

Death as Sleep: A Theological Metaphor?

BY WILSON PAROSCHI

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was influenced in its belief of conditional immortality¹ by some in the Millerite movement, particularly George Storrs, one of its most influential leaders in the late summer and early fall of 1844.² It was around 1840 that Storrs, still a Methodist preacher, became convinced that humans are not immortal, but receive immortality only through the condition of faith in Christ at the resurrection. As a corollary, he also believed that the wicked who live and die in their sins will be punished through fire and utterly exterminated, rather than live in suffering forever.³ Storrs strongly emphasized that death is a total deprivation of life, but most of his arguments are directed against the traditional belief in hell as a place of eternal torment. When he talks about the righteous, he wants to balance his statements in view of the resurrection promise, and he does that by means of the sleep concept. He says, “When men die they ‘sleep in the dust of the earth’ (Dan 12:2). They wake not till Christ returns ‘from heaven;’ or till the last trump.”⁴

As early as 1842, Storrs’ conditionalist ideas were accepted by Calvin French, a Baptist minister who also joined the Millerites. Despite his acceptance of the aberrant view that Christians can become so holy as to be above sin,⁵ French was able to advance the arguments concerning death as an unconscious state. And in order to do that, he also appealed—rather extensively—to the biblical metaphors of sleep and rest, arguing that “the righteous and the wicked rest together in the grave in an unconscious state until they hear the voice of the Son of man, and come forth to the resurrection of life or damnation,” and that “they who sleep in Jesus will awake at the first resurrection,” while “the rest of the dead will awake at the second resurrection, and appear before Christ at the

judgment.”⁶ This seems to have been one of the first occurrences among the 1840s Adventists of the expression “sleep in Jesus,”⁷ which would become rather popular even among the later SDAs,⁸ especially in obituary notices. Storrs’ biographical sketch published as an introduction to the 1855 edition of his *Six Sermons* so refers to Charles Fitch’s sudden death in October 1844: “He fell asleep in Jesus, in the glorious hope of soon awaking at the voice of the Son of God.”⁹ This mention of Fitch, one of the top Millerites, is fitting inasmuch as he became Storrs’ first ministerial convert to the doctrine of conditional immortality within the Adventist ranks while the other movement leaders strongly rejected it.

With the fragmentation of the Millerite movement after October 22, 1844, several Adventist groups continued to believe in conditionalism and annihilationism¹⁰; this¹¹ was the case with Sabbatarian Adventism, to whom the concept of sleep started playing a central role in their understanding of death vis-à-vis the resurrection. In their first publication, in 1847, James White refers twice to the “sleeping saints” who will be raised by Jesus Himself at His second coming.¹² Ellen G. White would use this expression at least fifteen times in her own writings. In fact, in the following years, she would make an extensive use of the concept of death as sleep in its various forms. Besides speaking of the “sleeping saints” who will be “kept in safety” until the resurrection morning, when they will be “awakened” by the voice of the Son of God and “called forth” from their graves, she also refers dozens of times to those who are now silently and for a little while sleeping/resting in their graves. She uses the expression even for herself, as in her diary entry for December 26, 1904: “May the Lord spare my life to do this work before I shall rest in the grave, is my prayer.”¹³ Two years later she would write in a letter: “I am waiting my summons to give up my work, and rest in the grave.”¹⁴

In a biographical article published in 1876, Mrs. White makes two surprising statements.

After reporting a conversation her mother had had with another woman in reference to a discourse they had heard on the nature of death, she came to her mother and, deeply impressed by the comments,

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started inquiring about the issue. At a certain point she asked: “But, mother ... do you really believe that the soul sleeps in the grave until the resurrection?” A few paragraphs later, when describing the impact that this new doctrine had on her, she says: “This new and beautiful faith taught me the reason that inspired writers had dwelt so much upon the resurrection of the body, it was because the entire being was slumbering in the grave.”¹⁵ Even though this episode took place more than thirty years earlier, in 1843 when Ellen White (then Ellen Harmon) was only sixteen, she seems to be reproducing the very language she used at that time, equating the *soul* sleeping in the grave with “the entire being.” Nowhere else does she speak of the *soul* sleeping, resting or slumbering in the grave. She seems to have avoided talking about dead souls. The¹⁶ closest she comes to the idea of a dead soul is when she speaks figuratively of sinners who have not yet accepted Jesus as their Savior. “A soul without Christ,” she says, “is like a body without blood; it is dead. It may have the appearance of spiritual life; it may perform certain ceremonies in religious matters like a machine; but it has no spiritual life.”¹⁷

In addition to Ellen G. White’s writings, other Adventist works also use biblical language to describe the state of the dead as a “sleep.”¹⁸ To those who were unfamiliar with the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of biblical anthropology whereby “man is a unit—that soul and body are not separate beings,” as R. F. Cottrell expressed it in 1865,¹⁹ the insistence on the concept of death as a sleep was open to misunderstanding. “We do not,” he said, “teach that ‘the soul sleeps *with the body* in the grave.’”²⁰ One modern Adventist reference work brings out this distinction somewhat differently. After listing seven points of comparison between sleep and death in order to demonstrate why the former “is a fitting *symbol*” of the latter, it goes on to equate the person’s “spirit” with “the character ... which God preserves until the resurrection.”²¹ Less cautious is the suggestion by one that soul-sleep is taught in the NT.²² Another is only a little more careful: “death is not complete annihilation—it is only a state of temporary unconsciousness while the person awaits the resurrection. The Bible repeatedly calls this intermediate state a sleep.”²³ Such statements are liable to be misunderstood by those holding to a dualistic anthropology. To be fair, it should also be pointed out that the *official* statements of Adventist beliefs have never used such terminology.²⁴

Death as Sleep in Scripture

In Scripture sleep is used both literally and metaphorically. When it is used literally, which is the most common usage, it simply denotes the physical act of sleeping as part of human experience (Gen 28:11; Job 33:15; Dan 10:9; Luke 9:32). In its metaphorical sense, sleep may denote spiritual dullness, indolence, or lack of vigilance. In Proverbs laziness, indolence, and sleep are used in a quasi-moral way to depict the negligent person who refuses to acknowledge the reasonable needs of human life (6:9–11; 19:15; 20:13; 24:33, 34). In Isaiah (29:10) and frequently in the NT (Mark 13:35, 36; Rom 13:11; Eph 5:14; 1 Thess 5:6–9) sleep describes a spiritual lethargy that must be thrown away in order to remain awake in this evil world. When it is used in this way, the context is very often eschatological, warning us to be alert to the signs of the times.

Sleep (as well as lying-down and rest) is also used as a meta-

phor for death.²⁵ This is common in the OT (1 Kgs 1:21; Job 7:21; 14:12; Ps 13:3; Jer 51:39, 57; Dan 12:2). The expression “slept [or rested] with his fathers” is a fixed formula in reference to the death of Israel’s and Judah’s kings; it is used 36 times in the books of 1–2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. The metaphor is also found in the NT. When Jesus rose from the dead, we are told that “many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised” (Matt 27:52). After being stoned, Luke records that Stephen knelt down, said his last words, and “fell asleep” (Acts 7:60). By the time of his third missionary journey, Paul says that some of those “more than five hundred” who had



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seen the resurrected Christ had already “fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:6). He also refers to those who “have fallen asleep in Christ” (vs. 18), to the resurrection of Christ as the “first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (vs. 20), and to his hope that not all of them would “fall asleep” before Jesus’ second coming (vs. 51). In 1 Thessalonians, while addressing the situation of the brothers and sisters who had already died, Paul refers to them three times as if they had “fallen asleep” (4:13–15). Other NT references are Acts 13:36, 1 Corinthians 7:39, 11:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:10, and 2 Peter 3:4.²⁶

According to the Gospels Jesus also used this metaphor in two different occasions. The first was in relation to Jairus’ daughter, who had just succumbed to her illness and died (Mark 5:35).²⁷ Upon His arrival at Jairus’ home, Jesus saw the commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly (vs. 38), after which he said: “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead, but sleeping” (vs. 39). The mourners responded cynically to Jesus and ridiculed Him (vs. 40). They could not make sense of His words, which seemed to imply that the girl was literally sleeping, while they knew that she was dead (vs. 35; cf. Luke 8:53).²⁸

The second occasion was when Lazarus died. When he was informed that the one he loved was sick (John 11:3), Jesus did not respond immediately. Instead he stayed two more days in the place where he was (vs. 6), time long enough for Lazarus to die. When he finally decided to go to Bethany, he said: “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awake him” (vs. 11). This confused the disciples, who took Jesus’s words at their face value, concluding that sleep would be good for Lazarus (vs. 12), and Jesus would not have to risk His life by going to Judea (cf. vs. 7, 8). The evangelist then intervenes and informs the reader that the disciples did not understand Jesus correctly. As in the case of Jairus’s daughter, Jesus was not speaking about sleep in its normal sense, but figuratively as a reference to death (vs. 13). It was necessary for Him to tell them plainly: “Lazarus is dead” (vs. 14).²⁹

Thus, in both stories Jesus resorted to the sleep metaphor to refer to death, and in both of them he was greatly misunderstood. The misunderstanding, however, was not because the metaphor was a novelty introduced by Him, but because he used it in an unconventional way: not simply to describe death itself, but to deny its irrevocable character. That the metaphor of death as sleep was not alien to Jesus’ contemporaries can be argued not only from its usage in the OT, but also from its recurrence in both Jewish literature³⁰ and Jewish tomb inscriptions in Greek and Latin, as Craig S. Keener has shown.³¹ As a matter of fact, death as sleep was also common in Greco-Roman literature.³² Because of their resemblance, Sleep and Death were twin brothers in

popular religion.³³ This unequivocally points to the fact that sleep was (and still is in several modern cultures) a widespread metaphor for death because of their phenomenological resemblance,³⁴ that is, death looks like a sleep and is therefore described as such.³⁵

Before any theological conclusion be drawn from the presence of this metaphor in Scripture, therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge the simple fact that the use of sleep in reference to death is not restricted to Judaism and Christianity, and that such a use owes its origin to the phenomenological similarity of both. If the mourners (in Jairus’ daughter’s story) and the disciples (in Lazarus’ story) misunderstood Jesus it was only because in both cases he used sleep to describe the tragedy of death in light of the approaching miracle, something they had no means to predict or reasons to expect. On a rhetorical level, both statements of Jesus (Mark 5:39; John 11:11) are clear examples of irony, in which what is meant is different from what is said.³⁶ That is to say, in no statement is Jesus rejecting the notion of a real death, “but rather . . . superimposing upon it a secondary . . . frame of reference. Death is not final, not ultimate.”³⁷ There is an interesting rabbinic parallel to this concept in *Genesis Rabbah*, where Jacob is told, “Thou shalt sleep, but thou shalt not die.”³⁸ The contrast in this passage is clearly between physical death and the resurrection, and it is this same contrast that appears in Mark 5:39 and John 11:11.

These are two important points: sleep is not an essential description of death, and on the lips of Jesus it only highlights the reality—and the imminence—of the resurrection (cf. John 11:23–25). This means that it is not appropriate to use sleep to understand the nature of death and by extension the condition in death or the ontological *state* of the dead. Neither the metaphor itself nor its use by Jesus allows such a procedure. Death is not sleep. One may resemble the other, but they are in fact two different things. As Bruce Reichenbach insists, “the metaphor ‘sleep’ . . . does not describe the ontological state of the dead, but rather refers to the possibility of the deceased: that though they now no longer exist, by the power of God they can be recreated to live again.”³⁹

The biblical description of death is that of termination or annihilation (Job 7:21; 14:12). When the person dies, nothing remains, as the breath of life returns to God and the body decomposes to the basic elements from which it was formed (Ps 146:4; Eccl 12:7; cf. Gen 2:7; Job 33:4; Eccl 9:5, 6, 10). As Haynes explains, “the union of two things, earth and breath, served to create a third thing, soul. The continued existence of the soul depended wholly upon the continued union of breath and body. When that union is broken and the breath separates from the body, as it does at death, the soul ceases to exist.”⁴⁰ Samuel Bacchiocchi puts it this way:

death is presented in Scripture “as a return to the elements from which man originally was made. . . . [Death is] the termination of one’s life, which results in the decay and decomposition of the body. . . . [It means] the deprivation or cessation of life.”⁴¹ While this cannot really be equated with sleep, the biblical metaphor remains important to the Adventist understanding of death.⁴² More questionable are statements that seem to endorse the soul-sleep concept, as if death were an intermediate state in which the person lies inactive in the grave until the resurrection morning.⁴³

Now, there is no question that there will be a resurrection, as in the case of Jairus’ daughter, Lazarus, and several others, besides Christ Himself. Some will resurrect “to everlasting life” and some “to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2; cf. John 5:28, 29). And the resurrection to everlasting life will be possible precisely because of the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:17, 18; 1 Thess 4:14). This is also how the expression “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18; Rev 1:5) or “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20; cf. vs. 23) has traditionally been understood.⁴⁴ To use a classical statement, “the resurrection of Christ is a pledge and proof of the resurrection of His people.”⁴⁵ So the biblical teaching is that, though death means complete termination or annihilation, it is not final or definitive, except for what the Bible calls “the second death,” which refers to the final extermination of the wicked (Rev 20:11–15; 21:8). For believers, death does not have the last word (1 Cor 15:26, 54, 55; cf. Rev 2:11; 20:4, 6).

But then comes the paradox: if death means termination, resurrection is much more than an awakening. It truly means recreation. If there is nothing left, there is nothing to be awakened or to come out of the tomb. All aspects of the present life reach their end at death. The memory of the personality and character of the deceased is preserved by God.⁴⁶ Sometimes not even the bones are extant. Yet, they will live again (John 5:25, 28; 11:25; Rev 20:6). So in order to be resurrected there has to be a new creation, this time not from dust, but from heaven (cf. 1 Cor 15:47–50). There is no physical link between this life and the new life in the resurrection. “Though they no longer exist, by the power of God they can be recreated to live again”⁴⁷—a recreation out of nothing, a new life out of our annihilated and crushed life. Thus, the awakening metaphor, also frequently used in the Bible, is simply the counterpart of the sleep metaphor. One is just the logical equivalent of the other.⁴⁸ As sleep does not convey the nature of death, awakening does not express the character of resurrection.

Conclusion

The Seventh-day Adventist view of what happens at death has sometimes been misunderstood; first, because

of the way we ourselves have occasionally described our views and, second, as a result of the dualistic connotation traditionally associated with soul-sleep. It could be argued that this comes from a reading of Adventist literature unmindful of the larger context of biblical anthropology in which these statements are made. But this is no excuse for making every effort to express our understanding of the subject as clearly and completely as possible.

The sleep metaphor does not fully express the condition of human beings in death, because death means the complete cessation of life with all that that includes. Sleep is only a phenomenological description of death. Jesus employed many metaphors in order to convey the meaning of concepts beyond ordinary human understanding. When describing death as a sleep, He relates it more directly to being “awakened,” i.e., to the assurance and immediacy of the resurrection than to death itself.

Therefore, we should to use the sleep metaphor judiciously to avoid understating the seriousness of death and detracting from the uniqueness of resurrection. An exaggerated emphasis on death under “the gentle image of sleep,”⁴⁹ may fall short of conveying the real nature of both death and resurrection.

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¹The view of conditional immortality holds that (1) immortality is bestowed conditionally (e.g., through faith in Christ) on the redeemed as a gift and (2) the impenitent are not granted immortality since they experience the extinction of consciousness.

²See George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite-Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 113.

³For a short biography of Storrs and a summary of his arguments, see LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers: The Conflict of the Ages Over the Nature and Destiny of Man* (2 vols.; Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1965), 2:305–313.

⁴George Storrs, *Six Sermons on the Inquiry Is There Immortality in Sin and Suffering? Also, A Sermon on Christ the Lifegiver: or, the Faith of the Gospel* (Bible Examiner, 1855), 1:8; online: http://www.a2z.org/wtarchive/docs/1855_Six_Sermons_George_Storrs.pdf. These sermons were first published in 1841, one year before Storrs was converted to Millerism under the ministry of Charles Fitch (Knight, 194). In 1843, the *Six Sermons* were published again as part of the first number of the *Bible Examiner*, a paper edited by Storrs himself and directed to the Millerites (ibid., 196).

⁵See Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1945), 117.

⁶Calvin French, *Immortality, the Gift of God through Jesus Christ to be Given to Those Only Who Have Part in the First Resurrection* (Boston, 1842), iii; online: http://ia600707.us.archive.org/0/items/immortalitygift07fren/immortalitygift07fren_bw.pdf.

⁷While the Greek underlying the expression (which may derive

from 1 Thess 4:14 KJV), has been understood in various ways, this is not one of them. For discussion, see Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1972), 186–194. The expression “those who have fallen asleep in Christ” of 1 Cor 15:18 (cf. 1 Thess 4:16; Rev 14:13) refers to “those who were believers when they died” (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 744; cf. 355 n. 37). The verb *koimaō* occurs eighteen times in the NT, only four times in reference to literal sleep; elsewhere it is a euphemism for death (only used thus in Paul).

⁸In fact, in his 54-page pamphlet, French refers to death as sleep 35 times, fourteen of which refer to “sleep in/with Jesus/Christ.” One time he explicitly refers to the “sleep of death” and seven times he uses the expression “sleep in the dust” of Dan 12:2. 9 Storrs, 5.

¹⁰Annihilationism holds that humans cease to exist at death.

¹¹According to Knight, conditionalism and annihilationism were actually the main issues of contention among those who became known as the Albany Adventists (283–293).

¹²James White, *A Word to the “Little Flock”* (1847), 4, 24; cf. 20 (where it is used by Ellen G. White). The expression “sleeping saints” seems to have been taken from Matt 27:52.

¹³Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (21 vols.; Hagerstown, Md.: Review & Herald, 1981–1993), 14 [Nos. 1081–1135]: 223.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 262 (Letter 112, 1906).

¹⁵Ellen G. White, “Mrs. Ellen G. White: Her Life, Christian Experience, and Labors,” *The Signs of the Times* (hereinafter abbreviated *ST*), March 9, 1876 (also in *Testimonies for the Church* [9 vols.; Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948], 1:39, 40).

¹⁶“The Lord created man out of the dust of the earth. He made Adam a partaker of His life, His nature. There was breathed into him the breath of the Almighty, and he became a living soul” (Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 10 [Nos. 771–850]: 326).

¹⁷Ellen G. White, “Connection with Christ,” *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (hereinafter abbreviated *RH*), Nov. 23, 1897.

¹⁸D. M. Canright, *A History of the Doctrine of the Soul* (2d ed.; Battle Creek, Mich.: SDA Pub. Assoc., 1882). The first edition (1871) was titled *History of the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul*. J. N. Andrews, *Thoughts for the Candid* (Oakland: Pacific, 1889), 2; E. J. Waggoner, “Spirits in Prison,” *ST*, Feb 11, 1889; Uriah Smith, *Here and Hereafter* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1897), 326; A. T. Jones, “Historical Necessity of the Third’s Angel Message, No. 4,” *ST*, March 23, 1888; D. M. Canright, “A Plain Talk to the Murmurers,” *RH*, April 12, 1877; *idem*, “To Those in Doubting Castle, No. 1,” *RH*, Feb. 10, 1885.

¹⁹R. F. Cottrell, “A Very Materialistic Christianity,” *RH*, Nov. 7, 1865.

²⁰*Ibid.*, emphasis his.

²¹These are the points: “(1) Sleep is a condition of unconsciousness. . . . (2) In sleep conscious thought is dormant. . . . (3) Sleep brings an end to all the day’s activities. . . . (4) Sleep dissociates us from those who are awake, and from their activities. . . . (5) Normal sleep renders the emotions inactive. . . . (6) In sleep men do not praise God. . . . (7) Sleep is transitory and presupposes an awakening. . . .” (“Death,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* [ed. Siegfried H. Horn, rev. ed.; Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1979], 278, emphasis mine).

²²In reference to Luther, Niels-Erik A. Andreasen says that “when describing the condition of the soul between death and resurrection, he occasionally accepted the NT picture of soul sleep” (“Death: Origin, Nature, and Final Eradication,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed. Raoul Dederen [CRS 12; Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000], 339).

²³Ministerial Association of the SDA General Conference, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (2d ed.; Pacific, 2005), 390.

²⁴See the 1931 and 1980 statements of fundamental beliefs. Earlier unofficial statements were likewise careful to avoid use of the word “sleep.” They all, official and unofficial, describe death as an “unconscious state” (1980) or a “condition” (1931) or “state” (“Fundamental Principles,” *Signs of the Times*, vol. 1, no. 1, June 4, 1874, p. 3) of unconsciousness.

²⁵In the OT, when “sleep” is used metaphorically for death, the verb most often represents the Hebrew *šāḱav* (lit. “lie down”; Job 7:21; 14:12; 1 Kgs 1:21; 2:10; 11:21; etc.) or *yāšēn* (Ps 13:3; Jer 51:39, 57); the noun renders *yāšēn* (Dan 12:2). In the NT the verb translates either *katheudō* (Matt 9:24; Mark 5:39; Luke 8:52; 1 Thess 5:10) or the passive of *koimaō* (Matt 27:52; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 1 Cor 15:6, 18, 20; etc.). No noun is used with this meaning; in John 11:13, though referring back to *koimaō* in vs. 11, *koimēsis* means literal sleep. In Christian tradition, however, *koimēsis* would be extensively used for death. The Christian word “cemetery” (*koimētērion*) comes from *koimēsis* and means “place of sleep.”

²⁶Perhaps mention should also be made of Rev 6:11 and 14:13, where the death of God’s faithful people is described as resting (*anapauō*) “for a little while” or “from their labors, for their deeds follow them.” On these passages, see Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2002), 240, 241, 454, 455.

²⁷The story of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:21–43) also appears in Matthew (9:18–26) and Luke (8:40–56). Since both Matthew (9:24) and Luke (8:52) agree with Mark (5:39) regarding Jesus’s statement on the girl’s condition—the three of them say in their own way that the girl was “not dead but sleeping” (*ouk apethanen alla katheudei*)—any account would actually suit our purposes here, but Mark’s is the most extensive account.

²⁸Some argue that the girl was not dead but in coma, implying that her salvation was not from death but from premature burial (Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes* [London: Macmillan, 1952], 285, 286). This interpretation, however, does violence to the story’s flow by ignoring the messenger’s report in vs. 35, the presence of the mourners in vs. 38, and the mockery in vs. 40, besides the fact that Jesus had not yet seen the girl. In other words, if she was not dead the whole story would not make sense at all (see Werner Kelber, *Mark’s Story of Jesus* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 32, 33). Also, in Luke’s account the miracle at Jairus’ house is plainly identified as a resurrection (8:55, 56), not as a healing.

²⁹On the historical reliability of the Lazarus’ story, see Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus, the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 308, 310. After a lengthy discussion on the tradition and redaction of the story, John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (3 vols., ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:831, concludes that “the basic idea that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead does not seem to have been simply created out of thin air by the early church,” though his final conclusions are not so similar to Twelftree’s.

³⁰2 Macc 12:45; Sir 30:17; *Jub.* 23:1; 36:18; *1 En.* 89:38; *Pss. Sol.* 2:31; *L.A.B.* 3:10; *4 Ezra* 7:31, 32; *2 Bar* 11:4; 21:25; 36:11; *T. Mos.* 10:14; *L.A.E.* 48:2; *T. Dan* 7:1; *T. Iss.* 7:9; *T. Zeb.* 10:6; *Gen. Rab.* 62:2.

³¹See Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:840, 841.

³²E.g., Sophocles *Oed. sol.* 1578; Callimachus *Epigrams* 11, 18; Plutarch *Apoll.* 12, *Mor.* 107D; Propertius *Eleg.* 2.28.25; Diogenes Laertius 1.86; Ps.-Callisthenes *Alex.* 3.6.

³³Homer *Il.* 3.8; 13.231; Statius *Thebaid* 5.197–199; cf. Sophocles *Phil.* 827–829.

³⁴For further references, see Horst Balz, “ὕπνος κτλ.,” *TDNT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 8:548, 553.

³⁵In philosophy, phenomenon (*phainomenon*) is any object, fact, or occurrence as it is immediately perceived by the senses. It contrasts with what is apprehended by the intellect. The Greek verb *phainesthai* (“to seem/appear”) does not indicate whether the thing perceived is other than what it appears to be.

³⁶“In common parlance, irony is the statement of one thing with the intention of suggesting something else. . . . Irony incongruity underlines both the teachings of Jesus . . . and His fate. . . . As literature the Scriptures are filled with dramatic irony, in which the reader knows what the characters do not” (Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* [3^d ed.; Atlanta: John Knox, 2001], 88).

³⁷Jerry Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark’s Gospel* (SNTSMS 72; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 39, 40. Commenting on Mark 5:39, William L. Lane declares: “Jesus’s statement means that in spite of the girl’s real death, she has not been delivered over to the realm of death with all of its consequences” (*The Gospel of Mark* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974], 197).

³⁸*Gen. Rab.* 96:60, 61.

³⁹Bruce Reichenbach, *Is Man the Phoenix? A Study of Immortality* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1978), 185.

⁴⁰Haynes, 54.

⁴¹Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives, 1997), 138.

⁴²See the following statement: “The condition of sleep, with its apparent unconsciousness well portrays the condition in death. . . . Of all the biblical metaphors for the state of the dead, that of sleep is the most important, enabling us to speak gently and naturally about the dead in a way that does not frighten the survivors. It portrays the experience of dying as slipping into an unconscious state in which all normal mental functions such as thinking, planning, loving, hoping, and believing cease” (Andreasen, 325). Similarly: “Death is not complete annihilation—it is only a state of temporary unconsciousness while the person awaits the resurrection. The Bible repeatedly calls this intermediate state a sleep” (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, 352).

⁴³Carlyle B. Haynes, *Life, Death, and Immortality* (Nashville: Southern, 1952), 202. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957), 523.

⁴⁴See James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 97, 98.

⁴⁵Cf. Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 258 n. 134.

⁴⁶Andreasen, 317, 318. Cf. Ellen G. White: “Our personal identity is preserved in the resurrection, though not the same particles of matter or material substance as went into the grave. . . . The spirit, the character of man, is returned to God, there to be preserved. In the resurrection every man will have this own character. . . . The same form will come forth. . . . It lives again bearing the same individuality of features. . . . There is no law of God in nature which shows that God gives back the same identical particles of

matter which composed the body before death. God shall give the righteous dead a body that will please Him” (*The SDA Bible Commentary* [7 vols.; rev. ed.; ed. Francis D. Nichol; Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1980], 6:1093).

⁴⁷Bruce Reichenbach, *Is Man the Phoenix? A Study of Immortality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian University Press, 1978), 185.

⁴⁸“There is harmony and symmetry in the expressions ‘sleeping’ and ‘awakening’ as used in the Bible for going into and coming out of . . . death” (Bacchiocchi, 143).

⁴⁹See Andreasen, 325.

Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet, An Article Review

BY MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

This article analyzes the recent publication titled *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*,¹ which came out as a result of a conference on Ellen G. White held in 2009, in Portland, Maine. Approximately forty scholars, including some prominent scholars of American Religion, participated in the meeting. Afterward, Terrie Aamodt, Ronald L. Numbers, and the late Gary Land compiled some of the best papers into the present volume. While some critical historians may find this book to be too sympathetic of a portrait, others may have a different opinion.

While this is a significant milestone for Ellen G. White studies, we should not confuse this collection of critical essays as one intended to build up confidence in the prophetic gift. Although the book makes contributions, it does not represent positions of mainstream Adventist scholarship or of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. In this essay I summarize some of the main arguments of the book and respond to what I believe are significant points within each chapter.

The book begins with “A Portrait”² by Jonathan M. Butler, who compares White to Queen Victoria (1819–1901). Both exerted the right to rule, with White exerting her “divine right” through her prophetic calling. Quoting the historian David Walker Howe, Butler observes that Victorian culture may have been “more intensely” experienced in America than even in Victorian England.³ White, Butler argues, can be said to have become more Victorian than even Queen Victoria “as another of those homegrown American religious figures whose life and career blurred the distinction between marginal and mainstream.”⁴ Butler follows a common interpretive pattern by many historians, noting that Victorian culture marked a taming of the myriad pulses found in the period before the American Civil War, as

denoted by the Second Great Awakening. What made Ellen Harmon White stand out, in his view, was that she saw “the most complete understanding of Christianity yet revealed” that must be proclaimed immediately before the end of the world. “All ages prior” were “incomplete stages” that “mattered like none before it because *her* world marked the end of *the* world.”⁵ While Butler recognizes White’s concept of the Great Controversy as pivotal, he fails to note that her view of theodicy was constructed upon a rich Puritan theological heritage dating back to John Milton.

I contend that Butler goes too far in his analogy with Queen Victoria. While White made significant contributions to Adventist lifestyle, most notably in the areas of health and dress reform, she fought against extremisms. Repeatedly she urged Adventist believers to look to Jesus instead of herself.⁶ Common sense must be exercised, and even at the end of her life she noted that the early “reform dress” was a start in the right direction, but that those who now advocated had failed to note just how much they had progressed since that early, formative period. Part of the genius of early Adventism, I believe, was their ability to view truth progressively, and to exert a flexible stance in the development of Adventist lifestyle. The *Testimonies*, as she corrected those who abused her writings, help to illustrate a tendency that she assiduously fought against her whole life.

The second chapter, “Visions”⁷ by Ann Taves, is largely an adaptation from her influential work *Fits, Trances and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience*.⁸ Particularly important, for Taves, is the Israel Dammon trial, which gives a raw and unedited version of Ellen Harmon’s interactions with other believers. White’s positive assessment of Dammon is ignored in light of her later statements castigating him as one of the most extreme fanatics. While White certainly downplayed the Dammon incident, part of this can be explained by later interactions she had with Miles Grant during the 1870s. What this suggests is that it is plausible that Israel Dammon, initially a supporter of Ellen Harmon, became the recipient of reproof, which may have in turn prompted the bedlam that broke out in Atkinson, Maine, in early 1845.⁹ Taves goes on to argue that these Adventists, by opening the door to visions, marked a way forward by allowing one the status of prophet as “an authoritative guide to scripture.”¹⁰ While Ellen Harmon would have vigorously denounced such a position, she repeatedly refrained from active participation during the Sabbath and Sanctuary conferences until after they had arrived at key theological positions such as the integration of the Sabbath and Sanctuary doctrines. Taves ultimately acknowledges that Ellen Harmon “brought something more to the task than her competitors.”¹¹

Perhaps the most helpful chapter for furthering

Ellen G. White studies in this volume is the interpretative essay by Graeme Sharrock on the “Testimonies.”¹² “The testimony letter remains Ellen White’s distinctive literary signature.”¹³ She adapted a literary and rhetorical device with deep cultural resonances as an important tool of persuasion. Over time the “testimony” developed “into a distinguishable document with a definable structure, standard sentence types, stock arguments, and repeated rhetorical strategies.”¹⁴ Some accepted her reproofs, whereas others “reacted defensively” too.¹⁵ Publication of “testimonies” allowed for a wider readership as she and James worked and re-worked them into new editions. Sharrock uses the Rumery family along with others in Monterey, Michigan as a case study that demonstrates just how influential these “testimonies” were among early Sabbatarian Adventists.¹⁶ Within an emerging market economy, White exerted moral ideals in which she “negotiated the space between cold formalism and heated fanaticism” as a reversal of the earlier powerlessness of the Millerites.¹⁷

Ronald Graybill’s chapter on Ellen White as “Prophet”¹⁸ surveys the rise of her prophetic leadership. He argues that once Ellen White assumed the identity of “prophet” she was no longer able “to recognize or acknowledge any evidence that might be at odds with it.”¹⁹ Graybill looks at other prophetic contenders, including one example where she recommended getting the person a pitcher of cold water to help them come out of vision. What Graybill fails to note are the many other examples of would-be prophetic contenders (even outright frauds) with whom she worked on a personal basis. In each instance she appealed to the authority of Scripture as the ultimate arbiter for the genuineness of the prophetic gift: Anna Garmire, Anna Rice, and Helge T. Nelson are just a few of many other examples not cited which could have provided a broader perspective on how White dealt with prophetic rivals. The broader context of her life makes clear that she evaluated such contenders based upon Scripture. In conclusion, Graybill argues that White clearly made an impact that extended from her family to the church, and even to detractors.

Ellen G. White as “Author”²⁰ by the late Arthur Patrick covers familiar territory in White studies. Scholars often state that her literary corpus amounted to some seventy thousand pages. While this detail may seem insignificant, it is much more cautious and probably accurate than the hundred thousand pages that is typically bantered about.²¹ This is a good example, used throughout the volume, where scholars such as Patrick serve as a useful corrective to help challenge typical statistics and make sure that such figures are indeed accurate. Patrick notes White’s own admission that she was a “poor writer” who was “rarely a solitary author” in order to produce such a huge literary output.²² While her use of

literary help is no surprise for someone from this time, her “claims of divine agency” coupled with her “unacknowledged use of sources” complicates things, according to Patrick.²³ Even during her lifetime, critics such as D. M. Canright capitalized on such claims to prove that she was a fraud.²⁴ He notes that “some detractors and defenders are as far apart as ever” on this issue²⁵ although claims by Walter Rea that she stole eighty percent of her material seem grossly exaggerated, whereas more cautious research by Fred Veltman appears to indicate that figures between ten and twenty percent are much more tenable.²⁶ *The Ellen White Encyclopedia* offers a different interpretative framework. Denis Fortin argues that White was always the “master” and never the “slave” of her sources.²⁷ Without a doubt, the issue of literary sources remains a controversial topic, as it does for many of her literary contemporaries—Leo Tolstoy is a notable example.

The next chapter by Terrie Aamodt covers Ellen G. White’s contributions as a speaker.²⁸ Initially she formed a speaking alliance with her husband James. After his death in 1881, she was dramatically healed while speaking at the 1882 Healdsburg camp meeting.²⁹ This marked a turning point in her physical health. “For Ellen White,” observed Aamodt, “public speaking supplied a measure of confidence and energy.”³⁰

In the next chapter³¹ Floyd Greanleaf and Jerry Moon state that as the builder of institutions, “Ellen White arguably exerted a greater influence on the development of Seventh-day Adventist institutions than any other person, but she did not act alone.”³² Her contributions included publishing, church organization, education, and the Western Health Reform Institute.³³ Altogether, her contributions as a public speaker as well as builder are remarkable. This chapter was the most positive in its assessment of Ellen G. White’s life and legacy.

The next two chapters cover White’s religious views. Fritz Guy addresses the topic of “Theology” and Bert Haloviak covers “Practical Theology.”³⁴ Guy argues that White’s thinking was “intuitive rather than deliberate, informal rather than structured, practical and occasional rather than theoretical and systematic.”³⁵ She was “motivated by practical concerns,” and did not consistently use her theological library. In fact, White “did not have a high opinion of the traditional discipline of theology and its practitioners.”³⁶ Her primary focus was on the near Advent of Christ. The “great controversy” conflict between Christ and Satan became a primary meta-narrative for her theology.³⁷ While it is certainly true that Ellen White was not a formally trained theologian, this does not lessen her profound theological themes and impact. Many profound theologians throughout church history have had less than a formal theological training or have not necessarily written a systematic theology. Karl

Barth, perhaps one of the most famous twentieth-century theologians, never earned a doctorate.³⁸ Similarly, John Wesley never wrote out a technical systematic theology. Each made profound theological contributions in their own way, as did White. One notable theme, observes Guy, is that as “a child of her times” she relied heavily on King James Version literalism.³⁹ Guy asserts that she made little use of other Bible translations. I argue, however, that although she admired the prose of the King James Version, her view of the Great Controversy opened the door for the possibility of other Bible translations that she increasingly used toward the end of her life.⁴⁰ Such a view helped move the church away from the rigid Fundamentalism of B. G. Wilkinson during the 1920s. Altogether, Ellen White “was always more a prophet than a theologian, but on occasion she expressed significant theological insights.”⁴¹ Haloviak argues that as a “practical theologian” White was influenced by the restorationist teachings of the Christian Connexion through her husband James (who early on was a Christian Connexion minister). Such views reinforced a literal reading of Scripture,⁴² especially a literal view of the “shut door”—the notion that the close of probation had occurred as illustrated in the parable of five wise versus five foolish virgins in Matthew 25:1–13. As a practical theologian she helped push the Church toward a more pragmatic open door.⁴³ This extended to practical aspects related to the Sabbath and Three Angels and Christian character.⁴⁴

A second chapter by Jonathan Butler is on the “Second Coming.”⁴⁵ “Though she remained the spiritual child of Father Miller, in many respects she had also grown up and left home . . . Ellen Harmon had been called as a prophet less to proclaim Christ’s imminent coming than to explain His delay.”⁴⁶ Through the “third angel’s messages” of Revelation 14, the seventh-day Sabbath, and her exclusive personification as the “Spirit of Prophecy” she distanced herself from Miller.⁴⁷ She created an “extension of time.” She abandoned earlier millenarian enthusiasm for a new kind of community.⁴⁸ She thus “abandoned the apocalyptic telescope” to place “her people under a spiritual microscope and looked to their moral development as the means to the Second Coming.”⁴⁹ White’s continued adherence to Miller’s historicist approach “ensured that her Seventh-day Adventist followers would remain in an American backwater of prophetic interpretation for generations to come” replete with “her own unique interpretations of the Bible.”⁵⁰ Ellen White needed to “slow down the eschatological clock,” noting that Adventists could hasten or delay the Second Coming.⁵¹ There is no doubt that the Second Coming was a significant and recurring theme throughout her life and ministry, but one historiographical challenge is to grasp the fervency and conviction of

her belief. One criticism, noted by Simon Chan, is of historians who after the fact may not experience deep emotions through direct context. In a similar way, it can be difficult for historians after more than a century to appreciate the deep fervency of White's conviction about the far-reaching fervency and impact of the Second Advent for her beliefs and even daily life.⁵²

Ronald L. Numbers and Rennie B. Schoepflin co-authored the chapter on "Science and Medicine."⁵³ "Ellen White attributed most of her scientific and medical knowledge," they observe, "to divinely inspired 'visions' rather than to reading or research."⁵⁴ A remarkable amount of her ideas about health reform are borrowed from contemporary health reformers. But perhaps the greatest challenge, for the authors, pertains to White's writings about science, most notably the geological column and the idea of a six-thousand-year-old earth.⁵⁵ Especially problematic is her statement about amalgamation, arguably her most controversial statement.⁵⁶ This latter statement has been explored in-depth in an article I co-authored with Timothy L. Standish in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*. Our conclusion was that the obscure statements were never clarified and therefore impossible to determine with the one caveat that she was not a racist. "She may not have been the most original American health reformer," observe Numbers and Schoepflin, "but she ranks among the most influential."⁵⁷

The chapter on "Society" by Douglas Morgan examines the intersection of Ellen G. White and culture.⁵⁸ "The 'great controversy' narrative shaped, though not without tension and ambiguity, her approach to public issues such as temperance and prohibition, woman's rights, poverty and economic injustice, race relations, and religious liberty."⁵⁹ She recognized that the prophetic minority throughout history should have a "transforming influence in society."⁶⁰ Evangelism should include attempts to relieve and restore the poor and suffering. Such attempts included her disdain for labor unions⁶¹ and the need to take the Advent message to the large cities.⁶² Yet labor for the poor should not eclipse the Adventist message, a trend that led to her criticism of some of Kellogg's humanitarian efforts.⁶³ Other areas of influence included race relations and religious liberty, where she insisted in both areas upon a modest pragmatism.⁶⁴ While some may observe a tendency to "practice craven compromise" others may detect a "wise, pragmatic flexibility in the service of faithfulness."⁶⁵ One could wish that such a nuanced interpretation could have been used by some of the more critical essays in this volume.

Benjamin McArthur in chapter 13 on "Culture"⁶⁶ notes that Ellen G. White "shaped a set of Adventist attitudes about recreation and culture that endured for decades." Such a "shared sensibility" was characteristic of "a thorough-going moralism that was shaped by

culturally middle-brow Methodism" (245). Adventists, as a consequence, did not develop an artistic tradition. Yet Ellen White did stress dangers, particularly when it came to objectionable literature, but was not afraid to utilize certain forms of fiction herself.⁶⁷ She recognized music as a central part of worship, but like most Protestants emphasized the exposition of Scripture through the sermon. She supported iconography through prophetic charts, as well as through a series of engravings similar to the Currier & Ives lithographs.⁶⁸

The chapter on "War, Slavery, and Race" by Eric Anderson examines the tendency by both her followers and critics to distort her statements about the American Civil War and its aftermath.⁶⁹ The war was "centrally important" to her and both agree that her "credibility would be damaged" if she was proved to be a racist.⁷⁰ Ellen G. White, like early Adventists, was an abolitionist. "She placed a divine imprimatur on their insights that slavery was wrong, that the war was about slavery, and that the North's early missteps were based on a failure to act on these truths."⁷¹ She urged Adventists to disobey the 1859 Fugitive Slave Law, but rejected Lincoln's call for a day of fasting and prayer on Thanksgiving 1861. She "offered little in the way of specific predictions." Furthermore, she "did not foretell the outcome of particular battles or campaigns or identify crucial turning points."⁷²

One of the most scintillating chapters is by Laura Vance on "Gender."⁷³ Four years after Ellen G. White's first vision, a group gathered in Seneca Falls, New York to vote upon their Declaration of Sentiments. The "prevailing ideology related women to the domestic realm" that left Ellen White in "a precarious position."⁷⁴ She actively supported the participation of women in religious work. This was despite the notion of "separate spheres and responsibilities" for men and women characteristic of the cult of domesticity. White did not believe that women should be "limited to the domestic realm." She "remained ambiguous in delimiting the specific parameters of women's access to authority—via ordination, especially—she unequivocally and repeatedly called all Adventists to religious work."⁷⁵ Thus women played an essential role through a variety of capacities, even if there continued to exist an essential difference between genders. Thus women should participate in public religious work, but not at the expense of domestic responsibilities.⁷⁶ She saw ordination by men for herself as unnecessary. Vance suggests that "she may have perceived advocacy of women's ordination as excessively controversial."⁷⁷ She thus addressed three major reform movements: suffrage, temperance, and dress reform. "White did not radically challenge gender norms, except in her support for reform dress, and she retreated from the controversial components of this when resistance to it proved intransigent."⁷⁸

T. Joe Willey describes in brief about Ellen G. White's "Death and Burial" (295–304). Three funerals were held, but what surprised Willey in his research was that her interment did not occur on July 24, as reported in the *Review and Herald*, but on August 26, thirty-four days afterward. This pattern resembled a similar delay in burying James White. Such discoveries surprised White's grandson, Arthur L. White.⁷⁹ Willey postulates that the most likely explanation for the delayed burials is theological with the supposition that White's two surviving sons, Willie and Edson, hoped to facilitate an opportunity for a special resurrection. Without any "direct evidence," I believe that all such speculations remain suspect.

In the penultimate chapter, Paul McGraw and Gilbert Valentine reflect on Ellen G. White's "Legacy."⁸⁰ Her death "produced conflict and tension" as Adventists grappled with life without a living prophet. Her writings went to an estate "who controlled them, and the authority attributed to them."⁸¹

In "Biographies"⁸² the late Gary Land wrestles with the "relatively little attention" given to Ellen White within American religious historiography by historians, at least until the publication of this book, from those "outside her religious tradition."⁸³ He divides Adventist historiography about Ellen G. White into three categories: early narratives that chronicle her life as God's messenger (1850s–1910s), the consolidation of her image as prophet (1920s–1970s), and the challenge to that image. Land cites Numbers with his *Prophetess of Health*⁸⁴ as developing two major themes: attention to her use of other health reformers, and that her views of health and health reform changed over time.⁸⁵ When dealing with historiographic issues, the question should be asked whether divine inspiration should be excluded. At first glance, new challenges, notably by Donald McAdams on White's chapter on John Huss in the *Great Controversy*, might present some challenges. As noted by Land, Fred Veltman conducted a study of White's literary sources in *The Desire of Ages* that concluded that approximately thirty-one percent of her material indicated some degree of literary dependency, even if her emphasis was frequently different from that of her sources.⁸⁶ Land furthermore asserts that Numbers played a significant impact on the new denominational textbook by Richard Schwarz, even if there were no direct references within the actual book.⁸⁷ At the same time Arthur L. White published a six-volume biography on White's life in line with older approaches to Ellen White. Signs of change were evident in the historiography of George R. Knight who "sought to present a realistic view of Ellen White and yet maintain a positive tone."⁸⁸ Outside of Adventism, historians increasingly reference White in narratives of religion in America, especially as a health

reformer. "Beyond that of most other nineteenth-century women, she has left a legacy both in American and abroad that remains to be more extensively explored and more completely understood."⁸⁹ Basically the historiographical landscape that Land paints is one with three different historiographies: apologetic (Arthur L. White), critical (Numbers), and moderate approach (Knight). It should be noted that most Adventist historiography for the past two decades has followed Knight's approach among Adventist historians. Furthermore, Land also overlooks the contributions of an earlier generation of Adventist historians, especially E. F. Albertsworth, who during the 1910s and 1920s, and at the 1919 Bible Conference, set the stage for the pursuit of the professional study of history within the denomination. Land approaches Adventist historiography as a sort of evolutionary model, but it is in fact much more nuanced and complicated.

Altogether, *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet* makes a significant contribution to Ellen G. White studies. It is a major new interpretive work. Overall, it highlights new interpretative trends.

Yet the volume forces a much deeper discussion about methodological presuppositions that moves beyond a construct vis-à-vis inspiration. In doing so, this volume assists Ellen G. White studies by providing a critical counterpart for Ellen G. White scholars, in the same way that Heiko Oberman observes is beneficial within Luther studies.⁹⁰ Of course one could wish that more of the essays had modeled after Doug Morgan's chapter by offering two interpretative options. Few of the essays reflect a largely positive assessment of White (most notably Moon and Greenleaf), whereas Butler, conversely, in his two chapters completely lacks such nuance. In fact, one could wish, as Adventist theologian Jon Paulien observed, that the book had been strengthened by leaving out some of the more critical references.⁹¹ Perhaps one of the contributions of this book is that it will help broaden Ellen G. White studies, despite the critical references, so that scholars outside of Adventism can recognize White's life and thought as much broader and more significant than simply as a health reformer.

This new volume, as well as *The Ellen White Encyclopedia*, will challenge Adventist scholars to evaluate the nature and role of revelation and inspiration. Larger interpretative patterns appear at work, including historiographical trends. While it is true that some have leaned towards inerrancy, especially during the 1920s when some Adventist thought leaders espoused essentially an Adventist version of Fundamentalism, at the same time this has not always been the normative view. As I read through some of the chapters I wondered if some of the authors, particularly those who have left Adventism behind, may at times be reacting against their

own experience rather than the historical Ellen G. White.

This book furthermore highlights the role of a prophet. What is a prophet? To what extent do Adventists admit to White's humanness and frailty? White argued in the *Testimonies for the Church* that one of the greatest proofs of the inspiration of the Bible is that it records not just the accomplishments, but also the failings of people within the biblical narrative. This tension, if true of biblical prophets, remains equally true in reflecting upon both the accomplishments as well as mistakes in White's life. "The life of a true Christian is ever onward," she once wrote.⁹² She was a woman caught between two worlds, the present and the heavenly world to come. The logical next question is: did her limitations eclipse the more significant aspects of her prophetic ministry? For one thing, it appears that she was consistent in her witness to uplift Jesus Christ. From her first vision in 1844 to the end of her life she increasingly emphasized and desired to point people to Jesus Christ. Another closely related theme was her high view of the authority of Scripture. She understood her writings as subservient to Scripture. She was far less preoccupied with many of the finer points, including some of the more obscure statements such as her statement on amalgamation, or her experience with Israel Dammon, that she most certainly did not consider to be normative of her life or prophetic calling. In fact, she felt she had a duty to ignore such critics along with their criticism, which was a perpetual challenge and one that she grew in her understanding of how to cope in the midst of such criticisms. Thus one can grasp a little bit of the frustration she must have felt when she publicly noted, "Great advantage is taken of my words, therefore I must move very cautiously." Along a similar vein she mourned her unlikeness to Christ. She appealed to people to not look to her, but instead, to look to Jesus Christ.⁹³ She viewed her life not as a Victorian Adventist version of Queen Victoria issuing lifestyle edicts, but rather as another sinner saved by grace.

Abraham Heschel asserts, "The ultimate purpose of a prophet is not to be inspired, but to inspire the people; not to be filled with a passion, but to impassion the people with understanding for God."⁹⁴ It is possible, with all the historical scrutiny, to miss out on what she considered as the most important contributions of her prophetic life and ministry. If this is true, then some of the authors are correct in ascertaining that she did truly believe that she had the most complete understanding of a cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan. She did not make such a statement in an absolute sense that no one could ever grow in their understanding. Instead, she viewed the Great Controversy in an absolute sense that the basic premise and storyline is true. The question of eternity is one that continues to hang in the balance. At the same time it

also explains White's juxtaposition as someone caught between two worlds. She agonized over how to explain what she had been shown to others. In one particular instance, which could be characteristic for many of her "testimonies," she warned, "I would you could see these things as Heaven has opened them before me."⁹⁵ As she struggled, she grew in her conception of what it meant to be a prophetic spokesperson for God. She became more confident and less trustful of self—which explains her increasing reticence as she matured to engage with critics. From a personal perspective, I find the ideas she espoused incredibly relevant to my personal life. While it is certainly true that some have misused and even abused this gift, when it is heeded, it is a blessing. And in my study of Adventist history, I have noted that when the Church has collectively heeded the prophetic counsel, the Church has been blessed as well.

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¹Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., *White: American Prophet*, 1–29.

³David Walker Howe, ed. *Victorian America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), 4.

⁴Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., *White: American Prophet*, 2.

⁵*Ibid.*, 3.

⁶cf. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, 118, 119

⁷*Ibid.*, 30–51.

⁸Princeton University Press, 1999.

⁹For a review, see Michael W. Campbell, "Miles Grant, D. M. Canright, and the Credibility of Ellen G. White: A New Perspective on the Israel Dammon Trial," *Reflections: BRI Newsletter* (January 2014), 5–8.

¹⁰Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., 45.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 46.

¹²*Ibid.*, 52–73.

¹³*Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 55. Sharrock describes the basic structure of a "testimony" as having eight basic parts: salutation, occasion of writing, announcement of theme, analysis of case(s), call to action, warrants and principles, appeal, and sometimes a personal note. I find his structure roughly parallel to my own literary analysis of the "testimony": spiritual blindness, challenge, appeal, consideration of influence, and pointing to Jesus. See my blog post: "The Five Steps of a 'Testimony' by Ellen G. White," <http://www.adventisthistory.org/2013/11/11/the-five-steps-of-a-testimony-by-ellen-g-white/>.

¹⁵Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., 61.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 63–69.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 74–90.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 74.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 90–109.

²¹As a recent example, see George R. Rice, "Spiritual Gifts," in

Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 636. Rice divides the hundred thousand pages between an estimated fifty thousand pages for books and articles, thirty-five thousand pages for her unpublished letters and manuscripts, and fifteen thousand pages for diaries and journals.

²²Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., 92, 95.

²³*Ibid.*, 97.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 99.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 106.

²⁶See Fred Veltman, “Study of *The Desire of Ages* Sources (1988),” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2014), 766–770.

²⁷Denis Fortin, “Plagiarism,” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 1028–1035.

²⁸Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., 110–125.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 118.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 122.

³¹*Ibid.*, 126–143.

³²*Ibid.*, 126.

³³*Ibid.*, 126–139.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 144–159, 160–177.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 144.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 145.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 151–153.

³⁸Roger E. Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 303.

³⁹Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., *White: American Prophet*, 155.

⁴⁰Michael W. Campbell, “Ellen G. White and the King James Version,” in *The Book That Changed the World*, ed. Nikolaus Satelmajer (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2013).

⁴¹Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., 157.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 164.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 166–169, 170–172.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 178–195.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 179.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 180–183.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 183.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 184.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 185.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 190.

⁵²Simon Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 151, 152.

⁵³Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., 196–223.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 197.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 214.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 215–217.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 217.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 224–243.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 225.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 233.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 234.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 234, 235.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 236–239.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 240.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 244–261.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 247–249.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 250–252.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 262–278.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 262.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 265.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 267.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 279–294.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 279.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 281.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 283.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 287.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 290.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 301.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 305–321.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 306.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 322–345.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 322.

⁸⁴Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1976).

⁸⁵Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., 331.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 333.

⁸⁷Richard W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant: Denominational History Textbook for Seventh-day Adventist College Classes* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979).

⁸⁸Aamodt, Land, and Numbers, eds., 334.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 339.

⁹⁰Heiko Oberman said “that the trouble with Calvin research was that Calvin had fallen into the hands of his friends.” Referenced by David C. Steinmetz, *Taking the Long View: Christian Theology in Historical Perspective* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 155.

⁹¹Jon Paulien, Review of *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, in *Ministry*, May 2014, 28.

⁹²Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), vol. 2, 521.

⁹³White, *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 118, 119.

⁹⁴Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1962), 146.

⁹⁵White, *Testimonies*, vol. 2, 157.

SCRIPTURE APPLIED

Lessons from Daniel 1

BY EKKEHARDT MUELLER

The Book of Daniel was written by Daniel a Jew who, together with his countrymen, was taken into Babylonian exile around 600 BC. Precise historical

documentation supports the claim that Daniel was indeed the author of the book named after him. Daniel was a contemporary of Jehoiakim, king of Judah; Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, kings of Babylon; Cyrus and Darius, both Medo-Persian kings; and others.

I. Discussion of the Chapter

A. The Historical Setting

1. Verse 1—The third year of Jehoiakim's rule lasted from Fall 606 to Fall 605 BC. Under Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian kingdom flourished and became a world empire.

2. Verse 2—God allowed the Babylonian exile to happen because His people had apostatized, worshiped idols, and gotten involved in all kinds of injustice and evil. The prophets had warned against the exile, calling the people to repentance in order to avoid the disaster (see Jer 4:5–31, where Shinar is another name for Babylon).

B. The Test for the Young Exiled

1. Verse 3—Daniel and his friends were part of the first of three deportations. It was customary to take the leading families first in order to secure the faithfulness of the rest of the captives to the new ruler.

2. Verse 4—Nebuchadnezzar choose young people because they are full of energy and drive, and can still be easily influenced. God often called young people such as Jesus and his disciples, Samuel, David, Jeremiah (Jer 1:6), and Timothy. However, God also calls older people such as Moses, Aaron, Noah, and Nicodemus. Likewise, God calls you and me to follow and serve Him.

3. Verse 5—Nebuchadnezzar's decision may not have been harassment, but a privileged opportunity. To refuse would have been more than impoliteness; at that time, a refusal to do what was demanded could have dangerous consequences.

4. Verses 6, 7—The giving of new names signified that the young men were accepted and welcome at the Babylonian king's court.

C. Daniel and His Friends' Reaction

1. Verse 8—Daniel exhibited courage and faithfulness. He was obedient to God. His stand was a difficult one to take especially when his countrymen reacted to the contrary. It is hard to address an issue, when others have already compromised. Daniel's life was in danger, yet for him obedience to God was more important than his own life.

In what ways could we become "unclean" today? Through a false use of the gift of sexuality; by eating unclean and unhealthy food; or by entertaining bad thoughts (Matt 15:18, 19).

2. Verse 9—Daniel experienced God's help, and learned that those who remain faithful to God will not be abandoned by the Lord. They have wonderful experiences. However, we need to dare to be obedient. Whoever is not faithful does not give God a chance to intervene.

3. Verse 10—*In comparison to Daniel, how did*

the commander respond?

- He was fearful and tense; Daniel did not show any fear.
- He was all alone; Daniel had God's support.
- He did not believe in Yahweh; Daniel did.
- He only valued what this earthy life holds; Daniel focused on eternal life.
- He doubted the positive outcome of the test; Daniel exercised his faith that the outcome will be for God's glory.

4. Verse 11—Daniel turned to his immediate supervisor and did not give up after an initial failure. How do we react to failures?

5. Verse 12—Daniel's simple food differed radically from the king's menu.

6. Verse 13—Daniel was courageous in proposing the direct comparison. *In what did he believe?*

- God's power
- The correctness of his decision
- The superiority of his meal plan
- Success
- Because he dared believe as he did, he dared ask that his friends and he be compared with the other young men (v. 13).

7. Verse 14—The official had doubts but, nevertheless, took the risk.

D. The Final Result

1. Verses 15–17—Daniel's exercise in faith results in success for Daniel; he received God's blessings, experienced God's power, and was strengthened in faith.

What possible reasons could there have been for Daniel and his friends to look better in just ten days?

- God's blessings
- The right food (see biblical health principles)
- Faster recovery after the walk through the desert

Besides the obvious external signs of well-being, there were positive consequences in their mental and spiritual health. When one part of the body is compromised, other parts are also affected. When we place our complete selves—both body and mind—into God's will, we experience total, comprehensive health (3 John 1:2).

2. Verses 18–21—At the final examination Daniel and his friends were ten times wiser than the wise men, astrologers, and scientists in the entire kingdom. They were called to serve the king. God's blessings are crucial.

Babylonian wisdom was mixed with paganism

and idolatry. How was Daniel able to stay away from these elements?

- He was determined to be absolutely faithful to God and His will.
- He remained dependent on God and was humble.
- His experience mentioned in Dan 1 may have been a safeguard for future trials.
- His constant prayer life (Dan 6) and his

study of Scripture (Dan 9) shaped him.

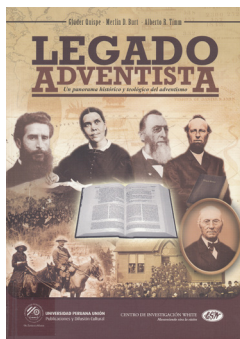
- God blessed and sustained him.

II. Application of the Chapter

The following principles are important for our lives:

- The positive effects of purity and health
- Faithfulness pays off.
- Absolute obedience to God makes a difference.
- Most of all, God supports his children.

Book Notes



Glúder Quispe, Merlin D. Burt, and Alberto R. Timm. *Legado Adventista: Un panorama histórico y teológico del adventismo* [Adventist Legacy: A historical and Theological Overview of Adventism]. Lima, Peru: Universidad Peruana Unión, Centro de Investigación White, 2013, 415 pp. US\$20.00.

This book—which includes eight chapters and eleven appendices—is the result of the papers presented at the “150 años de legado adventista” [150 years of Adventist Legacy] seminar, which was held October 12–13, 2013 in the facilities of the Peruvian Union University under the organization of the Ellen G. White Research Center–Peru to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The first chapter, “150 años de legado adventista: Un breve panorama histórico de la estructura organizacional de la Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día” [150 years of Adventist Legacy: Brief Historical Overview of the SDAC Organizational Structure] by Quispe, is divided into three sections: (1) the history of mission organization (1844–1863), (2) the organization and its beginnings up to new challenges for the mission work (1863–1901), and (3) the reorganization and the mission (1901–).

The second chapter, “Antecedentes históricos de la interpretación bíblica adventista” [History of Biblical Interpretation], is the extended version of the publication edited by George W. Reid.¹ Here, Timm teaches that “if Seventh-day Adventists want to keep the identity of their message and mission, they must remain faithful to its high view of Scripture and accept only the hermeneutical principles that do not violate confidence in the Bible as the Word of God” (71).

The third chapter, “Elena G. de White y el surgimiento del adventismo sabatistas” [Ellen White and

the Emergence of Sabbatarian Adventism], by Burt, examines the emergence of Sabbatarian Adventism from the Millerite movement up to 1855, besides Ellen G. White’s role during this process.

The fourth chapter, “Cristología adventista del séptimo día, 1844–2013: Una breve reseña histórica” [Seventh-Day Adventist Christology, 1844–2013: A Brief Historical Overview], is a revised and updated version of the paper presented at the Seventh South American Biblical-Theological Symposium on the theme “Christology”, held at Bolivia Adventist University, 2007. In this chapter, Timm reveals once more his scholarly condition by dividing the Christological discussions in the Adventist Church into four periods: (1) Emphasis on the Human Nature of Christ (1844–1898), (2) Emphasis on the Divine-Human Nature of Christ (1898–1957), (3) Tensions on the Humanity of Christ during the Incarnation (1957–1980), and (4) Contemporary Christological Debates (1980–2011). Before his conclusion, Timm references Norman R. Gulley,² to emphasize that “despite all the Christological discussions . . . we do have a solid ground for our trust that Jesus Christ is the coeternal Son of God; that He became truly man to save us from our sins; that His vicarious sacrifice on the cross of Calvary paid the price of our salvation; that He is ministering today in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf; and that He will return soon to grant us eternal life” (137).

The fifth chapter, “El legado doctrinal de 1888” [The Doctrinal Legacy of 1888] and the sixth chapter, “La doctrina de la Trinidad en la Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día: Un análisis histórico” [The Trinity in Seventh-day Adventist History], written by Burt, emphasize—in the fifth chapter—the historical and theological discussions of the Minneapolis General Conference Session (1888) through the contributions of J. N. Andrews, Stephen Pierce, E. J. Waggoner, J. H. Waggoner, and others. Then follows a description—in the sixth chapter—of one of the current historical controversies: the pioneers’ antitrinitarian belief and subsequent acceptance of the doctrine of one God in three co-eternal Persons.

The seventh chapter, “Historia de la interpretación del libro de Apocalipsis en la Iglesia Adventista del

Séptimo Día” [History of the Interpretation of the Book of Revelation in the SDAC], shows that since its Millerite origins, the SDAC has focused with special interest on the book of Revelation (183). On the other hand, the history of the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of Revelation, says Quispe, may be divided into three periods: (1) the *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation* (1862–1944), (2) the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (1944–1970), and (3) The *multiple emphases* (1970–).³ After this categorization, Quispe engages in a brief historical development and the success factors of each period.

The eighth chapter, “Breve reseña histórica sobre la ordenación de la mujer en la Iglesia Adventista del Séptimo Día” [Seventh-day Adventists on Women’s Ordination: A Brief Historical Overview] by Timm, closes with a golden broach this fascinating book. Divided into nine historical periods, this document may be the most extensive ever written on the ordination of women as it is well-detailed and emphasizes that “Despite all the challenges the church is facing today, we must trust in God’s leadership and pray for the leaders of the church in these difficult days when authority in all its forms is being undermined” (320).

Although the book has some errors in translation and editing,⁴ it is important to note that perhaps this is the first publication—in the South American context—that brings an excellent contribution to the area of Adventist Studies. Although unfortunately it is in Spanish, reading this book is a must, not only for Bible teachers

and Church administrators but also for church members that are interested understanding the development of the Adventist Church and some of its distinctive doctrines.

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¹See Alberto R. Timm, “Historical Background of Adventist Biblical Interpretation,” ed. George W. Reid, *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, Biblical Research Institute, vol. 1 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2006), 1–14.

²Gulley says, “So in human nature, Christ was unlike the pre-Fall Adam and unlike the post-Fall Adam, even though there are similarities. Unlike the post-Fall Adam, Christ was the sinless Son of God on a mission to save sinners (their sinful natures and acts), and did not participate in sin, either in nature or acts. A doctor does not need to have cancer in order to save cancer patients. Nor does a sinless Son of God need to take on sin within His nature in order to save a sinful nature. For sin, whether in nature or acts, participates in a broken relationship with God. Christ didn’t come to enter such a broken relationship but to restore it”. See Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3—, *Creation, Christ, Salvation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 434.

³A critical review of Quispe’s book can be found in Ekkehardt Müller, “[Book review of] The Apocalypse in Seventh-day Adventist Interpretation, by Gluder Quispe,” *Reflections—The BRI Newsletter* 45, January (2014): 10–12.

⁴To mention some: it was translated “Sabbatarian” as “sabatista” (12, 14, etc.), while in other occasions it appears as “sabatario” (87, 92, etc.), “antitrinotaria” instead of “antitrinitaria” (162), “iglesia cristina” instead of “iglesia cristiana” (163), etc. In some cases puts as English, “Ellen G. White State” (130, 191), while in other places brings “Patrimonio White” (172, 227).

WORLDWIDE HIGHLIGHTS

New Publications from BRC – South Pacific Division

Scholars of the South Pacific Division with the support of the local BRC have recently published two tomes:

Hermeneutical Intertextuality and the Contemporary Meaning of Scripture (edited by Ross Cole and Paul Petersen [Adelaide, South Australia: ATF Theology and Avondale Academic Press, 2014], 308 pp. US\$34.95) is a collection of papers from a 2003 Seventh-day Adventist Biblical Conference at Avondale College in Australia on the broad topic of intertextuality. The book discusses the relationship between modern hermeneutics and faith and

focuses on how to read and apply the Bible in the twenty first century.

Biblical and Theological Studies on the Trinity (edited by Paul B. Petersen and Robert K. McIver [Adelaide, South Australia: ATF Theology and Avondale Academic Press, 2014], 234 pp. US\$34.95), as the the book description notes, many Christians who want to be biblical have questioned the official church doctrine on the Godhead. This collection of articles from a Seventh day Adventist conference in Sydney emphasizes, however, that the concept of the trinity is thoroughly biblical. The book covers a variety of aspects of the discussion of the doctrine—biblical, historical, and theological.

“It is of the greatest importance that you continually search the Scriptures, storing the mind with the truths of God. You may be separated from the companionship of Christians and placed where you will not have the privilege of meeting with the children of God. You need the treasures of God’s Word hidden in your heart.” Ellen White, *My Life Today*, 28.



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