

The Sabbath: Ford on Brinsmead
Bad Business: The Davenport Fiasco
The Burbank Case

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THE CHURCH AND ITS FUTURE

Celebrating the Adventist Experience
Adventist Theology Today
The Church as Prophetic Minority
Christian Brotherhood

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About This Issue

As the church faces numerous challenges, it must not allow present difficulties to blind it of its mission for the future. If the church is to become a body of believers ready to meet the needs of the late twentieth century world, it needs to define a vision of the future that draws on its strength as a community. With this goal in mind, SPECTRUM presents a special section on "The Church and Its Future," articles written from a variety of viewpoints designed to suggest some directions that the church can explore in the next few years.

We also include a small cluster of articles investigating the difficulties experienced by the Burbank Church in 1975. Although much has happened since these events, the articles continue to be of interest because they raise moral and legal issues concerning church organization which deserve attention, especially since many Adventists have become interested in congregational organizations.

Our commitment to report significant issues within the church community has made this issue larger than usual. Recent events within Adventism required numerous reports and reviews analyzing meetings, personnel changes, and publications creating controversy. Of particular interest is the introductory analysis of the denomination's financial investments with Dr. Davenport. Since this involvement will be the subject of protracted legal proceedings and financial audits, the report here published merely sets the stage for future articles investigating this scandal.

SPECTRUM is particularly pleased that its readers continue to respond to past issues by writing numerous letters. Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to publish all of the letters we receive, and often we find it necessary to edit the longer letters. Beginning this issue, furthermore, we have set the responses in smaller type. We hope that this slight change in layout will allow greater space for our readers' forum.

The Editors

Celebrating the Adventist Experience

by Roy Branson

Whether this period in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination will be regarded as a time of disaster or renewal depends on the membership as a whole. Now, certainly, is a time when all members who care deeply about their church must come to its assistance. When Adventists emerged from the agonizing uncertainty and internal debate associated with the Great Disappointment, they flung themselves across continents and oceans, taking the gospel in the first half of this century to virtually every known nation. Now that these many decades later we find ourselves also in crisis, with both our structure and our doctrine undergoing searching reappraisal, we can emerge from it to unite in a cause equally great: demonstrating in the Adventist way of life the meaning of the gospel for our technological, urban culture. But if that is to happen, Adventists must fuse out of their present debates a new expression of Adventism that not only reinvigorates the movement itself, but kindles the mind and spirit of our time.

Recent developments have been shocking. Major newspapers report that most of the unions and several conferences in North America invested funds (including trust

monies) in a business venture that has now entered bankruptcy. Several leaders of these unions and conferences are reported to have concurrently invested their own private funds in the same company, and serious questions are being raised concerning conflicts of interest. No doubt the implications for greater accountability by church officials to the laity will have to be explored.

Division

Whatever prove to be the consequences for policy of these financial tangles, recent theological clashes have already had a major impact. The dismissals of Desmond Ford and Walter Rea, the resignation under fire of Smuts van Rooyen from the religion department of Andrews University, and the firings and resignations of a significant number of young pastors have been met by immediate reaction. Several writings have drawn an opposition between what is called "traditional Adventism" and "evangelical Adventism." Evangelical Adventists have formed over forty congregations called Gospel Fellowships, which hire their own pastors and meet in separate Sabbath morning worship services. The loss of talent from the denomination is appalling, and those not

directly involved find it reasonable to think that such tragic consequences could have been avoided.

However, it must be acknowledged that these conflicts arise from a serious underlying question: What is the essence and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination? A certain logic has driven Adventists to consider the nature of the church. Those emphasizing Christ's sacrifice on the cross as sufficient for salvation find offensive any view of a heavenly, investigative judgment that implies that Christ's death was not a completed work of redemption, but had to be supplemented by activities within the sanctuary in 1844. These members believe that if Ellen White did not always have an accurate, biblical view of salvation, then her humanity and limited authority in interpreting Scripture must be acknowledged.

On the other hand, there are those who see activities that began in 1844, in a heavenly sanctuary, as events necessary to the plan of salvation. For these members, the whole purpose of Mrs. White's ministry and of the Adventist movement is to testify to those events. The salvation of the world depends on this community of believers' accepting the unique role of communicating to all nations and peoples the significance of the investigative judgment.

One group asks whether the Seventh-day Adventist denomination is genuinely Christian. The other, whether it is truly Adventist; whether Seventh-day Adventists are the hinge of history. There are voices on both sides who agree that if the church fully acknowledged the death and resurrection of Christ as the divine act sufficient for salvation, it would sound the death knell of Adventism. Some evangelical Adventists believe Adventism would merge into those Christians who have gained a renewed appreciation of the gospel. Their most outspoken opponents in the church agree. Without the traditional understanding of the investigative judgment beginning in 1844, Adventism would lose its reason for being a distinct denomination.

But what if Adventists did agree that

Christ's death and resurrection were the sufficient and necessary acts of God guaranteeing the salvation of mankind? Would it not still be possible to affirm a unique and important role for the Seventh-day Adventist church?

One of the reasons for the present impasse is that both groups contending within Adventism are preoccupied with a single doctrine — atonement. But atonement is only one activity of God, one article of faith, however central, within Christianity. Once a person acknowledges Christ's atoning work and is justified, there is still a lifetime of enjoying the fullness of the gospel.

Just as Adventists do not separate the spiritual from the physical in human nature, so they do not isolate God as Savior from God as Creator and Sustainer of all life. All true Christians proclaim Christ as their Savior, but how is salvation to be expressed in the rest of life? It is in describing what follows justification that Adventism is distinctive. Whatever other distinguishing marks Adventism may proclaim, a unique contribution is the Adventist experience; not a way to achieve salvation, but an overflowing of the gospel in a distinctive way of life — a life of both celebration and service.

Celebration

The festival of the Sabbath frees Adventists from efforts to order and sustain their lives. At the end of each week, they acknowledge that their whole lives are a gift; they know as concretely as in the celebration of baptism and the Lord's Supper that their entire existence is the result of God's grace. In Sabbath worship they reenact the mighty acts of God. By knowing Sabbath renewal, culminating their week with joy in the completed work of Christ on the cross, they gain assurance of the final restoration that will culminate salvation history.

Justification and grace become warm and human in the ceremonies of Sabbath fellowship: the intellectual companionship of the Sabbath school class, the relaxed humor of families and friends gathered for the prolonged midday meal, the moment of meditation at sundown worship, and even the burst of vitality and excitement of Saturday night recreation.

Steeped in the amazing world of trumpets, horses, and vivid colors that are Daniel and Revelation, Adventists can sense the grandeur and scope of God's grace. If Adventists went further, incorporating into every worship service Scripture readings from the songs and poetry of such apocalyptic literature of the Bible, the imagination of Christians and even nonbelievers would be drawn into an experience of the transcendent: worship would not separate them from the real world, but lead them through a glorious creation to the very presence of God.

Service

How we celebrate affects how we act. Truly experienced, Sabbath joy interrupts and frees us from preoccupation with ourselves and liberates us for concern about others. Week by week we are reminded that the Sabbath commandment extended freedom to servants, strangers, and cattle — to all God's creation.

Because Adventists live in an apocalyptic world, resounding with the clash of powers, nations, and civilization, we celebrate a cosmic Redeemer and serve nothing less than the whole world. Because Adventists worship a God who will resurrect us individual and whole, we appreciate the body and commit ourselves to preserving its health. The future is as real and concrete as the skin we touch. In the Adventist experience the Christian hope is made flesh.

Early Adventists had an expansive understanding of the gospel and the Christian life. So, the entire United States developed an appetite for wholesome grains made into wheat and corn flakes, and defied years of habit to adopt lighter, more nutritious breakfasts. Millions nearly addicted themselves to the protein-rich peanut butter developed in Battle Creek.

A community whose imagination was formed by the images and beasts of Daniel and Revelation kept lively the conviction that Christ is not only Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the world, but is also its Judge. The founders of Adventism demanded that the government of the United States free the slaves, even at the cost of bloodshed. Later, Adventists attacked liquor interests for dev-

astating the lives of the weak.

Adventists, with the urging of Ellen White, showed the strength of their conviction that the gospel affects all life by establishing institutions to demonstrate its power. Since the turn of the century, Adventists have created the largest Protestant parochial school system in the world, and the largest Protestant healthcare system in the United States. Adventists send more physicians from the United States to other countries than do the next thirteen most active Protestant denominations and Catholic orders combined.

The health food industries started in Battle Creek are now worldwide. In Australia, the Sanitarium Health Food Company is second

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only to Kellogg's in breakfast cereal sales, and is using its profits to develop inexpensive, nutritious foods for people in poorer countries. Food is also the focus of the \$15 million annual budget of Adventist World Service (SAWS). Agricultural demonstration projects in Chad, Haiti, and Zimbabwe show government ministries how crops can be grown on previously barren land.

In the conflicts now dividing the church, Adventist institutions are often caught in the crossfire, condemned by both traditional and evangelical Adventists. Institutions are considered stubbornly irrelevant to atonement, the preoccupation of both groups. Certainly, salvation does not come from institutionalization. But Adventist institutions do reflect the fact that Adventists have attempted a distinctive way of expressing their salvation. Rather than condemnation, Adventist institutions deserve praise for nurturing and sustaining a community committed to service, as an essential part of the

Adventist experience. Properly understood, they can be launching stations from which Adventists penetrate the world around them.

Renewal

The reservoir of committed and trained talent, in both Adventist and secular institutions, is the denomination's greatest resource. The most serious cost of the debates currently absorbing Adventists is the lay professional who turns from questions to despairing withdrawal, and the persons in church institutions whose creativity withers into devising strategies for survival.

Consider what would happen if Adventists turned their talent and superb training from debating whether or not the sanctuary doctrine established that Adventism is the only true church, to making the Adventist experience not only reasonable, but memorable. Imagine the change within the church if Adventist scholarship and writing altered contemporary patterns of thought. Think how we would feel if musicians and artists, inspired by the Sabbath and the Apocalypse, created symphonies, paintings, and sculptures that moved whole cultures to experience the grandeur of God. If only we had writers who could inflame the imagination of the listless and bored in society with the drama of the Adventist experience. Within Adventism entire worlds collide: American Protestantism and world religions; constancy of conviction and revolutionary change; the transcendent and the immediate; the present, the past and the future. Adventism is an unexplored opportunity for authors able to recognize in the interior life of this peculiar people universal truth. Nikos Kazantzakis, finding the passion of Christ reflected in the Greek Orthodox community of tiny Crete, or Chaim Potok discovering the enduring value of tradition in the Hasidic Jewish neighborhoods of Brooklyn, should indicate to some Adventist genius the possibilities that are waiting in the life of Adventism.

Could not a generation of Adventists, despite the financial mishaps and theological brittleness of their elders, feel that God was

using the Seventh-day Adventist church if its members were involved in new, effective forms of service to the whole person? Would Adventists not be proud to be part of a movement that gave itself utterly for the fragile, the weak among God's creatures, even if it meant challenging principalities and powers?

For example, what if groups within Adventism cared enough about their fellow human beings in the United States to challenge a powerful industry that year after year insures that federal tax revenues will subsidize the cultivation of tobacco while at the same time the federal government cuts by two-thirds the funds for established programs informing the public about the direct links between smoking and 300,000 deaths each year in the United States from heart attacks (200,000), lung cancer (80,000), and other lung disease (34,000). Certainly our Adventist forefathers, who fought the slavery and alcohol interests, would be proud if their spiritual heirs helped break the power of forces systematically contributing to a third of a million fatalities from what the Surgeon General calls "the single most preventable cause of death" in America.

The besetting sin of Adventism today is preoccupation with itself. Some Adventists speak from within Adventism to other Adventists in order to preserve the purity of the denomination. Other Adventists adopt terminology from outside Adventism to make Adventism Christian. Perhaps both have their place. But what is desperately needed are people who speak distinctively and movingly from within Adventism to the larger community; voices who, from the core of Adventist particularity, express a universal message for our time; people who allow the power of the gospel to challenge those who oppress the vulnerable.

We believe the Seventh-day Adventist community is an instrument by which God loves humanity, and that He will be able to use it even more powerfully in the future than He has in the past. But first, we will all have to recognize that who wins the battle to lead the church is not as important as whether, through its embodiment of the gospel, the church leads the world.

The Church and Its Future

Adventist Theology Today

by Fritz Guy

In spite of the painful theological tensions currently felt in the church, Adventist theology still has a transcendent vocation: it is challenged with a task that is full of potential good both for the church and for the contemporary world. For Adventist theology can speak to the present human situation with hope, and the world needs to hear what it has to say.

Ideologically the world is predominantly secular; its interest is concentrated in the here and now, and it lacks an ultimate point of

reference for meaning and value. Politically the world is idolatrous, worshipping substitute gods such as national power and material affluence. Economically the world is unjust and ecologically it is precarious, with the affluent minority worrying over energy to run its machines while the impoverished majority worries over food to maintain human bodies. It is for *this* world that Adventist theology has good news. In stressing God's transcendence and holiness, his work of eschatological judgment and ultimate renewal, his call to stewardship and service it has a message of relevance to the world's present needs.

Yet we cannot ignore the continuing theological discussions within the church. If Adventist theology is going to speak to the

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world with power, we must be sure that the various questions that currently agitate it are not potentially fatal. Once we are reassured about this, we can explore some of the elements of Adventist theology that enable it to respond to the problems and perplexities of the present world. Finally, we must consider the practical need of providing an appropriate context for Adventist theology as an activity within the community of faith.

Every theology, of course, faces the challenge of unanswered questions, loose ends, unfinished business; and Adventist theology is no exception. The questions that are involved here, however, are manageable and need not be felt as threatening to the validity and viability of Adventist theology as a whole. On the contrary, they can be regarded not merely as problems to be solved, but as occasions for theological growth.

In spite of the amount and variety of recent attention to the doctrine of the sanctuary, more work needs to be done¹ before a final answer can be given to a basic question: is the historic Adventist understanding of the sanctuary in heaven and its “cleansing” fully warranted by Scripture, interpreted according to generally accepted principles of exegesis? In response to this question at least four different preliminary answers have been offered. Each of them is logically possible and has its own distinctive values; but each one also carries its own theological difficulties.

The first answer is that the doctrine of the sanctuary is indeed warranted by Scripture, and should be maintained and proclaimed in the same form in which it was developed by J. N. Loughborough, Uriah Smith, and James White in the 1850s.² This has been the answer of traditional Adventism, but it has not yet been established to everyone’s satisfaction. Even the best discussions³ of the sanctuary symbolism in the prophecy of Daniel have not identified a clear biblical basis for the idea of a heavenly *investigative* judgment that scrutinizes the life record of every person in history who has claimed the promise of salvation in Christ.⁴ The recent tendency to refer to a pre-Advent judgment

rather than an investigative judgment⁵ may be a tacit recognition of the problem here.

The opposite answer, on the other hand, is that the doctrine of the sanctuary is not warranted by Scripture, and should be revised or rejected. This answer has been seriously suggested at various points in the history of Adventist thought up to and including the present; but it has never been widely accepted, and it has always been officially rejected whenever it has become the focus of attention.⁶ The reason for the strong reaction against this answer is probably the enormous importance of the doctrine of the sanctuary for the religious experience of the early Sabbath-observing Adventists. For it was crucial to their self-understanding, and we are their direct spiritual and theological descendants.⁷ Whatever the biblical evidence or theological reasoning involved, it would be extremely difficult for the community of faith as a whole to conclude that so central a historic affirmation is no longer tenable, because such a conclusion might well result in a traumatic crisis of identity for the total community as well as for individual members. Another problem with this answer is that it raises a difficult question regarding the theological function of the ministry of Ellen White, who explicitly affirmed the doctrine of the sanctuary in its midnineteenth-century form.

A third answer, similar to the first, is that the doctrine of the sanctuary is warranted by Scripture when it is interpreted according to distinctive Adventist principles of exegesis. This answer has not (to my knowledge) been formally proposed; but it has been suggested in classroom discussion and private conversation. It is theologically plausible, and it is attractive to those who want to emphasize the unique elements of Adventist theology. Nevertheless, it presents a major problem; for it means that the validity of these distinctive principles of exegesis must be established *before* the doctrine of the sanctuary can be seen as biblically credible. That is, people would have to learn to read the Bible in a new, “Adventist,” way before they could recognize the scriptural basis of this doctrine.

Yet a fourth answer, which may be regarded as a combination of some aspects of

the second and the third, is that although the doctrine of the sanctuary is not warranted by Scripture itself, it is adequately warranted by the prophetic reinterpretation of Scripture by Ellen White. This answer has only recently been explicitly formulated,⁸ but it has often been implied by Adventist interpretations of the relevant biblical materials. It is also implied by the comment, often heard these days, that in the current discussions about the sanctuary and the investigative judgment, the bottom line is the authority of Ellen White. This answer seems, however, to conflict with the historic assertion of Adventist

“The prophetic role of Ellen White is as indispensable to Adventist theology as it is to Adventist history; to ignore it would be impossible, and even to try to do so would be irresponsible.”

theology, paralleled by Ellen White’s own conviction, that the Bible alone is “the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”⁹ Also, this answer makes an acknowledgment of the prophetic mission of Ellen White a logically necessary prerequisite to a recognition of the validity of the doctrine of the sanctuary.

Since each of these answers remains problematic in its own way, Adventist theology will no doubt continue its efforts to understand the scriptural witness more completely. It may be that a more satisfactory answer will come by means of careful reflection on the experiential and theological *meaning* of the ministry of Christ in the sanctuary in heaven and the work of judgment which that ministry involves.¹⁰

The prophetic role of Ellen White is as indispensable to Adventist theology as it is to Adventist history; to ignore it would be im-

possible, and even to try to do so would be irresponsible. So there is no question about taking Ellen White seriously; the question, rather, concerns the precise role her work should play in Adventist theology. More specifically, is her expressed understanding of the meaning of a particular biblical statement decisive in determining our exegesis of that statement?¹¹ Further, should her understanding of a particular theological issue determine our present understanding of that issue regardless of all other considerations? And is her authority alone sufficient to establish a doctrine of the church in the absence of a clear biblical witness to that doctrine?¹²

These questions emerge not only from the ongoing discussion of the doctrine of the sanctuary just cited, but also from the work of Adventist biblical scholars whose exegetical work may lead to an understanding of some part of Scripture that is different from the understanding expressed by Ellen White.

Two principle answers have been offered in this regard, but neither is without some difficulties.

The first answer is that the authority of Ellen White is equivalent to that of Scripture. This answer is confirmed by popular Adventist piety (as indicated, for example, in the material typically selected for devotional reading) and by the function of Ellen White materials in general religious discussion within the church (as published, for example, in the *Adventist Review*). But this answer has never been officially asserted by the church; on the contrary, it has often been publicly denied,¹³ and it runs counter to Ellen White’s own declarations regarding the relation of her work to the Bible.¹⁴ If this answer were taken seriously, it would require the church to define the function of Adventist exegesis as discovering and expounding biblical evidence to support Ellen White’s interpretation of the text.

The second answer is that the authority of Ellen White is subordinate to that of the Bible. But this answer presents the difficult challenge of defining the “subordinate authority” of a prophetic ministry. If the authority is in fact “subordinate,” then in principle it can be overruled by the higher authority to which one has a right to appeal; but if

prophetic authority can be thus overruled, in what sense is it indeed “authority”?

The considerations here must take into account the evidence that Ellen White made extensive use of the literary work of others, from whom she evidently derived both information and wording.¹⁵ But this evidence is not at all decisive either way, for literary and informational borrowing is a common phenomenon in Scripture too, as well as in many other kinds of writing both ancient and modern.

Like the question of the biblical basis of the doctrine of the sanctuary, the question of the theological authority of Ellen White deserves and demands continuing, constructive attention, not just because it is a subject of current interest in the church, but also because it has profound implications for the future shape of Adventist theology as a whole.

Until it was eclipsed by the recent discussions of the sanctuary and Ellen White’s use of literary sources, the subject that evoked the most spirited theological debate, and was allegedly responsible for “the shaking of Adventism,”¹⁶ was the proper understanding of righteousness by faith. It could easily be argued that this subject is just as crucial theologically as either of the others, and even more important experientially. For the question here is, “What is the Adventist understanding of the heart of the gospel?”

Two main alternative answers have been given. One is that the heart of the gospel is justification, the new status of the Christian; and the other is that the heart of the gospel is sanctification, the new life of the Christian. But since these answers do not seem to be mutually exclusive, it might be supposed that they could be combined into a third, better answer — namely, that the heart of the gospel is union with Christ, the new creation that includes both the new status and the new life. But on further consideration, this third appears not to be a genuine alternative to the other two after all; for each of them already includes the other as a secondary element, and it is not clear that the two elements could be given actually equal emphasis. So the question can be reformulated: “Is the essen-

tial message of the gospel a matter of justification, of which sanctification is the inevitable behavioral consequence; or is it a matter of sanctification, for which justification is the necessary prerequisite experience?”

The broader theological implications of this question become evident with the introduction of important related questions. In the area of Christology the corollary question is, “Did Jesus have exactly the same human nature as the rest of humanity?” “Was he just like us?” In anthropology the question is, “What are the effects of Adam’s sin, and how are they transmitted?” In eschatology, the question is, “Has the Second Coming been delayed by the failure of God’s people (in proclamation, in spiritual maturity, or in some other way)?” Because of the inter-relatedness of all these questions, one can speak broadly of two “families” of Adventist theology: one “family” emphasizes justification, the uniqueness of Christ’s nature, and the radical character of human depravity; the other “family” emphasizes sanctification, the similarity of Christ’s nature to that of redeemed humanity, and the possibility of overcoming sin as Christ did.

In regard to the question concerning the essential meaning of the gospel, both answers can arise from genuine pastoral concern. The one that emphasizes justification reflects a sensitivity to the need for liberation, assurance, and joy of experienced forgiveness; the one that emphasizes sanctification reflects a recognition of the need for the behavioral consequences of spiritual growth and practical religion. Besides, each of these two answers can claim the virtue of its special relation to the Christian tradition: the emphasis on justification is a reaffirmation of the Reformation (and Pauline) insight of *sola fide*;¹⁷ and the emphasis on sanctification can be given a uniquely Adventist dimension in relation to the so-called “harvest principle.”¹⁸ But it should be recognized by everyone concerned with this question that neither the pastoral concern nor the historical relationship is theologically decisive, so the choice between the alternative answers must be made on other grounds.

The continuing discussion of this question may be facilitated by a recognition of two

distinctions. The first is the difference between a commitment to God's will (which is involved in justification and the relationship to Christ as Lord), and a *behavioral actualization* of God's will (which is the meaning of sanctification). Thus justification includes a will, but a different kind of interest from that involved in sanctification. The second useful distinction is the difference between sanctifi-

“Does the fact that Christ has not yet returned call for a reexamination of Adventist eschatology? Can the church believe and proclaim an ‘imminent’ Second Advent for an indefinite length of time? Is there any way to continue an authentic Adventist theology?”

cation as a *possibility of grace* and as a *requirement for salvation* (or for translation into heaven, or for the occurrence of the Eschaton). Sanctification may thus be understood in terms of a gift rather than a demand. It is not to be expected that a recognition of these distinctions will solve the tensions between the two ways of understanding the meaning of the gospel, and thus obviate further discussion; but such a recognition may make the ongoing discussion more constructive.

Of less general interest to the church as a whole, but of great importance to some within its academic community, is the question of origins: “When and how did God bring the world to its present condition and establish life (especially human life)?” Because the theological issue here is first of all a matter of the proper interpretation of Scripture, the question may be rewritten this way: “How literally should we understand the Genesis narratives of creation and the ac-

companying chronological data?” Here again a range of answers is theoretically possible.

One answer is a strict literalism, maintaining a seven-day creation process that occurred no more than 6,000 years ago. Many (if not most) Adventists are entirely comfortable with this answer, although the available historical and archaeological data seem to require more time than 6,000 years.

A second answer is a less-strict literalism, maintaining a seven-day process of creation that occurred perhaps 8,000 to 12,000 years ago. Many Adventists who are professionally involved in biblical or theological studies are more inclined to this answer than the first one; this takes account of the historical and archaeological evidence, but there remains the problem of the great amount and diversity of geological and paleontological evidence that seems to suggest an extremely long span of time.¹⁹

A third answer is a nonliteral interpretation, maintaining an evolutionary development that was divinely directed and that included the emergence of hominid forms of life approximately 1.5 million years ago. Only a very small minority of Adventists seems to be attracted to this answer, which is beset by a major theological obstacle: it is extremely difficult to incorporate the notion of an evolutionary process of some 2 billion years into an Adventist understanding of the Sabbath (which is explicitly related to a seven-day creation in Genesis 2:2-3 and Exodus 20:11; 31:17), of the relation of sin and death (especially human death), and of a catastrophic, supernatural end of history (which seems to presuppose a similarly sudden, supernatural origin of history). Furthermore, the witness of Ellen White is explicitly and emphatically against this third answer.²⁰

While this question does not loom as large on the Adventist theological horizon as it did a few years ago, it raises the fundamental issue of the relevance of “secular” (that is, nonrevelatory) knowledge for religious belief and theological understanding. In the modern Western world, for example, it seems impossible to deny or ignore any significant body of scientific evidence and still be credible to others

(and perhaps even to oneself). Thus if evolutionary theory is not tolerable in the context of Adventist theology, some alternative theory must be developed to make sense of the mass of available evidence. Although interest in the question of the process of creation and the age of the earth has temporarily receded, it has not disappeared completely; and it will surely be revived sooner or later, either by internal concerns within the community of faith or by our relationship to the culture in which we live and to which we are called to proclaim the Advent message.

Two other questions deserve serious theological consideration in the near future, even though they have not yet attracted any widespread or sustained attention.

The first of these additional questions concerns the meaning of the continuation of human history because of the nonoccurrence of the Eschaton. Does the fact that Christ has not yet returned call for a reexamination of Adventist eschatology? Can the church believe and proclaim an "imminent" Second Advent for an indefinite length of time? If so, what is the meaning of the idea of "imminence"? But if not, is there any way to continue an authentic (and not merely nostalgic or cultural) Adventist theology?²¹

The second issue is the relationship of Adventism to the larger Christian community. Is Adventism called to be the consummation, the quintessence of Christianity? If so, is it to try to become, religiously speaking, all things to all people everywhere? And how then is one to understand the role of other Christians in the world? Are they in some sense second-class Christians? Or is Adventism a kind of theological "family," different from other "families" (Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, and so on) but sustaining a similar relation to the whole? Is Adventism, in other words, merely a distinctive color in the Christian rainbow?

So there is plenty of work for Adventist theology to do in coming to a clearer understanding of eternal truth. Yet neither of these last two questions, nor any of the preceding four, nor all of them together, threaten the

soundness and viability of Adventist theology as a whole. Rather, they can contribute to its excitement and vitality.

Besides the clarification of answers to the various questions of current and potential interest within the church, the Adventist theological agenda also includes the articulation of a powerful message to a world that, as suggested earlier, is ideologically secular, politically idolatrous, economically unjust, and ecologically precarious. This latter task is just as important as the former, and just as urgent; so our attention to it must not be postponed until we have answered all our internal questions.

The most pervasive motif in Adventist theology is the affirmation of transcendence, a recognition of the "otherness" that constitutes the holiness of God. This theme is evident in the meaning of the Sabbath, a recurring acknowledgment and experience of the Ultimate Reality which is the source and ground of our own reality, and which therefore gives meaning to our reality and at the same time relativises it. Thus the Sabbath is both a refutation of secularism and rejection of idolatry; it is both a recognition of a transcendent point of reference for our existence in the world and a protest against the deification of anything in the world. In a context of economic affluence it is a protest against the seduction of materialism, and in the presence of political power it is a protest against every form of tyranny.

The eschatological motif in Adventist theology is closely related to that of transcendence; it could indeed be seen as any element of the transcendence motif. To look for a kingdom of God beyond history is to declare the provisional and ambiguous character of every human structure, and the fragmentary character of every human plan and program.²² This is not to say that all human structures and programs are equally bad (or good), but that none is purely good and therefore worthy of absolute allegiance. While it is not the business of Adventist theology to propose specific political or economic reforms, its responsibility does include a witness and warning against the

human pretension to absolute goodness.

A third motif in Adventist theology is the idea of stewardship and service. Because the Creator is Lord of the whole of human existence and because all human existence is interrelated, every personal resource is intended to be a means of actualizing the Creator's generous love. This is the potential of grace in human existence. Thus the use of one's time, the care of one's body, and the spreading of one's money are all part of a person's religious vocation and experience — not, to be sure, in order to earn divine favor

“A church cannot say to its theologians and biblical scholars, any more than a teacher can say to his students, ‘You must not ask *that* question. You must ask only *safe* questions, the ones to which we already know the answers.’ ”

or to qualify for eternal life, but in order to be an agency of gracious love in the world, to relieve the pain and reduce the suffering of one's brothers and sisters. Similarly, the world's natural resources are gifts of grace. While again it is not the business of Adventist theology to propose specific responses to the problems of poverty and ecological crisis, its responsibility surely includes a call to awareness, concern, and constructive action.

So it can be seen that Adventist theology is broadly relevant to the contemporary human situation. It can speak both critically and creatively to many of the present needs of the world, and it is called to do so.

If Adventist theology is not fundamentally threatened by the questions that currently confront it, and if it is existentially relevant to the contemporary world, then our one remaining concern is whether constructive theological activity can now be carried on within the community of faith. Can the church as a whole accept and encourage theological development? If not, Adventist

theology has a dim future, in spite of its scriptural validity and contemporary relevance. For if the community of faith does not support the activity of theology, those who are best prepared by education and experience to engage in it will decline to do so, and the activity itself will become minimal and haphazard.

The end of serious, vigorous theological activity would not, of course, signal the end of Adventism as a sociocultural phenomenon, maintaining its distinctive lifestyle and perpetuating its traditional understandings. But an Adventism without constructive theology would be incapable of fulfilling the mission to the world that the very self-understanding of Adventism entails. For the community would have lost the possibility of discovering “present truth”; it could only remember and proclaim its “former truth.”

Thus the prospect for ongoing theological activity — which is the future of Adventist theology — depends on an atmosphere of openness in the church. There must be an openness to questions — questions that most members of the community of faith are not asking, either because they have not yet thought of them, or are not sufficiently interested in them, or are afraid to ask them. The questions may sometimes seem “radical” in the sense that they probe the roots of the community's beliefs; but they must not be ruled out of order on that account. A church cannot say to its theologians and biblical scholars, any more than a teacher can say to his students, “You must not ask *that* question. You must ask only *safe* questions, the ones to which we already know the answers.” Nor can the church regard the asking of such questions as a mark of disloyalty. The truth to which the church is committed is clarified, not diminished, by investigation.²³ Openness is the opposite of insecurity.

There must be openness to new evidence — a willingness to acknowledge it, to take it seriously, and to consider its possible implications for the improvement of our theological understanding. On the one hand, this evidence may be biblical. It may, for example, be the result of a more careful exegesis of a particular text, and therefore a clearer expression of its meaning (as in the case of the

expression "within the veil" in the letter to the Hebrews).²⁴ It may be a newly recognized pattern among several parts of the Bible, a new whole that is greater than the sum of its parts (such as the total biblical understanding of womanhood). It may be a phenomenon of biblical revelation that discloses some aspect of the revelatory process (as do the similarities and differences of the synoptic gospels). On the other hand, the new evidence may be some secular knowledge that assists us in the application of biblical principles and norms to the particularities of our life in the twentieth century (such as the recognition of the nonvolitional nature of some instances of homosexual orientation).²⁵ Whatever the evidence, it must always be welcome; for truth is always preferable to error, and truth is discovered by taking account of all evidence. Openness is the opposite of obscurantism.

And there must be openness to the possibility of alternative views within the basic consensus of the community of faith — a determination to interpret the consensus broadly rather than narrowly. In other words, there must be an ability to handle a certain amount of ambiguity. For sometimes the evidence is capable of varying interpretation, either because the evidence itself is not decisive, or because different persons look at the same evidence through different eyes. Openness, however, is by no means a refusal to come to a definite conclusion; it is instead the ability to come to a conclusion of one's own without insisting that everyone else

come to the same conclusion. Openness is the opposite of dogmatism.

The encouragement of openness within the church is the responsibility of the whole community of faith, not least of all the administrators and theologians in that community. The role of administrative leadership includes the communication of a sense of assurance regarding the stability of the community's fundamental beliefs, and a sense of confidence regarding the loyalty of its scholars. For their part, the scholars can initiate responsible theological discussion, and also provide for the church an example of listening to and learning from those whose views differ from their own. And those who are neither administrators nor theologians, but who make up the great majority in the community of faith, can encourage openness by participating in the ongoing discussions whenever there is an opportunity, recognizing that the future of Adventist theology is part of their future too.

In the light of the challenging but manageable questions currently being discussed, and of the relevance of Adventist theology to the problems and perplexities of our world, the theological task of the church is worth everyone's best efforts. Fulfilling it is for the good of those who need to hear the Advent message in clarity and power, for our own maturity in the understanding and experience of truth, and for the glory of God who is the source and goal of all truth and all theology.²⁶

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1. Cf. "Christ and the Heavenly Sanctuary," *Adventist Review*, September 4, 1980, p. 15; *Ministry*, October 1980, p. 18; and *SPECTRUM*, vol. 11, no. 2 (November 1980), p. 71: "But while we believe that our historic interpretation of Daniel 8:14 is valid, we wish to encourage ongoing study of this important prophecy."

2. Cf. Don F. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, revised edition (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1976), s.v. "Investigative Judgment," pp. 671-72.

3. E.g., Gerhard F. Hasel, "Christ's Atoning Ministry in Heaven," *Ministry*, January 1976, supplement; and "The 'Little Horn,' the Saints, and the Sanctuary in Daniel 8," Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute,

1981), pp. 177-227; William H. Shea, "Daniel and the Judgment," unpublished manuscript prepared for the Sanctuary Review Committee, Glacier View, Colorado, August 1980; Arthur J. Ferch, "The Pre-Advent Judgment," *Adventist Review*, October 30, 1980, pp. 4-7.

4. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1911), pp. 486-90.

5. E.g., Hasel, "Christ's Atoning Ministry in Heaven," p. 25c; Ferch, "The Pre-Advent Judgment."

6. The most prominent cases are those of A. F. Ballenger (1905), W. W. Fletcher (1930), and Desmond Ford (1980).

7. Cf. Ellen G. White, letter to John A. Burden, December 11, 1905, in *Selected Messages*, book 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958) pp. 160-162.

8. Raymond F. Cottrell, "A Hermeneutic for Daniel 8:14," unpublished manuscript prepared for the Sanctuary Review Committee, Glacier View, Colorado, August 1980.

9. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. vii.

10. Cf. William G. Johnsson, "What the Sanctuary Doctrine Means Today," *Adventist Review*, May 14, p. 13; May 28, pp. 13-14; June 11, pp. 11-12; June 25, p. 17; July 9, pp. 13-14; July 23, pp. 14-15.

11. Cf. "The Role of the Ellen G. White Writings in Doctrinal Matters," *Adventist Review*, September, 1980, p. 15; *Ministry*, October 1980, p. 19; and SPECTRUM, vol. 11, no. 2 (November 1980), p. 72: "These writings also confirm Biblical truth, without in the least intending to inhibit serious research built upon sound principles of interpretation."

12. Cf. *ibid.*: "While the fundamental doctrines of the church are structured on the authority of Biblical writers, expanded understanding and insight toward their full development may be found in Ellen G. White's writings."

Cf. also *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1957), p. 93: "While Adventists hold the writings of Ellen G. White in highest esteem, yet these are not the source of our expositions. We base our teachings on the Scriptures, the only foundation of all true Christian doctrine."

13. E.g., *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 90: "We have never considered Ellen G. White to be in the same category as the writers of the canon of Scripture."

Cf. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Spirit of Prophecy," p. 1413: "In accord with the historic Protestant position, SDA's accept the Bible and the Bible only as the Christian's rule of faith and practice. . . . [They] affirm that the canonical Scriptures constitute the norm by which all other prophetic messages are to be tested."

14. E.g., Ellen G. White, *Colporteur Ministry* (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press, 1953), p. 125: "The Lord has given a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light."

15. Cf. Douglas Hackleman, "GC Committee Studies Ellen White's Sources," SPECTRUM, vol. 10, no. 4 (March 1980), pp. 9-15; Donald R. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen G. White Studies in the 1970's," *ibid.*, pp. 27-41; Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White and Her Writings," *Adventist Review*, November 27, 1980, pp. 7-9; William G. Johnsson, "Reflections on Ellen White's Inspiration," *ibid.*, pp. 12-13; W. C. White and D. E. Robinson, "Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of Ellen G.

White," *Adventist Review*, June 4, 1980, insert.

16. Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977).

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19. Cf. Molleurus Couperus, "Tensions Between Religion and Science," SPECTRUM, vol. 10, no. 4 (March 1980), pp. 74-78.

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21. Among the few considerations of the question, cf. Roy Branson, "Adventist Between the Times: The Shift in the Church's Eschatology," SPECTRUM, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 1976), pp. 15-26; Tom Dybdahl, "How to Wait for the Second Coming," *ibid.*, pp. 32-35; Jonathan Butler, "When Prophecy Fails: The Validity of Apocalypticism," *ibid.*, pp. 7-14.

22. Cf. Langdon Gilkey, *Reaping the Whirlwind: A Christian Interpretation of History* (New York: Seabury, 1976), pp. 233-238.

23. Cf. Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1946), pp. 33, 44: "Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation." "If the pillars of our faith will not stand the test of close investigation, it is time we knew it. There must be no spirit of pharisaism cherished among us."

24. "Christ in the Heavenly Sanctuary," *Adventist Review*, September 4, 1980, p. 14; *Ministry*, October 1980, pp. 16-18; SPECTRUM, vol. 11, no. 2, p. 70: "The symbolic language of the Most Holy Place, 'Within the veil,' is used to assure us of our full, direct, and free access of God."

25. Cf. Robert K. Johnston, *Evangelicals at an Impasse: Biblical Authority in Practice* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), pp. 117-20, 133-38.

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Christian Brotherhood: The Foundation of the Church

by Kent D. Seltman

Lynn called me late one night. The dormitory curfew had long passed. From the sound of swiftly moving cars, I knew that she was not calling from her room. Her message was calmly desperate — “You asked me to call before I did anything drastic, and that’s why I’m calling.” I asked for more details. She had her car, she said, and was intending to ram the bridge at a hundred miles an hour before the night was over. Later, finally trying to fall asleep that night, I couldn’t forget Lynn’s desperate claim of a few days before, when she had said, “Jesus is my only friend.” Her phone call that evening had proved the obvious — Jesus was not enough.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is, of course, enough to save us from our sins. But by itself — apart from friendship with the concrete flesh and blood members of His earthly body — it is only abstract soteriology and not enough to make life worth living. The earthly church must cultivate a sense of community, a sense of Christian brotherhood among its members. To neglect this duty is to deny the foundational act of the Christian church, that of Christ’s death on the cross. Christ died, after all, that we might live, and life without a network of friends — bonds of love between parents and children, neighbors and citizens, husbands and wives

— is not life at all. As Aristotle put it, “Without friends no one would choose to live though he had all other goods.”

Even though we will all agree that friendship, like motherhood and apple pie, is good, it, like so much that is vital in our lives, is widely neglected or distorted. The treatments of friendship that we find in the secular world today are largely commercial. Hallmark Cards probably prints more words on friendship than any other publisher. Relationships between people are typically not treated in the traditional terms of brotherhood, but in terms of manipulation. On the one hand, we have the manipulation for practical gain in such works as *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, and on the other, the manipulation for personal pleasure in the tradition of *Playboy* and *Playgirl* magazines.

Ironically, the Adventist Christian community self-consciously uses the terms “brother” and “sister,” but actually talks about friendship and brotherhood very little. In all the Adventist hymnals — *Hymns and Tunes*, *Christ in Song*, and *The Adventist Hymnal* — one can find only one hymn on the topic of brotherhood. In my 39 years in Adventist congregations, I do not ever recall singing this single hymn, “In Christ There Is No East and West.” Perhaps our religious terminology of “brother” and “sister” serves primarily as a social leveler, not as a sign of our sense of community. Or worse, it may be a means of actually condescending to others when we reprove or evangelize them.

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In the church, friendship is used as an evangelistic tool. In other words, we use friendship for practical gain. Thus, the "friendship issues" of the *Adventist Review* are designed for giving to our unbelieving friends. If I recall correctly from my childhood, on the designated Friendship Sabbath each year we were expected to bring a non-Adventist to church.

Uncle Arthur Maxwell's 1950 book, *Your Friends the Adventists*, is prefaced with these words, "We have tried to tell you the story of your friends the Adventists — to help you understand something of their faith and their message and, above all, to let you know that they are indeed a friendly people who want to be friends with you."¹ However, he subtly reveals the conditions of these evangelistic friendships in the last paragraph of his book, "You need not travel alone; for this is the hope of your friends, the Adventists. This is the land of their dreams. They are going to the self-same place. Why not go with them? They would love to have your company."¹ Notice that it is the neighbor who is expected to come along with the Adventist, and the Adventist friend will not realize any change in the experience of friendship. Thus, the invitation is not for a full, reciprocal friendship. It is a condescending friendship. The invitation is from the superior Adventist to the inferior, unbelieving neighbor.

I trust that we agree that conversion is not the culmination of the religious experience. After the conversion comes fellowship with Christian brothers. Being a Christian is the process of a lifetime whereas conversion is that of only a moment. And yet, the theology of brotherhood is mightily neglected in our communion.

If the evangelistic thrust of Adventism were the primary cause of this neglect, the problem would not be too serious. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The greatest impediment is our passion for doctrinal purity. We are guilty of overly minute examination of structural pillars, but never stepping back to view the temple built on the foundation of Christian love.

Consequently, in recent times, some of us

seem aligned with the tradition of militant Christianity, where being right is more important than being kind. We are told that we may have to die for our faith. Traditionally, this has meant that the believers would also kill. True, we do that today in a somewhat more civilized fashion than was done during the Reformation. Since burnt human flesh is out of fashion in religious circles, we avoid harming physical bodies, but wage war on reputations and careers. Rather than torches and stakes, our weapons are labels and innuendo. The camaraderie of soldiers standing as watchmen on the walls of Zion is substituted for fellowship with Christian defenders of the traditional faith. Both those intent upon changing the faith and traditionalists seem to share the passionate need of being proved right.

Readers of SPECTRUM should not feel smug. They may neglect Christian brotherhood even more than the general membership of the church. The Adventist Forum and its publications are marked by intellectually critical examinations of issues significant to the church. We deny ourselves fellowship in the body of Christ to the extent that we feel bitterness about the objects or the results of this critical study. Interaction among individuals is necessary for friendship and brotherhood. Thus, the man with whom I maintain a bitter quarrel is not my friend or spiritual brother. If we only quarrel with our church, we will never experience Christian brotherhood in it. We may find temporary refuge in the fellowship of those similarly embittered, but that avoids confrontation with the philosophical and theological basis of brotherhood.

I do believe, however, there are solutions to the present problems I have identified in the Seventh-day Adventist community.

While the hierarchy of friendship mentioned earlier puts friendship for personal pleasure and practical gain below full friendship, the legitimacy of the lower levels of exchange should not be denied. In fact, full friendships always begin as friendships for personal pleasure or practical gain. My first relationship with my wife, for instance, was purely for personal pleasure. I dated her as I did several other young women in order to

share a basketball game, a concert, a meal, or a day's skiing. A full friendship grew from there. The church also needs to nurture relationships based upon pleasure or utility so the relationships can expand into full brotherhood within the community of Christ. Our apocalyptic emphasis on the shortness of time blinds us to the need for planting or cultivating the seeds of brotherhood. Our Millerite focus on an impending crisis makes

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such activity seem meaningless or unnecessary.

The problem is really theological. In an attempt to emphasize the peculiar, sectarian nature of Seventh-day Adventism, important though that is, we forget that the most important doctrine in Scripture is the doctrine of Christian love. Christ did not die on the cross for doctrinal purity but for human beings. He expected his friends and followers to be willing to do the same:

. . . Love one another, as I have loved you. There is no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I call you servants no longer; a servant does not know what his master is about. I have called you friends, because I have disclosed to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me; I chose you. I appointed you to go on and bear fruit, fruit that shall last; so that the Father may give you all that you ask in my name. This is my commandment to you: love one another. (John 15:12-17, NEB)

The mark of the Christian is not possessing doctrinal purity but a willingness to die for a

friend. Certainly, nothing is said here about killing or destroying. Rather, we are invited to become full friends with Christ.

The tragedy of Christ's death was heightened by the separation He experienced shortly after demonstrating the height of brotherhood in the upper room. In Gethsemane, His dearest friends failed to reciprocate in His moment of agony. They slept rather than sympathized. Later, one friend betrayed Him, and another denied Him. The ultimate separation occurred on the cross when Christ, in a moment of utter despair, cried, “My God, My God, why have *you* forsaken me?” In that moment of total loss of hope and meaning, He experienced the worst that any human being can. He died alone.

Those of us who know anger and bitterness in our experience with the brothers and sisters of our community can come together in the spirit of brotherhood. The formula is suggested by the Quaker scholar, Paul Lacey, who suggests self-knowledge is the first step. We must recognize that when we are indignant with others — even righteously indignant at their errors — we are cultivating a monster in ourselves with which we attack the monster of errors in others. When we recognize both behaviors as monstrous, we are ready to see a brother where before we saw an enemy. For most of us, this self-knowledge is not enough. We have to see *more* than the monster within us. This deeper insight, Professor Lacey testifies, is Christian love. “For what is needed to break free of the bond of hatred is to be able to see one's self as a *monster* and a *child of God*, as both in need of forgiveness and having received forgiveness. . . .”³ This deep Christian experience permits us to discard the *them* and *us* mentality. Instead of adversaries and monsters, it permits us to see brothers *like us* needing and receiving the accepting love of Christ.

Human friendship tends to be exclusive. We cannot have a very large circle of intimate friends. The demands of time as well as psychological protection do not permit us to share our intimate gift of friendship too widely. However, Christian brotherhood is

not merely an extension of intimacy but an extension of the other traits of full friendship: feeling concern and acting for the good of another. Thus Christian brotherhood is *inclusive* rather than *exclusive*. Christ's love extended beyond the circle of His close friends to those He had not met — those centuries of humans who had already died and others not yet born. None of us would betray a dear full-friend, but until we can extend that same ethic to those we do not know and will not meet, we do not know the meaning of Christian brotherhood.

Christ died to save us from our sins, but that fact alone does not make human life bearable. My own moments of deepest pain have come when I have lost my friends. The manipulation, militancy, and bitterness that divide us from our brothers in Christ also divide us from Him. But happily, we have Christian brothers who can personify, and hence make real, the love that Christ has for us. And even more happily, we have our Brother Christ, who persuades us by His life that Christian love is the foundation which supports the pillars of our faith and life.

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1. Maxwell, Arthur, *Your Friends the Adventists*, (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association), p. 4.

2. Maxwell, p. 96.

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The Church as a Prophetic Minority

by Jack W. Provonsha

One of the barriers Adventists face in their attempt to bring "the truth" to their non-Adventist Christian brothers derives from their use of such terms as "the truth." To many non-Adventists, this and such Adventist expressions as "God's people," "God's church" and "the remnant church" are likely to seem perverse and arrogant.

General Conferences are occasions that heighten a denomination's sense of uniqueness. For example, at the Vienna General Conference, a reporter for *Christianity Today*

noted that at the meetings "terminology tended to be esoteric."

When Adventists spoke of God calling us "to be truly one in Christ Jesus," it meant unity among Adventists. "The remnant church" and "God's people everywhere" referred to God's Adventist people everywhere. "Lands untouched by the Gospel" were those which had not heard the Adventist message. Adventists spoke as though they were tackling world evangelization single-handedly. Many other utterances echoed that of Vice President W. Duncan Eva: "God has committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church the last task to save the world. We have God's package deal. . . the Gospel from beginning to end."¹

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not merely an extension of intimacy but an extension of the other traits of full friendship: feeling concern and acting for the good of another. Thus Christian brotherhood is *inclusive* rather than *exclusive*. Christ's love extended beyond the circle of His close friends to those He had not met — those centuries of humans who had already died and others not yet born. None of us would betray a dear full-friend, but until we can extend that same ethic to those we do not know and will not meet, we do not know the meaning of Christian brotherhood.

Christ died to save us from our sins, but that fact alone does not make human life bearable. My own moments of deepest pain have come when I have lost my friends. The manipulation, militancy, and bitterness that divide us from our brothers in Christ also divide us from Him. But happily, we have Christian brothers who can personify, and hence make real, the love that Christ has for us. And even more happily, we have our Brother Christ, who persuades us by His life that Christian love is the foundation which supports the pillars of our faith and life.

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The Church as a Prophetic Minority

by Jack W. Provonsha

One of the barriers Adventists face in their attempt to bring "the truth" to their non-Adventist Christian brothers derives from their use of such terms as "the truth." To many non-Adventists, this and such Adventist expressions as "God's people," "God's church" and "the remnant church" are likely to seem perverse and arrogant.

General Conferences are occasions that heighten a denomination's sense of uniqueness. For example, at the Vienna General Conference, a reporter for *Christianity Today*

noted that at the meetings "terminology tended to be esoteric."

When Adventists spoke of God calling us "to be truly one in Christ Jesus," it meant unity among Adventists. "The remnant church" and "God's people everywhere" referred to God's Adventist people everywhere. "Lands untouched by the Gospel" were those which had not heard the Adventist message. Adventists spoke as though they were tackling world evangelization single-handedly. Many other utterances echoed that of Vice President W. Duncan Eva: "God has committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church the last task to save the world. We have God's package deal. . . the Gospel from beginning to end."¹

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Now, I have experienced something of the feeling of worth, strength and power that a strong sense of mission can bring to a church's outreach. And I am apprehensive over the loss our movement will suffer if the ability to feel that in some way we are "God's special people" ever fully slips away from us. But I must also confess to an increasing personal uneasiness over the use of such expressions, as through the years I have come to know and love some of the very numerous, God-fearing, committed Christians who do not wear our Adventist label. I remain uneasy over the arrogant phrases such as "the remnant church" and "God's people everywhere" can suggest, and I find myself in increasing agreement with J. B. Phillips, who in his book *Your God Is Too Small*, suggests that one of the ways we make God small is to place Him in a box — our private box, that is. Surely God is nobody's private property — not even the "remnant church's."

There remains in my heart a tension. On the one hand, I feel deeply that I and my church are uniquely important to God, that we are the object of His supreme regard, that God has specially called us to a task that is ours alone, that in some special way we are "His chosen people." On the other hand, I am keenly aware of the obvious fact that God is the universal Father of all men, that He can never become the exclusive possession of any individual or group, that there can thus *never* be an exclusive "people of God" wearing an institutional label like "Seventh-day Adventist."

In attempting to resolve this tension, I have come to this conclusion: We must accept both poles of the tension as necessary parts of a larger unity — hopefully providing the basis for a retrained sense of mission, without which the Adventist Church is done for, and a concurrent universal sense of brotherhood, without which we will slip into the ghetto mentality which resulted in the rejection of Israel, God's ancient "chosen people."

The resolution of this tension depends on making some fundamental definitions,

mainly centering around three uses of the term "church." The first two of these are fairly traditional and will require little comment. The third will occupy us to a greater extent since it is the key to my thesis. Diagram 1 is provided to aid in identifying and relating the three ways of speaking of church.

The larger, outer circle in this diagram represents the arena of God's redemptive activity — the world. It refers to the world of fallen humankind over the whole sweep of human history. Somewhere within that larger whole, God has in all ages had His faithful children. This constitutes the Church Invisible — known to God, though invisible, perhaps, to the rest of us. Its membership is based not on public confessions or statistics or membership rolls, but on a quality of life best characterized by the word "integrity." These are the "honest in heart" who in every age and in every place live according to whatever measure of light they possess from whatever source. They include those heathen to which Ellen White refers as worshiping God "ignorantly." When we finally get to the Kingdom of Glory, we may well be astonished at the labels some of its inhabitants wore.

Ellen White speaks of these members of the invisible church when she writes, "From the beginning, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth. In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faith-

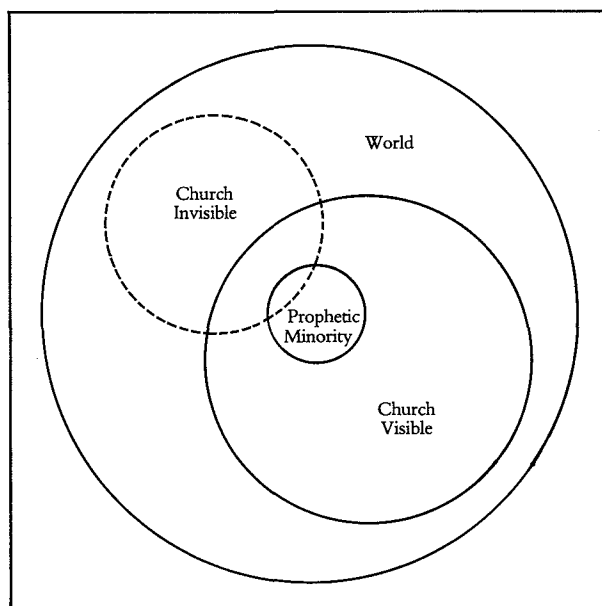


Diagram 1.

ful testimony to the generation in which they live.² It is of this “church” that she says, “Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theatre of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts.”³ This is the olive tree of Romans 11, the true Israel from which branches may be grafted. It cannot be institutionally delimited, even though human institutions may at one time or another bear a greater or lesser correspondence to it.

I have drawn the circle representing the invisible church with a broken line to indicate the indefiniteness of its observable boundaries. I do not even know how large or small to draw that circle. Only God could draw it because to Him only is it truly visible.

By contrast, the Church Visible is a conscious, institutional entity and is easily objectified. Although it may have multiple, often confusing, structures and identifying labels, it always remains identifiable in one way or another. It is composed of all men who have openly claimed to be God’s church whether or not they, in fact, bear any relation to the Church Invisible.

I have purposely drawn its circle in such a way as to overlap that of the Church Invisible. I presume the overlapping would vary considerably from time to time and place to place, depending on the spiritual state of the Church Visible. At different times, one could belong to one or the other or to both; they are simply not necessarily coterminous.

The third definition of church, the Prophetic Minority, is our primary focus. It is drawn as a smaller circle within the larger Church Visible, because it shares in its institutional “visibility.” I have drawn it astride the broken line representing God’s Church Invisible to indicate that again no necessary connection exists between the two. As in the larger Church Visible, some or even many of its members may also be among those reckoned by God as His faithful children. But some or even many may also not be so reckoned.

The Prophetic Minority possesses institu-

tional and other characteristics that identify it with the Church Visible, with which it may share a common feeling of brotherhood. But it is also different in a very real sense, and it is in reference to this difference that a separate label is employed. The term “prophetic” has a specialized meaning in this connection that requires some background explanation. It does not refer to its interest, or competence, in interpreting Bible prophecy or in the possibility that its existence and function may have been divinely predicted. It does not even refer to its possession of the prophetic gift. The term “prophetic” is used in another sense analogous to the ancient role of Israel’s prophets.

In the 1960s, Jack Newfield wrote a book titled *A Prophetic Minority*, in which he describes the radicals of the sixties as being in “ethical revolt against the visible devils of racism, poverty, and war, as well as the less tangible devils of centralized decision-making, manipulative, impersonal bureaucracies, and the hypocrisy that divides America’s ideals from its actions.”⁴ He saw the New Left as expressing its “new ethical-rooted politics in its affirmation of community, honesty, and freedom, and in its indifference to ideology, discipline, economics, and conventional political terms.” Newfield also states:

At its surface, political level, the New Radicalism is an anti-Establishment protest against all the obvious inequities of American life. . . . At its second, more complex level. . . [it] is a moral revulsion against a society that is becoming increasingly corrupt. . . . At its third, subterranean level, the New Radicalism is an existential revolt against remote, impersonal machines that are not responsive to human needs.

This description of the New Left may sound like a “far-out” base from which to draw an analogy for the Adventist movement, except that the analogy is not drawn from the specific content or concerns of Newfield’s radicals or from the vigorous and sometimes violent ways in which they expressed them. The point of comparison is, rather, the role of being a “light set on a hill,” the duty to cry out for reform and change. In

the case of Adventism, the voice is crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

The analogy is thus far older than the sixties. It goes back to Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and John the Baptist. It is in their sense "prophetic." "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Prophetic minority movements share with those ancient figures even in the style of their expression, although the specific content and purpose of their message may differ.

Neither the prophetic role nor the prophetic style has been given sufficient attention in Adventist literature. The prophetic style differs, for example, from that of the scholar.

"A prophetic movement, insofar as it is true to its divine calling, may function as a catalyst bringing about that final polarization which constitutes the climax of the Great Controversy."

Prophets were more likely to cry out in righteous anger and anguish than to employ the scholars' measured tones of logic, analysis and synthesis. They often seemed extremists to ordinary folk. Their tools of trade were shock weapons; their language, poetry, invective exhortation and diatribe — even disturbing symbolic exhibitionism (for example, Jeremiah with the ox-yoke around his neck). Prophets stood up to be counted and even, perish the thought, sometimes screamed to be noticed — if that's what it took to get a hearing. The prophet was concerned with making his point, even if it called for speaking loudly to make it.

The prophetic style gives logic to a number of peculiar characteristics of a prophetic minority. Camel's hair coats, a vegetarian diet, the avoidance of jewelry, condiments, tea, coffee, alcohol and tobacco all help to provide a sense of identity that brings cohesion and thus a measure of power to the prophetic group. Adventists would do

well to think carefully before they dispense with too many of the marks of their common identity. Mutual strength is to be derived from being able to pick each other out of a crowd, even if the cues are subtle ones like what is worn on the hands or ears or around the neck or on the face. The prophet has to know who he is.

But that is only a minor justification for such things. If these serve only the self-needs of the prophet, they isolate him from his task. Recall that self-serving is the hallmark of a false prophet. Prophetic identity must serve the prophet's larger role of crying aloud to all people. It is on this basis that such practices as total abstinence from the use of alcohol and tobacco may be defended. Admittedly, on biblical textual grounds alone, total abstinence from alcoholic beverages, especially wine, cannot be defended. On prophetic grounds, however, it can be defended. (Interestingly enough, wine was ruled out for the prophet, John the Baptist.)

I once heard a former president of the American Cancer Society support the surgeon general's determination "that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health." His words could scarcely be heard because of the cloud of cigarette smoke about his own head. I cannot prophetically cry aloud if my voice is muted; I cannot accept responsibility for that vast sea of human misery caused by the world's alcohol problem if I am a drinker. The fact that one out of 14 persons in the greater Los Angeles basin is a frank alcoholic must rest heavily on our collective conscience, as should other similar human afflictions caused by tobacco and drugs. Traditional Adventist attitudes toward the theatre, dancing, even war, can also, I think, be supported with prophetic logic.

Of course, not everyone who stands up to be counted or even screams to be noticed is a true prophet or a member of the Prophetic Minority. False prophets are also in the land; how to distinguish them is always a serious question. One might not easily distinguish Elijah or John the Baptist from the ascetic "desert fathers" that were numerous in the Syrian and Egyptian deserts during the early

centuries of our era, or from the bearded, sandaled youth of the sixties. In spite of their similar general appearances, however, there were and are crucial differences.

For one, the true prophet's face is always toward his people, even when they do not appreciate his message. The desert father, on the other hand, ran from his people into the wilderness. More important, the true prophet speaks for principle, while the false prophet is actuated primarily by conscious or unconscious self-interest.

Many of the young "prophets" of the sixties, for example, underneath their appearance of concern for peace, love, justice, honesty and equity, were really concerned with promoting their own ends, including their need to count for something. In ghettos, on university campuses, and wherever the young were drawn together were thousands of young people for whom the normal identity crisis of early adulthood had been complicated by rapid change, impersonal bigness and a depersonalizing technology. Their frenzied activism thus may not have been derived so much from selfless concern, compassion and legitimate outrage as from cryptic self-disesteem and the frustration of meaninglessness. Their causes were largely incidental and thus irrelevant. Any cause would have served as well as another provided only that it was convenient and "in."

By contrast, the true prophet is such because of his basic sensitivities. His conscience is easily and deeply disturbed as he beholds error, injustice and hypocrisy. He is angered at oppression and dismayed by error, not for his own sake, but because he deeply feels the evil of injustice. He is thus a people's sensitive conscience and therefore a morally indispensable part of his larger society.

Besides its role as a "light set on a hill," a Prophetic Minority may also play a unique role in bringing about the consummation of all things. Indeed, it may be called to play this role.

The Scriptures repeatedly speak of the last stages of the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan as consummating in a final polarization of mankind and his institutions. Jesus, in His parable of the tares, referred to a time of harvest when it would be appropriate

for the wheat and tares, existing together until that time, to be separated. He also spoke of the final separation of the sheep and goats and of the wise and foolish virgins. The time is coming at the end of all things where the "mixed multitude" of which the Church Visible and even a Prophetic Movement consists will polarize into just two entities, the remnant and Babylon.

The terms "remnant" and "Babylon" are instructive here. In any absolute sense, the term "remnant" is applicable only at the time of the final polarization; it means "that which remains faithful to the end." A preliminary use of the term is justified only by anticipation (and in one other way which we shall consider in a moment). The final remnant may have very minimal institutional character. I cannot imagine a General Conference president of the remnant. The remnant will rather be a general gathering of individuals who in a certain setting will be united by their faith and absolute trust in God.

Babylon, by contrast, will reflect an authoritarian, coercive, human institutional effort to come to grips with impending disaster, much in the way that that ancient tower was man's attempt to be self-sufficient in the face of danger. Since the builders of the tower did not trust God's promise, they were forced to go it alone, to save themselves by their own works. Babylon is such a salvation. Again, it is faith versus works — the oldest battleground of all — locking men in a final climactic struggle.

It is in such a setting that the last prophetic movement comes into its own. Ellen White speaks of a final gathering of "the remnant church from among the nations of the earth,"⁵ of a time when "all who are honest will leave the fallen churches and take their stand with the remnant."⁶ She even refers to a "shaking time" within the Adventist Church.

This gathering of the remnant, I believe, is bigger than any single institution, although an institution — even our visible Seventh-day Adventist Church — may play a significant role in the gathering. Indeed, it may be called primarily for that purpose.

It is possible, by exercising some care, to cool water below its natural freezing point without freezing or crystallizing it. We speak thus of supercooled water. But when this has been achieved, if one takes even a small piece of ice and drops it into the supercooled liquid, crystallization occurs with great rapidity around the introduced fragment, which is called a nidus. A prophetic movement can be the nidus around which the remnant can crystallize in that final setting. To shift the metaphor slightly, a prophetic movement, insofar as it is true to its divine calling, may function as a catalyst bringing about that final polarization which constitutes the climax of the Great Controversy.

This, I think, constitutes the answer to that nagging sense of guilt and frustration which is beginning to hover like a cloud over a denomination that expected singlehandedly

to “finish the work” of evangelizing the world in a generation. In the final moments of earth’s history, there comes into visible being something bigger than any denominational institution, the final remnant; but it comes into being partly because there is a catalytic presence around which the remnant become visible as a testimony to their trust in a trustworthy God. □

The Bible describes a sad time when no prophets were in the land. It also warns that where there is no vision, the people perish. The warning is as apropos today as then. It is high time that a prophetic minority called the Seventh-day Adventist Church became conscious of its God-given role — a role that sets it apart, giving it an identity and a voice; a role that also sets its face and heart toward its brethren, toward God’s people everywhere in all the churches.

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 3. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
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 6. Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Christian Home Library), p. 261.
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Becoming the Family of God

by Nancy Vyhmeister

The church needs to become more and more a living, loving community, working toward common goals. The church needs to become a family; not the nuclear family that

predominates in a United States committed to individualism and independence, but what Adventism has already become in some other parts of the world — an extended family.

Seventh-day Adventists have, perhaps, a better chance than others to be such a family. There is, after all, the gift of the Sabbath, and its special twenty-four hours. When Adventists in the United States refer to the Sabbath

Nancy Vyhmeister, a native of Chile, is a graduate of Pacific Union College and Andrews University. She is assistant professor of mission at Andrews.

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as “family time,” they mean a period when father and mother can spend a few hours with their children. In many other countries, the Sabbath is a time for the nuclear family to spend a full day with God’s larger family, sharing in worship, service, and fellowship. In South America going to church is like joining a family reunion. Members come for Sabbath school and church, carry on “missionary work” after lunch, gather for a Missionary Volunteer meeting at sundown, and stay for the Saturday night social.

The Sabbath is a day that members should enjoy so much that it affects their weekday life. (My son once asked why each week could not have six Sabbaths and one work day!) In South America and the Inter-American Division, Sabbath school classes are not once-a-week Bible study groups but social and outreach units active throughout the week. Sunday morning, members often gather to make needed repairs on their church building, and in the afternoon play soccer. Wednesday night, even children attend prayer meeting to see friends and listen to the latest chapter in continuing stories.

Churches that gather more than once a week should have buildings that are more than just sanctuaries. If Adventists were clear that they wished everywhere to be a community of intimately related persons, sharing not only a common set of beliefs and values, but a wide range of activities, Adventist congregations would make certain that they housed themselves in multipurpose buildings. They would direct architects to design a structure that within minutes could be changed from a place for reverent worship to a large hall, or a dining room, or a series of classrooms, or even a gymnasium. A church that is a family needs a home, but a home that can be lived in all week, not just on Sabbath morning.

In addition to the experience of the Sabbath, the commitment of Adventism to the priesthood of all believers helps sustain within Adventists the feeling that they are a family. In Latin America, lay members often not only teach the Sabbath school classes, but preach the church sermon and pastor each other during the crises of sickness and death that come to any extended family. The

young people are eager and able to develop their talents by entertaining themselves, including producing and performing plays on Saturday nights.

Members also accept responsibility for fostering intellectual fellowship. The church becomes the center of the lives of many because it is the community within which they develop their God-given mental faculties. Classes are conducted not only for other members, but for non-Adventist friends. Typically, these classes discuss parenting, nature, health, even Seventh-day Adventist history. Interaction in these classes is one way the church opens its doors to the larger community.

Of course, a bouyant community discovers that there are many ways it attracts others anxious to be warmed by its fellowship. Friends and relatives want to be a part of a church family that welcomes others to share in its love throughout the community.

Adventist teenagers in Brazil have given roses to sick ladies on Mother’s Day and visited cemeteries on All Saints’ Day to comfort relatives visiting their loved ones’ graves. Brazilian university students and professionals have given three or four weeks of their vacations to assist in schools, launches, clinics, small hospitals and churches serving their poorer brothers in northern Brazil. Other students and professionals in Chile have been interested in studying and analyzing the Bible in the home of an Adventist professor on the faculty of the University of Concepcion. Prominent Brazilians gather around the swimming pool of a well-to-do Adventist active in the nation’s capital, Brasilia, to explore the meaning of faith.

Human beings need to belong, to be accepted, to grow within a supportive community. With its members fellowshipping together and cooperating to express their Christianity in their lives, the Seventh-day Adventist church can and should be just such a redemptive and nurturing community. The church’s future shines brightest when it is a caring family, whose delight in fellowship is a foretaste of that community of love and delight that the Scriptures call heaven.

The Burbank Case

Some Political Perspectives

by Ervin Taylor

Representative — the form of church government which recognized that authority in the church rests in the church membership with executive responsibility delegated to representative bodies and officers for the governing of the church. . . . The representative form of church government is that which prevails in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 1971 edition, p. 46.

The Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has “ecclesiastical control and authority over all Seventh-day

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Adventist Churches” in Southern California. . . . The conference is “the local governing body of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church which is an *extremely highly organized hierarchical church*.” Sworn statement of Southern California Conference President in a civil suit filed against the Burbank Seventh-day Adventist Church and eight named members of the church, in the Superior Court of the State of California for the County of Los Angeles, April 23, 1975.

The *Los Angeles Times* religion page for Saturday morning, March 29, 1975, carried a headline: “Adventist Group Protests Expul-

sion.” The story carried the news of the removal of the Burbank Seventh-day Adventist Church from the “sisterhood” of Seventh-day Adventist churches in southern California. A follow-up story in the *L.A. Times* Sunday edition was entitled “Expelled Adventists Defy Church Chiefs.” This account reported that members of the expelled Adventist congregation in Burbank met for an Easter service despite protests of three representatives of the Southern California Conference that it was unlawful for them to do so. According to the *Times* reporter, the Burbank police, called to the scene by conference officials, did not interfere and the Easter services were held.

What manner of church was Burbank? Some may be surprised to learn that it was one of the first churches in the denomination to formally propose the creation of lay advisory committees for local conferences. Burbank was the first church in the Southern California Conference to urge openly the creation of a human relations committee to deal with the problems of racial discrimination in hiring and promotion at Adventist institutions. It was also the first Adventist congregation to put into effect its own constitution which formalized a dominant role for laymen in the administration of the local church.

The developments relevant to our discussion began in 1963 with the appointment of Wayne P. Jones as pastor.¹ Jones arrived at Burbank committed to supporting a climate where intellectual and religious freedom could flourish.

During 1963 and 1964, a major reorganization of the local church’s political and fiscal structure was carried out. The keystone of the new system was a conviction that the internal operation of the church was the total responsibility of laymen. A fundamental element in the reorganization was provisions which allowed the pastor to totally relinquish his role as church administrator to permit him to function full time in his pastoral capacity. In his place, a layman was elected on a year-to-year basis to function as both church administrator and chairman of the church board. Specific organizational responsibilities such as education, welfare, finance,

plant operations and social activities were delegated to elected department heads who reported to the church administrator, not to the pastor.

Even before the pastorate of Jones, the Burbank Church Board Minutes record objections to the “Ingathering” system. In 1964, Burbank voted to withdraw, as a church, from the public solicitation aspect of the Ingathering campaign. Research by Burbank members, especially Jones and Wesley Nash, a banking executive, had uncovered the fact that the local conference administration set the total Ingathering goals of local churches as much as 500 percent higher than was necessary to supply the funds requested by the General Conference for support of the international missionary activities of the denomination. The local conference was then enabled to receive back from the General Conference a percentage of those “excess” funds with no restrictions as to use. Since donations had been originally solicited by church members from the general public under the impression that they were destined for foreign mission use, such a reversion policy, in the view of many Burbank members, represented, at the least, a serious misrepresentation, or, at most, bordered on fraud.

Also by this time, the nature of the tithing system that the denomination promulgated came under scrutiny. The basic question was, “What organizational unit of the church — the local church or conference organization(s) — should exclusively benefit from the tithing system?” A simple change of wording on the Burbank offering envelope reflected this issue. The word “tithe” was replaced by “Southern California Conference.” The point was that the tithe denoted an amount. Whether that amount should be contributed to the work of the church at the conference or local church level (or divided in some manner) should be at the option of the member.²

The 1965 Biennial Constituency Meeting of the Southern California Conference offered Burbank a regional forum where it could offer recommendations for effective change within the existing political

framework of the church. Burbank's involvement and recommendation were modest. Delegates requested published agendas and departmental reports as well as a study of support given to local churches for secretarial help. In addition, one of Burbank's delegates read a minority report from the constitution and bylaws committee. The reaction of the conference administration to Burbank's activities was immediate — it asked for a meeting with the church. Although a whole host of specific issues were raised, the basic question revolved around the issue of "loyalty" to the larger church body.

"After delivering the sermon, the Conference president delivered an ultimatum: disband or face the consequences. The Burbank congregation, by a solid majority, refused to disband."

Beginning in 1966, several Burbank members separately organized and published a journal called *Perspective* as an experiment to assess the spirit of the church's commitment to free and open dialogue and discussion. During its three-year life, its maximum circulation was 1,700 paid subscriptions. *Perspective's* general inability to attract denominationally employed contributors to its pages, its occasional excursions into radical expressions of dissent and its limited funding were fatal flaws in its operation. One of its major contributions, however, was the stimulus it gave to General Conference support of the launching of a more moderate counterpart, SPECTRUM.

The participation of the Burbank Church at the 1967 biennial constituency meeting again involved the support of a few simple proposals, including the establishment of a lay advisory committee for the conference. Two of Burbank's proposals were accepted by the delegates. Immediately following the constituency meeting, however, rumors began to circulate that Jones was being re-

moved as pastor of the church. Four weeks later, he was informed that his four-year tenure as pastor was at an end; he was being "called" to a *smaller* church as an *assistant* pastor.

It was clear that the action removing Jones as pastor was in direct response to his unwillingness to invoke his clerical status to alter the collective opinions and policies of the lay-constituted organization of the Burbank Church. Conference officials were totally opposed to an open discussion of the issues surrounding the ouster, but did finally consent to discuss them with the elders of the local church. At this meeting, the conference treasurer summed up the differences. They related to the symbol of the organized denominational authority over the local church — the *Church Manual*: "We (the conference) feel that the *Church Manual* is a guiding principle. You in the Burbank congregation feel that it is something that should be accepted or rejected by a local church." Attempts to set up, on an ongoing basis, dialogues between the Burbank Church and the conference officials were unsuccessful. Unable to obtain any redress from its parent organization, Burbank took upon itself the employment of its former pastor as Minister of Social Concern. This action was not unprecedented, since Burbank had supported its own associate pastor as far back as 1961.

Over the following seven years, Burbank's relationship with the local conference administration was consistently directed by the local church leadership away from those issues which might cause potential confrontation possibilities.

In August 1974, the conference appointed pastor reported the conference's renewed "unhappiness" with sections of Burbank's constitution dealing with the role of the conference-designated pastor, with the refusal of the church to enforce vague "standards" of conduct on those holding church offices and, finally, with ill-defined "abuses" in the financial administration of the church. On three different occasions, committees elected by the church met with conference officials to review these matters. It was the

clear desire of a majority of the church to resolve the problems and, in this spirit, a request went out on January 27, 1975 from the church's assembly requesting from the conference a detailed, exhaustive and specific listing of their dissatisfactions with the Burbank Church program. As the chairman of the church board and church administrator at that time stated:

We are, of course, already familiar with some problem areas, but are disturbed by the persistence of a seemingly endless stream of questions, "allegations" and "rumors" concerning the Burbank Church which has had, and will continue to have, unless checked, a most insidious and debilitating effect upon our struggle to serve as a positive, progressive Christian witness in the community and among our sister churches. Hence, we feel that it is essential to have an exhaustive list of all problem areas set forth in writing.³

This the conference administration refused to do. Instead, their response was to present to the February 1975 meeting of the conference Lay Advisory Committee a "recommendation" that the conference administration "take whatever steps are necessary to reorganize, disband, expel or otherwise bring the Burbank Church into harmony with the Sisterhood of Churches, and that the issue be brought to the Conference constituency at its 1975 session."

With the 1975 constituency meeting now a little more than a month away, the Burbank Church sent a letter to the conference requesting that each and every specific charge against it be put in writing, that a full and fair hearing be held and that conference officers and employees desist from making any verbal charges, insinuations or derogatory remarks about the officers or members of the Burbank Church.

On Saturday morning, March 25, 1975, six hours before the opening of the constituency meeting, all three executive officers of the conference administration appeared unannounced at the church service. After delivering the sermon, the conference president delivered an ultimatum: disband or face the

consequences. The Burbank congregation, by a solid majority, refused to disband.⁴ A document containing the specifications of the charges that the Burbank congregation had been requesting for about 12 months was then presented to the congregation. The "recommendation" contained the text of the motion which was to be the first item of business at the constituency meeting to be held on that evening in the Ellen G. White Memorial Church in Los Angeles. This action proposed that the constituency expel the Burbank Adventist Church from the "sisterhood" of Adventist churches, transfer all of its members to the "Conference Church" and declare the Burbank Church "closed."

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At the Sabbath evening constituency session, the motion passed by a vote of 664 to 115 with 7 abstentions.

Alerted by an announcement mailed from the Burbank congregation that services would continue, the conference administration sent letters to all members of the "former" Burbank Church stating that the physical plant was closed and "anyone entering without permission will be charged with a trespass."⁵ The following Sabbath morning, despite the presence of police, services were held with about 70 members in attendance. Five days later, six members of the Burbank Church, including the church administrator, head elder and three members of the ministerial staff were declared disfellowshipped by a vote of the conference committee. The basis of the action of the conference committee was their assertion that since the members of the Burbank Church had been transferred to the Conference Church, the conference executive committee could de-

clare members of the Conference Church disfellowshipped.⁶

Despite the disfellowshipping action, services at the Burbank Church continued. On April 23, the Southern California Conference filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles County Superior Court listing as defendants the Burbank Seventh-day Adventist Church and seven members of the church. The suit asked for immediate possession of the church property by the conference administration, a restraining order preventing the use of the building by Burbank Church members and a declaration that the Southern California Conference owned the name "Burbank SDA Church." In the documents filed by the conference, it was declared that the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists had "ecclesiastical control and authority over all Seventh-day Adventist Churches" in southern California and declared that the conference is the "local governing body of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church which is an *extremely highly organized hierarchical church*." The last five words in this sentence were underlined in the conference brief.⁷

The court denied a request by the conference attorneys for an immediate restraining order and asked the parties to prepare for a trial on the merits of the case. Services continued on a week-to-week basis for the next nine months. In March 1976, a trial was held in Department 86 of the Superior Court located in Glendale, the city in which the conference offices were located. The right of the conference to control and dispose of the property as it saw fit was affirmed as was the ownership of the church's name. The church's checking and savings account was awarded to the congregation. Within a few weeks, a "new" Burbank Church was organized under conference sponsorship. The leadership core of the "old" Burbank Church formed an independent "church-in-exile" fellowship maintaining its corporate identity and continuity.⁸

Three of the disfellowshipped members appealed to the Pacific Union Conference committee citing prohibitions in the *Church Manual* against unilateral transference of membership in the absence of a request by a

member and thus the lack of jurisdiction of the local conference executive committee. The union conference affirmed the right of the local conference to disfellowship.⁹ One member then appealed to the General Conference, specifically to Neal Wilson as the then vice president for North America. In an unprecedented move, the General Conference directed the local conference president to notify the "disfellowshipped" members that their disfellowshipment was null and void, especially rejecting the right of a constituency assembly to vote unilateral membership transfers. Members of the "old" Burbank Church were thus in the interesting and unique position of having membership in the denomination while not being members of any specific congregation unless they personally requested that such action be taken.¹⁰

On the surface, the Burbank Case seems relatively simple and straightforward. A local Adventist church wanted to exercise more autonomy than the local conference could permit. Over an extended period of time, the local church persisted in an independent course. Local conference officials were unable to persuade it to conform. These officials felt they had no alternative but to exercise their authority under the *Church Manual* to close down the insubordinate group. However, the public statements of these conference officials strongly suggest that they saw much more at stake than simply who was to control a rather small congregation in a suburb of Los Angeles. Witness, for example, the fact that the 1980 General Conference was asked to endorse a thoroughgoing revision of Chapter 14 of the *Church Manual* on "Organizing, Uniting, and Disbanding Churches." The new chapter, which will carry the title "Organizing, Uniting, Disbanding, and *Expelling Churches*," clearly has been written to ensure that Burbank will never happen again.¹¹ What is the Burbank Case telling us about the nature of the Adventist Church, particularly in its contemporary structure?

I can here offer only an abstracted version of what is available elsewhere in much

greater detail. Those interested in the basis on which the following statements have been formulated are invited to request the full text of this paper.¹² I submit that the Burbank Case can best be understood within the context of the following observations:

1. Although the organizational structure of the Adventist Church is represented as a five-tier organization, functionally it can be divided into two levels: a lay-constituted structure (the local congregation) and a clerically constituted structure (all other levels).
2. Although the organizational system of the Adventist Church has been called "representative" in the *Church Manual*, a more accurate descriptive term would be "democratic centralism" as

"Any open opposition to current policies and practices is seen as an act of disloyalty to the church with the strong implication that such actions are also somehow contrary to the will of God."

it is phrased in the Constitution of the U.S.S.R.¹³

3. Political power in the Adventist Church is currently effectively concentrated in the hands of a professional clergy. There are at least two distinct levels of authority within this group: an administrative clergy (conference officials and institutional administrators) and a pastoral clergy (local church pastors). Ranking below both segments of the professional clergy in terms of political power is the lay membership of the church.
4. The current political dominance of the professional clergy has been institutionalized in the denominational organizational structure and in the implementation of the church's administrative policies, the most important of which are codified in the *Church Man-*

ual. The *Church Manual* contains the elements of a political charter which legitimizes the dominant role of the professional clergy and the current political structure of the church.

5. A central ideological buttress of the present political system is the sacramental character of the denomination's bureaucratic and organizational structures, *i.e.*, the view that the church's political system has been ordained of God.
6. A central functional buttress of the present system has been the successful implantation of a set of norms in most lay members which mandates that the vast overwhelming percentage of funds contributed at the local level — mostly in the form of the tithe — cannot be used at the local level but must be remitted into the hands of the clerically controlled administrative units.
7. The pastoral clergy — the local church pastors — are paradoxically in the weakest and, at the same time, potentially in the most politically powerful position in the church. On one hand, as the political representatives of the professional clergy at the grass roots level, they are charged with responsibility for seeing that the local church unit functions in a manner compatible with the priorities of the clerically constituted structures. On the other hand, the total economic stability and viability of the church depends on the predictable flow of funds from the local church to the local conference and above. Clearly, the whole operation of the administrative apparatus of the church above the local church level would rapidly be disestablished without this constant flow of lay-generated funds.

When one examines the church's current political structure in the light of these observations, it is perhaps somewhat easier to understand the real or imagined threat posed by Burbank to leadership. It was not simply that a local church was insubordinate. It was the fact that Burbank directly and openly challenged on a point-by-point basis the central

ideological and functional foundations of the church's political system. At the core of the challenge was a collision of two highly divergent views of the source and nature of legitimate political authority in the denomination.

Since the ouster of John Harvey Kellogg in the first decade of this century, a clerical "party" has developed and successfully promulgated what we will call a *sacerdotal model* of church polity. This model views the church's political system as an integral extension of its theological or doctrinal structure. In the same sense that the Adventist Church's doctrinal teachings are seen as true and as reflecting a correct interpretation of Scripture, it is assumed that the present organization is ordained of God and the present clerical leadership is carrying out their God-prescribed responsibilities. The legitimacy of their authority derives from a supernatural source. There seems to be a tendency to conduct the business of the church as if God speaks more clearly to professional clergymen than he does to ordinary laymen. A logical extension of this view is that any open opposition to current policies and practices is seen as an act of disloyalty to the church with the strong implication that such actions are also somehow contrary to the will of God.

Within the space of about a decade, Burbank evolved a consensus on what we will call a *participatory model* of church polity. This model sees political authority in the church as deriving its legitimacy from the expressed consent of the governed — the majority of the members. In theological terms, this model assumes that God can and does speak as authoritatively concerning the operation of the church to the laity as he apparently does to members of the clergy. The will of God as expressed through the collective consensus of church members is as valid a source of legitimate political authority as that derived from a clerical interpretation of some designated external authority.

As Burbank's internal political operations increasingly came to reflect the characteristics described in the participatory model, it was inevitable that a question would be asked

whether the present organizational structure was a reflection of a God-given mandate or evolved as a result of a human tendency for a group acquiring authority to want to validate the political power it has acquired. The development of a Burbank political consensus opted for the latter view seeing the *Church Manual* primarily as a charter by which a clerical minority operated and justified a political system over which it had acquired almost total control.

The focus on the church's clerical establishment may cause some to infer that the cause of and/or "blame" for the present political system lies at the feet of the professional clergy. It is important to state specifically that, in the view of the writer, the pastoral and administrative clergy, with few exceptions, are sincerely attempting to carry out what they conceive to be "God's will" in the corporate life of the church. If any "blame" should be assigned, it should be directed at the majority of Adventists, the laymen. More than a decade ago, Dr. Leif Tobiassen succinctly summed up the basic cause of the present political system: "the actual behavior of the church members as they discharge (or shrink from discharging) their responsibilities in connection with church decisions and church elections."¹⁴ He then states:

Whatever fault, if any, may be found among the clergy, our organization . . . can rectify it if the church members have the will. If the church members have insufficient will, the clergy is tempted beyond resistance. . . .

The great lesson from the second, . . . third, and fourth centuries is that when and where members of the Christian churches ceased to take a personal interest in the administration and the elections of the church, the episcopacy and eventually the papacy evolved. This evolution was not . . . planned by the clergy or the hierarchy; it was caused, fundamentally, in the churches. If a similar situation should develop among us now, it would be difficult to believe that we could escape a similar evolution. But the responsibility would not rest solely on the clergy or the Establishment but also on the individual members of the church.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The history of the Burbank Church outlined in this article is based mainly on three sources. For developments to the end of the Jones era, see Charles Randall, "The Burbank Case," *Perspective*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (summer 1967), pp. 8-13. For greater detail and a political analysis up to 1967, see George W. Colvin, Jr., "Conflict: A Study in Church Politics," unpublished manuscript prepared for a Seminar in Political Behavior at California State University, Los Angeles, March 1972. The discussion of developments from the end of the Jones era to the present time (1979) is based on unpublished materials, including minutes, memos, letters and other documents, copies of which are in the possession of the author and John Craven. Conclusions and the selection of data from the primary documents are entirely the responsibility of the author. Readers should be aware that the author was a participant-observer in the episodes at Burbank from 1963 to the present and freely admits any resulting bias. The views expressed are entirely his and may not reflect the opinion of any other member of "old" Burbank Adventist Church.
2. More recently, church officials have emphasized that Ingathering solicitations should emphasize both foreign and "home" missions. It should also be noted that the term "tithe" was returned to the offering envelope about six months later, following meetings between representatives of the Southern California Conference and the Burbank Congregation.
3. Letter of E. Nathan Schilt to Harold L. Calkins, January 27, 1975.
4. There has been confusion over this point due to certain statements made by conference officials. The conference officers that were present at Burbank on March 22 had prepared a ballot that was handed out to those attending the church service on that day. The ballot asked whether church members wished the conference to take control of the Burbank Church. The vast overwhelming majority of members present on that day refused to even participate because such a procedure violated the Burbank Constitution. In a business meeting called by the church administrator following the church service, those present voted overwhelmingly against disbanding.
5. Letter of Harold L. Calkins to "Former Members of the Burbank SDA Church," duplicated, March 27, 1975.
6. Minutes of the Southern California Conference Executive Committee, pp. 4341-4342, 1975 (under listing: Burbank Church 7450-75).
7. Superior Court of the State of California for the County of Los Angeles, Case No. NC C11391-B, 1975.
8. The name of the "church-in-exile" is the Church of the Adventist Fellowship.
9. Appeals Committee Report, Pacific Union Conference, 8 pages, duplicated, September 7, 1975.
10. Under provisions of the *Church Manual* in force in 1975, there are only three ways in which one can lose his membership in the Adventist Church: through death, loss of contact or disfellowshipping. Obviously, death or loss of contact is not relevant in these cases. The disfellowshipping was declared reversed. Therefore, all are still members of the church. See *Church Manual*, pp. 70, 95, 239.
11. See *Review and Herald*, December 15, 1977, pp. 13-14.
12. Anyone interested in receiving the complete manuscript is invited to write the author at the Department of Anthropology, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521.
13. I would invite anyone who feels this suggestion to be unjustified to read the section in the *Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics* adopted in 1977. An English translation was published by the Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1977. In that edition the section appears on page 20: "The Soviet state is organized and functions on the principle of democratic centralism, namely the electiveness of all bodies of state authority from the lowest to the highest, their accountability to the people, and the obligation of lower bodies to observe the decisions of higher ones. Democratic centralism combines central leadership with local initiative and creative activity and with the responsibility of each state body and official for the work entrusted to them."
14. Leif Tobiassen, Letter to the Editor, *Perspective*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer 1967), pp. 6-7.

Burbank: Other Perspectives

by Jerry Wiley

Albert Einstein suggested years ago that our perspective, our relative position, defines reality. Elsewhere in this issue of *SPECTRUM*, Ervin Taylor offers his view of the Burbank Case and takes the role of apologist for that experience and sets forth arguments for a changed form of church governance and structure. In order to sharpen the reader's perspectives on the issue confronted in the Burbank Case, I offer some other perspectives as set forth below without comment on Taylor's major premise, which I read to be that the form of church governance in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is no longer sound, or at the very least, the form of church governance of the Seventh-day Adventist Church should be carefully and seriously reexamined. Robert Peterson and Elder Harold Calkins, president of the Southern California Conference, have both read this short response to Taylor for factual accuracy but are not responsible for the choice of language or any conclusions herein. Throughout my reply, I shall use "Burbank" to denote the group of members who were in control of the local Burbank Church and "the Church" to denote the sisterhood of churches in southern California represented in their constituency meetings and between constituency meetings by the Southern California Conference.

By opening his article with the quotation

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from the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (hereinafter *Church Manual*) and the quotation from some of the evidence in the lawsuit, Taylor offers the readers a concept he and the Burbank group found necessarily incompatible, namely that a church could at once be "representative" and at the same time "extremely highly organized." The position of Burbank both within the sisterhood of churches and later before the court was that the Church simply could not be simultaneously or logically representative and highly organized. Both the sisterhood of churches, acting in the constituency meeting he refers to, and the court rejected this argument. Another way of viewing the dispute between Burbank and the Church is to call attention to the fact that Burbank wished to unilaterally change the form of church government from representative and highly organized (local church, local conference, union conference, division, general conference) to congregational¹, and that it wished to do so unilaterally, *i.e.*, without the sanction of the sisterhood or general corporate body of believers. It was from this perspective that the sisterhood, through the constituency, and the court viewed the dispute, and from that perspective, both made judgments against Burbank.

One of the ironies of the Burbank issue seems to me to have been that those in control of Burbank never understood that the policies they offered for betterment, many of which Taylor refers to, were suspect in the eyes not only of the conference leadership, as

he notes, but also in the eyes of the representatives of the other churches, because Burbank's methods seemed to the constituency to be suspect, and Burbank's posture unduly adversarial.

An evidence instructor of mine once observed that most of what we accept as fact is opinion, and as such, its setting subjects it to distortion, and the distortion may well lead to a result which is therefore incorrect. For example, while Taylor is technically correct in stating that "the Burbank congregation, by a solid majority, refused to disband" (p. 28), SPECTRUM'S readers may find that their perspective is changed to know that the "solid majority" referred to was a solid majority of those present and voting and that the total group voting represented only about 15 percent of the membership in the church.² One of the pieces of evidence prepared for trial later included some earlier minutes of the Burbank meetings, wherein the leaders were quoted in their own minutes to the effect that, although they were only a small minority of the membership, they could seize and maintain control of the local church because they were highly organized.³ I was reminded of the old adage that bad governments are the result of good citizens who do not vote when, at one point, we heard many of the members who had attended in Burbank say that they simply would no longer attend there because they did not like what was going on. That led me to the position that the quiescent members got what they deserved by not participating. Later, however, I realized that most people go to church for healing and help and not for stress and controversy. Thus, it may be that an organized minority can always control a single church.

When Taylor reports the site of the trial before the court, he offers two statements which are inaccurate in different ways. First, the Department was not "86" but rather Department "D."⁴ This bit of dramatizing may be inconsequential, but the other inaccuracy regarding the situs of the trial seems more significant and may tell SPECTRUM'S readers something about reality. Taylor

states, "In March 1976, a trial was held in Department 86 of the Superior Court located in Glendale, the city in which the conference offices were located" (p. 29). I assume he offers the latter clause so that the readers may draw some inference from it. Before you finalize any inference, let me note that the case was originally set for trial in Burbank and was moved to Glendale as a result of the action of Taylor's attorney, *i.e.*, the attorney for the named defendants and the Burbank group. The Church, acting through the conference, was quite happy to try the case anywhere, including Burbank, but that did not suit the Burbank group, so that the case was moved from Burbank to the next nearest court as a result of Burbank's action.⁵

The question of church membership once a congregation has been disbanded by the sisterhood of churches sitting in constituency meeting is one upon which the *Church Manual* is unfortunately ambiguous. I offer as some evidence for that conclusion that the constituency, local conference and union conference thought that one thing occurred or should occur to church membership when a church is removed from the constituency, and the General Conference thought something else. And alas, Taylor and I disagree as to what the General Conference ultimately decided even now.

The *Church Manual* stated in part, "In any case of disbanding a church, for whatever reason, a full statement of the facts shall be presented at the session of the conference or field, and action shall be taken dropping the church from the list of constituent churches and a record of this shall be made in the minutes of the conference or field giving the reason for disbanding."⁶ Unfortunately, there is no language following the section in the *Church Manual* on disbanding describing the procedure to be followed in dealing with the membership of the individual members. Alternatives seemed to include: (1) an assumption that with the disbanding all former members were disfellowshipped, *i.e.*, had no church membership even though not individually disfellowshipped for cause; (2) that the individuals were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church but in some sort of suspended membership; and (3) that

the constituency had the power to decide membership inasmuch as they could remove the entire church. Because the constituency strongly desired to hurt no individual in its attempt to deal with Burbank, in a spirit of loving concern for each individual, it decided that the *Church Manual* language set forth below meant that those whose memberships resided in Burbank would become members of the Conference Church until such a time as an individual member asked for transfer.

If in the membership of a disbanded or expelled church there are loyal and worthy members who desire to remain with the body, they may be organized into a new church, or by vote of the conference committee may be recommended for membership in another church.⁷

Additionally, the sisterhood of churches in its constituency meeting considered that since letters of transfer to other churches were not to be made prior to the constituency's decision to expel or disband, that letters of transfer to some new church should be granted to all loyal members. Who then was to issue the letters? The constituency read the absence of direct instruction in the *Church Manual* to mean that the memberships of all of the Burbank congregation would then be in the Conference Church, and that the Conference Committee was empowered to act as the Conference Church because its membership, by its nature, could not be called together.⁸

As noted above, Taylor and I disagree as to what the General Conference reversal of the subsequent attempt to disfellowship for cause certain dissident leaders from Burbank meant to the former members. Those of us who examined the instruction from the General Conference were not only perplexed, but also dismayed, for our reading of the instruction to the local Conference Committee was that the Conference could not have disfel-

lowshipped the dissident members, *because* the constituency action had already deprived them of their church membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and therefore there was nothing from which to disfellowship them, *i.e.*, no membership on which to act. This was disquieting because it meant that all of the loyal members of Burbank who wanted to attend a "normal" church were disfellowshipped by the constituency action removing Burbank from the sisterhood, although they were not disfellowshipped for cause. A number of us sought clarification and were told that that was the correct interpretation of the General Conference position. Stated another way, the Conference Committee could not disfellowship for cause a person who had already been disfellowshipped by disbanding or exclusion of his/her former church, for there was no church membership over which to take jurisdiction.⁹ While this seemed a result less gentle than that sought by the constituency and subsequently the Conference Committee, it was binding. Thus, it appears that Taylor is *incorrect* in stating that "members of the 'old' Burbank Church were thus in the interesting and unique position of having membership in *the* denomination while not being members of any specific congregation unless they personally requested that such action be taken" (p. 29).

An exploration of any complex church issue is in order, but I do not believe that a single congregation, acting unilaterally, has the right to change the rules against the expectations of generations of prior believers. As one older member who had left Burbank said to us, "Don't let them take our church. We built that church as a part of the denomination, and not as a local group merely carrying the Church's name." That statement was echoed in many forms throughout the controversy and poses another perspective on the reality of the dispute.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See pp. 46-47 of *The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (hereinafter *Church Manual*), 1967 edition. All references to the *Church Manual* are from that edition since it was the edition accepted as controlling

by disputants.

2. Evidence prepared for trial in the Burbank Case.

3. Evidence prepared for trial in the Burbank Case.

4. Court record on file in Los Angeles County.

5. Court record on file in Los Angeles County.
6. *Church Manual*, pp. 249-50.
7. *Church Manual*, p. 249.
8. See *Church Manual*, pp. 67, 70, 249-50.
9. I personally discussed at length the General Conference position with President Neal Wilson, then vice

president for North America, on two occasions and was assured that the General Conference understood and intended its interpretation to result in disfellowshipping *without* cause all members of the former Burbank Church.

Misperceptions of Burbank

by George Colvin, Jr.

Dr. R. Ervin Taylor's article is useful as a first attempt at a political understanding of Seventh-day Adventist church government and as a partial explanation of the Burbank case. The realities, however, are so much larger than his excessively confining categories, particularly for Adventist government as a whole, that his efforts to force them into his analytical box remind one of Dorothy L. Sayers' description of an attempt to "force a large and obstreperous cat into a small basket":

As fast as you tuck in the head, the tail comes out; when you have at length confined the hind legs, the forepaws come out and scratch; and when, after a painful struggle, you shut down the lid, the dismal wailings of the imprisoned animal suggest that some essential dignity in the creature has been violated and a wrong done to its nature.¹

Dr. Taylor asserts that the situation at Burbank church contrasted with the situation in Adventist government generally. He contends that in the Adventist church as a whole, power is wielded by the administrative clergy, who control the lay members

through organizational structures (codified in the *Church Manual*), functionaries (particularly the local pastors), and clerically-inspired norms (including the divine ordination of the structure). This is a "sacerdotal model" of church polity, whose secular equivalent is the governmental structure of the Soviet Union.² Against this model the Burbank church evolved a "participatory model," in which power is held by anyone whom the "collective consensus of church members" designates, and the structure is not divinely ordained. The Burbank case was a defense of the "sacerdotal model" by the administrative clergy against the challenge of the "participatory model" as established at Burbank church.

Problems in this analysis abound. The "participatory model" appeared to be opposed to reliance on interpretation of "some designated external authority" for guidance on church organization. Yet the Adventist church relies on an interpretation of an "external authority," the Bible, for its theological teachings. Even to the limited extent that the term "participatory model" describes Burbank church government, that model attempts to separate theology from polity, which is both unnecessary and unwise. A different model based on a more member-directed interpretation of Scripture would

George Colvin, Jr., is completing his doctorate in government at the Claremont Graduate School. His dissertation studies Adventist church government.

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through organizational structures (codified in the *Church Manual*), functionaries (particularly the local pastors), and clerically-inspired norms (including the divine ordination of the structure). This is a "sacerdotal model" of church polity, whose secular equivalent is the governmental structure of the Soviet Union.² Against this model the Burbank church evolved a "participatory model," in which power is held by anyone whom the "collective consensus of church members" designates, and the structure is not divinely ordained. The Burbank case was a defense of the "sacerdotal model" by the administrative clergy against the challenge of the "participatory model" as established at Burbank church.

Problems in this analysis abound. The "participatory model" appeared to be opposed to reliance on interpretation of "some designated external authority" for guidance on church organization. Yet the Adventist church relies on an interpretation of an "external authority," the Bible, for its theological teachings. Even to the limited extent that the term "participatory model" describes Burbank church government, that model attempts to separate theology from polity, which is both unnecessary and unwise. A different model based on a more member-directed interpretation of Scripture would

¹ George Colvin, Jr., is completing his doctorate in government at the Claremont Graduate School. His dissertation studies Adventist church government.

unify theology and polity and yet change the current emphasis in a “participatory” direction.

In addition, Dr. Taylor does not identify the locus of power in his “participatory model.” If laymen in general are to have real decision-making power, this power must be located at the level accessible to most laymen — the congregational level. There is thus an implicit congregationalism in Dr. Taylor’s “participatory model.” In his analysis, the choice lies between this congregational form and a severely centralized (“sacerdotal”) one. Yet, the best option is neither a centralized nor a decentralized form, but rather a healthy blend of centralization and decentralization that fits the contest and the jobs to be done and encourages participation by the most competent people. These people would be equally frustrated, though in different ways, by both of Dr. Taylor’s options.

The inadequacy of Dr. Taylor’s analysis is also seen in his treatment of Burbank church. By and large, what factual material Dr. Taylor presents is accurate. His interpretations, however, are confused. They portray Burbank church’s actions both as a “point-by-point” challenge to the present system and as “modest,” “simple,” “not unprecedented,” and certainly nonconfrontational. A close acquaintance with Burbank’s history shows that Burbank was not only attempting to implement a “participatory model”; it was also working out the essentially congregationalist implications of this model, which Dr. Taylor understates. It appears that the congregationalist actions, rather than Burbank’s structure, were in fact the bulk of the reasons for the crises. The lay-controlled Burbank structure acted primarily to intensify the crises when they arose by requiring the conference administration to deal with a structure and leaders they did not understand, disliked, and could not control without drastic action.

Some of these congregationalist actions are mentioned by Dr. Taylor himself: formation of a Burbank “constitution” that referred to the “voluntary bond” by which Burbank was united with the Adventist church; withdrawal from Ingathering; replacement of the denominationally sanctioned term “tithes” on

offering envelopes by other terminology; and hiring Burbank’s former pastor, no longer credentialed by the Adventist church, as a minister on a salary drawn from Burbank church funds.³ Dr. Taylor omits other actions in this vein: ordination of a woman lay elder against conference wishes; refusal to apply Adventist church-specified tests to local officers; a redefinition and very substantial broadening of the term “worship” to include, for example, waterskiing on Sabbath behind boats rented on Sabbath by Burbank church; direct giving through Burbank church to particular mission projects; and a clear deviation from Adventist doctrine in a statement of beliefs carried for years on the weekly church bulletin.⁴

This last point is particularly noteworthy. In 1971 a three-member Burbank church committee, divided as Burbank church itself was without animosity into a theologically conservative minority and a theologically liberal majority, produced majority and minority reports on a statement of beliefs for the bulletin.⁵ The minority report was a paraphrase of the current *Church Manual* statement of beliefs. The majority report, however, was rather shorter and mentioned only four beliefs: “the right to worship,” “a personal God,” “a place to worship on the seventh day,” and “the belief that Christ will return.”⁶ After strenuous debate in the general church meeting, the minority (conservative) report was printed under the heading “Seventh-day Adventists traditionally teach,” followed by the belief summaries. The majority (liberal) report was also printed, under the heading “Burbank Seventh-day Adventist Church offers.” The difference in headings was significant. The majority report represented the extent of belief assertions that the Burbank liberal wing would make; it also demonstrated the extent of Burbank’s congregationalism by its assertion that Burbank church could “offer” beliefs different from the “traditional teachings” of the Seventh-day Adventist church.⁷

This record shows that Burbank church was attempting to operate a congregationalist church with a relatively open internal struc-

ture — a far better description of Burbank than Dr. Taylor's artificial "participatory model." Dr. Taylor's failure to bring this out illegitimately avoided a relevant point in the debate over Adventist church government: would the church as a whole operate better or worse under a Burbank-style congregationalism, where policy and theology alike are purely, or largely, local responsibilities? Neither Dr. Taylor's article, nor any article in *Perspective*, nor any statement

“Though Dr. Taylor’s account of the Burbank church is inadequate and distorted, it is in his analysis of present Adventist church government that Dr. Taylor most conspicuously fails to describe reality.”

from Burbank church properly addressed this question. Burbank church thus seemed to desire to do what it wished without consideration of the effects of its example on the Adventist church generally; but this was a luxury the conference administrators could not afford. The steadily increasing congregationalism at Burbank also tended to reduce Burbank church's own openness by making it an uncomfortable place for those who did not desire a congregationalist church, however open its structure. These factors worked together to produce a gradual drop in Burbank's membership and the final events in 1974 and 1975 — which were the almost inevitable result of an attempt to use a small local church as a weapon in a battle over Adventist church order.

Though Dr. Taylor's account of the Burbank church is inadequate and distorted, it is in his analysis of present Adventist church government that Dr. Taylor most conspicuously fails to describe reality. His "sacerdotal model" (the present structure) allows for only three monolithic actors: the administrative clergy, the pastoral clergy, and the pow-

erless laymen. This description might have been accurate three decades ago; it is not accurate now.

The Adventist church now has more highly educated members than ever before, and they are linked by many networks. This situation has tended to divide Dr. Taylor's monolithic blocs along cultural and educational lines, so that a clergyman with a graduate degree in counseling, for example, often has a greater affinity with lay professionals in counseling than with other clergymen not so educated. Lines of thought have thus become far more important divisions than in the past; and these lines cross Dr. Taylor's three groups. Education also has produced a large and growing body of educated Adventist laymen — particularly practitioners of the health-related professions and teachers in Adventist institutions of higher education. The first group has significant influence on the local level in many cases through financial means, though its influence on denominational policy as a whole has been limited. The Adventist educators, however, have acquired significant policy influence in the Adventist church as a whole, bypassing Dr. Taylor's "participatory" and "sacerdotal" models (which are parish-oriented). They have this influence both directly through their own actions and indirectly through the effects of their teaching on Adventist undergraduates who will shape future policy and on current administrators who agree with them.

The direct influence of Adventist educators was apparent in the recent debate over specific statements of belief on inspiration and creation. Though these statements were strongly pressed by influential members of Dr. Taylor's "administrative clergy," they were not carried — largely due to vociferous opposition from Adventist college and university teachers. Their influence, too, was important in the formulation and passage of the statement of beliefs at the 1980 General Conference session, which stressed a progressive revelation position quite out of harmony with the idea of "preserving the landmarks." Current controversies over Dr. Desmond Ford and the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy will significantly involve and

may even turn on the views of these Adventist educators.

The indirect influence of Adventist teachers is harder to observe. Yet these teachers are often involved in presenting to students and other Adventists ideas that portray Adventism in a way often very different from recent and even current denominational precept and practice. As these ideas are absorbed they will have immense though unpredictable effects — particularly in a church where members' lives and their beliefs are so closely connected as they are in the Seventh-day Adventist church. All these effects of education escaped Dr. Taylor's analysis.⁸

"Prophecy," George Eliot wrote, "is the

most gratuitous form of error." Yet even in the face of such a warning, it is possible to hazard a guess. If changes in Adventist church structure are to come, they probably will do so not primarily through a direct political challenge such as Burbank church posed, but rather through the operation of ideas put forward by academics, many of whom no more intend this result than the first Adventist teachers in a one-room school intended the development of a critical Adventist historiography. Thus the Adventist church would reenact the constant tendency of man to be surprised at the effects of his own actions.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. "Creative Mind," in Dorothy L. Sayers, *Christian Letters to a Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 84.

2. This comparison was inapt and abstracted excessively from reality. The plain text of the Soviet Constitution cited by Dr. Taylor could have been a description of both American and Soviet government — which, in the light of their obvious differences, should have been a warning that it is deceptive. In any case, such formalistic comparisons often prove little about the actual operational differences between systems, particularly when the gap between theory and practice is as wide as it is for the Soviet system (on which point Alexander Solzhenitsyn is definitive). To cite only a few examples, Adventist teachers have incomparably greater freedom of thought and action than their Soviet counterparts do; ordinary Adventists have greater access to the denominational press (despite unfortunate restrictions) and to Adventist leaders than inhabitants of the Soviet Union have to the Soviet press and leadership; and despite some limiting changes passed at the 1980 General Conference, Adventists cannot be deprived of their denominational "citizenship" by the central leadership as Soviet inhabitants can. Dr. Taylor's analysis ignored the freer nature of Adventist politics, though the very existence within the Adventist Church for over a decade of a dissident Burbank church and the significant constituency opposition in 1975 to the leadership's demand for Burbank's ouster (both inconceivable under the Soviet system) should have alerted him to this fact.

3. Dr. Taylor's constant efforts to make these actions appear moderate and understandable individually were puzzling in the light of his assertion that they were revolutionary collectively.

4. This list is taken from the personal experiences of the author and from materials in his possession, particularly the Southern California Conference "Recommendation Regarding the Burbank Church" presented at the 1975 constituency meeting and the Burbank church's "Refutation of Expulsion Charges" issued after that meeting.

5. The author was himself the minority member of this committee. Like Dr. Taylor, the author was a participant-observer at Burbank Church for many years.

6. The majority report read:

BURBANK SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH OFFERS:

THE RIGHT TO WORSHIP: Surely God would not deny any man this right. Therefore, the only requirement for worshipping with us is the desire to do so.

THE BELIEF IN A PERSONAL GOD: Religious thinking is inherently personal and a man's relationship with God is singularly important. The full understanding of God is enhanced through the diversity of opinions. The exchange of these opinions is welcomed at Burbank.

As our name implies, **A PLACE TO WORSHIP ON THE SEVENTH DAY.**

As our name implies, **THE BELIEF THAT CHRIST WILL RETURN.**

7. A final irony at Burbank church involved this statement. On the charge of apostasy, the Burbank church's "Refutation of Expulsion Charges" cited the conservative statement as a proof of Burbank church's orthodoxy, though the vast majority of the 1975 leaders had opposed this statement in 1971 and had been instrumental then in making clear through the difference in headings that this statement did not represent Burbank church. This curiously meek and deceptive attitude was constant throughout the "Refutation," which nowhere avowed the revolutionary goals Burbank church actually pursued.

8. One reason for this omission suggests itself in the composition of Burbank church's leadership. The Burbank church board of elders in 1967, for example, included no church employees at all among its 14 members. (See "Meeting of Southern California Conference Executive Committee with the Board of Elders of the Burbank Church, May 4, 1967" [mimeographed transcript] p. [13]. At no time did Burbank church or its leadership have any important ties to Adventist higher education.

The Continuing Crisis

by Richard Emmerson

One year after the events generally known as “Glacier View,” the Seventh-day Adventist church remains in a state of crisis. Although the scandal of the denomination’s financial involvement with Dr. Donald Davenport has, for the time at least, drawn national attention away from the theological and ethical issues raised by the defrocking of Desmond Ford and the dismissal of Walter Rea, these issues remain real and of major concern to many Adventists. Certainly the inappropriate — and in some cases perhaps unethical — decisions by several denominational leaders concerning the investment of church monies (see page 50) need careful scrutiny. But the continuing hard-line decisions of church leaders, the disillusionment and even loss of many congregations and young pastors, and such events as the Desmond Ford sponsored “Gospel Congress” (see page 45) ultimately may be of greater significance for the future of the church.

Since SPECTRUM published its first re-

port, “Must the Crisis Continue?” (Vol. 11, No. 3), church leadership has continued to harden its position concerning theological matters and the freedom of theologians and teachers to differ from “official” positions, while at the same time theologians and others have formally asked this leadership to take a more moderate and open stand on “new light” and in its treatment and reporting of divergent opinions.

The decision last spring of Smuts van Rooyen, a popular religion teacher at Andrews University, to resign under pressure shocked Adventist college campuses perhaps even more than did Desmond Ford’s dismissal last summer. Although university officials maintain that van Rooyen was not forced to resign, the decision not to allow him to preach at the university church on May 9 and the university’s generous waiver of his educational debt of approximately \$50,000 suggest that the university made its position clear. According to van Rooyen, the university gave him no ultimatum, but he was expressly told twice by Dr. J. Grady Smoot, president of Andrews, that he did not see how van Rooyen could continue to teach at an Adventist institution, and since the university was expecting to cut its teaching staff,

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van Rooyen believed that he might not be rehired. Andrews University provost, Roy Graham, would not comment on van Rooyen's resignation, noting that he had promised van Rooyen that their conversations were private.

Van Rooyen apparently ran into trouble with some members of the university community when he refused to say with confidence that the Adventist church is God's remnant church on earth. In a phone interview with SPECTRUM, however, van Rooyen stated that he did not believe that his difficulties were due to one particular issue and definitely not to his theological beliefs, since a number of teachers at Andrews and elsewhere hold similar positions. He believes that rumors concerning his connection with *Evangelica* played a major part. "After Wilson's visit to Andrews, I severed all connections with *Evangelica*," he noted, "but they thought I was responsible for each succeeding issue."

Although he claims to feel no malice over his difficulties at Andrews, van Rooyen does believe that the administration was weak in giving in to rumors and pressure and in not investigating the issues at hand. "They never took the time to discuss my views with me in any detail, or to discuss the rumors or their particular concerns." Noting that he never was given a hearing before his peers, as Smoot had promised, van Rooyen said the whole situation led to "a tremendous breakdown of communication."

Having joined Desmond Ford to work with Good News Unlimited, van Rooyen denies emphatically that he and Ford are forming a new denomination. Good News Unlimited wishes instead to become "something equivalent to a Billy Graham ministry, or to a Campus Crusade." For the future, he plans to publish books and preach, "perhaps on television and radio," but for the present he will be writing his dissertation on the history of the doctrine of justification within Adventism in order to complete his doctorate at the University of South Africa.

Aware of the loss of many committed teachers and pastors from denominational employ, many Adventists, both formally and informally, have expressed their dismay

regarding the actions of church leadership since Glacier View. One area of concern is what is perceived as biased and needlessly polemical reporting of news in official church papers. The editors of the student newspapers of the Adventist colleges in North America meeting at Pacific Union College sent on April 7 an open letter to Franklin Hudgins, Kenneth Wood, and Neal Wilson. Affirming their dedication to the church, the college editors nevertheless complained that official church news releases "were needlessly rhetorical, often to the point that the material might be considered not only inaccurate but also misleading."

As examples, the letter pointed to the church's reporting of the Ford dismissal and of recent discussions concerning Ellen White's unacknowledged use of materials written by her contemporaries. The editors felt that the news releases were "defensive" and perhaps "counter-productive." The letter concluded with a plea for greater trust on the part of church leadership in the ability of church members "to handle debatable and delicate issues" and a statement of confidence that a unified church can be the result of "a well-informed clergy and laity."

A similar commitment to church unity and a desire, as Lorenzo Grant of Southern Missionary College said, to address in the spirit of "reconciliation" the discord and theological upheaval now troubling the church brought together 17 teachers from seven Adventist colleges and universities on June 12 in Atlanta. Over two days the participants shared their feelings and fears, their convictions and hopes, their prayers and songs, in the end producing a document signed by all 17 participants,* christened "The Atlanta Affirmation."

The document (see box) declares the group's confidence in the Adventist mission and message, determination to be faithful to the tasks of ministry and teaching, belief in the need for theological curiosity and openness, and commitment to the support of such

*Later, one participant, Norman Gulley of Southern Missionary College, requested that his name be removed from the document.

openness. It further declares the group's unhappiness with policies and actions that have fostered division and misunderstanding in the church, and finally encourages efforts to build trust and to affirm and renew the Adventist message.

Several religion teachers at Southern Missionary College, led by Grant, organized the Atlanta meeting. Participants and visitors emphasized the importance of freedom within the church for theological reflection. For example, Frank Knittel, president of Southern Missionary College and a visitor to the first session, said that the church required an atmosphere conducive to theological study "devoid of fear." Others were troubled by the after-effects of the present crisis. Adrian Zytoskee of Pacific Union College worried over the "cynicism" he finds among many of his students, and Charles Teel, Jr., of Loma Linda University noted that many college students end up leaving the church. Said Teel: "The true-believer mentality is not washing."

Speakers at the meeting reaffirmed the importance of theological study and the need to tackle difficult problems. Jack Provonsha of Loma Linda University suggested that,

rather than being disturbed by the church's theological problems, we should acknowledge that the search for understanding is eternal and that the church is a community "in collective and never-ending quest."

One participant at the Atlanta meeting, Richard Rice, commented on the connection between fruitful study and diversity of opinion. No one group in the church should be allowed to define Adventism. "We must pluralize and complicate what Adventism is," he said. Ironically, Rice's attempt to suggest new approaches in Adventist theology has since led to problems for the Loma Linda University theologian.

Rice's book, *The Openness of God: The Relationship of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will* (see reviews, pages 62 and 64), has become the center of a controversy in the church that raises serious questions concerning both the freedom of theological study and the editorial repercussions of the recent decision to combine the Southern Publishing Association with the Review and Herald Publishing Association. Having been accepted for publication and printed by Southern, the book, which in six months sold over half its initial printing, was, at least temporarily,

The Atlanta Affirmation

Because of our shared commitment to the building up of the church and to the preservation of its unity, we have come together to explore ways in which our ministry may contribute to these ends. As a result of our prayer and worship as a group, and of our frank discussions with one another, we together affirm:

1. That we are confident in the providential origin and distinctive message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

2. That we take seriously our call to the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and that we intend to be faithful to that call.

Because careful theological study led to the founding of our movement, and has always been considered the means to advance in our knowledge of truth, we further affirm:

3. That the task of theological inquiry is linked inseparably to our vision and way of life, and that we are irrevocably committed to the responsible fulfillment of that task.

4. That the atmosphere of openness, curiosity, trust and love for one another necessary for fulfilling the task must be preserved.

5. That advances in the knowledge of truth occur, as has been the case from our movement's beginnings, when a variety of gifts and viewpoints come to expression.

6. That we are bound in solidarity with one another and with our colleagues in the teaching ministry and are committed to support one another in our efforts to be honest, creative and redemptive through scholarly investigation.

7. That we are committed to work with church administrators in their efforts to unify the church through theological dialogue, Bible study, fellowship and prayer.

In the light of these affirmations we call attention to, and express our concern over, the following points:

1. That the dismissal or withdrawal under pressure of certain teachers and pastors from denominational employ has given rise to grave concern among many members of our church.

withdrawn by decision of the Review and Herald Administration Committee. Bothered by the book's theology, the Review and Herald at first decided simply not to advertise the book, and then to draft a disclaimer to accompany it. In a letter dated July 14, however, Richard Coffen, a book editor at the Review, notified Rice that the Administration Committee had declared the book out of print, which in effect meant that the book's remaining copies would not be distributed.

When reached by SPECTRUM, Rice stated that he was not sure exactly what were the book's problems that had led to the decision to withdraw the book, since he has not been informed officially. He understood, though, that some church leaders did not approve of his approach to the Ellen White statements in the book's appendix and that others were unhappy with his use of "process thought" in the book.

Rice was hopeful that the book would be available soon. He noted that in a phone conversation, Robert Kinney, head of the book department at the Review and Herald, informed him that the decision to withdraw the book had been changed. Although at the

time of this writing he had not received a written confirmation of the conversation, Rice understood that the remaining copies of the book would be offered for sale, although the book would not be advertised. In a conversation with SPECTRUM, Kinney confirmed that the book would be available. Rice expressed his hope that the book would make a contribution to the thinking of the church and his desire that it "be judged by its content rather than by its publication history."

Nevertheless, the book's publication history certainly raises issues with major implications for the future publication of the work of theologians and others dealing with delicate issues within Adventism. Will the church no longer offer the opportunity to its theologians to advance new ideas for general discussion? Does the merger of the Southern and Review and Herald Publishing Associations mean the end of the theological creativity encouraged by the Anvil Series formerly published by Southern? How is it possible for one Adventist editorial board, after careful scrutiny, to approve a book for publication only to be reversed by another?

2. That loyalty to the church is now often measured with reference to certain personalities or publications rather than to Scripture.

3. That well-meaning attempts to respond creatively to theological questions now confronting Adventism have been interpreted in some circles as jeopardizing the integrity of the church and its message.

4. That the credibility, and therefore effectiveness, of seminary and certain other religion faculties — made up of the very persons prepared to serve the church theologically — are now being eroded.

5. That the treatment of recent theological controversy in the *Adventist Review* and *Ministry* has not always reflected the variety of viewpoints that exist in the church, and that this one-sidedness has fostered an attitude of suspicion and a sense of impotence among a substantial number of our members.

6. That both critics and defenders of currently dominant expressions of Adventist doctrine have stated their views in a manner tending to divide rather than to heal.

7. That energies which should go into the building up of the church are now being wasted in dealing with the consequences of the present climate of distrust and alienation.

8. That frustrations associated with developments we are noting have engendered hurt, dismay, and cynicism among our students, our colleagues in other academic disciplines, and the general membership of the church.

On the basis of the foregoing, we recommend:

1. That teachers, pastors, administrators, and other church members attempt now to stop the polarizing process that threatens our unity and future as a movement by cooling rhetoric, easing tensions and enhancing mutual trust within our community.

2. That they take frequent opportunity to express confidence in the truthfulness of the Adventist message.

3. That they continue, in light of the present situation and in faithfulness to our Lord, to learn about, examine, and renew the heritage God has given to us all.

Dalton Baldwin
Ted Chamberlain
Douglas Clark
Walter Douglas
Jon Dybdahl
Larry Geraty
Jerry Gladson
Lorenzo Grant

Jack Provonsha
Richard Rice
Charles Scriven
Charles Teel
Fred Veltman
Edwin Zackrisson
Robert Zamora
Adrian Zytkoskee

What these and other recent events mean for the continued open discussion of theological issues within Adventism is not altogether clear. Nor is it clear what will be the result of two actions taken at the September 1 meeting of the Andrews University board of trustees. First, the board elected General Conference president Neal Wilson to serve as its chairman, although Wilson said that he did not intend to continue as chairman "indefinitely"; and second, the board appointed Gerhard Hasel, present chairman of the department of Old Testament in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, to be seminary dean. These appointments fill positions vacated by the recent resignations of General Conference vice president Max Torkelson as board chairman and Thomas Blincoe as seminary dean.

Although many had expected Wilson to "take over" the Andrews board, even members of the small "search" committee appointed by President Smoot to consider candidates for the position of dean were caught by surprise when Smoot announced to a hastily gathered meeting of the seminary faculty that Hasel had been chosen. After the meeting, many of the faculty expressed "amazement," "disbelief," and "chagrin" not only with Hasel's appointment, but with "a complete lack of consideration of the faculty's wishes." During a previous meeting, Smoot had promised a nomination that would meet with the approval not only of the field, but also of the seminary faculty. Instead, he evidently capitulated to pressure from Wilson, who in turn was trying to please local and union conference presidents who have been

increasingly strident in their complaints about the seminary faculty. In his own account of Hasel's appointment, Wilson is reported to have told members of the General Conference committee two days later that the seminary is "infected with Christian humanism," and that Hasel was chosen by the board from among five candidates because he was the only available person conservative enough to deal with the problem. (One faculty member later commented how ironic it is that the church, in an effort to bring about theological unity, chose the one person most likely to bring division.)

In the September 1 meeting with the faculty, and after Smoot had announced an "overwhelming" approval by the board (there were only two dissenting votes) of "his recommendation," Wilson spent approximately 30 minutes defending the board action. Repeatedly appealing to the "wishes of the world field," he called on the seminary to become the "arsenal of defense" that the church needs and complained that it had produced men "bewildered, confused, and unable to preach with conviction." Referring to the need to be candid, he stated that "the field is making strong demands for a seminary more conservative in thought and direction." Finally, while admitting that "many of you and others . . . will be uneasy, disappointed and depressed," Wilson said that he was sure that the decision was the one that would meet with the widest possible support in the church as a whole. "You should know," he stated emphatically, "that the board wanted no confusion as to where Andrews University stands theologically."

The Gospel Congress

by Greg Schneider and Charles Scriven

Coming mainly from California but also from as far away as Toronto, Florida, and Australia, substantially more than 1,000 adult participants gathered in Monterey, California, July 23-26, for a Gospel Congress sponsored by Good News Unlimited, the employers of Desmond Ford and Smuts van Rooyen. They came to celebrate their newfound "freedom" in the "pure gospel," and to ponder the meaning and trauma of their discontent with traditional Adventism. At the same time, they found themselves faced with division in their own ranks, division clearly serious though still difficult to assess as to its ultimate consequences.

The main story at the congress was the sense of liberty, of freedom, felt by everyone. A singer who remarked that he generally liked to talk to his audiences before starting his song, said that at a recent camp meeting the platform chairman had instructed him to say nothing since it was the preachers who were paid to talk, not the singers. "Here I am now at the Gospel Con-

gress," he said, "and I've got back my freedom of speech." Though it was Sabbath, the listeners felt free to greet this quip with laughter and applause.

Alan Crandal, editor of *Evangelica*, read a satirical story about Dwight Goodall, an obviously legalistic Seventh-day Adventist. When Sam, a new neighbor, tries to invite Goodall to a get-acquainted party, Goodall wonders if meat will be served — "I mean, the meat of cloven-footed animals?" At this the congregation chuckled. There was loud laughter at Sam's answer: "Well, I've never eaten a cloven-hoof, but if you'd like some. . . ."

Noel Mason, a Good News evangelist and pastor to a Gospel fellowship in Auburn, California, drew a full-throated amen when he declared that the "grace of Christ cannot fit into a legalist, perfectionist wineskin." When to an audience of teetotalers he added parenthetically, "I've never had fresh grape juice bust any of my bottles," a ripple of laughter swelled into applause as people assimilated his meaning.

Ford in calling for the offering mentioned the difficulty they had in finding offering plates. The ushers then began passing around dozens of paper tubs emblazoned with the red and white graphics of Colonel Sanders'

Kentucky Fried Chicken. Again the audience, long steeped in vegetarianism, responded with chuckles and applause.

If the sense of liberty fostered enjoyment of parodies of Adventist subcultural taboos, it also fed appreciation of remarks undermining exclusivist Adventist categories. During a question-and-answer session, Desmond Ford defined "the remnant" as "all those who are trusting in the merits of Jesus and demonstrating their trust by a whole-hearted surrender to His will as they know it." Once more, amens and applause broke out. On Sabbath morning, Noel Mason's use of the new wine and old wineskins metaphor in connection with the question, "Who constitutes the church of Christ?" led him to the statement that all people who have been called out by the grace of God make up his church. This expansive, antiexclusivist message again drew amens and applause.

It was Ford among others, however, who was concerned to put the message of freedom in perspective. On Sabbath morning he told of someone's remarking to him, "My, this is a group of liberated people!" He had replied, "Yes, but not libertines." The entire congress program, in fact, indicated concern to balance freedom with discipline. Much was said throughout the weekend on the basic message of freedom with which Ford and his fellow workers have identified themselves. But the issues of limits and discipline received attention, too. Thus, for example, the initial meeting on Thursday evening featured Smuts van Rooyen on "A Gospel Worth Dying For." And Calvin Edward's Sunday morning discourse on "The Limits of Freedom" aimed clearly at tempering the impulses of liberation so obvious among Gospel believers. The very juxtaposition of such messages with others raised the question of the purpose of the congress in relation to the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

The congress program for Friday read: Alan Crandall, 8:45 a.m., "My Witnesses . . . To the End of the Earth"; Desmond Ford, 10:45 a.m., "The Church in Thy House (Guidelines for an Evangelical Society)"; Peter Johansen, 2:00 p.m., "Setting a Proper

Climate for a Growing Evangelistic Church"; and Peter Johansen, 3:45 p.m., "Selecting, Training and Motivating Leadership." This listing of titles seemed to encourage at least two inferences: 1) The gospel worth dying for that van Rooyen had proclaimed on the preceding evening was seen by congress planners as issuing in mission and in some organized expression of church fellowship; 2) Congress planners intended to encourage the organization of congregations as alternatives to membership in the Seventh-day Adventist church. As it happens, the first inference is largely correct, whereas the second one is wrong.

Alan Crandall did indeed point to the duties of Christians to engage in mission, stressing the need for active compassion in relation to such outcast groups as the hungry of the third world and the homosexuals in our own society. Ford pointed out that one of the marks of a true church was the maintenance of discipline, the rebuking and correction of open wrongs. He also promoted the concept of the disciplined cell group as the foundation of a strong church. Peter Johansen and his associates from First Baptist Church of Modesto, California, offered a how-to, step-by-step approach to church growth and leadership, complete with hand-outs, overhead transparencies, questionnaires and charts. Thus, all the daytime Friday speakers lent their influence to the need for discipline and order among Christians.

Did all these messages add up to a call for a new church? Some, encouraged by remarks made recently on the Adventist camp meeting circuit, might conclude that it did. While speaking to camp-meeting audiences this summer, the Ellen White Estate's Robert Olson, for example associated Desmond Ford with "demonic" forces threatening the Seventh-day Adventist church. He accused Ford of starting his own church, claiming, among other things, that he was encouraging the formation of new congregations and was holding his first alternative "general conference" at Monterey. The evidence available at the Gospel Congress does not sustain these allegations.

At their strongest, Ford's "Guidelines for

an Evangelical Society” gave only permission for the establishment of independent gospel fellowships. He insisted that only where the consciences of clergy and laity were oppressed with regard to proclamation of the gospel was it necessary to separate from the “mother church.” In such situations, “the mother church herself is responsible for schism.” He introduced his guidelines with much talk about the necessity for reform in a church where the vision of the original creative minority has become routinized. Nevertheless, his three basic guidelines hardly encouraged separatist zeal:

“Did all these messages add up to a call for a new church? Some, encouraged by remarks made recently on the Adventist camp meeting circuit, might conclude that it did.”

1) There never has been nor will be a pure church on earth; 2) most who attend church are not fully committed Christians; 3) new churches, once large, repeat the precise history of the church from which they separated. The upshot of the imperative for reform, combined with the practical realization that no new movement is likely to establish a truly satisfactory organization, was Ford’s advocacy of a cell group strategy within existing church arrangements.

This message should lay to rest speculation about Ford’s seeking to start a new church. (It does not, of course, stop conjecture about the “mother church” or other forces pushing him into such a move.) As for the Gospel Congress amounting to a “general conference” session for this “new church,” it should be noted that there were no elections of officers, no committees drafting policy statements and certainly no formulation of a statement of fundamental beliefs. If anything, the spirit of the congress resembled that of a camp meeting rather than any sort of business session.

The question remains, however, of why any practical organizing emphasis was included in the congress. What, indeed, was the purpose of holding a “Gospel Congress,” if not to foster a new church movement?

Ford claimed the main purpose of the congress was to rally support for the evangelistic ministry of Good News Unlimited, especially the television outreach it hopes to build around the preaching talents of Smuts van Rooyen. He admitted that the scheduling of his presentation on evangelical societies next to Johansen’s on church growth and leadership encouraged the inference that a new church was in the offing, but insisted that his intentions were quite different.

Noel Mason said opportunity for fellowship among like-minded believers in the “pure Gospel” was one of the chief reasons for holding the congress. Mason, van Rooyen, and Good News administrator Calvin Edwards all agreed with Ford that they were not seeking to establish an organized alternative to membership in the Adventist denomination, but were supportive of groups whose circumstances “forced” the formation of independent fellowships. They did not wish, they emphasized, to foster schism with the established denomination.

Nor, of course, did anyone wish to foster schism within the Gospel revival movement. Yet part of the story of the congress is a story of what appears to be incipient division. Alan Crandall originally conceived the idea of the congress and, with the help of his associates at *Evangelica*, began the planning process. Crandall said that a major purpose of the congress was to have been that of unifying the Gospel revival movement by bringing together its two main leaders: Desmond Ford and Robert Brinsmead. In the early planning stages, Brinsmead and Ford expressed willingness to appear together. Then Brinsmead published an issue of *Verdict* attacking sabbatarianism and urging that no special day of worship is binding upon the Christian. Ford, who strongly disagrees with Brinsmead on this point (see Ford’s review of the *Verdict* issue, page 66), decided he could not participate in the congress lest by his presence he

appeared to condone Brinsmead's antisabatarianism. With one of their main purposes for holding the congress thus frustrated, the *Evangelica* staff dropped their plans to sponsor it. Good News Unlimited then stepped into the vacuum and became sponsor.

Some in the Gospel revival movement have clearly become discontented over what they feel to be Ford's excessive caution and conservatism in relation to traditional Adventist issues. There were some at the congress who openly, though not publicly, avowed that they were no longer Adventists. These people seemed largely to identify with Brinsmead not only on his treatment of the Sabbath issue, but also on his critical, even hostile, attitude toward Ellen White and toward most of traditional Adventist doctrine and subculture.

The concerns of this group received some public attention during the question-and-answer panels Sabbath afternoon and evening. Ford himself gave resounding defenses of both the Sabbath and Ellen White's prophetic gift, drawing applause which, though fervent, was somewhat scattered. The support Ford received from his Good News associates was somewhat less than wholehearted. Van Rooyen, for example, drew laughter and applause when he responded to a question on the difference between the official Seventh-day Adventist position on Ellen White and the position of the staff of Good News. "At this point," he confessed, "for me the difference is that the denomination has a very set view, and I find myself very confused."

In sum, at the points where the people had opportunity to speak, they evinced a division among themselves over the doctrinal issues of the Sabbath and Ellen White. This division, in turn, was roughly — not perfectly — paralleled by a division of loyalties between the two major leaders of the Gospel revival, Desmond Ford and Robert Brinsmead.

That the Gospel movement has two distinguishable wings seems clear, too, from a remark by Alan Crandall, who is now serving as pastor of a Napa, California, Gospel fellowship and pursuing graduate study in Berkeley as well as editing *Evangelica*. Although enthusiastic on the whole about the

congress, he is uncomfortable with Ford's dogged courting of the Adventist denomination and is quite sympathetic with the positions of Robert Brinsmead. Obviously disappointed in Ford's refusal to appear with Brinsmead as originally planned, he described the congress that did occur as the "Des Ford caucus" within the larger Gospel revival movement.

Ford and the rest of the staff of Good News readily admit that there are two wings in the Gospel revival. Ford even granted the fairness of Crandall's description of the congress as a "Des Ford caucus." They displayed no perceptible hostility to the Brinsmead wing, although Mason, Edwards and Gill Ford, Desmond's wife, complained of Brinsmead's stridency and lack of pastoral concern for the Gospel movement during his recent tour through the United States. Edwards explicitly dissociated Good News from attacks on Ellen White and other Adventist distinctives.

If the signs of division signaled trauma within the Gospel revival movement as a whole, Smuts van Rooyen's presence at the congress symbolized the pain — as well as joy — that individual participants have experienced. The people listened to van Rooyen with an air of expectancy that seemed to go beyond just his reputation as an outstanding preacher. The title of his opening-night sermon, "A Gospel Worth Dying For," was especially significant in light of the possible death of his own academic career subsequent to his resignation under pressure from Andrews University (see page 40). He proclaimed that only if for all of us, as for Paul, "to live is Christ," can it follow that "to die is gain." He laughed and his audience laughed with him when he pointed out that if for him "to live is my academic career," then to die could only mean that "my brilliant brains will rot in the grave." This was his self-effacing testimony to what he was ready to sacrifice for the Gospel. On Sunday his closing message again touched on the personal dimensions of the crisis he and his hearers have struggled through in relation to the Gospel and their inherited commitments. He

likened the turmoil the disciples experienced when they found that their cherished beliefs about Christ's mission were wrong to that of the Adventist Gospel believers today. Alluding to his own sleepless nights over the past few months, he said, "I was so very sure I was right and I discovered I was wrong." He then looked at his audience and said, "Oh, it's deep trouble, isn't it?" Quiet amens rose from many of his hearers. His hearers understood the difficulty of adjusting to a new understanding as old wineskins begin to break. The first concern is the future of the two wings of the Gospel movement. Ford and his associates continue to hope that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination will hear and accommodate their gospel message. As Calvin Edwards put it, "I hope for a time when my having worked for Good News will be a high recommendation for employment anywhere in the denomination." Brinsmead's followers and some of the Gospel fellowship pastors see such a hope as at best forlorn and perhaps unworthy. Brinsmead has already announced his intention to organize the Free Christian Alliance, a para-church organization. Its purposes were

fuzzy even in the minds of his supporters at the congress, but the move seems at least to communicate the Brinsmead wing's preference for a clean break with Adventism. Barring an arrest of current attitudes in the "mother church," an official Adventist accommodation to Ford seems unlikely. If it should occur, however, would the Gospel revival movement split irrevocably? If the denomination continues to isolate Ford, will the Gospel believers reconcile their differences and provide a coherent alternative to traditional Adventism?

Questions of the second kind concern the meaning of the liberty in Christ the Gospel believers are now savoring. Will these people in time also hear and respond faithfully to the call to discipleship and service sounded by Ford, Edwards, Crandall and others? One may grant that the gospel of the objective work of Christ is better than the spiritual narcissism of perfectionists who inflate their personal moral battles into a conflict of cosmic significance. But will this gospel set people free only to drift into the secular narcissisms of the modern world? It is too early, of course, to tell.

Bad Business: The Davenport Fiasco

by Tom Dybdahl

On July 13, 1981, a Beverly Hills developer named Donald J. Davenport filed for protection under the bankruptcy laws of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California in Los Angeles. Along with his petition, as exhibit A, was a list of his ten largest unsecured creditors, to whom he owed \$5.3 million.

Because of the large sums of money involved, the case would no doubt have created something of a stir under any circumstances. But because Davenport was a Seventh-day Adventist, and many of his creditors were members, officers, or organizations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, his action caused more than a few tremors. In the offices of local conferences and unions across the country, and at the General Conference headquarters, the response was seismic.

Union conference treasurers and presidents, along with selected local conference officials, were summoned to Washington for an emergency meeting. In quick succession

the church hired an outside law firm, an auditing company, and some communications consultants.* Meanwhile, articles about Davenport's bankruptcy filing appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. Rumors of millions of lost dollars, a Securities and Exchange Commission investigation, and possible criminal charges began to circulate widely. Scouts from CBS News began contacting people who might know something about the situation.

Amid all the speculation, two things were clear: that the legal case would go on for months, or perhaps years, so that the full truth, if it ever came out, would be a long time emerging. And that the church's extensive involvement with Davenport had raised difficult questions that would have to be answered if church leadership was to retain the full confidence of the members.

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*Church spokesman James Chase said that the amount of money being paid the communications consultants was "not for publication." It is known, however, that for services of the type that Hill & Knowlton are providing to the General Conference, the minimum fee is \$6,000 per month, and the firm must be retained for a minimum of 12 months. Expenses are extra.

To understand the story, it is important to start at the beginning. The problem in this case is that it is difficult to pinpoint a beginning. Davenport himself was born in Bakersfield, California, in 1913. His father was an Adventist doctor who had been a pioneer missionary to China. Young Donald decided to follow in his dad's footsteps, and in 1940 he graduated with an M.D. degree from the College of Medical Evangelists in Loma Linda.

Early in his career as a general surgeon, Davenport developed a little sideline — building post offices. "I was tired of standing in line for packages," he told the *Wall Street Journal* in 1968, "so I asked the fellow why they didn't build a bigger building. He said, 'Why don't you?' and I said I couldn't, it was the government's. He said I could — so I did."

In 1946, Davenport began to build post offices and then lease them back to the government. Gradually this business grew, and in 1963 he retired from medical practice to devote his full time to it. By 1965, he had built some 37 post offices in California, Arizona, and Nevada.

Because Davenport was an active member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it was only natural that he would seek loans* from his fellow members. He was a hard man to

*One issue that may become important in the legal wrangling is the difference between a lender and an investor. A lender is involved in an enterprise in a limited way, and entitled only to his loan plus the agreed upon interest. An investor, however, has equity in the enterprise. If it prospers, he will likely do better than the lenders; but if it fails, he may lose everything. When it comes to dividing the assets in a bankruptcy case, investors must get in line behind the lenders, and by the time they get to the front there is often nothing left.

Because of this, all church spokespeople have been advised to use the word "loan," not "investment," when discussing the church's involvement with Davenport. Attorney Jerry Wiley suggested that some of the arrangements that Davenport made with church organizations and members were so legally unorthodox that many who consider themselves to be lenders may actually be investors, and thus have difficulty getting any of their money back.

This article makes no attempt to distinguish between who was a lender and who was an investor. The terms here are used interchangeably, without reference to their legal distinction.

refuse. Not only personable and charismatic, he was persistent as well. Here was a wealthy doctor and businessman who didn't mind spending money on his friends — even to the point of bringing some fine perfume by the house for the missus. He promised big returns, and paid off.

As church members gave Davenport their funds, and reaped excellent rewards, they shared the good news with friends. More and more Adventists loaned him money. Soon his creditor list included not only laymen, but many ministers and organizational leaders as well. He became well known in church circles, and served on the executive committee of the Southern California Conference from 1961 to 1965.

The doctor continued to prosper through the 1960s, and by 1968 he reported his holdings at "around 70" U.S. post offices, and "conservatively" valued his estate at between \$6 and \$7 million. "Some people collect stamps," he said. "I collect post offices."

As more church leaders became involved with Davenport, they began to look into the possibility of loaning church funds to him. At that time, the investment monies under local conference and union control were primarily association** funds, usually revocable trusts and annuities, and the list of approved investments for these funds was rather short. But after repeated requests from a number of conference officials, the North American Division Committee on Administration (NADCA) voted at its spring meeting on April 2, 1968, that Association funds could be invested in U.S. government post office facilities. The action did not mention Davenport, but one observer recalled that "we didn't know anybody else who was building them."

The NADCA action also listed specific guidelines for these investments. The first was that they be limited to those facilities secured by recorded first mortgages. (In some states, including California, these are called first trust deeds.) It also required that loans be secured from the time the funds were released by the investing organizations,

**The association is the legal arm of a conference or union, which transacts the business for the organization.

be limited to a maximum of 25 years, and be limited to a maximum of 95 percent of the recognized appraised value of the property at the time the loan was made.

And so church monies began to flow into Davenport's business. His influence had spread far beyond California, and unions and conferences across the country began to loan him their funds. Then he expanded into building telephone company and bank facilities as well, and his supporters in the church did not want to miss further investment possibilities. They pleaded their case once again, and at the NADCA meeting on November 1, 1973, the approved list was amended to include investments in these endeavors.

“Davenport’s empire was an elaborate scheme, which would work only as long as there was cash from new investors coming in to cover the payment to old investors.”

At the same time, the guidelines were tightened. A title search or title insurance was required, and the amount of the loan was cut back to a maximum of 75 percent of the recognized appraised value of the property. It was also spelled out that “second mortgages or trust deeds may not be used as securities for these loans.”

Meanwhile, Davenport's marriage had come apart. In 1972, he and his wife were divorced, and he was disfellowshipped from the Long Beach Seventh-day Adventist Church. But this unfortunate episode did not seem to hurt his financial standing with the church, as individual members and organizations continued to loan him their cash. He later remarried, and after a time was accepted back into the Garden Grove Seventh-day Adventist Church on profession of faith.

About this time, the church's extensive involvement with a single businessman began to attract some attention. But because information about church loans (and finances in general) was not readily available, few people knew what was going on. Further, a considerable number who did know had made personal loans to Davenport, and thus had no interest whatsoever in asking potentially embarrassing questions.

One of the first church members to look into the Davenport-Adventist connection was John Jim Adam, a lawyer and stockbroker in Memphis, Tennessee. Adam was an active layman, and for a time headed the Businessmen's Foundation of the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference, a group of business people that put together loan money to help build churches in “dark counties.” In working with the conference, he learned about their loans to Davenport, and the more he heard, the more concerned he became. So he did some checking into the matter, and concluded that Davenport's business practices put the conference at some risk.

He asked his conference president for a list of conference loans, but his request was refused. Adam began to speak with other conference treasurers and leaders about their involvement with Davenport. But his questions and pleas were dismissed, and several officials speculated that he was simply jealous of the doctor and wanted to get some of the church's business for himself.*

Adam was not one to give up easily, however. He kept voicing his fears about Davenport, and in a letter to the treasurer of the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference, dated November 21, 1978, he said he has been warning them for about five years. Then he added: “You have ignored my admonitions for the last time. We are all about ready to reap the whirlwind.” John Adam was almost three years ahead of his time.

Other voices were being raised as well. Walter Rea, pastor of Davenport's old home

*Adam denies this. In his defense, he pointed out that his primary business is selling stocks and bonds, which local conferences are not permitted to invest in. He said he “did not solicit or need the church's business.”

church in Long Beach, had been a member of the Southern California Conference Committee from 1968 to 1970, and became interested in the conference's investments. When he saw that Davenport had a substantial amount of the organization's money, he asked the doctor for a balance sheet, but received nothing. He asked the conference treasurer, who was his friend, for some more information about Davenport's finances, but none was forthcoming. So he did a little investigation of his own, and found that some of the notes held by the conference were not properly secured.

In June, 1977, he wrote a very straightforward letter to Robert Pierson, General Conference president, questioning the wisdom of the loans to Davenport. He received a reply, but that was about all that happened.

About the same time, Jerry Wiley, an Adventist attorney and currently an associate dean at the University of Southern California law school, looked into the doctor's business affairs for three clients who were having difficulty recovering their money. He came up with a rather startling analysis: Davenport's empire was an elaborate scheme, which would work only as long as there was cash from new investors coming in to cover the payments to old investors. He shared his findings with Neal Wilson, then president of the North American Division. Wilson expressed considerable doubt that anything was wrong, but he promised to take up the matter with Kenneth Emmerson, the General Conference treasurer, and Cree Sandefur, Pacific Union Conference president. But again, nothing seemed to change.

Then came Sydney Allen, a former teacher and missionary. Though he had been disfellowshipped by the Loma Linda University Church in 1976, following his divorce, Allen was a very active attendee, and even published a little paper with church news which he called *The Remnant*. In 1978, he obtained some financial statements from Davenport's divorce settlement in 1972, including a partial list of creditors who were church members. The list included many prominent names, such as Robert Pierson, W. J. Hackett, Cree Sandefur, Faith For Today speaker William A. Fagal, a smattering of General

Conference officials, and several conference presidents and treasurers.

Allen's main concern was not the stability of Davenport's business ventures, but the issue of conflict of interest. "Here," he said, "is a great conflict between the private purse and fiduciary responsibility." With his voice and pen, he began to ask some embarrassing questions about *l'affair Davenport*, as he called it. He also wrote an open letter to Wilson, who was by then General Conference president, suggesting that the whole matter be investigated and the findings made public.

The pressure was building, and Davenport could not ignore it much longer. On April 19, 1979, Davenport sued John Adam and his employer, A. G. Edwards & Sons, Inc., charging that Adam had interfered with his business and defamed his character. He asked for \$1 million actual damages and \$3 million punitive damages. He followed that up on May 15 with a similar suit against Sydney Allen for \$2,550,000.

The General Conference Treasury also increased its pressure on denominational organizations.* On April 10, Emmerson wrote

*As far back as September 1967, the General Conference treasury became concerned, leading Emmerson to ask Robert Osborn, an assistant treasurer, to investigate church investments with Davenport. During the years following, in numerous treasurers' councils, trust services advisory meetings, and in minutes and letters sent to conference and union leaders, the treasury insisted that church organizations follow established guidelines. Unfortunately, although at least one union began withdrawing its investments, many others simply ignored the guidelines. Emmerson's letter of April 5, 1979, to W. J. Blacker, Loma Linda University vice president for financial affairs, reflects a decade of treasury's continuing concern with Davenport. Noting that he had recently heard that Davenport was approaching Loma Linda regarding an investment "scheme," Emmerson wrote: "To put it mildly, I was alarmed, concerned and almost angered over the thought that anyone at Loma Linda University would even entertain such an approach. I shall not write at length, Jack; but I should state that it would be *totally unacceptable* to the General Conference and to some of us as Loma Linda University Board members if the University were to have *any* connections or dealings whatsoever with Dr. Davenport. The program he suggests has legal and moral implications that may not be clear to some, but they are very clear to a few of us." Interestingly, Loma Linda University President V. Norskov Olsen was a friend — and creditor — of Davenport.

to Elder Harold Calkins, the president of the Southern California Conference, regarding Davenport. He told Calkins he was “entirely sympathetic” to what Walter Rea had written regarding the doctor. He also mentioned that Loma Linda University was thinking of getting involved with Davenport, and that he had warned officials there that if they proceeded it would “very seriously affect the financial backing of the General Conference to Loma Linda University.”

Emmerson said that he would soon be going to a treasurers’ meeting in Portland, Oregon, and that he had the “Dr. Davenport investment problem” on the agenda. At the meeting, he said, “we are going to strongly urge — in fact we are going to do everything in our power to make it imperative — that the brethren begin to liquidate any connec-

“Emmerson said that ‘we are going to strongly urge — in fact we are going to do everything in our power to make it imperative — that the brethren begin to liquidate any connection and investments they have with the doctor.’ ”

tion and investments they have with the doctor.”

Despite Emmerson’s urgings, the matter did not end there. On August 10, 1979, a letter was sent out to all the union conference presidents and treasurers, as well as the heads and chief financial officers of General Conference institutions, signed by Wilson, C. E. Bradford, General Conference vice president for North America, Emmerson, and M. E. Kemmerer, General Conference undertreasurer. The letter stated that investigations were being made into Davenport’s relationship with the church, and that the General Conference had been asked to make full disclosure of the extent of the church’s involvement. But the quartet reported that “as we have looked at this matter, we do not feel this is prudent or necessary at this time.”

The letter went on to say, however, that

although the General Conference did not “wish to overreact even at this date,” since “our stewardship integrity and leadership ethics are being questioned,” it would like some information. There followed 16 questions, asking not only for details on the amounts of monies the different units had loaned Davenport, and the security he had offered, but also about investments by individual officers or committee members who made decisions on investments, whether any of these people encouraged others to invest with the doctor, and whether any officers, board or committee members had received “any particular favors — trips, use of vacation facilities, higher interest, etc.” A reply was requested by September 17, 1979.

Meanwhile, Davenport’s lawsuits were meandering through the courts. John Adam hired a lawyer to defend him, but he also got a powerful assist from an old friend named John Felts, a printer in Ooltewah, Tennessee. On his own, Felts hired a private investigator to look into some of the mortgages that the Georgia-Cumberland Conference held as security on its loans to Davenport. In a document dated October 7, 1979, the investigator reported that several of the properties for which the conference claimed first mortgages happened not to be owned by Donald J. Davenport.

Felts and a pastor at the Collegedale Church, Jere Webb, went to the conference president, Des Cummings, to discuss the matter. But Cummings, who had personal funds with Davenport, argued that the mortgages were valid security, and refused to take any action.

The information uncovered by Felts strengthened Adam’s case, and on March 11, 1980, Adam and Davenport made an out-of-court settlement. Davenport agreed to drop the suit, and Adam in turn agreed to refrain from “any unlawful or improper conduct,” without any admission that “he has in the past engaged in such conduct.”

About the same time, Davenport offered to drop his lawsuit against Sydney Allen if Allen would promise never to mention Davenport’s name, either orally or in print, or if he ever did mention Davenport’s name, to pay him \$1,000 for each person who heard

Allen say it or read it after he had written it. Allen was amused, but not enough to accept. Acting primarily as his own lawyer, he went through extensive discovery proceedings. Lack of funds forced him to suspend publication of *The Remnant*. Then on July 1, 1981, Davenport dropped his suit against Allen.

By this time, however, Davenport's sun was ready to set. The publicity and the allegations about his business affairs had created considerable attention. Instead of money coming in, a growing number of people wanted their money back. Interest rates had zoomed over the past couple of years, and Davenport was borrowing money at 18 percent interest to pay the interest on his 15 percent loans. A tight money market made it difficult to find new investors, even when he offered 22 percent interest. His financial situation deteriorated rapidly, and on July 13, 1981, he filed for bankruptcy under chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy laws.

The initial document filed by Davenport proved quite revealing. In addition to the 27 banks and six insurance companies, his creditors included 10 local conferences, five union conferences, one division,* and at least eight other church-affiliated institutions. Of the 200 or so individuals on the list, at least 40 were present or former Adventist officials, and many others were ministers and teachers.

The first petition gave dollar figures only for the 10 largest unsecured creditors. Included on this list was the Layman Foundation of Madison College, to which Davenport was indebted \$240,000, and the North Pacific Union Conference Association, to which he owed \$100,000.

The figures on the list were soon called into question, however. One named creditor was Dr. Clarence Lindgren of Eugene, Oregon, a former classmate of Davenport's at Loma Linda. The court document said he

*The filing listed five union conference associations, but last year two of those involved — the Central Union and the Northern Union — were merged to form the Mid-America Union. Although the Inter-American Division is listed in the document, the division did not invest its own moneys but was given moneys already invested in Davenport.

was owed \$100,000. He told the *Los Angeles Times* that when interest was figured in, Davenport actually owed him about \$230,000. The *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin* reported that the North Pacific Union Conference had as much as \$1.9 million invested with Davenport, and there was speculation that considerably more than \$100,000 of that money was unsecured. The recently released "Investments Summary" (see box) shows that the North Pacific Union's losses are much more serious, amounting to over \$7.7 million in unpaid principal and accrued interest.

Since Davenport lived in Beverly Hills, rumors about his involvement with the Pacific Union Conference and former president Sandefur were rife. Consequently, the *Pacific Union Recorder* discussed the matter at some length (see below), reporting that the union had loaned Davenport \$1.5 million on security from five properties.** The *Recorder* said that of the five, "four were secured initially by trust deeds to real property, though subsequent investigation shows that some security may be impaired. Our file shows that we did not receive a trust deed on the fifth property." In addition, interest was delinquent for several months — a total of about \$120,000.

Other reports indicated that the Upper Columbia Conference had invested more than \$1.4 million with Davenport, and the Georgia-Cumberland Conference more than \$3 million. There were as yet no official accounts of the total church involvement, however. General Conference spokesman James Chase said simply, "If I knew the amount, I'd tell you." He did state that the *Times* had misquoted Bradford when the newspaper attributed to him an estimate of \$46 million for Davenport's total debts. But before he stopped speaking to the press, Davenport's lawyer, Robert Shutan, estimated that creditors claims may go as high as \$40 million, and Ernie Ching, a lawyer representing more than 30 of Davenport's creditors, suggested a similar figure. On September 10, Chase released figures (see box) that placed the total church investment in Daven-

**These were not trust funds, however, but moneys from the union's income funds.

port at \$17,873,424, with accrued interest at \$3,137,313, making a grand total of \$21,010,737 in possible losses.

While some people had been crying “bankruptcy” for years, Davenport’s actual filing caught many by surprise. How, they wondered, could the former post office king have reached such a sorry state? They recalled ruefully his regular interest payments in the past; the reports that he could always be counted on. But then information began to surface that suggested Davenport’s financial foundation had been crumbling for some time.

A re-examination of some financial documents submitted in Davenport’s 1972 divorce case indicated that he may have had cash flow problems even then. He had borrowed heavily against his properties, and a study by the *Times* showed that of the 55 postal facilities he reported owning at the time, 19 were mortgaged for amounts greater than their fair market value. (Liabilities are sometimes overvalued in divorce proceedings, however, as a way of lowering the settlement.)

In the same year, 1972, Davenport borrowed \$45,000 from the Potomac Conference Association, and gave as security a first trust deed on the postal substation in La Sierra, California. But Davenport did not reveal that this property was not his. Rather, it had been owned by La Sierra College (later Loma Linda Univeristy) since 1920, and he merely leased the land from them. Then in 1976, he gave another first trust deed for the same property to the Collegedale Credit Union as security for a loan of \$95,714.

Throughout the 1970s, this practice was apparently repeated. The private investigator hired by John Felts in 1979 had discovered that at least five properties for which the Georgia-Cumberland Conference reportedly held first mortgages were owned by people or organizations other than Davenport. Two of the first trust deeds held by the Pacific Union as security for \$1.5 million in loans to Davenport were found upon investigation to be “impaired.”

A few observers suggested that Davenport’s business — at least the way he had run

it — was never particularly sound. While leasing post offices to the government provides a steady and reliable return, such leases are not a good investment for speculators. They are generally long term, so the return may end up being relatively low, particularly when interest rates rise quickly. In order for this kind of business to be especially profitable, according to Jerry Wiley, three conditions must be met: 1) Many of the post offices must be in areas where property values are rising rapidly, and the lease term must be nearly up, so that a high rent can be negotiated. 2) The money market must be very loose, so that interest rates remain low. 3) There must be a ceiling on the interest rate paid to investors. By the late 1970s, none of these conditions had been obtained, and Davenport’s fortune was in a steep decline.

Indeed, throughout the last decade, his assets diminished and his debts increased. He had reported owning “around 70” post offices in 1968, but the 1972 divorce papers show his holdings to be 55 postal facilities and 11 telephone company buildings. By August, 1980, however, in a deposition for another court case, he listed his holdings as “probably 9 or 10 buildings.”

In recent years, not only was it difficult to attract new money, but people began to ask for their money back. They found it increasingly difficult to reach the doctor, and even tougher to get their cash. One pastor in southern California asked for all his funds in early 1980, but the deadlines kept passing, and he has yet to receive a penny. Ching reported that of his 30 or so clients, only one had received anything on his principal in the previous six months, though many had asked for their money. (Most were paid interest for a part of this time, however.) Davenport was clearly caught in a squeeze, and the only question was when he would go broke.

As information about the sorry state of Davenport’s finances and his questionable business practices began to emerge, the question arose as to why the church — and so many of its members — were yoked together with him. While he usually gave church or-

ganizations some kind of security on their loans to him, members received nothing more than notes. Several lenders reported that they knew of no case where individuals received any security for their loans.

In addition, Davenport was known for not providing a financial statement of his holdings. As early as 1970, the General Conference treasury, Walter Rea and others had asked for one in vain. When Davenport solicited a loan from the church-related Hewitt Research Institute in 1978, the president contacted Wiley, who then asked Davenport for his balance sheet. In his reply letter, Davenport said that he never gave one out, and added that the investment was no longer available.

When people would press him for financial information, he responded in various ways. According to Ching, some of his clients were shown two or three deeds or post office contracts, with many-figured sums, and this

would calm their fears. In another case, as reported by the *Times*, Davenport wrote: "The security is predominantly against my estate. My wife and I sign the note and the estate is worth several million dollars. I don't think more details than that are necessary at this time."

Finally, a significant number of the loans made to Davenport by church units violated the clear guidelines that had been adopted by the North American Division. Both the Pacific Union and the North Pacific Union had at least one loan that was completely unsecured. Other security, such as the first trust deed given to Potomac Conference for its loan, was on property that Davenport did not own, and a simple title search, as required by the guidelines, would have revealed the problem.

There seem to be several reasons why Davenport, with all these strikes against him, was able to attract so much church money.

INVESTMENTS SUMMARY
Accrued Interest and Principal Due
June 30, 1981

	Accrued Interest	Principal Unpaid	Total
<i>COLUMBIA UNION</i>			
Union Association	\$ 35,315	\$ 334,611	\$ 369,926
Potomac Association	5,400	45,000	50,400
Total	40,715	379,611	420,326
<i>MID-AMERICA UNION</i>			
Union Conference	195,484	493,251	688,735
Northern Union Conference	211,900	560,000	771,900
Kansas Conference Association	97,148	1,102,000	1,199,148
South Dakota Conference Association	65,992	425,000	490,992
Christian Record	8,551	99,144	107,695
Total	579,075	2,679,395	3,258,470
<i>NORTH PACIFIC UNION</i>			
Union Association	1,334,727	6,403,823	7,738,550
Montana Association	1,368	233,591	234,959
Upper Columbia Mission Society	189,929	1,450,328	1,640,257
Western Oregon Association	52,941	420,077	473,018
Total	1,578,965	8,507,819	10,086,784
<i>PACIFIC UNION</i>			
Union Association	120,449	1,528,094	1,648,543
<i>SOUTHERN UNION</i>			
Carolina Association	120,352	520,506	640,858
Florida Conference Association	58,468	555,000	613,468
Georgia-Cumberland Association	609,658	3,122,999	3,732,657
Kentucky-Tennessee Association	20,217	160,000	180,217
Total	808,695	4,358,505	5,167,200
<i>SOUTHWESTERN UNION</i>			
Southwest Estate Service (Portion)	9,414	420,000	429,414
GRAND TOTALS	3,137,313	17,873,424	21,010,737

Perhaps the most important was that he was a fellow Adventist, who was clearly a wealthy and powerful man. His deep and close relationship with the church constituted a kind of implied endorsement. In the close-knit world of Adventism, it was easy for members to reason that “my minister (or conference or union) wouldn’t be involved if it weren’t safe and proper.” So they turned over their funds with few qualms.

Another attraction was Davenport’s high interest rates. Back in the 1960s, when rates hovered around five percent, he routinely paid 10 to 12 percent on a loan, and sometimes as much as 15 percent. Church spokesman Chase suggested that conference investment committees favored Davenport because they wanted “to increase their return and thus help the church.” Others, who did not wish to be named, argued that greed played a role as well.

There is no doubt that Davenport’s personal contacts and friendships within the church helped him weather some storms. When John Adam, Walter Rea, Sydney Allen and others were questioning the propriety of the Adventist entanglement with Davenport, he had strong defenders. Even when church auditors turned up some improper loans, and reported them to their superiors, it made little difference.* The general feeling was that Dr. Davenport is a good man, and a good businessman, he’s always paid off in the past, and everything will be just fine.

In retrospect, several investors expressed the fear that they were going to look a bit silly, having loaned money with no security. In the context of the church, however, with so many other members and institutions involved, to have done so is certainly understandable, if not defensible. And the bankruptcy petition showed that at least three banks also gave unsecured lines of credit to

*The *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin* reported that back in 1976 an audit report on the North Pacific Union Conference Association singled out at least one loan to Davenport as “not in harmony with the applicable investment policy of the denomination.” This was supposedly cleared up, but an audit report earlier this year again revealed investments — unnamed this time — that violated General Conference guidelines. A member of the auditing company later confirmed to the *Union-Bulletin* that the warning referred to Davenport loans.

Davenport, in amounts far exceeding any individual lenders.

It is more difficult to explain the conflict of interest in the Davenport affair. Many of the people who had made personal loans to Davenport were on the boards and committees that made decisions regarding church funds. On the face of things, these individuals were violating the conflict-of-interest guidelines in the North American Division Working Policy. (Some of them were involved prior to the development of the guidelines in 1972, but did not choose to call in their funds when the policy went into effect.)

That policy is exceedingly clear. Under the section titled “Conflict of Interest,” it is stated that church officers and employees should “deal with all persons doing business with the organization on a basis that is for the best interest of the organization without favor or preference to third parties or personal considerations.” There follow eight descriptions of situations which “have the potentiality of being in conflict and therefore *are to be avoided*” (italics supplied).

Situation number six is this: “Lending money to or borrowing money from any third person who is a supplier of goods or services or a trustor or who is in any fiduciary relationship to the denominational organization or is otherwise regularly involved in business transactions with the denominational organization.” There can be no doubt that Davenport was “regularly involved in business transactions” with the church.

Rumors of more flagrant conflicts of interest were widespread as well. Almost everyone interviewed for this article said that individual lenders received higher rates of return on their funds than did church organizations, and several stated that influential and powerful people in the church received better returns than ordinary mortals. And in his last, difficult days, Davenport had apparently paid off some favored creditors. His trustee, Irving Schulmeyer, reported in an application to the judge that “preferences have been made in substantial sums” by Davenport in the 90 days prior to his filing for bankruptcy.

Davenport, in turn, was not loath to use his church connections to the fullest. In his suit against Adam, his attorney stated that the individuals and conferences of the church “provided a source of lending which cannot be replaced through other conventional lending sources.” On one occasion, Davenport took a letter of recommendation that had been written on his behalf by a union conference president to the membership committee of a country club to which he was seeking admission. He put the same letter with his own cover letter, to a bank where he was seeking a loan, saying that if the bank would do business with him he would channel

“It is more difficult to explain the conflict of interest in the Davenport affair. Many of the people who had made personal loans to Davenport were on the boards and committees that made decisions regarding church funds.”

church funds into their vaults. And in at least one case, he made good on his promise.

Many church members — including ministers and officials — did not simply loan Davenport money, they encouraged others to support him.* One pastor was urged by his union conference financial advisors to invest with the doctor, and they even put some of their funds with his to make a reasonably large amount. “I couldn’t have gotten in without help from the church,” he said.

Late last year, this minister heard rumors that Davenport’s finances might be in trouble, so he called several conference and union treasurers that he knew to investigate the situation. “None of them gave me a clear answer,” he recalled. He felt a bit uneasy, so he wrote Davenport and asked for the interest on his loan. Within a few weeks, Davenport sent him \$2,000, which was close to the

*Ernie Ching reported that when several of his clients had trouble collecting their money from Davenport, they asked church leaders who knew him to intercede with the doctor on their behalf.

amount he had requested. He stopped worrying.

Then in mid-July, a friend called to say that Davenport had just filed for bankruptcy. So the minister rang one of the treasurers he had spoken with earlier, and said “Why didn’t you tell me Davenport was in trouble?” Again, the answer was vague. “My impression was that they hadn’t wanted to start a panic,” the pastor said, “but at least they could have given me a better understanding of the situation.”

The whole incident left the pastor considerably poorer. Since he had never stayed too long in one place, he had never owned a home. His investment, which included other family funds, was intended to be the down payment on a house. “Now,” he says, “chances are I’ll never own a home.” Another pastor who is likely to lose his money said: “I can’t say I’ll go hungry, but I won’t be able to have the kind of retirement that I had been hoping for.”

At this point, of course, no one knows how much money the creditors will be able to collect. Some of Davenport’s friends have adopted a “wait and see” attitude, and suggested that the doctor will reorganize his affairs and pay off his debts. Ching reports that the doctor has, in fact, called some of his creditors and assured them that they will be paid, that he needs only a little time. But many observers are more skeptical, and suggest that collections will be few and far between.

If Davenport cannot pay his creditors, the individual lenders will simply lose their money. But the situation with the church funds is more complicated. Since most of the loans were from revocable trust funds, legally they may need to be made up from other monies.** When asked whether any losses would be compensated for by other church funds, Chase replied: “I can’t answer that. I wish I could.”

**Under normal circumstances, if trustees do not properly exercise their fiduciary responsibilities, and do not invest the funds as a “prudent man” would, they are liable for losses. A prudent man would probably not make unsecured loans. But some trust agreements themselves may reduce the responsibility of the trustees. So legally, at least, the issue is clouded at this time.

One obvious fear among church leaders is that, as a result of the Davenport fiasco, some people may lose confidence in the financial arm of the church. Chase felt that the affair would affect giving “to an unforeseeable degree,” depending on several factors, including the “solidity of the faith and commitment of members,” the amount of the losses, what the church does to prevent a repeat, and “how openly and forthrightly the news is told to our people.” Bradford echoed this theme: “We are facing a credibility crisis. We’ll have to prove to the people that we’ve done our best.”

Consequently, three brief reports have been released by General Conference officials. The first mentioned the problem and reported that the General Conference had hired outside help; the second called some news stories on the subject “premature”; the third gave a listing of outstanding loans from church units to the doctor. While these items gave an overview of the current status of the case, they covered only what would have appeared during the bankruptcy proceedings.

Some other printed reports did not enhance the church’s credibility, either. One of the worst mistakes came in a pastoral letter to the members of the Potomac Conference from the president, Ron Wisbey. After describing the situation, he wrote: “As far as Potomac is involved, it is a relatively small amount (\$45,000) and is totally secured, recorded, and liquid to the point that we already have a buyer for the mortgage.”

The amount was correct, but the first trust deed which Potomac had held since 1972 was on property that Davenport did not own, but rather was owned by Loma Linda University (see above p. 56). A California lawyer reaffirmed its ownership, and said that “legally and practically, Potomac’s statement is totally false.” Since a simple title search would have shown that the trust deed was faulty, he added that “there was no excuse for them not to have known about the problem.”

The longest article was in the *Pacific Union Recorder*, under the heading “We’re glad you asked.” It began with a potpourri of some of the nastiest rumors, combined into one ex-

tended query.

Rumor has it that the Church has lost millions, and the figures are so large that I cannot even imagine that amount of money. Conversation in our town is that the Church’s retirement fund is in question, that this Dr. Davenport has granted special favors to our leaders like building a retirement home for Cree Sandefur in Texas (who is this Dr. Davenport, anyway?), that the Union Revolving Fund is involved, that trusts written within the Union are unprotected, that conflict of interest is widespread among Conference leaders in our field, that the Pacific Union has lost millions and that consequently evangelism funds for the next three years are gone. Please say it isn’t so.

It wasn’t so, of course. But the phrasing made clear from the outset that the primary purpose of the question and answer was not to reveal information but to reassure the constituency. These terrible rumors were denied one by one, and the report then closed with a ringing assertion: “How we rejoice in an organization which provides security against human error in the pursuance of the divine injunction, ‘Occupy till I come.’”

Nevertheless, the article was quite forthcoming, and did report on the union’s \$1.5 million investment, the problems with past interest, and the impairment of some of the security.

A lingering question, of course, is “could something like this happen again?” It is almost certain that the church will respond with some tightening of the guidelines here, some procedural modifications there, and at least a few personnel changes. Adventist leaders will argue that such a fiasco will not recur.

But the reason it is difficult to accept a definitive “never again” is that the whole Davenport episode should not have happened the first time. If the union and local conferences had followed the guidelines spelled out by NADCA for loaning association funds, any money given to Davenport would have been properly secured with title searches, recorded first trust deeds, etc.

Likewise, if the conflict of interest standards had been adhered to, many Adventist leaders would not have loaned Davenport money, or would have withdrawn their funds after 1972, when these guidelines were developed. In the uncertain world of finance, it is possible for investors to lose their money even under the best of circumstances. But if the rules had been followed regarding loans to Davenport, the church would not be in this embarrassing and painful situation.

There are several reasons why — in violation of the guidelines — leaders often invested their own money, and the church's money, with Davenport. He had a good track record, he was a fellow believer, and he paid top dollar, at least to influential individuals. A good many people, often personal friends of Davenport, simply felt that in this case the rules could be ignored.

The situation appears to be different with respect to the General Conference. As early as 1968, the treasury department began discouraging investments with Davenport, and in April 1979 Emerson and Osborn were strongly urging church organizations to shun any connection with Davenport. The department's actions, particularly the Emerson letters to W. J. Blacker and Harold Calkins (see pp. 53-54), make the General Conference leadership look blameless. Still, however, there is reason, in light of claims it has recently made in court, to ask whether the General Conference was unable to do anything about the Davenport matter except give warnings. In the legal case involving the Pacific Press Publishing Association and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the church had argued that it was of the "hierarchical variety," with "orders of ministers," and a "first minister at the top." In the press' reply brief, this had been explained to mean that "a 'hierarchical' church is one in which final decisions are made at the top of the organizational ladder, in contrast to a 'congregational' church organization in which every local group, like the Baptists and Unitarians, is free to go its own way." This reasoning was then used to justify the

action of the General Conference Committee when it reached all the way down to declare that two women employees of the press were "at variance" with the church and therefore should be fired.

If such is in fact the church's organizational structure, it is difficult to believe that the General Conference was as impotent as it wishes to appear. Indeed, from Emerson's letter it is clear that the threat to withdraw General Conference support from Loma Linda University made any traffic with Davenport suddenly unattractive. It would be interesting to know if such tactics were ever considered in dealing with other uncooperative units, or what role Davenport's friends — and creditors — in the General Conference might have played.

If there was really nothing the General Conference could do but plead with the union brethren, to whom are the union leaders accountable? The answer should be "their constituents," but given the secrecy* with which church financial matters are generally handled, most laymen know little about them. And those who try to find out, such as John Adam and Walter Rea, often meet a stone wall. Or if the General Conference could not actually enforce its guidelines, could it not have ordered an audit and then informed the appropriate constituency of the problems and conflicts of interest, a strategy which would likely have resulted in some changes? And finally, if the General Conference is powerless in such matters, it does not inspire confidence that better rules and procedures will prevent any repeats. For despite all the negative publicity and the General Conference pressure, church organizations were reportedly loaning Davenport money as recently as March 1981.

*A basic question is why information on conference and union association financial holdings is generally secret in the first place. Secrecy, even for the best reasons, tends to breed suspicion and hide incompetence. It also generates more secrecy. No one that I talked to who is employed by the church (with the exception of official spokespersons) wanted to speak for attribution, even about matters of public record.

The Openness of God: A Compromised Position?

reviewed by George L. Goodwin

Richard Rice, *The Openness of God: The Relationship of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will*. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980. \$4.95 (paper).

The process theism of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne is a subject of much theological discussion and debate today. Based on Whitehead's metaphysics of becoming, this new understanding of God claims to be more logically consistent, more adequate to human experience, and more faithful to the biblical witness than the traditional Christian theological concept of divinity. In *The Openness of God*, Richard Rice attempts to integrate this revisionary theism into a fundamentally conservative Christian perspective. This book will be criticized both for having gone too far and (as in this review) for not having gone far enough. But let it be said at the outset that Rice treats a delicate project with considerable care and expertise, presenting it not as a matter of confrontation, but of synthesis.

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The central issue of the book concerns the relationship between divine foreknowledge and human free will. If God knows infallibly from eternity what I will do in the future, am I really free to do otherwise? It would seem not; for if God knows infallibly that I will do x, then I cannot do y, else God is mistaken. And if I cannot do other than x, then do I really do x freely? Not if freedom means the power to do otherwise. So how can we reconcile genuine human freedom with divine foreknowledge of the details of the future?

Rice shows in chapter one how this problem is symptomatic of a larger issue in traditional theism: the conflict between the biblical portrait of a loving God who is intimately related to creation and the Greek metaphysical understanding of a perfect being who is changeless, timeless, and self-sufficient. Both strands have been woven together to produce a concept of God that raises serious questions and presents an easy mark for contemporary atheists. How can an immutable, and therefore impassible, God really be said to love us, if love means real relatedness and sympathetic response to the beloved? Such a God, remarks Camus, is "the eternal bystander whose back is turned on the woe of the world."

In chapter two, Rice defends an "open view" of God in an attempt to resolve these

paradoxes. In this open view, derived from Whitehead and Hartshorne, the Greek interpretation of perfection — a product of human reason, not divine revelation — gives way to a neoclassical philosophical understanding, wherein God is conceived as “dipolar”: changeless in identity and yet changing in concrete manifestations or actual experience.

This open view of God is able to reconcile divine omniscience and human freedom. If God is both changeless and changing, then the quality of God’s knowledge is changeless, while the content of the divine knowledge may change in response to novel events. Thus, human freedom is no illusion: I take responsibility for my actions precisely because I can do otherwise; I have real alternatives. Before I choose, God knows perfectly all the possibilities of my choice, and as soon as I actualize one possibility, God knows it perfectly as actual. Thus, omniscience involves change because the object of divine knowledge changes from possibility to actuality. As Rice points out (p. 45), the real issue here concerns the character of the future. Omniscience simply means that God knows everything exactly as it is. If the future is not determined in all its details, then a perfect knower would know it as partially determinable, not as fully determined.

Chapters three through nine show how this open view absolves God of any responsibility for moral evil, is compatible with the biblical notions of prophecy, providence, and predestination, and articulates well the religious conviction that life makes a real difference to God.

Overall, I commend Rice for showing intelligently how the neoclassical reconciliation of divine omniscience and human freedom should pose no threat to a careful interpretation of Scripture. However, I do have a basic problem with the book. In his attempt to harmonize the viewpoints of process theology and conservative Christianity, Rice sometimes compromises the strict implications of the new theism. He argues, for instance (pp. 28-29) that God is best conceived as dipolar (absolute in existence, re-

lated in experience), and yet he asserts that God is ontologically independent of this or any world. But surely this is to take away with the right hand what the left has given. If one aspect of the divine reality is defined by real relatedness to a world, then God requires some or other world to experience. To deny relatedness as an essential feature of deity is simply to deny dipolarity.

Other manifestations of this compromise occur in the discussions of providence and predestination. Rice correctly argues that the open view of God requires a nuanced interpretation of providence, wherein genuine human freedom means that God does not have absolute coercive control over history. Indeed, a social model of omnipotence as shared creativity is an implication of human freedom. Nevertheless, Rice maintains that “the final outcome of history is a practical certainty. God’s objectives for mankind will eventually be realized, whatever the actual course of events may be” (p. 57). But if human destiny is really a matter of divine power *and* human freedom, what sense does it make to speak of a guaranteed actual outcome? Or if the outcome is indeed guaranteed, how are we to understand human freedom? Does not this recall a position that Rice seeks to avoid: that God knows a detail of the future and yet we choose freely?

A similar objection may be raised to the discussion of predestination: “A group of people will eventually be saved. . . . But the precise composition of the group awaits the personal decisions of individual human beings” (p. 75). Again there is a dilemma: either all people are free to accept or reject the divine invitation (in which case “the group” is so vague as to be uninformative) or it is in fact determined that a group will be saved (and therefore at least some persons are not free to exclude themselves).

In sum, my criticism is that Rice has unjustifiably stopped short in his adoption of process theism. I stress this point just because I do share his belief that neoclassicism is so very compatible with the biblical understanding of divinity and with our deepest religious intuitions. I applaud and recommend his project, even if I cannot agree with all his conclusions.

The Openness of God: A Logical Position?

reviewed by Hollibert E. Phillips

Does God know everything that's going to happen to me? Can God foresee all my actions and decisions? With these questions, Richard Rice introduces his "open view" of God, the central thesis of which is that "reality itself and . . . God's experience of reality are essentially open rather than closed;" that "God experiences the events of the world . . . as they happen"; and that "not even God knows the future in all its details" (p. 8).

Rice's open view of God, certainly reminiscent of Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality* (Humanities Press, 1929), bears many striking resemblances to Edgar S. Brightman's notion of a finite God, which he argues very strongly for in his *A Philosophy of Religion* (Prentice-Hall, 1940). For example, Brightman claims that the idea of an absolute God "removes all incentive to moral reform" and "denies the reality of time." Rice similarly argues that "absolute foreknowledge . . . excludes creaturely freedom," and acceptance of it "results in the ultimate collapse of all temporal distinctions." But enough of resemblances.

Perhaps the main strength of the book is that its central thesis is kept very much alive throughout. In this regard, not even chapter titles are overlooked. Every title, with the exception of the first, incorporates the phrase

"the openness of God." But its weaknesses are scarcely less pervasive.

Given the contentiousness inherent in the nature of the thesis the author undertakes to defend, one is led naturally to expect not only a certain logical rigor, but a tentativeness that at least recognizes the diversity of relevant published opinion. Rice promises something of the former, but hardly lives up to it — at least not enough to sustain his central contention. The latter does not appear to have been a consideration. Indeed, one senses quite early that the work is much less an inquiry into intractable difficulties than it is a series of claims and the assertion of their resolution.

The crucial turn in Rice's reasoning occurs in his first chapter in which, on purportedly logical grounds, he rejects the conventional and "widely accepted view" of God's omniscience and installs in its place the open view which, he claims, "is more faithful to the biblical portrait," and, paradoxically enough, represents "a way of looking at God that most Christians take for granted."

But just what is this turning point, this bit of logic, upon which so much is made to depend? It is the claim that "the idea of absolute foreknowledge excludes creaturely freedom." That is to say, according to Rice's reasoning, the idea of absolute foreknowledge and the idea of creaturely freedom are related to each other as logical contradictions: if the one is true then the other is false; they cannot both be true, and they cannot both be false — to affirm the one is to deny the other. On the strength of what he calls

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common human experience and human intuition, and a metaphysical claim about what can or cannot be known about the future, Rice affirms creaturely freedom, and by immediate inference, denies the proposition that God is omniscient. A serious flaw at this point, however, is Rice's overreliance on logic to settle matters of fact. That, logic cannot do. Whether the reality called God is or is not omniscient is obviously a matter decidable neither by inference from intuited or empirically derived premises, nor by the analysis of concepts.

But more on the presumed contradiction. Why does Rice perceive the two ideas as contradictories? Because, he reasons, creaturely freedom by *definition* entails an indefiniteness of sorts, whereas absolute foreknowledge — especially of human actions and decisions — presupposes a definiteness about the future that contradicts creaturely freedom. But does not this conclusion come all too easily?

As Alvin Plantinga notes in his *God, Freedom, and Evil* (William B. Eerdmans, 1977), "the claim that God's omniscience is incompatible with human freedom is based upon a confusion." God's foreknowledge, or anyone's for that matter, imposes no causal necessity whatever on any state of affairs that is foreknown. All that the claim to foreknowledge entails is that if it is true of any individual, say John, that that individual will in fact choose to do and follow through in doing some certain something, say purchase a 1985 blue Lincoln, that whoever foreknows that state of affairs to be true, *necessarily knows* it to be true, merely by virtue of *its* being true. But it certainly does not follow from this that causal necessity is thereby imposed

on the state of affairs so that John *necessarily buys* a 1985 blue Lincoln. Put another way, we may say, in the case of John, that God *necessarily knows* what John will in fact choose to do and follow through in doing, and not that God knows what John will *necessarily choose* to do.

To reason as Rice does that John is not free since the fact of foreknowledge *a priori* guarantees that John cannot change his mind and buy, for instance, a 1985 brown Rabbit, is entirely irrelevant to the issue of creaturely freedom. The fact that John cannot change his decision in 1985 no more denies creaturely freedom than the fact that having chosen to buy a Lincoln yesterday, I cannot today choose *to have done* differently. The logic is precisely the same in each case.

The remaining chapters of the book deal with creation, evil, the future, providence, prophecy, predestination, and personal religion. In these discussions, Rice attempts many reinterpretations (a revisionist exegesis?) in an effort to show how they are illuminated by the open view. On these matters, his greatest difficulty arises when he attempts to reconcile his view with certain quite specific prophetic utterances. The reconciliation at times appears uncomfortably forced, if not downright implausible. Since foreknowledge of free acts is "logically impossible," Rice leaves God drawing very heavily on His experiences and working out, albeit well-founded, probabilities. True, Rice does concede that "God knows which of the available options a person will likely select," but a little reflection suffices to show that this is an empty claim.

All in all, the book makes for quite interesting reading. But one may be excused for wondering whether God knows that He knows so little.

The Sabbath: Brinsmead's Polemic

reviewed by Desmond Ford

R. D. Brinsmead, "Sabbatarianism Re-examined,"
Verdict, vol. 4, no. 4, June 1981.

Robert Brinsmead has placed the whole Adventist world in his debt by his emphasis on righteousness by faith. Perhaps more than any other figure, he has been responsible for challenging accepted legalistic concepts of salvation in our community. His recent book, *Judged by the Gospel*, though marked by unnecessary asperity, should nonetheless cause gratitude because of its exposure of doctrinal aberrations in traditional Adventism. One does not have to agree with all his conclusions (as this reviewer does) to acknowledge the necessity of his critique.

Now, the issue of *Verdict* containing his book-length article "Sabbatarianism Re-examined" with its rejection of the Seventh-day Sabbath as a Christian obligation. First, we should say that as a people we have been guilty of treating the Sabbath as we have the gospel — we have turned it into an instrument of legalism too often, and this

failing Robert Brinsmead criticizes. When he affirms that we have frequently mistaken the form for the substance, he is correct.

There are other excellent features in the article. It rightly reminds us that the New Testament does not so much issue rules as point to Christ, affirming faith and love in the Savior as the chief motivation for conduct. Furthermore, it correctly asserts that a literalistic reading of the Ten Commandments can be a very poor guide for Christian behavior.

Besides areas of agreement, I must also indicate areas where I disagree with "Sabbatarianism Re-Examined." Because of space limitation, the following will of necessity seem staccato and laconic. The reader may refer to my recently published book, *The Forgotten Day*, for further details.

Robert Brinsmead's polemic against the fourth commandment makes many assumptions not only beyond the evidence but often contrary to it. Following are examples only.

1. *The Epistles, not the Gospels, always have the last theological word.* (p. 6)

This is a half-truth. Some esoteric references in the gospels are subject to clearer explana-

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tions in the letters, and the great truth of the atonement finds its fullest explanation in the writings of Paul. On the other hand, it should be remembered that for the most part the gospels were written later than the epistles and are just as theological, as every scholar knows. Furthermore, it is *Jesus*, not Paul (and Brinsmead by the epistles really means those of Paul), who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is the light of the World. The great commission is to teach believers all that Jesus commanded, not Paul. The blood of the covenant at Calvary ratified the teachings of Jesus, not those of Paul (Gal. 3:15).

Paul acknowledged this priority of the words of Jesus (I Cor. 3:11; 7:10). One chapter in eight in the gospels refers to the Sabbath and always positively, and this *after* the circulation of the supposed texts which declare the commandment abolished!

Brinsmead quotes John 16:12, 13 — the Spirit will, Jesus says, teaching more than he has been able to tell — perhaps momentarily forgetting that this promise began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, at least thirty years before the first gospel was written. The gospels are the product of the Spirit of Pentecost. And the one written particularly for the cosmopolitan gentile world (Luke) has the most references to the Sabbath — with never a syllable against it.

2. *Sabbath-keeping in the first century was subsumed under circumcision, and the rejection of circumcision (Acts 15) automatically embraced release from the fourth commandment also (p. 12).*

Abundant historical evidence exists that large numbers of Gentiles in the first century kept the Sabbath but were never circumcised. (See Acts 13:42, 44; 15:21; F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, pp. 216, 301, 64; and the well-known comments to this effect by Philo and Josephus.) Even in Old Testament times Gentiles could keep the Sabbath without circumcision, but not offer sacrifices in the regular way, or keep the Passover, etc. (See Ex. 20:8-11; Isa. 56:1-7, and compare Ex. 12:44, 48.)

3. *Silence in the Epistles on Sabbath-keeping signifies Sabbath was not kept by Gentiles (p. 12).*

Often silence means something is taken for granted and not a subject of dispute. Thus for at least six hundred years after the entrance

into Canaan, we do not have a single reference to the Sabbath, and in Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon not even an allusion except as a heading for one psalm — and this despite the frequent lists of sins in both Proverbs and Psalms. Nor do we find anywhere in John's gospel a command to baptize or keep the Lord's supper. Nor any warning against making graven images.

4. *We have a fairly accurate account as to why Christians were persecuted in the Roman world (p. 13). Sabbath-keeping is not among them.*

This is just not true. We have practically nothing from the first century as to the reasons involved. Cannibalism is the one fantastic charge that has come down to us.

5. *Slaves would not have been able to keep the Sabbath (p. 13).*

In my book *The Forgotten Day* I have pointed out that while slaves of unbelievers did become Christians, there are no grounds for thinking that this was a large group. Many slaves worshipped as did their masters, and many had Christian masters. Other slaves were granted freedom of religion, particularly if in a position of trust.

6. *The "days" mentioned in Gal. 4:10 really mean the Sabbath Day (p. 18ff).*

The word "sabbath" was a common one. Why did Paul not use it here if he intended it? The context speaks of observances reminiscent of previous pagan bondage to superstitions. Nowhere does Scripture refer to true Sabbath-observances in this way. A recent commentator, John Bligh, says the reason the Sabbath is not here mentioned is that Paul had no wish to condemn a current practice in this regard. It is quite wrong to parallel this list of times with the Jewish yearly, monthly, weekly holy times. The text is referring to various days, months (not just the new moon day), seasons and years — all in the plural. There is no evidence that the sabbatical or jubilee years were kept in the first century in Galatia. Undoubtedly a perverted Judaism was a large part of the trouble in Galatia, but to conclude that this alone can be the basis for an exegesis of Galatians 4:9-10 is to err.

7. *Romans 14:5, 6, says that all days are of equal value (p. 30ff).*

The commandments of God are certainly not in view in this passage. It is the *adiaphora*

(matters indifferent) which Paul discusses. Verses 1-6, 21 indicate that some were abstaining from certain types of food and drink on specific days. But Judaism used the Sabbath as a feast day, not a time of fasting. Nothing in the Pentateuch prohibited the use of wine. The expression "every day" in Exodus 16:4 is used for the week days with the Sabbath excluded.

8. *Colossians 2:14-15 obviously excludes all necessity for keeping the Sabbath (p. 25ff).*

Observe that this book never uses the word for "law," though it appears over 70 times in Romans. Neither does it use "commandment," with reference to anything from Sinai. What it does speak about is "philosophy," "angel-worship," and "ordinances" made by cultic heretics forbidding the use of food and drink on holy days (see verses 8, 14,

"Robert Brinsmead's polemic against the fourth commandment makes many assumptions not only beyond the evidence but often contrary to it."

18, 21, 22). The heretics claimed all these precepts of theirs about food and drink on holy days were "shadows" of a great reality, but Paul refuses to grant their right to judge men by such superstitious human inventions. Contrary to Brinsmead's view, the "eating and drinking" of Colossians 2:16 has nothing to do with the Jewish offerings linked with holy times in Ezekiel 45:17. The Greek form prohibits any such interpretation as does the context. And as certainly as Paul's dictum does not rule out all eating and drinking, neither does it rule out all Sabbathkeeping. (See the commentaries by Lohse, H. C. G. Moule, Francis, R. Martin and all recent discussions on the incipient Gnosticism at Colosse). As this is the only negative Sabbath text out of approximately 150 references in the entire Bible, one should remember that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

9. *Because the Jewish Torah no longer is the guardian of believers, the commandments are not binding (p. 19).*

Barth, Bultman, Conzelmann, Ridderbos, Ladd, Schrenk, etc., all agree that the New Testament regards the Decalogue as still binding. This has been the position of the evangelical Christian church in all ages. (See Carl Henry's *Christian Personal Ethics*, pp. 269, 272ff, 315, 336ff.)

10. *The historical elements in the Decalogue show it was never intended for Christians (p. 40f).*

The same principle would wipe out the Sermon on the Mount (there are no pagan Roman soldiers around for whom we should go the second mile), the epistles (written to ancient local communities), and indeed the whole New Testament, including its Great Commission which was given to a group of Jews. But see Ephesians 6:1-3, and also observe how Jesus could apply to Himself what was said to the people of the Exodus one-and-a-half millenniums ago (see Matt. 4:4). The Jews were only "stewards" of God's revelation (Rom. 9:3, 3:2).

11. *The fact that the Sabbath points to rest of spirit through faith in Christ means the ordinance is not necessary (p. 57).*

One might as well say that if one is feeding on the merits of Christ's broken body and spilled blood, there is no necessity to keep the Lord's supper, or that if by faith in the death and resurrection of Christ the believer has become one with Christ, there is no need to be baptized. The fourth commandment shows that man is to follow the example of Christ who worked and then rested. Work and rest are both implicit in the commandment, and it is nonsense to say that they are no longer necessary. Hebrews 4:9 says the fulfillment of the Sabbath awaits the world to come.

12. *Love, not law, should guide the Christian (p. 64).*

This erroneous assumption is hoary with age but not venerable. Even when man was made with love inscribed on his heart, he needed the guidance of the specific commandments found in Genesis 1 and 2. Law tests so-called love, for the latter offers motivation rather than content for action. The New Testament invokes particular precepts to guide believers (see Rom. 12 and 13). The vast majority of Christian scholars in all centuries have summarily rejected this false thesis. (See C. Hen-

ry's *Christian Personal Ethics*.)

13. *The Decalogue is not distinguished from the rest of the Mosaic code, but moral and ceremonial laws are ever intertwined* (p. 42f).

This another half-truth. In places the eternal and the temporary are joined, but not in their original revelation or in the teachings of Jesus or Paul. The old covenant was ratified over the moral law. Then came the directions for building the tabernacle and the sacrificial system was given. Jesus foretold the fall of the Temple and the passing away of the significance of holy places (Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, John 4:21). Since sacrifice could only be offered at the Temple, His words foretell the abolition of the whole system. But the same Christ spoke of "the commandment of God" with the utmost reverence in every reference thereto. (See Mark 7:8, 9; Matt. 19:9, 17-19; Matt. 5:17-45; Matt. 12:12; and compare 1 Cor. 7:19; Rom. 13:9; James 2:10-12; 1 John 5:2, 3.)

The Commandments only name the obvious violation of the principle at stake in each, but include all lesser violations as made clear in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus also taught that every negative implies a positive and vice versa (see Luke 6:9). The first commandment of the Decalogue includes all the rest, and it will guide the Christian in giving God His true place in all matters.

Having listed the chief assumptions of the book which to some are unacceptable, may I offer a few final comments?

1. The case fails to deal adequately with the main sections of the New Testament which discuss the Sabbath. (See Matt. 12:1-12; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; 23:56; John 5:1-19.) Christ worked seven miracles on the Sabbath in His attempt to reform the burdensome observance of the Pharisees. Moreover, His polemic on behalf of the Sabbath embraces more phases of argument from more sources than He ever invoked in any other area. Not one syllable He uttered downgraded the fourth commandment or suggested its coming demise. He affirms the Sabbath to have been made at the beginning as God's gift to mankind, and claims to be its interpreter and protector (see

Mark 2:27, 28).

In a more recent statement Brinsmead has attempted to deal with this neglected area, but his case is no better than his original one. He completely misses the point that the summation of our Lord's case is that both He and His disciples were "guiltless" about the Sabbath, and that as the holy institution was intended for man's benefit, all acts of mercy, necessity, or piety are in harmony with the fourth commandment (see Matt. 12:7, 12). Neither has Brinsmead considered the fact that the massive Sabbath content of the four gospels implies that towards the end of the first century the apostles considered such instruction vital for Christians. They wrote it up in such a way as to show that Christ's Sabbath reformation was partly responsible for His crucifixion (see Mark 3:6).

2. The evidence of Scripture is that the fourth commandment has been used by God as a test of His professed people from the very beginning. Note that the first use of the term "Sabbath" is linked with God's use of the day as a test. (See Ex. 16:4, 23, 28 and cf. Jer. 17:23-27, Eze. 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24; Isa. 56:1-7; 58:13, 14; Neh. 13:15-22 and the references from the gospels named above which depict the Sabbath issue as a chief precipitant of the cross.)

3. Church history shows that the church dies proportionately to its neglect of the fourth commandment. This is the verdict of Calvin, Ryle, Schaff, Fairbairn and others.

4. Despite whatever arguments casuistry may invent from the New Testament against the fourth commandment, literally scores of historical statements from the first five centuries testify to the widespread observance of the Sabbath (as well as Sunday from the second century) for many generations. The church knew nothing about its abolition.

5. All mystical statements about Christ's fulfilling the Sabbath for us, thereby making observance of the day unnecessary, are as fulsome as the thought that His refraining from adultery makes our abstinence outmoded. Christ worked, rested, and worshipped in harmony with the sabbatical cycle. Should we also do so? So long as these are necessities, the seventh-day Sabbath is obligatory.

Food

Interesting but Strange?

To the Editors: Your issue on "Food" took a very ordinary topic and made it intensely interesting. Congratulations!

The article by Reo M. Christenson was a strange one. For, while calling for intellectual honesty, and even attaching moral importance to it, the author hardly concealed his own strong bias. Obviously, a person who plays down the danger of meat consumption while emphasizing, in the same breath, the hazards of peanuts (based on the *belief* of a single researcher) has got to have an axe to grind. Christenson's description of the Adventist apology for vegetarianism amounted, in some respects, to caricature, and served to reveal his own misunderstanding of the subtleties of biblical hermeneutics. He obviously thinks it is scoring high points by noting the absence of "a single, clear-cut, admonitory verse in either the Old Testament or the New" in support of vegetarianism. Perhaps he has not observed that the same might easily be said about monogamy, alcohol, tobacco, LSD, slavery, suicide or abortion. Using the KJV, Christenson calls attention to I Timothy 4:3 as a potential damper to the fervor of vegetarians, completely oblivious of the fact that the Greek word *bromata*, used in the passage, refers not to flesh, as such, but rather to food in general.

To add illogic to confusion, Christenson charges Adventist vegetarians with "flagrant selectivity" in their use of evidence, and then reaches into the writings of Adventism's most influential advocate of vegetarianism to select a single admonition that we demand a "thus saith the Lord" in support of every doctrine. It would appear that this intellectual honesty thing is much more elusive than Christenson suspects.

John Brunt made a gallant attempt to put the entire subject of clean-unclean foods into proper perspective; but the entire article, unfortunately, was marred by his use of precarious exegesis and questionable logic. It was surprising that Brunt should adopt the position that the New Testament "explicitly abolishes distinctions between clean and unclean" foods. This is certainly a misunderstanding of the New Testament; and nowhere did it become more evident than in Brunt's strained interpretation of Mark 7. Clearly, Mark's editorial comment in verse 19 ought to be understood within the context of the entire pericope which has nothing to do with the question of clean/unclean foods, as such. What Brunt does is to interpret verse 19 in a universal

sense, thereby succumbing to the kind of literalism we would expect to find in less careful students. Nowhere does the passage shift gear from the ritualistic to the hygienic.

Roy Adams
SDA Theological Seminary
Far East

An Outdated Argument

To the Editors: The editors of SPECTRUM deserve praise on a number of accounts, but among others certainly for having discovered an author whose article, "Are Vegetarians Intellectually Honest?" (Vol. 11, No. 3) might possibly have been timely if published 50 years ago, and again on having given a forum for the occasion in which the "strawman" so subject to devastating destruction is replaced by a "vegetarian man" (I suppose) with similar fate at the hands of the author.

In 20-plus years of formal education in Adventist schools and another 25-plus years in the perhaps academically isolated atmosphere of Loma Linda, I have never heard the arguments so cleverly cut down by Christenson, advanced as substantive by any leader in our church — academic, administrative, religious or scientific. They have been considered quite properly as peripheral and/or speculative.

Personally, as a physician who has read a little of the literature both pro and con about vegetarianism, I really resent such a blatantly obscene remark as ". . . the attitude of most Adventist vegetarians is the quite flagrant selectivity with which they marshal evidence to support their views." Now where is the author's documentation for *that* statement?

As one of the few remaining (no doubt) Adventists who comfortably believe that Mrs. E. G. White, with all her human weaknesses, foibles, and failures, was inspired by the Holy Spirit, I also resent the author bringing her into his discussion without a full, balanced appraisal of what she actually wrote about vegetarianism.

I certainly do endorse Christenson's inspired statement about "having a right to be distressed when people cite [fail to cite?] "scientific and scriptural evidence with misleading selectivity, to buttress a treasured view." I would add E. G. White's and anyone else's writings to those sources.

Gordon W. Thompson, M.D.
Loma Linda University
Medical Center

Ignores Scientific Data

To the Editors: I would like to comment on Reo M. Christenson's "Are Vegetarians Intellectually Honest?" I agree wholeheartedly with his position that vegetarianism receives no biblical support whatsoever. Many times I feel embarrassed about the way some Adventist vegetarians promote vegetarianism. On the other hand, I am quite disappointed in Christenson's conclusion that vegetarianism cannot be supported on a scientific basis. He says "the evidence quite clearly indicates that a strict vegetarian diet is a rather hazardous one." The source of "clear evidence" was limited to an article from *Harper's* and two from *Consumers' Report*. These magazines are not scientific journals that describe scientific research in full detail.

They can be misleading to uninformed readers. For instance, it is true that vitamin B₁₂ is seldom found in plant foods. But we only need an extremely small amount of it to function and our body keeps ample store to last several years. I am not a strict vegetarian and neither do I promote it. But I feel that Christenson's argument against it was quite shaky.

He further criticizes Adventist vegetarians for disregarding recognized authorities who disagree with them. This may be a valid criticism, especially when one considers various methods employed by some vegetarians to support their views. Some will even argue that meat-eating is immoral. But let's not forget that there are recognized authorities who promote vegetarianism on a scientific basis, too.

Paul H. Eun
School of Medicine
Loma Linda University

Christenson Responds

Every one of the biblical interpretations in support of vegetarianism cited in my article were advanced either in the *Review*, in Sabbath school quarterlies, by preachers or by leading laity during my attendance at numerous Adventist churches during the last 40 years. They were not only advanced — on many occasions — but they almost always went unchallenged. So the "straw men" of which Dr. Thompson speaks have hardly been the figment of my fevered imagination.

I did not deal with Mrs. White's teachings on vegetarianism because I was analyzing biblical verses related to meat-eating, with the implicit aim of demonstrating their incompatibility with the teachings of Mrs. White and the church on this subject. To have quoted copiously from Mrs. White in order to provide a sharper contrast would have made it harder for readers to view the subject in a relatively dispassionate way.

As for the absence of clear-cut biblical condemnation of the practices cited by Roy Adams, there is considerable difference between biblical silence on certain subjects, or only brief references to them, and extensive biblical treatment of a subject. The Bible clearly treats meat-eating in a favorable light in many passages, as I think I demonstrated in my article; the same cannot be said of polygamy, tobacco, LSD, slavery, suicide or abortion.

Concerning my citation of I Timothy 4:3, a Greek scholar colleague confirms Mr. Adams' point. I regret having in-

cluded that reference.

As for Dr. Eun's letter, although I have not cited material from professional journals, major health research findings almost always find their way into the *New York Times* or one or more of the three newsweeklies. Moreover, the editors of *Consumers' Report* comb the professional literature very carefully before writing their reports. If a single nationally recognized nutritional authority has advanced well-accepted scientific evidence demonstrating that a well-balanced vegetarian diet is more healthful than a well-balanced diet which includes lean meat and fish, I have yet to read about it. And even if it could be shown that a judiciously selected vegetarian diet was *as good as* one containing meat, why attach importance to that? Why blow the trumpets, unless it is better?

Reo M. Christenson
Department of Political Science
Miami University

Clean and Unclean Foods

To the Editors: Concerning John Brunt's article (Vol. 11, No. 3), I share his view that the issue is *health*, and deplore with him some of the bad practices he mentions of Christians who use diet as a measure of piety. The same happens sometimes with other worthy practices such as Sabbathkeeping and tithing (already so in Jesus' time, as in Luke 18:9-12). However, concerning the author's sweeping statement that "It is hard to imagine that first-century Gentile Christians would have taken (Mark 7:19) to mean all foods except those declared unclean in Leviticus 11," there is good evidence of precisely what to him is "hard to imagine." When a practice has been so universally accepted as to be beyond questioning, there is seldom need for it to be explicitly mentioned. That the observance of the *kosher* laws of Leviticus 11 was such a "universal" among Jews and Christians in apostolic times becomes clear when we consider, 1) Peter's statement in Acts 10:14; "I have *never* eaten anything impure or unclean" (emphasis supplied, NIV). Peter had lived with Jesus for three years. If Jesus had "freed" His disciples from the teaching of Leviticus 11, surely impetuous Peter could be counted on to be the first one to adopt the practice. 2) The Jewish leaders, too, would rush to make maximum use of such a violation of Torah teaching, had it in fact occurred. There is no record that they ever brought such charge either against Jesus or the apostles.

The issues in Leviticus 11 were *health vs. disease*, then as today. Only these concepts were couched in the expressions *clean-unclean*, the terms that people could understand at their stage of development.

Albert P. Wellington
Interlaken, New York

Ignores New Testament

To the Editors: I am writing the following after reading carefully the SPECTRUM issue on food, vegetarianism, unclean foods, etc. I found it a most interesting issue with some articles and positions that were enlightening. However, the purpose of this letter is primarily to challenge the position of John Brunt's article.

The facts are that the New Testament clearly delineates

the issues that were at stake. The amazing thing is that Dr. Brunt chose to ignore the plain definitive passages of the New Testament which set forth the issues and which when compared with the ones he did quote are explanatory and resolve the whole problem. I refer particularly to 1 Corinthians 8 where the question of defilement of food is clearly stated to be the issue of food that was offered to idols and thus rendered defiled by those who had a weak conscience and recognized an idol as having powers. Acts 15:29 also makes it abundantly clear that this was a major consideration to the New Testament church. The fact is that the New Testament is entirely silent concerning the distinction between clean and unclean animals, and out of this silence Dr. Brunt creates a philosophy which contradicts the plainest statements of Scripture.

It certainly ought to be clear from Peter's vision that New Testament believers assumed abstinence from all unclean foods and that the vision was not intended by God to make any statement whatsoever about dietary habits, but rather about an attitude of the Jews toward the Gentiles.

I certainly find it difficult to believe that the New Testament church could have ignored or abrogated the laws of unclean animals, as far as food is concerned, without the New Testament being filled with evidence of the controversy that such action would create.

I would like to close with these questions for Dr. Brunt: 1) In the light of his argument, why did the New Testament church forbid the eating of blood and things strangled as well as food offered to idols if there was no longer to be a relationship between the will of God and what the believer eats? 2) Why does Dr. Brunt ignore the most explanatory New Testament passage of 1 Corinthians 8 in seeking an explanation for the less explicit passages from the letters of Paul? The obvious parallel of Romans 14 and the other passages of 1 Corinthians 8 is totally ignored. 3) Once he establishes his "health theology," where would he get his list of unhealthful foods as a guide to health and to contribute to the unity and fellowship of the believers as they endeavored to eat at the same table? Obviously, under his philosophy, everyone would be a law unto themselves and no one could eat with anyone else. His philosophy puts us back to square one where we have to ask, "Where do we go from here?" Then, in the endeavor to discover and teach some theology of health that would unify the community of believers, we would be right back to the Scriptures asking what guidelines God had given in the past.

I do appreciate reading SPECTRUM. I am always ready to welcome a challenge to any traditional position. Surely those who make such shocking challenges can accept a rather pointed counter challenge when their work has been obviously deficient in both logic and research.

Elden Walter
Ministerial Director
Pennsylvania Conference

Brunt Responds

I appreciate the response to my recent article, "Unclean or Unhealthful?" I have learned from most of the letters and am grateful readers have taken the time to respond. I wish I could respond to all the points, but since that is impossible I will try to mention a few major ones.

First an observation that relates to almost all the letters. I obviously did not make one item sufficiently clear. The

New Testament material is not addressing our question about health. It is speaking to the clean-unclean distinction as it was understood at that time. The context is that of ritual purity. We cannot force the New Testament to answer our questions, but must listen to see what questions it is addressing. If we would only do this we could take the New Testament for what it says without being threatened in our own position on the one hand or trying to suppress what it clearly states on the other.

Now let me briefly respond individually to some of the letters.

Roy Adams needs to reread my article and his New Testament, for he misunderstands both. He accuses me of saying that Mark makes a shift from the ritualistic to the hygienic, but if he reads the article carefully he will find that that is precisely what I do *not* say. Mark nowhere speaks to the issue of health or hygiene. Adams fails to realize that in the first century Jewish food laws were not understood by *anyone* in terms of hygiene. But while Mark has not discussed hygiene, he has, contrary to Adams' opinion, moved beyond the specific question of eating with unwashed hands, as virtually all redactional studies of Mark 7 have shown. Clearly Mark's editorial comment that Jesus declared *all* foods clean transcends the specific discussion and is intended in a universal sense.

Albert Wellington says that he has "good evidence" for that which I find hard to imagine; i.e., that Gentiles would have taken Mark 7:19 to mean all foods except those specified unclean in Leviticus 11. But the "evidence" he presents comes from a Jewish context and predates Mark! He fails to differentiate between Jesus' teaching and Mark's later conclusion. I agree wholeheartedly that Jesus was not understood to abolish distinctions between clean and unclean foods at the time. This conclusion is Mark's and is based on subsequent (inspired) theological reflection on Jesus' words. The question of how the disciples would have understood Jesus' words must be clearly separated from that of how Gentiles would have understood Mark's words.

Elden Walter addresses three questions to me, and I will briefly respond to each. 1) The "apostolic decree" in Acts 15 is problematic, to say the least. That it was not universally observed in the early church is proven by the fact that Paul allows the eating of food offered to idols in certain situations (1 Cor. 10:25). 2) Although the principles governing interpersonal relationships that Paul sets forth in 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Romans 14 are similar, all of the terminology that speaks to the specific situation is different. For instance, the words for idol meat (*eidolothyton* and *hierothyton*) do not occur in Romans, and clean-unclean language is not found in 1 Corinthians. This leads me to conclude that Romans 14 is *not* concerned with the question of food offered to idols, and thus is not the key to explaining Romans 14:14 or Mark 7:19. The issue of food offered to idols should not be imported into the latter passages. 3) Walters is worried that if we all act on the basic principle of eating the most healthful food available to us everyone will be "a law unto themselves." Here I simply disagree with him. Acting on the basis of principle should make us *more* responsible. If we put more emphasis on principle, there would be fewer who simply refrain from eating pig (because they don't want to sin) but give little heed to health reform in other areas (because those are just health matters that don't involve sin as such), and more who try to consistently live the most healthful life in all areas.

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