

The tendency of Ellen White to draw attention to the controversy between Christ and Satan, particularly as it relates to the individual, clearly demonstrates her own understanding of the practical significance of Bible study. . . .

What, then, do we mean when we affirm a unique place—a place second only to the Bible—for her writings in the church? We mean that we cannot simply place them on the same level of importance and authority as that of other commentaries. Such a high view of her writings, can be easily misunderstood and misapplied, however. It would be inappropriate to use her writings to settle questions relating to the reading of a text, the meaning of a word, the authorship or date of a biblical book, etc. . . .

On the basis of the observations advanced above, it seems more accurate to describe her interpretation of Scripture as primarily a religious exposition of the great controversy theme on a cosmic, historical and personal level, than to characterize it as scientific exegesis in a technical sense. In no way is such a classification denigratory. To the contrary! It may help prevent further misunderstanding and misuse of her writings. If her writings were designed to answer questions of a scholarly nature, their significance would be restricted to a relatively small group, and would in time become dated. Such is the nature of scholarship. But her writings have a deeper purpose and a wider scope.

etarian, he stands close to our conception of the reformer of life . . . Still, some worry.

There was no need for Adventists to be concerned, Pastor Mueller advised. Jesus' statement, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and God what is God's," meant that every Adventist should be subject to the government, pay his taxes, assist the government with good works and pray for the authorities.

Yet, the Nazi regime demanded more. Mueller said that Adventists needed to adjust quickly to these new circumstances, but unfortunately some church members were slow in changing. They refused to salute the Swastika flag and to use the Hitler greeting. This refusal, Mueller argued, was bad for the church's image. Besides, every "Christian can without concern" salute the Nazi flag, the symbol of sovereign Germany. Likewise, he said, Adventists could raise their arms and give the Hitler greeting with a clear conscience.

Mueller concluded that under no circumstances did any Adventist have the right to resist the government, even if the government prevented him from exercising his faith. Resistance would be unfortunate because it would mark Adventists as opponents of the new state, a situation that should be prevented. . . .

Because offspring of [state ordained] unions were to be healthy and racially pure specimens, they were to be bred carefully. To guarantee this outcome, Adventists assisted in many government-sponsored programs for women, teaching not only hygiene and child care, but also such Nazi topics as eugenics, race and civics.

The government asked all free churches and denominations to defend these and all other Nazi policies at home and abroad. There is sufficient evidence to conclude

## Seventh-day Adventist Publications and the Nazi Temptation



by Erwin Sicher  
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*Erwin Sicher is chair of the social science department at Southwestern Adventist College in Keene, Texas. Sicher's background drew him to the topic of this essay, one of the most meticulously researched and hardest hitting in the history of the journal. (Spectrum is still the only Adventist journal to print material on this subject.) Sicher was born and reared in Austria, also the birthplace of Hitler. Sicher served as a pastor in Vienna before com-*

*ing to the United States, where he earned a doctorate in history at the University of Southern California, and taught in the history department at Andrews University.*

**T**he president of the East German Conference, W. Mueller, said that the Christian

welcomes with joy the reawakening of Germany and the fight of the Hitler government against unemployment. He is happy for the defense of Christianity, for morality and order, incorruptibility and justice in government, for the attack on class consciousness and the elevation of the ethnic community [Volksgemeinschaft] . . . The Christian is happy to know that the direction of his country is in the hands of a man like Hitler, who frequently emphasizes that he received his post from God to whom he is responsible. As non-drinker, nonsmoker and veg-

that many Adventists accepted this demand. Hulda Jost, Adventist welfare leader until 1938, stated as early as 1933 that after her return from Sweden, she reported to the Nazi propaganda ministry "that I was able to defend our present government in a choice society. . . ."

On the next level of Nazi indoctrination, the Labor Service, Adventists found a satisfying rationalization for participation. Johannes Langholf wrote that Adventists approved, in accordance with their biblical understanding, every effort that brought people closer to work. "We expect every member," he continued, "to follow the divine command, 'pray and work.' It would be absolutely contrary to our understanding if we refuse the Labor Service." The author, however, was fully aware that a significant percentage of the Labor Service participants were members of the SA, SS and Stahlhelm, the most fanatical Nazi groups who indoctrinated and militarized the youth.

The outcome of all this was that most Adventist students joined the Hitler Youth, the BDM [Association of German Girls], the Labor Service and the German Red Cross. And, in 1937, the Adventist college town, Friedensau, voted 100 percent for Adolf Hitler.

At least some Adventists came to support sterilization, whose overriding aim, like that of most Nazi programs, was the protection of the German blood. . . .

After the passage of the law, though, discussion ceased and the church supported sterilization either through direct Adventist statements or through the reprinting of non-Adventist articles. The mentally weak, schizophrenics, epileptics, blind, deaf, crippled, alcoholics, drug addicts—all were to be sterilized.

"This law," an article in the Seventh-day Adventist paper *Jugend-Litstern* said, was "a great advance

in the uplifting of our people."

Because it was for the good of the nation as well as for the individual, the article argued, the ethic of the state and of Christianity were in full accord on this point. "The national socialist state is aware of its responsibility to heighten the physical and moral values of its people through purification of its blood." Although sterilization was hard on the patient, it was said, once he understood the contribution he was making to the well-being of his people he would accept it.

"Only sterilization can protect a people from the decline of their race," another article claimed. Furthermore, some writers suggested, the chronically ill should be sterilized because they place too great a financial burden on the state, for the costs go into the billions of reichsmarks.

With the liquidation of Czechoslovakia, all pretense that Hitler simply wanted to rightfully unite all Germans should have vanished. Yet, Adventists agreed with the Nazi extinction of Czech sovereignty. Then came the attack on Poland, an even more brutal act. Still, an Adventist author could write that in view of the "inhuman tortures our Volkscamrads have suffered among this foreign people" the German attack was probably justified. The Führer wanted only to correct these injustices. "In the East there is now peace. Humanly everything is being done to strengthen and secure it . . . Meanwhile, the Führer has shown the way to peace also in the West. By the time this *Adventbote* reaches the readers, the dice will have fallen. What will the enemy have decided? Certainly, there exists not a single German who does not want peace like the great Führer of our people." But if this wish should be unfulfilled, "we know that God is in control, and that things happen

only through his will and permission."

God, according to this version, apparently did not want peace, because war erupted also in the West with the German invasion of Denmark and Norway on April 9, 1940.

Still, Adventists continued to support Hitler. In fact, they sang his praises on his 51st birthday, which came on Sabbath, April 20, 1940. *The Morning Watch Calendar* stated:

Trust in his people has given the Führer the strength to carry through the fight for freedom and honor of Germany. The unshakable faith of Adolph Hitler allowed him to do great deeds, which decorate him today before the whole world. Selflessly and faithfully he has struggled for his people; courageously and proudly he has defended the honor of his nation. In Christian humility, at important times when he could celebrate with his people, he gave God in Heaven honor and recognized his dependence upon God's blessings. This humility has made him great, and this greatness was the source of blessing, from which he always gave for his people. Only very few statesmen stand so brilliantly in the sun of a blessed life, and are so praised by his own people as our Führer. He has sacrificed much in the years of his struggle and has thought little about himself in the difficult work for his people. We compare the unnumbered words, which he has issued to the people from a warm heart, with seeds which have ripened and now carry wonderful fruit.

Adventist publications said nothing about the 1933 purges when hundreds were murdered in cold blood. Nor did they raise a voice against the persecution and execution of countless Jews. Neither the atrocities in the concentration camps or the occupied territories

received mention, nor the euthanasia program, which the Catholics, largely alone, were able to stop. The war itself was never questioned.

Although some individual Adventists seemed to have resisted the Nazi temptation, no active official opposition to the inhuman Nazi regime seemed to have existed nor even to have been permitted among Adventists. Yet, many Adventists did die, unfortunately, for the dia-

bolical policies of that state. Then it was possible to pen a parting word for the dead, saying, as happened in one instance, that in "faithful execution of his duty he gave his young life, so that his Volk might live and prosper."

Finally, even such statements ceased. There was only silence as the government ordered all church publications to close. All raw materials, including paper, were needed for the war.

known Christian Darwinists in the United States, having long promoted a theistic view of evolution. Although he faithfully defended the Bible's historical accuracy, he saw no conflict between Genesis and geology and no reason to insist on a worldwide flood. It was not until after World War I, when Price emerged as their scientific spokesman, that fundamentalist leaders began insisting on a 6,000-year-old earth and a universal deluge.

On the eve of the Scopes trial in July 1925, in which a high school biology teacher in Dayton, Tenn., was found guilty of violating a state law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in public institutions, the high priest of fundamentalism, William Jennings Bryan, invited Price to assist the prosecution as an expert witness. Price was a logical choice, being both an acquaintance of Bryan's and the best-known scientist in the fundamentalist camp. Unfortunately, Price was teaching at the time in an Adventist college outside London and could not attend the trial. Instead, he wrote Bryan a letter advising him to avoid any *scientific* arguments and to charge the evolutionists with being un-American for compelling a parent to pay taxes "to have his child taught something that he utterly repudiates and considers anti-Christian."

At one point during the epic trial, Clarence Darrow asked Bryan if he respected any scientist. When Bryan named Price, Darrow scoffed: "You mentioned Price because he is the only human being in the world so far as you know that signs his name as a geologist that believes like you do . . . every scientist in this country knows [he] is a mountebank and a pretender and not a geologist at all." Eventually, Darrow browbeat the broken old man into conceding that the world was indeed more than 6,000 years old and that the six days of Cre-

## Sciences of Satanic Origin: SDAs on Evolutionary Biology



by Ronald L. Numbers  
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*Ronald L. Numbers is William Coleman Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Wisconsin. He incorporated this essay featuring George McCready Price into his recent prize-winning book, The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism (Knopf, 1992). Numbers, the son and grandson of Seventh-day Adventist ministers (his grandfather, W. H. Branson, was president of the General Conference), grew up in the mission field, graduated from Southern Missionary College and received his doctorate in the history of science from the University of California at Berkeley before teaching at both Andrews and Loma Linda universities. He is the editor and author of many books that emphasize the part Adventist*

*figures have played in American history. He also served for several years as the executive secretary of the Association of Adventist Forums. (For more on Numbers, see the profile elsewhere in this issue and Jonathan Butler's "The Historian as Heretic," the brilliant and moving introduction to the enlarged edition of Prophets of Health [University of Tennessee Press, 1993]).*

Through his numerous articles and books, [George McCready] Price significantly altered the course of fundamentalist thought, slowly but perceptibly steering it in the direction of the traditional Adventist interpretation of Genesis. Prior to the appearance of Price on the fundamentalist scene, many evangelicals had compromised with the teachings of modern science. As late as 1910, for example, the editors of *The Fundamentals*, the series of pamphlets whose publication [is often said to mark] the beginning of the so-called fundamentalist movement, chose George Frederick Wright, a clergyman geologist from Oberlin College, to write on evolution and religion. His selection is surprising in retrospect, because Wright was one of the best-