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## Ellen White and the Cities: Was She a Fearmonger? (The President's Page)

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Jo Ann Davidson

**S**eptember 11, 2001. You've heard the many news commentaries and read the horrifying descriptions, as I have. However, what has most gripped my mind are the graphic words with which Ellen White describes the fate of great cities, as well as the challenge they pose to the church. In a few words I'd like to emphasize the part the Adventist Theological Society is playing in challenging Adventists to renew their respect for the counsel God has given through Ellen G. White relative to church mission and cities alike. In the early 1900s she wrote:

"The work that should long ago have been in active operation to win souls to Christ has not been done. The inhabitants of the ungodly cities so soon to be visited by calamities have been cruelly neglected. The time is near when large cities will be swept away, and all should be warned of these coming judgments" (*Evangelism*, p. 29).

## Ellen White and the Cities: Was She a Fearmonger?

"We are living in the time of the end. The fast-fulfilling signs of the times declare that the coming of Christ is near at hand. The days in which we live are solemn and important.

The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth. Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the despisers of the grace of God. The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude. The agencies of evil are combining their forces, and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones. . . . Men possessed of demons are taking the lives of men, women, and little children. . . ." (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9, "The Last Crisis," pp. 11-13).

### Fear Mongering?

Equally startling is her descrip-

tion of what would happen to New York City: "On one occasion, when in New York City, I was in the night season called upon to behold buildings rising story after story toward heaven. These buildings were warranted to be fireproof, and they were erected to glorify the owners and builders. Higher and still higher these buildings rose, and in them the most costly material was used. Those to whom these buildings belonged were not asking themselves, 'How can we best glorify God?' The Lord was not in their thoughts. . . .

"The scene that next passed before me was an alarm of fire. Men looked at the lofty and supposedly fire-proof buildings, and said, 'They are perfectly safe.' But these buildings were consumed as if made of pitch. The fire engines could do nothing to stay the destruction. The firemen were unable to operate the engines" (Ibid.). I have frequently heard disquieting voices in the Seventh-day Adventist Church describe Ellen White's "fearmongering" as merely a product of 19th century thinking. What happened in New York City on Tuesday, September 11, will not strengthen that allegation!

#### **Another Kind of Visitation**

A city in Europe had another kind of "visitation" this past summer. Austria hosted the Adventist Theological Society International

Conference at Bogenhofen Seminary, July 29 to August 4. Dr. Jerry Moon, my husband, Richard, and I from Andrews University Theological Seminary, along with Dr. Wolfgang Stephani from Australia, were the presenters at the conference, which focused on the theme "Bible and Culture." The Austrian Union and Bogenhofen Seminary were gracious hosts to attendees from Germany and Switzerland; all Austrian pastors were present. Unlike in other areas of Europe, Ellen White gets a fair hearing at Bogenhofen. Mozart, who was born in Salzburg and still honored there, would have been moved by the superb music given in praise to God.

#### **Looking for a Remnant**

In Germany, Dr. Gerhard Pfandl of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute led out in the 2001 ATS meetings. Held June 22-24 in the beautiful Academy church in Darmstadt, they attracted people from as far away as Vienna, the southern part of Switzerland, and the shores of the Baltic Sea. Attendance ranged from 350 on Friday to 900 on Sabbath morning, and 500 in the afternoon and Sunday morning. Among topics: "God Is Looking for a Remnant Today," "Trends in Adventist Theology," "Isn't There a Prophet of the Lord Here?" and "Interpretation of the Ellen G. White Writings."

Reports Pfandl: "After each meeting on Sabbath afternoon and evening, and on Sunday, we had a question time, which was always too short; and a sweet spirit of unity in Christ was evident throughout the meetings. At the Sunday business meeting, Detlev Ludwig, a church elder from Mettmann, was chosen as the new ATS president. ATS has between 600 and 700 members in Germany."

#### New Talents Sought

The tragedy in New York City makes the ministry of the Adventist Theological Society all the more timely and urgent. Ellen White counsels us:

"The time is near when large cities will be swept away, and all should be warned of these coming judgments. But who is giving to the accomplishment of this work the wholehearted service that God

requires? . . . We do not realize the extent to which Satanic agencies are at work in these large cities. The work of bringing the message of present truth before the people is becoming more and more difficult. It is essential that new and varied talents unite in intelligent labor for the people. . . . Often we have been told that our cities are to hear the message, but how slow we are to heed the instruction. I saw One standing on a high platform with arms extended. He turned and pointed in every direction, saying, 'A world perishing in ignorance of God's holy law, and Seventh-day Adventists are asleep'" (*Evangelism*, pp. 29, 31, 32).

You are invited to join forces with the Adventist Theological Society as it seeks to uphold and proclaim the ever more timely messages God has committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. □

## ATTACK ON THE WORLD

Headline writers have called it an "Attack on America," but the terrorism that took down the Twin Towers and damaged the Pentagon, could more properly be labeled "Attack on the World." People from more than 50 countries are missing in the rubble or confirmed dead. Casualty lists stretch across six continents. Hardest hit: Britain, with about 300 deaths. Chile: 250, Colombia: 200, Turkey: 130, Germany: 170 plus. . . . and on it goes, throughout the world.