

Ria's Corner

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September 10, 2020

Our most precious family and friends, old and new,

These past days our thoughts and prayers have been with the victims of monster hurricanes, which smash the homes, lives, and dreams of thousands, while the Covid-19 pandemic has sown fear and brought a totally unpredictable, uncertain future. Hatred and violence fill our media. People need the message of our blessed hope now more than ever. We pray His peace will fill your hearts and minds as we look forward to the coming of our Prince of Peace.

When I started this letter more than a month ago, I was shocked to see that a year had passed since I last wrote to you! In the meantime, most of us have had much tribulation, but we also had the joy of receiving many letters, phone calls, and even queries about when they would hear from us again. I badly longed to communicate with you for many weeks, but all kinds of calamities, including pain in my back and eyes prevented me from using the computer. About the same time, I again very badly sprained a back muscle while trying to move a potted plant in the garden. This is an excruciating extra handicap. But praise God, this morning in worship Isa. 46:3, 4 He reminded me that He had been carrying me from the womb, but especially now in old age and gray hairs!

For the many of you who suffer tribulation in this shattered old world, I hope this precious quote from *Desire of Ages*, p. 528, will help. "To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest. They will look back with thankfulness upon the darkest part of their way.... From every temptation and every trial He will bring them forth with firmer faith and a richer experience."

Recently during worship in private prayer, I vainly tried to name and pray for all of you who have made our lives so wonderfully worthwhile and happy. I know some of you carry impossibly heavy burdens and my heart went out to you. I started praying for friends in Australia, New Zealand, Myanmar, and South Africa, where so many of our loved ones and friends live, including Arno Kucharzik, whom Edwin first met at Helderberg College in 1947—73 years ago. Another special friend there is Heather Tredoux, now in her eighties, who is still working for the Lord. We believe she was, in years gone by, the best director that the Voice of Prophecy Bible School ever had. Among other things, with financial assistance from us and others she helped with the process of having an entire series of Bible lessons translated into two more African languages. One was Northern Sotho, spoken by more than three million people, which up to that time did not have a scrap of Seventh-day Adventist printed material, apart from Edwin's tract on Daniel 2. The other language into which the Bible lessons were translated is Tsonga, a language spoken in both South Africa and the neighboring Mozambique. Then I prayed for the medical missionaries in Cuba and elsewhere, especially remembering Henry and Arleen Stubbs with their mission boat, which will hopefully be completed soon. There are so many in the United States, as well as special friends in Canada and Mexico. I prayed for the supporting ministries and their special

missionaries. Most of you we met or made contact with since coming from South Africa in 1994. But the names just became too many to mention in one prayer, yet I felt so deeply blessed to know you and your love for Edwin's ministry of writing books on Bible prophecy, in which he staunchly defends the Historicist approach, to which he was first introduced by Uriah Smith's *Daniel and the Revelation* and godly teachers at Helderberg College. Just think of it, as a young Theology student, he graduated there seventy years ago, in 1950! Although it is not our habit to directly ask for people to donate, a few have sent means from time to time as God impresses them. Fortunately, people order a few books on the recommendation of friends like you, because we do not have a budget for advertising.

Some very dear friends have recently passed to their rest. One of them was Patrick Vassell, long-time elder at our Pharr congregation, where I used to be the Sabbath School leader. Then there was Dr. William H. Shea, whose almost weekly phone chats and guidance helped shape Edwin's work. Another was Dr. Hector Ramal, formerly Dean of Theology at Montemorelos University. In 2003, he invited Edwin there for a series of lectures: *Perspectivas Escatológicas para el Tercer Milenio* (Eschatological Perspectives for the Third Millennium). On that occasion we met a number of top theologians from all over the Spanish-speaking world. I felt quite impressed. They all spoke in their mother tongue, though Edwin's lectures had to be translated. The lectures created material for his wonderful little book *The Use and Abuse of Prophecy* (2007). I love chapter 1, which in a nutshell covers much of and as it were updates LeRoy Edwin Froom's *Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*. It recounts the amazing way God developed the Historicist interpretation of prophecy Himself, involving even that wonderful Jesuit scholar Manuel Lacunza in the process. What a story!

Some of you may remember that on the very morning when Edwin was to take this booklet to the printers, out of the blue a stranger called. It was Steve Emse who had googled up masses of superb material, but did not know what to do with it! His research and that of Jerry Stevens helped create Edwin's monumental work *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy*. Jerry also copy-edited the whole work for free and in the process created and published his prophetic timeline. God Himself had handpicked these two men for this work. Then later precious Michael Scheifler came on board and tirelessly crafted our website as a labor of love for years, until he became a helpless victim of Parkinson's. A host of scholars also made suggestions to improve the final product. All these will receive their reward at the resurrection of the just. We treasure Norman Gulley in his suffering, and Jack Blanco who in spite of age and still writing, always immediately responds to our communications with an encouraging comment like "Amen, and amen!"

Dear friend, you are in our hearts and prayers, and we always, but always, love hearing from you! We especially wish to thank all those who communicated with us in concern when Hurricane Hannah recently tore through our Rio Grande Valley—though compared to Laura it was a walk in the park. Hannah decimated my beautiful Eden-like trees, tearing off huge limbs and casting them this way and that. But the great miracle is that our mobile home was not flattened; in the incessant wind it did not lose even one windowpane or a tile from the roof, nor did a single branch hit the house. It rained and rained and rained, but we were not flooded out. We can only conclude that God held His hand over us. I realize I cannot create Eden down here anymore but over the years have gained valuable skills for my garden in the world made new. I cannot wait!

During that terrible night, repeated flood warnings came over our cell phones, and sure enough—though no life was lost—multitudes were flooded out, some homes having 20 inches of water in them! What a loss! About six miles away our son and his neighbors sustained significant damage to their roofs. So our prayers of gratitude mingled with pleas for help for those who suffered so many and greater losses than we.

Since starting this letter a few weeks ago more calamities have overtaken the world: those horrible hurricanes, the Beirut explosion, and dreadful fires in California, Oregon, and Washington State, Covid-19, and who knows what, Satan would like to wipe out life from our Lord's blood-bought earth, although he will not succeed. Nevertheless, we are very homesick for heaven. Jesus said, Look up! Your redemption draws near. Many hearts are failing for fear, domestic violence is on the increase, multitudes have lost their jobs, and not a few consider suicide. They need to be encouraged, so they will experience, with you, His calm in the time of storm to bear problems and suffering bravely. The everlasting arms of our loving Heavenly Father are holding us up, as He suffers with us.

Unfortunately due to my age I am still suffering much pain from more sources than before, which this new back injury compounded. According to the X-rays there is no fracture. There are also other health concerns with which I need not burden you. In all of this, I need to learn patience in suffering. Just a few activities, like watering a few plants and putting breakfast on the table, leave me feeling kaput and I have to lie down on a heating pad to recover and ease my back spasms. Fortunately I love reading and listening to music. Our strange medical setup in the U.S. and sheer expenses prevent my getting all the treatment that I need. If only I were in a country like New Zealand. . . There my sister-in-law, who with my brother lives in a tiny town with about 200 inhabitants, was recently airlifted over mountainous terrain and taken to hospital by helicopter, free of charge.

But this lying down so much enabled me recently to quickly devour Dave Fiedler's four fantastic books about the time of Dr. Kellogg and Sister White. This gave me a much better perspective on the tumultuous years of that famous physician and how hard the servant of the Lord and others tried to save him from himself as he lapses into pantheism. I heartily recommend Fiedler's books and hope he will be writing more.

Meanwhile my precious 90-year-old Edwin remains my knight in shining armor, though this trite image makes him mutter. He cheerfully massages my muscle spasms, waters the garden, and drives out to buy food and medicines. At times, he even retrieves a letter that my rascally computer has swallowed! All of this unfortunately takes its toll on his writing. Fortunately he has put what are, we hope, the final touches to his article for the new Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia about the Number of the Beast, a topic on which he is now considered the expert. This should soon appear online after it has been finally edited. Many scholars are working on this Encyclopedia, a mammoth undertaking that will eventually encompass ten thousand articles by writers from around the world. It should be a fascinating read once it is available. By being online, it can—apart from being printed—be updated easily. It is also going to be more honest in acknowledging the warts of spiritual leaders of yesteryear. It has always troubled me that our older encyclopedia was filled with only all "perfect" denominational leaders and workers.

God's injunction, Give and it shall be given you, has always been our watchword. Recently, with the wonderful help of family and friends in America we were enabled to provide a laptop computer, a printer, Internet connection, and a year's Internet use paid up for a year to struggling relatives in Barrydale, a beautiful part of South Africa. At that time Monique, the daughter, who has cystic fibrosis, was rushed by ambulance to the Swellendam hospital because her oxygen ceased flowing when a deliberate outage, locally known as *load shedding*, cut off the electricity. She came home after a few terrible weeks.

But load shedding is a regular feature in that country; therefore, it is bound to recur. What would happen to Monique the next time? Once more a small voice prompted Edwin: "Buy them a generator!" That afternoon he went to Western Union and sent them \$300.00 to acquire one, although it looked as if we could not really afford it. In South Africa, an old student of Edwin's, Michael Sparrow, received the money, ordered the generator, and had it delivered to Monique's mother. Please pray for her for pain and weakness; she is still suffering due to only 39 percent of lung capacity. The lifespan of these unfortunate sufferers is short. Born to die young, so to speak. What a tragedy for which the devil is ultimately responsible. And so we were short of \$300.00? Not at all! The Lord prompted others to reimburse us, which they did within a few days. Our Lord, who himself is so generous, is forever faithful; and we cannot out-give Him. All that we have belongs to him, anyway!

But the Lord of Misrule (Satan) is always at work to bring about hurtful mischief. Almost five weeks ago, I walked out onto the ramp that leads up to our mobile home. Right next to me, the neighbor's tomcat was snacking food that we had actually put out for another cat. At that very moment, the tomcat spotted his rival and in fury slashed open the back of my left leg, resulting in a gash like a miniature Grand Canyon. This needed somebody with expertise to clean and treat. Again God was so absolutely magnificent in sending us two Filipino friends, Seventh-day Adventists RN's, who are waiting to fly back to their country as missionaries. They had stopped working with patients in a hospital setting, so they were less likely to bring to virus to us. Dear Zelda Colegado came for daily visits. This also included loads of love, fresh food, and expert medical attention. She also taught Edwin how to clean and dress the wound, which took more than five weeks to get to the scab stage. Precious sisters from the other two area churches have been bringing us more food than we can cope with. A true casserole brigade in action! The Mission Hope church similarly spoiled us after my back surgery and femur fracture two years ago. How wonderful it is to belong to the family of God!

We are so very happy to report our website, after many false starts, is at last getting some attention from the assistant of our precious friend, Norma Fleitas. So far we have had more than 80,000 views, but not many orders. On the recommendation of White Horse Media we sold some books, and we have a livewire Dr. Karl Tsatalbasidis. When able to make presentations, he sells them almost like hot cakes.

We are, however, still concerned about the lack of interest in the two translations into Spanish of *A More Sure Word of Prophecy* as well as *Christ and Antichrist in Prophecy and History*. This has been particularly puzzling because there are more Seventh-day Adventists whose mother tongue it is than English. Even within the United States Spanish congregations

abound. It has been suggested that these people just do not read, though that is surely not good for their theological and spiritual growth in Christ.

Please pray with us for our friend, Dr. Loron Wade at Montemorelos University, who acts as a go-between by taking our Spanish books into Mexico. Please pray for him; he has dengue fever and is lying in hospital. Recently our precious Pastor Esteban Hidalgo called from our university in Puerto Rico and told Edwin he had a good plan for bringing *Cristo y Anticristo en la Profecía y la Historia* to the attention of believers in the Spanish-speaking world. Praise God! Our special friend of Está Escrito, Pastor Robert Costa, has been introducing Edwin's work to our leaders as he travels around the globe to teach people how to invite their friends to the marriage supper of the Lamb! I mean, this will rival all the royal weddings that took place on this earth since the beginning of time until now. We must not miss it for anything, friend!

You may have noticed that many of our ABC's have closed down. This fate has recently also befallen the one in Berrien Springs, just outside our Andrews University. Several years ago, Pastor Ken Scribner, who lives in that area, fetched from the printer many boxes of Edwin's books, especially *The Truth About 666 and the Story of the Great Apostasy* as well as *Seven Heads and Ten Horns* and kindly kept them at his home. From time to time, he used to supply copies to the ABC branch at Berrien Springs. Because of its recent closure, we have to move 33 boxes of them to a better location. That will be the book store at Hartland Institute in Rapidan, Virginia, more than 660 miles (1060 km) away. To pay for the shipping via media mail, plus insurance, is costing us \$820.00. Ouch!

Please pray for us in our feebleness, brought on by age, to keep on doing something for our Lord and Saviour each day. We know many of you have your own battles to try men's souls, so we love, pray, and tele-hug you in His holy name.

Recently I read with deep joy the precious promises in Isaiah 35 and 40 and recommend them warmly. In this time of fear and uncertainty when there is a tremendous increase in violence in families cooped up together, Edwin and I treasure the morning and evening worship time when we read aloud from the Bible or *The Desire of Ages*, a marvelous book that we love. Afterwards we discuss the implications of what we had read, what we were grateful for, and then pray together. The very first time we did this Edwin asked the Lord to forgive him for bossing me around in the past. We also pray for you, the missionaries, the sick, and our loved ones scattered over the face of the earth. This helps us to focus on heaven, the Most Holy Place, where Jesus is calling out names to see if they may remain in the Book of Life. We pray He will place His seal upon our foreheads as well as yours, dear friend.

We long for heaven where we look forward to meeting you face to face. We are homesick for heaven, because this world is not our home. Please pray for us and also let us know how your personal battles are going. Also share with us your favorite Bible promise and hymn(s). Ria's is Romans 8:28, plus the rest of that chapter, as well as John 14:1-3; and Hymn 532 ("Day by day...") Edwin's is Ps. 145 and Hymn 213 ("Lift up the trumpet...")

Fondest love and big, virus-free hugs from your forever friends, Ria and Edwin. ☺