

Third International Faith and Science Conference

Editorial note: *The following address was given on the opening night of the third and final International Faith and Science Conference held by leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on August 10-29, 2004 in Denver, Colorado. While similar more local conferences were held in venues around the world, this August conference marked the climax of a three-year, three-meeting series convening so that Adventist scientists, educators, and theologians, along with Church leaders, could openly discuss the implications of contemporary scientific discovery and related worldviews upon the Christian faith and more specifically upon the faith of those, such as Seventh-day Adventists, who believe in a recent, literal seven-day, special creation. The well-paced remarks published below provide an effective orientation to the work and function of the three international conferences and especially of the final and most definitive Denver convocation.*

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Denver. This conference marks the conclusion of a three-year series of consultations on issues in faith and science—particularly those relating to our understanding of the origin of life on our planet. Some, perhaps most of us, have had the opportunity of participating in previous conferences in various parts of the world. Others are here for the first time. So perhaps it is well to spend a few moments this evening to consider why we are here, what we will be doing, and what is expected of this concluding conference.

Why are we here?

Seventh-day Adventists value both the knowledge which comes by divine revelation and that which comes from human observation, research, and discovery. We treasure these as gifts of a wise and loving Creator. We are students

LOWELL COOPER



of Scripture, drawing our worldview, our moral and spiritual reference points from its teachings. We are also students and beneficiaries of science, embracing advances in knowledge and technology. The practice of science in fields such as agriculture, communications, ecology, and space exploration have occasioned enormous changes in the way we live. When our children get sick, we pray over them and we take them to the doctor. We plead for God's healing power in their lives and we give them medicines which science tells us will be helpful in dealing with their illness.

In many areas of life these two sources of knowledge appear to be in harmony. Advances in scientific knowledge often confirm and validate the views of faith. However, in regard to the origin of the universe, of earth, and of life, we encounter two very contradictory worldviews. Claims based on a study of Scripture are often viewed in stark contrast to claims arising from the scientific methodologies used in the study of nature. This tension has a direct impact on the life of the church, its message, and witness.

We celebrate the life of faith. We advocate a life of learning. Both in the claims of Scripture and in the orderly processes of nature we see indicators of the Creator's marvelous mind.

Since its earliest days the Seventh-day Adventist Church has encouraged

the development of mind and understanding through disciplines such as worship, education, and observation. So it is not surprising that at times our conclusions differ and our interpretations vary. We come along the path of learning from different starting points, from different directions and at different paces. For some the answers to questions about origins are a certainty. To others the answers are more elusive and call for investigation and discovery through scientific research.

Reports in the public media concerning the rapid advances in scientific knowledge, particularly in the natural and social sciences, are generally framed within certain assumptions about origins. These realities bring into greater prominence, within the church, the question of how to reconcile the differing explanations of origins offered by faith and science.

No one can deny that within the church itself there is a variety of views about origins. Perhaps this should be expected. Is it fair to say that every Seventh-day Adventist belief invites study and reflection? Our belief statements are couched in such brevity. There is opportunity for investigation, questioning, and probing the dimensions of what each belief means and how it is to relate to life in our time. But such opportunity does not create room for emptying our beliefs of their content. In saying what we believe we must also be clear as to what we do not believe.

The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of origins affects and informs other dimensions of church life. The early chapters of Genesis have enormous importance for the life of the church. If we look to the Genesis record only to debate questions about 6 days and 6,000 years, we deprive ourselves of many priceless treasures. It is from our belief in and about Creation that we

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Jesus warned that we would have problems. We encounter different kinds of problems:

- ◆ *Temptations.* Satan works to draw us away from God and to weaken our character. Temptations call for resistance. Jesus' own first line of resistance was Scripture.
- ◆ *Trespasses.* Other people's sins may wrong us. Trespasses against us call for forgiveness. "Forgive one another even as God, for Christ's sake has forgiven you."
- ◆ *Troubles.* Our own choices are often to blame for our troubles. Proverbs helps us acquire the wisdom to avert many of these problems. Troubles call for repentance.
- ◆ *Trials.* God tests us to draw us closer to Him and to strengthen our character. Trials call for us to relax and trust God.

—Rick Warren

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derive an understanding of who we are, how we relate to each other and to our world, what our mission and message is. Our view about the Creation story permeates and informs all our other views about life.

For these reasons church leadership sees wisdom and value in exploring the theological and scientific implications of various views of Genesis 1–11. The questions that will engage our attention are not new nor is this conference an attempt to resolve them once and for all. We are not here because the Seventh-day Adventist Church is uncertain about its beliefs.

Acknowledging questions and exploring their implication should not be seen as a threat to one's spiritual life. Our task is to engage in interdisciplinary dialog that identifies the contributions and limitations that both faith and science bring to our collective understanding of our life, our universe, and our destiny.

There are several reasons which suggest that it is appropriate to review what our belief in Genesis 1–11 involves and how it can best be expressed and communicated.

Philosophical reasons: There is the ever-present challenge of defining the relationship between theology and science—or faith and reason. Are these two streams of knowledge in partnership or in conflict? Should they be viewed as interactive or are they independent nonoverlapping spheres of knowledge? The dominant worldview in most modern societies interprets life, physical reality, and behavior in ways that are markedly different from the Christian worldview. How should a Christian relate to these things?

Theological reasons: How is the Bible to be interpreted? What does a fair reading of the text require of a believer? To what extent should knowledge from science inform or shape our understanding of Scripture and vice versa?

Scientific reasons: The same data, from nature, is available to all observers. What does the data say or mean? How shall we arrive at correct interpretations and conclusions? How do we differenti-

ate between good and bad science? Is science a tool or a philosophy?

Nurture and education of church membership: How is a church member to deal with the variety of interpretations of the Genesis record, accompanied by various theories of origins among theologians, pastors, scientists, leaders, teachers in our educational system? What does the church have to say to students who find in their educational curriculum ideas that conflict with their faith? Maintaining silence concerning such issues sends mixed signals; it creates uncertainty and confusion and provides fertile ground for unwarranted and dogmatic views.

Developing a living faith: Clarification and reaffirmation of a Bible-based theology of origins will equip members with a framework for dealing with challenges on this topic. Our understanding of Scripture needs to engage with the issues of the day. The Faith and Science Conferences are not convened simply for the intellectual stimulation of attendees but as an opportunity to provide orientation and practical guidance for church members. We cannot pretend to keep our beliefs in a safe place, secure from all challenge. If we do so, they will soon become relics. Our beliefs need to be engaged in meeting the problems of the day so that they remain a living faith, otherwise they will be nothing more than dead dogma.

"There is a strong prima facie case for re-examining the claimed cognitive content of Christian theology in the light of the new knowledge derivable from the sciences. . . . If such an exercise is not continually undertaken theology will operate in a cultural ghetto quite cut off from most of those in Western cultures who have good grounds for thinking that science describes what is going on in the processes of the world at all levels. The turbulent history of the relation of science and theology bears witness to the impossibility of theology seeking a peaceful haven, protected from the sciences of its times, if it is going to be believable."¹

It is for reasons such as these the church leadership took the initiative to convene a series of discussions about

faith and science issues and their impact on the life of the church. Thus the three-year time frame during which several conferences have been held in various parts of the globe. Our purpose has been to bring together a group of scientists, theologians, and church leaders in a collective dialog. We expect that about 140 persons will attend this conference—with roughly equal representation from the three groups mentioned.

It should come to us as no surprise that the very existence of these dialogs is a source of considerable uneasiness on the part of some—maybe even some who are here in Denver. There is on the one hand a foreboding that discussing doctrinal issues may lead to a watering down of our faith, that somehow the package of beliefs will be damaged, or perhaps that we shall soon find ourselves on a slippery slope with nothing to hang on to. On the other hand there is a nagging fear that we shall disparage learning, scholarship, and enquiry in order to preserve our beliefs from close scrutiny.

I have the confidence to believe that this group in Denver is sufficiently responsible to preserve us from either extreme.

So, why are we here? Not just for personal pleasure or continuing education. Representing various disciplines in church life we've been invited to:

- ◆ Become conversant with the issues and their effect on our collective life and witness.
- ◆ Collaborate in developing appropriate responses that will be of value to the church.

What we will do

In many ways this conference will be unlike those that have preceded it. In the earlier conferences our purpose was to become informed about the evidence and the arguments that support or challenge our belief in a recent special Creation. Thanks to a host of contributors there is a huge supply of scholarly papers dealing both with theology and science. Most of these can be obtained through the Geoscience Research Institute (www.grisda.org).

We begin our work session with a time of review and reflection on the information and ideas covered in earlier conferences. On Sunday we will spend our time listening to and discussing summaries of the theology and science questions that we've explored. This will be followed on Monday morning by looking at some of the implications that various ideas or theories about origins have with respect to other areas of life and belief.

When one deals with such matters in the life of a community it is inevitable that related issues arise. We cannot separate our beliefs from the ways that we put them into practice. Several such questions immediately come to mind:

- ◆ The ongoing place of scholarship in the church. How does the church maintain the confessional nature of its teachings while being open to further development in its understanding of truth?
- ◆ Educational models for dealing with controversial subjects and the ethical issues involved for teachers and church leaders. How shall we teach science courses in our schools, colleges, and universities in a way that enriches rather than erodes faith?
- ◆ What ethical considerations come into focus when private conviction differs from denominational teaching? How does my personal freedom of belief interface with my public role as a leader in the church? In other words, what are the ethics of dissent?
- ◆ Administrative posture and processes in dealing with variations in or re-expressions of doctrinal views.

What is expected of us

The last portion of the conference will focus on arriving at consensus regarding a report, recommendations, affirmations, or appeals that can be forwarded to the General Conference president. The Organizing Committee

has been tasked with the assignment of preparing a report which the General Conference president will include with his report to the Annual Council 2004. (The General Conference Executive Committee authorized this series of conferences and rightfully expects a report on what has been done.)

We are inviting you to be a part of that report—to help create it. Accordingly there will be several periods during our time together when we shall break into smaller groups to discuss a number of questions, consider recommendations, or propose actions that the church might take in response to these matters.

We have not come to this conference with a prescribed outcome and report. Obviously we have some thoughts in mind but we seek a collective engagement in preparing a report. Our vision at present is that the report will contain a narrative section that describes what we have done over the three years. We suggest that the report may have a section on affirmations followed by a section of recommendations. Not a long list of general recommendations that will get filed away in some archive as an historical artifact. Instead we invite you to help create nothing less than an action plan for the entire church that addresses matters such as:

1. What can be done to help us, and indeed the whole church, deal with sensitive topics in our faith community? Have these conferences helped us toward that end? What can be done to help us avoid the irresponsible use of science to validate Scripture—or to avoid the denigration of faith in order to accommodate some theories of science? How can we carry on a helpful dialog without resorting to caricature and innuendo towards those who hold other views? What are the things that hold us together even while we differ?
2. What can be done to provide

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nurture and education to our members so that they will have a robust faith grounded in Scripture while living in a world that increasingly views science as the preferred, if not only, source of knowledge?

3. Is there anything more that should be done to assist Seventh-day Adventist students in dealing with educational curriculum, especially in the natural sciences, that may challenge their faith commitment?

4. What can be done to support and encourage those who teach theology and the sciences in our schools? One of the Organizing Committee members remarked recently that we have long considered the religion teacher in our schools as one of the key individuals in our educational system. Has not the time come for us to recognize that the science teachers in our schools are at least equally critical to the success of our educational endeavors?

5. How can we support Seventh-day Adventist scholars, scientists, and theologians to engage in public discourse about the two dominant and competing worldviews in our day? Or is our dialog to take place only within our community of faith? Is there a place, on the issues of faith and science, for Seventh-day Adventist scholarship in the public forum? How can we give it more visibility?

Is this too big a challenge for us to undertake at this brief moment together? The Organizing Committee feels this is too overwhelming—but it must be done and we need to begin somewhere. Obviously, there cannot be a sense of finality to the need for dialog on the questions that brought us here. But let us resolve to make a beginning rather than to shrink from so large a task.

In summary

It is a privilege to have each of you as partners in this journey over the next few days. The Organizing Committee has looked forward both with anticipation and anxiousness to this event. We hope you will find the physical accommodations adequate and the schedule not too burdensome. We have every

confidence that our time together will be beneficial to us individually but also to the church of which we are members. We believe that once again a conference of this nature can be conducted with openness, honesty, civility, and respect.

It can only be to our advantage that we learn to speak with humility about origins. There are far more questions than there are undebatable answers. Let us be firm about what we can know while recognizing that in pressing further questions we also draw closer to a wonderful and impenetrable mystery.

"Among the pieces of memorabilia found in Charles Darwin's belongings after his death were two letters from his wife Emma. Her cautionary counsel is applicable for us as well: 'May not the habit in scientific pursuits of believing nothing till it is proved, influence your mind too much in other things which cannot be proved in the same way, and which if true are likely to be above our comprehension.' Charles Darwin made a notation on each letter. On one he wrote, 'God bless you. C.D. 1861.' The other has this note: 'When I am dead, know that many times, I have kissed and cried [sic] over this. C.D.'"²

This International Faith and Science Conference begins with the celebration of the Sabbath. Here, in worship, adoration, and study we find faith and reason in their highest partnership. Let us come together to learn, not only from each other, but from Him who is the source of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."³ ■

Lowell Cooper is a general vice president for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Silver Spring, Maryland.

1 Arthur Peacock, *Theology for a Scientific Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 6, 7.

2 Jean Pond, essay on "Mutual Humility in the Relationship Between Science and Christian Theology," in *Science and Christianity, Four Views*, Richard F. Carlson, editor (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 69.

3 C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), *Is Theology Poetry?*

AN AFFIRMATION OF CREATION:

Report of the Organizing Committee of the International Faith and Science Conference

VOTED, To record the presentation of An Affirmation of Creation—Report of the Organization Committee, which reads as follows:

An Affirmation of Creation

The International Faith and Science Conferences 2002–2004 report of the Organizing Committee to the General Conference Executive Committee through the office of the General Conference President, September 10, 2004.

Introduction

The very first words of the Bible provide the foundation for all that follows. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . .”—Gen 1:1 Throughout Scripture the Creation is celebrated as coming from the hand of God who is praised and adored as Maker and Sustainer of all that is. “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”—Ps 19:1 NIV

From this view of the world flows a series of interlocking doctrines that lie at the core of the Seventh-day Adventist message to the world: a perfect world without sin and death created not long ago; the Sabbath; the fall of our first parents; the spread of sin, decay and death to the whole creation; the coming of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to live among us and rescue us from sin by His death and resurrection; the Second Coming of Jesus, our Creator and Redeemer; and the ultimate restoration of all that was lost by the Fall.

As Christians who take the Bible seriously and seek to live by its precepts Seventh-day Adventists have a high view of nature. We believe that even in its present fallen state nature reveals the eternal power of God (Rom. 1:20), that “‘God is love’ is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass.”—Ellen G White, *Steps to Christ*, p 10

For us, all Scripture is inspired and tests all the other ways, including nature, through which God reveals Himself. We have great respect for science, and applaud the prominence of science departments in our institutions of higher learning and healthcare. We also value the work of Seventh-day Adventist scientists and researchers not employed by the Church. We train students at our colleges and universities how to employ the scientific method rigorously. At the same time, we refuse to restrict our quest for truth to the constraints imposed by the scientific method alone.

The Question of Origins

For centuries, at least in the Christian world, the Bible story of creation was the standard explanation for questions about origins. During the 18th and 19th centuries the methodologies of science resulted in a growing understanding of how things worked. Today no one can deny that science has made a remarkable impact on our lives through advances in the areas of agriculture, communication, ecology, engineering, genetics, health, and space exploration.

In many areas of life, knowledge derived from nature and knowledge from divine revelation in Scripture appear to be in harmony. Advances in scientific knowledge often confirm and validate the views of faith. However, in regard to the origin of the universe, of the earth, and of life and its history, we encounter contradictory worldviews. Assertions based on a study of Scripture often stand in stark contrast to those arising from the scientific assumptions and methodologies used in the study of nature. This tension has a direct impact on the life of the Church, its message, and its witness.

We celebrate the life of faith. We advocate a life of learning. Both in the study of Scripture and in the orderly processes of nature we see indicators of the Creator’s marvelous mind. Since its earliest days the Seventh-day Adventist Church has encouraged the development of mind and understanding through the disciplines of worship, education, and observation.

In earlier decades the discussion of theories on origins primarily occurred in academic settings. However, philosophical naturalism (wholly natural, random and undirected processes over the course of time) has gained wide acceptance in education and forms the basic assumption for much that is taught in the natural and social sciences. Seventh-day Adventist members and students encounter this view and its implications in many areas of daily life.

In its statement of fundamental beliefs the Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms a divine creation as described in the biblical narrative of Genesis 1. “God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made ‘the heaven and the earth’ and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the

world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was ‘very good,’ declaring the glory of God.”—Gen 1; 2; Ex 20:8-11; Ps 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; Ps 104; Heb 11:3

Reasons for the Faith and Science Conferences

Because of the pervasive and growing influence of the theory of evolution, the General Conference Executive Committee (2001 Annual Council) authorized a three-year series of Faith and Science conferences. These conferences were not called to modify the Church’s long-held position on creation but to review the contributions and limitations that both faith and science bring to our understanding of origins.

The principal reasons that led to the convening of these conferences involved:

1. Philosophical questions: An ever-present challenge exists in defining the relationship between theology and science, between that of faith and reason. Are these two streams of knowledge in partnership or in conflict? Should they be viewed as interactive or are they independent, nonoverlapping spheres of knowledge? The dominant worldview in most modern societies interprets life, physical reality, and behavior in ways that are markedly different from the Christian worldview. How should a Christian relate to these things?

2. Theological questions: How is the Bible to be interpreted? What does a plain reading of the text require of a believer? To what extent should knowledge from science inform or shape our understanding of Scripture and vice-versa?

3. Scientific questions: The same data from nature are available to all observers. What do the data say or mean? How shall we arrive at correct interpretations and conclusions? Is science a tool or a philosophy? How do we differentiate between good and bad science?

4. The issue of nurture and education for Church members: How is a Church member to deal with the variety of interpretations of the Genesis record? What does the Church have to say to those who find in their educational curriculum ideas that conflict with their faith? Maintaining silence concerning such issues sends mixed signals; it creates uncertainty and provides fertile ground for unwarranted and dogmatic views.

5. Development of living faith: Clarification and reaffirmation of a Bible-based theology of origins will equip members with a framework for dealing with

challenges on this topic. The Faith and Science Conferences were not convened simply for the intellectual stimulation of attendees, but as an opportunity to provide orientation and practical guidance for Church members. The Church cannot pretend to keep its beliefs in a safe place, secure from all challenge. In doing so they will soon become relics. Church teachings must engage and connect with the issues of the day so that they remain a living faith; otherwise they will amount to nothing more than dead dogma.

The Faith and Science Conferences

Two International Faith and Science Conferences were held—in Ogden, Utah 2002 and in Denver, Colorado 2004—with widespread international representation from theologians, scientists, and Church administrators. In addition seven¹ of the Church's thirteen divisions conducted division-wide or regional conferences dealing with the interaction of faith and science in explanations about origins. The Organizing Committee expresses appreciation to the participants at these conferences for their contributions to this report.

The Ogden conference agenda was designed to acquaint attendees with the range of ways in which both theology and science offer explanations for the origin of the earth and life. The agendas for conferences in divisions were determined by the various organizers, although most included several of the topics dealt with in Ogden. The recent conference in Denver was the concluding conference of the three-year series. Its agenda began with summaries of the issues in theology and science, then moved on to several questions regarding faith-science issues in Church life. These questions included:

The on-going place of scholarship in the Church. How does the Church maintain the confessional nature of its teachings while being open to further development in its understanding of truth?

Educational models for dealing with controversial subjects and the ethical issues involved for teachers and Church leaders. How shall we teach science courses in our schools in a way that enriches, rather than erodes, faith?

What ethical considerations come into focus when private conviction differs from denominational teaching? How does personal freedom of belief interface with one's public role as a leader in the Church? In other words, what are the principles of personal accountability and the ethics of dissent?

What are the administrative responsibilities and processes in dealing with variations in, or re-expressions of, doctrinal views?

Scholarly papers by theologians, scientists, and educators were presented and

discussed in all the conferences. (The Geoscience Research Institute maintains a file of all papers presented at the conferences.) The Ogden and Denver conferences involved at least some representation from every division of the world field. Well over 200 persons participated in the conferences during the three-year period. More than 130 attended the Denver meeting, most of whom had attended at least one other of the Faith and Science Conferences.

General Observations

1. We applaud the seriousness and dignity that characterized the conferences.

2. We noted the strong sense of dedication and loyalty to the Church that prevailed.

3. We experienced that even though tensions surfaced at times, cordial relations were maintained among the attendees, with fellowship transcending differences in viewpoint.

4. We witnessed in these conferences a high level of concurrence on basic understandings, especially the normative role of Scripture, buttressed by the writings of Ellen G. White, and the belief by all in God as beneficent Creator.

5. We found no support for, nor advocacy of, philosophical naturalism, the idea that the universe came into existence without the action of a Creator.

6. We acknowledge that the conflict between the biblical and contemporary worldviews impacts both scientists and theologians.

7. We recognize that tension between faith and understanding is an element of life with which the believer must learn to live.

8. We observe that rejecting contemporary scientific interpretations of origins in conflict with the biblical account does not imply depreciation of either science or the scientist.

9. While we found widespread affirmation of the Church's understanding of life on earth, we recognize that some among us interpret the biblical record in ways that lead to sharply different conclusions.

10. We accept that both theology and science contribute to our understanding of reality.

Findings

1. The degree to which tension exists regarding our understanding of origins varies around the world. In those areas where science has made its greatest progress in society, the questions among Church members are more widespread. With the advance of science across all societies and educational systems, there will be a corresponding increase in members wondering how to reconcile Church teaching with natural theories of origin. Large numbers of Seventh-day Adventist students

attend public schools where evolution is taught and promoted in the classroom without corresponding materials and arguments in favor of the biblical account of origins.

2. Reaffirmation of the Church's Fundamental Belief regarding creation is strongly supported. Seventh-day Adventist belief in a literal and historical six-day creation is theologically sound and consistent with the teaching of the whole Bible.

3. Creation is a foundational pillar in the entire system of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine—it bears direct relationship to many if not all other fundamental beliefs. Any alternative interpretation of the creation story needs to be examined in light of its impact on all other beliefs. Several of the Faith and Science Conferences reviewed alternative interpretations of Genesis 1, including the idea of theistic evolution. These other interpretations lack theological coherence with the whole of Scripture and reveal areas of inconsistency with the rest of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. They are, therefore, unacceptable substitutes for the biblical doctrine of creation held by the Church.

4. Concern has been expressed regarding what some see as ambiguity in the phrase "In six days" found in the Church's statement of belief on creation. It is felt that the intended meaning (that the six-day creation described in Genesis was accomplished in a literal and historical week) is unmentioned. This situation allows for uncertainty about what the Church actually believes. Further, it provides room for other explanations of creation to be accommodated in the text. There is a desire for the voice of the Church to be heard in bringing added clarity to what is really meant in Fundamental Belief #6, Creation.

5. Although some data from science can be interpreted in ways consistent with the biblical concept of creation, we also reviewed data interpreted in ways that challenge the Church's belief in a recent creation. The strength of these interpretations cannot be dismissed lightly. We respect the claims of science, study them, and hope for a resolution. This does not preclude a re-examination of Scripture to make sure it is being properly understood. However, when an interpretation harmonious with the findings of science is not possible, we do not allow science a privileged position in which it automatically determines the outcome. Rather, we recognize that it is not justifiable to hold clear teachings of Scripture hostage to current scientific interpretations of data.

6. We recognize that there are different theological interpretations among us regarding Genesis 1–11. In view of the various interpretations we sensed a high degree of concern that those involved in the Seventh-day Adventist teaching min-

istry conduct their work ethically and with integrity—by standards of their profession, the teachings of Scripture, and the basic understanding held by the body of believers. Since Seventh-day Adventists recognize their comprehension of truth is a growing experience, there is an ever-present need to continue the study of Scripture, theology, and science in order that the truths we hold constitute a living faith able to address the theories and philosophies of the day.

7. We appreciate and endorse the significant value of ongoing international and interdisciplinary dialog among Seventh-day Adventist theologians, scientists, educators, and administrators.

Affirmations

As a result of the two international conferences and the seven division conferences, the Organizing Committee reports the following affirmations:

1. We affirm the primacy of Scripture in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of origins.

2. We affirm the historic Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Genesis 1 that life on earth was created in six literal days and is of recent origin.

3. We affirm the biblical account of the Fall resulting in death and evil.

4. We affirm the biblical account of a catastrophic Flood, an act of God's judgment that affected the whole planet, as an important key to understanding earth history.

5. We affirm that our limited understanding of origins calls for humility and that further exploration into these questions brings us closer to deep and wonderful mysteries.

6. We affirm the interlocking nature of the doctrine of creation with other Seventh-day Adventist doctrines.

7. We affirm that in spite of its fallenness nature is a witness to the Creator.

8. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist scientists in their endeavors to understand the Creator's handiwork through the methodologies of their disciplines.

9. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist theologians in their efforts to explore and articulate the content of revelation.

10. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist educators in their pivotal ministry to the children and youth of the Church.

11. We affirm that the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church identified in Revelation 14:6, 7 includes a call to worship God as Creator of all.

Recommendations

The Organizing Committee for the International Faith and Science Conferences recommends that:

1. In order to address what some interpret as a lack of clarity in Fundamental Belief #6, Creation, the historic Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Genesis narrative be affirmed more explicitly.

2. Church leaders at all levels be encour-

aged to assess and monitor the effectiveness with which denominational systems and programs succeed in preparing young people, including those attending non-Adventist schools, with a biblical understanding of origins and an awareness of the challenges they may face in respect to this understanding.

3. Increased opportunity be provided for interdisciplinary dialog and research, in a safe environment, among Seventh-day Adventist scholars from around the world.

Conclusion

The Bible opens with the story of creation; the Bible closes with the story of re-creation. All that was lost by the Fall of our first parents is restored. The One who made all things by the Word of His mouth at the beginning brings the long struggle with sin, evil, and death to a triumphant and glorious conclusion. He is the One who dwelt among us and died in our stead on Calvary. As the heavenly beings sang for joy at the first creation, so the redeemed from earth proclaim: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created. . . . Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. . ."—Rev 4:11; 5:12 NKJV

¹ East-Central Africa Division, Euro-Africa Division, North American Division, South Pacific Division, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Southern Asia Division, West-Central Africa Division.

RESPONSE TO AN AFFIRMATION OF CREATION

Made by the members of the General Conference Executive Committee at the 2004 Annual Council

VOTED, To approve the following statement in response to the International Faith and Science Conference Organizing Committee's report, An Affirmation of Creation, subject to the changes that were voted in the previous action, to read as follows:

Whereas belief in a literal, six-day creation is indissolubly linked with the authority of Scripture, and;

Whereas such belief interlocks with other doctrines of Scripture, including the Sabbath and the Atonement, and;

Whereas Seventh-day Adventists understand our mission, as specified in Revelation 14:6, 7, to include a call to the world to worship God as Creator,

We, the members of the General Conference Executive Committee at the 2004 Annual Council, state the following as our response to the document, An Affirmation of Creation, submitted by the

International Faith and Science Conferences:

1. We strongly endorse the document's affirmation of our historic, biblical position of belief in a literal, recent, six-day Creation.

2. We urge that the document, accompanied by this response, be disseminated widely throughout the world Seventh-day Adventist Church, using all available communication channels and in the major languages of world membership.

3. We reaffirm the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the historicity of Genesis 1–11: that the seven days of the Creation account were literal 24-hour days forming a week identical in time to what we now experience as a week; and that the Flood was global in nature.

4. We call on all boards and educators at Seventh-day Adventist institutions at all levels to continue upholding and advocating the Church's position on origins. We, along

with Seventh-day Adventist parents, expect students to receive a thorough, balanced, and scientifically rigorous exposure to and affirmation of our historic belief in a literal, recent, six-day creation, even as they are educated to understand and assess competing philosophies of origins that dominate scientific discussion in the contemporary world.

5. We urge church leaders throughout the world to seek ways to educate members, especially young people attending non-Seventh-day Adventist schools, in the issues involved in the doctrine of creation.

6. We call on all members of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist family to proclaim and teach the Church's understanding of 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. ■