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Wilson urges all Adventists to reaffirm stance on Creation
Conference votes statement affirming Bible’s ‘reliable account’ of recent literal Creation

August 26, 2014 | St. George, Utah, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

Seventh-day Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson expanded his recent call for Church educators to reaffirm their conviction that God created the Earth
several thousand years ago to include all 18 million members of the denomination, saying the issue “involves the eternal destiny of each of us.”

Wilson’s comments came at the end of a 10-day International Conference on the Bible and Science in St. George, Utah, where about 400 educators approved a resolution pledging to teach the biblical understandings of origins in their classrooms and got ready to share the latest scientific research that they had learned with their students.

Wilson, speaking in an interview, said all Church members should carefully weigh an appeal that he made for Adventist educators to reject evolutionary origins during his opening speech at the conference on Aug. 15.

“This is so intrinsic to the beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists that it is vital for all church members to reaffirm their conviction that God truly is the Creator and created this Earth in six literal days recently,” he said. “This is certainly a personal decision that has to be made, and in all kindness and love I urge every church member to do so because it involves the eternal destiny of each of us.”

Wilson, reiterating his August 15 speech, said that educators and pastors who accepted widespread teachings that the Earth evolved over millions of years should not be permitted to lead in Adventist classrooms and churches.

As for regular Church members, he said, the matter was personal, but people who hadn’t resolved it in their minds should pray earnestly and make a decision.

“These decisions on the part of every individual will help to determine how they relate to this extraordinary mission entrusted into our hands by heaven and proclaimed by the three angels’ messages, which includes the first angel’s message to worship God and give glory to Him for He has made everything,” he said, referring to the three angels’ messages recorded in Revelation 14 to prepare people for Jesus’ return to Earth.

'Employees Should Believe in Creation'

Wilson’s Aug. 15 speech—in which he said that anyone who rejected the literal six-day creation described in Genesis could not be described as a real “Seventh-day” Adventist because “Seventh-day” refers to the 24-hour Sabbath day that ended creation week—elicited much comment on Seventh-day Adventist websites during the past 10 days.

Some Adventists have embraced a popular theory that each day of creation might have lasted millions of years rather than 24 hours, thereby mixing the Bible account with evolutionary teachings. This line of reasoning, Wilson said, not only invalidated the Sabbath but also cast doubt on the inspiration of the creation account and, by extension, the entire Bible.

“It is vital that every employee—whether an administrator, pastor, teacher, or whoever—should strongly believe in the fundamental understanding of creation as the Seventh-day Adventist Church enunciates it,” Wilson said Sunday. “To continue to be employed and hold a view other than that would not be compatible to the very reason for the existence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

He added: “As far as church members in general are concerned, it’s a personal matter that they need to discuss with the Lord in earnest.”
Wilson's Closing Speech

Wilson also mentioned the Church at large in a closing speech Sunday that focused primarily on the educators in attendance.

“As Seventh-day Adventist teachers, educators, pastors and church employees living in the end of time—and not only employees but all Church members—we should not reduce our ‘seventh-day’ distinctiveness but rather trumpet it as a wonderful feature of life,” he said.

Speaking directly to conference attendees, Wilson urged them to work hard, show love, and cling to the Bible.

“Scientists: Continue to do good scientific research. Do the work God has given you in a profound and careful way,” he said.

“Theologians: Do the same thing. Reach out to those who may not agree with what we have voted today and with what the Seventh-day Adventist Church has stood for. Reach out to those people in care and love—not in a condescending way, but in a loving way.

“But,” he said, “I want to tell you: Please do not in any way be reluctant to stand for biblical truth. Be open, be careful, but be bold.”

At the close of the 42-minute speech, Wilson asked the educators to reaffirm their conviction to the biblical creation by standing up and later pairing with seatmates to pray.

Conference Approves Statement

Shortly before Wilson’s speech, the conference attendees approved in a nearly unanimous verbal vote a statement that affirmed that the Bible presents “the reliable account” of a recent literal six-day Creation and that a global flood destroyed the Earth except for Noah’s family and animals in an ark.

“We reject those worldviews that intentionally remove biblical truth from public discourse and scientific endeavor,” the statement says. “We affirm the necessity of an intellectual environment in which competing theories about origins are presented and openly discussed within the context of a biblical worldview. We commit ourselves to teaching and advocating the biblical understandings of origins in our professional roles as Adventist educators.”

The document, which was developed during the 10-day event, will be submitted to the church’s major year-end business meeting, the Annual Council, in October, said Michael L. Ryan, a vice president of the Adventist world church and chair of its Faith and Science Council, which sponsored the conference.

It was unclear what influence, if any, the document would have on the wider church. Ryan said a separate working group of the world church was considering revisions to one of the church’s 28 Fundamental Beliefs—on creation—in preparation for a vote by delegates of the world church during the General Conference Session in July 2015.

High Demand for Resources

Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, director of the world church’s Education department, told the conference
that she would use the statement to press for funding to produce and distribute more resources that support creation. The resolution calls for “a coordinated approach to be taken to the ongoing development, in all major languages, of high-quality, media-rich resources regarding the biblical account of origins and natural and earth sciences.”

Speaking in an interview, Beardsley-Hardy said conference participants have inundated her with requests for creation-themed materials.

“The biggest comment that I’ve gotten is, ‘We want materials so that when I go back to our schools we’ll be able to educate our students and educate our family about the issues,’” she said. “They want textbooks, they want PowerPoints, they want to be able to download some of the presentations that were here so they can study them themselves and translate them into various languages.”

Beardsley-Hardy said some conference materials could be found on the Faith and Science Council’s website, fscsda.org, and the Geoscience Research Institute’s website, grisda.org, and more would be released in the upcoming weeks and months.

But, as any major conference, some presentations might not be available for some time because their authors are preparing the research for publication in major scientific journals, said Beardsley-Hardy, who helped organize the conference and is a member of the Faith and Science Council.

“Some of the presentations that were here were cutting edge research, and the presenters can’t have those presentations shown elsewhere until they get published in peer-reviewed literature,” she said.

Beardsley-Hardy said she was pleased that scientists, theologians and other educators in attendance appeared enthusiastic about sharing what they had learned, and she expressed hope that they would leave feeling more informed and less intimidated about discussing the areas where science and the Bible overlap.

“Nature tells us some things, and the Bible tells us some things, and the Bible is a higher source of revelation because nature has been influenced by sin,” she said. “But there are areas of overlap, and I want our academics to be reasonably informed about the areas of overlap.”

See more stories from the conference HERE.

Adventist Church appoints Reece, Williams honorary Health Ministries leaders
Maryland’s medical school dean, Harvard public health professor promote Church’s evidence-based health message

August 26, 2014 | Ansel Oliver/ANN | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States

The University of Maryland medical school dean and a Harvard University professor are the newest honorary associate Health Ministries directors for the Seventh-day Adventist world church.

Adventist Church members Dr. E. Albert Reece, distinguished professor and dean of the University of Maryland School of Medicine, and David R. Williams, a professor of public health at Harvard University, were approved as Health Ministry advisers earlier this month by the General Conference Administrative Committee.

The duo will join a group of 10 other official advisers who offer consulting to the department, public speaking appearances and official representation on behalf of the denomination.

Health Ministries Director Dr. Peter Landless underscored that both Reece and Williams were selected for their spiritual commitment and support of the department’s work through “evidence-based” health practices.

“We’re so glad they could join us. They each bring a tremendous spiritual commitment and clarity of mission,” Landless said. “They support the evidence-based Adventist health message through credible research and publication.”

Landless said Reece and Williams have long served the Adventist Church with consulting and speaking appointments without the honorary title. Reece and Williams have known each other since they were faculty members at Yale University in the 1980s.

Landless, who directs a team of three fulltime associate directors, said more honorary associates were needed because of the expanding opportunities for health ministry worldwide.

The honorary posts are unpaid positions, and its members serve on an as-needed basis. Each honorary associate brings expertise in a specific field of health and health management.

Reece, dean of Maryland’s School of Medicine, also serves as a professor at the university’s departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Medicine, and Biochemistry & Molecular Biology. He is also member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

Of this month’s appointment as honorary associate, Reece said he appreciated the opportunity to serve his church.

“I’m delighted to serve and be helpful in anyway I can,” he said in a phone interview. “I appreciate the opportunity to serve, to provide input and advise when appropriate.”

Reece will consult for the department on chronic diseases, which he said consume nearly 80 percent of healthcare funds. Type-2 diabetes, often resulting from obesity, has become one of the leading causes of death, he said. The key, he said, is to focus on breaking the chain of inter-generational rates of obesity and diabetes among mothers and their children.

A native of Jamaica, Reece holds bachelor’s degrees from Andrews University and Long Island University, a medical degree from New York University School of Medicine, a Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica, and an MBA from
Temple University in Philadelphia. He received postgraduate medical and educational training at Columbia University and Yale University.

Williams, the Florence and Laura Norman professor of public health at Harvard is also a professor in the departments of African and African American Studies and Sociology. He is internationally recognized as a leading social scientist examining social influences on health. His research in the U.S. and South Africa has examined how physical and mental health can be affected by race, racism, socioeconomic status, stress, health behaviors and religious involvement. In 2008, he was ranked as the Most Cited Black Scholar in the Social Sciences worldwide, and earlier this year was listed by Thomson-Reuters as one of the World’s Most Influential Scientific Minds.

Williams said he was happy to continue serving the Church, with or without the honorary title.

“I think, like most Christians, I’m thankful for the blessings I’ve received from God, and then our obligation of every blessing we receive puts on us greater responsibility to share,” Williams said.

Williams completed his elementary and high school education at Adventist schools in St. Lucia. He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of the Southern Caribbean in Trinidad, a master’s of Divinity from Andrews University, a master’s degree in public health from Loma Linda University and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Michigan.

The other honorary Health Ministries advisers are as follows:

**Associates**

—Dr. Tricia Penniecook, dean of the School of Public Health at Loma Linda University
—Craig R. Jackson, dean of the School of Allied Health Professions at Loma Linda University
—Dr. Doyle Nick, associate professor of dentistry at Loma Linda University
—Dr. Dan W. Giang, vice president for graduate education and professor of neurology at Loma Linda University
—Dr. Gary Hopkins, associate research professor at the School of Public Health at Loma Linda University
—Patricia Jones, professor of nursing at Loma Linda University
—Stoy Procter, former associate director of Health Ministries

**Assistants**

—Dr. Carlos Fayard, associate professor of psychiatry at Loma Linda University
—Dr. Lowell Meister, a practicing optometrist in Nowata, Oklahoma, United States
—Dr. Gilbert Burnham, professor at the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University

Adventist Church sponsors its first religious liberty festival in Britain
2,000 attend the ‘Free to Worship’ festival

August 26, 2014 | West Bromwich, England | Victor Hulbert, John Surridge, Dan Serb and ANN staff

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Britain held its first religious liberty festival, in which Church leaders offered an overview of religious freedom developments and urged Church members to continue defending rights for people of all faiths and beliefs.

More than 2,000 people attended the “Free to Worship” festival on Saturday, August 16, the second of a two-day event at the Bethel Convention Centre in West Bromwich.

Keynote speaker U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry Black emphasized that religious worship must lead to action. “Worship is what happens during the church service, while it should be seen as commencing when the service ends,” Black said.

Black referred to Matthew 25 and Luke 4:18-19, saying each “confers upon the worshipper the liberty to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and minister to the marginalized.” Black continued, saying, “True worship also grants us the liberty and courage to be prompt in publically voicing concern and offering solutions to social ills which threaten human dignity.”

On opening day, Ian Sweeney, president of the Adventist Church’s British Union Conference, welcomed guests, including Members of Parliament, John Speller and David Jamison, Councillor Yvonne Mosquito, and representatives from other religious faiths. Sandwell Mayor Derek Rowley also attended the festival.

The event was a blend of music, worship, prayer and learning.

John Graz, Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director for the Adventist world church, delivered a report on the state of religious freedom in the world underlining the new challenges and the recent events in Iraq. He emphasized that Adventists should defend freedom of conscience for people of all faiths, as well as people with no faith.

“If we don’t promote and protect religious liberty we will lose it,” Graz told the audience. “The most difficult place to promote it is in countries where we have it. But people should remember that a lot of sacrifices have been made to arrive at where we are today.”

Ganoune Diop, who serves as the Adventist Church’s United Nations liaison, said the most important value in every society is human dignity. “It is the foundation of human rights…. Human dignity is the foundations of all other values in society, whether freedom justice or peace.” Diop said the Adventist view of creation is key. “The fact that we are made in God’s image is the foundation of human dignity itself,” he said. “We can only understand who people are in the light of who God is.”

Dwayne Leslie, Legislative Affairs director for the Adventist world church, said establishing relationships with key influencers is key to promoting religious freedom. “We must have
relationships to influence people," he said. "We need to go to our political leaders before we are in trouble."

Delbert Baker, a vice president of the Adventist world church told the story of Pastor Antonio Monteiro, who was falsely imprisoned for nearly two years in Lomé, Togo before being released in January. Though Monteiro has been released, Baker noted there were other cases still outstanding with much work to be done.

Graz, Diop, Leslie and Baker also participated in a panel discussion led by Audrey Andersson, executive secretary of the Adventist Church’s Trans-European Division.

The day closed with a corporate commitment and desire from attendees to “Thank God for religious freedom, thank the UK for religious freedom,” and to work to maintain such freedoms both locally and wherever members have a sphere of influence.

Andrews theologians approve statement on headship

Statement emphasizes equality of men and women as members of the body of Christ

August 24, 2014 | Silver Spring, Maryland, United States | Andrew McChesney/Adventist Review

The faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University has voted a statement on Biblical concepts of headship, the university said Friday.

Teachers at the church’s main North American training ground for pastors adopted a seven-page study titled, “On the Unique Headship of Christ in the Church.”

The document, approved Thursday, “represents a consensus of the seminary faculty who created this document as a service to the worldwide church,” the university said in a statement.

“I am excited to offer to the church this biblical-theological study that uplifts the unique headship of Christ in the church,” seminary dean Jiří Moskala said. “It is my hope that it will significantly contribute to the current debates on leadership.”

The document opens by unequivocally declaring that the church’s head, or leader, is no one other than Christ.

“While there exists legitimate leadership in the church, no other human being may rightfully claim a headship role in the church,” it says. “As head of the church, Christ provides the ultimate manifestation of God’s love, demonstrating and vindicating God’s moral government of love, and thus defeating the counterfeit government of the usurping ‘ruler of this world.’”

Later, the statement addresses Biblical understandings of the roles of men and women.
“Since Christ is the unique Husband of the church (Christ’s metaphorical bride), the members of the church cannot themselves be husbands of the church but collectively, men and women together, are the bride of Christ,” it says.

The statement makes no mention of women’s ordination, a divisive issue among some church members that faces a possible vote by the world church at a General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, in July 2015.

The statement does affirm that God created man and woman equal in the Garden of Eden, and it says that God desires to restore that equality.

“Although various interpretations of Gen 3:16 have recognized some kind of post-Fall disruption of this pre-Fall egalitarian ideal, the Bible consistently calls us back to God’s original plan for full equality without hierarchy (Song 7:10; Isa 65:17, 25; cf. Gen 1:29-30),” the statement says.

“Paul’s writings, though often misunderstood (2 Pet 3:16), maintain this Eden model (Eph 5:21-23), affirming with the rest of Scripture the Gospel ideal of the ultimate restoration of the Eden model (cf. Matt 19:8; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:28).

“Ellen White also underlines this redemptive paradigm: ‘Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband’s equal, (AH 231),” it says.

Moskala said he hoped the Andrews statement would help end some divisions among church members.

“I pray that this document will prove to be a unifying influence in the church,” he said.

—Click HERE to read the statement in its entirety.