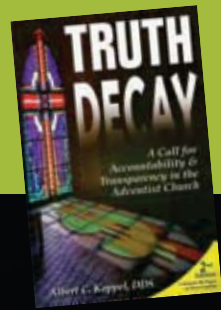


Graham Maxwell: A
Theological Retrospective

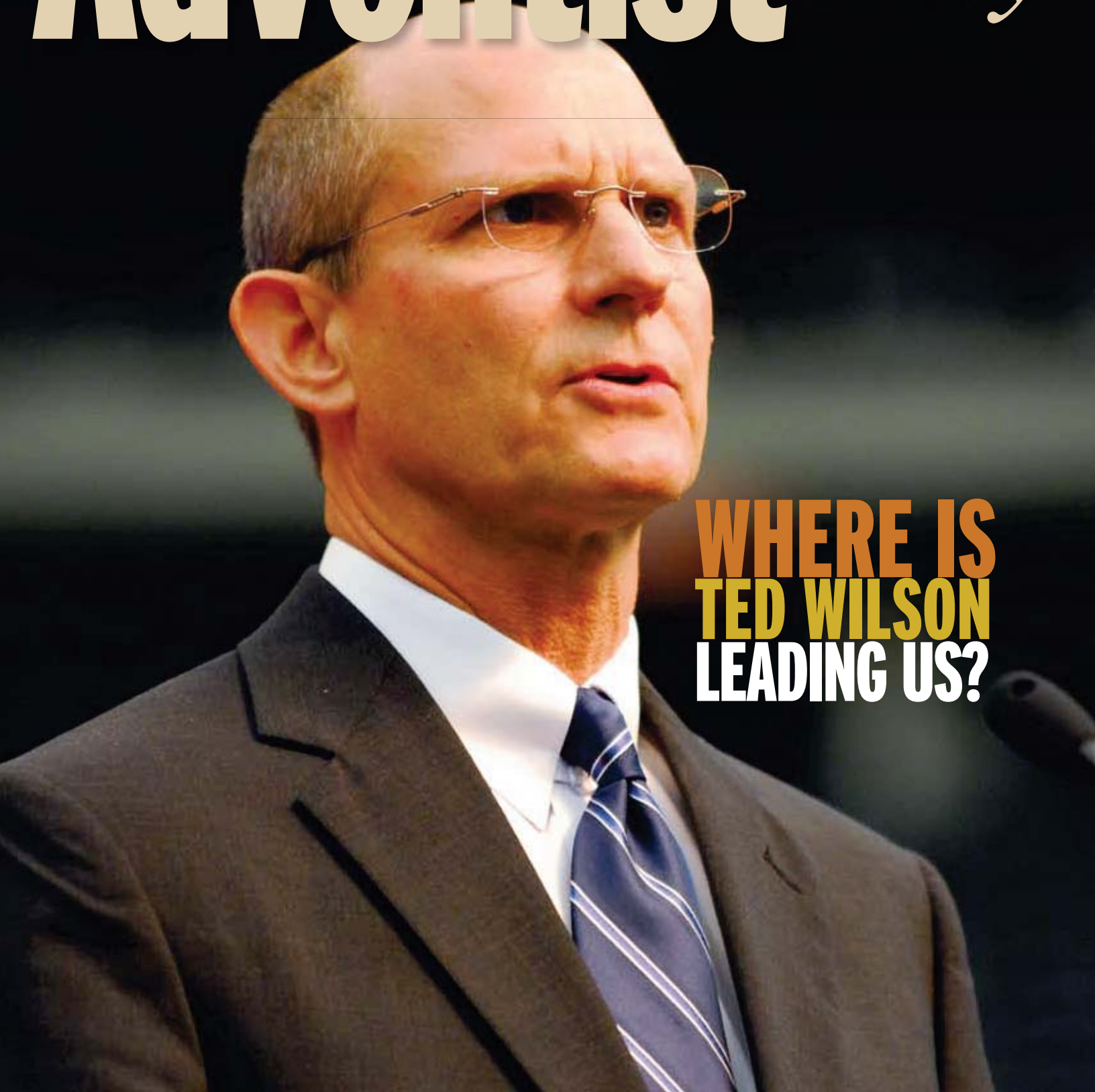
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Adventist *Today*



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TED WILSON
LEADING US?**

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Science Is Not Enough

J. David Newman

About two years ago, an intense discussion was taking place on the *Adventist Today* website regarding the role of science as it pertained to evolution and the Bible. Person A was absolutely sure that science proved that life on earth was millions of years old, while Person B believed that life had been around for only thousands of years.

Neither side was convincing the other. So Person B said: “In the end it does not really matter what you believe in this area since we are saved by faith, not by knowledge. The important thing is that you have a relationship with Jesus and by faith have accepted his gracious offer of salvation.”

Person B then asked Person A if he had this relationship.

Person A’s response was terse and angry. He said it was none of Person B’s business what his relationship with Jesus was. Unwittingly he had answered the question. He did not have a saving relationship with Jesus. For Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16, *NIV*).

All who have a relationship with Jesus are happy to share with others what Jesus means to them. “Christ’s love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now!

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (2 Cor. 5:14-17, *NLT*).

There are some things that science cannot tell us. It cannot tell us there is a God. It cannot tell us that we are sinners. It cannot tell us that God came as a man to save us. Science does not tell us that we are saved through the blood of Jesus. Science does not tell us the meaning of life.

I am making the assumption that the readers of *Adventist Today* magazine and its website are Christians. I am making the assumption that these readers believe in God and believe that the Bible tells us something about God. I am also making the assumption that just as science has certain authority, so the Bible has certain authority.

I have also come to the conclusion that the most important contribution *Adventist Today* can make is to help people find a relationship with Jesus and grow in that relationship. For if there is a God and if there is a future life, then it seems clear that we need the Bible to help us be ready for that future life.

Paul wrote a strong letter to the church at Corinth. It was a divided church. There were different factions in the church (1 Cor. 1:10-12), just as there are different factions in the Adventist Church today (read the *Adventist Today* blogs). What was Paul’s answer to these factions? His answer was not to rely on the logic and wisdom of humans but to rely on the grace of God, no matter how foolish it might seem.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.’

“Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor. 1:18-25, *NIV*).

Where is our “stumbling block?” Science is vital, but it is not enough when it comes to ultimate realities. Be certain where your faith lies.

Science does not tell us that we are saved through the blood of Jesus. Science does not tell us the meaning of life.



Death Before Sin

The discussion of “Death Before Sin?” in the Fall 2010 issue of *Adventist Today* was timely and much appreciated. J. David Newman presented a compelling case for sin before death, invoking relevant and persuasive Scripture support. Thanks to the AT editorial staff for staging a discussion of a subject that has become a controversial issue in our church.

R.W. FANSELAU
Ooltewah, Tennessee

Counsel for Elder Wilson

In response to the editorial by J. David Newman [Fall 2010], why is it that we Adventists seem to feel a need to produce a list of Ellen White quotes to substantiate a point of doctrine or any spiritual thought? I see this in almost every article of the *Adventist Review*, most every Adventist pulpit, and even in this *Adventist Today*.

Let me make it clear that I am not anti-Ellen White. I do value her writing thought and prophetic calling. But I seek to verify every point of doctrine and spiritual thought by Scripture alone! Is there no value in *sola scriptura*?

I am not of the generation of Adventists who seek to put Ellen White and her writings on the back burner. I use

her in my study to help me understand and expand my understanding of specific Scriptures. That can stand alone in explaining my position.

The reason I take exception to the above-mentioned practice is that it often stands in the way of getting close to the heart of a person who has never heard of Adventists. I would like to see Ellen White grace our thoughts (as in study time) but not our printed page.

I am not against the premise of this editorial, only the way it is laid out. Indeed, Christ our Righteousness should permeate our every thought, every action—the very breath we breathe!

REED QUALLEY
Battle Ground, Washington

Editor's Response:

Qualley makes an excellent point. It is not the usual practice of this editor to quote Ellen White. But you will notice that the editorial was primarily for Elder Wilson's benefit, and he would respect greatly what Ellen White says since he regards her as a very high authority.

Paulien's Review of Ford

I am grateful to Jon Paulien for his courteous and generous review of my recent book on Revelation [Winter 2011]. Jon has my deepest respect. Nevertheless, for the sake of readers, some comments should be made on the latter part of his review.

I do own a number of the books Jon guesses that I may not have seen. And I have studied them in detail. The ones he names do not have equal value, and most of them are ignored by recent scholarly commentaries on Revelation. Also, he has failed to mention Richard Bauckham, who surpasses in quality by far a number Jon has invoked. I have read Bauckham's book.

There is nothing strange in my comments about the Jews on my page 4. Let all read and see. Professor F.F. Bruce agreed with my comments (found in *The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology*, p. 259, published by the University Press of America) that the Apocalypse is an enlarged form of the Olivet Discourse, and my statement to which Jon takes exception is a platitude with the best scholars in Apocalyptic.

Regarding “all doctrinal truths have their spring in the fact of creation,” that too is a platitude among Bible scholars, and I am puzzled by Jon's aversion to it. Only the Creator could redeem.

As for Daniel 9:24-27, again I refer the reader to my doctoral thesis supervised by F.F. Bruce on this point. The Olivet Discourse revolves around the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple foretold in Daniel 9.

But my main concern is twofold. John faults me for believing that “Daniel 8 is all about Antiochus Epiphanes.” Here I challenge my friend. Find for me any apocalyptic scholar, respected by his peers worldwide, who does not agree with me on this. The point is important because the typical Antichrist, Antiochus, is the shadow behind the Antichrist figures of Revelation 13. Even a new Adventist girl, who had never been exposed to the heights and depths of apocalypticism, wrote this in her essay for me on Revelation. I punished her severely—by marrying her. (But I should add that though I believe Antiochus IS in Daniel 8, I believe him to be there as the type of all future antichrists.)

My second concern is this: Jon faults me because I “largely discard the historicist tradition so familiar in Adventist evangelism.” He is right. I do. But he is wrong in not following suit. And again I challenge him: find for me

ANY apocalyptic scholar respected by his worldwide peers who does NOT agree with me in this. No scholar of general esteem accepts the historicist emphasis on finding dates in the prophecies (usually done in order to damn Roman Catholics). The words of Christ in Acts 1:7 forbid such exegetical historicism.

Again I thank Jon for his very Christian wording in his review, and I wish him and his wife and family God's richest blessing.

DES FORD
Shelly Beach, Queensland, Australia

Cain's Wife

Richard Coffen's article, "Whom Did Cain Marry?" has two major flaws in his treatment of the Genesis story of Cain. The first has to do with incest. Three times in the article, Coffen takes it as absolute that incest cannot be an option for Cain.

In Genesis, incest is an issue only when it breaches the generational divide. It is clearly a problem in the stories of Lot with his daughters (Genesis 19), Reuben with Bilhah (Gen. 35:22; 49:4) and Judah with Tamar (Genesis 38). Incest is not considered problematic when the generation line is not crossed, as when Jacob married a pair of sisters (Genesis 29), and Abraham shows no embarrassment over his marriage to his half-sister (Gen. 20:12). In a nice piece of irony, it is the pagan king Abimelek who assumes that "sister" is exclusive of "wife." If we move on to Exodus, it is again ironic that Moses, the lawgiver, had incestuous parents, for his mother Jochabed was aunt to his father Amram (Ex. 6:20). If you check out the incest laws of Leviticus 18 and 20, you will find that most of them do not deal with genetic issues. The issue is family order. And Genesis only concerns itself with incest when the most serious boundary of family order is breached: the dividing line between generations.

In short, there is really no incest issue with Cain marrying his own sister—at least, not one that the text of Genesis would mention.

The second issue is how Genesis 4 is read. Genesis 3 tells how sin corrupted the first couple and their world. Genesis 4 continues the story, showing how their world and family was further corrupted. Of course, there are several parallels between chapters 3 and 4, and chapter 4 is best understood in light of chapter 3.

In chapter 3, Adam and his wife try to cover themselves with garments made of leaves, then they hide in the foliage of the garden. Both are insufficient. In the end God provides them with clothing that is sufficient—made from the skins of animals. He does this before the couple is expelled from the garden, which means the animals that provided the skins are killed within the deathless paradise. Is it any surprise that Cain's offering of vegetation is rejected, but Abel's offering of livestock is accepted? There seems to be a qualitative difference in the types of offering, a difference with roots in the previous chapter.

So Cain finds himself feeling a need for protection, and he builds himself a "city." The term means "fortress," and it indicates Cain's insecurity and his desire to not wander. This fortress functions like the clothing of Adam and his wife, self-protection of human design. Cain's city begins a motif in Genesis, for the builders of Babel build their city lest they be scattered (Gen. 11:4), and Lot, tired of wandering the highlands of Canaan with his uncle, longs for the Eden-like Valley of Siddim, where a city promises an end to his nomad existence (Gen. 13:10-11). Of course, both cities are false refuges, destined for destruction.

JIM MILLER
Madison, Wisconsin

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?

F E A T U R E

A portrait of Dr. A. Graham Maxwell, an older man with glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and striped tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

DR. A. GRAHAM MAXWELL:
A THEOLOGICAL

BY JONATHAN GALLAGHER

“GOD WILL SAVE ALL WHO TRUST HIM.” THIS SIMPLE RESTATEMENT of the principle of “righteousness by faith” is quintessentially Maxwellian. It sums up much of his theology—that it should be all about God, not us; that salvation is to do with relationship and not legal status with God; and that theology should be expressed in simple words that can be readily understood.

Through his ministry, which included many years of lecturing at Loma Linda University and Pacific Union College, Maxwell influenced many with his warm personality and his emphasis on a positive picture of God in the setting of the Great Controversy. His position was labeled “the Larger View,” or “the Trust-Healing Model,” or “the Friendship Model,” but he refused all labels, wanting to go beyond such categorizations and rather examine the truth based on evidence.

His preferred medium was audio, as witness the many hundreds of audio-cassette tapes that covered camp meeting presentations, sermons, weeks of prayer, and Biblical book-by-book studies, as well as the weekly Sabbath school discussions.

Maxwell authored the following books: *You Can Trust the Bible, I Want to Be Free, Can God Be Trusted?, Servants or Friends? Another Look at God, and Be Careful Who You Trust*. He was also the principal contributor to the Romans section in the *SDA Bible Commentary*.

As always, it is hard to choose primary themes among the myriad of theological elements developed in the thousands of hours of Maxwell’s tape ministry.¹ However, the following are surely among the most significant.

The Great Controversy Over God’s Character

The beginning point—and the overarching background—to Maxwell’s theology were the issues and consequences of the Great Controversy understood in a relational rather than forensic way. The arguments at the heart of the Great Controversy were, for Maxwell, far more over the nature and character of God than matters of legal obedience. This “universe-wide” setting provided Maxwell with the means to explore the consequences of different perspectives on the nature of God—not in terms of the classically

analyzed concepts of omnipresence, omnipotence, etc., but as people relate to God and his essential character.

So, for example, Maxwell contrasted the “larger Great Controversy view” with the “narrow this-little-planet view,”² and he asserted that “this whole plan for our salvation needs to be reviewed in this larger setting of the Great Controversy over the government and character of God.”³ He added, “That’s the contribution we Adventists have to make—to put Christian doctrine, which is the everlasting good news, to be sure, in this larger setting of a universe-wide controversy over the character and government of God.”⁴

The Importance of Trust

This then led into a discussion of what it means to relate to God. In the words of his little book *Can God Be Trusted?*, the issue is the trustworthiness of God as challenged by Satan. “Can God be trusted? is the ultimate question in the Great Controversy. Can He, or can He not be trusted?”⁵

To some it’s a *sine qua non*, or even offensive; *of course God can be trusted!* However, as Maxwell pointed out, if God is viewed as portrayed by Satan, then clearly he is not to be trusted. . . . But, Maxwell affirmed, “God is not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be.”⁶

According to Maxwell, trust is the central aspect of the whole Great Controversy. “It is significant to remember, of course, that trust is what the Great Controversy is all about. All God asks of us is trust—Old Testament, New Testament, before sin came in, and for the rest of eternity—for where there is mutual trust, and trustworthiness, all is well. Even for us sinners, if we trust God, He can readily heal all the damage done. All God ever asks of us is trust.”⁷

The Significance of Truth and Evidence

Trust cannot be based on “mere claims,” Maxwell stated. Consequently, the demonstration that God is trustworthy must lie in a revelation of the truth. “The truth wins us to repentance, and the truth wins us to trust. And to be won back to trust is to be won

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back to a right relationship with our God. And God can save and heal all who trust Him.”⁸

Truth has to be based on evidence, Maxwell concluded. “There is a solution, and we need to help people see how you can put all the parts of the Bible together, and all of those parts come together in the one central theme: the truth about God. In the setting of this Great Controversy over His character and government, God hasn’t claimed to be worthy of our trust. He has shown that He is. Some of us find the weight of evidence more than enough on which to base our decision to trust Him, and to be willing to listen, and to let Him heal all the damage done.”⁹

Truth based on the demonstrated evidence is a recurring theme in Maxwell’s theology, believing in “a friendly God who

**“God says,
‘I can
completely
heal the
damage done,
and all I ask
is that you
trust Me.’”**

wants friendly, trusting, trustworthy people who have *chosen* to trust Him because they have been convinced by the costly evidence that God indeed is that kind of a Person.”¹⁰

“How readily God could convince us on the basis of His authoritative declarations. He being so infinitely powerful, surely if He were to speak to us with authority we would believe—or does it work that way? He chooses rather to convince us on the basis of evidence.”¹¹

Sin: Imposed Penalty or Natural Consequence?

So what went wrong in God’s universe? What is the core issue here? For Maxwell it was a broken relationship far more than an infraction of rules. At the same time, the results of that broken relationship are those of natural consequence rather than sin having an imposed penalty. Maxwell quoted Romans 6:23 as “Sin pays its wage, and the wage is death.” He then commented: “And Jesus was made to be sin, though He knew no sin. And He died the sinner’s death. And the angels looking on said, ‘So that’s what You meant. You did tell the truth.’”¹²

So much of the imposition of punishment, particularly in the Old Testament, was for Maxwell a question of “emergency measures”—God having to act in a certain and rather unpleasant

way because of the circumstances. “Some still seem to need the thunders of Sinai to be reverent and take God seriously. And God is gracious enough to use such emergency measures with those who only respect a show of power. Until hopefully someday they will learn to regard God with reverence and humility and respect, without any of those emergency measures.”¹³

Examples of these “emergency measures,” as defined by Maxwell, include the Flood, the “thunders of Sinai,” Elisha and the she-bears, Israel in the wilderness, the sacrificial system, circumcision, etc.

He stated, “I believe the whole legal theological approach is an emergency measure.”¹⁴

Salvation Is Healing

So for Maxwell, salvation was always about healing more than “an adjustment of your legal standing” before God. He pointed out: “You can see why the New Testament word for ‘salvation’ means literally ‘healing.’ To save is to heal. This is why salvation for us Adventists includes so very much. For some it simply means being forgiven and admitted to the kingdom, never mind your condition. But to us it affects the whole person. Salvation involves the restoration of everything that has been lost, and look how we have been affected physically, mentally, socially and spiritually! Salvation involves the restoration of all of this.”¹⁵

“Just to be forgiven for sin does not make one safe to save. There has to be some healing taking place. There has to be rebirth, conversion. There has to be faith taking the place of rebelliousness. There is a real change here. That’s why I like ‘set right’ rather than ‘justify,’ which has connotations of a judicial act, a mere legal adjustment.”¹⁶

“Perfection is not a requirement; it’s an offer of healing. If only we could get away from this legal model of the plan of salvation into the trust/healing model, then perfection is marvelous news. God says, ‘I can completely heal the damage done, and all I ask is that you trust Me.’”¹⁷

The Cross and the Atonement

It is in the area of soteriology that Maxwell was seen as being most controversial. He was often accused of believing the classical Moral Influence Theory, a charge he denied. However, he did reject some concepts of Atonement since for him they did not speak well of God. He also widened the concept of Atonement beyond that of payment and substitution. Note these comments:

“Before sin entered this universe, there was atonement.

Atonement does not have to do with sin. There was atonement before sin. There was “at-one-ment”—perfect unity and harmony—throughout the universe because there was trust. Where there was mutual—where there is even now—mutual trust and trustworthiness, there is perfect unity, harmony, friendship, security, safety, freedom.

“And the whole purpose of the plan of salvation is to restore oneness, unity, harmony in the universe. Which, of course, has to be based on a recovery of trust and faith. Which, in turn, cannot be commanded, but must be based on the great, costly weight of evidence. Without trust, there can be no at-one-ment.”¹⁸

“Even angels needed the message of the cross. And they did *not* need adjustment of their legal standing, because they had never sinned. But without the meaning and message of the cross, we are told that angels would not be secure against apostasy and defection. For the eternal peace and security of the universe, even loyal angels needed the meaning of Christ’s suffering and death. You can truly say, Christ died for sinless angels too.”¹⁹

“It all depends on how one understands why Jesus had to die. Because one can leave from the foot of the cross with a very fearsome picture of God, saying to oneself, ‘So that’s what You’re going to do to me in the end, if I sin. I appreciate You doing it to Your Son to warn me.’ So with mixed feelings of fear and appreciation, one leaves Calvary, determined to be good.”²⁰

Friends of God


It’s here that Maxwell’s theology finds its strongest expression. In identifying us as God’s friends, rather than his servants, Maxwell spoke to the issues of choice in relationship, of doing right because it is right rather than through obligation, and to what God most wants: the freely-given love of his children. So aside from his love for Romans, Maxwell’s favorite texts were John 15:15 and 16:26.

“We should make the decision for ourselves to rise above the legal emergency picture, which God gave with a picture of trembling servants doing what they’re told; and make the rest of the move in John 15:15 and become His understanding friends. To the servant, sin is dangerous because it offends God. To the friend, sin is dangerous because of the damage it does to the sinner. And there’s a real difference right down the line.”²¹

“God is a friendly God, and He will save all friendly people. Why only friendly people? I think it’s just because heaven is a friendly place, and God is a friendly God who presides over the universe.”²²

These concepts are developed in his book *Servants or Friends? Another Look at God*.

“You can force people to be your servants. But you cannot compel them to be your friends. ... Which one of us would have dared to approach God with the incredible idea of John 15:15? ‘We are no longer willing to be called your servants. We insist that from now on we be addressed as friends!’... I believe it is a great honor to be God’s servant, and especially to be regarded as a faithful one. It is also a high privilege to be called God’s child. But most of all, I’d rather be His friend. A trusting and trusted friend.”²³

These concepts Maxwell embodied in life. For him God is friendly and loves us—even to dying on the cross for us. God values nothing higher than our freedom and wishes to heal us, remake us, and spend eternity together with his trusted friends. 

Dr. Jonathan Gallagher, former UN representative of the Adventist Church, facilitates the Sabbath school study discussions at www.sabbathschoolonthemove.org and is also translating the New Testament into modern English (www.freebibleversion.org).

¹ Many of Graham Maxwell’s tapes can be found online at: <http://pineknoll.org/all-audio-resources>.

² A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?*, PUC tape #3.

³ A. Graham Maxwell, *The Picture of God in All 66*, Isaiah tape, Riverside, CA, 1982.

⁴ A. Graham Maxwell, *Perfection—Requirement or Generous Offer?*, San Diego, CA, 1983.

⁵ A. Graham Maxwell, A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?*, PUC tape #2.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ A. Graham Maxwell, *The Picture of God in All 66*, Daniel tape, Riverside, CA, 1982.

⁸ A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?*, PUC tape #7.

⁹ A. Graham Maxwell, *Perfection—Requirement or Generous Offer?*, San Diego, CA, 1983.

¹⁰ A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?*, PUC tape #12.

¹¹ A. Graham Maxwell, *Faith, Righteousness, and Salvation*, Number 18, 1975.

¹² A. Graham Maxwell, *Atonement and Your Picture of God #1*, San Diego Forum, 1993.

¹³ A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?*, PUC tape #5.

¹⁴ A. Graham Maxwell, *Atonement and Your Picture of God #2*, San Diego Forum, 1993.

¹⁵ A. Graham Maxwell, *Faith, Righteousness, and Salvation*, Number 26, 1975.

¹⁶ A. Graham Maxwell, *Faith, Righteousness, and Salvation*, Number 4, 1975.

¹⁷ A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?*, PUC tape #7.

¹⁸ A. Graham Maxwell, *Atonement and Your Picture of God #1*, San Diego Forum, 1993.

¹⁹ A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?*, PUC tape #8.

²⁰ A. Graham Maxwell, *Faith, Righteousness, and Salvation*, Number 5, 1975.

²¹ A. Graham Maxwell, *Atonement and Your Picture of God #2*, San Diego Forum, 1993.

²² A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends?*, PUC tape #9.

²³ A. Graham Maxwell, *Servants or Friends? Another Look at God*, pp. 23-24.



TED N.C. WILSON, WITHIN HOURS OF his election to lead the 12-million-plus-member Seventh-day Adventist Church, said to the assembled delegates: "Seventh-day Adventist Church members, hold your leaders, pastors, local churches, educators, institutions, and administrative organizations accountable to the highest standards of belief based on a literal understanding of Scripture." We accept President Wilson at his word and welcome his invitation to hold him accountable for his statements.

As the spiritual leader of a global religious organization, it is important that we who are part of this community of believers understand our leader's

finds its identity as the last-day people. This prophetic church, Wilson reminds his audience, accepts and believes all 10 of God's commandments, including the fourth commandment to remember the Lord's holy Sabbath day. "The observance of the Sabbath is not only a sign of His creatorship in the beginning, but will be *the* sign of God's people in the last days," he says.

God's Care for Adventist Church

"God has carved out of this chaotic world the Seventh-day Adventist Church," Wilson continued. "We are to be a peculiar people. God's *remnant* people... We have a unique

WHERE IS TED WILSON LEADING US?

BY LAWRENCE G. DOWNING

vision for the church. One method to do this is to examine Wilson's articles and statements, including his inaugural sermon "Go Forward, Not Backward!" published in three print editions of *Adventist Review*, the official voice of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Inaugural Sermon

Wilson began his sermon with an affirmation that the Seventh-day Adventist Church "is on a heaven-directed journey, and we are almost home." No surprise here, nor in his affirmation of the Bible as the foundation for all church belief. "[We] see in its pages our unique prophetic identity and mission."

Scripture is where Wilson finds the assurance that the Adventist members are "remnant" people and where the church

message of hope and a mandate to proclaim God's grace to the world."

Put yourself in the place of the representatives of other denominations who sat in the audience when Wilson first delivered these words. What would you think about the claims Wilson makes? Might you conclude from his statement that other Christians have a less significant role in fulfilling God's purposes? Is there a possibility you might wonder if Adventists held to a hierarchy of holiness within God's kingdom, with Adventists at the top?

In his next statement, Wilson attempts to provide some assurance that the answer to the questions above is no. "We rely," he says, "wholly on Jesus and our relationship with Him for our salvation. We do not obtain salvation through works, but through the grace of Christ."

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Once again, consider what the non-Adventists heard. There were no qualifiers or exemptions to his statement that salvation is through Christ's grace alone. Would it not be reasonable for the non-Adventists, who look to the same Jesus for salvation and who have an equally vital relationship with him, to conclude that they—like the Adventists—are saved by grace? Might these listeners wonder if they understood correctly what Wilson appeared to imply: the non-Adventists “saved” ones are not quite as saved as the Adventists?

The Remnant People

Wilson turns to an Adventist essential: the Spirit of Prophecy. “Revelation 12:17 tells us that God's remnant people will ‘have the testimony of Jesus Christ.’ Revelation 19:10 explains that ‘the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ The same Spirit who moved the holy men of old has again, in these last days, raised up a messenger for the Lord. ... the Spirit of Prophecy ... God used Ellen G. White as a humble servant to provide inspired insight about Scripture, prophecy, health, education, relationships, mission, families, and much more.” It is important that Wilson quotes Revelation 12:17 from a “correct” (i.e., the King James Version or similar) translation. The New Revised Standard Version, and others, translate Revelation 12:17 as “...hold the testimony of Jesus.”

The application of “remnant” to the Adventist Church opens the possibility that church members consider themselves to be in a class of their own as compared to other Christians. Wilson deflects this conclusion by stating that when Adventists use the term “remnant church” or “remnant people,” it is never to be in a “self-centered, exclusive manner. We are to be the humblest people on earth... ” By this warning, he acknowledges that it is difficult to hear the quiet call to

humility amidst the hallelujahs of self-congratulation.

Literal Interpretation of Scripture

Wilson moves next into the theme that gave the title to his presentation: Go forward, not backward! He said, “Stand firm for God's Word as it is literally read and understood.” Very clear. Take the Bible literally. Do not meddle with the clear statements that we find.

Well and good! I assume the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists will establish a defense fund for those charged with murder when they fulfill the literal reading of scripture. The command is to stone the adulterous person or the person who may offer sacrifice to an idol or the one who is a wizard, or the blasphemer, or the rebellious son (Lev. 20:2, 27; 24:14). Deuteronomy 21:21 and other texts demand this punishment! How will President Wilson explain to his wife that he has assisted others to stone her grandson when he refused to follow his father's commands? This is a hard saying the president sets forth! Lest any doubt he means what he says, Wilson quotes from *Selected Messages*, Book 1, p. 170: “Do not overstrain the meaning of sentences in the Bible in an effort to bring forth something odd in order to please the fancy. Take the Scripture as they read.”

I do not believe Wilson intends nor wishes for anyone to kill a disobedient child! He would be the first to point out that such behavior is incompatible with Jesus' teaching and that such cruelty counters everything we understand about what scripture teaches. However, his statement to take scripture literally has no qualifier, nor does he call the hearer to consider the scriptural context before acting on a command found in Scripture. We find in his statements no ground for interpretation or application of common

sense. He has set a standard that, as we will see below, not even he will follow.

Trends to Avoid

Wilson continues: “Go forward, not backward! ... Do not succumb to the mistaken idea, gaining support even in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, of accepting worship or evangelistic outreach methods merely because they are new and ‘trendy.’ ... Don't reach out to movements or megachurch centers outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which promise you spiritual success based on faulty theology. Stay away from non-biblical spiritual disciplines or methods of spiritual formation that are rooted in mysticism such as contemplative prayer, entering prayer, and the emerging church movement in which they are promoted. Look *within* the Seventh-day Adventist Church to humble pastors, evangelists, biblical scholars, leaders, and departmental directors who can provide evangelistic methods and programs that are based on solid biblical principles and ‘The Great Controversy Theme.’”

Once more Wilson offers no qualifiers. The hearers are left with the impression that megachurches are evil. How inclusive is this? Loma Linda, Kettering, and other Adventist churches fall within the megachurch category. Are they to be viewed with suspicion? How do his statements apply to those who seek to build relationships with other Christian groups? Is there nothing we can learn from others? Do we have a corner on truth? How does his condemnation of contemplative prayer rest with those who find this practice meaningful to their spiritual lives? Is there no room for alternative worship forms?

Beware of Dangerous Methods of Biblical Interpretation

“Go forward, not backward! Let Scripture

be its own interpreter. Our church has long held to the historical-biblical . . . method of understanding Scripture The historical-critical method of explaining the Bible, however, puts a scholar or individual above the plain approach of the Scriptures and gives inappropriate license to decide what he or she perceives as truth based on the resources and education of the critic. This type of approach leads people to distrust God and His Word.”

With this statement Wilson has taken away significant tools from the interpreter who seeks to better understand Scripture. These are the methods that help us to determine when and why a passage or book was written. Wilson thwarts the interpreter’s ability to consider the social, political, or religious context of a particular writing. Is he aware that the methods he decries are those commonly used to help us understand Ellen White’s writings? For example, she states that people should not buy or ride bicycles. Interpreters explain that in Australia, where she lived at the time, people were spending inordinate time and money on bicycles. She addresses a particular time and circumstance. To help us reach this understanding, the interpreter turns to higher criticism. Wilson is aware that the General Conference (GC) assigned Dr. Fred Veltman to do a study of the sources found in *The Desire of Ages*. This is source study, a tool of higher criticism. Is it ethical to label as harmful a system that has often been used by the Adventist Church to serve, when deemed necessary, its own purposes? Is it helpful for the General Conference president to use his bully pulpit to cast suspicion upon loyal Adventist scholars whose specialized skills assist them to better understanding God’s Word?

From this sermon—his first public statement after his election to the office of General Conference president—and in the subsequent articles published in

the *Adventist Review*, we see the points that may well define his agenda. Here are several of the salient points:

- A literal reading of scripture
- A call to revival and reformation
- A creation completed in six literal, contiguous 24-hour days
- The Adventist Church is God’s remnant and Laodicean people
- The significance of Ellen G. White and the Spirit of Prophecy

Wilson’s sermon title, “Go Forward,” does not carry through into his presentation. Where is the call to venture into new territory? Where does the reader find the challenge to expand the churches’ mission? Wilson’s view of the future is more fearful than hopeful. His admonitions and evaluations center on the past more than on the possibilities that await creative thinkers. There is no reference in his presentation of the opportunities that await those who live and work in an ever-expanding global community.

Paul, the Heavenly Sanctuary, and Creation

The October 2010 edition of *Adventist World*—NAD published an abridgment of Wilson’s July 15, 2006, presentation to the Bible Conference of Adventist scholars and administrators in Izmir, Turkey. The article, “Walking in Paul’s Footsteps,” opens with the statement: “Paul knew nothing except Christ crucified, risen, interceding in the heavenly sanctuary for each of us, and coming again.” Paul may be surprised to learn he promoted Adventism’s understanding of the heavenly sanctuary. Or is Wilson taking on himself the prophet mantle to share special revelation with the church? Another “revelation” follows.

“Paul,” Wilson states, “understood and endorsed the Biblical account of creation, and that he was explaining [in his discussions with the philosophers on Mars Hill] a creation of recent origin

that occurred in six, literal, consecutive, 24-hour days.” This is an astounding insight into the apostle’s teachings! Where is the biblical documentation for this pronouncement? Are we privy to a contemporary prophetic voice?

Wilson, assuming what may be described as a prophetic role, also addressed the spiritual condition of the church. “There can be no denying it: we have grown Laodicean. We’ve become smug in our sophistication and in our evaluation of ourselves. We’ve become fascinated with our own understanding of how we think things should happen. Whether we like the thought or not, we are Laodicea. We are the embodiment of the church identified in Revelation 3.”

In an interview with editors of *Ministry* magazine published in the January 2011 issue, he says more. In the context of an explanation of the committee formed to address the topic of revival and reformation in the church, Wilson is quoted to say: “It [creating the committee] is simply an effort to help us realize that we are Laodicea, as Revelation 3 tells us. . . .”

Remember Your Name

In his statement to the churches’ 2010 Annual Council, as reported in the December 2010 issue of *Adventist World*—NAD, Wilson urged the assembled delegates to “Remember your name. . . . When you share with the public in writing or in speech, don’t just refer to yourself as an ‘Adventist’ or hide behind the abbreviation ‘SDA.’” The Church’s name “is so distinctive. . . . The ‘Seventh-day’ refers to God’s power in creating this earth in six literal, consecutive, contiguous, 24-hour days, capping it with a memorial of that creation, the seventh-day Sabbath.”

Wilson gives no acknowledgement that many Adventists struggle to maintain their Christian faith within the context of modern scientific discoveries.

Virtual Reality

The same *Adventist World—NAD* edition carries Wilson's article titled "Virtual Reality?" In it, Wilson affirms that "God is a real person who enjoyed talking with His creation 'in the cool of the day,' as Genesis records it (Gen. 3:8). During that fateful conversation in Genesis 3 after sin had entered, our *real* God spoke to the *real* devil, disguised as a serpent."

Wilson leads the hearers into a hermeneutical minefield. In his inaugural sermon, he called the church to read the Bible literally. When he identifies the serpent as the devil, he violates his own admonition to "Stand firm for God's Word as it is literally read and understood." He, like Bible interpreters for centuries before him, and as did Ellen White, *interpreted* the serpent to be the devil. Scripture does not say Satan came disguised as a serpent.

Proclaim Christ's Second Advent

The November 2010 issue of *Adventist World—NAD* carried Wilson's article "A Revival of True Godliness." As he has on numerous other occasions, Wilson tells believers that "we must keep uppermost in our minds that Jesus is coming soon." No one will take issue with Wilson's affirmation that, for us, Christ's soon coming is part of our DNA. Might it not be appropriate, however, for a contemporary leader to recognize the problem of the delayed Advent? How are we as a church to cope with our proclamation that Jesus will soon return and yet maintain our credibility?

Creation Views and the Flood

Michael W. Campbell reported in an *Adventist Review* article¹ that Wilson was determined to uphold the Church's position on creation. Wilson's July 1 presentation,

plays a role in these conclusions, nor is there allowance for those who may hold alternative positions. Wilson gives his assurance, as GC president, that events happened as he and the others described them. So it must be! Or is it?

Wilson holds a similar literalistic position on the global Flood, a view that is shared, he says, by the Adventist Church. "These positions are based on a literal reading of the Word of God and demonstrations in nature." No evidence is presented to support his assertion that nature demonstrates his conclusions.

In a brief Q&A session, Chris Chan of Parksville, British Columbia, asked Wilson his intended response to the creation-evolution debate. "It is," states Chan, "an open sore' in the church."

Wilson acknowledges that the creation-evolution matter is a "delicate" issue, but

"THERE CAN BE NO DENYING IT: WE HAVE GROWN LAODICEAN. WE'VE BECOME SMUG IN OUR SOPHISTICATION AND IN OUR EVALUATION OF OURSELVES"

For Wilson or others to link the serpent with the devil is not a literal reading of the Word and provides evidence that a "literal" reading of Scripture is not a viable rule for all situations. Wilson has, however, by stating the serpent is the devil, opened the interpretation door. What boundaries determine where interpretation shall begin and end? The question of how we are to *apply* our interpretive skills to biblical texts is left unanswered. It is, however, a question that is too important to ignore or dismiss by saying, "We take Scripture as it literally reads." A *literal* reading of scripture has not been the practice among Adventists in the past, nor will it be so in the future. Wilson's own words are evidence.

"God's Literal, Six-Day Recent Creation—The Church's Position," delivered as part of the "Yes, Creation!" series held in conjunction with the recent GC Session, assured attendees that "The Seventh-day Adventist Church will stand firm for the things that we have understood to be the pillars of faith. We will not flinch."

Wilson, speaking to an overflow crowd, affirmed what the other presenters had said and shared his views toward those who do not share similar conclusions. "Unfortunately, there are those who dismiss Genesis 1-11 as allegorical, [as] nice stories but only symbolic," he said. "I want to tell you ... that God created this world in six literal, consecutive, contiguous, 24-hour days of recent origin."

There is no acknowledgement that faith

his intent is that all Adventist teachers, "whether they are theologians or science teachers, believe and accept the biblical creation as the church has voted and understood it. That is our goal, and that is what we need to move toward." Based on this statement, college and university teachers can expect to hear from the GC administration and be called to account for what is taught in their classrooms.

Adventists and Spiritual Life

The lead article for Sept. 28, 2010, on Adventist News Network is a report from the General Conference spirituality committee. "Tasked with kindling spiritual growth among members, the committee is still in the developmental stage. Even its name is

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BY WILLIAM F. NOEL

Social (In)Justice?

Is the modern concept of “social justice,” with taxpayer-funded programs designed to benefit minorities, God’s model for charity and something the church should support? Only if you enjoy disobeying God.

Charity is a biblical imperative for individuals. Proverbs declares: “If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered (21:13, NIV)” and “He who

oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God” (14:31, NIV).

God blessed those who obeyed his instruction to not harvest the edges and corners of their fields. When the owners of crops and orchards left the outskirts unpicked, travelers and poor individuals—like the widowed Moabitess described in Ruth chapter 2—found sustenance.

This system neither compelled giving nor taxed producers to help those in need. No group was considered “entitled” to receive because they had less than someone else. Specific acts of charity were the choices of individuals whose hearts were moved by awareness of need, with no government involvement. Recipients were expected to take what opportunity they had to work and to preserve their dignity as they returned to self-sufficiency. This is why the Apostle Paul ordered: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10, NIV).

This contrasts sharply with the popular concept of social justice, which is based in liberal-socialist philosophy and hijacks the biblical model to promise an end to poverty after enough is taken from the rich. The path to this socialist utopia and total government control of life follows many action paths. Let’s look at four.

First is the elimination of religion as a powerful force in society, through subversion and forced cooperation. Faith in God must be replaced with faith in the state. This is why, in *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Joseph Engels wrote that “religion is the opiate of the people.” Socialism has been hugely successful in this, not because their concept is more powerful than God, but because the absence of Holy Spirit has left most churches so weak that the contrast makes government seem far stronger.

Second is the elimination of private property through heavy taxation and seizure.

Third is redistribution of wealth. This is justified by redefining “poverty” from the inability to adequately provide for one’s needs to the inability to buy all of the same properties and privileges enjoyed by the “rich.” Critics are accused of not caring about the poor.

Fourth is lying and deception. Telling “small” lies so often that people are no longer offended or surprised. Using terms that mean one thing to your listener when you really mean something else. Saul Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals* details how socialists should use noble-sounding terms like “social justice” to make their motives seem honorable. Read Alinsky, and you will see the blueprint for both President Barack Obama’s personal concepts and the strategy being followed by his administration in their efforts to transform America into socialist utopia.

Comparing this strategy to the Bible unmasks social liberalism as a Satanic deception.

The biblical concept of “justice” involves absolute honesty,

fairness, and respect for your fellow man in all of your personal and business relations. Socialism turns it into a battle cry for taking from the rich by force of law and without their willing consent. That isn't justice; it's the legal definition of theft and a violation of the 8th Commandment.

Perhaps worst of all, "truth" in the mind of a Socialist is not a set of objective information outside your control and to which you are subject; it is whatever claims you make to support your viewpoint, regardless of their basis in fact. This violates the 9th Commandment.

How successful have liberals been in achieving their social goals? Forty-seven years after President Lyndon B. Johnson launched his 50-year "war on poverty," the percentage of Americans living in poverty has not declined. Laws passed to eliminate the institutional discrimination of past years now enforce the barring of others from college scholarships, initial employment, and job promotions just because their skin is the wrong color or they are the wrong gender.

The African-American family, the very social group claimed by social liberalism as being most needful of government help, has suffered terribly. Eighty years ago pregnancy outside of marriage was as scorned as in any other social group. But welfare programs paying benefits based on the number of children in a household became an incentive to have more children regardless of marital status, with the result that illegitimacy is now considered the norm. Today more than 80 percent of African-American children are born into single-parent homes.

Perhaps the worst result of social liberalism has been promoting the concept of being "entitled" to receive public benefits paid for with taxes taken from the rich. This not only destroys a person's motivation to work and to be self-sufficient, but also violates the 10th Commandment, which prohibits coveting the possessions of others.

Discovering the true nature of social liberalism presents Christians with a difficult challenge: learning how to minister God's love using his methods and power when churches are typically filled with a cavernous absence of the Holy Spirit. Believers want to help their neighbors. But as long as the power of the Holy Spirit is not expected until some prophetic future date, the power of the public purse makes it easy for members to abandon the fundamentals of faith and start singing the siren song of socialism.

Fortunately, the power of the Holy Spirit is available today, already implanted by God in all who believe, and waiting to be discovered. My testimony is that I have found that empowerment and you can, too.

Begin by studying the miracles of Jesus. They demonstrated the loving nature of a caring God. The first result of each miracle was

an immediate improvement in a person's life.

Continue by allowing God to expand your concept of what is or is not a "ministry." He has a lot of ideas you've never considered, extremely few of them involving teaching Bible doctrines. God will probably reveal your ministry by putting a burden on your heart that you can't escape but feel powerless to address.

Seeing the need God has shown you, ask the Holy Spirit to empower and guide you. Outside the four Gospels, the Holy Spirit is the most frequently mentioned, active, and powerful revelation of God in scripture. Jesus was so confident of this power that he promised his followers would do greater works than he did (John 14:12)! Imagine that! God has exciting plans for you.


Finally, run away from any church leader who says you need permission to do your ministry or that you can only minister in certain ways. If God is telling you to do something, you already have all the permission that you need. More than that, you're connected with the source of all the power you will need. So, how could you need permission or guidance from people, some of whom may never have met the Holy Spirit? Get moving!

Meeting the Holy Spirit transforms you. Once upon a time I was a pastor. My preaching was less than stellar, and my skills at giving Bible studies even worse. That failure led me to realize I was not gifted for that role.

Then I began seeking the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. One day I was reading the story of Moses at the burning bush and felt that God was asking me the same question: "What is in your hand?"

It took several weeks to compose an answer. I had learned carpentry and other building skills from my father and grandfather and enjoyed them. My toolbox was small and ill-equipped, but it was what I had to offer. If he could turn that into a ministry, I was willing.

God's answer was as clear as if spoken: "I can bless that." The result was a ministry doing home repair projects for people needing help. Believe me, when you're fixing a problem in someone's home, you're improving that person's life. The fellowship of the church is being strengthened, and people are being attracted to the church. I'm enjoying the adventure of a lifetime.

Are you ready to discover the Holy Spirit and get started on your ministry adventure? 

William Noel is a lifelong Adventist and an award-winning author. A 1980 graduate of Southern Missionary College, he has since earned an MBA and works in project management for the U.S. Army. He leads the Angel Team home repair ministry at Grace Fellowship SDA Church in Madison, Alabama. In recent years he has spent as much as 300 hours a year doing service projects.

Desmond Ford *and* Historicism

BY DARREL LINDENSMITH

I think I finally understand why such a great scholar as Dr. Desmond Ford rejects historicism. I believe, and this is tentative, that his rejection of the Adventist's traditional view of the sanctuary and his rejection of historicism are epistemologically tied.

Ford writes, "The year/day principle is not Biblical, and therefore neither is 1844 as the beginning of the antitypical Day of Atonement." His presuppositions are tied to a very conservative Adventist thinking, I feel.

When I was studying theology in the '80s, I heard in our religion department some squabble about Hebrews 6:19. I was learning Greek at the time, and I looked up the text in Nestle's *The Greek New Testament* and Nicoll's *The Expositor's Greek Testament*. The locus of contention seemed to be τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος *esoteron tou katapetasmatos*, which is literally "within the inner veil." Four times the Greek Old Testament uses the exact same wording regarding the Holy of Holies in Leviticus 16 (see verses 2, 12, 15) and once in Exodus 26:33, also speaking of the Holy of Holies.

Jesus entered through the "esoteric veil" into the very presence of the Father on our behalf. Wow! My initial "disappointment" became a joyful reappointment of my faith in Christ as my complete Savior. No fear of a time when I would "stand without a mediator,"¹ because "he ever liveth to make intercession for" the saints (Heb. 7:25, KJV).

At this time I had been an Adventist Christian for only three years, so for me the categories of prophecy and Adventist

sanctuary were not so wrapped around each other that I couldn't manage to untie the knot—rather than rashly cut through it, as some seemed to feel they must. Hebrews and historicism function well together. Only a very traditional Adventist mindset could not see that they are NOT unconditionally linked.

Preterism for Dr. Ford might be playing the same role as predestination did for Luther—an extreme position meant to completely seal off an argument against one extreme. For Luther, predestination guaranteed no room for works. And Preterism precludes any possibility for prophetic failure by removing the "predictive premise" itself.

Historicism, I believe, is internally logical to the idea of prophecy and a theory that is falsifiable, so it can be tested. Simple forensics of the future—that is, a study of history for prophetic "pattern recognition" to find a DNA match—is the historicism's hermeneutic.

Of course, expositors have made mistakes in the application. But no approach to prophecy has been more empirically verified through historical analysis than historicism.

Hippolytus was a historian and pastor near Rome who died in A.D. 235. In his writings he refers to the prophecies of Daniel during the very time of the Roman Empire. He explains Daniel 2 and 7 in historicist fashion, predicting the rise of the 10 powers after the breakup of the Iron Kingdom of Rome and the appearance of antichrist from the dust that would settle.²

Pattern recognition: positive!

What about this A.D. 538 to 1798 thing? Remember, we are looking for general

pattern recognition. We have argued around and around specific dates, missing "the forest for the trees."

Does any political/religious creature speaking blasphemies and practicing persecution after the fall of the Roman Empire, having a general lifespan of 1,260 years, arise on earth? Yes?

In A.D. 1689 an English Bible scholar named Drue Cressener (1638-1718) published his predicted date for the end of the 1,260 days. "He began the prophetic period in the time of Justinian in the sixth century A.D., and by applying the year-day principle to these 1,260 days, Cressener came to the conclusion: "The time of the beast does end about the year 1800."³

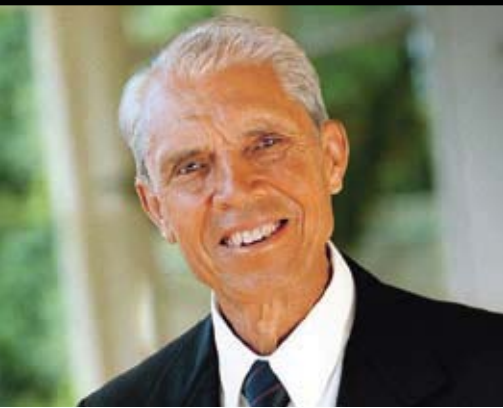
Was Drue Cressener generally correct? Yes!

The ending of the last of the three divisions—the Ostrogoths in A.D. 538 or 540 or 550—staged the beginning of institutionalized spiritual abuse in Europe and the East that continued 1,260 years. This is simply a historical fact.

"When the Roman emperor Justinian I sent reinforcements, Witigis was forced to agree to a three-month truce, which Belisarius broke, invading Picenum and threatening Ravenna. In March 538, the Goths abandoned the siege of Rome."⁴

"Vigilius, a pliant creature of Theodora, ascended the papal chair under the military protection of Belisarius (538-554)."⁵

If we jump to the other end of our 1,260 years, we see a symmetry of completion regarding Rome. "From 1790 the Papal States were profoundly affected by the French Revolution and the subsequent



wars of Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1791 Avignon removed itself from papal control and was annexed by France. In 1798 the French seized the rest of the papal territories and proclaimed the Roman Republic; the refusal of Pius VI (1775–99) to recognize the new state led to his arrest and imprisonment.”⁶

Daniel 7 from the historicists’ viewpoint is accurate. My assumption is that Daniel 8 and 1844 also fit a match with history, when understood correctly.

Many scholars have pointed out the need to focus on the thematic congruence between Daniel 7 and 8. The “little horn” power of Daniel 7 is the same as he who “magnified himself even to the ruler of the host” in Daniel 8 (verse 11). In context, both arise from the fall of Rome. In Daniel 8 “the daily” (verses 11-13) was taken away by this evil power. And the “the place of his [Jesus’] sanctuary was cast down” (verse 11).

The question asked in this context is key: “How long shall be the vision concerning the daily [sacrifice], and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?” (Dan. 8:13, KJV).

The question is about the transgression or sin that has allowed this historical situation of spiritual abuse. It is this “transgression” that is giving the sanctuary and the host to be trampled. How long until this is punished and the sanctuary freed?

“And he said to me, ‘For two thousand three hundred days. Then the sanctuary shall be cleansed’ [also translated as “set right” or “properly restored”] (Dan. 8:14, NKJV).

A strictly historicist perspective to this answer would demand a pattern match in history and not in heaven, and the sanctuary needing cleansed would be in some sense on earth.

Such an important prophecy in Daniel surely has its cognate in Revelation. I believe Revelation 17:15-16 parallels the themes at this point in Daniel 7 and 8.

“And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire” (Rev. 17:16, NASB).

The powers of Europe symbolized by the 10 horns were once in league with the spiritual abuse with “the whore,” but after a time (1844) they rebelled and *cleansed* the religious and political mess through “The Reign of Terror.” Secular Humanist philosophy and atheist communism would inflict its deadly wound throughout two full centuries.

There is a series of letters between United States Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Adams, speaking in July 1814 of the French Revolution, comments: “Catholic Christianity, which has prevailed for 1,500 years, has received a mortal wound, of which the monster must finally die. So strong is his constitution that he may endure for centuries before he expires.”⁷

The French Revolution has long been recognized as the fountainhead of the anti-religion reactions against Christianity’s spiritual abuse. Thousands of priests were killed, churches were attacked, catechisms and Bibles were burned. The goddess “Reason” was set

up in the cathedral of Notre Dame to be worshiped. In 1792-1793, three-quarters of France’s bishops and a third of its regular clergy (30,000) fled the country.⁸

According to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in *The Gulag Archipelago*, Soviet penal code Article 58-10, which dealt with “counter-revolutionary agitation and propaganda” (1927), made teaching a child about religious belief a crime. The sentence for instructing a son or daughter in the Lord’s Prayer, for example, was 10 years in the Gulag.⁸

In February 1918, Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin explained that “after the implementation of separation of church and state and school have taken effect, it is essential to strive for the separation of the people from religion and church.”⁹

“The only country in which the antireligious movement is able to develop openly, broadly, unhindered is the U.S.S.R. Our experience is of the greatest importance to every nation. We must never forget that by our work we are rendering assistance to our foreign comrades. We must deeply internationalize our work so that every atheist should regard his work as part of our international struggle against religion and the church.”¹⁰

German-Jewish philosopher Moses Hess, an early socialist and (oddly) a Zionist, introduced Karl Marx to “communism” as economics. Hess wrote to a friend in 1841 that “Marx would give the coup de grace to medieval religion and politics.”¹¹

In 1844 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels first met and collaborated on their atheist
Continued on page 29

PILLARS OF THE EARTH

By Jeff Carlson

Little pieces of unconnected thought, like small streams, converged and, like a mighty river, pushed me back into the seat of my car as I drove home after a church board meeting.

Thought Stream #1

I watched an episode this evening from the TV miniseries *Pillars of the Earth*, and it made me sick. It depicts, among other things, the depths to which the Christian church had fallen during the Middle Ages. Murder, rape, theft, and perjury are all acted out as if they are simply parts in an Easter pageant and not diametrically opposed to the basic script that Christ left for the church to follow.

It didn't make me sick because it was unfair to the church. It made me sick because it was all true. I have read literally thousands of pages of church history from original sources, and the story is devastating—even early on.

The more I read, the more discouraged I become. And I've only made it up to about the year A.D. 450 or so. I don't have much hope, because I know it only goes downhill from there. But like a driver passing a bad car accident, I can't look away.

It would be easy to respond with a simple, "Well, we follow Jesus and not people." But that won't work. We don't simply ask people to follow Jesus. We ask them to join the Adventist Church.

Thought Stream #2

I'm a pastor. There is nothing that makes me question the validity of the Church more than this job.

Over lunch a couple of weeks ago, I had another pastor friend ask me what I thought of doing if I were not a pastor. We both laughed because I had such a quick response. I think about it nearly every other day. The way I see people treat each other and the things that get people hung up and threatening to leave the church are exasperating. The question practically screams at me: "What am I doing this for? What's the point?!" I hate conflict. This job forces me to spend so much of my time dealing with conflict.

Thought Stream #3

My denomination is the best one I can find. There is nowhere else for me to go. I meet with an amazing group of Lutheran pastors every week for a Bible study and find camaraderie and spiritual support

from them. I attend Mars Hill Church in Seattle when I am in the area on a Sunday. There I worship through the music. I am brought to tears as I am led to the throne of Christ through the music I am invited to sing at the top of my lungs.

But I couldn't be a Lutheran or Calvinist or any other type of Christian. There is no space in those churches for my theology. Parts of it, yes—but not the whole or even the majority. My theology fits in the Adventist Church. But how can many churches, which have such clear pieces of the practical character of Christ, be so deficit in biblical theology as I see it? And how can my denomination, with its airtight theology, be so full of punks? I feel like Peter saying, "Lord, where else would I go?" But honestly, I don't like being here a lot of the time.

So I sat in my car, now parked in my driveway. I gripped the steering wheel while the music swirled around me and the thoughts churned in my head. The river raged inside me, but then it hit something solid. Something like a rock of Gibraltar that I didn't know was there. The wave shattered as it collided. It was a Bible verse. It flashed in my mind out of nowhere: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it!"

I don't know when I last read Matthew 16:18, and it isn't a verse that I ever memorized, but it rang in my ears as clearly as the music swirling around me. "You, Jeff Carlson, are the little stone that I will build my church on, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it!"

As the darkness and debris of my thoughts settled, I began to see little stones standing silently and defiantly in the shadow of fallen cathedrals: small stones tortured on the rack, small stones who stood up to Hitler in Germany and formed the Confessing Church in response to the majority of Christians who sold out in silence, small stones like Ellen White who attacked slavery when it was in vogue. These are the little stones that Christ is building his church on, and the gates of hell would not and could not prevail against it. It might look like the gates of hell have prevailed, but those gates collide and shatter on those small stones. Those are the stones on which Christ is building his church.

I know we generally don't interpret this statement to Peter as saying that the Christian church would be built *on* him. But it

seems that, in a way, Peter himself did. He said, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5, NIV). He took the same language of small stones that Christ used when speaking to him and transferred it to the church members. "You are the living stones," he says. "You are the church."

The church is ultimately built on Christ, and the Bible makes it clear that he is the foundation and head. However, each of us is the church, in its entirety—each on our own as we join the group that is built on Christ. We often talk about the church in third person, as in "The church did this or that." But God calls each one of us to be his church, and he builds his visible church on Earth on each one of us. We, as individual stones being joined to the group, are the visible manifestation of the invisible God.

In that moment, nothing changed about church history or the reality of church punks. But the call to be one of those stones was deeply personal, and the voice reverberated in my soul. "If you walk away, the gates of hell have prevailed against the church. If you stay, the gates of hell will not prevail against you, because you are a small stone on which the church of God is built."

I don't completely understand why Christ formed the church, but I know that he did and that he calls us to be part of it. Not in a convenient spiritual-but-not-religious way, but in the inconvenient and messy actually-join-it-and-actively-engage sort of way. We are all little stones on which he wants to build his church. I am a little stone being built into the church of God, and that thought just made it okay for me tonight.

"You are Peter, and on this stone I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it!" May that be said of me, Jesus, and may I dwell in the house of the Lord forever. 🇺🇸

Jeff Carlson is a 32-year-old pastor who, until recently, worked mostly with youth and young adults. After asking to be placed in a district where he could get experience as a "real" pastor, he now serves as lead pastor of the Mount Vernon and Stanwood churches in Washington state.

These are the little stones that Christ is building his church on, and the gates of hell would not and could not prevail against it. It might look like the gates of hell have prevailed, but those gates collide and shatter on those small stones.

Truth Decay:

A Call for Accountability & Transparency

Among Several Books Banned at GC Session

BY ALBERT KOPPEL

Through my 92 years of experience with Adventism, I have been haunted by leaders' profound reticence to account for their everyday decisions. One Church treasurer at the highest level told me flat-out that the Bible has no Freedom of Information Act. Why, by implication, should I expect it of the Church?

This same individual, with strained exegesis, also patiently explained to me that Jesus wrote out the sins of the adulteress's accusers in the sand—demonstrating, so he said, that Christians should not point out others' wrongdoings in permanent form, God forbid in books!

Yet, as an author of just such a book, I am not convinced that I am out of line or at odds with the zeitgeist of Adventism. (By the way, *Truth Decay* still appears in Adventist Book Centers and sells by the hundreds each year—11,000 copies distributed in five years, since publication.) That my book, among others, was suppressed—in fact, banned on the premises—at the recent General Conference Session in Atlanta will not diminish the inexorable cry by laity for greater accountability.

Lay members on Church and hospital boards have told me, after reading *Truth Decay*: “The sad part is that you describe [in *Truth Decay*] only the tip of the iceberg.”

Another wrote, “It has been my experience while serving on the XXXX Conference Executive Committee that the resistance to transparency and

accountability is the standard method of doing business.”

“[There is a] pervasive culture of secrecy both in the church and in our health systems,” another told me.

Truth Decay has received the written and verbal support of a number of top Church leaders, as well. A General Conference attorney wrote: “I believe that your comments on service and accountability are most constructive and should be taken to heart by every leader, regardless of where they are serving.

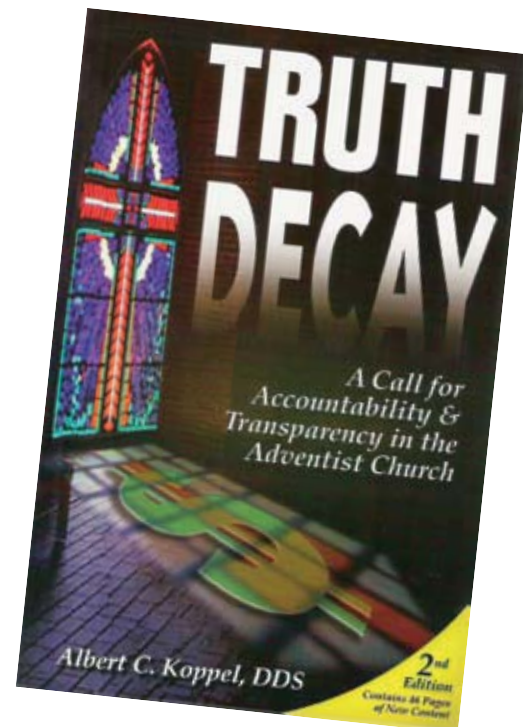
“I’ve seen firsthand some of what you talk about in your book,” he continued. He listed the following problem areas in the church: lack of full disclosure, conflict of interest, undue influence, undue fiduciary influence, fiduciary irresponsibility, and misrepresentation of fact.

President’s Call for Transparency

What mystifies many of us is that the decision to suppress *Truth Decay* at the recent GC Session came in the wake of a ringing endorsement of transparency, published as an interview with then-world church President Jan Paulsen in the June 2009 *Adventist Review*, titled “INTEGRITY = OPENNESS + TRUST.”

Dr. Paulsen says that “our members... work in the secular marketplace... where they become even more sensitive to how the church uses its money—and rightly so. They should be sensitive and they should hold church leaders responsible.”

He also says in the interview, “People



who support the Church have a right to expect the highest integrity and the highest care from individuals and boards making executive decisions.”

Then he adds, “I can’t overstate the importance of openness and transparency.”

I believe for various reasons that Dr. Paulsen is sincere in the interview and that he purposely granted the interview as a way of promoting change in the Church. Granted, Dr. Paulsen does not refer directly to *Truth Decay* or similar books. But the context convinces me that this genre of books provided an impetus for him to go on record, for he goes on to reiterate the essential message of *Truth Decay*, stating that “problems arise when information fails to flow where it should, or where members... vote on issues about which they have little understanding or knowledge.”

“Weaknesses That Need Attention”

In the interview, he also makes a pitch for greater involvement and lay oversight—a point *Truth Decay* also highlights and for which I have been commended by some

top Adventist leaders. For example, the president of a large North American union conference wrote: “You have identified weaknesses that need attention. I’m glad you didn’t stay silent. One of the issues we face...is that of incompetent people [ill prepared] for the complexity of work they must do.”

Surely it behooves the Adventist Church to pay attention to the concerns of a General Conference attorney who

Other Voices on the Topic of Leadership and Accountability

The St. Louis 2005 58th General Conference Session Supplement of the *Adventist Review* published the following statements of three named and voted delegates, alerting fellow colleagues to the problems the church has with “servant leaders”:

Melvin Paul said: “Sometimes the auditors find discrepancies in financial matters. Their reports often have explicit recommendations, but the administrators do little or nothing to rectify these errors. I have heard individuals say that they are not concerned with the auditors’ report because they are connected with the powers that be and will remain in office.”¹

Juan R. Prestol said: “At times integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and sincerity are not evident in an entity...; it becomes impossible for an individual to point out the wrongs, because deceit, dishonesty, and lack of sincerity have already become systemic. When a group of individuals create and nurture an atmosphere of corruption, when institutionalized corruption is accepted as a way of life, what means are left to the individual seeking change?”²

M. Serrant Simon said: “I will get right to the point. Our people have lost confidence in the leadership of the church from top to bottom.”³

¹ *Adventist Review*, GC Bulletin #5, July 6, 2005, p. 28.

² *Adventist Review*, GC Bulletin #7, July 8, 2005, p. 14.

³ *Adventist Review*, GC Bulletin #4, July 5, 2005, p. 30.

wrote me these words, after he read *Truth Decay*: “What was especially saddening for me was the repeat offenders and how we as a church are so poor in dealing with these individuals other than moving them from place to place. I hope and trust that the upcoming generations of church leadership learn from the mistakes of the past and [will] not repeat them.”

Many North American delegates to the 2005 General Conference Session and countless Trust officers have benefitted from the revelations and recommendations of *Truth Decay*; they’ve told me so, personally. But when *Truth Decay* was declared off-limits at the 2010 GC Session, delegates from other cultures were denied that information. This move directly contradicts the message of Dr. Paulsen in the *Adventist Review*, and I fear for the future of a Church rent by such internal inconsistency on such a core administrative value.

There seems to be a struggle internally in the Church, and I believe this struggle is responsible for the suppression of *Truth Decay* and two other whistle-blowing books on church finance: *Who Watches? Who Cares?* by Doug Hackleman and *Fatal Accounts* by David Dennis. This is not transparency. This is not the will of the Adventist people.

Dr. Paulsen ends his *Adventist Review* interview by expressing this concern: “Young people need to trust you before you even open your mouth. They need to feel there’s enough basic integrity there that they don’t have to wonder if there’s a hidden agenda—that things are deliberately left unsaid. And you can be sure they will have an unfailing sense of when ‘talk’ doesn’t match up with the actions.”

Truth Decay agrees emphatically with the spirit of Paulsen’s remarks, and the hundreds of unsolicited positive words from readers have encouraged me that, at

least in the United States, its message is helping bring change for the better.

Although my book, and others like it, has arrested the attention of the Church in North America, there is apparently a fear that the call for financial forthrightness in the world field will somehow produce an unmanageable backlash. Strong forces seem to oppose a climate of openness and transparency in the Church, preferring closed-door meetings and filtered statements. If so, much work remains to be done to ventilate these rooms with the “sun” of transparency (2 Sam. 12:11).

Though I’m 92 years old, I will not be subdued by this setback. I am motivated by the comment of one reader who opined: “Somehow this banning of the book has a taint of arrogance to it—as if ‘we the people’ somehow do not have enough intelligence to read and make decisions for ourselves. The leadership would have been much wiser just to ignore it and let the chips fall—[the chips] are falling anyway, as many of you have read some of these books already. This is just a part of a larger problem of leadership being out of touch with those of us who ‘own’ the church.”

Yes, the General Conference seems seriously out of touch with the mood of those who today pay the majority of the bills, through trusts, tithes, and offerings. Leadership needs to urgently address this disconnect, before many more lose faith in a system that seems more concerned about withholding than sharing vital information.

The Church must stop sending out mixed signals. It cannot “have its transparency and stifle it too.” It should not proclaim transparency on the one hand and shutter its windows with the other. 🚫

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The Infamous Fleece of Wool

THE 5 WORST REASONS TO ASK GOD FOR SIGNS *By Vanesa Pizzuto*

Have you ever wished you lived among the ancient Israelites to see the cloud guiding during the day and the column of fire at night? I know I have. At times discovering God's will seems to be such a confusing task that I can envy the luck of the Israelites, who could get a clear "yes" or "no" from God through the Urim and Thummim¹ in the high priest's ephod. Thus, along with many modern Gideons, when I need to make a decision and God seems too quiet, I can be tempted to put a fleece of wool in my backyard!

I must admit that I have done some "fleeing" in my life, though it didn't always go well. Actually, I know of many more sincere Christians who were disappointed after they followed what they thought was a clear sign from God to move forward in a particular direction. Yet, I know of other Christians who indeed felt guided by God in this way.

So what makes signs seemingly "work" at times and "fail miserably" at others? I propose that we explore our motivations and the nature of God's will to find some answers. To do that, let's take a look at the five worst reasons to go for signs.

#1: To Take a Shortcut

Let's suppose I am looking for a new job. Finding a new job can be a difficult task that requires patience, hard work, and wisdom. Now imagine that I want none of the latter. I do want a better-paid job, but I do not want the effort of getting it. So I could over-spiritualize the venture by praying like this: "Lord, if you want me to find a better job, make somebody come to me offering what you have already chosen for me."

Obviously, I am exaggerating with this example, and most of us would not dare to pray like that. However, I need to confess that at times, when I ask God for a sign, the reason beneath my request is about taking a shortcut. Deep down, I may be seeking to simplify the process to get rid of the part that I don't like. Thus, before asking for a sign, I know now that I need to do some soul searching. I need to ask the Holy Spirit to guide me and to make sure that I am not turning discovering God's will into a scheme by which I can put all of the responsibility and all of the work in God's hands.

Schaeffer brilliantly exposes the possible consequences of this behavior: "Of course, if the sign does not come, we can feel we have been given an 'excused from work' slip from heaven. In fact, we can start to believe that if we do not get 100 percent

divine confirmation in a dramatic way for specific direction in life, we do not have to do anything at all."²

#2: To Ignore God's Revealed Will

As contradictory as it seems, at times we may ask for a sign not because we want to discover God's will, but rather because we do not like what he has already revealed. A new believer, for example, could be introduced to the doctrine of tithes and offerings and, disliking the idea, he could pray like this: "Lord, if you truly want me to pay my tithes, then make my boss give me a 15 percent pay raise." Regardless of whether he gets the pay raise or not, the point is that God made his will clear with regard to offerings and tithes in the Bible. The only sign needed is the one already given: his Word.

Jesus provided a great example of this type of behavior in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. When the rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus so that his family would repent, Abraham gave him an insightful answer: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31, NIV).

Likewise, we lie to ourselves if we think that though we ignore the Bible, we would listen and willingly obey if God were to use a supernatural communication method. Just like the Israelites, our biggest issue is not "knowing" but "surrendering to" God's ways. Sadly, if we don't pay attention to the extensive truth in the scriptures, we are most likely to doubt and ignore a "fluky phenomenon" like a pillar of clouds or fire.

#3: To Validate a Decision You Already Made

Balaam provides a sad example for this kind of behavior. This prophet was bold enough to ask God if he could go and curse the Israelites! God, obviously, answered his prayer with a clear "no." Unwilling to submit, Balaam prayed again, and even though

an affirmative sign was not given to him, he went anyway to Balak's realm.³ He had made up his mind long before praying. Discovering God's will was only a formality to Balaam, a pretext to justify a decision he had already made.

At times we act similarly to Balaam. We do this every time we make our plans first and then ask God to bless them. Think about it; we organize evangelistic campaigns, we choose jobs, and we go on dates, but we base our decisions on what we want according to our dreams and ambitions for the future. After that, we get on our knees and pray, "God, please bless this project." We are leaving God out of the picture until the plan is ready for the "icing on the cake:" his blessing. This is following in Balaam's steps.

However, knowing God is fundamentally about surrendering your will and your ways. Stormie Omartian expresses this with great honesty: "The part we do not want to hear is that a time comes when each of us must place our desires in the hands of God that He may free us from those that are not in His will. ... God wants us to stop holding onto our dreams and start holding onto Him."⁴

#4: To Avoid Waiting

Impatient people often make this mistake. I confess that when confusing situations take long to untangle, I am tempted to look for a "quick answer." This is why signs can be so alluring; they seem to be a more efficient way to approach the issue. Furthermore, they seem not only to be able to help us avoid "the waiting part," but also to put us back "in control" of the situation.

This is how it works: while we wait we are powerless and dependent (anxiety grows inside us because we can do nothing). But asking for a sign, especially if we give God a sort of timeframe or deadline, puts us "back in control." Suddenly God needs to answer according to our schedule, so the seemingly endless waiting (the nightmare of every control freak) is over. We have done something about it; we "fixed" the problem. And because we pretended to be submissive to God all the way, we do not have to feel guilty!

However, loving God is about making ourselves vulnerable and surrendering to him the urge to control and the unwillingness to wait. "If you do not have clear instructions from God in a matter, pray and wait. Learn patience. Depend on God's timing. His timing is always right and best. Don't get in a hurry. He may be withholding directions to cause you to seek him more intently. Don't try to skip the relationship to get to the doing."⁵

#5: As a Talisman or Luck Charm

There is a general misconception that doing the will of God equals living "happily ever after" and avoiding all kinds of failure and pain. If we adhere to this fallacy, we may find ourselves trying to use signs as a talisman or a luck charm to protect us from ever experiencing problems.

As Schaeffer explains, "the truth is that we often seek to know the will of God about a decision we are making with the belief that in doing so we can insure ourselves against anything going wrong."⁶ This view, however, does not have biblical support. In fact, the Bible has many examples of people who were doing exactly what God wanted them to, and yet they went through hard times, persecution, and even death. When Jesus himself was nailed to the cross, he was fulfilling God's perfect plan for him.

God's idea of success may be radically different to what we have in mind; thus, it may include some painful times and dry seasons. If we are serious about doing God's will, we need to be willing to stick to his plans even when it hurts.⁷

God or a Cosmic GPS?

Ultimately, we need to ask ourselves what we are looking for when we explore God's will. The main point here is that while at times we try to use God as a cosmic GPS to tell us the shortest way to get from point A to point B, he is more interested in developing a loving relationship with us. We cannot separate God's will from God, nor can we bypass the relationship with him. Discovering God's specific plans for our lives is a natural result of a vibrant relationship with him, not its substitute.

Therefore we need to be honest with ourselves and stop treating God as if he were a sort of Ouija Board. Reducing God's will to a "destination," rather than the process of getting to know him better and tuning our souls to the Holy Spirit, is a big mistake. It turns Christianity into a superstitious and shallow practice. We need first an intimate relationship with God. Then God may choose to talk to us through the Bible, through a friend, using circumstances or, yes, even a sign. And in all these ways we will be able to recognize his voice, because we will be accustomed to it. 📌

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¹ See Exodus 28:30.

² Daniel Schaeffer, *The Bush Won't Burn, and I'm All Out of Matches: How to Find God's Will When You've Looked Everywhere*, Discovery House Publishers, 1995, p. 28.

³ Ellen White declared: "Balaam had received permission to go with the messengers from Moab if they came in the morning to call him. But, annoyed at his delay, and expecting another refusal, they set out on their homeward journey without further consultation with him. Every excuse for complying with the request of Balak had now been removed. But Balaam was determined to secure the reward..." *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 442.

⁴ Stormie Omartian, *7 Prayers That Will Change Your Life Forever*, Thomas Nelson, 2007.

⁵ Henry Blackaby, Richard Blackaby, and Claude King, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*, B&H Publishing Group, 2008 revised and expanded edition, p. 151.

⁶ Schaeffer, p. 142.

⁷ Yet we need to be careful not to assume that "if it hurts, then it is God's will." Going through painful times or being faced with failure does not mean, in itself, that we are doing God's will.



By Harold Frey

THE DAUGHTERS of ADAM *Who Were They?*

When it comes to interpreting the scriptures, being a pure literalist will not only *allow* but also, in some cases, *require* some very interesting conclusions. It will also permit some wonderful imaginations concerning those details that are not provided for us in the text.

One such detail is the utter silence concerning the daughters of Adam. In only one Bible text is Adam said to have had any daughters. It says: "After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters" (Gen. 5:4, NIV), which permits the idea that he had daughters prior to that time.

In this context Adam is 130 years old when his son Seth is born. Seth is declared, in Genesis 4:25, to be a replacement for Abel. Cain and Abel were born first, and Cain killed Abel. Seth could not replace Abel if other sons had been born before him; thus, Adam had only three sons by the time he was 130 years old, and one of them was dead.

Profuse Polygamy?

If Adam had more than three children during his first 130 years, then other than his three sons, they would all have had to be girls. Those girls could have become wives for Adam and his two surviving sons. It seems reasonable to conclude that many sons would have been born, and if Adam did not father them, his sons must have. Yet it is quite interesting to note that Cain did not have a son until after he was cursed and was building a city in the land of Nod. His age isn't given.

Adam's third son, Seth, did not have a son until he was 105 years old. Seth's firstborn son did not have a son until he was 90, and that son did not have his son until he was 70 (Gen. 5:6-12). The account of sons being born continues, with the youngest age

for a father being 65 years old. Most of them are well over 100.

If these are all firstborn sons, as we assume, the male population would have been greatly lacking in comparison to the number of females likely born during these hundreds of years. (Remember, the Bible rarely tells us about the birth of females.) In order for this multitude of women to have husbands, there would have had to be profuse polygamy. Yet the account does not imply that and mentions only one man, Lamech, who married two wives (Gen. 4:19).

Noah and the Nephilim

When we read of Noah, we find that he does not have sons until after he is 500 years old. Try to imagine how many daughters Noah alone could have had in those 500 years. It does not seem unreasonable to conclude that the female population may have greatly exceeded the males. That further implies that a great multitude of women must have perished in the Flood, possibly including hundreds of Noah's daughters.

In this context we also have the strange account beginning in Genesis 6 where the Bible states that daughters were born to the increasing number of men on the earth. Consequently, the sons of God saw their beauty and married them. The implication is that most of these women were not married to the sons of men, which permits the profusion of women suggested above without men to marry them. As to who exactly these sons of God were, or where they came from, there is no explanation.

The offspring from these marriages were apparently called Nephilim and said to be "the heroes of old, men of renown" (Gen. 6:4, NIV). The meaning of Nephilim is not clear, but when they show up again in Numbers 13:33, they are obviously giants.

The term would appear to mean giant, rather than a genetic line of people, since they show up both before and after the Flood. If the Nephilim in Numbers were descended from the Nephilim in Genesis, and if the Flood destroyed all humanity, then Noah and his sons would have had to be Nephilim. That does not seem likely, since the Nephilim appear to be one of the reasons God destroyed humanity, and when they show up after the Flood they come from the descendants of Anak. We can only wonder how these giants were produced a second time. Is it possible the sons of God again came from some unknown world to marry the daughters of men?

There are no substantial answers for these mysterious Genesis anomalies. I have somewhere come across the suggestion that the ages given for the fathers does not represent literal years, but rather serves as a metaphorical indicator of status or importance. This seems to hold some credibility, as we find credence in the fact that Cain the murderer does not have an age; he has been cursed, while Noah's age of 500 far exceeds the ages of the other fathers. Thus, if age is a metaphor for importance, then Noah is not literally that much older when he becomes a father, but as the single male representative of righteousness worthy of salvation, his importance is represented by his age. That may seem like a strange way to interpret, but it's certainly no less curious than waiting 500 years before you have children.

God's Plan for Perfect Sex

Another curiosity with a literal interpretation of the Genesis stories is the concept of perfect sex. If God did actually start out with only two people, whom we know as Adam and Eve, and they were created perfect and placed in a perfect world where everything was good, then his command to them to be fruitful and multiply holds very necessary implications which we consider sinful. This perfect first family could come into existence only through a great incestuous and most likely polygamous culture. Brother with sister, uncle with niece, and any other combination possible in such a close-knit clan, where everyone would love everyone perfectly. Wow! Was that really God's perfect plan?

Such an amalgam of procreative sex flies in the face of what we think we know about the human family and, more to the point, what we think we know about God's mind concerning sex. If God's original idea for a perfect world included such necessary sexual freedom, and it clearly would if we insist on a literal two-parent beginning, then how did we get so far off course?

When we come to Noah, the problem is repeated if all humans were destroyed in the Flood. Only the four couples in Noah's family survive. The only family righteous enough to be saved must now engage in the sinful orgy of incest and polygamy in order to again populate the human race. In simple logic, these sins became necessary in order for God to have a human family whom he can love and save. This raises questions about God's original intentions concerning what he wanted perfect sex to be. We must therefore ask another question.

Does marriage really exist in Eden, or do we just impose it there? If unrestrained sex became detrimental as a result of sin, then marriage would follow sin as a necessary control. It would not be necessary in a perfect world. This might help explain the polygamous ancients and the progressive need to move toward monogamy. It is not the utopian culture of Eden that makes this move necessary. It is the utter inability of sinful man and woman to love with perfect unselfishness as they would in Eden.

God's Plan for Perfect Sex

Jesus said, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matt. 22:30, NIV). First of all we must note that Jesus is answering a question concerning a woman who had seven husbands. The Sadducees wanted to know whose wife she would be. It seems clear from his answer that she will be no one's wife. The answer further implies that she could be with all seven men, and any number more if she chose. I don't think the genders will be segregated.

So we must ask, what else does Jesus wish to convey here? What are the angels like? Do they experience physical intimacy? Is this a suggestion that we will no longer be human? Certainly we will not lose our humanity. Jesus himself retains the humanity he assumed for our salvation. We don't know if angels have gender, but humans do. Exactly what type of relationship there might be between genders in the resurrection we do not know, but evidently angels also experience it and it does not require marriage. If we conclude that neither angels nor glorified humans experience anything akin to what we call sex, what does that say about our hope of being restored to Eden, where male and female were instructed to experience perfect sex? Kind of demolishes it, right?

We could surmise that God would have created other people for Adam's offspring to marry, but that's a wild card with no credibility. We could also consider the possibility that what

we call incest and polygamy is not sinful in a perfect world. Monogamy serves as a safeguard against profuse jealousy and as a somewhat safe environment for bringing up children. It is sin that makes this necessary, not a utopian society with perfect love.

Most Important Question

These ideas do not meld well with what we think we know. But we really don't know very much, and that is why my most important question is this: What do the Genesis stories and the Bible as a whole intend to teach us?

If we approach the scriptures with this question, the answers will lead us to the Savior. Now that's significant! The Bible's intention is to lead us to Jesus. If we do not find him, we are missing it. It's about the good news, our salvation, and a rela-

tionship with the Creator of the cosmos. History, science, archaeology, anthropology, and any other "-ology"—including theology—all have a place with varying degrees of significance; but unless we find God as love and love as his directive for us, we are not tuned in to its purpose.

suffice, and only the garments of his making are acceptable to him. That is why he made clothing for them and gave it to them. God's work alone was able to clothe them in an acceptable way. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9, NIV). "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27, NIV).


The power of the Genesis metaphors points us to the great gospel claims of the apostle Paul. Our salvation is not by our works. We cannot boast about how good our fig leaves are. God doesn't like them and will not accept them. We must accept the clothing God alone has provided and covers us with. Everything we need to be free of sin's naked shame is already provided by

WE REALLY DON'T KNOW VERY MUCH, AND THAT IS WHY MY MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION IS THIS: WHAT DO THE GENESIS STORIES AND THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE INTEND TO TEACH US?

Consider just one example where the power of the metaphor in Genesis points us to the biblical gospel. This is one of my favorites, and it holds great truth to be considered. When Adam and Eve fell from faith and sinned, the account says: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (Gen. 3:7, NIV). "The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (verse 21, NIV).

When our first parents became aware of the shameful nakedness of sin, their first inclination was to do something themselves to cover that shame. So they made fig leaf clothing and put it on. But God did not accept the fig leaves. He does not accept our feeble efforts to cover the sin problem by working at it ourselves. Sewing fig leaves together is man's work, and that will never cover the naked shame of sin; only God's work will

the finished work of Christ. It is available to us because of his amazing grace, and we receive it as a gift by faith. We can be acceptably clothed only with Christ. No fig leaves of our making will ever do.

There are many other allusions to the gospel in the Genesis stories. This is the intention of the writings. God's passion is to be in a relationship with us, and this is why he created us and what these stories intend to teach us. Such truth melds with the larger biblical paradigm, affirming the credibility and integrity of the content. It's not about historical or scientific information. It's about whether or not we find Jesus, and he is clearly found when he is the one we seek. May we continue to seek him in whom is found the truth. Even the truth of the Genesis anomalies. 

Harold Frey is a multifaceted artist retired from the food service and professional driving industries. Presently he works part time in grounds maintenance and as a freelance writer. His first book, Prisoners of the Paradigm, was self-published in June 2008. He is presently writing a novel.



Don't "Get in Too Great a Hurry and Expect Too Much of Darkened Minds"

By Alden Thompson

This isn't a sermon for the choir; it's for me. Patience is a theme I need to hear again and again. I'm naturally ready with a hearty "amen!" when I hear "We must ... not only strike the iron when it is hot, but make the iron hot by striking."¹ But the exclamation point goes missing in the face of those other words: "You must not get in too great a hurry and expect too much of darkened minds."²

Patience crops up with unsettling frequency in New Testament virtue lists. Older translations often talk of "longsuffering" or "forbearance." But most modern ones simply go with some form of "patience." In 1 Corinthians 13, it heads the list: "Love is patient and kind ..."³ In Galatians 5, there it is again among the fruit of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace, patience ..."

Yet the line that inspired my troublesome title immediately precedes one of my favorite Ellen White quotes, one that empowers us—or so it seems to me—to study all of the sociology and psychology we can get our hands on. "You need to educate yourself so that you may have wisdom to deal with minds," she counsels. "You should with some have compassion, making a difference, while others you may save with fear, pulling them out of the fire. Our heavenly Father frequently leaves us in uncertainty in regard to our efforts."⁴

So let's use our heads, think it through, pray it through, then do what we believe is best. Did you notice, however, that according to Ellen White, the result will be uncertainty rather than arrogance or even confidence? And it's a beautiful uncertainty, enabling us to listen to wise counsel from fellow believers. That's good.

Suggesting the study of psychology and sociology may alarm some. To those who believe that a miracle-working God is active in our world, the psychologists and

sociologists often seem to be snatching God's mysteries away from him.

But Ellen White is simply wanting us to be practical. Notice how her counsel worked in real life. The brother to whom she wrote this 1874 testimony was facing an urgent list of needed deletions and additions when it came to character traits. While seeking to overcome "a morose, bigoted, narrow, faultfinding spirit," she wrote to him that he should "cultivate a good temper—kindly, cheerful, buoyant, generous, pitiful, courteous, compassionate traits of character."⁵ In the face of his heavy-handed, one-size-fits-all approach, she counseled, "Don't get in too great a hurry and expect too much of darkened minds."

But now let's look more closely at the "darkened mind" idea and apply it to current attitudes toward Ellen White. How did we arrive at such a pass where some 80% of collegiate Adventists retain some sense of authority for the Bible, but only 22% for Ellen White?⁶

Easy. Simply by not observing how our misuse of her writings has stirred up resentment, anger, and exasperation. Her own writings yield a startling list of attitudes and actions that "stir" up "the worst passions of the human heart," to use her phrase. For starters, try "arbitrary words and actions," "scolding," or "fretful, impatient words."⁷ Tragically, our way of using Ellen White has often sparked those "worst passions."

Recently, a painful email from a longtime Adventist told of his experience in an Adventist academy. In both algebra and geometry classes, no less, he had to memorize Ellen White quotations in order to get an A. His spouse and siblings had similar experiences. In his view, when charges of plagiarism began to circulate against Ellen White, an angry sibling

saw an opportunity to escape from her scolding voice. He left the church.

But hope is rising from our ashes. Patience with darkened minds can bring good results. One of my teaching colleagues told of asking his students to read and report on one of two books. Stable or sheltered Adventists were to read *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. Those with a strong aversion to Ellen White were to read *Steps to Christ*. Among other things, he asked them to identify the chapter they liked best.

Across the board, my colleague reported, the students who read *Steps to Christ* were moved and inspired. And, speaking with one voice, they said all Adventists should read the chapter titled "What to Do With Doubt." In the discussion that followed, my colleague asked how many were not sure of their salvation. Hands everywhere. Apparently, decades of Valuegenesis hasn't done the trick. We're still having a hard time believing that God saves people like us.

Patience, time, and gentle energy can bring light to darkened minds. Indeed, it's already happening. If this new generation can discover Ellen White for themselves, maybe their parents and grandparents can too. But let's not get in too great a hurry and expect too much from darkened minds.

¹ Ellen White, *Evangelism*, p. 647.

² Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 420.

³ Biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

⁴ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 420.

⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 420–421.

⁶ Survey in the Walla Walla University student newspaper, *The Collegian*, May 13, 2010.

⁷ Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 134 (1900 edition); Manuscript 31, 1901 (*Sermons and Talks* Vol. 1, p. 328); *Youth's Instructor*, March 5, 1903 (also found in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 3, p. 1157).

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pending. When world church President Ted N.C. Wilson announced the committee during his first address to employees at church headquarters this summer, he called it 'Revival and Reformation.' Now, he favors 'Revival and Beyond,' said committee chair Armando Miranda, a world church general vice president."

Church members applaud and support the objectives and methods of the committee. There are a few questions, however, to consider when giving thought to the committee's assignment. When one looks at church history, what characteristics are associated with revival? Where in church history can we find examples of revival initiated by committee action or from the top down? What makes revival unique as compared to ordinary church life? How might we know a revival when it appears? From an examination of the times and places commonly associated with revival—such as the Great Awakening in America, the 1888 Movement in Adventism, the Azusa Street and the Pentecostal groups—what are the characteristics that we might wish to adopt or avoid?

What About the "Ins" and "Outs"?

The call for revival and renewal is a hallmark of churches or groups that are seeking to find new life or a renewed purpose. The faithful will offer their Amen, and others will shrug and await further developments. Left unanswered is whether Wilson's pronouncements will promote unity within the church or contribute to further polarization. Will youth, young adults, and those whose views may differ from Wilson's find assurance they are valued and welcomed in their church? Or will they find in his

statements further evidence that they must look elsewhere for a spiritual home? Will his administration model inclusiveness and acceptance, or will it promote exclusiveness and uniformity? The next five years will provide answers to these and other questions.

Lawrence Downing, D.Min., is a retired pastor who, with his wife, makes his home in Southern California.

¹ Michael W. Campbell, "Church President Says He Won't 'Flinch' on Creation Issue," *Adventist Review*, July 8-22, 2010.

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political views. Marx was expelled in 1844 from Paris, of all places, for his radical philosophy, which he wrote as the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*; these were not published officially until 1930 however. Also, Charles Darwin completed and selectively distributed his *Origin of the Species* in 1844. It was not officially published until 1859, soon after which Ernst Haeckel explained: "On one side are spiritual freedom, reason and culture, evolution and progress stand under the bright banner of science; on the other side, under the black flag of hierarchy, stand spiritual slavery and falsehood, irrationality and superstition ... Evolution is the heavy artillery in the struggle for truth. Whole ranks of sophistries fall together under the chain shot of this artillery, and the proud and mighty structure of the Roman hierarchy, that powerful stronghold of infallible dogmatism, falls like a house of cards."¹²

Atheist philosophy, however, was never so articulately propagated by anyone but Adolf Hitler's 'beloved prophet,' Friedrich Nietzsche, who interestingly was born in 1844.

Something fitting the language and

context of Daniel 8 really did happen. Christianity was cleansed through fire by an ungodly philosophical and political turn in history that God used to purify the church.

Jeremiah warned Israel that because of their sin, God would allow an ungodly power to sweep Palestine clean (Jer. 25:9-12). Daniel and John wrote their prophecies as exiles under persecution.

My "historical matches" may not strike fire for you, but at least one can see that the above method is a contextually faithful attempt to properly exegete Daniel 8. Mistakes happen in interpretation. Expect them, but never allow them to push you to extremes that truly will fail you. Let's not confuse historicism itself with hermeneutic hiccups.

Darrel Lindensmith is pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Fargo, North Dakota.

¹ Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 425.

² "Treatise on Christ and Antichrist," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5, Sections 28-33, p. 210.

³ L.E. Froom, *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. 2, p. 595.

⁴ "Witigis," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, from Encyclopedia Britannica 2007 Ultimate Reference Suite (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica), 2008.

⁵ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3, p. 372.

⁶ "Papal States," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, from Encyclopedia Britannica 2007 Ultimate Reference Suite (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica), 2009.

⁷ Christopher Hibbert, *The Days of the French Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins), 1980, pp. 230-232.

⁸ *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956*, Vol. 1 (New York: Westview Press), 1991, pp. 37-38.

⁹ M.I. Shakhnovich, *Problemy Ateizma V.I. Lenina* (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademice Nauk SSR), 1961, p. 67.

¹⁰ "Religion in the USSR: Militant Atheism Becomes a Mass Movement-1934," from rationalrevolution.net/special/library/cc835_41.htm.

¹¹ Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *Historische-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 1 (Frankfurt-am-Main: Marx-Engels Institute), 1927-1935, p. 261.

¹² Stephen Jay Gould, *Ever Since Darwin: Reflections in Natural History*, 1977, p. 217.

7 QUESTIONS FOR...ELDER TED N.C. WILSON by J. David Newman



ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

Since becoming president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Elder Ted Wilson has appeared prominently on the covers of *Ministry*, *Adventist Review*, and other Adventist magazines. *Adventist Today* thought it would be good to ask Elder Wilson to respond to seven questions, just as Doug Batchelor and other conservatives have answered in this magazine.

Wilson's assistant, Orville Parchment, sent me this reply: "Elder Wilson does not wish to answer these questions directly. He has had to turn down

many invitations. He has indicated that the answers to many of the questions that you have asked are already printed in documents that have been distributed to the membership at large. Thank you for your understanding."

I must say that I was quite surprised that he would decline to participate in our regular column feature. He is president of the whole church, not just those who agree with him. It is unfortunate that he is not willing to dialog with the progressive side of Adventism.

Here are the questions I submitted:

1. Our readers would like know the human side of their world leader. What would you like to share about yourself in 200 words?
2. You are making revival and reformation a hallmark of your administration. Why is this so important?
3. The 1976 Annual Council called for a similar revival and reformation. How does this call build on the previous call?
4. Since the 1976 call did not bring its desired results, what lessons can we learn that will make a difference in this call?

5. Are there limits to theological diversity in the Adventist Church? If the answer is Yes, how do we determine those limits?
6. Apart from the need for revival and reformation, what other major challenges does the Adventist Church face?
7. How do you build consensus among the wide diversity of leaders at the General Conference, Division, Union, and Conference levels?

As you read these questions, consider the statement that "he has indicated that the answers to many of the questions that you have asked are already printed in documents that have been distributed to the membership at large."

Let's see how true that is. You will find little or no information regarding questions 1, 3, 4, 5, or 7. The answers to these questions are very important for the future health of our church. I ask our readers to supply their own answers. How do you think that Elder Wilson would answer these questions? If we get enough response, we will print them in the next issue and send the answers on to Elder Wilson. If you do not want your name to be printed with your submission, please let us know.

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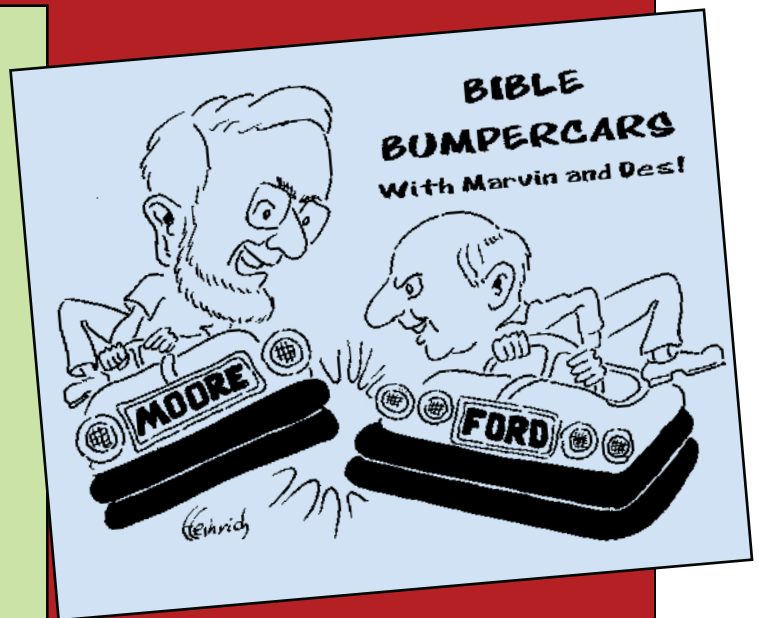
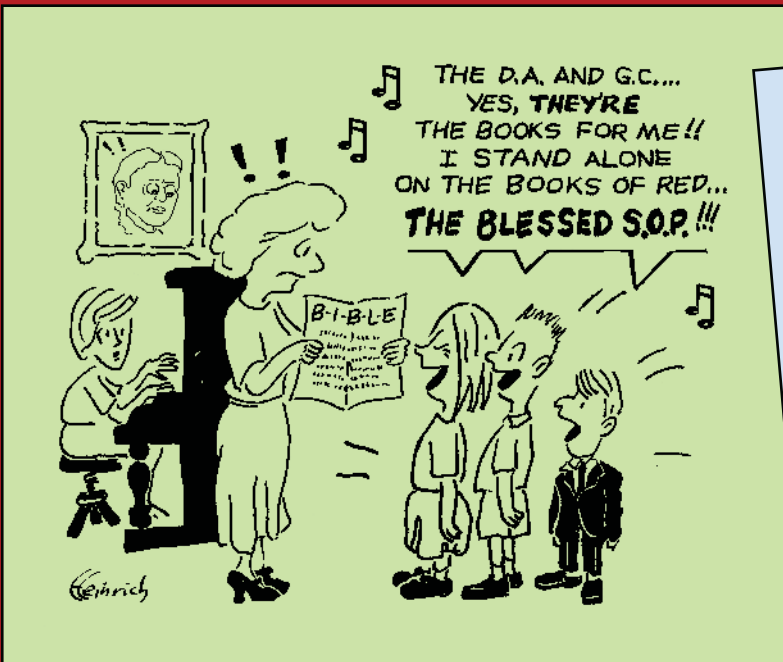
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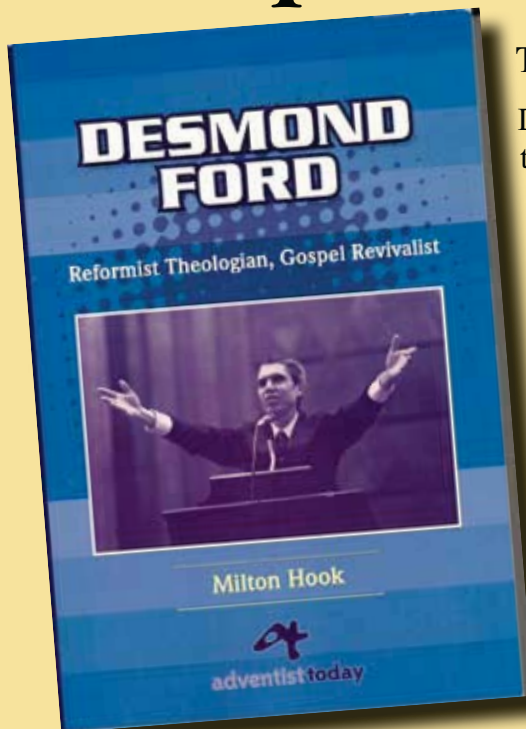
A SATIRICAL LOOK AT ADVENTIST LIFE



The second Adventist Man has retired and wishes to retain his anonymity. The third Adventist Man will continue our *Adventist Today* satire through cartoons.



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