

## Seventh-day Adventist Protology, 1844–2015: A Brief Historical Overview

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### Introduction

**S**eventh-day Adventists have given much attention over the years to the basic components of Biblical protology, the study of origins. Accepting the historicity of Genesis 1–11, mainstream Adventists believe that God, by the power of his Word, created the earth perfect in six literal days (Gen 1 and 2), which took place a few thousand years ago; that through the fall of Adam and Eve sin corrupted this world (Gen 3); and that the flood was a global catastrophe that changed the geological characteristics of the earth (Gen 6–8). Many authors helped to place Adventist protology on a solid exegetical platform and enriched that platform with scientific evidences derived from the natural world. But since the early 1970s, some voices within the denomination began to echo more explicitly several concepts of “scientific evolutionism.” This has generated major tensions in some scholarly circles related mainly to Adventist universities and colleges.

A few studies have considered the development of specific aspects of Seventh-day Adventist protology. For example, Harold W. Clark’s article

“Traditional Adventist Creationism: Its Origin, Development, and Current Problems” (1971)<sup>1</sup> provides a short historical overview of major Adventist contributions in the area of creationism up to the late 1960s. Clark’s book *The Battle over Genesis* (1977)<sup>2</sup> deals with the origin and development of evolutionism and its ongoing conflict with creationism. Ronald L. Numbers, in his book *The Creationists* (1992),<sup>3</sup> presented the historical development of scientific creationism, with several references to Seventh-day Adventist contributions in that field, including a whole chapter on George McCready Price. Rodrigo P. da Silva’s article “Interpretações dos capítulos 1 a 11 de Gênesis na história do adventismo” (2003)<sup>4</sup> highlights some basic Adventist historical landmarks in the interpretation of Genesis 1–11, with special emphasis on conflicting interpretations that began to emerge within Adventism in the 1960s. None of those historical writings has, however, contemplated the development of the whole Seventh-day Adventist protology up to the present time.

The present study provides a brief historical overview of the development of Seventh-day Adventist protology between 1844 and 2015. After a few introductory remarks on the Millerite background, the investigation deals specifically with the development of Seventh-day Adventist protology. That development is considered within the framework of the following three major periods: (1) Building on the Biblical Foundation (1844–1902); (2) Looking for Scientific Confirmation (1902–1971); and (3) Dealing with Internal Challenges (1971–2015). The study highlights some of the most significant Seventh-day Adventist literary contributions for the understanding of the biblical accounts of creation (Gen 1–2), the age of the earth, the fall (Gen 3), and the flood (Gen 6–8).

A clear perception of the origin and historical development of Seventh-day Adventist protology is of major importance for responding to the protological challenges of our days and keeping alive the doctrinal identity of the denomination.

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<sup>1</sup> Harold W. Clark, “Traditional Adventist Creationism: Its Origin, Development, and Current Problems,” *Spectrum* 3 (Winter 1971): 7–18.

<sup>2</sup> Harold W. Clark, *The Battle over Genesis* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Rodrigo P. da Silva, “Interpretações dos capítulos 1 a 11 de Gênesis na história do adventismo,” *Revista da Escola Adventista* (Brazil) 7 (1st Semester 2003): 10–14.

### The Millerite Background

Millerism was essentially an eschatological movement with special emphasis on the single doctrine of the literal, visible, and premillennial Second Coming of Christ.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the eschatological platform of that movement was sustained by several prophetic time-periods beginning at different events of human history. The largest of those periods was 6,000 years, understood as reaching from the creation of this world (protology) to the second coming of Christ (eschatology).<sup>6</sup> This temporal connection between eschatology and protology provided room for a few Millerite insights on biblical protology.

In the writings of William Miller one can find references to the basic protological concepts addressed in the present study. For example, already in his 1822 Statement of Faith he affirmed his personal trust in the biblical records of creation and the fall, by stating,

3<sup>rdly</sup>. I believe that God, by his Son[,] created man in the image of the Three persons of the Triune God, with a body, soul, and spirit; and that he was created a moral agent, capable of living up to the Laws of his Maker or transgressing them.

4<sup>th</sup>. I believe that *man*, being tempted by the enemy of all good, did transgress and became polluted; from which act, sin entered into the world, and all mankind became natur[al]ly sinners, thrust out from the presence of God, exposed to his just wrath forever.<sup>7</sup>

However, it seems that Miller was not sure in regard to the specific length of each creation day (Gen 1:1–2:3). In his “Lecture on the Great Sabbath,” he mentioned that Mason Good, in his *Book of Nature*, supposed that “the earth was six thousand years in forming: if so, then here would be another proof that I am right concerning a thousand years being a day with the Lord.”<sup>8</sup> In this

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Editorial, “Dangers Which Believers in the Doctrine of the Second Advent Should Avoid,” *Signs of the Times* (Millerite) (hereafter *ST[M]*) (May 3, 1843): 68: “We should avoid bringing in connection with the Second Advent, and a preparation therefore, any doctrines not necessarily connected therewith. They only serve to divert the mind from the true issue, and repel those who might otherwise embrace the doctrine of the Second Advent.”

<sup>6</sup> [William Miller], *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology*, edited by Joshua V. Himes (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1841), 40–53, 157–71; idem, “Synopsis of Miller’s Views,” *ST(M)* (Jan. 25, 1843): 147–50.

<sup>7</sup> William Miller, [“Statement of Faith”], autograph manuscript photocopy, Sept. 5, 1822, Advent Source Collection. An edited version of those statements appeared in Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller, Generally Known as a Lecturer on the Prophecies, and the Second Coming of Christ* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 78.

<sup>8</sup> [Miller], *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology*, 170.

statement, the expression “if so” implies that Miller did not discard the theory that each creation “day” could have been a thousand years long.

Miller also accepted the old notion that each day of the creation week represents analogically one thousand years of human history (2 Enoch 33:1–2; cf. 2 Pet 3:8). For him, the Bible mentions three kinds of days: (1) “the natural day,” which is of twenty-four hours; (2) “the prophetic day,” which is a year long (cf. Ezek 4:5, 6); and (3) “the day of the Lord,” which stands for a thousand years (cf. 2 Pet 3:8, 10). By applying the third option to the creation week, he could suggest that “as God created the heavens and earth, and all that are in them, in six days, and rested on the seventh, so Christ would be six thousand years creating the new heavens and earth, and would rest on the seventh millennium.”<sup>9</sup> Some early Seventh-day Adventists would uphold a similar interpretation.

Another basic protological concept that Miller fostered was his theory that creation occurred not in 4,004 B.C., as suggested by James Ussher,<sup>10</sup> but rather 153 years earlier, i.e. in 4,157 B.C.<sup>11</sup> Miller argued in 1840 that

it is a well-known fact that chronological writers disagree much as to the present age. The Chinese make it about 25,000 years; the Hindoos about 14,000; the Romans about 6550. The Pentateuch, or Samaritan copy of the five books of Moses, makes it about 5648. The Septuagint copy of the Old Testament makes it 6254. The Hebrew Bible, from which ours is principally taken, makes the age of the world, as calculated by Us[s]her, 5844. Some others have varied from

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<sup>9</sup> [Miller], *Views of the Prophecies*, 41, 166–67.

<sup>10</sup> James Ussher, *The Annals of the World*, rev. and updated by Larry and Marion Pierce (Green Forest, AR: Master, 2003), 17.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. William Miller, *A Lecture on the Typical Sabbaths and Great Jubilee* (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 25–26: “It is said by our chronological writers, that the world was 4004 years old at our era for the birth of Christ. But I think they are not right, into more than 150 years; and I think I can prove by the Bible they are not. In the one article of chronology, for the time of the judges’ rule, from Joshua to Samuel, or to the death of Eli, our chronologers have given but about 295 years, when the Bible, in the history of the judges, gives us 448 years; Paul, in Acts xiii. 20, gives us about the space of 450; and Josephus, the Jewish historian, gives us for judges 451 years. Now, I ask, in all human probability, who is right – our late writers, who only give 295 years, or the history of the judges, which gives us 448 years, corroborated by Paul and Josephus’s testimony? Surely all must agree, that the weight of testimony is in favor of that chronology which makes the year of Christ’s birth, according to our computation, 4157 years after the creation or the fall of man. Then, by adding 1843, we have our 6000 years up to the commencing of the day of rest, or the beginning of the seven thousandth year, or the great sabbath, of which our seventh day is but a shadow. What strong evidence is this, that we are now living at the end of the 6000 years, in which the work of redemption must be completed, and the glory of God be revealed in the face of Jesus Christ at his appearing and his kingdom!”

Us[s]her's calculation. The reader will find, accompanying this volume, a chronology, made, as it is believed, from the Bible, having very clear evidence of every period of time given from creation to Christ, which makes our present year [1840], from the creation of Adam, 5997.<sup>12</sup>

This allowed Miller to suggest that the 6,000 years of the world's history would end in 1843, together with the 2,300 symbolic days of Daniel 8:14 and other prophetic time-periods, when the seventh millennium of rest would be brought about by Christ's second coming.<sup>13</sup> Although early Seventh-day Adventists would maintain some of Miller's basic protological concepts, they disentangled the supposed end of the 6,000 years from the fulfillment of the 2,300 symbolic days.

In regard to the flood, Miller accepted the literality of the Bible account, which describes it as a global catastrophe. In his exposition of Matthew 24, he spoke of the global flood in the days of Noah as a type of the final passing away of the heavens and earth by fire (2 Pet 3:5–7). He regarded the “last days scoffers” (2 Pet 3:3, 4) as the true followers of the wicked scoffers in Noah's day who doubted the possibility of any global flood having occurred. In a hypothetical conversation between a wicked host and a stranger guest, the later said sarcastically to the former,

God will not destroy the world in the midst of this hilarity and glee, and in the height of all these improvements at the present day. Much, much of the earth remains yet to be cultivated and inhabited. Our western wilderness is yet to be explored and settled. Then the world is yet in its infancy – not two thousand years old yet; and you know we have a tradition that the earth is to wax old like a garment. It cannot be true, what the old man [Noah] tells you. I will warrant you the earth will stand many thousand years yet.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, Miller linked together protology and eschatology by means of a typological relationship. He saw the flood in the days of Noah and the final

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<sup>12</sup> [Miller], *Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology*, 170–71.

<sup>13</sup> Miller, “Synopsis of Miller's Views,” *ST(M)* (Jan. 25, 1843): 147–50.

<sup>14</sup> William Miller, *A Familiar Exposition of the Twenty-fourth Chapter of Matthew, and the Fifth and Sixth Chapters of Hosea. To Which Are Added an Address to the General Conference on the Advent, and a Scene of the Last Day*, ed. Joshua V. Himes (Boston, MA: Joshua V. Himes, 1842), 37–43.

destruction of the earth by fire as global events. The Sabbath-keeping branch of Millerism retained many of his protological concepts.

### **Building on the Biblical Foundation (1844–1902)**

Early Sabbath-keeping Adventists were much concerned with the development and refinement of their eschatological system of distinctive beliefs.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, not so much attention was given to the biblical accounts of creation (Gen 1–2), the fall (Gen 3), and the flood (Gen 6–8). Most of the allusions to creation were related to the institution of the Sabbath as the seventh day of the literal creation week (Gen 2:1–3), on which the pattern for the seventh-day Sabbath observance was grounded (Exod 20:8–11; Heb 4:9–10).<sup>16</sup> In other words, the acceptance of the seventh-day Sabbath helped to confirm the notion that the creation week comprised seven days of 24 hours each. Consequently, evolutionary geology, with its long ages for the formation of the earth, was regarded as “the great instrument which unbelievers are endeavoring to wield against the authenticity of the Scriptures. To its deductions they bow as to the oracles of God.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Helpful expositions of the formation and early development of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines can be found in P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977); and Alberto R. Timm, *The Sanctuary and the Three Angels' Messages: Integrating Factors in the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Doctrines*, ATSDS 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 1995 [published, 2002]).

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Joseph Bates, *The Seventh Day Sabbath, a Perpetual Sign* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1846), 3–9; Editorial, “When Was the Sabbath Instituted?” *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald* (Nov. 1850): 1; “The Sabbath. A Weekly Memorial of the Living God,” *The Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald* (hereafter *RH*, April 18, 1854): 101–2; J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Review & Herald, 1859), 7–12; *ibid.*, 2nd ed., enl. (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1873), 9–32, 44–64; [Uriah Smith], *The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists* (Oakland, CA: Steam Press of the Pacific S. D. A. Publishing House, 1878), 116–20; *idem*, *Synopsis of the Present Truth: A Brief Exposition of the Views of S. D. Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1884), 63–68.

<sup>17</sup> Editorial, “Geology,” *RH* (Dec. 16, 1858): 28. See also “Science and the Bible,” *RH* (Nov. 24, 1859): 107; “Geology,” *RH* (July 3, 1860): 49; G. W. A[madon], “The Skeptic Met,” *RH* (Sept. 4, 1860): 121–22; G. [Amadon], “Geology and the Bible,” *RH* (Oct. 17, 1865): 157; D. T. Bourdeau, “Geology and the Bible; Or, a Pre-Adamic Age of Our World Doubtful,” *RH* (Feb. 5, 1867): 98–99; “Geological Chronology,” *RH* (Feb. 8, 1870): 51; “That Old Skull,” *RH* (Oct. 25, 1870): 146; S. Pierce, “Does the Bible Agree with Science?” *RH* (Oct. 3, 1871): 121–22; “Turning the Tables,” *RH* (Apr. 9, 1872): 130; Phebe A. Miner, “Science, Falsely So Called,” *RH* (July 8, 1873): 31; “Darwinism Examined,” *RH* (May 18, 1876): 153; J. W[hite], “The First Week of Time,” *RH* (Feb 12, 1880): 104–5; J. O. Corliss, “Geologists Vs. the Mosaic Record,” *RH* (Feb. 19, 1880): 116–17; “False Theories of Geologists,” *RH* (Sept. 5, 1882): 568–69; “Evolution. Anti-Bible, Anti-Science, Anti-

In 1867, D. T. Bourdeau added,

Genuine Geology is as true as the Bible, and it does not contradict the Bible; for truth cannot contradict truth. Yet it is strange that some should pretend that there is a discrepancy between this science and the Bible; and it is stranger still that some *professing* to believe the Bible, should adopt views purporting to be based on Geology, which are antagonistic to plain Bible facts, and yet claim that there is harmony between their views and the Bible.<sup>18</sup>

The 1872 *Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* mentioned God as “the creator of all things” and the Lord Jesus Christ as “the one by whom God created all things.”<sup>19</sup> These simple wordings would be kept until 1980, in the subsequent statements of beliefs prepared by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.<sup>20</sup>

The notion that each day of the creation week analogically represents one thousand years of human history continued to be echoed in some early Seventh-day Adventist circles. For instance, Joseph Bates stated in 1847 that “the 6000 years of the world could not be completed until the seventh month” of the Jewish year of 1843.<sup>21</sup> Other Seventh-day Adventist authors also spoke of the history of this world as comprising 6,000 years, but they did not define specifically the years when they started and when they would end.<sup>22</sup> Yet, James

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Commonsense,” *RH* (Apr. 24, 1883): 261–62; [A.] T. Jones, “The Uncertainty of Geological Science,” 3-part series in *RH* (Aug. 7, 1883): 497–98; (Aug. 14, 1883): 513–14; (Aug. 21, 1883): 529–30; idem, “‘Evolution’ and Evolution,” 3-part series in *RH* (Mar. 11, 1884): 162–63; (Mar. 18, 1884): 178–79; (Mar. 25, 1884): 194–95.

<sup>18</sup> Bourdeau, “Geology and the Bible,” *RH* (Feb. 5, 1867): 98.

<sup>19</sup> *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventists Publishing Association, 1872), 4; republished in “Fundamental Principles,” *Signs of the Times* (June 4, 1874): 3.

<sup>20</sup> See “Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists,” in *Seventh-day Adventist Year Book of Statistics for 1889* (Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald, 1889), 147; *Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists*, Words of Truth Series, No. 5 – Extra (Battle Creek, MI: Review & Herald, 1897), 1–2; “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” in *1931 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1931), 377.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Bates, *Second Advent Way Marks and High Heaps, or a Connected View, of the Fulfillment of Prophecy, by God’s Peculiar People, from the Year 1840 to 1847* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1847), 16. See also idem, *A Vindication of the Seventh-day Sabbath, and the Commandments of God: With a Further History of God’s Peculiar People, from 1847 to 1848* (New Bedford, MA: Benjamin Lindsey, 1848), 83.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., [James] W[white], “The Day of Judgment,” *Advent Review*. 4 (Sept. 1850): 49; Hiram Edson, “An Appeal to the Laodicean Church,” *Advent Review Extra* (Sept. 1850): 14–15; Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week* (2nd ed.), 9; E. G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan During the Christian Dispensation*, rev. and enl.

White argued as early as 1849 that the seventh-day Sabbath is not “a type of the seventh thousand years,” for “all shadows cease when they reach the bodies which cast them,” but the weekly Sabbath was instituted “before the fall” and “will never end.”<sup>23</sup> It seems evident, therefore, that early Seventh-day Adventists saw the relationship between the creation week and the 6,000 years more on the basis of analogy than of typology.

In regard to the flood, early Seventh-day Adventists held consistently to its literal occurrence as a global event. Uriah Smith stated in 1878 that any figurative rereading of the flood would end up sweeping away the eschatological “new heaven” and “new earth” (Rev 21:1; cf. Isa 65:17; 66:22). He argued,

The apostle [Peter] has so clearly identified [in 2 Pet 3:5–7, 13] the three worlds, namely, the one before the flood, the one that now is, and the new earth which is to come, as to entirely preclude the figurative view. . . .

No fact can be more plainly stated than that the world that perished by the flood is the same as that which now is, and is reserved unto fire. This is to be changed by fire, and then will appear the new heavens and the new earth, according to the promise of God. And it is a remarkable fact that the promise referred to by the apostle is found only in Isa. chapter 65. Thus, the apostle links the three worlds together. Are the first two worlds literal? So is the third. Is the new earth, mentioned by Isaiah, figurative? So are all three worlds figurative. But if they are all literal, then we see a harmony in Scripture respecting them. If they be regarded as figurative, then we are left to the following conclusion:—

That in the days of figurative Noah, the figurative heavens and earth, being overflowed by figurative water, perished figuratively. But the figurative heavens and earth, which are now, are reserved unto figurative fire, against the figurative day of judgment and perdition of ungodly figurative men. Nevertheless, we, according to his figurative promise, look for figurative new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth figurative righteousness.

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(Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1888), 518, 656, 659. Cf. Warren H. Johns, “Ellen G. White and Biblical Chronology,” *Ministry* (April 1984): 20.

<sup>23</sup> [James White], “Scripture Usually Quoted to Prove the Abolition of the Sabbath, Examined,” *Present Truth* 2 (Aug. 1849): 10–11.



True, the sacred writers use figures and parables. But we should believe that God in his word means just what he says, unless the connection shows good reasons why a figure or parable is introduced. If God does not mean what he says, in his word, who will tell us what he does mean? In case that God does not mean what he says, the Bible ceases to be a revelation, and he should give us another book to teach what this one means. But the Bible is the very book in which God has plainly spoken to the children of men.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, some of the most significant Seventh-day Adventist protological contributions of the period under consideration (1844–1902) came from the prophetic writings of Ellen G. White. As early as 1864, volume 3 of her *Spiritual Gifts* was published with many significant insights on the subject,<sup>25</sup> including a literal creation-week and a short chronology of “about six thousand years” for the earth. She argued forcefully:

I was then carried back to the creation and was shown that the first week, in which God performed the work of creation in six days and rested on the seventh day, was just like every other week. The great God in his days of creation and day of rest, measured off the first cycle as a sample for successive weeks till the close of time. . . .

When God spake his law with an audible voice from Sinai, he introduced the Sabbath by saying, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” He then declares definitely what shall be done on the six days, and what shall not be done on the seventh. He then, in giving the reason for thus observing the week, points them back to his example on the first seven days of time. “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” This reason appears beautiful and forcible when we understand the record of creation to mean literal days. . . .

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<sup>24</sup> [Uriah Smith], *The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists* (Oakland, CA: Steam Press of the Pacific S. D. A. Publishing House, 1878), 10–11.

<sup>25</sup> “Ellen G. White Statements Relating to Geology and Earth Sciences” (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1982; reformatted for website in 1999 by the Geoscience Research Institute); [http://www.grisda.org/resources/GRI\\_ref-egw.htm](http://www.grisda.org/resources/GRI_ref-egw.htm)

But the infidel supposition, that the events of the first week required seven vast, indefinite periods for their accomplishment, strikes directly at the foundation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. It makes indefinite and obscure that which God has made very plain. It is the worst kind of infidelity; for with many who profess to believe the record of creation, it is infidelity in disguise. It charges God with commanding men to observe the week of seven literal days in commemoration of seven indefinite periods, which is unlike his dealings with mortals, and is an impeachment of his wisdom.

Infidel geologists claim that the world is very much older than the Bible record makes it. They reject the Bible record, because of those things which are to them evidences from the earth itself, that the world has existed tens of thousands of years. And many who profess to believe the Bible record are at a loss to account for wonderful things which are found in the earth, with the view that creation week was only seven literal days, and that the world is now only about six thousand years old. These, to free themselves of difficulties thrown in their way by infidel geologists, adopt the view that the six days of creation were six vast, indefinite periods, and the day of God's rest was another indefinite period; making senseless the fourth commandment of God's holy law. Some eagerly receive this position, for it destroys the force of the fourth commandment, and they feel a freedom from its claims upon them. . . .

I have been shown that without Bible history, geology can prove nothing. Relics found in the earth do give evidence of a state of things differing in many respects from the present. But the time of their existence, and how long a period these things have been in the earth, are only to be understood by Bible history. It may be innocent to conjecture beyond Bible history, if our suppositions do not contradict the facts found in the sacred Scriptures. But when men leave the word of God in regard to the history of creation, and seek to account for God's creative works upon natural principles, they are upon a boundless ocean of uncertainty. Just how God accomplished the

work of creation in six literal days he has never revealed to mortals. His creative works are just as incomprehensible as his existence.<sup>26</sup>

Also in *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 3, Ellen White provided a very insightful behind-the-scenes description of the fall of Adam and Eve.<sup>27</sup>

In a detailed explanation of the geological effects of the flood she stated, for instance, that (1) “The whole surface of the earth was changed at the flood”; (2) the earth became “a vast burying ground” for the dead bodies of both people and animals; (3) “The precious wood, stone, silver and gold that had made rich, and adorned the world before the flood, which the inhabitants had idolized, was sunk beneath the surface of the earth”; (4) large buried forests “petrified and become coal,” which by its turn “has produced oil”; (5) “God causes large quantities of coal and oil to ignite and burn” within a complex melting process that “causes earthquakes, volcanoes and fiery issues”; and (6) in the end-time judgments upon the earth “God will send lightnings from Heaven in his wrath, which will unite with fire in the earth.”<sup>28</sup>

In volume 1 of *The Spirit of Prophecy* (1870) the same author enlarged somewhat her expositions of the creation, the fall, and the flood.<sup>29</sup> However, it was in her classic *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890) that her more extended treatment of those subjects appeared.<sup>30</sup> Noteworthy also is the fact she spoke throughout her writings about the age of the earth in terms of about 6,000 years.<sup>31</sup> This and many other protological concepts from her pen helped to shape the thinking of mainstream Adventism over the years. Many other writers have accepted those concepts as faithfully reflecting the teachings of Scripture.

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<sup>26</sup> Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864), 3:90–93.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 36–47.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 78–83. Some helpful remarks about Ellen White’s statement on the formation of “volcanoes” are provided by Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998), 492–93.

<sup>29</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1870), 1:24–44, 66–85.

<sup>30</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan, as Illustrated in the Lives of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1890), 50–68, 94–112 (in more recent, standard editions, pp. 44–62, 90–110).

<sup>31</sup> Ellen G. White, “Ellen G. White Statements on the Age of the Earth,” chap. 4 of “Ellen G. White Statements Relating to Geology and Earth Sciences” (Washington DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1976), 12–13.

### **Looking for Scientific Confirmation (1902–1971)**

The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century saw an increasing impact of evolutionist ideas on the North American schooling system. Many evolutionist textbooks were reshaping the mind frame of a large number of former Christian students. Reflecting on the seriousness of the problem, Ellen G. White stated in 1903:

In the study of science, as generally pursued, there are dangers equally great. Evolution and its kindred errors are taught in schools of every grade, from the kindergarten to the college. Thus the study of science, which should impart a knowledge of God, is so mingled with the speculations and theories of men that it tends to infidelity.

Even Bible study, as too often conducted in the schools, is robbing the world of the priceless treasure of the word of God. The work of “higher criticism,” in dissecting, conjecturing, reconstructing, is destroying faith in the Bible as a divine revelation; it is robbing God’s word of power to control, uplift, and inspire human lives.<sup>32</sup>

The next year White added:

False science is one of the agencies that Satan used in the heavenly courts, and it is used by him to-day. The false assertions that he made to the angels, his subtle scientific theories, seduced many of them from their loyalty. . . .

The field into which Satan led our first parents is the same to which he is leading men to-day. He is flooding the world with pleasing fables. By every device at his command he seeks to prevent men from obtaining the knowledge of God which is salvation.

We are living in an age of great light; but much that is called light is opening the way for the wisdom and arts of Satan.<sup>33</sup>

As logical and helpful as such biblical-philosophical arguments could be in facing the evolutionist challenges of that time, there was still the need for someone to demonstrate the scientific bases of creationism (creation) and

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<sup>32</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), 227.

<sup>33</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1904), 8:290.

catastrophism (flood). That need was supplied outstandingly by the self-taught geologist George McCready Price (1870–1963), who received a B.A. degree from Loma Linda College (1912) and a M.A. degree from Pacific Union College (1918).<sup>34</sup> Strongly influenced by Ellen G. White, Price argued for a literal six-day creation, a short chronology of the earth and a literal fall of Adam and Eve, besides explaining that the geologic column was formed, not by a slow evolutionist process, but rather by a worldwide flood. As early as 1902 his book, *Outlines of Modern Science and Modern Christianity*,<sup>35</sup> came off the press as one of the earliest significant attempts to respond to evolutionist presuppositions from a scholarly creationist perspective. Up to the early 1920s, several other books from him were launched by Adventist and non-Adventist publishers.<sup>36</sup> Notwithstanding, in 1923 the Pacific Press Publishing Association launched his mature 726-page textbook titled *The New Geology*, the content of which was divided into the following five parts: (1) “Physiographic Geology,” (2) “Structural Geology,” (3) “Dynamic Geology,” (4) “Stratigraphical Geology,” and (5) “Theoretical Geology.”<sup>37</sup> Used for many years as a textbook in Adventist and some non-Adventist colleges and schools, it became his single most influential contribution to the so-called “flood geology.”

<sup>34</sup> An insightful biography of George M. Price, from the perspective of his literary contribution, was provided in Harold W. Clark’s *Crusader for Creation: The Life and Writings of George McCready Price* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1966). See also F. D. N[ichol], “1870—George McCready Price—1963,” *Review and Herald* (Feb. 7, 1963): 36; obituary in *RH* (Apr. 4, 1963): 24; “Price, George McCready,” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> George M. Price, *Outlines of Modern Science and Modern Christianity* (Oakland, CA: Pacific Press, 1902).

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., George M. Price, *Illogical Geology: The Weakest Point in the Evolution Theory* (Los Angeles, CA: Modern Heretic, 1906); idem, *God’s Two Books; or, Plain Facts about Evolution, Geology, and the Bible* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1911); idem, *The Fundamentals of Geology and Their Bearing on the Doctrine of a Literal Creation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913); idem, *Back to the Bible* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1916); idem, *Q.E.D.; or, New Light on the Doctrine of Creation* (New York: Revell, 1917) (published in German as *Naturwissenschaft und Schöpfungslehre* [Hamburg, Germany: Advent-Verlag, 1925]); idem, *A Textbook of General Science for Secondary Schools* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917). See also Price’s *Evolution and the Sabbath* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1908]), a 16-page tract advertised in the *RH* (Apr. 19, 1908): 24; and his *Did a Good God Make a Bad World?* Bible Truth Series 18 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1922]) and *Why I Am Not an Evolutionist*, Bible Truth Series 52 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, [1922]), two 8-page tracts advertised in the *RH* (Apr. 20, 1922): 21.

<sup>37</sup> George M. Price, *The New Geology: A Textbook for Colleges, Normal Schools, and Training Schools; and for the General Reader* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923); *ibid.*, 2nd ed. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1926).

Several new titles by Price were released by Adventist and non-Adventist presses from the 1920s up to the 1950s,<sup>38</sup> with special reference to his *Genesis Vindicated* (1941) and *Common-Sense Geology* (1946). By publishing some of his books outside the Seventh-day Adventist realm (especially by the Methodist Fleming H. Revell Company), Price reached out to a much wider group of readers, many of which got interested also in reading his books published by Adventist presses. Trying to define his own work, Price stated that “when a building is to be erected on ground already occupied, the old structures must be demolished first. His task, he said, was to clear the old evolutionary structures from the ground.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, he was the outstanding pioneer who paved the way for the appearance of many other creationists. According to the Baptist Henry Morris, “the most important creationist writer” of the first half of the twentieth century “was a remarkable man by the name of George McCready Price.” Even without a formal Ph.D. degree, Price was, in Morris’ opinion, “a clear and original thinker,” “with the ability to analyze and retain what he read,” “far better educated, in the true sense, than 90% of the Ph.D.’s and Th.D.’s cranked out by the assembly lines of the educational establishment.”<sup>40</sup>

While Price was making his outstanding contribution, a few other Seventh-day Adventist authors also began to argue for creationism. Already in 1919 Lucas A. Reed’s book *Astronomy and the Bible* tried to demonstrate how

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<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., George M. Price, *Science and Religion in a Nutshell* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1923); idem, *The Phantom of Organic Evolution* (New York: Revell, 1924); idem, *The Predicament of Evolution* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1925); idem, *Modern Botany and the Theory of Organic Evolution* (n.p., [1925]); idem, *A Solution of the Evolution Riddle* (Watford, England: Stanborough Press, [1925?]); idem, *Evolutionary Geology and the New Catastrophism* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1926); idem, *A History of Some Scientific Blunders* (New York: Revell, 1930); idem, *The Geological-Ages Hoax: A Plea for Logic in Theoretical Geology* (New York: Revell, 1931); idem, *Modern Discoveries Which Help Us to Believe* (New York: Revell, 1934); idem, *The Modern Flood Theory of Geology* (New York: Revell, 1935); idem, *Some Scientific Stories and Allegories* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1936); idem, *Genesis Vindicated* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1941); idem, *If You Were the Creator: A Reasonable Credo for Modern Man* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942); idem, *How Did the World Begin?* (New York: Revell, 1942); idem, *Common-Sense Geology: A Simplified Study for the General Reader* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1942); idem, *Feet of Clay: The Unscientific Nonsense of Historical Geology* (Malverne, NY: Christian Evidence League, 1949); idem, *Were the Fossils Contemporary?* (Malverne, NY: Christian Evidence League, 1949); idem, *The Man from Mars* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1950); idem, *The Story of the Fossils* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1954); idem, *Problems and Methods in Geology* (Malverne, NY: Christian Evidence League, 1956); idem, *Theories of Satanic Origin* (Loma Linda, CA: author, n.d.).

<sup>39</sup> Clark, *Crusader for Creation*, 82.

<sup>40</sup> Henry M. Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, new updated ed. (Santee, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1993), 87, 90.

Astronomy requires the existence of God and supports creationism. Reed argued eloquently:

Some of the men accounted great to-day—mere pygmies compared with the men just mentioned [Kepler and Newton]—have the effrontery to tell us that they see in the heavens no trace of a God. But in making such a statement, they but confess their own blindness and dumbness. They are like one who cannot read, pointing at the letters of the printed page, and saying there is no trace of knowledge or intelligence there.

To disbelieve in God, a man must believe in a thousand anomalies which he cannot reconcile with reason; and he must accept contradictions and improbabilities without number. He must assume that effects are greater than their causes; that the greatest effects are without any cause at all; in fact, that something, and a mighty something at that, came from nothing.

That he may not see evidences of God, the atheist must close his eyes to the light which shines upon him everywhere, from sun and stars, and reflected from satellite and planet, and that also gleams from the eyes of countless intelligent creatures in the world about him.

That he may not hear the message of God in nature, he must close his ears to the voices that sound in creation's harmonies, from the hum of insects and the songs of the birds, up to that silent thunder of uncounted worlds and suns and systems which pour into the ear of the soul the mighty music of the spheres.

The irreligious scientist is a contradiction. The undevout astronomer has become spiritually deranged.<sup>41</sup>

Besides teaching and writing many book and articles for scholarly journals, Price also inspired several of his students to go on “to make significant contributions of their own.” Among them were especially Harold W. Clark and Frank L. Marsh, as well as Ernest S. Booth and Clifford L. Burdick.<sup>42</sup> After attending a course in geology taught by Price at Pacific Union College in 1920, Clark continued teaching that course in the same institution for many years. In

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<sup>41</sup> Lucas A. Reed, *Astronomy and the Bible: The Empire of Creation Seen in the Dual Light of Science and the Word* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1919), 13–14.

<sup>42</sup> Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, 90–92.

1929 Clark's *Back to Creation* came off the press,<sup>43</sup> followed by several other books on creationism and flood geology.<sup>44</sup> It was basically in his *The New Deluvialism* (1946) and especially in *Fossils, Flood, and Fire* (1968) that he differed from Price by trying to show (1) "how the data regarding glacial action [or glaciation] could be fitted into the Flood theory"; (2) "that there was much more regularity to the stratified rocks than Price had recognized"; and (3) "that there seemed to be clear evidence for extensive lateral movements, known as *overthrusts*—a point which had hitherto not been recognized by diluvialists."<sup>45</sup>

A significant contribution for the creationist cause was made also by Frank L. Marsh, who taught Biology for many years at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, and who received a Ph.D. in the same area from the University of Nebraska. In 1941 he released his book *Fundamental Biology*, written from a creationist perspective.<sup>46</sup> In his *Evolution, Creation, and Science* (1944, revised in 1947), he challenged the so-called "unjustified authority" claimed by evolutionist scientists for themselves.<sup>47</sup> Marsh's *Studies in Creationism* (1950) provided a meaningful explanation of the biblical account of creation and correlated topics found in the Pentateuch.<sup>48</sup> In his *Life, Man, and Time* (1957), he stated that "there is no scientific method available [including the newly proposed radiocarbon dating] which is able to demonstrate that this first life

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<sup>43</sup> Harold W. Clark, *Back to Creation: Back to Creationism; a Defense of the Scientific Accuracy of the Doctrine of Special Creation, and a Plea for a Return to Faith in the Literal Interpretation of the Genesis Record of Creation as Opposed to the Theory of Evolution* (Angwin, CA: Pacific Union College Press, 1929).

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Harold W. Clark, *Genes and Genesis* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940); idem, *The New Deluvialism* (Angwin, CA: Science Publications, 1946); idem, *Creation Speaks: A Study of the Scientific Aspects of the Genesis Record of Creation and the Flood* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1947); idem, *Nature Nuggets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1955); idem, *Skylines and Detours* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1959); idem, *Wonders of Creation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1964); idem, *Genesis and Science* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1967); idem, *Fossils, Flood, and Fire* (Escondido, CA: Outdoor Pictures, 1968); idem, *The Battle over Genesis* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1977); idem, *New Creationism* (Nashville, TN: Southern, 1980).

<sup>45</sup> Clark, *Fossils, Flood, and Fire*, 41–42.

<sup>46</sup> Frank L. Marsh, *Fundamental Biology* (Lincoln, NE: author, 1941).

<sup>47</sup> Frank L. Marsh, *Evolution, Creation, and Science*, 2nd ed., rev. (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1947).

<sup>48</sup> Frank L. Marsh, *Studies in Creationism* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1950); published in Portuguese as *Estudos sobre Criacionismo* (Santo André, SP, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, n.d.).



appeared on our earth more than a few thousand years ago.”<sup>49</sup> Besides these, Marsh also wrote a booklet titled *Evolution or Special Creation?* (1963).<sup>50</sup>

That was indeed a time of much challenge for the general creationist cause in the United States. Back in 1925, John T. Scopes, a high-school teacher in Dayton, Tennessee, was taken to court for violating the recent state law against teaching human evolution in public schools. A convincing creationist speech at that trial could have reinforced the teaching of a literal creation week in the science classes. Unfortunately, however, the Presbyterian layman and politician William J. Bryan, who spoke for the creationist cause, did confess that he himself accepted the day-age interpretation of Genesis 1.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in 1947 at the Institute for Nuclear Studies of the University of Chicago, Willard F. Libby and his colleagues developed the carbon-14 dating technique, which he researched and perfected over the next 12 years.<sup>52</sup> There was an increasing feeling in many Christian circles that Bible chronology was already outdated by modern science. It is not a surprise that many Adventist professors felt unqualified to answer some of the hard questions raised by their students.

In Los Angeles, California, already in 1938 George M. Price and some Adventist associates had formed the Society for the Study of Creation, the Deluge, and Related Science, commonly known just as the Deluge Geology Society, which continued for some ten years.<sup>53</sup> Only those who believed “in the literal six-day creation week, and that the flood should be studied as the main geological event since creation,” were eligible to join the society.<sup>54</sup> But on August 29, 1957, the General Conference Committee voted to approve “a plan whereby selected science teachers be assisted in taking advanced study in geology, paleontology, and related fields, in order to be prepared to offer counsel and give assistance in the teaching of these subjects.”<sup>55</sup> The 1957 Autumn Council recommended that the General Conference should appoint “a committee of

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<sup>49</sup> Frank L. Marsh, *Life, Man, and Time* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1957), 51. This book was published in German as *Leben, Mensch, Zeit* (Zürich: Advent-Verlag, 1967).

<sup>50</sup> Frank L. Marsh, *Evolution or Special Creation?* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1963); published in Portuguese as *Evolução ou Criação Especial?* (Santo André, SP, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 1964).

<sup>51</sup> See Numbers, *The Creationists*, 41–44, 72–73, 96–101.

<sup>52</sup> The first comprehensive exposition of carbon-14 dating was Willard F. Libby’s *Radiocarbon Dating* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).

<sup>53</sup> See Numbers, *The Creationists*, 118–39.

<sup>54</sup> Benjamin F. Allen, “Deluge Museum at Southern California Camp Meeting” – Note, *RH* (Oct. 3, 1940): 20.

<sup>55</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Teaching of Geology, Paleontology, and Related Fields” (Two Hundred and Fifteenth Meeting of the General Conference Committee, August 29, 1957).

seven” in charge of (1) recommending names of selected individuals “of proved loyalty” to get “additional training in the fields of geology and paleontology” and (2) giving “the necessary guidance to those men in their study program.”<sup>56</sup> That was the beginning of the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), which functioned on the campus of Andrews University up to 1980, when it was relocated to the campus of Loma Linda University. The staff scientists who worked for GRI have done much research over the years in response to some of the major tensions between modern science and the Bible record.<sup>57</sup>

One of the most enduring Adventist contributions for the study of the origins was volume 1 of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*.<sup>58</sup> In the process of producing such a work, a special Committee on Bible Chronology was established to deal with some major issues, especially the inaccuracies of Ussher’s chronology.<sup>59</sup> Besides the insights provided in the exposition of Genesis 1–11, that volume of the *Commentary* also has some helpful introductory articles dealing specifically with “Science and a Literal Creation”; “Evidences of a Worldwide Flood”; and “The Chronology of Early Bible History.”<sup>60</sup>

In 1969 Harold G. Coffin’s 512-page volume titled *Creation: Accident or Design?* came off the press. It became, through a few revisions and updatings, one of the most influential Adventist responses to evolutionism. Its nine sections deal respectively with (1) “A Perfect World,” (2) “The Flood,” (3) “The Structure of the Earth,” (4) “The Fossils,” (5) “Glaciation,” (6) “Origins and Time,” (7) “The Formation of New Species,” (8) “Science and God,” and (9) “The Theory of Evolution.” The discussion ends with the conclusion that the acceptance either of the creationist model or of the evolutionist theory is a matter of faith. The author argues,

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<sup>56</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Individuals to Be Trained in Geology and Paleontology” (Autumn Council – Two Hundred and Twenty-sixth Meeting of the General Conference Committee, October 25, 1957).

<sup>57</sup> Frank L. Marsh, “Geoscience Research Center,” *RH* (June 2, 1960): 21–22; Numbers, *The Creationists*, 290–98; Morris, *History of Modern Creationism*, 254–56; “Geoscience Research Institute,” *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*; L. James Gibson, “Geoscience Research Institute,” *Adventist Review* (June 30, 2005): 62–63.

<sup>58</sup> Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1953), vol. 1.

<sup>59</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Minutes of the Committee on Biblical Chronology” (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; Siegfried H. Horn letter to Alberto R. Timm, Sept. 2, 1992).

<sup>60</sup> Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:46–97, 174–96.

By faith the creationist accepts the Biblical account as a correct history of the earth. By faith men receive the evolutionary theory as a true basis for understanding prehistoric times. A man is circumscribed by his faith. His life, hope, and destiny are determined by the quality of this faith. One faith holds to a theory that permits him to trace his descent “from germs and mollusks and apes,” whereas the other entitles him to be a part of the genealogy that traces his ancestry back to “Adam, which was the son of God.”<sup>61</sup>

The contributions of George M. Price and his followers helped to strengthen the Seventh-day Adventist responses to the evolutionary challenges. But by the mid-twentieth century a few Seventh-day Adventist scholars were already tempted to accept some theistic-evolutionistic views. Yet, it was only from the early 1970s on that those disruptive views found their way into unofficial Adventist publications.

### **Dealing with Internal Challenges (1971–2015)**

The new period under consideration (1971–2015) is characterized by major tensions and contributions to Adventist protology. It is not always easy to distinguish between tensions and contributions. As a general rule, however, the following discussion regards as protological “tensions” the new concepts that either departed from traditional Adventist concepts or generated a certain kind of theological struggle within the denomination. Protological “contributions” stands for other eschatological developments which do not fall directly into the previous category. The following discussion will address first the tensions and lastly some significant contributions.

#### ***Major Tensions***

Some of the most challenging Adventist protological tensions were generated by both the Association of Adventist Forums (publisher of *Spectrum* magazine) and the Adventist Today Foundation (publisher of *Adventist Today* magazine), unofficial Adventist entities with historical-critical leanings. The Winter 1971 issue of *Spectrum* magazine suggested a critical revision of Seventh-day Adventist protology in order to bring it closer to modern scientific evolutionism. Under the assumption that “neither the Bible nor the writings of

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<sup>61</sup> Harold G. Coffin, *Creation—Accident or Design?* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1969), 463.

Ellen G. White give a scientific account of Creation and the Flood in any modern sense of the word,” Ross O. Barnes suggested that “the uniformitarian hypothesis should be the starting point for our investigation of geology.” Denying the historicity of the biblical creation and flood stories, Barnes argued for “a figurative and theological interpretation of this material.”<sup>62</sup> Such revisionist ideas would continue to be echoed by other Adventist scholars.

A major landmark for revisionist protology was the 1985 Conference on Geology and the Biblical Record, in West Yellowstone, Montana, sponsored by the Association of Adventist Forums.<sup>63</sup> The papers presented at that conference would be published 15 years later in a volume titled *Creation Reconsidered* (2000).<sup>64</sup> The overall tone of the conference was well expressed by Raymond F. Cottrell, who stated that “historical conditioning permeates the entire Bible,” and that, “in matters of science, the Bible writers were on a level with their contemporaries.”<sup>65</sup> For Cottrell, “the Bible writers have much to say about who created the universe, some to say about why he created it, little to say about how he created it, and nothing to say about when he created it.”<sup>66</sup> So, he could speculate that “at an unspecified time in the remote past, the Creator transmuted a finite portion of his infinite power into the primordial substance of the universe—perhaps in an event such as the Big Bang.”<sup>67</sup> But, at the same time, Cottrell had no difficulty in accepting that the Big Bang could have happened “perhaps fifteen or twenty billion years ago.”<sup>68</sup>

The notion that “the words and forms of expression in the Bible were historically conditioned to their time and perspective” led the same author, elsewhere, to the conclusion that the Genesis Flood did not extend beyond the known “lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea.” He further stated that “only by reading our modern worldview of ‘all the earth’ [Gen 7:3] back into the Hebrew text can the idea of a world-wide flood be established.”<sup>69</sup> This represents indeed a major departure from the traditional Adventist

<sup>62</sup> Ross O. Barnes, “Time—and Earth’s History,” *Spectrum* 3.1 (Winter 1971): 31, 44.

<sup>63</sup> Karen Bottomley, “Pilgrimage in the Rockies: The AAF Geology Tour,” *Spectrum* 16.4 (Nov. 1985): 21–26.

<sup>64</sup> James L. Hayward, ed., *Creation Reconsidered: Scientific, Biblical, and Theological Perspectives* (Roseville, CA: Association of Adventist Forums, 2000).

<sup>65</sup> Raymond F. Cottrell, “Inspiration and Authority of the Bible in Relation to Phenomena of the Natural World,” in Hayward, *Creation Reconsidered*, 199–200.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>69</sup> Raymond F. Cottrell, “Extent of the Genesis Flood,” in Hayward, *Creation Reconsidered*, 275.

understanding of a universal flood, as presented in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*,<sup>70</sup> of which Cottrell himself was an associate editor.

Special appeals for a theistic-evolution model, with emphasis on a long-age creation process, appeared in the issues of *Spectrum* magazine for Autumn 1999<sup>71</sup>; Winter 2000<sup>72</sup>; and Spring 2004.<sup>73</sup> For instance, James L. Hayward argued in the Winter-2000 issue that

by 1999, significant numbers of Adventist scientists accepted (1) the possibility of rather large-scale evolutionary change among organisms; (2) the reality of the sequence of fossils in the geological column; and/or (3) the implication from radiometric dating that the earth, and possibly life, is billions of years old. Joint acceptance of all three of these propositions would mean a significant paradigm shift in Adventist perspectives about the past.

It would be a mistake to assume that the shifts in thinking highlighted here have been universal—a number of Adventist scientists continue to hold very traditional views regarding the past. . . .

If anything conclusive can be said about the progression of Adventist views on earth history, it is that pluralism has characterized and continuous to characterize the process.<sup>74</sup>

Another revisionist exposition of Adventist protology was published in 2006 by the Adventist Today Foundation, under the title, *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives*.<sup>75</sup> Its chapters were written by scholars mainly from Loma Linda University and La Sierra University. Richard Bottomley, from Canadian University College (now Burman University),

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1:257: “This description [of Gen 7] renders utterly foolish and impossible the view set forth by some that the Flood was a local affair in the Mesopotamian valley.”

<sup>71</sup> See articles by Edwin A. Karlow (“The Metaphor of Design: How Shall We Talk about the Creation?”), Richard J. Bottomley (“Age Dating of Rocks”), and Mary Pat Koos (“The Age of the Earth”) in *Spectrum* 27.4 (Autumn 1999): 36–54.

<sup>72</sup> See articles by Langdon Gilkey (“The Meaning and Relevance of Creation”), James L. Hayward (“Shifting Views of the Past: Adventists and the Historical Sciences”) in *Spectrum* 28.1 (Winter 2000): 56–68.

<sup>73</sup> Brian Bull and Fritz Guy, “Then a Miracle Occurs,” *Spectrum* 32.2 (Spring 2004): 30–40; reprinted as a booklet, under the same title, by AAF/Press, 2004.

<sup>74</sup> James L. Hayward, “Shifting Views of the Past,” *Spectrum* 28.1 (Winter 2000): 67–68.

<sup>75</sup> Brian Bull, Fritz Guy, and Ervin Taylor, eds., *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives* (Riverside, CA: Adventist Today Foundation, 2006).

expressed well the overall feeling of the contributors of that multi-authored book when he stated,

But if we accept the data from age dating, would we not be theologically adrift in a sea of uncertainty and chaos? Not at all! Remember, we are all still creationists. We are not surrendering to a Godless evolutionary paradigm. . . .

I believe we need to learn to state our theology and beliefs in a way that is not wholly dependent on the literal veracity of a young-earth model in order to be relevant. . . . The current idea that if we do not support a young-earth/deluge model we cannot be Adventist Christians seems to be pathological theology.<sup>76</sup>

Despite such appeals for theistic evolutionism, mainstream Adventism continues to emphasize its trust in a literal six-day creation, a short chronology of human history, and a worldwide flood.

### **Major Contributions**

The early 1970s saw the launching of a few influential academic journals promoting creationism. In April 1972 in São Carlos, SP, Brazil, the Sociedade Criacionista Brasileira ([www.scb.org.br](http://www.scb.org.br)) published the first number of its *Folha Criacionista*, intended “to spread out scientific aspects related to the doctrine of creation as exposed in the Bible.”<sup>77</sup> Although not officially related to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the society was founded and managed over the years by a Seventh-day Adventist scholar. Two years later (1974) the Geoscience Research Institute launched its official periodical titled *Origins*, “designed mainly for the Seventh-day Adventist educator, especially the science educator.”<sup>78</sup> In its very first issue, Berney R. Neufeld proposed “a General Theory of Creation,” with the following 11 postulates:

POSTULATE 1. The physical substance of the observable universe and the laws of their interactions were brought into existence by an infinitely wise Creator, and their continued existence is dependent upon His maintenance.

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<sup>76</sup> Richard Bottomley, “The Clocks in the Rocks: A Personal Perspective,” in *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives*, ed. Bull, Guy, and Taylor (Riverside, CA: Adventist Today Foundation, 2006), 110.

<sup>77</sup> “Editorial,” *Folha Criacionista* (Brazil) 1.1 (Abril 1972): 1.

<sup>78</sup> Ariel A. Roth, “Editorial: Why a Publication on Origins?” *Origins* 1.1 (1974): 4.

POSTULATE 2. In the relatively recent past a creative event(s) occurred on earth. By this act the earth was organized and/or created to provide a suitable substrate for living organisms, and organisms were created to live upon that earth.

POSTULATE 3. The events of Postulate 2 occupied an extremely short period of time (six literal days).

POSTULATE 4. The biological world was created so as to relate intimately with the physical world. There was a balanced fauna and flora present including the major categories of plants and animals now living.

POSTULATE 5. Man was endowed with characteristics unique in the creation. These included: 1) higher intelligence, 2) exercise of dominion over the animals, 3) a knowledge of the Creator, and 4) free will.

POSTULATE 6. The initial creation was perfect. It was designed for mankind by a Creator whose character is love. As such it provided for man a completely adequate opportunity for physical occupation and sustenance and met fully his aesthetic and spiritual needs.

POSTULATE 7. The initial creation was modified, subsequently, in such a way that it became progressively less “perfect.” Death became the lot of all organisms.

POSTULATE 8. The crust of the earth provides a record, albeit incomplete, of the past history of the earth. In particular, the upper layers contain the remains of organisms destroyed in a major post-creation event—the flood.

POSTULATE 9. The organisms existing today are the descendants of those brought into being during the initial creation period. There have been no subsequent creations.

POSTULATE 10. The present characteristics and distribution of organisms are the result of the dynamic interactions between the organisms and the ecological history of the earth. The biological world as we know it is well-described as “descent with modification.”

POSTULATE 11. The Creator is not capricious in His actions and thus the biological and physical universe can, most often, when adequately understood, be described in mathematical terms.<sup>79</sup>

As already mentioned in the introduction to the present article, in 1977 Harold W. Clark's *The Battle over Genesis* provided a general overview of the development of evolutionism since ancient times and its ongoing conflict with creationism.<sup>80</sup> In 1978, Jacques Doukhan defended his Th.D. dissertation, "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story,"<sup>81</sup> inferring that the text of Genesis 1 and 2 forms a literary unity under three genres—genealogy, prose, and recitation; and recognizing the historicity of the creation account.

While many critics tried to undermine the historicity of the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, in 1980 Gerhard F. Hasel published a two-part series in *Origins*, highlighting the historical relevance of those "chronogenealogies."<sup>82</sup> In contrast to the genealogies of Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–38, which only list name after name with a few gaps in between, the chronogenealogies of Genesis 5:1–32 and 11:10–32 are intertwined with time elements and direct-descent statements, which do not provide room for genealogical gaps. In Hasel's view, the longer time periods mentioned in some ancient manuscripts do not support a symbolic rereading of those genealogies.

The 1980 "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" included a specific statement on "Creation" and another one on "The Nature of Man." Statement 6, on creation, reads as follows:

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

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<sup>79</sup> Berney R. Neufeld, "Towards the Development of a General Theory of Creation," *Origins* 1.1 (1974): 6–7.

<sup>80</sup> Clark, *The Battle over Genesis*.

<sup>81</sup> Jacques Doukhan, "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story" (ThD diss., Andrews University, 1978); published as *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, AUSDDS 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978); cf. abstract in *AUSS* 19 (Spring 1981): 73–74.

<sup>82</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, "Genesis 5 and 11: Chronogenealogies in the Biblical History of the Beginnings," *Origins* 7.1 (1980): 23–37; idem, "The Meaning of the Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11," *Origins* 7.2 (1980): 53–70. See also idem, "The Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and Their Alleged Babylonian Background," *AUSS* 16 (Autumn 1978): 361–74.



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; 104; Heb. 11:3.)<sup>83</sup>

Statement 7, on “The Nature of Man,” adds,

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and soul, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:7; Ps 8:4–8; Acts 17:24–28; Gen 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12–17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20; Gen. 2:15.)<sup>84</sup>

In 1983 a revised and updated edition of Coffin’s *Creation: Accident or Design?* came off the press under the new title *Origin by Design*, with the special contribution of Robert H. Brown. After addressing critically the major arguments of contemporary evolutionist science, Coffin concluded that,

since both Creation theory and evolution theory lie outside the realm of science, we cannot make a decision on the basis of which one is science and which one is not. We must determine which theory the total range of available evidences at hand best supports and which comes closest to the method of operation and results we have learned to expect of science.

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<sup>83</sup> “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1981), 33.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

I believe that Creation is a viable alternative theory of origins and that it adequately incorporates the facts of science.<sup>85</sup>

At Andrews University in 1994, Marco T. Terreros, from Colombia, defended his Ph.D. dissertation titled, “Death Before the Sin of Adam: A Fundamental Concept in Theistic Evolution and Its Implications for Evangelical Theology.”<sup>86</sup> Terreros argued that the evolutionistic interpretation of the geological column requires the assumption that death existed before the sin of Adam, therefore contradicting the biblical teaching that death began through Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12; cf. Gen 3).

Leonard Brand’s helpful *Faith, Reason, and Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design* (1997)<sup>87</sup> is regarded by Kurt Wise, from Bryan College, as “one of the very few creationist works where . . . evolutionary theory and thus evolutionists (even theistic evolutionists) have been treated with respect.”<sup>88</sup>

In 1998 Ariel A. Roth, director of the Geoscience Research Institute for 14 years (1980–1994), brought out a 384-page book titled *Origins: Living Science and Scripture* (1998).<sup>89</sup> Roth concludes from his study that

I cannot accept the idea that God does not exist. Nature is too complex and existence too meaningful for me to think that all the intricacies and delicate balances I see about me are just accidental. There has to be a Designer. If there is a Designer, I would expect some meaningful communication from Him. . . .

My personal assessment is that creation answers that question [Why are we here?] better than do other models. Creation makes a

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<sup>85</sup> Harold G. Coffin and Robert H. Brown, *Origin by Design* (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1983), 430.

<sup>86</sup> Marco T. Terreros, “Death Before the Sin of Adam: A Fundamental Concept in Theistic Evolution and Its Implications for Evangelical Theology” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1994); cf. abstract in *AUSS* 32 (Spring-Summer 1994): 114.

<sup>87</sup> Leonard Brand, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1997); published in Spanish as *Fe y Razón en la Historia de la Tierra: Un paradigma de los orígenes de la tierra y de la vida mediante un diseño inteligente* (Lima, Peru: Ediciones Theologika, Universidad Peruana Unión, 1998) and in Portuguese as *Fé, Razão e História da Terra: Um paradigma das origens da Terra e da vida por planejamento inteligente* (São Paulo, Brazil: Unaspress, 2005).

<sup>88</sup> Kurt Wise, “Foreword,” in *ibid.*, vii.

<sup>89</sup> Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Living Science and Scripture* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 1998); published in Portuguese as *Origens: Relacionando a Ciência com a Bíblia* (Tatuí, SP: Casa Publicadora Brasileira, 2001).

significant, reasonable, and satisfying contribution to the great questions of truth, meaning, purpose, duty, and our personal destiny.

Some establish their worldview on the basis of science alone. While science is worthy of respect, it is an incomplete worldview. Others ground their worldview on the basis of Scripture alone. But even this is a restricted outlook, and Scripture encourages us to learn from God's creation. To me, a more satisfactory approach is to link science and Scripture.<sup>90</sup>

From a popular perspective, Dwight K. Nelson's booklet *Built to Last: Creation and Evolution: A Thoughtful Look at the Evidence That a Master Designer Created Our Planet* (1998)<sup>91</sup> pulls together several evidences of an intelligent design behind the complexities of life in this world.

Two helpful Adventist theological treatments of creation came to light in the year 2000. One was William H. Shea's chapter on "Creation" in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*,<sup>92</sup> providing a general overview of the subject throughout the Scriptures, the Church history, and the writings of Ellen G. White, with emphasis on a short chronology and a literal 24-hour day creation week. Another theological treatment was the book *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary*, edited by John T. Baldwin,<sup>93</sup> and with chapters by the editor himself ("Revelation 14:7: An Angel's Worldview"; "The Geological Column and Calvary: The Rainbow Connection—Implication for an Evangelical Understanding of the Atonement") and by Gerhard F. Hasel ("The 'Days' of Creation in Genesis 1: Literal 'Days' on Figurative 'Periods/EPOCHS' of Time?"), Randall W. Younker ("Genesis 2: A Second Creation Account?"), Richard M. Davidson ("Biblical Evidence for the Universality of the Genesis Flood"), Ariel Roth ("The Grand Canyon and the Genesis Flood"), Norman R. Gulley ("Evolution: A Theory in Crisis"), Ed Zinke ("The Role of Creation in Seventh-day Adventist Theology"), and Martin F. Hanna ("Science and Theology: Focusing the Complementary Lights of Jesus, Scripture, and Nature").

<sup>90</sup> Roth, *Origins: Living Science and Scripture*, 361, 363.

<sup>91</sup> Dwight K. Nelson, *Built to Last: Creation and Evolution: A Thoughtful Look at the Evidence that a Master Designer Created Our Planet* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1998). A revised edition of this booklet came off the press as *Creation and Evolution: A Thoughtful Look at the Evidence that a Master Designer Created Our Planet*, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2009)

<sup>92</sup> William H. Shea, "Creation," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, ed Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 418–456.

<sup>93</sup> John T. Baldwin, ed., *Creation, Catastrophe, and Calvary: Why a Global Flood Is Vital to the Doctrine of Atonement* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000).

The early 2000s saw some significant denominational attempts to settle the creation-evolution tensions. The 2001 General Conference Annual Council approved the plan of having (1) an International Faith and Science Conference in 2002, to “initiate a process by which the Seventh-day Adventist Church addresses the interplay of faith, science, and philosophy and the ways in which these challenge or contribute to the Church’s understanding and witness regarding Genesis 1–11”; (2) Regional Faith and Science Conferences in 2003 and 2004, “to broaden the involvement of theologians, scientists, church leaders, and others in the discussion of agenda issues outlined by the International Faith and Science Conference in 2002”; and (3) a second International Faith and Science Conference in 2004, “to bring to summation the international dialog which began in 2002 by providing counsel, guidance, and information to the Church regarding its understanding and explanation of Genesis 1–11.”<sup>94</sup>

The first International Faith and Science Conference took place in Ogden, Utah, August 23–29, 2002, with participation of 84 Seventh-day Adventist scholars and leaders.<sup>95</sup> Regional Faith and Science Conferences were held in seven of the church’s 13 world divisions. And a second International Faith and Science Conference convened in Denver, Colorado, August 20–26, 2004, with 135 participants, 45 of whom were from outside the North American Division.<sup>96</sup> Out of those conferences came the document “An Affirmation of Creation,” presented to and received by the General Conference Executive Committee at the Annual Council Session in Silver Spring, Maryland, October 11, 2004.<sup>97</sup> Two days later the same Executive Committee accepted and voted another document titled, “Response for an Affirmation of Creation,” stating, “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

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<sup>94</sup> “136-01G Faith and Science Conferences,” *2001 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee—General Actions* (Silver Spring, MD, Sept. 25–27, 2001), 25–28.

<sup>95</sup> Ray Dabrowski, “Adventist Scholars and Leaders Begin Faith and Science Conversation,” *Adventist Review* (Oct. 2002): 40–41.

<sup>96</sup> Bill Knott and Sandra Blackmer, “Denver ‘Faith and Science’ Meeting Reaffirms Six-Day Creation, Calls for Humility and Dialogue,” *Adventist Review* (Oct. 2004): 40–41.

<sup>97</sup> “147-04Ga An Affirmation of Creation—Report of the Organizing Committee,” *2004 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee—General Actions* (Silver Spring, MD, Oct. 8–14, 2004), 35–41; reprinted in *Statements, Guidelines & Other Documents* ([Silver Spring, MD]: General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Communication Department, 2005), 12–20.

identical in time to what we now experience as a week; and that the Flood was global in nature.”<sup>98</sup>

In 2005 a new revised and updated edition of Harold G. Coffin and Robert H. Brown’s *Origin by Design*, with the co-authorship of R. James Gibson, came off the press.<sup>99</sup> The content was rearranged under five major sections: (1) “The Biblical Narrative of Creation and the Flood,” (2) “Geology and Genesis,” (3) “Paleontology and Genesis,” (4) “Geochronology: The Age of the Earth,” and (5) “Biological Change.”

Meanwhile, several words of anti-theistic-evolutionistic warnings could be heard. For example, in 2002 Ariel A. Roth warned in the *Adventist Review* that “Adventists need to be especially careful that the pressures that have caused other churches and institutions to drift away from the Bible and God do not affect us.”<sup>100</sup> In a short article entitled “Seventh-day Darwinians,” published in 2003 in the same magazine, Clifford Goldstein stated,

What amazes me isn’t so much that people can believe in evolution (after all, I used to), but that those who do still want to be Seventh-day Adventists. I can respect someone who, believing in evolutionary theory, rejects the Adventist Church entirely. I have no respect for those who think they can meld the two.<sup>101</sup>

In the same year (2003), the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* published eight papers read at the International Faith and Science Conference held in Ogden, Utah (August 23–29, 2002), plus three additional articles.<sup>102</sup> In his paper “The Biblical Account of Origins,” Richard M. Davidson presented seven arguments for the so-called “passive gap” notion of “a two-stage creation of this earth” (cf. Gen 1:1 and 1:3ff.). Against theistic evolutionism, Davidson warned,

Interpretations of these chapters which present God as an accomplice, active or passive, in an evolutionary process of survival of the fittest,

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<sup>98</sup> “147-04Gb Response to an Affirmation of Creation,” *2004 Annual Council of the General Conference Committee*, 41; reprinted in *Statements, Guidelines & Other Documents*, 21–22.

<sup>99</sup> Harold G. Coffin, Robert H. Brown, and R. James Gibson, *Origin by Design*, rev. ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2005).

<sup>100</sup> Ariel A. Roth, “The Evolution Bandwagon,” *Adventist Review* (hereafter *AtR*, June 27, 2002): 28.

<sup>101</sup> Clifford Goldstein, “Seventh-day Darwinians,” *AtR* (July 24, 2003): 29. Cf. “Clifford Goldstein,” *AtR* (Aug. 28, 2003): 2–3; “Seventh-day Darwinians? Readers respond to a six-day creationist column,” *AtR* (Sept. 18, 2003): 25–27.

<sup>102</sup> *JATS* 14.1 (Spring 2003).

millions of years of predation, prior to the fall of humans, must seriously reckon with how these views impinge upon the character of God. I would argue that perhaps the greatest reason to reject (theistic) evolution or progressive creation is that it maligns the character of God, making Him responsible for millions of years of death/suffering, natural selection, survival of the fittest, even *before* sin.<sup>103</sup>

Also in 2003 Michael G. Hasel argued that a protological change to accommodate theistic evolutionism would require a similar eschatological change. According to Hasel, “eschatologically the ‘creation of new heavens and a new earth’ indicates that what was created at the beginning will also be created at the end.” Consequently, under a theistic-evolutionistic model, “the object of re-creation becomes so indefinite in the face of 600 million years of evolutionary development that we must even wonder whether it would ever take place.”<sup>104</sup>

In 2005 Fernando Canale’s book *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation* brought new light into the evolutionist-creationist debate by dealing with some foundational issues. He argued,

Is Seventh-day Adventist theology compatible with the evolutionary metanarrative, according to which life on our planet originated through deep time by way of a process in which higher organisms of life emerged from lower forms? Can Adventist theology be harmonized with evolutionary science? . . .

Harmonizing creation and evolution inescapably leads to the abandonment of the *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle. If science can correct Scripture’s views on origins, it can also correct it in any area where scientific and theological discourses overlap. Finally, any attempt at harmonization calls for a radical change in the understanding of the divine revelation and inspiration of Scripture. . .

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<sup>103</sup> Richard M. Davidson, “The Biblical Account of Origins,” *JATS* 14.1 (Spring 2003): 21–24, 28.

<sup>104</sup> Michael G. Hasel, “‘In the Beginning...’ The Relationship between Protology and Eschatology,” in *The Cosmic Battle for Planet Earth: Essays in Honor of Norman R. Gulley* ed. Ron du Preez and Jiri Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Old Testament Department, 2003), 30–31.

Harmonizing Scripture to evolution, then, requires the harmonization of the Adventist theological method to the always-changing dictates of human science and tradition. In turn, methodological changes will require a reformulation of the entire corpus of Adventist doctrine and, eventually, the reformulation of all 27 fundamental beliefs. Before seeking harmonization between the creation and evolution metanarratives, then, Adventists should seriously think whether they are willing to give up the very reason for their existence as a church.<sup>105</sup>

After surveying “Creation through the New Testament Looking Glass” (2005), Ekkehardt Mueller concluded that “Jesus does not propose a literal reading of Genesis 1–2 and at the same time a symbolic reading.” For Mueller, “if at the end of the Millennium, God is able to create a new heaven and a new Earth without time spans of millions or billions of years, but brings them about right after the Millennium, why should He not have used similar techniques right in the beginning?”<sup>106</sup>

Another major contribution for Adventist protological studies was Richard M. Davidson’s article “Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture,” published in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle* (2009).<sup>107</sup> Davidson suggested that “in these opening chapters of Gen 1–3 is summarized the multi-faceted center of Scripture,” comprised of the following seven facets:

1. Creation and the divine design for this planet.
2. The character of the Creator (with implications for theodicy).
3. The rise of the moral conflict concerning the character of God.
4. The Gospel covenant promise centered in the Person of the Messianic Seed.
5. The substitutionary atonement worked out by the Messianic Seed.
6. The eschatological windup of the moral conflict with the end of the serpent and evil.

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<sup>105</sup> Fernando Canale, *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University LithoTech, 2005), 136, 140–41.

<sup>106</sup> Ekkehardt Mueller, “Creation through the New Testament Looking Glass,” *Perspective Digest* 10.3 (2005): 32–34.

<sup>107</sup> Richard M. Davidson, “Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture,” in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle*, ed. Daniel Heinz, Jiri Moskala, Peter M. van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Old Testament Department, 2009), 5–29.

7. The sanctuary setting of the moral conflict.<sup>108</sup>

Meanwhile, David C. Read's 684-page work, *Dinosaurs: An Adventist View* (2009),<sup>109</sup> came off the press as the most exhaustive treatment of the subject from a Seventh-day Adventist catastrophist perspective.

In 2010 the Biblical Research Institute published the book *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, edited by Gerhard Pfandl, with several short articles dealing with issues related to Genesis 1–11.<sup>110</sup> Those articles were written by Gerhard Pfandl (“Does Genesis teach that the earth existed in an unformed state prior to the Creation week?”), Jiri Moskala (“What was the light created on the first day of the Creation week?” and “Were the Creation days 24-hour days or indefinite periods of time?”), Randall W. Younker (“Are there two contradictory accounts of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2?”), John T. Baldwin & Erno Gyeresi (“Can we know where the garden of Eden was located based on the names of rivers?”), Tarsee Li (“Why didn't Adam and Eve die immediately?”), Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole (“Is Genesis 3:15 a Messianic prophecy?”), Michael G. Hasel (“Where did Cain get his wife?”), Donn W. Leatherman (“Who were the ‘sons of God’ and the ‘daughters of men?’”), and Richard M. Davidson (“How could every species be preserved on the ark?” and “Was the Flood global?”).

At the 2010 General Conference Session, Atlanta, Georgia (USA), the newly-elected General Conference President Ted Wilson addressed the evolutionist-creationist debate in his Sabbath July 3 sermon in the following terms:

Don't go backwards to misinterpret the first eleven chapters of Genesis or other areas of Scripture as allegorical or merely symbolic. As just this week we have once again affirmed in an overwhelming manner, the Seventh-day Adventist Church both teaches and believes in the biblical record of creation which took place recently; in six literal, consecutive, contiguous 24 hour days. The Seventh-day Adventist Church will never change its stand or belief in that foundational doctrine. If God did not create this world in six literal days and then blessed the Sabbath day, why are we worshipping Him today on this seventh-day Sabbath as SEVENTH-

<sup>108</sup> Davidson, “Back to the Beginning, 11, 19.

<sup>109</sup> David C. Read, *Dinosaurs: An Adventist View* (Keene, TX: Clarion Call Books, 2009).

<sup>110</sup> Gerhard Pfandl, ed., *Interpreting Scripture: Bible Questions and Answers*, BRIS 2 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013).



DAY Adventists? To misunderstand or to misinterpret this doctrine is to deny God's Word and to deny the very purpose of the Seventh-day Adventist movement as the remnant church of God called to proclaim the three angels' messages with Holy Spirit power. Don't go backwards to atheistic or theistic evolution, go forward to the prophetic understanding that loyalty to God, the Creator and Redeemer, will be seen in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath as the distinguishing characteristic of God's people in the very end of time. Seventh-day Adventist Church members, hold your leaders, pastors, local churches, educators, institutions, and administrative organizations accountable to the highest standards of belief based on a literal understanding of Scripture.<sup>111</sup>

In the early 2010s, Pacific Press published two helpful books with multi-authored chapters on creationism. One of those books was *Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science* (2011), edited by L. James Gibson and Humberto Rasi,<sup>112</sup> articulating twenty crucial questions that Christians often struggle with. The other book, edited by Bryan W. Ball, is titled, *In the Beginning: Science and Scripture Confirm Creation* (2012),<sup>113</sup> and seeks to demonstrate that "it is entirely possible to defend the traditional Adventist positions on Scripture, Creation and the Flood and not be scientifically illiterate."<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, Volume 3 of Norman R. Gulley's massive *Systematic Theology* devoted a 390-page section to "Creation."<sup>115</sup> The book's comprehensive biblical-systematic exposition of creation, the fall, and the flood is enriched by insightful allusions to the most influential figures in the faith and science debate.

It is worthwhile to mention also the popular expositions of L. James Gibson's *Origins* (2012);<sup>116</sup> Leonard R. Brand and Richard M. Davidson's *Choose You This Day: Why It Matters What You Believe About Creation*

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<sup>111</sup> Ted Wilson, "Go Forward: Church President Affirms Foundational Adventist Beliefs," [www.adventistreview.org/wilsongcsesermon](http://www.adventistreview.org/wilsongcsesermon)

<sup>112</sup> L. James Gibson and Humberto M. Rasi, eds., *Understanding Creation: Answers to Questions on Faith and Science* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2011).

<sup>113</sup> Bryan W. Ball, ed., *In the Beginning: Science and Scripture Confirm Creation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2012).

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, back cover.

<sup>115</sup> Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology, [Vol. 3] Creation, Christ, Salvation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 1–390.

<sup>116</sup> L. James Gibson, *Origins* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2012). This was the companion book for the Adult Sabbath School Lessons of the 1st quarter of 2013.

(2013);<sup>117</sup> as well as the multidisciplinary approach of *Criacionismo no Século 21: Uma abordagem multidisciplinar* (2013).<sup>118</sup> But the most widely translated and circulated creationist exposition in 2013 was L. James Gibson's Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide titled, *Origins*.<sup>119</sup> At the 2013 General Conference Annual Council, the DVD *The Creation: The Earth Is a Witness* was launched as part of the major Creation Project ([www.creationsabbath.net/creation-project](http://www.creationsabbath.net/creation-project)).<sup>120</sup>

Several significant contributions came off the press in 2015. Among them are the scholarly multi-authored book, *The Genesis Creation Account and Its Reverberations in the Old Testament*,<sup>121</sup> and its more popular version entitled, *He Spoke and It Was: Divine Creation in the Old Testament*,<sup>122</sup> both edited by Gerald A. Klingbeil. These two correlated books demonstrate how the Creation narrative of Genesis 1 and 2 is understood by other Old Testament writers. Furthermore, Richard M. Davidson's article, "The Nature of the Human Being from the Beginning: Genesis 1–11," provides helpful glimpses into humanity's original, fallen, and future states.<sup>123</sup>

In the revision of the "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" voted at the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio, Texas, Statement 6 on "Creation" was slightly changed to read as follows:

God has revealed in Scripture the authentic and historical account of His creative activity. He created the universe, and in a recent six-day creation the Lord made "the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" and rested on the seventh day. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of the work He performed and completed during six literal days that together with the Sabbath

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<sup>117</sup> Leonard R. Brand and Richard M. Davidson, *Choose You This Day: Why It Matters What You Believe About Creation* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2013).

<sup>118</sup> Wellington dos Santos Silva, ed., *Criacionismo no Século 21: Uma abordagem multidisciplinar* (Cachoeira, BA, Brazil: Centro de Pesquisa em Literatura Bíblica, 2013).

<sup>119</sup> L. James Gibson, *Origins*, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide—Jan.–Mar. 2013 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2013).

<sup>120</sup> Edwin Manuel Garcia, "Creation Movie Central to Church Identity Is Key to 2014 Evangelism," <http://news.adventist.org> (released on Oct. 15, 2013).

<sup>121</sup> Gerald A. Klingbeil, ed., *The Genesis Creation Account and Its Reverberations in the Old Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2015).

<sup>122</sup> Gerald A. Klingbeil, ed., *He Spoke and It Was: Divine Creation the Old Testament*, Creation Series 1 (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2015).

<sup>123</sup> Richard M. Davidson, "The Nature of the Human Being from the Beginning: Genesis 1–11," in *What Are Human Beings that You Remember Them?* *Proceedings of the Third International Bible Conference Nof Ginosar and Jerusalem, June 11–21, 2012*, ed. Clinton Wahlen (Silver Spring, MD: Review & Herald, 2015), 11–42.

constituted the same unit of time that we call a week today. 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; 5; 11; Ex. 20:8–11; Ps. 19:1–6; 33:6, 9; 104; Isa. 45:12, 18; Acts 17:24; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Rev. 10:6; 14:7.)<sup>124</sup>

Yet, with such a rich protological literary heritage available, theistic evolutionism is still tempting some Seventh-day Adventist academic circles and individuals.

### Concluding Remarks

The present study considered the development of Seventh-day Adventist protology within three major periods. During the first one, titled “Building on the Biblical Foundation (1844–1902),” Seventh-day Adventists emphasized the historicity of Genesis 1–11, believing that God, by the power of his Word, created the earth perfect in six literal days (Gen 1 and 2), which took place around 6,000 years ago; that through the fall of Adam and Eve sin corrupted this world (Gen 3); and that the flood was a global catastrophe that changed the geological characteristics of the earth (Gen 6–8). The second period, “Looking for Scientific Confirmation (1902–1971),” was deeply influenced by George McCready Price and some of his followers in their task of responding to major challenges from the external evolutionistic world. And the final period, called “Dealing with Internal Challenges (1971–2015),” demonstrated how many of the formerly-external challenges were embraced in some academic Adventist circles, related mainly to such non-official Adventist entities as the Association of Adventist Forums and the Adventist Today Foundation.

In the ongoing Adventist debate between creationism and theistic-evolutionism, mainstream Adventism has taken a clear stand in defense of the historicity of Genesis 1–11, against a symbolic rereading of that biblical section; of a short chronology of the world, against deep time evolutionism; of a literal creation week of 24-hour consecutive days, against long geological periods; and of a universal flood related to Noah, against the confinement of that event to any specific region of the ancient world. Seventh-day Adventist scholars have

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<sup>124</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” in *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2015), 163–164.

pointed out also that any departure from these foundational components would erode the overall Adventist doctrinal system. After all, doctrines do not function in isolation from each other. So, if Seventh-day Adventists want to keep their biblical identity, they should not ever allow the authority of science to weaken their commitment to the Protestant *sola-tota-prima Scriptura* principle. For “the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isa 40:8).