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## The Tears of San Antonio I BY BONNIE DWYER

n Wednesday, July 8, as I walked the lower level Alamodome hallway late in the day, the vote on women's ordination over, coming towards me was one of the staffers from Secretariat, the office charged with maintaining the records of the event. Tears were streaming down her face as she walked by, nodding a greeting. No words were necessary..

From there I made my way to the hotel ballroom that the North American Division had reserved. It was packed with small circles of people gathered around female pastors for whom prayers were being offered and tears being shed.

On this very emotional day, tears had also come when a group of delegates booed the speech by Jan Paulsen, former president of the General Conference, as he pleaded for understanding from the numerically superior African delegation for the work in countries with more secular societies and smaller church presence. While Mike Ryan, the chair of the session, had discouraged cheering and clapping, nothing was said about booing.

The tears of San Antonio remain in my mind more than the speeches of the day, although there were some very good speeches in favor of the vote. There were also many speeches that never got made. People who had immediately lined up at a microphone at the beginning of the day were still standing in line at the end of the session. The tally on speeches was 19 for a yes vote, 20 for a no vote, and 35 points of order in which people tried to use that parliamentary procedure to circumvent the process of one speech for yes, and one speech for no that the organizers had established. The final vote was no 1,381 (58%), yes 977 (41%), abstentions 5 (1%).

To me it was notable that although the organizers framed the conversation about ordination, the vote was actually on structure, and in no way recognized or acknowledged the woman pastors, leaders, and administrators that are already working very effectively within the

organizational structure for the church in many divisions, including the General Conference. We can have a woman vice president of the General Conference, associate dean of the Seminary, presidents of hospitals and universities, but we cannot ordain a woman for the work she is doing in the local church? Our inconsistencies and inequalities are baffling. Our ignoring of these women and their contribution to the mission of the church brings tears to my eyes.

The no vote in San Antonio against divisions being allowed to determine whether or not to ordain women was different than losing a vote on a key issue. This affected people's lives. Women pastors began receiving messages telling them they no longer had a right to their jobs. In a later business session, there was a request from the floor for clarification. What did the vote mean? General Conference President Ted Wilson came to the microphone and said that the vote had not changed policy. Women who were eligible to serve in pastoral roles as commissioned pastors before the vote would continue to be allowed to hold their positions. The vote did not change policy. It just broke our hearts.

But I remain hopeful, because hope is the Adventist response to disappointment. In this organizational challenge, I remain hopeful because of our belief in equality as expressed in Fundamental Belief #14, "Unity in the Body of Christ"; "In Christ we are a new creation, distinctions of race, culture, learning, and 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."

Our search for that equality continues. .

**Bonnie Dwyer** is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

## The First Adventist? | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

f Jeremiah was the first Jew, was Roy Branson the first Adventist? The question bears on the pathology—and promise—of Adventism. The pathology was on display this past summer in San Antonio, and the promise was on display—imperfectly, of course—in Roy Branson, not to mention the Adventist pioneers he admired.

One of the greatest of the prophets, Jeremiah, became, as one historian remarked, the "first Jew"—Jew, that is, in the sense familiar today: a person of Hebrew background living in the diaspora, away from the homeland. Jeremiah not only spent some of his life outside the Promised Land, but also reflected on how Israelites who had been dragged away to Babylon could be faithful there. He sent a letter (Jeremiah 29) encouraging them to build houses, bear children and—this is astounding—"seek the welfare of the city" where they reside.

Even when you're away from home against your will, Jeremiah was saying, go about the business God gave you: take care of your families; take care of the wider world. Seek the shalom, the peace—the "welfare"—of those around you. Don't follow Babylonian "dreams," but do follow God's. Live generously, even when you are aliens.

There were hints of Adventist generosity at the 2015 General Conference session in San Antonio, but too little of it came through in the preaching. For the most part, speakers picked by top administrators made an argument for other worldliness. We are aliens here, they said, and our job is to get ready to leave, and to bring others along with us.

Escape from the here and now? Jeremiah wouldn't get it. He would have loved, I think, Jesus' saying that the faithful live in the world but do not "belong" to it. Those words seem like an echo of his own, and they precisely entail investment in the well-being of the earth. Right in the middle of his apocalyptic sermon at the end of Matthew, Jesus himself, after all, made this very point. Fear cannot box the faithful servant into some sort of skit-

tish, unimaginative status quo; if you are faithful, you improve upon things (Matthew 25:14-30).

The familiar phrase, "in the world but not of it," does not mean "in the world, alas." The world is God's gift, and you must dare to dream about its prospects—galvanized all the while by the hope of ultimate victory the Second Coming will fulfil. And if preoccupation with escape is a travesty, so, mark this well, is preoccupation with words. Words matter but they serve the higher purpose of peace, the welfare of the city where you live.

Roy Branson got this. If he was not the first Adventist, he was, perhaps, the first theologian to insist that a people of the Second Coming—a people who feel to some degree like outsiders in this present age—must also be a people of peace, a people who seek the welfare of the city where they live. In the twentieth century, black Adventist pastors such as Lewis Sheafe, Matthew Strachan and Warren Banfield became influential in the American civil rights movement. But Branson was certainly a pioneering theologian; his unwavering passion was how the church can meet the world's needs, reform its politics, bend its arc toward justice, even jov.

One of the last pieces he completed for publication was a review of Do Justice, a book of essays, edited by two Australian Adventists, that defines faithful living along such lines as Jeremiah suggested. The book pleased him; it felt, I think, like a vindication of his life work.

It might well have pleased some of the Adventist pioneers Roy admired for their sometime dalliances with even movement toward—a vision like Jeremiah's. Today our topmost leaders resist all of this, or at least (judging from San Antonio) pay it no regard. Still, the vision remains alive, even if Roy does not, and that, surely, is something to celebrate.

Charles Scriven chairs Adventist Forum.

# The Bible and ELLEN WHITE

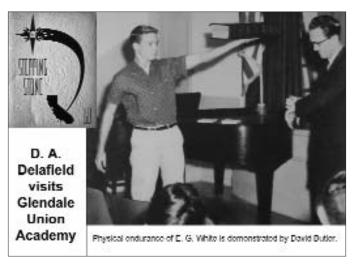


It was a smaller Bible that Ellen Harmon held open at the Thayer home in Randolph, Massachusetts.

# The Big Bible, Bigger Still | BY RONALD GRAYBILL

→ he Big Bible Ellen White held in vision has fascinated generations of school children, hundreds of camp meeting crowds, and thousands of tourists who have seen and lifted it at General Conference headquarters.

Arthur L. White and staff members from the White Estate used to carry it with them to academies and colleges.



D. A. Delafield times David Butler (brother of Jonathan Butler) as he holds the Big Bible at Glendale Union Academy in 1960.

They told the story as it had come down to them through J. N. Loughborough and the White family. The experience is said to have taken place in the Harmon home in Portland, Maine, in 1845, when Ellen was a frail girl of 17. During family prayers she was taken off in vision. While in vision, she stepped over to the table, picked up the large family Bible and, holding it closed, placed it on her left hand, stretched it out at arm's length, and held it for about half an hour. Although, Loughborough had said the huge volume was held open, W. C. (Willie) White says his parents told him it was held closed.1

There were other Bibles—not as large as this one which were held open during vision. At 18½ pounds, the Big Bible is so heavy that there are very few people who can hold it at arm's length for even a minute. The longest it has been held by anyone was two and a half minutes by Walla Walla College student Donald Van Tassel.<sup>2</sup> (Another Walla Walla student built a wooden brace inside his shirt and held it even longer—much to the amusement of the students and consternation of Arthur White.)3

Despite the fact that in formal discussions of the tests of a prophet, physical phenomena are accorded a subordinate position, the dramatic nature of the Bible-holding incident, together with the existence of a tangible artifact, have made the story a particularly appealing one to Adventists.

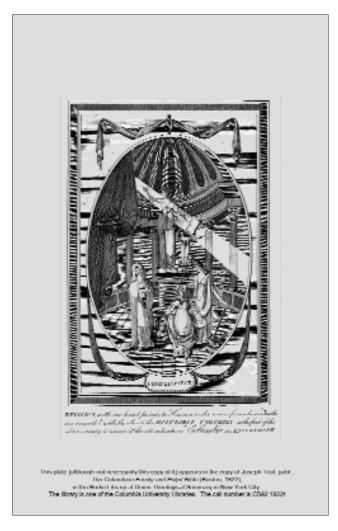
For all of its fame, the Big Bible has always been merely a heavy object. Until now, no one has looked closely at the volume itself or told the story of how it came to be. This article will tell that story, returning from time to time to that theme for a closer examination of the Big Bible story.4

In 1820, Joseph Teal and his family sailed from England to Boston. Teal may have had some connections to a British publisher, 5 at any rate he immediately launched his own publishing business in America. His first goal was to create an American Bible based on a British model.<sup>6</sup> Teal knew Americans would prefer American Bibles, published in America.

Teal engaged J. H. A. Frost, a well-established Boston printer, to create his Bible. He handed Frost a Bible from England, John Fowler's The Christian's Complete Family Bible, to use as the basis for this new American Bible.7 For much of the early portions of the Bible, Frost simply reset the biblical text and notes of Fowler's Bible, virtually line for line.



Teal called his book *The Columbian Family and Pulpit Bible*. Columbia was the female symbol of the United States before the arrival of the Statue of Liberty, so even Teal's title said to his potential customers, "This is an American Bible." The frontispiece of Teal's Bible depicted a woman kneeling before an altar to receive light from heaven. In Fowler's British Bible the woman was named "Britannia." Teal used the same picture, but changed the name to "Columbia."



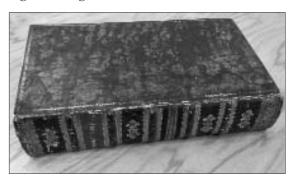
Teal renamed the kneeling figure "Columbia." In the British Bible he copied, she was called "Britannia."

Teal sold his Bible by subscription and issued it in installments. Envisioning a Bible more than 1,200 pages long with numerous engravings, Teal realized that it would be very difficult to fund the project if he waited till it was complete before he realized any income. Subscribers usually received their installments weekly, sometimes more frequently, so that the project, which began in January of 1820, was not completed until sometime in

1823.8 However, the Bible bears 1822 as its official date of publication.

This subscription system also made it possible for people of modest means like Robert Harmon, Ellen White's father, to purchase the Bible. In today's money, the Bible would cost between \$300 and \$400, but since he could pay for it a little at a time. Harmon and many other middleclass citizens could afford it.

Subscribers would collect the weekly installments, and when the Bible was complete, take it to a local book binder. In Robert Harmon's case, that binder was doubtless Nathan Sawyer of Portland, Maine. Two other Bibles bound by him have bindings identical to the original binding of the Big Bible.9



The Harmon family Bible—the Big Bible—looked very similar to this one when it was first purchased. Both copies were bound by Nathan Sawyer in Portland, Maine.

James and Ellen White never made any known public use of the Big Bible story. It was not written down or printed anywhere in Adventist literature until 1891, when J. N. Loughborough told it in a sermon at a General Conference Session.<sup>10</sup> The next year he elaborated on the story in his book, Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists. The long period—nearly fifty years between the time the incident is said to have occurred and the time it was first published allows plenty of time for the story to grow and change shape; for things to have "crawled" into the story, as A. G. Daniells later put it.

Loughborough connects the lifting of the Big Bible with Ellen Harmon's third vision, which took place in Portland, Maine, in early 1845. It is a vision Ellen White herself reports in Life Sketches,



J. N. Loughborough

with no mention of the Big Bible.

Ellen White did, however, tell the story of her holding a smaller Bible during a vision in the Thayer home in Randolph. Massachusetts. That Bible was held open as she pointed to

texts and quoted them correctly without seeing them. In Spiritual Gifts, Vol. II, she reports the incident by quoting a letter from Otis Nichols, an eye-witness to the incident.11

So there are two significant stories of Bible holding incidents: one involving the Thaver family Bible, the other the Harmon family Bible (the Teal Bible), better known as the Big Bible. The Big Bible was held in Portland, Maine, the Thayer Bible in Randolph, Mass. The Big Bible is a folio volume weighing 181/2 pounds, the Thayer Bible was a quarto volume of unknown but lesser weight. The Big Bible was held closed, the Thayer Bible was held open. A miracle of strength was involved in holding the Big Bible, while the miracle involved with the Thayer Bible was that Mrs. White quoted texts without looking at them. The story of the Thayer Bible was told by an eyewitness and published just 15 years after the event<sup>12</sup>, the story of the Big Bible is based on hearsay evidence and doesn't appear until nearly 50 years later.

All this happened many years after the Teal Bible was created; and in fact that Bible probably came into Robert Harmon's home three or four years before Ellen Harmon was even born in 1827.

The Teal Bible has its own secrets and peculiarities to share with us. The process of publishing in installments over a long period of time allowed Teal and his printer to insert different plates (engravings) in different copies of his Bible. Any one copy of Teal will have somewhere between 32 and 42 plates, but more than 60 different plates have been located in one or

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another of the known extant copies of Teal at various universities, archives, and shops of antiquarian book dealers.



At  $18\frac{1}{2}$  pounds,

the Big Bible

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The engraved title page of the Teal Bible announced it would include the Apocrypha, but many copies lacked those books.

The Harmon family copy of the Teal Bible includes the books of the Apocrypha in smaller type between the Testaments. The engraved title page in all the Teal Bibles claims they include the Apocrypha, but perhaps a third of them do not. Early Adventists were familiar with the Apocrypha; in fact, Ellen White included a few phrases from the Apocrypha in her account of her first vision.12

By the time Teal reached the book of Leviticus, he had engaged an American Bible scholar to improve the notes and commentary he was borrowing from Fowler's Bible. That scholar was the Reverend Jonathan Homer (1769-1848), a Harvard graduate and pastor of the First Congregational Church in Newton, Mass., 10 miles west of Boston. 13 Homer

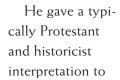
pastored that church for 57 years.

At first, Homer's changes had to fit in the same space as the Fowler's commentary so as not to disturb the overall layout of the page, but as work on the Bible progressed, he was given more and more freedom. By the time he reached Revelation, Homer was allowed to completely rewrite Fowler's notes.

Homer was justifiably proud of his work. He claimed that his notes on the dates and places of writing of the New Testament epistles "may be safely copied in future American editions of the Bible or New Testament, from the present Bible as a standard."14 Indeed, in the absence of international copyright laws, and given weak copyright protection in the United States at the time, copying notes, charts, maps, and engravings from one Bible to another was common practice. Sometimes credit was given, sometimes not.

Homer did not hesitate to place brackets around any passage that lacked support in the earliest manuscripts available. He cited scholarly

authorities whenever he questioned a passage, but assured his readers that these authorities maintained their full faith in the Scriptures. So while he exhibited a scholar's objectivity, he did not abandon his pastoral concerns.





**Homer thought Martin** Luther might be the third angel of Revelation.

the prophecies he found in Revelation. The interpretation was Protestant in that Homer saw the Pope as the prophetic "beast", and it was historicist in that he interpreted the prophecies as being fulfilled throughout history and believed some were yet to be fulfilled. When he came to the three angels of Revela-



Harriet Beecher Stowe based her storybook character, Parson Carryl, on Jonathan Homer, editor of the notes in Teal's Bible.

tion 14, he suggested that Luther might be the third angel because he was "boldly and vehemently uttering divine judgments against the corrupt bishop and church of Rome."

Homer's final, and to his mind, most convincing argument for the Bible being the Word of God was the argument from prophecy. In his concluding sentences at the very end of the Book of Revelation he wrote "If then the Scripture prophecies are accomplished . . . the Scripture must be the word of God. And if the Scripture is the word of God, the Christian religion must be true."

Homer was a delightfully quirky and obsessive preacher and scholar. As a boy, Oliver Wendell Holmes knew Homer, who was a friend of his father's. Years later he remembered him: "A slender, stooping, little old gentleman he was, with a sharp-angled wedge of a face, a senile voice, and an abundant flow of talk. His manner was kindly, and on certain subjects he conversed with an enthusiasm which sometimes excited a smile on the faces

of . . . the listeners."15

Other literary figures of the time also noticed Rev. Jonathan Homer. Harriet Beecher Stowe, in her book Oldtime Fireside Stories patterned Parson Carryl after Homer. 16 In her story, Parson Carryl is the same distracted, eccentric, impractical man as Jonathan Homer. Parson Carryl's wife dies (as did Jonathan Homer's wife<sup>17</sup>), and when his young housekeeper's presence in his household fosters gossip among older jealous widows in the church, Parson Carryl marries the housekeeper. Homer did have a beloved housekeeper, although he never married her. In his will he made a bequest to his "faithful and affectionate friend, Susan H. Domet, who has dwelt with me many years."18

Using the storyteller's voice and homespun language, Mrs. Stowe describes Homer's preaching: "He was gret on 'texts,' the doctor was. When he hed a p'int to prove, he'd jest go through the Bible, and drive all the texts ahead o' him like a flock o' sheep; and then, if there was a text that seemed agin him, why, he'd come out with his Greek and Hebrew, and kind o' chase it 'round a spell...I tell you, there wa'nt no text in the Bible that could stand again the doctor when his blood was up."19

Homer was accomplished in languages, both ancient and modern. He knew Biblical Greek and Hebrew, as well as Latin, German, Dutch and French. After he was 60 years of age, he taught himself to read Spanish



Jonathan Homer's diary.

**Even if one** concludes that the story of the Big Bible lacks adequate historical support, the

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with the Bible remains the legend about her holding it in vision. But even if one believes that God directly intervenes to interrupt the course of nature with miracles, one needs to be cautious about accepting claims for miracles. After all, eight eye-witnesses swore they saw and handled the golden plates from which Joseph Smith if one believes translated the Book of Mormon; but were they in a state of ecstatic suggestibility? In the case of

> credibility of the witnesses making the claims. Loughborough says the Big Bible story was

miracles, our only recourse is to examine the

There is no way of knowing if Ellen Harmon

herself ever studied the Teal Bible or read Jonathan Homer's notes. Her only connection

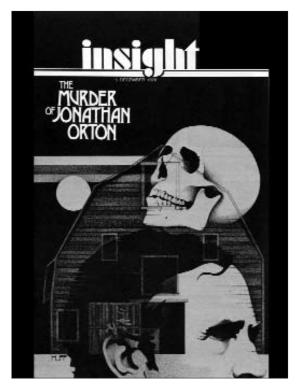
**Eight witnesses claim to have** seen and handled Joseph Smith's golden plates.

told him by Ellen White's parents and sister, but he doesn't say when or where that happened. The main difficulty with his story is that Loughborough is not always a trustworthy witness.

Loughborough was a

devoted pioneer Adventist evangelist and leader. He did much to establish the church's work in California.<sup>20</sup> But when writing history he often relied on his memory, and his memory did not serve him well. Even when documentation was available to him, Loughborough made errors. A few minor errors would not be a problem, but Loughborough's errors are numerous and fall into a pattern; they always enhance the reputation of Ellen G. White.

For instance, in telling the story of the murder of Jonathan Orton, Loughborough says that Orton expressed fears for his life, but "did not seem to have any idea who it was that wanted to take his life."21 Loughborough wrote this in spite of the fact that 26 years earlier he himself had



Loughborough said Orton knew who wanted to kill him, but later said he didn't know.

reported the murder in the Review and said: "Brother Orton told me last Friday . . . that he feared P[addock] would try to take his life."22

Paddock and Orton had been involved in two lawsuits, and Paddock had repeatedly threatened Orton's life, but Loughborough was more interested in linking Orton's death to a prediction made by Ellen White. She had warned Orton and others several months earlier that Satan was angry with them and would seek to harm them.

Rolf Pohler, a German scholar, has said that to classify Loughborough as "extremely careless" was "almost a euphemism." Pohler placed Loughborough's work "among the worst examples of SDA apologetics" for its "misleading approach"

and "irresponsible use of the documents."23

Loughborough made some inadvertent errors. For instance, when he discussed



Loughborough's books are marred by a pattern of errors.

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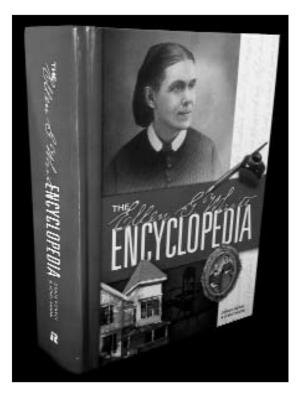
claims for

miracles.

William Foy as one of two men who received visions prior to Ellen White, he said Foy died shortly after the Great Disappointment. Actually, Foy lived until 1893.24

Loughborough tells how the Millerite Adventist Stockbridge Howland was placed under guardianship because he was too generous in his support of the Advent movement. The guardianship was soon removed, Loughborough says, because the neighbors realized how foolish it was to impose it on a competent civil engineer like Howland.<sup>25</sup> As a matter of fact, probate records indicate that the guardianship was not removed for 13 years.

Loughborough's work is also marred by an occasional direct distortion of his sources. When he republished his book as The Great Second Advent Movement in 1905, he changed the wording of a letter he "quotes."26



The new Ellen G. White Encyclopedia makes scant mention of the Big Bible story.

In a passage where Loughborough quotes James White's Word to the Little Flock he omits the crucial words "and shut door" without ellipsis. The omitted words would have countered the argument Loughborough was making.

Despite these errors, it is, of course, possible that Loughborough, in telling the story of the Big Bible, was entirely accurate and that Ellen White's parents and sister did tell him the story just as he related it. Some experts in Ellen White studies, whom I respect and appreciate, do feel that Loughborough's testimony is sufficiently credible in this case. But the new Ellen G. White Encyclopedia

makes scant mention of the Big Bible story, noting only that she is "said to have" held the Bible for "several minutes." Then adds that it was witnessed by "many people."28 But Loughborough only mentions three



Willie White displays the Big Bible at Elmshaven.

people whom he claimed witnessed the incident involving the Big Bible—the Harmon family Bible.

But it is also possible that Loughborough's familiarity with the story of the Bible-holding incident during the Randolph vision, together with the existence of the impressive artifact—the Teal Bible—merged in his mind to create the story of the Big Bible. Willie White later said his parents related the story to him. However, neither of them were eyewitnesses, as James was not present and Ellen was in vision, not aware of her own actions. Willie's account came well after Loughborough's story was in wide circulation.

In the earliest known mention of the Harmon family's copy of the Teal Bible, in Life Sketches of James and Ellen White, 1880 edition, James White says that between 1860 and 1880, both his and Ellen's parents had passed away, and the family Bibles of both families had "fallen into our hands as an invaluable legacy." One of the Bibles, James noted, was published in 1822. "These dear old books, made still more precious by the marks of age, dimly bear the names of their first owners in gilt letters on their worn covers."29 If the 1822

**Subscribers** 

usually

received their

installments

weekly, some-

times more

frequently, so

that the

project, which

began in January

of 1820, was

not completed

until sometime

in 1823.

Bible—the Big Bible—was the more precious because of its miraculous past, James White makes no mention of it.

Even if one concludes that the story of the Big Bible lacks adequate historical support, the legendary story conveys a symbolic truth. Ellen White did indeed uphold the Bible in her writings. She always considered hers a "lesser light" to lead to the "greater light" of the Bible. 30 In one

Pharaoh and his Host Drowned, from the Teal

This subscription system also made it possible for people of

modest means

like Robert

Harmon, Ellen

White's father,

to purchase

the Bible.

of her last sermons, she held up her own Bible and said, "Brethren and Sisters, I commend to you this Book."31 So the Big Bible can be a symbol of how her writings upheld the Bible. The Bible is also a tangible physical link to Ellen White's childhood home. It remains, as James White said, "an invaluable legacy."

The pictures in Teal's Bible must have fascinated, and sometimes horrified, Ellen during her childhood. There was Samson tearing a lion limb from limb, a terrified Pharaoh and his horse being swallowed up in the Red Sea, the woman about to drop a millstone on the head of Abimelech, and Paul shaking a viper from his hand. More comforting would have been Boaz and Ruth, Samuel and Eli, or Christ Blessing the Children.

Teal used only a few of Fowler's engravings in his Bible. The image areas were small, the figures still smaller, and the art work often crude and unnatural. So Teal improved the illustrations in his Bible by hiring his own engravers.

These engravers often took their patterns from other engravings, paintings, or drawings. So Teal's engraver might copy quite closely an image from Brown's 1813 Self-Interpreting Bible or some other earlier Bible. Or, possibly both Brown's engraver and Teal's engraver were copying from a still earlier exemplar.

Teal commissioned John Chorley, an engraver on whom he called frequently, to copy Raphael's Madonna of the Chair, although he doubtless copied from some other engraver's rendition of it. The original painting would not have been available to him as it resides in the Palatina Gallery of the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, Italy. Mary holds the baby Jesus, with his cousin, John the Baptist, looking on.

Teal borrowed the work of other engravers who also based their work on earlier paintings.



Samuel and Eli, an engraving patterned after Copley's painting.

His Samuel and Eli was rendered by the British engraving firm, Butterworth and Livesay, who had patterned their work—without giving credit—on a painting by John Singleton Copley. Copley had used, as his model for Eli, the face of a poor, maimed beggar from the streets of London. The man, who had lost both legs in battle, hobbled around the studio on crutches to pose as the distinguished image of the Jewish high priest. Meanwhile, little Samuel was modeled by Copley's own seven-year old son.

Benjamin West, an American painter living in England, became quite wealthy, not just by selling his paintings to the rich, but by commissioning engraved copies to be sold to middle-class people. An engraving of his painting, Daniel Interpreting to Belshazzar the Writing on the Wall appeared in a few copies of Teal's Bible, but without listing either the artist or the engraver.<sup>32</sup>

One rare plate in some Teal Bibles is an image titled Adam Naming the Creation, engraved specifically for Teal by O. H. Throop. Unlike pictures of the Garden of Eden rendered by fundamental-



Adam Naming the Creation

ist Christians, there were no dinosaurs in the early nineteenth century images. Ironically, the first dinosaur to be described scientifically was Megalosaurus, named in 1824 by William Buckland.33 So, just as Throop was engraving his image of the Biblical story of Adam naming of the animals, scientists were about to name a whole new order of creatures.

Between the testaments, many copies of the Teal Bible include a large fold-out Family Register, embellished with engraved symbolic figures.



Robert Harmon never filled in the Family Register, so James White registered his family after he inherited the Bible.

In the Harmon family Bible, this register records James and Ellen White's family. Apparently Robert Harmon never filled it in. This is not surprising, since these huge family Bibles were not really study Bibles; rather they were pieces of sacred furniture, showing everyone that the family revered the Bible.

At the top of the Family Register is a symbol of Christ in the form of a pelican nourishing its young with its own blood. It was believed that the pelican, in times of drought or famine, would peck her own breast in order to draw blood which she then fed to her chicks to sustain them, just as Christ shed his blood to sustain his followers.

Since Teal had used artwork from other Bibles so liberally, it is not surprising that engravings he had commissioned soon appeared in the works of other Bible publishers. John Henry White published the first Bible ever printed in Canada in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1832.34 He reprinted 14 of Teal's plates just as they had appeared in Teal's own Bible

"These dear old books, made still more precious by the marks of age, dimly bear the names of their first owners in gilt letters on their

worn covers."



A complete copy of a Teal Bible has been scanned and will be published as an eBook.

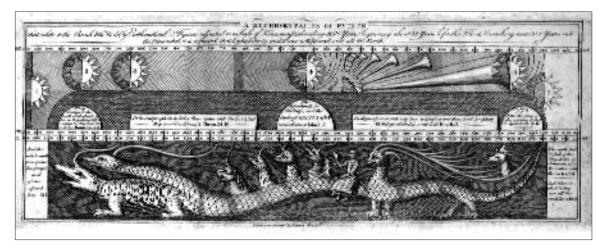
Teal's title page for his Columbian Family and Pulpit Bible announced it as the "First American Edition," but there never was a second or later edition. Possibly the venture was not financially successful. Teal and his Bible would have largely disappeared from history had it not been that Robert Harmon bought a copy.

ond century, when the millennium was expected to dawn. So, according to this prophetic chart, the second coming of Christ was still several hundred years in the future. That relaxed expectation would change dramatically when William Miller arrived on the scene. The Big Bible lacked that prophetic chart, so the charts to which the young Ellen Harmon was exposed had a much shorter timeline than the one in some copies of Teal.

In 1919, a president of the Adventist General Conference, A. G. Daniells, expressed his skepticism about the story of the Bible holding incident, saying that if he were in the audience and a minister was expanding on that topic, he would wonder how much of it was authentic and how much had "crawled" into the story over the years.<sup>35</sup> Yet Daniells himself later included the story in his book, The Abiding Gift of Prophecy, billing it as an "accompaniment," but not a proof of prophetic inspiration.<sup>36</sup>

More than twenty Adventist colleges and universities outside the United States have Ellen

> G. White Research Centers. and each of these has now been supplied with a copy of a Teal Bible, helping to make it one of the church's most wellknown historic artifacts.



Lizar's prophetic chart put the end of the world many years in the future.

There is even an ironic link to the millenarian beliefs of the Adventists in a few copies of Teal's Bible. A prophetic chart, created back in the 1790s, is found in the Book of Revelation. In this chart the apocalyptic beast with seven heads and ten horns appears as a giant lizard below a timeline (after all, the engraver's name was "Lizars"). The timeline projects forward to the twenty-sec-

In conclusion, we can say that James White's view of the Big Bible can still be ours today. He said the Bible is an "invaluable legacy." Indeed it is. It is an heirloom, a precious keepsake, the only physical object we have that comes from the home of Ellen White's childhood and youth.

The Big Bible is also a window into the history of the Bible in America; it is a museum of early nineteenth century Biblical art, and a testimony to the magnificent scholarship of the Reverend Doctor Jonathan Homer. It provides insights into

the orthodoxy of New England Congregationalism in the early nineteenth century, and exhibits the heyday of the historicist school of prophetic interpretation. In short, the Teal Bible is not only an invaluable heirloom for our Adventist family, it is an invaluable primary source for American religious and cultural history.

Finally, the legendary story conveys a symbolic truth. Ellen White did indeed uphold the Bible in her writings even if she never "held up" this one. She always considered hers a "lesser light" to lead to the "greater light" of the Bible.<sup>37</sup> In one of her last sermons, she held up her own Bible and said, "Brethren and Sisters, I commend to you this Book."38

So Joseph Teal's Bible lives on, though rarely consulted, in the archives and special collections of elite secular universities like Harvard and the University of Michigan, sometimes in little church collections, sometimes in prestigious depositories like the Library of Congress and the American Antiquarian Society. But if Teal's Bible gets little attention in these academic settings, the story attached to it in Adventist circles ensures that it will delight and fascinate hundreds, perhaps thousands, who see it at Adventist headquarters or at one of the church's educational institutions around the world.

Ron Graybill isa former Associate Secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate and a retired history professor. His books (Ellen G. White and Church Race Relations [1970] and Mission to Black America [1971]) and many articles on Adventist history in church journals during the 1970s and 80s are among the most frequently



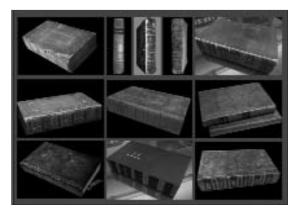
cited sources for the recently published Ellen G. White Encyclopedia. He spent the last dozen years of active service as a community health coordinator at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

#### **Footnotes**

1. Arthur L. White, Ellen G. White: The Early Years, Vol. 1, 1827-1862 (Review and Herald Publ. Assn.: Washington, D.C., 1985), 92. A typical report of the Bible's visit to a college is n.a., "Elder White Visits Campus," North Pacific Union Gleaner, Vol. 43, (Feb. 10, 1948): 8. The article includes the passage: "Also on display was the  $18^{1}/_{2}$  pound Bible which Mrs. White

held for half an hour on her extended left hand while in vision. One of the students here was able to hold the Bible in a similar position for one minute and ten seconds."

- 2. Note in the flyleaf of the Harmon family copy of the Teal Bible, July 6, 1978.
- 3. This story is based on hearsay evidence so should be treated with caution. Supposedly the prankster was one George Norwood, who earned himself expulsion from school for the caper.
  - 4. Dr. T. Joe Willey purchased a copy of the Teal Bible in



Of the 3000 Teal Bibles printed, more than 60 are extant.

2012, and lent it to me for study over the past two years. In preparation for rebinding the Bible, it had to be completely disassembled. This allowed me to scan the entire 1,200 pages, and I will soon be releasing a digital PDF copy of the entire volume.

- 5. Letter by Jonathan Homer, entitled "Sources of the common English Bible," Newton, MA, February 23, 1838, in, Supplement to the Comprehensive commentary ... / edited, under the supervision of William Jenks (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1869): "A Guide to the study and reading of the Bible," Part 1, Appendix A, 55.
- 6. The Bible was initially advertised under other titles: "American edition of the Grand folio Bible." in Boston Intelligencer, (March 18, 1820); "Columbian folio Bible", in Boston Intelligencer, (March 18, 1820); "The Columbian grand folio Bible, or Library of divine knowledge", in Columbian Centinel, (Dec. 29, 1821).
- 7. The Christian's complete family Bible (Ormskirk: printed and published by John Fowler, 1810).
- 8. A few copies include Orramel Hinkley Throop's engraving, Adam Naming the Creation, which was "Engraved for J. Teal's Edition," in Boston in 1823.

**Even if one** concludes that the story of the Big Bible lacks adequate historical support, the legendary story conveys a symbolic truth.

- 9. One of the Sawyer bindings is on the Teal Bible at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, the other belongs, as of 2014, to an antiquarian book dealer in Providence, RI.
- 10. J. N. Loughborough, "Early Experiences," *Daily Bulletin of the General Conference*, Vol. 4 (March 18, 1891): 145; J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, Mich.: General Conference Assn., 1892), 103-104.
- 11. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. II, (Battle Creek, MI: James White, 1860), 77.
- 12. Ron Graybill, "Under the Triple Eagle: Early Adventist Use of the Apocrypha," *Adventist Heritage* (Winter, 1987): 25–32.
- 13. Henry Martyn Dexter, "Notice of Rev. Jonathan Homer, D.D." in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. 2, 1835–1855* (Boston: Mass. Hist. Society, 1880), 275–278.
- 14. Jonathan Homer, "Preface, by the American Editor, to the Columbian Family And Pulpit Bible," *The Columbian Family and Pulpit Bible* (Boston: Joseph Teal, 1822).
- 15. "A Characteristic Letter by Oliver Wendell Holmes," *The Outlook*, Vol. 53 (June 13, 1896): 1107.
- 16. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Oldtown Fireside Stories* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low, & Searle, 1871), 77–110.
  - 17. Anna Curtis Homer (1753-1824).
- 18. The New England Historical and Genealogical Register; v. 102 (January 1968): 89.
  - 19. Harriet Beecher Stowe, Oldtown Fireside Stories, 84.
- 20. Ella May Robinson, *Lighter of Gospel Fires: John N. Loughborough* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1954); Brian E. Strayer, *J. N. Loughborough: The Last of the Adventist Pioneers* (Review and Herald Publ. Ass'n: Hagerstown, MD, 2013).
- 21. J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and progress of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, Mich.: General Conference Association of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1892), 270.
- 22. J.N. Loughborough to Bro. Aldrich, in "Assassination of Bro. Orton, of Rochester, N.Y.," *Review and Herald*, (March 20, 1866): 127; Ron Graybill, "The Murder of Jonathan Orton," *Insight*, Vol. 9 (December 5, 1978): 8–12.
- 23. Rolf Pohler, "'And the Door was Shut': Seventh-day Adventists and the Shut Door Doctrine in the Decade after the Great Disappointment," (typewritten, Andrews University, 1978): 48–49; Pohler's paper is not footnoted. Canright's charge against Loughborough is found in D. M. Canright, *The Life of Mrs. E. G. White, Seventh-day Adventist Prophet* (Cincinnati: Standard Pub. Co., 1919), 88.

- 24. Delbert Baker, *The Unknown Prophet: Revised and Updated*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2013), 159.
- 25. J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and progress of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 59.
- 26. J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 119, cf J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1905), 223
- 27. James White, *A Word to the 'Little Flock*, (Brunswick, ME.: James White, 1847), 22, cf J. N. Loughborough, *Rise and progress of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 128.
- 28. Denis Fortin, "Visions of Ellen G. White," in Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon, eds., *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* (Hagerstown, MD.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 2013), 1249.
- 29. James and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of James and Ellen White* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Review and Herald Publ. Ass'n., 1880), 324.
- 30. Ellen G. White, "An Open Letter From Mrs. E. G. White to All Who Love the Blessed Hope," *Review and Herald*, Vol. 80, (January 20, 1903): 15.
- 31. William Ambrose Spicer, *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, c1937), 30.
- 32. The original painting by Benjamin West is in the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Teal's engraver may have used, as his exemplar, a popular engraving of West's work by British engraver Valentine Green.
- 33. Martin J. S. Rudwick, *Worlds Before Adam: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Reform* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 61.
- 34. John Henry White, publ., *The Holy Bible in Three Volumes Containing the Old and New Testaments* (Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1832).
- 35. "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in our Teaching of Bible and History," in *Minutes of the Bible and History Teacher's Conference*, (July 30, 1919), 1190.
- 36. A. G. Daniells, *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1936): 273.
- 37. Ellen G. White, "An Open Letter From Mrs. E. G. White to All Who Love the Blessed Hope," *Review and Herald*, Vol. 80, (January 20, 1903): 15.
- 38. William Ambrose Spicer, *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1937): 30.

#### **The Teal Bible**

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# Ellen White: Centennial Prayer | BY JIM PEDERSEN

Prayer offered at the 100th anniversary of the exact hour of Ellen White's death at her Elmshaven home, St. Helena, California.

#### Dear Lord.

AT THIS HOUR, at this moment, on this ground that is truly made sacred by your presence, we gather to remember your servant, your messenger, Ellen Gould Harmon White, who lived her final years here. One hundred years ago at this time she entered her rest.

Lord, we come today, grateful that on this spot, in this place, your servant lived and shared her ministry, not just with people of her own years and days, but coming down to us today, and beyond.

Lord, we are grateful for your messenger, a young lady who was chosen after a couple of gentlemen said no: someone who was willing to follow your leading, to be part of your mission. Someone who by your calling served you well and helped to establish your church, that we know as the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whose members continue to work to spread your message of prophetic urgency—the three angels' messages of a soon-coming savior. We are grateful for the way that she was willing to be used by you; to be touched by you to share those words, those thoughts, those messages with us. We are grateful for the way that they have touched our lives and the lives of others. I pray that we will continue to be touched, to share those messages with others.

Forgive us when we have not paid attention to those messages from you that have come through her.

Forgive us when we have not shown the kind of respect for her writings that we should have.

Forgive us when we have relegated her to the past, to something that is in our history, but of very little consequence to our life today. May we continue to share her messages in the spirit that she gave; to the spirit which she pointed and that was to Jesus, our savior. As the focus

of her ministry, she kept showing us and pointing us to her friend Jesus. May we cherish that message as part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with love, grace, and in the way that she herself did in the best sense of the word, in a progressive way.

Forgive us when we have used her writings in a way that she never intended.

Forgive us when we have made her into something that she was not.

Forgive us when we have looked to her instead of to Scripture for our own study.

Forgive us when we have used her writings to prove a point that agrees with us, merely us.

Forgive us when we have used her writings to create a box to put ourselves, our children, and anyone else in, when that is not what she had in mind. She kept pointing us to Jesus.

Lord, keep us looking forward. Keep us in the spirit of what she has written. Keep our eyes on the Jesus that she loved, the Jesus that she longed to see. And as we stand here on this sacred ground, ground that was visited on numerous occasions by angels from your heavenly throne more times than we can understand, that this place is sacred; we are special in your eyes, because your son died for us.

We thank you Lord for the ministry of Ellen White. May it prove to be a blessing to us and to the world around us as we share the love of Jesus and the precious promises found in the Bible.

In Jesus' lovely name, I pray, Amen.

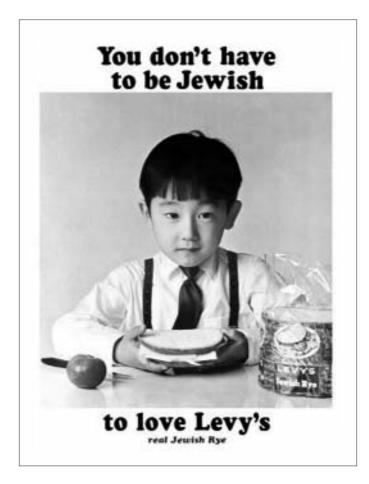
Jim Pedersen is the president of the Northern California Conference. He



has also served as NCC assistant to the president, as conference executive secretary, and as senior pastor of the Napa Community church. He worked for 20 years as a pastor in the Southern California Conference.

# Not Talking To Ourselves Any More: Adventists, Ellen White,

and the Scholars | BY ERIC ANDERSON AND BEN MCARTHUR



New York bakery came up with a classic advertising campaign a few years ago. Using a poster adorned with a smiling Asian man, the bakery's ads bluntly declared: "You don't have to be Jewish to like Levy's real Jewish rye." Two recent events carry a similar message for Seventh-day Adventists: "You don't have to be an Adventist to be interested in Ellen G. White."

Without any help from Adventist publicists or evangelists, *Smithsonian Magazine* put the Adventist prophet on a list of the "one hundred most significant Americans of all time." Not "notable American women," mind you, or "important religious leaders," but the one hundred most significant control of the c

nificant Americans of all time.

About the same time, a major university press published a well-received scholarly study entitled *Ellen Harmon White*: *American Prophet*. "She ranks as one of the most gifted and influential religious leaders in American history," declares Oxford University Press. The authors are a disparate lot, including Adventists, non-Adventist Christians, ex-Adventists, and others who might be described as "none of the above." The Adventist contributors are not heretics or rebels, by the way, but teachers and scholars "in good and regular standing" from Walla Walla University, Andrews University, Southwestern Adventist University, Southern Adventist University, Washington Adventist University, La Sierra University, the General Conference Archives, and Pacific Union College.

The scholars are not interested in either debunking this "American prophet" or defending her. The goal is simply to understand her, to put her into historical context. They are eager to write American history in its full complexity, including individuals and movements that were once dismissed as marginal. Without expecting complete originality or demanding personal impeccability from their biographical subject, they are intrigued by her influence and successful institution-building.

This is an unfamiliar situation. We are used to thinking something like this: "You must be an Adventist to understand Mrs. White. Outsiders will probably be unfair, studying her only to discredit our denomination." We feel vaguely defensive, often holding off any discussion of Ellen White until the final stages in the initiation of a convert. We are not used to communicating with the likes of *Smithsonian Magazine* or Oxford University Press.

We tentatively celebrate the new attention, of course, but we are also uneasy. Will we lose control of the discussion of Ellen White and our history if well-informed outsiders start asking questions and venturing conclusions?

Our situation is comparable to that of Republican Party leaders the day Abraham Lincoln died. "Now he belongs to the ages," murmured a member of Lincoln's cabinet as the President breathed his last. As Lincoln moved from live politician to martyred statesmen, his party colleagues only gradually learned what "belonging to the ages" entailed. They might resolve to preserve his memory and be faithful to his teachings but they could no longer control his name and image. Everybody could become involved in deciding Lincoln's legacy—even people who did not vote for him or, eventually, folks who lived long after.

Something similar happened when the United States declared an official holiday in honor of Martin Luther King. Creating the holiday was a dramatic way of saying "This man is an American hero." In other words, neither the King family nor certain kinds of Christians nor black people in general controlled the agenda. All sorts of people could now cite his words and interpret his achievements. You did not have to be a victim of segregation to appreciate him.

Seventh-day Adventists should not be afraid of wider discussion of Ellen White—any more than Americans should fret about Democrats quoting Lincoln or former racists citing King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Even if readers of Ellen Harmon White or Smithsonian Magazine don't understand "the year/day principle," it is still a great victory, is it not, to have them saying "What a remarkable woman! Why didn't we know this before?" Their reaction suggests that we have stopped talking to ourselves.

In short, the neutral, objective, non-evangelistic approach of scholars can be useful to Adventists. These academics speak a specialized language, with an emphasis on certain kinds of evidence and specific, focused arguments. Even the believers among them do not, when writing as scholars, explain historical events by invoking providence or divine inspiration.

But then neither does an Adventist physician writing a scientific article on the dangers of smoking or an Adventist geologist employing conventional periodization to classify dinosaur bones. Though the writers of Ellen Harmon White use secular language, they do not thereby affirm that Ellen White was uninspired or that divine revelation is an impossibility.

People notice that it is hard to tell the Adventists from the "non-Adventists," the believers from the agnostics in this new book—and there is a good reason for that. All of the contributors "adhere to the most rigorous standards of critical vet appreciative historical inquiry" (as the distinguished Christian historian Grant Wacker put it). That's the way you move from talking to yourself to engaging the wider world. That's why Ellen Harmon White is published by Oxford University Press rather than Pacific Press.

Academic history has already broadened our understanding of Ellen White. Some Adventists have (at last) learned to be more careful about claiming uniqueness or perfection for her work. If Ellen Harmon White is a good indication of the direction of future discussion, we will be hearing much more about Ellen White as speaker, as practical theologian, and as apocalyptic preacher. The academic approach has helped us better understand the use and reception of her testimonies and her complex interaction with denominational leadership. Even the most skeptical historian cannot help but notice that people "who adopted her recommended life style" live "substantially longer and healthier lives."

We scholars never have the last word in matters of faith, of course. We ought to recognize the limitations of our documents and footnotes and cautious hypotheses. We should admit that as scholars we cannot explain the power of her words to change people's behavior. But all Adventists have reason to celebrate the new "outside" interest in our history.

You don't have to be Adventist to be interested in Ellen G. White.

Ben McArthur is professor of history at Southern Adventist University. His



biography of A. G. Daniells is scheduled to appear from Pacific Press in early 2016.

Eric Anderson is the Walter C. Utt Professor of History at Pacific Union



College. A graduate of Andrews University and the University of Chicago, he has written on a wide range of subjects, including Reconstruction in North Carolina, philanthropy for black education, and Ellen White's understanding of the Civil War. From 2005 to 2014, he was president of Southwestern Adventist University.

# Ellen White on Ordaining Women: "The Question is Not for

Men to Settle" | BY GILBERT VALENTINE



t the beginning of a landmark series of articles in *Spectrum* in 1970, Herold Weiss and the late Roy Branson sounded a prophetic challenge to the church concerning the need to rescue Ellen White from those who would misuse her. She was so often quoted on opposite sides of Adventist theological debates and made to speak with so many accents that Weiss and Branson wondered whether she would soon completely lose her own voice. "The result of having so many Ellen Whites is that the Adventist church may soon have no Ellen White at all," they warned. "Among the top priorities of the church," they suggested, was the urgent need to establish "more objective ways of understanding what Ellen White said."

As the church marks the centennial of Ellen White's death on July 16, 1915, and forty-five years after *Spectrum* began its series, the call is as prophetic and timely as ever.

Weiss and Branson suggested a number of important steps the church should take in order to make possible a more consistent interpretation of White's inspired writings. One of these critically important steps was the need to take seriously the task of recovering "the social and intellectual milieu in which she lived and wrote." It was an imperative to recognize "the economic, political, religious, and educational issues that were the context of her words," because "either Ellen White lives for us first in her own cultural situation or she does not live for us at all."<sup>2</sup>

This did not mean that understanding Ellen White in terms of the nineteenth century would make what she said irrelevant to the twentieth century. To the contrary, "finding how her words pertained to the past century is a necessary step in establishing their relevance to our own. Like most things in nature, words do not live in a vacuum." We might add that neither do ideas live in a vacuum.

Following the call from Branson and Weiss, the later 1970s and early 1980s saw the emergence of a wide ranging scholarly study that has helped the church enormously

in understanding Ellen White in her nineteenth century context. Gary Land, Jonathan Butler, Ronald Numbers, Ron Graybill and George Knight, among others, helped document the contextual background, although at times these studies seemed iconoclastic and caused the church discomfort. Later, some of Knight's doctoral students continued the process less jarringly and, with Knight's prodding, church publishing houses caught the vision of what had to be done.

One hundred years after the death of Ellen White the need for a critical understanding of her context is even more urgent if the church is to continue to benefit from her words and her ideas. In 2015 there is still much to be discovered about her nineteenth century context that will help keep her words alive in the twenty-first century.

#### A Case Study: Women in Ministry

A particularly helpful illustration of how the exploration of historical context helps in understanding Ellen White is a fresh critical awareness of the deep social changes occurring in Australia and New Zealand at the time Ellen White resided there. This new awareness provides an important background for understanding the significant cluster of Ellen White's radical (for her time) mid-1890s comments that urged the church to make space for women to take up fulltime roles in public ministry. The cultural and historical context of these particular statements is especially relevant to current toxic church debates about formally recognizing the role of women in pastoral ministry.

In an earlier article on Ellen White's provocative statements encouraging women to take a more public role in pastoral ministry and in Christian welfare, I noted that the statements take on fresh relevance when understood against the background of Ellen White's exposure to, and her familiarity with, both the women's suffrage movement and the liquor law reform agitation (Temperance) in New Zealand and Australia in 1893–1895.3 When Ellen White resided in the southern hemisphere, social change of momentous proportions was sweeping New Zealand and Australia as both countries moved to give women the right to vote in the election of their national leaders. Ellen White was not unaware of these social movements.

This present article draws attention to another newly discovered contextual dimension that is perhaps even more important for understanding Ellen White's call for women to engage in public work and pastoral ministry. In July, 1895, her call to the church in this regard had a radical edge and clearly pushed social boundaries.

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.4

Three years later Ellen White was even more assertive in her call for a wider role for women when she wrote:

Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman's work. If a woman puts her housework in the hands of a faithful, prudent helper, and leaves her children in good care, while she engages in the work, the Conference should have wisdom to understand the justice of her receiving wages. . .

. . . should not such labor be looked upon as being as rich in results as the work of the ordained ministers? Should it not command the hire of the laborer? Would not such workers be defrauded if they were not paid?

This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it.5

"The result of having so many Ellen Whites is that the Adventist church may soon have no **Ellen White** 

at all."

#### The Maitland Daily Mercury

November 28, 1894 p 4.

#### A Deaconess for St. Mary's

"Last evening a meeting of the parishioners of St Mary's parish, West Maitland, was held in St Mary's Hall for the purpose of deciding upon the engaging of a deaconess to assist the incumbent in his multifarious duties. There were between fifty and sixty persons present. . . . The Chairman announced the object of the meeting, and pointed out the necessity of having such a worker in the parish . . . . A deaconess would be of great assistance in the spiritual welfare of the parish . . . a young lady named Miss Reid, a public school teacher, who was in receipt of a salary of £ 120 a year; but who was so devoted to the work of Christ that she was willing to give herself up entirely to the work at a much smaller income. . . . It was pointed out that before being ordained the young lady would have to undergo a course of reading in certain subjects, and to pass an examination . . . and the ceremony of admitting her as a deaconess would probably take place in the parish church."

Ellen White later became so deeply convicted on the need for such women in ministry that she felt it to be her duty to "create a fund from my tithe money" to ensure that such women ministers would be paid, and she used it to support the women in their ministry.<sup>6</sup> As Arthur Patrick has noted insightfully, only the conviction that such men and women had the call "to preach and teach the word" in a recognized authentic ministry could enable a Seventh-day Adventist to so use the sacred tithe."7

The sudden appearance in the 1890s of this type of counsel to "set apart" women in ministry and pay them has challenged leaders in the Adventist Church: How best to understand the counsel and how to implement it? Previous studies by Bert Haloviak, Ginger Hanks Harwood, and Beverly Beem have sought to understand this provocative counsel by looking at the context within the Adventist church.8 This paper suggests that the context of developments in the wider religious world in which Ellen White lived provides an even more crucial background.

The social and religious context of the 1890s statements was characterized by a vigorous public discussion occurring in the Anglican Church and in the public press, both in Australia and New Zealand, about the need for women in ministry and their role as deaconesses. What was the role of deaconess? Adventists today, conditioned by their own traditional use of the term may fail to understand the significance of the debate in the Australian context of the 1890s and thus miss or minimize the significance of Ellen White's challenge to the church.

In Adventist practice the deaconess role is limited to an internal church function, confined to preparing for communion (bread and grape juice), assisting with removing the cloth from the communion table, assisting with foot-washing (towels and basins), welcoming folk to church, caring for the flowers, assisting with the church cleaning roster, and helping with Dorcas work. Occasionally the role might mean visiting elderly members or shut-ins, although in most Adventist churches this task is usually attended to by the elders. As the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia explains, traditionally deaconesses are not ordained.9

The Anglican understanding of the term "deaconess" related somewhat to these Adventist kinds of tasks, but in other ways was markedly different. A deaconess in the developing Anglican usage of the 1890s was a professionally trained, paid, full-time employed ministerial role in the church. Whether that ministry should be fully equated with the traditional third order of clergy the Deacon (with its administrative level of Arch-Deacon) was a topic of debate. This paper argues that Ellen White and her fellow church members in Australia and New Zealand during the mid-1890s would have been aware of this important debate; the discussion featured in public newspapers.

At the time of Ellen White's residence in Australia, the Anglican Church constituted the dominant majority of the population in every state of Australia and in New Zealand. The greatest concentrations were in Sydney (forty-six percent) and around Hobart in southeast Tasmania. In some local regions around Sydney the density reached fifty-five percent.<sup>10</sup> Consequently Anglican Church affairs were





deemed of importance by editors who regularly published lengthy articles on Anglican matters in their newspapers—papers which Adventists also read. Church discussions often became public discussions.11 Furthermore, new converts to Adventism often came from an Anglican background. The Lacey family, for example, was one such family. In May 1895, Ellen White's fortyfour year old son, W. C. White married twentyone year old May Lacey, a former, very active, Anglican from Tasmania. The Lacey family had migrated from England and settled in Tasmania in the early 1880s. They became close friends with the large family of their local Anglican minister in Newtown, Hobart. May and her siblings spent much time together with the children of their minister friend. Until her death in 1890 May's mother, a skilled church organist, continued playing the large pipe organ at St John's Anglican church in Newtown, even after she became an Adventist. 12 Following the marriage of May and Willie, May's aging father David and his new wife and family moved to Cooranbong near the new College where they became close neighbors of Ellen White. Networks of neighbors, relatives and school friends meant that early Adventists in Australia remained aware of what was being discussed in Anglican circles.

World-wide Anglicanism in the 1890s was on a journey of rethinking the role of women in the life of the church. The topic was a live issue in Australia during Ellen White's residence there. Beginning in the 1860s in England, in response to the Tractarian movement, Anglicanism had taken steps to allow the formation of communities of sisterhoods to facilitate the development of women in religious life and involve them in community service work. In doing so, church leaders banned perpetual vows and took care to avoid replicating the Catholic convent or monastic system. As a counterweight to the high church demand for sisterhoods, Anglican leaders also authorized the revival of the ancient order of deaconesses which had been lost during the Middle Ages, when the ministry of women had been confined and absorbed into the monastic system. Cautiously Anglicans had begun to encourage the participation of women in the public ministry role of deaconess.13

This new order of ministry for women had

One hundred vears after the death of Ellen White the need for a critical understanding of her context is even more urgent if the church is to continue to benefit from her words and her ideas.

spread timidly to the Australian colonies in 1885, with the establishment of a deaconess order in Melbourne to assist with church work in inner city slums. This was the year the Adventist church was first being established in Australia. In 1887 in Tasmania, when the Lacey family was making its transition to Adventism, the attempt to intro-

#### The Maitland Daily Mercury

May 25, 1895.

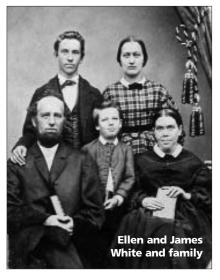
#### Admission of a Deaconess

"On Tuesday evening, at St Mary's Church, West Maitland, Miss Jessie Read, who has been laboring for the past few months in the parish as a deaconess, under the oversight of the esteemed incumbent, was formally admitted to that office. The more importance was attached to the proceeding by reason that it is a new departure as far as the diocese of Newcastle is concerned. [The Bishop of the Diocese of Newcastle and four other clergymen participated – all named.]

An interesting address was delivered by Archdeacon Tyrell on the scriptural and church authority of the office of deaconess, and on the important work to be done by organized female agency in the church.

The candidate, who was attired in a plain black dress, with white collar and cuffs, and white cap, was presented by the Archdeacon to the Bishop sitting in front of the holy table. The Archdeacon in reply to the Bishop having stated that the candidate had been trained, taught, examined, and approved, and he believed her to be fit for the discharge of the office, her examination by the Bishop followed on lines similar to that pursued in the case of a deacon, the differences of duties being considered. The final question, setting forth the duties of the office, was as follows: 'It appertaineth to the office of a Deaconess to aid in all spiritual ministrations except the public services of the church; to assist in all such good works as shall be committed unto her; to nurse the sick; to visit and relieve the poor and afflicted; to tend and instruct the young and the ignorant; to minister especially to women who need to be brought to the grace and service of God; and in all things to help the minister of Christ in any parish to which she may be appointed to serve. Will you do this earnestly and humbly, in the love of God and in faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ?' The answer, 'I will strive to do so, by the help of God,' having been given by the candidate in a clear, distinct voice, . . . the Bishop, standing, prayed that God who had given her the will to do all these things, would grant her also strength and power to fulfil the same. . . . The Bishop, then laying his hands upon the candidate's head, gave her authority to execute the office of a deaconess in the Church of God, and afterwards handing her a New Testament, exhorted her to take heed that she taught nothing contrary to the doctrine of Christ contained in it. . . "

duce a sisterhood in their Tasmanian Anglican diocese produced vigorous opposition from many parishes. It was argued in Synod (the meeting was prominently featured in the local newspaper) that instead, it was much better that "noble kind-hearted, Christian women" be



"organized, ordained, and paid" as part of restoring "the ancient and scriptural order of deaconess". 14 In the early 1890s, training institutes for deaconesses were gradually established all around the colonies. 15 Bishops were soon setting apart professionally trained women to the office of deaconess in special ordination ceremonies, and appointing them to work in the parishes of their dioceses. As in Tasmania, the development was accompanied by a spirited debate between those bishops who saw the full-time deaconess office as a parallel office to that of deacon, and therefore (in Anglican polity) a clergy office, and those who saw it only as a lay office.16 Evangelical Anglicans, mostly from the Sydney diocese, viewed the role of deaconess as simply lay participation. As such, the work of a deaconess did not need to be supervised by a bishop. In keeping with this "lay" view, a private deaconess training institution, "Bethany," had been established in the suburb of East Balmain in Sydney in August 1891.17 Its welfare activities were frequently reported in both the local and national press.<sup>18</sup> Deaconess training institutions and welfare homes following this model began to appear in other Australian cities and in New Zealand.

Two years later, in 1893, the Kilburn Sisters, a religious order from St Augustine's Parish Church in London, startled Anglicans in Sydney by establishing a training college in Waverly, a southern suburb in Sydney. The high church sponsors of the Kilburn order were more interested in the communal "sisterhood" features of the involvement of women in church work. They argued that the deaconess should be accorded the same clerical status as the male deacon. Other institutions sprang up in other cities after this model. The two institutions—the Bethany training

institute and the Waverly training college—represented the two approaches to the problem of finding a meaningful and acceptable role for women in ministry in Australia. The role of women and the meaning of their ordination thus became a major issue of church and community discussion in the colonies, and an important question was whether these women would work at their own initiative in congregations or under the direction of the bishops. The discussion clearly parallels the issue discussed in Ellen White's 1895 statement.

Many examples of the widespread discussions taking place in religious circles can be found in local newspapers and illustrate the new developments taking place in the religious world around Ellen White. In May 1893, for example, when Ellen White was in New Zealand, it was announced in New Zealand newspapers that the newly appointed Anglican Bishop of Christchurch would be bringing with him from London an experienced deaconess for the purpose of initiating "a like order in the colony, and to give instructions as to the work."20 The deaconess concerned had been on the staff of William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Within six months of her arrival in New Zealand deaconess work had been firmly established and women were being ordained to this rank of clergy. By the end of 1894 the Auckland Synod was also announcing plans to follow Christchurch, introduce the order, and ordain deaconesses. The involvement of women in this kind of ministry was again extensively reported in newspaper articles. Before the end of the October conference discussion had turned to the question of whether women should also now be allowed to vote in the Synod meetings, following the granting of the right to vote in national elections.<sup>21</sup>

In September, 1893, at a service for the "making of a Deaconess" in St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney, the Bishop Smith noted the important contribution that women could make in urban ministry.<sup>22</sup> At a major South Pacific-wide Anglican Church congress which convened in the new St David's Cathedral in Hobart in January

1894, the role of these ordained deaconesses and the meaning of their office featured as a topic of spirited discussion, which was extensively reported in Australian newspapers. At this time Ellen White and her colleagues were conducting an evangelistic camp meeting in a central suburb of Melbourne, with its 35% Anglican population.<sup>23</sup> In his opening address at the Hobart Congress on January 24, the presiding Bishop Montgomery appealed to the representatives from every diocese in Australia and New Zealand saying, "I trust Congress will exhibit the self-confidence of a young church and keep a very open mind toward new situations . . . let us welcome the extension of serious responsibility to women in the affairs of the church."24 Reverend Spence of Goulburn, NSW, spoke for many of his colleagues when he asserted, "Inasmuch as deaconesses were a branch of the clerical order they could not be considered as belonging to the laity."25 Only the Sydney diocese disagreed.

Because the ordination of women was something of a novelty, newspapers frequently reported on the formal ordination services for these deaconesses, during which the bishop formally laid hands of ordination on them, sometimes in a Cathedral, sometimes in parish churches. Typical of many such reports in the public press was the ordination of two deaconesses in Christchurch in January 1894.26 The ordination of a deaconess in St Mary's church in West Maitland, NSW in May, 1895 was given prominence in local papers. "Importance was attached to the proceedings by reason that it is a new departure as far as the diocese of Newcastle is concerned," reported the Maitland Weekly Mercury. 27 Maitland was just twenty miles away from the new College site at Cooranbong, where increasing numbers of Adventists were congregating in 1895. Across the colonies of Australia and New Zealand, Anglicans adopted the new initiative, training and ordaining women in ministry to help address the challenge of mission with its widespread social needs and desperate conditions of poverty occasioned by the severe economic depression of the mid-1890s.

In the years after Ellen White's death in **1915**, women in public ministry in the Adventist **Church steadily** declined as the church was negatively influenced by the reactionary **fundamentalist** movement.

Ellen White and sister

As Bert
Haloviak has
documented,
under the leadership of Ellen
White and seasoned ministers
like John O.
Corliss, Adventists too threw
themselves into
new types of
"helping hand"
ministry to

White lives for

"Either Ellen

us first in

her own cultural

situation or

she does not

live for

us at all."

address the widespread economic distress experienced by local families. Haloviak notes how this distinctive social welfare approach to Adventist ministry and evangelism extended to every large city in every state and to many local churches. He also carefully documents how the approach differed from that of John Harvey Kellogg in Chicago. It proved to be a most effective approach to church growth, and it depended heavily on the involvement of Adventist women in public work.<sup>28</sup>

Adventist leaders up to this time had no difficulty with the concept of giving pastorally gifted women licenses to function as ministers and preach the word. There were many such. But also aware of a broader ministry that women were able to do and, that they could be more effective in this public work than men, in mid-1895 Ellen White urged Adventists to adopt the practice of setting apart women for this full-time, paid, public ministry. This seems clearly to have reflected an awareness of an authorized— "ordained"—public role for women in ministry in the wider religious world.

Perhaps it was this encouragement that emboldened the church to include their traditional, internally focused, deaconess-caring-for-the-communion-table-cloth role among the ordained. On Sabbath, August 10, 1895, for example, in the Ashfield Church in Sydney, (a church Ellen White often attended and where she was occasionally invited to preach) deaconesses were

"ordained" along with elders and deacons by Elder J. O. Corliss by prayer and the laying on of hands.<sup>29</sup> In 1896, before John Corliss left Australia, one of his last acts was to ordain a woman, Bertha Larwood, to the ministry of deaconess in Perth, Western Australia. This was an event significant enough for W. C. White to report it approvingly to the Union Executive Committee.30 In 1900, back at Ashfield, W. C. White himself led out in a Sabbath service that included his laying hands of ordination on two deaconesses, Mrs. Brannyrane and Mrs. Patchin; a significant enough event to note in his diary.31 It seems that in Adventism too there was ambiguity in role function, as in Anglicanism, but Ellen White's mid-1890s counsel talked about paid full-time and part-time roles.

This paper argues that the discussion in the wider religious community in Australia and New Zealand in the mid-1890s about the role of women in formal, recognized, public ministry provides an important backdrop for Ellen White's provocative comments about the need for the involvement of women in the ministry of the Adventist church, and that Adventist women should be "set apart" by the "laying on of hands" to this public work. Ellen White's clear and provocative encouragement of women in full-time ministry in the Adventist church, and the importance of paying them for their work and ordaining them for it, were not comments made in a vacuum.

#### **Women and the Ordained Ministry**

In the years after Ellen White's death in 1915, women in public ministry in the Adventist Church steadily declined as the church was negatively influenced by the reactionary fundamentalist movement. In the Anglican Communion, Sean Gill notes that confusion and ambiguity concerning the nature of the deaconess role and its relationship to the Anglican ordained priesthood, persisted for decades and hampered recruitment to this form of ministry far into the twentieth century. In 1920 the matter came to Lambeth Palace, but the decisions taken only

made the ambiguity worse. In the mission fields of South Asia and the Far East, where there was less prejudice and the effectiveness of women in evangelistic outreach was recognized, the role of women in ministry flourished. By 1930, deaconesses were allowed to conduct baptisms; funerals were later added to the list of permissible duties. In 1944, because of the special need of the church in China, the Bishop of Hong Kong, in an Anglican world first, ordained deaconess Florence Li to the priesthood, authorizing her to conduct communion for her congregants.

Discrepancies and anomalies in salary and pension schemes between deacons and deaconesses continued to create frustration, and eventually full equality of the deaconess office with that of the third clerical order of the Deacon was recognized. In 1987 the office of deaconess was merged with that of deacon into one "diaconate" office. But then, the inconsistency of discriminating against women by ordaining for one office but not for another became intolerable in the wider church, and with the permission of Church headquarters in London (Lambeth Palace) in 1968, the Anglican Church in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and Hong Kong and Southeast Asia were embraced in the communion, even as they fully admitted women to the ordained priesthood. England did not take the historic step until 1994.

If one might be permitted to see a "trajectory" in the inspired counsels of Ellen White, might this newly recovered larger context of Ellen White's 1890s statements suggest that her counsel to the delegates at the 2015 San Antonio General Conference might well have been to recognize what God is indeed already doing in the church for the world?

One hundred years after the death of Ellen White, the task of recovering the context of her times continues to challenge the church.

New Zealander Gilbert M. Valentine is professor of Leadership and Administration at La Sierra University and has a special interest in the area of leadership and Adventist history. He is author of a scholarly biography on W. W. Prescott (2005), a history of the White Estate entitled The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage (2006), and a study of the political influence of Ellen



White in The Prophet and the Presidents (2011). Recently he co-edited, with Woodrow Whidden, a Festschrift for George Knight entitled Adventist Maverick (2014). He is married to Kendra Haloviak Valentine, who also teaches at La Sierra University, and enjoys visiting his Kiwi homeland with him.

#### **Footnotes**

- 1. Herold Weiss and Roy Branson, "Ellen White: A Subject for Adventist Scholarship," Spectrum 2, (Autumn 1970): 30-33.
  - 2. Ibid.
- 3. "When President Wilson Changed His Mind About Policy for Women," Spectrum 43:2 (Spring 2015): 72-79.
- 4. "The Duty of the Minister and the People," Review, (July 9, 1895): 433–434. Ginger Hanks Harwood and Beverly Beem provide an excellent discussion of the wide range of these provocative statements by Ellen White with a focus on the internal Adventist Church context. "'Not a Hand Bound; Not a Voice Hushed': Ordination and Foundation Adventist Understandings of Women in Ministry." Andrews University Seminary Studies, Vol 52, No 2, (2014): 235-273.
- 5. Ellen G. White, Manuscript, March 22, 1898. Ellen White added that men should "do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel, whose work testifies that they are essential to carry the truth into families. Their work is just the work that must be done. In many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot. The cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor. Again and again the Lord has shown me that women teachers are just as greatly needed to do the work to which he has appointed them as are men. They should not be compelled by the sentiments and rules of others to depend upon donations for their payment, any more than should the ministers."
  - 6. Ellen G. White to Uriah Smith and A. T. Jones, April 21/22, 1898, 9-10.
- 7. Arthur Patrick, "Ellen Gould White and the Australian Woman, 1891-1900," M Lit Thesis, University of New England (1984), 85.
- 8. Bert Haloviak, "Ellen White and the Australasian Ministers, 1893 to 1901: An Analysis of the Documents," 2005; Ginger Hanks Harwood and Beverly Beem, Ibid.
- 9. Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia (Washington DC, Review and Herald, 1976), 379.
- 10. James Jupp, (ed) The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and their Origins (Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 2001), 324. Catholics represented approximately 26% and Methodists, 10.1%.
- 11. Arthur Patrick's PhD Dissertation, "Christianity and Culture in Colonial Australia: Selected Catholic, Anglican, Wesleyan and Adventist Perspectives," (1991), has a helpful summary of the social issues Anglicanism grappled with in Australia during the 1890s.
- 12. H. Camden Lacey to A. W. Spalding, June 5, 1947. May's elder brother, Herbert, mentioned years later that the family lamented that in their Adventist worship services they missed the singing of some of the grand old Anglican hymns, especially those that spoke of the Trinity.
- 13. Sean Gill gives a helpful account of the revival of the order of Deaconess in Anglicanism. Women and the Church of England, (London, SPCK, 1994), 163-169.



14. Mercury, (April 6, 1888): 3; (April 14, 1888; Supplement): 1.

15. Discussion about the appropriateness of a public role for women in this kind of ministry was a frequent topic of correspondence and discussion in internal Anglican publications. See for example The Church of England Messenger for Victoria and Ecclesiastical Gazette for the Diocese of Melbourne (Vic. 1889-1905).

16. According to Mavis Rose, the controversy sparked when the Reverend George Spencer, Rector of Bega, NSW, argued that because of the laying on of hands by a bishop a

deaconess was really a female deacon and a member of the clergy. The Australian Record, July 18 and 25, 1891. See "Formal Women's Ministry: The Deaconess" in Freedom from Sanctified Sexism—Women Transforming the Church, (Brisbane: Allira Publications 1996), 56–75. The chapter is available at http://www.catherinecollegelibrary.net/ related/rose\_04.asp

17. Another evidence of Adventist awareness of the Anglican initiatives is that "Bethany" was also the name given to a deaconess-like "helping hand center" for unwed mothers, recovering alcoholic women, and released prisoners, established in an aristocratic suburb of Napier by the Adventist Caro family in 1898. See E R Caro, "The Napier Bethany Home," Bible Echo, (Mar 7, 1898): 77. Mrs Caro, "The Bethany Home, Napier, N.Z.," Union Conference Record, (July 19, 1899): 1.

18. See for example, Bowral Free Press and Berrima District Intelligencer, (April 21, 1894), 2; and Sydney Morning Herald, (November 5, 1895), 6.

19. Mavis Rose, Ibid.

20. Christchurch Press, (May 23, 1893): 2. See also New Zealand Herald, (19 May 1893): 6. The new Bishop made the matter of the involvement of women in this form of ministry work a major topic of his annual Synod meeting in Christchurch in October 1993. See Christchurch Press, (18 October 1893): 2; Wellington Evening Post, (18 October 1893): 2; New Zealand Herald, (15 August 1893): 5.

- 21. New Zealand Herald, (17 October 1894): 6.
- 22. Mavis Rose, Ibid.
- 23. At the Melbourne camp, the novel concept of a "Union Conference" was adopted.

- 24. The Mercury, (January 24, 1894): 2.
- 25. The Mercury, (January 25, 1894): 3. The whole of page three of the large page Mercury was given to reporting discussions at the Congress. Other newspapers around the colony also reported the proceedings see for example the Melbourne Argus, (Jan 24, 25, 1894).

26. The Christchurch Press, (13 January 1894), p 6 reports it as an "impressive ceremony of ordination" by the Bishop of Christchurch the previous day.

27. The Maitland Weekly Mercury, (May 25, 1895), 2. Six months previously the same paper had reported on church discussions and approvals for the appointment of the deaconess, (November, 28, 1894): 4. The Newcastle Morning Herald (May 22, 1895), p8 also reported on the deaconess being ordained by the Bishop of Newcastle who "repeated two prayers and laying his hands upon the head of the candidate at the Holy Table admitted her to the order." The story was also reported in the Sydney Morning Herald, (22 May 1895): 5.

28. "Ellen White and the Australasian Ministers, 1893 to 1901: An Analysis of the Documents," 2005

29. Ashfield Church Minutes, August 10, 1895.

30. W. C. White to Members of the Union Conference committee, July 15, 1896. WCW, Bk 10, p 195.

31. Ashfield Church Minutes, June 6, 1900. W. C. White also recorded the event in his diary for the same date. See Arthur Patrick "The Ordination of Deaconesses." Adventist Review, (January 18, 1986): 18-19.

32. Arthur Patrick, points out that Ellen White's 1895 language about setting apart by "the laying on of hands" in the context would have clearly been understood by Adventists as ordination. "Ellen Gould White and the Australian Woman, 1891-1900," M Lit Thesis, University of New England, (1984), 85.

33. See Gilbert Valentine "Flying Bishops, Women Clergy, and the Processes of Change in the Anglican Communion," Andrews University Seminary Studies, Vol. 51, No 2, (Fall, 2013): 219-265.

is not for

This question

men to settle.

The Lord has

settled it.

# **My Parents and Ellen White:** History as

# Autobiography | BY JONATHAN BUTLER

eflecting on how I became interested in history, I think less about those bright, orangecovered biographies written for children, with their silhouetted illustrations of historical figures, and more about my father, who is far more vivid and colorful in my long-term memory than a silhouette. He was twelve years older than my mother—about halfway between my mother and my maternal grandparents in age and he was a storyteller. He reminisced about a chapter of the past that I would not have known, at least in such a personal and entertaining way, without him. I used to coax him into telling me stories by saying, "Dad, tell me about back when you were alive." And before long, he had whisked me off on a magic carpet, to an unimaginable world where there were gas lamps, the occasional car on dirt roads, silent films, and a full day's work for 25 cents.

The most startling story about his past, however, was the one he never told me. I pieced together some of it from what my parents said to each other in muffled under-

tones, an ill-conceived strategy to keep secrets from a child, who was only all the more intent on eavesdropping. My Aunt Charlotte told me the full story. It turns out that my dad was the illegitimate child of a fortythree-year-old man named Fred Slack, my natural grandfather, and a sixteen-year-old girl, Christine Kennedy, who would become my grandmother. This was, understandably, ancient history



My radiant mother at 47.

in our family, either unknown or suppressed when I was a child; I knew only that Frank Butler, whom my grandmother had later married, was my grandpa.

Leaving aside the dubious fact that I could have been named Slack, the disparity in ages between my dad and mom, as well as between Fred Slack and my grandmother, result-



My rakish father at 31, three years before marrying my mother.

ed in a telling lesson of just how short American history really is. Though I was born in 1945, my grandfather was born in 1861 (at the beginning of the Civil War), and my great grandfather was born in 1817 (when Adams and Jefferson each had nine years to live). In a sense, I guess, I came by my interest in history illegitimately.

If my dad awakened my interest in American history, my mother ensured that I would care especially about church history. While Dad was the occasional Congregationalist, my mother, a devout Seventh-day Adventist, immersed us in the faith and practices of Adventism long before our formal baptisms. Nothing about my life was untouched by religion. Growing up Adventist, I knew far more about biblical history than American history. I especially mastered a "canon within a canon" that included the Ten Commandments, the Levitical dietary laws, and Daniel and Revelation.

In the 1950s, I could not attend Saturday matinees with my public school friends, as I explained weekly to my buddy Steve, "Because it says so in Exodus 20." My dad's pipe smoking was a sin that would keep him from heaven, not a health hazard that shortened his life. As a ten year



old, I hand-

wrote a letter

to President

Eisenhower

advising him

icy based on

Daniel 2. In

1960, I was

(though only

temporarily)

by the election

crushed

on foreign pol-

infant in 1945.

My proud dad holding me as an

of a Roman Catholic, John F. Kennedy, to the White House. While every evening my father, under a nimbus cloud of pipe smoke, read the Los Angeles Times and the New Yorker as well as his daily staple of fiction, biography, and, as a frustrated actor, stage plays, my mother read Ellen White. In their own ways, they were both looking for the truth, but my father happily meandered in its direction; my mother believed she was taking the more direct route.

"Sister White," as she was known in our home, was anything but a historical figure. She was really a contemporary. At first I did not know her as a writer but as a voice channeled through my mother, my Aunt Lilah, and my grandmother (who could have played the prophet on stage). Sister White provided the running, and inspiring, commentary on whether we could eat white bread, or daydream, or swim rather than wade in the ocean on Sabbath afternoon, or whether my mother could wear pants instead of a dress when she drove the Glendale Academy school bus.

As my mother's child—and Sister White's "grandchild" so to speak—at 12 years old I became something of a boy preacher, who felt perfectly at ease speaking before congregations of 300 or more church members. I was, paradoxically, quite uncomfortable talking at church to a girl named Margie, who sang in a trio, wore snugly fitting dresses and, to my eyes, astonishingly high heels. In retrospect, I'm sure that my being at once self-possessed in the pulpit but

otherwise socially awkward would have pleased all the women in my life—except perhaps Margie. It certainly would have gratified that invisible woman my mother always quoted, who exerted her still, small voice on me in any social situation. At seventeen, I had matured a little but nonetheless chastised my steady girlfriend for listening to rock-and-roll music. "Why not?" she asked incredulously. "Because," I told her, " it arouses the animal passions."

It would be easy to make the argument that, for most of their fifty-two years together, my parents were unhappily married. But it would be more accurate to say that my dad was happily married to my mother, while my mother was unhappily married to my father. My mother believed—and quoted to me with feeling—Sister White's comments that "to connect with an unbeliever is to place yourself on Satan's ground." Though Mom could be forgiven for the mismatch because she had not converted to Adventism until two years into the marriage, theirs had become "a home where the shadows are never lifted," as Sister White had said.

Even as a fairly young child, though, I suspected that the problems between them involved more than their religious differences. They were simply two very different people. My dad sat in a wingback chair every evening and read Edgar Allan Poe, or Dorothy Day, or Tennessee



My beautiful mom with her motley children at lunch in the park (I'm on the far left).

**Spiritually** 

speaking,

I was a child

of both

my parents.



On a family outing at Knott's Berry Farm (my stagestruck father often donned hats).

Williams. My mother seldom sat at all, unless it was to type furiously on a manuscript (which she did professionally), or knit sweaters or sew dresses (which she did for fun). She also gardened and raised earthworms, ran the Dorcas Society, and den mothered the Pathfinders.

On Friday afternoons—the "Preparation Day"—when Mom cleaned house, only her Rachmaninoff LPs could be heard above the noise of the vacuum cleaner. Every few months she took her turn superintending the Sabbath School, her voice quavering from nerves. Every week she unfailingly cranked out the church bulletins, with the blue ink of the mimeograph machine smudging her rubber gloves. She did her reading in small increments—the tracts she stuffed in the literature rack at the grocery store each week and the latest Morning Watch devotional book. My parents were as different as Edgar Allan Poe and Ellen White.

As their middle child, with an instinct for bridging the gap between them. I did my best to improve their relationship, with little, if any, demonstrable success. Nothing I did seemed to lessen the daily reminders of the basic incompatibility between them. Most school days, Dad chauffeured me back and forth to the Academy—an hour's drive for him—easing my life considerably and giving him a respite from my mother. I could tell that they had just been quarreling—or she had been haranguing him when he stared wistfully out the car window and offered his familiar refrain, "Your mother has always been my girl." When I quoted the phrase to her, she could not believe that he had meant it with affection. For her part, she tirelessly



My mother in her mid-30s with my sister and me on a family vacation in Oceanside, California.

inventoried to me all of his faults, but when I asked her why then had she married him, she typically offered no more of a rationale than that "he had such soft hands."

Whatever the seemingly insurmountable divide between them—whether spiritual or psychological or cultural—I refused to accept the view of my mother, or Sister White, that my parents' marriage had made of our home a satanic preserve, enveloped in unrelenting shadows. I might have conceded that this had been

The most startling story about his past, however, was the one he never told me.

I became something of a boy preacher who felt perfectly at ease speaking before congregations of 300 or more church

members.

At 12 years old

my mother's marital experience, but, in my view, it would have been no way to characterize what life had been like for me growing up. Her unhappy marriage had not made mine an unpleasant childhood. In fact, I came to see my parents' differences—even the religious ones—as a kind of advantage for me.

My parents were so obviously different in their approaches to life that it served. I think, to broaden my own perspective on life. I cannot take much credit for this—it was the natural outgrowth of my circumstances—but by being exposed as a child to these two dissimilar people, it was as if I became well travelled without ever leaving home. As to their religious differences in particular, I think there was a real benefit for me there as well. I had inherited my mother's certainty about "the truth," but I also understood my father's tolerance for people who thought differently. I was baptized a Seventh-day Adventist, but I was quietly proud of the fact that I was the one child in the family whom Dad had taken for infant baptism in the Congregationalist Church. Spiritually speaking. I was a child of both my parents.

My dad embodied my "outside" world reported in the newspaper, or reflected in great literature, or talked about at the grocery store or at town hall meetings. My mother personified my



Mom and Dad had their happy times together.

"inside" world conveyed in Sabbath School lessons or sermons, in Junior Guide or The Youth's Instructor (in those days). I found both worlds fascinating. When it got too dark to play outdoors. I came home and hung over my dad's chair and tried to read what he was reading over his shoulder, as the pipe smoke wafted upward. I liked his books about movie stars in the 1920s and 30s, especially when they had pictures.

The "movie stars" in my mother's world were television evangelists like George Vandeman and William Fagal, the King's Heralds Quartet or, my favorite, Del Delker. Sabbaths began with frozen raspberries and cream, as a break from the more mundane weekday regimen of oatmeal or Ruskets, and Sabbaths ended with potlucks in glorious Lacy Park. After lunch I slyly feasted on the conversational drippings of my mother and aunt rather than playing with the other kids. These often incomprehensible yet riveting talks might include arcane theological speculation on whether character perfection was a possibility, or more practical theology regarding just how far short of perfection the minister's wife had fallen, in her blue eye shadow and black hose. Inevitably, Mom and Lilah got around to their husbands-my dad and my Uncle Tom-and what an inexhaustible study in imperfection they were.

I probably should not have been privy to their adult conversations, but through them I gained access to the fact that my parents occupied two separate worlds, each spinning on a different axis and (if you asked my mother) in different orbits as well. It fell upon me to establish dual citizenship, as it were, so that I could move easily in both their worlds. Both worlds mattered a great deal to me. Having grown up an Adventist, my "native tongue," as it were, was my mother's tongue. I navigated in my father's environs by learning a "second language." But I wanted to be fluent in both languages, not just the one. Down deep I sensed that I could establish citizenship in both worlds without being a "tourist" in either one. At times there were awkward, even embarrassing, moments when I felt that I had been too "liberal" in my mother's world or too "parochial"



Dad's most familiar pose, reading in his wingback chair (his pipe tucked out of sight for the photo).

in my father's. But my mother was usually charitable about my "liberalism," and my father was protective of my "sectarian" ways.

Taking both worlds seriously was a way of taking both of my parents seriously, but there was more to it than that. I felt the need to do something that neither of my parents had been able to do—integrate their two, separate lives into one, cohesive whole. I needed to do this even before I could have understood—or put into words—what I was doing. My father sat in his wingback chair each night and drank in the larger culture. My mother occupied a pew each week and focused intently on the church. Metaphorically speaking, Dad could not see Mom's world clearly through all the pipe smoke; the stained-glass windows had distorted my mom's view of Dad's world.

In grappling with an adult task at which both of my parents had failed. I think there was more involved for me than the abstract juxtaposition of religion and culture. There was something deeply personal and emotional in all this, which I could only have seen at the time "through a glass darkly." I was no prodigy at understanding my parents and how they impacted my life. It took time, and even this late in the game I could still use more time. But reflecting on my formative years, I came to understand—if my parents did not-that their worlds not only interconnected but even complemented each other. I also think that by recognizing that their worlds somehow fit together, I had found a way of validating their marriage. That is, in my nascent mind, I came to believe that Dad's and Mom's two worlds belonged side by side, just as they themselves belonged together.

If they continued to struggle as a couple, I found myself benefiting from their less than ideal relationship in many respects. I now think, for example, that it is too glib—in fact, fundamentally inaccurate—to see my life as a passage from my mother's world to my father's. It is unfair as well to describe her world as pinched, rigid, and sectarian and his as open, tolerant, and cosmopolitan. These are caricatures that would never hold up to the reality and complexity of their lives. Most importantly, I think it is better for me to see how I have always—and will always—reside in both of their worlds, and that I am all the better for it.

It would be a distortion, then, to reflect on my story as if it were "exit" literature; in the way I find most examples of that genre to be a distortion. Such stories tiresomely convey, in effect, I was parochial once, and now I am urbane; I was marginal and now I am mainstream. I find these narratives irritatingly condescending and simplistic. After reading them, I always want to say something on behalf of those intelligent and interesting women who served me countless potluck lunches on Sabbath and talked and talked into the late afternoon.

I entered La Sierra College as a Theology, not a History, major, although I understood the harsh truth that this could cost me dates with girls like Margie, who had no intention of becoming ministers' wives. I might have protested (though I would never have done so out loud) that I did not exactly fit the mold of the typical ministerial student. I could also say the same for many of my fellow "theologues." This may have had a good deal to do with our being Southern California Adventists, and having a sophisticated crop of college professors, but for me it also had to do with being my father's son.

In college, I found myself reading not just Ellen White's Steps to Christ but also C.S. Lewis's Mere Christianity; not just Paul's Romans but also Karl Barth's Epistle to the Romans; not just the Psalms "Sister White," as she was known in our home, was anything but a historical

figure.

need to do something that neither of my parents had been able to do—integrate their two, separate lives into one. cohesive whole.

I felt the

but T.S. Eliot's *Waste Land* and his "Journey of the Magi." In those days, both Mom and Dad liked hearing me preach, which should not have been a huge surprise since I was their son, but I think they each saw themselves in my sermons. In my preaching, they were not just seeing their son in the pulpit; they were looking into a mirror at their own marriage, and concluding that something good had come from it after all.

I enrolled at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in the late 1960s. It was a golden time and place for ministerial education in Adventism. Our gifted, young, seminary professors, with PhDs from distinguished schools like Harvard, and the University of Chicago, Tubingen and Duke, were the reason we came to see Adventism in fresh and imaginative ways. I took a seminar on American religion from a brand new, Harvard-educated professor, Roy Branson, and his class provided a guided tour to a world beyond the church without leaving the church.

Branson introduced me to several classics in the field of American religion, by historians like Perry Miller, Sidney Mead, Whitney Cross, and Timothy Smith. For me the collective impact of these books—especially Mead's—was an epiphany. Each study, in its own way, made abundantly clear that Adventism could not be understood as an insular movement, unaffected by its religious, cultural, and social setting. I realized that non-Adventist academics, viewing Adventism from the outside, could teach us much more about who we were—and who we are—than Adventist insiders could ever do on their own. In other words, to understand Seventh-day Adventism, I should not just listen to my mother; I had to hear what my dad was saying too.

As a result of that class on American religion, I decided to attend the University of Chicago—where Mead had taught for many years—and study under Mead's most creative and prolific student, Martin Marty. When I got to Chicago, I was young and green, excited and a little terrified. On my first day there, I stared incredulously at the faculty directory by the elevator in the Divinity School lobby. Nearly every name on it

was a celebrity in the academic world of religion. I had read the work of these professors as texts in my Seminary classes; now I would be actually taking classes from them, in the flesh. The prospect elated me, but it seized me with insecurity as well. I felt as if I had been invited to a special occasion by mistake. I was an impostor who soon would be exposed, collared, and removed from the building.

Just then I noticed a man shuffling toward the adjacent elevator. Clothes beyond rumpled, hair comically unkempt, glasses as thick as Coke bottle bottoms, he could have passed for the great circus clown, Emmett Kelly, out of costume. I recognized Mircea Eliade from book jacket photos and knew him to be the greatest scholar of Comparative Religions of the time, and perhaps ever. I had read him at the Seminary and begun to see the world through his all-seeing eyes. From reading him, I knew that I would never see anything quite the same way again. I could not form speech in his presence, but I think I nodded to him as he entered the elevator. At least I hope I did.

Thankfully, I was not expelled from Chicago on my first day. But to make my way there called for an educational "baptism by immersion," so to speak, not a token "sprinkling." I had to submerge myself in its culture. I had to live and breathe it. I could not audit classes; I could not take them by correspondence, intellectually and socially removed from the full educational experience. I had to get used to a biblical schol-



These are the women on whom I eavesdropped on Sabbath afternoons; my aunt Lilah and my mother, with their first born sons, flanking my grandmother ("Granny") in 1941.



My father and mother on their 50th wedding anniversary; he was 84 and she was 72. He passed away two years later.

ar, who knew much more about the Bible than I did, illuminate one scriptural passage after another, with a cigarette dangling from his mouth. I had to find the basement coffee shop, even though I did not drink coffee, so I could talk things out with fellow students.

In my first conversation with Marty, over his coffee and my decaffeinated tea, he advised me not to study Seventh-day Adventism while I was there. He gave me two reasons: first, it could be too narrowing for me professionally; and second, it could get me into trouble with my church. It was good advice. In other words, he was urging me to find a balance between my parents' two worlds that would allow me to contribute constructively to both. At Chicago, I specialized in the history of millenarianism, and of course my own tradition was never far removed from my thinking, but I avoided Adventism as a research topic. Later, when I delved into the Adventist sources, I was excited by what I found there. I think by staying away from Adventism in my graduate studies, I could understand it in a deeper and richer sense when I returned. It was by travelling through Chicago that I saw Battle Creek and Loma Linda in new and meaningful ways.

I am no longer a believing or practicing Seventh-day Adventist by my mother's definition of that term. With respect to what the church taught me as a child and young adult, I am more agnostic than Adventist. But oddly, I spend my days voraciously reading Ellen White's writings as I peck away on a biography of the prophet. My father became an Adventist in the last twenty years of his life. In that period, we had some of our most satisfying conversations. Our paths had crisscrossed in different directions, and yet I never felt closer to him. In ways that were not enough for my mother, I probably continue to be an Adventist, on some level, as James Joyce continued to be a Dubliner. Joyce lived most of his life abroad and never returned home, but reading his work leaves no doubt as to where home was for him.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "All history is biography." I might tweak the great man's remark and say that all historians are being, to some degree, autobiographical. Much of my academic work since Chicago has been an effort to show how Seventh-day Adventism has been contoured by the wider culture. My dissertation, however, had nothing to do with Adventism; I had taken Marty's advice. But it did explore how evangelical notions of afterlife have been shaped by their cultural context. My mother typed my thesis for me several times, since this was prior to the word processor. I dedicated the book that resulted from it to her and my dad. In a sense, they deserve mention in anything I write about the marriage of religion and culture. Their marriage shed light on what I do; it did not cast a shadow.

Jonathan M. Butler obtained a PhD in church history at the University of Chicago and authored Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling: Heaven and Hell in American Revivalism 1870-1920 (1991). Most of his scholarly publications, however, have focused on Millerism and Adventism. He coedited (with Ronald L. Numbers) The Disappointed: Mil-



lerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century (1987). He contributed two chapters to Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet (2014).

Author's note: My thanks to Becky Richardson, my youngest sibling, who provided the photos. She had not been born when the family shots were taken.

I came to see my parents' differences even the religious ones -as a kind

of advantage

for me.

# Remembering... ROY BRANSON



Roy Branson, PhD, noted Seventh-day Adventist theologian, former Spectrum editor, social activist, ethicist, mentor and educator, passed away from complications of cardiovascular disease July 7, 2015, at the age of 77. His memorial service was held Saturday, August 8 at the Azure Hills Church in Grand Terrace, California.

# **Roy Branson: Friends Pay Tribute at Memorial Service**

# **Ancestry and Youth**

BY RONALD NUMBERS

oy and I are first cousins on his father's side, and grandsons of William Henry (Will) Branson (below). Since the late nineteenth century our branch of the Branson family has been tightly intertwined with Adventism. In the 1870s, various collateral relatives joined a little Adventist church in rural Wayne County, Illinois. Will's mother, Mary Anne (Dicky) Branson, joined the Keenville church when Will was "about five or six." Franklin, Will's father and a skilled carpenter and farmer, became an avid student of Adventism, but apparently never embraced Ellen G. White, preferring to remain with the Primitive Baptist church of his parents. Family members later recalled that young Will and his father would argue heatedly late into the night about the Bible—and the anti-Adventist charges of D. M. Canright, the author of Seventh Day Adventism Renounced (1889)

and, twenty years later, The Life of Mrs. E. G. White: Her Claims Refuted (1919). Their arguments, I strongly suspect, became the outline of Branson's 1933 Reply to Canright: The Truth about Seventhday Adventists (later titled Defense of the Faith).

Soon after moving to Florida, Will, age thirteen, left for Battle Creek, where for three years he worked as a cook in the kitchen of the Battle Creek Sanitarium



W. H. Branson with his parents. Mary Anne (Dicky) Branson and Franklin Parker Branson, Orlando, 1928.

and attended Battle Creek Academy, apparently completing elementary school. At **Emmanuel Missionary** College, he took just two courses in the winter term of 1904: baking and vocal music. After passing a course





Roy's father and mother Ernest **Branson and Ardice (Detamore)** 

on grape culture, he topped off his college education in the spring term with a class in canvassing. He returned home in the summer of 1904, fell in love with the considerably older Minnie Shreve and, at the ripe age of seventeen, married her. Ordained at twenty-three, young Branson became president of the South Carolina conference the following year. At twenty-eight he was elected president of the old South-Eastern Union. Five years later he became the first president of the African Division, a position he occupied for ten years.

In 1930, Will and Minnie Branson returned from Africa with their two children—Ernest, Roy's father, and Lois, my mother. Will then became a vice president of the General Conference, but in 1935 Minnie died. The very next year—to the consternation of his associates—Will married Elizabeth Hilton Robbins, an attractive, well-todo widow from North Carolina. This may have cost him the GC presidency in 1936. In 1950, Will finally became president of the world church. This came as something of a last-minute development after the front runner, and Will's close friend since their days in Africa, N. C. Wilson, got caught up in a scandal.

Roy Branson was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1937, just weeks before his family sailed on the Queen Mary on the first leg of their journey to become missionaries in the Middle East. His earliest memories of living in Egypt dur-

Roy [was cast] in about ten episodes, and always, to his great chagrin, as the "good kid," not as the more interesting villainous characters he would have preferred.

ing World War II, where his father Ernest had gone to be superintendent of the Egyptian Mission (largely because of his archaeological interests), were of air-raid sirens and soldiers.

During the war, to escape from the German General Rommel's incursions in North Africa, the Branson family escaped from Egypt to Ethiopia for six months. While there, Roy's mother, Ardice Detamore Branson, opened a small school for Emperor Haile Selassie's grandchildren on the palace grounds. Fouryear-old Roy tagged along with his mother every day to the school. Ernest loved the excitement of his wartime experiences; Ardice grew increasingly depressed staying "home" with the kids. Their marriage seemed to have been always troubled. From the time he was about nine, Roy saw himself as the family's mediator, a role that left him with a lifelong aversion to strife and conflict. After the war Ernest moved the Middle East headquarters to Beirut, Lebanon, where the Bransons lived for four years.

Roy and I first met during the summer of 1950, when his family returned permanently to America and when he turned thirteen and I turned eight. Uncle Ernest, Aunt Ardice, and Roy met my mother, sister, and me in Miami, and for weeks we crossed the country with our grandparents, stopping at camp meetings on the way to the GC meetings in San Francisco. In St. Louis, Uncle Ernest took us to see the Cardinals play the Boston Braves, my first major-league game. While riding in the back seat of the car, Roy taught me how to read box scores, and Aunt Ardice coached us in giving impromptu speeches.

After a short stay in Oakland, where Roy attended Golden Gate Academy, Ernest became president of the Greater New York Conference, and Roy moved with his family to New York City. The early years there were probably the worst of Roy's life. His father threatened to quit the ministry and divorce his wife. Ernest's father, then president of the GC, panicked, insisting that such action would force him to resign the



Baby Roy in the arms of his step-grandmother, Elizabeth Robbins Branson, before departing for Egypt in 1937. Others, from left to right, are Jack Robbins (Elizabeth's son), W. H. Branson, Ray Numbers, Bruce Branson, Lois Branson Numbers, Ernest Branson, and Ardice Branson.

presidency and turn in his ministerial credentials. Ernest had long concerned his father. Washington Missionary College had expelled his son for eloping with Ardice. As a young minister he had then gone through a crisis of faith, questioning not only Adventism but also the existence of God. Ernest seemed to right himself when he became immersed in graduate study at New York University and in starting the New York Center; but he never regained his belief in the verbal inspiration of either the Bible or Ellen White. (For reasons I didn't fully understand at the time, as I was growing up, family members would say I was just like my Uncle Ernest.) Ardice meanwhile pursued a master's degree at Teacher's College Columbia. Shortly after retiring to southern California, Ernest died at age fifty-four from a (second) massive heart attack.

To compound matters in New York, Roy was encouraged to skip the eighth grade and enroll directly in Greater New York Academy. He arrived a month late, just in time to take a round of tests. Under pressure to perform, he flunked them. This threw him into a terrible psychological state: "a kind of nervous breakdown . . . a disassociation . . . a total nightmare," Roy would later say. He could neither sleep nor excel in class (though he did eventually pass his courses.). What finally brought him out of his funk was becoming, as a sophomore, an actor on the net-

work television show, Faith for Today. Elaine Giddings, who wrote the scripts and cast the people, put Roy in about ten episodes, and always, to his great chagrin, as the "good kid," not as the more interesting villainous characters he would have preferred.

When Roy was about fifteen his mother saw an advertisement for an upcoming Dale Carnegie course on public speaking, with the first session free to the public. Lots of ambitious young professionals showed up; the organizers were offering a door prize, which gave a big discount for the full course. Roy won-but had to confess that his family couldn't afford even the reduced fee. So they waived the fee. After a few terrifying sessions Roy became an accomplished impromptu speaker, which is not surprising given his mother's tutoring in the summer of 1950.

Even equipped with his Carnegie speaking skills, Roy was hardly a young man of the world. Before graduating from academy, Roy took a date to a party in some Adventist's home. To his utter horror, the young people were playing Spin the Bottle. Having never kissed a girl, he couldn't believe that people were kissing each other just because of where the bottle ended up. He ushered his date out in a righteous huff.

After graduating from academy, Roy took up canvassing, selling Bible stories and our grandfather's Drama of the Ages (a book we both confessed we had never read). He continued doing this for nine summers, even while he was working on his PhD at Harvard. By contrast, I lasted only half a day as a canvasser.

Growing up Adventist was very different for Roy than it was for me. The Bransons read novels, went to movies, and ate meat; the Numbers did not. The Bransons asked risky questions; only one Numbers did, and not till he was in his twenties. (I should also note that the Bransons kept the Sabbath, shunned alcohol, and didn't dance.)

Roy had a big influence on me from the time we first got acquainted in 1950. As adults we nonetheless had our significant differences on theology and history. Our mutual friend, Jonathan Butler, who thinks of us as more like "brothers" than cousins, says we were "sibling rivals." I have always disagreed with him; I loved Roy like the brother I never had.

During the last decade or so of his life, especially after his first two heart attacks, Roy thought a lot about death, which he found terrifying. He especially feared dying

alone. For Roy the future was a theological toss up between annihilation (never hell) and eternal bliss. Let's hope he found the latter.

Ronald Numbers, professor emeritus, History of Science and Medicine, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Note: Details of Roy's life are based on an extensive interview I conducted on March 17, 2002; Jonathan Butler edited the presentation made at the memorial service for Spectrum.

# **Growing Up in the Middle East**

BY LARRY GERATY

 peaking for both Gillian and myself, the name Branson has been a part of our earliest memories-even though our earliest lives started half way around the world from each other.

I grew up in inland China behind Japanese lines during World War II. W. H. Branson, Roy's grandfather, was our division president and a confidant of my father's. When we were kicked out of the country by the Communists, we moved to the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. There we assisted Roy's uncle, his mother's brother, the worldfamous evangelist, Fordyce Detamore, with his nightly meetings attended by multitudes who wondered what the movements around them portended. By this time, Roy's grandfather, W. H. Branson, had become the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Washington D.C. Knowing the value of several of his socalled "China hands," Branson arranged for many of them to be transferred to the newly-organized Middle East Union under the leadership of his own son, Roy's father, E. L. Branson, who had been serving in Egypt.

Adventist history will always remember W. H. Branson as the forward-thinking administrator who brought together the first world-wide Bible conference, in 1952, to tackle several doctrinal and prophetic issues, on which there were various and differing views being espoused in the church. In contrast to what we've become used to in our day, Branson chose as his speakers and experts—imagine this (!)—

professors and scholars, rather than preachers and evangelists! Among them were names like Siegfried Horn, Edward Heppenstall, W. G. C. Murdoch, Leroy Froom, and W. E. Read! The outcome was a two-volume work entitled *Our Firm Foundation*, whose biblically-researched articles guided the church down the middle of the road through the next generation.

By this time, thanks to W. H. Branson, our family had moved to Beirut, Lebanon, where my Dad (having attended the 1952 Bible Conference as a friend of Branson) became the president of Middle East College, the Adventist institution founded in 1939 by G. Arthur Keough (who later became my father-in-law). Later on, the chairman of the College Board was E. L. Branson, Roy's father, who was then serving as the President of the Middle East Union. By the time the Geraty family moved into their new home on the Lebanese mountainside overlooking the blue Mediterranean, the Branson family had just left for a new assignment in New York City, where E. L. Branson became the president of the Greater New York Conference and where Roy then attended Greater New York Academy. Thereby was established a pattern in which Larry always followed Roy—to Atlantic Union College, to Harvard, to involvement with the Forum and Spectrum, to the Seminary faculty at Andrews, and even to the Inland Empire where he often repaired when his

greatly admire
his intellect, his
ability to read
widely and write
courageously,
his unique

ability to foster

disciples.

I came to



Roy and his mother with Haile Selassie's princess granddaughters in Ethiopia.

older brother, Bruce, his mentor, was here.

At Atlantic Union College, Roy came under the influence of his English professor, Ottilie Stafford, who was still there when I came much later as college president. She never let me forget that Roy Branson was one, if not the most illustrious, of AUC's alumni!

Before this, when I got to Harvard to do my PhD, true to form, Roy had just left for a faculty position in ethics at Andrews. However, because he, along with other graduate students mentored by a young Harvard faculty couple, Alvin and Verla Kwiram, were still there when Gillian and I came, we often had the pleasure of Roy returning to Cambridge for some reason, and at that time, involving me in Forum as well.

When we finished at Harvard we followed Roy to a faculty position at the Seminary at Andrews. Roy talked me into becoming president of the Association of Adventist Forums. In turn, I involved an undergraduate student there named Eric Anderson (later president of Southwestern Adventist University) in editing the Forum newsletter. One of the topics that we researched and were about to publish was the remuneration pay scale within the denomination. Wanting to be accurate (as Forum and Spectrum have always tried to be). I asked Eric to make an appointment with the General Conference treasurer so we could get the pay scales "straight from the horse's mouth," so to speak. That quickly resulted in a threat to me that came through the Seminary Dean: If I were to allow the pursuing of this issue and its publication, I would lose my new teaching job. The topic continued to be thoroughly researched but I preemptively sent in my resignation to Forum, recommending that they never elect a denominational employee for president again; and that policy was followed up until just recently.

It was at the Seminary, however, where Roy and I had our first opportunity to work together on a daily basis and, as might be expected, I came to greatly admire his intellect, his ability to read widely and write courageously, his unique ability to foster disciples—particularly in the field of ethics—and especially his enthusiasm for the

Seventh-day Adventist Church as he had come to see its role in the world. As we all know, he walked the talk, even during those tumultuous days, joining Martin Luther King's march across the Pettis Bridge at Selma! Who else do you know personally who did that?

I have to share an incident that happened shortly after I arrived at Andrews—one we never tired of telling. In the registration line, the photographer came up to me and said, "Your portrait photos are ready." Looking puzzled, I said "What portrait photos?" "Do you mean to tell me," he said, "that you stood in front of me while I was taking those photos and you don't even remember me?" "No," I said, "I really don't." Looking at me incredulously, he responded, "You're Roy Branson, aren't you?" "No," I said, "I'm Larry Geraty." He quickly moved away in disgust! But ever since, neither Roy nor I could tell you how many times we've both experienced similar incidents! We used to enjoy regaling each other with the latest such episode of mistaken identity. I don't know whether it was our facial similarities, our red beards, our red Harvard robes at graduations, or just what it was, but we were constantly taken for the other person! This even continued here after Roy moved to the Loma Linda University School of Religion. The most recent such incident happened when Roy ran into someone over in Loma Linda who was lauding him for the great job he had done at La Sierra and how transformative the Riverwalk Project was, etc. He just said it was easier to say, "Thanks; I appreciate that!" "Besides," Roy said, "it just made me feel so good!"

As many of you know, Roy had always wanted a beautiful big house in which he could invite sizable groups of his friends over for discussions. He was so excited when Donna helped him find just such a house in what he liked to call the "Colton Hills" section of town! One such evening he called me over and said, "Larry come out here with me." He took me out on the balcony just as the sun was setting. Pointing to the Mediterranean-like flora west of his house, he said, "Can't you just imagine being on the mountainside there in Lebanon!" Then he pulled me around to the left corner of the balcony and exclaimed "You can almost imagine the beautiful blue Mediterranean just around the corner over here!" It was almost as though Roy had achieved a lifelong dream!

The last time Gillian and I saw Rov was at a Harvard reunion at our home just ten days before his death. Who of us could have imagined that he would have been taken away from us so soon, so unexpectedly! I heard the news in

San Antonio at the beginning of the General Conference Session. My first thought was, "At least he's been spared some of the devastating developments in his beloved church that are taking place here this week." As we all know, Roy loved the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was always so positive about it and the potential of its impact on society and the world. He authored seminal articles, putting it in its best light, and prodding it to fulfill its mandate for present truth. We can recall the last two books he edited, one on the Sabbath, and the other on the Second Advent. I've always said, "If Roy ever gets discouraged about the church, there will be no hope for it!"

If Ted Wilson makes it to the pearly gates, I can imagine Roy there, asking him some pretty incisive questions! All of us who ever had our manuscripts for Spectrum edited by Roy, know what will be in store for the son of Neal who was such a close friend and neighbor of the Bransons in Egypt! Wouldn't we each love to overhear that inquisition? All I can say is: Hasten that day!

Larry Geraty, president emeritus, La Sierra University

# The Roy I Knew in Egypt

BY GILLIAN GERATY

hen the E. L. Branson family went to the Middle East Union headquarters in Beirut, they moved into a four story building with two apartments on each floor. The ground floor was where the offices were located and the families who worked there lived above. Each family was assigned an apartment according to the number of children, and since my family had four children we were on the second floor. The Bransons had only Roy with them, so they were on the fourth floor. The children quickly picked their favorite place to play games, which was the top landing of the stairwell. Roy had most of the games, so of course we played ones which tested our knowledge of Bible, geography, famous authors and nature.

That top landing led out onto the roof where washing was hung out to dry, because of course we had no washing machines or dryers. A lady from the local Palestinian camp came once a week to wash our family's clothes, sheets, towels, etc. and her daughter, who was in her late teens, came daily to help prepare food, iron, and clean.

Of course we had to have school. Across from the Bransons lived the Funds, and Mrs. Alice Fund turned one of her bedrooms into a school room. Wooden desks were made, painted apple green, and Mrs. Fund taught us (only five or six of us). After school we would play outdoors or on the landing.

The Bransons had to go to the United States for meetings, so Mrs. Branson offered to bring back items the families might want to order from the Montgomery Ward catalogue. The catalogue made its rounds, orders were placed, and what excitement when the Bransons returned. We all crowded into the Bransons' apartment and happily opened packages. The women tried on dresses they'd ordered. So exciting. In those times we couldn't just run down to Beirut and buy clothes, you had to make them yourself or find a dressmaker.

One day I walked into the Bransons' apartment and was startled because when I brushed my teeth, I always stood over a sink while doing so; and here was Roy brushing his teeth while walking all around his apartment. I didn't know you could do that.

Another day, Roy decided that, because we were friends, we should be able to tell each other things we couldn't share with just anyone. We could be honest and truthful with each other. He decided we should tell each other our faults—so we could improve ourselves! I remember Roy sat at one end of the sofa and I sat at the other end. He went first and told me what my faults were (I don't remember what he said were my faults), but when it was my turn our relationship became strained. I could not for the life of me think of any faults that Roy had—not one. He became so exasperated with me; I had let him down. But it didn't last long.

He asked me if I wanted to go with him to the USIS library—just the two of us, by ourselves! I had never gone anywhere that far without an adult. It was quite the adventure. We caught a "service" taxi, a taxi that picked up and dropped off passengers along a designated route, and went all the way to downtown Beirut, all by ourselves, picked up library books and came back all by ourselves. I remember that as we started out I felt self-conscious about being a boy and girl out by ourselves. I wondered if people would think we were "boyfriend" and "girlfriend"; but I decided they would look at us and assume we were brother and sister, and then I was comfortable and fine with our momentous outing.

On Saturday nights the families would gather out in the garden where it was cool. The adults would talk and the children would run around and play. On one of those evenings, the boys decided they wanted to have a boys' club—a secret boys' club. And I have to say that out of ten or twelve children most were boys, only three or four of us were girls. I was the only older girl. Pretty soon Roy came to me and said, "We want you to be in the boys' club. Do you want to join?" And so I was inducted into the Boys' Club. And that was Roy, big hearted, inclusive, not wanting anyone to be left out of the fun. That was who Roy was; that was who Roy always was.

Gillian Geraty, retired elementary and piano teacher and childhood friend

# **Greater New York Academy and Atlantic Union College Days**

BY ROBERT E. SODERBLOM

longtime, highly respected friend of myself and scores of others, a giant for God and society, has fallen asleep in Jesus. Yet, all of us take courage in the promise that "He that is yet to come, will come!"

This afternoon I have been asked to paint a picture in words of Roy's years at Greater New York Academy and at Atlantic Union College, 1953 to 1955 and 1955 to 1959, respectively.

In accepting this assignment and honor, I felt compelled to contact a number of his classmates who journeyed together during those foundational years of yet-to-come stellar careers. You will likely recognize some of these classmates: Dr. James Londis, Dr. George Chonkill, Dr. George Petti, Dr. Edwin Krick, Dr. Virgil Wood, Dr. Norman Farley, Donald Yakush, Dr. Ana Parrish, to name a few. The following words that I share will be a compilation of their fond remembrances of this brilliant but humble



"Faith for Today" photo from 1952.

individual. My thanks to all of them.

I first became acquainted with the Branson name in about 1952 when Elder Ernest Branson. then president of the Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, preached in my home church in Middletown, New York. Just one year previously, as a teenager, I had accepted the Adventist message and been baptized. Little did I then know I would make further acquaintance with Elder Branson's two sons, Bruce and Roy.

At that time, Roy and his family had recently returned to the United States from the mission field of Egypt, and Roy had begun attending Greater New York Academy, while I had matriculated at South Lancaster Academy on the campus of Atlantic Union College.

Dr. James Londis, also a student at Greater New York Academy at that time, comments on his observations of this young teen: he was an unusual teenager, by any standard in the school; he was bookish, creative, and passionate about causes; he was fascinated by his father's conference presidency (and grandfather's General Conference presidency) and the politics and decision making therein; he was a very popular student leader (and president of his senior class) though he was only at Greater New York Academy his last two years; he always had, as the poets' say, "a different angle of vision".

Dr. Londis commented on the day Roy decided to attend an NBC orchestra rehearsal conducted by the famous Arturo Toscanini and wrangled a short interview with the conductor which, with post haste, Roy turned into an article for the Youth's Instructor magazine.

Don Yakush, another Greater New York Academy classmate, shares:

Almost all the students attending the academy came by elevated subway, which would drop them off each morning about six blocks from the school. Many would meet up on the train in the morning. Roy would scour the subway car to find a discarded newspaper to read. . . his prime interest, The New York Times. He would then search for the World News section, fascinated by world and political happenings.

"Faith for Today," the first Seventh-day Adventistsponsored, religious television broadcast, was at this time headquartered on Long Island. The founder, Pastor Fagal, frequently used Greater New York Academy students to act in their "skits". Roy was often part of this pioneer television project.

Roy then transitioned to Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, a small Adventist school with enrollment of about 400-500 students.

Dr. Ann Parrish, an English major at Atlantic Union College during Roy's years as a student, shared this:

Roy came to Atlantic Union College in September 1955. He was short, healthy looking, alert, enthusiastic and, it turned out, very bright indeed. He had attended Greater New York Academy, but fitting in there had, at least from his parents' viewpoint, been difficult, so they bad enrolled him in a Dale Carnegie course in winning friends and influencing people.

This fact, and Roy's attempts to practice Carnegie's teachings, amused his classmates mightily, and the amusement continued, at least through his first years at Atlantic Union College. He would be excited about something discussed in a class and would continue discussing it after class, even in groups where some had no knowledge of the subject. Then, noticing a glazed look, he would stop his

That was Roy, big hearted, inclusive, not wanting anyone to be left out of the fun.

word flow quite suddenly. "What a beautiful tie!" he would say winningly to the glazed friend. Or, "Are those new shoes? They look great!" His listeners would look at each other, roll their eyes, and smile indulgently. You couldn't help liking him. "Our boy, Roy," they called him. Despite his eager, grasping mind, he seemed very young to be in college.

His freshman English teacher, Ottilie Stafford, always eager to find and encourage good writers and thinkers, was delighted with Roy and, in his sophomore year, hired him as a reader, mainly of freshmen compositions. She had enough work to employ two student belpers: Roy was one, I was the other, and we graded papers in her office. A major in theology from his start in college (this was the Branson and Detamore vocation), Roy added a second (but equal) major in English.

From his freshman year on, he was a staff member of the college newspaper, The Lancastrian. In his junior year, he became editorin-chief. He wrote thoughtfully, often eloquently. He even tried poetry. Did it trouble his parents and brother that our boy Roy, headed for the ministry, was becoming increasingly political? Writing poems for the literary magazine Contours on such subjects as Russian oppression in Eastern Europe?

Later, at Harvard Divinity School, he joined other graduate students in Civil Rights marches and, as an Adventist, traced and publicized the anti-slavery, anti-racist views and actions of the Adventist pioneers.

While Roy was at Harvard, I was a graduate student at Boston University, so I was present when he initiated the idea of Adventist Forums; meetings of Adventist graduate students on Sabbath afternoons, for potlucks, special speakers on knotty religion-related topics, lively arguments or other responses to the presentations, and to connect with our roots and to branch out. This Adventist Forum idea was copied in intellectual centers across the country, and the journal Spectrum was developed to share with a larger audience the stimulation that the forums provided.

Roy's grandfather was a president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. His father returned from the mission field in the Middle East to become president of the Greater New York Conference. It seems that Roy's family—and most certainly his elder, physician brother—expected Roy to become the second Branson General Conference president. That did not happen. But our boy Roy's accomplishments and his legacy should have made any family proud.

Roy went on to be the president of his graduating class at Atlantic Union College (1959). I went on to medical school; he to Harvard and other universities of higher



**Greater New York Academy Graduation** 

learning; on to accomplishments and a career of unsurpassably effective service to contemporary society. Our paths did not cross again until Roy joined the faculty of religion here at Loma Linda University a few years ago.

In the words of Dr. Nathan

Farley, a former classmate at Atlantic Union College, long-time pastor, and most recently retired president of the North American Religious Liberty West: "He was named President of AUC's graduating class of 1959, the largest class in the history of AUC till that time. He was a leader to be enjoyed and respected. An extraordinary person; the visionary scholar of AUC. In his life he fulfilled the most important tasks of life . . . justice, mercy, and faithfulness. In the hall of "wisdom" his name will appear on the eternal plaque."

Roy's senior yearbook at Atlantic Union College had this summary, by him, of his classmates:

This year's senior class, the largest in history, could easily establish a new, Utopian society by utilizing the talents and skills of its own members. Essentials such as housing utilities could be arranged by the engineering majors, meals planned by home economics majors and medical needs cared for by the premedic and predental class members.

Several institutions could be established. A church with several ministers would be a possibility, with music majors providing the vocal and instrumental numbers for the services. Experienced leaders would be available for the Sabbath school, missionary volunteer, home missionary, and temberance departments.



AUC Graduation, 1959

A school could give instruction in art, biology, chemistry, economics, education, history, languages, literature, mathematics, and music. A library could be staffed, and a newspaper or two edited. In the necessary civic government that would arise, a number of tested leaders could assume responsibility.

Conceivably, an autonomous community governed by distinctive Adventist principles could be established by this class. Such colonies sprang up right here in New England during the transcendental movement of the last century, and our own denomination, beginning at about the same time, fostered a distinctively Adventist community in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Today, such an idea sounds not only bigoted, but ludicrous. The class has no intention of limiting its scope of activity to conform to such a narrow philosophy. This is not its aim. Effective service to contemporary society is.

Robert Soderblom, nephrologist and college classmate

# **Heady Days at Harvard**

BY ALVIN L. KWIRAM

am not pleased to be here. It is too soon. Roy needed more years to explore, to question, to propose. Today, more than ever, we need his ebullient, creative and visionary spirit.

Roy was almost too intellectually curious for his own good. Possessed of an expansive mind, he was far too restless to be comfortable as an indentured servant in any hierarchical structure. Consequently, his deep passion for transformation within the church was often unrewarded. He sought to usher in a new era of openness and inquiry, and to search for new strategies. He labored to create a new paradigm that could speak to a contemporary society in compelling ways, one that would expand the horizons of the church so that it could become a force for positive engagement in society at large. He struggled to achieve such goals throughout his life, not within the power structure of the organization but inevitably from the sidelines, where at best his views could safely



**Harvard Graduation** with his mother, 1968

be deflected and his proposals marginalized. It is exactly voices like Roy's that are desperately needed to reverse the growing trend of disaffection among the younger generation. His was a prophetic voice heavily seasoned with perpetual questioning of the status quo. One is reminded of Robert Frost's rejoinder in "Mending Wall" when his neighbor says "Good fences make good neighbors," Frost responds:

Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder If I could but a notion in his head: 'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it Where there are cows? But here there are no cows. Before I built a wall I'd ask to know What I was walling in or walling out, And to whom I was like to give offense. Something there is that doesn't love a wall . . . '

Roy had a knack for putting notions in our heads. His was a prophetic voice. We desperately need such voices today—voices that get a respectful hearing, voices unhampered by suffocating constraints. Voices that can help the community see with fresh eyes, voices that can speak with clarity and compassion and can be heard over the drumbeat of anachronistic mantras. Again, Frost says of the neighbor:

He moves in darkness as it seems to me, Not of woods only and the shade of trees. He will not go behind his father's saying, And he likes having thought of it so well He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.' For many

he provided a

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hope that

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way to a

better place.

I first met Roy in Pasadena around 1959 when I was in graduate school and he would come home in the summer and stay with his mom, Ardice. In no time we had a discussion group going. Of course, this sort of thing was part of the Zeitgeist in those years. Several of us who were at Caltech had been having our own weekly discussion group on the growing tension between science and religion. So, it didn't take long after Roy and I met until we decided to engage in similar conversations with friends on more theological topics.

Roy moved to the Boston area around 1961 to enter the Divinity School at Harvard. But whenever he was back in Pasadena, we would end up at his home in some discussion group. In 1964 Verla and I were married and Roy was one of my groomsmen. That fall Verla and I moved to the Boston area as well and joined up with Roy. This was a period of intense national unrest. The Vietnam War, the civil rights battles, and the fight for women's rights were all part of the intellectual cauldron that was at the point of boiling over. The Adventist community was not immune. Serious discussions of the church's role in these matters found their way into Sabbath School classes and were topics of discussion at virtually every social gathering. It seemed only natural that we should organize a discussion group in Cambridge. We started with individuals we already knew. Verla remembers that besides Roy and the two of us, Ann Parrish, Carol Peterson-Haviland and Jim Londis rounded out the group at that first meeting. Verla decided there must be many more students and young professionals in and around Boston, which is such an educational mecca. She set out on a relentless quest to find them, and the group grew rapidly thanks in large part to Verla's efforts. Some were easy targets because they were already established members of local congregations; the Asgierssons, the Baklands, the Hardins, the Graysons and the Rushings come readily to mind. With the arrival in Boston of the Geratys and Teels, the Elders and Vandermolens, the Coxes and Bushnells, among others, attendance continued to grow rapidly, and these events became not-to-bemissed "happenings".

Roy had arranged for us to meet monthly in the very elegant Braun Room of the Divinity School. At our peak in the late sixties, Verla had over one hundred and fifty names on the mailing list and attendance sometimes hit one hundred. It was a very active and stimulating group.

It was a remarkable convergence of people and events.

In time we discovered kindred spirits in a few other locations in the country: Stanford, Berkeley, Seattle, Michigan, and New York. We even organized a couple of regional conferences. At some point a few of us in the Boston group decided it would be important to form a national network of such groups and maybe even create a formal organization. This, of course, dovetailed perfectly with Roy's long-held dream of launching an independent journal. We discussed whether we had the wherewithal to succeed in such a venture. Eventually, we decided to bring representatives from each of the existing groups together to form an organization. But the goal was to do



**Roy and Neal Wilson** 

this with the blessing of the General Conference (GC) and not as a rump group at the margins of the church.

To this end we arranged to meet with Neal Wilson

as head of the North American Division. A key question was whether this organization would be a GC sponsored activity with control over the operations in their hands or an independent entity, but one that had the GC imprimatur. After an initial general session with the 'brethren' in which everyone participated, the formal negotiations somehow landed on my plate. After several tense sessions going back and forth between Neal and a few of his NAD officers and our "delegates", Neal signed off on an agreement for the "independent" arrangement.

That initiated a very intense period of strategic planning. We drafted a constitution and bylaws, formed an organization with officers and job descriptions, decided on what it would be called, and what the communications vehicle would be, how frequent, what tone, what content, who would serve as editor, and so on. That was the beginning of the Association of Adventist Forums. The name "Spectrum" was suggested independently by

Roy's mom and Verla. Roy identified Molleurus Couperus as editor and the rest is history. Molleurus served as editor for six years followed by Roy for roughly two decades.

Roy's role in this development was critical: but his focus on launching a journal represents just one of the many ways in which he promoted new ideas, proposed a larger vision and promulgated a more inclusive community. His engagement in the civil rights movement, his work at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown, his fight against the multinational tobacco companies, his relentless advocacy for women's ordination, all reflect both his passion for justice and his boundless energy.

Such is the legacy he has left for us who remain. His unwavering goal was to make Adventism so relevant, attractive and meaningful that those who caught the vision would spontaneously proclaim that message to anyone who would listen. And although he may have been impatient with the glacial pace of change, for many he provided a beacon of hope that pointed the way to a better place. There are no doubt many who continue to engage with this community of believers because of his labors. Those of us who were privileged to know him could not help but be influenced by him. We will not soon see another like him. Treasure your memories of him.

This encomium is not intended to lay the groundwork for an effort to recommend Roy for sainthood. He, like the rest of us, had his flaws. Roy and I had our differences. That is normal in any human relationship. But any objective evaluation of his life must surely recognize a lively mind, a powerful mind, a generous mind, a playful mind, a creative mind. That mind is now silent. Nonetheless, terabits of his ideas, his vibrant personality and his vision will pervade the ether for years to come. We honor that life today. Rest in peace, dear friend.

Alvin Kwiram, professor emeritus of chemistry, University of Washington

# **Passionate Teaching at Andrews University**

BY GERALD WINSLOW

y first glimpse of Professor Roy Branson was at the end of summer, 1967. Roy, I was told, was a wunderkind who had just completed his PhD at Harvard, and had joined the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Roy was in a hurry to get to the summer graduation ceremony. He grabbed his crimson Harvard academic robe from the back of what I recall was a metallic blue Chevrolet Impala and ran toward the church, the robe, like a flag, flying behind him. Months would pass before I recall seeing him again, the second time in person.

I had moved to Andrews to study for an M.A. in Pastoral Counseling. It took me about three weeks to discover that this was not the right field for me; but, if not that, then what? I didn't know. I scoured the bulletin looking for options and discovered that the only degree I could finish in the one year of sponsorship I had from my conference, was Systematic Theology. Well then, that's what it would be.

During that autumn quarter, my wife and I both contracted mononucleosis. It was debilitating for both of us. We were also poor, so I signed up to be a substitute teacher for Berrien County schools, but this meant I had to save at least three days a week for work. This combination of factors was what led me to Professor Branson's office. I needed an evening course that would meet a requirement for the degree. Roy's advanced seminar in ethics fit the schedule perfectly.

His answer? It was No. The course, he explained, was for second-year students; I was in my second quarter. What's more, the semiIn his life

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nar the previous quarter was a pre-requisite, and I hadn't taken it. So he said he was sorry. I will admit that I begged. Finally, he relented, but only to this degree: I could come to the seminar for the first couple weeks, read the books, write the papers, then he would decide if he would make an exception and sign the add slip.

It worked. That seminar was the single best educational experience of my life, either before or after the time. We read a book and wrote a paper every week, and the books were not chosen for simplicity or brevity. Then there was the paper to write—and no place to hide. There were, as I recall, eight of us in the seminar; Imagine the likes of Charles Scriven, Ron Graybill, Dan Day, Sy Saliba, and Jim Coffin, preparing papers to be read to the seminar. The discussion would often go late into the night, and often it was so intense, Roy had difficulty adding his questions or comments. Once I remember seeing Roy raise his hand, as if looking for the professor to call on him and, I believe, it was Ron Graybill who did call on him.

This quarter-long episode began a journey of friendship and mentorship that has lasted for nearly five decades. To tell you that I will miss Roy really does not capture my feelings today. Yes, I will miss him. But I know his influence will so often be present in thoughts, in writing, and in work. He gave something that typically only one person can give another in this life—a passion for an intellectual discipline, the courage to follow that passion, and the first steps into a life in the academy.

Only in more recent years have I come to realize that Roy did this for scores, if not hundreds, of his students. He taught us that our scholarship should make a difference, not only for the church we love, but also for the world. He moved us in the direction of social justice, and not just in words, but in deeds. He helped us see not dread, but joy in the Apocalypse, as he would remind us, "for the healing of the nations." In all these ways, and countless others,

he vivified the story of Jesus, as the One who saves and also serves. What a great blessing it is today to remember and to thank the Creator for the amazing gift of Roy Branson.

**Gerald Winslow**, vice president of mission and culture, Loma Linda University Health

# **The Washington Years**

BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

n August 21, 1971 Roy Branson wrote in the guestbook at our house: Thank you for "a friendship I hope never ends. It's what makes the Andrews years worthwhile." A few weekends ago, when my children and I were in Takoma Park, together in that same house, we came across the guestbook, and those words struck me: Friendship is "what makes the Andrews years worthwhile."

Roy Branson befriended students, often for life. To a substantial degree, befriending students was his life story—whether he was formally on a faculty or not.

During the school year 1967–68 I enjoyed what some ten or so of us recall as the very first ethics seminar Roy taught at the Andrews University seminary. We met, at least some of the time, in his apartment, which for sparse furnishings resembled a prison cell, and yet was as warm as a Friday evening dinner table. Reading, and writing about, our book a week, we learned, among other things, that great teaching can consist of great conversation; and the best conversation, as we also learned, is conversation among friends.

For many people in this room, a life-long friendship with Roy began in a seminary class-room. But in just a few years, after church and university leaders attempted and failed to reeducate him into a more conventional Adventism,

Roy left the seminary and came to Washington, D. C., where he worked as a scholar in the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University. An article he finished there, on "The Secularization of American Medicine." appeared in 1973 in the journal Hastings Center Studies. To this day it appears as the first collected article in the immensely influential bioethics anthology, On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives on Medical Ethics.

For several years Roy carried the title "senior research follow" at the Kennedy Institute, but by the mid-1970s he was also otherwise involved. In 1975, when Molleurus Couperus' founding editorship of Spectrum ended, Roy became, along with me, one of the co-editors of the magazine. A bit later he married Viveca Black, although the marriage would be somewhat short-lived. By 1978 he was the sole editor of Spectrum.

His editorial tenure lasted until 1998. During that time he was inadequately paid—substantially less than an Adventist minister. Yet he was, without ever, it seemed, a let-down, passionately engaged. During most of that time he worked out of a Spectrum office located on the second floor of the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church office building, just down the hall from the senior pastor's office.

His friend from New York City and Atlantic Union College, James Londis, was the church's



The Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University

senior pastor, and the two of them would talk often and sometimes share lunch together. Jim left that position in 1985 to become a cofounder, with James Cox, of The Washington Institute. This was an entity, partly funded with General Conference money, whose mission involved addressing Washington thought leaders by looking at contemporary issues through the lens of faith.

From the start Roy participated in the conversations about the Institute's work, sometimes at the Tropicana, a Cuban restaurant further up Flower Avenue from the church and its sister institution, Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University). The question of how Adventism can serve the wider world usually animated the discussion. This was Roy's passion, and when funding for the Institute pretty much dried up in the later 1980s, he tried, while editing Spectrum, to keep it alive on little money by focusing on anti-tobacco advocacy. By now I had succeeded Londis as Sligo Church pastor, and I helped a bit and can say that his advocacy made a difference. He founded the Interreligious Coalition on Smoking or Health, and became well connected with many leading figures in Washington. Senator Richard Durbin, then an Illinois congressman, was one: another was Richard Cizik, Governmental Affairs Vice President for the National Association of Evangelicals. Still another was Matthew Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Roy was down the hall from me, too, and in several respects I knew him really well. But it dawned on me slowly—such was my cluelessness and his refusal to complain—that he was making payments on a house that, after the ending of his marriage, he could no longer live in. And in part for that reason, he was sleeping in his office and taking showers in the men's residence hall at the college. Jim Londis and I were chatting on the phone the other day, and Jim, who knew also how little Roy had lived on at Harvard, remarked: "I

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At Columbia Union College, now Washington Adventist University

have never seen anyone live such a Spartan existence for a cause he believed in." His passion for Adventist faith—for its maturation and well-being—was simply amazing.

This came through, too,

in his commitment to great Sabbath School conversation. During most of his time in the Washington area, he led a class whose flavor I tasted the day I realized, early on as the Sligo pastor, that we were having a discussion in which the Big Bang was a *premise*. Highly successful Adventists scientists like Don Ortner and Pete Hare were members, and Roy took it for granted that a viable Adventist future requires a welcoming and grateful attitude toward members who think themselves out of ordinary Adventist conventionality.

All the while, he was continuing to nurture students, who often came over from the college to do part-time work for the magazine. One of these, who began assisting him in 1995, was Alita Byrd, who later earned a master's degree at the London School of Economics and married an Irish diplomat, and who continues to assist Bonnie Dwyer on the magazine. Alita has written in a tribute: "There is no one who has shaped my thinking more." At first she kept Spectrum "paperwork up to date," but was soon writing stories, as, to this day, she continues to do. Roy "listened to people," she says, "especially students—never talking down to them. I never felt he tried to convince me of anything, either. He just kept asking questions and kept listening, letting me talk my own way through sticky issues."

It was, again, conversation—and friendship: Roy spoke at Alita's wedding. In 1998 he left Spectrum to teach topics in political science at Washington Adventist University, where he again entered into the kind of relationships a faculty member has with students. To enhance interest and draw students into the pre-law program, he set up the Institute for Law and Public Policy, which became a space for informal conversation as well as classroom teaching. He also set up a mock trial team, which was soon defeating similar teams from schools like the University of Maryland and the University of Dayton. The first "star" student litigator later earned his law degree at Georgetown University. During his ten years at Washington Adventist, students of Roy's went on to law schools at Harvard and Duke and other fine institutions. One earned a doctorate in education at Harvard. A couple of these are now active on the Washington Adventist University board.

Kristel Tonstad, whom Roy met while he was a guest-teacher in a classroom at La Sierra, assisted him at the Institute for Law and Public Policy before going on to earn a master's degree from the School of Government at Harvard University. In 2008, from her perch as an official for the country of Norway, she prepared a tribute to Roy for his combined 70th birthday and farewell party as he was about to leave for Loma Linda University. Here is a bit of what she said:

"Hundreds of students have found their voices in your classes and seminars; as a result of your prodding questions...they had to speak or burst....You are more idealistic and hopeful than many people my age. Your sense of purpose and movement continues to inspire. Your refusal to sit back and 'shut up' does, too."

"Listen. Don't lose hope. Never shut up." It could be a mantra for all of us. ■

For many

he provided a

beacon of hope

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the way to

a better place.

**Charles Scriven**, former president, Washington Adventist University

# The *Spectrum* Years

BY BONNIE DWYER

hile the narrative about the birth of Spectrum that Alvin Kwiram has shared includes details about graduate students meeting with church officials and creating an organization as well as a jour-

nal, I would like to suggest that Spectrum was truly born at the Branson family dinner table in the vigorous discussions of current issues and church politics that took place there. Roy's mother, he told me, often took an opposing position just for argument's sake, or would challenge her sons to argue the other side after they had made a passionate case for an idea. She set a lively conversational standard that Roy would relish for the rest of his life, that charmed us all, and that influenced his editing.

Later, after Roy's college dream of an Adventist scholarly magazine was beginning to take shape under the auspices of Adventist Forum, it was again Roy's mother who came up with the name Spectrum during a Sabbath dinner-table discussion of the venture.

But even though the idea for the magazine had come to him in college, Roy was not Spectrum's first editor: Mollerus Couperus was chosen for that spot. Roy first served as the secretary of the Association of Adventist



**Rov with Branson men** 



Sharon Fujimoto Johnston, Charles Scriven, Bonnie Dwyer, Roy Branson, Les Pitton, Bronwyn Larson, Dave Larson.

Forums, the carefully crafted organization for Adventist graduate students that had the initial blessing of church leaders such as Neal Wilson. Roy supported the journal by writing articles and helping AAF make its way within the church. He managed a number of social action projects for the association, as well.

Truth be told, there are reports of contention between some church leaders and the journal, even before the first issue was released. That contention became very real during the second year of publication when discussion of Ellen White quickly became a flash point. Roy and Herold Weiss made the case for historical consideration of her in the context of her times. William S. Peterson suggested that Ellen used anti-Catholic historians in constructing her views of the French Revolution for the Great Controversy, and that she accepted proven errors in the writings of these authors, in spite of her claim that visions formed the basis of her views. This brought a fiery response from the White Estate, to which Editor Couperus expounded on the stated purpose of the journal "to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject", which meant that the editors did not always agree with all of the articles that were published.

Thanks to Alvin Kwiram, the Forum had been set up as a truly independent organization, and the journal did not have any official or financial ties that limited its publication policies. This proved to be key to the long-term success of the journal as an independent voice within the church.

Six years of the political, financial and editorial chal-

From Spectrum to Columbia Union College (Washington Adventist University)

befriending

substantial

degree,

To a

students

was his life

story—

whether he

was formally

on a faculty

or not.

lenges proved to be enough drama for Dr. Couperus; he stepped down as editor but continued to be a supporter. He was responsible for bringing the "Minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference" to the journal, which were published to much acclaim. An editorial board was named to replace him, with Roy Branson and Charles Scriven responsible for the actual production of the journal. Roy and Chuck redesigned the magazine for a more general audience, which helped expand the membership base. After two years, Chuck's graduate studies needed to take precedence over the production of the journal, so Roy continued as the editor; a position that he held for twentytwo years.

Spectrum's pages during those years were filled with the ideas, theology, art, arguments, and people that Roy cherished. It was where he set the table for discussions that helped shape the agenda for the church that he loved. Granted it was sometimes a misunderstood love, particularly by church officials who felt that the General Conference was meant to control everything. But that love persisted and gave hope to so many of us.

His editorship did occur in extraordinary times. Ellen White underwent a significant historical makeover. Next up was the Davenport bankruptcy that brought to light conflict

of interest charges for investments made by church officials at every level from local churches and conferences to the General Conference. There was pending bankruptcy within the church's publishing industry, as well

as the equal employment lawsuit of Lorna Tobler and Merikay Silver.

After significant reporting on all this bad news, Roy turned the attention of the church to the Sabbath by publishing an issue celebrating the gift of the Sabbath. It was a very special issue, embellished with four color art, and was later turned into a small book. It differed from most previous Adventist discussions of the Sabbath, which tended to focus on the change of the Sabbath to Sunday and the rightness of the seventh day. Instead, this issue focused on the joys of the Sabbath. "The Sabbath was never a haven of solitude, but always an invitation to fellowship," Roy wrote.

Later, an issue and book were produced on the apocalypse that similarly found new meaning in a specific point of historic Adventist theology, because Roy believed that the best way to honor tradition was to see it with new eyes. His present truth lesson from Revelation was not about timelines for the end or the beasts, but about worship. Worship takes us out of this collapsing world and into the next. It reminds us that God is above the bickering and woes of his people. In Him there is rest and peace and joy.

In addition to the honest reporting on the various troubles within the church, Roy faced down the challenges that come from being an independent non-profit organization living on a razor thin financial edge. I've heard rumors that at one point he was literally living in his office, donated to the organization by Sligo Church. The brilliant scholar and teacher, who could have had an impressive academic career outside the church, gave the better portion of his professional life so that Adventism would have a free press. His sacrifice still awes me.

One of the ways in which the financial challenges of Spectrum were met was through the creation of an Advisory Council, pioneered by Dr. Ray Damazo. Supporters of the magazine were invited to meetings, where the case was made for significant financial gifts. Those meetings became a listening post for Roy, and given the extraordinary things that were happening within the church, more in-depth news about the church was what people wanted.

Roy's response was to very carefully expand the news section of the journal, checking and double-checking assertions that were made. Lawsuits became particularly significant stories, because the official church press could say little if anything about them. He also sent a reporter to Annual Council; coverage of the General Conference was a must. As the news stories multiplied, so did the requests for investigations. In one story, Roy described the, "all-purpose confessional called the Spectrum telephone".

As the years rolled by, new issues appeared on the Adventist landscape—the sanctuary debate and Des Ford, ordination of women, the existence of the gay community within the church—there never seemed to be a shortage of topics to cover.

In 1995, the General Conference Session in Utrecht promised to be a watershed moment for the church. Just like this year in San Antonio, it proved to be a major disappointment to the women who had begun pastoring as they were given permission to baptize and do more and more pastoral work. However, ordination was still frustratingly out of reach; in the late 1970s, ordination of women had seemed imminent. There was great hope that the request by the North American Division to be given permission to ordain, even if the rest of the world did not want to do so, would be approved. When it was turned down, depression and gloom blanketed the church. Never one to be stifled by official actions, Roy began a discussion within his Sligo Sabbath School class that eventually led to the first ordinations of Adventist women pastors by a local church. Reports of the event in Spectrum inspired other churches to follow suit. Roy demonstrated the principle of being the church you want to have.

As a reporter, I know that I can tend to focus on the bad news. And from this list of "issues" you might think that the Spectrum office was a tension-filled place. But to know Roy, to work with Roy, was to laugh, often and heartily. He even wrote about the significance of laughter in one of the last issues of the journal that he edited. "In laughter we hear the sounds of the sacred," he wrote in 1998. "Laughter responds to the pleasure of creation, recognizes the complexities of the human condition, and experiences the exultation of redemption. At the heart of our merriment, we discover the holy."

Through laughter, a brilliant theological mind, a determined missionary spirit, a love for justice, and an understanding of the importance of the free press, Roy left a legacy of excellence. It is a legacy that the Weniger Society for Excellence in Adventism is set to honor at its next awards ceremony in February. As a member of the Weniger Board, I know it gave us great pleasure to have communicated the news of that honor to Roy earlier this year.

Roy brought us all to the table for significant conversations. There he bore witness to the present truth in Adventism, and gave voice to all who wished to speak. May his legacy of a free press in Adventism continue to bless this church family that he loved.

**Bonnie Dwyer**, editor *Spectrum* magazine.

Truth be told, there are reports of contention between some church leaders and the journal, even before the first issue

was released.

# **Summing up a Legacy**

BY DAVID R. LARSON

More than

most people

must, he

had to choose

between

fostering his

own success

as an individual

or working

closely with

others and

contributing to

the success

of them all.

hese remarks are drawn from one portion of my reflections at Roy Branson's memorial service. The other two were about his extraordinary contributions as a friend and as a mentor. I begin this time with two stories that I did not tell the afternoon of August 8.

The first story is about Roy's PhD oral examination at Harvard University. "Mr. Branson," asked one of his questioners, "if Thomas Aquinas were alive today and on our faculty, in which department would he be teaching?"

This was a serious query for which there was only one truly correct response. Roy got it right. Aquinas would be teaching in the Department of Social Relations led by Talcott Parsons, a descendant of Jonathan Edwards from a Congregationalist minister's family in Colorado, who always thought of himself as a "Cultural Calvinist."

Although I do not know if Roy took any courses from him, some of Parsons' many scholarly contributions influenced Roy immensely. Like Aguinas, Parsons had an academic interest in almost everything. This is why Harvard had difficulty finding a permanent place for him in one of its existing departments; a "problem" it solved by authorizing him to create one of his own. Like Aguinas, no one remembers Parsons for doing meticulous quantitative and qualitative empirical research. His passion was finding similar patterns, forces and tendencies in apparently dissimilar intellectual worlds. Like Aguinas, Parsons cared more about the integration of knowledge than the ever widening separation caused by increasing specialization. Like Aguinas, Parsons did theoretical work that was practical through and through.

This bore fruit in his "Action Theory." Part of it highlighted the importance of voluntary



Roy at the Larson wedding, 1997, with Charles Scriven (left and David Larson (center).

endeavors and collaborative efforts in "civil society," something that Alexis de Tocqueville had noted about American life several generations earlier. Apart from such voluntary associations, Parsons thought it difficult entirely to account for positive social change.

The second story is about the approval of Roy's PhD dissertation. One of his advisors was James Luther Adams, a Unitarian social ethicist at Harvard from eastern Washington. He had grown up in a family of fundamentalists who constantly proclaimed the soon and fiery end of the world. (They were not Seventh-day Adventists.) Like Parsons, Adams was interested in the role of voluntary associations; however, he made them front and center in his overall interpretation of positive social change.

Roy and Adams worked well together, except for one thing. No matter how much and how well he wrote, Adams cheerfully asked him to look into something else too. It is impossible to know how long this would have continued if Ralph Potter, a younger social ethicist, hadn't intervened while Adams was away.

Potter informed Roy that he was taking his dissertation to the committee of examiners before Adams returned. Roy objected that it was not yet fully ready. Potter retorted that it was good enough and he took it to the committee anyway. Its members, which included a historian from across the campus, heartedly approved it. In this way, thanks to Potter, Roy

completed the requirements for his doctorate before Adams had a chance to come up with something more for him to do!

An affable man, Adams seems to have thought it funny too. Years later Roy, Charles Scriven and I, spent a splendid evening of conversation with him in his home near Harvard. His stories about what he saw as a theological graduate student in Germany as the Nazis gained power were by turns humorous and frightening.

Surprise: Roy's dissertation was about voluntary associations!

It argued that, among the founders of what is now the United States, James Madison made a distinctive but often overlooked contribution to discussions about the proper role of religion in society. He differed from those who wanted to use the coercive power of the state to enforce religious beliefs and practices; however, he also differed from those who believed that religious people should influence the state only as individuals. Madison held that citizens could form what we now call voluntary associations. These freely established collaborative endeavors would allow them to have more influence in public life than they would have had as individuals, while also preventing them from becoming tyrannical.

Early in his career, Roy had to decide how seriously to apply to his own life what he had learned about voluntary associations. More than most people must, he had to choose between fostering his own success as an individual or working closely with others and contributing to the success of them all. In street language, he had to decide whether to be "The Sage on the Stage" or "A Guide by the Side".

For several reasons, including his convictions about voluntary associations. Roy chose a career of collaboration. Despite his great ability, he determined that he would accomplish more by working closely with others than he would on his own. His life unfolded accordingly, albeit often painfully.

The various voluntary associations with which Roy worked testify to the importance of his choice. These include the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Kennedy Institute for Bioethics at Georgetown University, the Center for Law and Public Policy at Washington Adventist University, the Interfaith Coalition against Tobacco (which he founded), the Center for Christian Bioethics at Loma Linda University and, most importantly by far, the Adventist Forum, which he co-founded.

It is impossible to exaggerate the powerful and positive contributions of the Adventist Forum, its journal Spectrum, and now its very frequently visited website, to Adventism. Roy might have moved to Vermont and become a widely known successful author. Or he might **Despite his** 

great ability,

he determined

that he would

accomplish

more by

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with others

#### **Some Seventh-day Adventist Theological Transitions (1965–2015)**

Creation From Timing to Meaning

**Humankind** From State of the Dead to Whole Person

From Hierarchy to Equality Gender

Sin From Personal Pettiness to Oppressive Structures

**Salvation** From Our Faith to God's Faithfulness

From Furniture, Compartments and Dates to Immanuel: God Always with All of Us Sanctuary

From Persecuted Minority to Prophetic Movement Church

Sabbath From Obligation to Celebration **Prophesy** From Predicting to Protesting

**Ellen White** From Unquestionable Authority to Fallible but Helpful Guide

**Apocalyptic** From Inside Knowledge about the Future to Coded Resistance and Living Now as We Will Then than he would

on his own.

have become a professor of social or bioethics. Instead, he devoted most of his life to working for positive change in the church and in society through voluntary associations.

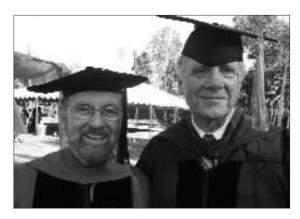
The organization to which Roy contributed most of his life was initially known as the "Association of Adventist Forums." The word "association" had two meanings for him in this context. On the one hand, it meant "society", "affiliation", or "group." On the other hand, it meant, as an expression of what Talcott Parsons and James Luther Adams had taught him and others about voluntary associations, a "freely entered collaborative endeavor on behalf of the common good". This has nothing to do with whether its participants are paid.

I was disappointed when the organization dropped the word "association" in favor of "Adventist Forum." I hope that someday it will return it for Roy's sake and ours. Yet no matter its name, the organization, plus its journal and website, have served precisely as Parsons and Adams would have predicted.

Although he suffered enough "Great Disappointments" to justify not being so upbeat, by temperament and self-discipline Roy was an unusually cheerful and positive person. Yet during the last year or so of his life he was sometimes briefly pensive and frustrated.

This was especially so as he watched the stormy clouds of divisive Adventism darken the denomination's sky. For a person who loved the church, a person who was a fourth generation Adventist on one side of his family, and a seventh generation on the other, this needless discord pained him. It was tempting in such moments for even him to be somber about the denomination's future.

Roy characteristically resisted the temptation of pessimism by recounting the accomplishments of the past. More than once, when things started to become too gloomy, we listed positive ways important sectors of Adventism have changed between 1965 and 2015, partly because of his collaborative efforts. We were always astonished and encouraged by the length of these lists and



2015 Loma Linda University Graduation with Dave Larson

the importance of their contents.

The accompanying table (page 55), which focuses on doctrinal transitions, exhibits one such list. Many others could join us by making similar lists of their own. The results make it difficult to be intensely pessimistic about the denomination's future. Roy wasn't!

Three men changed Adventism more profoundly and positively over the last half century than any other trio that we might mention.

Their names are Talcott Parsons, James Luther Adams and Roy Branson. Where would we be without them?

**David Larson**, professor, Loma Linda University School of Religion

# **Roy Branson and Loma Linda**

BY RICHARD HART

hen I saw the list of speakers and my place on the roster, I knew two things would be true; there would be few stories or aspects of Roy's life that hadn't been told, and it would be very late. So let me be brief.

I can't remember, as I search the archives of my mind, when and where I first met Roy—some

Early in his

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associations.

time and some place long forgotten—but I will never forget his message. Then, and subsequently, it was usually embodied in one word: advocacy. He felt clear that anyone involved with public health should be guided by advocacy, whether it was a tobacco issue or some other issue that was bothering him at that point in time.

So it was with some excitement that I supported the recruitment of Roy Branson, at age 70, to come and join the faculty at Loma Linda University. Here was a theologian, scholar, and advocate joining our faculty. This began a sojourn with Roy over the last seven years at Loma Linda that has been both fascinating and challenging.

I'm sure that one of the phrases I have heard more than anything else from Roy is "the healing of the nations", because Roy, as Associate Dean of our School of Religion, would look for times when Jon Paulien was out of town and he could come and attend dean's council. And it seemed to me that almost every issue we were discussing, the solution was always somehow "the healing of the nations."

So we would talk, and Roy appreciated the perspective that Loma Linda brought because he was a "natural" Loma Linda person, in my view. He had a perspective, worldview, and an inclusive nature about him that fit so well on our campus; with the storied Roy Branson name, he



The Branson family—Roy. **Betty, and Bruce** 

became a regular part of our campus setting. When he took over as director of the Center for Christian Bioethics, he reactivated a tradition on our campus, which has frankly been invaluable, by bringing speakers, usually on a Sabbath afternoon, to talk about a variety of different topics. We are

indebted to Roy for bringing that aspect of Loma Linda back to life again, and I am delighted that we are starting a Roy Branson Lectureship to continue that tradition.

He also had a flare for art, as has been referred to here, and many of us have appreciated the various displays that have been placed on the third floor of the Centennial Complex. Roy had a knack for that.

The final comment I want to make is centered on that artistic talent of Roy's. I'll never forget, probably two years ago, Roy walking into my Magan Hall office, with a roll of papers under his arm. He sat down with a little bit of a sheepish grin on his face and a twinkle in his eye. He said, "Dick, I'd like to get rid of this building, and your office." After a pause, I said "well, ok", and he rolled out his papers. Many of you know the story. Roy had photo-shopped a picture of the Loma Linda Campus. It had this beautiful layout, from several different angles, showing Magan Hall gone, the Faculty Reading Room over the breezeway gone, the Heritage Room gone, the old library stacks gone, and a beautiful open campus view from the hospital to the Centennial Complex; a beautiful vision.

The first time I saw it, I kind of laughed inside and sent him on his way, but the idea kept growing, and Roy kept coming back. He enjoyed pointing out, in only Roy's fashion, that the long sidewalk going north to south, with the cross sidewalk in the quad going east to west, made a perfect cross. What could be better, connecting the healing arts on the south end with the academic world on the north end? I don't think he missed the point that at the foot of the cross was the School of Medicine, while at the head of the cross was the School of Religion. That plan is now under active consideration. One of Roy's greatest legacies will be if we can indeed pull that off and unite our campus in that way. So Roy, my friend, you will be missed. We valued your contribution. Thank you for being part of Loma Linda.

Richard Hart, President, Loma Linda University

I don't think he missed the point that at the foot of the cross was the school of medicine, and at the head of the cross was the school of

religion.

# **Revolutionary of the Imagination**

BY JOHN BRUNT

first met Roy Branson in 1962 when I was an undergraduate student at La Sierra and he was a doctoral student at Harvard. We met in the Southern California Conference Office in Glendale where we both were to pick up our colporteur supplies. Roy and Larry Geraty are probably the only two Harvard PhDs in the history of that institution to work their way through by colporteuring.

The last evening I spent with Roy was about two weeks before he died. Thanks to the hospitality of Dr. Joan Coggin we sat together a few rows behind the Dodger dugout at Dodger Stadium. It was the fourth time this summer that I had sat next to Roy at a Dodger game. They won one and lost three. Two things that I always found consistent with Roy, whether he was colporteuring, or watching the Dodgers, or anything in between; first, Roy cared deeply. He didn't just go out colporteuring to earn money; he cared about what he was doing. And I can tell you that when he was at a Dodger game, he cared deeply.

Roy had been a Dodger fan from their Brooklyn days. And though much of his life was lived across the country from the Dodgers, he still knew the lineup everyday and whether they had won or lost. Roy loved the Dodgers so much that it literally brought him pain when the manager would do things that made no sense. He had a great deal of advice for Don Mattingly, the Dodger manager. Unfortunately, Mattingly couldn't hear it. I'm sure if he'd been able to hear Roy the Dodgers would have won all four of those games.

Roy also lived joyfully. When he was colporteuring, he could go out to face the day of knocking on doors with joyful enthusiasm,

something I have to admit I found a lot more difficult (which is probably why he sold a lot more books that I did). And at Dodger games he was joyful. He never gave up. No matter how far behind they were, there was still hope as long as there was one more inning.

There was one thing he loved to do at the Dodger games: he loved to predict what the next batter was going to do. Now, batters can do so many things that most of the time Roy was wrong, and when he was wrong he was silent. But once in a while Roy would be right. He would jump up with ecstasy and high five everybody and say, "See, I told you that's what he was going to do, didn't I tell you that?" Roy was never happier than when he got the prediction right.

Roy cared deeply and lived joyfully. Some people can care deeply, but they care so deeply that they miss the joy of life. Some people can live joyfully in a trivial or shallow way without seeing the real issues of life. But Roy cared deeply and lived joyfully and he did it because of a central vision in his life. The Apostle Paul sums up that vision well with just one short verse. It comes in Romans 1:14. The people of Rome were engaged in some petty disputes about what they ate and when they ate it. Paul tried to raise their vision. He told them the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drink, but of justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Roy lived by a vision of that kingdom—a kingdom of justice and peace and joy. He loved the visions of the book of Revelations. He did not consider that book a codebook of past events or future predictions, but a vision of what God has in store for us in the future and a vision of what God wants us to do right now, in this world, to give people a taste of the kingdom so that they will long for it.

We are going to look at some of the things Roy said because I think that is a great way to remember him. Thinking of that vision of justice and peace and joy, which Roy especially found in Sabbath, he said, "The greatest gift of Adventists to humanity is not 'hastening the end'

Roy lived by

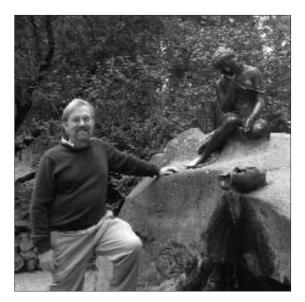
a vision of that

kingdom—

a kingdom of

justice and

peace and joy.



St. Petersburg, Russia

through moral purity of our lives, but embodying God's just and peaceable kingdom and inviting all to share in celebrating Sabbath worship at the culmination of every week."1

Justice and peace and joy; that vision motivated all the varied activities of Roy's life. It propelled him to be a social activist. He did not just pray for justice and peace; he worked for justice and peace. You saw that in 1965. He was in Selma, Alabama when Martin Luther King Jr. led a march that changed the direction of this country. That was not just a walk in the park. There were people from the north who died going down to Alabama, and Roy was there. And of course he enjoyed going back for the fiftieth anniversary of that occasion just this past March.

That vision of the kingdom propelled Roy's social activism to take on the tobacco industry, and all the work that he did in his Center for Law and Public Policy. It also propelled him in his engaging work as a teacher. Roy was a dynamic, demanding, engaging teacher. Unfortunately, his tenure at the seminary was cut short, but in the short time he taught at Andrews, he changed the face of Adventist theology and ethics for the next couple of generations. His students truly changed the face of ethics in the Adventist church and brought the study of Christian ethics into prominence.

He believed that teaching was actually a part of the apocalyptic vision. Here is what he said about teaching:

Great teachers are totally undaunted. They do not drone on with endless facts about the long ago and far away. They shock the present with the past. They ridicule commonplace assumptions, rescue imaginations from the trivial, bring students into the presence of the wisest, most fascinating personalities the world has known. Great teachers overwhelm the trash of the present with the vividness of humanity's most enduring visions. In the presence of great teachers, the forgotten and dead live again. Students are astonished and transformed. In the presence of great teachers, students experience nothing less than resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

You see what made him such a great teacher? He had a vision for what teaching was all about.

It also propelled his work as editor. Roy loved nothing more than getting his friends to write the things that would make a difference in the church, and he inspired so many to write. He had a vision of a kind of writing and journalism that would make a difference, and it has. Now, I will say that as an editor, Roy sometimes blurred the lines between editing and writing. As an editor, he did a lot of reworking. I have worked with a lot of editors, and nobody reworked the things I had written like Roy did. In fact, we had kind of a running dispute.

As a preacher, I've been schooled by the writings of Fred Craddock and Eugene Lowry, who say you never let people know where you are going right at the beginning. You create suspense and you lead people along, and you finally get them to a conclusion that is so obvious that they make it for themselves. Well, I tried to write that way, but Roy was sure that the conclusion had to be in the first paragraph. Almost every article I ever wrote for Roy, I found that there would be a new first paragraph with all this stuff from my last paragraph. But what a difference his editorial work made.

Roy also was a theologian. Donna tells me that sometimes Roy wondered if that legacy

He told them the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drink, but of justice and peace and joy in the

**Holy Spirit.** 

would even be remembered, but what an impoverished church we will be if we do not remember Roy's theology. Roy was not the kind of theologian who analyzed theoretical words. He was a theologian with a vision of what we ought to do and where we ought to be, and he knew that theologians were important for the church. Here's what he said about theologians:

The future of the Adventist church depends on its theologians not responding to what seems to be an increasingly hostile environment, becoming more politically astute, muted, and gray. [Roy could never be accused of being muted and grey, I can assure you.] For succeeding generations to care about Adventism, its theologians must feel passionately enough to make us long for vistas we can barely glimpse. For a faith rising out of visionary experience to flourish, Adventism depends on its theologians to continue to be passionate and daring enough to inspire the church with sightings of new horizons.<sup>3</sup>

A number of you have been in Roy's new home, just a couple of miles from here. He loved that new home, and when he would talk about it, the thing he talked about most was the view. Almost three hundred and sixty degrees of view where he could look out over the horizon and could see the lights of the city and the mountains. Roy loved looking out and seeing beyond. He knew that is what theologians need to do, and that's what he did as a theologian.

Roy was an Adventist theologian. He was an Adventist through and through. I don't think that even in his wildest imagination Roy could see himself not being an Adventist. Roy loved the Adventist church so much that it brought him pain when its leaders did things that didn't make sense to him. Unfortunately, that was often the case. Roy was well aware of the church's foibles. He could say that recently the church in North America had become more an earthen vessel than a treasure.4 He could point out those foibles and he could make suggestions, but it was always in a spirit of constructive criticism, wanting the church to do better, be better than it is. Roy could take every aspect of Adventism and draw it into that vision of the future that makes a difference in the present. He could even take something like Adventist dietary practices, vegetarianism, (although he wasn't a vegetarian), and say, "The vegetarian diet does not have to be one more means of purifying our lives, or another law. The vegetarian diet can be a cornucopia of the pleasures and benefits given to us by God. The healthier and longer lives vegetarians enjoy is a foretaste of the New Earth."<sup>5</sup>

Probably for Roy though, the part of Adventism that was the greatest sign of the coming kingdom was the joy of Sabbath. It gave him such a sense of joy in life. He could say, "In the full throated laughter of Sabbath joy, we hear all our laughter resonate already to the sounds of the Holy City and a God of joy."

That's where Roy's joy was. He had a vision for Adventism, but Roy's Adventism was not sectarianism Adventism; it was not a separatist Adventism. Roy believed that Adventism had something to offer to the world; it had something to offer to the culture; it had something to offer to the broader Christian community. He had a vision of us going out with no shame, but with great appreciation of our heritage, sharing this vision of the kingdom. Listen to his vision of what Adventism should be:

Contemporary Adventism should regard a rekindling of the apocalyptic vision as its special gift to contemporary culture. The Adventist church in our time is to embody the apocalyptic vision of a community whose disappointments are overwhelmed by its experience of the divine. A church empowered by God's presence. The Adventist church is to be a visionary vanguard, revolutionaries of the imagination, propelled into action, shattering the routines of oppression, with the shock of the holy.<sup>7</sup>

That's a vision to get excited about, isn't it? That vision caused Roy to care deeply and to live joyfully, and it's hard to think of him not being with us. What would Roy want us to do today?

I'll tell you one thing he wouldn't want us to do, he would not want us to minimize the pain of loss. He would not want us to try and put a pretty face on death. Roy knew better. I'll never forget, many years ago, at an American Academy of Religion meeting, in Chicago: a big ballroom, over a thousand people present. A plenary session was given by Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, a woman who helped us in our ability to treat people who are dying with dignity. In this particular lecture, however, she was trying to convince us that we should accept death as a natural part of life. That we should welcome death as a friend. That we should recognize that there is beauty in death.

I remember her using the analogy of shooting stars. She said, we look to the sky and we enjoy the beauty of shoot-

ing stars going across the sky, and she said they are the death of meteors. It is just death, but there is this beauty in it. And we need to learn to see that kind of beauty in human death as well. I was sitting in the same row with several of you and with Roy. As he listened to this lecture, he got more and more livid. He was talking under his breath, "that is not true, no." And when she ended, he virtually bounded out of his seat to get to the microphone to take her on. She was a bit dismissive of him, but Roy was tenacious. And when the question and answer session was over. he went and engaged her personally in a rather long and animated conversation that I enjoyed watching. I remember Roy saying things like, "Paul says the last enemy to be destroyed is death." And he quoted from Dylan Thomas, "do not go gently into that good night."

Roy would not want us to try and put a pretty face on horrible loss. And Roy was right. When I walked into the viewing room at Montecito, and I saw Roy's lifeless body in a casket, I can assure you it was nothing like watching shooting stars. It was terrible. Roy knew that about death. The theologian Oscar

Cullmann pointed out years ago that the artists who paint the most glorious portraits of the resurrection are those who paint the most realistic picture of the crucifixion. Only when we realize that death is the enemy, can we see how glorious hope is. And Roy had that hope. That was part of his vision, a kingdom that was coming.

He edited a book called The Pilgrimage of Hope and some of us here had the privilege of writing articles in that book. He himself wrote two. I want to close by looking at some excerpts of what Roy said about hope in those two essays.

Contemporary Seventh-day Adventists live between the times, between the decisive battle and the future celebrations, but no matter when the final victory comes, our lives now need not be racked with doubt and anxiety. The decisiveness of Christ's triumph in the past quarantees the certainty of his return in the future. Nothing can alter the significance of what has already been accomplished. No delay can shatter confidence in the triumph already achieved. My grandfather and my parents expected Christ to come before they died. Years after

impoverished church we will be if we do not remember Roy's

theology.

What an



Ron Numbers, Dave Larson, Charles Scriven, Bonnie Dwyer, Donna Carlson, Gillian Geraty, Alvin Kwiram, John Brunt, and Larry Geraty at the Branson Memorial Service that was planned by Donna Carlson.

their death, I still mourn separation from my mother and father. I believe that one day my loneliness will be overcome. Christ's work in the past makes certain his return in the future. God, when he decides, can come. God, when he decides, will come.8

That was Roy's hope. I pray that Roy's joy and hope brings you comfort in this time of loss, and holds you, and keeps you, and supports you until that day when the last enemy is destroyed and death is swallowed up in victory.

John Brunt, senior pastor, Azure Hills SDA Church

#### **Footnotes**

- 1. Roy Branson, "The Drama of Adventist Worship," Spectrum 29:4 (2001): 43-45, see page 43-44.
- 2. Roy Branson, "Bringing the Dead to Life," Spectrum 26:1 (January 1997): 2.
- 3. Roy Branson, "The Daring Vision that is Adventism," Spectrum 26:1 (May 1997): 2.
- 4. Roy Branson, "Trumpet Blasts and Hosanas: Once and Future Adventism," Spectrum 18:3 (1988): 29-35, see 32.
- 5. Roy Branson, "Those Hardy Vegetarians and Their Succulent Cuisine," Spectrum 26:3 (Sept. 1997): 2.
- 6. Roy Branson, "The Sacredness of Laughter," Spectrum 26:4 (January 1998): 44-49, see page 49.
  - 7. Roy Branson, "Trumpet Blasts and Hosanas," 33.
- 8. Roy Branson, Ed., Pilgrimage of Hope (Association of Adventist Forums, 1986), excerpts from his two articles, "Adventists Between the Times: A Shift in the Church's Eschatology," 60-61; and "Responding to the Delay," 16.



Roy and Donna Carlson in San Diego.

### **Dublin Tribute**

BY ALITA BYRD

cannot think of a single person I know who influenced so many people to such a great extent as Roy Branson. Generations of young people at Andrews University, Washington Adventist University and Loma Linda University experienced his mind-expanding classes. His legendary Sabbath School classes forced people to think about and discuss difficult social and theological issues. The media organization he founded illuminated the Adventist church in important ways.

There is no one who shaped my thinking more.

Roy Branson introduced me to The New Yorker. He showed me the importance of social justice. He made me realize that it's possible to actually influence policy—in both the church and the secular world—instead of just watching it happen. He encouraged me to research and write difficult stories, and trusted me with assignments that other editors wouldn't have. He opened my eyes to the broader world of academia outside Adventism. He helped me to see beyond the insular walls of the local Adventist church, and place my faith in a global context. He showed me a side of Adventism that was not constrained by rules and dogma, but was focused on advocacy, peace, justice and equality for everyone. He embodied ethics. He lived kindness and generosity in his everyday life. He was always cheerful. His self-discipline was admirable, as he walked three miles every day without fail (following the scare he had after his first heart attack).

I first met Roy Branson in 1995, when I came to Columbia Union College (now Washington Adventist University) as a sophomore. As a journalism major, someone suggested that I apply to work in the office of Spectrum, right on campus. Roy gave me a job as administrative assistant, and I helped to process subscriptions, write Christmas cards to donors, and keep the paperwork up-to-date. But gradually, he gave me more and more writing assignments. I wrote about Adventist members of congress. I wrote about Adventist congregationalism. I investigated large salaries paid to administrators of Shady Grove Adventist Hospital. And I tracked down an Adventist pastor accused of genocide in Rwanda. Roy talked me through everything. I can't imagine he ever could have edited a daily, because no mat-

ter how busy he was, he always had time for discussions. And he always had time to listen. He was a keen questioner and he truly listened to people, especially students—never talking down to them. I never felt he tried to convince me of anything, either. He just kept asking questions and kept listening, letting me talk my own way through sticky issues.

Roy was never great at the details. He was the ideas man, the thinker, the entrepreneur. He needed other people to help carry his projects to fruition. He knew that, and there was never any lack of those people. After all, we were the ones who benefited most.

Working for a while at Roy's Interreligious Coalition on Smoking or Health on Capitol Hill was a wonderful eye-opener on the workings of government, and the way that even small organizations can have a big impact. Roy's confidence in speaking to politicians, religious figures and the media helped me to grow my own confidence. His ability to nurture relationships was inspiring.

It was Roy who told me I should try to work for Preservation, the magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (because it was such a beautiful publication!), which I had never heard of. But sure enough, I got an internship there, which led to my first real job, at National Geographic magazine.

It was Roy who I always turned to first for a recommendation, and his recommendation probably helped me get to London School of Economics for a master's program.

And it was in London that I met my Irish husband. When we got married in 2003, I couldn't think of anyone I wanted to speak at our wedding more than Roy Branson. He agreed, and he later told me that he spent weeks researching and preparing. He spoke movingly and memorably about Ruth, and about how her marriage to Boaz was the uniting of two different peoples.

There are simply hundreds, and probably thousands, of people who have similar stories about the impact Roy Branson had on their politics, their faith, their career. If we all wrote short



Roy in St. Petersberg

tributes, they would fill books. There are not many people in the world who can claim to have inspired the number of people Roy did. He was a giant in the world of Adventism and beyond.

With a PhD from Harvard University and a network of contacts, Roy could have done anything. But he chose to concentrate his efforts within the Adventist church and its institutions. He remained passionate about the church all his life, and the church is richer because of him. His thoughtful editing of Spectrum made it the influential publication it is. His Sabbath School inspired people far beyond Sligo Church. His championing of the ordination of women made waves, and possibly changed the course of Adventist church history. His friendship with generations of Adventist theologians, teachers and administrators undoubtedly made them think about things just a little bit differently. It would be difficult to overstate his influence.

I will miss you. Rov. We will all miss you.

Alita Byrd, member of the Spectrum web team and freelance writer from Dublin, Ireland, sent this tribute when she learned of Roy's death.

He showed me a side of **Adventism that** was not

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rules and

dogma, but was

focused on

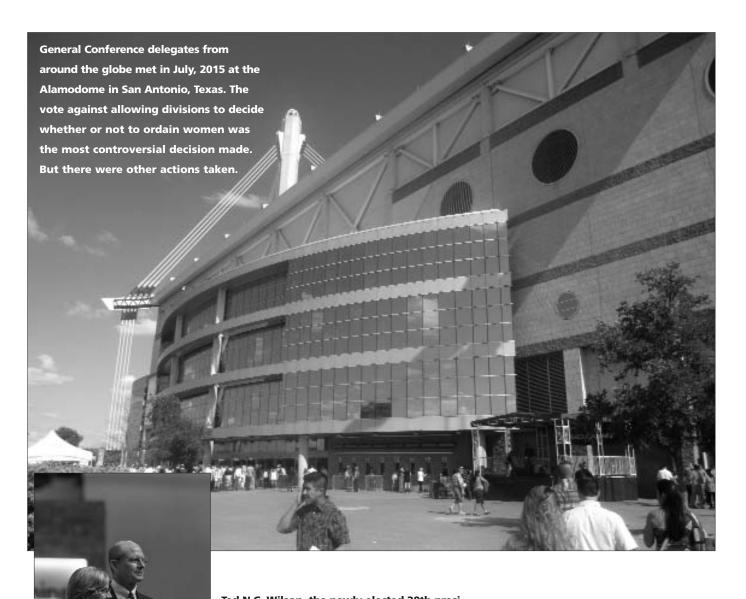
advocacy,

peace, justice

and equality

for everyone.

# After SAN ANTONIO



Ted N.C. Wilson, the newly elected 20th president of the General Conference of Seventhday Adventists is joined by his wife, Nancy Wilson, as they are presented to the delegates at the 60th General Conference Session.

# San Antonio and the Church Manual | BY JOHN BRUNT

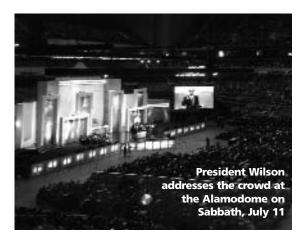
n the article I wrote before the General Conference Session on proposed changes to the Church Manual, I questioned whether they would be a matter for discussion or merely a rubber stamp, especially in light of the seemingly more significant items on women's ordination and Fundamental Beliefs. If anyone thought that Church Manual issues would be rubber-stamped, they were in for a huge surprise. About two and a half days were devoted to the Church Manual, and even then delegates never got to all of the proposed items.

#### First *Church Manual* Session

The direction of the discussions was set right at the beginning when the fifth business meeting, on the morning of Sunday, July 5, took up the first Church Manual issues in a session chaired by Geoffrey Mbwana. Church Manual chair, Armando Miranda, and secretary, Harald Wollan, presented a total of five items during that first session. These all seemed like fairly simple items, but the delegates referred all but one of them back to the committee. In the first half-day they approved only one item!

The first item seemed simple enough. It stated that the Church Manual speaks primarily to the local church and the Working Policy to the wider organization. Delegates Jay Gallimore and Mario Veloso immediately objected that this introduced a dangerous dichotomy. Others joined in and the proposed change was referred back.

The second issue was a change in the appeal process when organizations within the church structure have a dispute. At present the appeal can continue right to the General Conference; the new proposal would limit the appeal process



to the highest organization not involved in the dispute, and that decision would be final. Again, there were immediate and serious objections. Most focused on the need to allow appeals to go all the way to the General Conference if they were not settled at a lower level, and felt that any limiting of the appeal process would be unfair. Again, the proposal was referred back.

The third proposal of the first morning called for using the term "pastor" throughout the Church Manual. The present wording is sometimes "pastor" and sometimes "minister." At this point it became evident that no discussion could ignore the women's ordination issue that was to come three days later. Opponents of women's ordination saw this as an entry to woman pastors and objected. Others admonished the chair not to allow commercials about opposition to women's ordination to creep into a discussion that had nothing to do with it. But opponents continued to worry that this change might open the door to women in the office of pastor (even though, as delegate Elizabeth Talbot pointed

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Church Manual

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be rubber-

stamped, they

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for a huge

surprise.

out, we opened that door long ago by agreeing to the commissioning of women pastors.) Finally Doug Batchelor moved that the item be referred back to the committee, and it was. Three up and three down!

The fourth proposal addressed who may speak in Adventist church services. The current *Church Manual* allows only credentialed individuals to speak. Yet many local elders speak who do not have credentials. Therefore new wording was proposed that stated: "No one should be allowed to speak to any congregation unless he/she has been invited by the church in harmony with guidelines given by the conference." After some brief and minor objections, this proposal passed. The first actual change to be made in the *Church Manual* after almost two hours of discussion!

Progress was short-lived, however. The next item was also referred back to the committee. It involved reasons for church discipline, expanding the reasons by adding the words:

Violation of the commandment of the law of God, which reads, "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14, Matt. 5:28), as it relates to the marriage institution and the Christian home, biblical standards of moral conduct, and any act of sexual intimacy outside of a marriage relationship and/or non-consensual acts of sexual conduct within a marriage whether those acts are legal or illegal. Such acts include but are not limited to child sexual abuse, including abuse of the vulnerable. Marriage is defined as a public, lawfully binding, monogamous, heterosexual relationship between one man and one woman.

Jeroen Tuinstra, a conference president in the Inter-European Division, offered an amendment to omit the words "and any act of sexual intimacy outside of a marriage relationship". This amendment was quickly defeated, but another issue was raised by Dan Jackson. He suggested that the term "legally binding" might become problematic in the future, as laws redefine marriage. On that basis the motion was referred back to the committee.

This was the first of five sessions on the *Church Manual*. Within the scope of this article we cannot go into this much detail for each of the five sessions, but will try to summarize high points and major issues.

#### Second *Church Manual* Session

The sixth business session, which began at 2:00 p.m. that same day, began with an easy one. The proposal changed only one word relating to church discipline. The word

"remove" had been used in a section referring to church discipline, but since censure is also an option in discipline, the work was changed to "discipline." Finally, an easy pass.

Two other issues dominated the remainder of this second session on the *Church Manual*: membership issues and who may conduct communion services.

The most significant proposed change in church membership had to do with those who choose to resign their membership. At present, if a member wishes to resign from church membership their request must be voted by a church business meeting and is recorded as being dropped for apostasy. The new proposal would allow the church board to receive the letter and simply record it, adding that efforts should be made to restore the individual.

This new proposal was voted after several minor changes were made by common consent, and after a good bit of discussion. Some were concerned that members would use this to avoid church discipline. Others wondered what this meant for those who resigned and later wanted to return. Would they come in by baptism or profession of faith? Some were concerned that if there was no discipline, and the person who resigned later wanted to join a different local church, the second church wouldn't know what the person had done. Even though the proposal passed, it was surprising to see how important it was for some delegates who spoke to assure that a pound of flesh be extracted from erring members before they could resign on their own.

Also with regard to membership, currently a business meeting can specify a period of time before a person can be reinstated after discipline, but the new proposal simply leaves the time open to a point where there is confession and evidence of change. This proposal also passed, but only after a long discussion.

The coming vote on women's ordination came back into the forefront when a seemingly simple proposal to allow ordained and commissioned pastors and local ordained elders, but not ordained deacons and deaconesses, to lead out in the communion. Those who opposed not only women's ordination, but also women as pastors, seized on this as an opportunity to try and roll back already-voted privileges allowed to commissioned pastors. An amendment was made to remove commissioned pastors from those who could lead out, but it was defeated, and the proposal was voted. It was obvious, however, that Wednesday was already in the room.

#### Third *Church Manual* Session

Discussion on Church Manual proposals had to wait two more days to allow for the discussion of changes in the Fundamental Beliefs, but Tuesday afternoon the Church Manual took center stage again. This session was amazingly restrained compared to the first two sessions, which were noteworthy for their vigorous discussions. For the first time a number of proposals were voted without any discussion at all. Perhaps being sandwiched between Tuesday morning's discussion on Fundamental Beliefs and Wednesday's discussion of women's ordination made Church Manual proposals appear less vital.

Changes voted included sections on the function and training of deacons and deaconesses, giving receipts to members, nomenclature for the community services or Dorcas ministries, the procedure for objecting to local nominating committee reports, and the role of the finance committee. But proposals on youth ministries, unauthorized speakers in the church, and the communion service were referred back to the committee.

#### Fourth *Church Manual* Session

Several of the items referred back to the committee at earlier sessions came back to the floor on Friday morning. The item from the first session. on the relationship between the Church Manual and Working Policy, came back with no change and was voted without discussion.

The second issue referred back in the first session—that of appeals when organizations have disputes—came back with a slight change. It specified that appeals could be made to one higher organization than the first proposal, but the organization could decide whether to hear the appeal or not. Several delegates objected that this limitation was unfair; there should be no denial of the right to appeal all the way to the General Conference. Delegate Roscoe Howard noted that in the U.S. appeal process, the Supreme Court is able to choose which appeals it hears.

A motion was made to refer this matter

back to the committee again. The motion was defeated, although the vote was so close that someone called for an actual count. The motion to refer lost 510-647. (Notice that by Friday morning fewer than half of the 2,566 delegates were present and voting.) After more discussion, the main motion to accept the proposed wording passed.

The next item was the proposal for using the term "pastor" consistently throughout the Church Manual. It had also been referred back on Sunday, but now passed. A few proposed changes in the role of the church board received several additional suggestions, but a motion to refer it back lost and the proposal was voted.

The last item taken up Friday morning related to campus ministries. Delegates voted some minor wording changes, such as changing the term "public colleges" to "colleges or universities not operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

As time for lunch passed, the chair gave delegates the choice—stay another half hour and finish, or come back in the afternoon for a fifth session on the Church Manual. Hungry delegates decided to go have lunch and come back.

#### Fifth and Last *Church Manual* Session

This session was nothing less than bizarre. Somehow Alamodome staff got the idea that there was no afternoon session, and many delegates coming to the meeting were turned away. Given the long distance from the Dome to the hotels it was impossible to get the word out that the delegates were to return and meet. As a result very few delegates were on the floor. The chair ruled that, due to the lack of delegates, contentious proposals that had been referred back to the committee would not be addressed. and in these areas the Church Manual would remain in its present form for another five years.

The proposed changes on youth ministries that had been referred in the third session were voted. and some changes were made to the sections on church discipline and marriage. Under reasons for discipline the following statement was added:

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Fornication, which includes among other issues, promiscuity, homosexual activity, incest, sodomy, and bestiality.

In addition, the last reason for discipline saw a change in wording designed to rule out the use of marijuana in localities where it is legal. The underlined portions are new, and the sections with a line through them are deleted from the previous *Church Manual*.

The use or manufacture of illicit drugs or the <u>use</u>, <u>misuse</u>, or sale of narcotics or drugs without appropriate <u>medical cause and license</u>. <del>misuse of, or trafficking in, narcotics or other drugs</del>.

The statement on marriage was changed as follows:

Marriage, thus instituted by God, is a monogamous, heterosexual relationship between one male and one female. Marriage is a lifelong commitment of husband and wife. As such, marriage is a public, lawfully binding lifelong commitment of a man and a woman to each other and between the couple and God...

Statements on communion and unauthorized speakers in churches were not brought back to the floor, and in these areas the *Church Manual* will remain as is until 2020, when they are taken again in Indianapolis.

At the end of the session, delegate Larry Geraty rose to make a comment, stating that while he agreed with most of what had been voted, his heart was heavy as he sensed a lack of compassion for people "whom God has created, many of them the way they are." He was cut off by the chair, who ruled that since there was no motion on the floor to address he was out of order.

#### **Concluding Reflections**

The overall direction of the changes made is mixed. Many were fairly insignificant changes in wording and details. Some were clearly improvements, such as allowing members to resign membership without having to take the

request to the church business meeting. Many, however, seemed to reflect a desire to tighten and restrict membership.

When one considers the amount of time devoted to the discussion of the Church Manual in San Antonio, the apparent lack of genuine practical significance in many of the items that were changed, and lack of seriousness with which the Church Manual is taken, at least in my part of the world, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that much time was wasted in this process. One might be tempted to see this as evidence that what began as a movement has become a bureaucracy. Bringing two-and-half-thousand people together from all over the world to haggle about issues of wording in a manual that have very little effect on the real world, hardly seems to make sense. It could lead to discouragement about the church.

Fortunately, arguments about the wording of the *Church Manual* do not represent what the church is all about. Even though there is no doubt that church structure and organization aid in the mission of the church and are important, the church is about vital, dynamic, flourishing communities at the local level where members experience God's grace through fellowship, study and worship, and then give their energies to mission at home and around the world.

As part of one of those communities I conclude with a confession. Recently at a church board meeting someone asked what the *Church Manual* said about a certain issue. A search of the premises could not locate a *Church Manual*.

**John Brunt** is the recently-retired senior pastor of the Azure Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in Grand Terrace, California. He taught in the School of Theology at Walla Walla University



for 19 years and was the Vice President of Academic Administration for 12 years. He and his wife, lone, have two grown children and three grandsons.

This session

was nothing less

than bizarre.

# **How the Adventist Church Changed its Fundamental** Beliefs in San Antonio | BY LARRY CERATY

he current statement of Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists was adopted for the first time by the 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas. Other than adding an additional statement to satisfy a "third world" need several years ago (Belief 11, "Growing in Christ"), 2015 was the first time this 35-year-old Statement had been revised (as provided for in the original Preamble). Work on this Fundamental Beliefs statement zeroed in on the nuances of specific words on Monday, July 6, 2015, at San Antonio's Alamodome where General Conference delegates gathered for their fourth day of business sessions.

The conversation began with the matter of how many votes would be needed to pass changes in the beliefs—a "simple" majority, or two-thirds. A delegate had requested on the first day of meetings that, given the importance of the Fundamental Beliefs, any changes be treated like changes to the constitution and bylaws that require a two-thirds majority vote to alter.

President Ted Wilson told the group that the Steering Committee had considered the request, but decided not to move away from the simple majority vote. He said, "It is not our intention that the fundamental beliefs be changed with a close vote, but a consensus vote. We recommend that we do not insert into the rules order a requirement for a two-thirds vote." He appealed to the delegates to "Calm our hearts so we do not get caught up in parliamentary process and block the progress of our work." After some discussion, the delegates voted to accept the recommendation of the Steering Committee to

remain with a simple majority.

Drafting Committee members Artur Stele, Bill Knott, and Angel Rodriguez were introduced and on the platform ready to answer questions. Though not present, it was mentioned that Gerhard Pfandl had also been a part of the working group. (Unlike the members of the original Drafting and Review Committees in 1980 which included a number of the denomination's top scholars and professors, the 2015 committee was made up exclusively of General Conference employees, the two primary theologians being with the GC Biblical Research Institute). Stele, capable chair of the committee and a GC vicepresident, led the way through the Fundamental Beliefs documents. He said the committee had been given a specific task—first, to review all the beliefs to make sure that the language is clear and distinct, and secondly, to find a way to integrate the language of the "Affirmation of Creation" document approved by the 2005 General Conference, into Belief 6 on "Creation" and Belief 8 on "The Great Controversy" (the most suitable place for mentioning a global flood). He emphasized that there were no recommendations to change what we believe. Rather the effort was directed at making the Beliefs clear, given the changes that occur over time in the understanding of words and phrases. It soon became apparent, however, that though the preamble states Adventists "accept the Bible as their only creed," Ellen White and "tradition" were also sources of authority in terms of the revised Fundamental Beliefs.

Slight revisions to a few Beliefs were first quickly voted because their only changes were Good people,

able people.

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putting the biblical references in canonical order: the preamble and Beliefs 13, "The Remnant and Its Mission"; 14, "Unity in the Body of Christ"; 15, "Baptism"; 16, "The Lord's Supper"; 26, "Death and Resurrection"; 27, "The Millennium and the End of Sin"; and 28, "The New Earth". Other simple changes to Beliefs 25, "The Second Coming of Christ"; 20, "The Sabbath"; 11, "Growing in Christ"; and 9, "The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ", were voted. Throughout the entire statement of Fundamental Beliefs a change to gender neutral language was achieved, mostly without controversy, except in a few specific beliefs.

The word "apostolic" in Belief 17, "Spiritual Gifts and Ministries", sparked extended discussion. Since it could be misunderstood without more clear definition, the committee said in its recommendation that it be removed from the sentence: "Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God." There were suggestions for alternative words such as crosscultural, and pleadings to leave the word in place. Eventually the vote to refer this Belief back to the Drafting Committee for reconsideration was defeated and "apostolic" removed from the Belief that was then approved.

Belief 21, "Stewardship", was voted without extended discussion. A delegate then suggested that discussion move to Beliefs 6, "Creation", and 8, "The Great Controversy", which everyone was waiting for, but Artur Stele demurred, not wanting "to destroy the good movement that was occurring."

Belief 22, "Christian Behavior", was easily voted.

Proposed changes to Belief 23, "Marriage and the Family", brought defenders of the gay community to the microphone, because the proposed changes included removing the word "partners", given its current connotation with gay marriage. In the midst of the conversation, President Ted Wilson went to the microphone and said in an authoritative tone, "We want to leave no ambiguity about marriage". His comment received thunderous applause. All proposals to alter the proposed changes then met with defeat and the revised Belief was voted as is.

Finally, Belief 6, "Creation" was introduced. Not long into the discussion, Arthur Stele said the Committee knew that it would need to review this item, and Belief 8, "The Great Controversy", so rather than going through vote after vote on parliamentary procedures, the comments from the delegates should simply address what the committee should review. Suggestions included (from the Seminary) whether to use the creation language of Genesis or Exodus in Belief 6, and (from Geoscience) to substitute "global" for "worldwide" in Belief 8. But most of the extended discussion centered on the fundamental words: "recent" (in terms of time), "literal" (in terms of days), and "historical" (in terms of account). Because of the Committee's mandate, it was clear that even though these words do not appear in Scripture and are clearly debatable based on increasingly well-known evidence, because they are used by Ellen White, they had to be in the statement in order to "exclude any possibility of the concept of evolution creeping in to the church."

Monday afternoon, the only sticking point in Belief 24, "Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary", was the use of the word "symbolized" in the phrase: Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary "was symbolized by the work of the high priest in the holy place." Some preferred a word like "typified", which was referred to the review committee. Perhaps it is worth noting that this relatively brief discussion was in contrast to the 1980 GC Session in Dallas where this particular Belief was debated at length and was the last Belief to be adopted (on the last Friday of the session).

Belief 19, "The Law of God", was easily approved. There followed some controversy over Belief 12, "The Church". As revised, it reads in part, "The church derives its authority from Christ who is the incarnate Word revealed in the Scriptures." Several South American delegates, wanting to distance themselves from Catholicism, argued for a dual source of authority— Scripture and Christ—but current GC officials expressed the view that Christ is the only authority, and their view prevailed.

Belief 10, "The Experience of Salvation"; Belief 2, "The Trinity"; and Belief 3, "The Father", were easily voted. Not so Belief 4, "The Son". The issue raised by several delegates was the phrase "became also truly human, Jesus the Christ," where it had originally been "truly man." The review committee argued in response that the issue was the incarnation, not gender, so the referral lost and the proposed belief was voted.

Belief 7, "The Nature of Humanity", and Belief 5, "The Holy Spirit", were adopted as presented. Belief 18, "The Gift of Prophecy", provoked quite a debate about Ellen White's relation to the Bible. For instance, Cliff Goldstein spoke strongly in support of the wording, while Ray Roenfeldt felt Ellen White herself would be "scandalized" by the wording. Several spoke in favor of referring the statement back to the committee so it could be strengthened. Some wanted to add "truth" into the statement: "Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church." A delegate questioned the "canonization" of Ellen White, but the delegates voted the Belief as presented.

With Belief 1, "The Holy Scriptures", being the last one to be considered, and yet, in some ways, the most important, Artur Stele suggested referring it back for review, presumably so as not to prolong discussion on such issues as whether to include the word "final" in the proposed addition, "The Holy Scriptures are the final, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will."

By the end of Monday, during sessions ably chaired by Vice Presidents Ben Schoun and Lowell Cooper, all Beliefs were voted as presented except for four: Beliefs 1, 6, 8, and 24. Comments and concerns about them were to be

reviewed by the Drafting Committee overnight and brought back to the delegates for disposition on Tuesday morning.

Tuesday's chair was Vice President Ella Simmons, who endeavored to handle business carefully and compassionately. In many ways, she had the most difficult chairing task of all, but throughout the morning several delegates complimented her on the way she conducted business; she deferred to the Spirit's guidance. "Right off the bat" Tuesday morning, various delegates had general suggestions. One was the importance of modern language for the Beliefs so they could be better understood, including by youth. Another was an appeal to leadership, that they really listen to the body of delegates, even though they seemed determined to stick to what they had already written. Artur Stele then reported on the "hard work" overnight of the Drafting Committee, indicating that they would proceed from "the easiest to the hardest".

On Belief 24, "Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary", the committee accepted the previous day's suggestion to incorporate "typified" instead of "symbolized". This provoked many objections to "typify," as old English and hard to translate, but the body voted the new word and passed the Belief as presented.

On Belief 8, "The Great Controversy", the Drafting Committee accepted Geoscience's recommendation that "global" replace "worldwide" for the extent of the flood, even though the notion of "global" is not biblical and was unknown until modern times. A young delegate asked if there had been consideration of eliminating the sentence which had been added by the committee, "as presented in the historical account of Genesis 1–11." Stele said yes, but the decision was to keep it in. The delegates duly voted the Belief as presented.

On Belief 1, "The Holy Scriptures", Artur Stele reported that they wanted to strengthen the statement, so looked for a word other than "final" that would not have chronological implications. The word "supreme" was chosen; the Belief thus reading "the Holy Scriptures are the

It's hard for several hundred delegates to make a positive difference in two days. supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will." Many other words were suggested, such as "normative" and "ultimate." Roger Robertsen from the Israel Mission was the first to speak. He reminded the delegates that the preamble speaks of the Bible being our "only creed," so suggested that to strengthen the "sola scriptura" concept, the following statement should read, the Scriptures are "the sole revealer of doctrine." Artur Stele's rejoinder was, "there are many words and this is the one that came up!" Gerard Damteegt again objected to inclusive language, being sure that no females were involved in writing the Bible. There followed quite an involved discussion as to the meaning and use of the Greek word "anthropos" (man, human) and how it should be translated. It appeared at times that some delegates enjoyed showing off their knowledge of New Testament Greek. There was also a debate over the term "author" vs. "writer", which one delegate tried to settle with Ellen White's well-known statement in 1 Selected Messages 25, that "God is author, but writers are human." He was countered by Ellen White's own statement that her writings are not to be used to settle arguments! Ultimately, Belief 1 was voted as presented.

That left to the last Belief 6, "Creation". Angel Rodriguez said the committee knew the wording for this Belief was controversial but their work proceeded on the following basis: first, they decided not to use ambiguous words that would allow evolutionary thinking. Second, the word "recent" was necessary to combat the notion of "deep time"; the biblical genealogies place creation not that long ago, even though we know they are incomplete. Third "Seventh-day Adventists assume the history of our planet began in Genesis 1," so a literal reading of Genesis is necessary, and seven literal days has to be a part of the statement. The word "historical" was thus voted, even though the fact that God is the subject of every sentence in Genesis 1 means that "theological" would have been a more accurate and helpful word. Bill Knott, a member of the Drafting Committee, said how proud he was to be an Adventist as he watched the process, including the "year of listening" by the committee. After a review of the statement the evening before, a "clean copy" of the Belief was put up on the screen; Artur Stele then moved Belief 6 as amended.

At that point President Ted Wilson came out to speak: "Essentially this version of the Belief was brought to the floor at the 2005 GC Session. I personally endorse it. This

wording will help us in our work. You can put a spin on any word, such as 'recent,' but it means 'not old.' There is no room for theistic evolution. I will tell you I personally believe, based on the Spirit of Prophecy, that the earth is approximately 6,000 years old." From then on, all speeches were either supportive of the Belief as presented, or wanted to strengthen it further. Typical was Cliff Goldstein's comment: "This issue didn't arise in a vacuum. We are purposely doing this to exclude evolution." There followed a bit of discussion about whether the entire universe is 6,000 years old but the consensus was that the wording presented was adequate for the church. An African delegate admitted he was now relieved. "It is now time to trust the Holy Spirit and the scholars who have worked on this. My children will be safe. I call question on the motion." Belief 6 was voted as presented. Artur Stele assured the assembled delegates: "None of what we voted has changed what we have always believed."

That is what happened with the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs on Monday and Tuesday. This author tried unsuccessfully to participate in the process, but the outcome was predetermined. Good people, able people, were involved but no meaningful discussion of the issues could take place in two-minute segments. As a result, the statement of Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists looks increasingly like the work of a committee rather than a convincing literary masterpiece. It's hard for several hundred delegates to make a positive difference in two days. Maybe the hopes of delegates to improve the wording of their beloved beliefs was unrealistic from the start. Certainly the administration of the General Conference got what it wanted. The question now is how will they use what they have crafted? Will it be "descriptive," which would be an appropriate use, or "prescriptive," which could prove to be disastrous—both to the concept of "present truth" and to denominational employment. Will the words of our pioneer, John Loughborough, quoted on the floor, be prophetic? A guiding hand was evident throughout; let's hope it was the Holy Spirit's.

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delegate at the 60th General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas

# The Time Has Come | BY LOTHAR TRÄDER

very fast growing organization will have to face the question of whether its structure is still befitting of its mission. Churches are no exception to this rule. The Seventh-day Adventist church, for several decades, has oscillated between two forms of governance: centralism and/or federalism. As a church historian I have attentively observed that development.

In 1995 in Utrecht, Robert Folkenberg played the centralist card when he was elected "first officer", not "primus inter pares" (first among equals). The church had presumably learned lessons from recent controversies due to differing views on doctrine, and didn't want to face another Glacier View, as in the case of Desmond Ford. The tendency of the motion of Robert Folkenberg was a clear shift towards centralism. There was not yet a pope in sight, only some shady contours. That is why resistance within the General Conference administration was substantial. I still remember the long queue at the microphones. In vain, the motion was voted.

At the same GC Session an opposing motion was put forward: the North American Division's motion to ordain women. The motion was to leave it to the divisions to decide upon the matter; it was voted down. That was clearly a motion aiming for federalism. So two clearly opposing motions were being put forth at that session.

Every observer could see the problem that had arisen. So the GC, over the next few years, initiated several commissions to study this problem. For instance, at the 2004 year-end meeting a commission was organized to study steps

towards an administrative restructuring of the church. They were asked to present their findings only six months later. Obviously the church was in haste. In autumn 2005 a permanent commission was initiated. Jan Paulsen's reason for this group was the rapid growth of the church. As he said: "there must be a better, more effective and efficient way of doing church."

In that context we immediately hear a word that rings alarm bells for administrators (the NAD's motion in 1995 was indeed aiming for self-determination): congregationalism. Why is that term so controversial? The original meaning of the word congregationalism is the deconstruction of an existing structure, in this case the dissolution of a worldwide Adventist Church, shifting competences towards the local church. This can hardly be a solution for our church, but something has to happen, and that quickly. San Antonio doesn't leave us with any other conclusion. We can't allow cultural majorities to determine theological and structural questions.

Our Church Manual lists different forms of church government and decides for what we call a representative form of church constitution. But it is exactly that governance which is faced with its own limitations. Just by sheer quantity, delegates of certain regions can block any motion just because it doesn't suit their theological convictions or cultural habits. Other regions have to acquiesce, even if their cultural environment is different. The vote on the motion to make women's ordination regional has shown that clearly.

So what can we learn from church history? In Germany we have two dominant churches: the

If we don't succeed in adapting our structure to accommodate healthy growth, we will soon witness qualitative and quantitative

erosion.

Roman-Catholic and the Lutheran Church. Both have completely different forms of governance. The Roman-Catholic church champions a centralist structure with a pope in Rome, while the Lutheran Church (or better, churches) favors a federalist solution. The different federal churches (Landeskirche) are rallied together under the roof of the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), with a president. The regional churches owe their existence to Luther. He determined the principalities of the different regions to be the administrative heads of the church, since for protestant churches there was no longer a pope. But as the sovereigns lost power, something had to be done. So every regional church has its own structure; sometimes headed by a bishop (e.g. Berlin-Brandenburg), sometimes a socalled president (e.g. Hessen-Nassau). These regional churches determine many of their questions independently. Their superstructure (EKD) provides the needed unity for public relations.

Both structures of church governance have proven reliable. Both churches have millions of members and could serve as an example for us. But we will have to decide soon, for the current situation is unbearable. The "representative" model is outdated, because it is not applicable to our church. It did serve us well in the first phase of our history. but the number of delegates alone will get us into trouble. Where will we find suitable venues to host business sessions for delegates if we don't want to radically reduce their number? July's vote on women's ordination has shown that it is irresponsible to allow one cultural group to enforce their views on another group that holds different cultural convictions, just by the weight of their numbers. We can't as yet see the damage that has been done by that vote. As of today, four days after the vote, I have received the first reports of requests for the removal of membership. These people tell me: "The church of San Antonio is not my church anymore!" And we are not talking about frustrated female pastors.

So what should we do? Could church history help us? What we do not want is another pope, that is clear, but the delegate structure has reached its limits. I would suggest an Adventist version of congregationalism: "unionism". Unio = to unite, or more clearly: union = alliance, bond (esp. of states or churches with similar confessions). And that is exactly what is meant. We should aim at building relatively independent regional churches: an Adventist Church in Europe, an Adventist Church in North-America, South-

America, Africa, etc. This world alliance could replace the now existing General Conference. What competence this world alliance or the regional Churches could or should have, should be left to experts. I just want to insert a practical solution from church history into the overdue discussion.

Now is the time: the kairos of Texas is a real chance. Let us not stay deaf to the wake-up call of history. If we tarry any longer, we will have to face schism (another lesson from church history). If, for example, the already existing resolutions on women's ordination in several fields continue to be implemented (and there is no reason to doubt that that will be the case), then the organizational structure of our church will fail. That is exactly what my model would prevent. We have to change our form of organization; and in order to avoid the contentious term congregationalism, I have decided to speak of "unionism". A continental (regional) church could make intelligent decisions on its own, not only as far as ordination is concerned. Our "Adventist Church in Europe", for example, could determine its own week-of-prayer edition, still championing the world-theme, but adapted to our cultural needs. The same applies to quotations and didactical questions of the Sabbath school quarterly.

The last day of business sessions in San Antonio saw just that kind of change to the *Church Manual*. Divisions were given the possibility to determine questions on their own without having to refer them on to the General Conference. This could be a first step. I appeal to all leaders of divisions and administrations, to initiate a bold structural change. If we don't succeed in adapting our structure to accommodate healthy growth, we will soon witness qualitative and quantitative erosion. This kind of exodus has already begun in Europe and will be visible in the United States shortly. The more cultural difference manifests itself one-sidedly, the more minority groups will shrink in number. It is high time to initiate concrete steps. Whoever wants to keep our church from serious damage, has to act. Now!

**Dr. Träder** is longtime President and Co-founder of the AWA (the Ger-



man forum identical to Adventist Forum); founder and longtime Director of the West-German Student Union of the SDA; Director of the Adventist School Center, Marienhöhe, Darmstadt; a professor in church history and a pastor for over 40 years.

# What Happens Next? | BY MITCHELL TYNER

Note: The author of the following article was asked by Spectrum to address only the legal and enforcement aspects of the San Antonio decision about ordination of women. For discussion of the historical, theological, ethical and moral implications, see previously published articles by Gary Patterson and Gary Chudley.

ince the vote of the General Conference Session in San Antonio to deny the divisions the right to make their own decisions as to the ordination of women to the ministry, vast verbiage has been expended, some extolling the propriety of the decision, and much bemoaning its negative impact on the most developed parts of the world. One question that has seemed to come from both camps is a simple one: What will come next?

The answer was not long coming. On August 17, the General Conference Secretariat released a paper entitled "Unions and Ordination to the Gospel Ministry," in which it argued that the unions have only delegated and limited power in the area of ordination, and that denominational policy does not permit women to be ordained. Others have argued that specific policies clearly state the contrary. So who's correct?

Before answering that question, let's wade through some language from the General Conference Working Policy, 2014-15 edition. None of the sections quoted below were revised by the recent session.

**B 15 05 Authoritative Administrative Voice of the Church** – The General Conference Working Policy contains the Constitution and Bylaws of

the General Conference, the Mission Statement and the accumulated or revised policies adopted by the General Conference Session and Annual Councils of the General Conference Executive Committee. It is, therefore, the authoritative voice of the church in all matters pertaining to the mission and to the administration of the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in all parts of the world. (Emphasis supplied, as below)

#### **B** 05 Organizational and Operational Principles of Seventh-day Adventist Church Structure.

- 3. Organizational status is granted to a constituency as a trust... not self-generated, automatic or perpetual.
- 5. The highest level of authority within the powers granted to each level of denominational organization resides in the constituency meeting.
- 6. Different elements of organizational authority and responsibility are distributed among the various levels of denominational organization. For example, the decision as to who may/may not be a member of a local Seventh-day Adventist Church is entrusted to the members of the local church concerned, decisions as to the employment of local church pastors is entrusted to the local conference/mission; decisions regarding the ordination of ministers is entrusted to the union conference... Thus each level of organization exercises a realm of final authority and responsibility that may have implications for other levels of organization.
- 8. . . . The Church Manual and the General Conference Working Policy present the collective voice of Seventh-day Adventists regarding beliefs, denominational structure, relationships and operational procedures.

When examples are given in an authoritative document. it may be assumed that they are equally valid.

#### B 50 05 Lines of Responsibility.

Union Conferences/Missions – Union Conferences/missions are responsible to the respective *division* section of which they are a part, and are administered in harmony with the operating policies of the General Conference and of the division.

#### L 45 Procedure in Authorizing Ordination.

- After favorable consideration the local conference committee will submit the name of the candidate with its findings and convictions to the union for counsel and approval.
- 4. The division and institutional boards will submit names recommended for ordination to the division committee. The General Conference and its institutional boards will submit names to the General Conference Executive Committee.

Next, some principles of interpretation of authoritative documents.

- Legislative bodies, and the writers they employ, are assumed to have the competence to say what they mean and mean what they say. Intent should be considered only where necessary, as when seeking to harmonize conflicting provisions from an authoritative document of equal applicability.
- 2. The plain meaning of the words has a rebuttable presumption of accuracy. Any alternate meaning should be shown by a clear history of such usage in other authoritative documents from the same source.
- 3. Prohibitions are not to be assumed. This is the difference between a totalitarian society and a free one. In the former, all is forbidden except that which is expressly allowed. In the latter, all is allowed except that which is expressly forbidden. The burden must always be on the party seeking to restrain action, not on the party proposing to act.
- 4. Expressions of restraint are to be construed narrowly against the restraining power. If the provision in question does not accurately describe the actions in question, there is no violation.

Now, to apply the principles to the above cited policies. We have seen that: (1) The *Working Policy* and *Church Manual* are the authoritative documents; (2) Subject to those documents, each level of church structure exercises a

realm of final authority in those areas delegated to it; (3) The union is delegated the responsibility for decisions as to ordination of ministerial candidates; and (4) The ultimate authority at each level is the constituency of that organization. Applying our principles of interpretation, we thus find that the denomination's authoritative documents do not forbid unions to ordain women to the ministry. No plain statement of any such prohibition can be shown.

Still, the General Conference Secretariat disagrees. It argues that the policy sections quoted above don't mean what they appear to say, but rather what the General Conference administration says they say. The church has executive and administrative arms at all levels, but it has no designated judiciary, and in this vacuum, administration assumes the right to interpret without review or appeal. In essence, it argues that 'policy means what we say it means.' If that's true, we need to reexamine the absence of a designated judiciary function.

A judiciary function exists to clarify the meaning of authoritative documents, and to serve as a check on the executive and legislative powers of an organization. The absence of a judiciary function is a telling indicator of the difference between a governmental model of governance, which always has such a function, and a corporate model, where that function is usurped by the executive. Having grown into the equivalent of a multi-cultural society, whether the denomination is better served by a corporate or governmental model is an open question that deserves more attention.

The Secretariat document argues that Working Policy B 05 does not mean what it says, which is that the final authority as to ordination candidates is a matter for the union to decide. It argues that the examples given are just that—examples, not policy statements. Oddly, it doesn't reject the other examples in that section, such as the local congregation having final say as to who may or may not become or remain a member. Many can cite examples, such as Desmond Ford, of members who the General Conference would have preferred to be disfellowshipped, but where the General Conference ultimately respected the authority of the congregation of which he was a member to make that decision, rather than attempt to force the issue. When examples are given in an authoritative document, it may be assumed that they are equally valid. Evidence of respect shown, especially unwilling respect, for one example in such a list should

be taken as evidence of the propriety and equally binding nature of the entire list.

Another such example flows from Working Policy L 45 05, cited above. This policy says that ordination candidates from conferences and unions will be approved by the union committee, candidates employed by a division or its institutions will be approved by the division committee, and candidates who are employees of the General Conference and its institutions will be approved by the General Conference Executive Committee. Why was this added if the overall power to approve ordinations rested with the General Conference?

An interesting anecdote illuminating this policy is that of the ordination of Bob Folkenberg. In 1966, Folkenberg was employed by the Columbia Union, working as a singing evangelist with Roger Holley. The General Conference extended a call for Folkenberg to go to the Inter-American Division, which he accepted. Only when he and his family were ready to leave—presumably by this time off the payroll of the Columbia Union—did someone notice that he had not yet been ordained. Since it would not do to send an un-ordained man to a mission appointment, the General Conference asked the Columbia Union to approve Folkenberg's ordination and arrange for the ceremony, which hurriedly took place on Christmas Eve. 1966.

Was policy L 45 05 in effect at that time? If so, why was it not followed by having Folkenberg's ordination approved by the General Conference Executive Committee? If L 45 05 was not in effect, and the General Conference had the residual power to approve ordinations, why did it call on the union to do so?

Answers to questions like these would be easier to find if there were a complete, annotated compilation of all General Conference Executive Committee and Session actions, but such is not to be found. If such existed, it would be easier to test the facts of the occasionally heard story of a late-nineteenth century General Conference committee action requiring that ministers not be clean-shaven. Was such an action taken? Was it

ever repealed? If so, when? If not, is it still to be considered binding, even though it was never codified in the Working Policy? If the 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2015 votes on ordination of women are enforceable though non-codified, what else is out there in the same category?

The Secretariat document also argues that the Working Policy plainly prohibits the ordination of women because WB L 35, a long section entitled "Qualifications for Ordination to the Gospel Ministry," uses only the word 'man', and that such usage, rather than the more inclusive 'candidate', exhibits a clear non-gender inclusive intent. Perhaps that was the intent of the writers, but again, it does not clearly say 'women may not be ordained to the ministry.' Such an important and divisive restriction should be stated clearly, not merely by inference of intent.

Finally, Secretariat points to the exception in Working Policy BA 60 10.6. BA 60 is entitled "Human Relations" and BA 60 10 is entitled "Official Position," which then lists several situations where discrimination on the basis of gender, inter alia, is not allowed. Then BA 60 10.6 states:

Employment opportunities, membership on committees and boards, and nomination to office shall not be limited by race or color. Neither shall these opportunities be limited by gender (except those requiring ordination to the gospel ministry\*).

The asterisk refers to this footnote:

\*The exception clause, and any other statement above, shall not be used to reinterpret the action already taken by the world Church authorizing the ordination of women as local church elders in divisions where the division executive committees have given their approval.

BA 60 10.6 certainly reserves the right to discriminate on the basis of gender as to candidates for ordination. It is properly read as a preservation of rights. But such a preservation of rights stops far short of clearly saying that such ordination shall not happen!

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The denomination's authoritative documents contain no clear and unmistakable restriction on ordination as available only to men. Such a restriction should not be inferred, but must, as a matter of equity, be clearly stated. Importantly, if the General Conference administration had intended such a clear policy statement to exist, it was clearly within its power to make it so. After previous General Conference sessions refused to allow the request of the North American Division to approve women's ordination, or to approve divisional option as to such ordination, no effort was made to include that denial of authority, much less a clearly worded policy forbidding the ordination of women, in either the Working Policy or the Church Manual. It may be argued that the language of the previous votes did not indicate a documentary policy change. Perhaps, though General Conference administrations are, and have been, experienced in the intricacies of policy change and how to word propositions so as to achieve the end desired. One may ask why this was not done. Was it because it was considered possible that such actions might be reversed by a future session? In the absence of testimony by those who made that decision, any answer must remain mere speculation.

It may also be asked why, after the history of previous session votes, the proposition was put to the delegates in San Antonio in a form that did not call for a clear policy statement forbidding or allowing the ordination of women to the ministry. Instead, the question asked concerned only allowing for divisions, which are organizationally branch offices of the General Conference, not separate entities responsible to their own constituencies, to make that decision based on the needs of their territories and the cultures therein. Read plainly, the 2015 vote applies only to the divisions, not to other levels of the church structure. The Secretariat document attempts to refute this, but only by inference and interpretation, not reference to clear worded policy.

The Secretariat document seems to say "You know what we mean, and you know what the

delegates intended, so don't quibble." It cites past procedure and current perception as though they were equally authoritative with the authority of the *Church Manual* and *Working Policy*. Fortunately, neither precedent nor perception equals policy. Both may be evidentiary, but neither is authoritative.

So, the unions are free to ordain women and still remain within church policy. It appears that the General Conference will not likely be content to let it rest as a matter of interpretation. But what else can it do? As it turns out, a good bit.

First, we can expect continued pressure on union administrations to submit. It was a letter from the General Conference president to the North Pacific Union president, and the circulation of the Secretariat document to all the members of the executive committee of the union that caused the cancellation of a previously announce session to further consider the ordination of women. As shown above, the ultimate authority rests with the constituency, usually exercised through the executive committee; but the committee chose to go along rather than resist.

It comes as something of a shock to many new General Conference officers and staff to discover just how little power the General Conference has to require conformity to its dictates. Its greatest—and most frequently used—power is the power of moral authority and persuasion. That's what happened in the North Pacific Union.

But it doesn't always work out that way. Some years ago, the same union rewrote its constitution and bylaws at the time the General Conference was trying to achieve conformity of such documents with the model constitution and bylaws contained in the *Working Policy*. Specifically, the union wanted a different method for choosing the nominating committee so as to provide more time for consideration of candidates and communicating with the delegates. The General Conference sent a delegation to use the power of persuasion to see that the models were followed in toto, but the delegates said 'thank you for your concern, but we prefer to do it our way.' Similar delegations more recently

failed to persuade the Pacific and Columbia Unions to forgo ordaining women. Neither has suffered demonstrable harm as a result of their decisions.

And if efforts to gain conformity by moral suasion are ineffective, what next? The General Conference has the power to call special meetings of a union constituency. At such, it could argue for a reversal of policy. It could argue that union and conference constitutions bind those entities to follow General Conference policy and procedures. As an example, the bylaws of one typical conference provide that "All purposes, policies and procedures of this conference shall be in harmony with the working policies of the North American Division and the General Conference. The Conference shall pursue the mission of the Church in harmony with the doctrines, programs, and initiatives adopted and approved by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in its sessions." But, importantly, the last three words constitute a most important qualifier to what goes before: the conference is bound only by those policies approved at a General Conference session—the Church Manual and Working Policy.

If unions refuse all such efforts by the General Conference, there remains one final solution—a 'nuclear option.' Working Policy B 95 15 details the procedure for the dissolution and/or expulsion of a union. It provides that when, in the opinion of a division administration, a union is found to be in apostasy or rebellion, certain steps shall be taken. First, the division committee makes the determination of apostasy or rebellion. Next, the division shall refer the matter to the General Conference Executive Committee with a recommendation for expulsion. Third, the General Conference Executive Committee must decide whether to call another union constituency meeting. Finally, the General Conference Executive Committee shall consider the recommendation of the division at a Spring Meeting or Annual Council. If the committee approves the recommendation at such a meeting, it shall refer

the recommendation to the next regular or specially called General Conference Session.

The procedure outlined in B 95 15 is indeed a 'nuclear option.' To even consider it brings to mind visions of a circular firing squad—a selfdefeating process that results in injury all around. It is difficult to foresee circumstances that would even arguably require such.

Other questions remain. What of those already ordained—in China, the Columbia and Pacific Unions, the Netherlands Union? Is their ordination to be annulled, their credentials revoked? Such action is usually reserved only for those guilty of transgressions of great moral turpitude. Various levels of the church structure have been known to pass off employees guilty of such transgressions as theft, spousal and/or child abuse to another organization, rather than face a public spectacle. How can we, with a straight face, argue that the credentials and ordination of women who are guilty of nothing more than finding themselves in the middle of a muddle, should be revoked in the face of such gross past inconsistency?

The General Conference has a vested interest in arguing for an expansive interpretation of its powers. The unions, in turn, have a similar interest in arguing for an expansive view of their authority. Who is to decide? Perhaps it is time to reconsider our lack of an independent judiciary. In the meantime, we can only hope that calm, settled reason will trump fundamentalist fervor.

Mitchell Tyner has been a pastor, a Conference departmen-



tal director, Associate Director of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty at the General Conference, and was Associate General Counsel at the General Conference from 1993 to 2006.

**Applying our** principles of interpretation, we thus find that the denomination's authoritative documents do not forbid

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# **Reflecting on San Antonio:** Or, Hermeneutics or Humility or What's the Bible Really Got to Do With It | BY HEROLD WEISS

**Mercy can** 

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everal observers have said lately that the Adventist Church is in crisis. The diagnosis is related to several factors. Some see the main issue to be the wilting of small congregations in the United States. Others see the exodus of the young who are educated beyond high school, even in Adventist colleges and universities. Still others point to the abandonment of traditional Adventist behaviors like abstention from Coca-Cola, coffee, tea, beer and wine, attendance at movie theatres and Sabbath shopping. I guess that it is in reference to these practices that the General Conference President, Ted Wilson, calls for revival and reformation. Besides, the issue of women's ordination as pastors, something that has been on the front burner for over twenty years, is seen as a possible sufficient cause for a split in the denomination.

In preparation for the recently held General Conference Session, a large committee studied the ordination issue for over a year. It is my suspicion that the members of the committee who were in favor of women's ordination determined that the chances for a favorable vote at the General Conference Session in San Antonio were minimal. On that account, they were instrumental in recommending that the question to be decided was not whether or not women could be ordained, but whether or not to authorize the Divisions of the General Conference to determine whether or not to ordain women in their territories. I was given to understand by some members of the study committee that as such the recommendation of the study committee would pass. Well, to the great disappointment of many, the recommendation of the study committee was

voted down. In this way the delegates to the General Conference Session at San Antonio demonstrated that the church is not only against the ordination of women; it is also against tolerance. Tolerance makes one understand that not all human beings have the same cultural and historical background and, therefore, allows diversity. Tolerance is the virtue that makes it possible for unity not to be dependent on uniformity. Intolerance is the hallmark of an insecure organization on the defensive.

The San Antonio General Conference Session will also go down in history for its revision of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. The promulgation of these clumsy, over-wordy "beliefs" at the 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas only revealed the siege mentality dominating the church's hierarchy then. Their further elaboration at San Antonio thirty-five years later demonstrates that the ecclesiastical authorities are still dominated by a reactionary mindset. The announcement that a committee will be formed to study the proper hermeneutical method to be used by Adventists is further proof, if such were still needed, that the leadership of the church suffers from a profound lack of vision. It is ironic that the church that began its life as a movement bringing about liberation from the tyranny of dogmas and creeds, and that formulated its message by an unfettered and original study of the Scriptures, is now trying to find security by controlling how the Bible is to be studied, thus ensuring that its study can only prove what the church has proclaimed to be fundamental beliefs by which church employees will be judged. This development will only serve to promote inquisitors within the membership.

Actually, the crisis of the Adventist church has been percolating for some time and it is related to the study of the Bible. Ever since the educational institutions of the church raised the educational standards of the membership, the reading of the Bible to search for text with which to construct doctrines has been seen as artificial by those members with intellectual curiosity. The academic study of nature, history and literature teaches new ways to approach and evaluate evidence. This phenomenon had been taking place in Protestantism ever since the study of the past developed criteria with which to test its results. At issue has been the question of origins: the origin of the universe in which humans live, the origin of the relationship between Israel and Yahve, the origin of the Bible. For believers, all these revolve around the origin of the Bible. Some insist that its author is God and that, therefore, it reveals God's mind. Others insist that its authors were human beings under inspiration who wrote within the confines of their mental powers and their world of meaning.

Those maintaining God's authorship pick here and there freely because God is consistent and never changes his mind. They still search for texts with which to build doctrinal constructs. For them, taking texts from the Bible as the last word on any subject is the only way to recognize its authority. This way of seeing the question has been taken to the extreme of proposing that believers must envision the universe in which we live as it is described in the Bible. Fernando Canale, as professor of Systematic Theology at the Seminary, insisted on the necessity to adopt the "biblical worldview" as an essential requirement for Adventists. According to him, "a deliberate search for, and adoption of, the biblical worldview is a necessary condition for . . . Christian unity [which] is a unity not only in action but also in mind and thought. . . . The biblical worldview becomes the indispensable tool for grounding the internal unity of the global church."1

Such a point of view is difficult to take seriously because it makes a travesty of the Bible.

Which of the various cosmological worldviews presented by different biblical authors is to be adopted? The worldview of Genesis 1 where God is distant, omniscient and omnipotent and man is God's "image" within creation? The worldview of Genesis 2 where God has to fumble looking for what will work, gets dirty working with mud, and man turns out to be disobedient? The worldview of Paul who ascended to the third heaven and saw there things which he cannot reveal? The Stoic worldview of the author of To the Hebrews who expects this world to be shaken so that the hypostatic world may be revealed? Or, the worldview of John the theologian who thinks that there is a furnace with a shaft from which smoke escapes when the key to open the abyss is used? Of course, all these descriptions are to be read literally.

Those who insist that the Bible was written by inspired human beings read the books of the Bible for what their authors were arguing about and discover that the authors reveal different worldviews and sometimes less than morally commendable views. For them, the authority of the Bible is to be seen in the faith its authors confess, even if at times its expression is limited by the circumstances in which they lived. Those who see God as the author of the Bible, and give to its words absolute eternal authority, describe its authority and inspiration with abstract concepts that are connected only tangentially with the contents of the Bible. Those who see human beings expressing their life of faith in the Bible describe its authority and inspiration on the basis of what they read in the Bible.

Are we expected to believe that God takes pleasure in smashing on the rocks the children of the enemies of Israel? (Ps. 137:9). How can we forget that God commands that homosexuals cannot enter the temple (Deut. 23:17), and that anyone engaging in homosexual activity is to be put to death? (Lev. 20:10). Of course, anyone caught working on the Sabbath should also be put to death (Exod. 31:15). Let us be obedient to the command that the firstborn must be sacrificed to the Lord (Exod. 22:28). Well, not really,

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because the Lord changed his mind about that one (Mic. 6:7). Besides, there is another law proposing that, rather than offering the sacrifice, one was to *redeem* the firstborn paying the stipulated price at the temple (Exod. 34:20). Ezekiel evaluates the original law and decides that it was among God's "bad statutes" (Ezek. 20:25, 26). Jeremiah, on the other hand, insists that God did not command such things at all. In fact, such a thought had never even entered God's mind (Jer. 19:5, 6). Were all these understandings of what to do with the firstborn written by God?

On what basis do we neglect to obey the command that if your eye or your hand causes you to sin you must cut it off? (Mark 9:47; Matt. 5:29). Which commandment are we to obey? The one in the Law of Moses allowing a man to divorce his wife because she no longer "finds favor in his eyes" (Deut. 24:1); the one from Jesus saying that divorce is forbidden, period (Mark 10:2–12); the one in the gospel According to Matthew, allowing a man to divorce his wife if she commits adultery (Matt. 5:31; 19:7)? Paul knows Jesus' prohibition of divorce but, as one working among Gentiles, he found it necessary to issue his own exception to the rule; he allows it if an unbelieving spouse initiates it (1 Cor. 7:15). Apparently it has been unofficially decided that only the one issued by Moses is to be followed, with the understanding that the wife can also initiate it if her husband does not find favor in her eyes.

One of the ways by which to understand the Old Testament is to see it as the record of the centuries-long struggle of the Israelites to become a nation of monotheists. Through its pages there are continuous references to the idolatrous tendencies of the people. Several chapters in Isaiah deal with the need to recognize that Yahve is the only true God and that the other gods are just idols. They are pieces of wood which can be used for different purposes. Idolaters shamefully bow themselves before them and worship them. In these chapters the question is repeatedly asked, "To whom then will you liken God?" (Isa. 40:18), "To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One" (Isa. 40:45), "To whom will you liken me and make me equal, to compare me, that we may be alike? (Isa. 46:5). The answer to the question is obvious. None other can do the things that are listed as done by God. One of these is brought out repeatedly: God is the only one who can foretell what will happen tomorrow. What God says about the future is proven by future events (Isa. 41:21–24; 42:9; 44:6–8; 46:8–10). God's prophecies

are always fulfilled. An anonymous theologian of ancient Israel disagreed. He told the story of the prophet Jonah to point out that Yahve is not bound by prophecies. The future is in God's hands and those who think they know the future because of a prophecy may find themselves like Jonah completely frustrated. God does carry out his purposes, but those who pretend to know how God will do it forget that God is the only being who is absolutely free. Mercy can only be exercised by those who are free.

Maybe it is possible to construct an argument defending the full authority of God behind all these statements. Maybe someone can harmonize all these statements. There are those who would point out that the Bible must be interpreted with humility. Is it really a question of hermeneutics, or of humility? It is obvious that the authors of the Bible did not take dictation. They were not setting down the view from the top. They were participating in a faith journey with the Lord, and they were expressing the life of faith with the language and the mores of their own cultures. Later Bible writers, on the basis of their life of faith in their own cultures and also under inspiration, judged previous expressions of the faith inadequate.

It is quite evident that the whole of Deuteronomy proclaims the necessity of keeping the commandments as the requirement for living happily and prosperously in the Land. It affirms that righteousness is to be attained through the law: "And it shall be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us" (Deut. 6:25). God and the people are bound by a covenant: "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations and requites to their face those who hate him, by destroying them; he will not be slack with him who hates him, he will requite him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandments, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command you this day" (Deut. 7:9–11). In Leviticus the situation is perfectly clear: "You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live" (Lev. 18:5). However, when Habakkuk wondered how could it be that in God's world sinful Israel was being sent into exile, and idolatrous and murderous Babylon was rewarded with the spoils of Jerusalem, he was told, "Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by

faith" (Hab. 2:4). Paul takes Habakkuk's declaration as his basic text and declares that no one will be justified by living under the law. According to Paul, Israel should have known all along that obedience to the law did not give life. Habakkuk had it right. Paul acknowledges that Moses said that "the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live" (Rom. 10:5), but then denies it by pointing out that Israel failed to obtain righteousness because it "did not pursue it through faith but as if it were based on works" (Rom. 9:32). Can anyone reading the Bible carefully come to the conclusion that God is its author?

Affirming that God is the author of the Bible, which was quite in evidence at the discussions that brought about the revision of the fundamental beliefs at the General Conference Session in San Antonio, has been taken for granted by Christians over the centuries. It is, in this connection, guite revealing that when Paul refers to the declaration that life depends on obedience to the commandments, he does not say "God writes that," but rather says "Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it" (Rom. 10:5). The context is a developed argument to prove Moses wrong.

The god of the Psalmist, who prayed to his god to smash the children of his enemies on the rocks, is not my God. He thought his god would do that for him. I think my God could not possibly do that for anyone. I know that not because I read it in the law; I know that not because I read it in the Bible; I know that because my mind, renewed by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:2), tells me so. The Gospel, as Paul says, is power to live as a new creation in the Risen Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, however, does not make me an irrational being. It enlightens me into the love and the righteousness of God as I critically read the Bible. That the world is full of people who live according to the passions of the world does not deny that the world is also full of people who are empowered by the Spirit to enact God's love and righteousness in this world. It is in the lives of these people that the truth and the

authority of the Bible is revealed.

The positing of God as the author of the Bible in order to give authority to one's own interpretation of it received a shot in the arm by Gerhard Hasel, when he was the Dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. In his Biblical Interpretation Today (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), he wrote, "Scripture issues from God who therefore is the Author of the Bible" (100). His many students apparently have been promoting his views. One thing is to assume that God is the author of Scripture in the abstract, unaware of any second thoughts about it. In most worship services throughout Christendom, at the conclusion of the Scripture readings the readers proclaim, "This is the Word of the Lord." This declaration conforms to the understanding that the Word of the Lord is an oral word. The Word of God is to be heard Worshippers understand that the Word of the Lord is to be interpreted by the prophet that will explore it in the following sermon. In this way the worship service has been an encounter with the oral Word of the Lord.

It is something quite different to state in a polemical context that the Bible is "the written word of God," as the first of the Fundamental Beliefs defensively proclaims. In this connection, one cannot but notice the lack of vision of those who formulated the Fundamental Beliefs and decided that one had to affirm belief in an infallible Bible before one could believe in God. Can there be a more blatant confusion of priorities? The reactionary idolatry of the Bible is the most lamentable development in the present crisis of the Adventist church.

Those who consider the Bible to be the written word of God impose on its stories an anachronistic literal historicity and scientific accuracy. Such total lack of understanding of what modern science and history are about renders irrelevant whatever else these defenders of God's authority may say. Historians recognize that any telling of the past, or of the present, is conditioned by the subjective agenda of its author. Rather than granting accuracy to ancient The academic

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writers, they reconstruct the historical settings and the symbolic universes of these writers, whether inspired or not, so as to understand them in their own terms. To give historical or scientific credit to those who wrote unaware of historical or scientific cannons is anachronistic and, at face value, unbelievable. Besides, those wishing to give historical and scientific value to what supposedly God wrote fail miserably in their efforts because they give such value capriciously to some texts and not to others. The test of any method of interpretation is its ability to function consistently.

Defenders of the notion that God is the author of the Bible and therefore it is the last word on any subject apparently want to have their cake and also eat it. On the one hand they claim that the Bible has historical and scientific authority. On the other they claim that it is beyond any critical evaluation. But that is precisely the hallmark of modern science and history. What any scientist or historian says is immediately considered critically by peers. All their statements are open to critical review by anybody. This is the case when the issue is considered from the point of view of science and history. If we look at it from the point of view of the Bible, to place the Bible beyond any critical judgment is to overlook that biblical authors used their critical judgment on previous biblical authors, as I have been pointing out.

If the Bible is to remain at all relevant in the twenty-first century, its relevance cannot be imposed by authoritarian proclamations of God as its author. The word authority derives from the word author. An author is not just a writer. An author is one whose writings are recognized by readers who determine that what they are reading says something that makes sense and is significant. Authors cannot impose their authority. They are given authority by readers who gain insights into reality from them. The authority of the Bible cannot be established by declarations that its author is God. Its authority comes from the readers who find in its pages insights that give their lives new significance as they are confronted by the Spirit that inspired the writers of the Bible. As the leaders of the Protestant Reformation well understood, the Bible is the Word of God when the Spirit that inspired its writers inspires its readers. As pages with ink signs on them, Bibles are just books.

Those who claim to know God's mind appeal to their Bibles, and those who know the Holy Spirit that moves human spirits in mysterious ways to lead their journeys of faith also appeal to their Bibles. It is easy to diagnose the crisis in Adventism. It is the standoff between these two

postures toward the Bible. It is more difficult to find a resolution to this confrontation. My suggestion is to take the advice Paul gave to the Christians at Rome who were having heated disputes about proper diet and the observance of the Sabbath. Paul knows that as a result of these disputes some judged the others as sinners, and these responded by despising their judges. Paul reminds everyone that they will have to stand before the judgment seat of God and that, therefore, it is essential to be true to one's faith, that is to one's determination that God is faithful and requires commitment. Sin is what is done without reference to one's faith. Because the classification of clean and unclean meats is real in the realm of knowledge and not in the realm of being, sin is not to be defined in the realm of knowledge. Of course, Paul could bring into the discussion the distinction between the realm of being and the realm of knowledge because he had the benefits of a good Hellenistic education, something that was not available to the ancient Hebrews. On the basis of this cultural development he declared all meats clean. On account of this understanding of sin, he advised the Romans who had "disputes over opinions," "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. . . . May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." In effect, Paul tells the Romans that their judging and despising are uncalled for because these actions deal with definitions of sin that overlook the way things are. His advice is to live by faith knowing that you will be judged by God. Sin, like faith, is in the realm of being.

Would that the crisis in Adventism were solved by the relocation of priorities. That the Bible is "the written word of God" is not the number one Fundamental Belief in the realm of being. The number one Fundamental Belief is that I live by faith in the promise of God and therefore I abound in hope.

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first issue in 1969. His last book was Meditations on 'According to John': Exercises in Biblical Theology. A companion volume, Meditations on the Letters of Paul: Exercises in Biblical Theology, is scheduled for publication in February, 2016.

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## Des Ford Takes on Darwin | BY BRYAN NESS

n several ways this is a unique book, beginning with the author, Desmond Ford, who is a theologian and not a scientist. That someone with his background would write a book attacking Darwinism is not unique; what is unique is that he actually engages the science honestly and more objectively than is commonly the case for nonscientists. Most theologians who write books that are pro-creation and anti-Darwinist consistently refute scientific facts on the slimmest of evidence; the "evidence" itself often being based on a misunderstanding of the science, or at best, on a very narrow facet of the scientific evidence that is problematic; as if any hard to explain evidence from science is proof that science has failed to properly interpret the natural world.

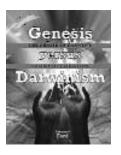
Ford's intended purpose in writing this book is stated succinctly in the Foreword:

The traditions I refer to have to do chiefly with the early chapters of Genesis. University professors usually ridicule the creation story of Genesis chapter 1 and the stories concerning Adam and Eve, the serpent, and the Fall. But these chapters are the foundation of the whole Bible, and if they go the whole edifice of revelation crumbles. When that happens, for most, life threatens to become a meaningless affair based on chance. . . .

This book is an attempt to help parents and young people with these tremendous issues. It discusses Genesis chapters 1–11 in considerable detail and also the challenge of Darwinism—that scientific giant which often threatens young Christians—and a Goliath calling upon them to surrender their faith. And this, despite the fact that the most wellknown evolutionist of the twentieth century, Stephen Jay Gould, declared that neo-Darwinism is 'effectively dead.'

Ford appears to have carefully considered his audience, who will most likely be laypeople concerned about the inroads that Darwinism has made into Christian beliefs about creation. He spends the first part of the book emphasizing the theological importance of the creation story in Genesis, including the theological significance of the Noachian flood narrative. I doubt that most fundamentalist believers would find much problem with this section, since Ford effectively ties the Genesis narratives together with the plan of Salvation, showing how many of the details in these stories foreshadow Gospel truths not made clear until the New Testament narratives make them more explicit. He also vigorously defends the seventh-day Sabbath, while at the same time laying the groundwork for its theological imperative, regardless of whether the days of creation in Genesis are literal or not. He also spends a considerable amount of space reviewing the significance of the occurrence of the number seven throughout Genesis and elsewhere, showing how carefully constructed these narratives are:

There is a marvelous precision in Genesis one. It is characterized by what some have called "the seal of seven." The first sentence has seven Hebrew words and four times seven Hebrew letters. The three nouns: "God," "heaven," and "earth" have a combined numeric value of 777. (Each Hebrew letter stands for a number—see any Hebrew Grammar). There is a Hebrew verb "created," and its numeric value is 203—seven times twenty-nine. According to some researchers there are at least thirty different numeric features in this verse.



Genesis versus Darwinism: The Demise of Darwin's Theory of Evolution, by Desmond Ford, 2014.

At times, Ford's enthusiasm for compiling the numerical references and other parallels in Genesis with Christ's life and role in our salvation gets tiring, but he has a point in doing this. He shows a great reverence for the text and its embedded meanings. This should serve as a reminder to the reader that as Ford progresses through the book revealing what Genesis has to tell us, in light of modern scientific findings, he considers the Bible an inspired document, and its theological truths must be taken seriously.

From Chapter 9 onward, Ford gets into the meat of the book. His primary assumption, while wrestling with the problems of interpreting Genesis in light of modern science, is that God has revealed Himself equally in the Bible, and in His second book, nature. This is not a new idea and is one that was often repeated by Ellen G. White, but Ford has the courage to confront these issues head-on, assuming that these two books should have equal weight. In order to do this, he makes the case that the Bible is not intended to be a science book, so that when God's message from nature appears to conflict with God's message in the Bible, it may well be that we have incorrectly used the Bible to interpret nature. This runs counter to the long Seventh-day Adventist tradition of assuming that, at least when it comes to the first chapters of Genesis, the Bible explicitly defines how nature works, so that when data from the Bible and nature disagree, there is always assumed to be something wrong with our interpretation of nature. This is where many Fundamentalist readers will become uncomfortable, but Ford is simply approaching the topic honestly, and is recognizing a glaring problem that many Christian scientists have long recognized, that what modern science knows about nature is in direct opposition to Fundamentalist interpretations of Genesis when it comes to issues like age of the earth, the age of life on the earth and the universality of the Noachian flood. He minces no words in making this point:

The Bible cannot rightly be used to establish even an approximate date for the age of the earth. It is nowhere interested in that topic. When genealogies are used, the years are never totaled, and there are many omissions, as anyone can prove by comparing Matthew 1 with the chronology of 1 Chronicles. "Begat" and "fathered" do not have in Scripture the precise meaning we give them. The terms are often applied to ancestors. Archbishop Ussher was a fine Christian and an excellent scholar, but when he fixed upon 4004 B.C. for the birth of the world he made the biggest mistake of his life.

Today, there are about fifty methods for calculating the earth's age, and these yield results that approximate each other. That the world is about four and a half billion years old is now an axiom for scientists. Most of the evidence is drawn from the geologic column, astronomy, continental drift and plate tectonics, radiometric, radiocarbon, and amino acid dating. The evidence for the great age of the earth is overwhelming and fully valid for all who really want to know.

These points are no surprise to those who know the scientific evidence, and are even fairly well accepted by many theologians, but Ford does not stop here. As he progresses through the book he also points out that the fossil record is very dependable and shows signs of vast time spans, and that the geologic record does not give any evidence of a worldwide flood. Ford does not suggest that we must reconcile these problems, but he does believe we should not reconcile them by pretending there is scientific evidence to support Fundamentalist interpretations of Genesis when there is no such thing. This will only insult the intelligence of well-educated believers. Ford suggests that these apparent inconsistencies between the Bible and nature be treated as mysteries that may have no complete solution, "Christians should take very seriously all that can be learned from God's second book—the book of Nature. If our understanding conflicts with either of God's books the fault is with us and not with them. Meanwhile let us ask God to help us to be fully committed to the truth of Romans 8:28: 'All things work together for good."" This is not a copout, but rather a clear recognition of the difficulties associated with these topics.

A central thesis that Ford believes may help make sense of the problems of interpretation in Genesis is recognition that the first eleven chapters are distinctly different in character from the remaining chapters:

Most scholars see Genesis 1–11 as a different genre to chapters 12–50. It covers an unknown vista of time whereas chapters 12–50 encompass only about five centuries. Genesis 1–11 is a global introduction to the history of one localized unknown tribe. And it begins with the Creation of the universe—about 14 billion years ago. Anyone who reads both sets will see the difference immediately.

At this point in the book the reader may get the impression that Ford is advocating some sort of theistic evolutionary model, but as should have already been apparent, he thoroughly rejects Darwinism, the very mechanism that drives evolution. He more than once refers to Stephen Jay Gould's pithy

comment that "neo-Darwinism is 'effectively dead." Although this makes a valid point, that the fossil record is not adequately explained using the gradualist process of neo-Darwinian natural selection, he is overplaying his hand a bit. Such statements by Gould, and a few others that Ford quotes, must be taken in context. Since the 1970s, paleontologists such as Gould and Niles Eldridge have attributed the distribution of fossils in the geological record as a result of "punctuated equilibrium." Punctuated equilibrium, though, is more a description of what is found in the fossil record than a mechanism for causing the observed distribution.

In brief, paleontologists have long known that species in the fossil record often persist for millions of years, apparently changing little, if at all, until they go extinct, often being replaced by new species that seem to suddenly appear in the record with no clear ancestors. This pattern is typical of the vast majority of fossil sequences, long periods of equilibrium followed by periods of rapid appearance of new organism types, and thus the coining of the term, "punctuated equilibrium." Neo-Darwinist theory predicts that gradual, steady changes over time, due to natural selection, is what leads to the origin of new organism types, but the pattern of the fossil record simply does not support such a model, except in sparse, isolated cases.

So, based on the fossil record, natural selection does not seem to be sufficient to account for the evolution of life. In fact, not only does neo-Darwinism not adequately account for the origin of new kinds of organisms, it has no answer for how life itself would have arisen from non-living material. Many Neo-Darwinists do not agree with this assessment, arguing that the fossil record is too incomplete (an argument used since Darwin's own day, which is much less true today) and that natural selection could still be the primary driving force, such assertions being followed by various complex arguments that have some relevance, but actually leave the challenge from paleontologists little better than deflected.

Given these grave failures of neo-Darwinism, Ford sees the naturalistic origin and evolution of life as scientifically untenable, so that even a theistic evolutionary model is inadequate to account for the fossil record. Consequently, Ford sees progressive creationism as the only viable alternative.

May I repeat in a nutshell what the preceding paragraphs endeavor to say? The idea of an Adam who lived ages ago is very hard for us to comprehend, but the fact that Genesis 1 is telling of a creation that took place over thirteen billion years ago should help us. The Adam figure follows after the ancient creation with its progressive creation of ascending life forms and thus his great antiquity is not to be wondered at. When one reads very thoughtfully the first three chapters of the Bible, they convey a consciousness that what we have here is suprahistorical. These chapters are elevated far above anything we know in human history. They belong to a pristine era with which we are uninformed. Consider the tremendous difference between these chapters and the civilization presented in the chapter that follows (chapter 4). In chapter four we have a city, technology, culture, music, and so on—see the last verses of the chapter. What a tremendous gap this creates between itself and the preceding chapters! It was God's intention that the meaning of this gap should become apparent only when it was needed—in the era dominated by modern science.

Of course, this sort of interpretation of the Genesis narrative immediately brings up the question of death before the Fall. Ford uses a lot of space on this issue but, in a nutshell, his conclusion is that nothing in the Bible clearly says that no death of any sort occurred prior to the Fall, and those texts that have been used to suggest such he claims have been misinterpreted.

We know that the well-intentioned efforts of Creationists to prove a young earth and a universal flood have failed. The view of earth's history so offered is false. Ours is the duty of acknowledging as truth all that God has made clear in both Scripture and nature. If our view of one contradicts our interpretation of the other we have erred and must look again. They agree. The geologic column is a fact that no one can deny and it proves beyond all doubt the great age of the earth, and the progressive unfolding of life's forms with man at the summit. Death is implicit in the record—otherwise there would have been

When God's message from nature appears to conflict with **God's message** in the Bible. it may well be that we have incorrectly used the Bible to interpret

nature.

overcrowding and subsequent recurrent universal starvation. When Scripture in Romans 5 says that death entered our race with Adam, it is referring to human death. No one could even walk among Eden's bowers without inflicting death on microscopic forms of life, and the daily diet meant death to plants and fruit. Did not the elephant's descending feet wreak bavoc among the minute lives in the dust? A child or an ignorant man without education can grasp the lessons of Genesis. It is not necessary that they understand science. But if that child and man ultimately must encounter unbelievers they will need to know more than they presently do. And that knowledge is readily available. God does all things well, and both nature and Scripture testify of his love and power and wisdom. Alleluia!

Lots of ground is covered in this book, and Ford crafts his arguments skillfully. Since he is not a scientist himself, Ford quotes extensively from the writings of a plethora of scientists to buttress his interpretations of what nature has to tell us. Many lay readers will no doubt question many of the ideas presented in the book, but as a scientist myself I can say that Ford paints a very clear picture of where science currently stands on issues such as the age of the earth and the geological and paleontological record. Yes, there are Seventh-day Adventist creation science arguments used to support a more Fundamentalist view of a young earth, but the evidence used is little more than the cherry-picking of geological anomalies that cast doubt on some aspects of geological science. The argument is often made that, although creation scientists have slim evidence, at best, for things like a short term chronology or a worldwide flood, they are hard at work on the problem and a breakthrough is imminent. This approach has been around for more than 100 years, and instead of the evidence in favor of creation science growing, it has just become ever more difficult to counter the consensus of the majority of geologists.

The remainder of the book, a good half of the total, is under the heading "Miscellany." Numerous of the topics discussed in the first half of the book, and others that are tangential, are covered here, primarily with extensive quotes from other sources. Ford has clearly been mulling over these issues for many years, and felt he could not leave out the extensive material he has amassed. This portion of the book could be safely skipped, but to a reader who wants more support for the various ideas presented in the first half of the book, this is a treasure trove. The book also contains a useful glossary, for those not acquainted with some of the scientific terminology used, and an extensive bibliography.

If nothing else, I think this book makes a good argument for a continuing, open discussion about interpreting Genesis. Instead of closing ranks and shouting ever more vociferously that our traditional beliefs about Genesis are the only acceptable way to interpret the creation and flood narratives, we need to humbly admit that we do not have all the answers. It should also prod us to consider that we can and should allow a plurality of views concerning these issues, since, as Ford amply displays, the theological truths of Genesis need not be lost just because new data from nature challenges some of the contexts for these stories. The creation narrative, however interpreted, still proclaims God as the creator of the universe, it still proclaims the holiness of the Sabbath and why God still expects us to honor the seventh day, and the story of Adam and Eve still instructs us about the origin of sin and God's solution to this problem. Even the flood story, however interpreted, as global or local, still teaches us God's abhorrence of sin and man's depravity, as well as His desire to save mankind, and nature, from the pit into which we have fallen.

I will close this review with two quotes from the book that I think point to the spirit in which this book should be read:

Genesis is not anti-scientific nor pre-scientific, but non-scientific. Scientific views change from generation to generation, but holiness, the reflection of God, never changes. And there can be no lasting happiness without holiness. Sin is suicide and insanity, but purity is paradise. How very practical Scripture is! History can be interpreted in many different ways, and historians differ in their opinion, but holiness is so clearly identified in the person of Jesus Christ that all unanswered questions have little weight.

Though historical and scientific questions may be uppermost in our minds as we approach the text, it is doubtful whether they were in the writer's mind, and we should therefore be cautious about looking for answers to questions he was not concerned with. Genesis is primarily about God's character and his purpose for sinful mankind. Let us beware of allowing our interests to divert us from the central thrust of the book, so that we miss what the Lord, our Creator and Redeemer, is saying to us.

**Bryan Ness** is a professor of biology at Pacific Union College. His research interests include plant systematics and genetics.





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### Cover Art Description:

Sacred stories inspire my work, and this painting of Tamar, daughter of King David, is based on 2 Samuel 13. It was created to inspire action on behalf of those silenced and mistreated among us. Tamar threw ashes over her head and wailed, making the wrong committed against her known to the public. But no one responded to her call for justice and instead of receiving validation she was silenced, spending the rest of her days shut away, disgraced. May we never sentence someone to such a dark fate through our inaction.

#### **About the Artist:**

Mindy Bielas is a Masters of Arts student at Claremont School of Theology in Interdisciplinary Studies, focusing on Hebrew Bible and Feminist Theory. She graduated from La Sierra University with a BA in Religious Studies and Pre-Seminary as well as a Masters of Theological Studies. When she is not studying or painting, she enjoys playing with her cat and practicing her harp. See more of her art at mindypaints.weebly.com.

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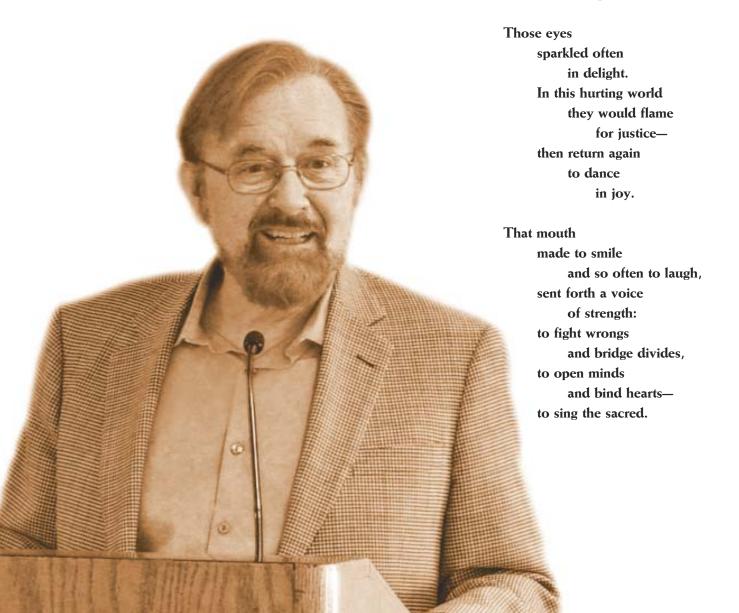
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## **Roy Branson: I Know in Part**

BY MICHAEL ORLICH

Now I know only in part; then I will know fully. 1 CORINTHIANS 13:12



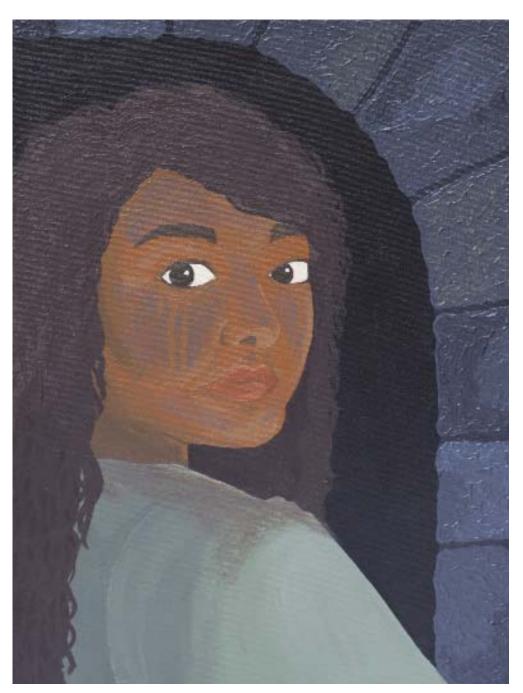
#### The Hair

like a Southern clay—
hard to cultivate
easy to hold in the heart—
glowed in boldness
untroubled by age
or opinion,
burning with life.

#### Those hands

held forth in welcome
or comfortably clasping a book,
reached for truth
and beauty,
waved with the weight
of meaning,
pointed the way
with passion.

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