



## “Aha” Moments | BY BONNIE DWYER

Connecting the dots between contemporary events in order to understand their significance can be difficult. Painful introspection may be required. The perspective of history might be what is needed to reach an “aha” moment.

There was much on Lowell Bock’s heart when we sat down to talk recently. He had been thinking about the fifty years he spent serving the Lord and the church (1946-1988), and he wanted to share his testimony and key insights. He reviewed his years as a pastor, then as a department secretary, conference president, union conference president, and a General Conference vice president. He had experienced the extreme hierarchal rule of a dictatorial conference president who kept the policy book under lock and key in his desk drawer. He had watched the laity become more educated and interested in having a say in church policies. He had been handed difficult assignments such as chairing the board of Pacific Press following the Merikay Silver lawsuit. He had served several General Conference presidents and noticed there was always a call for revival and reformation when a new administration came into office.

“The whole issue was ‘What is Truth?’” he said, recalling discussions he had with then-General Conference president Robert Pierson who would say, “Lowell, we’re counting on you to hold the line.”

To Pierson, Bock explained, there was no right or left—truth was a straight line. But Bock wondered, where was that line?

Bock’s stories flowed. About the time of the Civil Rights Movement in the Southern New England Conference, when the graduate students expressed an interest in racial equality, Bock put them on a committee that drafted an amendment to the constitution forbidding racial discrimination. Much to the surprise of many church leaders, the amendment was passed at the constituency meeting and picked up by the General Conference. He said the Pacific Press had footed

the bill for equality in the church when the Press agreed to pay the million-dollar settlement of the Merikay lawsuit against the advice from the General Conference. The backstory on the Consultation at Glacier View in 1980 was his desire to bring together the academic and administrative communities within the church, only to have the agenda scrapped and replaced with a trial on the views of Des Ford. Bock had experienced much, and came to realize that the church leadership, at times, was part of the problem.

Bock’s “aha” moment came in reading Daniel and seeing the connection between repentance and revival. Now, he feels that the leadership needs to follow the example of Daniel and repent, because without repentance there can be no revival and reformation.

There have been several “aha” moments for me in my understanding of church history over the past few months. One of them came while reading Gerry Chudleigh’s account of the history of headship theology within Adventism that appears in this issue. I never thought that Adventists believed in headship theology. Chudleigh helps connect the dots.

Graeme Sharrock’s chapter on Ellen White’s testimonies from the new book by Oxford University Press provided more “aha” moments as I came to a better understanding of White’s writings and their role in the church. We’ve included that in this issue, too.

Charles Scriven’s reporting from the recent conference on World War I and Adventism connects more dots regarding Reform Adventism.

That such “aha” moments can come from reading history as well as experiencing it gives me hope—hope that connecting the dots of the past can help us understand present truth, so our community can progress in our theology and life together. ■

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