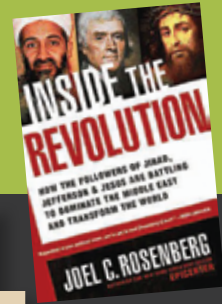


Ellen White a Spokesperson  
for the "Emerging Church"?

The Assumptions  
Behind 1844



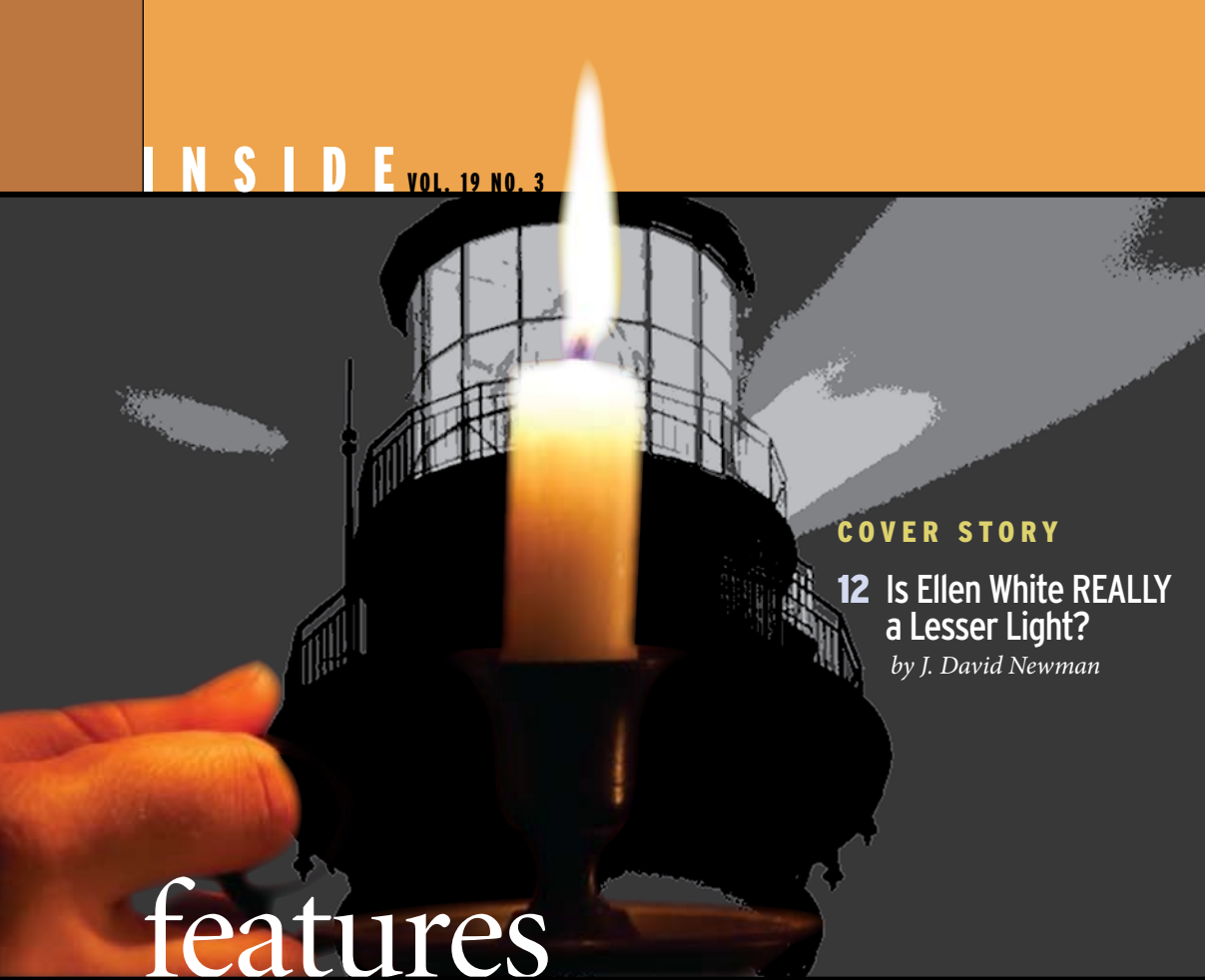
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# Adventist *Today*

Is Ellen White  
**REALLY**  
a Lesser Light?





features

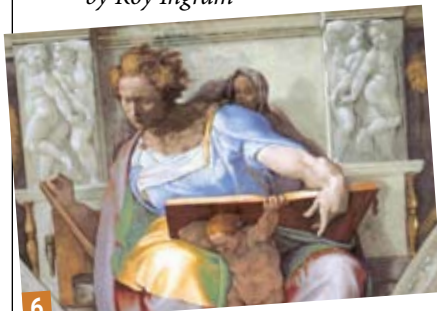
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## Slanting the Truth

J. David Newman

“It is difficult to create an environment in which individuals are expected on the one hand to obey orders unquestioningly and on the other to speak their minds freely.” So wrote William J. Crowe, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, near the end of his Ph.D. dissertation.

When Crowe left Princeton after completing a doctorate in politics, he determined always to speak his mind. However, he soon discovered that independent thinking isn’t always appreciated.

In 1967 Crowe headed the East Asia Pacific Branch, the U.S. Navy’s politico-military division. Asked by a senior officer to prepare a memo on why a particular Air Force position was full of holes, Crowe studied the matter and wrote a paper concluding that the Air Force argument was acceptable.

Crowe’s boss told him, “We didn’t send you up there [to Princeton] to come back with new ideas. We sent you up there to learn how to write and represent the ideas we’ve got. If we want you to do original thinking, we’ll let you know about it.”

We like to think that what we preach, write, or publish represents the whole truth about the church. Yet, like Admiral Crowe, we feel pressure to always paint the organization in the best possible light. Our reports may be factual but slanted and even misleading as far as the truth is concerned. It is not always what we say that is most important, but what we leave out!

For example, a pastor has a history of making sexual advances to the women in his congregation. He may not have acted unwisely enough to warrant dismissal from the pastorate, but he certainly has worn out his welcome in that congregation. So the conference leadership arranges with another

conference for him to be transferred to a new district. His wife is seeking a new job, and the ideal one opens up in that location. His wife’s job need is given as the reason for moving, which is certainly true. But the real reason is left out.

No lies have been told, yet certain omitted facts distort the truth. If they were given, these facts might prevent the planned move.

Another example could be an executive committee discussing a large financial item. No money can be spent until the committee authorizes it. The comments and questions of the committee members seem to indicate that if the motion is put to a vote, it will fail. The presenter finally is forced to admit to the group that a subcommittee has already contracted with a certain party to do the work, and therefore they are morally if not legally bound to pay the amount.

If the members had voted in favor without any questioning, no one would have known of the unauthorized action. And in presenting the need for the money, no lies were told. But neither was the whole truth told. The truth was slanted. Naturally, the presenter felt embarrassed to admit that a mistake had been made. But how much better to have been candid from the beginning. When we slant the truth, many people wonder whether other actions taken may not be as pure as they seem, either.

Ellen White, in commenting on the words of Jesus that our yea be yea (Matt. 5:37), says: “Even facts may be so stated as to convey a false impression. And ‘whatsoever is more than’ truth, ‘is of the evil one.’

“Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan.”<sup>1</sup>

**“Even facts may be so stated as to convey a false impression.”**

—Ellen G. White

### EDITORIAL PHILOSOPHY

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the editorial board. One of the purposes of this magazine is to encourage dialogue between those of differing viewpoints within the Adventist Church. Thus, we will publish articles ranging throughout the conservative-liberal continuum.

### Telling the Whole Truth

So how should a pastor or church executive act when faced with the question of whether to slant the truth? Admiral Crowe faced that issue many times. He was asked to write a paper for the secretary of defense

*Continued on page 27*



### Where Is Wilson Leading Us?

When I read the lead article in the Spring 2011 issue by Larry Downing, I was disappointed, disturbed, and disgusted! Why so many negative opinions of our new world church president, Dr. Ted N.C. Wilson? (I understand he earned his doctorate at New York University.)

Do we still believe in ethical principles, academic integrity, and spiritual maturity? I am cognizant of your editorial right to publish this rude, crude, and unchristian attitude toward a leader of the church. I don't subscribe to *Adventist Today*, but I read it at La Sierra University Heritage Library.

Please, David, use your God-anointed editorial talents for compassion, fairness, and justice.

**KEITH R. MUNDT (RETIRED MINISTER)**  
Riverside, California

### Cain's Wife

My husband receives your magazine, *Adventist Today*. In your Winter 2011 issue, I was disturbed by the article titled "Whom Did Cain Marry?" by Richard Coffen.

The author states a belief that Genesis has an implicit supposition that other human beings may have existed contemporaneously with Adam, Eve, Cain,

and Abel. What, then, is the explanation of the text in Genesis 2:5, which states that "there was not a man to till the ground"? This before Adam was created. If there were other humans in another part of the earth He had created, God didn't seem to be aware of them.

**JODI PATTERSON**  
Ooltewah, Tennessee

### Political Injustice

I was surprised that you published the article "Social (In) Justice" by William Noel (Spring 2011). *Adventist Today* is a magazine on religious subjects that concern Seventh-day Adventists. Noel's article is a blatantly political piece.

True, he has made some religious references. But the whole thrust is promoting a conservative Republican right-wing viewpoint. From the article, I gather that capitalism is God's preferred form of government. I thought God was above politics. I also notice that God has special concern for the rich and does not want them to have to give up their fortunes to aid the poor. That is not the way I read my Bible.

Please note that I am not objecting to the article because I disagree with the content (although I do). It would be just as improper to defend socialism or any other -ism. I expect *Adventist Today* to publish articles with different opinions. Lively disagreement is healthy. But I expect it to stick to religion and not politics. While we each have our own viewpoints, I understand that Christians are citizens of the kingdom of heaven and will not promote strictly political causes or champion political parties.

I do enjoy the journal.

**ROGER L. DUDLEY**  
Berrien Springs, Michigan

### Desmond Ford Replies to Darrel Lindensmith

Darrel has favored us with a very interesting article (Spring 2011), but it will prove puzzling for many readers. In the first paragraph, three times he indicts me for departing from the traditional Adventist historicist mode of interpreting prophecy. Yet his article from start to finish deviates from traditional Adventist prophetic positions in amazing ways.

For example, nowhere is the investigative judgment seen by Darrel as the fulfillment of Daniel 8:14. Second, he agrees with me that Christ did not have a first-apartment heavenly ministry but went directly into the presence of God, as typified by the sanctuary's second apartment and as clearly set forth in Hebrews 6:19 as well as, recurringly, in Hebrews chapters 9 and 10 (thus informing us that the sacrifice on Calvary was the antitype of the Day of Atonement, not the investigative judgment). Third, he interprets the little horn of Daniel 8 as papal Rome only, whereas for over one and a half centuries Seventh-day Adventists have taught that it embraces both pagan and papal Rome. Fourth, instead of seeing punctiliar prophetic fulfillments precisely in 1798 and 1844, he spreads what he considers the real fulfillment over two centuries. Fifth, he states that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 is on earth, whereas the church has always taught that it is the heavenly sanctuary. Sixth, the cleansing for Darrel is something accomplished by earthly powers, not by our Judge-Advocate in heaven. Should Darrel really be indicting me for a departure from traditionalism, when his deviations are more numerous and indeed more flagrant than mine?

Darrel, at the commencement of his piece, writes that he believes my exegetical

failures are partly “epistemologically tied.” I doubt that epistemology is customarily linked with exegesis. Perhaps one day Darrel will explain it to me. It is a philosophical term concerning the grounds of knowledge.

My dereliction is further explained by the charge that I am a preterist, thereby sinning in a somewhat similar fashion to Calvin when he set forth predestination. But I am not and never have been a preterist, limiting the meaning of the prophetic word to those who first received it. (Though I do believe that the meaning understood by the first recipients of messages from the prophets is where we should start.) In 1979, in the summer prior to the October Forum that led to Glacier View, I wrote my main work on prophecy (*Crisis!—A Commentary on the Book of Revelation*). In it I critiqued and rejected preterism. When F.F. Bruce kindly wrote introductions to my commentaries on Daniel and Revelation, his main complaint was that I was not a preterist. Neither, might I add, am I a futurist, of which I have also often been accused because Professor Bruce supervised my dissertation (again, note that he was a preterist and not a futurist). Concluding the preterist charge, does Darrel know that I have written 10 books on prophecy, each of which rebuts his charge as false?

Before I wrote *Crisis!* I spent a week in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., perusing the commentaries on Revelation. I found that through the centuries, scholars had used historicism to apply events in the Book of Revelation to their own times. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Seventh-day Adventists did the same, so that important “last day” events occur in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The problem with this method is that, as time passes, the interpretations become redundant. The

Bible indeed contains history, but that is not what Adventists mean by historicism. They mean that you can find current events, empires, and specific dates in the book of Revelation. In fact, Revelation is a book of signs and symbols and reveals global principles, which keep recurring until the final end.

Of greater importance than any of the foregoing are the following observations:

Darrel never attempts to prove from Scripture that in prophetic symbolism a day is given to represent a year. That view was a providential crutch for the church over long centuries before eschatology was understood and principles of biblical exegesis formulated. I challenge Darrel, as I have my friend Jon Paulien, to name non-Adventist biblical scholars of our time who believe that the Bible teaches the year-day principle. Only Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists cling to this outmoded and inaccurate use of Scripture. Christ’s words in Acts 1:7 clearly warn us against all attempts at date setting. Furthermore, as the *SDA Bible Commentary* emphasizes, the New Testament makes it clear that there need not have been a long delay between the two advents. In God’s ideal plan, there never was to be an 1844 or a 2011 (Matt. 24:34). See page 729 of the *SDA Bible Commentary*, Volume 7. Paul expected some of the Thessalonians to be alive when Jesus returned (see 1 Thess. 4:14).

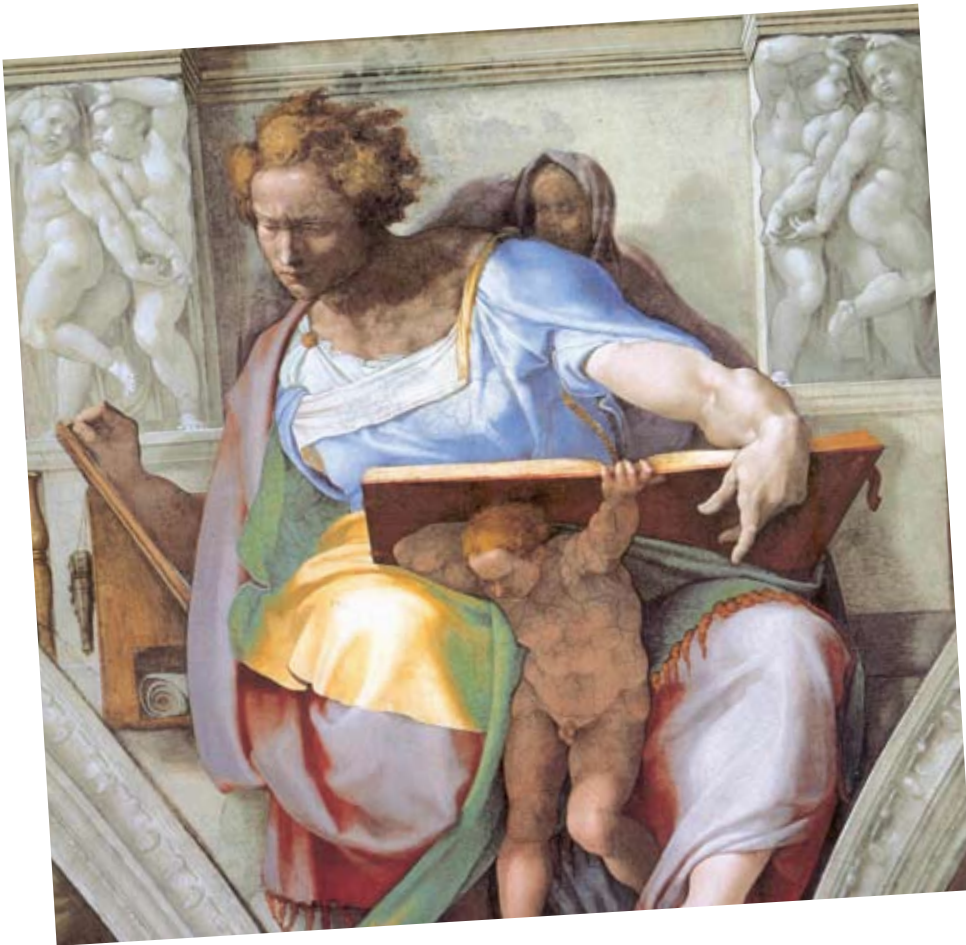
Has Darrel read and understood John 10:22? Christ attended the feast celebrating the cleansing of the sanctuary in 164 B.C. from the defilement by Antiochus Epiphanes. The vast majority of interpreters for more than 2,000 years have understood Daniel 8:11-14 as applying primarily to the dastardly work of the wicked Antiochus IV. Darrel would be very hard pressed to find any respected scholar of our day who does

not so interpret this prophecy. Again, I invite him to look and see.

It is exceedingly strange that Darrel should base his whole exegesis on a text he obviously has not closely examined. The Hebrew word for “day” (*yom*) is not found in Daniel 8:14 (though it is found elsewhere in Daniel.) Therefore, recent translations use “evening-mornings,” because most exegetes understood the Hebrew as referring to the evening and morning sacrifices. See verse 26 of the chapter, and note the repetition of the article, thus making it plain that the evening and morning sacrifices are intended. Raymond Cottrell often stressed this point in his talks and writings.

Typical of Darrel’s misunderstanding of the biblical text is his quotation from a noted historical figure employing the wording of Revelation 13:3 about “the deadly wound.” Traditionally, we have applied this to events in 1798 when the pope was made prisoner. But this is not the meaning of the passage. The wounding of the beast’s head is well-known biblical symbolism originating in Genesis 3:15 and later alluded to in Romans 16:20, Hebrews 2:14, Colossians 2:14, and Revelation 12:7-10. The word translated “wound” is elsewhere translated “plague,” and it should be noted that the meaning is a plague that brings death, not what we mean when we talk of a wound sustained by someone who remains alive.

In my book *For the Sake of the Gospel*, I have given abundant evidence that neither A.D. 538 nor 1798 have anything to do with Daniel’s predictions. The year 538 was one of the worst years the papacy ever had. It certainly did not mark its supremacy. Furthermore, the papacy was never supreme for 1,260 years, only for 200 at the most. May I challenge Darrel  
*Continued on page 27*



NO ONE WHO IS FAMILIAR WITH THE Seventh-day Adventist Church would question that 1844 is a significant date in the history and thinking of the church. The year 1844 was established from the prophecies of Daniel 8 and 9 using the historicist method of prophetic interpretation. Our pioneers were greatly disappointed when Jesus did not return on October 22 of that year. Out of the pain of that great disappointment developed the view that the event foretold was not the Second Coming, but rather Jesus moving from a first-apartment ministry in the heavenly sanctuary to a second-apartment ministry in the Most Holy Place, commencing an investigative judgment of professed believers.

This teaching is said to be our one “unique” doctrine<sup>1</sup> that gives Adventists their “self identity”<sup>2</sup> and “validates” their presence “in the world and ... in the Christian Community.”<sup>3</sup> As such, this teaching has drawn criticism from non-

Adventist scholars, as well as from within our own ranks.<sup>4</sup>

In 1981 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists established the Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM) to investigate these criticisms and to establish whether the teaching is truly biblically based. This included questions raised by Dr. Desmond Ford at Glacier View (1980).<sup>5</sup>

DARCOM met between 1981 and 1992, producing seven volumes<sup>6</sup> said to be “the finest studies on sound ways to interpret the great apocalyptic prophecies.”<sup>7</sup> These volumes are said to have “confirmed the historic Adventist understanding of the biblical material”<sup>8</sup> “on exegetical and theological grounds,”<sup>9</sup> providing biblical answers to the critics.

### **DARCOM Series, Adventist Identity, and the Central Issue**

The prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 is a key passage in our interpretation of the

2300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14. A number of writers highlight the problems in understanding this passage, because of “the difficulty of the text and the multiplicity of interpretations.”<sup>10</sup> It should be of great concern to us that this passage is “one of the most controversial in the entire OT” and that “extreme divergency” “exists on the question of the beginning ... and end” of the 70-weeks prophecy.<sup>11</sup> Adventist biblical scholar Gerhard F. Hasel states that the Historicist School, along with the other schools of prophetic interpretation, “has certain weaknesses.”<sup>12</sup> Determining the commencement date

## The Assumptions Committee in Def

for the 70-weeks prophecy “has been one of the questions to challenge students of prophecy.”<sup>13</sup>

If it is our one “unique” doctrine and rationale for our existence, it is vitally important that we give an absolutely clear and unambiguous defense from the Bible of this teaching. “Although the writings of Ellen G. White were carefully considered,” it is commendable that DARCOM was “to focus on the Scriptural basis for belief.”<sup>14</sup>

The central issue of this teaching is the establishing of the “correct commencement date” for the 70-weeks prophecy (Daniel 9), which gives the starting date for the 2300-days prophecy (Dan. 8:14).<sup>15</sup> This central issue involves the relationship between the two prophecies and the 70 weeks being “cut off” from the beginning of the 2300 days; the year-day principle being biblical; and the word “vision” (Dan. 8:13) applying to the entire vision (verses 3-14), not just to the activities of the “little horn” (verses 9-12).

This paper is an examination of these books, along with subsequent articles related to this central issue. Of the more than 2,400 pages in the DARCOM volumes, only about 3.5% deal with the central issue. The rest, while containing some excellent material, deal with peripheral issues.

What is most disturbing is that at every stage in dealing with the central issue, writers use conjecture, speculation, and assumption rather than clear biblical exegesis. Terms such as “assuming,” “appears,” “circumstantial,” “suggests,” “deduce,” “favor,” “possibilities,” “if,”

Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:25). This is despite the fact all writers agree it does not mention rebuilding Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup>

Adventist archaeologist William H. Shea suggests three “possibilities” for this: (1) Ezra was given permission *orally*; (2) He received a supplementary decree *not recorded in the Bible*; and (3) Ezra *understood* he had authority to build.<sup>18</sup>

One could speculate at length about the “possibilities” of what is “not recorded in the Bible” or anywhere else.

3. That the decree of Artaxerxes to stop the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Ezra 4) occurred after Ezra 7. It is then suggested

*commences* the 490-years prophecy. It is assumed this finds fulfillment in the decree of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7).<sup>24</sup>

6. That the date for the issuing of the decree of Artaxerxes is 457 B.C.,<sup>25</sup> when the decree is actually undated.<sup>26</sup>

Correlations used to calculate the date of Artaxerxes’ 7<sup>th</sup> year are *incorrectly* presented as evidence the decree was issued in that year, by both Shea and Hasel.<sup>27</sup> As spring was the best time for Ezra’s journey to Jerusalem, and Josephus says a copy of the decree was sent to Jews in Media, many of whom responded,<sup>28</sup> it could have been a considerable time before Artaxerxes’ 7<sup>th</sup> year (even a year or more earlier).

7. That the 70-weeks prophecy begins *when* the decree of Ezra 7 *goes into effect* in the fall of 457 B.C.<sup>29</sup>

This contradicts Daniel 9:25 and point 5 above, that it was the *issuing* of the decree to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” that *commenced* the 70-weeks prophecy. **What happened in the fall of 457 B.C. that we use that as the starting point of the 2300 days/years, other than it fits in with October 22, the fall of 1844?**

Shea, more recently, admits that “it is still awkward that the decree does not specifically authorize the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem.” He then postulates it was Ezra who issued the decree in the summer/spring of 456 B.C. after dealing with the problem of foreign wives.<sup>30</sup>

I’m not sure if Dr. Shea understands the implications of this so-called “supplementary evidence!” **This completely undermines our traditional position** (that Artaxerxes’ decree is the one fulfilling Daniel 9:25). **It also renders invalid the view that Artaxerxes’ decree went into effect in the fall of 457 B.C., commencing the 2300 years.**

8. That Jesus was baptized in A.D. 27,<sup>31</sup> when the specific date of Tiberius’ 15<sup>th</sup> year is unknown.<sup>32</sup>

9. That the word “decreed” (Dan. 9:24)

that Artaxerxes’ decree (Ezra 7) must have included authorization to rebuild Jerusalem, even though it did not specify that. The problem is, Why would he stop the rebuilding he has authorized?<sup>19</sup> Ellen White, on the other hand, called the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4 the False Smerdis (522 B.C.).<sup>20</sup>

Arthur Ferch acknowledges that *the restoration of the city*, as well as the temple, *began in the time of Cyrus*.<sup>21</sup> This is in line with Isaiah 44:28 and Haggai 1:4 (520 B.C.).<sup>22</sup>

4. That Ezra used the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar, rather than a Persian/Babylonian spring-to-spring calendar in identifying Artaxerxes’ 7<sup>th</sup> year, because Nehemiah, Ezra’s contemporary, appears to use the Jewish calendar. This assumption puts Ezra’s journey to Jerusalem in 457 B.C.<sup>23</sup> and not in 458 B.C., as most non-Adventist scholars date it.

5. That it is the *issuing* of the decree to “restore and rebuild Jerusalem” that

“probably,” “it is only reasonable to conclude,” “it seems reasonable,” “supports the idea,” “seems most likely,” “the only logical conclusion,” “do not fully prove,” “seems to be,” “an unexpressed but understood relationship,” etc. are used extensively. What is even more disturbing is that the matter is treated as though it has been proved from the Bible. Perhaps, because most of the articles are on peripheral issues, writers were not aware of how much conjecture is used when dealing with the central issue?

DARCOM and subsequent writers have failed to establish clearly and unambiguously from the Bible the 1844 investigative judgment. Assumptions, speculations, and conjectures have been made at both of the following crucial steps:

1. That Artaxerxes of Ezra 7 is Artaxerxes I.<sup>16</sup>

2. That the decree of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7) is the “decree to restore and rebuild

# of the Daniel and Revelation ending 1844

BY ROY INGRAM

means “cut off” and that the 70 weeks are “cut off” from the *beginning* of the 2300 days, giving its starting date,<sup>33</sup> when Daniel 9:24, as well as being Messianic, applies the 70 weeks as probationary time “for your people and for your holy city” and not to the 2300 evenings-mornings. The 70 years of captivity was one-seventh of a previous 490 years (2 Chron. 36:21).

In an extended, highly speculative, intricate discussion on the meaning of *hatak* (“decreed,” “cut off”), Shea refers to the “possibility” that “the masculine plural ending of the word ‘weeks’ in Daniel ... was used to designate unexpressed but understood relationships to the evening-

## Yet other Adventists have charged “that Hebrews denies the Adventist belief that Christ mediates in a two-phase priestly ministry.

mornings of” Daniel 8:14.<sup>34</sup> One could speculate at length about “unexpressed but understood relationships,” but *if it is unexpressed*, how can we know what it is? We surely need to establish our doctrine on better evidence than this.

Hasel says: “Based on Daniel 9:24, 25, where it is stated that the ‘seventy weeks’ or 490 years began in 457 B.C. and were ‘cut off’ from the 2300 years, it follows that the 2300 years also commence in 457 B.C.”<sup>35</sup> Where is this stated in Daniel 9:24-25? It is very disturbing to find blatantly incorrect dogmatic statements being used to support our doctrines!

10. That there is a biblical year/day principle that applies to apocalyptic time prophecies in Daniel and Revelation.

Shea presents 23 so-called biblical reasons for the year/day principle.<sup>36</sup> That there is a day-year relationship in the Bible is evident. (There is also a day-1000 year relationship—see Psa. 90:4 and 2 Pet. 3:8.) What is not presented is a clear, unambiguous year/day principle that applies to apocalyptic prophecy. The fact that Shea refers to establishing this “through reasonable interpretations of Scripture” indicates there is no clear principle! This is in agreement with the Glacier View Consensus Statement.<sup>37</sup>

A very long bow, indeed, is drawn to make some passages, such as Leviticus 25:1-8 on the sabbatical year and the year of jubilee, teach a year-day principle.<sup>38</sup> The most obvious problem with applying a day for a year in Daniel 8:14 and Daniel 9:24-27<sup>39</sup> is that the word “day” does not occur.

William G. Johnsson, seeing the connection between the 70 years of captivity (Dan. 9:2) and the 70 weeks (verse 24), says that the time allocated “would amount to seven times ‘seventy years,’ of which Jeremiah spoke.”<sup>40</sup> This contradicts the view that the time period should be interpreted as 490 days symbolic of 490 years.

11. That the word “vision” in the question in Daniel 8:13 applies to the whole vision and not to part, namely, the activities of the “little horn.” This avoids the application, made by non-Adventist scholars, to Antiochus Epiphanes.

This is no small matter! **Our entire view of the 2300 day/year prophecy depends on their being only one unambiguous meaning for the word “vision.”** Yet, it is stated there are two alternative interpretations and the one adopted applies it to the whole vision. Quite an elaborate argument is used to support this. What is “not explicitly cited

in the question” of verse 13 is also used as “evidence.”<sup>41</sup>

Firstly, if there are two alternative interpretations, we cannot be dogmatic about one of them. Secondly, to build a case on what is “not explicitly cited” is eisegesis, not exegesis. And thirdly, if we need to go into elaborate, intricate arguments to establish our doctrine, then something is wrong. The meaning of the ram and the goat in Daniel 8 need no elaborate explanation.

12. That, after arguing that the 2300 evenings-mornings apply to the entire vision, in contradiction, this period is then said to apply *to part of the vision* from 457 B.C. on and not from the beginning in 539 B.C., when Medo-Persia conquered Babylon.<sup>42</sup>

It seems our scholars, in their enthusiasm to defend the traditional position, have overstated the evidence. Hasel correctly criticizes dispensationalists for basing their views on assumptions.<sup>43</sup>

### The New Testament

Perhaps the greatest problem with the doctrine of the 1844 investigative judgment is that it is not taught in the New Testament. The New Testament interprets the Old Testament, not the other way around, as dispensationalists would have it.

The book of Hebrews is the main New Testament book that explains the sanctuary. In pointing to Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, it helped our pioneers “to resolve the dilemma of the 1844 disappointment.” Yet other Adventists have charged “that Hebrews denies the Adventist belief that Christ mediates in a two-phase priestly ministry.” DARCOM concluded that Hebrews neither affirms nor denies “Christ’s two-phased priestly ministry.”<sup>44</sup> For Hebrews to **not** affirm this teaching **is** to deny it.

Johnsson says Hebrews “does not deny the SDA sanctuary doctrine, because



basically it does not address the issue.” After saying it does **not** deal with Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary “*from a time perspective*,” in contradiction, he says “the apostle’s emphasis [is] *on one point in time—the once-for-all sacrifice of Calvary*” (emphasis mine).<sup>45</sup> Again, for Hebrews **not** to address the SDA sanctuary doctrine is to deny it.

What is true is we must not “dilute the apostle’s emphasis on one point in time—the once-for-all sacrifice of Calvary.” (See Heb. 9:6-14, 22-28; 10:10-14, 19-22, etc.)

The New Testament does, of course, affirm judgment: at the cross (John 12:30-33), at the preaching of the gospel (John 3:16-18; 5:22-25) and at the end (Acts 17:31; John 5:28-29; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10).<sup>46</sup>

## Enormous Resources Expended

Why have we expended enormous resources to defend a position that can only be substantiated by a series of presuppositions? While the “focus” was to be “on the Scriptural basis for belief,” one can only conclude that writers instead followed Ellen White, who endorsed this teaching. We want to defend the integrity of our prophet. I believe she had the prophetic gift and treasure her writings. Some of her statements on substitutionary atonement and the imputed righteousness of Christ are as clear as can be found anywhere. But spiritual gifts are subordinate to the Bible.

## Cognitive Dissonance

What we have here is a classic case of cognitive dissonance, which occurs when we hold two conflicting thoughts in the mind at the same time. For example, believing smoking is unhealthy and continuing smoking. Something has to change to eliminate the discord and bring psychological harmony. Usually attitudes accommodate behavior. Smokers, for example, knowing it is unhealthy, will often

rationalize and say, “I’ll put on weight if I stop smoking.”

To admit that this “unique” doctrine is not true, after investing so much in defending it, would be embarrassing. Instead we have rationalized the “uniqueness” of this doctrine (“because no one else teaches this”) into “evidence” of our “special calling.”<sup>47</sup>

## Spiritual Gifts

The integrity of Ellen White is under threat only if we have an incorrect view of inspiration and fail to recognize the limitations of the prophetic gift.

1. **Prophets are not infallible.** Nathan was wrong to tell David he could build the temple (2 Samuel 7). John the Baptist doubted Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 7:18-28). Paul was wrong in rejecting John Mark (see Acts 15:36-41; 1 Pet. 5:13; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11). “Ellen White was not infallible, and she never claimed infallibility. *She grew, changed her mind on issues, and was constantly open for more light.*”<sup>48</sup> “In regard to infallibility,” Ellen White in a letter written in 1895 said, “I never claimed it; God alone is infallible.”<sup>49</sup>

2. **Prophets are products of their times.** The disciples, following the popular view in expecting a political kingdom, were shattered by the death of Jesus (Luke 24:21). They still expected this after the resurrection (Acts 1:6). Peter, following Jewish customs, separated himself from Gentile believers (Gal. 2:11-14).

Ellen White also was a product of her time. She said the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4 was the False Smerdis (522 B.C.). DARCOM has a different view (see point 3 above). She reflected Ussher’s chronology (printed in the margins of many Bibles) on the age of the earth. Siegfried Horn, at a 1970s Bible Conference, said archaeology shows the world is older than 6,000 years. We cannot use archaeology to prove the Bible and then reject its findings when they

don’t suit us.

William Shea, at a later Bible Conference, disagreed that Revelation 9 applied to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, as Ellen White asserts.<sup>50</sup> He applied it to a later event. He then asked, “What do we do with Ellen White?” His answer: “She was reflecting the popular view of her day.”

Ellen White’s view of the investigative judgment is not the view the church promotes today. The view presented in *The Great Controversy* gives no assurance of salvation until our lives pass the scrutiny of the judgment and we are perfected by the atoning work of Jesus. And, to add to the uncertainty, we don’t know when our names will come up in the judgment.<sup>51</sup>

What is said by DARCOM and others is quite different. But there is still an endeavoring to marry what God has not joined together: completed atonement at the cross and a special cleansing work of Jesus during the investigative judgment—grace and end-time sinless perfection.<sup>52</sup> “The atonement, or reconciliation, was completed on the cross ...” (emphasis mine).<sup>53</sup> *Atonement by judgment* will, therefore, bring about a fully reconciled and harmonious universe” (emphasis mine).<sup>54</sup> In 1844 Jesus “would begin His special work of *cleansing* and judgment in addition to His continual intercessory ministry” (emphasis mine).<sup>55</sup>

3. **Spiritual gifts must be tested by the Word** (see 1 Thess. 5:19-21 and 1 John 4:1). “As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe in the gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy, but we also believe that everything should be tested by the Word of God.”<sup>56</sup> “The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for Scriptures explicitly state that the Word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”<sup>57</sup>

4. **The Bible is the only rule of faith and practice.** The preamble to our

fundamental beliefs states: “Adventists have but one creed: ‘The Bible, and the Bible alone.’”<sup>58</sup>

Gerhard Pfandl’s comments on Ellen White are relevant: “Her writings are not another Bible, nor do they carry the kind of authority found in the Bible. In the end, the Bible and the Bible alone is our ultimate authority. ... The crucial point to remember is that our church’s doctrines are based solely on the Bible. They are not dependent upon Ellen White’s writings, however helpful she has been in clarifying some of those teachings. ... Ellen White’s writings are never to be used in place of the Bible.”<sup>59</sup>

Ellen White said of the Scriptures: “In our time there is a wide departure from their doctrines and precepts, and there is need of a return to the great Protestant principle—the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty.”<sup>60</sup> And she added, “The Testimonies are not to take the place of the Word.”<sup>61</sup>

### The Everlasting Gospel

It is an overstatement to say that the relevance of our message and our right to exist are diminished or denied if we admit that the 1844 investigative judgment is not biblical. The Sabbath, God as Creator, the Second Coming, the state of the dead, the health message, Christ’s intercession, salvation by grace through the substitutionary atonement, etc. are all still true and relevant today.

The heart of the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Since he is our substitute and representative, everything that happened to Jesus—his death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement—is provisionally counted as happening to the whole human race. This becomes a reality for the believer by faith in Jesus (2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:6)! His victory and righteousness *then* become

ours, and we become citizens of heaven (see Heb. 2:14; Rom. 8:37; 4:6; Col. 1:12-13; Eph. 2:19-22; Phil. 3:20-21).

With the gospel at the center, we have something very important to share with the world; but without the gospel, we are just another sect.

Ellen White herself wrote: “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. ... The sacrifice of Christ *as an atonement for sin* is the great truth around which all other truths center” (emphasis mine).<sup>62</sup> “Hanging upon the cross Christ was the gospel.”<sup>63</sup> “Christ’s sacrifice in behalf of man was *full and complete*. The condition of the atonement *had been fulfilled*” (emphasis mine).<sup>64</sup>

“The great work that is wrought for the sinner who is spotted and stained by evil, is the work of justification. By Him who speaketh truth He is declared righteous. The Lord pronounces him righteous before the universe. [Could we instead say: This is the pre-Advent judgment that “reveals to heavenly intelligences” (Fundamental Belief 23, 1988 version) what takes place *at the time when* a person accepts Jesus (emphasis mine)?] He transfers his sins to Jesus, the sinner’s representative, substitute, and surety. ... Christ made satisfaction for the guilt of the whole world, and all who come to God in faith, will receive the righteousness of Christ.”<sup>65</sup>

The two greatest threats to the gospel are legalism on the one hand and liberalism on the other. Crudely put, legalism is the view that we can earn salvation by what we do. A more subtle form (what the Council of Trent did) is to substitute the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit for the finished work of Christ, *as the basis of salvation*.

With liberalism, some turn the liberty of the gospel into license to do as they please (e.g., Gal. 5:13). The position of those who

say that because of grace we do not have to obey God’s commandments (or who are careless about obedience) is just as destructive of the gospel as legalism.

Ministers can believe quite aberrant, perfectionist views of the gospel and still retain their credentials. Some hold that Christ had a sinful human nature but did not sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. They reason that if he could do it, then so can we. They see Jesus primarily as our example rather than as our substitute. The last generation, some claim, will be without sin through the final atonement of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, where he perfects the saints.

This was the 1960s view of Robert Brinsmead’s Sanctuary Awakening offshoot. It still is the teaching of some independent groups today. Ministers can believe these unscriptural views and retain their credentials, but if they question the 1844 investigative judgment, which is not a salvation issue, they could be dismissed.

### An Appeal for Reassessment

Ellen White has said: “Error is never harmless. It never sanctifies, *but always brings confusion and dissension*. It is always dangerous” (emphasis mine).<sup>66</sup> “Every position we take should be critically examined and tested by the Scriptures.”<sup>67</sup>


“There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. ...

“Long-cherished opinions must not be regarded as infallible. ... We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will

never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. ... We should never allow ourselves to employ arguments that are not wholly sound.<sup>68</sup>

Can we claim to be “people of the Book” and heirs of the Reformation’s *sola scriptura* while we “go beyond what is written” in Scripture (1 Cor. 4:6)?<sup>69</sup> This one “unique” doctrine undermines our credibility as “Bible-believing Christians.” By far the great majority of Adventists have no understanding of these issues, and few could give an intelligent Bible study on these prophecies. They just accept the church’s teaching on the subject. How will they feel when they eventually discover that this doctrine we make so central is unbiblical? By allowing this unscriptural teaching to prevail, we detract from the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus and the completed atonement at the cross. We also undermine assurance of salvation for many Adventists who believe they have to reach a certain level of holiness before they are ready for heaven.

While this situation remains, we sap the energy and morale of pastors who know that this doctrine is unscriptural. This, I believe, is stifling our mission—especially in Western countries among thinking people.

This article is an appeal to the church to reassess this teaching in the light of Scripture. 

*Roy Ingram is a pseudonym.*

<sup>1</sup>Clifford R. Goldstein, “The Gospel, 1844 and the Judgment,” *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, April-June 2006, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Angel Manuel Rodríguez, “God’s Presence in the Sanctuary,” *BRI Documents* (on CD), (n.d.), Vol. 1-2, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Angel Manuel Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), pp. 405-406.

<sup>4</sup>Arnold V. Wallenkampf, “Challenges to the Doctrine of the Sanctuary” in *Doctrine of the Sanctuary: A Historical Survey*, edited by Frank Holbrook, (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), Vol. 5, pp. 197-224.

<sup>5</sup>Rodríguez, “The Sanctuary,” pp. 405-406.

<sup>6</sup>Edited by Frank Holbrook and published by Biblical Research Institute. They will be subsequently referred to by article author, article title, DARCOM date, volume number, then page number.

<sup>7</sup><http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/bookshop.htm>

<sup>8</sup>Richard M. Davidson, “A Song for the Sanctuary,” *Adventist Review*, July 2, 1992, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup>Rodríguez, “God’s Presence in the Sanctuary” (n.d.); Rodríguez, “Response To: ‘The Investigative Judgment: A Bible Based Doctrine?’ *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1997” (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, Nov. 1997), p. 1 (see <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/>).

*Exegesis* is the act of drawing the meaning out of the text itself, while *eisegesis* is reading into the text one’s own ideas and meaning.

<sup>10</sup>Jacques Doukhan, “The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9: An Exegetical Study, in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, edited by A.V. Wallenkampf and W.R. Leshar (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1981), p. 251.

<sup>11</sup>Gerhard F. Hasel, “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, pp. 5, 7, 62-63.

<sup>12</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Arthur Ferch, “Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 65.

<sup>14</sup>W. Richard Leshar and Frank Holbrook, “Final Report” (DARCOM 1992), Vol. 7, p. 452.

<sup>15</sup>Frank Holbrook says that this prophecy “finds genuine meaning only if its correct commencement date can be established” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 64.

<sup>16</sup>Ferch, “Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 68.

<sup>17</sup>Hasel, “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, pp. 51, 57; Ferch, “Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, pp. 65, 69, 74; William H. Shea, “When Did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?” (DARCOM 1991), Vol. 6, pp. 383-384; William H. Shea, “Supplementary Evidence in Support of 457 B.C. as the Starting Date for the 2300 Day-Years of Daniel 8:14,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 89, 94.

<sup>18</sup>William H. Shea, “Unity of Daniel” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 2, p. 287.

<sup>19</sup>Hasel, “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 51; Ferch, “Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, pp. 69, 71, 74; Rodríguez, *The 70 Weeks and 457 B.C.* (Silver Spring, MD: BRI, April 1994), p. 4 (see <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/>); Shea, “When Did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?” (DARCOM 1991), Vol. 6, p. 382.

<sup>20</sup>*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 572-573.

<sup>21</sup>Ferch, “Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 70.

<sup>22</sup>“God rebukes the Jews for allowing their comfortable living in well-appointed houses to blind them to the need of rebuilding the Temple,”

*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, edited by Francis D. Nichol (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1955), Vol. 4, p. 1076.

<sup>23</sup>Rodríguez, *The 70 Weeks and 457 B.C.* (Silver Spring, MD: BRI, April 1994), p. 7; Shea, “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, pp. 100, 101; Shea, “When Did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?” (DARCOM 1991), Vol. 6, p. 390; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1955), Vol. 3, p. 365.

<sup>24</sup>Hasel, “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 49; Ferch, “Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 65; Shea, “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27” (DARCOM 1991), Vol. 6, p. 88; Shea, “When Did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?” (DARCOM 1991), Vol. 6, pp. 377, 384-385; Rodríguez, *The 70 Weeks and 457 B.C.* (Silver Spring, MD: BRI, April 1994), p. 8.

<sup>25</sup>Shea, “When Did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?” (DARCOM 1991), Vol. 6, pp. 389, 392, 393; Shea, “Supplementary Evidence in Support of 457 B.C. as the Starting Date for the 2300 Day-Years of Daniel 8:14,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 89-96; Hasel, “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 49; Ferch, “Commencement Date for the Seventy Week Prophecy” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 69.

<sup>26</sup>Shea, “When Did the Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24 Begin?” (DARCOM 1991), Vol. 6, pp. 384-5; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1954), Vol. 3, p. 97 (footnote).

<sup>27</sup>Shea, “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 101; Hasel, “Divine Judgment,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 839.

<sup>28</sup>“Antiquities of the Jews,” Book 11, Chapter 5, No. 2.

<sup>29</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1954), Vol. 3, p. 365; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1955) Vol. 4, p. 853; Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood, *The Chronology of Ezra 7* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953), p. 4.

<sup>30</sup>Shea, “Supplementary Evidence in Support of 457 B.C. as the Starting Date for the 2300 Day-Years of Daniel 8:14,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 2001), pp. 89, 94, 96.

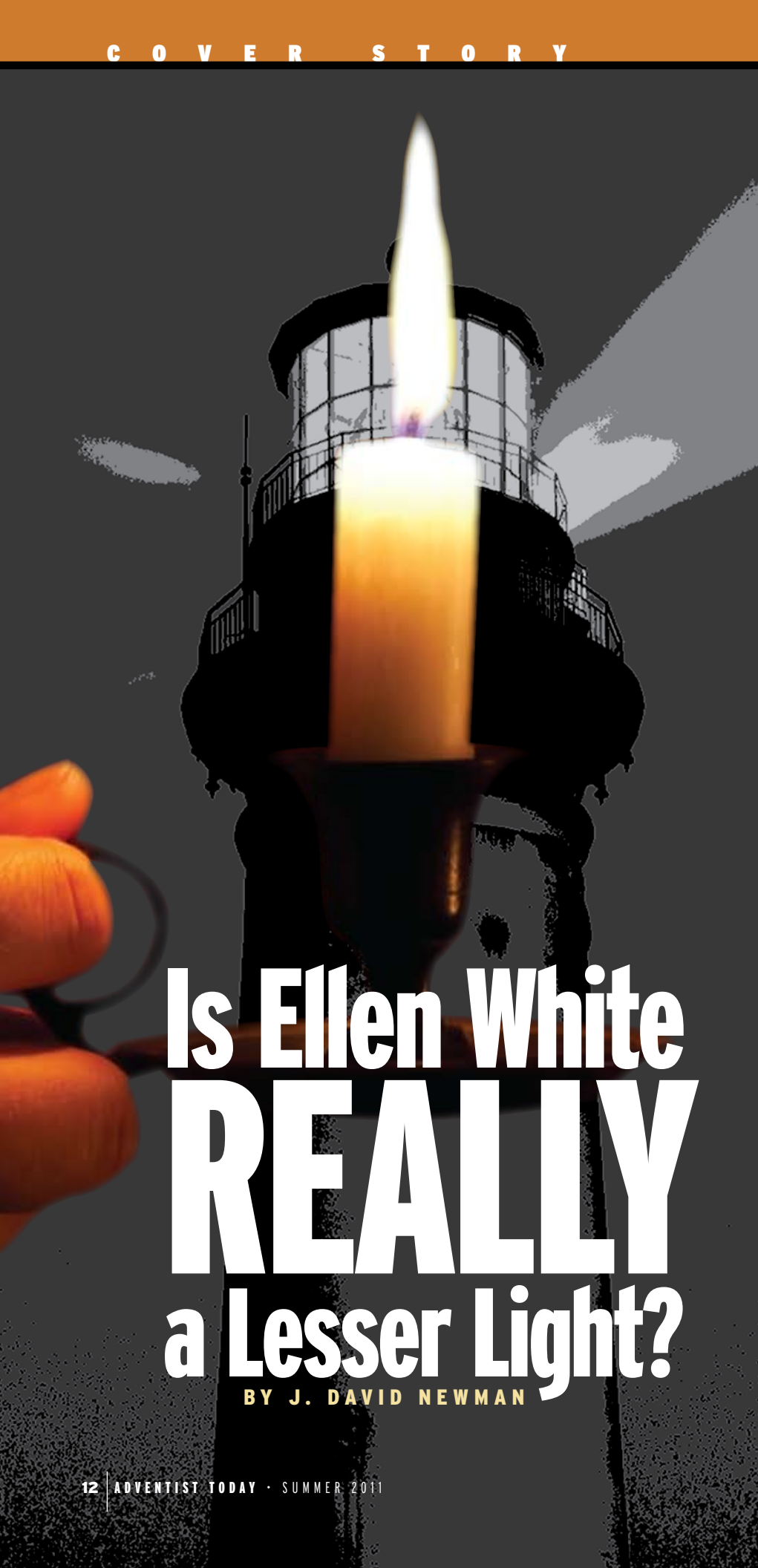
<sup>31</sup>Shea, “The Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 102. Shea cites J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton, 1964), pp. 259-73, to support A.D. 27.

Hasel, in a footnote in his “Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, p. 49, also cited Finegan, who gives either A.D. 26 or 27.

<sup>32</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1955), Vol. 5, pp. 235, 244.

<sup>33</sup>Hasel, “A Study of Daniel 8:9-14” (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 2, p. 438; Shea, “The Prophecy of Daniel

*Continued on page 28*



# Is Ellen White REALLY a Lesser Light?

BY J. DAVID NEWMAN

ELLEN WHITE AND HER RELATIONSHIP TO the Bible have come under great attack by Dale Ratzlaff. A former Seventh-day Adventist pastor, he wrote *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, which has received wide circulation.<sup>1</sup> In this book Ratzlaff says that “Ellen White has misinterpreted and misapplied Scripture on numerous occasions”<sup>2</sup> and that the Adventist Church should “drop the writings of Ellen White as a source of authority.”<sup>3</sup>

Ratzlaff portrays her as a plagiarist who unashamedly copied other people’s writings, not giving credit; who covered up what she had done while saying that the Bible was the only standard for truth; and who also, at times, made it clear that she had the last word from God. He says that in addition to her copying, she also contradicted the Bible, taught doctrines that were against the gospel, changed her views many times, and was harsh to others while wanting great consideration for herself.

What role does Ellen White play today, almost 100 years after her death? Is she a “continuing and authoritative source of truth,” as Fundamental Belief #18 states? And if so, does that make her equal with the Bible, which is also a continuing and authoritative source of truth?

## Our Historical Position

Ellen White herself called her writings a “lesser light” to lead people to the greater light—the Bible.<sup>4</sup> There is a growing trend in the Adventist denomination today to make Ellen White the infallible interpreter of Scripture. See, for example, *The Remnant Study Bible*, in which the words of Ellen White are interleaved with the words of the Bible.<sup>5</sup>

In our early years, Adventists were content to leave her precise role undefined. It was not until 1931 that the church developed a statement of fundamental beliefs printed in the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. These beliefs were not voted by any authoritative committee but were the work of four men: M.K. Kern, F.M. Wilcox, E.R. Palmer, and C.H. Watson.<sup>6</sup>

The original belief on spiritual gifts simply said this: “God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit as enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. .... These gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given for the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ”<sup>7</sup>

It was not until 20 years later that the following words were added to the statement in the *1951 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*: “The gift of the Spirit of Prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church. 1 Cor. 12:1, 28; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; Amos 3:7; Hosea 12:10, 13. They [Adventists] recognize that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen White.”<sup>8</sup>

This definition stood for 29 years until, at the 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, this part of the statement of fundamental beliefs was officially revised and made more authoritative. It is reproduced below as printed in the *1981 Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*.

“One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14–21; Heb. 1:1–3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)”<sup>9</sup>

If you look at this statement, you will find that we have tried to have it both ways. We have tried to make the Bible supreme, the final authority, and we have also tried to make Ellen White supreme, the final authority. This statement says that “her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth.” What does “authoritative” mean?

*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* defines authority as “the power to determine, adjudicate, or otherwise settle issues or disputes; jurisdiction; the right to control, command, or determine.”<sup>10</sup> The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, while agreeing with this definition, adds “moral or legal supremacy.”<sup>11</sup>

Now, we cannot have it both ways. The Bible cannot be the “standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested” if the writings of Ellen White have “the power to determine” or to “settle issues or disputes.” There is only one final authority.

The suspicion that the denomination was trying to advance the supremacy of Ellen White through the back door is strengthened when we see the changes that took place in Fundamental Belief #1, which deals with the role of the Bible.

Prior to the revisions of 1980, this fundamental said in part that “[the Holy Scriptures] are the *only* unerring rule of faith and practice”<sup>12</sup> (emphasis added). In the new statement of 1980, the word “only” was dropped and we now read that “The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will ... .” With the word “only” dropped, we left the door open for other “infallible revelations.” Yes, we still believe in the infallibility of the Bible, but we no longer believe that it is the *only* infallible revelation of God.

### Ellen White Unique

While we dismiss Joseph Smith and Mary Baker Eddy as counterfeits, we say that Ellen White is the only prophet God has appointed since New Testament times and that she holds a unique place in human history. I am not aware that our church has ever considered anyone else—even men like Martin Luther and John Calvin—to have the prophetic gift.

It is quite incredible that we could come up with this understanding considering what the Bible says about prophets in the

last days. Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost quoted from Joel 2. “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy” (Acts 2:17–18, NIV).

This passage is listed as one of the references to Fundamental Belief #18 on Ellen White and the gift of prophecy, yet the passage clearly states that more than one person will have the gift of prophecy. Why do Adventists limit this gift to one person?

Furthermore, the Bible stresses the importance of gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to the church. In Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4, the gift of prophecy is listed as one of the gifts. It is not limited to one person or to one time. There is not the slightest hint that while all of the other gifts could be manifested in many people, this gift would only be manifested in the life of one person.

### Personal Struggles

I grew up believing that Ellen White was perfect, that she never sinned, that she never had to struggle. But one day I came across this statement where she was describing her struggle to give up meat.

“I suffered keen hunger, I was a great meat eater. But when faint, I placed my arms across my stomach, and said, ‘I will not taste a morsel. I will eat simple food, or I will not eat at all.’ Bread was distasteful to me. I could seldom eat a piece as large as a dollar. Some things in the reform I could get along with very well; but when I came to the bread, I was especially set against it.”<sup>13</sup>

Then I learned that she and her husband used to fight in their marriage. They did not battle physically, but they certainly did not mince words to each other. There was a time when James White was living

in Michigan and Ellen was living in California. Each one believed the other should be the person to relocate.

Ellen wrote some letters to a friend named Lucinda Hall. Here is part of what she wrote:

“Should I come east, James’s happiness might suddenly change to complaining and fretting. I am thoroughly disgusted with the state of things, and do not mean to place myself where there is the least liability of its occurring. ... I

me. That she went through her struggles. But others were not so forbearing. Men like Walter Rea (author of *The White Lie*) and Dale Ratzlaff have written scathing books condemning Ellen White as a plagiarizer, as deceptive, as arrogant, and as a liar.

They have pointed out issues concerning her that the church has no easy answer to offer. Adventists have spent millions of dollars in research to try to prove the infallibility of Ellen White, and

once they become Adventists, we often reverse ourselves and refuse to recanvass what we have been taught.

Again on the same subject, Ellen White counsels us: “Truth is eternal, and conflict with error will only make manifest its strength. We should never refuse to examine the Scriptures with those who [sic] we have a reason to believe desire to know what is truth as much as we do. Suppose a brother holds a view that differs from yours, and he comes to you,

## THOSE WHO THINK THAT THEY WILL NEVER HAVE TO GIVE UP A CHERISHED VIEW, NEVER HAVE OCCASION TO CHANGE AN OPINION, WILL BE DISAPPOINTED.

must work as God should direct. ... God in his providence has given us each our work, and we will do it separately, independently. He is happy; I am happy; but the happiness might be all changed should we meet. ... A great share of my life’s usefulness has been lost. ... I cannot have confidence in James’s judgment in reference to my duty. He seems to want to dictate to me as though I was [sic] a child.”<sup>14</sup>

In another letter to Lucinda, Ellen penned: “I sometimes think he is not a sane man, but I don’t know. May God teach and lead and guide. His [James’s] letter has fully decided me to remain this side of the mountains.”<sup>15</sup>

James White was just as strong in writing back: “I shall use the good old head God gave me until He reveals that I am wrong. Your head won’t fit on my shoulders. Keep it where it belongs, and I will try to honor God in using my own. I shall be glad to hear from you, but don’t waste your precious time and strength lecturing me on matters of mere opinion.”<sup>16</sup>

These insights and many others like them actually did not discourage me about Ellen White. For the first time, I began to see that she was human. That she was like

we still have not satisfied the critics.

I believe there is an easier way—one that cuts to the heart of the issues and solves most of the problems. I believe that our published fundamental doctrine about the authority of Ellen White is wrong and that we need to change it. Ellen White herself reminds us that just because we have taught some things as truth for many years does not make them truth.

### Truth May Not Always Be Truth

“There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.”<sup>17</sup>

Now that can be a very scary statement to some people, but it’s true. We should always keep an open mind. We tell people from Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and other religious backgrounds to keep an open mind when we get ready to tell them about the Seventh-day Sabbath and other Bible doctrines. We want them to investigate ideas that are new to them. Yet

proposing that you sit down with him and investigate that point in the Scriptures; should you rise up filled with prejudice, and condemn his ideas, while refusing to give him a candid hearing? The only right way would be to sit down as Christians and investigate the position presented in the light of God’s word, which will reveal truth and unmask error. To ridicule his ideas would not weaken his position, though it were false, or strengthen your position, though it were true. *If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of investigation, it is time that we knew it, for it is foolish to become set in our ideas, and think that no one should interfere with our opinions.* Let everything be brought to the Bible; for it is the only rule of faith and doctrine” (emphasis added).<sup>18</sup>

Ellen White also reminds us that we may even need to reverse ourselves on some things we had considered to be true: “We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed.”<sup>19</sup>

## The Bible Only

There is little doubt as to the mind of Ellen White concerning the primacy and authority of the Bible. In an address to church leaders, she said: “How can the Lord bless those who manifest a spirit of ‘I don’t care,’ a spirit which leads them to walk contrary to the light which the Lord has given them? But I do not ask you to take my words. Lay Sister White to one side. Do not quote my words again as long as you live until you can obey the Bible. . . . When you make the Bible your food, your meat, and your drink, when you make its principles the elements of your character, you will know better how to receive counsel from God. I exalt the precious Word before you today. Do not repeat what I have said, saying, ‘Sister White said this,’ and ‘Sister White said that.’ Find out what the Lord God of Israel says, and then do what He commands.”<sup>20</sup>

In an earlier letter, she wrote: “In public labor do not make prominent, and quote that which Sister White has written, as authority to sustain your positions. To do this will not increase faith in the testimonies. Bring your evidences, clear and plain, from the Word of God. A ‘Thus saith the Lord’ is the strongest testimony you can possibly present to the people. Let none be educated to look to Sister White, but to the mighty God, who gives instruction to Sister White.”<sup>21</sup>

## Truth to Unfold More and More

God expects us to think and study for ourselves, and some of us may come to new insights that need to be shared with the larger church. Ellen White says: “But the Holy Spirit will, from time to time, reveal the truth through its own chosen agencies; and no man, not even a priest or ruler, has a right to say, You shall not give publicity to your opinions, because I do not believe them. That wonderful ‘I’ may attempt to put down the Holy Spirit’s teaching. Men may for a time attempt to smother it and kill it; but that will not make error truth, or truth error. The inventive minds of men

have advanced speculative opinions in various lines, and when the Holy Spirit lets light shine into human minds, it does not respect every point of man’s application of the word. God impressed His servants to speak the truth irrespective of what men had taken for granted as truth.”<sup>22</sup>

## Definition of Prophet

So what exactly is a prophet? The earliest mention of the term *prophet* in the Bible is found in Genesis. God is speaking to Abimelech, king of Gerar, who had taken Sarah, Abraham’s wife, to be his wife. “Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die” (Gen. 20:7, NIV).

Persons with a wide range of associations were called prophets because each in some way claimed to be communicating a divine message. The patriarch Abraham spoke for God to Abimelech as a prophet. Aaron, the brother of Moses who would become the first high priest, was likewise called a prophet (Ex. 7:1), and the singer Jeduthun (1 Chron. 25:3) was also called a prophet.

Some individuals—such as Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Samuel—are recorded as receiving specific calls to the prophetic office. The primary role of the prophet was to speak directly for God. This speaking was for encouragement, exhortation, or reproof, and it was rarely predictive. The root meaning of prophet is “to see, perceive, understand.” That is why sometimes the word for prophet is translated as *seer* (1 Sam. 9:9).

## Old Testament Prophets

Old Testament prophets served as direct messengers from God, sent to speak to men and women the very words from God. For example, we read of the prophet Haggai: “Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: ‘I am with you,’ declares the LORD” (Hag. 1:13, NIV). Likewise, Nathan came with

a direct word from God to King David (2 Sam. 12:25). Prophets spoke with authority, reminding Israel of the terms of the covenant and the penalties for disobedience (Jer. 7:25; 2 Chron. 24:19; Neh. 9:26).

The prophets’ role was to speak the very words of God. “Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say” (Ex. 4:12, NIV). “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him” (Deut. 18:18, NIV). “Well, I have come to you now,” Balaam replied. “But can I say just anything? I must speak only what God puts in my mouth” (Num. 22:38, NIV).

Sometimes the prophet delivered messages from God using the pronoun “I,” but it would be clear to the people that the prophet was not speaking for himself but for God. “I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me,” (Isa. 45:5, NIV).

If the people disobeyed such a message from the prophet, they were in actuality disobeying God. “If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account” (Deut. 18:19, NIV).

When a prophet spoke in the name of God, no one questioned whether or not the message was true. If what the prophet said did not come true, then he was a false prophet. “If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:22, NIV).

When delivering a divine message, a true prophet never spoke some of God’s words mixed with some of his own words. His message was either completely true or else it was false. For example, Micaiah was willing to stake his reputation on the fulfillment of just one prophecy when he said to King Ahab, “If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through

me.' Then he added, 'Mark my words, all you people!'" (1 Kings 22:28, NIV).

The Old Testament was written by prophets—Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, etc. However, some prophets such as Iddo (2 Chron. 13:22) wrote books that never appeared in Holy Scripture. Others—like Nathan and Elijah, who spoke fearlessly to the reigning king on several occasions—delivered God's messages but never wrote a book.

### Prophets in the New Testament

Wayne Grudem, a Protestant theologian, wrote his doctoral dissertation on the gift of prophecy. He makes a careful distinction between the writers of the Old Testament and the writers of the New Testament. He states that the Old Testament was written by *prophets* but that the New Testament was written by *apostles*. The apostles are not normally called prophets; prophets and apostles were two separate offices in the New Testament. However, the apostles spoke the direct word of God as the prophets did in the Old Testament.<sup>23</sup>

Old Testament and New Testament inspired writings are connected by Peter. "I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Peter 3:2, NIV). Prophets gave the word of God in the Old Testament, and apostles gave the word of God in the New Testament.

Paul as an apostle insisted that his message came directly from Christ. "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11-12, NIV). This is in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets (Deut. 18:20; Jer. 23:16ff).

Paul many times emphasized that he spoke directly for God. "According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede

those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thess. 4:15, NIV); "If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed" (2 Thess. 3:14, NIV).

### Why Apostle Rather Than Prophet?

If the New Testament apostle is so similar to the Old Testament prophet, why didn't God use the same title? Grudem gives three reasons.

1. *Joel's prediction of prophecy for all God's people.* Joel predicted an outpouring of prophecy that would fall on many people, not just on a select few as in the Old Testament. "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29, NIV).

Prophets in the Old Testament wrote down the very words of God, and their writings became the unique Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. In the last days, when God pours out his spirit in a special way on people (just about everyone receiving the gift), he wants to make a distinction between their gift and the gift as given in the Old Testament.

2. *Meaning of the word "prophet."* By the time of the New Testament, the meaning of the word *prophet* had changed in the world as a whole. It had come to mean "one who has supernatural knowledge without any connotation of divine authority." It had lost its meaning of prediction, foretelling the future. The title prophet no longer automatically meant one who spoke the authoritative words of God. The term had become too watered down to have any authoritative meaning.

The Jews had accepted much of this modern meaning and no longer used the word *prophet* in the way it was used in the Old Testament. Paul employed this general use of the term when writing to Titus. "Even one of their own prophets has

said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons'" (Titus 1:12, NIV).

3. *A new term for Christ's representatives.* God established a new order after the death and resurrection of Jesus. While much remained the same, yet there were some crucial differences. God may have decided that he wanted a new term to designate his authoritative leaders—those who would write the New Testament—and so he chose the term *apostle*. It tied in with *prophet* because its root meaning is "one who is sent." In this case, it means one who is sent from God just as the Old Testament prophet was sent by God. It was not a common term before the New Testament, so it would not be confusing to people and was a word that was free from misleading implications, both from the Old Testament and from the secular world.<sup>24</sup>

### Prophet Defined

There are three major passages on spiritual gifts in the New Testament (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Eph. 4:11), and they all list prophecy as one of the gifts the Holy Spirit gives. There is no indication that this gift is limited to a very few select persons. On the contrary, Paul wanted everyone to prophesy. "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy" (1 Cor. 14:1, NIV). The primary purpose of New Testament prophecy, he says, is for strengthening, encouragement, and comfort (verse 3, NIV).

Paul says, "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified" (verse 5, NIV). Prophecy is something special, something important for God's people. It is for their encouragement, their help, their joy.

Paul then says something interesting about how to deal with prophets, which is very different from the Old Testament. He says, "Two or three prophets should



speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace” (verses 29-33, NIV).

The congregation in Corinth contained several prophets. They should speak one at a time. One prophet could interrupt

of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles” (Acts 21:10-11, NIV).

Agabus got some of his details wrong. First, he predicted that Jews in Jerusalem would bind Paul. But later on, in verse 33, Luke tells us: “The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done.” So it was the Romans who bound Paul, not the Jews.

Second, Agabus predicted that the Jews would deliver Paul into the hands of the

that everything is to be judged by the Bible, and that she is a lesser light to lead people to the greater light. Now a lesser light cannot be equal to a greater light. And if Ellen White is to be tested by the Bible, we cannot then turn around and make Ellen White the determiner of what Scripture means.

But if we see Ellen White as a New Testament prophet, things become much clearer. She is a prophet of God. God gave her gifts that would apply to the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. This gift

## THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET WOULD HAVE BEEN STONED TO DEATH IF HE HAD MADE THESE KINDS OF MISTAKES. BUT THE PROPHET IS A DIFFERENT KIND OF PERSON IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

another prophet (unheard of in the Old Testament). Furthermore, the people were no longer to assume that what a prophet said was the absolute authoritative word of God. Listeners were to compare what the prophet said with the revealed will of God in the Bible. Everything was to be judged by the Bible.

Let us summarize what Paul is saying about this spiritual gift. It involves a specific revelation (verse 29) that God gives to someone whom he chooses, and the revelation is to be given publicly (verses 29-31) for the “strengthening, encouragement, and comfort” as well as instruction of another individual (verses 3, 31). When the prophet speaks declaring that he or she has a revelation from God, those hearing it are to judge whether it indeed has come from God. If they agree that it is God’s words, then they are to listen and follow what the prophet says.

### New Testament Prophets Could Be Mistaken

“After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming over to us, he took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, “The Holy Spirit says, “In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner

Romans. Instead, the Roman centurion had to rescue Paul from the Jews who were trying to kill him.

An Old Testament prophet would have been stoned to death if he had made these kinds of mistakes. But the prophet is a different kind of person in the New Testament. The Old Testament is full of prophecies in which the smallest details always came to pass exactly as foretold, whether it was the dogs eating Jezebel (2 Kings 9:35-36), Elijah promising that the meal and oil would never run dry (1 Kings 17:16), or Elisha predicting in famine-stricken, besieged Samaria that one day later, about the same time of day, a measure of fine meal would be sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria (2 Kings 23:16).

It seems that Agabus had a general revelation from God about Paul’s capture that was not given in great detail. And apparently Agabus decided to throw in some extra details, which were correct in general but not in detail.

### Application to Ellen G. White

How does this apply to Ellen G. White? We have seen that she makes it clear that the Bible is the sole rule of faith and practice,

was not universal, like the Old Testament prophetic gift that applied to all people worldwide. Ellen White was given just to the Adventist Church.

Ellen White when using Scripture is mostly “homiletical” and “evangelistic,” says Robert Olsen, former secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate. “We cannot use Ellen White as the determinative final arbiter of what Scripture means. If we do that, then she is the final authority and Scripture is not. Scripture must be permitted to interpret itself.”<sup>25</sup>

Here is but one example. In Genesis 3 we have the story of the temptation of Adam and Eve. Ellen White says of Eve that “absorbed in her pleasing task, she unconsciously wandered from his side. On perceiving that she was alone she felt an apprehension of danger” as she studied the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>26</sup> After Eve took and ate the fruit, “she sought his [Adam’s] presence, and related all that occurred.”<sup>27</sup>

However, the Bible says that “she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (Gen. 3:6, ESV).

When I have discussed this difference with conservative Adventists, they have always come down on the side of Ellen

White and not the Bible. Ellen White has now become the greater light and not the lesser light.

As counseled in 1 Corinthians 14, we are to study the prophet's words, see if they agree with Scripture, and—if they do—accept them as from God. And if not, then we go with the Bible. We do not need to make Ellen White infallible, which she did not claim, or to use her as the final authority in any argument.

Given this understanding of the word

Unfortunately, our denomination has too often acted as if both lights were equal. If Ellen White is the lesser light, then she can never be as important or as authoritative as the greater light. The purpose of her writings was not for us to study them in every detail, but to cause us to go back to the Bible and find in it the great and eternal truths God gave.

According to T. Housel Jemison, a former Andrews University professor, Ellen White wanted: (1) to exalt the Bible,

all countries?), ethnic balance and makeup of the General Conference, and more.

We must return to the Bible, find the principles there, and then apply them to our day.

### Ellen White's Personal Growth

Ellen White grew in her understanding of truth. In her early years, she talked a lot about perfection and becoming sinless before Jesus comes. In her first book, she wrote: "I saw that none could share the

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*prophet*, we no longer must defend everything that Ellen White said. We can say that she was fallible and even wrong at times, period. If we would teach this, we would take away a huge argument from the critics of the Adventist Church.

### Ellen White's Role

In the New Testament, the role of the prophet changed. The church no longer lives under a theocracy. Everyone has direct access to God. The role of the prophet is to encourage people in their relationship with God. It is no longer an emphasis on *rules*, but on *relationships*.

It is clear that Ellen White was essential to the founding and establishing of our denomination. It is also clear, through the many visions she received and the kind of life she lived, that God was with her. No scandal erupted concerning her, nor did her contemporaries question her morality and ethics.

Ellen White described her role as one of encouraging people to study the Bible. "The Lord has sent his people much instruction, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little. Little heed is given to the Bible, and the Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light."<sup>28</sup>

(2) to attract minds to the Bible, (3) to call attention to neglected truths, (4) to further impress truths already received, (5) to awaken minds, (6) to simplify truths, (7) to bring out principles and help apply them, and (8) to instruct in details.<sup>29</sup>

But greater and more important than the above was her consuming desire to see people enter into a vibrant relationship with Jesus. She took the principles of the Bible and applied them to situations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to help us in our walk with Jesus. But the farther away we get from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the less helpful Ellen White becomes.

We cannot receive direct counsel from her on the following issues: abortion, nuclear disarmament, environmental pollution, gay rights, the almost universal tolerance of divorce under any circumstances, running hospitals in our extremely competitive environment, institutionalization of the church, reorganization of the church given its growth and size, tithe and the storehouse, ordination of women, celebration worship, whether or not the KJV is the superior translation (as some advocate), videos and computers, how to change standards as culture changes, the organization of a universal church (should it be the same in

'refreshing' unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence."<sup>30</sup>

By contrast, in 1911 she wrote: "Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict that we shall overcome. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. So long as Satan reigns, we shall have self to subdue, besetting sins to overcome; so long as life shall last, there will be no stopping place, no point which we can reach and say, I have fully attained. Sanctification is the result of lifelong obedience."<sup>31</sup>

In 1915, the year of her death, she wrote: "I do not say that I am perfect, but

I am trying to be perfect. I do not expect others to be perfect; and if I could not associate with my brothers and sisters who are not perfect, I do not know what I should do. ... No one is perfect.”<sup>32</sup>

## God and Children

In 1864 Ellen White wrote: “God loves honest-hearted, truthful children, but cannot love those who are dishonest.”<sup>33</sup> “The Lord loves those little children who try to do right, and he has promised that they shall be in his kingdom. But wicked children God does not love. He will not take them to the beautiful City, for he only admits the good, obedient, and patient children there. ... When you feel tempted to speak impatient and fretful [sic], remember the Lord sees you, and will not love you if you do wrong.”<sup>34</sup>

Twenty-eight years later, in 1892, she wrote: “Do not teach your children that God does not love them when they do wrong; teach them that he loves them so that it grieves his tender Spirit to see them in transgression, because he knows they are doing injury to their souls.”<sup>35</sup>

## Growth in Prophecy

In the first edition of *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White said, “The message of Revelation 14 announcing the *fall* of Babylon ... must be given in the last days, therefore it cannot refer to the Romish Church, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries.”<sup>36</sup> In the 1911 revision, she wrote, “The message of Revelation 14 ... cannot refer to the Roman Church *alone*, for that church has been in a fallen condition for many centuries” (emphasis added).

Do you see the difference? “The pastor did not rob the bank.” “The pastor did not rob the bank alone.” There is quite a difference in meaning once you add just one word.

I could give other examples. The question, of course, remains this: At what time in Ellen White’s life is she completely authoritative? Ellen White’s messages are

important to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but they are not the Bible. She was inspired of God, but her writings are not the Bible. We are to check her out by the Bible, just as the church in Corinth had to check on the prophets in its midst as to the veracity of their statements.

Ellen White was given messages from God to help start this denomination. She was given divine messages to counsel and help the church leadership. Her visions helped to establish a strong educational and health emphasis for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But she is the lesser light to lead us to the great light: the Bible, which tells us of the Light, Jesus Christ.

## Church Has Ignored Ellen White

The Adventist Church has, in practice, already determined that everything that Ellen White spoke was not authoritative, not a direct word from God for all time. The 1989 General Conference Spring Meeting of the Executive Committee voted to remove the administrators of Adventist hospitals from the denomination wage scale and to allow them to set much higher salaries than had been previously allowed.<sup>37</sup>

This was in direct opposition to the counsel of Ellen White, who was very specific in this area. Ellen White was also specific that tithe should not be used for paying teachers in our schools—especially elementary schools—or for supporting colporteurs.

“One reasons that the tithe may be applied to school purposes. Still others reason that canvassers and colporteurs should be supported from the tithe. But a great mistake is made when the tithe is drawn from the object for which it is to be used—the support of the ministers. There should be today in the field one hundred well-qualified laborers where now there is but one.”<sup>38</sup>

Yet at the 1985 Annual Council, the tithe-use policy was changed so that elementary teachers could be paid up to 30 percent of their salary from tithe. The payment of colporteurs from tithe had

begun much earlier.

Furthermore, Ellen White specifically says that we *should* pay minister’s wives from tithe,<sup>39</sup> yet we ignore that counsel, saying that we do not have enough tithe to do that. Of course not, since we are paying teachers from tithe!

I could give scores more examples, but these are enough to help you see that it is too easy for the denomination to speak out of both sides of its corporate mouth when it comes to the authority of Ellen White. When it suits our purpose, we declare that we must follow exactly what the Spirit of Prophecy says, but when economic and other pressures bear upon us, we become pragmatic and find a way to rationalize her counsels.

## Prophecy at the Local Level

Should we look for the gift of prophecy to be evident in the local church? Yes, if we are to follow the clear teaching of Scripture regarding the outpouring of God’s Spirit in the last days and the giving of spiritual gifts.

The gift of prophecy is the divine enablement to reveal truth and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner for understanding, correction, repentance, or edification. There may be immediate or future implications. But it must come as a direct revelation from God. People with this gift have a unique ability to expose sin or deception in others in such a way that reconciliation takes place without their feeling condemned.

People with this gift speak a timely word from God that causes conviction, repentance, and edification. They see truth that others often fail to see, and they challenge others to respond. They will warn of God’s immediate or future judgment if there is no repentance. They will speak their messages in love, avoiding pride or any kind of superior attitude.

Others will recognize that they have this gift. The hearers will know that this person is speaking for God, because God has impressed the hearers as well.

*Continued on page 28*



## Ellen White: An “Emerging Church” Spokesperson?

By Alden Thompson

Ellen White never heard of the “emerging church.” Nor did Isaiah or Paul. Jesus hadn’t heard of it either.

So with conversations about the “emerging church” raging all around us, how can we appeal to “inspired” writers in the discussion?

That’s a crucial question to which I will propose a simple three-part answer. But first let’s explore the possibility of Ellen White’s being a spokesperson for the “emerging church.”

### Ellen White: An Early Rob Bell?

Without fully vouching for its accuracy, I would recommend the Wikipedia article on “emerging church.” It’s a good place to start in trying to grasp the complexity of the movement. To summarize and oversimplify, we could see it as a late-20<sup>th</sup>-century attempt to break away from some of the rigidities of traditional Christianity.

Adventists should prick up their ears, for emergent spokesperson Rob Bell has recently published *Love Wins*, a book that moves close to Adventist positions on hell and salvation for non-believers. Evangelicals have criticized Adventism for its liberal stance on these doctrines, and Bell is now getting the same treatment. We should be able to affirm him for the good things he says without being unduly preoccupied with his errors.

The American religious right, however, has developed a powerful negativism that attacks a long list of “evils” including “spiritual disciplines” and “emerging church.” Someone recently sent me a YouTube link with all of the presentations listed under the heading “Know Your Enemy.” Every entry was an attack against an “enemy” of Christianity. Unfortunately, many in Adventism have adopted this negative rhetoric against the “emerging

church,” making it nearly impossible to affirm the good in Bell’s book.

Two key Ellen White quotations point Adventism in a healthier direction. First: “The Lord wants His people to follow other methods than that of condemning wrong,” she wrote, “even though the condemnation be just. He wants us to do something more than to hurl at our adversaries charges that only drive them further from the truth.”<sup>1</sup>

The second quote is from an 1887 letter to a Brother Boyd, who was headed to South Africa for mission service. She advised him not to emphasize our unique doctrines because they would “often erect a formidable barrier between you and those you wish to reach.” Speak on “points of doctrine on which you can agree,” she counseled. “Give them evidence that you are a Christian, desiring peace, and that you love their souls. Let them see that you are conscientious. Thus you will gain their confidence; and there will be time enough for doctrines.”<sup>2</sup>

### Adventism As an “Emerging Church”

I would argue that when we attack the “emerging church,” we are denying an essential part of our heritage and losing a wonderful opportunity to spread the good news. In our early years, Adventism was clearly an “emerging church,” a countercultural movement—“sectarian” is the technical term. Such movements begin when the dominant culture no longer seems able to nurture genuine spiritual life. Thus Adventism became an “emerging church,” seeking to break loose from orthodox rigidities. Greg Dodds, a colleague in our Walla Walla University

history department, quipped that early Adventism formed a movement by bringing all of the old “heresies” together: Seventh-day Sabbath, sabbatarianism, no immortal soul, no eternally burning hell, no Trinity or full divinity of Christ, and no creed.

But rarely does a new movement stay put. That was true of Adventism, especially in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. In 1852 James White could talk about that “old trinitarian absurdity.”<sup>3</sup> But in 1898, in *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White, though not using the term “Trinity,” affirmed the full divinity of Christ, a key aspect of the Trinity doctrine: “In Christ,” she wrote, “is life, original, unborrowed, underived.”<sup>4</sup> Today Adventists still maintain their convictions on soul and hell but believe that God used Ellen White to help us see in Scripture the full divinity of Christ. That was not an easy change. M.L. Andreasen called it “revolutionary.” He actually visited Ellen White in person to see if she had written it. He was “astonished” to see the quote in Ellen White’s own handwriting.<sup>5</sup>

### Jesus, the Apostles, and Early Adventism

Jesus, too, was founder of an “emerging church” movement, one that was clearly countercultural as far as Judaism was concerned. In seeking a more people-centered approach, Jesus trampled on key Jewish traditions, putting his new wine in new wineskins, as he put it (cf. Matt. 9:17). His people killed him for it.

Typically, sectarian movements are confrontational, challenging the status quo. That was certainly true of the early church. If one reads Steven’s speech in

Acts 7, it's not hard to see why they stoned him.

Adventism, too, was confrontational in its founding. The second angel's message, "Babylon is fallen" (Rev. 14:8), played a key role, especially when linked with Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people."

But if one takes Jesus very seriously, as Ellen White did, then a sectarian movement can begin to reflect more fully the methods of Jesus. *The Desire of Ages* (1898) is masterful in that respect. Confrontation is still part of the story, but the tone is dramatically different. Now you can hear the "tears" in Jesus' voice when he utters his "scathing rebukes."<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the preferred mode has become cooperation instead of confrontation. As in the 1887 letter noted above, Ellen White was now advising Adventists to work with people on "points of doctrine on which you can agree."<sup>7</sup>

### **A Surprising Example: The Great Controversy**

But perhaps most surprising is the way Ellen White followed the principle of working with others on points of agreement in the writing of *The Great Controversy*, one of the more "confrontational" books to come from her pen. Even in it, Ellen White focused on points of agreement when she dealt with the various reformers.

Thus Ellen White celebrates John Wycliffe as the "morning star of the reformation" and translator of the Bible into English.<sup>8</sup> But Wycliffe was a predestinarian and did not believe in the separation of church and state at all, points on which Ellen White would sharply differ with him. But she doesn't mention those distractions. She focuses on points on which she could agree.

Similarly, she praises Martin Luther for his teaching on righteousness by faith, his attack on papal abuses, and his work in translating the Bible into the language

of the people.<sup>9</sup> She does not tell us about his predestinarian theology, his brutal suppression of the peasant revolt, and his rabid anti-Semitism. She focused on points on which she could agree.

Finally, in the chapter "The French Reformation,"<sup>10</sup> Ellen White describes the work of several reformers, John Calvin being the most prominent. She speaks highly of his efforts to establish the principles of Protestantism, but she does not mention his predestinarian theology or his heavy-handed rule in Geneva where 58 dissenters were killed and 76 banished during his rule (1541 to 1564). She looked on the positive side, focusing on points on which she could agree.

In short, Ellen White was indeed a champion of the "emerging church." She felt no obligation to attack or even mention points of disagreement. She simply practiced what she preached: "The Lord wants His people to follow other methods than that of condemning wrong, even though the condemnation be just."<sup>11</sup>

### **Ancient Texts: Modern Issues**

So how can we use inspired writers to address issues like the "emerging church"? Here are three steps:

First, we look to Jesus, searching his life and teachings for principles that can be applied elsewhere in Scripture and in our modern era.

Second, we illustrate those principles with the applications we have found in Scripture.

Third, we compare the applications from Scripture with the situations and circumstances in our day.

With such an approach, we may not find a specific text for every issue we want to address. And that's troubling, indeed unacceptable, for those devout people who want only clear-cut applications. But if we insist on finding a specific text for each issue, the result can be highly selective. The Bible, for example, doesn't say anything against tobacco or drugs—so,

the logic would go, we can't say anything against them either.

I well remember a conversation with an Adventist brother who objected to my support for women in ministry because Paul said women should not teach or have authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12). In the conversation that followed, he ended up arguing in favor of slavery, polygamy, and blood vengeance—with proof texts for them all.

But if we take Jesus—and sin—very seriously, we can understand why we won't always find good key texts for everything we want and why some key texts that we do find should not be used at all today.

We start with the simplest principle stated by Jesus: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12, NRSV).

That's simple, but not easy. Because sin has had such a devastating impact on humanity, we must constantly ponder how to adapt God's message to particular people in particular situations. When we treat them as we would want to be treated if we were in their place, we must follow Paul's example of being "all things to all people" in order to "save some" (1 Cor. 9:22, NRSV).

### **The Hazards of "Adaptation"**

But such "adaptation" is deeply troubling for some, including many evangelical Christians. For example, when I was looking for a publisher for my book *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?*,<sup>12</sup> an evangelical professor at the University of Edinburgh noted that the evangelical publisher InterVarsity UK would never touch the book because I had stressed "accommodation" far too strongly.

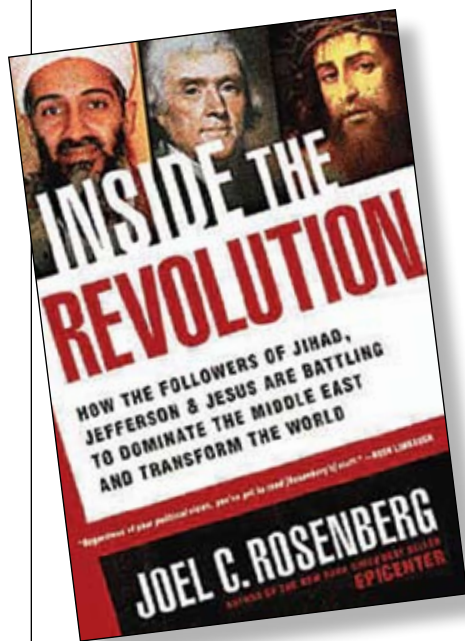
Based on my own study of Ellen White, I have concluded that she also did not readily make peace with the idea of accommodation (or adaptation). The only explicit statement I know of is a relatively

*Continued on page 29*

## What Should We Know About Muslim Radicals?

by David A. Pendleton

Joel C. Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution: How the Followers of Jihad, Jefferson & Jesus Are Battling to Dominate the Middle East and Transform the World* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale, 2009), 551 pages.



Muhammad lived in a time characterized by hardship, violence, and clannish rivalry—a milieu permitted, if not sanctioned, by numerous Arabian tribal gods. Such deities ensured the safety, prosperity, and ultimate triumph of the chosen. Depictions of those venerated even included Jesus and Mary, but this pantheon of gods was not for Muhammad. Convinced of the superiority of monotheism *sans* graven images, he incurred the ire of Arabian tribal leaders and fled to Medina in A.D. 622. With this decisive migration (known as the Hijra, or Hegira), Muhammad established not just a new religion but the Muslim Middle East.

In the nearly millennium and a half

since the Hijra, the Middle East has changed in ways that Muhammad never imagined. If his dream was a monolithic peace-loving culture united under Allah, what ensued is anything but. *New York Times* best-selling author Joel C. Rosenberg chronicles in some detail the volatile situation we confront today—a complicated and fragmented Muslim Middle East typified by radicals, reformers, and revivalists, categories transecting the familiar Sunni-Shiite sectarian divide.

The most visible and frightening are the radicals. They believe that Islam is the answer and violent *Jihad* is the way. They covet weapons of mass destruction for use against the “Great Satan” (United States of America). There is reason to dread such radicals and to understand their mindset.

In a manner redolent of Bacon’s “knowledge is power,” Rosenberg immersed himself in the literature of Muslim leaders, scrutinizing the spectrum of Islamic thought. He encountered a disturbing arsenal of information, especially on the Internet, to indoctrinate prospective radicals of Allah’s impending annihilation of the “decadent” West. Most disturbing for Rosenberg were the ubiquitous, indiscriminate calls to murder men, women, and children. Radicals salute such violence as not just permissible but commendable.

Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are self-styled radicals. Apparently not entirely backward in all things, their electoral victories demonstrate not only their sophistication but also the persistence and pervasiveness of tribal prejudices. Radical voters extolled the

September 11, 2001, death toll by electing leaders espousing homicidal political platforms.

Radicals cite the *Qur’an* and quote *hadith* (Muhammad’s sayings) condoning their actions. Divine judgment and wrath are emphasized. They credit their zealous faith as key to the world’s imminent end, when all human beings will find themselves either numbered among Allah’s faithful or among the infidel doomed for destruction. What is striking is the extent to which Islamic radicals obsess over apocalyptic literature.

While moderate Muslims go to great lengths to view apocalyptic themes through the lens of *Qur’anic* passages about peace, radicals dismiss them as Westernized perversions of authentic faith. *Qur’anic* fundamentalism insists on a literalist reading of sacred text and a slavish adherence to “historic” Islam.

In contrast, reformers accept Islam as the answer, but they disagree that *Jihad*—at least violent *Jihad*—is the way. For them, *Jihad* is interpreted as an *interior* struggle, one against humankind’s inner selfish and wayward inclinations. Reformers see genuine *Jihad* leading to harmony among, rather than hostilities between, peoples.

Reformers are comfortable with Jeffersonian political principles. For instance, former Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Maliki professed a Lockean “belief in the rights of every individual ... so that future Iraqi generations can live in peace, prosperity, and hope.” And he linked the West’s involvement in the region to the preservation of human rights worldwide. If democracy were “to fail in Iraq and terror permitted to triumph, then the war on terror will never be won elsewhere.” Such reformers see no contradiction

between core democratic principles and the *Qur'an*. Indeed, they reject Islamic states as 20<sup>th</sup>-century innovations.

Where radicals indict reformers as traitorous collaborators, reformers see enlightened Islam as under threat of being hijacked by radicals. A Hegelian might construe a reformer's version of progressive Islam as the synthesis of Muslim East encountering Christian West.

The revivalists believe Islam is *not* the answer and that *Jihad* (however benign) is not the way. Rather, Jesus is the way. Recounting a remarkable number of converts to Christianity from radical Islam, Rosenberg posits that essential to Middle East peace is a critical mass of erstwhile *Jihadists* who embrace the peace promised by Isa, which is the Arabic name corresponding to Jesus in English. These will shed differences rather than blood and engage in random acts of kindness rather than violence.

Having showcased former radical Muslims turned Christian peace activists, Rosenberg proposes peace through proselytism, the active and systematic conversion of Muslims to Christianity. Until theologians of Islam consistently condemn violence, he implies, adopting a peace-oriented Christianity may be the only immediate means to attain harmony among Middle East peoples. According to Rosenberg, wholly secular efforts within Islam to achieve a permanent peace have proven to be ephemeral.

Christianity took two millennia to leave behind the Crusades, Protestant-Catholic warfare, forced baptisms, denominational strife, and ancient animosities—and it still has a way to go. The West may not have the time to permit the Middle East to evolve incrementally to a more peaceful

civilization. In this nuclear age, to tarry for even a generation may be too long. Within years, not centuries, radicals in Iran, Afghanistan, or Iraq may be able to manufacture or illicitly procure weapons of mass destruction. It's not whether, but when. Because the time within which to pursue peace is not limitless, a *laissez-faire* approach is not only dubious but also dangerous.

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“Wise criticism,” Abraham Joshua Heschel once wrote, “always begins with self-criticism.” And perhaps rather than proposing mass conversion to Christianity as the panacea to the Middle East problem, exploration of the underlying catalysts that precipitated a more peaceful Christianity would be worthwhile. The expanse from violent Islam to peaceful Islam may be easier to bridge than from violent Islam to Christianity.

With all that Rosenberg says, he sidesteps the question of the eclipse of Christianity. Whereas historians report the statistical eclipse of Judaism by Christianity, some demographers forecast the inevitable displacement of Christianity by Islam as the world's largest religious community. Just as Jews once far outnumbered Christians, only to be numerically superseded with the passage of time, so too will Christians be outnumbered by Muslims. This is neither superstitious numerology nor a Malthusian pessimism.

Fifteen hundred years ago, there were no Muslims. Thirteen hundred years ago there were at least 99 Christians for every Muslim. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2003) reported Christians worldwide at 2 billion. *World Almanac* (1997) estimated Muslims at 1.1 billion. Today the ratio of Christians to Muslims is fast approaching 60-40. Within a century it may well be 1-1. A below-replacement birth rate in the West contrasted with burgeoning Indonesian and African families is only partly responsible for this population trend. Regardless of the cause, more important is the *consequence* of such demographics. What would this mean for Western democracy, evangelical proselytism, or Christian eschatology? God only knows.

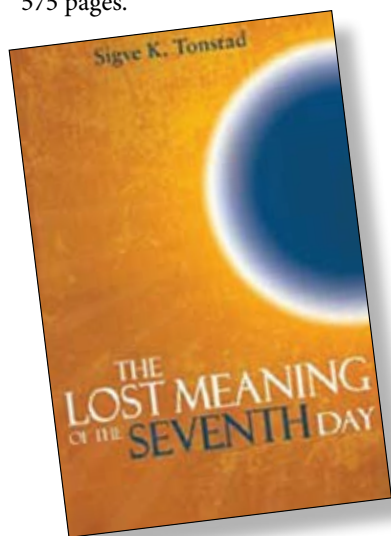
But what this mortal reviewer knows is that Rosenberg's critical survey of the Middle East is perceptive and prescient, if not a little provocative. While his proposal for peace will offend some, his analysis will intrigue most, and his goal of peace in the Middle East will be shared by all people of good will.

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## Thompson Critiques *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*

By Alden Thompson

Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Andrews University Press: Berrien Springs, Mich., 2009), hardback, 575 pages.



My response to Sigve Tonstad's book has been shaped by a unique twofold exposure, first by the ear, then by the eye. Because my wife, Wanda, reads significant books out loud to us while I do the kitchen cleanup after meals, I first heard the entire book by ear. Both of us were astonished at how readable this scholarly tome actually is. And we marveled at Sigve's beautiful prose, not written in Norwegian, but in English! Its soaring, lyrical vision was inspiring and exciting.

Because of the powerful devotional experience triggered by hearing the book, when I sat down to read it critically in a more traditional academic manner, I almost felt that I was committing a sacrilege. The book throbs with a deep-seated love for the Sabbath and

an unshakable conviction that in Jesus we see a powerful testimony to God's faithfulness. The whole book is driven by Sigve's conviction that we are called to speak well of God. A buoyant commentary on Psalm 92, which was called a Song for the Sabbath Day, carries the reader through to his vibrant conclusion. Passionately melding the first and the last books of the Bible together, he declares in his very last sentence: "We will have to set out for the sound of God's singing if we wish to know the spirit of the seventh day and the reality to which it points" (p. 515).

Intending to give us a cradle-to-the-grave vision of the Sabbath's meaning within the context of a cosmic conflict, Tonstad surveys the biblical scene in both testaments. He explains gaps in the historical data, interprets key passages, and in the Old Testament explicitly privileges Isaiah over Nehemiah as he builds his case for recovering the meaning of the Sabbath. He is thorough in his treatment of the Gospels and of controverted Sabbath passages in the epistles.

In the post-biblical era, he documents the swift demise of the Sabbath within Christianity, arguing that an intense hostility toward Judaism and a dominant preference for Greek otherworldliness combined to ensure that the Sabbath would virtually disappear from Christianity. The soul was important; earthy people and an earthy creation were not. Here Tonstad is thorough, vivid, almost polemical, and devastatingly effective.

In terms of content, I hope our conversations will take seriously what he leaves out and explore his reasons for doing so. He clearly wants to overwhelm the shadow side of Scripture with irresistible goodness as seen in Jesus. "I do not call you servants any longer, ...

but I have called you friends," says Jesus (John 15:15, NRSV). But even Jesus gives us another view: "So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'" (Luke 17:10, NRSV). In the Epistles, Paul is even more brutal, offering the wayward Corinthians a choice of stick or gentle love (1 Cor. 4:21), and urging, "Drive out the wicked person from among you" (1 Cor. 5:13, NRSV). Whatever happened to 1 Corinthians 13, where love is patient and kind (1 Cor. 13:4)?

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear," John declares (1 John 4:18, NRSV). But does God's love also include bone-shattering fear, Sinai-style? "If we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, we shall die," exclaimed the people (Deut. 5:25, NRSV). "You talk to him," they implored Moses. "We can't take any more" (cf. Deut. 5:27).

God's response? "They are right in all that they have spoken," he told Moses. "If only they had such a mind as this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!" (Deut. 5:28-29, NRSV). In this context "fear" is clearly raw terror, not just gentle respect and reverence. And the Lord said the people were right.

Why is it that Sigve never mentions that vivid Sabbath incident where the LORD himself commands the death penalty for picking up sticks on the Sabbath? "The man shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him outside the camp" (Num. 15:35, NRSV).

I am in wholehearted agreement with Sigve's overall thrust and his theological perspective. A cosmic conflict where God doesn't just smash his enemies, but wins the hearts of his created beings, is Adventism at its best, the gospel in its



purest biblical form. But I do think we need to take more seriously the role of “fear” in winning broken people to God in a world where evil still reigns.

In chapter 26, “Confrontation of Signs,” the next to last in the book, Sigve painstakingly develops the story of the cosmic conflict, focusing primarily on the book of Revelation. Contrasting “God’s Story” and “The Dragon’s Story,” he admits that a first reading of Revelation is not likely to yield the message he believes God wants us to hear. “Only on the second or subsequent passage through the text,” he concedes, “will the reader be attuned to the panoramic character of the author’s story-telling ways” (p. 470). Is it providential that the more gentle picture wins only through hard work and much effort? We wrestle not against human forces only, declares Paul, but “against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12, NRSV). It may be that because the Dragon is such a clever character, the cosmic conflict is not at all obvious, especially in much of the Old Testament. The story of Satan’s rebellion “has been repressed rather than destroyed,” Sigve quotes approvingly (p. 51). I would go further and argue that the absence of Satan is providentially linked with the needs of fallen people. Sigve does not want “divine sovereignty” to control the interpretation of “God’s Story.” I don’t either. But given the ravages of sin, rebellious creatures may need a strong dose of divine sovereignty to get them started on the path toward the kingdom.

A great multitude in our world cannot read, and a host of others will not read. Such people may be the ones most likely to respond to a fear motivation, the kind that was so effective at Sinai. A vision of

divine sovereignty is precisely what they need. And that is the apparent reading of much of Scripture.

Sigve’s view is closer to ultimate truth, I believe. But it can win its way only through much hard work. In other words, until the Lord returns, pastors and university teachers will never run out of work. We cannot simply solve the riddle once and for all and expect the world to see it clearly.

In the end, however, I would affirm the importance of a book like this, indeed this very book, where goodness overwhelms evil. And there are clear biblical precedents for such deliberate shaping of the message. When the Chronicler retold the history of God’s people, for example, he simply left out all of the sordid incidents that marked the lives of David and Solomon, Israel’s great kings. Even the story of Bathsheba disappears without a whimper. Why? Because the people needed a good-news version to shake them out of their discouragement and lethargy.

So Sigve’s good-news version of the Sabbath is following a clear biblical pattern. And I will continue to revel in the power of his vision and the beauty of his prose. But by God’s grace a chorus of voices with differing perspectives and emphases will complement his, so that the church can indeed reach every “nation, kindred, tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6, KJV) and every shape and flavor of people among them. Those who cherish the Sabbath can expect to nurture that kind of diversity. Thus Isaiah’s prophecy and John’s vision will both become a reality. “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples,” exclaims Isaiah in one of Sigve’s favorite prophetic chapters (56:7, NRSV). In Revelation, a great multitude from all nations are “standing before the throne

and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands,” celebrating the good news that “Salvation belongs to our God” (Rev. 7:9-10, NRSV).

I am grateful that Sigve has done such wonderful work in sharing his vision, God’s vision, with us.

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## Tonstad Answers Thompson

*By Sigve Tonstad*

The implied reader of *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* is not a Seventh-day Adventist. I intended it that way from the beginning. My goal was not to weigh in on debates internal to Adventism, even though there are chapters that take the meaning of the Sabbath to be quite different from traditional Seventh-day Adventist affirmations. Where I deal with Bible texts, I have meant to do serious exegesis, but I do it, of course, in the context of a project that has an apologetic character. I am not ashamed to be seen as an apologist. However, my objective is not to be an apologist for the Sabbath or for Adventism, for the defense of the brand name. In an important and deliberate sense, my project is a generic apology for hope.

I say this in response to Alden Thompson and the sins of omission he has pointed out, of which I think only one needs a comment. In my book, I attempted a comment on the death penalty for Sabbath violation in Exodus 31, but I did not write the long chapter that would have to be written about

the stoning of the person for picking sticks on the Sabbath. This is a necessary sin of omission for reasons of space and also for reasons of theology. My project is to sketch a path to hope and to a sense of God's presence at a time and in a culture where a sense of God's absence is the predominant sentiment. The reader context assumed by my book does not reside in texts where God seems to be doing too much or doing the wrong thing, but in a reality where God seems to be doing nothing. My task is not to address every difficult text in the Old Testament; that has long been Alden's territory. The post-Holocaust awareness of my project is meant to be taken seriously and is not an opportunistic claim. The stoning of the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath is descriptive of something, but it has—and I mean this respectfully—no prescriptive or explanatory power for a post-Holocaust reality or for a path to hope in a post-Holocaust reality.

Does it have explanatory power for anything? If it does, how should we explain it? In the New Testament, there are several conspicuous stonings or attempts at stoning. In John, two attempts to stone Jesus are aborted (John 8:59; 10:39), both happening downstream from Jesus' alleged violation of the Sabbath. One stoning Jesus aborts—the one of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). A fourth stoning is completed, the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58-8:1). In a subtle telling of the conversion of Paul, this stoning is more than incidental. In the Old Testament, a "bad" and obstinate person is reportedly stoned by the people of God. In the New Testament, the "good" people are stoned by the people of God. Indeed, in the New Testament there is not a single reported instance of stoning of bad people by good people. It is always

the other way around. Whatever remedial virtue stoning may have had in Old Testament times, in the New Testament stoning has lost its theological luster.


For the difficult story at hand, it is possible to postulate a situation with significant aggravating factors: (1) a brazen disregard for a well-known ordinance, (2) the prospect that the attitude of the dissident would quickly attract others to its cause, and (3) even the possibility that the whole project of the exodus might unravel. In the most radical version of this scenario, the man gathering sticks on the Sabbath represents a formidable existential threat—a clear and present danger to the creation of a liberated people of God.

But my preferred explanation for Alden's difficult text, I suspect, might be to take recourse to the book in the New Testament that is most intimidating to the Sabbath but also most radical with respect to the stories in the Old Testament. In Galatians, Paul is engaging opponents who claim to read the fine print of the Old Testament and who thereby map a more tortuous path to hope. Paul says, pounding the table, that "the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ" (Gal. 3:16, NIV). In this text, Paul suspends the significance of the physical lineage of Abraham; he suspends the entire history of Israel between Abraham and Jesus; he suspends the significance of the man who gathered sticks on the Sabbath and the instruction to stone him; what matters in this simplified vision is to understand Abraham and his singular seed. In Paul's argument with the Teachers, Abraham is a punctiliar figure, not a linear one. Unlike the Teachers' Abraham, Paul's Abraham has "seed," not "seeds," and Abraham's singular seed is Christ.

There are apples and oranges in Scripture. The text on friends and servants (John 15:15) does not negate other texts, or vice versa. When I highlight this particular text in my chapter "The Sabbath and the Imperial Ideal," it is partly because it is a stupendous text and partly because Christian theology and Christian institutions bear the imprint of a monarchial and imperial paradigm, construing an imperial relationship between God and the believer. My suggestion that there is an anti-imperial texture to the Sabbath from the very beginning, a sphere of tranquility within which God relates to humanity not as to servants but as to friends, is crucial and quite easy to defend. What Jesus says on this point belongs to his Sabbath script in the creation story in Genesis (Gen. 2:1-3) and is one of the lost meanings of the seventh day.

The lesser voices in Scripture become more muted and marginal as God's story turns to the revelation of God in the singular seed of Abraham. There are even complete reversals. In 1 Kings 18, the true God is authenticated by fire coming down from heaven in response to Elijah's prayer. In the New Testament, however, Elijah and Moses are found in deep conversation with Jesus on the subject of the departure Jesus was to accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:30-31). What do these muscular, testosterone-filled messengers of power and might know about the way of Jesus? What common ground is there between Jesus and these condoners of stonings and slayings, the former soon to be crucified by people who will draw their warrant from Moses? What can these towers of strength contribute to the One who is soon to be crucified in weakness (or even "crucified a weakling"—cf. 2 Cor.

13:4)? We need to read the fine print in the Old Testament to see this reversal in the making, and we need to read it with lenses quite different from the way Jesus' critics read the fine print, beginning with Moses' encounter with God in the cave at Horeb (Ex. 33:21-23) and then with Elijah's encounter with God in the same or a similar cave some 700 years later (1 Kings 19:9). It is hardly possible to overestimate the significance of the divine choreography in the latter story. "Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence" (1 Kings 19:11-12, NRSV).

In Revelation, the significance of fire from heaven takes a new twist. The calling card of God on Mount Carmel is now the calling card of the opposing side in the cosmic conflict, with undiminished persuasive power (Rev. 13:13). My project assumes that the Sabbath is the divine calling card from beginning to end of the story. This assumption will be valid only when it is accompanied by hard choices as to what is, and what is not, the meaning of the seventh day. I hear my much beloved friend Alden, somewhat to my surprise, say "this" and "that" for his view of God and the meaning of the Sabbath. You should hear me say, and say emphatically, "this" and not "that." 

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### **Editorial** *continued from page 3*

concerning Geneva Accord violations arising out of the Vietnam War. He wrote what he considered a balanced paper, pointing out that while North Vietnam had certainly violated some of the accords, so had the United States.

His immediate superior reacted furiously. In fact, he was so angry that he called together all of his staff and lectured them on how a junior officer had written many misconceptions about Vietnam. He ordered Crowe to submit a rewrite, leaving out any culpability on the part of the United States.

This left Crowe with a moral dilemma. He had to obey his superior officer, but he also had to tell the truth. His solution was to blur his writing. After he turned it in, he never heard about it again.

We may believe that slanting the truth benefits the organization, but the end never justifies the means. Credibility is also important to an institution, its leaders, and its members. Better not to speak than to slant the truth. The whole truth must always be our goal.

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, 1955 [originally published 1896], p. 68.

### **Letters** *continued from page 5*

again? This time it is to find any historical work of note that says the papacy was supreme in the world for more than 12 centuries. It cannot be done. Has Darrel never heard of the Eastern Orthodox Church? At no time was it subservient to the papacy.

Now may I venture to enunciate my chief concern with such positions as Uriah Smith and Darrel Lindensmith take? Prophecy, as with the rest of Scripture, is about Jesus and the gospel. Christ, Paul, and John tell us this repeatedly. See John 5:39; Luke 24:25,

26, 44; and Rev. 19:10. Not only Moses, but also Daniel and all of the prophets wrote of Christ and his redemption (Acts 10:43). In the chief prophetic work of the New Testament, the book of Revelation, all of the church's coming experience is seen through the lens of the cross. Christ's passion week is a miniature of the plan and the counterplay of good and evil at the end of the world. (See my book *The Coming Worldwide Calvary*.) Too often the church has embarrassed itself by invoking local contemporary "fulfillments," such as the demise of Turkey, World War I, and Armageddon with the Oriental hordes. The General Conference tried unsuccessfully for years to find historical support for their traditional view of the French Revolution and Revelation chapter 11. Today, top Adventist scholars reject that view, as well as the idea that the United States appears in Revelation chapter 13.

Our great need is not to be able to use Scripture so as to condemn the Roman Catholic Church, or to find in the prophetic word forecasts of Islam, the French Revolution, and Karl Marx. We need Jesus. By beholding him we become changed, whereas even if we memorize the great works of history, they will leave us as sinful as before. Let us, like the disciples, see no man but Jesus only (Matt. 17:8). "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2, KJV), we will successfully fight the good fight of faith. When the Word is made flesh in us, then the world will wonder, adore, and listen.

(If Darrel wishes to read my positions on Daniel and Revelation and their key passages, I would be happy to send him as a gift some of my 10 books on prophecy, available through Good News Unlimited in both Australia and USA.)

**DESMOND FORD**  
Shelly Beach, Queensland, Australia

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9:24-27" (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, pp. 106-107; Rodríguez, *The Sanctuary and Its Cleansing* (a supplement to *Adventist Review*, September 1994); Rodríguez, "The Sanctuary," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 396.

<sup>34</sup>Shea, "The Relationship Between the Prophecies of Daniel 8 and Daniel 9," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, edited by Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W.R. Leshner (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), pp. 241-248.

<sup>35</sup>Hasel, "Divine Judgment," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 839.

<sup>36</sup>Shea, "Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation" (DARCOM 1982), Vol. 1, pp. 56-88.

<sup>37</sup>"Consensus Document: Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary," *Ministry*, October 1980, pp. 16-19. Reprinted in DARCOM 1989, Vol. 5, pp. 225-233.

<sup>38</sup>Shea, "Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation" (DARCOM 1982), Vol. 1, pp. 69, 71, 74-75, 77, 79.

<sup>39</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 61-62, 64, 80.

<sup>40</sup>William G. Johnsson, "Biblical Apocalyptic," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 798.

<sup>41</sup>Shea says, "The reverse order of these elements cited in the question leads naturally back into those elements of the vision which were not explicitly cited in the question, and ... the word for vision becomes a summary of all of them" (from "Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation," pp. 80-81, emphasis mine). See also Hasel, "A Study of Daniel 8:9-14," (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 2, pp. 433-434.

<sup>42</sup>Shea, "The Relationship Between the Prophecies of Daniel 8 and Daniel 9," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement*, edited by Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W.R. Leshner (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), pp. 249-250; Rodríguez, *The Sanctuary and Its Cleansing* (a supplement to *Adventist Review*, September 1994); Hasel, "Divine Judgment," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 836.

<sup>43</sup>Hasel, "Interpretations of the Chronology of the Seventy Weeks" (DARCOM 1986), Vol. 3, pp. 14-15.

<sup>44</sup>Frank Holbrook, ed. (DARCOM 1989), Vol. 4, p. 64.

<sup>45</sup>Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1979), pp. 115-116.

<sup>46</sup>See Jon Paulien, *Elders Summer School* (Melbourne, 2002), on CD.

<sup>47</sup>Clifford R. Goldstein, "The Gospel, 1844 and the Judgment," *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, April-June 2006, p. 2.

<sup>48</sup>Gerhard Pfandl, "The Prophetic Gift," *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* (Jan-Mar 2009), p. 110.

<sup>49</sup>*Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 37.

<sup>50</sup>See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 334-335.

<sup>51</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 425-490.

<sup>52</sup>See Hasel, "Divine Judgment," pp. 844, 845; Rodríguez, "The Sanctuary," p. 401, in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, edited by Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000).

<sup>53</sup>*Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* (Hagerstown, MD: Ministerial Association, 1988), p. 315.

<sup>54</sup>*ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>55</sup>*ibid.*, p. 322. (See also pp. 323-325.)

<sup>56</sup>Pfandl, "The Prophetic Gift," *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* (Jan-Mar 2009), p. 29.

<sup>57</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

<sup>58</sup>*Seventh-day Adventists Believe...* (Hagerstown, MD: Ministerial Association, 1988), p. viii.

<sup>59</sup>Pfandl, "The Prophetic Gift," *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* (Jan-Mar 2009), pp. 98, 113, 152.

<sup>60</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 204-205.

<sup>61</sup>White, *Evangelism*, p. 256.

<sup>62</sup>White, *Gospel Workers*, pp. 156, 315.

<sup>63</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p. 1113.

<sup>64</sup>White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 29.

<sup>65</sup>White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 392.

<sup>66</sup>White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 292.

<sup>67</sup>White, *Evangelism*, p. 69.

<sup>68</sup>White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 35-37, 40.

<sup>69</sup>See Frank M. Hasel, "Presuppositions in the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Understanding Scripture*, edited by George W. Reid, (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), p. 36.

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I believe that part of the reason so many independent ministries are springing up to reform the church is because we have not allowed any kind of prophetic gift to continue operating in the Adventist denomination. These independent ministries believe that they have been called to interpret Ellen White and sound the call back to the "blueprint."

Places like Hartland Institute and Our Firm Foundation exist because the church has in many ways ignored the counsels of Ellen White without giving compelling reasons for differing. Too often the changes have occurred because of financial pressures.

In the financial world, we have auditors who check to see that management has been faithful in following the rules, laws, and procedures of wise financial


management. Likewise, we need spiritual auditors who can check the spiritual pulse of the church—people who are known for their high spirituality and deep devotion to God. Without such individuals, members believe what they want to believe about the condition of the church. Leadership laments the lack of true spirituality but does little about it.

Let's begin to look for and practice the biblical gift of prophecy. Let us look for those people whom Joel says will, in the last days, "prophesy and have visions and dream dreams." If we are in the last days, we should be experiencing this reality. If we lack faith, God will pass us by.

As Paul said, "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy" (1 Cor. 14:1, NIV).

## Gifts and Grace

The purpose of spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy, is to lead people to Jesus, to understand his great Gift. The Greek inextricably links spiritual gifts and grace. The word for "spiritual gift" is *charisma*. The word for grace is *charis*. So God has given to his church gifts (plural) to help people lead the unsaved to the Gift (singular). And these gifts are to be exercised with joy since when a person understands that God's salvation is free, that it requires no works of mine, that I am totally accepted by God just as I am, and that he longs for me to possess this precious gift, that person will be filled with inexpressible joy and peace.

The accent is always on the Gift, God's grace, never on the messenger. Let us keep our focus and our energies bent on sharing God's Gift through the gifts he has given us. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet. 4:10, NIV). 

J. David Newman is editor of Adventist Today and senior pastor of the New Hope Adventist Church in Fulton, Maryland.

<sup>1</sup>Dale Ratzlaff, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (Glendale, AZ: Life Assurance Ministries, 1996). This book is now in its second printing. Ratzlaff also publishes the magazine *Proclamation!* which encourages Adventists to leave the denomination and find real grace and peace.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid.*, p. 344.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid.*, p. 355. This book is only the latest in a series of books such as Walter Rea's *The White Lie*, published in 1982, and D.M. Canright's *Life of Mrs. E.G. White: Her Claims Refuted*, published in 1919.

<sup>4</sup>Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup>*The Remnant Study Bible* (Coldwater, MI: Remnant Publications, 2009).

<sup>6</sup>LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1971), p. 413.

<sup>7</sup>1931 *Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*, prepared by H.E. Rogers (Washington: Review and Herald, 1931), pp. 379.

<sup>8</sup>1951 *Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination*, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup>1981 *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup>*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Second Edition*, Unabridged, p. 139.

<sup>11</sup>*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 125.

<sup>12</sup>1980 *Year Book of Seventh-day Adventists*, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup>White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 483.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted in George R. Knight, *Walking With Ellen White: The Human Interest Story* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 1999), p. 75.

<sup>15</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>17</sup>White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 35.

<sup>18</sup>White, "The Blessings of Bible Study," *The Signs of the Times*, Feb. 6, 1893.

<sup>19</sup>White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 37.

<sup>20</sup>White, Manuscript 43, 1901, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>White, Letter 11, 1894. Published in *Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, p. 29.

<sup>22</sup>White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 1896, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup>Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy* (Eastbourne, U.K.: Kingsway Publications Ltd., 1988), pp. 25-27.

<sup>24</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 32-39.

<sup>25</sup>Robert Olson, "Olson Discusses the Veltman Study," *Ministry*, December 1990, p. 17.

<sup>26</sup>White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 54-54.

<sup>27</sup>*ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>28</sup>*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Jan. 20, 1903, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup>T. Housel Jemison, *A Prophet Among You* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1955), pp. 367-371.

<sup>30</sup>White, *Early Writings*, 1882, p. 71.

<sup>31</sup>White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1911, p. 560.

<sup>32</sup>White, *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 29, 1915, quoted in *Review and Herald*, July 23, 1970, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup>White, *An Appeal to the Youth*, p. 42.

<sup>34</sup>*ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>35</sup>White, "Ye Are Complete in Him," *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 15, 1892.

<sup>36</sup>White, *The Great Controversy*, 1888, p. 383.

<sup>37</sup>See report in *Ministry*, August 1989, pp. 22-26, for the relevant passages from Ellen White.

<sup>38</sup>White, *Gospel Workers*, 1915, p. 226.

<sup>39</sup>White, Letter 137 (to "Dear Brothers Irwin, Evans, Smith, and Jones"), April 21, 1898, p. 9.

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late one (1890) commenting on the custom of blood vengeance, which required the next of kin to redeem the family's honor by tracking down a killer to even the score. The cities of refuge were established as a kind of halfway house, blunting some of the more horrific aspects of the custom (cf. Num. 35:9-34). Ellen White called this plan a "merciful provision" that would "insure the safety of those who should take life unintentionally." But perhaps more revealing are these words: "The Lord did not see fit to abolish this custom at that time."<sup>13</sup>

She does not explain why the Lord could not abolish such a deadly custom immediately. But if God is going to be "all things to all people," change cannot come immediately. He must win; he must convince. He cannot simply overpower.

Ellen White's superb explanation of that principle is based on her own experience with health reform. "We must go no faster," she argued, "than we can take those with us whose consciences and intellects are convinced of the truths we advocate. We must meet the people where they are."<sup>14</sup> Some have required "many years" to grasp an advanced understanding of health reform, she continued. "If we should allow the people as much time as we

have required to come up to the present advanced state in reform, we would be very patient with them, and allow them to advance step by step, as we have done, until their feet are firmly established upon the health reform platform. But we should be very cautious not to advance too fast, lest we be obliged to retrace our steps. In reforms we would better come one step short of the mark than to go one step beyond it. And if there is error at all, let it be on the side next to the people."<sup>15</sup>

The "emerging church" is seeking to do a noble work, but the results will always be erratic and partial. That's inevitable when the Spirit leads his children to break new ground. But let's not attack them for their errors. Let's rejoice with them on points on which we can agree. That's what we can learn from Ellen White, that notable spokesperson for the "emerging church."

<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, 1901, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup>E.G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 1915, pp. 119-120; *Evangelism*, p. 200; cf. "Letter to a Minister and His Wife Bound for Africa" [June 25, 1887 = Letter 12, to Elder Boyd; almost verbatim "original" of the *Gospel Worker* quote] is published in *Testimonies to Southern Africa*, pp. 14-20.

<sup>3</sup>James White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 5, 1852, p. 52, as cited by George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>E.G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, p. 530.

<sup>5</sup>George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), pp. 116-117.

<sup>6</sup>E.G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 1898, p. 353.

<sup>7</sup>E.G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 1915 [originally published 1892], p. 120.

<sup>8</sup>E.G. White, *The Great Controversy*, 1911, pp. 79-96.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 120-170.

<sup>10</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 211-236.

<sup>11</sup>E.G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, 1901, p. 121.

<sup>12</sup>Alden Thompson, *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?* (Paternoster Press, 1988; Pacesetters, 2003).

<sup>13</sup>E.G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 1890, p. 515.

<sup>14</sup>E.G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, 1872, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

**7 QUESTIONS FOR...CLIVE HOLLAND** by J. David Newman

**Clive Holland is part of the *Adventist Today* administration and chair of the board for Adventist Today Foundation. He is functioning as interim editor of blogs until a suitably qualified and willing individual is located to become the permanent editor.**

**Recently retired from a 25-year management role in a commercial plant**

**genetics company, Clive held global responsibilities for the development and production of various crops. Prior to this he spent a number of years in academia at Michigan State, Florida State, and South Dakota**



**State universities as a researcher and lecturer in plant physiology and crop production specialties.**

**He has long-term relationships with the United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Services and for 14 years has been chairman of the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center advisory board. He also participates in short-term consulting assignments for the U.S. Agency for International Development, to numerous developing countries.**

**Clive resides with his wife, Carmen, on the northern outskirts of Kansas City, Missouri. The Hollands are native-born New Zealanders, having lived in the United States for more than half their lives.**

**You recently became the chair of the board for Adventist Today Foundation. What led you to accept that assignment?**

I have been a friend of *Adventist Today* for many years and initially demurred at the invitation to join the organization administratively. Adventist Today Foundation has existed for 18 years now, and the core individuals who created the organization were extremely persistent to make this happen. It is their persistence that won me over. Challenges were presented, and these were perhaps the defining stimulus to my acceptance. It also helped that I had very recently stepped out of a very active career and felt I could devote time to give something back in life for the many abundant blessings received over the years.

**You have become more involved than just leading the board. What else have you been doing at *Adventist Today*?**

Business issues were handed to me as the biggest challenge, with these requiring firm management, so an early step was to form a team to share this burden. I lead this team, and we meet regularly for discussion and approval of all business matters.

Part of my goal for *Adventist Today* is make sure it remains relevant in 2025. At the forefront is the challenge of making a significant paradigm shift from a paper magazine, read in an armchair by a senior retiree, into a whole new web environment. Change doesn't come readily to many, but readers in 2025 are expected to demand paperless reading and to consider today's Kindle as we now view 8-track tapes.

A new design for the *Adventist Today* website will allow us to add features for years to come, with new and different modules, without disruption to the established electronic base. I have been very focused in directing this development and will continue to oversee our web operations for the near term.

**What have been your biggest challenges?**

Choirs of senior citizens may produce beautiful music, but for a more lasting legacy, we must also encourage and train younger singers to join their ranks. Comfort zones are not always easily tweaked or changed, but I see a growing acceptance of my vision and direction for *Adventist Today*. This is to expand its horizons to include younger, inquiring minds while also addressing more directly issues of greater relevance to younger Adventist families. A good discussion on one's mortality is always helpful in bringing clarity to forward-thinking concepts, but it's challenging nevertheless.

**Tell us a little about your background. What in your background has prepared you for your role at Adventist Today Foundation?**

Perhaps the most recent 25 years in the middle of commercial corporate operations, rather than my earlier years in academia, has given me the knowledge and experience I've used most since coming to Adventist Today Foundation. I was not queried on my theology prior to joining the organization, but the questioning was intense on business management issues. My 30-year involvement with various scientific and professional organizations, all non-profit entities, has positioned me with a strong background for issues in this area. Serving on many boards, and as national

chairperson of several, has given me experience to cover nearly all happenings. A strong background in editing and writing is something I've not had time to utilize for *Adventist Today* yet, but it is providing me a solid basis for judgment calls on incoming content for web publication.

**What do you like most about being involved with *Adventist Today*?**

As an individual who recognizes stress only academically, I absolutely thrive on challenges and creating results. I'm not easily daunted by tall mountains, be it person or issue, but have found over the years that an extreme focus on any issue provides the greatest boost to solutions. *Adventist Today* has provided me with all of the challenges I could want—and even a few I didn't expect.

**What do you like least about being involved with *Adventist Today*?**

I dislike always scrambling on busywork activities, without enough time to focus on the core business of communications. I keep reminding myself that a core focus is paramount, so I must delegate. Then the paucity of volunteer assistance becomes apparent. Time to cultivate and mentor writers is the luxury I'm hoping to experience at some early time.

**What are your dreams for the future of *Adventist Today*?**

My dreams for *Adventist Today* have also, in a special way, been my biggest challenges. I have been immersed in the corporate world, where we do constant revisions of five-year plans spanning the next 20 years. Positioning a 15-year vision to my new *Adventist Today* colleagues hasn't been the most readily digestible meal placed on the board table. I like to think of mortality and diversity discussions in this process as the condiments of the long-term-planning meal, which we have chewed on rather well now.

My dreams are simple and realistic. The electronic age has taken over, and we must be nimble to keep up with the mass appeal and trends. Taking nothing away from our current print offering, while putting all new increases and efforts into digital communications, is to be our focus. Personally, I want to help develop a wider range, in age and interests, for a more diverse readership from within the ranks of Adventism. To be a relevant and recognizable voice for Adventism in 2025. To be successful in this, all other planning and development must fold neatly under this vision/dream.

# Adventist Man

A SATIRICAL LOOK AT ADVENTIST LIFE



## I'm back.

Print isn't audible, of course, so you'll have to trust me when I tell you that your caped crusader has been practicing those two words out loud, trying to sound as gritty and Schwarzeneggerian as possible. I even tried a thick Austrian accent, but it came out as "I'm Beck," which not only would have redirected the tenor of this column at least 180 degrees, but would have necessitated investing in a whiteboard. Not goin' there.

There are several reasons why Adventist Man has not been in your midst of late. This hiatus (in most cases, a low-at-us) has not been an easy one, but I'm happy to report that it has not been spent in vain.

First, after months of painstaking Scriptural exegesis, I have determined that the book of Revelation does not allude to Sarah Palin. I am sure she has many good qualities, for which she might well be Revere'd, but I was especially relieved to see that she does not figure in any end-time scenarios I can discover. (The thought briefly crossed my mind that she may be the King of the North, but the gender didn't match.)

Another slice of my time away was spent in genealogical research to see if Ted Wilson is related to the people who make Wilson baseball gloves. If so, this might signal a future willingness to catch and deal with hardball questions thrown by *Adventist Today* Editor David "Cardinal" Newman. (The "Cardinal" refers not to anything papist, but to the T-ball team Dave played on as a child.)

Still more anxious months were spent in trying to convince Editor Newman to help me promote my longtime dream of training church greeters to customize the traditional Sabbath greeting to fit various kinds of visitors, such as basketball players ("Hoopy Sabbath"), Native Americans from Arizona ("Hopi Sabbath"), aging flower children ("Hippie Sabbath"), advertising executives ("Hype-y Sabbath"), and even owners of comfort rabbits ("Hoppy Sabbath"). Despite my incessant badgering, David informs me that the jury is still out on this

issue. Readers, please email him directly with your encouragement.

So what prompted my return? Two things. First, the prospect appalled me that my beloved *Adventist Today* page might be taken over by the drawings of my distant cousin, the supposed cartoonist Heinrich. He means well, but in a contest between the printed word and the printed doodle, I win, hands down.

The second reason I've returned is that one desperate twilight evening, David Newman ascended the battlements of the *Adventist Today* building and, using a military-surplus searchlight, projected my uniform's logo against low-lying clouds.

Glancing up bleary-eyed from the ink-stained worksheet on which I had been trying to make P-A-L-I-N add up to "666," and each time getting only as far as 51, I saw the shining symbol in the sky. David needs me, I murmured, rocketing from my window, my cape fluttering behind me. *I'm back.*

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

## 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?*

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