



Whom Did Cain Marry?

No Church Manual

Book Review



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# Adventist Today



## An Adventist Historical Puzzle

THE DELAYED BURIALS OF JAMES AND ELLEN WHITE



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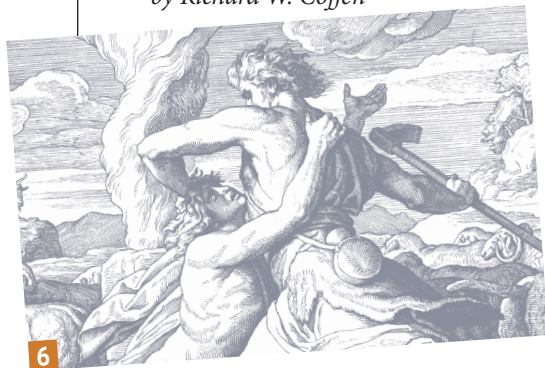
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## More on Death Before Sin

J. David Newman

I was surprised that we did not receive more letters on the subject of death in the evolution-creation debate. One of the best articles I have read on the theological consequences of this debate was written by Marco T. Terreros, Ph.D., chair of the School of Theology at Colombia Adventist University. He wrote an article with the title “Is All Death a Consequence of Sin? Theological Implications of Alternative Models.”<sup>1</sup> As part of the article, he deals with how the theory of evolution destroys the need for the atonement of Jesus Christ. And I reproduce that part here, although the whole article is well worth reading.

“The rejection of a cause-effect connection between sin and death adversely affects the evangelical theology of the atonement in at least the five following ways:

“First, it was the tragedy of the fall of humanity into sin that set in motion God’s plan for the redemption of the human race. Thus, redemption history begins with the sin of humankind, so that evangelical soteriology is dependent on a literal Fall of man.<sup>2</sup> It was at the Fall that the proto-euangelion was announced (Gen. 3:15). If man’s voluntary, free decision is removed or severed from death, then sin as a cause of death disappears from the story of redemption.

“Second, the disjunction of death and sin undermines the biblical teaching on death as a penalty for sin, thereby removing the basis for Christ’s atonement understood in a substitutionary sense. For example, if death entered the world through any other means than by human sin, then, as noted, death could not be the penalty for sin, and the basis of the atoning value of Christ’s death in the sinner’s stead is neutralized precisely because His death does not then constitute the wages of the sin of humanity.<sup>3</sup> The importance of this implication cannot be overstressed. This means that Christ did not really have to die because God could have solved the death problem in a better way than the

one He chose. ‘Christ dying for us,’ however, as noted by Bloesch, ‘is certainly the foundation and pivotal point of our salvation.’<sup>4</sup> As Cameron argues, the acceptance of death as a reality before the sin of Adam pulls the rug ‘from under the feet of the evangelical understanding of the atonement.’<sup>5</sup>

“A third effect of the rejection of the biblical cause-effect connection between sin and death for atonement theology is that only if the phenomenon of death is more than natural is a more-than-natural plan of redemption necessary. If death were just a natural problem, it could have then been solved through natural solutions, and no supernatural intervention, such as God’s irruption into human history through the incarnation, would have been necessary. Denying the sin-death connection makes the biblical plan of salvation a faulted plan instead of a perfect one. It jeopardizes God’s wisdom in designing it. In short, the admission of no cause-effect connection between sin and death, as when death is regarded as just a natural phenomenon, renders the plan of salvation, as delineated in the Bible, unnecessary.

“Fourth, according to a high view of Scripture, the above conclusion is not less true of the phenomenon of death in the nonhuman world, because the solution of even this aspect of the problem will also require supernatural intervention. Only if evolution is true, if animals, for instance, first came into life by only natural means, can we expect that the problem of their death should be reversed by means equally natural. But if the Genesis account is correct, and creation and the historical Fall are true, then the only possible way that the problem of death in the nonhuman world can be reversed is through a new creation, i.e., through God’s supernatural intervention, which is precisely what God says He will do (Rev. 21:5; cf. Isa. 65:17:25). Moreover, it is because the lot of the natural creation is so

*Continued on page 28*

**“If death were just a natural problem, it could have then been solved through natural solutions, and no supernatural intervention ... would have been necessary.”**

**—Marco T. Terreros**



### Creation/Evolution

The articles by Newman and Taylor (Fall 2010) argue that the Bible and science offer simply contradictory answers to the question “When did death begin?” Neal’s article argues that the scientific story is more complicated than Taylor acknowledges. I argue that the Bible story is more complicated than Newman indicates.

The classic Christian story goes something like this: God created a deathless ecology. Adam and Eve sinned. As a natural consequence of their sin, the original deathless ecology naturally mutated into the death-permeated ecology evident in the fossil record and contemporary biology.

There are major problems with this as the definitive interpretation of Genesis. In Genesis 3, God declares that Adam and Eve must be expelled from the garden because if they remained in the garden eating from the tree of life, they would live forever. This strongly implies that Adam and Eve did not enjoy “natural” immortality. Rather, their immortality was dependent on access to the tree of life. This

would mean that in regions of the world far removed from the garden, death would have been the natural state of things.

A second implication of this declaration by God is that death was not the “natural consequence” of sin. Death was a divinely imposed punishment. If God had not intentionally intervened, the natural sequel of Adam and Eve’s sin would have been that they stayed where they were, eating from the tree of life and enduring immortality as sinners. God interrupted this natural course of events by expelling Adam and Eve and posting a guard to prevent them from returning.

According to Paul, only male sin had the power to initiate death in earth’s ecology. Paul is quite explicit that Eve was capable of sinning, but she had no power to disorder the deathless ecology of the world. While she was the first to sin, she did not initiate death in the world. I conclude that in Genesis and Paul, there is no simple, “natural” link between human sin and the origin of a death-permeated ecology.

**JOHN MCLARTY**  
Enumclaw, Washington

It was interesting to note, in the discussion “Death Before Sin? Yes/No” (Fall 2010), that while Ervin Taylor denigrated David Newman’s use of Scripture as “key text approach,” he himself used no Scripture at all. If the Bible has nothing cogent to say about death, it would have nothing to say about concomitant topics such as life or salvation. So, of what benefit is it?

**RAYMOND H. WOOLSEY**  
Boonsboro, Maryland

I enjoyed the essays on creation and evolution in the Fall 2010 edition. I especially enjoyed Beatrice S. Neal’s article, “Trump Card for Creationists?”—not only because it was well written and scientific, but she was a theology classmate of mine back in the dark ages at La Sierra College

(now University). We graduated in 1949, so she has a right to sign off as an “old fossil.” I laughed at that, and I can tell that her brainpower is still head of the class—which it was back then also. When I first started at La Sierra, I had spent two years in WW2. Beatrice came right out of high school with her dark hair in pigtailed. When I last saw her at a class reunion, she had blonde hair (not in pigtailed). So she is doing her best not to fossilize.

The other article I am going to copy and hand around to friends is “Contemporary Christian Music.” I belong to a contemporary church. Most of the time the music is a little too rocky for me, but I love the words to the music and the kids in the worship groups.

I won’t even print what horrible things some people say about our music and church. Nancy Canwell’s observation that thousands of young people will go to a Contemporary Christian music festival when they could be doing something far worse is so true. I am also glad Mrs. Canwell loves to see her 16-year-old daughter praising the Lord, even if the words are with rocky music. Keep on being a good mom, Nancy.

Another “old fossil,”

**ELLSWORTH E. WELLMAN**  
Yakima Washington

### Ford and the Investigative Judgment

I read with great interest the review by Desmond Ford of Marvin Moore’s book and also Marvin Moore’s response and conclude that the investigative judgment is still a VERY HOT subject. I would love to throw in some more thoughts for the interested.

1. Daniel 9:24 does not say “seventy sevens” but the reverse: “seven seventies.” Why? Because Daniel’s prayer focused on the 70 years of captivity that were almost over. He interceded powerfully for his people and their return to Judea.

God answered Daniel's prayer and gave them "seven seventies!" Thus the time of mercy was 7 times longer than the time of captivity! Sounds like a divine principle. "Seven seventies" = 7 x 70 years = 490 years. Therefore, the 490-year prophecy uses literal years!

2. In Dan. 7:25 we read that "the saints shall be given into his hands." Who is it that hands over the saints? It seems to be a heavenly decree, and for that we do NOT need earthly historical dates! I don't think God emailed the devil to tell him that now he was free to persecute the saints to a higher degree than before.

3. The judgment in Dan. 7:22 "was made in favor of the saints." If someone receives the favor in a judgment, it usually means that someone else loses it. In the Old Testament, God favored a nation; the nation FAILED! From the cross until the judgment in 7:22, God favored a church; the church FAILED! After that, the judgment "was made in favor of the [individual] saints!"

4. In the phrase "restore and rebuild Jerusalem" in Dan. 9:25, the word "restore" actually denotes repetition. The four historical decrees are spread out over many years and, according to some Bible scholars, none of them fit very well! The reason could be that God did not reveal the exact time of Christ's first coming to the Old Testament people—just as His people today are not to know the exact time of Christ's second coming.

Another thought with my earnest suggestion: The previous pope, John Paul II, "repented" and publicly asked for forgiveness for what his church did to the saints during the Dark Ages. Can't we as a church also repent and publicly ask for forgiveness for how we have handled "dissidents" in the past (John 16:2-3)?

**TOBY JORETEG**  
Swan Valley, Montana

### **Bible Only**

In his latest print editorial, David Newman missed a golden opportunity to reaffirm Adventists' traditional understanding of the primacy of biblical authority. In responding to Ted Wilson's inaugural General Conference sermon, and its dependence on a preponderance of quotations by Ellen White, Newman responds with his own Ellen White quotations; thereby illustrating why Adventists will never be taken seriously by other Christians, let alone by believers in other faith traditions.

Adventists have to get past this unrealistic competition about who can quote Ellen White more or better. It seems that fewer and fewer Adventists can sing that old song: "The B-I-B-L-E, yes that's the book for me; I stand alone on the word of God, the B-I-B-L-E."

**STEPHEN CHAVEZ**  
Silver Spring, Maryland

### **Church Structure**

The commentary by Milt Erhart entitled "Time for the Laity to Take Over" in the Fall 2010 issue of *Adventist Today* raised a serious challenge to the current church structure.

There are nine union conferences in the North American Division (NAD). At least since 1980, there have been rumors that the SDA Church would reorganize the church structure and terminate the union conferences in North America. Obviously, church restructuring never became a reality. Milt Erhart suggests that the first step in the "laity takeover" would be to terminate the local conferences and "fold" them into their respective union conferences. We applaud that approach. He estimated the cost saving to be \$50 to \$70 million annually. In the early '90s, the General Conference director of auditing

found that the administrative costs for the nine unions in North America were in excess of \$38 million annually. It would be informative to repeat that audit today. If the 50 local conferences in the NAD were terminated, the cost savings would be several times greater than the savings associated with eliminating the nine union conferences.

You may recall that in the fall of 2006, then-GC President Jan Paulsen formed an ad hoc committee on Ministry, Service, and Structure composed of 116 members from around the world. Members for Church Accountability (MCA) worked for one year, meeting weekly, to develop a proposal addressing the issue of an obsolete church structure in the electronic age. The proposal can be read on the MCA website: [http://www.advmca.org/news/2007\\_aug.php](http://www.advmca.org/news/2007_aug.php)

In summary, MCA recommended eliminating the local conferences and transferring property to the union conferences. The union conferences would service the local churches with multiple electronic modalities. Methods for streamlining the union conferences were outlined as well as a system of voting for union conference officers by every local church member. The complete proposal was sent individually to the 116 members of the committee, but MCA received no meaningful response. We are unaware of any changes in church structure that resulted from Dr. Paulsen's committee's actions.

The problem of how to effect structural change is a very difficult one, and MCA applauds the efforts of the local churches in the Boise area for leading the way.

**GEORGE GRAMES**  
Redlands, California

# WHOM DID CAIN MARRY

BY RICHARD W. COFFEN



If a jetliner crashed on the U.S.-Canadian border, where would the survivors be buried?”

Similar posers have arisen from Biblical data. What did God do with the 32 Midianite virgins who made up his share of plunder (Num. 31:2-3, 8, 35, 40)? This question ostensibly causes embarrassment among Bible believers. Or what about this one: whom did Cain marry? At the time he fled home, his parents had conceived only two offspring—both males. After Cain’s fratricide, just one son (Cain), one mother (Eve), and one father (Adam)

remained. Nevertheless, the Bible says he took a wife after fleeing home.

This knotty point is calculated to throw believers into a tailspin. But those I’ve known retort unabashedly: “Cain married his sister. Genesis 5:4 states that Adam (and Eve) had daughters.”

However, this explanation flies in the face of the most universal taboo—incest. Indeed, the Torah forbids sexual contact with one’s sister (Lev. 18:9) because YHWH abhors it (18:27-29). Those who proffer this explanation explain away the incest taboo by resorting to our scientific understanding of genetics. Incest, they argue, might not have been so horrendous “back then” because humankind had not degenerated genetically. With Cain being relatively fresh from the Creator’s hand, the likelihood of birth defects from a consanguine marriage would for all practical purposes be nil. God decided later that it was repulsive.

On the one hand, this understanding of the identity of Cain’s spouse has roots in the story itself. When the first man named his wife, he called her Eve because “she was the mother of *all the living*” (Gen. 3:20, *Tanakh*, The New JPS Translation). It doesn’t fly in the face of logic and has a basis in the *explicit* storyline. If Eve was truly the mother of all living humans, then Cain had no one but a sister to marry. End of debate.

On the other hand, the Genesis storyline contains additional details implicit or even explicit in the narrative. The narratives found in Genesis chapters 2 through 4 contain numerous surface and subsurface assumptions. Because of space limitations, this article cannot examine the unspoken presuppositions underlying the Creation story found in Genesis 2, another interesting task. We must proceed with the account beginning in chapter 3—life after the Fall. The next episode states that Adam had sex with Eve, who gave birth to Cain (4:1). Verse 2 says that “she again bare his brother Abel.”

Time passed quickly after the births of Cain and Abel. Cain cultivated the soil, following in his father’s footsteps and doing

what God commissioned the first man to do. Abel herded sheep. At this point we encounter an assumption hidden just below the surface—the paradigm of sacrifice. Although the text gives no indication of any divine warrant to offer sacrifices, each brother offered a sacrifice to YHWH (4:3-4). This is such a startling incursion into the story that one cannot help wondering why the first children did this. Cain's sacrifice—vegetable products—corresponded to his occupation as a gardener. Abel's sacrifice—a lamb—was in keeping with his occupation as a herder. YHWH accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's, even though Cain was the one following his father's God-ordained occupation (4:4-5).

Not only is it a surprise to read about sacrifices, but YHWH's negative response also shocks readers. The story gives no hint as to why and how God made his displeasure and pleasure known. Another assumption must be hidden from view. Implicit in the story is a set of rules dictating what was appropriate to offer. Also, we can only surmise how God's acceptance and displeasure became known. (Don't assume immolation provided the cue to approval. The text says nothing about that.)

Cain found the rejection so traumatic that “his countenance fell” (4:5). The brothers ended up where some translators render “outside.” Had they made their sacrifices inside a sanctuary of some sort? The underlying assumption here is not at all clear. Despite the difficulties inherent in the text, the result is obvious—fratricide.

YHWH did not disregard Cain's action but arrived on the scene as the avenger of Abel's blood. Having interrogated Cain and listened to his dodging of the questions, God condemned him. Here we sense another presupposition—the existence of a moral law. Otherwise how could God hold Cain accountable for Abel's death? Prior to this point in the story, the only explicit divine command that could possibly be construed as a “moral law” was God's ban against eating the forbidden fruit. But here a different moral code for behavior is presumed to exist.

Because Abel's blood cried to God from the ground and because the ground would have to guzzle down Abel's blood (4:11), Cain's occupation as gardener would grow more difficult. He would be more cursed than the ground (4:10-11). “If you till the soil, it shall no longer yield its strength to you” (4:12, *Tanakh*). So Cain abandoned his God-approved occupation of gardener and ended up being worse than a drifter (4:12).

After YHWH pronounced Cain's exile, the renowned murderer started whining. His punishment exceeded what he could bear (4:13). He'd not only live as an ever-roving gypsy, but would also remain separated from God (4:13). Additionally, he worried that he'd wear a bull's eye on his back. “Anyone who meets me may kill me!” (4:14, *Tanakh*).

Who might be the “anyone” Cain feared might do him physical harm? If we go by the explicit storyline up to this point, the only candidates would be either Adam or Eve. Would they have resorted to “honor killing,” such as we hear about in the news?

Here we encounter another supposition underlying the story. Although the narrative has explicitly identified only four human beings—(1) Adam, (2) Eve, (3) Cain, and (4) Abel—the assumption is that they weren't the only people extant. They may have been the only individuals in the area known as Eden, but others lurked out there who just might give Cain a taste of his own medicine. In fact, Cain fled to another locale, the land of Nod (4:16). Understand that the expression “land of Proper Noun” refers not to soil but to a populated country—a civilization. Eden may have been in the east (2:8), but Nod was situated even farther east (4:16). Eden was located in “the presence of the Lord,” but Nod was not (4:16).

YHWH heeded Cain's protestation, marking him in a way that would afford protection from avengers (4:15). Ancient readers of the story may have shared an assumption of what Cain's identification mark consisted of, but that supposition is lost on contemporary readers.

Next we read that Cain had sex with his wife, who delivered a son named Enoch (4:17). After this auspicious birth, Cain constructed the first city. Cities in the ancient Near East offered lasting and safe abode (unlike contemporary urban settings). Whether Cain dwelt there himself, we don't know. Probably not, because YHWH had condemned him to perpetual wandering. Cain called the city—was it in the land of Nod?—Enoch, honoring his firstborn.

It is at this point in the story that we encounter our opening question: Whom did Cain marry? The narrative (1) provides no clue to when Cain took a wife, (2) remains silent as to her name, and (3) reveals nothing about her ethnicity. Readers would assume that Cain met her during his wanderings en route to or in the country of Nod. Once again, a presupposition undergirds

the storyline—the same one as when Cain complained about unspecified people who might wreak vengeance on him. *Explicitly*, the story thus far allows for only (1) Adam, (2) Eve, (3) Abel (deceased), (4) Cain, (5) Cain’s nameless wife, and (6) Enoch. However, *implicitly* the story presumes that other people populated the planet—at least in Nod and its vicinity.

Biblical scholars agree that other human beings existed according to the narrative. The ostensible identity of these other individuals is what causes debate. Some look to chapter 5 for a clue. “And when Adam had lived 130 years, he begot a son in his likeness after his image, and he named him Seth. After the birth of Seth, Adam lived 800 years and begot sons and daughters” (5:1-3, *Tanakh*). These interpreters feel certain that Cain married his own sister. After all, Adam and Eve had “sons and daughters.” Who else could it have been?

This answer has the benefit of sticking exclusively to what is *explicit* in the narrative. Although this approach remains faithful to what Scripture *explicitly* asserts, it has certain disadvantages. We’ve already mentioned the problem posed by the nearly universal taboo against incest and the Torah’s prohibition against a brother marrying his sister. If Cain did marry his sister, one must assume that the incest taboo was not yet in existence and that ancient Hebrew readers wouldn’t have felt any cognitive dissonance when assuming that Cain’s marriage violated God’s yet-to-come command against brother/sister incest.

But we find other niggling issues. The narrative contains other tacit assumptions. Among them is the supposition that other people existed outside the land of Eden: (1) those who might kill Cain upon sight and (2) the girl he married. Additionally, it would seem odd for Cain—in the land of Nod—to construct a city for only three people: himself (perhaps), his sister/wife, and his son Enoch. Cities are not constructed to accommodate one solitary family consisting of two or three individuals. Of course, we could assume again that these citizens were Cain’s other siblings.

That brings us again to Gen. 5:4, which mentions Adam and Eve’s other offspring. Strictly following the storyline, we find that (1) Adam and Eve produced Cain; then Abel; (2) Cain murdered Abel; (3) Adam and Eve next produced Seth, the replacement son, when Adam was 130 years old; and (4) during Adam’s 800 years *after* Seth’s birth, they had “sons and daughters.”

The linear production of children in the story is quite explicit. Those who suggest that at least some of these other “sons and daughters” were born *prior* to the births of Cain and Abel or shortly *thereafter* do violence to the narrative’s linear structure. They must insist that the words “*after the birth of Seth*, Adam

lived 800 years and begot sons and daughters” are merely genealogical and without chronological value. Their rationale contravenes the overt linearity of the story and the explicit assertion that these “sons and daughters” were begotten “after the birth of Seth.”

Another factor adds significance to our reading. Genesis 2:4 specifies the narrative title, which I’ve capitalized in the

*So, whom did Cain marry? Maybe his sister; perhaps not. Possibly he married a woman in the ancient Near East who lived in the region of Nod, where Cain erected the first city.*

customary style for titles: “These Are the Generations of the Heavens and of the Earth.” Because the Hebrew Bible originally contained no chapter divisions, one must make a judgment call here. Is this the title of the chronicle in Genesis 1 or of the narrative in Genesis 2-4? Does it *follow* or *precede* the story it identifies? We find clues to an answer in Gen. 5:1; 6:9; 10:1. Note the implication of this conventional Hebrew title, and let’s bracket out Gen. 2:4 for the moment and focus on Gen. 5:1; 6:9; and 10:1.

“**This is the book of the generations** of Adam. ... And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness. ...; and called his name Seth: and the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat

sons and daughters: and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years” (5:1-5).

“**These are the generations** of Noah: ... And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth” (6:9-10).

“Now **these are the generations** of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood. The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. And the sons of Gomer; Asheknaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. ... And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtechah. ... Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of



Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were children born. The children of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram” (10:1-3, 6-7, 21-22).

The accounts bearing the title “These Are the Generations of ...” do not deal with the *origins* of the individual first mentioned. Instead, these narratives deal with his *progeny* (not his *ancestry*) and his *deeds* (not his *beginning*). Basically, it’s the title of a hero story that relates (1) what the protagonist did, (2) the children he sired, and (3) what his offspring did. Again, the title implies *not origin* of the hero but what he generated, whether that be children or actions.

So the objective of the narrative that we have been following is not so much to give detailed scientific information about the origin of Adam and Eve but about what these entities *produced*. Earth, for instance, “generated” Adam and the animals; Adam “generated” Eve; and Adam and Eve “generated” Cain, Abel, Seth, and other children. Any story bearing the title “These Are the Generations of ...” must be read looking in the correct direction, which is *not* that which lay *behind* the individual named but that which lay *ahead*.

From the narrative structure of the plot as well as from the literary title given, we must presume that at the time of the first murder only four actors existed overtly within the narrative: (1) Adam, (2) Eve, (3) Cain, and (4) Abel. One of those was dead, leaving just three actors. The embedded chronological sequence implies the same. Yet *if* Cain’s plea to God makes any sense at all, readers must look to the assumptions beneath the surface—namely, that other human beings existed not in the immediate vicinity of Eden but in the area east of Eden (in the territory of Nod), and *these* people (not Adam or Eve) constituted a threat to Cain. That’s the only way to make sense of his plaint that someone might kill him.

The rest of the Old Testament focuses on God’s people: the children of Israel, Israelites, Judahites, Jews. It has little or nothing to say about the roots of the Egyptians or the origin of the Incas. Thus, one logically asks: Shouldn’t the first 11 chapters participate in the same purpose and focus?

Maybe, then, the title of this narrative (whether it be the story in Genesis 1 or the story in Genesis 2-4) should be read not so much for information about the origination of life on earth but for insight into the *descendants of Adam and Eve*—specifically, those who worshiped the true God. Perhaps we should pay more attention to Gen. 4:26, which points out that about the time Seth’s son Enos was born “that men began to invoke the Lord [YHWH] by name.” It should be clear by now which direction the story is heading—*toward the future*—the people who invoked YHWH’s name, the Hebrews.

In short, we can choose between two ways of understanding the early narratives in Genesis. With one reading, the stories relate the creation of the cosmos. But let’s not hastily discount the other possibility. According to this alternative reading, the stories point to the creation of God’s people.

The latter approach recognizes that the first 11 chapters of the Bible function *not* to satisfy 21<sup>st</sup>-century curiosity about the big bang that supposedly started the universe. The narratives throughout the first 11 chapters of Genesis were *not* preserved to give us arguments for the creation versus evolution debate. The first 11 chapters of Scripture do *not* give us clues so that we can sort out *Homo habilis* from *Homo rudolfensi* from *Homo erectus*, etc. The first 11 chapters do *not* constitute a biology or geology or paleontology or cosmology textbook.

This less-conventional approach affirms that the first 11 chapters of the Bible serve the same function as the remainder of Scripture—to keep in focus those who worshiped the true God. From this perspective, it does not shock us or even take us by surprise that Genesis has an implicit supposition that other human beings may have existed contemporaneously with Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel. Indeed, this is what readers expect when carefully noting the assumptions underlying the storyline. However, these other individuals remain almost imperceptible cardboard characters because they do not advance the plot. The storyline does, though, lead readers person-by-person to Abraham, “father of the faithful”—Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem, Arphaxad, Cainan, Salah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, and Abraham.

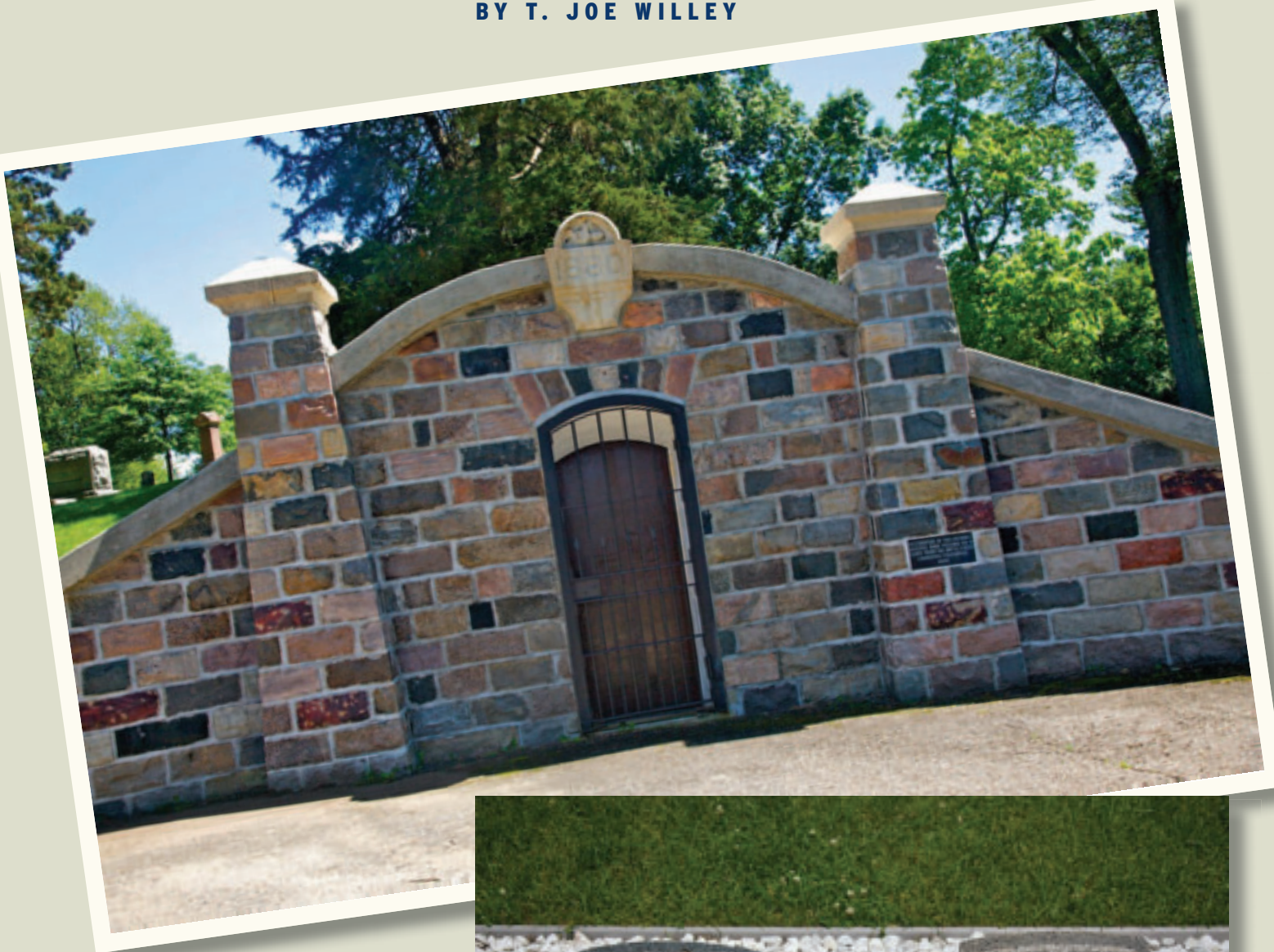
So, whom did Cain marry? Maybe his sister; perhaps not. Possibly he married a woman in the ancient Near East who lived in the region of Nod, where Cain erected the first city. However, Cain, his wife, and their children are not all that germane to the overall story. We read just sparse details about them and their descendants who interacted with God’s ancient people, but they are little more than side excursions, having the potential of distracting our attention from the real plot—namely, an account of the activities of those who worship the true God. That’s what the Old Testament is all about, where the real focus is: the Hebrew people.

Reading these Genesis narratives with any other expectation resembles trying to extract orange paint rather than orange juice from Valencia oranges. Squeeze them for their delicious and nutritious juice ... and be satisfied. 🍊

*Richard W. Coffen is a retired vice president of editorial services at the Review and Herald Publishing Association.*

# An Adventist H

BY T. JOE WILLEY



The coffins of Adventist pioneers James and Ellen White were held in this vault at Oak Hill Cemetery in Battle Creek, Michigan, before being secretly opened and then resealed for final burial nearby.



# Historical Puzzle

## THE DELAYED BURIALS OF JAMES AND ELLEN WHITE

“It is the distinction of our days that the Church in America has enjoyed the teachings of two later prophetesses. Mrs. Eddy, founder of the Christian Science Church, and Mrs. Ellen G. White, leader and teacher of the Seventh-day Adventists, both lived and died in comfort and honor, surrounded by their admiring followers. Many of Mrs. Eddy’s disciples believed she would never die, and Mrs. White hoped to be one of those who would be taken up alive to meet the Lord in the air.”

—*New York Independent*, Aug. 23, 1915, as quoted by Arthur L. White. Also published in *The Later Elmshaven Years*, Vol. 6, Review & Herald Publishing Association, p. 443, and in *The Advent Review & Sabbath Herald*, Sept. 2, 1915.

Following the sorrowful funeral and graveside services of Elder James White, and unbeknownst to the departed mourners who had melted away after the graveside burial Aug. 13, 1881, his coffin was removed and transported down the hill to the receiving vault near the entrance of the Battle Creek Oak Hill Cemetery. There it was stored. Then again at night, 10 days later, White’s eldest surviving son, James Edson White, along with William H. Hall, chief steward of Sanitarium Improvement Company, returned to the vault and opened the casket. They then resealed it and transported it back up the hill to the family gravesite. At last, Elder James White was buried.

Thirty-four years later on July 24, 1915, following the funeral of Ellen White—which was the largest in Battle Creek history—“The remains of our dear sister were tenderly and silently lowered into the grave to rest beside the body of her husband, Elder James White.”<sup>1</sup> But this was not exactly true. After the mourners departed, her coffin was removed from the gravesite and transported down the hill to the same cemetery vault. There her remains were stored above ground for more than 30 days, well into August. On Aug. 26, Edson White returned to the cemetery along with a witness and unsealed the coffin. After observing the condition of his mother, he closed the coffin, took her remains up the hill to the family plot, and at long last Ellen White was “lowered into the grave.”

### Mystery of the Clandestine Interments

These raw facts regarding the interruptions of the burials of both James and Ellen White remained a secret until 1973. In that year, Mrs. Alta Robinson, the wife of Virgil Robinson, a great-grandson

of Ellen White who was then employed by the Ellen G. White Estate, came across a revealing letter written Oct. 15, 1915, by Edson to his brother William C. White.

The first paragraph of Edson’s letter read: “You asked in regard to mother’s burial. I think I explained this to you fully stating that we went to the grounds about three weeks after the funeral and we saw her placed in the grave that had been prepared for her. Of course her face had changed considerably, and yet she was preserved as well as I could expect. When we went to the cemetery Sister Isreal (sic) took me over in her auto...Everything went off smoothly, and occupied but little time.”<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Robinson, like most everyone else, believed that Mrs. White was buried in full view of all of the mourners on July 24, 1915, as described in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* and in the Battle Creek newspapers. Three weeks later would put the actual burial into the month of August. To pursue the matter further, Mrs. Robinson sent a letter to the Battle Creek Cemetery sexton and asked him if he knew anything about this interruption in the burial of Ellen White. Since the sexton had no personal knowledge of the matter, but thinking who might know, he passed the Robinson letter to Mark Bovee, a grandson of Uriah Smith. Bovee was living in Battle Creek and served as press secretary for the Tabernacle Church.

Bovee was also actively collecting Adventist history associated with his venerable grandfather. At the time of Ellen White’s funeral, he was 15 years old but could not recall any of the details of her burial. However, as a frequent contributor to the Battle Creek newspapers on church and community affairs, Bovee had



Just inside the entrance to Oak Hill Cemetery is the receiving vault, which was built in 1880 and restored in 2008.

interviewed several elderly people who were present at the burial. Following up, he wrote to Mrs. Robinson about eyewitnesses who possibly could fill in more details.

Mrs. Edith Childs (age 32 at the time of the funeral) said that she “saw the casket being lowered and dirt was thrown on it, as is sometimes the custom.” Another eyewitness, Mr. L.C. Coulston (age 36 in 1915), also “distinctly remembered that Sister White was buried on the spot, immediately following the graveside service.”<sup>3</sup> These two eyewitnesses convinced Bovee (for a short time) that Edson had confused his participation in extracting his father’s coffin and reburying it back in 1881. Still, the October 1915 date on the letterhead remained troubling, since it only described his mother’s delayed burial. Was she also secretly removed from her grave?

At first Bovee wrote to Robinson that the solution to the dilemma found in Edson’s letter could be solved by reaching back to the delayed burial of James White described in the 1881 diary of William H. Hall, which had just come into his possession.<sup>4</sup> To make his point, Bovee quoted from the Hall diary in answering Robinson’s question. The entry was taken from Aug. 23, 1881: “Tonight I went to J.E. White and we went to Oak Hill and we moved the remains of Eld. White from the vault to the grave. We opened the casket and took a last look until the morn of resurrection. Rest in peace, war worn soldier, sleep on.”

This was 10 days after the burial account in the *Review*. Bovee went on to explain that he thought the interruption of the burial was because James White had died suddenly and perhaps his burial plot had not been purchased yet. The problem with that explanation is that James White and John Loughborough together purchased the White family plot back in 1861, 20 years earlier. Had Bovee known this fact, his speculation could not account for the 10-day “reburial” of James White.

### Arthur White Reaction

Arthur White, grandson of James and Ellen, devoted his life to the White Estate and, when shown the Edson letter, he admitted that he was surprised by the implications of this interruption. It could focus an embarrassing spotlight on the circumstances between the very public burials and some kind of clandestine interruption. He took the unusual step of writing an internal memorandum dated Nov. 4, 1974.<sup>5</sup> In that memorandum, he noted how he had dealt with “rumors that Ellen G. White was not buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery on the day of her funeral.” Each time he had “categorically denied that her burial was any different than what might have been anticipated . . . she was buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery on the day of her funeral.” He stated that the White Estate had been “unable to track down any other information that would support the J.E. White statement. At no time was the matter of how Ellen was buried discussed by W.C. White [Arthur’s father] in his conversations with me. I have never heard it mentioned in the family.” He reasoned that that if the facts were true, his own guess was that the “body was kept under lock and key to prevent possible exhuming by the curious, particularly Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, for an examination of her brain.” Kellogg did not attend the funeral and was on his way to the Pan American Exhibition in San Francisco and a Race Betterment Conference at the time.

Within a few months after Arthur White’s memorandum, Bovee went to the Oak Hill Cemetery, where the official burial records were kept. The cemetery records go back to the origin of the cemetery in 1844. After pulling up the leather-bound volume for 1915, Bovee discovered that Edson was correct. According to the cemetery records, Mrs. White’s casket was transferred to the vault on July 24 and remained there until August 26. Thus the actual date for burying Mrs. White was not July 24, as reported by the *Review* and the newspapers, but rather in August, 34 days later. Mrs. White’s casket was the only one in storage in the vault throughout 1915. Bovee made copies of these records and sent them to Ronald Graybill and Arthur White at the White Estate.<sup>6</sup>

At this time, Arthur White was focused on refuting charges of plagiarism and overuse of literary assistance in the writings of Ellen White. After receiving the copies of the burial records, he wrote to Bovee thanking him for his efforts: “You write of the fact that Ellen White was not placed in the grave until about three weeks after her funeral. I appreciate the data you have sent to us on this. The whole thing was rather incredible to me, but I think there is ample evidence to support what seem to be the facts. Thank you for going to the trouble to investigate the matter thoroughly there.”<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, we will never know what Arthur White meant

by “what seem to be the facts.” Was he referring to “facts” in the *Review* and his long-held view or Bovee’s recent vault storage information? This group of documents describing the circumstances of the deferred burials remained in the White Estate, with only a few people being aware of them. In the course of writing his six-volume biography of Ellen White, Arthur White included no mention concerning the events associated with the delayed burials of either James or Ellen White, not even a footnote.<sup>8</sup> Nor did Virgil Robinson note this information in his biography of James White published in 1976.<sup>9</sup>

What could have been the motivation for secretly removing the bodies of James and Ellen White from their graves after the assembled leaders and devotees in the thousands had come to Battle Creek to witness and appreciate the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

### **The Religious Worldview of Early Adventism**

To address this interesting question, we begin by distinguishing the pioneers and people in the past as essentially different from our own time. Descriptions of everyday miracles, specific

Would I have him suffer all this over again? No, no. I would in no case call him from his restful sleep to a life of toil and pain. He will rest until the morning of the resurrection,”<sup>11</sup> which she, of course, believed was not far off.

There are a number of common or physical explanations that come to mind that might explain the interruptions of these two burials. We’ll cover a few. Coffins were stored in the vault during the winter waiting for the ground to thaw. That explanation obviously does not apply here. On rare occasions when family members had to come from a great distance, a coffin might be held in the vault to allow them a final viewing before burial. This was not an issue for either James or Ellen White. Both funerals were held a week after death attended by family. There was no legal request to conduct an autopsy. Safety of the coffins or mutilation of the remains was never an issue. There was no legal reason or questions about the ownership of the plots to delay the burial. The coffins were not held in the vault because of fear of premature burials, since both James and Ellen White were embalmed and their public burials took place a week later. Finally, if you think about other physical reasons,

## **In that memorandum, he noted how he had dealt with “rumors that Ellen G. White was not buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery on the day of her funeral.”**

manifestations of God’s presence, and even heavenly journeys and purported resurrections were more common in 19<sup>th</sup>-century and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Adventism than today.<sup>10</sup> For instance, Mrs. White in reference to early fanaticism in the followers to Millerism described circumstances where a “dead child was left unburied; for a ‘sign’ had been given that it would be raised from the dead.”<sup>9</sup> Mrs. White herself certainly must have thought resurrection or translation was possible for her late husband, soon after he passed away in 1881.

Before his funeral, one of the leading brethren, who thought a great deal of the leadership of Elder White and could not see how the church would function without him, came to Mrs. White and urged her to appeal to God to raise her husband from the dead. “Do not let them bury him,” he implored, “but pray to the Lord, that He may bring him to life again.” After reflecting on the request, Mrs. White said no. “He had done his work ...

none of them require secrecy. There are not an infinite number of generalizations that are consistent with the limited set of observations.

### **Historical Facts Prompt a Theory**

We may never know why the James and Ellen White caskets were removed after the public melted away and then quietly, without telling anyone—including members of the family and church leaders—stored above ground, then opened after a delay, and returned to the final resting place. It sounds bizarre to say the least. But based on the fact patterns, we can construct a reasonable theory that underlies the scenarios.

In offering an explanation as to what motivated both acts, first recall the similarities in the burial interruptions of both parents. We know the coffins were removed to the receiving vault in secret. And in both it was most likely son Edson White who



Today the vault at Battle Creek's Oak Hill Cemetery is used to store pots.

directed the removals. Before reburial he is joined by a witness or confidant and superintends the reburials outside of public view. What is the most likely explanation for his behavior?


Edson thought of himself as an honorable man, son of the co-founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But Edson's early years were troubled and his youth unpredictable. He "was happy-go-lucky in character, living for the moment." As he became older, to his anguish he was never accepted by church leaders or respected like his younger brother William. Growing up he abandoned the Church, then at mid-life he returned to the Church.<sup>12</sup> Edson probably revealed his true inner life in these burial interruptions. Living with his parents, he had been deeply exposed to the Bible. Might he have come to expect a full resurrection of his parents, just as in ancient times? The basic ideas that govern our thoughts in everyday life can show themselves, as it did here in this instance.

I propose that Edson believed his worthy father and mother could be translated by God. But to make this determination would be more difficult after the caskets were buried. So he decided to hold the coffins in the vault for a time to see if early rapture had occurred. But removing each coffin to the vault and lifting the casket lid to observe whether or not the remains were still there would require a witness, someone he could trust. Edson needed to demonstrate that he did not remove the body himself and then fabricate a resurrection story.

An interesting aspect of this theory is that it provides an insight into the personality of Edson White. When peeled away, it can be argued that he had great respect for his parents. After his father did not turn up missing over the course of 10 days, he may have thought his mother had a greater possibility and hence he waited three times longer before reburying her. Finding both physical remains, it was simply better for both brothers to not talk about it with others, including family.

Perhaps even more interesting is that this theory might open a new window into the ethos of those who were active participants in the world of Adventism as practiced during the times of James

and Ellen White. Certainly some 19<sup>th</sup>-century religious ideas are less visible in our own times.

Could this theory be wrong? Of course; direct evidence is missing. But the theory has the convenience of argument, because what happened was clandestine and the negative outcomes could not be revealed; it also exposes the unconstrained inner world of Edson, in his hopes of moving into the inner circle of respect among church leaders like his brother. Generally speaking, the White Estate does not suffer from a lack of details about the lives of both James and Ellen White. But here was an important gap in the history of the family. If the White Estate had a more convincing explanation, we would no doubt have heard it by now. 

*T. Joe Willey received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, in neuroscience and was a postdoctoral fellow at New York University in Buffalo. He also taught neuroscience at the Loma Linda University School of Medicine.*

<sup>1</sup>The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, Aug. 5, 1915, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>In W.C. White letter file on microfilm at Loma Linda University Heritage Center, Loma Linda California.

<sup>3</sup>Mark L. Bovee to Mrs. V.E. Robinson, April 29, 1973, Mark Bovee (Collection 146), Center for Adventist Research in the James White Library at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

<sup>4</sup>Wm H. Hall Diary is from Box 11, folder 9, Mark Bovee (Collection 146), Center for Adventist Research in the James White Library at Andrews University. Wm. H. Hall first appeared in the Review in the 1870s as a member of the Minnesota Conference Committee. Next time he showed up as nominated to the Board of Trustees of the Educational Society in Battle Creek in 1880 along with other prominent leaders, including Elders Uriah Smith, George Butler, and James White along with Prof. Brownsberger, G.W. Gage, H.W. Kellogg, and O.B. Jones. In 1884 he was placed as a board member and secretary of the Health Reform Institute and in 1886 as treasurer of the Sanitarium Improvement Company. His diary entries do not appear to be a forgery. The sentences were written in the same handwriting, they were short entries, some words were abbreviated, and there was no evidence that the entries were interpolated at a later date. The diary appeared to be written at the moment (end of each day), and historical data included in the diary checks against events taking place at Battle Creek, in the State of Michigan, and nationally. There does not appear to be any reason to distrust the reburial entry on August 23, 1881. He used the same description "worn-out soldier," a term that was in vogue for James White at the time of his death. The vault referred to by Hall was constructed in 1880, so it had been in use about a year.

<sup>5</sup>Arthur L. White, memorandum titled "Ellen G. White—Question of Deferred Burial," Nov. 4, 1974, Loma Linda University Heritage Center, Loma Linda, California.

<sup>6</sup>Letter from Mark Bovee to Ron Graybill, March 14, 1975, Center for Adventist Research in the James White Library at Andrews University.

<sup>7</sup>Arthur White to Mark Bovee, April 1, 1976, Center for Adventist Research in the James White Library at Andrews University.

<sup>8</sup>Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years*, Vol. 3, 1984, also published in *The Later Elmshaven Years*, Vol. 6., 1982, p. 353.

<sup>9</sup>Virgil Robinson, *James White*, Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1976.

<sup>10</sup>Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances & Visions*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

<sup>11</sup>*Manuscript Release*, Vol. 7. p. 419, The White Estates Archives. Also published as Ellen White letter 396-06 written to "Sister Belden" on Dec. 25, 1906, and in Ellen G. White, *The Retirement Years*, Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1990, p. 164.

<sup>12</sup>Jerry Allen Moon, *W.C. White and Ellen G. White*, Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993, p. 43.

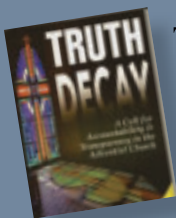
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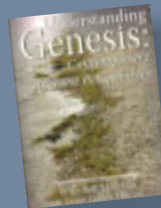


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# Adventism *and* Ecumenism

## Does our eschatology have room for relationships with fellow Christians?

BY BORGE SCHANTZ



The Advent message with its radical reforms has strong exclusive overtones. From their beginnings, Adventists were convinced that they were God's special people with a unique message to the world. At the heart of Advent Movement is a deep-rooted belief that the message must be preached to all Christians and non-Christians. For that reason, they cannot be associated with the many attempts to establish ecumenical unity. Faithfulness to such fellowships could involve a soft-pedaling—or even complete silence—on distinctive doctrines. To this must be added that comity (a policy whereby one religious denomination refrains from proselytizing the members of another) should be accepted.

In Adventist understanding, ecumenical affiliations would be apostasy from Bible teaching. “On the basis of Bible prophecy and the writings of Ellen G. White, SDAs anticipate the eventual success in some form or another of the ecumenical movement, both in eliminating the divisions of Protestantism and in reuniting Christendom by bridging the gulf that separates non-Catholic communions from Rome.”<sup>1</sup>

This Adventist anti-ecumenical stand was so important that it was not only widely published in literature, but also preached together with the new special Biblical absolutes that were the reason for the Advent Movement. A warning against Roman Catholics (the beast) and fallen Protestantism (the children from the great mother of prostitutes in Rev. 17:1-5) was part of the message. To this was added a strong appeal to “come out of her” (Rev. 18:4) and join the true church. In this way the evangelists were not only

trying to steal the sheep, but were also seen as criticizing the shepherd and the fold. It is understandable that Adventists were not too popular among the various denominations.

However, it was later accepted that there are “neutral” areas where cooperation with other Christian groups would be in order, and even desirable. Churches and Christians from other traditions are neighbors. We operate in the same countries and cultures and with the same people. We benefit from or struggle with the same governmental laws, regulations, and benefits. We work under the same legal and social obligations, and we are challenged with the same social issues. The church policy positively guides these relationships in this way: “We recognize those agencies that lift up Christ before men as a part of the divine plan for evangelization of the world, and we hold in high esteem Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in winning souls to Christ.”<sup>2</sup> However, the coexistence of this policy on good interfaith relationships with the “doctrine” warning against ecumenism has, without doubt, produced both problems and ambivalent feelings.

### The 1910 Missionary Conference

Promoted by the main Protestant/evangelical mission societies—who for nearly 200 years had worked in the so-called “mission fields,” often in competition with each other—a most important ecumenical gathering was organized. The 1910 World Missionary Conference, held in Edinburgh, Scotland,



was a first in the history of the Christian church.

Seventh-day Adventists were among the invited denominations, probably due to its well-developed foreign mission program, which included a rather impressive financial budget considering the relatively small size of the denomination. The leaders of the Adventist Church, with their rather negative stand on ecumenism, were no doubt surprised at the invitation. The Adventists' negative position on cooperation was well known among Protestants. Still, after careful consideration in three General Conference committee meetings, it was decided to send three delegates and an additional three attendees to the Synod Hall Meetings.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the General Conference was using Edinburgh as a "trial marriage" on possible areas where at least some cooperation with other mission societies could be a reality?

The Adventist delegates joined 1,200 other delegates representing the mainline Protestant denominations in Europe and America. Participants were, in general, mission executives and represented the historical churches such as Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, and The Salvation Army. Roman Catholics and Orthodox were not invited.

Doctrines were left out of deliberations. The conference was really more American activism than European reflection. It was a time of optimism and anticipated victory. The world should be won for "Christ in this generation." The forming of the "Continuation Committee" paved the way for collaboration between churches and missionary societies. The many

conferences in the following years paved the way for the institution, in 1948, of the World Council of Churches.

Adventist delegates were carefully chosen. Two of them had international executive and administrative experience. W.A. Spicer was a secretary of the General Conference in charge of Adventist mission. He had been a missionary to India and was from 1922 to 1930 president of the General Conference. L.R. Conradi, leader for the work in Europe, can be credited with pioneering the work in Eastern Europe, Russia, the Middle East, East Africa, and South America. They were joined by W.J. Fitzgerald, president for the British union. However, their presence at the Edinburgh conference remained somewhat in the shade. The 33 boxes with the official archives from the 1910 conference stored at the Burkes Library (Columbia University) do not at all indicate that the Adventist delegates were serving on any of the main committees or subcommittees.

It is also worth observing that the Adventist Church itself gave its participation in the 1910 Mission Conference minimum publicity. It was not officially reported to the various churches or commented on by Adventist leaders.<sup>4</sup> Neither do we find official reports on Edinburgh in Adventist magazines. E.G. White was likewise silent on the event.<sup>5</sup>

However, in two articles published in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Spicer reflected personally on his impressions. He stated that the conference, in the providence of God, could serve to prepare the way for closing the work of the gospel. He mentioned that at the

conference he found an honest Biblical concern to bring Jesus Christ to the millions in non-Christian countries. Still, Spicer revealed ambivalent feelings on the experience. As he wrote, he no doubt had in mind that he was a key leader and spokesperson for a movement with a special call and message to the world. His articles express loyalty to the anti-ecumenical stance of the Adventists. One conclusion Spicer drew as a justification for Adventists not to combine their evangelistic activity was what he regarded as the emphasis on humanistic and philanthropic efforts. The church task was not to heal the world, but to bring the last message.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the misgivings and somewhat lukewarm attendance of the Adventists, the 1910 Missionary Conference became of great importance to Adventist mission. One result of the conference was that some mission/colonial governments (especially in Africa) instituted "grant-aided programs" for schools and hospitals. These funds became one of our greatest instrumentalities of mission.

### The 2010 Missionary Conference

The centennial for this important event was celebrated with the 2010 World Missionary Conference, conducted June 2-6 in Edinburgh with the motto: "Witnessing to Christ Today." Three hundred delegates from around the world attended, many of them young people. In addition to the mainline churches from 1910, a great number of participants came from the Pentecostal, Orthodox, Catholic, and even independent African churches. At this conference the participants probably

consisted of more practitioners, observers, and promoters of mission compared with executives and administrators in 1910.

The conference will be remembered for several study groups that have worked globally on various aspects of missions. There were expositions from a Catholic on liturgy, a Malaysian Lutheran on evangelical models, a Russian Orthodox on secularism, and a model where Ugandan Pentecostals interfaced indigenous African Christianity. However, the important message was “ongoing cooperation, to deal with controversial issues and to work toward a common vision,” where it recognized the need for “authentic dialogue, respectful engagement, and humble witness among people of other faiths—and no faith—to the uniqueness of Christ.”

The power word was *unity*. The 2010 conference was an opportunity for a global, diverse, and representative group to show gratitude for the important heritage the 1910 conference left to Christianity in general and missions in particular. The overwhelming number of charismatic groups and indigenous churches was a testimony to the success of the 1910 meeting.<sup>7</sup>

Three Adventist delegates attended: Dr. Ganoune Diop, director of General Conference Global Mission Study Centers; Dr. John K. McVay, president of Walla Walla University; and Dr. Cheryl D. Doss, director of the Institute of World Mission. Diop represented the church in a visible way, as he among other things was leading out in the three-hour celebration that drew the conference to a close. About 1,000 people attended this service, which had strong charismatic overtones. An Anglican bishop did the preaching, and a group of Indians performed a religious dance. Adventist attendance at the 2010 Missionary Conference was, interestingly, justified with the words in the General Conference Working Policy that encourage recognizing agencies that

lift up Christ in the divine plan for world evangelization.<sup>8</sup>

### A Backdoor Invitation

It should be recorded that invitations to the General Conference were not initially sent from the ad hoc 2010 Edinburgh planning committee. Adventists were somewhat slipped in by the back door. The incentive to include them began during a conversation I had with my friend Birger Nygaard in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2006.

Nygaard is a capable and devout Lutheran mission executive who is director for the Areopagus (Christian Mission to China), chair for the Danish Lutheran Lausanne Committee, and former general secretary for the International Association for Mission Studies. When Nygaard first told me in 2005 that he was one of the “trail blazers” in organizing a 2010 centennial event, I telephoned, emailed, and met with him to draw attention to the Adventist presence in 1910. Pages from my dissertation were accepted as evidence; the matter was brought to the planning committee. And as a result, the General Conference was invited to appoint a member for the planning committee.

Jon Dybdahl represented the church excellently as the Adventist member of the planning committee and, as a result, three Adventist delegates were invited to the centennial event.<sup>9</sup> Gratitude is owed to an open-minded, helpful Lutheran ecumenist: Birger Nygaard.

### An Internal Eschatology/Relationship Dilemma

The Adventist Church reluctantly sent three delegates to the Edinburgh mission conference in 1910 but willingly appointed three delegates in 2010. Since 1910, Adventists worldwide have slowly, year after year, accepted invitations to become members of local church councils, fellowships of pastors, and other semi-ecumenical associations. There are

appreciated elections of Adventist leaders to be national chairpersons for Bible Societies. To this must be added that it is now somewhat common for Adventist leaders to be invited to—or even apply to get observer status in—global and local ecumenical events.

These meetings, however, have in Adventist history met both approvals and disapprovals. Some Adventists will claim that such engagements and involvements represent a denial of the uniqueness in Adventist essentials—thereby giving a wrong message to other Christians—and serve as support for the anti-Christian movements that we have significantly been warned against in our eschatology. Some are convinced that such relationships show that the Advent Movement is apostatizing and on its way into Babylon. This has caused members to stop attending church, to withdraw their financial support and form independent conservative groups, or even to leave the church.

On the other side, Christian denominations likewise have misgivings about Seventh-day Adventist presence and cooperation. They are aware that Adventist literature at times focuses on a call to members of other traditions—Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, and Protestant—to come out of Babylon and join the “remnant church.” Even when such calls are not expressed directly, there is in Adventist self-understanding an undertone that they were specially selected by God for a mission. However, in public preaching it is fair to state that such direct calls to leave Babylon are getting less frequent.

A growing number of Adventist pastors and members feel it is time to open up for positive relationships with other Christians and churches. The task of bringing Christ to two-thirds of the world’s population needs as many voices as possible. Adventists cannot do it alone. And as we have so much in common with most missionary-minded evangelicals, it would be spiritual arrogance to continue

justifying our historic isolation.

Adventist anti-ecumenism eschatology on one side, and the policy on amicable relationships and cooperation on uncommitted issues on the other, should generally not contradict but should complement each other. Still, these eschatology/relationship issues have shown to be open to interpretation.

It is interesting to note that in 1925, just 15 years after the 1910 Mission Conference, N.C. Wilson Sr. (grandfather of current General Conference President

*A growing number of Adventist pastors and members feel it is time to open up for positive relationships with other Christians and churches. The task of bringing Christ to two-thirds of the world's population needs as many voices as possible. Adventists cannot do it alone.*

Ted Wilson) was called to serve in Zambia. Before he moved to his new assignments, he was met in Cape Town by W.H. Branson, president the work in South Africa, and W.A. Spicer, president of the General Conference. Elder Spicer had a special prayer for the new missionary family, and Branson counseled Wilson

not to bother and compete with the other Protestant/Evangelical missions. They advised him to instead concentrate the mission on other receptive tribes, where there is “a great and needy field and plenty of opportunities for all Christian missions without any competition to bring people to Jesus Christ.”<sup>10</sup>

### Cooperation With Other Mission Agencies and Missionaries

The 1910 Mission Conference was initiated by mainline Protestant mission societies. At that time, many missions were in their pioneering stages. However, in the 100 years since—in spite of world wars and political upheavals—mission churches grew tremendously in membership and potency. In the new governments that were formed in former colonies, the missions achieved political influences and social responsibilities. Decisions and counsels from Edinburgh in 1910 helped churches—including Adventist—to handle these vital developments with governments and with each other.

To this must be added that in our age, with aggressive global challenges from sections of non-Christian religions, especially Islam, there is a call for responsible communication and interaction between mission agencies.


For the Adventist Church, with its inhibiting stand on ecumenism, the generous and open policy on *Relationships With Other Christian Churches* is a welcome door opener. Facing the enormous challenges both on the official and personal level, missionaries often instinctively seek and benefit from assistance across denominational lines.

On the practical, social, welfare, and personal levels, in local church life and missionary activities, interaction with other Christian traditions and general cooperation are needed. As Adventists, we have not only to consider these opportunities. We should seek them.

In some situations, no doubt, there

remains a sensitive balance between belief and practice. How do we interpret the admonition to “hold in high esteem Christian men and women in other communions who are engaged in winning souls to Christ”? What is included? How far do we go?

In a time when stress on Adventist fundamental beliefs is somewhat revived, it could perhaps be in order to create guidelines defining areas where cooperation will be advantageous as well as areas that would be in conflict with our eschatology.

Keeping a balance is perhaps the trickiest art in the world. May the Lord of Missions also guide us in this vital and sensitive encounter. 

*Borge Schantz, PhD, is an adjunct professor at Loma Linda University in California. He has served as a pastor, evangelist, mission administrator, teacher, and theology department chair in various countries on four continents. He was founder of the General Conference Islamic Study Center and also authored and edited numerous books and articles on Islam, missions, and church growth. He is now retired and lives in Denmark.*

<sup>1</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Washington D.C.: Review and Herald, 1996, p. 491.

<sup>2</sup> General Conference Working Policy 2009-2010, p. 525. See also <http://adventist.org/beliefs/other-documents/other-doc5.html>.

<sup>3</sup> General Conference committee minutes for January 17, March 6, and April 20, 1910.

<sup>4</sup> Borge Schantz, “Development of Seventh-day Adventist Missionary Thought,” Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983, pp. 152-158, 387-393.

<sup>5</sup> William Fagal, personal email, Sept. 29, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> W.A. Spicer, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 21, 1910, pp. 9-10; Aug. 11, 1910, pp. 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> *Revitalization Movement* newsletter, Vol. 17 No. 2, July/August 2010, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY. Also consulted various Internet reports from mission agencies.

<sup>8</sup> General Conference Working Policy 2009-2010, p. 525.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Birger Nygaard, Copenhagen, Oct. 6, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with N.C. Wilson Sr., Grand Terrace, California, July 6, 1982, quoted in Schantz, 1983, pp. 416, 486.

**Editor's Note:**

*At the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta, delegates voted a new revised Church Manual. There was loud opposition to the addition of an ordination service for deaconesses. Eventually, however, this provision was approved. The delegates debated and argued other changes, as well. It was clear that the world church considers the Church Manual the final authority on procedure and practice in the Adventist Church. What most delegates did not know was that for our first 69 years of existence as a church, we operated quite successfully without a manual.*

*In the 1880s some felt that it was time for a Church Manual, and one was proposed. But after extensive discussion, the church decided not to have one. The article below gives the reasons why a manual would be a hindrance and not a help to the church.*

*Elder Butler ends his article by saying that the arguments against a manual were so strong that he doubted the subject would ever rise again. And it did not for almost 50 years.*

*In the introduction to the 2005 Church Manual, the editors explain that the church, out of necessity, has developed policies and procedures to guide it, and all that this manual was doing was bringing them into one easy place for reference. However, what is not addressed are the original reasons why we should not have a manual. Let the reader decide if they still apply today.*

The writer was requested by the recent General Conference to make a brief statement through the *Review* of the action taken in reference to the proposed Church Manual. For four or five years past, there has been with some of our brethren a desire to have some manual of directions for the use of young ministers and church officers, etc. It was thought that this would lead

Conference proceedings given in last week's *Review*. The Conference acted upon this recommendation, and quite unanimously decided against having any manual. In doing so, they did not intend any disrespect to the worthy brethren who had labored diligently to prepare such a work. They had presented much excellent matter, and given many valuable

# NO Church

BY GEORGE I. BUTLER, PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE  
*The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 27, 1883

to uniformity in all parts of the field, and afford means of instruction to those who were inexperienced, and be very convenient in many respects. Steps were taken several years ago to prepare a manual, but for a time it was left unfinished. Last year, at the Rome Conference, the matter came up for consideration, and three brethren were appointed a committee to prepare a manual, and submit it to the Conference this year for its approval or rejection. During the past summer the matter they have prepared has appeared in the *Review*, and has doubtless been well considered by its readers.

At the recent Conference a committee of thirteen leading brethren were appointed to consider the whole subject, and report. They did so, and unanimously recommended to the Conference that it was not advisable to have a church manual. Their reasons were briefly given in the report of


direction concerning church ordinances, holding business meetings, and many other important questions, and had done as well, no doubt, as any others would have done in their place. The reasons underlying this action of the Conference were of a broader character. They relate to the desirability of any manual whatsoever.

The Bible contains our creed and discipline. It thoroughly furnished the man of God unto all good works. What it has not revealed relative to church organization and management, the duties of officers and ministers, and kindred subjects, should not be so strictly defined

and drawn out into minute specifications for the sake of uniformity, but rather be left to individual judgment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Had it been best to have a book of directions of this sort, the Spirit would doubtless have gone further, and left one on record with the stamp of inspiration upon it. Man cannot safely supplement this matter with his

manual have ever contended that such a work was not to be anything like a creed or a discipline, or to have authority to settle disputed points, but was only to be considered as a book containing hints for the help of those of little experience, yet it must be evident that such a work, issued under the auspices of the General Conference, would at once carry with

are engaged has the same influences to meet which all genuine reformations have had to cope with. After reaching a certain magnitude, they have seen the need of uniformity, and to attain to it they have tried to prepare directions to guide the inexperienced. These have grown in number and authority till, accepted by all, they really become authoritative. There seems to be no logical stopping-place, when once started upon this road, till this result is reached. Their history is before us; we have no desire to follow it. Hence we stop without a church manual before we get started. Our brethren who have favored such a work, we presume never anticipated such a conclusion as we have indicated. Very likely those in other denominations did not at first. The Conference thought best not to give even the appearance of such a thing.

Thus far we have got along well with our simple organization without a manual. Union prevails throughout the body. The difficulties before us, so far as organization is concerned, are far less those we have had in the past. We have preserved simplicity, and have prospered in so doing. It is best to let well enough alone. For these and other reasons, the church manual was rejected. It is probable it will never be brought forward again. 

weak judgment. All attempts to do it in the past have proved lamentable failures. A variation of circumstances requires variation in action. God requires us to study important principles which he reveals in his word, but the minutiae in carrying them out he leaves to individual judgment, promising heavenly wisdom in times of need. His ministers are constantly placed where they must feel their helplessness, and their need to seeking God for light, rather than to go to any church manual for specific directions, placed therein by other uninspired men. Minute, specific directions tend to weakness, rather than power. They lead to dependence rather than self-reliance. Better make some mistakes and learn profitable lessons thereby, than to have our way all marked out for us by others, and the judgment have but a small field in which to reason and consider.

While brethren who have favored a

it much weight of authority, and would be consulted by most of our younger ministers. It would gradually shape and mold the whole body; and those who did not follow it would be considered out of harmony with established principles of church order. And, really, is this not the object of the manual? And what would be the use of one if not to accomplish such a result? But would this result, on the whole be a benefit? Would our ministers be broader, more original, more self-reliant men? Could they be better depended on in great emergencies? Would their spiritual experiences likely be deeper and their judgment more reliable? We think the tendency all the other way.

The religious movement in which we

# h Manual



## Is There Anybody Left Who Will Read This?

By Alden Thompson

A prayer story from an evangelistic series in Canada planted the seed for this column. A devout Adventist woman randomly chose 15 names from the telephone book and began praying. To her great joy and to the amazement of her pastor, on her list were nine of 15 new members—people she had never known, never met.

The story triggered many questions for me: Did it really happen? Would this method work for anyone? Is this a gift for shy people—evangelism without talking to anyone? But what happens if new members don't know any old ones?

I wanted the story to be true, but I worried about the implications.

One phone call confirmed the story. It happened. The details were astonishing.

But now for the implications. I wanted to use the story to counteract the powerful impulse toward deism that lurks everywhere in our culture. Prayer is a key issue. Adventist author Roger Morneau has argued that God always answers our prayers if we are right with him.<sup>1</sup> His stories are impressive. But he does not address the question of prayers from good people that go unanswered.

Rabbi Harold Kushner, by contrast, was so troubled by the death of his little boy from progeria (rapid aging disease) that he ruled out all divine intervention.<sup>2</sup> God listens but is powerless to affect the course of human events. Thus he preserves God's goodness at the cost of his power. That's hardly biblical, but it's still a seductive temptation in our world.

C.S. Lewis occupies a middle ground, affirming that God answers prayer, but

not predictably. Noting Jesus' cry from the cross, Lewis suggests that the best get the least help. "When God becomes man, that Man, of all others, is least comforted by God, at His greatest need."<sup>3</sup>

Lewis has somber words for the rest of us: "If we were stronger, we might be less tenderly treated. If we were braver, we might be sent, with far less help, to defend far more desperate posts in the great battle."<sup>4</sup>

Lewis counters the modern impulse that prefers no answered prayer at all rather than admit that God could "unfairly" answer some but not others. And he is solidly biblical, for in Scripture, God's response is highly unpredictable. Nearly half the psalms are complaints about unanswered prayer. And the illustrations multiply. A single chapter, Acts 12, tells how Herod killed James but also how God delivered Peter. In Hebrews 11 some escape the sword, while others are killed by the sword—both by faith.

To conclude bluntly, I can rejoice at the miracle in Canada without thinking that all of us should go and do likewise.

### No Obvious Options

That was essentially the first edition of this column. It was clear—until I pondered a survey from *Adventist Today* on the future of this journal. In several cases I didn't like any of the options. Yes, we should deal with issues. But can issues nurture the body of Christ? They so easily stir up anger...

So I called two thoughtful Adventist families, asking them candidly about their views of *Adventist Today*. One family had cancelled their subscription

some time ago. The spirit of Jesus was too often missing, they said. The other family still subscribes but admitted that they cannot stand the angry blogs from either *Adventist Today* or *Spectrum*.

And that gave birth to the title for this piece: Who will read it? Many don't read anything at all these days. And if those repelled by anger, criticism, and cynicism have turned away, only the contentious remain—ones not particularly drawn by gentleness.

Current events, of course, loom large here. In the Summer 2010 issue of *Adventist Today*, a cluster of authors answered the question: "If I Were the Next GC President..." I opted out since I had already focused on the General Conference in the previous issue. "Living in Hope" was my subtitle, a commentary on the 1901 General Conference, described by the *GC Bulletin* as "the most peculiar, yet the very best General Conference ever convened by Seventh-day Adventists." "Not one unkind word was spoken on the floor, not a single rebutting argument was used," wrote the editor. "But all seemed to vie with one another in maintaining the rules of courtesy and Christian deportment."

Quite frankly, I was praying that the 2010 General Conference would reflect the same spirit. Alas, after Ted Wilson was elected, one staunch conservative was heard saying into his cell phone: "We won!" A noted liberal was perhaps even more jubilant, assuming that the new president would provide the independent press plenty of copy. Both right and left jubilant, but for opposite reasons? That

wasn't the spirit of 1901.

### **The Key to Kind and Gentle Power**

Returning to that "best" General Conference, I re-read Ellen White's pointed comments at the beginning of the session. I quoted excerpts in my previous column, but not her last words, words that I now suspect may have been key to that best of all General Conferences. Our new president rightly reminds us that we must hold our leaders accountable. That's what

here and now."<sup>5</sup>

She sat down. A season of prayer followed. The best GC Session ever was the result.

As I pondered Ellen White's role in 1901, I kept thinking of her relationship to George I. Butler, General Conference president at the "righteousness by faith" GC Session in 1888, the "worst" of conferences, in Ellen White's view.

Butler was a passionate man with strong convictions. After 1888 he left

massive subsidies needed by our medical school would mean recalling a significant number of missionaries. Unthinkable. "We recommend that the school be closed."

Everyone sat paralyzed, Olson recalls. But after a period of painful silence, "an old, gray-haired, trembling brother arose in the front row of seats and began to speak, in a quavering voice, somewhat as follows:

"Brethren, I am bewildered. I can

**Quite frankly, I was praying that the 2010 General Conference would reflect the same spirit. Alas, after Ted Wilson was elected, one staunch conservative was heard saying into his cell phone: "We won!"**

Ellen White was doing for the 90 or so GC delegates who heard her:

"I want to have a home with the blessed, and I want you to have a home there. I want to work in harmony with you, and I want that every one who has an impetuous temper, that will flare up and lead him to act like a frantic man—I want him, as he begins to speak in this way, to remember Christ, and sit right down and hold his peace. Say not a word.

"God help us to restrain our tongues. The voice is a precious talent, and it is to be used to a purpose. It is not lent to you that you may swear; but every one who gives way to an unholy temper might just as well swear. God help us to submit to Jesus Christ, and to have his power right

church work for 13 wilderness years to care for his invalid wife. His tumultuous earlier experiences need not detain us here. When he returned to active service, Ellen White joyously welcomed him. A.V. Olson in *Thirteen Crisis Years*, a commentary on the worst/best conferences and everything in between, includes a chapter on Butler. His closing paragraphs powerfully illustrate how the worst can lead to the best, and how God can use one old man to transform the world.<sup>6</sup>

Olson was present at the 1915 Autumn Council in Loma Linda. He was 31, president of the Quebec Conference. He tells how a subcommittee brought a stunning proposal to the council. The

hardly believe my eyes and my ears. What is this I hear you say? We must close this school? I am old now [81 years] and I do not know much. You are young and strong, and you must know what has to be done. Soon the vote will be taken, but before it is taken, let me say this:

"You know who I am, George I. Butler. I used to be president of the General Conference, and I think I received more testimonies from the servant of the Lord than any of you, and most of them rebuked me. We were at times urged to do what seemed impossible, but when we went forward by faith, the way opened."

Waving a pamphlet with Ellen White's counsel on Loma Linda, Butler  
*Continued on page 29*

## A Look at Des Ford's Latest Book on Revelation

By Jon Paulien

Desmond Ford, *The Time Is at Hand!: An Introduction to the Book of Revelation*, Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2009.

When I was offered the opportunity to review Desmond Ford's latest book on Revelation, I was delighted to accept for two reasons. First, I had just published



a similar short overview of Revelation for Pacific Press. Reviewing Ford's short introduction to Revelation would be a great opportunity to compare notes with someone who was writing important stuff long before I started my doctoral program in New Testament. Second, I feel that I owe Desmond Ford a spiritual debt. Doing this review gives me a chance to acknowledge that debt and thank him for his contribution in a tangible way.

I was born and raised in a fairly traditional Adventist home in the New York City metropolitan area. I attended a German-language church in Manhattan for my entire childhood. I would not say that my family and church were overtly legalistic, but I certainly grew up with a

strong focus on doing the right thing, self-discipline, and a certain insecurity about where I stood with God. These tendencies were compounded in college when I was introduced to the final-generation perfection ideas of M.L. Andreasen, which I embraced with much enthusiasm. Sadly, these powerful convictions didn't work for me or anybody I knew. In other words, these ideas did not help me become a better person or attain the goals that they set before me.

Enter Desmond Ford. His gracious way of introducing the gospel in the context of the Adventist world I had grown up with was just what I needed. He helped me to see the harmony between the letters of Paul and the best of traditional Adventist teachings. He helped me to see that Ellen White, rightly understood, uplifted Jesus Christ, the cross, and the gospel. He helped me to see that I could be a lover of the gospel and an Adventist at the same time (I recognize that many still struggle with this combination). For these things I will be eternally grateful. To some Adventists, Ford has become something of a pariah. But while I disagree with Ford on a number of points (see below), my life would be diminished if he had never lived. Now to the book.

There are many things I liked about the book. It is compact, 43 pages of fairly small print, which means it touches on the big moves in the book and the big issues. Most commentaries on Revelation go so deeply into details that the big picture of the book is lost. Ford's little book is focused in on the big picture.

Some readers will no doubt complain that there is very little about the book that is distinctively Adventist. Large parts of the book could have been written by any Protestant author who has studied Revelation with some care. But Ford's Adventism comes through

very strongly with regard to the Sabbath and the millennium. He gives a ringing affirmation of the Sabbath, both as a continuing institution for today and as a vital element in the final crisis of Earth's history. He also stands strongly for a traditional Adventist view of the millennium. The thousand years occur after the Second Coming of Christ and involve a desolate earth because the wicked are dead and the faithful are in heaven with Christ. Adventists have unique positions on these issues. Ford promotes these unique positions on Revelation in concert with mainstream Adventism. So fairness would suggest that, whatever its weaknesses, the book is distinctively Adventist in its approach.

As one would expect from Desmond Ford, the book is filled with classic one-liners that use metaphors to simplify complex issues. A few examples will have to suffice. Applying Aquinas to the role of the interpreter in the book of Revelation, he writes, "If an ass (donkey) looks into a book, you can't expect an angel to look out." Regarding sin: "Sin (is) a burden upon us, a tyrant over us, and a traitor within us. Justification deals with the first, sanctification the second, and glorification the third." Also: "The sun that melts wax also hardens clay. No one can be the same after hearing the gospel." These one-liners are classic Des Ford, and there are many more like them.

On the seals and the trumpets, which vex so many interpreters, Ford takes a careful, exegetical approach. He rightly interprets the seals in light of the slain lamb of Revelation 5, the covenant woes of Leviticus 26, the Olivet discourse of Jesus (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21), and parallels in Revelation 19. He sees the seals as expressing the experience of God's people in their presentation of the gospel to the world. The trumpets, on



the other hand, are helpfully interpreted in light of Creation, the Exodus, the fall of Jericho, and parallels with the seven bowls of Revelation 16. Unlike the seals, the trumpets fall on those who oppose God and his people. I find myself in broad agreement with what Ford has to say about the seals and the trumpets.

I also thought Ford did an outstanding job on the identification of Babylon in Revelation 17 (pages 30-33). While many scholars of Revelation see the Roman Empire in much of the book, Ford rightly sees the heart of the vision of Babylon as an indictment of apostate religion. In other words, the great enemy of God and faith at the end of time will wear a Christian face. This is a sober call to all readers of Revelation to not only come out of Babylon as a physical entity, but

exaggerated, in my opinion. Another example is “All doctrinal truths have their spring in the fact of creation” (page 23). The connection between creation and doctrine is worth noting, but it is likely exaggerated in the use of “all.” On page 2, Ford asserts that the Olivet Discourse itself is a commentary on Dan. 9:24-27. Again, this is a helpful exegetical observation that overdoes the connection. To quote Ford himself in another place, it is possible to undo by overdoing. So be skeptical of sweeping observations in the book. To be fair, however, this book is a summary of key points in the much larger work published 30 years ago as *Crisis*. Readers who want to go deep can better evaluate the grounds for his assertions there.

At times Ford seems to buy too easily

page 4, also rings strange in the light of post-holocaust scholarship on the New Testament.

Things have moved so rapidly in studies of Revelation over the last 30 years, both inside and outside the Adventist Church, that reading Ford’s book makes it seem little has changed in his thinking over the last 30 years. For those unfamiliar with recent research, this is not a problem. But for those reading the above-mentioned works, and also those of Leonard Thompson, David Aune, and John and Adela Collins, the book comes across as a little out of date. To be fair, Des has been in retirement for more than a decade now and should not be expected to keep up with the latest literature in specialized fields. Check with me in 20 years to see if I do any

## We all tend to read the Bible through the lens of our own personal and group experience.

also to deal with the Babylon in each of our hearts.

While I would prefer to say only good things in any review, candor and helpfulness require me to point out what I feel are significant deficiencies in Ford’s work on Revelation. First of all, he has a tendency to combine careful exegetical observations with what could be called “evangelistic exaggeration.” For example, he states often that “Revelation is an enlarged Olivet Discourse” (Jesus’ end-time sermon in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21). See page 9, for example. While you can find an exegetical basis for this statement in Revelation 6, it is not as strong there as Ford implies, and direct verbal connections with the discourse in the rest of Revelation are sparse. So the comparison is helpful but

into the “assured results” of historical critical scholarship, such as the confident assertion that Daniel 8 is all about Antiochus Epiphanes. I am no specialist on Daniel, but mainstream Revelation scholarship has certainly moved on from historical criticism in several directions, as evidenced in the recent work of David Barr, Ron Farmer, G.K. Beale, Edith Humphreys, and Steve Moyise. I doubt that Ford is familiar with such works. I also believe he has too readily bought into preterist and futurist perspectives on the book and does not seem to have taken into account more recent Adventist work on Revelation by Ekkehardt Mueller, Ranko Stefanovic, Sigve Tonstad, and the Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM volumes 6 and 7). His attitude toward the Jews, on

better! But in a review, it is important to highlight the weaknesses of a work as well as the strengths.

Finally, most Adventists will be disappointed that Ford continues to largely discard the historicist tradition so familiar in Adventist evangelism. We all tend to read the Bible through the lens of our own personal and group experience. It strikes me that Ford reads Revelation in reaction to the worst extremes of traditional historicists, who often ignored the text of Revelation to pursue personal schemes of history and prophetic interpretation. But as Ford himself would say, “Abuse does not rule out proper use.” More recently, sober scholarly work has both critiqued these excesses and also grounded the best of  
*Continued on page 29*

## Would Ellen G. White Endorse the *Remnant Study Bible*?

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A new study Bible, published by Remnant Publications and printed by Thomas Nelson and Sons, places the words of Ellen White within the text of the Bible. You read a few verses, then comes a quotation from Ellen White. You read a few more verses, then comes another quotation. What would Ellen White think of this use of her writings? Would she endorse it? Following are statements she made about the authority of the Bible compared to her authority. You be the judge.

**the Bible alone**, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; all who bow to this holy word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God's word is infallible. Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, "It is written." Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, The Bible our rule of faith and discipline."<sup>2</sup>

"But don't you quote Sister White. I don't want you ever to quote Sister White until you get your vantage ground where you know where you are. **Quote the Bible. Talk the Bible.** It is full of meat, full of fatness. Carry it right out in your life, and you will know more Bible than you know now. You will have fresh matter - O, you will have precious matter; you won't be going over and over the same ground, and you will see a world saved. You will see souls for whom Christ

Creek-based institutions had in many cases reached a low ebb. Testimonies calling for a return to Bible principles had been received, theoretically, but no real improvement had taken place.

"Most delegates coming to the General Conference Session, which would open the next morning, sensed that there must be changes. Ellen White would in the opening meeting rebuke institutional leaders and call for a reorganization of the General Conference. It was her burden that the changes that needed to be made would be based on Bible principles and not just on the word of Ellen White. In this address she declared:

"God has told me that my testimony must be borne to this conference, and that I must not try to make men believe it. My work is to leave the truth with the people, and those who appreciate the light from heaven will accept the truth." Manuscript 43, 1901.

"Counsel would come through her as the messenger of the Lord and this counsel should be heeded, but work in depth must be done, work based on the principles set forth in God's Word. -Compilers]

"When you make the Bible your food, your meat, and your drink, when you make its principles the elements of your character, you will know better how to receive counsel from God. I exalt the precious Word before you today. **Do not repeat what I have said, saying, "Sister White said this," and "Sister White said that."** Find out what the Lord God of Israel says, and then do what He commands. Manuscript 43, 1901. (From an address to church leaders the night before the opening of the General Conference session of 1901.)<sup>4</sup>

"**Get Proofs From the Bible.** In public labor do not make prominent, and quote that which Sister White has written,

has died. And I ask you to put on the armor, every piece of it, and be sure that your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel."<sup>3</sup>

"**On Quoting Sister White.** How can the Lord bless those who manifest a spirit of "I don't care," a spirit which leads them to walk contrary to the light which the Lord has given them? But I do not ask you to take my words. Lay Sister White to one side. Do not quote my words again as long as you live until you can obey the Bible.

"[\*Ellen White was meeting the leaders of the church as a group for the first time in ten years. Situations in both the General Conference and in our Battle



### The Bible Only

"**The Bible, and the Bible alone**, is to be the rule of our faith. It is a leaf from the tree of life, and by eating it, by receiving it into our minds, we shall grow strong to do the will of God. By our Christlike characters we shall show that we believe the word, that we cleave to the Bible as the only guide to heaven. So shall we be living epistles, known and read of all men, bearing a living testimony to the power of true religion."<sup>1</sup>

"When God's word is studied, comprehended, and obeyed, a bright light will be reflected to the world; new truths, received and acted upon, will bind us in strong bonds to Jesus. **The Bible, and**

as authority to sustain your positions. To do this will not increase faith in the testimonies. Bring your evidences, clear and plain, from the Word of God. A “Thus saith the Lord” is the strongest testimony you can possibly present to the people. Let none be educated to look to Sister White, but to the mighty God, who gives instruction to Sister White.”<sup>5</sup>

“The first number of the *Testimonies* ever published contains a warning against the injudicious use of the light which is thus given to God’s people. I stated that some had taken an unwise course; when they had talked their faith to unbelievers, and **the proof had been asked for, they had read from my writings instead of going to the Bible for proof.** It was shown me that this course was inconsistent and would prejudice unbelievers against the truth. The *Testimonies* can have no weight with those who know nothing of their spirit. They should not be referred to in such cases.”<sup>6</sup>

“The Lord has sent his people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.”<sup>7</sup>

“Do not make the Sabbath school lessons dry and spiritless. Leave the impression upon the mind that **the Bible, and the Bible alone, is our rule of faith,** and that the sayings and doings of men are not to be a criterion for our doctrines or actions.”<sup>8</sup>

“Teachers need an intimate acquaintance with the word of God. **The Bible, and the Bible alone, should be their counselor.** The word of God is as the leaves of the tree of life. Here is met every want of those who love its teachings and bring them into the practical life. Many of the students who come to our

schools are unconverted, though they may have been baptized. They do not know what it means to be sanctified through a belief of the truth. They should be taught to search and understand the Bible, to receive its truths into the heart and carry them out in the daily life. Thus they will become strong in the Lord; for spiritual sinew and muscle are nourished by the bread of life.”<sup>9</sup>

“God will move upon the hearts of monied men, when the **Bible, and the Bible alone,** is presented as the light of the world. In these cities the truth is to go forth as a lamp that burneth.”<sup>10</sup>

“**The Bible alone** affords the means of distinguishing the path of life from the broad road that leads to perdition and death.”<sup>11</sup>

“The servants of Christ should labor faithfully for the rich men in our cities, as well as for the poor and lowly. There are many wealthy men who are susceptible to the influences and impressions of the gospel message, and who, when **the Bible and the Bible alone** is presented to them as the expositor of Christian faith and practice, will be moved by the Spirit of God to open doors for the advancement of the gospel.”<sup>12</sup>

“**The words of the Bible and the Bible alone,** should be heard from the pulpit. But the Bible has been robbed of its power, and the result is seen in a lowering of the tone of spiritual life. In many sermons of today there is not that divine manifestation which awakens the conscience and brings life to the soul. The hearers cannot say, ‘Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?’ Luke 24:32.”<sup>13</sup>

“When **the Bible and the Bible alone** is the rule of our faith and practice, the influence of our lives will have a telling power on the world.”<sup>14</sup>

“**The Bible and the Bible alone** must now be laid up in the heart. It must be cherished and regarded as the voice of God, for it alone can make men right and keep them so.”<sup>15</sup>

“Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a **lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light.** Oh, how much good would be accomplished if the books containing this light were read with a determination to carry out the principles they contain!”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, “Bible Religion,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 4, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, “A Missionary Appeal,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 15, 1885.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Spalding and Magan Collection of Unpublished Manuscripts*, p. 174.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages Book 3*, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1980, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen G. White, Letter 11, 1894, *Selected Messages Book 3*, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1980, pp. 29-30.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, “The Nature and Influence of the Testimonies,” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1882-1889, p. 669.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Evangelist*, Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1920, p. 37.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, 1938, p. 85.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1913, pp. 352-353.

<sup>10</sup> Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946, p. 87.

<sup>11</sup> Ellen G. White, “The World By Wisdom Knew Not God,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 15, 1891.

<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1915, p. 348.

<sup>13</sup> Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1917, p. 626.

<sup>14</sup> Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 4, Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990, p. 412. Originally published in “*The Medical Missionary Work*,” May 10, 1899.

<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 17, Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990, p. 234.

<sup>16</sup> Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry*, Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1953, p. 125.

**Editorial** *continued from page 3*

inseparably connected with humanity's attitude toward God that Paul can write that 'the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice' (Rom. 8:20, NIV), and that the whole of creation 'will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God' (vs. 21, NIV). This passage indicates that God promises to accomplish the liberation of the lower animal kingdom through a new creation, not through a long process of evolution.

"Fifth, affirming death before sin means that the first human sin ceases to be the basis for the human need of salvation, and this suggests the need of a rethinking of the Christian faith. Such faith has to be adapted to this new understanding of the 'Fall' and 'original sin.' Theistic evolutionary evangelicals maintain that if this adaptation is not made possible, Christian soteriology would become obsolete.<sup>6</sup> Evangelical theology is thus confronted with the alternatives of either preserving historical Christianity or renouncing its doctrinal values in favor of interpretations that give science authority over Scripture. For example, writing from the standpoint of a theistic evolutionist, Schmitz-Moormann affirms that salvation 'cannot mean returning to an original state, but must be conceived as perfecting through the process of evolutionary creation.'<sup>7</sup> This process of creation by evolution, some evangelicals believe, is capable of telling us still more about God's purposes and about His way of offering humanity a way of salvation<sup>8</sup> than is the traditional Christian belief in creation as 'a series of instantaneous events—creation by simple fiat.'<sup>9</sup> On this point, evangelical author George Murphy agrees with Schmitz-Moormann. Or, to quote Karl Schmitz-Moormann's words,

the 'Christian faith would be relegated to the status of the religious fossils known through mythology.'<sup>7</sup> In a theistic view illumined by evolutionary science, the most important truths, in keeping with the idea of continual progress, are to be found not in the beginnings, but in the present and in the future (ibid.). Murphy, as noted above, believes that theologically, evolution is preferable to the doctrine of creation.<sup>10</sup>

"It is theologically important to notice that it was the emergency of the entrance of sin into the world which gave occasion to the most fundamental alteration of divine nature testified to in Scripture, namely, the Son of God's incarnation as Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 3:16). In light of this fact, it is not surprising that some alterations, such as changes in the physiological makeup of some animals, became necessary in order to cope with the new conditions brought about by human sin. Only if the character of sin is not regarded as seriously as the Bible does can we wonder at the physical evils and the changes in the natural world brought about by the emergency of sin. At the same time, no physical evil can be compared with that moral or spiritual evil which is sin itself.<sup>11</sup> But if death preceded sin, how can the evil of sin be characterized?"

We must always keep in mind that no one was present when this world came into being.

Both sides have the same evidence. How we interpret the evidence depends on the presuppositions with which we come to the debate. In a subsequent issue I plan to address the whole subject of epistemology, how we know what we know. If any of you would like to write on that point, please send in your articles.

In the meantime, may the conversation continue without rancor and with civility

on all sides.

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 14, Issue 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 150–175.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted material from Clark H. Pinnock, "Climbing Out of a Swamp: The Evangelical Struggle to Understand the Creation Texts," *Interpretation*, Vol. 43 (January 1989), p. 151.

<sup>3</sup> This means that God could have dealt with the problem of death without having to deal with the problem of sin. But in fact he did not, which demonstrates the causal connection between sin and death.

<sup>4</sup> Bloesch, *The Christian Life and Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Nigel M. de S. Cameron, "Evil, Evolution and the Fall," in *Creation by Evolution? The Evangelical Debate Today*, ed. David C. Watts, (Glasgow: Biblical Creation Society, 1983), pp. 26–33.

<sup>6</sup> Or, to quote Karl Schmitz-Moormann, the "Christian faith would be relegated to the status of the religious fossils known through mythology" (Karl Schmitz-Moormann, "Evolution and Redemption: What is the Meaning of Christians Proclaiming Salvation in an Evolving World?" *Progress in Theology: The Newsletter of the John Templeton Foundation's Center for Humility Theology*, Vol. 1 [June 1993]: 7). In a theistic view illumined by evolutionary science, the most important truths, in keeping with the idea of continual progress, are to be found not in the beginnings, but in the present and in the future (ibid.).

<sup>7</sup> ibid., Schmitz-Moormann's emphasis.

<sup>8</sup> ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Paul K. Jewett, *God, Creation and Revelation: A Neo-Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 480.

<sup>10</sup> George L. Murphy, "A Theological Argument for Evolution," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* [JASA] Vol. 38 (March 1986), Issue 19. However, in brief response to the claims made above, one may point out that if humanity is evolved from lower life forms, whether it happened entirely through natural processes as Darwin proposes, or through divine guidance of the process as suggested in theistic evolution, there was not a first man who stood as an individual entity separate from the animal kingdom. This means that without an Adam and Eve, the Fall as recorded in Genesis never occurred (cf. Bolton Davidheiser, "Theistic Evolution," in *And God Created*, ed. Kelly L. Segraves (San Diego: Creation-Science Research Center, 1973), Vol. 3, pp. 50–51.

<sup>11</sup> Paula Haigh, *Thirty Theses Against Theistic Evolution* (Louisville: Catholic Center for Creation Research Publications, 1976), p. 55.

**Thompson** *continued from page 23*

continued: “Now Brother Daniells [president of the General Conference] will soon call for a vote. When he does, there is one old hand that will not go up.”

“This hand,” he said as he stretched out his quivering arm, “has not learned how to vote to close what God says should be open.”

Butler “lowered his trembling hand and sat down.”

Olson remembers: “I thrust my right hand into my pocket and said to myself: ‘I know another hand that will not go up!’”

The result? “Not one hand went up! The school was permitted to live. Not one missionary was called home in order to

give the foreign missions offerings to the school.”

Olson’s moral: God will bless when we listen.

My bottom line: I want us to hear about God’s miracles from yesterday and today. I pray that the right people will read this piece. By God’s grace, good things can happen.

<sup>1</sup> Roger J. Morneau, *The Incredible Power of Prayer*, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, New York: Random House, 1981.

<sup>3</sup> C.S. Lewis, “The Efficacy of Prayer,” *The World’s Last Night and Other Essays*, Orlando, FL: Harcourt (1960, 2002), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1901.

<sup>6</sup> A.V. Olson, *Thirteen Crisis Years*, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald (1966, 1981), pp. 95-96.

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Adventist conclusions on solid exegesis of the text. If you would like to add to your reading of Ford a similar book that takes a more historicist approach to Revelation, check out my small volume called *Seven Keys: Unlocking the Secrets of Revelation*.<sup>1</sup> I also plan to write a more detailed book on Revelation 12-14, with careful attention to such Adventist issues as the year-day principle, the remnant, and the Antichrist, without abandoning the best that recent scholarship offers. I will allow others to be the judge of which approach best tracks with the evidence of the text of Revelation.

Let me take this opportunity to offer an appeal to the world church. Desmond Ford is not the only person working on Revelation and other important topics in relative isolation. The church has a deep and continuing need for Bible conferences and working groups where questions and challenges are confronted honestly and openly. We need Bible conferences where the outcome is not pre-determined, but the Bible and the Bible only is the measure by which

opinions are judged. Such conferences could rekindle the spirit of the Adventist pioneers, who wrestled together over the Word and often changed their minds when confronted with the plain teachings of Scripture. For what it is worth, I suspect that then and only then will Ellen White’s prediction be fulfilled—that when the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, there will be seen among us a great revival.<sup>2</sup>

Let me now conclude this review. For all my concerns, it is clear to me that in this book Desmond Ford stayed true to himself and his convictions. Even if Desmond has taken some paths I cannot follow, he has blessed me with his life and I wish him every blessing as well.

*Dr. Jon Paulien is dean of the School of Religion at Loma Linda University in California. He is a biblical scholar and a prolific writer on Adventist thought in general and the book of Revelation in particular.*

<sup>1</sup> Jon Paulien, Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 112-114.

## Articles Needed

Please consider submitting articles in the following areas for publication in *Adventist Today*:

### ■ Epistemology—How Do We Know What We Know?

*What is the role of presuppositions in our beliefs?*

### ■ Beliefs—Can Thinkers Believe? Can Believers Think?

*How do we decide what is by faith and what is by evidence? Must we have concrete evidence for everything we believe? What is the role of science and faith? Are the Bible and science interrelated, or are they separate realities—neither of which directly informs the other?*

### ■ Mission of the Adventist Church Today

*Is our mission still the same as it was in the 19th century? If it is, then why? If it is not, then what is our mission today?*

### ■ Hermeneutics—How Should We Understand the Bible Today?

*What are the key principles or interpretive tools for making sense in today’s culture? What part does culture play in understanding the Bible, in Bible times, today?*

### ■ Social Justice

*How involved should the Adventist Church be in social issues?*

### ■ What Defines an Adventist?

*How much do you need to believe to be an Adventist? The 28 fundamentals? The 13 questions in a baptismal certificate? Believing the Apostles’ Creed? How far can a member stretch the Adventist boundaries and still be an Adventist?*

### ■ What Does an Experience With God Look Like?

*How do you tell a Christian from a non-Christian?*



**QUESTIONS FOR...HEATHER-DAWN SMALL**

by Jeff Boyd, *Adventist Today* Online contributing writer



I talked with Heather-Dawn Small about the Enditnow Campaign, which aims to curb violence against women. Heather-Dawn is the director for Women's Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Prior to moving to the General Conference in 2001, she held the position of Children's and Women's Ministries Director for the Caribbean Union Conference. As she travels the world, she has three passions: to see more women involved in evangelism, to encourage women to be involved in ministry to others, and to share the joy that God has given her in spite of life's many challenges.

**Tell me about the Enditnow Campaign. What is it, and what are your goals?**

The main goal for this part of the campaign is to raise awareness and to educate the church and the community about the problem of violence against women.

Women have held rallies in the communities. They've held marches. They've gone to malls and put up stalls where they collect signatures for the campaign. They've gone door-to-door getting signatures. They've gone to supermarkets and put up tables to get signatures. We've received stories from all over the world—from Europe, India, South America, the Caribbean, Africa, everywhere. Go to our website and find issues of our newsletter, *Mosaic!* with stories from different countries. Since we launched this campaign, we've had stories in almost every issue over the past year.

Many of the European countries welcomed this campaign because it helps to give them a point of connection with the community. Normally we go into a community with our Bible lessons to win people to the Lord, but in post-Christian countries, that's difficult. So you've got to have some way to connect with them—other than something that is biblical—that will show them the love of God in action.

**Something that is deeply rooted in both the biblical tradition and the community?**

Yes, something they will connect to, something they are willing to support, something that speaks to their minds and their hearts. That's what the Enditnow Campaign did in many first-world countries.

This whole issue of winning the world to Christ is more than just a Bible study. We've got to deal with what people deal with. We've got to deal with people's pain, like Jesus did. So we can't ignore issues like this—not any longer, not if we're going to be relevant to the world in which we live.

**You mentioned signatures. Tell me about these.**

We're at just over 600,000 signatures right now. But the goal is to get 1 million signatures, from more than 200 countries, and then to present these signatures to General Secretary Ban Ki-moon at the United Nations. The reason for presenting it to the United Nations is to raise the awareness of the global community that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is doing something on this particular issue.

**Can you give me a description of the problem, both within the church and within society? How significant of a problem are we talking about?**

Well, the United Nations calls it a pandemic. That's just to tell you how severe this is. It is seen as a disease because it has affected so many people, so many women. And then from them, it affects their families.

The largest part of this particular issue is the domestic violence issue, the abuse issue.<sup>2</sup> But in addition to that, you have a number of other issues—female genital mutilation, early childhood marriages, dowry murders, honor killings, trafficking of women, forced prostitution, and rape (that's a huge one). For example, in the United States, rape is our second biggest issue after domestic violence. A woman is raped every 16 seconds in this country. And so that is one of the areas we are focusing on in this particular Division.

Depending on what country you go to, how big a problem violence against women is will increase or decrease. For example, in this country dowry murders and honor killings are very minute, but in other countries [there are] honor killings and what's called daughter neglect/son preference, where baby girls are killed and where baby boys are left to live because they are preferred over girls. If a father has too many girls, he doesn't want more; for him that's just mouths to feed. Dowry killings are something you find in India, in the Middle East, and some other countries. So it depends on what country you're looking at.

**You mentioned the United Nations. Do you have ties with campaigns like the UN's "Say NO" initiative?**

At the beginning of each year at the United Nations, there is a conference called the Commission on the Status of Women. Women come from NGOs and governments to discuss issues. One of the big issues at this last meeting was violence against women. That's something we go to each year, so we are able to share our information with a number of different campaigns and they share with us. We keep each other informed.



# Adventist Man

A SATIRICAL LOOK AT ADVENTIST LIFE

## True Meaning of 144,000 Pagan by Association? 30-Year-Old Debate

**Can you explain to me the significance of the number 144,000 and why people are so interested in it?**

A great question—one that has tremendous impact on our quality of life. For years scholars have debated the mysterious number found in Revelation chapters 7 and 14. However, in recent times Adventists have not only discovered the true meaning of this number but have been basking in its blessings. The number reflects the annual base salary in dollars for those who work for Adventist Health System. This wonderful company has thrown off denominational remuneration restraints in order to recruit the brightest and the best the church has to offer. And with such a high salary offering, you know they are also getting the most spiritual. Why else would pastors, teachers, communicators, and church administrators—people with token hospital and business experience—leave their church posts

and sign up? May God bless Adventist Wealth—I mean, Health—System in all they do.

**Does celebrating Christmas make you a pagan?**

No more than sitting in church makes you a Christian. So have no fear, and enjoy your festivus pole.

**What do you think of the recent insights by Desmond Ford in *Adventist Today*?**

Recent in terms of when printed or recent in terms of when thought up? 'Cause one is recent and the other seems like reheated leftovers from a 30-year-old debate. That said, I wonder what new titles Herbert Douglas and George Knight will choose when they publish their old material with new book covers? I mean, seriously, these guys are supposed to be scholars—not Union administrators or Leslie Pollard recycling camp meeting sermons.

**Do you have a tough question? Adventist man has “the answer.” As a former member of “the remnant of the remnant,” Adventist Man was ranked 8,391 of the 144,000—and working his way up. Now he relies solely on grace and friendship with Jesus. You can email him at [atoday@atoday.com](mailto:atoday@atoday.com).**

**Talking about partnerships, I'm curious to learn more about the partnership between your department and ADRA. Why did you decide to work together, and what are the benefits of collaborating?**

There was a donor who wanted to donate some money to ADRA but was very specific that it was to be given to a campaign that dealt with violence against women, so [ADRA] approached us. Now ADRA had the money; we had the work force. Our part was to get this information to our sisters in every church, keep motivating them, and receive signatures from them.

**How can individuals and congregations get involved with the Enditnow Campaign?**

Well, there are a number of things they can do. One is that they can visit our website, [www.enditnow.org](http://www.enditnow.org), which gives many resources and ideas they can download and use in their churches. We have the petition online. We also have a little “Take a Stand” pledge card. They [can] get graphics for banners from the website. There's also a video they can download and show in their churches. It's very powerful.<sup>3</sup>

We suggest that church members and Women's Ministries leaders work with their local pastor to receive his advice and support. We don't want people going off and doing their own thing. Also, if they can work with their pastor, then they may be able to get a day on their church calendar. We have an Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day,<sup>4</sup> but we can't wait for the whole year until that date comes along, so we ask church members to work with their church pastor and get a date. It may be a Sunday when they go out into a mall, into their communities—something that the entire church gets involved in.

Then we also suggest that they get a team to work with who can help plan and implement the campaign. They can invite people from the community to talk on this issue of violence against women and how it impacts their particular country. It's important for the speaker to make the topic of interest and value to the people who are listening. For this event, church members can invite non-Adventists to their church and make it a community event.

If church members want to get involved in doing something to make an impact, we tell them to look in their local communities for things like halfway homes, which shelter abused women. Go and find out what we can do. Can we make care packages? Can we assist in some way? Do they need volunteer help? We need to work alongside whomever is in the community already working on this problem. I've seen that work around the world.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.adventistwomensministries.org/index.php?id=25>

<sup>2</sup> For more on this topic, see René Drumm, Marciana Popescu, Gary Hopkins, and Linda Spady, “Abuse in the Adventist Church,” *Adventist Review*, Oct. 11, 2007, <http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=1401>.

<sup>3</sup> You can also purchase an Enditnow Action Kit from AdventSource at <http://www.adventsource.org/as20/product.aspx?ID=36145>.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://adventistwomensministries.org/index.php?id=125>

# Where Is the Adventist Church Headed?

*Change is in the air for the Seventh-day Adventist Church!*

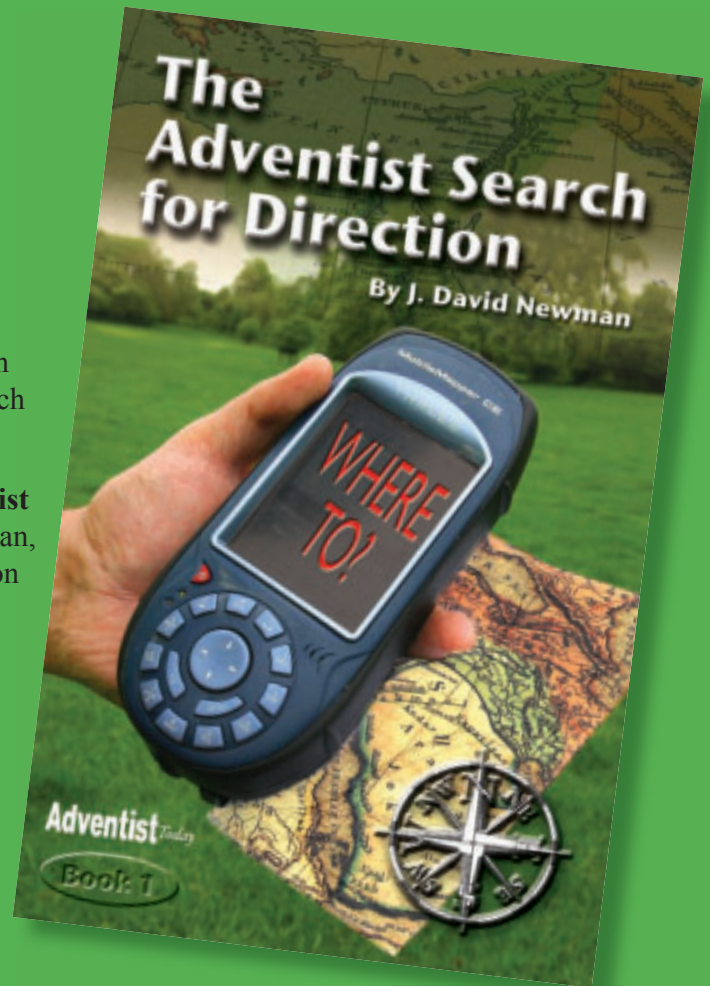
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**About the Author:** Dr. Newman is a highly successful pastor whose church has doubled in size and now numbers 700 souls since he became its pastor a few years ago. Son of missionary parents who has lived in many parts of the world and for many years edited *Ministry* magazine for the General Conference, Dr. Newman is considered one of Adventism’s most successful pastors and sources of ideas for expanding and growing the church in changing times.

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