Adventist Doctor Said He Will Decide about Run for U.S. President by May 1: In a lengthy interview, SDA Republican Dr. Ben Carson appears poised to run for the US presidency....

Abuse of Aboriginal Children at Adventist Mission in Mid 20th Century Reported: Evidence of warehousing and abuse of Australian native students came into focus this week, allegedly perpetrated at an Adventist mission school operated in Far North Queensland. Redress is sought....

Adventist News Agency in Europe Celebrates 40 Years of Serving Secular Media: During the 1970s the Adventist Church took major initiatives to establish its identity in the public eye. Changing times have diminished that focus, but anniversaries provide a chance to revisit those successes....
Ellen White Included in Smithsonian's "100 Most Significant Americans": How has a 19th-century mystic named Ellen G. White managed to find her place 100 years after her death as one of the 100 most significant Americans of all time?...

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Book Release: Questions and Answers About Women's Ordination: A brand new book (reviewed by Cindy Tutsch) looks at most-asked questions and provides thoughtful answers about women's ordination, as the Church prepares to discuss the issue formally next July in San Antonio....

As Proof Crumbles: How should we contend with the reality that for better than 150 years Adventists have proclaimed the "imminent return" of Christ, in glory, even as overall world conditions and other portents seem comparatively mild, compared to the holocausts of the 1900s? Andy Hanson writes....

Peace, Joy, Power (DEVOTIONAL): The Advent season, now in its second week, proclaims "The Advent is Peace." These lyrics by the late Corienne Hay fit the season well....
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The Four Agreements (VISUAL): Ancient Toltec artifacts inspire this painting by Dan Cope, based on the theme "The Four Agreements," a book by Don Miguel Ruiz....

From the Wilderness of Africa to Adventism, by Way of the Internet (PROSE): Simon Kahoko Mureu continues his memoir essay about his journey "from the wilderness of Africa to Adventism."...

NEW WEBSITE ANNOUNCEMENT

Welcome to the new Adventist Today web site! There are 3 important items you need to know:

First, you no longer have to "log in" to post comments! You simply must supply your name and email address when you post a comment.

Second, for a few weeks, while we put the finishing touches on the new site, you will have access to all content without having to log in. We are in the process of transferring all the subscriber accounts to the new site. Once that is done, we will send our subscribers a link to create a new password and a significant part of our content will be available only to subscribers.

Third, as of December 1, all new Adventist Today content is being posted only on the new site. Content posted previous to December 1 will remain on the www.atodayarchive.org site and comments can still be posted with those articles. When transfer of the archives is
completed, a notice will be posted on both the old and new sites and subscribers will receive an email. In the future the archives will only be available to subscribers.

We thank you for your patience as we move into the final stages of this transition. If you have any questions or suggestions, please let me know. You can send me an email at atoday@atoday.org if you put "Executive Director" in the subject line. Or you can phone (503) 826-8600 and leave a message for me.

Monte Sahlin  
Executive Director  
Adventist Today Foundation

Contact:  Adventist Today  
PO Box 1135  
Sandy, Oregon 97055-1135  
atoday@atoday.org
Monte Sahlin

By AT News Team, December 4, 2014:  Dr. Benjamin Carson, recently retired chief of pediatric brain surgery at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and an active member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, told the Cable News Network (CNN) on Wednesday (December 3) that he would make a decision about running for president of the United States by May 1, 2015. If he does so it will be the first time an Adventist has been a candidate for the nation’s top position.

He has launched an exploratory organization, he stated. He is making campaign appearances in states with early primary elections. He was invited by CNN to do the lengthy interview yesterday because a new poll of Republican Party members ranked him second among 16 top figures considered to be possible candidates.

Mitt Romney who ran as the Republican candidate for president in the last election and lost, but remains a popular figure among conservatives, got 20 percent support with Carson getting the support of 10 percent of the respondents. When Romney’s name was removed from a follow-up question (because he has stated that he will not run again), the top spot went to Jeb Bush, former governor of the state of Florida and the son and brother of two former presidents. Carson still came in with the support of 11 percent of the respondents compared to Bush’s 14 percent.

In the interview with CNN’s Wolf Blitzer, Carson refused to withdraw or modify his controversial comparison of the current political situation in the U.S. to Nazi Germany. Carson made the comparison in March during an interview the very conservative online news service Breitbart.com and has been criticized for it. He said that “we now live in a society where people are afraid to say what they actually believe” and that the Nazi regime of the 1930s was “using its tools to intimidate the population.” Along with many other conservative spokespersons, Carson has criticized “politically correct” expressions and ideas in defense of some of his blunt comments on controversial issues. He again referred to the government “using instruments of government, like the IRS, to punish its opponents.” This refers to widely publicized charges that the tax collection agency of the U.S. government refused to give tax-exempt status as a charity to several conservative public policy and educational organizations.

Carson was also asked about his statement that a government health care program widely labeled “Obamacare” because it was introduced the current U.S. president, Barack Obama, was the “worst thing” that’s happened in the U.S. “since slavery.” When he was asked if the health care reform law was really worse than various crises that have gripped the nation, such as the Great Depression, Carson said that “not the point. The point of what I’m saying … is a major fundamental shift of power has occurred,” from the people to the government, and “if we continue down that road the United States of America becomes something very different than it was intended to be.”

The U.S. is the only developed country on the globe that does not have a national health care program which provides for all citizens. The law adopted four years ago is designed to take steps to remedy that lack and has been strongly opposed by the most politically conservative Americans. Carson’s unapologetic, outspoken style has contributed to his popularity among Republican Party members.

Carson stated that conservative options to the new law are described on the web site www.SaveOurHealthCare.com implying that he prefers these alternative policies. When Adventist Today searched the web site, no alternative programs could be found among the documents; only critiques of the new law. Sources have told Adventist Today that what Carson supports is an approach that combines private charity and a major emphasis on preventive health education, concepts that Adventists have long promoted in the U.S. and many places around the world.
The poll was conducted for CNN by ORC using standard survey research techniques. It included a sample of 1,045 telephone interviews on November 21 through 23. The standard allowance for sampling error in a survey of this size is three percentage points, plus or minus.
Abuse of Aboriginal Children at Adventist Mission in Mid 20th Century Reported

Monte Sahlin

By AT News Team, December 5, 2014: A public broadcasting service in Australia published a story on Wednesday (December 3) reporting the abuse of children at the Mona Mona Mission some seven or eight decades ago. The mission was located in Far North Queensland on a peninsula that reaches from Australia toward New Guinea. It started in 1913 with the goal of reaching the aboriginal people in the area, according to the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia. The Aborigines are the native peoples of Australia who were present when the first settlers arrived from England.

Mona Mona was one of 14 missions operated by various Christian denominations in collaboration with the government of the State of Queensland. The children of Aborigines were taken from their families at an early age in placed in dormitories at the mission stations where they were educated. These children are now senior citizens, many in their 80s. They recall the loneliness of being separated from their parents, harsh conditions in the dorms and instances of physical and sexual abuse.

Mona Mona Mission was closed in 1962. “A large-scale state government inquiry into the treatment of children in [these] institutions in Queensland, known as the Forde Inquiry, found wide-scale allegations of abuse,” the report published this week by Australia’s Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) states. “This led to thousands of claimants receiving compensation from the state from 2007 to 2010.”

The claimants from the church-run missions were left out of this compensation because the missions were “unlicensed” despite the funding they had from local government. Earlier this year a law firm in the city of Cairns filed a petition on behalf of more than 70 of these senior citizens with the Australian Human Rights Commission which has resulted in compensation, but some of the seniors “believe that the Seventh Day Adventist Church should be held accountable” as well, the SBS reported.

The report states that Judy Enoch is an Adventist who has been lobbying the denomination’s administrators in Australia “to officially recognize what happened at Mona Mona. She says that while the Adventist Church issued a general apology a few years ago to Aboriginal people for any wrongs that had been done in the past, it’s still not enough.”

Enoch is quoted in the report, “There has been no attempt made by the Church to come and hear their stories. The elders are being let down by the Church.” She told the SBS that the senior citizens who were children at the Mona Mona Mission “are now set on pursuing legal action against the Seventh Day Adventist Church for the mistreatment they suffered at the mission.”

The SBS report also quotes a representative from the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in Australia. “We are very concerned about any allegations of misconduct in the past and welcome the opportunity to dialogue with anyone who may have concerns that have not been addressed.”

The SBS report includes stories from several senior citizens in the local aboriginal community near Mona Mona. They tell of being housed in dormitories without sufficient heat and going hungry from lack of food, as well as being locked in for 12 hours a night and jailed for up to three weeks at a time if they ran away to see their families. One man states that he was sexually abused by older aboriginal children at the Mona Mona Mission.

There is nothing unique about the Adventist involvement in this story. The concept that native children should be separated from their families and “civilized” in mission schools was widely practiced throughout the 19th and 20th
centuries in many places around the world. It has left a bitter legacy which Christian leaders in several denominations now regret and has led to financial compensation plans in several countries, including the United States and Canada as well as Australia.
Adventist News Agency in Europe Celebrates 40 Years of Serving Secular Media

Monte Sahlin

From News Release, December 4, 2014:  APD, the Adventist Press Service or Adventistischer Pressedienst in German, celebrates 40 years of serving the secular news media, the ecclesiastical press and other public information institutions, including the print, broadcast and online media. Based in Basel, Switzerland, the agency was founded in 1974 at the initiative of journalist Christian B. Schaeffler.

In 2004 APD was reorganized and repositioned from a German language church press service to a news agency and has become an integral part of the European media world. It delivers the latest news, in-depth reports, commentaries and documentation from the Christian world. In addition to church internal developments, reports on topics such as international development assistance, human rights and religious liberty, church-state relationships and ecumenism are regular themes.

APD utilizes professional journalistic standards of objective and comprehensive reporting. Adventist Today regularly publishes stories from APD.

Although the agency is an integral part of the Adventist communication structure in Switzerland, the agency operates entirely independently of the denomination’s leadership. It provides independent reporting and operates independently of any denominational self-interest.

APD reports are disseminated electronically and also published on the Internet via the Web site www.stanet.ch/apd. It carries stories in English from time to time which are almost always published by Adventist Today.

For some 30 years APD releases have also been published as a monthly summary APD Information (ISSN 1423-9590). In addition to the media, this print edition is sent to archives, libraries, research centers and individual subscribers.

From 1974 to 2003 Schaeffler managed the communication and inter-church relations of the Seventh-day Adventist congregations in the German-speaking region of Switzerland. In this capacity he founded APD. He continued as its director and chief editor until 2010. Schaeffler was also instrumental in setting up the French Adventist Press Service (BIA or Bulletin d’information Adventiste) in 1982 and the APD Germany in 1984. Since 1992, APD Switzerland and APD Germany have worked collaboratively.

“APD is an excellent example of why the ministry of journalism is important to the cause of Christ in the world," reflected Monte Sahlin, executive director of Adventist Today. “There is a need for more Adventists who are professional journalists to join in similar efforts. The Adventist Today Foundation seeks to facilitate any who are interested in initiating similar projects to APD.”
Ellen White Included in Smithsonian’s “100 Most Significant Americans”

Monte Sahlin

By AT News Team, December 1, 2014:  A special issue of a widely respect history journal has included Ellen G. White, the most important of the cofounders of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, among what it calls the “100 most significant Americans.” She is one of only 11 religious figures included on the list of whom just three are women.

The Smithsonian Institution is an agency of the United States government that is responsible for the major museums in the nation's capital region. It publishes The Smithsonian Magazine, a widely-read journal of American history and culture. The most recent issue is a special edition with concise descriptions of “The 100 Most Significant Americans.”

The other two women included with White in the section on the most influential American religious figures are Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science religion, and Anne Hutchinson, who was a religious dissenter among the Puritans who founded Massachusetts. Hutchinson was an early advocate of a grace-oriented Christian faith and helped to establish the principle of religious liberty in America.

The eight men who round out the most significant American religious figures include Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, founders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or Mormon religion; and Jonathan Edwards and Cotton Mather, the two most noted preachers in the Congregationalist movement that early on shaped much of American Protestant faith. Also included are William Penn, the Quaker leader who founded Pennsylvania on principles of religious freedom; Roger Williams, an early Baptist leader who also played a key role in establishing American principles of religious liberty; L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the quite recent Scientology religion; and Billy Graham, the key leader of the contemporary Evangelical movement in the U.S.

There are ten other categories on the list of 100, each with about ten individuals named and described. “Trailblazers” includes early explorers like Christopher Columbus and Neil Armstrong, the American astronaut who was the first human to step on the Moon. “Rebels and Resisters” includes Martin Luther King, the organizer of the Civil Right Movement that brought full citizenship to African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s; and John Brown, an anti-slavery activist who played a violent role the led to the American Civil War of the 1860s.

Among the ten other categories are also a section for the most important U.S. Presidents, the first women to lead in many sectors, Outlaws, Artists, Pop Icons and Athletes. The section entitled “Empire Builders” includes famous achievers in technology and business such as the inventor Thomas Edison, leading industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie and Steve Jobs, who started the Apple computer company and did much to pave the way for today’s Internet applications.

White was a prolific writer and her books have been distributed by the millions around the world. She built the modern Adventist movement and is widely respected for her spiritual gifts of prophetic vision and leadership over a career that spanned the second half of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century. A collection of scholarly papers on her life, ministry and role in Christianity was published early this year by Oxford University Press. One source has
suggested to Adventist Today that the publication may have been influential with the decision-makers at the Smithsonian.

A copy of the special issue of the Smithsonian journal can be ordered at this Web page:
www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonianmag/meet-100-most-significant-americans-all-time-180953341
/#4HY7Tf13phRXuHJp.99
Adventists in Name Only?

by Mark Gutman, November 30, 2014:

Liberal Republicans have often been termed RINO's by more conservative Republicans. RINO (pronounced "Rhino") stands for Republican in Name Only, and the name caller is usually accusing the alleged RINO of failing to hold the party line in a key area. "If a Republican doesn't sign Grover Norquist's anti-tax pledge, or oppose abortion under all circumstances, or claim that evolution is a myth and global warming a hoax, he or she likely will be tagged as a RINO, or worse yet, as a moderate."1

Some Adventists tend to regard other Adventists as AINO's – Adventists in Name Only. As with politics, so in religion. Some who are more conservative don't want those who are more liberal being grouped with them. "If I can’t do that, it's off limits for all church members." "I don't believe that, so you shouldn’t either." What would be the standard for deciding if someone is an AINO?2

The 28 Fundamental Beliefs would surely be a good starting point for a measuring rod. But not every Adventist sitting in a pew (or no longer sitting in a pew) agrees with all 28. How many of the 28 must one agree with in order to be considered a genuine Adventist? Having a problem with 1 out of 28 may raise the hackles of those who keep score. Even as Republicans who are much more Republican than Democrat get called RINO, so Adventists who are much more Adventist than Presbyterian or unchurched sometimes get classed as AINO's. Alden Thompson points out that some want to make every doctrine crucial to Adventism.3 To miss one means you're not an Adventist. On the other end, some don't want to make any doctrine crucial, but may at least agree that the Sabbath and the second advent are important.

Perhaps someone agrees with all 28, but takes issue with parts of a few of the 28. The Church Manual does not allow disfellowshipping a member for not attending church (part of #11) or not paying tithe (part of #21). Many members either do not understand or openly disagree with at least a couple aspects of the sanctuary doctrine (#24). Yet they remain members of the church, even if that distresses some.

How certain does one need to be of each of the 28 to be on safe ground? Most members who agree with all 28 beliefs are not 100% certain about all of them. On the crucial doctrines, what % of certainty is sufficient? 90%? 51%? Human beings vary in their moods. Member Smith believed belief #__ 90% yesterday, but has a stomachache today and his certainty has dropped to 60%. Tomorrow all's well, and Smith is back in church, and the 60% has rebounded to 95%. (Your companions will affect your beliefs and doubts.)

Statements of the Fundamental Beliefs are useful, but as a tool for deciding who is a "real" Adventist, they have their limitations. Which beliefs are critical? How much of each doctrine must be accepted? What % of certainty is required?

So far in this discussion, the judging has been focused on something printed in a book as the criterion. When explaining to the "expert in the law," Jesus didn't mention any "doctrine" that would be in that type of test.4 He told a story about a compassionate person who probably would have failed the test that the expert in the law had in mind. A kind person who would have failed a test on the 28 fundamental beliefs. Jesus, though, recommended the caring "heretic" (Samaritan) as an example. Sometimes, looking at a beliefs book can lead us to overlook plain old real-life Christianity.

I heard about a lady who was furious when the Adventist church of which she was a member showed kind treatment to gays. She was ready to pull her membership from that church and move it to another place that would be more fundamental, more "Adventist," more "Christian." Her berating others who differed from her and her insistence on unfriendly treatment of such people does not qualify as heresy. She hasn't denied any fundamental belief. Her membership is not in danger. What a person thinks about belief #__ tends to engender more concern than how...
Christlike the person is.

Jesus gave a rule by which others would know that we were his followers. Here's how: that we love each other, as demonstrated by Jesus and by the compassionate Samaritan. He said that love is the best Christian ID card. Sometimes in our eagerness to judge others, we forget about what Jesus said mattered most. The fact that we're Adventists doesn't mean that we have something that superseded what Jesus taught, that now it's all right to be harsh with others. As Barbara Brown Taylor put it, "What I noticed at [where she used to pastor] is the same thing I notice whenever people aim to solve their conflicts with one another by turning to the Bible: defending the dried ink marks on the page becomes more vital than defending the neighbor. As a general rule, I would say that human beings never behave more badly toward one another than when they believe they are protecting God."

If people do not know what denomination we belong to, will they be attracted to ours on the basis of how we treat those who don't see things our way? Church members who are cruel to others can lead out in the church, while members who mimic the Good Samaritan can get booted from the church because they are considered to be AINO's. They, like the kindhearted Samaritan, may act Christlike but fail to get a good enough grade on the fundamental beliefs test to be allowed membership.

In our local church, we can stand for something. We don't have to let people who openly disagree with important church doctrines (however we rank them) promote their disagreement from the pulpit or a Sabbath School teacher's position. But would it hurt to let the people who are not entirely orthodox (according to us) enjoy our fellowship and ask their questions? We don't help our cause by only allowing those who agree with us to be heard in the church. Most readers of this column have read many times the Ellen White quote that combines the words "as real spiritual life declines" with "[t]hey become conservative and seek to avoid discussion." We can be fairly certain in our belief without being unkind (unchristian) to those who disagree.

The early Christian church had its disagreements. Paul didn't see things exactly the way Peter did. Paul even scolded Peter in public. The fact that Paul and Peter had their differences didn't mean that Paul considered Peter a CINO (Christian in name only). Neither tried to stop the other's ministry. One individual from a particular set of circumstances and teachers cannot fairly impose her moral judgment on someone else's theology or actions. "Religious people are notorious for confusing acceptance with agreement. When that happens, people assume that disagreement must result in rejection and condemnation. . . ."

I may disagree with you on certain doctrines, but making it plain that I want nothing to do with you (and that I'm superior to you) because of those differences will mainly teach you that I have a hard time accepting people who don't agree with me. By keeping you at arm's length, I will cost myself any chance of winning you by my actions or by my words. Placing a label of AINO on you will make it harder for the two of us to enjoy Christian fellowship.

Outwitted

He drew a circle that shut me out–

Heretic, a rebel, a thing to flout.

But Love and I had the wit to win:

We drew a circle that took him in!

Edwin Markham
1 See column by Geoffrey Kabaservice at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/geoffrey-kabaservice/conservatives-not-republican_b_1236972.html

2 I don’t know how AINO would be pronounced. If it’s pronounced as “I know,” it should remind the labeler that we actually know very little about the people we label.

3 See the last section, A Model for the Church, in the article “Must we agree?” from Ministry, Feb 1988. https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1988/02/must-we-agree

4 Luke 10:25-37

5 John 13:35


7 Counsels to Writers and Editors, p. 39.

8 Galatians 2:11

Visitor Staff: When did the Seventh-day Adventist church start having women pastors? Is it a new practice?

Cindy Tutsch: Since the early years of our movement, women were involved in evangelism and many other facets of ministry—serving as conference secretaries, treasurers, departmental leaders and even in management of churches. During the lifetime of Ellen White, 31 women were licensed credentialed ministers, and served as church planters, evangelists, as well as in the type of work that we would call pastoring today.

Is it possible to still have unity in the church, even if different divisions decide differently on women’s ordination? How so?

Throughout Adventist history, we have often faced theological and ecclesiastical issues that have caused differences among us. Despite vigorous debate at times, we have remained united as one body under Christ pursuing our unique God-given mission.

Ellen White has counsel that could be instructive in answering this question: “We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light “Love, the Need of the Church,” Manuscript Releases, Vol. 11, p. 266).

She also wrote, “The connection of the branches with one another and with the Vine constitutes them a unity, but this does not mean uniformity in everything. Unity in diversity is a principle that pervades the whole creation” (Review and Herald, Nov. 9, 1897).

Fundamental Belief No. 14 on “Unity in the Body of Christ” states: “Distinctions of race, culture, learning, nationality and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another. We are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.”

On the basis of this fundamental belief, the General Conference has established policies regulating responsibilities within the church, including employment practices recognizing women in leadership roles (see GC Working Policy BA-60). These policies reflect our convictions on the doctrine of spiritual gifts: that the Holy Spirit calls both men and women to service and that all spiritual gifts are gender inclusive (1 Cor. 12:11; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-21). The church has taken action to allow for the ordination of deaconesses and female elders and the commissioning of female pastors.
Although these church policies and practices are implemented differently throughout the world, the church has remained a unified, worldwide organization pressing together in mission and message. Thus, there is no historical indication that ordaining women in places where it would promote kingdom work and not ordaining them in other places would fracture the church.

What surprised you most when you were researching for this book?

I was especially surprised by two things:

- Ellen White affirms “unity in diversity” many times.
- Male headship theories did not exist in our church until they were imported in recent years from evangelical writers who opposed women’s ordination.

How does having women in pastoral and elder roles impact our churches?

Women, as men, are varied in the gifts and talents they bring to the pastoral role. Some are strong administrators, some are particularly gifted in preaching, others serve exceptionally as evangelists. Today, in a world of abuse, exploitation and abandonment, our churches benefit greatly from dedicated women in ministry who can nurture, counsel and comfort. An affirmation of God’s calling on women, as well as men, will strengthen and grow His church by using the talents of all.

The question that Annual Council recommends be taken to the 2015 GC Session is whether to allow divisions to decide whom to ordain in their territories. How would the answer to this question impact our church?

I believe a “yes” vote would best allow our church to remain united though we differ in our understanding of this topic. Those areas that choose to ordain women may be benefited by their ministry. Those who do not ordain will be glad that their convictions or culture has not been disregarded. The church as a prophetic movement can focus more on its mission to propagate the messages of the three angels and the righteousness of Christ.

I believe that a “no” vote would unnecessarily fracture our church. Many young people would be disillusioned by what they may see as a failure of the church to recognize God’s calling as more important than human prejudice or interpretation and would vote “with their feet.” Some entities would continue the practice of women’s ordination because of their constituents’ personal convictions that biblical principles of justice and equality trump human legislation. The debate and controversy would continue to distract and pull away from Jesus’ commission to spread the gospel, and we may “wander in the wilderness” many more years.

Why do you personally support women’s ordination?

I believe understanding the inclusive character of our God is part of “present truth” for this time of Earth’s history. From my study of the Bible and Ellen White’s writings, I have come to realize that it is essential to allow the Holy Spirit to anoint whom He will for the task to which He calls. How can puny humanity limit or prescribe who the God of the universe may call?

This interview was originally published in the online Columbia Union Visitor and has been reprinted with their
Webeditor

by Andy Hanson, December 4, 2014: “Like Moses, let’s cry to the Lord to use us in these last days of earth’s history as society crumbles, as moral belief disappears, and the social fabric disintegrates.” (1)

I was born in 1942, and I have been regaled almost from birth with this “proof” that “we are living in the last days of this world’s history.” Ted Wilson is echoing this Adventist mantra at a time when terrible things are happening in the world. But seventy years ago, things were unimaginably worse,* and there was a far better reason to anticipate the apocalypse.

“Until the period in which we live, no such universal conflict among the nations of earth had ever been waged since these and other similar prophesies were penned. But they have been literally fulfilled in World War I and the present world conflict. We should not fail to perceive the message that this mighty conflict bears to us. That message is that the day of the Lord is near. The feet of iron and clay of the image of Daniel 2 are crumbling. The world is sinking to its doom, and the Lord is about to make His second personal appearance—this time to destroy sin and sinners out of the earth and to set up His eternal kingdom and reign forever. This sign is the exact fulfillment of the prophecies, and its potent message can be rejected or disregarded only at the peril of the soul…Yes, Jesus is coming. There is no escaping this great and glorious truth, and His coming is not to be in the distant future but soon, very, very soon.” (2)

If it were up to me, I’d insist that the Lord come in the next five minutes. There is certainly enough evil around to warrant a change in leadership. However, I would argue that things have been far worse, and that, as bad as things are today, our present world is a relatively peaceful place. Consider the following:

DEATHS ATTRIBUTED TO WORLD WAR II (3)

Deaths by Country

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<th>Military Deaths</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5,533,000</td>
<td>6,600,000-8,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>20,000-35,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>580,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>87,000</td>
<td>1,500,000-2,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>301,400</td>
<td>457,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2,120,000</td>
<td>2,600,000-3,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>378,000-473,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>227,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>–</td>
<td>353,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>11,900</td>
<td>11,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>9,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>57,000</td>
<td>500,000-1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>240,000</td>
<td>5,600,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumania</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>833,000</td>
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<td>Singapore</td>
<td>–</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>11,900</td>
<td>11,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td>8,800,000-10,700,000</td>
<td>24,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>383,600</td>
<td>450,700</td>
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United States  416,800  418,500
Yugoslavia  446,000  1,000,000

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Battle Deaths</td>
<td>15,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Battle Wounded</td>
<td>25,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Deaths</td>
<td>45,000,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*World-wide casualty estimates vary widely in several sources. The number of civilian deaths in China alone might well be more than 50,000,000.

Lizzie Collingham’s book, *The Taste of War*, adds to the war’s documented horror. What follows are excerpts from Laurence M. Vance’s review. (4)

The chilling accounts in *The Taste of War* about Axis food policies come as no surprise: [Herbert Backe] argued that the Wehrmacht could be fed by diverting Ukrainian grain from Soviet cities. This would solve the problem of feeding a vast army while conveniently eliminating the Soviet urban population, who would starve to death.

During the Second World War, the National Socialists would argue that the need to secure a minimum food ration of 2,300 calories per day for ordinary Germans justified the extermination of 30 million urban Soviets, over 1 million Soviet prisoners of war, and at least as many Polish Jews.

The majority of the 100,000 Jews who died in the Warsaw ghetto succumbed to starvation. A proportion of the 200,000 mentally ill victims of Germany’s euthanasia programme and 2.35 million Soviet prisoners of war were all given so little food that they were slowly but systematically starved to death.

Although the National Socialists were at their most ruthless in exporting hunger to the Soviet Union and Poland, the plunder of foodstuffs from other occupied countries resulted in a famine which killed 500,000 in Greece, increased death and infant mortality rates and spread malnutrition, particularly among children, in Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, Belgium and Holland. During the Hunger Winter of 1944-45, 22,000 Dutch succumbed to starvation when the Germans cut off supplies to those parts of Holland that the Allies had failed to liberate. Malnutrition and tuberculosis had reached epidemic proportions among children in Czechoslovakia, Greece and Italy.

The relentless extraction of food from China in order to feed the Japanese homeland caused chronic hunger and malnutrition among the Chinese population. It was the Nationalist government’s decision to prioritize the food needs of the army and the bureaucracy over those of the peasantry that made rural famine inevitable, with 2-3 million deaths in the province of Henan alone.

There are no accurate figures for the number of Soviet civilians who died of starvation but it seems safe to estimate that somewhere between 2 and 3 million died of hunger and malnutrition.

Most westerners have never heard of the famine in the Vietnamese region of Tonkin in 1943-44 that probably killed more peasants than all the years of war that followed.

At least 1.5 million Bengalis died during 1943-44, when food scarcity was at its height. Altogether, about 3 million may have died as a result of the famine as epidemics of smallpox, cholera and a particularly nasty strain of malaria that killed those weakened by malnutrition. This was a death toll greater than that for Indians in combat in both the First and Second World Wars, and it overshadows the death toll of 60,000 British civilians killed by aerial bombing.
Meanwhile, in Greece, which was “dependent on the annual import of 450,000 tonnes of American grain for one-third of its food,” Greeks were starving because “the British blockade of occupied Europe cut Greece off from all imports.” Churchill eventually caved under pressure and lifted the blockade, but not until after “20,000 people had already died of starvation.”

I'll admit that these statistics mean very little to civilian populations currently suffering the consequences of war and terrorism, but it seems to me that referencing evil in the world as a predictor of the “imminent” Second Coming (5) eventually desensitizes church members and calls into question other Fundamental Beliefs of the Adventist Church. (6)


5. **Fundamental Belief Number 25** The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Savior’s coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ’s coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times. (*boldface mine*) [http://www.adventistarchives.org/fundamental-beliefs-of-seventh-day-adventists.pdf](http://www.adventistarchives.org/fundamental-beliefs-of-seventh-day-adventists.pdf)

6. While I freely admit using the word “imminent” has impact, it is also true that its overuse in the context of religious belief can be counterproductive. In the *Adventist Review* of November 28, 2013, David Trim, Director of the Office of Archives presented the findings of a *Landmark Survey of In-depth Beliefs*, in which some interesting statistics emerged. “When the [Adventists polled] were asked if they expect the world to end within the next 20 years, just 22 percent of respondents strongly agreed, and 45 percent strongly disagreed.” Mark A. Keller, in his editorial, “Giving Thanks,” in the November 28, 2013, *Adventist Review*, begins with these words: “Today won’t happen again for another 77,000 years, should time last that long.” (“Today” was a day when Thanksgiving Day in the United States coincided with the first full day of Hanukkah, a coincidence that had not occurred since 1888.) [http://www.atodayarchive.org/article/2261/opinion/hanson-andy/imminent-an-adventist-definition](http://www.atodayarchive.org/article/2261/opinion/hanson-andy/imminent-an-adventist-definition)
Peace, Joy, Power

A  atoday.org/peace-joy-power.html

Debbonnaire Kovacs

By Corienne M. Hay, Dec 3, 2014  Note from Debbonnaire: I have injured my hand, and typing is an ordeal. Since Peace is the word for this second week of Advent, I thought I'd share one of my mother's songs about peace. I am unable to determine when this was written, but it was many years ago. May it bless you.

STANZA 1

This old world is full of turmoil and woe;
There is strife and war wherever you go.
But Jesus promised peace within
To those who hide their lives in Him,
And He always keeps His promises, I know.

CHORUS:

Oh there's peace, there's joy, there's power in the early morning hour;
There is strength for all the burdens on life's way.
If you meet God in the morning, when the day is just aborning,
He'll go with you every hour of the day.

STANZA 2

It's a veil of tears we walk in they say;
There is pain and sorrow all along the way.
But Jesus said He'd cast out fears
And gently wipe away all tears;
He can make our joy complete in Him each day.

(CHORUS)

STANZA 3

I don't have the strength to fight life alone.
The old devil sure would claim me for his own!
But with Jesus ever by my side,
And the Holy Spirit as my guide,
God will keep my by the power of His throne.
FINAL CHORUS:

Oh, there's peace, there's joy, there's power in the early morning hour,

There is strength for all the burdens on life's way.

When I meet God in the morning, as the day is just aborning,

He goes with me every hour,

gives me peace and joy and power

all the day!
The Four Agreements

Dan Cope, Dec. 3, 2014  I am a 63-year-old retired carpenter. I have painted all my life; never had lessons, I just love to paint. The interplay of randomly placed colors and shapes intrigues me. I want to use my art to bring some good to this world.

This painting was inspired by *The Four Agreements*, a book by Don Miguel Ruiz, which I read and found to be very inspiring. I have summarized what Ruiz said about the four agreements, which he takes from ancient Toltec spirituality.

The Four Agreements

1. **BE IMPECCABLE WITH YOUR WORD**

Speak with integrity. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the Word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others. Use the power of the Word in the direction of truth and love.

2. **DON’T TAKE ANYTHING PERSONALLY**

Nothing others do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream. When you are immune to the actions and opinions of others, you won’t be the victim of needless suffering.

3. **DON’T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS**

Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness, and drama. With just this one agreement, you can completely transform your life.

4. **ALWAYS DO YOUR BEST**

Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstances, simply do your best and you will avoid self-judgement, self-abuse, and regret.
From the Wilderness of Africa to Adventism, by Way of the Internet, Part 2

Debbonnaire Kovacs

Simon Kahoko Mureu, Dec 3, 2014

One morning in August, 2012, while I was undertaking a research in the Internet, I came to an advertisement. It read: “Want to take Bible studies? IT IS WRITTEN MINISTRY IS HERE TO HELP YOU.” I decided to visit this ministry website, and signed up for the Bible lessons. I enrolled and did lesson one in the Bible Guide studies.

After two days the results were sent to me. I had performed well. I decided to continue with lesson two. I thought it would be better to increase my biblical understanding. Hardly did I know this lesson would be my turning point from Protestant to Adventist.

In the next days I did my lessons slowly and surely, by means of e-mail. The lessons turned to be interesting. I would get in touch with my Bible teacher if need be. This great man of God who had been in Africa in the 1950’s would answer all my questions pleasantly.

In time, I completed all the twenty-six lessons. By now I understood that the Bible program was from the Seventh-day Adventists. When I completed my course my teacher stated that a certificate would be sent to me from the Voice of Prophecy. He sent my diploma through e-mail.

I was very happy and decided to undertake different Bible guides from the Voice of Prophecy. I visited their website and found what they offered. “Focus on prophecy” became very interesting. I did not have money and I had to sell my shares so as to pay. I undertook the 26 lessons in the Focus on Prophecy and the Light of the World, a gospel program. Although these programs are offered free of charge, my online studies cost me because I had to travel more than six kilometers to where internet services were provided, besides having to pay for the services.

By the time I had completed my studies from the Voice of Prophecy related schools, I had started wondering whether to start my own preaching ministry. By now I had stopped writing for some time.

I had started doing Bible guides in the month of August in the year 2011 and completed them on 24 December in the same year. The books of Daniel and Revelation became my favorites. Our family became bereaved and my uncle visited us. He would preach on the dragon and the new earth during the evening but I did not disclose to him about my biblical Studies.

After the New Year 2012, I came to another different ministry which offered discipleship and ministry towards ordination. I enrolled with it, and undertook their studies during the next six months or so.

After receiving my credentials for ministerial duties, I thought I needed more biblical learning. I enrolled with Amazing Facts for their Bible study guides. By now I had started feeling unsettled in the church where I was a member.

Later on I enrolled for a biblical Bible Study program, a long series which is offered online by International Bible Training Ministries. I managed to complete the program up to advanced level 3.

I wish to make it clear that after the month of May 2013, I started to honor the Sabbath day as in Exodus 20:8-11. I continued with my thought of coming up with a preaching ministry.
In the month of September 2012 while I was in prayer, a vision appeared to me. I found myself in a class teaching Bible to a group of both men and women. Then I heard a voice telling me: "You will serve me in a wider ministry."

I then stood up, unbolted the door and in great fear, I moved outside. After thinking for a while, it came to me that it was God who had spoken to me. One week later while still in prayer, the every same voice spoke.

I was getting more restless in the Protestant church. I continued with my Sabbath day secretly. I surrendered to God to do His will and direct me. Before the end of November, the Spirit of God prevailed upon me. It directed me to a Seventh-day Adventist church which is very far from home.

I prayed about this for three days. On the fourth day, Saturday, early in the morning, I took my Bible and traveled to the Adventist church as God had directed me. After the Sabbath school, I introduced myself to a church elder who in turn introduced me to the pastor in charge.

In the middle of the service, the pastor introduced me to the faithful as a God-sent guest. In amazement, they all stood up and welcomed me to be one of them.

The pastor asked me to narrate my story. I did it and thereafter, everybody believed that God is preparing me for a big ministry. This is also my uncle’s understanding since I have met with him.

Many of my friends in my former church have since deserted me. Even the then-pastor refused to answer my greetings. I think they are taking me as another among many lunatics, but the Bible tells us that “you shall learn the truth and the truth shall set you free.” I am thankful to Jesus for the gift I cherish, the gift of salvation.

Since the church has allowed me to train for the chaplaincy, I am endorsed and happily visiting prisons, hospitals and children’s homes. This is a very wonderful ministry to serve in.

This story brings the scripture to light when the great teacher taught in the book of Ecclesiastes 9:10: “Whatever you do, do it with your might for in the grave where you are going, there is neither work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom” NIV.

I am surrendered to the will of God and through the guidance of the Holy I embark in the way He would wish me to follow, whether through the ministry of internet or otherwise.

Many young members of my church, though still very amazed, have agreed to embrace the changes in modern technology. The journey in the wilderness which my uncle started by becoming the first student in Discover Bible course in 1954 is still very healthy after all these years.

In his own words, “I’m at home. I belong here.” At 93 years old, he dreams of a day when Discover Bible Guides would produce scholars here in Africa. As thing are, the journey in the wilderness of Africa ought to be long although internet is doing wonders. Very soon we will be known because of our services to the Lord and not only because of our wild animals. I and other faithful are standing on a strong rock. The long journey continues.