

Esther and  
Her God



Sketching an Adventist  
Vision for Global Mission

The Real Mark  
of God's People

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# Adventist *Today*

## THE CHINA STUDY





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## The Real Mark of God's People

By J. David Newman

A pastor arrived at his new congregation and soon convinced the church board to change the church sign and to add a cross. A few weeks later, this pastor was approached by a fellow Rotary Club member at one of their meetings.

"I really like your new sign," he said. "That cross makes it so clear. I could never figure out what the three bugs were that you had on it before." He was referring to the three angels.

People love symbols, signs, and marks. Down through the ages, Christians have used various symbols to identify themselves, such as the fish and the cross. They have worn them in their hair, on their lapels, around their necks, and even tattooed on their bodies.

Seventh-day Adventists commonly use the three angels or the fourth commandment to identify themselves. Where I grew up, every self-respecting Adventist church made sure it had a picture of the Ten Commandments hanging somewhere on the premises. But what is the primary identifying mark of God's people?

### Christ's Identifying Mark

Just before he died, Jesus gave his disciples a mark that would clearly reveal who were his followers. At the Last Supper, he said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35\*).

After the resurrection of Christ, the first major theological conflict erupted over the matter of signs/identifying marks. One group believed that circumcision identified God's people. Paul addressed this issue when he wrote to the Galatians: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal. 5:6). Paul told the Corinthians that the supreme virtue concerned how they loved each other: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13).

Peter, writing for believers in the end time, reminds us: "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8).

Yes, the Bible is clear that the mark of the Christian is how he or she treats others. The Christian is considerate, compassionate, caring, courteous, and charitable. Ellen White reminds us: "The badge of Christianity is not an outward sign, not the wearing of a cross or a crown, but it is that which reveals the union of man with God. ... The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian."<sup>1</sup>

### Love's Power

Why is love so powerful? Perhaps it is because everyone yearns to be accepted. Ever since Eden, humans have feared rejection. Beginning with Cain, we have brought our offerings in the hope that we will be found worthy. We perform the duties that God requires, longing for him to accept us.

If Christians reject each other, if we as a church fight among ourselves, why would the world want to become part of us? Why would anyone care to join those who do not seem to care? People are longing for acceptance. Love accepts people where they are. We know that we should love people, but we often do not because we don't like where they are.

### Love the Last Message

The strategic importance of love as a mark of God's people is further emphasized by Ellen White: "The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of [God's] character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them."<sup>2</sup>

This means loving the not-so-lovely and the definitely unlovely as well as the lovely. It means listening to and accepting others, even when we do not agree with them. For if love is not at the center of our lives, then our religion has no value. We cannot fake love. We cannot put it on and take it off at will. We cannot disguise ourselves, trying to use love as a thin veneer. People know whether or not love permeates our being.

\* Scripture passages are from the New International Version.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1942), p. 470.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1941), pp. 415-416.

Where I grew up, every self-respecting Adventist church made sure it had a picture of the Ten Commandments hanging somewhere on the premises. But what is the primary identifying mark of God's people?

A hand holding wooden chopsticks is positioned at the top left, with the chopsticks extending diagonally across the frame. Below the hand, there are three artichokes and a piece of raw red meat. The background is plain white.

# THE CHINA STUDY

Incredible Science?  
Or Science That's  
Not So Credible?

BY ROGER N. TRUBEY

FOR WELL OVER 100 YEARS, THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH HAS BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE HEALTH MOVEMENT. LONG BEFORE FRI<sup>®</sup>CHIK, VEGGIE BURGERS, AND DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS, THE CHURCH WAS WAY OUT IN FRONT OF A MOVEMENT THAT HAS AS MANY ADHERENTS TODAY AS IT DOES DIVERSE OPINIONS ABOUT WHAT CONSTITUTES A HEALTHY DIET AND LIFESTYLE.

So it was with much delight, a huge amount of approval, and perhaps some degree of self-satisfaction that church members all over the globe welcomed the release of *The China Study*<sup>1</sup> a few years ago. Principally authored by T. Colin Campbell, professor emeritus of Nutritional Biochemistry at Cornell University and a world-renowned scientist, Adventist church members—along with scores of individuals not of our faith—were convinced of its basic premise right from the start. That premise was pretty straightforward and something “we already knew”: Animal foods cause a multitude of diseases; plant foods improve health. What’s not to like about that? After all, did not our founding mother tell us that “The liability to take disease is increased tenfold by meat eating”?<sup>2</sup> And did she not write that cancers and all inflammatory diseases were largely caused by the consumption of meat? Not just her opinion, she states that this “was from the light God has given me.”<sup>3</sup>

So now, here was a book telling us exactly the same thing, only with the backing of a voluminous amount of data, endorsed by some well-known proponents in the health-care field, even a former president, and the whole study launched via a partnership between Cornell and Oxford Universities and the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine. Impressive, indeed! And who thus would argue with this background and the conclusions found? Few did. In fact, it was just the opposite. The book was treated almost like it was handed to us by the Almighty at a second Mt. Sinai moment. Proponents lauded it with terms like “bullet-proof,”

“there’s no arguing with the findings,” and “groundbreaking.” Even *The New York Times* extolled it as the “Grand Prix of Epidemiology.”

And indeed the original study, called the China Project, was a massive undertaking and ended up as an incredible 894-page tome titled *Diet, Life-Style and Mortality in China*.<sup>4</sup> But let’s be

clear. Campbell’s popular book, *The China Study*, is a summation of *his conclusions* about his research in the China Project, and actually only a small part of the book was devoted to the data from the China Project.

Surprising to him and to many of his devoted followers, it is those conclusions that in the past couple of years have been under serious scrutiny. And for those who did immerse themselves into the raw data provided by the original China Project, what they found was a substantial dichotomy between the data itself and that of Dr. Campbell’s conclusions in his book.

The data comes with what appears to be such impressive scientific credibility: research from 65 counties in China, more than 6,500 study participants, and more than 8,000 statistically significant associations between lifestyle, diet, and disease. But in research and statistics, we are reminded of the old saying “figures don’t lie, but liars figure.” And while certainly no one accuses Dr. Campbell of lying, he is accused of sloppy citations, cherry-picking the data, omitting much of the data that contradicted his thesis, and forming conclusions that went well beyond the data.<sup>5</sup>

Before we review the contradictions between the original study and the book, I want to clarify three important points. First, much credit goes to Dr. Campbell for his promotion of whole foods as healing agents, first and foremost, and that health is largely expanded or detracted by our diet and lifestyle. That he would challenge not just his readers, but also the pharmaceutical and food industries, is to be commended.

Second, the original study, *Diet, Life-Style and Mortality in China*, was an observational study. And as Michael R. Eades, M.D., points out, observational studies can never yield proof of anything, only clues to form a hypothesis that must later be subjected to randomized controlled trials to determine proof.<sup>6</sup> The problem with observational studies is the variables. If an observational study found that a substantial percentage of diabetics ate fruit, one might be tempted to think it a cause of diabetes. But in order to be sure, one would need to do a controlled trial to eliminate the potential confounding variables, like weight, exercise, pre-existing diseases, and other dietary differences. What appears





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to have happened with *The China Study* is that the authors and the book admirers have taken observational data and produced conclusions that should never be deduced from an observational study.

Dr. Campbell, as intelligent as he is, fumbled on this issue. On page 107 of his book, he wrote: “At the end of the day, the strength and consistency of the majority of the evidence is enough to draw valid conclusions, namely whole plant-based foods are beneficial and animal-based foods are not.”

And yet the “ink was not even dry” before he wrote, with one sentence, intervention: “The China Study was an important milestone in my thinking; standing alone, it does not *prove* that diet *causes* disease.” This is a rather paradoxical—if not strange—juxtaposition of statements.

The third point is for those less familiar with correlation scores. The data in the large monograph is published with correlation scores between two specific factors, such as eggs and bowel cancer. The scores have a range from -100 to +100. A +100 score would represent a perfect correlation, and you have established a strong possibility that the two are related. A zero score would mean that the two pairs are not related. A correlation score of -100 is a perfectly negative score and may strongly suggest that the food item may act as a protection from the disease.

Well before *The China Study* was published, Harvard professors Frank Hu and Walter Willett in their letter to the editor of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* stated rather clearly that the China Project did not find an association between animal product consumption and risk of heart disease or major cancers. They wrote, “We firmly rejected the hypothesis that high protein intakes increase the risk of ischemic heart disease.”<sup>7</sup> Joseph M. Mercola, D.O., later agreed with those conclusions: “In many cases the data ... do not show statistically significant correlations between animal protein consumption and disease such as cancer. On the contrary, it would seem that sugar and carbohydrates are correlated with cancer—not animal protein. In addition, the data indicate that fat is negatively correlated with cancer mortality, which again contradicts the claim that meat is harmful.”<sup>8</sup>

Were these three physicians correct in their assessment? Perhaps most convincing is to look at the data itself. Few individuals have waded very deeply into the vast array of numbers that characterize the aggregate of the China Project. No one has produced a more thorough analysis than has Denise Minger.<sup>9</sup> For her it took a solid month and a half of studious exhaustion to analyze the raw data from the China Project. Refer to her original<sup>10</sup> and follow-up<sup>11</sup> manuscripts to see the full extent of her work.

It is important to clearly state that no one, not even Dr. Campbell himself, found any *direct* association between animal protein and any of the diseases in the study data. Because Campbell could not find a direct association, he uses cholesterol as a go-between and made the following unsubstantiated but major assumption:

- Higher cholesterol is associated with Western-type diseases.
- Animal protein is associated with higher cholesterol.
- Therefore: animal protein = Western diseases

But Campbell’s own data shows that there were multiple other variables clustered alongside Western-type diseases. They included higher blood sugar, excess consumption of refined carbohydrates, excess beer consumption, employment, and work hazards.<sup>12</sup> Thus, relying on a single parameter such as cholesterol may suggest the author’s desire to achieve a more biased outcome.

He worked his statistical magic in a similar way with cancer and animal foods. Because his data did not find any direct association between animal foods and cancer, he used biomarkers as the go-between. This is what he says on page 89: “Every single *animal protein-related biomarker* is significantly associated with the amount of cancer in a family.” But what does the data from the China Project tell us in regard to plant and animal protein? “When we look solely at the variable, ‘death from all cancers,’ the association with plant protein is +12. With animal protein, it’s only +3.”<sup>13</sup> Neither is statistically significant, so why does Dr. Campbell lead us to believe in his book that plant protein is preferable to animal protein?

There was no *direct* correlation between animal protein and specific cancers in the raw data, with the exception of a slightly positive—but not at all statistically significant trend—toward breast cancer. The correlation scores with **animal protein**<sup>14</sup> are as follows:

Lymphoma -18	Cervix cancer -4
Rectal cancer -12	Colon cancer -3
Bladder cancer -9	Liver cancer -3
Colorectal cancer -8	Oesophageal cancer +2
Leukemia -5	Brain cancer +5
Nasopharyngeal cancer -4	Breast cancer +12

Without a *direct* relationship between animal protein and cancer, Dr. Campbell introduces the cholesterol variable into the mix. But if animal protein were indeed a primary cause, he should be able to find a direct correlation with much higher positive numbers.

So how do these numbers compare with plant proteins? Here are the correlation scores for **plant protein**:<sup>15</sup>

Nasopharyngeal cancer -40	Rectal cancer +12
Brain cancer -15	Cervix cancer +12
Liver cancer -14	Colon cancer +13
Lymphoma -4	Leukemia +15
Bladder cancer -3	Oesophageal cancer +18
Breast cancer +1	Colorectal cancer +19
Stomach cancer +10	

Neither of the two data sets have any significant cancer correlation, except with a rather rare cancer (nasopharyngeal). So again, why does Campbell set up animal protein as the “fall guy” when the trend, if we have one at all, is toward plant protein?

When Campbell uses the biomarker, cholesterol, as a stand-in for a direct link with cancer that does not exist with animal protein, we have to ask if the increased cholesterol he found associated with liver cancer is a cause or effect. Cholesterol levels may actually increase with tumor development and decrease following treatment, then increase again with tumor recurrence. Thus would researcher S.J. Hwang and colleagues write in conclusion of their study, “Serum cholesterol levels may serve as another marker in identifying tumour recurrence and the presence of a viable tumour mass...”<sup>16</sup>

Minger, in her response to Campbell, would comment on this observation: “Thus liver cancer itself may cause cholesterol to rise, independent of diet or lifestyle factors. If this is the case, the influence of animal products on blood cholesterol would be irrelevant and a direct link between animal foods and liver cancer would be necessary to prove their association.”<sup>17</sup>

Other cancer researchers have called into serious question Campbell’s conclusion on cholesterol and liver cancer, suggesting his “conclusions (to be) unsubstantiated and misleading.”<sup>18</sup>

If we divide China geographically into areas with high hepatitis B rates and areas with low hepatitis B rates, the correlation between liver cancer and cholesterol completely disappears.<sup>19</sup> There is, in fact, no direct relationship at all between animal food intake and liver cancer in areas of China where there is a high prevalence of hepatitis B. Campbell does not tell us in his book that cholesterol is also associated with several non-nutritional variables known to increase cancer risk and raise cholesterol at the same time, namely hepatitis B infection (+30) and Schistosomiasis, a parasitic infection (+34). Is it really too much to ask our scientists for unbiased transparency?

Campbell’s obsession with low cholesterol leads him to write

(p. 132): “Eating foods that contain any cholesterol above 0 mg is unhealthy.” Based on that statement, he would necessarily rule out breast milk, since not only does it contain animal protein, but excessive amounts of—yikes!—cholesterol and saturated fat as well.

How about heart disease? Here’s what the correlations between **animal protein and cardiovascular disease**<sup>20</sup> look like:

Myocardial infarction and coronary heart disease +1  
Hypertensive heart disease +25  
Stroke +5

Correlations between **fish protein and cardiovascular disease** (from the China Project’s “diet survey”):

Myocardial infarction and coronary heart disease -11  
Hypertensive heart disease -9  
Stroke -11

Correlations between **plant protein and cardiovascular disease** (from the China Project’s “diet survey”):

Myocardial infarction and coronary heart disease +25  
Hypertensive heart disease -10  
Stroke -3

Correlations between **plant protein and cardiovascular disease** (from the China Project’s “food composite analysis”):

Myocardial infarction and coronary heart disease +21  
Hypertensive heart disease 0  
Stroke +12

About all one can conclude from this data is that there is not much difference between plant and animal protein as a factor promoting cardiovascular disease. The exception would appear to favor fish as weakly protective. But the association between animal protein and hypertensive heart disease appears to fall squarely on dairy foods and not meat, fish, or eggs. Notice the correlation numbers:<sup>21</sup>

Milk and dairy products intake +30  
Egg intake -28  
Meat intake -4  
Fish intake -14

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Richard Kroecker, a Ph.D. engineer, found similar gaffes (deliberate omissions?). He was simply trying to find out what to eat that would help him overcome his heart disease.

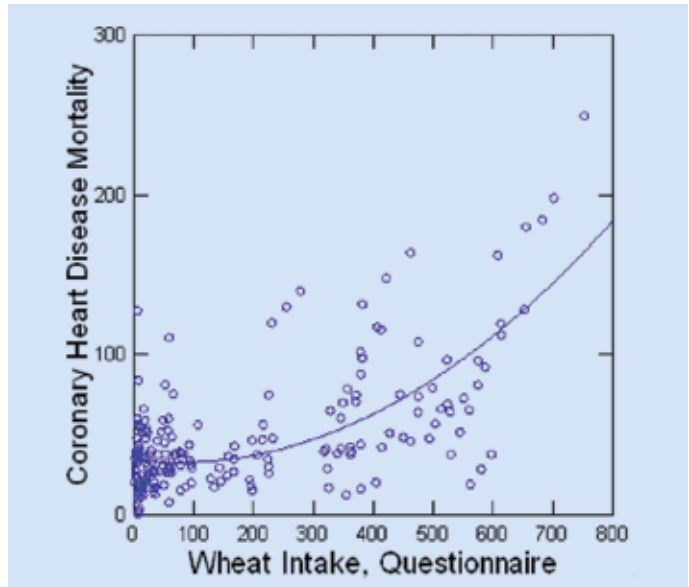
Kroecker published his summary and conclusions, findings that revealed not at all what Campbell implied in his book. He wrote: “My day-job is analyzing hard drive failure statistics ...; I get paid to make the problems being studied go away. I have also recently had a triple bypass, so I have applied my skills to something much more personal. I want to know what I should eat to improve my health. ... I ran multiple variant regression analysis [in the raw China Project data] against items of interest to me ... The following lists are what I found the data to say. ... The people who ate the most animal protein had 68.9% less heart disease (at 95% confidence) than those people who ate the least animal protein. The people who ate the most plant protein had 64.9% more heart disease (at 89% confidence) than those people who ate the least plant protein.”<sup>22</sup>

A more comprehensive picture of his data is available by going to the reference cited.

Probably the most startling finding of the raw data, not provided us by Dr. Campbell, is the strong positive association between heart disease and wheat—yes, wheat. As noted above, the correlation of animal protein and fish with cardiovascular disease was found to be +1 and -11 respectively. Yet the good doctor in his book completely overlooks the fact that wheat flour had a correlation of score of +67 and plant protein correlates at +25.<sup>23</sup> It is noteworthy here that a +67 score is considered strongly positive. And while “other grain” consumption has a correlation of +39, the correlation of rice consumption and heart attack is a strong negative, -58.<sup>9</sup> It may be troubling to many readers, but the unvarnished truth is that the primary predictor of heart disease rates in the China Project, if there is one, is the **type** of grain consumed, and wheat produced the highest disease correlations of any food.<sup>24</sup>

+46 with cervix cancer  
 +54 with hypertensive heart disease  
 +47 with stroke  
 +41 with diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs

What would lead Dr. Campbell to make this incredible omission in his book? Was this a simple case of merely overlooking data, or was it a classic “cherry picking” of data to support a pre-suppositional bias? To find that in the actual study, wheat has a stronger relative risk than any other food variable must come as a serious shock to those who read the book and cheered its conclusions. This data,



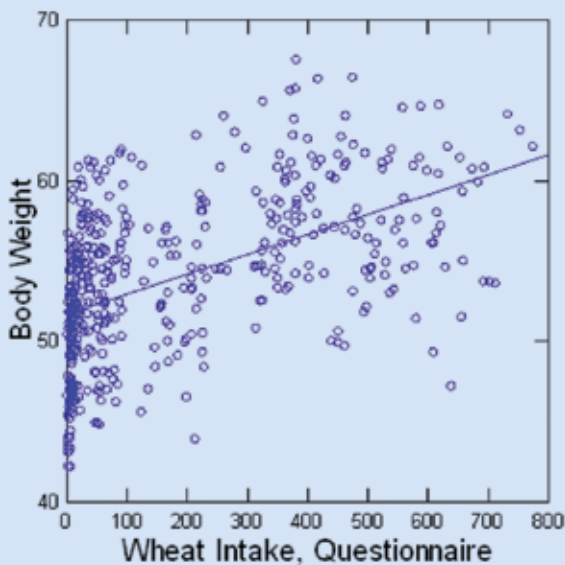
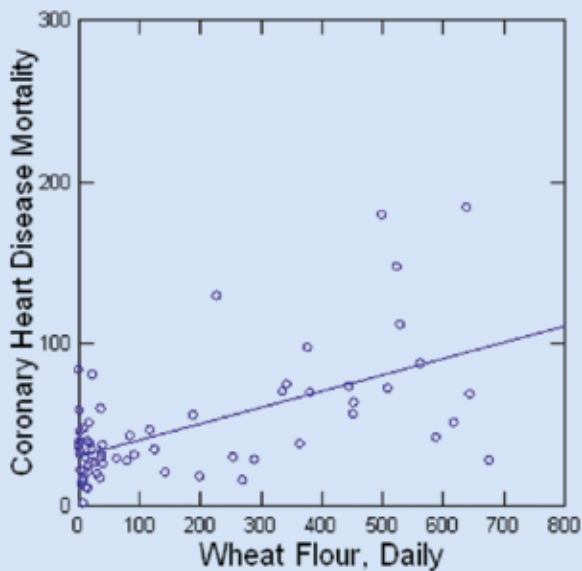
yielding no relationship with heart disease, must have been so confounding to Campbell that he doesn't even mention China in the one chapter on heart disease in his book. But he does devote a whole section to the Framingham Heart Study, calling its findings on blood cholesterol their “shining jewel” (p. 114). But then he fails to mention that the director of the Framingham study, Dr. William Castelli, in commenting on Frazer's paper on the Adventist Health Study, wrote: “In Framingham, ... the more saturated fat one ate, the more cholesterol one ate, the more calories one ate, the lower the person's serum cholesterol.”<sup>25</sup>

In the first graph below,<sup>26</sup> the strong positive relationship between wheat flour consumption and coronary heart disease mortality is rather obvious. But notice the second graph,<sup>27</sup> where it is equally clear that wheat intake was also found to have a strong association with body weight. So perhaps wheat has its deleterious effects on our hearts by increasing corpulence. Either way, should we not have been given this information in *The China Study*?

After the second graph, Paul Jaminet, Ph.D., notes that the correlation Minger found between BMI (Body Mass Index) and wheat was a +56, but with calorie intake only, it was a +13. He suggests that it's not eating more calories that makes a person fat, but “overdosing on wheat toxins.”<sup>28</sup>

Whether or not Dr. Campbell sees toxins as a factor in autoimmune disease is open to debate. But in the section of his book on autoimmune diseases, he does suggest several possible causes for their high prevalence. Not surprisingly, he believes the principal factor is animal-based foods, especially cow's milk. While he did accurately describe the role milk may play in the





development of autoimmunity and type I diabetes, he does not do so with any other “animal-based food.” So we must ask, why the unsubstantiated leap in his book to include all animal-based food with milk in the development of autoimmune diseases? And while milk has indeed been linked in the medical literature to a few autoimmune diseases, it comes nowhere close to that link to autoimmunity established with wheat protein. And Dr. Campbell does not give his readers even a clue that this relationship exists, let alone is so strong. Wheat protein (gluten/gliadin/glutenins) has a medical literature-established link to a whole host of autoimmune diseases and type I diabetes.<sup>29</sup> Ten years ago

*The New England Journal of Medicine* published a review paper in which they found 55 diseases that can be caused by eating gluten.<sup>30</sup> The list included almost all autoimmune diseases.

It is not at all difficult to find bias in *The China Study*. Dr. Campbell does not like animal foods. And while it’s perfectly OK to choose to be a vegetarian or vegan, it is quite another thing to misrepresent data to convince the unsuspecting that they need to do the same if they want to prevent any number of diseases.

Dr. Eades quotes Campbell (p. 52): “As time passed we were to learn something quite remarkable. Almost every time we searched for a way, or mechanism by which protein works to produce its effects (on cancer formation and progress), we found one.”<sup>31</sup> Eades is incredulous! “That my friends, is almost the dictionary definition of the conformational bias summed up in one sentence.”<sup>32</sup>

In a similar way, Dr. Campbell reveals his bias with body weight. His data, as already pointed out, gives a clear relationship with wheat and body weight. And even he admits that plant protein contributes to greater body size (p. 103). Yet he can’t seem to help himself when he says: “Body weight, associated with animal protein intake, was associated with more cancer and more coronary heart disease. It seems that being bigger ... comes with high costs” (p. 102). But apparently because he wants to convince his readers that they don’t need animal protein to provide them with a nutrature that gives a good height and weight, he confounds his readers with this comment on the same page: “But the good news is this: Greater plant protein intake was closely linked to greater height and body weight. Body growth is linked to protein in general and both animal and plant proteins are effective.”

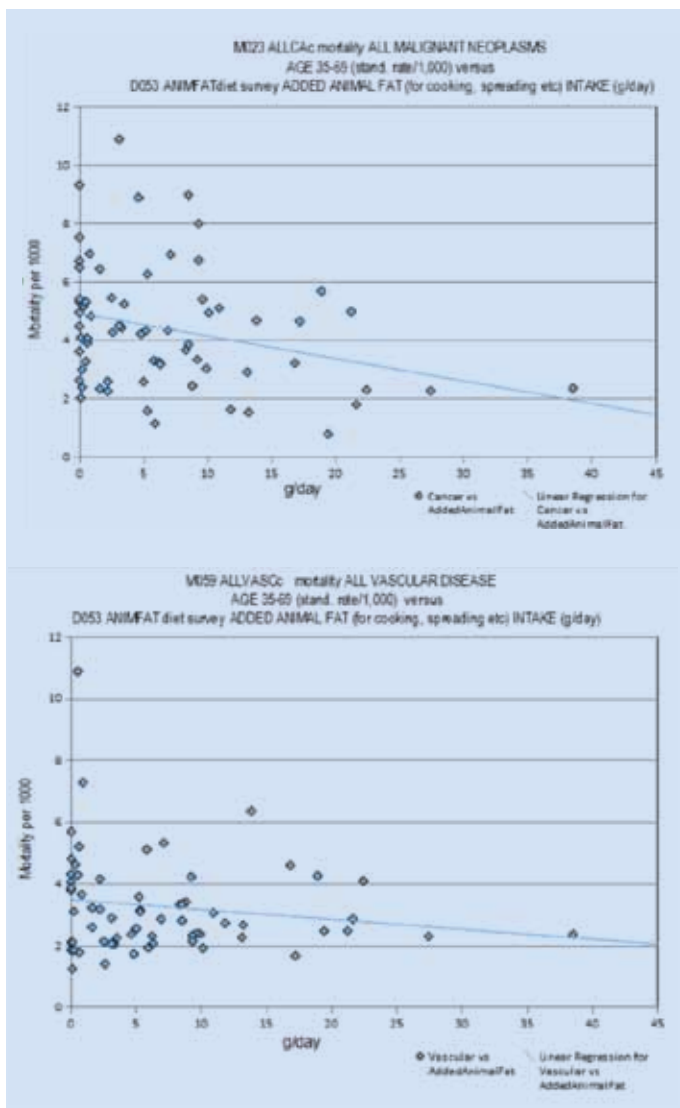
Minger is certainly not confounded, but she does want answers. “Wait a minute. This is good news? Didn’t Campbell just say being bigger ‘comes with very high costs’ and that it’s associated with ‘more cancer and coronary heart disease’? Why is it a bad thing when it’s associated with animal protein, but a good thing when it’s associated with plant protein?”<sup>33</sup>

When Campbell associates breast cancer with fat consumption in his book, he once again uses an indirect link and leaves the reader with the impression that diets with increasing fat intake result in increasing cancer and vascular disease mortality, which is clearly not the case, as observed in the graphs below.<sup>34</sup>

There is no relationship in the China Project data. Even Campbell would acknowledge “only modest support for the possibility of a diet-breast cancer link.”<sup>35</sup> Perhaps his vegetarian zeal was toned down by his co-authors for this journal article.

If fat intake is linked directly with breast cancer, the association is +18 as a percentage of calories and +22 for total fat intake, neither of which is statistically significant.<sup>36</sup> But breast cancer is

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equally strong or even stronger with other variables in the China data, and these seem to be ignored in the pursuit of his dietary presuppositions. Below are the other associations with breast cancer.<sup>37</sup>

Blood glucose level +36*	Hexachlorocyclohexane in food +24
Wine intake +33*	Processed starch and sugar intake +20
Alcohol intake +31*	Corn intake +20
Yearly fruit consumption +25	Daily beer intake +19
% of population working in industry +24	Legume intake +17

\*statistically significant

The original study, *Diet, Lifestyle and Mortality in China*, is intimidating for even the best of analytical researchers. Dr. Campbell likely understood this, and so he apparently summarized his carefully chosen data along with more carefully chosen evidence outside this study into a smaller and more-likely-to-be-read book called *The China Study*. But in this book, rather than providing the reader with the entire factual evidence found in the data, he projects into it his own bias toward a plant-based vegan/vegetarian diet and seriously mischaracterizes the original study. Sadly, he saw in the study what he already believed and failed to believe all that he saw.

In *The China Study*, it appears we have a person's opinions and biases clouding his scientific objectivity and find him chasing evidence to support his own preconceived conclusions. I believe Dr. Campbell has sacrificed scientific scrutiny and rigor, which we expect of our scientists, in pursuit of his advocacy for his vegetarian/vegan beliefs. We can applaud his passion and fervor, but not his scientific credibility. Had his book been peer-reviewed prior to publishing, it would never have been published.

Despite the fact that nearly every reader of his book assumed that the data from the China Project proved, without question, the superiority of a vegetarian—if not vegan—diet, in the end the evidence is only a mirage. The vegetarian party, at least from the view of *The China Study*, is over. If a study is used to promote a vegetarian or vegan diet, it should not be from Campbell's book; the data will not support it.

Although the criticisms of his book are not an advocacy for the superiority of animal protein, they are a compelling case of Campbell's failure to substantiate his vegetarian bias, despite his attempt by literary slight of hand to do so. If his objective was to convert his uninformed reader to a vegan/vegetarian way of eating, he may well have accomplished his objective, albeit very deceptively. But in doing so, by his sins of commission and his many sins of omission, he has seriously compromised his conclusions and the reliability and credibility of *The China Study*. 🇺🇸

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<sup>1</sup> T. Colin Campbell and Thomas M. Campbell II, *The China Study: Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss and Long-Term Health* (Dallas: BenBella Books), 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods* (Review & Herald: Washington, D.C.), 1938, p. 386.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 388.

<sup>4</sup> Junshi Chen, T. Colin Campbell, Li Junyao, and Richard Peto, *Diet, Life-Style and Mortality in China: A Study of the Characteristics of 65 Chinese Counties*, Oxford University Press, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> See Harriet Hall's blog at <http://www.sciencebasedmedicine.org/index.php/the-china-study-revisited>; Michael Eades' blog at <http://www.proteinpower.com/drmike/cancer/the-china-study-vs-the-china-study>; Chris Masterjohn's blog at <http://www.cholesterol-and-health.com/China-Study.html>; Denise Minger's blog at <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/07/07/the-china-study-fact-or-fallac/>; and Tim Ferris' blog at <http://www.fourhourworkweek.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Spotting-Bad-Science-103-The-China-Study.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Michael R. Eades, <http://www.proteinpower.com/drmike/cancer/the-china-study-vs-the-china-study/>.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Hu and Walter Willett, *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Vol. 71, No. 3, March 2000, pp. 850-851.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph M. Mercola, <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2010/09/08/china-study.aspx>.

<sup>9</sup> Denise Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/08/03/the-china-study-a-formal-analysis-and-response/>.

<sup>10</sup> Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/05/25/exciting-update/>; <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/07/07/the-china-study-fact-or-fallac/>.

<sup>11</sup> Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/08/03/the-china-study-a-formal-analysis-and-response/>; <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/09/02/the-china-study-wheat-and-heart-disease-oh-my/>.

<sup>12</sup> See Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/08/03/the-china-study-a-formal-analysis-and-response/>.

<sup>13</sup> See Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/07/07/the-china-study-fact-or-fallac/>.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

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

<sup>16</sup> S.J. Hwang, S.D. Lee, et al., "Hypercholesterolemia in Patients with Hepatocellular Carcinoma," *J Gastroenterol Hepatol*, Sept-Oct. 1992, Vol. 7, No. 5, pp. 491-496. See abstract at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1382658>.

<sup>17</sup> See Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/07/07/the-china-study-fact-or-fallac/>.

<sup>18</sup> C.P. Wild and R. Montesano, "Correspondence re: T. Colin Campbell, et al., "Non-association of aflatoxin with primary liver cancer in a cross-sectional ecological survey in the People's Republic of China," *Cancer Research*, July 15, 1991, Vol. 51, No. 14, p. 3825.

<sup>19</sup> See Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/07/07/the-china-study-fact-or-fallac/>.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> See [http://www.amazon.com/Analyzing-the-China-Study-Dataset/forum/fx1YJPR95OHW08P/TxY4S5EzD8Y2XE/1/ref=cm\\_cd\\_dp\\_ef\\_tft\\_tp?\\_encoding=UTF8&asin=1932100660&store=books](http://www.amazon.com/Analyzing-the-China-Study-Dataset/forum/fx1YJPR95OHW08P/TxY4S5EzD8Y2XE/1/ref=cm_cd_dp_ef_tft_tp?_encoding=UTF8&asin=1932100660&store=books)

<sup>23</sup> See Brad Marshall's blog at <http://bradmarshall.blogspot.com/2005/12/is-wheat-killing-us-introduction-maybe.html>; Denise Minger's blog entries at <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/05/25/exciting-update/> and at <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/09/02/the-china-study-wheat-and-heart-disease-oh-my/>; and Stan Bleszynski's blog at <http://stan-heretic.blogspot.com/search/label/china%20study>.

<sup>24</sup> See Brad Marshall's blog at <http://bradmarshall.blogspot.com/2005/12/is-wheat-killing-us-introduction-maybe.html> and Denise Minger's blog entries at <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/08/03/the-china-study-a-formal-analysis-and-response/> and at <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/09/02/the-china-study-wheat-and-heart-disease-oh-my/>.

<sup>25</sup> William Castelli, *Archives of Internal Medicine*, July 1992, Vol. 152, No. 7, pp. 1371-1372.

<sup>26</sup> See Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/09/02/the-china-study-wheat-and-heart-disease-oh-my/>.

<sup>27</sup> See Paul Jaminet, <http://perfecthealthdiet.com/?cat=43>.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Sarah Jane Schwarzenberg and Carol Brunzell, "Type 1 Diabetes and Celiac Disease: Overview and Medical Nutrition Therapy," *Diabetes Spectrum*, July 2002, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 197-201. See full-text version at <http://spectrum.diabetesjournals.org/content/15/3/197.full>.

<sup>30</sup> Richard J. Farrell and Ciarán P. Kelly, "Celiac Sprue," *New England Journal of Medicine*, Jan. 17, 2002, Vol. 346, No. 3, pp. 180-188.

<sup>31</sup> Eades, <http://www.proteinpower.com/drmike/cancer/the-china-study-vs-the-china-study/>.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> See Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/07/07/the-china-study-fact-or-fallac/>.

<sup>34</sup> Stan Bleszynski, <http://stan-heretic.blogspot.com/search/label/china%20study>.

<sup>35</sup> James R. Marshall, Qu Yinsheng, Chen Junshi, Banoo Parpia, and T. Colin Campbell, "Additional ecological evidence: lipids and breast cancer mortality among women 55 and over in China," *European Journal of Cancer*, 1992, Vol. 28, No. 10, pp. 1720-1727.

<sup>36</sup> See Minger, <http://rawfoodsos.com/2010/07/07/the-china-study-fact-or-fallac/>.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

## Articles Needed

Please consider submitting—by email to [adventisttoday1966@gmail.com](mailto:adventisttoday1966@gmail.com)—articles on topics of interest to *Adventist Today* readers, especially in the following areas:

### ■ How Do We Understand the Times?

*What impact, if any, should culture have on our theology and practice?*

### ■ 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?*

### ■ World View

*What is a world view? How does a world view impact the individual and the church?*

### ■ 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?*

# ESTHER and HER GOD

By Roger L. Dudley



THE BOOK OF ESTHER IS ONE OF THE MOST DRAMATIC BOOKS IN the Bible. It has all of the elements of a suspense thriller: a beautiful heroine in a desperate situation, a wicked villain, a murderous plot against an innocent people, a serendipitous hero, a chance discovery that will change the final outcome, and a surprise deliverance for a triumphal outcome. No wonder it has been the basis for a number of dramatic productions, including the musical “Courage to Stand,” which was performed during the evening meetings at the Pathfinder Camporee of 2009.

Yet, Esther is one of the two sacred books of the Bible that does not mention the name of God. Nowhere is there any reference to the divine, although the action and miraculous deliverance certainly imply supernatural intervention. The closest the record comes to prayer is to report that Esther and her maids would fast (4:15-16).

This omission has long been a mystery to me and to many others. But I recently decided to read the Apocrypha, and when

I came to the expanded book of Esther, a wholly different and inspiring story opened up to me.

The Apocrypha consists of 15 books—or parts of books—that were not included in the Hebrew Scriptures when that canon was formed in the intertestamental period. Thus, they are not part of the Old Testament as it appears in most Protestant versions of the Bible. However, with one exception, they were included in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint. As such, they were accepted as Biblical by the first-century church and were studied and quoted by early Christian writers. The Greek Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus and the apostles. Today these books are generally included in Catholic versions of the Bible and in some other versions. My reading came from their inclusion in The New English Bible (NEB), published by Oxford University Press in 1970.

The individual books vary in content. Some are mainly historical, such as First Esdras (much like Ezra) or Maccabees



(which gives the history of the intertestamental period). Some resemble the wisdom literature of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, such as The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus. Others are quite fanciful: Judith, Daniel and Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. I make no defense for their inspiration and do not argue that they should be included in the canon. Here I am interested only in Esther and her relationship with God.

The NEB includes in the Apocrypha those portions of Esther that do not occur in the Hebrew Scriptures; but in order to make sense of the narrative, it has given the entire text as found in the Greek Septuagint. To allow comparison, the NEB has kept the chapter and verse arrangement found in traditional Bibles and has integrated the additional text into the proper place in the story, giving the text chapter and verse numbers from chapter 11 to 16. These do not necessarily follow the same arrangement as in typical Bibles, however. For example, the book begins with 11:2-12; 12:1-6. I will cite references using the NEB system. A number

of the terms reflect British spelling.

The Greek version has minor differences from the Hebrew one. For example, Mordecai is named Mardocheaus, Xerxes becomes Artaxerxes, and Queen Vashti is labeled Astin. But the main story is the same and is easy to follow. My sole purpose is to look for references to God and prayer.

To begin with, the king gave a banquet lasting seven days to celebrate his marriage to Esther. “But Esther had not disclosed her country—such were the instructions of Mardocheaus; but she was to fear God and keep his commandments, just as she had done when she was with him” (2:19-20).

When Haman launched his plot to destroy the Jews, and Esther agreed that she and her maids would fast for three days and that she would go to see the king, “Mardocheaus prayed to the Lord, calling to mind all the works of the Lord. He said, ‘O Lord, Lord and King who rulest over all, because the whole world is under thine authority, and when it is thy will to save Israel there is no



one who can stand against thee; thou didst make heaven and earth and every wonderful thing under heaven; thou art Lord of all, and there is no one who can resist thee, the Lord. Thou knowest all things; thou knowest, Lord, that it was not from insolence or arrogance or vainglory that I refused to bow before the proud Haman, for I could gladly have kissed the soles of his feet to save Israel; no, I did it so that I might not hold a man in greater honour than God; I will not bow before any but thee, my Lord, and it is not from arrogance that I refuse this homage. And now Lord, God and King, God of Abraham, spare thy people; for our enemies are watching to bring us to ruin, and they have set their hearts upon the destruction of thy chosen people, thine from the beginning” (13:8-16).

“Then Queen Esther, caught up in this deadly conflict, took refuge in the Lord. ... And so she prayed to the Lord God of Israel” (14:1-3). “O my Lord, thou alone art our king; help me who am alone, with no helper but thee: for I am taking my life in my hands. Ever since I was born I have been taught by my father’s family and tribe that thou, O Lord, didst choose Israel out of all the nations” (14:3-4). “But now we have sinned against thee, and thou hast handed us over to our enemies because we honoured their gods; thou art just, O Lord. But they are not content with our bitter servitude; they have now pledged themselves to their idols to annul thy decree and to destroy thy possession, silencing those who praise thee, extinguishing the glory of thy house, and

casting down thy altar. They would give the heathen cause to sing the praises of their worthless gods, and would have a mortal king held in everlasting honour.

“Yield not thy sceptre, O Lord, to gods that are nothing; let not our enemies mock at our ruin, but turn their plot against themselves, and make an example of the man who planned it. Remember us, O Lord, make thy power known in the time of our distress, and give me courage, O King of gods, almighty Lord. Give me the apt word to say when I enter the lion’s den. Divert his hatred to our enemy, so that there may be an end of him and his confederates.

“Save us by thy power, and help me who am alone and have no helper but thee, Lord. Thou knowest all; thou knowest that I hate the splendour of the heathen; I abhor the bed of the uncircumcised or of any Gentile. Thou knowest in what straits I am; I loathe that symbol of pride, the headdress that I wear when I show myself abroad, I loathe it as one loathes a filthy rag; in private I refuse to wear it. I, thy servant, have not eaten at Haman’s table; I have not graced a banquet of the king or touched the wine of his drink-offerings; I have not known festive joy from the time that I was brought here until now except in thee, Lord God of Abraham. O God who dost prevail against all, give heed to the cry of the despairing: rescue us from the power of wicked men, and rescue me from what I dread” (14:6-19).

“On the third day Esther brought her prayers to an end. She took off the clothes she had worn while she worshipped and put on all her splendour. When she was in her royal robes and had invoked the all-seeing God, her preserver, she took two maids with her” (15:1-2) and went to see the king. The Apocrypha expands this encounter with the king. “Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness” (15:8) so that he is very concerned for her and loving. She makes her request to hold a banquet with the king and Haman, and the developments with which we are familiar follow their course.

Finally, Artaxerxes realizes the plot, has Haman hanged, and promotes Mardocheaus, on Esther’s recommendation, to prime minister. The king authorizes Mardocheaus to send a letter under the royal name to every part of the empire, allowing the Jews to defend themselves and destroy those who threatened them. Chapter 16 is a copy of the letter, which also talks about God.

“We find that the Jews, whom this triple-dyed villain had consigned to extinction, are no evil-doers; they order their lives

by the most just of laws, and are children of the living God, most high, most mighty, who maintains the empire in most wonderful order for us as for our ancestors.

“You will therefore disregard the letters sent by Haman son of Hamadathus, because he, the contriver of all this, has been hanged aloft at the gate of Susa with his whole household, God who is Lord of all having speedily brought upon him the punishment that he deserved. ... For God, who has all things

two lots to be cast, the day of decision by God before all the nations; he remembered his people and gave the verdict for his heritage.

“So they shall keep these days in the month of Adar, the fourteenth and fifteenth of that month, by gathering with joy and gladness before God from one generation of his people to another, for ever” (10:4-13).

After reading this version, I will never again read the book

*The nations are those who gathered to wipe out the Jews; my nation is Israel, which cried aloud to God and was delivered. The Lord has delivered his people; he has rescued us from all these evils. God performed great miracles and signs such as have not occurred among the nations.* —Esther 10:8-10, NEB Translation of the Apocrypha

in his power, has made this a day not of ruin, but of joy, for his chosen people” (16:21).

As in our traditional versions of Esther, the thirteenth of Adar arrived, the enemies of the Jews perished, and no one offered resistance to the Jews because the people were all afraid of them. The great triumph was to be memorialized by the feast of Purim. “Mardocheaus acted for King Artaxerxes; he was a great man in the empire and honoured by the Jews. His way of life won him the affection of his whole nation” (10:3).

As a summary, Mardocheaus gave the following interpretation for the whole experience. “All this is God’s doing. For I have been reminded of the dream I had about these things; not one of the visions I saw proved meaningless. ... The nations are those who gathered to wipe out the Jews; my nation is Israel, which cried aloud to God and was delivered. The Lord has delivered his people; he has rescued us from all these evils. God performed great miracles and signs such as have not occurred among the nations. He made ready two lots, one for the people of God and one for all the nations; then came the hour and the time for these

of Esther in the same light. It contains further insights into the character and dedication of Esther herself. But more than this, it shows that the book is deeply religious. Instead of causing us to puzzle over why a story this rich makes no mention of God or prayer, the narrative is saturated with both. God’s providence and care dominates the tale. We are thrilled to see God working behind the scenes to thwart evil and carry out his benevolent purpose.

Is this record as inspired as the one in our standard Bibles? I don’t know. But it makes sense to me that without God’s guiding hand, the drama could never have unfolded as it did. And it is almost impossible to conceive that Esther and Mordecai would not have done some earnest praying. I have been inspired and deeply blessed as I have studied this ancient story. That is its real value. 📖

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WAS AMERICAN CLERGYMAN WALTER RAUSCHENBUSCH THINKING about the Seventh-day Adventist Church when he wrote: “There are, indeed, a number of Christian bodies and a great number of individuals who have systematized the apocalyptic ideas of later Judaism and early Christianity and have made them fundamental in their religious thought. They are placing themselves artificially in the attitude of mind which primitive Christianity took naturally. They are among the most devout and earnest people. By their devotional and missionary literature they exert a wide influence. They share with splendid vigor in evangelistic work, because evangelism saves individuals for the coming of the Lord, and in foreign missionary work, because it is an express condition that

# SKETCHING AN ADVENTIST VISION FOR GLOBAL MISSION

*By Maury Jackson*

the Lord will not return ‘until the gospel has been preached to all nations.’ They take a lively interest in the destructive tendencies of modern life, because these are ‘signs of the times’ which herald the end; but they do not feel called to counteract them. Such an effort would be predestined to failure, because the present world is doomed to rush through increasing corruption to moral bankruptcy, and Christ alone by his coming can save it.”<sup>1</sup>

If Rauschenbusch imagined some other group, I think it safe to say that today’s Adventist evangelistic ventures fit the portrait all too well. And yet, today the stakes are much higher. As the denomination celebrates numerical growth (which is marginal at best, according to my colleague who says that “Adventism accounts for 0.2% of the global population, and the world population is increasing faster than Adventism”<sup>2</sup>), the forces of globalization take a unique shape. The commercial forces recruit global cities in an effort that shows our world is also urbanizing. Have the old strategies of mission by mass literature distribution<sup>3</sup> prevented new visions of evangelism from taking form? Do bolder visions entail evangelizing not only the people but, more importantly, the globalization processes?<sup>4</sup> Our mission efforts



confront a new context. To ignore this is to risk making grand mistakes. Our scope of service can no longer afford to be narrow.

Years ago, I had a conversation that illustrates the problem of thinking theologically without a global purview. I shared a standard Adventist interpretation of Daniel's metallic-image vision with a Nigerian Adventist friend. I reviewed which imperial nation each metal stood for (i.e., gold for Babylon, silver for Medo-Persia, etc.) and reiterated to him that the vision culminates with the stone (representing the return of Christ), which destroys the kingdoms of the fragmented Roman Empire.

To my surprise, my Nigerian friend responded, "Nonsense." This straightforward reply triggered critical thought when he pointed out that any oracle worthy of the name "prophecy," which pertained to the cosmic return of Christ, could not center in a European empire. To ignore the significance of West Africa, Far East Asia, the Western hemisphere, and the islands of the seas would be petty, parochial, and myopic.

I learned two lessons that day about growing up as an American Adventist. The first is that end-time biblical scenarios ought to encompass a global perspective. And the second is that my American perspective limited the data I viewed as relevant for an end-time global scenario.

Limited perspectives lead to truncated global visions. Sadly, this is the case for Bible writers, as well; their limited perspectives at times led them to select global scenarios that were parochial or myopic. Take, for example, the global scenario in the hymn of Moses: "When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, he *fixed the boundaries of the peoples* according to *the number of the gods*; the Lord's own portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share" (Deut. 32:8-9, NRSV, emphasis added).

In this worship hymn, God's picture emerges as the "Most High" among many deities. The poet also pictures a divided human family with (1) fixed boundaries and (2) limits to human community. This vision is quite myopic.

Generations later, Luke the Evangelist alludes to this hymn. Even still, Luke's comment shows that under the gospel age, the major steps taken on the theological picture outpace the minor steps on the anthropological picture. He writes: "From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and *the boundaries of the places where they would live*, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26-27, NRSV, emphasis added).

Here we see the great monotheistic tradition. Every person searches for the one God—not for the "Most High" god among many deities, as referenced in the hymn of Moses. This God creates all who inhabit the earth, authors history, and embraces all; he is not far from any one of us. Yet, in the midst of Luke's great celestial picture of God, the global picture of humankind remains ambiguous: God allots "*the boundaries of the places where they would live*." This picture leaves uncertain whether or not the geographical boundaries to human community, as penned in the lyric of Moses' hymn, remain. This vision is fairly parochial.

### Global Mission in a Globalizing World

The contemporary world, with advanced technology, gives us the ability to overcome the spatial boundaries that divide humankind. In matters of commerce, travel, communication, and more, we are a global village. The question we face today is whether social science can keep pace with physical science; whether theology can catch up to technology; whether ethics can encircle our ethnographies. The question today is not globalization or no globalization, but what kind of globalization it will be (i.e., a globalization with the principles of the kingdom of God or a U.S.-led imperial or corporate globalization).<sup>5</sup>

The gospel perspective is a global perspective. "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV). So it is not only because technological advance makes globalization inevitable; globalization is upon us because God envisions a global community. If globalization is inescapable, then let us revisit marks of divergence as we sketch an Adventist vision for global mission. *Adventists' mission theology ought to be candid where it places emphasis in a vision for global mission.* When sketching a biblically informed vision for global mission, wisdom would call one to emphasize the themes that the Bible writers emphasize.

### The Social Dimensions of the Gospel

In terms of how to *preach* the gospel, one should emphasize the social dimensions of the gospel more than its personal dimensions. Raschenbusch points out that 75 percent of the writers of the Gospels indicate that Jesus' message was the kingdom<sup>6</sup> of God at hand.<sup>7</sup> Only John says that Jesus' message is the promise of eternal life. Raschenbusch notes that the promise of eternal life addresses the personal dimensions of the gospel. He also points out how the kingdom of God highlights the gospel's social dimensions. If

Gospel writers emphasize its social dimension 75 percent of the time, why should our message today place a different emphasis? Why do we emphasize a personal relationship with Jesus more than a communal covenant with the cosmic Christ? Are we to be more concerned with saving souls than with speaking against social policies that destroy bodies?

When we look at Jesus' ministry (where he gives his inaugural address at the synagogue in Nazareth), we find a symbol of how social justice ministry is a ministry of grace. Jesus comes into the synagogue and reads (from Isaiah 61:1-2): "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news

**A prophetic ministry is a ministry that does not wait helplessly for supernatural agents to arrange the world in such a way that would please our desires.**

to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19, NRSV).

Then Jesus closes the book, rolls up the scroll, and sits down. All eyes are fixed on him. They notice that Jesus does not finish the prophecy; he does not read or comment on the rest of the verse in Isaiah 61:2. Instead, he comments, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21, NRSV). He does not proclaim the day of God's vengeance, because Jesus knows that a ministry of social justice is a ministry that holds at bay God's vengeance. Jesus knows

that ministry to the needs of the poor, oppressed, blind, broken-hearted, captives, and prisoners is a ministry of grace. Social justice is a ministry of grace.

### **The Prophetic Interpretation of Our Heritage**

In terms of how to preach the gospel and in terms of how to *interpret* the Adventist religious heritage, one should emphasize the prophetic vision more than the apocalyptic vision of our religious tradition. Adventism has conflated and confused the prophetic and apocalyptic visions of the Bible. We can no longer flirt with this approach. Which vision captures the heart of the Adventist mission to the world?

The Biblical prophets spoke out against injustice, oppression,

corruption and apostasy in their time. Cornel West puts it this way: "To prophesy is not to predict an outcome but rather to identify concrete evils. To prophesy deliverance is not to call for some *otherworldly paradise* but rather to generate enough faith, hope, and love to sustain the human possibility for more freedom."<sup>8</sup>

The prophetic tradition held onto a "this-world" kind of hope, not to be replaced by an "otherworldly" kind of hope. The prophet's message provoked repentance in the hopes of forestalling a deadly course of rebellion. This is captured in the records of Jeremiah, when he anxiously pens the words of God: "At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it" (Jer. 18:7-8, NRSV).

If only we would change our ways, repent, and turn from an evil course, Jeremiah saw hope in this life.

Unlike the prophets, the apocalyptic writers despaired of this world. They offered a vision of another world: a vision that too often discouraged human agency for change in the here and now. Elizabeth Achtemeier notes: "Couched in often fantastic and bizarre language ... apocalypses and particularly Daniel are not intended to predict the events that will take place in the future history of our time or any contemporary time. Rather, like Daniel, they are intended to encourage the faithful in a time of persecution by showing them the glory in the new age that awaits them beyond history, if they will only be faithful to the end."<sup>9</sup>

Without a doubt, there are times when all we have is to hold out hope for a new day.

Yet the majority of Hebrew Scripture expresses the prophetic sentiment and not the apocalyptic voice. The prophets invite us to new possibilities for existence in the here and now. A prophetic ministry is a ministry that does not wait helplessly for supernatural agents to arrange the world in such a way that would please our desires. On the contrary, it is active, making the structural change that welcomes and waits to usher in the glory of the Lord.

Imagine how disappointed the writer of the book of Daniel would have been to read the words of the prophet Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jer. 29:7, NRSV).

Urban centers during the time of the exiles played a central role in forming global order. Likewise, modern cities play key roles in

shaping global order.<sup>10</sup> Yet, while the apocalypse of Daniel sees Babylon as a lion at Israel's throat, Jeremiah bears witness that it is a city that God takes interest in. God is as concerned about the welfare of Babylon as Jerusalem; he cares as much about Nineveh as Samaria, as much about Rome as Riverside; and as much about Baghdad as Boston. The prophetic call brings about change with the weapons of love and compassion. It is a call for new life here and now.

### Contextualize Theology

In how to preach, interpret our religious heritage, and *contextualize* our theology, we should emphasize a preferential option for the marginalized more than society's elite. With the advent of liberation theologies, scholars have come to learn that all theology is contextual. There is no "noncontextual" position that helps us to arrive at a theory-free explanation of the divine.<sup>11</sup> There is no "God's-eye view on God." When describing divine reality, we are like fish in the ocean trying to describe the water.

If there were such a noncontextual perspective, it would not be a Christian perspective on the God of Jesus born in Bethlehem; reared in Nazareth; then tried, convicted, and executed in Jerusalem. By virtue of faith in the incarnation and humiliation of Jesus, Christians hold that humanity is no longer permitted to think of God without thinking of God as human.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus made his lot with the poor. He read how "those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him" (Prov. 14:31, NRSV). In his Olivet discourse, Jesus clarifies who it is that we encounter when we minister to the poor, hungry, imprisoned, thirsty, and naked. We encounter God's face. Theology must side with the poor, for they have a privileged view.

### Broaden Our Emphasis

An Adventist vision for global mission must go beyond the gospel's personal dimension, the social vision of God's reign. More than the apocalyptic interpretation of our religious heritage, it must stress the prophetic interpretation; and to focus less on the opinions of society's elite, it must highlight God's preferred option for the marginalized.

To enact this vision and make it a reality, we must do more than sketch it out on paper. We must live it out on Main Street. How might our worship liturgies shepherd the "mic check" at the American Occupy Movement gatherings? It is one thing to think globally, but it takes more to act locally. It

is one thing to speak a word of social justice, but it takes more than plain speech to the "powers that be" in order to act with personal righteousness toward those who are vulnerable to our positions of power. It is one thing to be an agent of change inspired by prophetic hope, yet we know that at times we are only able to hold out apocalyptic hope during life's hopeless seasons. It is one thing to show preferential treatment to the poor, but it is quite another to push for structural change in those poverty-complicit institutions that we benefit from being connected to.

When the church is able to wed personal holiness with social justice, to marry apocalyptic dreams with real prophetic visions, and to link elite power structures with aid for poor, marginalized souls, then in truth this gospel of the kingdom of grace will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. 📌

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1907), pp. 202-203.

<sup>2</sup> This statement was shared with me by Pastor Jared Wright in an email exchange. The problem with this kind of analysis is hinted at by the church's official disclaimer in its 2010 statistical report (<http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/ASR/ASR2010.pdf#view=fit%20cf>). David Trim writes: "Annual Statistical Reports over the next few years may show reduced growth rates, as audits identify members already separated from us, and remove them from the books. Any decline in growth rate ought, however, to be taken not as a sign that God is no longer blessing..."

<sup>3</sup> This is in reference to the campaign to send out mass quantities of *The Great Controversy* booklets.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Davey, "Do Christians have the audacity to believe that they can evangelize the global processes through their local and transnational witness?" *Urban Christianity and Global Order: Theological Resources for an Urban Future* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002), p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Womanist and Feminist theologians alert us to the patriarchal roots of the "kingdom of God" metaphor. Many alternatives have been offered to replace the symbol, such as "reign of God," "democracy, commonwealth, commonweal, rule, realm, or *kindom* of God; new creation, new age, and so on." Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, p. 107.

<sup>8</sup> Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1982), p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Preaching Hard Texts of the Old Testament* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998), p. 151.

<sup>10</sup> Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Cornel West, *The Cornel West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 1999), pp. 28, 364-365.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (London: John Knox Press, 1960), pp. 46-52.



## “I Want My Blessing”

By Alden Thompson

Jacob was heading home with all of his wives, children, and animals. It was a crowd.

Then he learned that his brother Esau was coming to meet him.

Scripture says the boys had quarreled while still in the womb. At birth Jacob had earned the title of “cheat” by grabbing Esau by the heel. In life he proved he deserved the name.

As the boys grew, so did the stakes in their private little war. Esau was tough, but Jacob was sly, managing to snatch away every one of Esau’s firstborn rights.

Fleeing from his brother’s wrath, Jacob took his clever tricks along, this time gaining a large family and great wealth at the expense of Laban, his uncle. But, in time, angry cousins forced him to flee again. So he headed back to Canaan and the brother who had vowed to kill him as a result of his tricks.

It was an impressive clan inching its way from Mesopotamia toward Canaan. Jacob had two wives, two maids, 11 sons “with another on the way,” and enough cattle to tempt marauding desert bandits.

Jacob knew he was vulnerable; the women, children, and animals were very slow. But patiently and prayerfully he nudged the camp forward.

Yes, Jacob was now a man of prayer. He had learned a thing or two about God during the lonely years away from home. He still struggled with the powerful, innate urges to manipulate people to his own advantage. But God was making progress with this man.

His eye had been on Jacob, promising him great things, including a good chunk of land and offspring like the dust of the earth. The reasons for God’s choice remain mysterious; the robust and hearty Esau

seems so much more likable than the conniving Jacob.

But grace demands no handsome face, no fine personality. If anything, grace prefers the gnarled, the twisted, the grotesque. It is the business of grace to transform ugliness into beauty.

And now, unhappy Jacob, fully aware of his twisted soul, trudges toward a confrontation with his past.

The memory of Esau’s pained and angry face ricochets through Jacob’s mind, tearing the flimsy scab from the wound that had never healed. Could there ever be peace? Or only slaughter and slavery?

Jacob sent messengers to tell Esau that his fugitive brother was now independently wealthy and had no interest in claiming the property rights of the firstborn—the rights Jacob had gained by fraud.

“Tell him my greed has been satisfied,” instructed Jacob. “Father’s wealth is his. Just let us live together in peace.”

The messengers returned—shaken. “We met your brother,” they reported. “He’s coming with a band of 400 men.”

Jacob’s options were few, but he must do something. First, he divided the camp into two groups. “Maybe Esau will find only one,” he explained hopefully.

But as Jacob proceeded with feeble human efforts, he also turned to God. “I’m not worthy,” he pleaded. “But still, I am what I am because of your blessing, your promise, your command. It was you who told me to return home. Deliver us, Lord. Unless you intervene, we’re finished.”

One more thing Jacob would do: send gifts to his brother. Two hundred female goats, and 20 males; 200 ewes and 20 rams; 30 female camels with their young; 40 cows and 10 bulls; 20 female donkeys and 10 males. He sent each group ahead

separately, instructing the servants to say, “Accept a present from your brother Jacob. He’s coming behind us.”

As darkness settled in, Jacob sent everyone else across the brook Jabbok. He stayed on the other side alone.

And then it happened. God came and wrestled with Jacob—all night.

Scripture simply says that a “man” wrestled with him. Jacob—who had gotten so much of his wealth through tricks and intrigue—was now down to brute force. Muscle. Sinew. Bone. Sweat. Terror.

Hours passed. Jacob held his own. But as the first streaks of light threatened to expose the Assailant, he simply touched Jacob’s thigh. With a stab of searing pain, it was over. Jacob’s hip was out of joint. Forever.

Yet the battle was not quite over. Jacob put the Man in a hammerlock and wouldn’t let go. “Please,” said the Man, “the day is breaking, and I must go.”

“Not unless you bless me,” retorted Jacob.

Had Jacob won? Could crooked, morally deformed Jacob set the terms of peace?

Yes and no. Sometime during that dark night of terror, the truth had struck home. Perhaps at midnight. Or at 4 a.m. Or with that wrenching pain when his hip went bad. We don’t know. But at some point in that night, Jacob discovered that he was wrestling with God.

Finally, Jacob gave in; he knew he had lost.

And that’s when he held on, knowing that he had won.

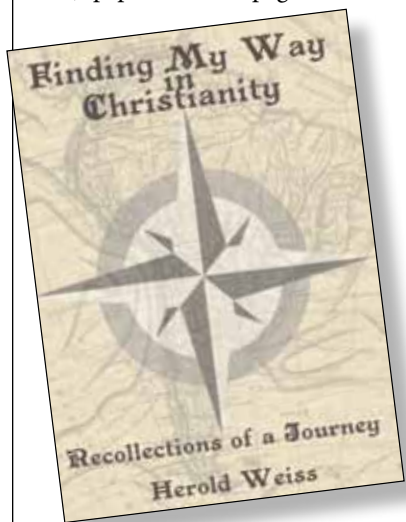
There’s much more to the story: the conversation, Jacob’s new name, the joyous meeting with Esau. All of that is intensely interesting.

But at the heart lies Jacob’s demand for a blessing. And God gave it.

## "A Pilgrim's Progress"

Reviewed by David A. Pendleton

Herold Weiss, *Finding My Way in Christianity: Recollections of a Journey* (Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2010), paperback, 240 pages.



The story of the transformative journey has been told before. Homer's *Odyssey*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* readily come to mind. While these accounts are fictitious, Herold Weiss's *Finding My Way in Christianity: Recollections of a Journey* is true.

It is a story of joy and sadness, change and constancy, academic achievement and denominational mistreatment, sincere questions and resilient convictions. Because of his candor, it will be appreciated most by those emotionally secure in their faith. And it is certainly *not* a book for those who (as Jack Nicholson put it in *A Few Good Men*) "can't handle the truth." If Weiss's autobiography were a novel, one

might term it a *Bildungsroman* (German: "formation novel"), a story about the psychological development and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood.

His is an intellectual autobiography characterized as much by geographical adventure as intellectual exploration and spiritual formation. Like legendary Odysseus, his life has been indelibly marked by his encounters with others. John Chrysostom, Gerhardt von Rod, Karl Rahner, LeRoy Froom, Siegfried Horn, Sakae Kubo, and Ellen G. White are but a few whose spoken or written words have wrought Weiss. While humbly avoiding conspicuous erudition, the captivating cast of characters and veritable smorgasbord of weighty issues—including apocalypticism, prophecy, tradition, theodicy, *sola Scriptura*, Church-State separation, Fundamentalism, the Ten Commandments, and vegetarianism—make Weiss's autobiography a delight to read. One might say that the arc of his life tracks developments in contemporary Adventism and hints at the trajectory of Christianity, in this latter respect making his autobiography reminiscent of Stanley Hauerwas's *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir*.

Weiss, a committed fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist, recounts a life punctuated by great books, deep conversations, intimate friendships, and some exotic locales. The reader follows him from his childhood years in Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, and Cuba to American adventures in Collegedale, Tennessee, then to the Adventist seminary, to graduate school at Duke University, and eventually on to New York City, Berrien Springs, Michigan, and Notre Dame,

where he emerges from his odyssey not merely with a faith intact but with a faith enriched.

Abandoning a sectarianism all-too-often obsessed with answering questions no one is asking anymore, he suggests that an authentic Adventism is one in dialogue with the rest of the world, eager not only to teach but to learn, and genuinely pursuing new light. Intellectual and spiritual integrity is not preserved by erecting defensive fortifications against the world's influences, but is in fact nourished by boldly entering into genuine conversation with others. Faith has nothing to fear from honest examination.

There are those ardently sympathetic with the dialogic enterprise yet skeptical of its benefits for Adventism. As one Adventist pastor once quipped to me, Adventists are experts at evangelistic campaigns but are less practiced in the art of listening. And at this stage, incorporating insights from others may well be a Herculean, if not Sisyphean, task.

If interdenominational dialogue is arduous and even tedious, nevertheless the necessity for such conversations cannot be exaggerated. For while in Ellen White's time there were just over 1 billion non-Adventists on the planet, today there are more than 6 billion non-Adventists. Clearly the conventional Adventist scenario (that at the end of time, which is imminent, all those saved will be identified with Remnant Adventism) may benefit from some nuancing in light of present truth.

Weiss recommends "a Christianity that is open, pluralistic and biblical"—and he does so without denigrating or ridiculing fundamentalism, whether Adventist or

otherwise. His is not a road-to-Damascus story, and yet from location to location one senses his “slow awakening” to God’s work in the world. As President John F. Kennedy said in 1961, “here on earth God’s work must truly be our own.” That is to say, God is more concerned with justice and peace than with doctrinal disputes and baptismal numbers.

Growing up multilingual in South America meant mastering various grammatical forms and acquiring a wide-ranging vocabulary. It is conceivable

## XENOPHOBIC HATRED OF FOREIGNERS AND ANTI-CATHOLIC SENTIMENT WERE NOT CONFINED TO 19TH-CENTURY PROTESTANT NORTH AMERICA, BUT ALSO SURFACED IN 20TH-CENTURY SOUTH AMERICA.

that this led to the recognition that language and culture color one’s view of the world and that “absolute objectivity is a chimera.” His parents spoke German at home, Spanish and Portuguese were the languages used in school, and he learned English from American books about Dick, Jane and Spot, who lived in an “enchanted world in which children played with robins and squirrels, creatures that did not even exist in my world.”

As an “Adventist of German extraction” in Catholic South America, he was a minority twice over. Sticking out was a fact of life. One imagines Ellen White’s description of a “peculiar people” having special meaning for a young boy eager to fit in.

Despite its distinctiveness, Adventism shares much in common with Judaism as well as other Christian denominations. Within Judaism, the Five Books of Moses are accorded more attention than the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. Similarly, Weiss discerns that every “Christian denomination has an effective canon within canonical Scripture. For Lutherans it is Paul’s letter to the Romans. For Catholics, the Gospel of Matthew.”

For Seventh-day Adventists, Weiss says the books of the Bible that serve as a canon within a canon are “the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation. All evangelistic meetings center on the interpretation of these apocalyptic books, which Adventists have always considered to be prescriptive biblical prophecy.” What was true for his childhood in South America persists today. *It Is Written*’s John Bradshaw opens an evangelistic series in Las Vegas this year with titles such as “Babylon Rising,” “The Day of the Dragon,” and “Mystery and Mayhem.”

Having been raised with this emphasis on prophecy, some of Weiss’s earliest memories include depictions of dreadful beasts and the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, which faithful Daniel and his companions refused to worship. Just as others have expressed concerns about long-established Adventist evangelistic approaches, he too worried that there might be “something manipulative” about how Scripture was construed and conveyed to reap baptisms.

Weiss observed that “what the evangelist presented as obvious was

thought such only by Adventists. Why was it that what was assumed to be absolutely clear was not accepted by most students of the Bible? Could it be that those who did not identify the apocalyptic symbols as we did were not obtuse but wise?” A budding student of history, he could not help but ask “why these prophecies according to our interpretation made reference to events which historians did not consider very important.”

Xenophobic hatred of foreigners and anti-Catholic sentiment were not confined to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Protestant North America, but also surfaced in 20<sup>th</sup>-century South America. “Catholic bashing was an everyday occurrence among Adventists,” Weiss acknowledges. “According to our reading of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, Catholicism, and especially the Papacy, is the evil power that persecutes the beleaguered people of God.” Such preaching left “all certain that the Second Coming of Christ would take place within, at the most, the next five years.”

One important aspect of Weiss’s autobiography is his account of coming to terms with Ellen White, eventually concluding that the real problem was “not with the authority of Scripture. The real problem was the authority of Mrs. White, the prophet of the church who had interpreted the Scriptures, according to some Adventists, definitively.”

While singing the Protestant refrain of Scripture alone, conservative Adventists accepted only those interpretations of Scripture consistent with Mrs. White’s writings. While all Adventists disavowed tradition and any creed save the Bible, Mrs. White’s writings served for some as their functional equivalent.

Weiss’s criticism is not of Ellen White but of what so many theological Luddites

have done with her writings, often ending theological discussion with a talismanic invocation of her writings. She sincerely strove to make Scripture speak to their times, just as the New Testament Bible authors spoke God's truth to their unique first-century historical circumstances. "Today, we can identify with their faith," he writes, "even if we do not share their historical and scientific limitations."

Describing a graduate-level Plan of Salvation course at the Adventist seminary, he laments it being based "entirely on the five volumes of Ellen White's Conflict of the Ages series." One infers not dissatisfaction with Ellen White, but rather disappointment in failing to engage her writings in dynamic dialogue with other Christian writings. The Church is wedded to Christ, not past doctrinal formulations.

"In her interpretation of the last days," Weiss chronicles, "Ellen White makes the point that Adventists, along with those who keep the commandments and in particular the Sabbath commandment, will be persecuted by both Catholics and what she designates as apostate Protestantism." Having enshrined Daniel and Revelation in the Adventist canon within a canon, it is no wonder that Adventist theology speaks with an apocalyptic accent.

Weiss summarizes in three sentences the core take-away message of a typical Adventist evangelistic campaign: "According to the Adventist interpretation of the book of Revelation, a law by the United States Congress supporting observance of Sunday as the Christian day of worship is one day to be established as the Mark of the Beast. Thus, in the large scheme of things, the United States government is to be at that time on the wrong side of the divide between the forces of good and evil.

The United States government would renounce the wall of separation between church and state and side with Catholics and Protestants who worship on Sunday, for all practical purposes establishing a state religion."

These specific words are not among the 28 fundamental beliefs, leaving progressives to interpret their exclusion to mean they are not fundamental, whereas conservatives insist that they are so fundamental as to render inclusion unnecessary, much like Adventist churches declining to post "No Smoking" signs in Sabbath school classrooms because everyone knows better.

While progressive Adventists welcome revisiting this traditional formulation, evangelistic crusades continue unabated, even now proclaiming in solemn and stentorian fashion that at the end of time all those who will be saved will associate themselves with Remnant Adventism.

Weiss's seminary experience, as might be expected, contributed to his spiritual and personal growth. Some of his professors, however, condemned the new scholarly approaches as instruments of "those wishing to demonstrate the untrustworthiness" of God's Word, and the historical-critical method was "denounced as a tool of the devil."

Reading the writings of contemporary theologians allowed Weiss to excavate some of his theological presuppositions and to appreciate that the "proclamation of Jesus as the One whom God had raised from the dead was based on an existential experience on the part of his disciples." Just as "the disciples expressed their faith with the cultural tools at their disposal, but their language is not essential to the message," so too with modern Christianity: old formulations may over time yield to fresh expressions, revealing the kernel of truth wrapped in a shell of

outmoded verbiage. This phenomenon is not an outside threat to faith, but an inherent part of a living faith.

Weiss recalls coming "to terms with the historical roots of apocalypticism," realizing "that the Adventist approach to apocalyptic interpretation was based on a misunderstanding of the character of these books. As a testament of faith, apocalyptic literature makes perfect sense. As prophetic foretellings of what would happen in the future, at the end of time, the books have been a source of much confusion and hubris of the worst kind: spiritual pride. One might recall the witty but wise words attributed to Yogi Berra that "it's tough to make predictions, especially about the future."

Rather than provide frightening details for use in a provocative prophecy poster or PowerPoint slide, apocalyptic literature is "primarily concerned with the affirmation that God's justice will triumph." When correctly reading "apocalyptic literature as theology rather than as predictive of the sequence of tragic events preceding the coming of Christ," eschatology becomes faith in Christ, not faith in chronology.

One gets the impression from Weiss that Adventist exceptionalism is as essential to Adventist Christianity as American exceptionalism is to democracy. That is, it is not necessary. Given the significant diversity even in Biblical times, Christian unity need not entail doctrinal uniformity. Sharing God's love is not identical with convincing others of the 28 fundamental beliefs. Weiss notes that Adventism has not always had 28 fundamentals and has never spoken with univocal monotony, but with a harmonious variety of notes. Perhaps a big-tent Adventism may accommodate both conservative and

*Continued on page 26*

**7 QUESTIONS**  
for...**Lisabeth Dolwig and Peach Knittel**

By James Stirling



**Dolwig believes, will not only attract new believers, but will also make for a healthy and safe church for all who come to worship God.**

**Adventist Today spent an afternoon in Northern California with these two women and listened while they answered questions and poured out their concerns.**

**Lisabeth, what got you started thinking about missions?**

Coming from a strong Catholic background, I had always felt a strong desire to serve God and to help others. Later in life I married a California state senator, who always referred to himself as a servant of the people and was always available to help them. Through a series of circumstances in 1992, we were led to the Adventist church, and both of us became baptized members.

When my husband died, the Holy Spirit impressed me very strongly that it was "payback time." I had received so much in life, and now it was time for me to share the blessings God had bestowed on me.

**Why did you choose to go to overseas?**

As my relationship with God grew, I found myself talking to others about him. I had heard of John Carter and the work he was doing in Russia to bring people to Christ, so I decided to go with him to Ukraine. It was thrilling to see sudden change in hearts that had been hardened. I knew then that what I wanted more than anything else was to go on campaigns and reach people. Because I had no idea about how to set up a mission trip, I joined with the Share Him group and did several mission trips with them.

People from the places where I spoke began to send me requests for a return to tell them more. So I started doing meetings on my own, chiefly in Third World countries.

I was invited to stay in the homes of the people, which gave me the opportunity to see, as they say, "where the rubber meets the road" and how people actually treat one another. I was struck by the great difference between how women are treated in these societies and how Jesus in his day had treated them with respect, encouragement, and love. The plight of these women became a heavy burden for me, and it still fills much of my teaching and sharing.

**Is this why you turned your emphasis away from preaching doctrines and toward emphasizing God's love and healthy domestic relationships?**

Absolutely! Staying in people's homes instead of hotels has given me insight into their domestic lives. Even some of the pastors have not learned to have a close relationship with Christ.

You see, when a pastor doesn't feel free to unburden himself to his wife, or to other pastors, it is as though he lives in a little cocoon. Such pastors often become so taken up with running the church that they have no time for their families. These men don't play with their children, and they treat their wives like servants.

I try to teach them that every Christian, especially one who is responsible for a congregation, should develop a triangle of love relationships—first to God, then to wife and family, and then to others outside the family. When a pastor shows that he really loves his wife and children, it also makes a difference in the attitudes of his church members toward their families.

**Peach, what initially got you to thinking about mission work in foreign lands?**

As a longtime student and then a teacher in Adventist schools, and a partner with my husband in a construction company, I had a good handle on practical things. I knew how important early childhood and teenage schooling was to the development and character formation of children, and especially their socialization in groups.

Through our work with Adventist schools in Third World countries, we learned that many of the disciplinary rules were based on outdated ideals, like strict separation of boys and girls. In some schools boys could not speak to girls on the school premises, else they faced punishment. There was almost no opportunity for them to get to know one another or to build lasting friendships. When we asked where the students would go upon graduation, the teachers replied, "To the public college or university." Then we asked where those students would likely look for marriage partners, if they had not made friends with their Adventist schoolmates, and we saw that it was a matter they hadn't really thought about. My focus is to help the school authorities put aside rules that hinder friendship and interaction and replace them with wholesome practices that help the students become lifelong friends.

**How did each of you find the money to make these many trips overseas?**

Most of it came from our own resources, now depleted. Because of an interview program we

**It is disheartening when people who accept the invitation to join the Adventist church ultimately "go out the back door." What does it take to help newcomers find lasting satisfaction in the household of faith?**

**Two Adventist women have taken on a personal mission to supply the missing ingredient, which they say is healthy relationships. They are taking this message where they feel it is most needed—in and among pastors and their families, and among church members young and old. Converts need nurturing.**

**Before joining the Adventist church, Lisabeth Dolwig was an executive in several businesses, was director of radio and television for both houses of the California Legislature, had her own radio and television shows, and had spent some time as an actress in New York. But for the past 10 years, Dolwig's focus has been on Adventist missions, and she has made annual trips to many different parts of the world. It was while working in Ghana, Africa, that Dolwig met Peach Knittel, a kindred spirit whose skills and interests proved a perfect complement to her own. For five years they have worked closely together on mission projects, concentrating primarily on Africa and India.**

**The heart of their ministry involves coaching administrators, pastors, and church members on how to not only build a strong relationship with God, but also to manifest Christian principles of love and grace. This,**



# Adventist Man

A SATIRICAL LOOK AT ADVENTIST LIFE



## Letter From Bertaleena D.

Strolling past the chuffing presses in the basement of the monumental *Adventist Today* building, I came upon Editor David Newman, wearing a green plastic eyeshade and gleefully inhaling the aroma of printer's ink.

"Oh, there you are," he said, fumbling in his shirt pocket. "You got another letter. From a lady in North Dakota."

I opened the envelope reverently, not only because correspondence to *Adventist Man* has been rare of late, but because this one was addressed in perfect Palmer Method handwriting, signaling that Bertaleena D. of Clerihew Falls, N.D., was at least 80 years old, and maybe even a schoolteacher to boot.

After a gracious comment that my picture reminded her of her grandson, Bertaleena's lovely loops and twirls poured forth such a flow of agonized questions that I have decided to answer a few of them here.

"Our church service has really changed," she

wrote. "Maybe since you're from the younger generation, you can help me understand. *Adventist Man*, why do they have to use drums to accompany their music?"

A good question, Bertaleena, with a good answer. You've heard of "prophetic time," which helps us figure out when foretold events will happen? There's also a "prophetic heartbeat." The 144,000 saints need 144 heartbeats per minute, which is the optimum cardiac rhythm to increase metabolism and sharpen the brain to best assimilate new truth. The drums help induce this heart rate.

"And why aren't they using the hymnal anymore?" she adds.

Bertaleena, you probably know all of those hymns by heart, so you may not have closely studied an actual hymnal page for years. If you do, you'll see appalling gray horizontal smudges and grimy thumbprints. Why? Because worshippers have become so accustomed to smartphones and iPads that they try to turn hymnal pages by brushing their fingers across them. And when this doesn't work, they press their thumbs here and there across the page.

Finally they try to reboot, and there are few sadder sights than watching someone trying to reboot a *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*. It is actually an act of mercy (to the hymnals as well as to the worshippers) to leave the books in the pew racks.

"Why do some of the young people raise their hands while they sing?" asks Bertaleena.

It traces back to volleyball, Bertaleena, volleyball. That sport's pernicious evil has spread even to the sanctity of the worship service, and whenever that game's devotees

stand to their feet, they unconsciously assume the classic defensive posture. Or maybe they think they're at a wedding reception, and they want to be the first to catch the garter. Either way, those around them become unwitting witnesses of whatever nail-polish shade they have chosen for the day—or of the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of their underarm deodorant.

"And tell me," she questions, "why do the musicians have to dress in black?"

Bertaleena, they'll tell you it's because they want the music to be what's important, and that they don't want to draw attention to themselves. That's only half true. They do want to avoid attracting attention, but it's for a different reason. They know that in each congregation is at least one elderly and feisty Dorcas lady. They also know that every Adventist clothing bank contains mateless women's shoes, and that Dorcas ladies carry these spiked heels in their purses for self-defense—or to throw at people who annoy them. Even the lowliest sub-species wishes to survive, and musicians are no different. Thus the protective coloration.

And now, Bertaleena D. of Clerihew Falls, N.D., I have a question for you. Where in North Dakota can you find enough topographical elevation to produce a "Falls"?

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participated in that aired on 3ABN television several months ago, a donor has come forward, very much excited about what we are doing. Though he is not able to do missions himself, he wanted to be part of our going back to India. So now we plan to go again in the spring of 2012 to fulfill requests from several fields.

### Lisabeth, what do you see as the problem with setting number goals for evangelism?

I have seen too many evangelistic campaigns where the goals were stated in numbers (i.e., "We should get 2,000 baptisms from this proposed

effort") rather than in terms of introducing people to Jesus. This numbers approach, entailing a recital of doctrines, may bring in a sweep of people dazzled by the technology of audiovisual effects, but it will leave them still hungry when the evangelist goes away. The resulting "backsliding" does more harm than simply skewing the membership records; it often leaves people gospel-hardened, sometimes angry with God.

### How much change do you think the two of you can make in the vast worldwide mission field of the church?

We have no idea. We are just farmers, you see. The Holy Spirit prepares the hearts, we plant the seeds, and God waters the developing shoot. We are willing to be used by him, and we have a burning desire to reveal him to others. We can only trust that people who listen and find a deeper relationship with God will carry this message to others, as well. God is the only one who knows what fruit will come from the efforts of people who are truly dedicated to him.

## Book Review *continued from page 23*

progressive Adventists.

“The gospel is not so much concerned with doctrines, theology, a truth to be extracted from a book,” concludes Weiss, “but with the business of living in God’s world as God’s creatures in peace with each other, loving and supporting each other in the emergencies of practical living.”

His practical, living faith included working with and teaching alongside many fine Adventist theologians and Biblical scholars. Yet he was perplexed by the habit of some to “avoid as the plague the critical reading of the Bible,” as if doing so was to enter a Faustian bargain of sorts. For some Adventist scholars, while their training equipped them for a “critical study of a Biblical

theme or passage,” their denominational employment inclined them to “teach theology using the Bible uncritically as the resource of choice for proof texts.” Indeed, it was a “tragedy when intelligent believers return to a denominational ghetto to deny what they learned while in graduate school.”

Some may have preferred a kinder, gentler critique (as does this reviewer). Others may fear whether, as Adam Zeman put it, there is only “night at the end of the tunnel.” But doubts do not kill faith, Weiss reassures us; instead, they “allow faith to strengthen and extend itself to all aspects of life.” He writes not to bash, but to explain how he made an inherited faith his very own.

Still others may find his ecumenical openness worrisome. An Adventist evangelist once cautioned me that “there’s

nothing like studying comparative religion to make one comparatively religious.” But as Max Müller said, “He who knows only one religion, knows none.”

Ultimately, Adventism is not a set of fundamental beliefs to be defended to the death. Rather, Adventism is a living, breathing community of believers seeking present truth in a complex and rapidly changing world. So with Christlike humility in both the study and proclamation of Scripture, Weiss invites others on their pilgrim way to embrace growth, change, and renewal as essential to the adventure that is Adventism.

*David A. Pendleton, a workers’ compensation appeals judge, is a former Hawaii state legislator. He writes from Honolulu, Hawaii.*

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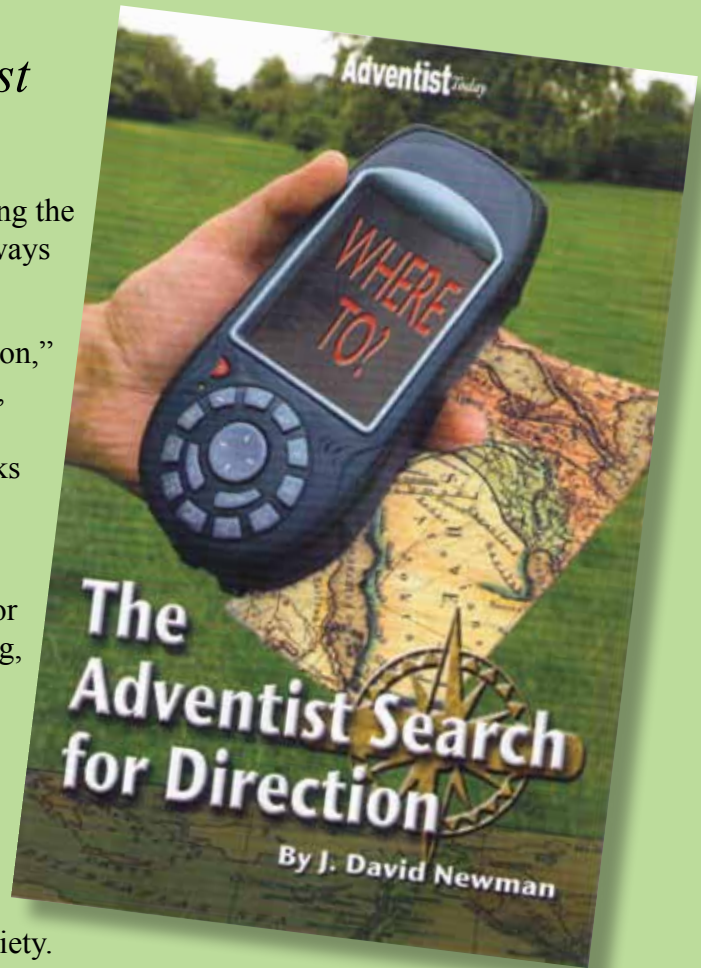
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**About the Author:** Dr. Newman is a highly successful pastor whose church has doubled in size and now numbers 700 souls since he became its pastor a few years ago. Son of missionary parents who has lived in many parts of the world and for many years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

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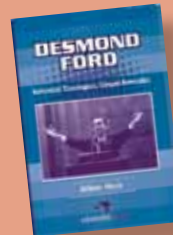


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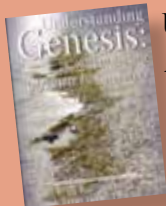


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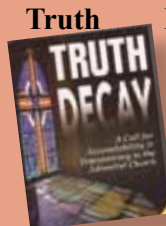


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