



William G. Johnsson

June 29, 1934 - March 11, 2023

William G. Johnsson, a prolific author, respected scholar, and long-time editor of the *Adventist Review* died on March 11 after an illness, in Loma Linda, California, United States. He was 88.

He devoted his life to serving others, sharing a message of hope and compassion. Johnsson explained the philosophy that informed his life choices in *Living In Love*, a deeply personal book published months before his death. “After a long life spent trying to figure out what this time on earth — so beautiful, so cruel, so wonderful, so ugly — is all about, I reckon that the poet Robert Browning got it right,” Johnsson wrote. “Life, he said, is just the chance of the prize of learning love.”

Better known as Bill, Johnsson was born in Adelaide, South Australia in 1934, the youngest of nine children raised by parents Joel and Edith (Painter) Johnsson. His four brothers were his best friends, Johnsson would later say. He trained to be a chemical engineer, graduating at age 19 with a bachelor’s degree in chemical technology from Adelaide University. But Johnsson couldn’t ignore the inner voice compelling him to the ministry, and he gave up a promising career to study theology at Avondale College.

Weeks after graduating with a bachelor’s in theology in 1959, he married the love of his life, Noelene (Taylor), and they set off for India on an oceanliner.

Johnsson served as a missionary from 1960 to 1975, working first as a teacher at Vincent Hill School and then as a faculty member at Spicer Memorial College. He felt a kinship with his students, and many became lifelong friends.

Along the way Johnsson collected more degrees: a master's degree in systematic theology from Andrews University in 1966; a bachelor of divinity from the University of London in 1969; and a master's degree and doctor of philosophy in biblical studies from Vanderbilt University in 1973. Later in life, he was recognized with honorary doctorates from Andrews and Loma Linda universities.

Johnsson embraced life as a scholar at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews from 1975 to 1980, where he started as a professor of New Testament exegesis and theology and later was named associate dean. During this time, he was elected as the first president of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies in 1979.

A year later, Johnsson switched careers, joining the editorial staff of the Adventist Review, the church's weekly flagship magazine. He would go on to lead the magazine for 24 years, launching a spinoff, Adventist World, as the founding editor. Johnsson helped forge policy and doctrine as a senior leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He also helped lead high-level interfaith dialogue with other Christian denominations.

Some of the most meaningful work of Johnsson's life came after he retired at age 72. At the request of then-General Conference president Jan Paulsen, he worked to introduce Adventists' values and mission to religious and government leaders in the Muslim world. The "seven-year odyssey," he wrote, "would challenge long-held ideas, expose prejudices, and open my mind and life to people and ideas previously shut out of my thinking."

Johnsson is best known for his writing, however, often with a strong pastoral emphasis. He authored more than 40 books, hundreds of Adventist Review editorials, and thousands of articles — all of them handwritten on legal pads. He was working on a new manuscript just days before his final illness.

He will be remembered for his endless optimism, gentle humor, and indomitable spirit. He ran in 20 marathons, completing 17 of the races. That grit and determination helped Johnsson do some of the most impactful writing of his life while battling lymphoma. He is survived by his wife, Noelene, sister Ruth White, daughter Julie, and son Terry and his wife, Renee, and granddaughters Madeleine and Jacqueline.

Bill Johnsson looked back on his remarkable journey and summed it up with these words from 1 John 4:16, 17: “God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect” (NLT).

Then he added, “So, my dear friends, live in love. Cast yourself on the side of love. Every day seek to relieve someone’s pain. That is the Prize.”

A memorial service is planned for March 25 at 5:00 p.m. at the Crosswalk Seventh-day Adventist Church in Redlands, California. A tribute article is also available.

Read more at: <https://adventistreview.org/news/william-g-johnsson-has-died-at-88/>

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Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR **25**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (PT)

Crosswalk Church
10421 Corporate Dr.
Redlands, CA 92374