

# Caviness, Leon Leslie (1884–1955)

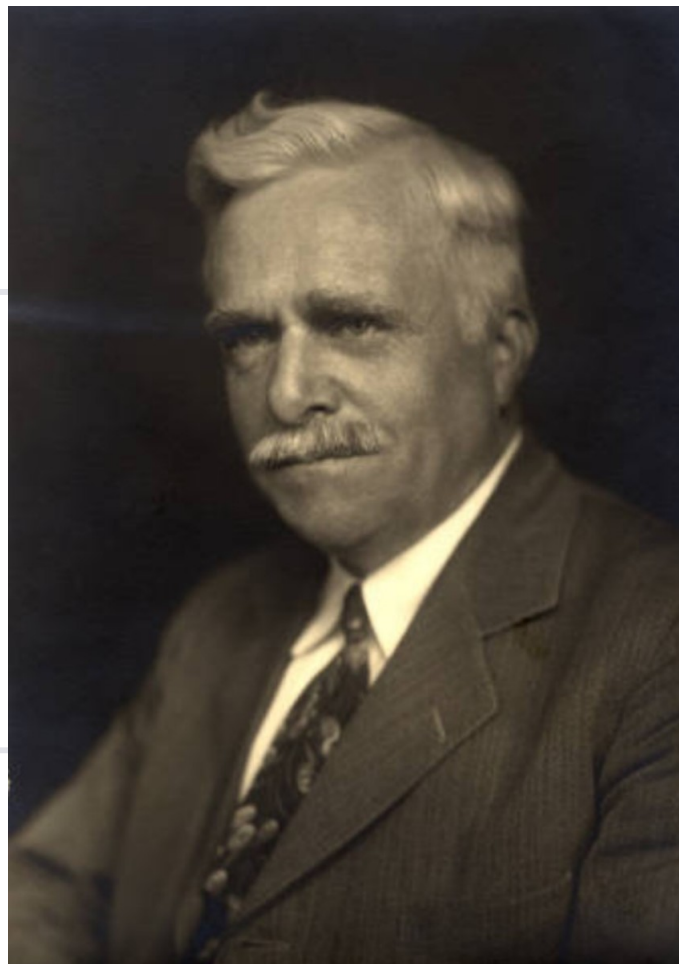
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Bruce Anderson, B.A. (Pacific Union College), M.S. (Ohio State University), M.D. (Loma Linda University). Internship at Stanford University Hospitals. Residencies at Harding Hospital; Ohio State University Hospitals Child Psychiatry fellow. Captain, MC, US Army 1975-1977. Staff psychiatrist at Hinsdale Hospital 1970-78, St. Helena Hospital 1978-present. President of Pacific Union College Alumni Association 1982-85. Founding Chair, Walter C. Utt Endowment. President and board chair, Adventist Health California Medical Group. Trustee, Loma Linda University Behavioral Medical Center Operating Board. Medical Director, LiveWell Behavioral Health, Adventist Health, Clearlake.

Leon Leslie Caviness was born August 19, 1884, in Battle Creek, Michigan, in the home of Uriah Smith. A pioneer educator, Caviness participated in the Advanced Bible School, forerunner of the Adventist Theological Seminary, and lead in creating the Bible Research Fellowship, progenitor of the Biblical Research Institute. His parents were George Washington Caviness and Alma Wolcott Caviness. He was considered a “pocket edition” of his tall father, who was later president of Battle Creek College and pioneer of the Adventist Church in Mexico. He married Agnes Elvira Lewis, daughter of Adventist educator C. C. Lewis, on August 19, 1912, in Angwin California. In 1912 Agnes was the first college graduate of Pacific Union College at the Angwin campus.

Caviness was educated at Battle Creek College, the University of Michigan (graduated 1906, B.A.), the University of Nebraska (graduated 1913, M.A.) and George Washington University (graduated 1926, Ph.D.)! His dissertation, “Daniel the Prophet: A Critical Review,” supported the early origin of the book of Daniel, a view different from members of his doctoral committee.<sup>2</sup>

Caviness taught at Union College from 1906 to 1913. He was professor of Greek at Washington Missionary Seminary from 1913 to 1915. From 1915 to 1920 he was assistant, then associate editor of the *Review and Herald*



Leon Leslie Caviness

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University.

In November 1920 the Caviness family was sent to Switzerland. Caviness was the first director of the *Seminaire Adventiste du Saleve*, near Geneva, from 1921 to 1922. He served as departmental secretary of the Latin Union Conference, and as educational secretary of the European Division, from 1924 to 1928. He was educational secretary of the Southern European Division from 1928 to 1932. In 1932 Caviness became professor of Biblical languages at Pacific Union College, serving until his retirement in 1952.<sup>3</sup> His addition strengthened the faculty and contributed to PUC becoming the first accredited Adventist college. He also contributed to the the Book of Esther and Song of Solomon in the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary. The Caviness home in Angwin was known for hospitality to students.

In 1933 the PUC faculty urged that a summer graduate school be established to meet the need for graduate Adventist education. An Advanced Bible School was approved by the General Conference for the summer of 1934 and held on the PUC campus. L. L. Caviness was one of the original faculty. After two successful summer sessions, the school was transferred to Washington D.C., where it became the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.<sup>45</sup>

Beginning in March 1943, Caviness lead a monthly meeting of biblical scholars in Angwin which continued to meet for a year and a half. his group became the Bible Research Fellowship, which functioned for ten years under his chairmanship, with Raymond F. Cottrell, secretary. This unofficial group of North American Bible teachers was disbanded under pressure in December 1952, and its role transferred to the General Conference under President Wm. H. Branson. The Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference is heir of the Bible Research Fellowship.<sup>6</sup>

Caviness was famous for his facility with languages. On one occasion he was riding on a train and sought to engage in conversation with a priest he encountered. After failing to communicate in several modern languages, he was able to converse with the priest in Latin.<sup>7</sup>

Leon Leslie Caviness died at home in Angwin, California on July 10, 1955.

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## SOURCES

*Adventist Heritage*, Summer, 1978.

*ARH*, July 25, 1955.

*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966. S.v. "Caviness, Leon Leslie."

*The Seminarian*, April 1938.

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## NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1966), s.v. "Caviness, Leon Leslie"; *ARH*, July 25, 1955, 27.
2. "In Defense of Fundamentalism," *Ministry*, March 1941.
3. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, (1966), s.v. "Caviness, Leon Leslie."; *ARH*, July 25, 1955, 27.
4. Walter Utt, *A Mountain, a Pickax, a College*, 1996, 87.
5. *The Seminarian*, April 1938, 7.
6. Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Bible Research Fellowship," *Adventist Heritage*, Summer, 1978.
7. Personal communication, Elizabeth Caviness Anderson.

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