Dear Andrews University,

Starting tomorrow you will get AT Update daily for the next ten days during the General Conference in San Antonio. AT has a team of seven journalists on site covering the events as important decisions are made and other business done.
-- Monte Sahlin, CEO

NEWS

Global Conclave of Adventist Leaders & Representatives Begins Today in San Antonio, Texas
The once-every-five-years top governing body for the Seventh-day Adventist denomination starts a 10-day meeting this afternoon which has potential to be historic. First in a series of stories.

- Black Adventist Church in Tennessee is Part of a Series of Fires Set at Historically African American Churches Last Week
This report has been updated in the last 24 hours. Read it here.

- Adventist Leaders Respond to the U.S. Supreme Court Decision Legalizing Same-sex Marriage The official statement makes two points which make create some tension. Read the report here.
Where has your pastor been this week? If you live in North America, then maybe she or he was at the Pastors Convention in Austin, Texas. More about this significant meeting.

OPINION

On Defining Rebellion: Union Conferences and San Antonio
The debate about extending clergy ordination to women pastors involves some fundamental principles of organization in the Adventist denomination that touch on many other topics. Read an analysis.

What Do the Proposed Changes in the Sanctuary Doctrine Mean? Part of the agenda in San Antonio is the revision of several sections of the denomination's Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. AT has published several opinions about the paragraph on Creation. This is the first on the Sanctuary.

A Dozen Thoughts on the SCOTUS Ruling on Same-sex Marriage
What is a faithful Adventist to think?

FEATURE & THE ARTS

Nothing in My Hands, chapter 7 -- Things are finally looking up for Dianne ... can't help waiting for the next shoe to fall! Read it here.
Devotional: What if *You* were God’s City of Jerusalem? *A thought piece on Psalm 48.*
Global Conclave of Adventist Delegates will Convene in Texas on Thursday

By AT News Team, July 1, 2015: Key leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination have been in San Antonio (Texas) for several days for prep meetings. Hundreds of booths have been set up in the exhibit hall. Perhaps as many as 65,000 people are on their way for the General Conference (GC) Session which begins tomorrow afternoon, according to the San Antonio Express-News.

The GC Session convenes once every five years. It is the constituency meeting for the top level of the complex organization of the largest Adventist denomination. It establishes the doctrines of the denomination, amends its constitution and bylaws, and makes revisions in the Church Manual, the rule book for local congregations. It also appoints the top officers, key staff and policy-making committees of the worldwide organization.

This is the 60th meeting of its kind since the first GC Session in 1863 during the formative years of a denomination that is about 160 years of age now. A total of 2,566 of the people coming to the GC Session are the delegates who will actually participate in the discussions and vote on the items presented. They come from more than 170 countries where the Adventist denomination has established organizations.

The other 62,000 or more people are simply observers who will hear music and preaching, hear the reports and observe the parades from various parts of the world while connecting with old friends and meeting new ones. But they will not participate in the business meetings, although they will be able to see and hear everything that happens in those meetings.

The denomination has four levels of organization as well as thousands of affiliated institutions and charitable agencies. The top level is the GC which has 13 divisions or field offices scattered around the globe, each encompassing a continental region. The level below it is made up of units called “union conferences” and “union missions.” (The difference is whether or not they are financially self-sustaining.) These union conferences are the entities that send the official delegates to the GC Session. Most encompass all of the Adventist members and organizations in a nation, although a few of the largest countries in the world have two or more union conferences covering a region of the nation.

Union conferences consist of a cluster of local conferences, the third level down from the top. The grassroots level consists of the local congregations in communities around the world. Each congregation in the denomination is part of a local conference (or “mission” or “field” or “section” — there are a variety of terms used in various nations) which manages pooled funds, hires the clergy, and administers Adventist schools and community service centers.

Each level of the organization has defined roles and authority. For example, the decision to accept or drop individual members of the denomination is in the hands of local congregations. The hiring and assignment of pastors belongs to the local conferences, while the ordination or commissioning of clergy is under the authority of the union conferences. At the 1901 GC Session major decisions were made delegating authority to the four levels instead of it being entirely in the hands of the GC. This was an historic step in the growth and maturing of the Adventist faith that gives it the flexibility to be one of the most multicultural religions in the world.

There are two kinds of delegates coming to San Antonio. The “regular delegates” are representatives of the union conferences that send them. The “delegates-at-large” include the officers and staff of the GC and its divisions, and representatives of the institutions and agencies that belong to the GC and the divisions.
Quotas defined in the bylaws determine how many delegates each organization gets. The total number of delegates from each division must be at least individuals who are either pastors or other “front line” employees or who are not employed by the denomination. The non-employees are often called “lay members” or “laity,” although most are well-educated professionals or proprietors of businesses.

There are 1,559 regular delegates and 1,007 delegates-at-large who have been pre-registered for the meetings beginning tomorrow. That is a total of 2,556 delegates. The Adventist News Network (ANN) has released data from a survey of the pre-registered delegates administered by the GC Secretariat.

Six percent are under 30 years of age and another 36 percent in their 30s and 40s. The majority (54 percent) are in their 50s and 60s, while only three percent are over 70 years of age. This reflects one of the major trends in the Adventist faith, the “graying of Adventism.”

Only 17 percent of the delegates are women, although the delegations from North America and Europe have higher numbers. For example, the Pacific Union Conference from the west coast of the United States is 42 percent women; twice the proportion of the world wide delegations. This is of particular concern to some denominational leaders and delegates because one of the major items on the agenda is about the role of women in the denomination.

One of the reasons that the percentage of women is so low is because most of the delegates are clergy and in most countries around the world there are few if any women among the clergy. In fact, many of the delegates are church administrators who hold jobs that the denomination’s Working Policy requires to be ordained clergy. And the GC refuses to recognize the handful of women who are ordained clergy in a few places.

Each delegate has the right to go to one of the microphones and speak to the agenda item that is under discussion at that moment. But often when the most controversial items are being debated the lines at the microphones are so long that it becomes impossible for all the delegates who wish to speak to have the opportunity. Sometimes the person in the chair will designate one microphone as “for the motion” and another microphone as “against the motion,” and alternate speakers.

Most important, the delegates vote on the recommendations and decisions brought before the session. Each delegate has one vote and at this session, for the first time, an electronic voting system will be used which will protect the anonymity of each delegate as he or she votes. A number of observers have voice the hope that this will mitigate the feeling at previous GC Sessions that some delegations engaged in “block voting” where individuals were pressured to go along with a particular viewpoint regardless of their actual convictions.

This GC Session has the potential, in the eyes of some observers, to become the most divisive since the 1922 session in San Francisco, California. At that session the man who was serving as the denomination’s president was alleged by a number of delegates to be not conservative enough, particularly in terms of interpreting the Bible. It was at the height of the emergence of the Christian Fundamentalist movement in America across all denominations and some historians have seen the tensions at that GC Session as influenced by that trend. As a result, Pastor Arthur G. Daniells, who had served as the denomination’s president since the 1901 session, was not reappointed to that position. Instead, he began secretary (number two officer) of the denomination and later the founding leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association.

It remains to be seen what will happen over the next ten days. Millions of people are praying for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a strong sense of God’s guidance and grace among the delegates.
Adventist Church in Tennessee among Four Historically Black Churches Torched

By AT News Team, June 29, 2015, updated July 1: College Hill Adventist Church in Knoxville (Tennessee) was burned last Monday (June 22). The fire department has reported that an arsonist deliberately set fire to the building owned by a predominantly African American congregation, according to WATE Channel 6 News, the ABC television station in Knoxville.

Last week three other historically African American churches were also set fire by arson. Tuesday (June 23) God’s Power Church of Christ in Macon burned, and arson was confirmed by the Macon-Bibb County Fire Department. Wednesday (June 24) Briar Creek Baptist Church in Charlotte (North Carolina) was hit by an arsonist according to the local fire department, reported the Associated Press wire service. Friday (June 26) Glover Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Warrierville (South Carolina) was destroyed by fire and the state fire marshal is investigating it as a suspicious fire.

Two other churches, also belonging to black congregations and located in the same region, burned during the week. Authorities believe they were caused by lightening in one case and faulty wiring in another, according to local news media in Gibson County, Tennessee, and Tallahassee, Florida.

National news media in the United States have reported all six fires in the same stories which may be an exaggeration of the facts. There has been a long history of white racist groups burning African American churches in the United States which has led to speculation about these fires on each day of last week, the week after much attention was given to the shooting of nine people during Wednesday night Bible study at the first black church in America, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston (South Carolina).

The fire at the Adventist church in Knoxville was set by someone who stacked hay bales against the building, according to the Washington Post. The paper quoted Pastor Cleveland Hobdy III; “Horror … what’s going on?” The congregation has about 300 members and is affiliated with the denomination’s South Central Conference.

Updated July 1: An unmarked van parked near the College Hill Church was destroyed in the fire, but damage to the church building was not sufficient to prevent the congregation from meeting on Sabbath, according to the Los Angeles Times. Several Adventist churches in the Knoxville area with predominantly white memberships joined the College Hill Church for worship, sources have told Adventist Today. Hobdy told the newspaper that the person or persons who set the fire “did not leave the typical stuff that hate-crime stuff leaves” and it may have been “just some crazy kids.” He also said that the when he talked recently to one of the investigators, the officer said there are “too many burnings” to ignore the arson possibility.
Adventist Leaders Respond to U.S. Supreme Court Decision Legalizing Same-sex Marriage

By AT News Team, June 27, 2015: Late yesterday the Adventist denomination responded to a decision announced earlier in the day by the United States Supreme Court that found laws against same-sex marriage to be a violation of human rights guaranteed by the constitution. A statement released by the official Adventist News Network (ANN) made two points:

(1) The denomination “maintains its fundamental belief that marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman [and] while [it] respects the opinions of those who may differ, it will continue to teach and promote its biblically based belief …

(2) “The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that all people, regardless of race, gender, and sexual orientation are God's children and should be treated with civility, compassion, and Christ-like love.”

The Adventist denomination prohibits its clergy from conducting same-sex weddings, but unlike some other Evangelical denominations and congregations, it has not issued any rules or admonitions regarding the behavior of lay members in regards to their occupation or business, etc. For example, there is no rule prohibiting an Adventist who makes her living as a photographer from taking pictures for clients who have a same-sex wedding.

Adventists have an historic concern about religious liberty and some Catholic and Evangelical leaders have raised that concern in statements yesterday and earlier. Michael D. Peabody, an Adventist attorney in California who publishes the online newsletter Religious Liberty.TV addressed these concerns in his bulletin yesterday. In the Supreme Court ruling, in addition to requiring state governments to license and recognize same-sex marriages, “the Court also found that the First Amendment protects the right of religious organizations and ‘persons’ to ‘continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned,’” Peabody wrote.

He continued, quoting the court decision: “The First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives and faiths, and to their own deep aspirations to continue the family structure they have long revered.” (p. 27)

The decision addressed religious concerns, stating: “Many who deem same-sex marriage to be wrong reach that conclusion based on decent and honorable religious or philosophical premises, and neither they nor their beliefs are disparaged here. But when that sincere, personal opposition becomes enacted law and public policy, the necessary consequence is to put the imprimatur of the State itself on an exclusion that soon demeans or stigmatizes those whose own liberty is then denied.”

Peabody’s analysis of the decision: “While the Court has determined that same-sex marriage is a national right, and simultaneously upheld the First Amendment right of religious or non-religious “persons” to speak (and even advocate) against same-sex marriage, the issue remains as to whether businesses, which now have First Amendment rights (see Burwell v. Hobby Lobby), and individuals have a right to discriminate against same-sex couples by refusing to provide services or other benefits that they provide to opposite-sex couples.

“The right not to participate in same-sex marriages has been a subject of intense debate in recent months as some state legislatures have rushed to enact Religious Freedom Restoration Acts (RFRA) in an effort to provide statutory
protections for the rights of conscience of those who oppose same-sex marriage. The constitutionality of some state RFRAs and the rights of wedding service providers will be the subject of legal battles.

“The concept that religious institutions are exempt from following generally applicable laws on grounds of conscience would also seem to be supported by the Court's decision in Hosanna-Tabor v. EEOC (2012).

“But while the dicta of the Supreme Court's decision seems to provide some recognition of religious schools to teach against same-sex marriage, it does not address whether they could lose their tax exempt status if they enact policies that prohibit recognition of same-sex marriage in terms of student housing, hiring practices, and employment benefits. It is anticipated that the more religious an institution, the more likely it is to retain the right to discriminate against same-sex couples, but if tax-exempt status is considered a privilege and the schools receive governmental funding, the issues could become murky.”

Adventists in several other nations have already dealt with this development as same-sex marriage was legally recognized. The official teaching of the Adventist denomination on marriage is stated in a document voted by the officers of the General Conference on April 23, 1996. The entire document can be read here.
Adventist Pastors from North America Gather for Convention

By AT News Team, June 30, 2015: If you are looking for an Adventist pastor in any town across North America this week, you may not find one. The 60 local conferences in the denomination’s North American Division (NAD) employ a total of about 3,000 pastors and a news release reports that 5,500 people are attending the Pastoral Family Convention in Austin, Texas, Sunday evening (June) through noon Wednesday. Although, because spouses and children are also participating, the number of pastors gone from local communities may be difficult to accurately estimate.

The opening session on Sunday evening focused on prayer and helping the pastoral families find spiritual refreshment. Pastor Wintley Phipps, a well-known gospel singer in the United States sang the powerful hymn “How Great Thou Art,” and shared some thoughts based on his day job as senior pastor of the Palm Bay Adventist Church in Florida.

“It is God’s dream that we reflect His character,” Phipps told the crowd. “This is the very foundation of our call to ministry. … Christianity without Christlikeness will always result in death. Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God.”

A team of young musicians and praise leaders led the thousands of voices in singing praise songs. The speakers were Dick Duerksen, an Adventist minister who is known as a professional storyteller and works for Maranatha Volunteers International, and Pastor Wesley Knight, senior pastor of Mount Olive Adventist Church in Atlanta.

Over the next three days hundreds of seminars on many practical topics will be presented for in-service education. There will be an entire track in the Spanish language, and sessions for pastors’ wives and children. It was planned by the NAD Ministerial Association as a time to re-energize the entire family.

Wednesday afternoon a number of the pastors and their families will drive the two hours to San Antonio where the denomination’s General Conference Session begins on Thursday. Only about 50 are delegates from the NAD, but many others are interested in observing the decisions that will be made there. Although North America has relatively little representation at the world conclave, the decisions it makes could have greater impact on the Adventist faith in the United States and Canada than anywhere else.
On Defining Rebellion: Unions and San Antonio

by Laura Ochs Wibberding, June 29, 2015: At this year’s long-anticipated General Conference session in San Antonio, delegates will vote on whether each Division may decide for themselves whether to ordain women. With all of the hype, the Internet war, and the mass mailings, it may help to step back and consider whether we are asking the right question. While all of the church is swept up in the argument over Divisions deciding for themselves, perhaps we need to ask, whose decision is it, really?

The vote in San Antonio is based on a broad, and studiously unquestioned, assumption. The assumption is that this issue—whether gender ought to be a requirement for ordination—is the prerogative of the world church. The vote presumes that the General Conference (GC) has custody of this decision and may choose to relinquish it, or not. Not only is this unproven, but it is likely untrue. And to know that for certain would take, not a vote of the GC, but a careful survey of church policy.

In 2012, the church was ignited into controversy when the Columbia and Pacific Unions both voted to ordain without regard to gender. In the months that followed, local conferences, in the US and in Europe, followed in kind. The word “rebellion” was bandied about cyberspace. But was it rebellion? It was certainly done over objection. In both cases the GC president personally urged the constituents not to vote the action, saying they must let the GC decide. But were they acting outside their authority? Were they violating church policy? If not, then the word rebellion is a gross injustice. And if the Unions were not in rebellion, then we already have a solution, one which does not take 2,600 GC delegates to make happen.

So let’s consider the Union votes. Let us consider, first, the question of policy. Did these votes put the Unions outside of world church policy? We can almost guess from the response. When the North American Division voted the (later-rescinded) E-60 policy, allowing a Commissioned minister (and thereby a woman) to serve as Conference president, the GC answered with lawyers. They made a case that the policy voted was invalid, as the Division had no proper constituency. By contrast, when the Union votes were taken, the response was not lawyers, but words. At the Autumn Council that year, a voted statement denounced the actions and refused to recognize them. Official statements said the Unions were “out of harmony” with the world church, implying a policy violation without exactly saying so. The implication was convincing. Even Adventist News Network, reporting on the events, mistakenly declared that church policy forbids the ordination of women.

Church policy does not. In fact, the votes were actually redundant. No policy change is needed to ordain a woman. No rule of the church prevents it. A careful reading of the GC Working Policy will give one nothing stronger to stand on than inference. In the qualifications for ordination, the policy mentions no gender requirement. There are only two evidences one may claim for a requirement. The first is that the language is not gender-inclusive. The policy book uses “he” and “his” for the candidate, and refers to the candidate’s wife. The second evidence may be claimed from the anti-discrimination policy. This policy insists that the church does not discriminate for employment on the basis of race or gender, but it allows an exception for positions which require ordination. That is, the policy is written in such a way that it cannot be used to prove women must be ordained to prevent gender discrimination. Both examples tell us it has been the church’s practice to ordain only men. Neither of them is an instruction, or a policy to ordain only men. One may make an inference from a text of scripture (such as Paul’s “husband of one wife”) and read it as proof of a not-actually-stated rule, but legal documents such as organizational policy allow no such casual hermeneutic.

But what of the 1990 and 1995 votes? They are the evidence used to claim the Unions are “out of harmony” with the
church. Many, if not most, Adventists have been told those votes expressly forbid the church generally (1990) and the NAD specifically (1995) to ordain women. They were, in fact, something much less decisive. In 1990, the GC in session rejected a movement to officially endorse the ordination of women. The reason given was cultural, because it would not be well-received in all parts of the world, and included the words “at this time.” Church policy was unchanged.

But is this splitting straws? Can we say that the Unions may do what the GC has, by vote, declined to do? That brings us to the second issue, the authority of the Unions. Did they overstep their authority? What is their authority, and how does it relate to the General Conference? The union conferences were created during the 1901 reorganization for the express purpose of distributing the GC's decision-making authority into the field.* There were practical advantages, of course, but the intent was also certainly to decentralize power in the church. The 1901 reorganization also, temporarily, replaced the General Conference president with a small committee.

This division of responsibility is seen in today’s Working Policy, as well. In section B 05, it states that “decisions regarding the ordination of ministers is entrusted to the union conference/mission; and the definition of denominational beliefs are entrusted to the General Conference in session.” So if ordaining women is a theological issue, then it should be decided by the General Conference in session. If it is a policy issue, it might be solved on any level, but the best case can be made for the Union. One may say that the Unions have authority only in approving specific candidates, and not over the rules for ordination. But this is a moot point. The church has never made a gender qualification for ordination, and decades of church-sponsored research on the theology (the area where the General Conference has final authority) have found no prohibition. It follows then, that Unions are free to consider women as well as men. And thus, the votes taken were within the bounds of union-designated authority.

Some have speculated on what will happen if a “No” vote comes out of San Antonio. It is possible that administration may seek punitive measures against the Unions which have voted to ordain without regard to gender. At the least, the threat of such measures, combined with the weight of a recent vote, would be useful in pressuring them to rescind their decisions. The accusation will be made that if they do not back down, they will be splitting the church. But if the Unions votes were legitimate, and not in violation of church policy, then it is not those votes, but the response to them which has created our problems.

We are in a debate without a reasonable expectation of consensus. No amount of Bible study has created consensus. No vote of the General Conference will create it, either. Conviction is not created by a vote or dictated from the top. In 1990, the General Conference declined to endorse women’s ordination because not all the church was ready for it. A yes vote would offend the convictions of many of its members. The same would be true of a world-wide “no.” This question cannot have a single answer for the world church.

But it does have an answer. Unions and Conferences have begun to answer it. We can move forward if we have help from two sources. The first is lawyers—not to lodge suits against each other, but to mediate. Our policies and procedures are only as good as our commitment to following them. We can see that Union votes have not been regarded carefully enough.

But most of all, we need the help of Christ. It is Christ who binds us together as a community, not our uniformity. And it is a lack of grace, not a lack of agreement, which can split us.

Although San Antonio will certainly impact this issue in our church, it will not resolve it. We will still disagree, but I also believe we have no need to divide. We can solve this problem. We have, right now, all the tools we need.

* “This, it will be plainly seen, will distribute the responsibilities of the General Conference, placing them more fully and definitely on those who are upon the ground where the work is to be done and the issues to be met. . . . A thousand details will be transferred from the General Conference Committee to those whom the Lord has called to
His work and whom He has placed in the field where the details are to be worked out." (1901 GC session bulletin, pp. 513, 514)

Bio–Laura Ochs Wibberding holds an MA in Religion from Andrews University Theological Seminary, with an emphasis in Church History.
What Do the Proposed Changes in the Sanctuary Doctrine Mean?

by Ranald McLeish, H. Ross Cole and Mel Trevena, July 1, 2015: The delegates to the 2015 General Conference Session are being presented with a number of proposed amendments to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. Paragraph 24 is about “Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary,” or what is widely known as the sanctuary doctrine. In the first sentence, it is proposed to replace “man” with “humans,” part of an effort to make the language more inclusive throughout the document. There is also a grammar correction.

The most extensive proposed change is in sentences three and four. These changes are needed, according to the agenda materials sent to delegates in advance, because “the statement does not mention the typological significance of the work of the high priest in the holy and most holy places of the earthly sanctuary. These additions make the connections clear.” Here are the specific changes: The words underlined are proposed additions, while the words with a line through them are the proposed deletions. The “He” is Christ.

“At His ascension, He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and He and, began His intercessory ministry at the time of His minister, which was symbolized by the work of the high priest in the holy place of the earthly sanctuary. ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning minister, which was symbolized by the work of the high priest in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary.” The remainder of the paragraph will not be changed.

Are the delegates aware they are not voting a specific interpretation of Daniel 8? Why vote a belief if widely divergent interpretations make a mockery of the belief? Which of the following four positions that have emerged throughout the history of the Adventist Church does the reworded paragraph endorse?

1. The “little horn” in verses 9-11 was understood to represent pagan Rome only, with the identity of the “daily” left open to various interpretations. (See Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 4, pages 841-842; Adventists Believe, pages 321-322; Anderson, Unfolding Daniel’s Prophecies, pages 103-104; Maxwell, God Cares, pages 154-155.)

2. An interim position developed immediately after the Glacier View conference. It understood the “little horn” to represent both pagan and papal Rome, with verses 10-12 applied to the papacy and the “daily” representing Christ’s ministry. (See the Sabbath School Teachers Quarterly for the Second Quarter, 2002, pages 46, 48; Pfandl, Daniel, page 77.)

3. In the current position (post-2002), the “little horn” represents only the papacy and verses 9-14 are applied to the papacy. The change to this position has been gradual, not readily apparent to the casual reader. It has been gradually introduced by various scholars. William Shea suggested that in interpreting the “little horn” of Daniel 7:8, “the possibility should be left open and not ruled out a priori that these two prophetic symbols could refer to different historical entities.” (Shea, Selected Studies on Prophetic Interpretation, Revised Edition, page 38.) The failure to thoroughly explore this possibility contributed to the gradual move from one view to the next. This third view of Daniel 8:9-14, if widely adopted, also provides a very different interpretation of Fundamental Belief 24. (See Stefanovic, Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise, pages 319-320; Sabbath School Teachers Quarterly, Second Quarter 2002, pages 44-45; Doukhan, Secrets of Daniel, pages 127, 131, 152.)

4. We propose in this paper an interpretation that seeks to deal with the conflicts among the first three. We submit that the “little horn” of Daniel 8:9 be understood to represent pagan Rome alone. Verses 10-11 refer to
the Roman persecution of God’s people, the ratification of the Holy Covenant by crucifying Christ, and the destruction of the earthly temple in 70 A.D. In verse 12, the papacy (the “little horn” of Daniel 7:8) appears and casts the holy covenant truth to the ground.

In our view, there is a vast difference between positions 1 and 4, and 2 and 3. In positions 1 and 2, Daniel 8:11 applies to the actions of the Roman Empire, whereas positions 2 and 3 apply verse 11 to the actions of the papacy. Pagan Rome is missing in positions 2 and 3, but accounted for in positions 1 and 4. This constitutes a major shift in the understanding of Daniel 8:9-14 that may result in an entirely different understanding of Fundamental Belief 24. Position 4 parallels position 1 in its understanding of verses 9-12, but presents a proposed identification and application of the “daily” that appears to be consistent with the context of the “daily” in chapters 8, 11, and 12.

For three decades, two conflicts have been underway among Adventists. One has been very public, the issue of women’s ordination. The other flared up in the 1980s but is barely noticed today: the Sanctuary doctrine. Many believed the blessings of 1844 included the sanctuary doctrine. This blessing may be removed if the proposed changes in Fundamental Belief 24 are voted. Will the delegates be fully briefed and informed on the implications of what they are voting in the reworded Fundamental Belief 24?

Lest We Forget

Few passages have been as fundamental to the formation of Seventh-day Adventist self-identity as Dan 8:9-14. Nevertheless, there have been several changes in how the text has been understood throughout Adventist history. In a postmodern era it may be fashionable to dismiss these points of differences as matters of indifference. However, the changes to a large extent reflect the church’s growing Christocentricity and efforts to come to terms with how prophecy works. It is therefore important to review these changes and to consider further possible advances in understanding.

The Pioneer View

Daniel 8 has always been an important linchpin in Seventh-day Adventist identity. William Miller was followed by most early Seventh-day pioneers in noting that the word “sacrifice” found three times in the KJV rendering of Dan 8:11-13 was in italics, and hence not part of the original Hebrew. They translated the Hebrew hattāmîd (“the daily”) substantively as “the continuance,” suggesting that in vs. 13 “the continuance and the transgression of desolation” represent two phases of Roman practice. The first, i.e., “the abomination of desolation,” represented the pagan phase, and the second, “the transgression of desolation,” represented the papal phase.

Consequently a dual application, pagan and papal Rome, was applied to the little horn of 8:9. It was argued that vs.11 applied to pagan Rome, who attacked “the prince of the host,” (Jesus and His people), during his earthly life and ministry. Vs.12 was applied to the papal phase, and the taking away of paganism was represented by the daily. The subject of the daily divided the pioneers, some applying it to paganism, others to Christ’s ministry taken away by the papacy, a division that was not generally resolved until after Glacier View and the publication of the DARCOM series. (For a summary of these views, see The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 4, pages 842-843, 880-881.)

The Post-Glacier View Understanding of the “Daily”

In this interpretation, “the term ‘daily … continual’ refers to the continual priestly ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 7:25; I John 2:1) and to the true worship of Christ in the gospel age,” taken away in particular by “the confessional and the sacrifice of the mass in place of the mediatorial work of Christ as our great high priest in the courts of heaven.” (Nichol, 4:843) In this view, Rome, the little horn of 8:9, is also seen as operating in two successive phases, pagan then papal. (Ibid., 4:841) Consequently the taking away of the “daily” has also been interpreted as having a dual fulfillment. The first applies to “the desolation of the Temple by Roman legions in A.D. 70 and the consequent cessation of the sacrificial services.” (Ibid., 4:843) The second applies to the taking away of
Christ’s mediatorial work, as seen above.

The new view of the “daily” also has its problems. In what sense can it be said that the mediatorial work of Christ has ever truly been taken from Him? According to the New Testament, only the outer court of the sanctuary is trodden underfoot by the Gentiles; the sanctuary itself is not (Rev 11:1, 2). Nor was papal Rome the simple successor of pagan Rome. Historians simply never refer to the Roman Empire as existing in these two phases. Constantine did not abandon the West, or give it to the Church, notwithstanding the fraudulent and now universally rejected claims made centuries later in the document known as “The Donation of Constantine.” Rome and the papacy existed side by side for many centuries, at times as competing powers.

More Recent Developments in Interpretation

Because of the perceived danger of uncontrolled multiple interpretations of the text, some Adventist interpreters have been very cautious about the idea that there is a dual fulfillment in Dan 8:9-12 and so have divided it into two chronologically distinct parts. Gerhard F. Hasel sees the activity of pagan Rome predicted in the horizontal movements to the South, the East, and the pleasant land in vs. 9, and the activity of papal Rome in the horizontal moves against the host and its prince in vss. 10-12 (Gerhard F. Hasel, “The ‘Little Horn,’ the Heavenly Sanctuary and the Time of the End: A Study of Daniel 8:9-14,” in Symposium on Daniel, Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, Volume 2; Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986, pages 378-425. See also Gerhard Pfandl, Daniel: The Seer of Babylon; Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2004, pages 79-82.). However, this view leaves out any reference in Dan 8 to the time of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry, even though Hasel, like Adventists generally, makes these events central to an understanding of the explanation of Dan 8 in Dan 9:24-27.

Other Adventist interpreters have gone a step further and do not see pagan Rome in Dan 8:9-12 at all. Instead they apply all four verses exclusively to papal Rome. Thus pagan Rome is envisaged as the fourth beast of Dan 7 but seen as totally absent from Dan 8 and the two “little horns” of Dan 7; 8; are identified as one and the same.

Martin Probstle concluded that “in Daniel 8 not only is Babylon missing but also pagan Rome. He sees the little horn in both chapters describing only the papacy” (BRI, email August 23, 2011. cf. Probstle, Truth and Terror, July 2006 edition, pp. 740 – 752).

The little horn of Daniel 7 and 8 follows the fourth of these kingdoms, indicating that it comes on the scene of action as a new phase of Rome, a religious phase. Thus, the position taken in this book is that the little horn represents the papacy… (William H. Shea, Daniel: A Reader’s Guide; Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2005, page 141. This statement represents a shift from Shea’s earlier agreement with Hasel’s position.)

Everything that happens to the little horn of chapter 7 has its counterpart in the little horn of chapter 8. Indeed, the little horn of chapter 8 and the little horn of chapter 7 are undoubtedly the same. (Jacques B. Doukhan, Daniel: The Vision of the End, rev. ed. Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1989. Pages 24-25.)

I indeed regard the referent of the little horn in Dan 8 to be the same as the referent of the little horn in Dan 7.” Martin Probstle, Email, October 28, 2011, cf. Truth and Terror, July 2006 edition, pp. 740 – 752.


“The Little Horn – Part 1 (Dan. 8:9, 10, 23-25). — After a discussion on how this little horn would oppose truth, it is revealed that it would be allowed to do so for “two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” (Dan. 8:14).” Teachers SS Quarterly, April 22, 2002, pp. 44-45.

As with Hasel’s view, this view leaves out any reference in Dan 8 to the time of Jesus’ earthly life and ministry, even though its proponents make these events central to an understanding of the explanation of Dan 8 in Dan 9:24-27.
A Way Forward

It is proposed that there is a way forward that addresses these issues, as well as dealing with the BRI’s concern regarding multiple fulfillments applying to the little horn. However, it goes in the opposite direction to Doukhan’s proposal, by applying the little horn of Dan 8:9 to the Roman Empire only, and verses 10 and 11 to Rome’s persecution of God’s people, the crucifixion of Christ and the subsequent ratification of the holy covenant, and the destruction of the earthly temple. (We will return to the consideration of Daniel 8:12 shortly.)

In this view, the little horn’s magnification of itself “even to the prince of the host” (vs. 11) specifically represents Rome’s attack on the earthly Jesus. (Note the reference to an attack “against the Prince of Princes” in Daniel 8:25.) The prepositional phrase, ūmimmēnū, later in the verse is translated, “but by him” (i.e., “by the ‘prince of the host’”), the waw conjunction being read as adversative and the preposition min being read as indicating a causal agent. (Cf. its use in Gen 9:11; Lev 21:7. See Bruce K. Waltke, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 213.) In other words, the Roman little horn attacks “the prince of the host,” but this little horn power does not take away “the daily” (the continual). Paradoxically it is the prince himself, who, by His death at the hand of Rome and the Jews, established, (min) the daily, the continual or everlasting, covenant. The sad event of the Jews’ rejecting their Saviour was also prophesied, (Matt. 23:37-39; John 19:36 and 37), as was the ratification of the holy covenant (Dan. 9:27; when type met antitype at the cross, the ratification of the daily was confirmed by the rending of the temple veil (Matt 27:51).

In the traditional messianic interpretation of Dan 9:27 it is the Messiah rather than His nemesis who in the middle of the seventieth week causes the cessation of the sacrifices and oblations (cf. Matt 27:51; Heb 8:13; 9:15). The antitypical fulfilling of the morning and evening sanctuary service not only ratified the daily, the everlasting covenant; it qualified Christ to be “High Priest of the greater and more perfect tabernacle,” Heb. 9:10-12.

In Dan 9:27, the external sign that “the sacrifices and the oblations” were obsolete was confirmed by the desolation of the sanctuary through “the overspreading of abominations.” Jesus specifically applies the language of the “abomination of desolation” to the Roman siege of Jerusalem that resulted in the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 (Matt 24:15, 16; cf. Luke 21:20). As Daniel, John, Jesus, and history are very clear it was Rome, not the Papacy, who crucified Christ, and destroyed the earthly temple; verses 9-11 do not apply to the actions of the Papacy, the little horn of 7:8.

Conclusion

Seventh-day Adventist interpreters have traditionally identified the little horn of Dan 8:9 as a symbol of Rome in two phases, pagan and papal. More recently some Adventist interpreters have identified it only with papal Rome. It has been argued here that only pagan Rome is in view here, a view that links in well with the explanation of Dan 8 that applies to the 70 weeks of Dan 9:24-27. In Daniel 8:12, the host that was set over the “daily” in Dan 8:12 constitutes an army of evil that resulted in the truth being cast to the ground until the time of the end.

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A Dozen Thoughts on the United States Supreme Court Ruling on Same-Sex Marriage

By Ken McFarland, June 30, 2015:

1. Some – perhaps many – of us who believe in God and His Word genuinely believe that His stated definition of marriage is that it be between one man and one woman.

2. Having said that, some of us also believe that in serving both God and Caesar, we need to harmonize as fully as possible with the law of the land as legislated by Congress, as codified in the Constitution, and as interpreted by the Courts.

3. When it comes to the recent Supreme Court decision concerning same-sex marriage, the Court has permitted it, not imposed or required it.

4. Therefore, I am free, should I so choose, to go right on believing as a Christian in marriage as between one man and one woman. No one is depriving me of that right or taking away my “religious liberty” to believe it.

5. Only in a case when the law of the land requires me, forces me, to make a decision contrary to God’s Law or my sincerely held Bible-based beliefs, must I then choose whom to obey. As a Christian, my obligation is thus clear. However, this Supreme Court ruling is not one of those times.

6. Perhaps the closest to being forced by this ruling to choose between God’s will and the state’s decision is what a minister does when asked to perform a same-sex wedding. I see nothing in the ruling that would remove the minister’s freedom to choose. An Adventist pastor, for example, should still be free to choose not to perform such a marriage. Plenty of secular alternatives remain: judges, justices of the peace, etc.

7. I believe that we Christians are greatly ill-served by expressing outrage and condemnation against the Supreme Court decision. We are called to live IN the world but not be OF the world, and we will never WIN the world with condemnation and disapproval and hate.

8. We as Christians, in fact, have the privilege and obligations of accepting ALL into our midst. We are commanded to go even further than merely refraining from hating and condemning them – we are commanded to LOVE them. Same-sex couple. LGBTQIA people, yes, even sodomites and what we might wish to call egregious sinners.

9. We are in fact forbidden to condemn those who engage in what we categorize as sins of the flesh, while we are still in the grip of the greater sins Jesus identified: pride, self-exaltation, rejection of others, “stoning” those with fleshly sins while we harbor even worse ones in our hearts. Only those clean of pride – only those who would die for someone before condemning them – can address the sins of another.

10. We simply must abandon the fear that leads us to reject in an ever-tighter circle those who don’t look like us, act like us, believe like us, or practice their lives like us. Ultimately, that circle will be drawn around our own feet and no one else’s.

11. Yes, there’s a great difference between hating the sin and loving the sinner. Do we ever get so caught up in excoriating the sin that we incinerate as well the sinner clinging to that sin? Perhaps if we truly spend our
efforts – as Jesus commanded us – revealing and demonstrating His love, the sins would fall away of their own accord.

12. Loving without limits is our commission. Unlimited by any sin or its hideousness, unlimited by how opposed it is to God and His will. Unlimited by how much we must fight back our inner hate and the revulsion we may feel. Only by this kind of love can we love as Jesus loves.

Ken McFarland is an Adventist author, Bible student and former vice president for editorial services at Pacific Press, the publishing house of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in North America.
ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

Gary had rented an upscale mobile home for his new family and Dianne loved it. The kitchen windows surrounded the front end of the trailer and it felt light and airy. Janetta had her own bedroom and there was an extra bedroom for either visitors or another child.

Dianne became a “stay-at-home mom” and Janetta grew and thrived. Gary took a personal interest in Janetta and was, in every way, her daddy. It was not long until Gary and Dianne knew that their family would soon number four but it seemed forever before Brian entered the family.

Brian was totally different from Janetta. He was a fussy baby and Dianne spent many hours walking the floor with him but she didn’t mind because she had the family and the stability she had long desired.

Gary’s parents lived in Missouri and on every long weekend, Gary and Dianne, with their babies, would head for Gary’s parents’ home. Gary’s mom loved Dianne and the babies and made them feel a part of the family from the very first moment. Gary’s stepfather also enjoyed the little family and all felt secure in his presence.

Dianne had finally found the perfect situation. Gary even attended church with Dianne though he was not a Seventh-day Adventist, and Dianne was thrilled to be part of the Family of God once more. Her previous life was never mentioned and she was accepted by the congregation.

When Brian was six months old, Gary received orders to report to Bremerhaven, West Germany for his next duty station. Dianne didn’t mind for she had enjoyed Germany though her situation had been less than ideal. The one complicating factor and the one that brought much stress to Dianne’s heart was that Gary had received orders to proceed after a thirty-day leave. Dianne could join him later, but would have to stay in the U. S. until housing could be arranged for her and the babies.

Dianne felt the stirrings of terror. She still suffered from the feelings of insecurity from her past and could not cope emotionally with the fact that Gary would be torn from her. She and Gary went to the base and spoke with counselors there as to what could be done. It was suggested that Dianne accompany Gary to New Jersey, which was the departure point for Gary’s plane. There, the couple could present themselves to the military, telling them that Dianne was there and had no place to go. The counselor explained that this had been done previously and subsequently, concurrent travel had been arranged. Gary and Dianne decided that they would try.

Only thirty days left, and they had family scattered through Missouri, Iowa, California, Oregon, and Washington. Gary and Dianne, with the babies, made a whirlwind trip to tell everyone good bye for the next three years.

Grace was on their list to be visited. Dianne had determined that she would not allow the affair to sever her relationship (what little there was) with her mother. She felt that she was doing the Christian thing by forgiving, and the affair was not mentioned.

When the last good-byes had been said and the last tears shed, Gary and Dianne and the babies headed for New Jersey. They enjoyed the cross-country trip and the babies traveled well. Brian had learned to eat solid foods and he loved the milkshakes that Dianne would buy for him. Janetta, of course, was big enough by this time to not require the constant attention and special foods that Brian required.
Arriving in New Jersey, Gary presented himself to the army and, as the counselor had suggested, told them that his wife and children had accompanied him and that they now had no place to go. True to what the counselor had said, concurrent travel was arranged and when Gary’s plane left the New Jersey airport, Dianne was seated at his side. Their car was to be shipped at a later time but Gary and Dianne didn’t care. They were together and that was what mattered.
What if You were Jerusalem, the City of God?

By Debonnaire Kovacs, posted July 1, 2015

Psalm 48, version found in the Book of Common Prayer

Great is the LORD, and highly to be praised;
in the city of our God is his holy hill.

The earliest forms of castles or fortresses were hills with wooden palisades on them for defense. If you were the city of our God, what would be the hill within you? Where is the high place where you praise God, the place from which you can look back and look (in a limited way) forward—the place of sure defense?

Beautiful and lofty, the joy of all the earth, is the hill of Zion, the very center of the world and the city of the great King.

In a very real sense, each one of us is the center of our own worlds—not in a selfish or self-seeking way, just in the sense that we can only look outward from where we are. Does the great King dwell in your center?

God is in her citadels;
he is known to be her sure refuge.

When others look at you and at what they can see of your life, can they see that God is your sure refuge? Do they know that God is your first recourse in every difficulty and in every joy?

Behold, the kings of the earth assembled
and marched forward together.

They looked and were astounded;
they retreated and fled in terror.

Trembling seized them there;
they writhed like a woman in childbirth,
like ships of the sea when the east wind shatters them.

Stand on your inner hill and look back. Mentally assemble all the troubles and evils that have come against you. How quickly did they retreat in terror? Were you able to hold your ground and cling to the King until they did? What did you learn, each time, that served you for the next assault?

As we have heard, so have we seen,
in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God;
God has established her forever.

We may be wailing, “How long, O Lord?” until the true consummation comes. But we can be established forever now. The Lord of all the hosts of angels can inhabit our city and reign on our hill, making it holy.

We have waited in silence on your loving-kindness, O God,
in the midst of your temple.

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We have waited in silence on your loving-kindness, O God,
in the midst of your temple.
Do you know your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Do you spend time in silence within, waiting on God’s chesed, that quality for which there is no good English term—or indeed, human term—that we call “loving-kindness”?

Your praise, like your Name, O God, reaches to the world’s end; your right hand is full of justice.

Everybody knows, really. They may not all recognize what they know. Some may consciously reject it. But all humans know, at the heart of them (on their own inner hills, which they may rarely visit) that there is a Creator who judges wisely and who will make things right.

Let Mount Zion be glad and the cities of Judah rejoice, because of your judgments.

Does the thought of God’s justice make you rejoice? If not, you may need to reconsider how you define God’s justice.

Make the circuit of Zion; walk round about her; count the number of her towers.

Consider well her bulwarks; examine her strongholds; that you may tell those who come after.

On a regular basis, make the circuit around your soul. Count the towers. Be sure they’re in good repair. Consider foundations and fortifications. Examine your strongholds and be sure they are ones you truly want to live within. Then tell the world:

This God is our God for ever and ever; God shall be our guide for evermore.