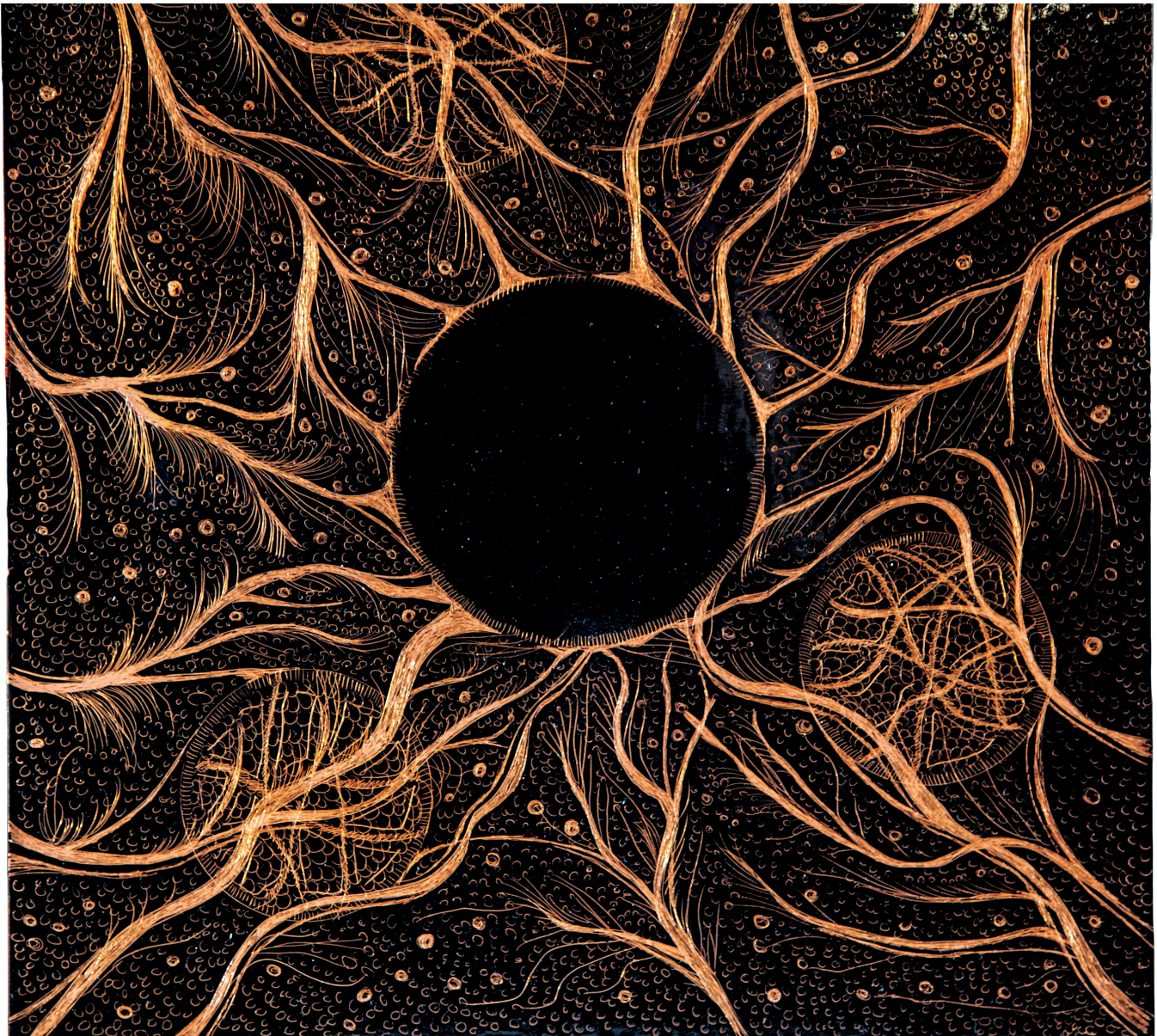


 community through conversation

# SPECTRUM



**Responding to the “Uplifting Jesus” Statement • *The Apocalyptic Imagination***  
**• *Last-Generation Lifestyle* • **Waco’s 25th Anniversary** •**  
**Postum Makes a Comeback • *Freedom for Neighbor Love* • **Hospitality Begins at Home****

community through conversation

# SPECTRUM

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## ABOUT THE COVER ART AND ARTIST:

**Richard W. Hawkins** is a multimedia artist, born 1989 in Lodi, California. Richard's work varies in media from paintings and sculptures to metal working, mixed media and experimenting with unconventional materials. Richard is a graduate of Pacific Union College ('13) and went on to obtain a Master's Degree in Fine Art from the top metal smithing program in the United States at Cranbrook Academy of Art. Richard's work has been exhibited nationally and internationally. His work has acquired collectors ranging from former politicians, star athletes, and architects.

Richard, on the cover piece of this issue, entitled, **"Void"**:

"There come moments in life when all is pushed away by circumstances. When foundations of family, relationships, and the continuity of stability are in question there is a great emptiness. All the beauty in life is pushed away from the radar and we are left with what seems insurmountable.

Made in a challenging period of my own life, I am reminded that when faced with uncertainty there is only one way to face it all, head on. If I can face my fear, be it loneliness, rejection, or loss, I can only then see what exists on the other side of a great void."

Additional images of Richard's metal and etching work appear on divider spreads within this issue. For more, visit <http://rhawki1.otherpeoplespixels.com>.

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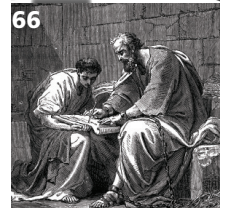
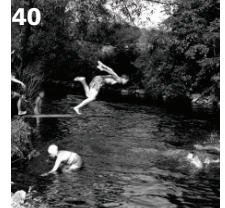
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## The Ties that Bind or Set Us Free | BY BONNIE DWYER

**Would  
acknowledging  
that we have  
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church  
debate?**

Family conversations about money, especially when you have very little, can move quickly into arguments with pointed fingers. The saver versus the spender. After a couple of such heated sessions early in my marriage, it dawned on me that we were both really trying to do the same thing. My thrifty husband wanted to build a nest egg to take care of the family and provide for our future. I wanted to purchase things to make our home comfortable and attractive. We both had the same goal of wanting to take care of the family, but we had very different ideas about how to accomplish that goal. Acknowledging our mutual goal helped take some of the heat out of the budget discussions.

Taking care of the church is another goal that can be visualized in very different ways. There are those who understand Total Member Involvement as an official church program for evangelizing the world and including lay people in the process. And then there are those who hear those words “Total Member Involvement” and think of the Priesthood of All Believers and the need to engage both men and women equally in the ministry of the church. There are those who think the vote of the church in San Antonio against allowing divisions to ordain women means that the unions that do ordain women are out of compliance with church policy. There are those who see the same vote as, to use a phrase Ted Wilson himself put into play, “changing nothing,” which is what he said the day after the vote was taken. Church

policy that specifies unions are the level of the church to decide on women’s ordination was not changed, so unions can continue making the decisions on who is ordained in their territory. Those people are taken aback by the push from the church administration to develop “consequences” for those entities that are “out of compliance.”

Would acknowledging that we have the same goal of taking care of the church take some of the heat out of the current church debate?

In this issue of the journal, we have a collection of articles arranged in a topical fashion. In the Noteworthy section, we’ve grouped together articles about the “Uplifting Jesus” document that came out in April right after Spring Meetings. We’ve pulled together book reviews at the end of the journal. Discussion of the Apocalypse is in the Bible Section. But the ideas in the various articles go beyond the boundaries of the organizing topic. Gerald Winslow’s discussion of freedom and neighbor love might influence how you understand the news in the Noteworthy section, for instance. I mention this because our goal in this issue is to help you think about seemingly common topics in new ways.

Our hope is that ideas that set our minds free can also draw us together, help us to see our common goals. Such ideas can bind us together as family by helping us to understand each other even if we see things differently. ■

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



## Unity by Authoritarian Means | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

I'm a troublemaker, and perhaps to no avail. I bawl, whimper, raise my voice, and point fingers in print. And because the tide I am now fretting over is ferocious, I know that a single sandbag—or a dozen or a hundred—amounts to little. By the thousands and the tens of thousands, Adventists must now, every one of us—*resist*.

*Can you please lay off the overheated rhetoric?*

No, and here is why. Our church's leadership is becoming more and more authoritarian and is thereby threatening the very soul of Adventism. I don't mean conference and union presidents, who do what they can to buoy up the lay leaders and church pastors who mind and encourage our local congregations. I mean Adventist leadership at the *top*. Instead of leading us to reformation and revival, it is blending slipshod spirituality and shameless heavy-handedness into a lethal venom it wants to pass off as good medicine. The danger is real—resentments, complacency, piety without substance—and it's getting worse. One resource against this danger is the scriptural vision and our pioneer perspective on it; another is church members who persist in loving their heritage and strengthening their congregations. But unless we make the most of these resources, our church will slip (whatever its membership) into decline and irrelevance.

What comes down from the top may be well-intended; I ascribe no mean-heartedness to anyone. But all who put even a modicum of energy into understanding and appreciating the Christian story know this disastrous turn must be challenged—with kindness, as we may hope, and also with unstinting resolve. This is no time for rose-tinted glasses.

The first siren call rang out on July 3 at the 2010 General Conference session in Atlanta. One theme of the new president's Sabbath sermon was "the unchanging Word of God." It is true, of course, that Jesus Christ is

the same yesterday, today and forever. It is true as well that the text of Scripture remains (but for scholarly discoveries concerning some details) essentially unchanged and unchangeable. Still, the Bible teaches that the *living* Word of God—the actual message of God to actual human beings—*does* change. The prophets say repeatedly that God will tell us "new" things. According to John, Jesus himself declared that the Holy Spirit—his own living presence in the church—would one day say what was then too hard for his disciples to bear. By the ultimate authority of Christ, the living Word would continue to speak and minds continue to change. The sermon in Atlanta overlooked these points.

Here Christian consensus in condemning slavery provides classic illumination. Slavery was nowhere condemned in Scripture, yet under the pioneering influence of Gregory of Nyssa, in the fourth century, church leaders came to condemn it. Christian tolerance of slavery persisted, actually, into our own era, but now, and well-nigh universally among Christians, slavery is both denounced and proscribed.

The living presence of Christ brought this about, and there is no reason to doubt that Christ's living presence has still more to teach. Ellen White says discernment of "new light...will continue to the end" (T5:706). So, it was disturbing when the sermon in Atlanta called us to a settled version of Adventism. The church's early doctrinal dynamism had come under threat with the passing of the pioneers. Official statements of Adventist belief had become longer and were now, all too often, a weapon against fresh perspective. All this was underwriting mutual distrust and feelings of exclusion. The Atlanta sermon, a *mélange* of suspicion and indignation, made matters worse; it warned against new interpretations of "landmark" beliefs and spoke darkly of church members holding their pastors and educators "accountable" for

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interpreting scripture in officially sanctioned ways. One passage even demonized “contemplative” prayer. At that point a young woman sitting next to my wife and me began to sob.

All this suggested an authoritarian frame of mind at the top. Worries evoked on that day in Atlanta have often seemed warranted, as when General Conference leadership has sought to control thought on Adventist college and university campuses, or to manipulate gender-equity conversation toward the outcome it prefers. Now, as controversy with respect to gender continues to fester, the church’s top leader has published, over two issues of *Adventist World*, a point of view on church unity first expressed in February at the General Conference Global Leadership Summit in Lisbon, Portugal.

The argument in Part 1, which came out in April, is that the “merging of purpose mission, and duty” to which Scripture calls us is compromised by “any difference of opinion.” The “humility” proper to church unity entails “submission to the entire church as it makes decisions.” If there is any uncertainty about what this latter might mean, Part 2, published in May, clears it away. These remarks repudiate both “independent opinions” and failure by church entities to adhere “strictly” to General Conference *Working Policy*. The church is governed by the Holy Spirit’s “leading.” What is more, “submissiveness” to God’s leading as expressed in “the will of the entire body” is required of all organizations. Anything less amounts to “working against God’s wishes for a church united in mission.” Appeals to the value of “diversity” must give way to “compliance” with policies taken by “the General Conference in session” or by “the General Conference Executive Committee functioning as God’s remnant church...” This latter phraseology is stunningly inappropriate to Protestant sensibility and, on any but the most superficial reading of Scripture, has no backing whatever from the written Word of God. Yet it appears now in an official publication.

A few weeks ago, the current president’s in-

ner circle posted on the Adventist News Network a statement it had not even bothered to share with the General Conference Executive Committee. Fraught again with suspicion and indignation, the statement was, in effect, a request for orthodoxy oaths from independent ministries within the church. It presented seven questions on topics about which Adventists are widely known to disagree, and asked for public answers that would meet with this inner circle’s approval. As to whether this more resembles Rome or Wittenberg, I need not even remark.

For more than twenty years I bore administrative responsibility, and I sympathize with the ideal of adherence to institutional conviction and policy. But when, within a church, unadulterated authoritarianism aims so completely to stamp out conscientious conviction of which it disapproves, we have reached a point of *crisis*. We know now that the threatening tide really is ferocious, and that Christian integrity really does summon us to (kindly) resistance.

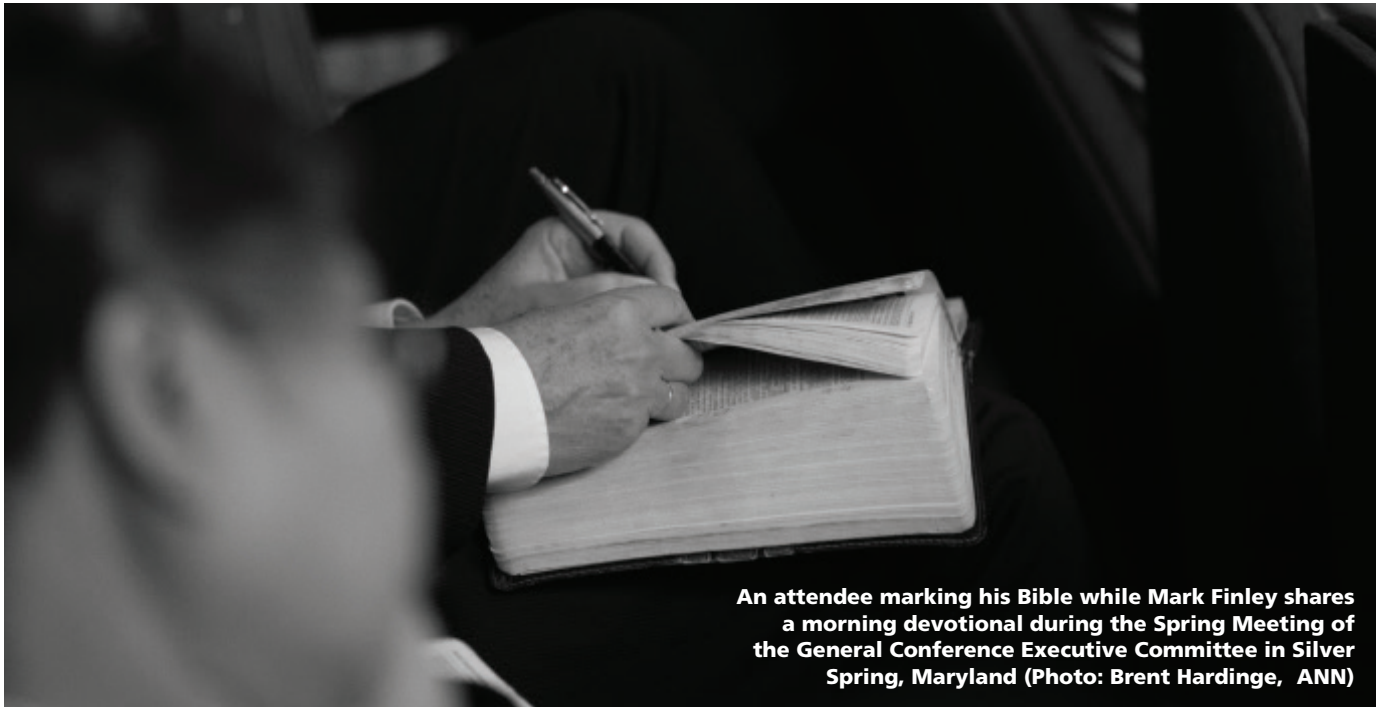
The spiritually mature realize that our quest for deeper understanding may meet with complexity that is all but irreducible. Then complete agreement just eludes us, and it is the better part of wisdom to permit a plurality of outlooks. Communities with real identities cannot, of course, allow any conviction at all to take hold. Surely no Christian group could now, in good faith, permit support of slavery. But in these matters no rule establishes exactly where and when to draw the line. Responsible communities must simply prepare for a certain amount of disagreement, and learn to handle it with grace. Our pioneers thought so—Ellen White was disturbed by lack of “difference of opinion” (5T:707)—and a certain amount of disagreement appears, of course, even in the Bible.

Authoritarians prize uniformity, but as an ideology, uniformity is poison. Surely it’s time to drink from another cistern. ■

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**Charles Scriven** chairs Adventist Forum.

## Spring Meeting Postlude | BY BONNIE DWYER



An attendee marking his Bible while Mark Finley shares a morning devotional during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee in Silver Spring, Maryland (Photo: Brent Hardinge, ANN)

IMAGE SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/ADVENTISTNEWSNETWORK/40495300995/IN/ALBUM-72157689764631580/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/adventistnewsnetwork/40495300995/in/album-72157689764631580/)

The General Conference Executive Committee completed its work early and was adjourned at noon on Wednesday, April 11. As the members were making their way to the airport a document that curiously never made it onto the agenda was posted on the Adventist News Network. Under the headline “An Invitation to Uplift Jesus: A Statement from the General Conference Executive Leadership and Division Presidents,” the document resembled in many ways the loyalty-oath portion of the document sent back to committee from Annual Council 2017. This time the request for loyalty was being made to independent organizations, with the One Project being singled out as an example.

We appeal to all organizations and initiatives that are united with us in mission to reaffirm or to respond positively in their official communication channels to the following crucial questions.

Seven questions follow, touching on substitutionary atonement, the role of doctrine, understanding of the heavenly sanctuary, uniqueness of Adventism, literal six-day creation, biblical authority and prophetic interpretation, support for church teaching on marriage and the family and LGBTQ relationships, and church membership in the light on Scripture.

The full document follows below, or read it directly on ANN’s website.<sup>1</sup>

To honor and exalt Jesus is the foundational commitment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and undergirds its prophetic message expressed in the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. Salvation by Faith alone leading to a life of discipleship to Jesus is the goal of our mission. As we proclaim the three angels’ messages let us make sure that Christ stands at the center of all our activities and initiatives.



A number of entities both inside and outside the church organization have been founded for the purpose of exalting the name of Jesus. Such an honorable task also brings the challenge of proclaiming a Christ in harmony with His Word. It is our conviction that the Jesus whom Seventh-day Adventists are to follow and emulate is the One revealed in the Bible—the One who presented Himself as the Truth and upheld the authority of the Scriptures. It is of utmost importance that we never forget that Jesus identified Himself with “the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). He is actually the Word (John 1:1).

Church leaders are often asked for advice on how to relate with some initiatives and organizations, some of which are well established and widely accepted, such as ASI-recognized entities, which have long cooperated with the church and its leadership. A more recent development is the One Project (now apparently transitioning to become the Global Resource Collective), about which some questions have been raised. Therefore, the General Conference executive leadership with Division presidents has decided to offer some guidance regarding the evaluation of any initiative seeking church endorsement.

We commend those who, prior to joining any initiative or movement, study for themselves to assess whether such movements are in accordance with the revealed will of God (Acts 17:11). As Jesus Himself advised us: “You will know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:16). He also gave the warning, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matt 7:21).

In harmony with the conviction expressed above that the name of Jesus must be uplifted in ways consistent with His propositional revelation in Scripture, we invite our church leaders and any concerned individuals to assess the biblical foundations of any ministry or evangelistic initiative in the light of Isaiah 8:20: “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

The Church will be eager to work with all who share its prophetic message expressed in

the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. In light of issues that have been raised regarding some recent initiatives, the following questions although not exhaustive provide some guidance for an assessment of such groups. We appeal to all organizations and initiatives that are united with us in mission to reaffirm or to respond positively in their official communication channels to the following crucial questions:

1. What does it mean to accept Jesus Christ? When we say we accept Christ is this a mystical Christ of experience only, or, does it mean an acceptance of the doctrinal truths He taught, or, both? Does such ministry or initiative uphold the substitutionary atonement of Jesus?

2. How do they understand the role of doctrine in Christian faith? Is there an organic connection between the person of Christ and the teachings or doctrines of Christ? Is there the understanding that knowing Christ necessarily includes knowing and living His teachings and the Biblical truths He taught?

3. What is their understanding and support of the message and mission the Adventist church in the light of its prophetic mission? How do they express their understanding of 1844 and Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary?

4. Do they have a clear understanding of the uniqueness of the Seventh-day Adventist movement? Are they clear in how Adventist faith differs from other evangelical denominations that exalt Jesus?

5. What is their understanding of creation? Do those involved in new ministries and initiatives believe that God created this world in six literal days and rested on the seventh day in the recent past as understood and voted in our 28 Fundamental Beliefs?

6. What is their understanding of biblical authority and prophetic interpretation? Do they accept the historicist explanation of Bible prophecy and do they share the Adventist understanding of the little horn of Daniel 7, the beast powers of Revelation 13 and the antichrist of Scripture, and that faithfulness to Christ will ultimately climax in a conflict over the law of God with the Sabbath at

the center of that final controversy?

7. Due to current perceptions of gender and sexuality, which contradict the biblical teaching on marriage and the family as accepted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, these pertinent questions must also be asked: How do they understand gender identity and the question of LGBTQ+ relationships to church membership in the light of Scripture? Do they have a clear, unambiguous and biblical understanding of this subject?

Organizations, groups, or individuals that cannot affirm the 28 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and provide clear and unambiguous answers to the questions above should not expect endorsement from the organizations of the Church. The General Conference executive leadership with Division presidents invites

every member and entity of the church to uphold the name of Jesus by presenting him to the world and living according to His will. In doing so, Jesus must be proclaimed in connection with the truth as revealed in Scripture and understood by Seventh-day Adventists. Consequently, we reaffirm our utmost commitment, which is to preach “Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2).

—General Conference Executive Leadership and Division Presidents ■

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Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

## Footnotes:

1. <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2018-04-11/an-invitation-to-uplift-jesus/>.

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# Responding to the General Conference’s Latest Document

| BY BONNIE DWYER

In “An Invitation to Uplift Jesus: A Statement from the General Conference Executive Leadership and Division Presidents,” (see *above*) the One Project is used as an example of an organization of whom questions should be asked regarding their stand on certain matters of church doctrine.

Asked for their response, two of the former leaders of the One Project replied.

Japhet J. De Oliveira, senior pastor, Boulder SDA Church said,

I do believe that the General Conference Executive Leadership and Division Presidents have been, once again, tragically misinformed. I will press on. I will preach in season and out of season. When it is acceptable and when it is not acceptable. I will always unabashedly lift up the name of Jesus.

“Indeed, I count everything loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my

Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ...” Philippians 3:8.

Paddy McCoy, pastor for young adult ministries, Kettering Seventh-day Adventist Church, said,

For seven years, my life has been changed by a deeper focus on the Jesus of Scripture. During that time, with the support of brothers and sisters and leaders in the Adventist church, I have had the incredible privilege to minister to 2,000 university students a year, teaching them about a walk with Jesus and trying desperately to keep them active members of the Adventist church. We have gone on mission trips, cared for the homeless in our community, sung to the elderly, raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for projects around the world, many with ADRA and Adventist hospitals, we have

baptized young adults into Jesus and His church, and we have worshipped the God of the Bible. We have also gathered together with Adventists and non-Adventists from around the world to talk about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, with great joy and celebration in our hearts.

For those that wonder about our ministry, I agree wholeheartedly that you should check the fruit. What fruit is there from our ministries or gatherings like the One project? Countless people I know that were on the verge of leaving the Adventist Church found hope in Jesus and our church again because of our gatherings. People nearly ready to give up on faith found Jesus again. There are more stories than I can include here, but one more. This one, on a very personal note, involves my own daughter, nine years old at the time. Inspired by what was happening at a One project gathering, two years later gave her life to Jesus in baptism because she realized that the most important thing in her life was for “Jesus to increase, while we decrease.” (She wrote those words, quoting John the Baptist in John 3, on a postcard at the gathering and turned it in without my knowledge until I found her card in a stack of other cards with people’s dreams for their church.

The only reason I knew it was hers was because in the top right corner she wrote her name and age). She embraced the words of Ellen White who once wrote that if we only had one passage in Scripture, John 3:16 is all we would need. And today, she is living a life devoted to Jesus. What more could a parent hope and pray and dream of?

So please, if you are to judge what we do, please judge us by our fruits. “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit...The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of the evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” Luke 6:43-45. And friends, after journeying with my brothers and sisters for seven years in the Way of Jesus, our hearts are full of Jesus. Not perfect, but full. That is all I have to say.

William Johnsson, a frequent speaker at One Project meetings said, “Incredible—you can be a racist or spouse-beater, but you’d better be straight on the little horn!” ■

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

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## A Committed and Concerned Church Executive Responds to the General Conference’s New Declaration | BY ANONYMOUS

**G**eneral Conference President Ted Wilson, along with a select few have, without authorization from any governing committee of the church, and absent of any authority aside from themselves, taken it upon themselves to declare the very first Seventh-day Adventist Creedal Statement in the history of our denomination, titled “An Invitation to Uplift Jesus: A Statement from the General Conference Executive Leadership and Division Presidents.”<sup>1</sup> While premised as a pastoral communication,

it departs boldly into new territory for a Church that up until Wednesday morning, April 11, affirmed, “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed” (Fundamental Beliefs preamble).<sup>1</sup>

This “statement” offers seven points that those who are to be deemed acceptable must publicly affirm and pledge. This replaces the baptismal vows, and the Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs. Now there are seven. If left unchallenged, this further turns Adventism towards creedalism and authoritarianism. This is especially true since this





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“statement” was issued during the closing hours of the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee, yet it appears this primary decision-making body was not even consulted about it.

The historical antipathy in Adventism to creeds is well documented in studies such as “Creeds and Statements of Belief in Early Adventist Thought,”<sup>2</sup> by S. Joseph Kidder. We have known as Seventh-day Adventists that credal statements have been used to coerce conscience, limit ongoing understanding of Scripture, and centralize power in the hands of clerics. From our earliest days as a movement, we have consistently opposed the development of creeds, especially as a mechanism of enforcement, since many early Adventists themselves experienced persecution and disfellowshipping from their previous churches charged with non-compliance with creeds.

Note in particular this observation by Michael W. Campbell, writing in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*:

These fears were aptly expressed during the earliest organizational developments in 1861 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Accord-

ing to denominational co-founder, James White: “making a creed is setting the stakes, and barring up the way to all future advancement....The Bible is our creed.” Another Adventist minister, J. N. Loughborough, reiterated their collective fear: “[T]he first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such.”<sup>3</sup>

The issuance of this statement without review or even the apparent knowledge of the General Conference Executive Committee in session is deeply troubling. If left unchallenged, this provides the precedent for elected leaders—absent of appropriate governance oversight—to create a form of authoritarian leadership which could be replicated at any level of the church. One can only imagine the chaos created in local congregations when these seven questions are instituted as a litmus test for pastors, teachers, and lay leaders.

The suggestive nature of these seven questions—quite similar to every inquisitive investigation in the history of Christendom—are designed for a single purpose: to divide and purge those who cannot express their Adventist faith in the precise manner as the small group who drafted the questions. This is in complete opposition to a time-honored Adventist process by which beliefs and policies were developed in consultation that led to consensus and a unified perspective.

The Church has always emphasized the ongoing need for dialogue within its walls as well as with the outside culture. The preamble given on the General Conference website<sup>4</sup> includes the words, “As the church continues to grow in size and influence, its role in society will require increased transparency. Such will continue to be the demands of society, and such will be the need to define Adventism’s relevance, or present truth, to those who are asking questions and seeking answers to their dilemmas and problems.”

The “Statement from the General Conference Executive Leadership and Division Presidents,” drafted in secret and issued without committee approval, is the very antithesis of this purpose.

Signed,

A Committed and Concerned Church  
Executive ■

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## Footnotes:

1. <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/>.

2. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3054&context=auss>.

3. Michael W. Campbell, “Seventh-day Adventism, Doctrinal Statements, and Unity,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 27/1-2 (2016): 98–99.

4. <https://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/>.

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# The “Uplifting Jesus” Statement: *A Theological Perspective*

| BY WILLIAM G. JOHANSSON

**L**ike the guy in the TV commercial, I know a thing or two because I’ve seen a thing or two. Beginning with the controversy over the views of Robert Brinsmead in ancient times (anyone remember him?), I’ve had a front-row seat on all the theological developments of the Adventist church during the past fifty years. Against this background I offer my assessment of the recently released document (*see above*).

First, the statement isn’t what it purports to be. It isn’t about uplifting Jesus: it scarcely mentions Jesus and is silent concerning His life and teachings.

What is it really about? Apparently an attack on The One Project, the only ministry it specifically mentions.

What disturbs me most is what the statement says and does not say about Jesus and the Christian life: “What does it mean to accept Jesus Christ? When we say we accept Christ is this a mystical Christ of experience only

or, does it mean an acceptance of the doctrinal truths He taught, or, both? Does such a ministry or initiative uphold the substitutionary atonement of Jesus?”

This statement, which is placed first on the list of seven points that define a genuine ministry, lacks clarity. How is it using “mystical”—pejoratively or positively? Then the statement goes on to seemingly equate accepting Jesus with believing teachings about Him. I protest! This is a perversion of the New Testament. At its essence our faith is not a *what* but *whom*. Theology is important, but Jesus, and only Jesus, saves us.

I am perplexed as to how this loose, confusing paragraph found its way into a release from church headquarters. Someone was asleep at the switch. Leaders should withdraw it immediately.

The remaining six points all focus on doctrine. I have no quarrel with them per se, but with the purpose to which

they are being put. The Church in general session voted Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs; do we now have a de facto list of thirty-five? Did someone pull a fast one on us? I would like some answers.

What an opportunity is lost in this document claiming to uplift Jesus! Why doesn't it invite the reader to what lies at the heart of the Scriptures—a personal, living, growing relationship with Jesus as our Savior, Lord, Best Friend? To know Him is life eternal, here and now; to be, like Paul, crucified with Him; to know the ineffable joy and peace of His abiding presence—this is why Christianity lives on and will never die.

Another missing element in the statement troubles me greatly. The statement is all doctrine, doctrine, doctrine. Doctrine is important, but *living* is more important. Jesus calls His followers to lives of probity, to unswerving integrity, to social justice. You wouldn't know that from this statement. Presumably you can be a racist or a spouse-beater, just be sure to have all the doctrines straight.

Recent reports in the secular press cause me consternation. My church is making news again—but for corruption in high places. This is at least the third embarrassing matter in the past few years. The corruption involves church leaders in three large divisions of the world church. All these leaders occupied major posts; one was a division president. And General Conference leaders seemingly were slow to take action when allegations surfaced.

Am I the only Adventist who wonders what is going on? Is there moral rot in our church that reaches to the highest level? Over my many years I have observed the diligence and concern afforded theological matters. Sadly, I have not observed the same level of concern in ethical situations. Too many Adventists, focused on correct doctrine, exhibit blind spots in elemental ethics.

Now, a word about The One Project. I spoke five times at meetings, worked side-by-side with the leaders, noted the nature of their lives, observed their theology. I also saw how The One Project brought men and women to a closer walk with the Lord, how it changed lives, how it led former members to reconnect with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Of this I am convinced: The One Project was a gift from God. It was an answer to many prayers for revival. I praise God for The One Project.

The response of Church leaders baffles me. This was

something to be supported, not attacked. Why—someone please explain to me—why, oh why would leaders seek to shut down a ministry that led people to Jesus? And why would other leaders who knew better choose political expediency and remain silent?

I have asked and asked what was wrong with The One Project. No one can give me a solid answer. The leaders of The One Project were subjected to character assassination—for what purpose? On the other hand, I could, if I chose, point out deviant theology in some other ministries—Robert Brinsmead is still with us! So I ask again: How come leaders singled out The One Project, whose “offence” was simply making Jesus All?

As a king once famously sang, “It’s a puzzlement.” ■

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## Footnotes:

1. <https://amzn.to/2J4T7bH>.

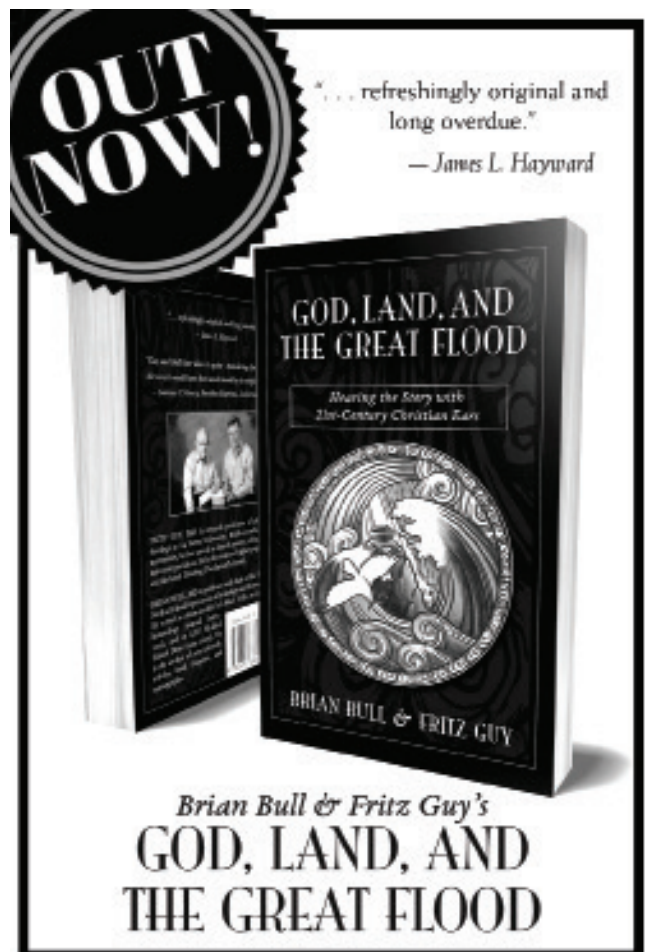


IMAGE SOURCE: 20TH CENTURY FOX





**Bishops debating with the pope during the Conciliar Movement**

## “Reformatio in Capite et in Membris” — 17 Questions That Need an Answer | BY EDWIN TORKELSEN

In 1378, the Great Papal Schism was a fact. The Western Roman Catholic Church was split. Two popes, later three, anathematized each other, all claiming to be the one and only true head of the church.

The scandal gave rise to the Conciliar Movement. Its aim was to restore unity. The watch cry was “*Reformatio in Capite et in Membris*” (reform in head and members). The need for reform was greatest at the top. It was the top that caused the schism. The popes perceived the Conciliar Movement as a challenge to “proper” church authority. For this reason, Pope Pius II in 1460 condemned Conciliarism in his bull “*Execrabilis*.”

The General Conference (GC) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church has for years promoted Revival and Reformation. It is still unclear what specific reforms are wanted. Does the need for reform also include the “head” or only the members? I have not read or heard GC President Ted Wilson mention the need of any reform “*in capite*.”

After the GC session in San Antonio in 2015, the focus shifted to the need for unity, understood as *submission of personal conscience to church authority and church rules*.

On the surface, women’s ordination is the issue. After the GC decided to accuse the unions that allow ordination of women of being non-compliant rebels, the main issue is *authority*. GC leaders promote a hierarchical under-

standing of church organization where the “lower” levels are obliged to obey and submit to the “higher” levels. The wish to control from the top has become prominent in articles and speeches as well as actions.

The GC’s accusations against some unions reveal that it sees its role as an authoritarian father attempting to discipline his naughty kids. It claims to be the highest church authority, speaking on behalf of the Holy Spirit. Its task is to bring the unions in line with the Church Family’s house rules.

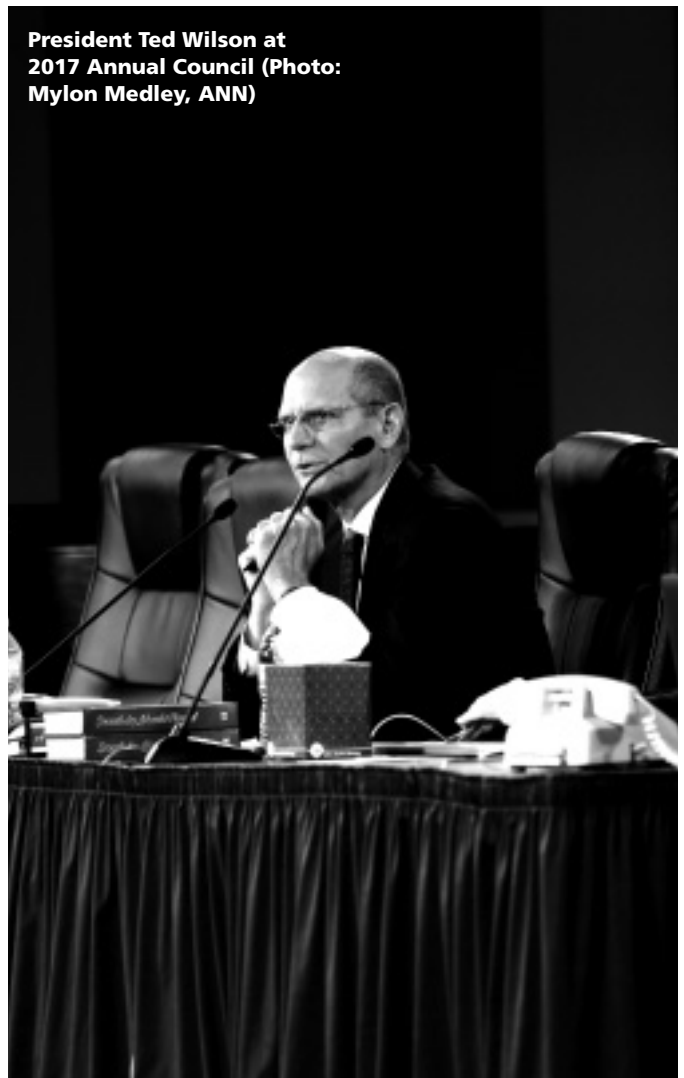
Women’s ordination is now reduced to a simple law-and-order question of policy compliance. The fact that women’s ordination is a complex, multifaceted issue is ignored. Presenting reductionist reasoning as a premise, the GC hopes nobody will discover that an invalid premise will never deliver a valid conclusion.

Some unions may succumb to pressure and accept this premise. They may view themselves as inferior to the Grand Inquisitors now traveling the world to conduct “conversations” with the naughty unions. Then collegiality will have lost to hierarchy.

We need to question these premises. Collegiality must be restored. The GC must be brought back to realize it is a service institution, not a control and command center. The unions need to proactively turn the tables, take the initiative, and *call the GC to account*. The GC must be *required* to answer questions about the inquisition process, the presuppositions, and assumptions that fuel it.

Ideally, we need an *independent* Unity Oversight Committee (UOC) that is free to critically evaluate the whole process, especially the role of the GC leadership. This is, of course, wishful thinking. The list of the present UOC members, almost all of them GC personnel, leaves no doubt that this committee will ask none of the important questions. They have only one task: bring the unions to submit to the will of God and the global church, defined by the GC as policy compliance.

If the present UOC members are in doubt about what happens if their conclusions do not satisfy the GC leaders, let them remember Thomas Lemon. After his honest remarks at the 2017 GC Annual Council, it did not take many hours before he no longer was chair of the UOC. A brief conversation with the GC President took care of that. That act alone speaks louder than a million words about the ability of the UOC to conduct independent oversight evaluations.



We need a UOC with *competent* members, independent of the GC leadership, including at least 50 percent women. They must address the underlying ideas and assumptions of the non-compliance allegations, starting at the top of the authority pyramid: the motives, authority, ideology, and agenda of the GC leadership.

Here are 17 points of concern:

1. Why was the question about allowing divisions to decide on women’s ordination brought to a vote in San Antonio, knowing that the Adventist Church is already polarized on this issue? A simple yes/no vote on a complex issue only serves to deepen the split. The tense situation was *willfully* aggravated. Is this wise leadership?
2. Is the San Antonio vote valid—not only technically but also ideologically and ethically? If this is a complex question of *conscience*, since when did the

IMAGE SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.FELCKR.COM/PHOTOS/ADVENTISTNEWSNETWORK/037572755032/IN/ALBUM-7215768684611671/](https://www.felckr.com/photos/adventistnewsnetwork/037572755032/IN/ALBUM-7215768684611671/)



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- Adventist Church decide such questions by a simple majority vote?
3. If it is merely a *policy* issue, why not change policy to bring it into harmony with reality? Do policies serve mission, or is mission the slave of policies?
  4. If it is a policy *compliance* issue, why does the GC refuse to comply with the GC *Working Policy* that leaves the handling of such issues to the divisions? What are the consequences for GC leaders who arbitrarily violate policies?
  5. If ordaining women is an issue of theological *heresy*, what is the orthodox position? When did the Adventist Church decide that ordaining women is heretical?
  6. What is the *material difference* between male ordained and female commissioned ministers?
  7. If *Male Headship* ideology is the philosophical basis for prohibiting women's ordination, why has the GC not openly supported or repudiated it?
  8. *Who* has decided that some unions are non-compliant and by what kind of *process*? Should the GC's *opinion* on votes and policies be accepted as the final verdict on the unions' assumed "guilt"? *When* did the GC acquire, as their prerogative, the *power of definition* and *the right to act as a tribunal*? The guilty verdict was handed down before the case was investigated. Is this *abuse* of authority and power?
  9. The aim of the "Unity in Mission" document in 2016 and the "Loyalty" document in 2017 is to *execute punishment* based on an *arbitrary and unsubstantiated* guilty verdict by the GC. If non-compliance is not *proven through an independent process of investigation*, how can the validity of this allegation be acknowledged as a fact?
  10. Both documents were presented to the GC Executive Committee (GCEC) at the last minute, the Chair explicitly

refusing requests from the members to study the documents before they were brought to the floor. In addition, one must look at the tactics used in 2017 to ensure that the "Loyalty" document was presented to the GCEC at all, despite being first voted down in the GC Division Officers' (GCDO) committee. There is also the fact that this document was not the product of the UOC but was handed to them by GC officers to be presented as if it was the product of the UOC. How could these, in my opinion, politically motivated, and possibly unethical, dishonest, and manipulative tactics pass without being strongly rebuked? Why were not the people responsible for these manipulations held accountable for their ethically questionable actions? These issues must be assessed from an ethical point of view. Should leaders be allowed to continue in their positions after they have repeatedly practiced unethical, deceptive, and manipulative tactics?

11. The core question of *unity* must be studied. Are true spiritual unity and organizational uniformity the same? When the GC President speaks about unity and church authority, he assumes that biblical unity in Christ and policy-enforced uniformity are the same. Nor does he distinguish between appropriate church authority, which is always limited, and inappropriate authority that does not recognize any limits. He assumes that in both areas the latter is the true definition of the former. Are these ideas in harmony with Adventist understandings of unity and authority?
12. The pivotal issue of using *threats* of punishment and *coercion* in ecclesiastical matters must take center stage as well as demands to *suppress personal conscientiously held convictions and freedom of speech*. These methods are in conflict with the



Thomas Lemon, former chair of the Unity Oversight Committee, gives the UOC's report to the Executive Committee at the GC Annual Council, October 9, 2017 (Photo: Mylon Medley, ANN)



IMAGE SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/ADVENTISTNEWSNETWORK/37346337510/IN/ALBUM-72157686884611671/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/adventistnewsnetwork/37346337510/in/album-72157686884611671/)

New Testament, the Reformers, and the Adventist Church's historically strong defense of conscience as a sacred core Christian value. The Adventist Church has traditionally preached that use of threats and coercion in religious matters, even if disguised as a pious call for submission to law-and-order and obedience, is a core marker of apostasy. Is it OK when our own leaders do this?

13. There is a serious *conflict of interest* in the present UOC. Top GC officers, including the GC President, are listed as *ex officio* members. They have played a *vital role* in the process leading up to the San Antonio vote; they have been the main *accusers* of the unions for being non-compliant; and they have vociferously proclaimed their guilt. As members of the UOC, they are acting as *judges in their own case*. They seriously compromise the UOC's task of doing a fair oversight evaluation. This is a challenge to the credibility of the rest of the members, not only the UOC's but also their personal

*ethical reputation* is at stake.

14. The GC members *hide behind the San Antonio vote by GC in session*, promoting themselves as merely duty-bound executors of that vote. This picture is false. The GC started the process; it ordered the TOSC project (and ignored its results); its members decided to bring the issue to the GC in session; they formulated the text of the vote; they introduced the item at the session; they chose not to have somebody present the results of the TOSC studies; they did not invite female pastors from China or elsewhere to tell their stories; they have interpreted the vote to mean a general prohibition against women's ordination. Simply put, the GC members orchestrated the process in order to obtain a vote to their liking, they have interpreted the vote to their liking, and they have acted upon that interpretation to their own liking. Will the UOC look into and evaluate the realities and not only the formalities of the San Antonio vote and

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how the GC has used it to promote its own agenda?

15. Will the UOC address *the logical irony and implication of the San Antonio vote*? The fact that the question of whether or not Divisions should be allowed to decide on women's ordination in their territories was an *implicit and tacit acceptance* of the *principle* of women's ordination. If women's ordination was considered to be wrong, for whatever reason, there would be no point in asking this question. *The premise for the question is that women's ordination is OK in the Adventist Church.* In fact, the GC in session, by its vote in SA, has now *affirmed* that women's ordination is OK. It only remains for the GC leaders to discover and accept this fact—and to abandon their illogical crusade and leave the unions alone. Will that happen?

16. Our top GC leaders have chosen to be the *accusers of the brethren*. Their accusations are aimed at unions that do their best to preach the Gospel where they are. By doing this, the GC leaders point the finger of the accuser back at themselves. Why do they do this?

17. We need to ask this tough but important question: are top GC leaders guiding us into *institutional apostasy*? Warped ideas of authority lead to control and loss of freedom of conscience and expression. That is institutional apostasy. The line in the sand appears *when personal conscience is downplayed* and use of *threats and coercion try to enforce uniform compliance* with man-made rules presented *in a religious garb*.

When uniformity and coerced submission to rules become more important than respect for personal conscience and practical flexibility, I sense that *we are about to cross that line*. In his speech at the Lisbon Leadership Conference in February 2018, the GC President promot-

ed such ideas, even indicating that the Spirit agreed with him on this point. These ideas are now authoritatively spread to the global church as the President's speech is being published through all available official Adventist channels. Sadly, *these ideas contradict the fundamental principles of the Gospel* that call for the sacred freedom of conscience and a *voluntary* spiritual unity in Christ in *diversity*. Is this the way we want our leaders to lead our church?

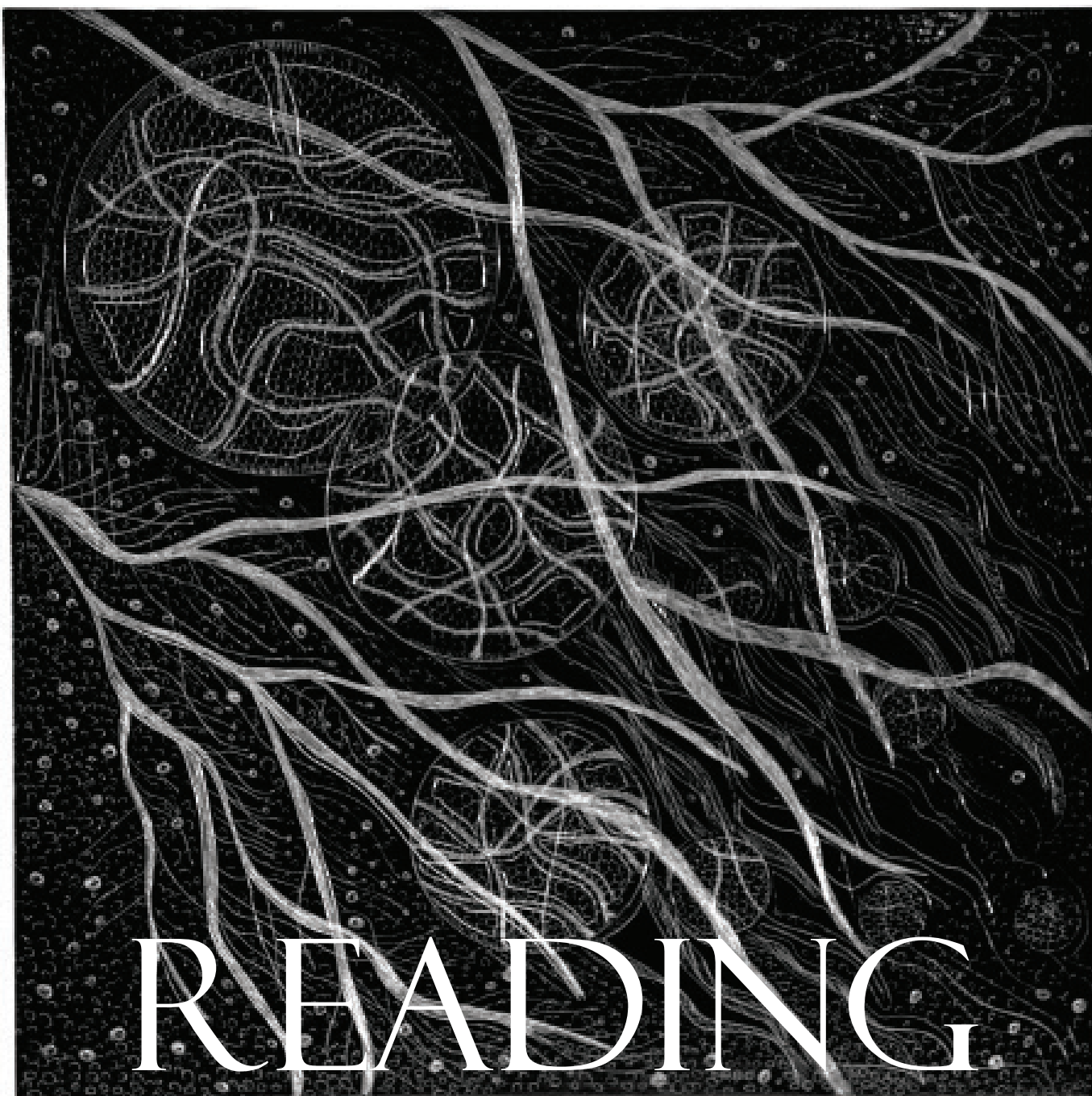
These fundamental questions cannot safely be ignored. The GC may ignore them only to find themselves marginalized in a divided church of their own making. As long as the assumed premises remain questionable, the ensuing compliance process and the final conclusions of the UOC will be equally questionable. For these reasons, the GC's effort of going after the unions must be taken seriously but not in the sense that the GC takes it seriously. I am afraid that by now it is too late to save the present GC leadership's prestige, reputation, and legacy. By now it is the reputation of the corporate Seventh-day Adventist Church that is in danger. That danger does not come from the unions that want to ordain women; it comes from GC officers willing to use coercion and split the church to prevent it.

If the UOC will not raise these questions, the unions should do so. The GC leadership must be confronted and held accountable for all their assumptions and the processes they have started based on these assumptions. Ethics is more important than policies and personal prestige.

*"Reformatio in capite et in membris"?* Yes, we need that. Especially *"in capite."* ■

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READING

THE BIBLE:

*Apocalyptic Literature*

Illustration: *Cellular Movement* by Richard W. Hawkins

# The Apocalyptic Imagination: *Challenges and Opportunities*

BY HEROLD WEISS



IMAGE SOURCE: [HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:SCHNORR\\_VON\\_CAROLSFELD\\_BIBEL\\_IN\\_BILDERN\\_1860\\_237.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Schnorr_von_Carolsfeld_Bibel_in_Bildern_1860_237.png)

**Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld**

**A**pocalyptic literature arose as a theological way of defending the righteousness of God even when human experience finds it hard to affirm this. It argues on the basis of two presuppositions: at the moment God is not in full control of the world, and our present historical existence will be eventually destroyed. God's justice will then be evident in a new creation. In other words, apocalyptic proclaims the doctrines of The Fall and of the Two Ages. Christianity has had a problematic relationship with the apocalyptic imagination. This is an attempt to explore its challenges and to show its opportunities for the Adventist tradition.

## Early History of Christian Apocalyptic

Some early Christians held highly apocalyptic views and wrote apocalyptic texts. They were influenced by their roots in a Judaism that counted several apocalyptic sects among its many manifestations. Best known among these were the disciples of John the Baptist, the Covenanters of Qumran, the Zealots, and the Pharisees. Both the Jewish and the Christian apocryphal collections contain important apocalyptic texts written in the late BCE and the early CE centuries.

When, after the destruction of the temple, Second Temple Judaism reconstructed itself as Pharisaic Rabbinic



Judaism, the so-called Council of Jamnia rejected apocalyptic texts as sources for understanding the Jewish way. The Zealot's apocalyptic visions had been a major cause for the revolt that brought about the Jewish War. When the Rabbis had to determine the canon of the Jewish Scriptures, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Esther required long debates. All three of them ended up in the canon, but not without serious arguments against them, Esther was suspect because it does not contain the word *Yahveh*; Ezekiel and Daniel because of their apocalyptic content.

When Christians found a need to present a strong front against emergent Rabbinic Judaism, they had to consider their own canon of the Scriptures. This process took place in a happenstance manner in different locations. As Christianity became institutionalized, no longer being a Movement, the church developed an institutional hierarchy and the bishops published lists of the books that could be used for doctrinal instruction within their territories. These lists included books that later did not become part of the Christian canon and left out some which did. By the time of Augustine in North Africa and Pope Damasus in Rome, most lists contained the twenty-seven books now in our New Testament, including Revelation. The canon of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, however, did not include Revelation until the fifth century.

Within Christianity, from the earliest times to modern times, the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation have not been considered of much value as sources for the Gospel, except by groups at its fringes. These books were relevant mainly to communities which were experiencing great economic hardships and political injustices. At the cosmopolitan centers, Christianity was predominantly a tool used by those with financial and political power, and there is no support for that in Revelation. Besides, the Hellenistic doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the introduction of the doctrine of purgatory in the ninth century obscured the notion of the resurrection essential to the doctrine of the Two Ages.

## Modern Scholarship: Elision and Recovery

The Enlightenment, with its new ways of understanding the natural world and of studying the human past, put Christianity on the defensive and forced it to establish its cultural credentials. On the other hand, the flowering of the Romantic Movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century gave Christianity a new way to understand the Gospel subjectively in terms of the relationship between the natural and the supernatural worlds—that is, Christianity was to be understood in loving terms as the “Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man” [sic].

The opening up of the Americas and of Asia gave Europe access to abundant natural resources. Those involved in the exploitation, transportation, and manipulation of gold, silver, slaves, sugar, chocolate, coffee, tobacco, tea, etc., now enjoyed the benefits of great wealth. The new economy, however, also created a new underclass, especially in England which was at the time the ruling power in Europe. In the context of the consequent widespread misery, apocalyptic gained new relevance in England and America.

The interpretation of Daniel and Revelation developed by William Miller in New England was not an isolated phenomenon. It was incubated in a well-established apocalyptic heat-chamber that had developed in England, had come to America, and was quite ready to welcome what Miller was offering. Miller's apocalyptic preaching plays a significant role in the history of the Adventist Church. From the perspective of life in the United States in general, however, it does not occupy a central role in its history. American Establishment Christianity carried on as if nothing had happened.

In the nineteenth century, German biblical scholars read the New Testament with the presuppositions of the Romantic Movement and saw the Gospel in terms of utopian ideas of progress characteristic of the Victorian Era. Toward the end of that century, they were shocked by the work of Johannes Weiss, who

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identified the worldview of Jesus and his followers as apocalyptic. Then Weiss' son-in-law, Albert Schweitzer, brought down the house with his doctoral dissertation. He did a study of all the "life of Jesus" books that had been published between the 1790s and the early nineteenth hundreds.<sup>1</sup> His conclusion was that these books told more about the views of these authors than about the life of Jesus. The one thing that was obvious to Schweitzer was that they had worked with rationalistic or romantic presuppositions and had missed the one thing that was indisputably at the center of Jesus' preaching: an apocalyptic world view. According to Schweitzer, since Jesus had been an apocalypticist, he was incomprehensible to rationalists and romantics of modern times. Famously, he declared that as a historical figure Jesus was "a stranger and an enigma" to anyone living in the early twentieth century. In 1892, Martin Kaeler had taken some of the sting away from the results of historical investigations of Jesus by arguing that the details of Jesus' life were not the basis of Christianity. The biblical Christ is the one that sparks and sustains Christian faith.<sup>2</sup>

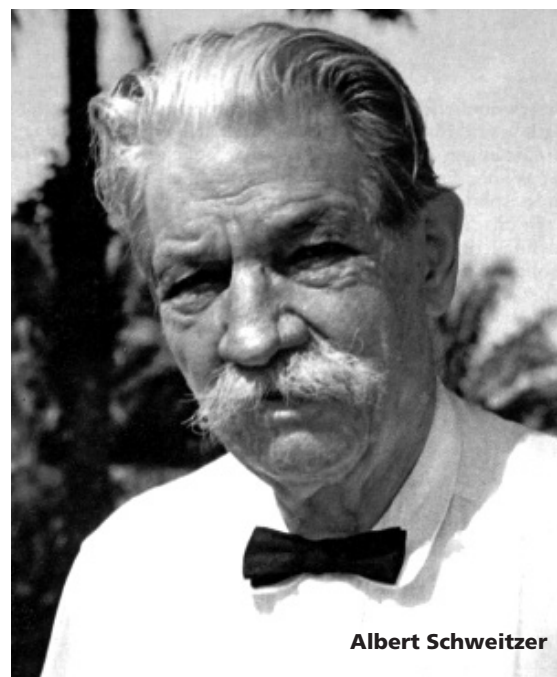
The optimism of the Victorian Era came to a radical halt with the First World War. It was the most incontrovertible demonstration of all that is wrong with the human spirit, thus questioning the Hegelian notion that humanity was on its way to reaching access to the Absolute Spirit. The use of aerial bombardment of cities and of poison gases had an unprecedented effect on civilian populations. The notion of a "just war," carefully designed by warring Christians, was shattered. The exposure of humanity's fatal flaw gave new impetus to the apocalyptic imagination within evangelical Christianity.

When, instead of being "the war to end all wars," the First World War established the causes for a Second World War, the apocalyptic imagination took over not only conservative Christianity but also popular culture. Entrepreneurs ever since have been providing ever more violent apocalyptic movies to audiences that seem never to become satiated. The apocalyp-

tic imagination that had been popular among many Jews at the time of Jesus has taken contemporary popular culture by storm.

Schweitzer's claim that Jesus had been an apocalyptic visionary could not be ignored by his scholarly colleagues. They, however, were unwilling to admit apocalyptic was the reality in which humans lived in the twentieth century. Toward the end of the previous century, scholars had already begun to study in earnest the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha of both the Old and the New Testaments.<sup>3</sup> Among these books were quite a few apocalyptic ones. These studies of the emergence and the characteristics of the apocalyptic worldview in antiquity resulted in a new appreciation for this literature, which had developed as an alternative to prophetic and sapiential visions of the world.

The Hebrew prophets were now given universal significance as the ones who had transferred the revelation of God from nature to history. In fact, they were the ones who created a new understanding of time and gave to the present significance unrelated to the cycles of nature. According to them, humans live in a timeline that extends into a future where new things are possible. By envisioning The Day of the Lord, the prophets gave a dominant role to history



**Albert Schweitzer**

IMAGE SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.BLUPELA.COM/LOTW.PHP?ID=31/DR-ALBERT-SCHWEITZER](https://www.blupela.com/lotw.php?ID=31/DR-ALBERT-SCHWEITZER)

in the human understanding of time. The Sages of Israel retained a special place for nature, understood as Creation, and conceived universal human life as a search for Wisdom to be applied in daily living in such a way as to prosper and be honored by one's neighbors. Both the prophets and the wise men understood that the Creator God of history demands obedience. They also agreed that the reward of obedience was prosperity and wealth in the land. According to the prophets, the Day of the Lord was to be a day in history.

The apocalyptic imagination sought to solve the problem created by the experience of those who, though obedient to God's will, were not being rewarded with happiness and prosperity in the land. Instead, they were exiled in Babylon. Ezekiel and Daniel were written to affirm that, despite all evidence to the contrary, God is still in control and his will to reward the righteous cannot be denied by earthly circumstances. To this end, these books explore the avenues to new beginnings and a resurrection of the dead. They find new use for the language of the ancient creation myths popular among the nature religions of antiquity. These myths told of battles between the forces of good and the forces of evil, and how the eventual triumph of the forces of good brought with it the creation of the world. In other words, the apocalyptic imagination retrieved from antiquity the ancient notion of time as circular. The cycle of time, however, is not yearly. It is cosmic. The Day of the Lord is not to take place within history, as the prophets proclaimed, but is going to end history and bring about a New Creation. This new conception of reality is present in apocalyptic additions to Isaiah, Daniel's vision of the resurrection of the just, and is fully represented in Revelation; the new earth will be a restoration of the Garden of Eden.

The problems created by the scholarly studies of apocalyptic literature were addressed directly by Rudolf Bultmann while the Second World War was raging.<sup>4</sup> He proposed that the Gospel Jesus had preached within an apocalyp-

tic framework in the first century is not inextricably bound to the apocalyptic language found in the gospels. That language is by its very nature mythological, indebted as it is to ancient creation myths. The solution to the problem identified by Schweitzer, the impossibility of believing in a Jesus who is a stranger and an enigma in our culture, is to transpose the Gospel from the mythological language in which it was originally cast into a language that is meaningful in the twentieth century, when mythologies are not considered descriptions of reality.

Bultmann's proposal was not to throw out the Gospel and its language (to throw out the baby with the bath water), but to recast the message of Jesus in contemporary language (to throw out the bath water and bathe the baby with clean water). He suggested that since God is a being in transcendent reality and mythological language is incomprehensible because it objectifies God's activity within the immanent world, the Gospel must be expressed now in a language that does not objectify God's activity. God is an absolute subject, and humans also live an "interior life" that is subjective. The Gospel, therefore, must be understood in a language that expresses what is transcendent in human subjectivity. He found that in the existentialist language developed by Heidegger, his colleague at the University of Marburg. Bultmann's proposal failed because people found Heidegger's existentialist language even more incomprehensible and distant from reality. The mythological language of apocalyptic, it has become clear, turns out to be quite understandable when it is recognized that it is not a description of reality, but metaphorical or analogical.

The first quest of the historical Jesus which had been a major project in the nineteenth century came to a halt by Schweitzer's analysis. Bultmann's shift from the life to the message of Jesus gave impetus to a second quest of the historical Jesus, no longer interested in the details of Jesus' life.<sup>5</sup> Of course, the message was found to be free of apocalypticism. However, in the 1950s, Ernst Käsemann, the most prominent of

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metaphorical  
or analogical.**

Bultmann's disciples and the initiator of the second quest, claimed that apocalypticism was "the mother of Christian theology;"<sup>6</sup> it had been the womb in which Christian theology had been gestated. His proposal was considered and soon discarded by his peers.

The effort to establish with historical accuracy the message of Jesus was judged inadequate by those who thought that the person of Jesus was also essential to the Gospel. Thus, a third quest of the historical Jesus was launched seeking to succeed by using more advanced methodologies. Jesus came out in these studies as a Galilean peasant, a Rabbi, a peripatetic prophet, a Cynic philosopher, a miracle worker with the mantle of Elijah and Elisha, etc. Some of them brought out the unquestionable fact that Jesus had to be seen within a Jewish milieu, beginning with the work of E. P. Sanders.<sup>7</sup> These studies also discounted the apocalyptic sayings in the gospels. It was Paula Fredriksen who, after a very careful explanation of the methodology to be employed, argued that Schweitzer's conclusion was correct: Jesus had been an apocalyptic visionary.<sup>8</sup> If, as the gospels agree, Jesus' ministry began in the context of the activities of John the Baptist, an apocalyptic visionary *par excellence*, and his disciples had preached an apocalyptic message after his crucifixion, how could anyone account for a non-apocalyptic Jesus?<sup>9</sup>

Coming to terms with a Jesus who proclaimed an apocalyptic Gospel has required a major effort throughout the centuries for a Christianity that, since the publication of the gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, has been searching for the way to fit within the political and economic realities of human life on earth. What scholars have been discovering is that the apocalyptic imagination is not amenable to uniformity. For some time, the Society of Biblical Literature had a section in which scholars studied apocalyptic literature trying to determine what was essential to it as a literary genre. After many years of regular sessions in which different apocalyptic books were studied, they

could not arrive at a list of criteria which a book should have in order to be considered apocalyptic. This made them realize that there was an apocalyptic mindset, but not an apocalypticism. The word could only be used as an adjective. Those who worked within that mindset did not constitute a movement.

## **Apocalyptic Reflections in the New Testament**

A brief survey of the apocalyptic texts in the New Testament reveals significant differences among them. It is agreed by all that the first Christian documents in our possession are the letters of Paul. They were written somewhere between 49–50 and 61–62 CE. Albert Schweitzer, the proponent of an apocalyptic Jesus, thought that Paul was a mystic. This gave some impetus to the notion that Paul had been the actual founder of Christianity. It was more comfortable not to have an apocalyptic founder. This popular way of understanding Paul in the first half of the twentieth century has been rejected by most New Testament scholars who see Paul's worldview to be apocalyptic. Paul's Gospel is the Gospel of the cross that put an end to the world fallen under the power of Satan by the sin of Adam, and of the resurrection of Christ as the New Creation in which those who crucify themselves with Christ live empowered and guided by the Spirit. His is an apocalyptic, not a sacrificially substitutionary, understanding of the Christ Event. His vision of the righteousness of God is fixed on life in and with Christ. He looks forward to the coming Parousia that will give believers a Spirit body, and believes he will be alive when it takes place (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Significantly, however, Paul the apocalypticist lacks any interest in cosmic speculations about battles, descriptions of landscapes, or torments and does not point to signs announcing the arrival of the Parousia, even though he is sure of its proximity (1 Corinthians 7:29).

It is also agreed that Mark is the first of the gospels to have been written, and that all the



gospels were written anonymously.<sup>10</sup> All of them give ample evidence of the use of oral traditions and collections of sayings of Jesus by their authors. They were written within and for the benefit of specific Christian communities in order to provide encouragement and guidance. Mark was written in the midst of the war Rome fought against the Jews between 66 and 73 CE. The major battle of the war brought about the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The war did not end, however, until the fall of Masada in 73 CE. Mark was written in the midst of the ups and downs of this war. It superimposes the Parousia on the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. This is quite clear when four disciples ask Jesus when the temple will be destroyed and Jesus answers by giving them a description of the coming Parousia (Mark 13:4–36). For Mark, the Parousia is going to take place tomorrow at the latest. His generation will experience it. (Mark 13:30).

Matthew had a copy of Mark available, as shown by the many passages copied word for word from it. This means that some of the imminence of the Parousia that characterizes Mark is also found in Matthew, but Matthew is quite aware that the Parousia did not take place at the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Fifteen years or more have passed, and the Lord has not returned in glory and majesty. Thus, he disassociates the Parousia from the destruction of the temple by having the twelve disciples (not just four) ask two questions, one about the destruction of the temple and one about the Parousia (Matthew 24:3). Jesus' answer has to do with the second. Matthew tells his community that there has been a delay, but their situation is not, therefore, disheartening. In Matthew's gospel the Parousia has a different role. He dramatizes the Resurrection to affirm the hope of the relatives of those who died during the delay, and highlights the Final Judgment as the significance of the Parousia. For Mark, as for Paul, the Parousia makes present an absent Lord. Matthew diminishes this role and comforts his community by having Jesus tell them that "where

two or three are gathered together there I am" (Matthew 16:17–18; 18:20). The last words of the Risen Christ are, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). This is further emphasized by the role Matthew gives to the church as an institution that is to enhance and protect the life of the believers (Matthew 16:18–20; 18:15–19). Since Jesus is already with them, the Parousia is what sets up the Final Judgment. In Matthew 13, parables of judgment are added to those found in Mark 4, and in Matthew 25, more parables of Judgment are found. Other parables, in particular the parable of the ten virgins, point out that the Lord is delaying his coming.

Luke explicitly says that he is writing after having consulted as many written accounts as he could find (Luke 1:1–4). Among the texts he used was Mark. Luke softens the apocalyptic aspects of the tradition and emphasizes the need to accommodate oneself to life in the Roman Empire. He says specifically that the kingdom would not come immediately (Luke 19:11), and that it is useless to be in expectation of the kingdom because "the kingdom is among you" (Luke 17:20–21).

To the Sadducees Jesus says, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Luke 20:25). In the second volume, written by the same author also for the benefit of Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1), the apostles are conscious of the need to live at once under the rule of God and the rule of the emperor. Both volumes picture Roman officials, be they Pontius Pilate, Felix, Festus, a centurion, or just a Roman soldier, as quite aware of the rights of Jesus, his disciples, and the apostles. Pilate declares three times that Jesus is not guilty of a crime (Luke 23:4, 14, 22), and a centurion declares him "innocent" (Luke 23:47, rather than the "Son of God" Mark 15:39, Matthew 27:54).

Luke has Jesus stay in Jerusalem teaching the disciples after the resurrection and then describes his ascension to heaven. This both establishes the delay and eliminates the anxieties caused by the delay. The way in which

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the author in both volumes describes the breaking of the bread at the Last Supper (Luke 22:30), with the disciples of Emmaus (Luke 24:30–31) and by Paul at Troas (Acts 20:7) gives to this rite the power to have the disciples experience the presence of Christ. By accommodating Christianity to life in the Roman empire, postponing the Parousia, having the Risen Christ instructing the disciples for forty days, telling of his ascension to heaven and of the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, Luke greatly softens the apocalyptic tone of his sources and directs the eyes of his readers away from the heavens and straight forward on earth.

John was not based on the sources used by the authors of the Synoptic Gospels. The few incidents found also in the synoptics seem to have come to the Johannine community as part of the early oral tradition. The clearest feature of this gospel is the complete omission of apocalyptic concerns. Not even one parable of the Kingdom, a clear apocalyptic metaphor, is found in it. The language of Jesus is totally different. The central motif is not the kingdom but eternal life, and all believers are enjoying it *now*. It was not without reason that Bultmann found in John the justification for his attempt to transpose the message of the Gospel to a non-apocalyptic key.

The Apocalypse of John of Patmos is the classic apocalyptic text within the New Testament. It is totally immersed in the apocalyptic imagination, and as such it is unique. To read it as prophecy is to ignore its modality. Its aim is not to foretell the future but to give strength and guidance in the present. The throne and the temple are the symbols that emphasize God's sovereignty, but God's wrath is what receives detailed treatment. Paul, as we have said, was an apocalyptic Christian. As such he was aware of the wrath of God. Like the Revelation (Apocalypse) of John, the epistles of Paul also are sure that all will have to appear before the judgment of God and give an account of what they have done while living in the world. According to Paul, the wrath of God is revealed when God "gives up" to their own devices those who do what is contrary to God's will (Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28).

In Paul's description of the Parousia in 1 Corinthians 15, he is silent about those who are not resurrected to be with Christ. Paul knows about the dark side of God and agrees that those who disregard God's merciful grace "deserve to die" (Romans 1:32), but he has no masochistic interest in the execution of their sentence. Revelation, by



Diego Velázquez, *Saint John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos*

contrast, seems obsessed with describing the fate of the wicked. In this text the wrath of God is not just God having to deal with wicked people. Instead of exposing the justice of God as what gives life to those who are dead, Revelation depicts a sadistic God, a vengeful enthroned King. Here we find apocalyptic with a vengeance. It gives a picture of God that is not particularly appealing to those who are attracted to the Prince of Peace. The apocalyptic worldview cannot envision the God of loving surprises. It views the passage of time to be as determined as the passage of the seasons of the year. The cosmic cycle will run its course according to the way it has been set. The apocalyptic imagination operates in a closed universe.

### The Challenge and Opportunity for Adventism

There is ample evidence that the apocalyptic imagination shows itself in many varied forms, and not all are

theologically appealing. Since it is present in many forms within the canon, it has to be read with as fertile an imagination as the one displayed by the authors who exhibit it. This presents an unavoidable challenge to the Adventist Church in the twenty-first century. Having been established in the midst of a culturally informed, apocalyptic enthusiasm, and still convinced that its mission is to bring to the forefront an apocalyptic worldview, it must exercise theological discretion in its use of the imagination.

The current trend to read apocalyptic texts in terms of historical-allegorical interpretations leaves the Church open to misguided enthusiasms, and confused in the midst of a popular imagination that finds in apocalyptic a way to escape from reality, and a membership that is quite aware of the eroding power of the delay of the Parousia. Are we tied to our Adventist past and to a restriction of "Present Truth" to its nineteenth-century exposition by our mothers and fathers? Or, are we bound to repeat the history of the early Christians, as recorded in the four gospels, journeying from an absorbing enthusiasm for an imminent Parousia to a realization that Jesus is present in the midst of us at all times, to a settling down to the realities of economic and political situations that demand practical choices, and finally to an abandoning of enthusiasm for an afterlife when this life offers all kinds of opportunities to live in faithfulness to our Creator? Our apocalyptic tradition presents an opportunity to be theologically responsible and continue to affirm with full confidence that in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, God's sovereignty and justice will prevail.

The evangelistic efforts of those who continue to preach a gospel that is hidden in the book of Revelation (which they have been privileged to "unlock" by supernatural sources) find competition in the cacophony produced by the current enthusiasm for cosmic battles in apocalyptic scenarios. They are supported by Adventists who find in those visions a way out of

dispiriting human conditions, and are attracted to charismatic leaders with extremist negative views of the world in which we live. It is sobering to realize that David Koresh was able to convince quite a few Adventists to follow him into a suicidal tragedy. It was the result of a grandiose messianic egotism, gullible apocalyptic believers, and the inability of those who were trying to prevent a tragedy to understand the mindset of extreme apocalypticists. To the agents of the FBI at Mount Carmel, David Koresh was a stranger and an enigma.

The apocalyptic imagination is flourishing these days on account of the insecurity and fear in which people live. Security has become the key word of our times. The world does not need the populist political rhetoric or the apocalyptic escape from reality that exploits the people's insecurity. What is needed is a theological construct that is able to give security and peace of mind by a prophetic characterization of the righteousness of God in line with Paul's theology, and not by an exploitation of insecurity and fear by apocalyptic chimeras that no longer supply the joy and the peace of the Gospel of Jesus. The imagination needed to read biblical apocalyptic texts is not one that exhibits theological immaturity.

In January of 2018, several television channels broadcasted documentaries marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of what happened at the Mount Carmel compound of the Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists at Waco, Texas. In his analysis of the way in which Seventh-day Adventists reacted to that tragedy, Ronald Lawson identified three responses.<sup>11</sup>

The ecclesiastical administration paid the media consultant firm of Porter/Novelli between \$75,000 and \$100,000 to distance the church from the Branch Davidians and keep the church's reputation clean for the benefit of the traditionalists.

The conservative wing of the church, consisting mainly of new converts, some pastors, and the "independent ministries" who claim that the church has been abandoning its original

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enthroned  
King.**

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tradition  
presents an  
opportunity  
to be  
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and continue  
to affirm with  
full confidence  
that in spite  
of all the  
evidence to  
the contrary,  
God's  
sovereignty  
and justice will  
prevail.**

landmarks, saw the tragedy as an opportunity to take advantage of the media's attention to proclaim the Adventist apocalyptic gospel. In their view, the tragedy was one more sign of the approaching Parousia and the expected persecutions that precede it.

The progressive wing of the church, represented by the Association of Adventist Forums and those Adventists who attend Forum events and read *Spectrum* and *Adventist Today*, identified the Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists as fellow church members who, like they, were at the margins of the mainstream, but at the other end of the spectrum. In an editorial,<sup>12</sup> then *Spectrum* editor Roy Branson wrote: "We didn't start the fire, but the tinder was ours."<sup>13</sup>

As a matter of fact, the only ones who could follow David Koresh's interpretation of the seven seals of Revelation were those who knew the Adventist interpretation of them. His efforts seeking converts were strictly aimed at Adventists, and over 90 percent of those in Mount Carmel were members in good standing of Adventist churches.

The media's recent attention to the events at Mount Carmel from February 28 to April 19, 1993, gives the church a new opportunity to reconsider its apocalyptic roots. The recycling of Revelation Seminars which claim to "unlock the secret" found in the book are fodder for another demonstration of misguided apocalyptic dreams. According to Jon Paulien, they may "become models for unstable people like Koresh."<sup>14</sup>

Paulien called for a serious and responsible reading of Revelation that would discourage interpretations without adequate support. It does not take much acumen to see that the intention of the book of Revelation is not to "lock in a secret" but to reveal what needs to be known about life in God's creation, even as it does so in a language that is not intended literally. It has been my intention in this brief survey of the apocalyptic trajectory within Christianity and our Church to call for a re-evaluation of the role of this literary genre so as to make sense of it,

not by an historically allegorical mismatch but by a theological metaphorical interpretation. This will allow apocalyptic to be a positive contributor to the living of full lives under God on this earth, rather than a predator of our fears and insecurities. The apocalyptic imagination rightly employed is quite intelligible to reasonable people; probably more so than convoluted arguments that claim to be reasonable explanations of the sovereignty and the righteousness of God. ■

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## Footnotes:

1. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1906, 2nd. ed., 1913.
2. *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*, 1892.
3. Texts written between 200 BCE and 200 CE using the name of a patriarch or an apostle which are not canonical.
4. *The New Testament and Mythology*, 1941.
5. James M. Robinson. *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1959.
6. The original essay appeared in English translation in *Perspectives on Paul*, 1971.
7. *Jesus and Judaism*, 1985.
8. *From Jesus to Christ*, 1988.
9. See, John P. Meier, "The Present State of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus: Loss and Gain," *Biblica* 80 (1999): 459-489.
10. I will refer to the gospels and their authors by the traditional names.
11. "Seventh-day Adventist Responses to Branch Davidian Notoriety," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34 (1995, 3): 323-341.
12. <https://spectrummagazine.org/article/2018/01/31/we-didnt-start-fire-tinder-was-ours>.
13. *Spectrum* 23 (May, 1993) 2, cited by Lawson.
14. "The Impact of Waco on Adventist Teaching of Revelation at the Graduate Level," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, Chicago, November 19, 1993, cited by Lawson.



# The Wars Waco Revealed: *Reflecting on Waco Twenty-Five Years Later* | BY KENDRA HALOVIK VALENTINE



The Fire at Mount Carmel, April 19, 1993 (Photo: Time & Life Pictures)

IMAGE SOURCE: TIME & LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGE, [HTTPS://WWW.CHRON.COM/NEWS/HOUSTON-TEXAS/ARTICLE/LOOKING-BACK-AT-THE-BRANCH-DAVIDIAN-SIEGE-24-11080656.PHP](https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/looking-back-at-the-branch-davidian-siege-24-11080656.php)

This past quarter I taught a new class for graduating religious-studies students planning to serve as pastors within the Seventh-day Adventist church.<sup>1</sup> It was an upper-division, biblical-studies, “topics” seminar that started with the Jewish apocalyptic roots of the book of Revelation. We then considered the various ways people read the book of Revelation, with a focus on the importance of the book for our church since the beginning of the Advent movement. The course concluded by considering the ethical ramifications of our interpretations of this final book of Scripture, and the potential of its moral-vision language for shaping the behavior of contemporary believers. One

of our two-hour sessions was devoted to the tragedy at Waco. I would learn in our discussion that only one of my students was alive at the time, and he was a one-year-old. It made me feel old. These graduating seniors were exploring for the first time an event that had significantly shaped the early years of my own ministry, as well as my graduate studies and scholarship as a New Testament professor teaching in an Adventist university. Has it really been twenty-five years? Given all that has taken place since, how do we now reflect on the tragedy?

What have we learned? Has anything changed?

This article reconsiders the Waco event from the perspective of a quarter century. After a brief description

**The vast majority of those who perished in the flames had been at one time members of the Seventh-day Adventist church and at the time they died, many of them still thought of themselves as Adventists.**

of the tragedy and *Spectrum's* initial coverage, I will review recent scholarly studies and media treatment of the event. In particular, I will consider the wars between different worlds that continue twenty-five years after Waco: specifically the war between pro-government and anti-government groups, and the war between literalistic and literary ways of reading the Bible.<sup>3</sup> The vast majority of those who perished in the flames had been at one time members of the Seventh-day Adventist church and at the time they died, many of them still thought of themselves as Adventists.<sup>3</sup> Would Adventism today respond differently to a raid and siege of a group of Branch Davidians in some remote location in America?

### **The Tragedy**

During the spring of 1993, as I was gathering the necessary materials for applying to graduate schools, the Waco tragedy was still very fresh in my mind and it sharpened a growing interest in doing interdisciplinary work in New Testament studies and ethics. On April 19, 1993, after the flames engulfing the Mount Carmel Center ceased, seventy-six people, including twenty-three children, were dead. Along with hundreds of thousands of television viewers, I watched the inferno as I had watched the preceding standoff between government agents and those inside the Center. The disturbing images were heart breaking. After fifty-one days the conflict was over.<sup>4</sup> But was there any “victory”? The cost had been huge.

The next month, an issue of *Spectrum* contained a large special section devoted to “Ranch Apocalypse.” In his editorial introducing the special section—“We Didn’t Start the Fire But the Tinder Was Ours”—Roy Branson included a note about the launch of a new popular independent journal called *Adventist Today*, whose very first issue was devoted to Waco.<sup>5</sup> In preparation for our class discussion, my students read the *Spectrum* articles and wrote at least one question they wished they could ask the author(s) of each article. They also received copies of the

first issue of *Adventist Today*. Their questions and the class discussion provided new insights and perspectives on this tragedy. For example, some students who read these pieces in the context of the recent #MeToo and Time’s Up movements, wondered why Adventists did not act years earlier when David Koresh (then Vernon Howell) first exhibited his unhealthy attraction to young girls? One said, “forget [arguing about] disfel-lowshipping him; he should have been jailed.”

How do we think differently about Waco in 2018? In the mid-1990s I wrote that “After 51 days the war between two very different worlds was over.” It seemed true. The government agents and law-enforcement officers were still standing; Mount Carmel and its occupants were ashes. But in another sense, the war between the two very different worlds was anything but over. The smoldering ashes of Waco would continue to flare at times into yet more intensified wars and on various fronts.

### **The War Between Pro-Government and Anti-Government Groups**

Public interest in the tragedy remains high—particularly at this quarter-century waymark. Although at the time of the siege and immediately after the fire, most media depictions of David Koresh and the Branch Davidians were harshly critical, recent portrayals have been more sympathetic. And there have been numerous media attempts at review. For example, during this twenty-fifth anniversary, a made-for-television, six-week series called “Waco” has aired on Paramount Network (beginning January 24, 2018 and concluding on February 28, 2018, the exact date of the raid on the Waco compound).<sup>6</sup> Accompanying the series has been an online companion documentary series “Revelations of Waco” (9–13 minutes each) featuring people who left during the siege or who survived the fire. Especially interesting for Adventist viewers are comments by Clive Doyle (a former Adventist from Australia) and Sheila Martin (whose husband, Wayne Martin, was also a former Adventist). In addition, the



executive producers and writers John Erick Dowdle and Drew Dowdle participate in a “Behind the Story” feature for episodes 2–6. These are 3–5 minutes in length.

I was surprised when the first episode of the Paramount “Waco” series began with footage far from the flat, arid wasteland of Waco, Texas. Instead, viewers were taken into the woods outside of Naples, Idaho and were shown footage of the eleven-day siege at Ruby Ridge (August 21–31, 1992).<sup>7</sup> While I had not made any connection between Ruby Ridge and Waco back in 1993, others certainly have over the years. I would learn that not only were the same government agencies involved in both standoffs (FBI and ATF), but even some of the same personnel from those agencies. Viewers made connections even as the movie shifted its focus to residents of Mount Carmel as they, too, watched the events at Ruby Ridge. It was a clever way for the cinematographer to cause viewers to identify with the Branch Davidians. We, like them, were all seeing Ruby Ridge unfold before us. Randy and Vicki Weaver had just wanted to be left alone in their remote cabin in northern Idaho. But now, at the hands of US Marshalls and the FBI, Vicki was dead, and so was their fourteen-year-old son, Sammy. As viewers get to

know the people at Mount Carmel, we cannot help but wonder: which of *these* mothers and children will die?

Each episode of the “Waco” TV series continued to nurture audience sympathy for the misunderstood members of the Mount Carmel Center as an undercover agent finds a community of people who love their children and believe in supporting each other. The nurture continues as the ATF is portrayed botching a search warrant that some argue was illegal and the search morphs into an all-out raid. FBI negotiators are shown arriving on scene after the raid to find their conversation partners within the community (primarily Koresh, Steve Schneider, and Wayne Martin) reasonable people just wanting to be left alone (and now to bury their dead). The allegations of abuse of the small children in Waco are not only minimized, they are challenged by the series. FBI negotiators will state that the children released in the first part of the standoff are healthy, normal, well-adjusted children.<sup>8</sup> Also in the series, the sexual abuse of underage girls by David Koresh is acknowledged but given a neutral spin. Sisters Rachel and Michele Jones, both of whom bore Koresh children, are conflicted, but conclude that he is always loving. This is an extremely disturbing part of the series, especially given

**Left: 1987 mugshot of David Koresh  
Right: Taylor Kitsch plays David  
Koresh in this year's *Waco* TV series  
(Paramount Network)**

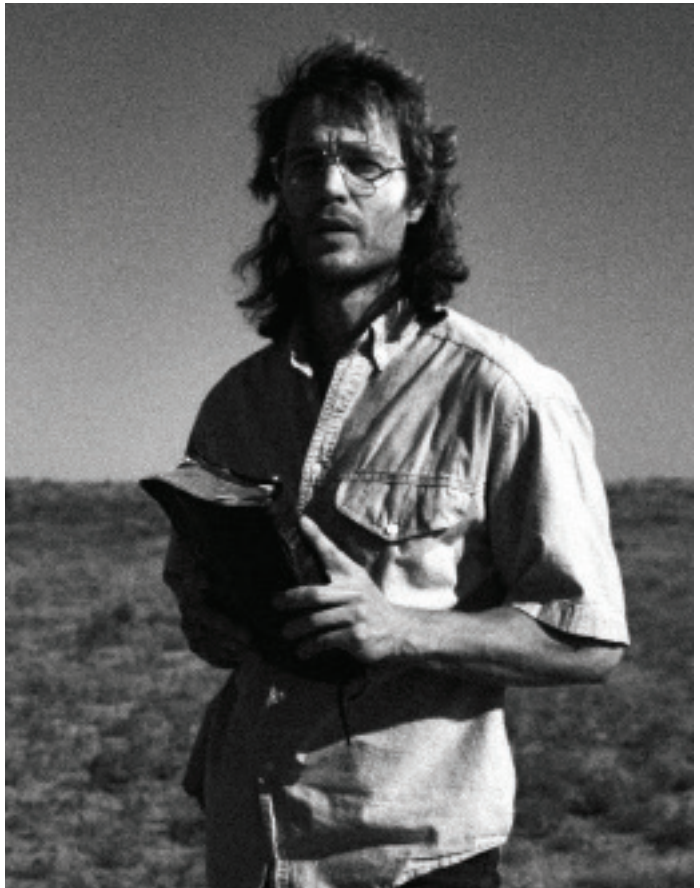


IMAGE SOURCE: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Koresh#/media/File:David\\_Koresh.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Koresh#/media/File:David_Koresh.jpg), PARAMOUNT NETWORK

the actual testimony of women who left Mount Carmel prior to the standoff who had been sexually abused by Koresh.<sup>9</sup>

Earlier films on Waco described as documentaries include “Waco: The Rules of Engagement” (1997) and “Waco: A New Revelation” (1999). These films, both supported by Second Amendment activist Michael McNulty, set the stage for the 2018 TV series’ sympathetic portrayal.<sup>10</sup> Both of the earlier documentaries suggest that the way the Branch Davidians were demonized in the media was neither accurate nor fair. The point they try to make is that the “unbalanced zealots” were not the Branch Davidians inside the compound, but the vengeful government law enforcement agents outside who were eager to end an embarrassingly botched raid that had left four of their friends dead and sixteen wounded.<sup>11</sup> The documentaries suggest that the American people have not been told the whole truth. Questions asked by the documentaries include: Who fired first on February 28? Who set the fire on April 19? Were the child abuse allegations exaggerated in order to get support from the Justice Department for the aggressive actions on April 19? To what degree was the White House involved? To what degree was there a cover-up? Supporting materials drawn from congressional commissions and investigations provide evidence of some poor judgments by the ATF, the FBI HRT (Hostage Rescue Team) and leadership in Washington, DC. The documentary filmmakers suggest that the government is at least partially responsible for the “murder” of the eighty-two people at the Mount Carmel Center who died in 1993.<sup>12</sup>

Those on the anti-government side agree. They take Waco (and Ruby Ridge) as a call to resist the United States government. For them, the Waco community might have embraced an incomprehensible theology, but nevertheless, it was a community of ordinary freedom-loving American citizens. They had been bullied by the government and then murdered for responding to an unprovoked deadly attack on their own property. The attack spawned a range of responses with varying levels of resistance. For some, Waco was the “catalyst” for complex conspiracy theories, and some of the theorists would go on to use Waco to launch their own media careers.<sup>13</sup> “For people who are on the hard far anti-government right, Waco is the parable—the government is out to get you.”<sup>14</sup> Another kind of extreme response that flared out of the smoldering ashes of Waco resulted in further carnage. This was the decision by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols to seek revenge against the government by detonating a bomb at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on the second anniversary of the Waco fire. On that April 19 day, 168 people (including fifteen children) died. Over 680 people were injured.

Those on the pro-government side of the assessment of the Waco tragedy note that the special council led by Senator John Danforth cleared the government and its law enforcement agents of any wrongdoing (even while identifying poor judgment at times).<sup>15</sup> The council’s fourteen-month investigation included fifty-six lawyers and investigators, and the report cleared Attorney General Janet Reno of any wrongdoing. In addition, the report concluded that no government agents had shot into the



**Left: ATF press conference (Photo: Rod Aydelotte, Waco Tribune-Herald)  
Right: ATF agents escort wounded officer Bill Buford from scene of shooting (Waco Tribune-Herald)**



IMAGE SOURCE: WACO TRIBUNE-HERALD. [HTTP://WWW.WACOTRIB.COM/NEWS/BRANCH\\_DAVIDIANS/YEARS-LATER-WACO-AIMS-PAST-NOTORIETY-THAT-FOLLOWED-BRANCH-DAVIDIAN/ARTICLE\\_552EA15B-B42D-53E2-902F-2E9507AE3B07.HTML](http://www.wacotrib.com/news/branch_davidians/years-later-waco-aims-past-notoriety-that-followed-branch-davidian/article_552ea15b-b42d-53e2-902f-2e9507ae3b07.html)



building on April 19, nor had they started the fire. David Koresh was deemed to be totally responsible for the fire and the deaths of the seventy-six people at Mount Carmel. That said, the report also noted that had the government been willing to wait for a longer period of time, perhaps the conclusion to the standoff would not have been so deadly.

Twenty-five years after the tragedy, and more than a decade after the commissions and investigations were wrapped up, there remain two warring sides: those who believe that a cover-up had occurred at the highest levels, and those who appreciated the efforts—however flawed—of government law enforcement who had been faced with an unprecedented situation. ABC journalist Terry Moran puts it succinctly: “For some Americans this was a legitimate law enforcement operation...and for others this was an overreaching and violent federal government.”<sup>16</sup>

Gary Noesner in his memoir *Stalling for Time*, published in 2010, suggests a helpful middle path as a way forward.<sup>17</sup> One of the earliest FBI negotiators at Waco, Noesner helps us better see the clash of perspectives and assumptions on both sides. Noesner describes Koresh’s fixation on control and power, even as he admits that his own side made mistakes, too. Noesner cautioned his colleagues during the siege that the FBI HRT’s military-type actions contradicted the words and work of the FBI’s negotiators (at times they were working at cross-purposes). For example, the perception of tanks moving onto the Mount Carmel property only reinforced predictions by Koresh that his community would soon be in conflict with evil forces. These were the very ideas FBI negotiators were trying to challenge by gaining the confidence of people inside like Steve Schneider. While deeply critical of some of the tactics of the FBI’s HRT, Noesner lets his readers know that Waco resulted in new policies and approaches to confrontations with groups like Waco, with much more positive results.<sup>18</sup> In “Revelations of Waco,” one of the short online companion

pieces to the six-part TV series, Noesner suggests that the only correct way to look back at Waco is to see it as an American tragedy: a very complex situation where both good and bad decisions were made on both sides.<sup>19</sup>

The FBI changed some of their policies and procedures after Waco. Have any Adventist policies changed? Are Adventists more prepared now in our PR departments for moments of crisis management?<sup>20</sup> In the 1980s, the Australian denominational response to intense media interest during the Michael and Lindy Chamberlain episode<sup>21</sup> was not to dissociate from the Chamberlains. Clearly the “regular standing” of the people involved was quite different. But were American Adventists too ready to draw clear lines between themselves and the people in Mount Carmel? Was there an almost collective “holding of the breath” in the hopes that the connections between “them” and “us” would not be made?

### **The War Between Approaches to Reading Scripture**

Following the tragedy in Waco, several Seventh-day Adventist colleges invited me to their campuses to talk with students about “Rescuing Revelation from Waco.” Typically, the campus organized a Friday evening or Sabbath afternoon event, and I met with sometimes dozens, sometimes hundreds of students who had questions about what had happened and why so many young, former Adventists (including college-age students) were among the dead. As we talked candidly together, we considered ways of reading the book of Revelation that would lead to life-affirming interpretations, rather than the deadly kind. I remember spending a lot of time with them in reflecting on the first phrase of the book of Revelation: “The revelation of Jesus Christ.” How should that first phrase of the book chart the continuing reading journey?

In 1993, it proved easy as mainstream Adventists to separate ourselves from Waco when it came to Koresh’s ethics—we were all appalled by the allegations of child abuse and sexual

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**Why would any Adventist be drawn to a group whose theology centered on a mission to call Adventism to repent and to warn its leaders with threats of physical destruction?**

immorality. Even the buildup of firearms felt foreign to campuses of Adventist students.<sup>22</sup> But how were people their own age so vulnerable to Koresh's teachings? As they had learned that Koresh recruited followers from Adventist campuses, they expressed concerns: were they somehow vulnerable, too? Should they just ignore the final book of the Christian canon? Is the book of Revelation just too dangerous to study?<sup>23</sup>

While it would be fascinating to ask those same students now—twenty-five years later—how they have reconciled Waco with their reading of the book of Revelation, I was able to ask my current students what their questions and concerns were as we discussed the twelve *Spectrum* articles. I will briefly discuss their reactions to three of the pieces. First, Joel Sandefur wrote "Apocalypse at Diamond Head" after interviewing Pastor Charles Liu on April 8, 1993, just eleven days before the fire.<sup>24</sup> The subtitle to his article was "Pastor Charles Liu remembers 14 members leaving his Diamond Head Seventh-day Adventist church in Hawaii." Koresh's preaching and Bible studies in Hawaii in 1986–87 convinced these church members to follow him back to Texas. They left everything—businesses, careers and sometimes even family members—to join Koresh in Waco, Texas. Among the group was a church deacon and Sabbath School leader, Steve Schneider, and his wife who would later become one of Koresh's wives and give birth to his daughter. All three in the Schneider family would die in the fire.

As my students read this interview, they wondered about the Bible studies Koresh gave to Pastor Liu's church members. Why didn't people have the resources to challenge Koresh's theology? (They did not like the idea that there was nothing much one could do in the situation other than forbid them from using the church facility.) Why would people go along with a teacher/preacher who never allowed them to ask questions or have dialogue? They found it difficult to imagine even a very charismatic per-

son having that kind of complete social control today. They were interested in Liu's mentioning that most who went with Koresh were recent converts to Adventism. Was this because they had been more recently exposed to the high drama of end-time events comprising evangelistic meetings? Did they perhaps share a similar social class? And what about Koresh's Ezekiel 9 interpretation? Why would any Adventist be drawn to a group whose theology centered on a mission to call Adventism to repent and to warn its leaders with threats of physical destruction?<sup>25</sup>

When my students learned that their beloved professor, Charles Teel, had contributed one of the pieces in the *Spectrum* issue, they were eager to read his reflections from 1993 in his article, "Kissing Cousins or Kindred Spirits?"<sup>26</sup> They wondered, along with Teel, how a person moves to such a theological place as Waco? Is it, as Teel suggests, when one interprets the book of Revelation—a favorite of Teel's—with a "wooden literalism"? Was it Koresh's approach to interpreting prophetic and apocalyptic literature—an extension of what they saw their evangelists do—that resonated with these Adventists? And, in that sense, were they much closer to us than "kissing cousins"?<sup>27</sup>

The students seemed to readily identify with Norman Martin, MD, the church member I had interviewed in 1993, whose brother, Wayne Martin (a Harvard-educated lawyer), died in the fire along with three of Norman's teenage nieces and a twenty-year-old nephew (Wayne's four oldest children).<sup>28</sup> Students wondered why Wayne and his family were drawn to life in the compound. What did such an educated person find so appealing about Koresh's message? And, most importantly, how did his brother cope emotionally with the tragic loss? Their interest, along with my own curiosity, led me to correspond with Norman, asking if he would be willing to follow-up on our earlier conversation of over two decades ago. I was delighted and grateful that he agreed.

To my inquiry about how he had coped with his loss and how things had changed for him

over the last twenty-five years, Norman replied that as a retired army colonel and a former track athlete, he had “never shed a tear in public before the Waco tragedy.” It was different for him now. Now it was easy to tear-up in certain situations. During certain hymns he finds himself having to stop singing. He also noted that, although twenty-five years ago he blamed his sister-in-law, Sheila, for introducing his brother to Vernon Howell, he now understands that Wayne actually made his own decisions. “This realization was hard for me to digest,” he noted, but his attitude to Sheila had “softened because of this understanding.” Norman still experiences the deep hurt and anger at the loss but has learned to manage these. He finds that during family visits he needs to tactfully steer around discussions of the 144,000 that still consume his sister-in-law.<sup>29</sup>

As one who remains actively involved in his local Seventh-day Adventist church, Norman Martin’s assessment of the official church’s response to Waco in 1993 is worth noting: “Our world church headquarters reacted with deliberate speed to tell the world that there were no SDA church members [among] the Branch Davidians.” While this might technically have been an “accurate statement” he wondered if “a short second or third sentence would have helped many Adventist families to weather the storm.” He noted that the Branch Davidians had “actively recruited” church members for many years. Acknowledging this “would have helped me to feel that many understood, many were caring, and many knew this full and correct history.” Norman Martin’s insights reiterate the point that Charles Teel made; the people who died in Waco were our brothers and sisters, even if they often did not sound exactly like us.

My students’ questions in 2018 reminded me of similar questions I had considered in my doctoral studies in the late 1990s. In 2002, my dissertation suggested that although Adventists did not recognize Koresh’s ethics, they would recognize something in his approach to biblical

interpretation. My thoughts about his hermeneutics have been confirmed during the past twenty-five years by others who have studied what Koresh actually taught at Mount Carmel and of how he recruited Adventists from churches and colleges. But the new (and surprising) idea for me was that his strange ethical behavior could be perceived by his followers as being consistent with his way of reading the Bible.

From the beginning of the siege, David Koresh used apocalyptic language. He proclaimed that he believed the fifth seal of Revelation 6:9–11, with its forecast of coming martyrdom, had begun.<sup>30</sup> It was a simple, plain-reading interpretation. While in the news media at the time we were embarrassed and could not recognize ourselves, in the literature that has been written since then by both scholars and by survivors of the fire, we find that there are numerous other distinctive commonalities. The people living in Mount Carmel were careful in the strict observance of Adventist dietary patterns. They believed in the significance of William Miller’s preaching and the prophetic year of 1844. They kept the seventh-day Sabbath, read the works of Ellen G. White, accepting her as inspired, and believed that God still works through prophetic gifts. They believed that the final judgment was coming on “Babylon” (the United States), and that we are all living in the “last days.” When it came to interpreting the Bible, they believed that one should only read the King James Version and should do so with a plain-reading (literal) approach. This approach gave the members of Mount Carmel, like it gave Adventists, an “exclusive truth” as “God’s true people.”<sup>31</sup> As religious studies professors James Tabor and Eugene Gallagher point out, “Only through an understanding of Adventist history can one ever hope to accurately comprehend Koresh within a meaningful context.”<sup>32</sup>

Kenneth G. C. Newport, former Adventist and currently an Anglican priest and professor of religion at Liverpool Hope University in England, has written several books on the Branch

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Davidians,<sup>33</sup> in which he shows a theological thread going from William Miller to the Seventh-day Adventists to the break-off group Shepherd's Rod to the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists to the Branch Davidians. The thread is "the historicist, premillennial, anti-Catholic reading of Daniel and Revelation." It is the method or approach, suggests Newport, rather than particular content.<sup>34</sup> He admits that much of Koresh's message might be strange to Adventist ears, but while "the content was novel, the method well-worn."<sup>35</sup> The observations of these scholars are supported by the publicly acknowledged self-understanding of the Waco group.

The memorial at Waco listing the names of the eighty-two people who died from February 28, 1993 to April 19, 1993 also features the names of the "Seven Shepherds of the Advent Movements." The Seven Shepherds are listed as: "Ellen G. White: Founder of Seventh-day Adventist Movement";<sup>36</sup> "Alonzo T. Jones: Leader of 1888 Message Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Movement"; Ellet J. Waggoner: Leader of 1888 Message Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Movement"; "Victor T. Houteff: Founder of the Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Movement"; "Benjamin L. Roden: Founder of Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Movement"; "Lois E. Roden: Leader of Living Waters Branch – A Division of the Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Movement"; and "Vernon Wayne Howell: Founder of the Davidian Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Movement." (See Fig 1.)

The lineage connection to Seventh-day Adventists is

quite clear. But what about Koresh taking girls barely into their teen years as his "wives"? That's not Adventist! Even the hint of a connection upsets us. Recent memoirs of survivors of the siege and fire give a perspective that, while disturbing, helps us at least to understand the connections they made for themselves—a justification based on a literalistic reading of Scripture so familiar to many Adventists.

Koresh's mother, Bonnie Haldeman, while uncomfortable in discussing the matter in depth, refers to how in the Bible great men of God took multiple wives, and that some were very young.<sup>37</sup> Clive Doyle's memoir includes a lengthy discussion of "Branch Davidian Theology," something that Doyle embraced from the age of fifteen when he and his mother were disfellowshipped from their local Adventist church.<sup>38</sup> Doyle joined the Mount Carmel community when Ben Roden was its leader, and then saw Vernon Howell as the successor to Roden's wife, Lois. Doyle came to the conviction that David Koresh was a manifestation of God, whose uniqueness was proven by his ability to explain the seals of the book of Revelation.<sup>39</sup> Treating the book of Revelation as a detailed chronological timeline of history and the last days, is an extension of the usual Adventist approach. Using this logic, the "Lamb" in Revelation could not be Jesus Christ, in Clive Doyle's reading, for Christ was already with the Father on the Father's throne. The "Lamb" must therefore be a current manifestation of God. He is the one seated as the rider on the four horses (Revelation 6:2–8), he is the seventh angel of Revelation 10 who understands mysteries and is able



The Waco Memorial (Photo: Nick De La Torre, Houston Chronicle)



to open the scroll. He alone can explain it to those who are interested in knowing. The Lamb comes *after* Jesus Christ, and the Lamb is the one who gets married (Revelation 19, 21). The Lamb's children are the twenty-four elders who are born for judgment. This theology, based on a plain literalistic reading, though sounding very stretched, was the basis of the sexual ethics at Mount Carmel. In 1986, Koresh began convincing his community that he should take multiple wives in order to produce children.<sup>40</sup> By 1989, he was convincing his community that no one else should be having sexual relations with their spouses since they were to be living celibately in these last days, based on a literal reading of Revelation 14:4.

While the vast majority of Adventists would challenge and totally reject Koresh's behavior in taking multiple wives and his goal of producing twenty-four children, some would find themselves embracing the same (if less consistent) literalistic approach to reading biblical passages, including the prophetic and apocalyptic parts of Scripture.<sup>41</sup> Such an approach reads a passage like Ezekiel 9 and assumes that God will soon be violently cleansing the church, starting with the elders. Such an approach reads Nahum 2 and, when seeing the ATF coming up the road as "Babylon," calls those inside the home to "guard the ramparts," "watch the road," "gird your loins," "collect all your strength" (Nahum 2:1). Such readers are told to expect a lot of bloodshed (2:3) as chariots (tanks) race madly through the streets (2:4). They will "hasten to the wall" (2:5) and the palace will tremble (2:6). Such an approach, on this occasion, believed that the teacher/leader who saw all this coming in advance and who was claiming to open the seven seals of God's final revelation must be the Lamb of God. Who else had explained Scripture so clearly to them and done so thorough a "plain reading"?<sup>42</sup>

Waco may have helped Seventh-day Adventists recognize the importance of reading Scripture literarily rather than literally, by considering a text's historical and literary contexts.

Whether a work was written after the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar or after the fall of Jerusalem to Rome makes a difference; and whether the passage is prose or poetry, narrative or song helps to shape understanding. To what degree have pastors and teachers modified their Revelation seminars since Waco? Do they now seek to ensure an understanding of the ethos of the book and its spiritual message and principles rather than as a guide to a highly detailed order of last day events? When pastors preach on the book of Revelation, they need to ask what is their goal for their parishioners? Is it to help people get the spiritual heart of the book, more than end-time scenarios? How to be faithful in their daily lives? How is the book of Revelation a "revelation of Jesus Christ?" What principalities and powers seek to destroy human life today? Rather than focusing on Sunday laws, should the goal be to help church members identify contemporary coercive beast-like powers that exhibit a preference for deception over truth?

In his *Spectrum* article in May 1993, Ernest Burse asked:

What can we salvage from Waco? The answers reveal yet another standoff—this time within Adventism—a standoff between those who see current events confirming Adventist interpretation of Revelation and those who see events like the Waco holocaust as confirming suspicion over the whole apocalyptic enterprise that has defined Adventism. In simple terms, we're in the midst of a standoff between those who attend Revelation seminars and those who boycott them.

The war between ways of reading Scripture continues twenty-five years after watching on our TVs that some readings are deadly. In the past few weeks, one Seventh-day Adventist pastor told me, reflecting on his preaching of the book of Revelation after the tragedy, "when

**Waco may have helped Seventh-day Adventists recognize the importance of reading Scripture literarily rather than literally, by considering a text's historical and literary contexts.**

Waco occurred I used it as yet another example (an extreme one) of the kind of interpretation I had warned about.”

Twenty-five years later are Adventists more literalistic or literary in reading and interpreting Scripture? Do Adventists talk about these differences with those who embrace a variety of views? Even after the Adventist Church’s emphasis on *salvation by grace* through faith in the 1980s and 1990s, does Adventist preaching on the book of Revelation continue to suggest “*end times*” by fear?

### “Do not be afraid” (Revelation 1:17)

In the twenty-five years since the tragedy, several memoirs have been written by survivors of the raid and the fire. These tend to emphasize the importance of the sense of community that was Mount Carmel: a place where people from various walks of life came for comfort, reassurance and meaning.<sup>44</sup> It becomes clear that part of what attracted people to this desolate part of Texas was a sense of family, even though the family might have been permeated by fear.<sup>45</sup> Willing to undergo life without the latest accessories and appliances, the people who came had a real sense of curiosity and commitment to Bible study. They shared food, cramped space, and hard work around the grounds and in the towns nearby. They watched each other’s kids and hoped to keep their children from the superficiality of much of American society.

That people with particular needs sought community is not unusual. But I wonder if the poison in the well from which Branch Davidian community drew its life was their understanding of Ezekiel 9—that theme of violence. Like break-away Adventists before them, the members of Mount Carmel embraced the idea of a separation of the true believers from those who had compromised with the world. When faced with a challenge, they reverted to actions that heightened the separation of people; theirs became a call to cleanse—to violent resistance. “You know, we’re getting an army for God together,” Koresh lectured his followers.<sup>46</sup> When the “world” arrived at their doorstep what else could they do but resist?<sup>47</sup> And at least some resorted to violence. When one begins to store up guns, is it inevitable that they will be used? It was a deadly mixture—literalistic readings of Scripture, aggressive law enforcement agents, and a special people called to “cleanse” the temple and to resist Babylon with the modern “swords” of America—automatic weapons.

Joann Vaega was a little girl at Mount Carmel at the time of the raid and siege. She would be one of the twenty-one children who came out during the siege, although her parents would die in the fire. She remembers her childhood in Mount Carmel as being “raised with fear – everywhere is fear.”<sup>48</sup> Bruce Perry, child psychiatrist who worked with the children who were released during the siege, documented how the children expressed their fear of so many aspects of life. Most of the children were between four and eleven years of age and they quickly made it clear that they had been told that those outside Mount Carmel were dangerous to their well-being and to their parents and friends still inside their home. “When I first met the children,” writes Perry, “they were sitting and eating lunch. As I walked into the room one of the younger children looked up and calmly asked, ‘Are you here to kill us?’ These children did not feel as though they had just been liberated. Instead, because of what they’d been taught about outsiders and because of the violence they’d survived, they felt like hostages.”<sup>49</sup>

Fear seemed to be such a dominant part of the Waco story—nurtured both inside the community, and among the law enforcement agencies outside the perimeter around Mount Carmel. Each group fearful of what the other group would do. If nothing else, the Waco story illustrates how people do horrible things to each other when we are afraid.<sup>50</sup>

But the book of Revelation calls its readers away from fear. Within its very first chapter, the book describes the One like the Son of Man touching a terrified John and saying, “do not be afraid” (1:17). Any version of Adventism that creates fear rather than joy at a God who embraces us, has the mark of Waco Adventism. ■

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### Footnotes:

1. I am grateful to the students who participated in this Winter Quarter course (January - March, 2018) and for their helpful insights. They are all completing degrees in the H. M. S. Richards Divinity School at La Sierra University (Riverside, California).

2. Research for this article led me to a study by Patricia Bernstein on an earlier tragedy, *The First Waco Horror: The Lynching of Jesse Washington and the Rise of the NAACP* (Texas A & M University Press, 2005). I include it here because of similar themes raised about issues of law enforcement

in an American town, the role of the media, and the ways religious groups defend behavior through particular approaches to their sacred texts.

3. Ronald Lawson, "Seventh-day Adventist Responses to Branch Davidian Notoriety: Patterns of Diversity within a Sect Reducing Tension with Society," in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34:3 (September 1995): 323–341. Lawson believes that the majority of those at Waco maintained their membership at local Seventh-day Adventist Churches (324).

4. This paragraph draws from my published dissertation *Worlds at War, Nations in Song: Dialogic Imagination and Moral Vision in the Hymns of the Book of Revelation* (Wipf & Stock, 2015): 1. In it, I contrast David Koresh's approach to reading apocalyptic literature with approaches that open rather than close down readings and interpretations.

5. The note says: "Although *Adventist Today* has no institutional, financial, or editorial relationship with *Spectrum* or the Association of Adventist Forums, we note with interest the arrival of this bi-monthly periodical of news and opinion. Its first issue is also devoted to Waco. Readers who wish to learn more about *Adventist Today* may look at the advertisement on the mailing wrap." *Spectrum* 23:1 (May, 1993): 2.

6. This six-part series starred Taylor Kitsch (David Koresh), Michael Shannon (Gary Noesner, FBI hostage negotiator), John Leguizamo (Robert Rodriguez, undercover agent), Rory Culkin (David Thibodeau, survivor), Melissa Benoist (Rachel Jones Howell, legal wife of Koresh), Paul Sparks (Steve Schneider), Andrea Riseborough (Judy Schneider), and Demore Barnes (Wayne Martin). It draws, in part, on the book by David Thibodeau: *Waco: A Survivor's Story*, David Thibodeau, Leon Whiteson and Aviva Layton (Hachette Books, 2018; originally published as *A Place Called Waco*, Public Affairs Publishers, 1999).

7. On August 21, 1992, after Randy Weaver failed to appear in court on firearms charges, FBI and US Marshalls confronted Weaver at his home. There followed an exchange of gunfire and an eleven-day siege.

8. This is in contrast to former Davidian Dana Okimoto, who tells that she was told to spank her baby (she had two sons with Koresh) for up to forty-five minutes at a time; actions she deeply regrets. See ABC News Special "Truth & Lies: Waco," which aired January 4, 2018. Bruce Perry, a psychiatrist who examined the children released during the siege would say that these "children lived in a world of fear" (59). See Chapter 3, "Stairway to Heaven," in Perry's work *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog and Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook: What Traumatized Children Can Teach Us About Loss, Love, and Healing*, 3rd ed. (Basic Books, 2017.). Even Bonnie Haldeman, Koresh's mother, who lived with the Branch Davidians from 1985–1991, tells how her oldest grandchild, Cyrus, told her that he wouldn't be allowed to see his grandma if she didn't spank him. So she did so, and he returned to his dad, thrilled that he could now report a spanking by grandma and therefore spend time with her. See *Memories of the Branch Davidians: The Autobiography of David Koresh's Mother*, edited by Catherine Wessinger (Baylor University Press, 2007), 97. Haldeman

also states: "Those kids all loved David" (99).

9. See Kenneth Samples, et al., *Prophets of the Apocalypse: David Koresh & Other American Messiahs* (Baker Books, 1994), including Appendix B – "Our Lives Were Forever Changed: Interviews with those who personally knew David Koresh" (173–216). See also the account by Kiri Jewell in the ABC News Special: "Truth & Lies: Waco."

10. William Gazecki directed the 1997 documentary film with writing and financial backing from McNulty. Jason Van Vleet directed the 1999 film with credit for the screenplay given to Gazecki and McNulty.

11. Roger Ebert used this language when he and Gene Siskel were reviewing the 1997 film. Siskel and Ebert suggest that if the media had used language like "religious group" and "church" rather than "cult" and "compound" there might have been a very different result. They find the people at Mount Carmel "sensible and sincere." And while admitting that it is "an advocacy bit of film making" it also "tries to be fair." See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rsaif8wn15E>. It should be noted that, due to a gag order by the Department of Justice, government officials were not able to participate in these documentaries.

12. Although there are different numbers given for those who died on April 19, 1993, the number of those killed on February 28 is consistent—six members of the community were killed on the day of the initial raid (five during the raid; one, Michael Schroeder, was killed when trying to return to his wife and children the same day, after the initial gunfire). If one goes by the memorial at Waco, in addition to the six killed on February 28, seventy-six people died in the fire, including two unborn or just born (accounts differ) children. Thus, from the perspective of the community, eighty-two members were lost between February 28 and April 19, 1993. When one includes the four ATF agents killed on February 28, a total of eighty-six people died at Mount Carmel between February 28 and April 19, 1993.

13. See observations by "A Current Affair" reporter Mary Garofalo in the ABC News Special: "Truth & Lies: Waco." Alex Jones (now of Infowars) sees his roots in Waco, in that it "awakened some of the more revolutionary feelings I've had." Mike Hanson has responded in another way. Rather than create a conspiracy-theory talk show, he has created a museum near the ruins of Mount Carmel, and has been part of the rebuilding of a chapel on the location as a challenge to the government. He calls the actions by the American government "murder and cover-up." And then says, "I'm mad they did this in our name." See ABC News Special: "Truth & Lies: Waco."

14. Terry Moran, ABC journalist, ABC News Special: "Truth & Lies: Waco."

15. See the "Final Report to the Deputy Attorney General Concerning the 1993 Confrontation at the Mt. Carmel Complex, Waco, Texas" (November 8, 2000).

16. ABC News Special: "Truth & Lies: Waco."

17. This work was also used in the making of the six-part TV series. See

Gary Noesner, *Stalling for Time: My Life as an FBI Hostage Negotiator* (Random House, 2000), especially Chapter 7 "Negotiating with the Sinful Messiah," and Chapter 8 "Picking Up the Pieces."

18. See Noesner, Chapter 8 "Picking Up the Pieces." A similar perspective comes through Bruce Perry's reflections on Waco, in *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*, 70. Perry reported to his FBI liaison that the children released during the siege and into his care often hinted that further aggression against their home could lead to a violent, even fiery end. While told, the FBI HRT still decided to escalate their aggressive tactics. Perry, 76–77, continues: "Just as the group dynamics within the cult pushed them [members of Mount Carmel] toward their horrific conclusion, so too did the group dynamics within law enforcement. Both groups tragically disregarded input that did not fit their world view." See also Jayne Seminare Docherty, *Learning Lessons from Waco: When the Parties Bring Their Gods to the Negotiation Table* (Syracuse University Press, 2001). It should be noted that thirty-five people (twenty-one children and fourteen adults) came out of Mount Carmel during the first twenty-four days of the standoff. Noesner observes that the negotiations early on were affective.

19. In that same companion piece, Dick DeGuerin, attorney for David Koresh, was asked: "What is the legacy of Waco?" to which he responded, "I hope it's that agencies with the power to use their military equipment only use it when it is absolutely necessary." DeGuerin believes that the fire was an accident, but that federal agents should have anticipated it.

20. Ronald Lawson, "Seventh-day Adventist Responses to Branch Davidian Notoriety," 328–329, states that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination spent between \$75,000 and \$100,000 on professional media consultants Porter/Novelli. "They thus defined the situation as primarily a public relations problem."

21. In 1980, while camping in the Australian outback with their family, a dingo took the Chamberlains' sleeping baby girl. Lindy Chamberlain would be convicted of murder of her daughter (1982) and would spend over three years in prison before being released (1986) and pardoned (1987) and eventually financially compensated by the Australian government (1992). During the legal struggle and even now in Australia, the Chamberlain case is often associated with the Seventh-day Adventist church.

22. Especially those students who had grown up hearing stories of conscientious objector Desmond Doss. For more on Doss' story, see the 2016 film directed by Mel Gibson, "Hacksaw Ridge," which was based on the 2004 documentary "The Conscientious Objector."

23. Once, in 1994, when visiting for the first time a particular Adventist Church, I was greeted in the foyer by a pastor I had known years earlier in another part of the country. We were delighted to reconnect and he asked me to preach sometime at his church. He then asked me what I was doing graduate work in. When I answered "the book of Revelation," his face fell. "You must not preach about that book," he quickly told me. "Do not even mention it from the pulpit." Stunned (was I in an Adventist Church?),

I asked him why. He responded: "This congregation lost two teenagers to Waco, and it's just too raw. There are too many associations between their loss and the book of Revelation." Koresh regularly used his interpretation of the book of Revelation to recruit young Adventists. Apparently, Koresh even targeted Adventists attending the 1985 General Conference Session in New Orleans. I, too, was present for those meetings, although I don't recall hearing a guy playing his guitar in the parking lot after being denied the opportunity to address the session. See Dick J. Reavis, *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation* (Simon & Schuster, 1995), 97–98.

24. *Spectrum* 23:1 (May, 1993): 30–33.

25. Since the founding of Davidian Seventh-day Adventism under the leadership of Victor Houteff (1885–1955) a major focus of the faith has been the call to "cleanse the people of God" beginning in the "house of God." Reading Ezekiel in a literalistic way, Davidians have seen their role as warning (and preparing to violently kill) those defiling the temple (Adventism), beginning with the "elders" (leaders and pastors). This is why their mission work is almost exclusively to Adventist churches, camp meetings and educational institutions. When Waco survivor and Branch Davidian, Clive Doyle, was disfellowshipped from his Adventist Church at the age of fifteen, he and his mother, Edna, went to Tasmania to tell Adventists there of the message that they needed to repent in order to avoid the wrath that was coming. They believed that "it just wasn't fair to let the Adventists in Tasmania get killed or go to hell without at least a chance of learning the Davidian message." Clive Doyle, with Catherine Wessinger and Matthew D. Wittmer, *A Journey to Waco: Autobiography of a Branch Davidian* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 22. Doyle also recounts: "Davidians at that time [1950s] and even up to the present day continue to attend Adventist church service on Saturday mornings" (30). And, "Davidians don't get into a lot of baptizing of people from the Adventist church because they've already been baptized" (62).

26. *Spectrum* 23:1 (May, 1993): 48–49.

27. Although at the time of the tragedy few Seventh-day Adventist publications acknowledged the high percentage of former Adventists among Koresh's recruits, there were some exceptions. In addition to Teel's piece, see articles in *Spectrum* 23:1 (May, 1993): Roy Branson, "We Didn't Start the Fire But the Tinder Was Ours," 2; Ernest Bursey, "In a Wild Moment, I Imagine...", 50–52; Douglas Cooper, "Did David Die for Our Sins?," 47–48; Charles Scriven, "Fundamentalism Is a Disease, A Demonic Perversion," 45–46; Ron Warren, "Our Brothers and Our Sisters," 50. In their book *In the Wake of Waco: Why Were Adventists Among the Victims?* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993), authors Cari Hoyt Haus and Madlyn Lewis Hamblin attempt to answer the question posed in their book's title, but do so without listing their sources or resources.

28. Kendra Haloviak, "One of David's Mighty Men," *Spectrum* 23:1 (May, 1993): 39–42.

29. Wayne and Sheila Martin sent their three youngest children out of



- Mount Carmel during the siege. Sheila then followed. Her husband and four oldest children would die in the fire. With the editorial help of Catherine Wessinger, Sheila has created the work, *When They Were Mine: Memoirs of a Branch Davidian Wife and Mother* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), which includes her early interactions with Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists, meeting Wayne Martin who was an active member of his local Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the births of their seven children. Norman has developed a relationship with his brother's two surviving children—Daniel who is now in his early thirties, and Kimberly who is in her late twenties. They were six and four when they left Mount Carmel, along with their eleven-year-old brother Jamie, who passed away in 1998.
30. James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995), 5.
31. *Ibid.*, 33.
32. *Ibid.*, 43. In a footnote in their book, Tabor and Gallagher note that early life at Mount Carmel was documented by Mary Elizabeth Power in her Master of Arts thesis done at Baylor University in 1940, "A Study of the Seventh-Day Adventist Community, Mount Carmel Center, Waco, Texas." She did interviews with Victor Houteff and most of the community's principals of this period (221).
33. See especially Chapters 7–9 in Kenneth G. C. Newport, *Apocalypse & Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), and *The Branch Davidians of Waco: The History and Beliefs of an Apocalyptic Sect* (Oxford University Press, 2006).
34. Newport, *Apocalypse & Millennium*, 201.
35. *Ibid.*, 214. Newport also explores the typology approach to reading texts, emphasis on the sanctuary, America as Babylon, and the importance of end-time messages being fulfilled in an imminent future. See also the work by professor of urban studies and Seventh-day Adventist, Ronald Lawson, "Seventh-day Adventist Responses to Branch Davidian Notoriety."
36. While some splinter groups from Adventism leave because of disagreement with the role of Ellen White's writings within the church, this series of splinter groups clearly cherish her works.
37. Haldeman, *Memories of the Branch Davidians*, 102–104.
38. See Doyle, Chapter 4, "Branch Davidian Theology." Doyle was disfellowshipped in 1956 for embracing and promoting Branch Davidian theology. An Australian, Doyle and his mother were living near Melbourne, Australia.
39. By April 14, when Koresh's lawyer Dick DeGuerin said that Koresh had told him he would come out of Mount Carmel after he had written his interpretation of the Revelation's seven seals, the FBI HRT did not believe it. They were fed up with Koresh's stalling. However, at the time of the fire, survivor Ruth Riddle carried out a computer disk with the first part of his interpretation. Tabor and Gallagher include Koresh's manuscript in their book (191–203).
40. According to Kenneth Samples, et al., *Prophets of the Apocalypse*, 171, Doyle's oldest daughter Karen became Koresh's first non-legal wife when she was thirteen years old. She never had children with Koresh. And she was not present at Mount Carmel during the raid on February 28, 1993. We know of eighteen children produced by David Koresh. Fourteen died with their mothers (seven of his "wives") in the fire. His first child was born to his girlfriend, Linda, in 1978, prior to David (then Vernon Howell) joining the Branch Davidians. One child was born to his fourth wife, Robyn Bunds, who left Mount Carmel in 1990 with her son. Two sons were born to his sixth wife, Dana Okimoto, who left Mount Carmel in 1991 with her sons.
41. It might be helpful for those not familiar with such approaches to consider the popular book by A. J. Jacobs, *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible* (Simon & Schuster, 2008).
42. Kathy Schroder, who came out of Mount Carmel prior to the fire and who spent three years in prison for her involvement, states in a recent interview: "David Koresh is coming back with God's army and if I'm at the right place and the right time, I'll be gathered up with him." ABC News Special: "Truth & Lies: Waco."
43. Ernest Bursey, "In a Wild Moment, I Imagine..." in *Spectrum* 23:1 (May 1993): 50–51.
44. Professor Catherine Wessinger's oral history project with surviving Branch Davidians produced three autobiographies which she edited: Bonnie Haldeman's *Memories of the Branch Davidians* (2007), Sheila Martin's *When They Were Mine* (2009); and Clive Doyle's *A Journey to Waco* (2012).
45. Haldeman says: "we were just like a big old extended family." *Memories of the Branch Davidians*, 88.
46. Sheila Martin, *When They Were Mine*, 37.
47. States Newport, "One should not underestimate the extent to which the arrival of government forces would have enforced upon the minds of the Branch Davidians the view that the eschatological dawn had broken" *The Branch Davidians of Waco*, 228.
48. ABC News Special: "Truth & Lies: Waco."
49. Perry, *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*, 64.
50. Radio host Ron Engleman (KGBS in Waco, Texas) gets the final word in the six-week TV series: "We are—all of us, Americans; when did we start seeing each other as the enemy?" In the final stages of writing this article, I watched a trailer for the film "The Great Controversy Ended." Are contemporary attempts to dramatize the book of Revelation or the Great Controversy sending us back to a Waco-like vulnerability? Do such "Left Behind"-type films encourage Adventists who do not believe in the Rapture to also read Revelation in a literalistic way? The entire clip provokes fear. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8Z1R3HKzpk>.

# Inhabiting the Kingdom: *On Apocalyptic Identity and Last-Generation Lifestyle* | BY ANTE JERONČIĆ



Swimming is a big “No” on Sabbath

IMAGE SOURCE: ALAMY LTD.

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## Introduction

Swimming is a big “No” on Sabbath. You can take a dip in the sea, but make sure that your feet do not leave the ground lest you begin exercising. Skiing is equally out. You can hike, although it demands more energy than skiing, but skiing seems more like doing what you please on God’s holy day (Isaiah 58:13). You can sail on the Sabbath, but don’t exert yourself by pulling the mainsheet; that would be “working.” Shave before sundown on Friday, and don’t shower on the Sabbath; avoid rock music (especially those tricky Beatles and their satanic backmasking); and be suspicious of laughter. After all, Ellen G. White exhorts, “God is dishonored by the frivolity and the empty, vain talking and laughing that characterize the life of many of our youth.”<sup>1</sup> Always place your Bible on top of other books; avoid Coke like the plague; wash your

dishes after sundown on Sabbath; do colporteur evangelism at least once a week; and by all means, don’t do any window shopping if you happen to walk through town after the Sabbath morning church service.

These lifestyle precepts were just some of the rules and practices that defined my Adventist teenage and young-adult years. As a new convert, I embraced them with a relish and seriousness that matched my zeal for my new-found faith. After all, becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, at least in the context of my home church, amounted to more than simply encountering God and finding forgiveness and grace; this was not a religion of mere sin management. Instead, nothing less than a complete transmutation of identity was called for. You didn’t just start praying, read devotional literature, and attend communal worship, you changed what you ate, watched, and listened to. In other words, you accepted and immersed yourself into a completely new lifestyle. You began to view the world as an arena of the great controversy and the urgency of “today”

(Hebrews 3:7)<sup>2</sup> and aimed to live accordingly. No choice was trivial, and no moment was to be wasted for anyone readying himself or herself to stand “without blemish” during the “time of trouble.” So, if that meant reading your pocket Bible while walking through town—bumping into people and lampposts in the process—or other efforts to become a complete overcomer, well, that was what one did.

Now it might appear that I am recalling such practices with a tinge of dismissal or sarcasm; I certainly am not. Granted, some of them were perhaps a bit too inflexible, too arbitrary—shaving on Sabbath as “work” (!)—but they were mostly done in good conscience and with a desire to honor God. With that in mind, I am leery of slapdash dismissals of “traditional Adventism”; those forms of reactionary zeal that mask a certain laziness of imagination and thought. Instead, my guiding desire is to probe the marrow of the Adventist way(s) of life in order to illuminate its architectonic beauty, to highlight its cohesive holism of doctrine and practice, and to celebrate its prodigious relevance to contemporary existence. One of the essential tasks of theology, after all, is to ferret out vital elements of the Christian faith from their overuse (and underuse) in order to imaginatively and critically re-sharpen them for both the life and the mission of the church. The same applies to the issue of “last-generation lifestyle”; that is, those copious attitudes and opinions of how Adventist believers ought to rearrange the totality of their lives—mentally, bodily, spiritually, socially, economically, and so on—in light of the imminent return of Christ. But how should one go about doing that? How can we meaningfully and coherently articulate what it means to truly worship God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind? What does it mean for our generation to live out the three angels’ messages? In sum, whither *apocalyptic identity*?

### Clearing: Naming Malfunctions

Dictionary treatments of *lifestyle* usually define the term almost redundantly as “a particular

way of living” or as the way an individual or a group decides to live, including convictions, attitudes, and emotional investments.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for example, when we say that Helen lives a “green lifestyle,” we have in mind a sense of identity expressed through specific practices over a period of time. But once we move away from such generic definitions and inquire into the specifics of an Adventist lifestyle, things become trickier. Be it questions of sexual ethics, diet, patriotism, choice of non-Adventist reading material, entertainment practices, Sabbath observance, jewelry, or spending money on status symbols in general—on these and other matters, one faces a deluge of opinions. That is particularly true in an age in which the immediacy of social media at times accentuates the basest aspects of human nature. Indeed, a simple Web search of matters Adventist will project one into a world of ministries or advocacy groups that elevate one or another lifestyle matter to *status confessionis* (confessional status)—an issue by which the church supposedly stands or falls. (Paul’s sarcastic jab in Galatians 5:15 about believers consuming one another is altogether apropos in this regard.) And how could it be otherwise in a religious movement in which disagreements habitually rise to the pitch of an apocalyptic “to be or not to be”? Such a burden of ultimacy is never an easy one to carry, neither for Hamlet nor for the Adventist believer.

As tempting as it might be to prance my way through these issues by advancing a personal “Here I stand” list, in this chapter I will instead take a step back and look at some of the foundational principles and beliefs that might aid us in approaching these matters in a faithful and coherent manner. For starters, we need to be transparent about various lifestyle malfunctions that routinely plague our community of faith, including the tendency to approach last-generation lifestyle matters in a reductionist sense. By that, I have in mind situations in which various communal rules and mores are wielded inconsistently at best, and disingenuously at worst. In fact, a habitual part of the Adventist folklore

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probe the  
marrow of  
the Adventist  
way(s) of life  
in order to  
illuminate its  
architectonic  
beauty.**

**It is usually  
a good all-  
around policy  
to distrust  
our preferred  
inclinations.**

is to spoof the adroit ways in which we have mastered the craft of “straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel” (Matthew 23:24). One does not have to be a pastor or church leader to realize that jadedness among Adventist young adults often stems from exposures to such sanctimonious standards. We have all heard statements such as, “But Mom, Elder So-and-So just bought a \$975,000 home and drives an Audi A8, and you’re telling me that I cannot have these \$25 earrings?” Examples like that abound, and many a family’s Sabbath lunch has been visited by such riveting disputations.

In addition to the problem of *inconsistency*, we, as Adventist believers, are frequently affected by the issue of *segmentation* (which, indeed, is another type of inconsistency). It is always tempting to approach issues of last-generation lifestyle in a thoroughly fragmented manner, in which one fixates on prayer but not on money; on missions but not on social justice (as defined in the Bible); on the dinner plate but not on speech; or perhaps on sexual purity but not on practices of nonviolence—and vice versa.<sup>4</sup> Of course, such selectivity seldom results from an intentional decision to become imbalanced; our interests, religious environment, and cultural trends do their skewing work in our lives without asking for our permission.<sup>5</sup> And yet, we need to guard against such bifurcations, whatever their spurious rationale. Simply saying, “This is not my thing,” or “It does not concern me” just won’t cut it, irrespective of the garnish we bestow on our complacent apathies. Thus, it is usually a good all-around policy to distrust our preferred inclinations. We would do well to ask ourselves, why do I find this unimportant? Who or what has influenced me in that regard? What emotions drive my resistance? What unpleasant experiences, bad examples, or personal slights lie at the bottom of my reservations? Even a modicum of self-honesty will usually help us discover a reactionary motive behind our misgivings.

In that regard, the Adventist pioneers, such as Joseph Bates, provide an enviable model. As



**Adventist Pioneer, Joseph Bates**

we read Bates’s life vignettes, we are struck by the extent to which they exhibit, for lack of a better word, a deeply organic or integrative *spirituality*. Quite honestly, I am grappling for words to express my utter astonishment in that regard, especially if we consider the common denominator of most apocalyptic movements, both Christian and non-Christian—the separation of the “children of light” from everything that is dark and impure.<sup>6</sup> You break off contact and build your little communes; you don’t soil your hands with pesky matters of this world. Not so with Bates. In 1842, while believing that Jesus Christ, the great Abolitionist, would come within a year or so, Bates continued to walk the trenches of social justice. To wit, this is a

IMAGE SOURCE: ALAMY LTD.



man who in 1846, in the context of the Mexican-American War, readily condemned the United States as a “land of blood and slavery,” a “heaven-daring, soul-destroying, slave-holding, neighbor-murdering country.”<sup>7</sup> How about chewing on that for a morning devotional while sipping a cup of tea?

My point here does not concern the exact wording that Bates chose but rather the question, What was it about his understanding of the coming of Christ that made such a prophetic indictment both possible and necessary? He himself answers this question in his diary, where he writes: “All who embraced this doctrine[of the Second Advent] would and must necessarily be advocates of temperance and the abolition of slavery; and those who opposed this doctrine of the second advent would be not very effective laborers in moral reform.”<sup>8</sup> So, whatever we mean by living in the light of the First Advent, it has to include such a broadened scope of discipleship; it has to include spiritual practices and ethical integrity, the indicative (proclamation) and the interrogative (critique), the personal and the social, our deeds and our hearts. All of these elements will be present in a Spirit-filled community; a community that lives out its apocalyptic calling in a holistic way. Therefore, let us not put asunder what the Spirit of God seeks to put together.

Then, on top of everything else, we have the malfunction of *misapplication*. We must caution against the tendency to view various lifestyle matters, including treasured spiritual practices such as prayer and Bible study, as barometers of spirituality. It is at this point that Jonathan Edwards, arguably the most significant American theologian, offers a treasure trove of spiritual insights—his stringent Calvinism notwithstanding.<sup>9</sup> In his *Religious Affections* (1746) and other works, he deals with the following conundrums: What are the true signs of Christian conversion? How can we know that an experience of revival is genuine? What principles should we use “to discern the spirits”? In an effort to respond to these tricky concerns, Edwards helpfully points

to the “signs of nothing,” that is, to all those practices and manifestations of spirituality that might or might not point to a genuinely converted life. Things such as long prayers, passionate worship, rigorous morality, avoidance of entertainment practices, frequent quoting of Scripture, and service to others could indeed be a testament that someone has a relationship with Jesus but not necessarily so. Are we not all familiar with instances when this or some other “sign” in ourselves or in others proved to be a mirage, a cover for a cavernous soul devoid of spiritual vitality? Even altar calls can easily turn into ritualized protocols whose long-lasting effect just about rivals the length of those minor key choruses we love to employ on such occasions.

But if we cannot trust these things per se, what else could possibly serve as a measuring stick for self-evaluation (Ezekiel 40:3)? Quite importantly, Edwards reminds us that we should always turn the index finger in our direction and not play the game of guessing the motives of others, including their altar call responses. In the end, his answer is not surprising: “positive signs” of genuine conversion concern living according to the law of the Spirit and exhibiting His fruits: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22, 23)—not the external observance of the “law,” including the Adventist “law” of lifestyle rules. Without a progressive growth in such character traits, I am but an annoying quack, irrespective of my denominational status, YouTube reputation, or sense of self-righteousness. Such laser-focused attention on the core of genuine conversion is desperately needed, particularly at a time when passion for truth among the saints increasingly functions as a license for meanness. We would do well to heed Ellen G. White’s counsel in this regard: “There can be no more conclusive evidence that we possess the spirit of Satan than the disposition to hurt and to destroy those who do not appreciate our work, or who act contrary to our ideas.”<sup>10</sup>

**In 1842,  
while  
believing that  
Jesus Christ,  
the great  
Abolitionist,  
would come  
within a year  
or so, Bates  
continued  
to walk the  
trenches of  
social justice.**

In truth,  
the plea of  
Bartimaeus  
often comes  
to my mind  
as I think  
of these  
issues,  
sometimes  
despairingly:  
“Rabbi,  
I want to  
see!”

That is why we need to be watchful lest our religion morph into a perfidious means of God evasion—our fourth malfunction, that of *delusion*. Remember David, for instance, on the heels of the Bathsheba affair (see 2 Samuel 12). Just observe him sliding into religious talk during his tête-à-tête with the prophet Nathan, now that morality concerns others and not his own ignoble actions. In 2 Samuel 11, we see him acting with a moral conscience befitting a Mafia don, sending people left and right as it pleases him, including to their death. When it comes to condemning someone else, the word *God* glides dexterously over his lips while amounting to little more than a type of religious accoutrement. Miraculously, moral obtuseness is now nowhere to be found, so that his ethical judgment dazzles us with its swiftness and severity. In that sense, religion, for David, fulfills a conscience-placating role. Its fervency only masks the absence of a genuine devotion, which is a tendency readily observed in the Gospels as well. A lot of religious hot air gets generated—tears are shed, healings take place, pamphlets are delivered, prayer hugs dished out—but in the end, the person does not really know the Lord and is not known by Him. The religious carnival “has left town,” so to speak, and all you have is someone building his house on sand, because he refuses to listen to the words of Jesus and put them into practice (Matthew 7:24).

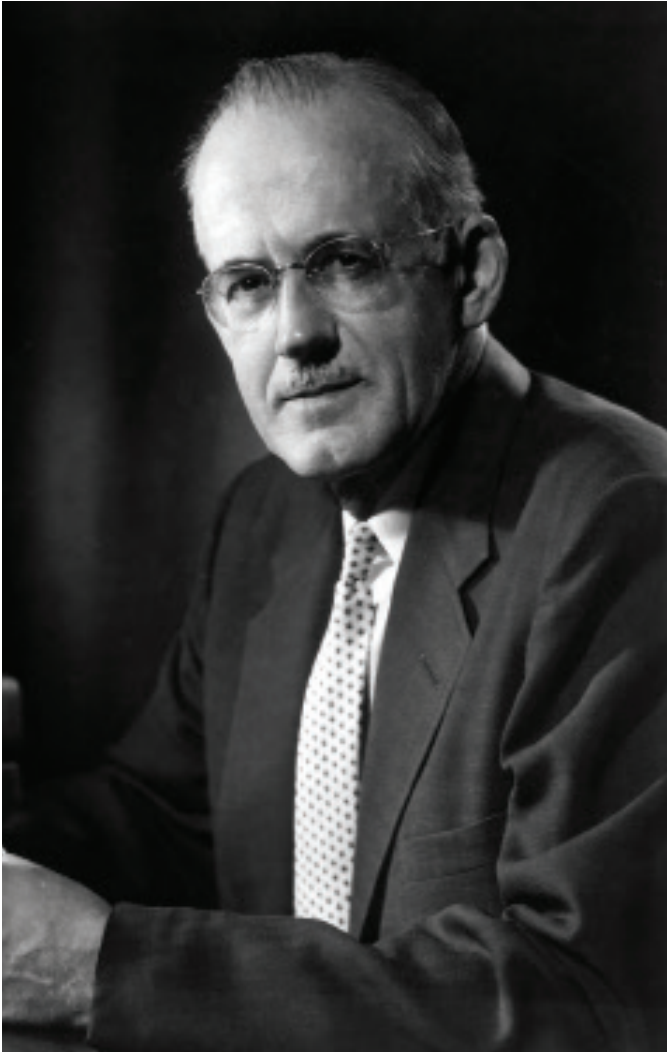
These, then, are some of the potential pitfalls that threaten to sabotage the faith of Christ’s followers: inconsistency (selective application of principles), segmentation (focusing on certain lifestyle issues at the expense of others), misalignment (forgetting the function and purpose of discipleship), and delusion (turning religion into a means of disobedience). Of course, all of that is clearly addressed in the Bible. Whether one takes a passage such as Isaiah 58 or perhaps delves into the Sermon on the Mount, the urgency to avoid such forms of inauthenticity are pressed upon us with particular vigor and insistence. How could they not, when so much is at stake; when the deceptiveness of the human

heart exerts such a blinding vigor? In truth, the plea of Bartimaeus often comes to my mind as I think of these issues, sometimes despairingly: “Rabbi, I want to see!” (Mark 10:51, NIV).

### Deepening: On “Seeing,” “Standing,” and “Being”

At one point in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C. S. Lewis’s famed collection of children stories, the narrator offhandedly reminds his audience that “what you see and what you hear depends a great deal on where you are standing. It also depends on what sort of person you are.”<sup>11</sup> Lewis hints here at the obvious truism that our “way of seeing” depends on our “standing” and “being.”<sup>12</sup> To appropriate an image from a well-known cultural critic, it is one thing to see the city of Chicago from the top of the Willis Tower; it is quite another to do so while standing in an alley on Chicago’s South Side.<sup>13</sup> The position and orientation of your standing is significant in determining your perception—the extent, intensity, perspective, impact, angle, and proportion of it—as well as your potential actions and accompanying attitudes and emotions.

To develop this a bit more, let us say that “seeing,” or *perception* in the Lewis quote above, includes the following elements: attunement (predisposition to notice), understanding (interpretation), judgment (valuation), and imagination (envisioning possibilities). It leads to statements such as, “Notice this!” or “It means this,” or “This matters!” or perhaps, “We could do that!” The Bible is saturated with examples of perception, so defined, playing a determining role in the lives of believers. Take the case of Jesus describing the extravagant act of His anointing as “beautiful”—the amazing connection of self-sacrifice and aesthetics here warrants a deeper exploration—while others dismiss the spilling of the fragrance as wasteful or self-promoting (Mark 14:4–6). Or when Paul becomes “greatly distressed” (Acts 17:16, NIV) upon entering the city of Athens and seeing the city littered with pagan symbols, while others walking next to him are either at peace or greatly



**Theologian, A. W. Tozer**

impressed with the city's splendor. In both of these occasions, we have a clash of perceptions—with Jesus and Paul on one side, and the disciples and the crowd on the other. To repeat, Jesus and Paul did not just act in opposition to others; they perceived things differently. They were predisposed to notice certain things when the people around them were oblivious to them (attunement); they understood them correctly (interpretation); they attached a different level of significance to these things than did their followers or adversaries (valuation); and they were alert to a range of potentialities (imagination) that others were not aware of. In that sense, the foundational question for Christ's disciples is not simply, What would Jesus do? but rather, What and how would Jesus see? This often boils down to, What would Jesus care about?

Given that our actions are always a response to how we see things, it is easy to see why the question of perception is so important for ethics and Christian discipline-

ship in general. As the ethicist Stanley Hauerwas rightly notes, ethics "is not first of all concerned with 'thou shalt' or 'thou shalt not.' Its first task is to help us rightly envision the world."<sup>14</sup> Such an observation, of course, applies to a multiplicity of life spheres. A doctor reading MRI and CT scans for diagnostic purposes, an art connoisseur noticing compositional elements of a Vermeer painting, a musicologist marveling at the mathematical brilliance of Bach's Chaconne for solo violin, an activist sensitized to subtle patterns of institutional injustice—these and countless other examples illustrate how competencies, life experiences, character, interests, psychological and physiological states, and beliefs influence our seeing or failure to see and how that in turn determines the range of our potential actions, emotional responses, and cares.<sup>15</sup> (There is actually a whole discipline that studies the nature and causes of ignorance called *agnology*, but that, too, must be left for another context.<sup>16</sup>)

And it is on this last point that the significance of Lewis's insight comes fully to the fore—the idea that perception is connected with our "standing" and "being." The former, I suggest, refers to our *orienting beliefs*, which include everything from basic worldview commitments—what James Sire refers to as ideas about the "basic constitution of reality"—to more ordinary, everyday beliefs.<sup>17</sup> All beliefs matter! In fact, by using the term *orienting beliefs* I mean to avoid the natural impulse to accord foundational worldview commitments a greater life-orienting weight than other, seemingly mundane, beliefs. After all, most people in the United States today deem Black Fridays more existentially pressing than black holes—used here as a metonym for questions of cosmology—and virtual reality fantasies more enticing than concerns over the nature of ultimate reality. And I don't mean this in any snide or demeaning sense. On the contrary, I simply credit the way in which minuscule tenets sometimes disproportionately affect the way we *live* our lives. For instance, Don might firmly believe in the glory of God—certainly a claim about the "basic constitution of reality"—but when it comes to mentally processing, let's say, a failed work promotion, it is his peeve about the dysfunctionality of bureaucratic institutions that assumes the ultimate orienting force. (Or he might be just an incorrigible quibbler!) Accordingly, describing a person in terms of his worldview, such as theist, deist, or monist, represents only a portion of who that person is and the choices he makes



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working,  
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socializing,  
relaxing, and  
so on.**

while working, commuting, socializing, relaxing, and so on. The question, therefore, is not which of his beliefs are important in some ultimate sense but rather which of them orients or directs his decision making.

Adding to this problematic situation is the vexed role of the cognitive unconscious that frequently overrides orienting beliefs without our conscious awareness.<sup>18</sup> A person who ardently sings and preaches about the love of God might nurture, at a more fundamental level, the image of an unpredictable and arbitrary deity whose providential interventions border on the schizophrenic. Yes, a theology of the love of God is intact and loquaciously defended—as we impassionedly seek to do in this book—but hidden uncertainties shape the person’s decision making, self-perception, and basic life orientation. To compound the problem, the presence and substance of the cognitive unconscious eludes superficial introspection. Along those lines, A. W. Tozer suggests that,

our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional religious notions and may require an intelligent and vigorous search before it is finally unearthed and exposed for what it is. Only after an ordeal of painful self-probing are we likely to discover what we actually believe about God.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, much ardent prayer needs to be offered to God asking Him to reveal to us the true state of our hearts and minds.

That being said, as important as are orienting beliefs (“where we stand”) for perception—and here we are moving to the other element of the Narnia quote above—what we see also depends on “who we are.” Obviously, we *are* in some ways our beliefs; how could it be otherwise? At the same time, we are so much more. That is, there is a more encompassing, *existential* dimension to us as human beings in general (and specifically as last-generation believers) that at the bare minimum includes the following aspects:

*Affective investments* comprise *desires* for objects, experiences, states of mind, God, or people; *passions* for causes, that is, things we feel strongly about; *loyalties* toward God, individuals, life roles, communities, institutions, traditions, the nation-state, and so on; and *priorities* in time and allocation of resources. Such affective investments might be either acute or protracted; they inextricably shape who we are as human persons. In fact, given their obstreperous character, these allegiances frequently exert a determinate influence on where and how we land on various moral issues. They not only supercharge our responses but also fundamentally direct them; they incline us to certain actions and affections.

*Embodied sensibilities* include automatic responses expressed through a “sense” or “feeling” about an issue, leading us either to recoil from it or to cling to it—often automatically. By functioning as the basis of our emotions, these embodied sensibilities manifest themselves through deep-seated feelings of like or dislike, attraction or repulsion, and delight or aversion and are often at work long before cogent, intellectual reasoning arrives on the scene. We are attracted by that which we find beautiful, pleasing, hip, and aspiring on the one hand and repulsed by that which we perceive as hypocritical, odious, passé, and limiting on the other. In other words, much of our being in the world is determined by these aesthetic sensibilities; sensibilities that, in conjunction with the cognitive unconscious, provide a covert mechanism of decision making. This has enormous implication for pastoral practice and missions because most people do not reject Christianity because they see it as wrong; they reject it because they find it unseemly—they are in some way repulsed by it. To a large extent, their rationales are aesthetic, not epistemological. In other words, their response involves judgments of taste and not statements of truth. For the most part, this blinding does not result from unearthing some faith-shattering axiom; instead, it sprouts from a slow, almost imperceptible shift of aesthetic sensibilities where fragments of God alienation

coalesce into alloys of religious indifference imperceptibly over time. In the end, the spark and luster are gone, and God just does not do it for the person anymore. (Of course, as the story of the Fall illustrates, such changes can happen more suddenly. Adam and Eve's about-face had nothing gradual about it; the shift in their aesthetic sensibilities seemingly happened with remarkable speed.)

*Character*, as the very term implies, refers to dispositions or tendencies to act, feel, and think in a certain way over an extended period of time. According to the Bible, it is impossible to talk about human identity, including the pursuit of truth, without focusing on character, which is that internal network of good habits and bad habits, virtues and vices. Namely, we may arrive at wrong judgments about something or someone—we “see” or “read” wrongly—not only because we possess inadequate information or misguided beliefs but also because we are plagued by character faults. A selfish person will see the world differently than a person who is generous, and the “fool,” as depicted in Proverbs, will remain impervious to words of wisdom despite their rational appeal (cf. Proverbs 23:9). Put differently, both the pursuit and articulation of truth inevitably rides the jagged topography of virtues and vices, emotions and experiences, influences and presuppositions. There is always more to knowing than simply knowing; inevitably, all kinds of motives, character traits, tastes, and emotions also get thrown into the mix in a way that often eludes our clear comprehension. That is why training in truthfulness requires “training in godliness.” Peter says as much when he exhorts us to supplement our

faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

He then concludes by stressing that these vir-

tues have an epistemic, or truth, weight in that they keep us “from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5–8).

*Personal particularities*, finally, pertain to matters such as *context* (cultural, economic, sociohistorical, etc.), *narrative* (forces of socialization, formative experiences, conversions, traumatic markers, etc.), *memories* (including suppressed ones), and *self-markers* (personality, gender, ethnicity, mental and physiological health, intelligence, etc.).

As a summary, we could now rephrase Lewis's words from the beginning of this section—about how our seeing depends on where we stand and who we are—as follows: what you *perceive* (as attunement, understanding, judgment, and imagination) depends on your *orienting beliefs* (worldview, doctrines, cognitive unconscious, etc.) and *existential situation* (investments, sensibilities, character, and particularities). And that leads us to the core claim in this chapter: personal *identity* is an emergent property, a gestalt (composite whole) that arises from the interaction happening among perception (“seeing”), beliefs (“standing”), and situation (“being”). Let us unpack this a bit more.

What has been clear so far is that our account does not find much sympathy for an intellectualized reduction of human beings to “thinking things,” that is, to disembodied cognitive machines churning out worldview blueprints or fundamental beliefs that are then more or less acted upon.<sup>20</sup> But neither do I think that our core identity is just a sublimation of existential situations; that human persons are nothing but a patchwork of reactive emotions or mindless passions. Rather, human identity understood in an existential sense is a type of gestalt—a protean, continually malleable pattern of interaction between beliefs and situations affecting, as we have argued all along, both our perceptual horizons (attunement) and acts (understanding, judgment, and imagination).<sup>21</sup> The Bible abounds with examples that speak to how identity, so defined, shapes the actions

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some way  
repulsed by  
it.**

**All these events, internal states, aspirations, and concerns, combined with our deepest-held beliefs, shape each configuration of identity, and with it, our relation to truth.**

of individuals. Some see the resurrection of Lazarus as a miracle of God; others see it as a reason to condemn Jesus to death. One thief on the cross perceives Jesus to be the Messiah, while the other mocks Him. Some discern John the Baptist to be a great prophet, while others dismiss him as a religious fanatic and a usurper of established power arrangements. In all these instances, we have a clash of perceptions, because people possess different identities and different perceptual horizons and cares.

As expected, the precise anatomy of identity differs not only from person to person but also within an individual in different moments of that individual's life; the exact shape of our identity changes and fluctuates—sometimes less and sometimes more—as we go through life. We acquire new friendships, suffer tragedies, grow older, become victims of conflicts, see miracles, battle addictions, experience conversions, and grow in wisdom. In other words, we experience life in its ungraspable and baffling complexity. All these events, internal states, aspirations, and concerns, combined with our deepest-held beliefs, shape each configuration of identity, and with it, our relation to truth. We could even say that at any given point in our lives our identity tends to coalesce around one or more *centrations* or concerns.<sup>22</sup> In everyday language, we sometimes refer to such centrations as “consciousness.” Thus, when we say that “Hannah has a strong social consciousness” or “Andy’s patriotic consciousness is quite pronounced,” we have precisely such centrations in mind. In both instances, identity centration stands for everything about these individuals that explains Hannah’s and Andy’s attitudes toward social issues and the nation-state respectively at that moment in their lives.

What the notion of centration points to, therefore, is that various events, states of mind, personality, and insights can function as catalysts to either stress or neglect certain faith commitments in the way environmental factors, analogically speaking, might lead to gene silencing or activation in human cells. For in-

stance, a church member coming from a war-torn region where religious symbols fueled nationalistic jingoism might feel differently about national flags in houses of worship than would a proud mother of a newly minted Marine in the pew behind. To wit, the former might even see such flags as “the mark of the beast on the Christian body.”<sup>23</sup> As it happens, both individuals believe in the sovereignty of God, the creation of humanity in the image of God, the Sermon on the Mount as the charter for Christian discipleship, respect for authorities, the three angels’ messages, and a host of other beliefs. But the disparity in their affective investments and their life centrations alters the way they interpret, emphasize, or apply those faith commitments.<sup>24</sup> These two individuals might have identical orienting beliefs on paper—there is no denial of the objectivity of truth here—but their configurations of identity result in certain beliefs becoming accentuated while others are muted; they simply care about different things in different ways. In other words, their identity gestalt determines their *inhabitation* of truth, which can be either authentic or inauthentic or biblically faithful or not.

While granting that the word *authentic* is a slippery one that means different things to different people, in this context it does indeed pull a hefty polemical punch. Namely, if you recall our discussion from the previous section (*Clearing*), you will remember that we examined some of the common faith malfunctions that plague our community of believers: inconsistency, segmentation, misalignment, and delusion. All these represent different forms of incongruity or inauthenticity that last-generation Christians need to confront. In this section, we have covered the same territory from a different angle by taking a more specific look at the notion of human identity and the various elements that compose it. It will not be lost on the attentive reader that the notion of congruency, and thus authenticity, has been the driving force here as well. After all, isn’t that our most urgent need? To bring *all* our orienting beliefs into harmo-

ny with the Word of God (authenticity 1)? To make sure that *all* our loyalties and priorities reflect those Christ-centered beliefs (authenticity 2)? To prayerfully examine *all* our sensibilities to see whether they mirror the timbre of Christ’s mind and spirit (authenticity 3)? And to petition the Spirit to instill in us His “fruits” or “kingdom virtues” that they might sustain us in our loyalty to Christ and provide the soil in which right sensibilities might flourish (authenticity 4)? The fusion of these four facets of authenticity is what I have in mind in the preceding paragraph as I refer to the authentic “inhabitation of truth.” For the last-generation remnant, such an authentic Christian identity is by definition an apocalyptic one.

### **Broadening: Inhabiting the Apocalyptic “Space”**

For the Adventist pioneers, the confession “Jesus is coming soon” was so much more than a vacuous gesture. Their apocalyptic focus on the imminent return of Christ, the conviction that eternity was right at the door, led them to craft a lifestyle that would reflect the gravity of the times in which they were living. As they saw it, you could not profess such a cosmic announcement and continue to stroll around as

if nothing had happened. “The King is coming; be ready!” A radical change of identity and practice was the only proper response to God’s ensuing interruption of history. Priorities had to be rearranged and resources reallocated; “life as usual” was no longer possible. To their credit, their response was one of verve, and then some. They were ready to assiduously up-end their existence and reject all forms of cultural and religious normality to an extent that we today find both inspiring and slightly unnerving. Any brief visit to the Adventist Village in Battle Creek, Michigan, or a perusal of early Adventist literature will make such an air of self-sacrifice and commitment virtually palpable. One feels dwarfed in the presence of such a spiritual dedication. And I don’t mean this in a hagiographic, melodramatic sense; their blind spots and character defects can hardly be hidden from any semi-critical historiography. But whatever their shortcomings, and there were many, no one can question our pioneers’ pursuit of congruence between faith and practice, between the proclamation of the final judgment and an unreserved commitment to God. They not only believed in the Second Coming, they lived it.

So, what happens when that focus diminishes? What happens to an apocalyptic movement when it becomes progressively *unapocalyptic*—note the shift here in identity centrations as discussed above—a fact only partially masked by the requisite “Jesus is coming soon” affirmations populating our collective gatherings? George Knight addresses these questions with some intensity in his widely received book *Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism*.<sup>25</sup> I remember how much I was taken by this book’s title the first time I saw it. It was the word *neutering* that did it for me and still does. I like the way it conveys the image of Adventism being drained of its vitality; the process of making it more placid, more insipid, and ultimately barren. There are many ways, of course, in which such an *unadventizing* of Adventism might and does happen: institutionalism, authoritarianism, lack of missionary focus, and doctrinal infighting are

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Jürgen Moltmann

IMAGE SOURCE: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/f1/30/4ff1304f6bd512a771dcbe15854911e85e5.jpg>



**As a corollary,  
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or uncouth  
exclusivism.**

just some of the potential forces that might contribute to it. But for Knight, and I would concur with him on this point, many of these problems are simply symptomatic of a deeper issue, namely, the loss of the apocalyptic identity central to Adventist pioneers.

Admittedly, that is a somewhat contentious claim because it is not at all self-evident that “apocalyptic” should be the central organizing idea of our Christian identity. Even our own community of faith faces significant disenchantments with apocalyptic discourse, particularly on a grassroots level. While the reasons for such disaffection vary, they usually fall back on some of the following: unease concerning Christ’s delay, antagonism toward Adventist “particulars”; rejection of a sectarian, contemptus mundi (contempt of the world) mentality; disillusionment with “beasts and charts” evangelism; alternative conceptions of Christ’s Parousia, or visible arrival; stress on the humanitarian and world-affirming dimensions of Adventism; and aversion toward a religiosity that fuels fear or promotes violence. As a corollary, many view apocalypticism as synonymous with loopy hysteria or uncouth exclusivism.

In response, I would say that the true character of Adventist apocalyptic identity is of an entirely different sort. It is *not* unduly obsessed with cataclysmic events in the near future, although its view of history is rather bleak. It is *not* conspiratorial, although it is often mistrustful of that which passes for “normality” or “common sense.” It is *not* world denying, although it is not naïve about the ways in which structured unbelief permeates most facets of our life or world. And most important, it is *not* just one aspect of biblical revelation; the Bible is apocalyptic through and through. In fact, we cannot make any sense of the ministry of Jesus, including such basic items as the Lord’s Prayer, without an apocalyptic framework. As Jürgen Moltmann famously and rightly puts it,

From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is escha-

tology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set, the glow that suffuses everything here in the dawn of an expected new day. For Christian faith lives from the raising of the crucified Christ, and strains after the promises of the universal future of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

In this quote, the word *medium* is key because it pushes Adventist apocalyptic identity beyond a narrow preoccupation with final events and issues of character perfection, important as these topics are, to include fundamental questions of human existence such as philosophy of history, divine action, tragedy, truth, power, and the common good. In that sense, Adventist apocalyptic identity mirrors the scope of the great-controversy narrative, both in terms of its historical span and its thematic inclusivity. It functions as a lens by which last-generation Christians ought to conduct their lives in obedience to Christ.

As it is quite impossible to fully unpack these issues here given our space limitations, let me highlight but a few selected and rather compressed theses on apocalyptic identity and its key centrations (or consciousness, as I will use the term synonymously here).

**1. The benevolence of the self-giving God is the foundation of all reality.**

“Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8). Everything stands and falls with that. No theology, practice, doctrine, policy, tradition, or anything else is ever—simply *must not be!*—allowed to impinge on this fundamental truth, this animating force of the universe. We are not waiting for just any God; some generic deity whose intentions are spurious or unclear. The

coming of God—in Creation, Redemption, and final glorification—speaks of a God of covenant faithfulness, of unmitigated and fierce love, of boundless grace, and of overwhelming compassion. The self-emptying (*kenosis*) of Jesus that Paul so movingly portrays in Philippians 2 is a dramatic enactment of divine humility, a revelation of who God always was, and is, and always will be throughout all eternity. Such a *God consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

### **2. To have apocalyptic hope is to live under the sense of the “now.”**

“I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2, NIV). *Therefore*, we conduct our lives under the sign of the *terminus*, the end. The very idea of imminence puts pressure on time; it compresses it, and with it shortens the horizon of our expectations. Apocalyptic Christians do not envision a historical horizon of perpetual postponement—a sense of slow, evolutionary development of humanity. They experience the urgency of time, and with it, the restlessness of hope. They are awake and alert, prayerfully attending to the “signs of the times.” Such a *time consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

### **3. God’s transcendence, or otherness, bursts through human expectations.**

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8, NIV). *Therefore*, we affirm God as the God of “breaking in” and rupture. He unsettles as much as He pacifies; He interrupts as much as He heals. We cannot control Him, nor can we confine Him within our arbitrary standards. He shatters all our religious efforts to turn Him into a manageable deity, into a god of our projections, wishes, and needs. Thus, to live in response to the coming of God means to live in repentance of all our idols, fetishes, and disguised forms of ego worship; it means to live in the light of truth that strips us of all falsehood and protective shields, es-

pecially religious ones. That God would confront us so is an act of grace, an act of “apocalyptic rupture” par excellence.<sup>27</sup> Such a *truth consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

### **4. The cross of Christ is the essence of our faith and identity.**

“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). *Therefore*, we side with Martin Luther’s words: “*Crux probat omnia*” (the cross tests everything). In so doing, we confess that apocalyptic identity is a cruciform identity. It imitates the crucified God in at least two key aspects: *kenosis* (self-emptying) and solidarity with others in their needs and sufferings. In other words, it recognizes that “the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven.”<sup>28</sup> Who then is the coming God for us today? He is the one who continually invites us to the *via crucis* (the way of the cross), to a life of self-emptying benevolence and true freedom. Such a *cross consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

### **5. An apocalyptic philosophy and theology of history is a form of remembrance.**

“They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” (Revelation 6:10, NIV). *Therefore*, we spurn bids to view historical developments and current societal arrangements through the eyes of the victors and their ideologies of “exception” by which they justify the necessity of exploitation, oppression, and destruction of human life. Instead, apocalyptic identity presents a form of counter-memory; an orientation attentive to the underside of history and the muted voices of victims, the multitude of slain souls under the altar (verse 9).<sup>29</sup> It refuses to sentimentalize their deaths, to abandon them to the logic of historical necessity and ideologies of collateral damage, and thus protests an “unalterable bias toward inhumanity and destruction in the drift of the world.”<sup>30</sup> Such a *solidarity consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

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needs.**

## 6. God's high regard for human and angelic freedom accounts for the provisional tragic dimension of human existence.

"For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now" (Romans 8:22). *Therefore*, we reject easy identifications of Divine Providence and history. We see God's purposes repeatedly thwarted by the mendaciousness and folly of both human and angelic freedom—the hubris of Lucifer, the rebellion of Adam who was "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall,"<sup>31</sup> the apotheosis of Babylon, and the surreptitiousness of the lamblike beast of Revelation 13. There is a certain sense in which it is fitting, therefore, to speak of "the weakness of God," as Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, not in order to make God impotent or complicit *vis-à-vis* human suffering, but rather to account for God's sovereign, self-limitation in the face of human freedom. Such a *tragic consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

## 7. In imitating the way of Jesus Christ, we pursue a life of peaceable witness.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). *Therefore*, we consider peacemaking as essential to the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18) that God has given to us in this world. Following the lead of the Adventist pioneers who considered "all participation in acts of war and bloodshed as being inconsistent with the duties enjoined upon us by our divine Master toward our enemies and toward all mankind,"<sup>32</sup> we, too, seek to engage in peacemaking efforts in all spheres of life. Such a *peace consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

## 8. The whole cosmos is alienated from God and under the provisional rule of principalities and powers.

"When we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world" (Galatians 4:3, NIV). *Therefore*, we profess that such fallenness extends beyond individual sinfulness; it infects all human institutions and endeavors, including corporations and governments, ideologies and philosophies. Principalities and powers, in whatever form they manifest themselves, always seek to make God weird and the "world" normal. With that in mind, apocalyptic Christians will be skeptical of powers of normalization. They will continually ask, How did such-and-such become a problem? Who de-



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

IMAGE SOURCE: [HTTPS://UPLOAD.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKIPEDIA/EN/46/DIETRICH-B.JPG](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/46/Dietrich-B.jpg)

fines the parameters of the "acceptable" and the "normal"? What reigning mythologies or ideologies seek to capture our imagination and actions? What liturgies or repeated practices have been established to achieve such outcomes? What symbols and rituals do they contain? How do they employ threats and promises as mechanisms of control? Such a *critical consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

## 9. In a world opposed to the gospel of Christ, our remnant identity will be one of cosmopolitan exiles.

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood (1 Peter 1:1, 2)."

*Therefore*, apocalyptic speaks of a nomadic existence, a

sense that in this world, even in the best of circumstances, we are never fully “at home.” The Adventist movement as a religion of hope unsettles societal norms, continually breaking camp and extinguishing existing campfires. The very notion of a tribal allegiance to an ideology or the state flies in the face of the cosmopolitan character of the people of God who refuse any form of “adjectival subversion” in which “black,” “white,” “American,” “libertarian,” “progressive,” or any other label would serve as a modifier of the noun “Adventist” instead of the other way around. Our kingdom is not of this world. Such an *exilic consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

### 10. The Spirit awakens us to the presence of the kingdom in all of its manifold manifestations.

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:7). *Therefore*, we readily affirm the sprouts of God’s kingdom as we encounter them in different dimensions of life—art, nature, science, the political sphere, and so on. Because apocalyptic Christians recognize the sovereignty of God in all things, they are free to recognize and support the common good wherever they encounter it. Such a *kingdom consciousness* frames the apocalyptic lifestyle.

These theses, while being borderline cryptic, at least partially limn, I hope, the contours of an apocalyptic lifestyle. Or rather, they outline foundational truths that ought to function as orienting beliefs for last-generation Christians so that Christ may reign supreme over our existence. Because in the end, isn’t that at the heart of it all? Isn’t it of utmost importance that Jesus Christ be the Alpha and Omega, the key identity centration encompassing all of our lives? As Dietrich Bonhoeffer movingly puts it,

[Christ] is in the middle. He has deprived those whom he has called of every immediate connection to those given realities. He wants to be the medium; everything should happen only through him. He stands not only between me and God, he also stands between me and the world, between me and other people and things. *He is the mediator*, not only between God and human persons, but also between person and person, and between person and reality. Because the whole world was created

by him and for him (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2), he is the sole mediator in the world. Since Christ there has been no more unmediated relationship for the human person, neither to God nor to the world. Christ intends to be the mediator.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, everything needs to go through Christ; all our words, deeds, and beliefs have to pass through Him as the Center, as do all facets of our existential situation. He is the norm, the measure, the example, and it is in obedience to Him, the soon-coming King, that we are called to live out our apocalyptic identity. ■

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## Footnotes:

1. Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 367.
2. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this chapter are from the ESV.
3. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. “lifestyle,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lifestyle>.
4. A theme that cannot be explored here concerns how preoccupations with personal or communal purity regulated through idioms of disgust and fear of defilement might lead to ill effects such as social disengagement and negative self-image. For a provocative treatment of these issues, see Richard Allan Beck, *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Morality* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011). On a related note, see George R. Knight, *I Used to Be Perfect: A Study of Sin and Salvation*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2001).
5. We will take a closer look at this issue in the following section.
6. While the term *apocalyptic* is rather difficult to define, in this context I am employing it as a general designation for groupings that subscribe to some expectation of a cataclysmic future on the one hand and the idea of an end-time “remnant” on the other. For a helpful discussion of different meanings of apocalypticism, see Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 1–84.
7. George R. Knight, *Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 54.
8. *Ibid.*, 59.
9. Most readers will be familiar with Edwards’s notorious sermon, “Sinners



- in the Hands of an Angry God.” What is less known is that Edwards was not a typical “fire and brimstone” preacher but, instead, focused primarily, perhaps like no other thinker in the history of Christian thought, on the beauty of God. See, e.g., Roland André Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968).
10. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1964), 487.
11. C. S. Lewis, *The Magician’s Nephew* (New York: Scholastic, 1995), 136.
12. The relationship of truth and virtue has been a major concern in the relatively recent field of virtue epistemology. One aspect of this discussion focuses on the definition of intellectual virtues, i.e., whether they refer to reliable cognitive faculties (memory, introspection, etc.) or to character traits (open-mindedness, thoroughness, etc.). For elements of virtue epistemology at work in the Narnia Chronicles, see Kevin Kinghorn, “Virtue Epistemology: Why Uncle Andrew Couldn’t Hear the Animals Speak,” in *The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy: The Lion, the Witch, and the Worldview*, Gregory Bassham and Jerry L. Walls, eds. (Chicago: Open Court, 2005). For a more technical discussion of these issues, see Ernest Sosa, *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Jason S. Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and Michael R. DePaul and Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
13. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 91–110.
14. Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 29.
15. For an interesting, personal take on this problem, see Alexandra Horowitz, *On Looking: Eleven Walks with Expert Eyes* (New York: Scribner, 2013). Writing from an autobiographical perspective, she notes, “I would find myself at once alarmed, delighted, and humbled at the limitations of my ordinary looking. My consolation is that this deficiency of mine is quite human. We see, but we do not see: we use our eyes, but our gaze is glancing, frivolously considering its object. We see the signs, but not their meanings. We are not blinded, but we have blinders.” *Ibid.*, 8.
16. Robert Proctor and Londa L. Schiebinger, *Agnology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).
17. James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 5th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 20.
18. For a classic treatment of the cognitive unconscious, see John F. Kihlstrom, “The Cognitive Unconscious,” *Science* 237 (September 1987): 1445–1452. Kihlstrom notes, “Consciousness is not to be identified with any particular perceptual-cognitive functions such as discriminative response to stimulation, perception, memory, or the higher mental processes involved in judgment and problem-solving. All these functions can take place outside of phenomenal awareness.” *Ibid.*, 1450.
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29. For a helpful discussion of Christian apocalyptic as a form of counter-memory and counter-history, see David Toole, *Waiting for Godot in Sarajevo: Theological Reflections on Nihilism, Tragedy, and Apocalypse* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1998), Chapter 7.
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# HEALTH & WELLNESS

Illustration: *Hang in the Balance* by Richard W. Hawkins



## Postum Making a Comeback | BY ALITA BYRD



Peter Hwang is senior vice president of Eliza's Quest Foods.

IMAGE SOURCE: POSTUM

*Postum, once a popular coffee substitute in many Adventist homes, was discontinued more than a decade ago. A new company was formed to bring it back, and a full-page ad will appear next month in the Adventist Review as senior vice president Peter Hwang works to regain the Adventist market.*

**Question: Postum, the roasted-grain beverage once popular as a coffee substitute, was discontinued in 2007. But it was reintroduced five years ago, and you are working to get the word out to more potential Postum drinkers. Please tell us a little bit about the history of Postum and how it came back to the market.**

Answer: The history of Postum dates back over 120 years. It was the first product of the Postum Company that was started back in 1895 by C. W. Post.

This company went on to become the Postum Cereal Company, which eventually grew to be General Foods.

It merged with Kraft Foods, becoming Kraft General Foods. It eventually merged with Heinz and became known as Kraft Heinz.

The Post Cereal division was sold to RalCorp. This is when some products were dissolved. They weren't sure how to position Postum. Was it a breakfast cereal? Was it to be sold in the coffee aisle?

**Can you tell us more about C. W. Post? How did he come to create Postum?**

C. W. Post had numerous health-related issues during his adulthood. In 1891, his wife Ella, along with their four-year-old daughter Marjorie, went to Battle Creek, Michigan, to check him into the Kellogg sanitarium to see if they could help him. He actually arrived on a stretcher. Upper-class Americans in the midwest

would go to the sanitarium to relax and live a healthy lifestyle. C. W. did not improve, and he moved into a boarding house owned by a Seventh-day Adventist in town. She taught C. W. all about healthy eating, keeping a healthy mind, and the dangers of caffeine. He was “cured,” and after he left, he started to experiment on how to create a product to replace coffee.

After numerous attempts, on January 1, 1895, he came up with what he felt was the right blend of ingredients and named the product Postum. His first attempts at trying to market it to local grocers failed. He didn't give up and aggressively began advertising it in local publications. Orders started to come in and the company grew rapidly. Not satisfied with the success of Postum, in 1897 Post invented Grape-Nuts. He gave the cereal that name because of the grape smell the product has when in the hoppers in the plant. He advertised Grape-Nuts as a wholesome way to provide a family with a good nutritious breakfast without all the work.

In 1904 he created Post Toasties, which is a corn flake. Toasties was sold for over 100 years in the southern and western states, but the plant could not keep up with production of Honey Bunches of Oats (which uses Toasties flakes), so the company stopped making Toasties as a stand-alone product. Now Toasties are just made in-house to be used in Honey Bunches of Oats.

C. W. was most happy when inventing things. It kept his brain active. His passion was to create and sell products that were not only tasty but also healthy and nutritious for everyone to enjoy.

**At its most popular, how much Postum was being sold? And was that during World War II when coffee was harder to obtain?**

In 1949, Postum sales reached \$500 million. By 1956, Postum was sold in 71 countries.

**Do you know what the sales of Postum was at the time it was discontinued?**

Around \$14 million per year.

**And what are sales like now?**

We did a little over \$750,000 last year and are on track to do close to \$1 million this year. Hopefully, we are just getting started.

**The Postum name and the secret recipe are now owned by Eliza's Quest Food. What else does Eliza's sell? How did Eliza's come to acquire Postum?**

Eliza's Quest Foods only manufactures and sells Postum. It acquired the trade secret and trademark from a small company that convinced Kraft to release them after years of protests from Postum lovers when the product was discontinued.

Eliza's Quest Foods was started by June and Dayle Rust who were teachers in North Carolina. They noticed blogs and petitions asking Kraft to bring Postum back and were surprised that hundreds of thousands of Postum customers were just as disappointed as they were that it was taken off the market. Research and development actually began in their home kitchen before they officially acquired the trade secret.

**How many employees does Eliza's have?**

Five in-house employees. We outsource most of our services, including manufacturing, for the time being.

**How much Postum are people buying now? Is the Original flavor the most popular, or is it the newer cocoa or coffee-flavored versions?**

Our sales have increased each year by 20 percent. The Original Flavor is still the most popular, but the Coffee Flavor and Cocoa Blend products are starting to grow. Many of our loyal customers enjoy mixing their Postum with cocoa to drink as a warm beverage or enjoy it as a cold, blended drink to have during the summer months.

Original Postum accounts for roughly 60 percent of sales while the Coffee Flavor is around 25 percent of sales, and Postum Cocoa Blend is 15 percent of sales.

**Who are Postum drinkers? Who is your market? People who don't believe in caffeine? Who can't tolerate caffeine? I believe Mormons and Adventists (both of whom traditionally didn't drink coffee) were previously the biggest consumers?**

Our customer base ranges from long-time devoted Postum drinkers who have fond memories of drinking Postum with their parents or grandparents to the younger generation who were introduced to Postum by family members. Postum was a staple in many homes.

Postum drinkers are people who are health conscious. A good portion of our customers are people who do not or cannot drink caffeine or who want to cut caf-





Vintage Postum Advertisement

feine from their diet. Many vegans and vegetarians do not drink coffee because the acid irritates their stomachs. Postum is pH balanced and actually soothes the stomach.

Even coffee drinkers who enjoy a non-caffeinated drink in the afternoons or evenings are choosing Postum over the other coffee-alternative products sold on the market today.

While Seventh-day Adventists and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) are very loyal Postum drinkers, they are not the only people who drink Postum. The largest group of customers are those who are health conscious and want a delicious beverage that contains no caffeine and does not irritate their stomachs.

#### **How are you marketing to Adventists and Mormons?**

We are very grateful for the long-term love and support we have received from the Mormons and Adventists. The Mountain West has been our largest market for the past few years due to the large LDS population in that area. We were live on Studio 5 with Brooke Walker and Good Things, Utah, two popular morning shows in Salt Lake City, Utah.

We currently have six Adventist distributors throughout the US that distribute our products to the local Adventist businesses, including ABC Stores, Village Market, Loma Linda Market, and other local health food stores. We have a full-page ad coming out in the May and June 2018 issues of the *Adventist Review*, plus 100,000 web impressions. We continually work very closely with the Adventist distributors in offering promotions to pass along to customers, such as regional camp meeting specials and other quarterly specials throughout the year.

#### **Coffee has continued to rise in popularity—does this actually benefit Postum?**

Just like coffee will always be around, there will always be a market for Postum. Many customers want a hot or cold coffee alternative product. Postum was and always will be considered a healthy beverage and will be sought after by those seeking to reduce caffeine intake or remove it completely from their diet. Postum is the Original Coffee Substitute since 1895, and unlike other substitutes, our product does not contain barley or chicory. It has a smoother taste that is created from roasted wheat, bran, and molasses.

#### **What other products are in development? Will you make a version of Postum that people can make in their Nespresso machines or other fancy coffee makers?**

We currently have the 8 oz. retail jars, 42 oz. wholesale/food service jars, and a 5 g single-serving packet that comes fifty per pack. We have tossed around the idea of a Keurig Cup possibly for the future.

#### **Where is Postum being manufactured? How has the original recipe or method of making it changed?**

Postum is manufactured in Indiana in a modern facility that still has access to similar equipment that was used in the original Postum plant. The trade secret is still used. The only change is that Eliza's Quest Foods took out maltodextrin from corn because this ingredient is potentially a GMO product. Maltodextrin has no flavor and only contributed to darkening the roast. It has been replaced by a non-GMO wheat starch. We feel this is a healthier option. The Postum sold today continues to have the same aroma and flavor as the original product created by C. W. Post.

**Postum was known decades ago for its clever advertising campaigns. Can you describe some of your favorite ads?**

The old Postum ads were priceless. We still use some of them in our current advertising because customers continue to love seeing them. Our favorite ad was an article C. W. Post ran in *Life Magazine* titled “Why Real Men Crack,” focusing on the adverse side effects of coffee consumption. Other favorites include “The Woman Who Cares.” This one shows a wife serving Postum to her husband with a scientific explanation why coffee is so bad for your health. There are many more.

**What kind of advertising are you utilizing now? How are you getting the word out?**

We are focusing on all forms of advertising from television lifestyle morning shows, television commercials, radio, magazines and newspapers to online impressions, online marketing, and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

**How did you come to work at Eliza’s Quest Foods? Are you the only Adventist employee?**

I met June and Dayle Rust at a Food & Beverage Show. I was there exhibiting another product of mine, and they had a Postum booth. I remembered the brand from growing up in an Adventist home, and I had confidence I could help them grow the business and the brand by leveraging my background in the food and beverage industry over the past fifteen years. They brought me on to join the team, and I am currently the Senior Vice President of Eliza’s Quest Foods, LLC.

I have been involved in sales my entire career. I have had a strong desire to do sales for as long as I can remember. My first job out of college was for a technology services company where I was an information technology (IT) recruiter or headhunter. Though I had zero experience in technology, they saw potential in me and were willing to train me.

In the late 1990s, dot com companies were appearing everywhere. Investors were lining up to throw money at ideas. There were too many jobs and not enough talent. It was a very good time to be in IT. However, once the IT bubble started to nosedive in the early 2000s, I wanted to try something new. So I decided to go to South Korea in 2003. I leveraged my bilingual skills along with my love of sales and approached US and international manufacturers

in the food and beverage industry, and that’s when my career in international trading began. This then eventually led me to manufacturing and branding products of my own, focusing mainly on natural foods and beverages. All products that I manufacture, sell, or distribute are either non-GMO or organic.

I am currently the only Adventist at Eliza’s Quest Foods. June and Dayle are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are both very good people. I am thoroughly enjoying partnering with them and playing a key role in bringing Postum back to all of our loyal customers.

**What products have you manufactured and branded yourself? Are you still selling them?**

I specialize in organic and non-GMO products from fruit and vegetable juice/purees, concentrates, fruit and vegetable powders, natural peanut butter/almond butter, instant breakfast “real oat” oatmeals, and natural seasonings/ingredients. I have an all-natural liquid meat tenderizer that is derived from the enzyme, found in the papaya fruit, called papain. This product helps break down the protein molecules. Most papain found on the market comes in a powder and has a very strong odor. However, our product is a liquid, and it is odorless, colorless, and tasteless.

**You are head elder at the Atlanta-Korean Seventh-day Adventist Church in Duluth, Georgia. Do church members that you know drink coffee? Are they interested in Postum?**

I was the head elder for the past four years at the Atlanta-Korean SDA Church. I am aware some Adventists these days are drinking coffee. However, I have been doing my best to introduce or reintroduce them to Postum. Many did not even know Postum was still available.

More and more younger people who never heard of it before are becoming interested in Postum. People wanting to reduce their caffeine intake or completely cut out caffeine are amazed at the smooth taste of Postum. Some who are sensitive to caffeine and can only drink it in the mornings can now enjoy a warm and tasty beverage in the afternoons or evenings and not have to worry about being unable to fall asleep at their normal hours. ■

*See Postum.com for more information about its history and where to buy it. Photos courtesy of Postum.*

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**Alita Byrd** is interviews editor for Spectrum.

# What is Vitamin B12 and Why is it Important?

| BY ROMAN PAWLAK



IMAGE SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.AMOILS.COM/HEALTH-BLOG/VITAMIN-B12-NEED/](https://www.amoils.com/health-blog/vitamin-b12-need/)

**T**he science of nutrition is fascinating, practical, and progressive. As new discoveries regarding specific issues, diets, and nutrients are made, nutrition professionals gain better understanding and sometimes revise existing recommendations. Vitamin B12 is a good example. Findings made in the last few years challenged many assumptions regarding this nutrient and forced scientists to rethink important as-

pects regarding vitamin B12 needs and recommendations, and deficiency criteria, prevention, and treatment. The information in this article highlights a few of these new discoveries.

Vitamin B12, called cobalamin, is unique for more than one reason. Its chemical structure is more complex than any other vitamin. In addition, cobalamin contains a unique chemical structure that incorporates a mineral: co-

balt. Vitamin B12 is made only by microorganisms, such as bacteria. This nutrient is essential for the synthesis of nucleic acids (DNA), which means that its role is critical for growth and development, such as in pregnancy and/or childhood, for example. Vitamin B12 is also essential for the synthesis of myelin, a specific type of nerve coating. Therefore, a deficiency of vitamin B12 may result in the malfunction of both the peripheral and central nervous systems. If untreated, symptoms (which can include tremors, tingling, and feeling pins and needles) can progress to paralysis and spinal cord compression, and could potentially become irreversible. Cobalamin is also essential for the synthesis of all blood cells, including red blood cells. Thus, a deficiency of vitamin B12 may result in anemia and associated symptoms.

Vitamin B12 deficiency is common and happens mainly for three reasons: inadequate intake, malabsorption, or a specific genetic defect called MTHFR mutation. Inadequate intake is often the reason for vitamin B12 deficiency among vegetarians, especially vegans. This is because this vitamin is not naturally found in foods of plant origin. The highest risk for deficiency among vegetarians include those with special physiological needs, such as pregnant and lactating women, infants, and the elderly.

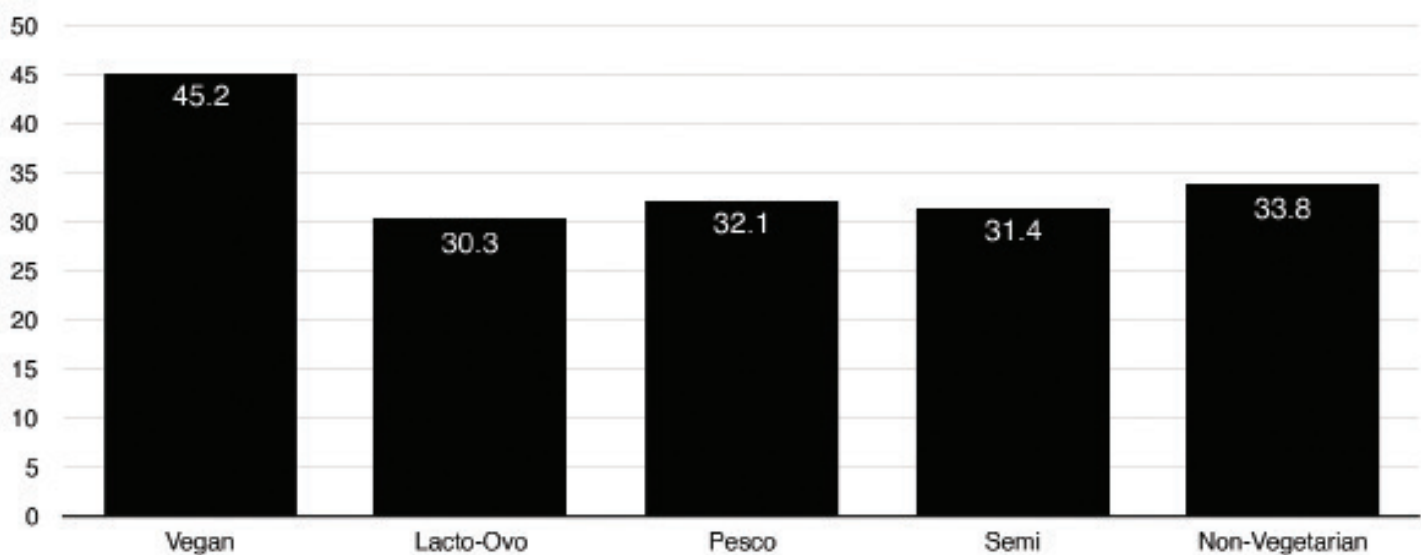
Malabsorption of vitamin B12 occurs among people

who have gastrointestinal surgery, those with health conditions affecting the GI tract (such as Celiac disease and Crohn's disease), and among people who take medication that impacts vitamin B12 absorption and status. For example, individuals taking metformin, aspirin, and/or antacids have an elevated risk of deficiency.

### How common is vitamin B12 deficiency among vegetarians?

Vitamin B12 deficiency among vegetarians depends mainly on the type of vegetarian diet individuals adhere to. Vegan individuals have the highest risk and deficiency prevalence, while deficiency among vegetarians, although also wide-spread, is less prevalent. Virtually all studies that have been conducted among vegetarians show a high proportion of participating vegetarians having biochemical vitamin B12 deficiency. In fact, this nutrient deficiency is often seen in more than 50 percent of the participating individuals, and much higher prevalence—reaching over 70 percent, 80 percent and 90 percent—has been reported. The illustration below shows the prevalence of elevated homocysteine among selected individuals from the Adventist Health Study II (homocysteine is a marker of vitamin B12 status. Among vegetarians, elevated homocysteine indicates vitamin B12 deficiency).

**Prevalence of Elevated Homocysteine Among Selected Participants of the Adventist Health Study II.**



Adopted from Haddad E. The Vitamin B12 Story: Why is it Still a Concern? Lecture presentation during the 6th International Congress on Vegetarian Nutrition. Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA. February 26, 2013



Individuals with vitamin B12 deficiency often are misdiagnosed. Some of the common misdiagnoses include dementia, multiple sclerosis, diabetes-related neuropathy, rare neurodegenerative health conditions, autism, or Wilson's disease. In such cases, progression in manifestation of symptoms continues and may result in disability or death.

Symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency can be divided into several categories including neurological, psychiatric, oral (manifestation in the oral cavity), dermatological, hematological, and rare manifestations. Selected symptoms for each of the above-mentioned categories are listed in the table below. In addition, symptoms related to fertility and pregnancy outcomes (congenital malformations) are common. They may include hypospadias, neural tube defects, spina bifida and anencephaly.

**Table 1. Selected Symptoms of Vitamin B12 Deficiency**

Category	Symptoms
<b>Neurological</b>	Deterioration of the myelin, cognitive decline (e.g. memory loss), speech impairment (slurring), difficulty walking, inability to feel the ground, tingling, difficulty concentrating, numbness in both legs, mood alteration/swings, muscle cramps, paralysis, electric shock sensations, jerking movements of abdominal muscles, anxiety, depression, clumsiness, visual impairment
<b>Psychiatric</b>	Disorientation, hyperactivity, decreased need for sleep, reckless and agitated behavior, social withdrawal, decreased interest, apathy, difficulty with falling asleep and concentrating, suspiciousness, hearing voices, hallucinations
<b>Oral</b>	Glossitis, pain and burning sensation in tongue, gradually progressive hoarseness, difficulty eating, red stains on inside of cheeks and tongue, oral epithelial dysplasia
<b>Dermatological</b>	Hyperpigmentation (blackish discoloration of the skin on knuckles, darkening of hands, feet, and tongue), skin lesions on feet, neck, and upper and lower limbs
<b>Hematological</b>	Pancytopenia (low count of all blood cell types), macrocytic anemia, hyperhomocysteinemia
<b>Rare</b>	Anorexia, exercise intolerance, urinary incontinence, persistent watery diarrhea

Although many people with vitamin B12 deficiency do not have overt manifestations of symptoms (for this reason, some scientists call it asymptomatic biochemical deficiency), it does not mean that symptoms are not present. Not all symptoms are manifested in a way that is detectable to individuals with a deficiency. For example, vitamin B12 deficiency is a risk factor for low bone mineral density and increased risk of bone fractures. Similarly, a deficiency is associated with hearing loss. Also, this nutrient deficiency is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease, especially stroke, brain atrophy and cognitive decline. Among pregnant women, a deficiency of this vitamin may cause inability to carry a live pregnancy to term.

Of most concern are cases of vitamin B12 deficiency among infants and toddlers. A number of case reports of vitamin B12-related complications among these children born to vegetarian, especially vegan, mothers and/or fed with vegetarian or vegan diets have been published. Infants and toddlers who develop vitamin B12 deficiency are often diagnosed with developmental delays and neurological damages. These children have such profound developmental delays that at age one, one and a half, or two years they may often not be able to sit up properly, eat, or even smile, and may have severe deficient weight, height, and head circumference.

Unfortunately, even mortalities among infants born to and breastfed by vegetarian and vegan women deficient in vitamin B12 have been reported.

Before more severe symptoms develop, individuals with vitamin B12 deficiency may experience mild and nonspecific symptoms. These symptoms include fatigue, irritability, feeling sleepy, inability to concentrate, feeling pins and needles in legs, tremors, and depression. Anyone with any of the above-listed symptoms should be checked for vitamin B12 deficiency. It is important to realize that vitamin B12 deficiency develops in stages. These stages include 1) inadequate intake, 2) cell vitamin B12 depletion, 3) abnormal biomarkers of vitamin B12 (e.g., low serum vitamin B12 or elevated homocysteine), 4) development of mild symptoms such as fatigue and irritability, and 5) development of severe symptoms including neurological impairments.

When overt symptoms of vitamin B12 are detected, a person may have been deficient for months or even years. Symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency are progressive and if

# 12 VITAMIN B12 food sources



Source: Dr. Axe (draxe.com)

untreated, some symptoms, especially neurological manifestations, are irreversible. It is equally important to know that in many infants and children diagnosed with vitamin B12 deficiency the diagnosis was made months after the

first symptoms of deficiency were manifested (severity of symptoms progressed during this time). These facts underscore the importance of taking preventive measures (described below) to avoid developing a deficiency. The table below summarizes pediatric symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency.

## Pediatric Symptoms of Vitamin B12 Deficiency

Anthropometric	Hematologic	Other
Developmental delays/ <b>fall in growth curves</b> Weight < 10th percentile Height < 10th percentile Unable to sit alone Unable to walk Involuntary movements Hyperpigmentation Abnormal fine and gross motor function	Elevated MMA Elevated Hey Low or "normal" B12 Low Hg and hematocrit Pancytopenia Low or subnormal RBC Low or subnormal WBC Low or subnormal platelets	Anorexia Lethargic Lack of responses to stimuli/interaction with people Hypotonic Muscular weakness Involuntary movements Slow/abnormal EEG Delays in speech development

There are several vitamin B12 assessment techniques. They include serum or plasma B12 concentration, holotranscobalamin II, homocysteine, serum or urinary methylmalonic acid, and mean corpuscular volume (MCV). Holotranscobalamin II and methylmalonic acid are the most accurate assessment methods while serum or plasma B12 and MCV are believed to be unreliable. Unfortunately, physicians often check for either of the two least reliable measurements and often rule out vitamin B12 deficiency as a cause of symptoms based on the outcomes of these assessments. Another unfortunate practice is the range of serum vitamin B12 used as normal. Symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency have been described among individuals with serum vitamin B12 lower than 300 pmol/L (and in some cases even with higher serum B12 values). "Normal" range of vitamin B12 is often given as one between 148 to 780 pmol/L. Also, if homocysteine concentration was assessed, a value of less than 15 µmol/L is often used a normal homocysteine concentration. However, much lower homocysteine concentrations have been associated with vitamin B12 deficiency symptoms, such as increased risk of arterial stenosis. To correctly assess vitamin B12 status, it is recommended that assessment is done using at least two different measure-

ments (e.g. serum vitamin B12 and homocysteine). The table below includes normal values for the different vitamin B12 assessment methods.

### Normal Values for B12 Assessment Methods

Assessment	Normal Value
Serum B12	>4000 pmol/L (>542 pg/ml)
Homocysteine	<10 µmol/L
Holotranscobalamin II	>35 pmol/L
Methylmalanic acid	<260 nmol/L
MCV	80 - 94

Meat and animal products naturally contain vitamin B12. However, because of their detrimental effect on the risk of developing several chronic health conditions, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease, it is best to avoid consuming these products. Some plant foods are fortified with vitamin B12. They include some soymilks, tofu, and some cereal products. However, it is unlikely that the amount of vitamin B12 in these products is sufficient to maintain a high enough serum vitamin B12 concentration. Thus, the most reliable way to prevent vitamin B12 deficiency among individuals at risk of vitamin B12 deficiency is to take vitamin B12 supplements. A dose of 250 µg per day is adequate for most adults. Elderly individuals should consider taking a higher dose (e.g. 500 µg). Children should be taking smaller amounts, between 5 to 25 µg, depending on age. For deficient individuals, high dose supplements or vitamin B12 injections are recommended. Physicians should be consulted in making such decisions. ■

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# LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

Illustration: *Enraptured* by Richard W. Hawkins



## Freedom for Neighbor Love | BY GERALD R. WINSLOW

For those who choose to live by the ethics of *agapē*, or neighbor love, there are varieties of freedom worth wanting.<sup>1</sup> According to Jesus, the second great commandment is to “Love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>2</sup> What is the significance of free will for the capacity to follow this commandment? Given current doubts about the possibility of deliberately chosen, self-caused actions, what can reasonably be affirmed about the choice to live according to the commandment to love one's neighbor? I offer here some reflections on the relationship between human freedom and the conscious decision to abide by the Christian norm of neighbor love. The goal is an understanding of personal freedom suitable for relationships nurtured by *agapē*.

### A Prismatic Story

Sometimes a story, like a prism, may open to view the beauty of nuances otherwise hidden. The brief letter of Paul, the Apostle, to a fellow believer named Philemon presents such a story. The letter is Paul's earnest appeal for Philemon to take back into his home, and his good graces, a runaway slave named Onesimus. Paul, who was a prisoner in Rome at the time of writing the letter, had somehow become acquainted with this fugitive slave. Apparently, Onesimus had escaped his master's house hundreds of miles away in Colossae and found his way to the capitol of the Empire. There he met Paul, became a Christian, and cared for Paul during his imprisonment. So beloved had Onesimus become to Paul that the Apostle refers to him as “my son”<sup>3</sup> and “my very heart.”<sup>4</sup>

After customary words of greeting, Paul begins the letter by commending Philemon for his “love and faith.”<sup>5</sup> Then, just before his appeal for Onesimus, Paul writes this: “I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love.”<sup>6</sup> Paul indicates that he would have been pleased to keep Onesimus

by his side in order to continue benefiting from the help he would have received. Then he adds, “But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and *not forced*.”<sup>7</sup> A couple of verses later, Paul becomes highly personal when he tells Philemon, “. . .if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.”<sup>8</sup>

The radical nature of Paul's appeal becomes most evident when he pleads for Philemon to take Onesimus back “no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.”<sup>9</sup> True, slaves in Roman times were generally considered members of the household, and some were even given major responsibilities for running the affairs of the home. But nothing like the kind of relationship Paul is prescribing would have been expected. The decision to relate to a slave as one's “dear brother” would have represented a drastic break with custom.

We have no way of knowing for certain how Philemon received Paul's plea. It seems likely that the appeal worked because the letter was preserved and entered the canon of Christian scripture, and because Onesimus is mentioned in one other letter as “our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you.”<sup>10</sup> Whatever the historical outcome, the structure of Paul's appeal to Philemon provides some prismatic light for our chosen topic.

### Reflections on Neighbor Love and Freedom

What then does the story of Onesimus teach us about the kind of love on which Paul asks Philemon to base his treatment of a returned slave?<sup>11</sup> And what has this story to say about the kind of freedom worth wanting by those who follow the way of Jesus—the way of *agapē*? Of the many that might be described, here are five essential features of such freedom.

First, human decisions matter. The story tells a truth about human volition and action that most people accept

19th century engraving of St Paul the Apostle in prison.



IMAGE SOURCE: ALAMY LTD.

**The story tells a truth about human volition and action that most people accept intuitively; the outcome of events often depends decisively on the choices people make.**

intuitively; the outcome of events often depends decisively on the choices people make. Paul knows that he made a choice, and he knows it will make a difference. He could have kept Onesimus with him in Rome. But he didn't. He also knows that Philemon has a decision to make. He will either accept Paul's appeal based on love, or he won't. Paul expresses his full assurance that Philemon will do the loving thing: "Confident of your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I ask."<sup>12</sup> But Paul knows it could turn out otherwise. Both Paul and Philemon have power over alternative courses of action, or else the story is senseless. Indeed, the intensity of Paul's appeal is felt more strongly in the letter just because of the element of uncertainty. Only when Philemon decides whether or not to accept Paul's appeal and act on that decision, will some of the uncertainty be removed.

If such power over alternatives is entirely illusory, if the end of the story was already determined from the beginning or if it depends on chance or chaotic complexity, then, of course, the story, at most, represents strange theater. What if, through time travel, we could now subject Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus to our current neuro-diagnostic tools to find out what the *real* causes of their decisions and actions were? Would we discover that they only imagined wrongly that they were responsible for

their decisions? Would we be able to describe what *actually* instigated what they thought were their choices? Maybe. And perhaps there might emerge some new, coherent way to rescue the sense of our story and much of the rest of an ethics of responsibility. But I will try to explain why I have my doubts about what is sometimes called compatibilism—the view that a deterministic account of human action is somehow compatible with moral responsibility.

A second feature of human freedom evident in our story is that persons committed to neighbor love can overrule, to some extent, their usual inclinations. If this were not true, it would make no sense to ask Philemon no longer to treat Onesimus as a slave but as a brother. It would also be nonsensical for Jesus to teach his followers to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."<sup>13</sup> And every hearer or reader of the story of the Good Samaritan should understand that the one who decided to act as a "neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers" had many reasons to skip the acts of mercy. The principle of *agapē* and the stories to which it gives rise are filled with examples of choosing to override strong inclinations or habits for the sake of neighbor love.

This does not mean, however, that human freedom, of the sort worth wanting and worthy of our belief, is exempt from all kinds of influences, both internal and external to the one

who decides. In the case of our prismatic story, Paul uses his leadership role in the church and his special friendship with Philemon to influence Philemon's decision to the fullest extent, short of coercion. Does such influence mean that Philemon is less free in the morally relevant sense? One way to reduce freedom of the will to absurdity is to imagine that a free choice requires a fully conscious, fully rational decision maker to be presented with equally attractive alternatives, and that no concealed influences be at work. But Philemon, like the rest of us, is the sum of his emotions and his reasons, his beliefs and his doubts, his culture and his faith, and innumerable other factors that will affect his decision, including the influence of the Apostle. The freedom needed for neighbor love could not possibly be an abstract metaphysical concept, stripped of connection with life's experiences. The Christian scripture says, "We love because [God] first loved us."<sup>14</sup> So freedom for neighbor love is centrally influenced for Christian believers by their experience of God's love as expressed in the ministry of Jesus. Such freedom is also exercised within the formative influence of the community of faith. The individualism of later "I-did-it-my-way" culture is foreign to the founding faith of Christians who could think of the church as the "body of Christ."<sup>15</sup> Still, if Philemon, under the power of neighbor love, chooses to take Onesimus back into his home as a "brother," he will always know that he could have done otherwise. Whatever his decision, Philemon knows (and we know with him) that he is responsible.

Third, human beings have a remarkable capacity to imagine alternative futures and then select a desired one in light of personal convictions and values. Paul could imagine Onesimus staying with him in Rome, helping him during his imprisonment, and perhaps traveling with him later. But Paul could also visualize Onesimus returning to the home of his surprised master and being accepted by a gracious Philemon. According to the text, Paul even imagines being a houseguest of Philemon again, and no doubt pictures Onesimus present "no longer as a slave, but as a dear brother."

A person's worst fears and best hopes, along with the most ethically praiseworthy or blameworthy actions, are enabled by this creative ability to envision alternative choices and their consequences. Persons typically understand the sense of what is meant when the poet writes:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other...<sup>16</sup>

The road ahead always bends, of course. The mind's eye can never foresee all that will come with the choice. And the roads that diverge are never all the roads that could have been imagined, if only the imagination were not constrained by limitations imposed by temperament and culture and countless other contingencies. Presumably, Paul, for example, does not imagine that Onesimus will be a new Spartacus leading a major slave uprising against the Roman Republic.<sup>17</sup> But Paul could imagine that the realities of Christian faith would lead in the direction of human equality: "There is neither slave nor free...for you are all one in Christ Jesus."<sup>18</sup> A central element of religious faith is its capacity to awaken the imagination to some new alternative futures, while foreclosing others. One of the most liberating features of faith, evidenced in the story of Onesimus, is faith's ability to open counter-cultural alternatives to view and thus empower prophetic action.

Fourth, this story of the return of Onesimus shows the power of love's persuasion as opposed to the methods of coercion. Of course, from the perspective of lockstep determinism there might be little or no ethically significant difference between coercive force and choices the decision maker falsely imagines are her or his own. All would be equally determined. But our story depicts a different reality—a world in which choices made freely are identified as the way of neighbor love. Paul claims the authority to command that Philemon accept his returning slave. But Paul prefers to encourage Philemon to act voluntarily because of love. American gangster, Al Capone, purportedly said, "You can get much further with a kind word and a gun than you can with a kind word alone."<sup>19</sup> However true this may be in the ordinary world of people seeking dominance, it is not true of the way of Jesus, who taught his followers,

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever

wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.<sup>20</sup>

Such freedom is characterized by resistance to being coerced and renunciation of using coercion as a means of causing others to make what are taken to be good and right choices. As the story of Philemon illustrates, the way of neighbor love is that of persuasion, not the way of coercion or manipulation.

Fifth, and finally, freedom for neighbor love requires that the believers take responsibility for their decisions, the actions based on those decisions, and the results of those actions. Christian thinkers, such as H. Richard Niebuhr, have described the capacity to respond to God's love and to take responsibility for one's actions as essential to the ethics of Christian faith. Instead of posing the central questions of ethics in terms of deontological duties or teleological goals, Niebuhr suggests that "we consider our life of response to action upon us with the question in mind, 'To whom or what am I responsible and in what community of interaction am I myself.'"<sup>21</sup> Whatever else is said about the kind of freedom essential for Christian ethics, it must be sufficient freedom to enable the person to respond to the love of the Creator and to accept responsibility for expressing that love to other persons. Followers of Jesus affirm that they are gratefully responsible for sharing the transformational love of God they have received. Here we may benefit from quoting Philip Clayton, who describes the

features of humanity that reflect the divine nature: humanity's moral nature, its rationality, self-consciousness, responsibility to others and to the earth—and its freedom. . . . Freedom is the leitmotiv of theological anthropology, the theory of personhood: we are free to worship God; we are free to make rational and moral decisions; and we are free to turn away from God, to alter the image that was created within us.<sup>22</sup>

The Creator who made a universe suitable for and nurtured by *agapē* is the Guarantor of the freedom needed for neighbor love. ■

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*Originally prepared for the Conference "What's with Free Will?: Ethics and Religion after Neuroscience, May 19-20, 2017, Loma Linda University.*

## Footnotes:

1. Readers of Daniel Dennett will recognize that I have adapted this phrase from his *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984 and 2015).
2. Matthew 22:39; all biblical quotations are from the New International Version.
3. Philemon 10.
4. Philemon 12; the expression in Greek is ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα or "my bowels," a then-common reference to the seat of a person's emotions.
5. Philemon 5.
6. Philemon 8–9; the Greek ἐπιτάσσειν is "to enjoin" or "to command" instead of which Paul asks Philemon to act διὰ τὴν ἀγάπην or "because of love."
7. Philemon 12, emphasis added.
8. Philemon 17.
9. Philemon 16.
10. Colossians 4:9.
11. My understanding of *agapē* (Greek ἀγάπη) has been most influenced by Anders Nygren, *Agapē and Eros* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953).
12. Philemon 21.
13. Matthew 5:44.
14. 1 John 4:19.
15. 1 Corinthians 12:27.
16. Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken."
17. Spartacus (111–71 BC) was a Thracian gladiator who was one of the escaped slave leaders in the Third Servile War, a major slave revolt against the Roman Republic.
18. Galatians 3:28.
19. The attribution of these oft-quoted lines to Al Capone is apparently an erroneous bit of American folklore. Standup comedian, Irwin Corey, claims to be the source. See <http://www.mylcaponemuseum.com/id211.htm>.
20. Matthew 20:25–28.
21. H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 68.
22. Philip Clayton, *God and Contemporary Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 37.



## Hospitality Begins at Home: Seventh-day Adventist Churches Craft Welcoming Statements

**T**he Seventh-day Adventist Church has officially published many encouraging statements welcoming all people.

*“As imitators of Jesus we welcome all people, inviting them into our faith communities and sacrificially serving them. . . . Modeling the love of Jesus Christ, Adventists welcome people from all walks of life to join them for Sabbath School, the worship service, the communion service, Bible study groups, and other church-based activities.”*

—North American Division Statement on Human Sexuality (Nov. 2, 2015)

*“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. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all.”*

—Seventh-day Adventist Church Fundamental Belief “Unity in Christ”

In practice, however, Adventist churches at times have been exclusive and repellent. We have closed doors to people who didn’t behave like us or think like us or look like us. Sometimes we have cared more about being right than about being kind. We have confused acceptance with agreement. We have been too motivated by fear. We have turned away thirsty seekers of the free water of life.

Now is the time to be more intentional concerning the openness and warmth of our local church climates. As important as a mission or vision, a welcoming statement gives the church a face.

Below is a list of Seventh-day Adventist churches that have published a church welcoming statement. The breadth and richness of approaches is inspiring. The list comes from the website (<https://adventistchurchwelcom->

[ingstatements.org/](https://adventistchurchwelcomingstatements.org/)) where statements from 21 different churches may be read.

What about your church? Do you have a welcoming statement to share? Would you like to create one as an act of hospitality and neighbor love?

### Advent Hope, New York, NY

Worshipping God together is an opportunity to meet one another as we meet the God who welcomes us all. We exist as a Church to live in loving, worshipful relationship with God and in loving community with all members of the human family. We gather every Saturday morning to practice this way of being in the world, taking time to be present to God, who is always present to us, and to be present to one another. We believe that the good news of welcome, reconciliation and healing through Jesus is for everyone; it changes us and changes the world. So, wherever you are in your spiritual journey, you are welcome here. We value diversity because we are all reflections of God’s image, an essential part of a shared story. Join us as we rehearse this story, pray, give thanks, lament, question, and learn to love together.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath day of the Lord your God . . .

Why Saturdays? Embracing the teaching of the ten commandments, Seventh-day Adventists recognize Saturday, the seventh day, as the Sabbath. This practice is derived specifically from the Fourth Commandment found in Exodus 20:8–11, which calls for us to work the first six days of the week and to rest on the seventh. In celebrating the Sabbath, we aspire to follow Jesus’ own example in this practice, observing Friday night sundown

to sunset on Saturday night as a time to rest and be present to God and one another.

Adventists observe the Sabbath in a variety of ways. We refrain from work and the distractions of media and commerce. Participation in Saturday-morning Bible studies and worship services attends us to God and God's work in the world. We celebrate life as the creation of God by enjoying time with friends and family and taking in the beauty of the natural world. Outdoor activities are a favorite way of remembering and celebrating God's creative work on the Sabbath. Most importantly, Sabbath offers the gift of peace. We are reminded in resting that God has made peace with humanity through the Jesus Christ; and that peace extends to all our brothers and sisters in the human family. The divine gift of our reconciliation with a God who never stops loving us makes our reconciliation with one another possible as well. In a world so often filled with anxiety and division, the Sabbath affords us the opportunity to rest in the peace of God.

### **Central Coast, Wyong, New South Wales**

The Central Coast Community Church is a community of people who are on a journey together. We believe passionately that Jesus Christ, the Carpenter of Nazareth and the Creator of this world, makes a fantastic difference in our lives. Knowing Him makes our individual life stories make sense within His story.

Everyone is welcome at our church. We hope that especially those who have had no religious or church background feel loved, accepted, and forgiven amongst us. We come from a rich, varied background. Some are from a religious background, which can be both positive and negative. Others have little or no religious heritage. It is fantastic; we are on a journey of discovery and we get to journey together.

You will be challenged at our church. Forget the religious trappings, rituals, taboos, or just playing church. We are a church that is a safe place to hear and experience a dangerous message. The message is that Jesus created us because He loved us. If we allow Him into our lives, amazing things will happen.

As a community, we are learning what it means to live a life with Jesus at the center of our existence. As His disciples, we want to be constantly changing and growing with Jesus Christ. Come, check us out. We are not perfect, far from it. Come join our story, maybe it is your

story as well.

The Central Coast Community Church is proud to be a part of the world-wide Seventh-day Adventist Church. Being part of this movement allows us the full privileges of a church that is committed to Jesus Christ, Biblical truth, and seeing souls won to the kingdom before Christ's soon coming.

### **Charlottesville, VA**

The Charlottesville Seventh-day Adventist Church welcomes you and people of every race, appearance, belief system, sexual orientation, nation, gender, economic level, age, and ability.

Our vision is to be a faith community where all people experience grace, find wholeness, and become great lovers for God.

We would love to have you join our family where our mission is to embody the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. To learn more about what we believe you can visit our About Us page. Please join us for Bible study, worship, prayer, and fellowship.

### **Colorado Springs, CO**

At Central we want you to know that no matter who you are, you are welcome to worship with us and explore issues of faith and life. So, if you are married, single, widowed, or divorced, you are welcome. If you are a hardcore believer or a jaded skeptic, there is a place at the table for you. No matter your orientation or dis-orientation in life, we welcome you to journey with us. We welcome all nationalities and ethnic groups, as well as all socio-economic classes. In this way, we feel we are living the Jesus lifestyle. So, come and join us on this exciting journey we call life and faith.

*First Time Visit? Here's What to Expect.*

Visiting a new church for the first time can be overwhelming, especially if you did not grow up attending church. Sometimes church can seem like a closed society, and unless you know the unwritten rules you will feel awkward about showing up. Questions arise such as where do I park? What door do I go in? What kind of clothes should I wear? When am I supposed to kneel or stand? Which class do I take my kids to? Is this a safe place or are the people a little off? I know the feeling. Even though I have attended church for thirty years, I still get nervous attending a new church for all of the above reasons.

**We extend  
a special  
welcome to  
those who  
are single,  
married,  
divorced,  
gay, filthy  
rich, or dirt  
poor—with  
crying  
newborns,  
skinny as  
a rail, or  
could afford  
to lose a  
few pounds.**

At Central, we want to take all the fear and uncertainty out of attending church. Church should be an enjoyable experience, not a painful one. So, we want our guests and first-time visitors to know that at Central you will find a loving and accepting church, where you are welcome to come just as you are. No need to dress up or dress down. More important than the clothes is the heart. And only God knows your heart.

You can park anywhere you like in the main parking lot or on one of the side streets. If you come later, you will have to look for a spot on one of the side streets. The main entrance is on the north side of the church where you will find two big glass doors and a small atrium. Once inside you will be greeted by warm and caring people, just like yourself. If you need assistance, they can direct you to the classes or restrooms.

We have Bible classes for all ages from infants to adults. Just ask one of the greeters in the main foyer and they will help you find the right class. Because people are diverse, so too is our congregation of about 400. We have all age and ethnic groups represented. We do not focus on any one demographic but try to make Central a safe place for worship and fellowship for all people and all ages. Our worship service reflects this diversity also. Parts of the service are traditional and other parts are very contemporary. The music rotates between traditional and contemporary from week to week. We have a children's story during the service as one way to minister to our children. The sermons are Bible based, practical, and relevant. Three times a month, we have a fellowship meal after church, and a couple times a year we have big social events that allow us to get together for fun outside of the church. When you visit, do not be surprised if people try to learn your name. One of our big values at Central is making connections.

Central is a Seventh-day Adventist congregation but welcomes everyone. Whether you are a lifelong Adventist or just brand new to Christianity, or if you are an atheist or spiritual seek-

er, it makes no difference. Jesus welcomed all people into His presence and we do the same.

### **Florida Hospital Church, Orlando, FL**

FHC is a diverse congregation in Orlando, Florida. Our mission is loving people into a life-long friendship with God.

We are . . . single, married, divorced, female, male, straight, LGBTQ, poor, rich, old, young. At FHC, we welcome any member of the community to join us in worship. We don't care if you're a practicing Christian or got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake. We want to offer you grace and peace as you begin or continue your faith journey.

We are FHC, and we're all welcome here.

### **Dallas First Church, Dallas, TX**

Welcome to the Dallas First Church of Seventh-day Adventists (DFC) located in Uptown Dallas! DFC is a Christian community of believers that is made up of a rich and diverse tapestry of cultures and backgrounds.

As you get to know us, you'll discover that our shared values include pursuing a deeper and more intimate knowledge of God, meeting the needs of both our congregation and our community, leading others into a vibrant relationship with Christ and living out a calling to excellence in every area of life and ministry.

You'll also discover that we enjoy celebrating hope and wholeness, through an emphasis on healthy living, the arts and healthy relationships; as well as our desire to extend our DFC family beyond the borders of our city with the help of media technologies.

Finally, you'll discover that we value Christian education with an equally strong emphasis on spiritual, emotional, physical and academic development through our Dallas Christian Academy.

In the end, DFC exists to provide a place of belonging where people from all walks of life can grow and develop and where they can be connected to God, to each other, and to their community. If you're looking for such a place,



you've found it. Welcome home. Welcome to the Dallas First Church!

We encourage you to pay us a visit in person, become our friend on Facebook, join our worship services and special events online, or send us an email and let us know how we can get to know you better and minister to your needs. We're looking forward to meeting you!

## **Gardena Genesis Community, Gardena, CA**

Gardena Genesis Community Church is deeply committed to the incarnational manifestation of *God's* word in each child, youth, young adult, professional, and family member's life, as well as the well-being of residents in the city of Gardena California. We invite you to join us in our exciting journey at one of our services (11am traditional or 3pm Contemporary-Gospel fusion), live-stream, our Daily Devotionals, or at one of our awesome events. Every engaging experience will be intentional to lead each person into a closer relationship with Christ.

## **Healing Hope, Portland, OR**

We are a community of committed believers in Jesus Christ, living expectantly in the light of His love and His soon coming, and seeking to serve the world around us.

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, gay, filthy rich, or dirt poor—with crying newborns, skinny as a rail, or could afford to lose a few pounds—if you can sing like Andrea Bocelli or can't carry a tune in a bucket—"just browsing," just woke up, or just got out of jail—over sixty but not grown up yet—teenagers who are growing up too fast—those who are in recovery or still addicted—if you're having problems or you're down in the dumps or if you don't like "organized religion," (we've been there too)—those who are inked, pierced, or both—those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down your throat as a kid, or got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake—tourists, seekers and doubters, bleeding hearts ... and you!

We don't care if you haven't been in church in a long time. Our church is the place for you. No matter what you call family we want you to become an intimate part of our church family.

## **Summit Northwest Ministries, Post Falls, ID**

In 2004, a small group of committed Christians needed to do something different. Not satisfied with doing

church as they had always done it, this group started over. All they had was a bit of equipment, a few friends, and a dream.

This dream was of a church where hurting, confused, depressed, and disenfranchised people could find hope, encouragement, love, acceptance, and salvation.

Summit Northwest Ministries started out in a couple of storefronts in the Post Falls Outlet Mall and soon expanded to three storefronts. Growth and economics mandated a move from the Outlet Malls to a rented church facility on the corner of Hwy 290 and Idaho Road in Newman Lake, WA. Very quickly it was evident that even this new location had become too small, and plans were underway to address the increased growth. Initially the plan was to build on church owned property in Post Falls, but then an opportunity opened up to purchase the old Post Falls Theater. After considering the costs of building new versus remodeling the existing theater building, the decision was made to purchase the theater and remodel it for use as a church. The initial phase of remodeling was completed in November 2013, which allowed Summit Northwest Ministries to Worship in their own facility for the very first time. Even though the location and the attendance changed (100% increase in a few short years), the passion to reach hurting, confused, depressed, and disenfranchised people for Christ never diminished.

In fact, this desire to "share our loving God with hurting people so that they can experience His transforming power in their lives" has become our statement of purpose and the driving force behind what we do. Summit Northwest Ministries is not content to just be a country club church; our goal is to make a difference in people's lives.

## **Worthington, OH**

In the Worthington Seventh-day Adventist Church we have vowed to become a *Treasury of God's Grace*; a place where people feel safe to laugh, to cry and to be real!

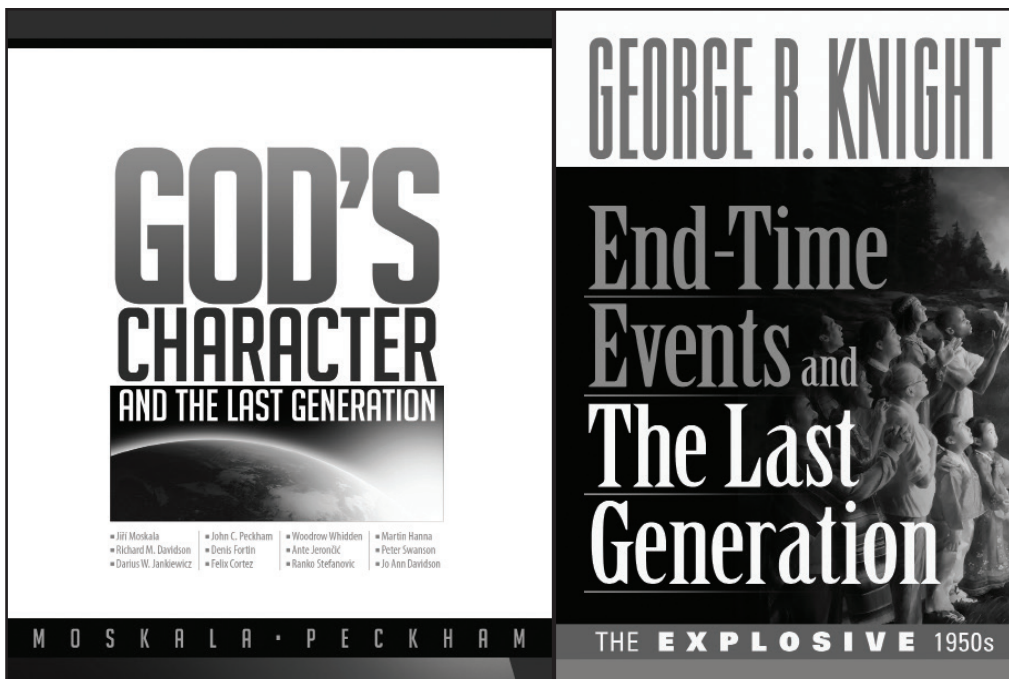
We are *passionate* about *the mission of Jesus*; to *love* God, *serve* others, *disciple* all, and *mentor* the young.

Here we believe that our own *passionate spirituality* is the means through which we are called to spark faith in the hearts of others and, in particular, in the hearts of our children and grandchildren.

In our church we believe that your life was never meant to be lived alone and that *love* can write your story. ■

# Speaking Out Against Last Generation Theology

BY REINDER BRUINSMA



Since He was exactly like us and did not sin, this is a state we can also reach. The cross of Christ did not complete the atonement, but the victory over sin by the “last generation” is the final phase of the atonement, when God will be vindicated and Satan is totally defeated.

This Last Generation Theology has not gone unchallenged by theologians and church leaders in past decades, but it seems that presently the dangers of this alternative theology

Few statements by Ellen G. White have had such a broad and lasting impact as the following few lines in her book *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 69: “Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”

This statement became one of the cornerstones of a theological stream that has a history of well over a century; it became more pronounced in the 1950s and '60s and continues to have a large following among today's Seventh-day Adventists. This theological current is known as Last Generation Theology, commonly abbreviated as LGT. Its supporters believe that Christ will not return until there is a group of believers who have reached perfection. Jesus, they say, had the same human nature as Adam had, after his “fall” into sin, and as we have today.

are evoking stronger reactions from different quarters than we have seen so far. Two books on the topic have recently been published, and one more is on the way.

Pacific Press has published a book by George Knight, a prolific author and one of Adventism's foremost historians, entitled *End-Time Events and the Last Generation*.<sup>1</sup> The same publishing house has also just released a book by fourteen theologians who teach at Andrews University. This work carries the title *God's Character and the Last Generation*.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, Oak and Acorn Publishing will, before too long, add a publication on the very same topic, written by the author of this article, which will be called *In All Humility: Saying NO to Last Generation Theology*.<sup>3</sup>

## End-Time Events and the Last Generation

Professor George Knight's book is relatively short with just 129 pages, but it provides an excellent overview of the various aspects of Last Generation Theology. Knight,

as always, writes with passion. And, as do several of his other books, this one also reflects his own personal history. After becoming an Adventist, he desperately tried to be perfect and became a firm believer in LGT. But after some years he vigorously rejected this approach to his Adventist faith.

Knight gives a succinct but clear description of the historical background of LGT, with a focus on the person and ideas of M. L. Andreasen, one of Adventism's most influential theologians in the mid-twentieth century. However, Knight also describes the earlier phase of LGT thinking and the post-Andreasen developments—in particular the controversy around the book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*.

The subtitle of Knight's book, *The Explosive 1950s*, underlines his conviction that several of the current theological challenges of the Adventist Church have their roots in the "explosive" 1950s. He deals with the most significant aspects of LGT but tells the reader his treatment is far from exhaustive. Nonetheless, it gives a good overview. I found his conclusion quite convincing, that most of the theological turmoil in Adventist history—in which LGT plays an important role—is the underlying, unceasing tension between those who want to stress the similarities between Adventism and traditional Christianity, and those who believe the unique features of Adventism must receive primary attention.

### **God's Character and the Last Generation**

As expected, there is a fair amount of overlap between Knight's book and the much more expansive treatment of Last Generation Theology by the Andrews University scholars. The former is well documented, but the Andrews scholars' book is even more heavily footnoted. This feature, and the in-depth treatment of most of the relevant issues, gives the book a more academic flavor than Knight's volume has. The books also differ in tone; Knight is much more combative than the Andrews group, which, we are told, does not want to be polemic, "but aims to

provide a positive, constructive approach to the issues concerned with LGT."<sup>4</sup>

The earlier chapters cover subtopics such as the scope of the "great controversy," the nature of sin, and justification and sanctification. Later chapters focus on Christ as our Savior and our Example, the significance of the cross, and the role and meaning of the atonement. The authors point to the weaknesses and errors of LGT in all these areas. They lay stress on the inadequate LGT view of human sinfulness and on the faulty concept that Christ's death on the cross did not mean the final victory of Christ over Satan and the final vindication of God's character before the universe. They leave no doubt that the LGT concept of a last-day perfect elite, that must play a decisive role in the ultimate vindication of God, is a serious heresy that places a dangerous emphasis on the human contribution to the plan of salvation and "downgrades and reduces the meaning and efficacy of Christ's death on the cross."<sup>5</sup> The chapters by Jo Ann Davidson about the so-called "delay" in Christ's Second Coming, and that of Ranko Stefanovic on the identity of the last generation, are quite insightful.

I found, however, two other chapters especially worthwhile, and each of them would, I believe, merit expansion into a book-length publication. Ante Jeronicic, in his chapter on "Apocalyptic Identity and Last Generation Lifestyle," [reproduced in this issue] suggests that the Adventist movement is in danger of "becoming progressively unapocalyptic" in its thinking and in its lifestyle, and as a result the church is threatened with being "drained of its vitality."<sup>6</sup> He argues that the Christian message must retain an apocalyptic framework, which is more than a preoccupation with final events. This serves as a lens through which we see things. The problem is that some get a distorted picture by using a different lens, as is the case with the LGT supporters who accentuate particular aspects while totally muting other elements.

Peter Swanson's chapter is also a most important contribution, which even by itself

**The role of humans in the cosmic drama is not to add anything to God's victory, but is a missional role of proclamation and witnessing to the truth of God's unimpeachable character and law of love.**

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would make this book worth purchasing. It is entitled "Inside the Mind of a Struggling Saint: the Psychology of Perception." Swanson zooms in on the question of how a person can know whether he/she has reached perfection; on the obsessive behavior that may be associated with the quest for perfection; and on the dangers of a "pathological perfectionism" that results from "unrealistic, self-imposed or externally prescribed expectations."<sup>7</sup> In the final chapter, an important point is once more clearly enunciated: "The role of humans in the cosmic drama is not to add anything to God's victory, but is a missional role of proclamation and witnessing to the truth of God's unimpeachable character and law of love."<sup>8</sup>

### **In All Humility: Saying No to Last Generation Theology**

When I wrote my contribution to the LGT debate I was not aware of the preparations of the two books I briefly reviewed above. When I began to read the manuscript files I was somewhat worried that my book would be superfluous. However, after carefully comparing the content of the three books, I think I can truthfully claim that what I wrote adds a few important dimensions to the discussion. If Knight's book is rather polemic, and the book of the Andrews scholars is more of an academic nature, my book may be characterized as more pastoral. The title indicates that, like the other writers, I respond with an unequivocal "no" to the claims of Last Generations Theology. But the title also includes a term that forms the basis of my approach: humility. It seems to me that a major problem with the supporters of LGT is that they claim to know far too much. They are not modest enough to realize that, this side of the Second Coming, there are lots of things that will remain unknown. There are mysteries that human minds cannot fully fathom. One of these mysteries is that of the human nature of Christ. It is one of the central tenets of LGT that Christ was exactly like we are. Indeed, in Christ, God became man, but He did so in a

manner that is totally unique and beyond our human comprehension.

My book devotes a chapter to the so-called "shaking," that according to many LGT supporters will eliminate large numbers of church members who do not belong to the end-time elite of "true" Christ-like believers. Like the other two books, *In All Humility* outlines the history of Last Generation Theology and the various key issues involved, but I focus more than these on the dangers of legalism that are never far away when people believe they can become perfect. And my book places special emphasis on how we may experience God's work of grace in us.

The fact that almost simultaneously three books are published that warn against Last Generation Theology is a telling sign that a major segment of the church is beginning to see, perhaps more clearly than in the recent past, that LGT undermines some of the very foundational gospel truths and leads Adventist Christians in a sectarian and legalistic direction, in which the role of the "true" believers is accentuated at the expense of the unique work of our Lord Jesus Christ! ■

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**Reinder Bruinsma** is a native of the Netherlands who retired in 2007 after a long career in pastoral, editorial, teaching, and church leadership assignments in Europe, the United States, and West Africa. After receiving a bachelor's degree from Newbold College and a master's degree from Andrews University, he earned a Bachelor of Divinity with honors and a doctorate in church history from the University of London. He recently interrupted his retirement to serve as the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Belgium and Luxembourg. He has authored more than twenty books, in Dutch and English, and a large number of articles. He has also translated various theological books from Dutch into English.

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