percentages of the responses to these four items (see also Tables B.56a, B.56b, B.56c, and B.56e in Appendix B). It provides data from AUC and SIM teachers.

Table 20.1

Practices of Traditional SDA Piety: Personal Prayer and Prayer Groups: SPD Teachers

	Pray				Weekly Prayer Groups			
	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot
0 Never	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%	7.4%	1.1%	1.8%	1.9%	3.7%
1 Seldom	3.3%	0.0%	10%	19%	31%	18%	9.6%	20%
2 A few times a month	2.2%	1.7%	20%	20%	32%	52%	25%	32%
3 A few times a week	23%	17%	31%	25%	24%	21%	46%	33%
4 Once or more a day	71%	81%	33%	30%	11%	7.1%	17%	12%
Number of participants	91	58	49	81	90	56	52	82

Notes on Tables 20.1 to 20.6:

1. AUC = Australian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; SIM = Solomon Islands Mission
2. AUC Tot/SIM Tot = AUC/SIM teachers who are over 20 years of age and employed in an Adventist school or Conference or Mission
3. AUC Wkly = AUC teachers who answered “yes” to the question, “Are you a Seventh-day Adventist”, and indicated that they attend church at least once a week. See explanation in Chapter 27.

The results recorded in Table 20.1 reveal that the 71% of AUC teachers in SDA schools, and 30% of SIM teachers pray once or more a day. These numbers might be compared to the numbers of SDA church members who pray daily (see Table 20.2). Table 20.2 reveals that the 62.5% of AUC church members, and 58% of SIM members pray once or more a day. Another point of comparison may be found in a report from the Pew Research Centre, who report that 18% of the Australian population prays daily (Pew Research Centre, 2018, p. 64).

Table 20.2

Practices of Traditional SDA Piety: Prayer and Attend Prayer Meeting: SPD Church Members

	Pray					Attend Prayer Meeting			
	AUC	SIM	PNG	NZ		AUC	SIM	PNG	NZ
<i>Never</i>	2.3%	4.0%	2.8%	1.4%	<i>Never</i>	53%	4.4%	9.3%	34%
<i>Less than once a month</i>	6.5%	4.4%	4.2%	1.9%	<i>Once or twice/once a quarter</i>	29%	25%	26%	28%
<i>About once a week</i>	8.3%	11%	8.6%	5.3%	<i>Once a month</i>	4.3%	12%	8.2%	11%
<i>More than once a week</i>	20%	22%	18%	20%	<i>Almost every week/every week</i>	11%	50%	49%	24%
<i>Daily or more often</i>	62%	58%	65%	71%	<i>More than once a week</i>	1.4%	9.4%	8.1%	2.5%
Number of participants	568	455	1,134	209	Number of participants	559	436	1,113	201

Notes on Table 20.2:

1. The numbers in Table 20.2 are reported from the results from the 2017 Global Church Member Survey (GCMS). I thank the General Conference office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, and Peter Beamish of Avondale University College, who made the SPSS data file for the SPD GCMS results available to me to run a report that revealed the numbers given in Table 20.2.

2. The questions about prayer and Bible study were asked slightly differently on the GCMS than in the survey of teachers reported in this book. The wording was as follows: “25. Other religious activities are often done either alone or with your family. How often do you engage in the activities listed below? Most of the time, this is how often I: ... 25.06 Have personal prayer (at times other than meals)”. “24. In the last 12 months, this is how often I usually ... attend a prayer meeting at my local church”. The GCMS had six choices for answering question 24. The numbers above combine the choices “Once or twice/once a quarter” and “Almost Every Week /Every week”.

3. AUC = Australian Union Conference; SIM = Solomon Islands Mission; PNG = Papua New Guinea Union Mission; NZ = North New Zealand Conference + South New Zealand Conference

Practices of traditional Adventist piety often include attending a weekly church-based prayer meeting, or other small group activity that has a spiritual focus. Tables 20.1 and 20.2 respectively report on how teachers and church members self-report these activities.

There is a noticeable difference between the percentage of AUC teachers who pray daily when compared to the SIM teachers (71% vs. 30%). This is matched by a difference between the percentages of AUC and SIM teachers that attend weekly prayer meetings (25.5% vs.

63.5%). There is, in fact, a statistically significant difference between the AUC Tot and SIM Tot teachers in their personal prayer and their participation in prayer groups. A Mann-Whitney Test gives the following result for personal prayer: $U(N_{\text{AUC}}=91, N_{\text{SIM}}=81)=1800.500$, $z=-6.288$, $p<0.000$; and for participation in prayer groups: $U(N_{\text{AUC}}=89, N_{\text{SIM}}=82)=2863.500$, $z=-2.538$, $p<0.011$. The reason for the difference in the prayer behaviour of teachers based in Australia and the Solomon Islands are not difficult to discern. Solomon Islands teachers live in a more group-oriented society, and thus their religion is more group oriented than that of Australians. Australians will pray privately; Solomon Islanders pray in groups. Table 20.2 reveals that the difference between church members in Australia and both the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea is consistent with what has been observed among teachers. SIM and PNG church members are much more likely to be attending weekly prayer meetings than their fellow believers in Australia.

Adventist members are urged to read their Bible daily, and to share their faith. Table 20.3 records how teachers have self-reported their Bible study and sharing their faith.

Table 20.3

Practices of Traditional SDA Piety: Reading Bible and Sharing Faith

	Read Bible				Share Faith			
	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot
0 Never	2.2%	0.0%	7.7%	11%	4.5%	0.0%	3.8%	1.2%
1 Seldom	8.9%	3.5%	14%	18%	19%	21%	15%	20%
2 A few times a month	21%	23%	14%	15%	44%	40%	37%	23%
3 A few times a week	41%	39%	35%	31%	26%	25%	31%	42%
4 Once or more a day	27%	35%	31%	25%	6.7%	14%	14%	15%
Number of participants	90	57	52	83	90	57	52	82

Other Spiritual Practices:

Meditation, Sense of Peace, and Wonder

Branch B of the survey included three additional items relating to spiritual practices which are not so regularly promoted to church members. They included asking participants to rate, "... how often you do or experience each of the following:"

- 56d: Meditate
- 56f: Feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being
- 56g: Feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe

While meditation and feeling spiritual peace and wonder may not be promoted regularly to church members, it is possible to find echoes of approval for such practices and experiences in the writings of Ellen G. White. For example, she gives the following advice for family members (emphasis supplied to this and subsequent citations):

At home I must guard my spirit, my actions, my words. I must give time to personal culture, to training and educating myself in right principles. I must be an example to others. I must *meditate upon the word of God night and day* and bring it into my practical life. (White, 1952, p. 138 [180])

She also says of self-supporting Gospel workers,

It is God's design that such workers shall be freed from unnecessary anxiety, that they may have full opportunity to obey the injunction of Paul to Timothy, "*Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them*". 1 Timothy 4:15. (White, 1911, p. 240 [356])

She also says, in approval of John the Revelator,

In his isolated home John was able to study more closely than ever before the manifestations of divine power as recorded in the book of nature and in the pages of inspiration. To him it was a delight to *meditate on the work of creation* and to adore the divine Architect. (White, 1911, p. 385 [571])

White identifies the Bible as the focus of Christian meditation, and in doing so uses the concept of meditation in a manner slightly different from that of practitioners of Eastern religions. Meditation, when understood as meditating on Scripture, is clearly something with which she was comfortable.

While White may not use the specific phrases "sense of spiritual peace and well-being", and "feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe", in her writings, she mentions achieving peace and seeing God in creation. For example:

If you would meet God in *peace*, feed His flock now with *spiritual food*; for every child has the possibility of attaining unto eternal life. Children and youth are God's peculiar treasure. (White, 1952, p. 219 [280])

In the beginning, *God was revealed in all the works of creation*. It was Christ that spread the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. It was His hand that hung the worlds in space, and fashioned the flowers of the field. "His strength setteth fast the mountains".

“The sea is His, and He made it”. Psalm 65:6; 95:5. It was He that filled the earth with beauty, and the air with song. And upon all things in earth, and air, and sky, He wrote the message of the Father’s love. (White, 1898, p. 9 [20])

Divine wisdom, infinite grace, were made plain by the things of God’s creation. Through nature and the experiences of life, men were taught of God. “The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world,” were “perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity”. Romans 1:20, R. V. (White, 1900, p. 10 [22])

Table 20.4 reports the frequencies with which AUC and SIM teachers say they meditated, or experienced “a sense of spiritual peace and well-being”, or felt “a deep sense of wonder about the universe”.

Table 20.4

Other Measures of Spirituality: Meditation; Feelings of Spiritual Peace and Wonderment

	Meditate		Peaceful		Wonder	
	AUC	SIM	AUC	SIM	AUC	SIM
<i>0 Never</i>	28%	8.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%
<i>1 Seldom</i>	28%	25%	10%	13%	6.7%	21%
<i>2 A few times a month</i>	14%	11%	31%	16%	32%	23%
<i>3 A few times a week</i>	15%	30%	26%	37%	30%	29%
<i>4 Once or more a day</i>	15%	26%	33%	33%	32%	24%
Number of participants	88	81	88	81	89	80

It is noteworthy that 28% of AUC teachers stated that they never meditated, and nearly half of them either never or seldom meditated. There is, in fact, a statistically significant difference between the AUC Tot and SIM Tot teachers in their practice of meditation. A Mann-Whitney Test gives the following result for personal prayer: $U(N_{AUC}=88, N_{SIM}=81)=2431.000, z=-3.651, p<0.000$.

A majority of both AUC and SIM teachers reported that they experienced feelings of peace and wonder a few times a month or more.

Tithing as a Spiritual Practice

Some may find it curious that tithing practice is included in this chapter as a practice of Adventist spirituality. The reason it is found here is because research conducted across four countries in 2013,

including research done in the Western Australian Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, showed that tithing behavior correlated strongly with what was described as “The Adventist Package: Personal Practices of Spirituality” (McIver, 2016, p. 128–32). The practices of spirituality measured in the tithe survey included attending Sabbath School, opening and closing Sabbath, studying the Sabbath School lesson quarterly, reading and reflecting on the Bible every day, praying often during the day, reflecting on spiritual things during the day, and attending small group meetings. It was discovered that the greater number of these spiritually related behaviors in which the respondents to the tithing survey engaged, the more likely they were to tithe regularly (McIver, 2016, p. 30, 128–132). For Adventists, then, tithing correlates with behaviors of spirituality. A consistent theme of the book I wrote to disseminate the results of my research on tithing behavior was that it was through their participation in tithe and its resultant blessings that most Adventist church members could most clearly see the hand of God in their lives (McIver, 2016, p. 22, 144, etc.).

Table 20.5 records the percentage of income that the teachers in Adventist schools in the AUC and SIM report they return as tithe.

Table 20.5

Tithes and Giving as a Percentage of Income for SPD Teachers

	Tithe				Total gifts to charities, tithes, and offerings			
	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Tot	SIM Wkly	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Tot	SIM Wkly
0%	7.3%	3.9%	0.0%	1.8%	3.7%	2.7%	1.2%	1.6%
less than 2%	4.6%	0.0%	11%	7.2%	7.4%	3.6%	3.5%	3.1%
2-4%	2.0%	1.9%	18%	22%	6.8%	3.6%	8.1%	7.8%
5-7%	2.6%	1.0%	9.1%	9.0%	4.3%	2.7%	5.8%	7.0%
8-9%	1.3%	1.9%	11%	8%	1.2%	1.8%	7.0%	7.0%
10%	68%	76%	36%	33%	14%	12%	22%	20%
11% or more/ 11-14%	14%	16%	15%	19%	44%	48%	16%	15%
15-20%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17%	24%	11%	12%
more than 20%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.2%	1.8%	26%	27%
Number	151	48	27	111	162	112	86	128

As may be observed from Table 20.5, 74% of AUC teachers and 52% of SIM teachers report that they return 10% or more of their income as tithe to the Church. These percentage increase to 91% for AUC teachers who attend church at least weekly. The comparative figure for SDAs in Western Australia was 69% (percentage figure derived from table on McIver, 2016, p. 259). One can conclude therefore, that, on average, AUC teachers contribute a greater percentage of their income as tithe than church members living in Western Australia, and most likely, other church members in the AUC.

Table 20.6 reveals the responses of SPD teachers as they strongly disagreed, disagreed more than agreed, etc., with the statement, “I know that God has blessed me because I return tithe”. Under the subtitle WAC Members “All”, the table also provides data from the tithe survey conducted in Western Australian SDA churches as a whole (McIver, 2016, p. 139, Table 9.10), and under the subtitle “≥8% Tithe”, the subgroup who returned greater than or equal to 8% of their income as tithe (McIver, 2016, p. 143, Table 9.12).

Table 20.6

AUC and SIM responses to the statement, “I know that God has blessed me because I return tithe”

	<i>SPD Teachers</i>				<i>WAC Members</i>	
	AUC Tot	AUC Wkly	SIM Wkly	SIM Tot	All	≥8% Tithe
<i>Strongly DISAGREE</i>	8.3%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%	21%	9%
<i>Disagree more than agree</i>	17%	13%	0.0%	0.0%	17%	12%
<i>Agree more than disagree</i>	39%	35%	22%	17%	29%	25%
<i>Strongly AGREE</i>	36%	44%	78%	83%	33%	54%
Number of Participants	72	48	27	41	1,575	1,242

Note on Table 20.6: WAC = Western Australia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

It is evident from Table 20.6 that a clear majority of the West Australian church members who tithed 8% of their income or more agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “God has blessed me because I tithe” (79%). This, interestingly enough, is exactly the same proportion of the AUC teachers who attended an SDA church once a week or more who agreed with the statement (79%). The tithe research in Western Australia revealed that the motive that God will bless is not

statistically related to tithing behavior in Australia (McIver, 2016, p. 128). But those that tithed in Western Australia perceived that God had blessed them because they tithed.

Concluding Observations

Personal spirituality is a very individual experience that is related to beliefs and feelings. Researchers are dependent on spiritually related behaviors such as prayer and Bible study as indicators of personal spirituality, together with what respondents to surveys reveal about their inner emotional states. By the measures of outward behavior and self-revelation of their inward emotional states of feelings of inner peace and wonder at creation, the teachers in Adventist schools in the SPD reveal very high levels of personal spirituality and engagement with spiritual things. Compared to both the population of Australia and Adventist church members across the SPD, the teachers responding to the survey in the AUC prayed more frequently. Furthermore, teachers in both the AUC and SIM read their Bible more frequently, were more frequently found in worship services, meditated more frequently and experienced feelings of spiritual peace and awe at creation.

References

- Beem, B., & Harwood, G. K. (2006). "My soul is on the wing for glory": Adventist spirituality, 1850–1863. *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 44, 155–71.
- Büssing, A. (2015). Spirituality and coping (SpREUK) questionnaire - data sheet. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278727858>
- Büssing, A., & Koenig, H. G. (2008). The benefit through spirituality/religiosity scale—a 6-item measure for use in health outcome studies. *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 38, 493–506.
- Činčala, P., Trecartin, S. M., & Brantley, P. (2018). North American Division report: Global Church Member Survey 2017. <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Resources/>
- De Benedicto, M. (2006, February). A search for spirituality. *Ministry* 78(2), 19–22.
- Dybdahl, J. (2007). *Hunger: satisfying the longing of your soul*. Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House.
- Dybdahl, J. (2015a, October). Spirituality: Biblical and nonbiblical – Part 1 of 2. *Ministry* 87(10), 19–23.
- Dybdahl, J. (2015b, December). Spirituality: Biblical and nonbiblical – Part 2 of 2. *Ministry* 87(1), 20–23.

- Eyer, J. C., Kapoor, S., Combs, M. A., Jay, E. M., & Thorn, B. (2018). Spiritual openness, revisiting a potentially important aspect of spirituality: scale review and revision. *EJournal of Religion and Health* 57, 883–900.
- Giacalone, R. A., & Jurkiewicz, C. L. (2003). Right from wrong: the influence of spirituality on perceptions of unethical business activities. *Journal of Business Ethics* 46, 85–97.
- Hughes, P. (2019, June). “Spiritual but not religious”. *Pointers* 29(2), 1–7.
- Jantos, M. (2017, January 16). Spirituality in the twenty-first century. *Adventist Review*. Downloaded 15 December 2019 from <https://www.adventistreview.org/2007-1502-8>
- Manners, B. (2008, April). Developing an Adventist concept of spirituality. *Ministry* 80(4), 16–20.
- McIver, R. K. (2016). *Tithing practices among Seventh-day Adventists: a study of tithe demographics and motives in Australia, Brazil, England, Kenya and the United States*. Revised Edition. Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press; Silver Springs, MD: General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.
- Oliver, B. (2005, October 27). How can we be spiritual in the modern world? *Adventist Review*. Downloaded 15 December 2019 from www.adventistreview.org/2005-1544-8
- Otaye-Ebede, L., Shaffakat, S., & Foster, S. (2019, March 5). A multilevel model examining the relationships between workplace spirituality, ethical climate and outcomes: a social cognitive theory perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*. Online.
- Pew Research Center. (2018, June 13). *The age gap in religion around the world*. Downloaded 24 December 2020 from <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/the-age-gap-in-religion-around-the-world>
- Reid, S. (2020, June). Australians’ changing religious practices. *Pointers* 30(2), 1–4.
- Shikha M., & Singh, A. J. (2018, November 29). Development of a spirituality measurement scale. *Current Psychology*. Online.
- Steensland, B., Wang, X., & Schmidt, L. C. (2018). Spirituality: what does it mean and to whom? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57(3), 450–472.
- White, E. G. (1880). *Life sketches of James White and Ellen G. White 1880*. Ellen G. White Estate, 2017.
- White, E. G. (1882). *Early writings*. Ellen G. White Estate, 2017.
- White, E. G. (1886, June 1). A visit to the Vaudois valleys. *Review and Herald* 63(22), 1.

- White, E. G. (1889). *The sanctified life*. Ellen G. White Estate, 2017
https://egwwritings-a.akamaihd.net/pdf/en_SL.pdf
- White, E. G. (1892). *Steps to Christ*. Ellen G. White Estate, 2017.
- White, E. G. (1898). *The desire of ages*. Ellen G. White Estate, 2017.
- White, E. G. (1900). *Christ's object lessons*. Ellen G. White Estate, 2017.
- White, E. G. (1903). *Education*. Ellen G. White Estate, 2017.
- White, E. G. (1911). *Acts of the apostles*. Ellen G. White Estate, 2017.
- White, E. G. (1952). *The Adventist home* [a compilation of her published and private writings on topics that relate to the home]. Ellen G. White Estate, 2017.

**Education as Preparation for
Eternity: Teachers in Seventh-day
Adventist Schools in Australia and
the Solomon Islands, and Their
Perceptions of Mission**

Edited by
Robert K. McIver, Sherene J. Hattingh,
and Peter W. Kilgour



Copyright remains with authors and editors
© 2020 all rights reserved

Co-published by
Avondale Academic Press
P O Box 19
Cooranbong NSW 2265
Australia

and
Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring MD 20904
United States of America

Cover Design: FreeRange Design (Miriam Kingston)
Layout: FreeRange Design (Miriam Kingston) & Robert K. McIver
Copy Editors: Howard Fisher, Diane Roy
Proofing: Taylor + Foote (Wendy Trim)

A record of this book is held at the National Library of Australia
ISBN: 978-0-6484704-5-8 (Paperback)
ISBN: 978-0-6484704-6-5 (Kindle eBook)

Chapters 5–7, 10, 13–14, 16, and versions of Chapters 9 and 15 of this book have previously appeared in, Robert K. McIver & Peter W. Kilgour, (Eds.). (2017). *Perceptions of mission held by teachers in Seventh-day Adventist schools in Australia and the Solomon Islands*. Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press. Chapters 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, and 12 of that book were refereed (these are equivalent to Chapters 5, 7, 10, 13, 14, and 16 of the current book).

The following chapters, new in the second edition of this book, have been academically refereed: Chapters 8, 11–12, 17–18, 24, and 26. Refereed versions (with North American Data) of Chapters 19–23, and 25 have previously appeared in Robert K. McIver & Sherene J. Hattingh, (Eds.). (2019). *Educating for service and mission: Teachers in Seventh-day Adventist Schools in North America and their perceptions of mission*. Cooranbong, NSW; Silver Spring, MD: Avondale Academic Press and General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.