**BREAKING NEWS**

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**Study of Education Outcomes Places Adventist Schools Significantly Ahead of Public Schools:** This *AT* exclusive report on a meta-study of 90 recent surveys on school achievement in the US shows Adventist schools significantly outpacing public school achievement levels, including much-vaunted charter schools....

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God's Blogs: Insights from His Site (Book Review): In this book, published when Kindles were still but a kindling in Amazon's eyes and most people thought blogs were old-fashioned shoes made in Europe, reviewer Debbonaire Kovacs finds thoughtful entertainment with author Larry Donoho, who's gentle and unexpected insights attempt to penetrate the mind of God....(available to AT subscribers)

_A Weekly Newsletter from atoday.org_
Hollywood Pastor Fired for Being Too Innovative

Submitted: Apr 3, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team
The senior pastor of the Hollywood Adventist Church, Ryan J. Bell, has been relieved of his assignment, placed on administrative leave and “counseled to resign” by the denomination’s Southern California Conference. He has until April 20 to sign a severance document given to him by the conference on Tuesday (April 2) and will be terminated from employment at the end of the month.

Probably the most visible Seventh-day Adventist church in Los Angeles, it is located on Hollywood Boulevard overlooking the Hollywood Freeway (US 101) where 290,000 vehicles pass each day according to city planning documents. A statement from the conference “expresses recognition of and gratitude for the many creative and effective ministries the ... church has extended to the interfaith community and to persons in need. However, there are multiple areas of belief and practice outside the parameters of Adventist Church positions that have been compromised.”

Pastor Bell told his congregation last week that “this Sabbath will be my last Sabbath” as pastor. “This turn of events breaks my heart. I have served the Seventh-day Adventist Church imperfectly for 19 years. It is the only thing I have done since graduating ... from Weimar College when I was 22 years old. But sometimes people grow in ways that are incompatible with the institutions they have been a part of.”

He has no major doctrinal differences with the denomination, but Bell told Adventist Today that “my views about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals is one significant
issue.” And, “I have expressed discomfort with the expression that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy ... feeling that statement simply goes too far” as well as “ambiguity about the church’s belief in a literal six-day creation.” Surveys show that significant minorities of Adventist pastors in North America have similar opinions.

Bell, like most pastors who agree with him on the issues noted above, has not been outspoken on these topics. “I have written articles [published] in Huffington Post and Spectrum that have been construed as critical of the church,” he said. “My goal has never been to slander the church that I love, but to nudge her along the path of growth ... in the hope that by bringing the church’s practices out in the light, those who are sometimes hurt by those practices would be heard and that perhaps the system might change a little.”

“While I will be leaving paid pastoral ministry, I am not angry with the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” Bell stated. “This denomination has given me my whole career and most of my education. I have been able to do the things I have done because the church has supported me. For that I remain grateful. I wish her only the best and I believe that there are many signs of hope within the denomination [while] at the same time there are signs of calcification and retrenching that cause me deep concern.”

At 41, Bell represents a generation of Adventist ministers in North America, Europe and Australia that are relatively few in proportion, forced to deal with significant change in the social context and severe polarization among Adventists. He came to the Hollywood Church eight years ago from Philadelphia where he had led the Bucks County Church in the suburbs for five years. He earned a Doctor of Ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena in March 2011, and recently became an adjunct professor in that program. He also teaches part-time at Azusa Pacific University, Loma Linda University and La Sierra University.

He has had a leadership role in the community organization LA Voice, currently serving as co-chair of the clergy caucus. This group got a permanent supportive housing development built in Hollywood and helped pass a responsible banking ordinance in Los Angeles, among other achievements. Because Hollywood is the global center of the film industry, Bell worked with his congregation to start a faith-based production company called New Name Pictures. Together with a church staff member, he helped found Just Hollywood, an organization that has established community gardens—including one on land that used to be a piece of the church parking lot—and has reached out to high school students with training in gardening, healthy diet and cooking.
When Bell arrived, attendance at the church was 50 to 60 people each week, he told Adventist Today. After three or four years it had grown to 150, although more recently, with the economy tightening the gas budgets of many people, it has leveled off between 100 and 120 each Sabbath. The total membership is 196, according to official records. The average Adventist church in North America has a typical Sabbath attendance equal to about half the official membership, while the same measure is over 60 percent for the Hollywood church.

The announcement of Bell’s firing sent shockwaves across North America, Australia and the United Kingdom because he is widely known among his peers as an innovator and mission-focused leader. While he was at the seminary at Andrews University from 1998 through 2000, earning his Master of Divinity degree, he was asked by Russell Burrill, director of the North American Division Evangelism Institute, to organize a series of seminars to encourage young pastors to plant new local churches. It was called Re-Church, and resulted in a network of mainly Generation X pastors who met yearly. The Re-Church Network has become an international connection and Bell has continued to be the coordinator.

Bell is also a significant spokesman for the Adventist Church in interactions with other Christians and other religions. He has developed a close friendship with noted Christian author Brian McLaren since they met at an academic conference in 2000; McLaren telephoned in recent days “just to see how I was doing,” Bell told Adventist Today. Well-known Christian writer and lecturer Alan Roxburgh was Bell’s major professor in the doctoral program at Fuller Seminary where he also became acquainted with theologian Mark Lau Branson. He also communicates regularly with Evangelical leaders Tony Jones and Doug Pagitt. In 2004, Bell arranged for Tony Campolo, the noted Christian author and sociologist, to speak for a gathering of Adventist pastors from across North America.

As an Adventist pastor, Bell has also entered into dialog with Muslim leaders. “A group of 10 to 15 of [Hollywood Church] members met for three months, every other week, with a group of 10 to 15 members from the local mosque (Islamic Center of Southern California) to talk about our faiths ... and build friendships,” he told Adventist Today. On the Sabbath a day prior to the tenth anniversary of 9/11 he invited a Muslim Imam to speak.

A regular writer for Huffington Post, the national secular online publication, Bell’s articles appear regularly in the religion section and also from time to time in the books, politics, and “Impact” sections. He has contributed chapters to four books, including two from Adventist publishers. He has had articles published in Fuller’s Theology, News & Notes, in
the Adventist Review and Spectrum, the journal of the Association of Adventist Forums. He is also a writer for Adventist Today and was elected recently to the board of the Adventist Today Foundation.

The elders and other lay leaders of the Hollywood Church have not yet met to debrief this shocking turn of events, “but they are strong and committed to the missional vision we have developed together for the past eight years,” Bell said. When the conference leadership gets around to meeting with the congregation, there will be many questions.

Tensions about change in the church are not new to the leadership of the Southern California Conference. They, along with the other conferences in the Pacific Union Conference, have had differences with the General Conference officers over the last year on the topic of ordination. Local pastors are hired and fired by the conference, while the General Conference has no such authority over conference and union presidents.
Study of Education Outcomes Places Adventist Schools Significantly Ahead of Public Schools

Submitted: Apr 4, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team
The first analysis of all available research comparing religious, public and charter schools was released recently in a presentation at Notre Dame University and the author had positive comments about Adventist schools. The meta-analysis combined data from all 90 studies on this topic published in recent years, most of them in refereed academic journals. It is the first such analysis ever undertaken comparing the three types of schools and included both elementary and secondary students.

Dr. William H. Jeynes, well known for his meta-analytic research on a number of topics, is a senior fellow at the Witherspoon Institute in Princeton, New Jersey, and professor of education at California State University, Long Beach. He is known as the architect of the economic and education plan that enabled the Republic of Korea to recover from the 1997–98 Asian economic crisis. He has authored more than 110 academic publications, including 10 books.

Students attending faith-based schools had an academic advantage of approximately one year over their counterparts in both public and charter schools, Jeynes stated in his Notre Dame lecture. Even when the data was controlled for socioeconomic status, ethnicity and gender this advantage was maintained. “I was quite surprised that students from charter schools did no better than their counterparts in traditional public schools,” Jeynes said. “I
really expected charter school students to outperform pupils in traditional public schools. It appears that if this nation is to support the notion of a greater breadth of school choice, then religious schools should be included.

Schools operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church were included in the analysis and Jeynes spoke exclusively to Adventist Today about the results. “Students who attend Adventist schools score at an academic level about 11 months ahead of their counterparts,” he said. “Even when controlling for socioeconomic status, race and gender, the advantage is six months.”

“The advantage for students who attend Adventist schools is somewhat greater at the high school level,” Jeynes told Adventist Today. Students in Adventist secondary schools are 12 months ahead of their counterparts as compared to 10 months for students in Adventist elementary schools. (Or seven months and five months when the data is controlled for ethnicity, socioeconomic status and gender.) “The primary reason for this is the high school students attending Adventist schools have been attending those schools longer than the younger students, and the … advantage tends to accumulate over time.”

The achievement gap for minority and low-income students in Adventist schools is about 25 percent smaller than in public schools, Jeynes said. “Attending private religious schools is associated with the highest level of academic achievement,” which means that Adventist education provides a significant path to overcome poverty for the children from inner city and immigrant families.

“One of the reasons that Adventist schools are successful,” Jeynes told Adventist Today, “is because they have higher expectations of students and encourage them to take hard courses. They are more likely to support the notion that ‘God doesn’t make junk’ and that students are often capable of achieving more than they realize.”

Jeynes also stated that “students who attend Adventist schools have fewer behavioral problems than their counterparts, even when adjusting for socioeconomic status, race and gender. In fact, the behavioral advantage is even larger than the scholastic advantage.” And students “report that there is a greater degree of racial harmony at Adventist schools than one finds in public schools,” despite the high level of diversity in many of the schools operated by the Adventist Church.

The research is being published in the Peabody Journal of Education, volume 87, pages
305–335. The article does not include any specific references to Adventist data.

“This research is similar to what the Cognitive Genesis project is finding,” a veteran education administrator for the Adventist Church told Adventist Today. “It is great to see that someone with Jeynes’ reputation agrees with our own findings.” The Cognitive Genesis project is research being conducted by La Sierra University for the Office of Education at the denomination’s North American Division. Little of the findings and data from the project has been released to date.

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Adventist Pastor Named Chief of Chaplains for the Pennsylvania State Police

Submitted: Apr 1, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team
Pastor Edward E. Blackwell serves two congregations for the Allegheny East Conference of the Seventh–day Adventist Church and has been appointed chief of chaplains for the state police in Pennsylvania. He is the first African American to hold the position and the first Adventist clergyman to do so.

Chaplains serve the state police on a part–time basis and include clergy of all religions. Pastor Blackwell started serving with the state troopers in January of 2010. The two churches that he leads for the Adventist denomination are the First Seventh–day Adventist Church of Coatesville, Pennsylvania, and the Rehoboth Church in Reading, Pennsylvania.

“I have received strong support from my chaplain colleagues who are ordained ministers … representing every denomination and faith group,” Pastor Blackwell stated. “I am grateful for the opportunity that God has given me to assist the men and women who serve as troopers for the State of Pennsylvania.”

First Church in Coatesville has about 90 members and sponsors the Atkinson Memorial Center, a social services agency that provides the only homeless shelter in the area, as well as transitional housing, community development, a community clinic and other programs. Rehoboth Church has 112 members. Both Reading and Coatesville are historic mill towns.
west of Philadelphia.
Simulcasts, Video Seminars about the Book of Revelation No Longer Unique to Adventists

Submitted: Apr 1, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team

Two decades ago the Seventh-day Adventist Church began to use new technology to make seminars on the Bible book of Revelation more widely available. Net 95, Net 96 and Net 98 linked live sessions to hundreds of locations and amassed audiences of more than 100,000 at a time. Although much of Adventist evangelism has turned to methods that involve face-to-face relationships, other Christian groups are now using the same technology.

Pastor David Platt, a Baptist preacher in Birmingham, Alabama, used the Internet for a simulcast on Good Friday last week to “answer questions about the Apocalypse as described in the book of Revelation.” The theme for the six-hour live event was “Heaven, Hell and the End of the World.” Thousands of Evangelical churches and small groups participated.

“There is so much confusion about the end times, so many opinions fighting for our attention,” said Maciej Wolfart, pastor of Apex Community Church in Kettering, Ohio, according to the Dayton Daily News. “I want my friends and the people I serve to know exactly what the living and transforming Word of God has to say about these realities.” Apex was one of the participating sites.

Small groups meeting in homes paid $59 and churches with 100 members or more paid
$850 to participate in the event. This included a password to connect via the Internet and handout materials to distribute to the local participants. Platt has held similar events twice a year since 2006.

A video series being used in congregations of many denominations was released in March. It is entitled, “Apocalypse ... When?” The five segments take a multi-faith approach to the topic with presentations by astronomer and physicist Marcelo Gleiser, Christian environmentalist Bill McKibben, and theologians Andrew Newberg, Barbara Rossing and Kahleel Mohammed. Group discussion guides are available for churches using the documentaries.

According to a news release from the producers, “Episode 2 looks at the Book of Revelation and ... Episode 3 is the story of an archetypal American prophet, William Miller, who convinced thousands of devoted followers the ‘second coming’ would occur on October 22, 1844.” It states that this segment explores “what happens in the aftermath of a failed prophecy? How do people maintain belief in the face of constant failure?”

Other segments focus on the Old Testament prophets, 20th century “harbingers of doom, nuclear weapons, religious intolerance, corporate greed, environmental degradation” and “contemporary forecasts of impending doom” such as “the Mayan calendar, solar flares, tsunamis, a global financial system on the verge of collapse,” etc. It is produced by a media company in British Columbia that does not identify itself with any particular religion.

Adventist pastors and lay leaders continue to be split over whether the emphasis on apocalyptic topics is helpful in drawing potential converts or sidetracks people from the central focus of the gospel. A 2009 survey conducted by the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University for the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church showed that 21 percent of active church members reported assisting with a Revelation Seminar in the prior 12 months, while 24 percent indicated they assisted with some other kind of Bible seminar.

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Caught Up in a Civil War, Adventists Seek Peace in the Central African Republic

Submitted: Apr 2, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team

International representatives from the African Union, United Nations and neighboring nations are meeting today with Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye of the Central African Republic after rebel forces ousted the nation’s president last week. More than a dozen South African peacekeeping troops were killed, according to Reuters news service. Leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the country report no fatalities among members or destruction of church property, states a report from the denomination’s official Adventist News Network (ANN).

Thousands of rebel troops invaded the capital city of Bangui on Sabbath, March 23. Church members were encouraged to go straight home after worship said James Kouedi, treasurer of the denomination’s Central African Republic Mission (CARM). Widespread looting broke out the next day and President Francois Bozize “sought refuge in neighboring Cameroon, and … exile in the West African state of Benin,” reported the Associated Press today.

Rebel leader Michel Djotodia immediately went on the air and proclaimed himself the new president. The prime minister represented the opposition in a coalition government, so he has continued to function. The United States, the African Union and other countries in Africa has protested the rebel takeover because in January Djotodia signed a peace accord with Bozize which included a provision allowing the president to serve out his term until the next
scheduled elections in 2016.

As the political situation deteriorated over the past few weeks, the Adventist Church had organized a peace demonstration in early March. This is the latest coup d’état in a country known for such leadership transitions since it gained independence from France in 1960.

Pastor Gueret Jean Jacques, president of the CARM, reported that order slowly seems to be returning in the capital city of Bangui, home to some 600,000 people. In a telephone interview with ANN on March 25, he said there was still minor unrest and some security problems, and no electricity or water service.

There are more than 10,000 Adventists in the country, served by six pastors and 10 Global Mission pioneers (volunteers not paid a regular salary). The events last week are the result of a civil war that has simmered since last year. The Seleka rebellion – meaning “Alliance” or “Solidarity” in the local Sango language – was widespread before a peace agreement was signed with the government in January. The agreement was soon discarded, inciting the current bout of fighting.

No members have been killed in the conflict, though a few have suffered injuries. In December, in the city of Bambari, the home of Pastor Mavoulet Marious and his family was hit with a rocket and gunfire. No one was harmed. In January, Marious was arrested after rebel soldiers confused his Pathfinder Club outfit for a government military uniform. He was soon released.

In the city of Sibut, mission pioneer Ngate Benjamin was beaten by rebel soldiers and suffered injuries, including a lost tooth. He was housing a church member serving in the government military. The man surrendered himself to the rebel army to secure Benjamin’s release. Church leaders say these isolated incidents have not otherwise disrupted church activities.

The Adventist Church came to this country in 1960 through the work of missionary Jean Kempf and his wife. Though the country is very rich with mineral deposits, oil and gems, there is widespread poverty. The mission is not self-sufficient and relies on appropriations from the union, division and General Conference.

The Adventist College of Bangui is a locally well known but offers only secondary and elementary school programs, not higher education. There are some 500 students enrolled.
The government recently gave the Adventist Church 30 hectares of land on the outskirts of the capital city to build an Adventist university, and an additional three hectares for the construction of a new denominational headquarters for a new union administration expected to be voted later this year. The union would retain the name “Central Africa Union Mission,” and would also include Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Chad. Cameroon, currently in that union, will become a second union on its own due to its very large church membership.

This report is based on a story from the official Adventist News Network.
Onjukka, Bryce

Bryce Onjukka comes from a missionary family, which has served in both long and short term positions in various countries. After completing his education, Bryce hopes to use his passion for aviation to serve the Lord as a mission pilot. He also enjoys sharing the good news of the gospel through music. Bryce attends school at Heritage Academy with his brother, Derek. His Parents, Tom and Jerri, currently serve as missionaries on the island of Guam.

Pre–Flight Check Off
Pre-Flight Check Off

Submitted: Mar 30, 2013

By Bryce Onjukka

I’ve had dream since I was 7 or 8: a dream to be a mission pilot. Ever since my first experience in a homebuilt plane, I was hooked on flying. Since then, flying has been a big part of my life.

When I found out I could receive my pilot’s license, and possibly an instrument rating by the time I graduated from high school, I jumped at the opportunity. That brought me to Heritage Academy.

I didn’t know much about Heritage until the end of my sophomore year at Guam Adventist Academy. That’s a long way from Tennessee, 8000 miles to be exact, but to me it was worth the sacrifice to leave home so I could pursue what I feel is God’s calling for my life. After a lot of prayer I made the decision to go. It has been one of the best decisions of my life.

The summer ended all to quickly and my brother and I flew across the ocean to attend school where we only knew one other student, a senior, also from Guam. On registration day, I received my flight bag, complete will all the materials I would need for the year. I was ready to fly, or so I thought. I was told the plane was down for maintenance but that it would be up and running in less than 2 weeks. It was disappointing, of course, but really not a big deal. After all, the school year is 36 weeks long, plenty of time to get the 40 hours necessary to take my check ride. The time passed, and the airplane still wasn’t ready. What was originally just a 100-hour inspection turned into something more major. A bad cylinder needed to be replaced. A few more weeks, the instructor told me, and we would be in the air. But again the plane wasn’t ready. I smiled and said something about maintenance taking longer than usual being normal for airplanes, but inside I was trying to hide my frustration. I
couldn’t understand why God had led me to Heritage so I could fly and then not give me a working airplane to fly. The first quarter was halfway finished, and I had not even seen the airplane. I prayed over and over again that I could fly. But God seemingly didn’t answer. Every day I would go to the flight office and wait for the words I was hoping for, that the plane was ready to fly. But everyday I sat in the office, flying the simulator, which by this time was thoroughly boring to me.

One day my instructor came and asked me if I wanted to go flying. I was ecstatic, and I couldn’t wait for classes to be finished for the day. The local airport had a Cessna 172 for rent, and since the maintenance on our plane was taking so long, we finally decided just to rent the airport plane. But just before we were about to leave, Mr. Miller informed me that the 172 was not available because of a prop strike. Up until this point, I was pretty upset. But after that day, my attitude changed completely. It was as if God spoke directly to my heart. That still small voice was as clear as ever.

“Bryce, Do you really trust me?”

“Of course I do!”

“Then let me handle the situation.”

“OK God, I’ll trust you.”

“OK, but it's not going to be what you want right now. You still need some “ground school” before you fly. You are impatient, and you are letting your zeal to work for me get in the way of the purpose of your work.”

As soon as I gave the situation to God, I had immediate peace. I realized two things. First, I realized that God brought me to Heritage for more than airplanes. In my zeal to want to work for God I had forgotten the importance of character development. I wanted to be a mission pilot, but God wanted me to be a MISSION pilot. Airplanes are wonderful tools, but if my purpose for wanting to be a mission pilot is so I can fly an airplane into short airstrips in the jungle, I am hindering God’s work more than I am helping it. The second thing I realized was that God was trying my patience. James chapter 1 says, “the trying of our faith works patience.” Could it be that in trying my patience, the converse of the verse was true, that it actually worked faith? I think so. Now that I can look back and see how God has led, I can have faith that He will get me through tough times in the future.

It took the rest of the first quarter for the plane’s maintenance to be completed, but the time seemed to pass quickly. I began to try to find out the other reasons why God brought
me to Heritage. One of them is to share Jesus. We are called to be missionaries wherever we are. If we aren’t then we are a mission field.

On the first day of the second quarter, I had my first flight, and on the last day, I completed my first solo. It was an amazing experience, one that every pilot, no matter what age, can explain in vivid detail. As I applied full power to begin my takeoff roll, I knew I was fulfilling part of my dream. The wheels lifted off the ground, and I was flying. I looked over to the right seat, now empty. Now I envision that I had an unseen copilot, one that will be with my on my flights for years to come.

Now that the third quarter has started I have four days of flying per week instead of two. I currently have over 15 hours and am on track to receive my license (God willing) by the end of the year, thanks to those 2 extra days per week. I like to think that God gave me those two days just to make up for the 15 hours I missed during the first quarter. Thanks, God!

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Life, Death, Life

Submitted: Apr 3, 2013

By Debbonnaire Kovacs

Within the months following my husband’s death in 2011, I told my pastor that one extremely comforting thing was that the grief was just pure grief. I didn’t have regrets or remorse, I didn’t feel there were things I wished I’d done, or had left undone, or done better. I knew that, before God, I had done the very best I knew to do, taken care of him up to and beyond my ability, by the grace of God. I had made it through the Valley, and now had only recovery to face. It seemed possible.

When, only nine months later, my young, quite healthy mother suddenly died, I felt machine-gunned off at the knees. It took me months to even consider that it might be true, let alone begin to deal with it. Only, now it was complicated grief. Guilt and remorse dogged me. Every single thing I’d ever done or left undone or done “wrong” since I was five years old roared up into my face and stoned me and beat me and broke my heart.

Last Thursday, in counseling, I realized I was now the one doing the shaming and blaming that used to come to me from the outside. I was judge, executioner, and victim all at once. Life imprisonment, torture---no punishment seemed great enough for my sin.

Then I went to the Maundy Thursday service. As I listened to the Bible readings of Jesus' last supper, betrayal, and trial, it dawned on me—I’d lost sight of the cross! Jesus had already served a life sentence on a penal colony called earth. He’d already accepted the torture and the death penalty. My sins, which were many, were nailed to the cross forever.

The next day, I took part in the community Good Friday service. I was asked to pray the dramatic Prayer of Lament that ended in tears at the foot of our small cross, nothing like the horrible instrument of torture that had killed my God.
Sabbath, I did my own little memorial service for my mother, in the woods she loved so much. I hung a birdhouse she’d made, sang one of the 200+ songs she wrote, and scattered some of her ashes. I cried. I told God I knew my sins were all burned up like those ashes, and that I would let the burden go and give God my sins and my remorse and guilt with them.

Sunday morning, the clouds were heavy. You couldn’t see if the sun had risen or not. But the Son did—with healing in His wings. And I rose with Him in newness of life. My grief is pure grief now. It still hurts. But, because He lives, Les and Mama will, too. And every day is one day closer.

I still have work to do—work God created me for—and God can make me strong to do it. I can be touched by sorrow and loss, I can weep, I can be broken. But I can’t be chained down by the demons of guilt and shame. They have no power here. The tears can run clear.

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!!
For the next few months, *Adventist Today* will be featuring an interesting new book by Dr. Ervin K. Thomsen, proposing a very different way of looking at one of our Adventist marker Bible passages—the three angels’ messages in Revelation 14. The main focus of his ministry on the three angels’ messages is that "the best protection against the beast is the genuine worship of the Lamb." We will be posting one chapter per week, beginning with the title page and contents, just to whet your appetite!

Educated in Denmark and England, Dr. Thomsen has been a pastor since 1967, leading churches in Michigan, Arizona, California, and Texas. He received his D. Min. degree from Andrews University in 1977.

AT asked Dr. Thomsen to explain for himself what his interest is in the three angels’ messages, and why he wrote a new book about them.

I have had a particular interest in the three angels’ messages for many years. Many Adventists see the three angels’ messages as heaven’s accreditation for the existence of the Adventist Church in the last days, but I also see these messages as God’s medicine for our own lives so we can become spiritually healthy individuals and congregations who contagiously attract and retain people for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because I have spent about 30 years in proximity to Adventist healthcare institutions, I have always been intrigued with Adventist healthcare, and I have often wondered, why could we not copy some of the best practices of hospitals in our own churches? You can read about it at this link – “A comparison between hospitals and churches.” (read page 2 of this brochure).

http://streamofhealing.org/mss/Revival+Reformation-Brochure-II.pdf

About 15 years ago, an Adventist physician in my local church commented that “doctrine is just like medicine; in the right dosage it can do a great deal for the patient, but in the wrong dosage and given for the wrong reasons, it can injure and even kill the patient.” That remark became a turning point in my practice of ministry, because I realized that far too many of us had dispensed doctrine as if it were the cure-all for people’s problems. Of course, we don’t want to dispense with doctrine any more than a physician would say that anatomy and physiology no longer matter, but our primary concern would be to bring healing to the patient. No physician would assign reading in the JAMA to his patients. Our primary mission as a church is not to build people’s faith in correct doctrine, but to connect them with the Great Physician, Jesus Christ.

The best and most effective evangelism is still the one-on-one approach as we mentor others into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.
At the present time Ervin Thomsen is the speaker for Healing Stream Ministries (http://streamofhealing.org). He has taken “The Victory over the Beast” seminars to numerous churches, conventions, camp meetings for the past nine years, including a camp meeting in New Zealand in 2008.
Victory over the Beast Contents

Submitted: Apr 3, 2013
By Ervin Thomsen

Here is a sampling of what we have coming up, as we go through this (possibly new) way of looking at the three angels' messages, as found in Dr Ervin Thomsen's book, *The Victory over the Beast*. All future chapters will contain a link back to this list so you can see where we are in the lineup. Happy studying!

The Victory over the Beast

Revival and Reformation through the Three Angels’ Messages

by
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God’s Blogs: Insights from His Site -- Reviewed by Debbonnaire Kovacs

Author: Larry Donoho  
Multnomah, 2005  
Review by Debbonnaire Kovacs

Some of my best finds are at garage sales and thrift stores, and this book is no exception. Speaking as an author, I find it depressing when great books end up in places like these; however, it does give more people a chance to benefit from the author’s work. In the case of God’s Blogs, the benefit is enormous; at least it is for me. It seems (from some back matter and ads) that the book is mostly meant for youth and/or young adults, but I’ve read the book through three times so far and sometimes dig into it in bits, looking for something to cheer me up, or for comfort for some spot I’m in.

First of all, it’s important to point out that on the front cover, up in the left-hand corner (at least of my paperback version), is the essential word, “imagine. . .” Some people might have a hard time with the idea of an author, especially a humorous one, being audacious enough to claim to speak for God. In his “Non-disclaimer,” Donoho acknowledges this fact and says, “Everybody has their ideas of what God might want to say to them. These are mine.” (All emphasis in this review is found in the original. Donoho makes good use of emphasis, from italics, bold, and underlining to different fonts and sizes, not to mention added jots, notes, squiggles, and artwork.)

A few pages later, in “the blog before the blogs,” Donoho puts these words into God’s mouth: “I’ll use a human to write these. Of course, using a human means he might misinterpret some of My thoughts or use some of his own to say what he thinks I AM thinking, but it’ll be a fun thing watching people read and respond.”

But we’re getting ahead of ourselves. Every page of this book is fun, even the copyright page. It says things like “Author created by God with help from Orville and Clara Donoho in 1953,” and “ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ALL WRONGS FORGIVEN.”
The "blog profile page" continues the quirky but insightful thoughts. Donoho has God list “Things I created that I really like: wind, smiles, water, light” and lots more, then adds, “Oh... and I really like how I made you. You are different and wonderfully unique, and I created you that way in your mother’s belly. I consider each of you My masterpiece.”

There are several pages of this sort of thing, evoking both laughter and thoughtfulness, before we arrive at the contents page, and Donoho has made even that interesting. It looks like one of little Billy’s meandering adventures in the Family Circle ® cartoons, with “You are Here” and “If you make it to here, call someone and tell ‘em to go buy this book,” and other little oddities, along with a map reminiscent of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites, or possibly of an old fantasy novel.

All this before even entering the Blogs proper. Quite simply, in my opinion they are amazing. There are some that are meant purely for fun, such as ones on Bubbles or Snow, intended to remind us that God created variety because God likes variety.

Even the just-for-fun blogs usually contain some important insight, and many entries deal with more serious territory, such as death, creation, and evil. Here are two representative quotes:

“No Ordinary People
“I made everyone.
“And“
I love every single individual, eccentric, weird, selfish, greedy, loving, lying, wonderful, selfless, pushy, manipulative, wining, bragging, talented, lazy, serving, rich, poor, homeless, sick, influential, last one of you.
“I love them all so much that I sent My Son to die for each one of them.

“How do you get this?”

“Forgiveness:
“You need to see those who annoy you, who mistreat you, who get on your nerves...as My children.
“Don’t get me wrong. I don’t want you to be mistreated or hurt, nor do I want you to stay near those who might be putting you in danger. Lots of My kids need help, but they are still My children.
“Together we will hate what they do to you. I will hold on to you during those times they treat you poorly, and I will listen as you talk to Me or pray to Me for them (your abusers...My children) and we will both love them..."

The book is also scattered with short entries Donoho calls “blogjots.” Here is one:

“Someone is needing encouragements and apologies—
needing them like air and water.

Close this book and call a friend.”

There are a few entries I have permanently dog-eared so I can find them when I need them. I’ll close with one of my favorites—a complete entry, called “Bubbles Too.” Notice that the date is three years after the book’s publication date. Donoho makes several references throughout to the fact that God is outside of time and can see all times at once, so the dates “might throw some of you off balance.”

“April 12, 2007

“Bubbles are thin layers of film made of liquid and soap that hold pockets of air. All the air inside the bubble is separated from all the rest of the air outside the film. Most of you know all that. As I mentioned in a previous post, it’s pretty natural to want to burst a bubble when you see it.

“There is one that I would like to burst. I have a strong desire for My children, the ones who love Me and claim Me as their father, to be who I made them to be and to relate well in a culture that doesn’t yet know Me.

“Some, however; have chosen to build a wall or a bubble around themselves to keep them away from the culture. [There is a graphic here of a person floating in a bubble.] They focus inward and tragically don’t want outsiders in there with them. It seems kinda silly to Me when I see anger and rejection flare up inside your bubble because some of your artists decide to perform or write for the folks outside of your bubble.

“Here is a thought. . .

“Artists who are Christians have a better shot at changing the world than ‘Christian artists.’

“You now have your own Christian stores and books and singers and mints. You have created your own clothing and music and lingo, and you have isolated the rest of the world.

“You have built a bubble around yourselves and used insider thoughts to try to influence outsiders. . .and they aren’t getting it. As a matter of fact, they see your bubble and your actions inside that bubble and they hear your words and they are choosing to not get in there with you. And that is a wise choice. I didn’t send My Son to die so you could form a club and dance at your own recital. I did it so all people could see Me and experience Me and understand forgiveness and grace and mercy and love, and so everyone would dance at My recital. . .and so I could dance at everyone else’s.

“The world has become dark, and bubbles can’t be seen in the dark. Sometimes I want to take a God-sized pin and burst your bubbles

“and hand you all a light instead.”