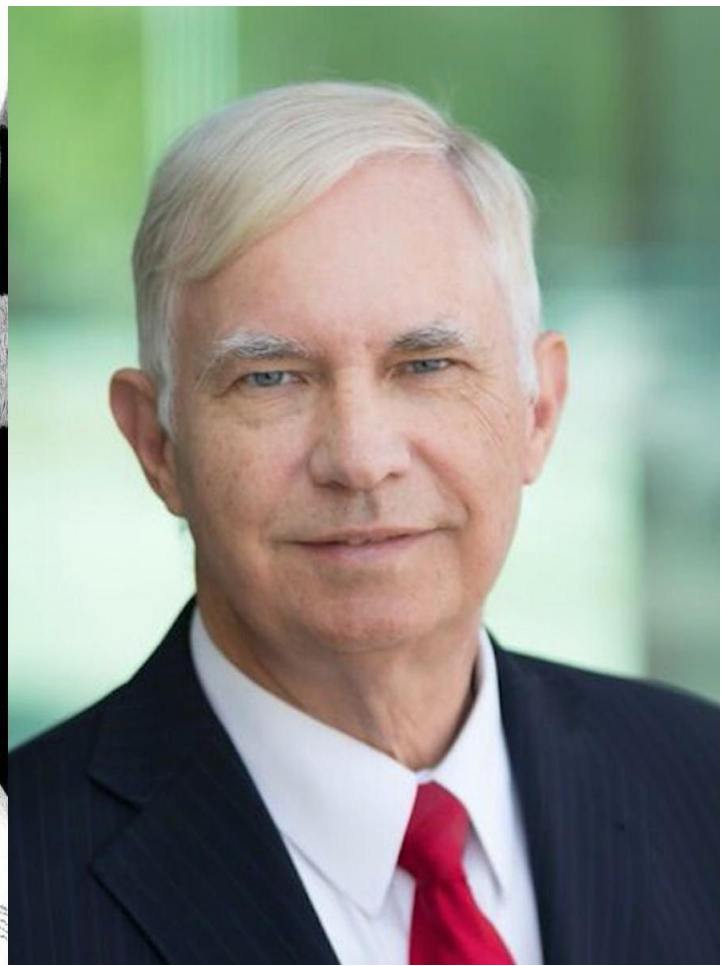




Prominent LLU Professor: 'No Sunday Law, No Great Controversy, No End-time Prophet and the Mark of the Beast is Undetermined'

By Andy Roman

Dr. Jon Paulien is a professor at the Loma Linda University School of Religion. At a recent church-sponsored symposium about the end time prophetic events, Dr. Paulien said that Sunday Laws are not coming, the Great Controversy is outdated, there are other options for the mark of the beast and Ellen White was not an end-time prophet. Eight months ago, the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists hosted a "Biblical Symposium on Final Events."

To the right is the video of the final presentation for the symposium. The presentation was entitled "The Coming Sunday Law Dilemma" featuring Dr. Jon Paulien, a leading scholar and professor at Loma Linda University. However, the "coming Sunday law dilemma" was not about the crisis our world would soon face; no, the "dilemma" that Dr. Paulien was inferring was that there was no Sunday law forthcoming.

The President of the Central California Conference, Pastor Ramiro Cano, welcomed the spectators and gave an explanation for the purpose of hosting this



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President Ramiro Cano.

event. Pastor Ramiro expressed that unfortunately there was too much “sensationalism” and “fanaticism” and that it was necessary to protect the church by presenting the “plain, unadulterated and clear truth.” Pastor Ramiro stated:

Minute 8:48 – “We are keenly aware of the many voices rallying the people to excitement and sensationalism creating fear, anxiety and fanaticism. As sentinels on the walls of Zion, we have a divinely bestowed responsibility to present the flock of God with **the plain, unaltered and clear truth** to navigate safely through the perils of these last days.”

Tragically, there were only obscure, adulterated and questionable assumptions heard during the presentation. Dr. Pierre Steenberg, Ministerial Director of the Central California Conference, introduced Dr. Jon Paulien, the featured speaker, with the following accolades:

Minute 13:48 – “Our speaker tonight as we come to the conclusion of this symposium is once again Dr. Jon Paulien. I got to tell you that **Dr. Paulien is a legend in the Adventist Church** when it comes to the book of Revelation.



Dr. Pierre Steenberg.

He's this **big in name scholar** that has been at it for a long time. **He knows his stuff inside and out** ... All I would like to say in the introduction tonight is, ‘Thank you, sir.’ You have been a blessing to us for many, many years. **You’ve presented globally, you have written books, you have published articles, you have really invested your life in these topics, and for us.** Thank you.”

The New Mark of the Beast

So what did this “legend” in Adventism say? What did the “big name scholar” present? The professor who “knows his stuff inside and out” when it comes to the book of Revelation, what great insights did he reveal for these end-times? Well, the new contemporary interpretation about the “Mark of the Beast,” according to Dr. Paulien, is that the text of Revelation describes a “counterfeit” and not specifically “Sunday.” In other words, the mark of the beast is a “counterfeit” and not specifically “Sunday.” And this “counterfeit” (the new mark of the beast) can have many interpretations. Notice how Dr. Paulien is rewriting Adventism:

Minute 17:45 – “The biblical evidence does not speak of Sunday as such, but it speaks about a counterfeit of the Sabbath being critical to the mark of the beast at the end of time. And we noticed that there were four possibilities and four options for a counterfeit. One would be a different day than the Sabbath, and Sunday would be an example of that. A second option is that every day is the Sabbath, which means that no day would have any special significance. The third is that no day is the Sabbath. Sabbath was simply abolished by Jesus and therefore we can worship on any day that we choose. And finally, some sort of legislation to forbid Sabbath-keeping would be option number 4. So within exegeses of the biblical text you do have options for understanding what the mark of the beast will actually turn out to be.”

Dr. Paulien is trying to insert options for the mark of the beast. Where do these options come from? He says it comes from the texts. And the texts don’t point to Sunday, they point to a counterfeit. And those options can be “any day.” It can include “all days” or it can mean “no days.” Do you see what is happening? They are re-writing the message of the mark of the beast. The contemporary church is attempting to remake the movement founded by our pioneers. We are witnessing a scenario in which anything remotely resembling historic Adventism is being eliminated, turned upside down or corrupted.

They are trying to understand the mark without any reference to the beast. You cannot separate the mark from the beast because the mark belongs to the beast. Who is the beast? Rome. What is her mark? Any day? Monday? Tuesday? Thursday? Friday? Absolutely not. Rome became the beast of Revelation in part because she established an idol Sabbath. If the beast is Rome, then what is the Papal Sabbath? Sunday. This is what inspiration says:

“When the test comes, it will be clearly shown what the mark of the beast is. It is the keeping of Sunday” (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 980).

Dr. Paulien is only affirming what many of our leaders already believe. His statements are a reflection of what Ted Wilson and other church leaders have already embraced. This explains why things are the way they are and why the Great Hope has replaced the Great Controversy. The modern church is now pushing the idea that the mark of the beast can be any day.

Attacking Ellen White and the Great Controversy

Now notice Dr. Paulien attacks Ellen White and her book the Great Controversy:

Minute 27:26 – “Our careful study of fulfilled prophecy, out of careful study from the book of Revelation and reading these statements (from Ellen White), with the biblical principles in mind, we should be careful not to assume that the end-time will be identical to GC (Great Controversy) in every detail. Considering both the Bible and world history, were Ellen White alive today there is at least a chance that her depiction of the end would be different than it was in the 1880s.”

This is another false assumption made by Dr. Paulien. He is suggesting that Ellen White had her own description of how the world would end. No she did not. She was not the author of her message, she was only the

A WORD OF CAUTION

WITH THE BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES IN MIND, WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO ASSUME THAT THE END-TIME WILL BE IDENTICAL TO GC IN EVERY DETAIL. CONSIDERING BOTH THE BIBLE AND WORLD HISTORY, WERE ELLEN WHITE ALIVE TODAY THERE IS AT LEAST A CHANCE THAT HER DEPICTION OF THE END WOULD BE DIFFERENT THAN IT WAS IN THE 1880s.



A slide taken from the presentation of Dr. Paulien.

messenger. The vision of the Great Controversy was not her own. Notice how Sister White describes how she received the Great Controversy vision and simply wrote it down:

“It was more essential that I should devote myself to writing out the important matters for Vol. IV; (Spirit of Prophecy Volume 4 was the original Great Controversy) that the warning must go where the living messenger could not go, and that it would call the attention of many to the important events to occur in the closing scenes of this world’s history. As the condition of the church and the world was open before me, and I beheld the fearful scenes that lie just before us, I was alarmed at the outlook; and night after night, while all in the house were sleeping, I wrote out the things given me of God. I was shown the heresies which are to arise, the delusions that will prevail, the miracle-working power of Satan—the false Christs that will appear—that will deceive the greater part even of the religious world, and that would, if it were possible, draw away even the elect. Is this work of the Lord? I know that it is, and our people also profess to believe it. The warning and instruction of this book are needed by all who profess to believe the present truth” (1888 Materials, p. 652).

Sister White had no personal views on the end of time. She simply wrote what God showed her in the Great Controversy book. And she saw it all. Heresies in the churches, spiritualism, ecumenism, false Christs, the beast and the image, the close of probation, the time of trouble, the second coming of Jesus, the millennium and the final home of the faithful. According to Dr. Paulien, we would have to ignore everything Ellen White wrote in the final chapters of the Great Controversy.

Rewriting Sunday Laws

Now notice what Dr. Paulien says about the Sunday law. These new views are creating a crisis of faith in Adventism and are leading us directly into the universal brotherhood of Rome.

Minute 28:12 – “The idea of a world-wide Sunday law made a lot of sense back then. The world was quite different than today. So we should not assume that after the passage of more than one hundred

and fifty years that every detail would necessarily be fulfilled.”

Do we ignore the reality that Rome is pushing for Sunday sacredness and that the world is embracing Sunday rest? Do we ignore every detail in the Great Controversy that is being fulfilled today? Do we ignore the three-fold union of Romanism, apostate Protestantism and spiritualism? How about ecumenism? What about all the religions, governments, economists and politicians who are joining Rome to defend the green Sunday law? Would Dr. Paulien want us to ignore the involvement of Seventh-day Adventists in all of these events as well?



Dr. Paulien is proudly giving his presentation wearing the logo of the Loma Linda University School of Religion as the Central California Conference bank-rolled this event. Church-owned institutions and entities are helping to promote these grave theological heresies.

Dr. Paulien goes on to present his theory that everything Ellen White wrote in the Great Controversy was only for her time, and if God were giving us a message today, it would be completely different:

Minute 29:40 – “If the end had come in Ellen White’s lifetime, I have no doubt that it would have happened essentially the way that she said.”

Minute 30:00 – **Great Controversy fits perfectly with exactly what was happening in the world in the 1880s...** I think we make the mistake in putting lines in the sand and saying it must happen exactly this way when in fact we see God being creative, not always predictable ... things have changed in the world. **If God was giving a prophecy today it wouldn’t sound like what was given back then because we are in a different world, different language, different circumstances, different time and place.**

A different world? A different language? A different time and place? No, not really. We see the same power today that was in her day. We see the same Sunday being celebrated world-wide. We see the same actors that were in her days. We see the same rhetoric and the same goals. Remember, Rome is a Chameleon and she can change her colors or tactics, but the ending will be the same:

“Popery is just what prophecy declared that she would be, the apostasy of the latter times. [2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.] It is a part of her policy to assume the character which will best accomplish her purpose; but beneath the variable appearance of the chameleon, she conceals the invariable venom of the serpent” (Great Controversy, p. 571).

Ellen White is not an End-time Prophet

Dr. Paulien introduces a new description of Ellen White’s prophetic role. He called her work and writings “classical” and not “apocalyptic,” which means that she wrote for her time, not for the end of time. The idea is that some prophets only had a role for their specific time such as Jeremiah, Amos, Micah and others. Then there were other prophets who were “apocalyptic,” that is, they had a message for the end of time, such as Daniel and John, Paul and Jesus. Notice what Dr. Paulien says:

Minute 17:30 – Ellen White’s style of prophecy is classical rather than apocalyptic.

Minute 30:46 – And finally, as a classical prophet, Ellen White’s predictions should be understood as conditional. As circumstances change the fulfillment of Revelation 13 could take other forms than the ones that seemed so clear in 1888.

What would those “other forms” for the fulfillment of Revelation 13 be? Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, no day, any day or all days?

Minute 41:48 – She (Sister White) is talking about the near future. She’s talking about a world that was very real in the 1880s, but no longer exists today. It’s no longer a Protestant government. It’s no longer a world in which spiritualism is at the top of the radar and the agenda ... What she was describing in Great Controversy was about her present and her near future.

In what world does Dr. Paulien live? He’s closing his eyes to Rome’s pantheistic encyclicals and the nature worship found in today’s climate agenda. He is ignoring how churches, including many Seventh-day Adventists, have embraced the spirituality of Mother Earth. This is the new world religion that everyone is adopting. Dr. Paulien is disconnected from reality. He’s on another planet or in some parallel universe. Sunday sacredness is being accelerated by Rome today on a global scale faster than Protestants in 1888 could have ever imagined.

Minute 42:45 – She does not address the world that we live in today, directly. Her predictions are natural extensions of the world of her day. You will look in vain for a nuclear war or a nuclear power. You will look in vain for computers, internet, cell phones, space travel, world wars, Islamic terrorism, rise of secularism, rise of post modernism and so on. She does not address our world. That is typical of the Bible prophets. They spoke to their world.

Throw out the book Great Controversy and Ellen White because she never talked about computers and the internet. She didn’t mention cell phones so she was in a different world than ours. Really? Well, if that’s the case, we must get rid of Daniel, John, Jesus, Moses, Paul, Isaiah and all the writers of the Holy Bible. They did not talk about computers, the internet or cell phones either.

We have a serious problem that is more than simply revising our Adventist message. If Ellen White is not an end-time “apocalyptic” prophet, then Seventh-day Adventists are not the Remnant Church of Bible prophecy. If Ellen White is not the prophet of the last days, for our time and our day, then we do not have the Spirit of Prophecy. We simply become a people without vision and we will soon perish: “Where there is no vision, the

people perish.” Proverbs 29:18.

Simply put, if Ellen White is not our “apocalyptic” prophet, then the gift of prophecy has not reached us, there is no Remnant church and what we once thought was the Spirit of Prophecy has just been completely removed from the Seventh-day Adventist movement. Of course, this is according to the “legendary” and highly esteemed “scholars” of our day.

Dr. Paulien’s view about classical and apocalyptic prophets is just another false assumption made to separate us from what inspiration actually says about the prophets of God:

“Each of the ancient prophets spoke less for their own time than for ours, so that their prophesying is in force for us. ‘Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come’ 1 Corinthians 10:11” (Selected Messages, Book 3, p. 338).

“The prophets spoke less for their own time than for the ages which have followed, and for our own day” (Signs of the Times, April 2, 1896).

All of God’s holy prophets, including Sister White, spoke less for their own time and MORE for our day, today, right now. And their prophecies are in full force for us right now, today. Praise the Lord!

Speculations, Conspiracies, Undermining Prophecy and Unsafe Assumptions

Finally, Dr. Paulien cautions us about taking Ellen White’s views from her book the Great Controversy and trying to apply what she wrote to our day. This is incredible.

Minute 49:48 – There is another way to undermine prophecy and that is to over specify the prophecy. To be too confident that we understand every detail in advance, and out of that confidence putting charts together signifying the events of the end in such a way that when the real thing comes you miss it. You don’t see it because it doesn’t fit the expectations you put together.

We didn’t put anything together. We are simply obeying the command that says we must read the prophetic word, understand it, keep it and proclaim it.

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” Revelation 1:3.

“Whoso readeth, let him understand.” Matthew 24:15

“Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” Revelation 10:11.

Important prophetic messages, such as the message of the first, second, and third angels, must be understood to be proclaimed. How can you tell people to avoid the mark of the beast, if you don’t know what it is? And Dr. Paulien said we don’t know exactly what the mark of the beast will actually be; therefore, it is better that we do not preach it. If we think we know what it is, we may be “overemphasizing” the prophecy and therefore undermining it.

The Adventist message is being replaced by a newer version of the faith that preaches nothing because it

knows nothing. We no longer have a clear message and therefore cannot really warn anyone. Therefore, we must embrace the popular ecumenical message to avoid controversy. The message is that we cannot have too much “confidence” in the third angel’s warning about the mark of the beast. This new position is actually denying people the final invitation of mercy that God wants the world to hear.

Minute 54:54 – “I believe it is unwise to use this particular idea (Sunday laws) as the sign of the end. As the one thing that we are all looking for to say, ‘Yea I think we’re in the final crisis.’ In the end it may happen in surprising ways. You see, after all, Ellen White spoke about Sunday legislation throughout her life. It was there, over 100 statements. There was legislation all through those decades that she served in her ministry. So the idea of Sunday being particularly significant to the mark of the beast certainly was a common theme in her writings. But the idea of a specific legislation in Congress, that’s the key idea that gets people excited. And that occurs only in statements around 1888 through 1890 ... **There was a specific context that called for that specificity. But to assume that this exact context will repeat itself at the end, it’s not a safe assumption.**”

Assuming that the Sunday laws of Ellen White’s day will be repeated in our day is not a safe assumption? That’s what Dr. Paulien believes. However, the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Ellen G. White Estates destroy Dr. Paulien’s erroneous assumption.

Bible: “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 1:9.

Spirit of Prophecy: “History will repeat itself. In this age the great test will be upon the point of Sabbath observance. The heavenly universe beholds men trampling upon the law of Jehovah, making the memorial of God—the sign between Him and His commandment-keeping people—a thing of naught, something to be despised ... Apostate Protestantism has accepted the false sabbath instituted by the Roman Catholic Church. They have cradled this child of the papacy. Very soon all who refuse to worship this idol will be forbidden to buy or sell” (Manuscript 110, 1904).

Ellen G. White Estates: “As Sunday law issues intensified in the late 1800’s and agitation for a national Sunday law in the United States increased, Ellen White wrote perceptively of “The Impending Conflict” ... Agitation for Sunday legislation gradually waned, but in succeeding years Ellen White kept the issues of the final conflict before church leaders. Times might have changed, so far as actual persecution for Sabbath observance was concerned, **but the issues and the principles involved remained the same.** Since Ellen White’s death further changes have taken place, **but we believe that the same principles and the same issues will be revived in the coming conflict, present appearances to the contrary notwithstanding**” (Selected Messages, Vol. 3, p. 380, 381).

Minute 58:34 – “As we look to the future, I encourage you to weigh Bible prophecy and particularly unfulfilled Bible prophecy. Speculations about unfulfilled prophecies have gotten us nowhere. It’s been a failure pretty much every time it’s tried.”

Minute 59:26 – “It’s easy for people to speculate and create conspiracy theories.”

The only “unfulfilled prophecy” that Dr. Paulien refers to is the mark of the beast. And he calls it speculation and a conspiracy theory to continue embracing the “more sure word of prophecy” that has served Seventh-day Adventists for so long. Dr. Paulien says that embracing Ellen White’s position on the mark of the beast is pure speculation today. Believing in God’s prophets has now become spiritually dangerous.

This is not the first time we have heard from theologians and scholars trying to diminish the writings of inspira-

tion. Tragically, today's theologians have become more authoritative than the prophets of God who had a higher source of inspiration. They are revising our historical beliefs about the mark of the beast in the same way that they have with women's ordination and the LGBT+ agenda.

They declare that what Moses wrote in Leviticus about marriage was good for his day, but not for us. Those instructions do not apply to this age. They say that Paul's writing and what he wrote on biblical headship was simply a cultural expression that ended during the rise of the feminist movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Ellen White's Own Defense of the Book Great Controversy

In 1888 Materials, pages 657-690, Ellen White presents her defense against church leaders who became antagonistic toward her book that she refers to as "Vol. IV." This is a reference to the book "Spirit of Prophecy Volume 4," which is the 1884 version of the Great Controversy. Notice her indictment against those who attacked the book the Great Controversy. And just as the Great Controversy book is the present truth for our day, the following admonitions are applicable to the false prophets and false scholars who would cause us to lose confidence in the testimonies of God's prophet:

"The course pursued toward Vol. IV. (Spirit of Prophecy Volume 4 which is the Great Controversy) has confirmed the word of the Lord which has been given me, that **men were occupying responsible positions who were not working where God was working; that the testimony of the spirit of God had no special sacredness to them unless it sanctioned their ideas and actions.** Anything not in harmony with their ideas, they did not receive. Had they realized the importance of the light given me of God, would they have let the message of appeal and warning lie buried in the office of publication while they only expressed regret, and did nothing to change the order of things? Brethren, you may think that your course in this matter does not justify me in speaking plainly as I do, but the time has come for me to speak, and I refuse to keep silent longer. I cannot but feel that the enemy has warped your conscience and beclouded your minds. My oral testimony will do you no good while you stand where you now are" (1888 Materials, p. 660.1).

"But their course in regard to the circulation of my books has made it a necessity for me to speak. I cannot be clear and keep silent. I cannot have confidence to leave these matters, which to me involves so much, to their discretionary power, when I am brought into constant embarrassment. **I have less confidence in their management than I have had, for I cannot believe that the Lord leads them to pursue the course they have taken.**" (1888 Materials, p. 657.1)

Seventh-day Adventists have reached a watershed moment at this point in history. We must choose between the paths before us. God through inspiration has told us which way to go to cross the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land. Fallen, sinful human nature is telling us that we have to go down a different path, a path that leads not only to Egypt, but into the arms of Rome. Will the Spirit of Prophecy be believed and obeyed, as revealed in the Great Controversy book? Or will we believe these "legendary" scholars who tell us that they know more than the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord?