



Evening Chats With Carl Geier

In the summer and early fall of 1976, I had the good fortune of residing in Grandpa Carl's house on second avenue NE, Jamestown, North Dakota. I was a book seller at the time and had the honor of looking after the grand old man. It wasn't difficult. He dressed and groomed himself. All I did was make his breakfast and a light supper. At noon, when I was usually gone, his lunch was delivered by Meals On Wheels. In the evening, before bedtime, we would sit in the living room, sometimes quietly and other times not so quiet. What follows are a few recollections of our frequent lively discussions.

I) The Eclipse Explanation:

I had read there was going to be total solar eclipse but that the path of totality was mainly going to be over the Indian Ocean. Grandpa, per his usual custom, was reading his German Bible. He peered at me above his spectacles and said, "Was?"

I said again that there was going to be a total solar eclipse. "That occurs when the moons orbit brings it directly between the earth and the sun, blocking out the sun except for a brilliant disc of light called the corona."

To this he replied with a smile, "No, that is not correct."

I shall leave off quoting because this was 40+ years ago so I don't exactly know how the conversation went. Knowing myself, I probably went a bit too far with all the scientific jargon and eventually realized it was futile. Grandpa Carl said he had witnessed such an event. According to him it happened when such and such a mountain, far away, blocked out the sun.

So, I let the matter be.

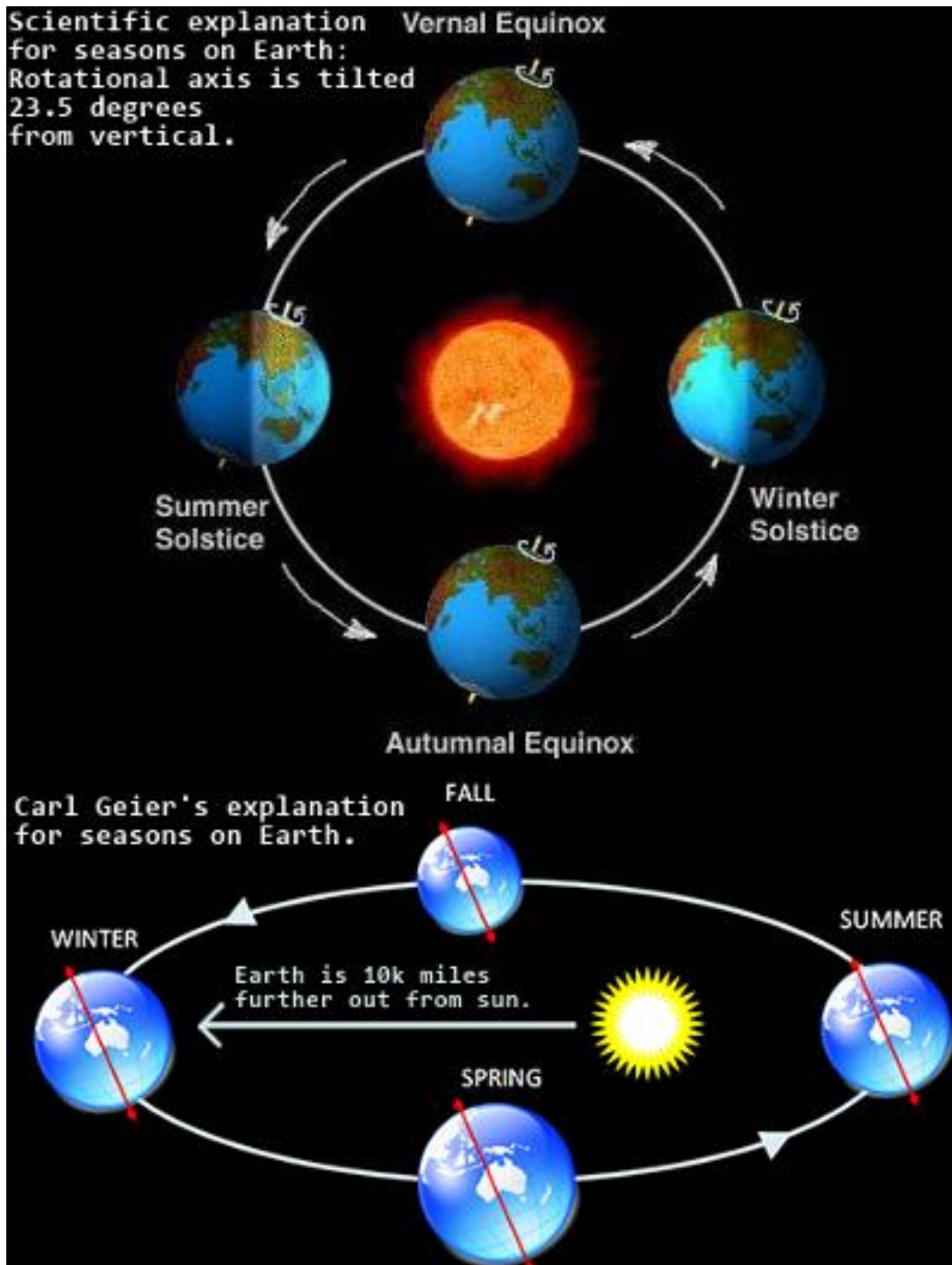
II) The Seasonal Oscillation:

Another evening Gramps was sitting in his chair, reading his German Bible while I was commenting (to put it mildly) on the heat wave we were experiencing. Once again I made the mistake of trying to impress the grand old fellow with my knowledge.

"You do know, Grandpa, what causes the seasons? It is hot now but in a few months it will be much colder."

"Yah. What do you say?" I then explained that the earth orbits around the sun and it takes 365 days to complete one circuit. But the earth is also rotating around the axis of the north and south poles. The seasons are caused by the fact that this axis of rotation is tilted..."

That is as far as I got in my explanation as Grandpa interrupted me at that point. "Das ist nicht richtig!" He then proceeded to correct me and I think it best to illustrate his belief on this subject:



III) The Chronicler's Conundrum:

On another occasion Gramps interrupted his Scripture reading, looked over the brim of his spectacles, and asked, "Did you ever read in the Old Testament about the dead man who came back to life?"

"Hmmm, no I don't recall that story. Where can I find it?"

Grandpa, with a chuckle and a smile, quickly gave me the verse: 2 Kings 13:21. It was obvious he just happened to be reading it, for the umpteenth time no doubt. I opened my Bible to the verse and read it. It was the account of several Israelite's who were bearing a dead man to his tomb when they spied a band of men. Apparently this was not a friendly band based on what they did next. "They cast the [dead] man into the tomb of Elisha and... when he touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood up on his feet." Apparently Elisha's tomb was near at hand when these bad guys showed up so the dead man was quickly tossed in and his friends then ran for their lives.

Many students of the Bible know Elisha as the prophet of Israel who succeeded Elijah in that role. The implication in this verse is that there was some kind of magical properties in Elisha's bones that brought the dead man back to life. I could not go along with this notion and said, "You know, Grandpa, this kind of thing is not unheard of, especially considering that Israelite's were instructed to bury their dead quickly. Maybe the man wasn't really dead and when his friends tossed him into Elisha's tomb the shock revived him somehow."

The look on Grandpa's face changed and I knew right there and then I was in for another correcting.

IV) All Is Not Well:

"What happened to your leg?" I asked Grandpa one evening.

"Was?"

"You have a limp. I was just wondering how that happened and when."

"Ach, yeah. I'm not sure when it happened but I do know how." He then proceeded to tell me which I will relate as best I can in my own way.

Many years ago came a summer, hot and with very little rain. You remember the water for the house came from a cistern that collected rain water. When that went dry we had to get water from the well down by the barn. One day I went to get water, but no matter how long I pumped none came out. Thinking perhaps something was blocking the pipe interfering with the flow of water, I decided to call my neighbor for help.

We took the pump apart and pulled up the pipe to see if I could find the problem, but I couldn't find anything wrong. After a lengthy discussion, someone suggested that I should be lowered into the well to have a look see. We removed the wooden platform and I, with some trepidation, was lowered down on ropes. I am not sure how far down I had gone but it must have been near the bottom when it happened: One of the ropes briefly slipped out of the hands of its bearer. This caused me to spin around and in a panic I grabbed onto one of the wooden slabs that lined the well. Much to my dismay, the wood came away in my hand and soon after, mud begin filling in.

The mud was nearly up to my waist as I hollered to the boys above to pull me out. As they did so, I felt a sharp pang in my right hip and a feeling that something was amiss. In those days people didn't normally go to the doctor for trivial ailments. I figured it would just hurt for a few days and heal on its own.

So what happened? As Grandpa was being hauled out of the mud he suffered a dislocated hip, but he didn't know that. He should have gone to the nearest doctor who would have performed a simple procedure called a reduction. One person holds onto your upper torso while the doctor pulls hard on the affected leg until the head of the femur snaps back into the socket, often accompanied by an audible "clunk". But Grandpa didn't go to the doctor. In time the dislocated part became fused to the pelvic bone, and that is what caused his characteristic limp for the rest of his days.

V) The Revelation Revolution:

Grandpa Carl's library included most of the German language editions of books written by Ellen G. White. There was one book he prized above all others except, of course, the Bible. That book was Daniel and the Revelation by Uriah Smith, originally published in 1897. Prophecy was a passion of his but it got him into a bit of trouble one year. It would have been avoidable but for the fact that he frequently preached at the little country church the family attended.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellen_G._White

In the book, Daniel and the Revelation, Uriah Smith presented several chronological charts based on historical fact and his authorized interpretation of prophetic symbolism. I won't bore you with the details. Suffice it to say that the book was an expose of Old and New Testament Biblical prophecies; those that had been fulfilled and those which pointed to a time in the future. Now Grandpa knew something of governments, history and politics in general. These things intrigued him almost as much as spiritual matters. There came a time when Carl thought he could improve on Uriah Smith's chronology and interpretations, and that is when he came under the attention of church officials. Not for the first time, was it?

I can't be sure how the subject came up one evening. As mentioned earlier, I was working as a book seller for the North Dakota Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, which had its headquarters in Jamestown. Perhaps I told Grandpa about a contact I had made that day which resulted in the sale of Daniel and the Revelation. This is pure conjecture because, to be honest, my memory is a little sketchy on this point. I do recall Grandpa's telling of his confrontation with several church officers concerning his departure from accepted church doctrine.

As I stated earlier, Grandpa Carl was often tasked with delivering the Sabbath sermon. He used this opportunity to present his version of Biblical prophecy where it differed from Uriah Smith's. How this reached the ears of those in Jamestown is not known. One day they called upon Grandpa to inquire of him and to look at his materials. Now Grandpa never shied away from a friendly debate, but in the end he had to abide by the will of the church. I have thought on this many times since and each time wished Grandpa had saved those "materials" but, alas, they are lost.