

## Arminianism and Seventh-day Adventism<sup>1</sup>

BY GARY LAND

The symposium on Arminianism and Adventism, held October 14-16, 2010 at Andrews University, attempted to analyze Adventist theology within a larger theological continuum, helping to explore the connections between Adventism and other religious traditions. The plenary papers addressed three major areas of concern: first, the Calvinist and Arminian understandings of God; second, Calvinist and Arminian positions regarding the assurance of salvation; and third, the relationship of Seventh-day Adventism to Arminianism.

### Calvinism and Arminianism

Roger Olson, professor of theology at George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University, addressed Calvinist/Reformed arguments that Arminianism is a man-centered theology because it allegedly places the decision for salvation in Christ within the human will.<sup>2</sup> He responded to this criticism first by arguing that Calvinism, by placing all responsibility for determining who will be saved and who will be lost on God, makes God an ambiguous moral character. Furthermore, he said, the criticism is misplaced—the critics do not seem to have read Arminius or other classical Arminians such as the Remonstrants and John Wesley. Had they done so, they would have seen that, because of prevenient grace which gives the human being the power to choose to accept Christ, even repentance is a gift of God. Classical Arminianism emphasizes human free will in order to protect God’s goodness and clarify human responsibility for sin. But the free will decision to accept God’s gift is itself empowered by God’s grace. Nothing happens in the process of salvation apart from God. True faith is always accompanied by good



works, but such works are not a part of faith or a condition of justification.

Barry Callen, University Professor Emeritus of Christian Studies at Anderson University, picked up on this theme of the human dimension. Agreeing with Olson, he stated that salvation comes only by unmerited divine grace, but added that it also involves a necessary human work. In contrast to Calvinism, which is monergistic since it places all action with God, Callen favors a synergistic approach, which involves a God-human relationship. While very concerned that we not tip the scales, that with Arminius we not “deviate from viewing salvation as a sheer gift of a gracious God,”<sup>3</sup> he nonetheless criticized contemporary evangelical theology for undercutting “the conscious choice to exercise faith and the serious action required of believers for needed growth in the Christian life.”<sup>4</sup>

Hans K. LaRondelle’s analysis of biblical passages bearing on election and predestination, though not mentioning Calvinism, seems to fit with this group of papers.<sup>5</sup> He noted passages from both the Old and New Testaments that speak of God choosing Israel, Christ choosing his disciples, and Christians as a chosen people. Throughout all of these elections God expects a response from the people he has chosen. Nonetheless, in line with Olson’s and Callen’s understanding of Arminianism, LaRondelle made clear that our decision to exercise faith, obey God’s will, and persevere in a sanctified life “are not meritorious works that contribute to our salvation.” But having said this, he also stated that an “authentic faith in Christ honors not only the sovereignty and the priority of God’s grace, but also seeks a faithful walk with Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

### Assurance of Salvation

A second group of papers addressed the issue of the assurance of salvation. Woodrow W. Whidden asked which theological tradition, Calvinism or Arminianism, best provides assurance. He described God’s redeeming power as both a  
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## EDITORIAL

## Revival As a Way of Life

The need for spiritual revival cannot be overstressed. As stated by Elder Ted Wilson, this is the time for church leaders to call the church to pray for it. But what does revival mean and what is its intended goal?



### 1. Revival Based on Our Conversion.

Revival implies a prior conversion, that we were once spiritually alive but that we are now slipping toward spiritual death and in need of a revival of our spiritual life. Before our conversion, we were dead in our sins (Eph 2:1), but God through Christ forgave our sins and made us alive (2:5; Col 2:13). As a result, we were introduced to a new life in union with Christ (Rom 6:4; John 15:1-10). This new life reached us through the Spirit and is directly related to the words of Jesus, which are Spirit and life (John 6:63; 2 Cor 3:6). The union of believers with Christ is so deep that the love of God is poured into their hearts, Christ lives in them (Gal 2:20), they live in service to others (1 John 3:14; 2 Cor 13:4), and they are assured that their prayers will be heard (John 15:7, 16, 23; 1 John 5:14).

**2. Revival As a Return.** In their journey believers may get discouraged and slowly weaken their union with Christ. This is called losing one's first love (Rev 2:4). A change is needed. We must acknowledge our need and return home like the prodigal son (Luke 15:17-19). When the father saw him, he exclaimed, "This son of mine was dead and now has come to life again" (15:24; NASB). Only the love of God revealed in Jesus, through the Spirit, can move us to reestablish union with the Lord. We reach our true destination when, moved by Him, we open the door (Rev 3:14-22). Then, we are once more alive, revived!

**3. Revival As a Way of Life.** Revival is the realization that we are about to lose our vital union with Christ, that the influence of the Spirit in our lives has diminished, and that we need to strengthen our spiritual life through study of the Word and through a life of prayer and service to others. This is what the Christian life should always be; if it is not, then we need revival. As we come closer to the Lord the Spirit will empower us to understand the Scriptures and to walk in holiness, moving us to spend quality time in communion with the Lord in prayer asking for the outpouring of the Spirit. The manifestation of the power of the Spirit in our lives is directly related to our *interest in spiritual growth and our engagement in the mission* of the church. The Spirit is dynamic and therefore His power is not granted to those who are indifferent to God's mission. As we approach the end of the conflict, the Spirit will come with unprecedented power (the latter rain) in preparation for the divine harvest. We should pray for this event and ask the Spirit to use us today as we share the message.

Revival is not about emotionalism, nor about miracles, but about a life totally committed to the Lord and nurtured by Him through study of the Scriptures, prayer, receptivity to the power and presence of the Spirit, and witnessing. If in our witnessing a miracle is necessary, the Spirit will do it and miracles will happen in connection with the latter rain. Let us all, together, pray for the revival of primitive godliness among us.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, BRI

## New Books



Two new books are now available dealing with revival.



Both may be obtained at [www.adventistbookcenter.com](http://www.adventistbookcenter.com)



## Reflections

*Reflections* seeks to share information concerning doctrinal and theological developments among Adventists and to foster doctrinal and theological unity in the world church. Its intended audience is church administrators, church leaders, pastors and teachers.

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*priori*, which includes such elements as prevenient grace and forgiving grace, and *a posteriori*, which includes the sense that God is speaking to the individual and the “practical manifestations of the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ in the life of the believer.”<sup>77</sup> He asserted that Calvinists and Arminians accept both of these categories, including “the full panoply of the *a posteriori* factors in the experience of saving assurance.”<sup>78</sup> But because Calvinists have no way of knowing whether God has elected them to be saved, they have no built-in advantages regarding assurance. Therefore, along with Arminians, they “must search the contours of their personal experience of grace for any evidence of the *a posteriori* blessings that they are evidently and assuredly saved.”<sup>79</sup>

Regarding “once saved, always saved,” Whidden commented that, because Calvinism cannot provide any assurance that one was once saved, it is unable to effectively address the issue of perseverance. It can only suggest that if the apparently once converted individual falls away from the faith that person was not saved in the first place.<sup>10</sup> Arminianism, again, provides a better response by giving the believer the ability to “decide to ignore the saving graces that placed him/her into the saving hand of the Father in the first place!”<sup>11</sup>

Keith D. Stanglin addressed many of the same issues as Whidden, but placed them within the context of Arminius’ experience.<sup>12</sup> According to Stanglin, rather than pursuing abstract questions of theology, Arminius’ thinking arose out of his pastoral role in Amsterdam where he found that many people in his congregation either had no confidence in their election or, in contrast, were overconfident regarding their salvation. The former position led to despair, while the latter allowed the Christian to continue in his or her sinful ways.

The doctrine of assurance, therefore, became an important point of departure for Arminius’ teaching. Similar to Whidden, Stanglin presented Arminius’ discussion of *a posteriori* grounds of assurance (the sense of faith, internal testimony of the Spirit, the struggle of the Spirit against the flesh, and the desire to engage in good works) and the *a priori* grounds (God’s will that all be saved and the directing of His saving love toward those who are in Christ through faith). Arminius’ examination of the grounds of assurance for the believer led him to a revised theology of God, one that, in contrast to Calvinism, emphasized that “God’s act of creation is an act of love and grace for the purpose of eternal commu-

nion, an act in which God obliges himself to creation for its benefit.”<sup>13</sup>

In his concluding, practical reflections, Stanglin also addressed “once-saved, always saved” but was more concerned with its actual effects on the life of the Christian. He called that position “reductionistic” and expressed concern that it “expects little or no progress in Christian holiness.”<sup>14</sup> Believing that sanctification is important, he stated that “good works are not a causal factor in obtaining or maintaining salvation. We are already saved; therefore, we want to do good works, and we do them.”<sup>15</sup>

### Is Seventh-Day Adventism Arminian?

Finally, we come to the papers that address the relationship of Seventh-day Adventism to Arminianism. Consequent to discussing Arminius and *The Remonstrance*, Denis Fortin identified five elements of Arminius’ position that resonate with Adventism.<sup>16</sup> First, there is the assertion that the individual needs to believe in Christ in order to be saved. Second, Arminius found repugnant the idea that God would predestine some people to eternal damnation before they came into existence. Third, human beings have freedom of the will. Fourth, God’s creation is good, something that is incompatible with the Calvinistic understanding that nearly everyone is predestined to damnation. Finally, sin causes damnation, a fact that again does not fit with Calvinistic supralapsarianism.

***Authentic faith in Christ honors not only the sovereignty and the priority of God’s grace, but also seeks a faithful walk with Christ.***

Addressing more specifically the Arminian elements of Adventist theology, Fortin observed that the motif of the Great Controversy “provides a theological framework that is dependent on an Arminian understanding of God’s relationship with sinners and the sinner’s need to respond to the gospel invitation.”<sup>17</sup> Among the key elements in this understanding is the belief that God created individuals with free choice and through the Holy Spirit provides them with the grace to accept his mercy. Fortin concluded that Adventism is “fundamentally Arminian” and that the “core of its belief system is Arminianism.”<sup>18</sup>



Courtesy of Darren Heslop

For George Knight, however, the picture is more complicated. He asserted that the 1931/1946 statements of belief suggest a semi-Pelagian position by leaving “the impression that the initial moves toward salvation are up to the individual.”<sup>19</sup> By contrast, the 1980 statement “makes significant strides in avoiding semi-Pelagianism,” particularly in Article 5, which “asserts that the Holy Spirit ‘draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms.’” In Knight’s view, Article 5 “is a clear statement of preven-

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ient grace even though it does not use that term.”<sup>20</sup> But is this 1980 wording so different from the earlier statements which state that the Holy Spirit “convinces of sin and leads to the Sin Bearer, inducting the believer into the new-covenant relationship...”<sup>21</sup>

Although “Earliest Adventism,” according to Knight, “definitely fit into the semi-Pelagian camp,”<sup>22</sup> beginning in the 1880s, through the influence of Ellen G. White, Adventists began placing more emphasis on salvation in Christ. White, he argues, “had a belief akin to what most Protestants think of as total depravity,” regarding humans as unable to choose God through their own power, and saw the need for prevenient grace.<sup>23</sup> But Knight sees semi-Pelagianism mostly persisting throughout the twentieth century. William H. Branson came to the “frontier of prevenient grace” but failed to pass over, asserting that it is up to individuals to choose to accept God’s grace.<sup>24</sup> The only writer during this period that seemed to have a concept of prevenient grace was I. H. Evans,<sup>25</sup> but, as Knight observed, he had relatively little influence. Edward Heppenstall drew upon elements that pointed toward the necessity of prevenient grace but “definitely left the impression that fallen individuals had free choice in the face of God’s special revelation.”<sup>26</sup> Edward Vick and Hans K. LaRondelle were the most clearly Arminian, according to Knight.<sup>27</sup> But other names could probably be added to this list.

**Conclusion**

The plenary papers manifested a wide agreement in the promotion of a divine-human synergism in the salvific process and of God’s amazing grace as a necessity at every step in that process, even before the human agent feels any need of salvation. Human actions, which arise out of the desire to be in harmony with the divine

Lawgiver and out of the assurance of justification and the Holy Spirit’s sanctifying guidance, are not the basis of salvation but the fruit of it. Divergent interpretations of historical sources regarding semi-Pelagianism vs. Arminianism calls for a thorough analysis of the sources. Standing in the Arminian tradition, Adventists do well to provide opportunities such as this for scholars and church members to reflect further on core aspects of salvation. In this connection, it would certainly be valuable to ponder the succinct synthesis of Ellen White in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 18-19, on a regular basis. The symposium proved significant in showing that Adventism’s soteriology stands in the Arminian-Wesleyan tradition.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised and shortened version of “Reflections on the Symposium,” the closing paper at the conference on “Arminianism and Adventism: Celebrating Our Soteriological Heritage,” October 14-16, 2010, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich. All presentations discussed herein were delivered as plenary sessions at the symposium.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Olson, “Arminianism is God-centered Theology,” October 15, 2010; idem, “Arminianism is Evangelical Theology,” October 16, 2010. Although he refers to other critics, Olson frequently references the “Arminian” issue of *Modern Reformation* (May-June, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Barry Callen, “Soteriological Synergism and its Surrounding Seductions,” October 15, 2010, 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 8

<sup>5</sup> Hans K. LaRondelle, “Divine Election and Predestination: A Biblical Perspective,” October 14, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>7</sup> Woodrow W. Whidden, “Investigative Judgment and the Assurance of Salvation,” October 16, 2010, 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> For example, see Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Whidden, 21, drawing upon Clark Pinnock, “From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology,” in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (ed. Clark Pinnock; Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Keith D. Stanglin, “Assurance of Salvation: An Arminian Account,” October 16, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Denis Fortin, “Historical and Theological Perspectives on the Rise of Arminianism and the Place of Seventh-day Adventism in the Calvinist-Arminian Debate,” October 14, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> George Knight, “Seventh-day Adventism, Semi-Pelagianism, and Overlooked Topics in Adventist Soteriology: Moving Beyond Missing Links and Toward a More Explicit Understanding,” October 15, 2010, 9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> *1931 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1931), 378; *1946 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946), 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. See William Henry Branson, *How Men are Saved: The Certainty, Plan, and Time for Man's Salvation* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1941).

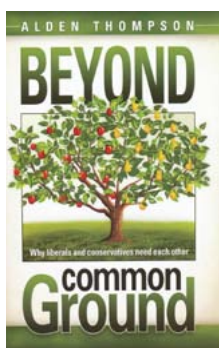
<sup>25</sup> I. H. Evans, *This is the Way: Meditations Concerning Justifica-*

*tion by Faith and Growth in Christian Graces* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1939).

<sup>26</sup> George Knight, 19. See Edward Heppenstall, *Salvation Unlimited: Perspectives in Righteousness by Faith* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1974).

<sup>27</sup> George Knight, 19. See Edward W. H. Vick, *Let Me Assure You: Of Grace, of Faith, of Forgiveness, of Freedom, of Fellowship, of Hope* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1968); Hans K. LaRondelle, *Christ Our Salvation: What God Does for Us and in Us* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1980).

## BOOK NOTES



Alden Thompson. *Beyond Common Ground: Why Liberals and Conservatives Need Each Other*. Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 2009. 256 pp. US\$16.99.

This is a book written from a pastoral heart, totally interested in the unity of the church and in bringing healing to doctrinal and theological controversies within the Adventist Church. The tone is irenic and conversational as

it tries to deal with both sides of the debate as fairly as possible. What should happen in order for conservatives and liberals to coexist within the church in a harmonious way? This is the question that Thompson is seeking to answer. He works with what is almost an assumption: The church needs both of them. But how can they function together? Here is his plan as I understood it.

First, we must agree on what fully matters in the Bible. His first concern is defining fundamental doctrines. The suggestion he offers is based on a covenant of faith written by the Michigan Conference in 1861: An Adventist is one who (1) keeps the Sabbath, (2) keeps the Commandments of God, (3) believes in the Second Coming of Christ, and (4) has the faith of Jesus. Under the influence of James White, Thompson adds a fifth one: the conviction that the Bible is our creed. He also argues that there are two other elements that matter in the Bible: the law of love, which calls us to treat others the way we would like to be treated if we were where they are now; and the example of Jesus, who loved and accepted all and lived and taught a life of simplicity—what is needed is His gentle love as we deal with each other.

The implication of his discussion is that outside of these minimal convictions the church should accept a diversity of views. Thus liberals and conservatives would be able to coexist within the same community of faith.

This, according to Thompson, is nothing new. The Bible, our creed, is itself characterized by a diversity of views. The rest of his book is basically a development of the ideas expressed in the first three chapters.

One of the problems that Thompson faced was defining the terms *conservative* and *liberal*. Readers must wait until chapter eleven to find his full treatment of the two terms. For him, the terms are primarily temperamental distinctions, psychological traits, and therefore both groups make contributions in the sense that we need both types of temperaments. In specifying the differences between the two, things become more complex. He admits that his own definition does not fit him and I suspect that both conservatives and liberals will argue that they are not properly represented in the definition of the terms. This raises questions related to the audience and the significance or value of the book. Could it be possible that the book is addressing a straw man? Are we not dealing here with deep conflicting ideologies and doctrinal matters and not just with temperamental issues?

The second problem Thompson faced was how to establish what really matters in the Bible. In order to keep both groups together he decided to look for the least common denominator. This minimalist approach limits the message of the church to five elements arbitrarily selected by the author. Thompson anticipated some problems with respect to the emphasis Ellen G. White gives to the doctrine of the sanctuary as being part of the very foundation of the Adventist message and mission. But he dismisses it by indicating that the purpose of the sanctuary was simply to affirm the truth of the Sabbath and the Law. Is that so? I do not think so.

Thompson also inadvertently adds another one: the unity of the church (p. 20). I suppose that he is referring to the world church. In that case I would have to say that only the world church has the authority to define the message and mission of the church based on the Scripture and under the guidance of the Spirit. If the criterion to be used in defining what we should consider to be non-negotiable is ensuring that liberals and conserva-

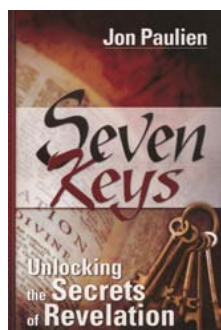
tives can coexist in the church, then the principle of *sola scriptura* is no longer valid.

This book is not likely to please anybody. It is Thompson's vision, a vision that the church will unquestionably not embrace. This is another weakness in the book. Unlike the Thompson we know personally, he comes across in the book as the only one with ultimate solutions. And the solutions he offers are grounded in his views on the revelation and inspiration of the Bible, particularly how to deal with contradictions in the Bible and with the picture of God found in the Old Testament. This is a topic that he has addressed in his previous books and is summarized in this one. His views have not seriously impacted the world church. One has to raise the question, why are his views still being pushed on the church? This has nothing to do with Thompson, who has the right to write and believe whatever he wants. This is

about the mission of our publishing houses.

Finally, let me say that the book is already outdated. The church is no longer dealing with liberals versus conservatives but with conservatives versus *radicals*. We only need to look at the websites that originally promoted liberal/progressive views to realize that the stakes are now very high. The church is facing radicals who are actively involved in an open attack against many of the biblical truths that we have been called to proclaim while seeking to entice church members to support them. Having said that, I support Thompson's desire for love to prevail and for us to avoid treating each other as enemies. God in His own time will address this concern. Meanwhile, let us pray for each other.

Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, BRI



Jon Paulien, *Seven Keys: Unlocking the Secrets of Revelation*, Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2009, 158 pp., US\$13.99.

This book, one of a number of books that Jon Paulien has published on the Book of Revelation, is concise and quite helpful, providing an excellent survey of the subject in four parts. Daniel

and Revelation are important for Adventists. Therefore, works dealing with these apocalyptic books are not only needed but appreciated.

The author begins with principles of interpretation, very crucial now since all kinds of fanciful interpretations are found among church members and even some Adventist pastors. The suggested biblical controls are much needed. Paulien discusses preterism, futurism—which is a major problem in certain sectors of the church—idealism, and historicism. He favors historicism because it corresponds with the intention and text of Revelation. In chapter two, seven keys for interpreting the Apocalypse are presented. But later chapters also describe other devices helpful for interpretation of the book (e.g., “duodirectionality,” 58-61).

Beginning in Part Two, Paulien surveys and summarizes the major visions of Revelation. Although covering the entire Apocalypse, rather than providing a commentary Paulien points to major themes and developments in Revelation. This is very important because, in a commentary's attention to details, the broad perspective can easily be lost sight of. Paulien's charts are very useful

with the possible exception of the table on p. 104, which could cause confusion if the columns are understood as being parallel. This book is pleasant to read and contains some fresh insights, for example, the suggestion that Rev 3:20 prepares not only for chapter 4 but for the entire vision of the seals.

Paulien allows for a historical application of the seven churches and lists not just four but twelve characteristics of the remnant. His description of the three end-time confederacies, which he calls “the Saints,” “Secular forces,” and “Religious forces” adds clarity to Revelation's depiction of end-time events. His treatment of the Millennium, following a premillennial approach argued from within Revelation itself, is also very helpful.

Apart from the book's many positive features, there are some debatable issues and shortcomings:

(1) The large print makes the book very readable for the elderly, but is not so necessary for the average reader and wastes spaces that could have been used to explain some subjects more fully. For instance, the discussion of the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation 21-22 takes up only a page and a half.

(2) The chart on p. 116 contains an unfortunate typographical error: “Judiasm” appears in large, bold print rather than “Judaism.”

(3) The author finds that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam combine to comprise the full truth of the remnant (115-117), but this only works, for example, by limiting (somewhat) Christianity to gospel, grace, and Jesus—which would seem to be an oversimplification of history. Strong eschatological concerns were present not just in Islam but also throughout Christian history. The same

could be said about the law and the Sabbath: they were not the sole possession of Judaism.

(4) The “kings from the east” (Rev 16:12) are only understood by some Adventist expositors as Jesus and his chosen followers (131-132); others understand them as Jesus and his heavenly host. A reference might have been helpful here, or at least a further explanation, because the author’s approach seems to suggest that the “chosen followers” liberate themselves from evil powers.

(5) While the Old Testament background for the term “abyss” is explored (146-147), the potentially useful New Testament usage is not.

(6) Most serious to this reviewer is the application of literary genres by the author to various parts of Revelation. To call the message to the seven churches “prophetic letters” (90) may be fine. But to distinguish the literary genre of the seven seals from the “historical apocalyptic” of the seven trumpets (91), making them “a form of classical prophecy” that “can be applied to more than one situation” (90-91), could be quite problematic,

destroying recapitulation in the first part of Revelation to some extent as well as its historicist interpretation. In addition, the term “historical apocalyptic” implies that there is another form of apocalyptic literature, e.g., “mystical apocalyptic.” Here the question must be raised, as to whether subcategories of genres are really necessary and contribute to the understanding of Revelation or simply burden the reader unduly.

Having mentioned some debatable areas, it must nevertheless be stated that apart from these issues the book is extremely helpful. Paulien correctly points out that the emphasis of Revelation falls not on the political and/or military sphere but on the spiritual realm. Its center is Jesus, His cross, and His ministry for His people. The conclusion summarizes Revelation’s main concern in eight, valuable, down-to-earth lessons that we as God’s people are asked to take seriously and live accordingly.

Ekkehardt Mueller, BRI



## WORLDWIDE HIGHLIGHTS

### Third International Bible Conference Set for 2012

The Third International Bible Conference, sponsored by the General Conference, BRI, and the North American Division, is to be held in Israel, June 11-21, 2012. The theme chosen for the conference is “Issues in Biblical Anthropology from an Adventist Perspective.” A total of twelve plenary sessions are planned, some exploring

the theme in connection with the ancient Near East, the Old and New Testaments, Greek philosophy and Judaism, Christian history, culture, and contemporary theology. Other plenary sessions will deal with ministry in an age of spiritualism, creation, evolution, and human

nature, and death and hell in Scripture. There will also be fifty-four additional papers, presented in six parallel sessions.

Goals of the conference include: (1) studying the biblical understanding of human nature, including the holistic idea of body, soul, and spirit, conditional immortality, and the challenges it faces from contemporary cultures, philosophies, religions, and from the rise of spiritualism at the close of the cosmic conflict; (2) examining ways of reaffirming the faith-commitment of church members to the biblical understanding of human nature in a world

culture increasingly characterized by spiritualistic propaganda and manifestations; and (3) exploring strategies of sharing the biblical view of humanity with adherents of other world religions.

Some of the most helpful presenta-

tions for the world church will be prepared and edited for publication as a book. All papers accepted for presentation will utilize a historical-grammatical and/or literary method which accepts the text in its final form and avoids the more critical approaches to the text of Scripture. Further information on method may be found in the book, *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, available from the BRI, and the “Methods of Bible Study” document voted at the Annual Council in 1986. See <http://adventist.org/beliefs/other-documents/other-doc4.html>.



In connection with the conference, there will be guided tours of major biblical sites throughout Israel and participants will have the opportunity to consider a statement of consensus on biblical anthropology. Due to space and logistical constraints, the conference is limited to 300 participants. Details regarding cost and other particulars may be obtained either from BRI or from the conference coordinator appointed by each division. A tour of Jordan and Egypt, which spouses are welcome to attend, is planned immediately following the Bible conference. The purpose of these conferences, held also in 1998 and 2006, is to promote biblical and theological studies and to foster theological unity and fellowship among Bible teachers, theologians, and administrators.

### Call for Papers

The Biblical Research Institute invites proposals for papers on the topic “Issues in Biblical Anthropology from an Adventist Perspective” for the Third International Bible Conference to be held in Israel, June 11-21, 2012. Proposals may be made within the categories of Old and New Testaments, Ancient Near East, Greek Philosophy, Judaism, Christian History, Contemporary Theology, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology, and Science in relation to Biblical Anthropology.

Proposals may deal with any aspect of the topic of Biblical Anthropology including especially, but not limited to, death, dying, the state of the dead, hell, spiritualism, human nature, creation and evolution as related to human nature, resurrection, Biblical terms such as soul, body, spirit, flesh, etc.

All papers accepted for presentation will utilize a historical-grammatical and/or literary method which accepts the text in its final form and avoids the more critical approaches to the text of Scripture. Proposals should include the author’s name, email address, and a one to two paragraph synopsis of the subject matter you will cover. Specificity in delineating the points to be made in the paper enhances the probability of acceptance of a proposal. Send proposals in MS Word format to Tom Shepherd at [trs@andrews.edu](mailto:trs@andrews.edu). Address questions about papers to Tom Shepherd or Clinton Wahlen at the Biblical Research Institute at [wahlenc@gc.adventist.org](mailto:wahlenc@gc.adventist.org). The deadline for receiving proposals is June 30, 2011.

### BRICOM and Faith & Science Council, 2010-2015

The BRI has a larger advisory committee called BRICOM composed of the BRI theologians, the GC officers and several General Vice Presidents, as well Adventist theologians and administrators from every division of the world church. Its membership, which is reconfigured every quinquennium following the General Conference session, provides scholarly representation in all major areas of biblical and religious research important to Seventh-day Adventists, including Old Testament, New Testament,

Church History, Historical Theology, Systematic Theology, Archaeology, Missiology, and Ellen G. White. The committee also includes the directors of the several Biblical Research Committees established by the divisions.

In addition to BRICOM, BRI theologians also work closely with research scientists of the Geoscience Research Institute on the Faith and Science Council. The council provides an opportunity for both scientists and theologians to present research in areas of mutual interest, especially concerning the biblical accounts of Creation and the Flood. Several volumes currently in preparation will deal with Creation and subsequent volumes are planned that will deal with the Flood as well as other topics.

