



# REFLECTIONS

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## THEOLOGICAL FOCUS

# No Middle Ground: Why Theistic Evolution and Biblical Creation are Mutually Exclusive (With Some Implications for Eschatology)

By Greg A. King

There are some people who are dual citizens and have passports from two different countries. Australia, Canada, Switzerland, and the United States are among the countries that allow this. Having two passports does not mean they are traitors to one country or less loyal to the other.

Similarly, some people claim to be dual citizens when it comes to the issue of origins. They profess to be Bible-believing Christians while also believing in macro-evolution. They state that it is possible to hold a high view of Scripture and at the same time embrace deep time and go back to a one-cell being from which everything slowly evolved.

Perhaps they are encouraged in this approach by quotes such as this: “I believe that God is in charge and that evolution is the way he chose to carry out his creation. If life emerged from a primeval soup, then God was the Master Chef.”<sup>1</sup>

Another quote tending in this direction is from

Stephen J. Gould, one of America’s most widely quoted scientists on the topic of origins. He stated that there is no conflict between science and religion because they are concerned with separate matters. Indeed, there is “a lack of overlap between their respective domains.” According to him, evolution is “entirely compatible” with Christian belief.<sup>2</sup>

However, before joining these scholars aboard the evolutionary train, Christians might want to consider another quote from Gould that suggests his approach to science is not quite as benign in its attitude towards religion as it might first seem. In answering the question of why humans exist, he declares, “I do not think that any ‘higher’ answer can be given. . . . We are the offspring of history and must establish our own paths in this most diverse and interesting of conceivable universes—one indifferent to our suffering, and therefore offering us maximal freedom to thrive, or to fail, in our own chosen way.”<sup>3</sup>

So the question is this: Are the viewpoints of cre-

ation and evolution logically consistent? Is it tenable to hold on to both biblical creation and macro-evolution at the same time? Is it possible for a Christian church or denomination to endorse both the biblical teaching of creation and accept the teachings generally espoused by science that complex life forms developed from simpler life forms and that cellular life began several billion years ago?

The thesis of this paper is that there is no middle ground when it comes to the matter of origins. This paper will seek to show that biblical creation and the evolutionary paradigm—even when the latter is comingled with some form of belief in God, as in theistic evolution—are mutually exclusive. That is, it is not possible to be logically consistent and hold to the viewpoint set forth in Scripture regarding the beginning of life on this planet while at the same time believing in macro-evolution.

After briefly defining theistic evolution, of which some variation is accepted by nearly all Christians who don't espouse a literal creation as described in Scripture, this paper will set forth six ways theistic evolution diverges from the biblical account. Then it will highlight seven important biblical teachings that are undermined or altered by an acceptance of theistic evolution. Finally, it will conclude with some thoughts on the importance of this matter for biblical eschatology.

### Definitions

It is important to give a definition first, so we will know what is being talked about when the term theistic evolution is used. Now that isn't as easy as it might seem, because the term is often used without defining it, leaving the reader in some doubt as to what is being described. However, theistic evolution is usually understood approximately as follows: The view that God, keeping discretely in the background, used the process of macroevolution to create every living thing. That is, God somehow directed the process of evolution from simple life to complex life over millions of years.

A key part of the definition is that God keeps "discretely in the background." That is, His creative activity is not really visible, except to the eye of faith. Therefore, the evolutionary processes would be understood and described in a similar way that a materialistic scientist understands and describes it—except for the proviso that God is somehow directing or guiding the process.

### Contradictions with the Genesis Creation Account

With this definition in mind, I now turn to the ways in which almost all understandings of theistic evolution contradict biblical creation. As will be seen, at its most basic level theistic evolution is in conflict with what Scripture teaches about the beginnings of life on this planet.

The first way that theistic evolution contradicts biblical creation is that there is no literal creation

week. In fact, theistic evolution is not focused on the issue of time, except for implying that the development of life and the march of progress from simple to complex forms of life took place over a lengthy, indeterminate period of time.

There is no evening and morning, as in the biblical account. There is no mention of six literal days in which God's creative activity took place—just long periods of time for random mutation and the development of various complex life forms.

Now some may say that each day represents a longer period of time, but nowhere in the biblical text is such implied. Another view is that God engaged in a week of revelatory activity when revealing creation to the author of Genesis, but again this is unsupported by the biblical text. Rather, it is best to simply recognize that *the biblical account describes a creation that occurs in six literal days, which is in conflict with the understanding of theistic evolution.*

A second way that biblical creation is contradicted by theistic evolution is related to the origin of human beings. In theistic evolution there is no special creation of humans. Rather, humans are the result of the long, slow, incremental process of natural selection that God—at least, according to the proponents of theistic evolution—originally set in motion. Now it is true that proponents of theistic evolution may in some way highlight the uniqueness of human beings. Some may say that at some point God placed an immortal soul within early hominids, thus specifying them as the first pair of humans. Others might contend that at some point God gave a sense of morality to a pair of human ancestors whom He selected. But in any case, *there is no special and unique creation of humans as described in Scripture*—that is, of humans who did not descend from animals and are the ancestors of all humans.

A third contradiction between theistic evolution and biblical creation is that theistic evolution does not depict God as personally involved with creation. On the contrary, the development of life in all its magnificent forms is viewed in basically the same way as it is in naturalistic evolution. In fact, one might be hard pressed to find much distinction between a description of the process of natural selection by a theistic evolutionist and the description of the same process by a naturalistic evolutionist. There is no deity who speaks his creation into existence by the power of his word, as depicted in Genesis and throughout Scripture. There is no divine deliberation prior to the creation of humans (Gen 1:26); nor is there the picture of God stooping to form Adam from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7). Instead, God is merely something like a life-giving principle. *The personal Creator God described in Genesis vanishes from the scene.*

A fourth contradiction between the account of Scripture and theistic evolution is that the latter does not have the causal linkage between sin and death that is basic and foundational in the biblical account. According to the proponents of theistic evolution, dis-

ease and predatory activity that result in the demise of living creatures have been part of this planet's history since the beginning. There was never a time when death was not present, and nature, red in tooth and claw (to use Tennyson's famous expression) has always been here.

But such a view directly contradicts the biblical account. According to Scripture, when this earth was made there was no shadow of death. This was because there was no taint of sin and everything was in harmony with God's will. But all of this changed when sin entered the world. After Adam and Eve rebelled against the divine will, death came in as a result (see Rom 5:12). The Bible teaches that *the only reason death exists is because of the intrusion of sin, while in theistic evolution it is part of the natural order of things.*

A fifth way that theistic evolution contradicts biblical creation is by removing the literal seventh day of the initial week of earth's history as the first Sabbath. Since there is no literal week of creation, just lengthy indeterminate periods of time, neither is there a literal Sabbath. The Sabbath only came along at a much later time, possibly when workers in early Israel desired a day of respite from their labors and an Israelite scribe wanted to infuse the day with some religious meaning. Or perhaps at some point the Israelites co-opted a non-working day from another culture.

But in any case, *the Sabbath is no longer a memorial of creation, as it is depicted in Scripture.* It is not the crown and climax of the week of creation, a day set aside and blessed by God Himself. This makes the Sabbath mostly a human idea, instead of a divine initiative, and is in contrast with the clear teaching of the Bible.

A sixth contradiction between theistic evolution and the biblical account of origins is its *denial of the global flood as described in Genesis.* By presenting the history of this earth and the fossil record as involving only naturalistic processes that are observable today, and by discounting the possibility that any worldwide catastrophes may have played a part in what transpired, theistic evolutionists ignore the pivotal role that the Genesis flood had in shaping the contours of the earth and the history of the human race.

As a study of the Gospels demonstrates, this perspective is at odds with the understanding of Jesus, who understood the biblical flood narrative literally (Matt 24:38–39). Additionally, those who hold this perspective deny the reality of the major divine judgment of the past—a global flood—even while they question the reality of the future return of Christ. Ironically, their disbelief in both the flood and the Parousia was anticipated in Scripture itself (see 2 Pet 3:3–7).

### Doctrinal Implications

Having looked at six ways in which theistic evolution contradicts the account of origins set forth in Scripture, I now turn to some of the implications of theistic evolution for biblical doctrines. That is, if a

person should embrace theistic evolution, how would their theology be altered? What doctrines of Scripture would be affected and how would they be changed?<sup>4</sup>

Before looking at several of these doctrines, I should give a brief definition of the term “doctrine.” Doctrines, which could also be understood as the teachings of the Bible, are simply the summary and description of what Scripture says about God. They are the unfolding of the biblical revelation of God and His dealings with humanity, and they unveil truth about how we should relate to God and one another.

Sometimes in our day and age people say, “I don't need doctrine; all I want is love.” But the love of God for His children is in itself a teaching or doctrine of Scripture. Instead of eschewing doctrines, we should embrace them because they tell us about God. So then, what doctrines are affected by a belief in theistic evolution?

The first doctrine impacted by embracing theistic evolution is *the doctrine of Scripture itself.* What does the Bible teach about itself? There are verses that state the Bible is inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16), and as such, it is reliable and trustworthy. Additionally, it is authoritative in what it teaches. This is what could be described as a “high view” of Scripture.

It is difficult to see how one can maintain a high view of the Bible and endorse theistic evolution. Theistic evolution, a view of origins that attempts to blend the current understanding of science with theism, is clearly at odds with Scripture in several ways (as shown above), and should be perceived as undermining the doctrine of Scripture because Scripture is no longer seen as reliable in what it states.

A second doctrine affected by a belief in theistic evolution is *the doctrine of God.* Scripture presents God as able to call the flora and fauna into existence by His spoken word (see Gen 1; Ps 33:6, 9). He is shown to be both sovereign and omnipotent, the majestic Lord of creation. There is also God's goodness.

By contrast, the God of theistic evolution is a diminished deity. Yes, the first spark of life came from Him, but His involvement with the world from that time forward seems very remote. At best, He is detached and in the background, working in the shadows, if at all. And the god of evolution is an utterly wasteful and cruel god who uses the suffering and the death of billions of creatures to propel the development of species. This is certainly not consistent with the teaching of the deity set forth in Scripture, and thus, the doctrine of God is undermined.

A third doctrine impacted by embracing theistic evolution is *the doctrine of salvation.* The Bible teaches that Jesus came to save us from death, which resulted from the choice made by the first humans who rebelled against God (see Gen 3; Rom 5:12). The misuse of human free will led to tragic consequences, from which God delivered us with the death of His Son. This, in a nutshell, is the plan of salvation.

It is difficult to see how the biblical teaching of salvation can be reconciled with theistic evolution.

According to theistic evolution, death has always been part of human experience, and in fact, it preceded the existence of humans. Theistic evolution also teaches that it was through natural selection, sometimes known as survival of the fittest, that complex forms of life arose from simpler forms. That being the case, it is difficult to even see what a plan of salvation logically consistent with theistic evolution would look like. Why do humans need to be saved if we are simply following God's plan for achieving higher forms of life? From what do we need to be saved? There is basically no fall, and thus no sin. Evolution indirectly denies the doctrine of sin. Such basic questions should be addressed before embracing the evolutionary viewpoint.

A fourth doctrine affected by theistic evolution is *the doctrine of man*. In Scripture humans are depicted as the capstone of God's created works. As the creation week builds to a crescendo, they are the crowning achievement, formed in the image of God Himself (Gen 1:26–27), and given dominion over creation (Gen 1:28).

This is clearly not the anthropology of theistic evolution. In theistic evolution hominids only emerge at the end of a long, slow process of development, proceeding by natural selection from the simpler forms of life to the more complex forms. If God did anything special in connection with the origin of humans, it was unnoticed and hidden, except to the eye of faith. The biblical doctrine of man is severely altered in such a scenario. In evolution there is no intrinsic value in a human being. If evolution is the survival of the fittest, why should one race not be better than another? This has severe implications on our ethics and how we treat each other.

A fifth doctrine impacted by believing in theistic evolution is *the doctrine of the Sabbath*. As noted previously, no longer is the Sabbath a memorial of creation, a day set aside since the beginning of the world. It is not the special day on which God Himself rested and which He sanctified and blessed.

Since theistic evolution has no literal creation week, its understanding of the Sabbath would be that it is of human origin instead of a divine institution, and like humans, it came about as a result of a long developmental process. Consequently, the Sabbath no longer has the significance accorded to it in Scripture and it loses much of its compelling significance.

A sixth doctrine that would be understood quite differently if theistic evolution were embraced is *the doctrine of marriage*. According to the Bible, marriage, like the Sabbath, is a divine institution, given by God Himself (Gen 2:24–25). Moreover, it goes back to the very beginning of earth's history. Additionally, it is a binding commitment between male and female, as exemplified in the very first marriage between Adam and Eve.

This perspective is drastically altered by theistic evolution. First, hominids did not come along until life on earth had existed for millions of years. Further, marriage, instead of being instituted by God, may have

arisen as part of the process of natural selection. That is, since a relationship between two members of the opposite sex could arguably be said to help promote the propagation of the species, the concept of marriage came into being. However, it is not a divinely given covenant as presented in Scripture, a permanent commitment between one man and one woman. Thus, theistic evolution helps pave the way for some of the unbiblical permutations of marriage that evidenced in our time—such as divorce, polygamy, incest, and homosexuality. It ultimately would lead to a loss of all sexual norms.

Finally, a seventh and final<sup>5</sup> doctrine impacted by theistic evolution is *the doctrine of the New Earth*, which will be brought into existence when God establishes His visible kingdom. One intriguing feature of this doctrine is how it is presented in Scripture as a new creation, a restoration of what had been lost through sin. The tree of life, originally in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9), will also be found in the New Earth (Rev 22:2). Sorrow and death will be absent in the New Earth (Rev 21:4), just as they were not part of God's original creation. Creation will come full circle, as God restores what was lost through sin.

This biblical teaching is certainly incongruent with theistic evolution, which has no place for a pristine original world with no taint of sin and no shadow of death. Instead it depicts a world in which decay, predatory activity, destruction, and death have always been present. Thus, it would be logically inconsistent to advocate the doctrine of the New Earth as outlined in Scripture.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, because of the irreconcilable contradictions between theistic evolution and Scripture, as outlined above, and because of the profound way in which theistic evolution would alter or modify key doctrines of the Bible, it seems clear that there is no middle ground between theistic evolution and biblical creation. As in Joshua's day (Josh 24:15), we are urged to choose whom we will serve: the Creator God as revealed in inspired Scripture or the deity implied by theistic evolution, who used a chaotic and destructive process of death and decay to bring his world into existence. As in Elijah's day, we are called to stop limping back and forth between two opinions—to get off the fence (1 Kgs 18:21).

The following quote shows why this issue matters so much in our day and age:

And so, here is our first answer to the question, "Who am I?" The Babylonian myth would answer, "You are a product of the gods to make their life easier." Modern myth would assert, "You are a product of random chance in a purposeless universe." The Bible says, "You are a personal creation of Yahweh, who cares for you, has created you male and female, and has placed you in

an orderly and good creation as his representative ruler.” This knowledge of God’s order and created relationships is considered obsolete by many today. As a result, our age suffers the anxiety of enjoying no secure place or significance in the world.<sup>6</sup>

The antidote to this angst and meaninglessness is for us as Adventists to—without apology or equivocation—be about the work of “proclaiming and teaching the biblical doctrine of creation, living in its light, rejoicing in our status as sons and daughters of God, and praising our Lord Jesus Christ—our Creator and Redeemer.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Humphreys, “Can Science and Christianity Both Be True?” in *Real Science, Real Faith*, ed. R. J. Berry (Oxford and Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 1991), 124–125.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, “Nonoverlapping Magisteria,” *Natural History* 106 (March 1997): 16.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen J. Gould, *Wonderful Life*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 323.

<sup>4</sup> A recent Adventist contribution on this topic is the fine volume by Clifford Goldstein, *Baptizing the Devil: Evolution and the Seduction of Christianity* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> This is not an exhaustive list. Also affected are other doctrines, such as the Great Controversy, the resurrection, the end of sin, etc. But due to the space limitations of this article, we will limit our discussion to the above mentioned doctrines.

<sup>6</sup> Albert Baylis, *From Creation to the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 42.

<sup>7</sup> Taken from the Southern Adventist University statement on creation, titled, “A Reaffirmation of Creation.” The entire statement is at [www.southern.edu/academics/academic-sites/faithandscience/adventistposition/universitystatement.html](http://www.southern.edu/academics/academic-sites/faithandscience/adventistposition/universitystatement.html) (accessed 09-04-2018)

## SCRIPTURE APPLIED

# Lessons from Matthew 4

By Clinton Wahlen

**M**atthew 4 begins with Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness for forty days. As in Mark and Luke, it occurs immediately after Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist and prior to His ministry in Galilee. The Gospel of John does not mention Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness at all and Mark’s description is very brief (Mark 1:12–13). But both Matthew and Luke describe in detail the devil’s attempts to defeat Jesus. The main difference between them is in the order of the second and third temptations; Luke’s geographical order culminates with the temptation for Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple, while Matthew’s more chronological account concludes with Satan offering Jesus the kingdoms of the world in exchange for receiving His worship.

### Structure of the Chapter

Jesus, having been anointed as Messiah by the Holy Spirit and identified as God’s beloved Son by the voice from heaven (Matt 3:16–17), begins His ministry with forty days of prayer. Matthew describes the early days of Jesus’ ministry in four sections:

1. Jesus’ temptation by the devil (Matt 4:1–11)
2. Significance of Jesus’ Galilean ministry (Matt 4:12–17)
3. Calling the first disciples (Matt 4:18–22)
4. Jesus’ teaching and healing (Matt 4:23–25)

Interestingly, there is an indication in Matthew, hinted at also in Mark 1:14, that Jesus’ ministry did not begin in Galilee. Matthew says that when Jesus “heard that John had been arrested, he *withdrew* into Galilee” (Matt 4:12, ESV).<sup>1</sup> The italicized words in this verse are not found in the parallel passages (cf. Mark 1:14; Luke 4:14). According to John, it was at this time that Jesus shifted His focus from Judea to Galilee after a confrontation with the Sanhedrin (John 5:16–18). As a disciple of Jesus, Matthew would be well aware of the circumstances that led Jesus to end his ministry in Judea. This initial phase of His public ministry, which seems to have lasted more than a year, includes ministry in a city of Samaria (John 1:35–5:47). The last three sections of Matthew 4 show how Jesus prepared the ground in Galilee, resulting in large crowds flocking to Him and gathering to hear the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7). It is important to keep in mind that this sermon occurs midway through Christ’s earthly ministry, after He has attracted many followers.

### Interpretation of the Chapter

#### 1. Verses 1–11

- The Greek word translated “tempted” (*peirazō*) can also refer to being “tested.” Jesus will be repeatedly tested by the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:1; 19:3; 22:18, 35). God allows His people to be tested (1 Cor 7:5). But He never tempts anyone (Jas 1:13); this is

the devil's work.

- Matthew places special emphasis on the battle between God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom, a theme that becomes especially clear in the third temptation.
- The forty days in the wilderness and Jesus' successful resistance of Satan's temptations contrasts with Israel's forty years of wilderness wandering in doubt and unbelief. To each of the three temptations, Jesus replies with God's Word rather than His own. By quoting from Deuteronomy each time (Deut 8:3; 6:16; 6:13; 10:20), Jesus redeems Israel's failure.
- Satan's first two temptations invite doubt of God's Word that was spoken at Jesus' baptism affirming His Sonship (Matt 3:17); the first temptation also implies doubt of God's provision for Jesus' needs (cf. Matt 6:31–33), while the second temptation, although on the surface seeming to affirm faith in God's protection, actually invites doubt by requiring proof.
- In the second temptation, the devil even quotes Psalm 91:11–12. But not "every word" is quoted (cf. Matt 4:4) and, as a result, a promise of protection is twisted to give a license for presumption, which is faith's counterfeit.
- Satan's third temptation, offering the world to Jesus if He would "fall down and worship" him, exhibits the attitude that led to his fall from heaven (Isa 14:12–14). This apparent "bargain"—winning the world without going to the cross—as with all of the devil's moral and ethical shortcuts, would have ended badly. Jesus came to proclaim the advent of God's kingdom, which is ever at enmity with the principles Satan introduced into the world through sin.

## 2. Verses 12–17

- Capernaum, Jesus' "own city" (Matt 9:1), was located in a fertile area, on a busy trade route, with a sizeable synagogue. It provided access to many nearby towns and villages, and a boat facilitated Jesus' ministry on both sides of the lake.
- This widespread ministry, reaching to the eastern shore and the Decapolis region (Matt 4:25)—predominantly Gentile areas—could aptly be described in the words of Isaiah's prophecy as "the way of the sea, beyond the

Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles" (cf. Isa 9:1–2).

- i. The Greek word translated "Gentiles" (*ethnē*, "nations") is used consistently in the plural in Matthew's gospel when referring to non-Jews.
- ii. Its first use in the singular refers to God's kingdom being "taken away" from Israel's leadership and "given to a people [*ethnei*] producing its fruits" (Matt 21:43, ESV). After this, the plural form is always used in reference to "all the nations," showing that the mission committed to Jesus' followers includes Israel (Matt 24:9, 14; 25:32; 28:19).

## 3. Verses 18–22

- Peter, the first mentioned here, together with his brother Andrew, as specifically called by Jesus (cf. Mark 1:16; Luke 5:1–11), also appears first in all four lists of the twelve apostles (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:13–16; Acts 1:13).
- Normally, young men would ask permission from a rabbi to be their disciple but Jesus, rather than relying on volunteers, singles out specific ones to follow Him. Having been able to observe them for some time, He now calls them to make a more consequential, fulltime commitment as "fishers of men."
- All four disciples appear to have been commercial fishermen, working closely with Zebedee and his two sons (cf. Luke 5:7, 10). They worked at night when the nets were more difficult for fish to see, and would sell their catch at market in the morning. In 1986 a boat like that used by these men was discovered, able to accommodate up to sixteen people. Such a boat, with the sizeable net mentioned here that was big enough to justify mending, would enable the catching of a very large quantity of fish. In other words, these men operated quite a successful business, and the call to leave their livelihood behind represented a significant sacrifice. But the blessings in following Jesus are even more significant (Matt 19:27–29; cf. 2 Cor 4:16–5:1).

## 4. Verses 23–25

- Jesus' ministry reached all classes of people. His teaching in the synagogue

reached the religious leaders, His preaching in the countryside reached the common people, and His healing ministry reached the sick, including those on the margins of Jewish society. Matthew also describes Christ's work as geographically extensive.

- Although Matthew portrays Jesus' work as parallel in some ways to that of John the Baptist, it is also distinctive. The good news proclamation begins with Jesus, a work that is to be carried forward by His followers "as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14).
- In the coming chapters, Matthew presents Jesus' teaching (Matt 5–7) and healing activity (Matt 8–9), which continues to attract "great multitudes" (Matt 8:1; 12:15; 13:2; 14:14; 15:30, etc.).

### Application of the Chapter

Important lessons that may be drawn from this chapter include:

1. Temptations often intensify following baptism. It seems that the devil works even harder to turn "forward-movers" into "backsliders." But no one can be compelled to sin. Jesus, being tempted in all points as we are, shows us that by relying on Him and His Word we can likewise be victorious over temptation (Heb 4:15–16).
2. The three temptations of Christ cover the

three main spheres of human temptation: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). Christ's victory over each of these three temptations shows that:

- what we eat and put into our bodies affects our spiritual health (1 Cor 10:31).
  - it matters whether we are willing to rely upon God completely and be satisfied with His approval or whether we desire human praise more.
  - idols cherished in the heart prevent us from putting God first in everything (cf. Matt 6:24), and hinder us in obeying and worshipping Him.
3. The fact that Satan could change the meaning of a Bible text by omitting just a few words shows that every word in Scripture is necessary in order to understand the inspired meaning of the whole. Changing or ignoring even one word may drastically change the message (cf. Matt 5:18–19). The warning about adding to or taking away from what has been revealed may also apply more broadly to the whole canon (Rev 22:18–19).
  4. When considering one's occupation it is wise to consider not only how it may be helpful in this life, but also how it could enable us to advance God's kingdom and produce fruit for eternity (Matt 6:33).

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations are from the New King James Version.

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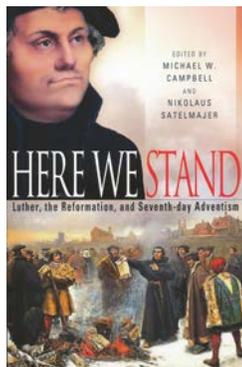
"All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it."

(Ellen G. White, 5T, 740)

# BOOK NOTES

## Michael W. Campbell and Nikolaus Satelmajer, eds. Here We Stand: Luther, the Reformation, and Seventh-day Adventism

(Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2017),  
300 pp.  
US\$19.99



To commemorate the five hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, the editors carefully chose a collection of essays that explore “the various facets and contours of Luther and compares them with Seventh-day Adventism.” The book is comprised of four parts: Historical Foundations, Echoes of Luther in Adventist Theology, Eschatology and Politics, and Dialogue and Legacy. Twenty-seven authors contributed to the book and overall the subjects are well chosen. I will comment on a few essays that I found to be particularly noteworthy.

### Essays from the Section “Historical Foundations”

“*Sola Scriptura: A Comparison between Luther and the Adventist Understanding*,” by Remwil R. Tornalejo concludes that Luther’s *sola Scriptura* made Scripture the highest authority but tradition did have a role. For Luther “the Word of God is the ultimate standard and norm, the proper touchstone, and final authority for faith and practice.” All other authorities must be evaluated in the light of the Bible. For the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Scripture, Tornalejo uses Ellen G. White’s view of Scripture “in order to establish an Adventist baseline view” (p. 29). Both traditions interpret *sola Scriptura* similarly; any teaching or doctrine that does not pass the test of Scripture must be rejected. To me Tornalejo makes a fair evaluation of both traditions.

“*Understanding Sola Scriptura: A Working Approach for the Church*” by John C. Peckham presents a new approach to *sola Scriptura* based on Peckham’s recently published book *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method*. He does not follow the editors’ goal of comparing the views of Luther and the Adventists; instead he addresses what the *sola Scriptura* principle “should mean for the church today” (p. 57).

Peckham recommends a canonically based *sola Scriptura* that “takes Scripture to be the unique rule (canon) or standard of faith and practice,” the principle of “*tota scriptura* that holds that *all* of Scripture serves as the infallible source, sufficient basis, and final norm of theological interpretation,” and “the primacy of Scripture” which “recognizes that, although Scripture is the uniquely infallible source of revela-

tion, it is not the only source of revelation.”

However, a canonically based *sola Scriptura*, according to Peckham, does not mean “all doctrine requires a *direct* biblical statement” (p. 61). Here he sees a distinction in the meaning of *sola Scriptura* as it applies to theological doctrine, and the way it applies to ecclesial policy and practice. Some things that church bodies consider are not explicitly addressed in Scripture. While ecclesial policy and practice should not be confused with or elevated to the level of theological doctrine, for Peckham “*Scripture should test all faith and practice*, but Scripture itself should never be subjected to any external standard, even the church itself” (p. 62, emphasis in the original).

Adventists believe, as White wrote, the Bible is the “standard for every doctrine and practice.” This means that the Bible “is to decide *all* controversies” (*1888 Materials*, pp. 44–45).

“*Ellen White’s Portrait of Martin Luther*” by Denis Kaiser gives an accurate description of Luther in light of the book *The Great Controversy*, showing how in God’s providence Luther was called to bring God’s Word to the attention of many who were deceived during the Middle Ages. It especially focuses on how Luther related to the authority of the Bible and his discovery of the doctrine of justification by faith. Kaiser’s fine portrait of Luther by White shows that her focus is on Luther’s positive contributions to the Protestant Reformation, avoiding the weakness of his character that could diminish his powerful influence on behalf of the truth.

### Essays from the Section “Echoes of Luther in Adventist Theology”

Most of the chapters in this section deal with Luther’s views on subjects like the priesthood of all believers, the state of the dead, the Lord’s supper, the Decalogue, the Sabbath, mission, etc., comparing these with similar topics in Adventism. However, they do not necessarily demonstrate that the Adventist understanding of the topic came from Luther.

“*Luther, Seventh-day Adventists, and Righteousness by Faith*” by Woodrow W. Whidden II deals with the central question, “What do Seventh-day Adventists owe Luther for their understanding of righteousness by faith and Christ and His righteousness?” In the history of the Adventist Church, this subject has been one of strong contention, as this essay shows.

Whidden's history of righteousness by faith fails to take into account the impact of the progressive revelation of the plan of salvation in 1844, which is absolutely essential to understand Luther's limited view of righteousness by faith compared to the tangible impact of the sanctuary message of Daniel 8:14 concerning the judgment hour message and final atonement (See Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, p. 356).

When comparing Luther with Seventh-day Adventists on righteousness by faith he should have kept in mind that Luther and early Adventists operated in different historical contexts that led each to emphasize different present truths adapted for their time. Luther faced a corrupt apostate church that taught the unbiblical gospel that good works or paying money earned righteousness and salvation. To proclaim the free gospel of grace was the present truth in Luther's time, three hundred years before the rise of the Advent Movement.

Adventist pioneers lived in a Protestant world that was familiar with the Reformers' teachings on justification and righteousness by faith. Through their study of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 they received progressive understanding of the everlasting gospel. In the 1840s they came to believe that the 2,300 prophetic days or years would end with Christ's ministry as Judge at His second advent.

When Christ did not return as expected, God gave them progressive light on the true meaning of Christ's cleansing of the sanctuary. Adventists realized that Christ, as Judge, had entered His high-priestly ministry in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary as part of the final atonement for sin. This understanding impacts how human beings experience justification, sanctification, and perfection in ways the Reformers could not have foreseen and that Protestants today do not understand. This insight of the everlasting gospel was integrated into the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6–12 and became the present truth for the time of the end—to prepare people to stand in the Day of the Lord.

Continued study, especially in the years surrounding 1888, gave Adventists progressive light on the "faith of Jesus" that embraced justification and righteousness by faith.

Whidden points out that in the 1950s there came a reaction and a strong resurgence in the Adventist Church,

emphasizing a more Protestant-informed soteriology that would be associated with the effective forensic view of theology. He stated that this more reformationist-evangelical strain of theology arose in Adventist academia as a corrective reaction to a perfectionistic soteriology (p. 121). Unfortunately, many today think that the Adventist view is a legalistic one, instead of understanding the continuity between the views of the Reformers and the progressive views on salvation that Adventists gained in light of 1844. As a result, unnecessary controversies have arisen. This essay should have given a more balanced view of the history of righteousness by faith in the Adventist Church and the significant contribution it has made to the pivotal doctrine of the sanctuary.

**"Reformation Ecclesiology and Adventism" by Reinder Bruinsma** posits that Seventh-day Adventists are indebted for their ecclesiology and model of church governance to the traditions from which they came. This was true of the larger organization of conferences and the General Conference, but not the local church. Interestingly, Bruinsma does not mention that the primary sources reveal that at first there was no Calvinistic influence of other churches on the roles of ministers, elders, and deacons (p. 163). Through divine guidance and Bible study James White and others introduced the New Testament role of elders as leaders of the newly formed churches. Ministers were expected to train members and plant new churches. There was no place for the so-called "settled pastor" role of ministers. It was not until well into the twentieth century that the settled pastor model of Protestant churches was adopted by Seventh-day Adventists, a decision that demoted local elders to assistants of settled pastors like the practice in other Protestant churches.

### **Essays from the Section "Eschatology and Politics"**

**"Luther, Adventist, Anabaptists, and Liberty" by Douglas Morgan** discusses Luther's understanding of the principle of freedom of conscience. He brings out that many have misunderstood and believed that Luther thought his conscience was free. It was not free but was "captive to the Word of God" and it was that Word that generated the freedom of his conscience (p. 235). Morgan explains also how Luther first opposed the use of the coercive suppression of dissent, but later reluctantly

endorsed the use of force, and even the death penalty for nonresistant Anabaptists. This essay provides some excellent insights into church-state relations between the Reformation and Adventists. This is also unfolded in **“State Power and Loyalty: Luther and Adventists”** by Lisa Clark Diller that correctly states that the strongest Reformation roots of Seventh-day Adventists are with the Anabaptists.

**“Martin Luther, Antichrist, and Seventh-day Adventists”** by Dennis Pettibone gives a helpful explanation of how Luther concluded that the papacy was the antichrist. The view of the papacy as antichrist had become generally accepted by Protestants in the time of William Miller and so became part of the Adventist prophetic understanding. Pettibone points out that although it is not politically correct to hold such a view today, the issue should not be whether it is politically correct or socially acceptable, but whether it is *biblically* correct (p. 227). The essay gives good insights regarding how the Protestant view of the antichrist influenced Adventists.

**“Islam in Luther and Seventh-day Adventism”** by Nikolaus Satelmajer nicely explains Luther’s position on the Turks (Islam). When it comes to Adventism and Islam Satelmajer uses W. A. Spicer and Uriah Smith’s views on Turkey as the king of the North in the last verses of Daniel 11 (p. 254), a view that few Adventists still hold. Strangely enough he fails to mention the extensive account of Islam as a fulfillment of God’s judgments on an apostate Christianity in the fifth and sixth trumpets of Revelation 8 and 9—an interpretation that is still held by many Adventists. More recent and problematic trends in the Adventist approach to Islam are not addressed in this article. This is an unfortunate omission.

**“Anabaptists—the Forgotten People of the Reformation”** by Richard W. Muller describes the Anabaptist movement in the context of the magisterial reformers. Muller gives these frequently neglected reformers their proper place and shows the results of a strict adherence to the princi-

ple of the Bible and the Bible only. A good description of the plight of the Anabaptists and their contribution is given.

### **Essays from the Section “Dialogue and Legacy”**

(This section addresses worthwhile topics such as Luther and images, music, Bible translation, and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue.)

**“Luther and Images”** by Daniel Wildemann provides a good explanation of the contrast between the Lutheran and the Reformed (Calvinist) church architecture and the impact of the latter on Adventists. The author designates the artwork of mocking caricature against the papacy and other enemies of Luther “distasteful” (p. 276), but perhaps does not realize there were cartoons Roman Catholics produced against the Protestants, placing both Luther and Calvin in hell. So, in the end both sides used this art form to characterize each other.

**“Luther’s Legacy in Music”** by Dan Shultz shows Luther’s profound influence on music during the Reformation and far beyond his time and ultimately on the world. His attempt to show how it differs from Adventism is to be appreciated.

**“Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogues and the Future of the Protestant Reformation”** by Denis Fortin gives an excellent overview of the dialogues between these religious traditions since Vatican II. As to the fruits of the dialogues, Fortin points out that many barriers of prejudice are being replaced with avenues of cooperation on social and moral issues. But in the areas of doctrinal differences these two traditions have largely no intention to compromise (p. 308).

With few exceptions this book gives a useful summary, pointing out the similarities between Luther and other Reformers and Seventh-day Adventists today and examining some of the ways Seventh-day Adventists are continuing the reformation.

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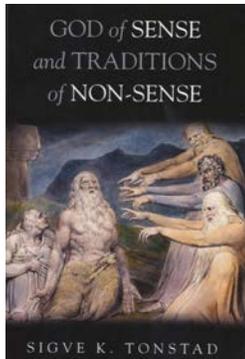
“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times.”

(Martin Luther, *Luther Works*, vol. 35, p. 370)

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## Sigve K. Tonstad God of Sense and Traditions of Non-Sense

(Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016),  
453 pp.  
US\$25.00



In his book *God of Sense and Traditions of Non-Sense* Sigve K. Tonstad, professor of biblical interpretation at Loma Linda University in California, tackles some of the most difficult questions connected with the thorny issue of suffering, evil, and the goodness of God. Tonstad is a master of words. He employs lavish language and writes with almost poetic fervor. He is well acquainted with theological and philosophical traditions that have shaped the discussion at hand and skillfully uses classical pieces of literature (such as the iconic story of the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevsky's epochal book *The Brothers Karamazov*) and pivotal cases of history (from Roger Williams to Auschwitz) to illustrate the impasse we are facing.

In twenty-one chapters Tonstad builds his case. He first sets the stage by pointing out the deficiencies in traditional theological explanations of evil by recourse to the most excruciating example of maliciousness—the Holocaust. He also points out neglected aspects of biblical teaching that have led to distorted perspectives, such as the denial of the involvement of demonic angels and Satan in the great controversy between good and evil. His affirmation of the reality of Satan and demonic forces at work in much of the evil we see in this world is positive and well taken (pp. 36–52, 245ff, 289–290). It is indeed a pity that much of theology has left out the role of Satan when dealing with the evil in this world. Tonstad's intimate knowledge of various theological positions results in some unusual comparisons, such as the interesting association of the church father Origen with Bart Ehrman (pp. 53–56), that are enlightening. Tonstad's vast knowledge of biblical, theological, and nonbiblical literary sources allows him to creatively weave different strands of thought together. This makes interesting reading and learning. It is strangely surprising, however, that he does not mention Victor E. Frankl, a prominent survivor of Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps. Frankl is the founder of the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy, the school of Logotherapy. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning* Frankl gives helpful perspectives on freedom and responsibility in light of our gravest existential challenges. The discussion in Tonstad's book would have been enriched from Frankl's insights. While Tonstad skillfully weaves interesting aspects together, this

strength turns out to be a weakness at the same time. In almost every chapter the reader finds Tonstad presenting an interesting point, but then jumping to another aspect, elaborating other details while his initial thought fades. This constant back and forth between contending positions in almost dialectical fashion does not foster easy understanding. Fascinating details are often presented at the cost of the flow of his argument. This makes the book cumbersome to read.

Throughout the book Tonstad is unafraid to ask tough questions. His proposed solutions to those questions, however, are not always convincing. Tonstad is adamant in affirming the value of human freedom and repudiates any use of coercion as a tool of divine action. With exegetical skills he plows through major biblical stories that depict God as acting in seemingly strange ways and tries to make sense out of something that is difficult to understand. Where God is depicted as someone who employs retributive justice or uses divine power to accomplish His plans, Tonstad provides alternative readings of the biblical text. Sometimes his creative new interpretations are driven more by *his* perspective of divine justice and goodness than by the actual text of Scripture. While there are some interesting insights to be gained, not all of his attempts to reread and reconstruct the biblical narrative are equally valid. What is said of Gerhardsson's interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew (cf. p. 269) could equally be said of Tonstad's biblical exegesis: it is brilliant, but at times speculative!

Throughout the book there is a recurring thought that sticks with the reader: unquestioning obedience is too simplistic. For Tonstad unquestioning obedience is not the biblical ideal. It is undoubtedly reasonable and good to try to better understand what God is really saying. Yet, we created beings will not always be able to explain everything in God's dealing with us. But for Tonstad obedience in the absence of understanding is deplorable (pp. 231–237 and *passim*). While there is certainly some sad truth to his statement that “the worst evil in the world has been committed in the name of obedience” (p. 234) we have to remember that some of the most noble acts in history have also been accomplished in the name of obedience. The latter is an aspect strangely absent in Tonstad's reasoning. He misses the fact that obedience can also be motivated

by love rather than just by understanding and that obedience is an expression of a relationship. If obedience is only legitimate and acceptable when I understand it fully (p. 278), *my* understanding quickly becomes the norm for what is right and wrong. This, however, does not adequately take into consideration the noetic effects of sin on our human understanding and reasoning!

Furthermore, Tonstad repeatedly disparages the idea of (divine) judgment and retribution. He flatly states that “justice . . . is not found in retribution” (p. 261). God certainly does not exercise personal vendettas, yet He is capable of a robust and effective opposition to all evil and sin. Tonstad’s peculiar perception of the nature of God, that categorically excludes any divine force to oppose evil, leads him to some questionable and unfortunate conclusions. While coercion surely is not God’s way of dealing with us (p. 350 and *passim*), Tonstad misses the point that in God’s dealing with sin there is also an aspect of divine justice that needs to be realized and executed in the face of relentless and unflinching evil. Justice is a fundamental aspect of human existence that resonates with our sense of fairness and needs to be upheld. Tonstad is correct that there is demonic activity at the end of time, but to state that the eschatological scenes in the book of Revelation “cannot be ascribed to divine agency” (p. 377) and that they only “describe demonic horror and not divine terror” (p. 390) and that “the seals, trumpets, and bowls represent mind-numbing exposés of demonic activity” (p. 391) does not do full justice to the biblical text. To argue, as Tonstad mistakenly concludes, that the book of “Revelation portrays the end of evil as self-destruction” (p. 394) so that “it is not fire from without that brings an end to the evil power but evil in her midst” (p. 394) because evil is “causing its own destruction” (p. 394, cf. 395, and *passim*), distorts the biblical picture and does not take the tenacity of sin seriously enough. Here Tonstad is close to the late A. Graham Maxwell, to whom, according to his own words, he owes the most for the rough contours of this book (p. xi). Tonstad is fully aware that “this might disappoint many who are convinced that the texts speak of punitive action that is alleged to be necessary for justice to be served” (p. 395). He knows that if the words of Revelation 20:9, “fire came down

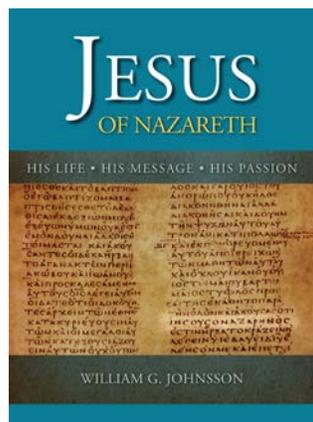
from heaven and consumed them” (Rev 20:9), were to be taken straightforwardly “all the images of self-destruction [that were proposed by Tonstad] will be for naught, and our theology of the end of evil will be terribly compromised” (p. 396). Yes, indeed, that would be the case. And it is not just Revelation 20:9 that challenges Tonstad’s interpretation. Other biblical passages, among them Malachi 4:1–2, Thessalonians 1:7–9, and 2 Peter 3:10–12, could be mentioned.

While Tonstad wants to maintain some nebulous notion of judgment (p. 395), his interpretation raises significant questions about the nature of judgment and God’s involvement in it. This has wide-ranging implications for several biblical doctrines as well as for our understanding of the nature of God and the biblical teaching of the wrath of God. To claim that sin will be eradicated by means of self-destruction and that evil is not destroyed but rather “implodes” (p. 394) because of its own evilness raises some important questions: does that not leave the solution of the sin problem ultimately to Satan and sinners, who will eventually self-destruct, rather than to God who alone is able to overcome sin? Would God still be the author and finisher of our salvation, if sin eradicates itself? Furthermore, would God truly be sovereign, omnipotent, good, and worthy of our adoration if He were indeed not able to respond resolutely and robustly to the problem of sin at the end of time? What does such a revisionist view of the nature of God and his judgment mean for the sanctuary doctrine and the biblical understanding of salvation? Tonstad seems to lean more toward a moral influence theory of salvation than a biblical substitutionary atonement. While the issue of human freedom is crucially important in the Bible and Jesus certainly helps us to correct human misunderstandings of God, Jesus was not just “sent in order to overcome human misperceptions of God—and with it the alienation and fear arising in the wake of such misperception” (p. 303), as Tonstad proposes. Jesus also came to die in our place so that we can be reconciled with God.

These significant theological problems cast a dark shadow over a book that otherwise brims with fascinating ideas.

Frank M. Hasel  
Associate Director  
Biblical Research Institute

The Biblical Research Institute and Andrews University Press are pleased to announce the immediate availability of a new textbook, authored by William G. Johnsson, intended for use in the undergraduate class, “Life and Teachings of Jesus.”



*Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, His Message, His Passion* was released by Andrews University Press on August 24, 2018, US\$34.99, hardcover, 408 pp. ISBN: 978-1-940980-18-8

The text was commissioned by the General Conference Biblical Research Institute and is the first in a series of specialized textbooks in Adventist biblical studies and theology developed by BRI and published by Andrews University Press for use in undergraduate and graduate programs in Adventist colleges and universities. Future topics will include an undergrad-

uate text on general Adventist doctrines, and graduate level texts on the Sabbath, Daniel and Revelation, the sanctuary, and the Spirit of Prophecy.

The purpose of the series is to provide desperately needed textbook resources to the expanding Adventist higher education system around the world. To accomplish this, BRI has partnered with Andrews University Press, the Church’s primary academic publishing house, to produce a series of new textbooks for our colleges. While this first textbook in the series is comparable priced in North America, the goal is to find creative ways to make the book inexpensive for students in colleges and universities outside North America.

William G. Johnsson has served as a New Testament professor at two Adventist universities, and is known around the Adventist world as editor and executive publisher of *Adventist Review* for more than two decades. He is a member of the Ellen G. White Estate Board of Trustees, and has authored nearly 30 books and more than one thousand articles.

Teachers and administrators worldwide can immediately begin working with Andrews University Press to establish *Jesus of Nazareth* as the standard text for “Life and Teachings of Jesus” classes in their institutions.

For more information on purchase and distribution, contact Ronald Knott, director of Andrews University Press (knott@andrews.edu; 1-269-471-6915).

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NEWS

## Fourth International Bible Conference Emphasizes Eschatology

**A**lmost four hundred Seventh-day Adventist theologians, college and university professors, and church administrators from around the world convened in Rome, Italy from June 11–21, 2018 to participate in the Fourth International Bible Conference. The theme of the gathering was eschatology which belongs to the very

ethos of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Our church was not only conceived

in the womb of great eschatological hope but our biblical understanding of prophecy and end-time events gives our mission purpose and urgency and shapes our theological identity and hope.

The event was organized by the Biblical Research Institute, which exists to



“promote the study and practice of Adventist theology and lifestyle as understood by the world church,” by providing research-based theological resources and by

address current questions and to tackle challenges the Church faces on this subject. The event fostered the exploration of biblical ideas and encouraged dialogue within the Adventist theological community. Getting acquainted with one another and learning from each other was an enriching and life-changing experience. However, just as important was the fellowship and worship shared with brothers and sisters from around the world. Attendees also had the opportunity to visit important places connected to the ancient city of Rome, which helped to better understand the prophetic significance of Rome in history and that “kings and kingdoms shall pass away,” but the kingdom of God will last forever.



“facilitating dialogue within the Adventist theological community.”

As part of his introductory remarks, Ted Wilson, President of the Adventist Church, greeted the scholars, sharing his deep interest in the subject. “The thing that drives me, animates me, keeps me moving toward the goal is Jesus’ soon coming,” said Wilson. “I believe that this is going to be an extraordinary time, focusing on an extraordinary topic.”

During the Bible Conference more than one hundred theological presentations were made in ten days. Attendees chose amongst seminars exploring the theme of eschatology from biblical, theological, historical, prophetic, scientific, ethical, and missiological perspectives. The plenary presentations, papers, and panel discussions presented gave an opportunity to study the Word of God more deeply, to

At the conclusion of the ten-day event attendees



voted a consensus statement, reaffirming the Adventist understanding of biblical prophecy, end-time events, and the missiological implications for the church. The text of the consensus statement is included in this newsletter.



**CONSENSUS STATEMENT**  
**Fourth International Bible Conference**  
**Rome, Italy**  
**June 11–21, 2018**

**Introduction**

The Fourth International Bible Conference was held in Rome, June 11–21, 2018, with the theme of “Biblical Eschatology.” Almost four hundred Adventist scholars, pastors, educators, and church leaders, sharing a deep commitment to Scripture and a biblical worldview, gathered from around the world to explore biblical, theological, historical, missiological, and scientific perspectives on eschatology. The goal of the conference was to affirm and explore biblical eschatology, foster fellowship and unity, and to bring about a renewed sense of the times in which we live so as to be better equipped to serve the Lord and His Church. We have been spiritually and intellectually enriched through Bible study and worship, seasons of prayer, lectures, discussions, and educational tours to important biblical, historical, and archaeological sites.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are impelled by the personal and profound conviction of the nearness of Christ’s coming as a literal, visible, personal, and worldwide event. We are keenly aware of the challenges being made to the historicist approach to biblical eschatology. These challenges include preterist, futurist, and idealist approaches to the books of Daniel and Revelation, scientific cosmologies that breed skepticism toward a supernatural resolution of the problem of sin and death, and speculation regarding things that have not been revealed.

**Statement of Affirmation**

Committed to the principles of *sola* and *tota Scriptura*, we hereby affirm that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, raised up in fulfillment of Bible prophecy near the end of earth’s history, has an eschatological perspective as an integral part of its ecclesiology, message, and mission.

We affirm that eschatology has its origin in the triune God. When the prophecies were fulfilled God the Father sent His Son Jesus Christ in order to redeem and adopt us as His children (Gal 4:4–5) and advance His plan of salvation, which will culminate in Jesus’ glorious reign after His Parousia.

We affirm that Jesus Christ with His life, death, and resurrection is the center of our eschatological hope. Through the Holy Spirit He confirms individual believers of being God’s children and heirs, while they eagerly wait for the final liberation from all corruption (Rom 8:14–25). Through the Spirit Christ also guides His church to rightly understand and interpret the Scriptures, contributing toward the fulfillment of its mission and leads us to a joyful obedience to His Word.

We affirm that biblical eschatology represents God’s historical and complete resolution of the problems caused by the entrance of sin into the universe.

We affirm that in biblical eschatology God confirms His promises and encourages His people to live meaningfully in light of the eschaton.

We affirm the historical accuracy of the biblical account of creation, the fall, and the global flood as essential to a proper understanding of biblical eschatology.

We affirm that the apocalyptic books of Daniel and Revelation are foundational for biblical eschatology and that the historicist method is the proper approach to interpreting them.

We affirm the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, with their interconnected truths of the everlasting gospel, Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, the commandments of God, including the seventh-day Sabbath, and the testimony of Jesus, the pre-advent judgment, the second coming of Christ to resurrect and redeem His people from the earth, followed by the millennium in heaven, the final judgment upon sin and sinners with their destruction in the lake of fire, which is the second death, and God’s re-creation of this earth as His people’s eternal home.

We affirm that we are responsible to care for God’s creation, including our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and to reflect God’s character of love to all people, urging them to accept this final message of hope for a dying world.

**Missiological Implications**

All members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church should share with the world this eschatological vision. Amid increased skepticism toward this future hope and futile attempts to build a paradise on earth, we accept the challenge of proclaiming this biblical eschatology within our varied contexts and dedicate ourselves to the work of finding effective approaches to meet these challenges.

# Index to *Reflections*

The first issue of *Reflections* was published in January 2003. Since then, we've published many articles.

While it's possible to use Acrobat to simultaneously search all past issues of *Reflections* for one word or phrase, some readers have asked for a formal index. From now on, you will find a pdf index at the end of each newsletter that you can download.

If you wish to search simultaneously all past issues of the newsletter for one word or phrase in

Acrobat, you must download from the BRI website <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/newsletters> all of the *Reflections* issues PDF's to one folder.

Open any issue in Acrobat, and then press Shift+Command+F (Shift+Ctrl+F on Windows). In the Search window that appears, be sure that you click the radio button that says, "All PDF Documents in," and in the dropdown menu below that, choose the folder in which you placed your *Reflections* issues.

[Click here to download the Index](#)

*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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### Manuscript Policy

Articles important for Adventist theology are written at the invitation of BRI and should be sent by email attachment to the editor at [brinewsletter@gc.adventist.org](mailto:brinewsletter@gc.adventist.org)

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