

# SPECTRUM

a quarterly journal of the association of adventist forums

SPECTRUM / VOLUME FIVE NUMBER THREE / 1973

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SPECTRUM is a journal established to encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint, to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject, to evaluate the merits of diverse views, and to foster Christian intellectual and cultural growth. Although effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and discriminating judgment, the statements of fact are the responsibility of contributors, and the views that the individual authors express are not necessarily those of the editorial staff as a whole or as individuals.

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VOLUME FIVE  
NUMBER THREE

1973

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SPECTRUM is published quarterly (winter, spring, summer, and autumn) by the Association of Adventist Forums. Second-class postage is paid at Loma Linda, California 92354. Content © 1972 by the Association of Adventist Forums. Request the editor for permission to quote.

Correspondence should be directed to SPECTRUM, Box 866, Loma Linda, California 92354: *manuscripts and letters* to the attention of the EDITOR; change of address (with the latest label) and *subscriptions* to the CIRCULATION MANAGER. Correspondence about *book reviews* should be sent to the BOOK REVIEW EDITOR.

Subscription rate: one year, \$10.00; student, \$5.00. Single copy, \$3.00. Remittance should be by check to the Association of Adventist Forums.

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*the blank walls*

DOROTHY BAKER

I saw a child running  
gaily in the city.  
He held a large pencil  
in his hand —  
to draw upon the blank walls  
in millions of houses  
and churches  
and schools.

But the mothers  
and the ministers  
and the teachers  
were waiting  
to protect the walls.

# What Is Truth?

MOLLEURUS COUPERUS

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The article in which Donald J. Ortner sets forth his views of the dialogue problems of science and religion, and the one in which Raymond F. Cottrell responds, involve a question which has troubled man ever since the dawn of history. It is the question that was voiced with such pathos by Pontius Pilate: *What is truth?*

Truth may be defined (*a*) as a statement of facts as they are known at the moment, or (*b*) as the way things really are, or (*c*) as an agreement of true facts and true statements. An essential characteristic of truth is its harmony with all other truths. If there seems to be conflict between the facts as they are understood in two fields of knowledge or thought, such as between science and religion, then an unbiased reexamination of the data and their interpretations in both areas is required. All of us reach maturity with a heritage of preconceived opinions, prejudices that are difficult to ignore, half-truths, and fallacies — all of which contribute to the conflict between truth and error in the individual, in the church, and in society in general.

An unbiased reexamination of an area of seemingly conflicting truth, therefore, is not easy, to say the least. In most individuals and organizations, it requires the passage of time — often a long period of time. For some individuals, even a lifetime seems too short a span in which to correctly relate tradition and long-held convictions and opinions to subsequently discovered fact and truth. An honest and serious attempt to accommodate all available data in one's concept of a specific truth must eventuate in a process of growth as knowledge, insights, and commitments develop.

There will be occasions when the evidence bearing on a problem may not be sufficient to make a decision as to where the preponderance of evidence

lies, and one may have to suspend final judgment and say *I do not know*. We must take care, however, that our preference for a certain opinion is not the underlying reason for remaining on the intellectual fence, or that we avoid facing the issues as they are by using an excuse like the phrase *the facts are not all in*. The absolute total of data, of course, is never in, and we must take our stand on what is actually available to us at any one time in our life.

In the human situation, truth is and must be progressive. It has been so in all of man's history, no matter how much truth was opposed and repressed at times. Doctrines and dogmas that were formulated with great care have often been looked upon as complete and final by those who authored them. When dogmas have been clothed in infallibility, then new insights and the demonstration of new facts have often been condemned as heresy, and persecution or schism has inevitably followed. The doctrine that was to be the basis for progressive understanding, knowledge, and growth became in reality a wall to keep out further truth.

Most of the problems that have arisen over conflicts between religion and science in the Christian churches during the last four centuries have been due, to a large extent, to a belief in some form of doctrinal infallibility, coupled with a faulty understanding of the intrinsic nature of truth. How different the relationship between science and the Christian Church might be today if the Church had been dedicated to a *continuing* quest for truth instead of imprisoning itself by static dogma and tradition. A church that claims to project a true picture of its God must first have respect for the coherence of all truth within God's creation if that church is to mediate trust in the God of that creation.

The concept of the essential unity of all truth, as well as an understanding of the progressive nature of the unfolding of biblical truth, has been a prominent part of Adventist belief. These statements by Kenneth H. Wood in the *Review and Herald* of April 3, 1969, reflect this concept well: "This illustrates a point that is beyond debate: truth never opposes truth. When we cannot see immediate harmony between revealed truth and discovered truth, between the Bible and science, between Scripture and reason, between the writings of Ellen G. White and the Bible, or between science and the writings of Ellen G. White, the problem usually is that we lack facts. At other times we are simply misinterpreting facts. Truth is always consistent with itself."

Ellen White stated her attitude very clearly on several occasions between 1881 and 1892, as illustrated by these statements from *Counsels to Writers*



*and Editors:* "The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light. . . . There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. . . . The rebuke of the Lord will be upon those who would be guardians of the doctrine" (pages 33-38).

7 Truth, like freedom, is kept vital only at the price of *eternal vigilance*. Former expressions of truth may no longer reflect accurately the facts as we know them now. When this is so, they are then inadequate or defective declarations of *present truth*. A Christian's commitment to truth may be expected to be stronger than anyone else's. Failure to demonstrate this commitment presents a false picture of the character and nature of Him who is called in Scripture "the God of truth" — in whose likeness man was made and who has promised man the Spirit of truth to guide him into all truth, that man, like his Maker, might *love* the truth.

# Science and Religion:

## PROBLEMS IN DIALOGUE

DONALD J. ORTNER

8

Among the current and potential problems that traditional Christianity faces, the difficulty of dialogue between science and religion probably cannot rank as the most important. The greatest concern is whether man can come to relate to his fellow man and to God on the basis of the great principle of love. However, there are aspects of almost all the sciences that conflict with aspects of Christianity; and how the Christian churches — the Seventh-day Adventists in particular — respond to these challenges is of importance.

Perhaps at some time in the history of the Adventist church it was possible to ignore the questions of science, in the hope that few church members would be exposed to them. Such a hope would be unrealistic today, however, since both the communication media and the systems of education give wide exposure to scientific theories. At some point, every observant, intelligent individual will encounter scientific ideas and theories that in varying degrees are incompatible with traditional Christian beliefs. In view of this fact of modern life, the attitude of Adventists toward aspects of science becomes an important consideration. At least partially, the ability and willingness of the church to discuss candidly such questions as science poses can be regarded, perhaps, as a measure of the faith of the church in its own system of beliefs.

In the dialogue between science and religion, problems arise at two distinct levels. The first, or *conceptual*, level concerns the facts and theories of science that may conflict with religious doctrine — as, for example, the theory of evolution. At the more *abstract* second level are the methods and characteristic thought processes of scientists that may differ from those em-

ployed by nonscientists. Because the nature of the scientist's training program may be highly complex, it is likely that the typical thought patterns of the scientist will differ fundamentally from those of the nonscientist. Each person must frame thoughts in words if he is to communicate. However, the scientist's methods, vocabulary, and perspective may make it difficult for him to communicate his viewpoint in words that are shared in common with the nonscientist. I will focus here on the *abstract* level, where the problems remain poorly understood because they are difficult to perceive. (I do this because I feel that the challenges of scientific theories and facts are relatively well known.)

A personal experience illustrates the difference in perspective of the theologian and the scientist. My father has been an Adventist minister for over forty years. As one might expect, his concepts of the structure and processes of the universe are strongly influenced by the religious framework that has been the basis of his lifework. My background, on the other hand, is that of a scientist who took as one area of specialization for the doctorate the fossil evidence for human evolution, and who has been engaged in research for several years. My father and I occasionally engage in friendly but vigorous debate on this aspect of science and religion. As a rule, my father has the last word in these debates, and usually he summarizes his opinion of the relationship between these two spheres of knowledge somewhat as follows: "There is no conflict between religion and *true science*. The only problem that arises is between religion and science falsely so called."

One of this century's leading paleontologists, G. G. Simpson, observes that "evolution and *true* religion are compatible."<sup>1</sup>

These converse opinions summarize the basic elements of the conflict between science and religion. With his religious perspective, my father takes as his reference point his *religious beliefs*, which he assumes to be absolute. His religion is true, and those aspects of science in agreement with his religion are true; all other science is false. On the other hand, Simpson takes as his reference point that which he assumes to be true in his *science beliefs*. By his definition, only those aspects of religion in agreement with science can be true. Both men assume that their particular *frame of reference* represents at least an approximation of something we might call ultimate truth.

In my opinion, *ultimate religious and scientific knowledge* simply is not available to man — because he cannot encompass all knowledge even if he had access to it, which obviously he does not. That both science and traditional religion are changing in terms of content and emphasis is eloquent testimony that in neither sphere of knowledge has man attained ultimate

truth. Both scientists and nonscientists, therefore, would do well to approach areas of conflict between science and religion with a great deal of humility.

In the following sections I shall discuss briefly: (*a*) the education of the scientist; (*b*) the methods used by the scientist; (*c*) the implications of scientific training and methodology for dialogue between science and religion; (*d*) church responsibility in relation to science and religion.

#### THE EDUCATION OF THE SCIENTIST

Probably no ability is more important in a scientist than the ability to view existing knowledge critically. Blind faith in ideas or persons (here used in the religious sense, as in "faith in God") is strongly discouraged in the study of science. For example, few things are dearer to the heart of a typical graduate student than demonstrating that a hypothesis or conclusion of one of the established scientists is wrong. This basic attitude has proved extremely beneficial to science, where change is expected and desired. However, in a belief system that many may want to keep absolute and unchanging, such an attitude could be dysfunctional.

Another ability encouraged in the development of a scientist is the ability to integrate theories and data from many different sciences. The graduate student learns to fit his contribution into what has already been learned and to make certain that it is consistent with principles already discovered. If he is unable to do this, he must be very cautious in promoting his ideas.

The final point important to the discussion of a scientist's education is that scientists are encouraged to consider phenomena purely on the basis of materiality. By materiality I mean that a given phenomenon occurs on the basis of intrinsic factors and that no external, nonmaterial forces (such as God) add to that phenomenon a dimension that cannot be studied by scientific methods. Therefore, the science student must assume that vital forces (God) do not affect the phenomenon he is studying. It is an easy step from this point of view to one that assumes that God does not exist. This last point, however, is not a necessary conclusion arising from the concept that phenomena are material by nature.

#### THE METHODS USED BY THE SCIENTIST

Just as there are affiliated persons who do not approximate the ideals of the religious group, there are scientists who do not approximate the ideals of scientific method in their research. For purposes of discussion, however, I shall assume the ideal situation.

If the scientist begins with the assumption that a problem is solvable by

some analytical method, first he establishes a hypothesis. The hypothesis is a *tentative statement* based on his specialized knowledge. In this statement, in effect, he predicts how an experiment will turn out and then how this result will affect the theory to which the hypothesis is related. Hypothesis-formulation is followed by hypothesis-testing — which results in acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis. The methods of testing hypotheses vary extensively. A chemist may develop the hypothesis that mixing reagent A with reagent B should result in a new molecule C. Proof in this situation is rather direct. Most hypothesis-testing in the biological sciences is much less direct and may involve the use of inferential statistics. In this type of testing, the scientist tries to determine if what he observed could have resulted from chance factors. If so, he is not in a position to accept his hypothesis.

It is important to emphasize that in all hypothesis-testing there is the chance of error in either accepting or rejecting the hypothesis. This is particularly true in the biological sciences. The scientist usually meets the situation by saying, "I think I am right, but there is a 5 percent chance that I am wrong." There are many problems inherent in hypothesis-testing that are not germane to our discussion. The main point is that there is always a residual possibility of being wrong; hence the scientist assumes that all people will qualify his statements, even though he does not.

A theory becomes established when hypotheses that are related to it and support it are shown to be true in the scientific sense. Perhaps nothing is more misunderstood by the general public than the nature of a theory and its relationship to hypotheses. An important principle of the nature of scientific theory is that it is dynamic. Although the basic concept may remain the same, many details of the theory will change as new problems are formulated and tested.

An example of how a theory changes is found in the theory of evolution. The basic concept of biological change through time is essentially the same today as it was when it was first formulated. Darwin's original concept of how this change took place is summarized in the phrase "survival of the fittest." In Darwin's theory of organic evolution, only those animals best suited to their environmental niche would be able to survive long enough to reproduce. Darwin's concept has been shown to be too simplistic in view of what is known today about genetics and ecology. Modern concepts of organic evolution postulate that those animals best adapted to their total environment will tend to produce more offspring. Since these offspring will tend to be like their better-adapted parents, the species will become increasingly better adapted to its environment.

We need not debate the various aspects of the theory of evolution for purposes of this paper. I have used it to illustrate the fact that scientific theories do change. However, the general public tends to overemphasize the tentative nature of theories. Ideally, by the time a theory is developed, there should exist many proven hypotheses that support the theory. To the scientist, the tentative nature of a theory is in its susceptibility to rather subtle changes, not in its basic validity.

The final point on scientific methods that I would like to stress is the relationship between scientists. Although it can be said that scientists are individualistic, there is a strong sense of collegiality between them. Current scientific knowledge has expanded to the point that specialization is required if one is to remain competent in scientific research. Holding a doctor of philosophy degree in one area, however, does not automatically qualify a scientist to speak or write authoritatively in another. This fact has made it necessary for scientists to collaborate with each other in team research.

Society has a great deal of respect for science and scientists because of the visible successes of science. However, the tendency to assume that science can address itself with favorable results to any problem is most unrealistic, of course. Occasionally scientists themselves are caught up in this popular notion and attempt to make statements on subjects for which they have little background or insight. A scientist should always be cautious about making statements on subjects outside his area of competence.

#### THE IMPLICATIONS FOR DIALOGUE

In contrast to the typical scientist, the orthodox Adventist does not treat natural phenomena on the basis of materiality.

One of my most memorable experiences illustrating this basic difference occurred in the winter of 1960 while my wife and I were living in Syracuse, New York. During the first portion of our one-year stay, we lived in an apartment adjoining the landlord's home. In this region of New York, snow arrives in October and covers the ground for six or seven months. Under these circumstances any signs of plant life are welcome. So, when the landlady invited us to see a plant that had just bloomed, we were delighted to do so.

Sunlight was streaming through the dining room window as we observed and admired her plant. In the course of our conversation the proud owner remarked on the wonderful way the flower always turned toward the sun. Now I would be the first to admit that my knowledge of botany is limited, but during my undergraduate days I had learned a few facts about photo-

tropisms. Thinking that this woman might appreciate a brief explanation of the mechanism by which the flower turns toward the light, I explained that growth of plant stem cells on the light side is inhibited by the sun, whereas growth of cells on the shady side is not. Thus the faster growth of the cells on the shady side of the stem keeps the flower facing the light. I was totally unprepared for her reaction. Looking at me as if I were the devil incarnate, she sternly informed me, "God did it."

As a physical anthropologist I have encountered this type of thinking on several occasions since, but no other experience has brought into sharper focus the basic difference between science and religion. Let me emphasize that I do not criticize this religious approach to the interpretation of biological phenomena. But the experience does contain, at a very simple level, the essentials of the conflict between the thought patterns of a person whose education and mental outlook are scientific and those of a person for whom a simple faith in God provides the necessary and sufficient answers for physical and biological phenomena on all levels of abstraction.

The clear indication of this experience is that the assumptions and perspectives of a scientist regarding natural phenomena basically differ from those of an individual whose observations of the same phenomena are from the perspective of a simple faith in God. In addition, depending on one's knowledge of the science, God becomes involved in nature at different levels of abstraction. For our landlady, it was almost as if God were physically bending the flower toward the sun. For a scientist, God was not directly involved. There appears to exist a whole spectrum of attitudes regarding the role of God in nature — varying from a belief that God's involvement is direct, personal, and tangible, to a concept of a God who established general laws involving the relationships between matter, with natural phenomena developing on the basis of these laws. Since at present there is little common ground between the specialist in religion and the specialist in science, there are likely to be problems in communication.

A further aspect of the dialogue between science and religion is a function of the probabilistic statements made by the scientist. In the biological sciences a scientist is expected to provide some indication of the probabilities that his conclusions will be wrong. Imagine the response of church members if the minister were to state that he thinks there is a 95 percent chance that Christ will return. Orthodox Adventism phrases its concepts in absolute statements. There is a tendency for persons whose conceptual framework is religious to view scientific statements as absolute also, without realizing that the scientist assumes a certain margin for error.

From my viewpoint as a scientist, I offer one additional observation. As I have noted earlier, the ability of scientists ranges from competent to incompetent, with most falling somewhere in between. Even the best scientists make mistakes, and their fellow scientists accept that which makes sense and reject occasional conclusions that may be incorrect. Scientists certainly would not reject the entire work of such persons.

In the religious sphere we may occasionally have situations in which an isolated statement may be incorrect. Because of the absolute framework in which religious statements are made, there is a tendency for some to say that a religious writer (particularly one considered to be inspired) either is correct in every statement or is unworthy of consideration at all. To a scientist such a conclusion is absurd. I suggest that, here, science has something to offer religion.

I have emphasized that the scientific concept of a theory is dynamic. Frequently this aspect is overlooked by those whose conceptual framework is religious. Because such persons may not have a continually growing knowledge of science, there is a tendency to misinterpretation. For example, I have read in church papers statements criticizing aspects of evolutionary theory that long ago were modified or rejected by most modern scientists. I have also read articles quoting comments by leading evolutionary biologists as criticizing various aspects of evolutionary theory. Often, the implication of such articles is that among scientists themselves there is general skepticism regarding evolutionary theory. Such is not the case. There is general agreement that through time biological change did occur. Debate centers on the *mechanism* by which this change occurred, not on *whether* it occurred. Again, the issue here is not evolutionary theory, but the misunderstandings that develop because of the different perspectives of the scientist and the theologian.

#### CHURCH RESPONSIBILITY

It may seem presumptuous and perhaps arrogant for me to offer some suggestions for relating responsibly to the science and religion dialogue. However, none of my proposals affects the basic posture of the church on any scientific issue. Such would involve matters of doctrine, on which I am poorly equipped to advise.

First, I would submit that the church should assume that there is nothing to be lost by an open and honest appraisal and review of any issue. Surely a church cannot have much confidence in the value of its beliefs if it thinks



these beliefs will be swept away by exposure to one or more scientific theories that may be in conflict with the doctrines of the church. Openness of discussion between science and religion may never resolve disagreements, but such discussion would ensure that the church will never be accused of being less than candid in dealing with problem areas.

Second, I would recommend that editors of church papers make it a policy to get opinions on all sides of issues discussed in published articles. This practice can help prevent the use of poorly conceived ideas and statements by church members to defend their beliefs. For example, there are very few statements I have read in church paper articles dealing with my area of specialization that would not have been rather thoroughly demolished by a group of knowledgeable specialists. In my opinion, discreet silence is far better than uninformed statements, no matter how noble the intentions may be.

In addition, I would recommend that editors recognize the wisdom of selecting a scientist qualified in the particular area of the issue under consideration. Asking a scientist competent in one area to discuss problems in another area is somewhat analogous to asking an auto mechanic to fix a wristwatch. He may be able to do it, but the prospects are not good.

Finally, I would suggest that we all keep in mind that scientific methods, for all their success in solving many problems, are not methods suitable for developing a theology that involves the concept of a personal God. Belief in God is a matter of faith, not a matter of science. Despite wishes to the contrary, the complexity of nature does not prove the existence of God, unless one assumes his existence to begin with.

If I appear to have been unduly critical of the religious sphere of thought and overly charitable of the scientific, it is because I am a scientist. My obvious bias, notwithstanding, I hope I have contributed here to a clearer conception of the thought processes and methods of the scientist and how they may differ from those of the nonscientist. In the dialogue between science and religion we must concern ourselves not only with the explicit challenges created by rapidly expanding scientific knowledge, but also with the basic differences that can compound existing misunderstandings.

#### REFERENCE

- 1 George G. Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1949), p. 5.

COMMENT:

## “Science and Religion”

RAYMOND F. COTTRELL

16

In an eminently fair and constructive spirit, Ortner identifies the central problem in the dialogue between science and religion as a difference in thought processes, in methods of dealing with evidence, and in the communication of ideas. He suggests that to make the dialogue more productive we must achieve a working consensus on the methodological aspects before we attempt to deal with the substantive issues. His suggestions deserve thoughtful consideration.

In any serious dialogue a consensus on methodology is logically prerequisite to dealing effectively with the issues themselves. Without prior consensus on hermeneutics, dialogue can be frustrating and unproductive. It may be that the procedural differences to which Ortner addresses himself do not result so much from any inherent disparity between science and religion as from differences between minds that are prepared to deal objectively with complex problems and minds that are not. There is more similarity than dissimilarity between sound theological reasoning and sound scientific reasoning.

### A MATURE FAITH

Under the aegis of the Holy Spirit, faith and reason are altogether compatible. The person whose primary concern in dialogue is to defend what he already assumes to be true, rather than to apprehend truth, does not have the frame of mind to recognize truth even when it is within his grasp. Sensing a threat to the security of his faith at what may seem a vulnerable point, he is not disposed to evaluate the evidence objectively. Accordingly, those who aspire to participate in the dialogue between science and religion should first possess a mature faith that can calmly consider any problem,

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however perplexing it may be. A sincere, positive desire for truth and a willingness to accept whatever truth may be found are prerequisite to any successful quest for truth. Mature faith is not blind, nor is it fearful in the face of the direst threats of men or devils.

At the point where science, *a priori*, sets up a purely mechanistic cosmogony of the universe and prescind from everything that cannot be subjected to sensory and rational investigation, the ways of science and religion inevitably part. Only the extrasensory perceptive capacity of faith is sensitive to supernatural realities. He who, as an *a priori* postulate, rules faith out of the universe will conclude that God does not exist. By his unwillingness even to examine the evidence about God in an objective frame of mind, he contravenes the very scientific criteria in whose name he takes this supposedly scientific stance. In this he is more narrowminded than the man of mature faith who, as a result of "blind faith" in his *a priori* assumption that there is no God, is disposed to examine all of the evidence fairly. Granted, "the complexity of nature does not prove the existence of God, unless one assumes his existence to begin with." On the other hand, it does not prove the nonexistence of God, unless one assumes his nonexistence to begin with. Faith is required either way, and I protest that there is adequate ground for faith in God, apart from that which may be deduced from a sensory investigation of the natural universe.

The degree to which a person is able to conceive of "a God who established general laws involving the relationships between matter" is one measure of the maturity of his faith and reason. This does not rule out that "God's involvement is direct, personal, and tangible" on occasion, but simply affirms both that a mature concept of God recognizes the economy of miracle and that God is honored by a universe and by rational beings that do not require his constant tinkering in order to keep in running order.

Ortner notes that science discourages "blind faith." But so does theology — or at least it should. Blind faith can be equally misleading in a study of the Bible or of science. To be sure, blind faith is preferable to no faith at all, but it is inherently weak and defenseless. A mature faith, with its eyes open to all of the facts and their involvements, is viable and secure.

#### A MATURE MIND

A mature mind, as well as a mature faith, is essential to participation in purposeful dialogue between science and religion — a mind that understands itself, its thought processes, its own finite and personal limitations. Anchored to ultimate realities by faith, a mature mind will be disposed to

examine any and all evidence objectively, and to modify preconceptions to comport with whatever proves to be truth. Mature faith agrees that “there is always a residual possibility of being wrong,” without in any way compromising faith itself. Accordingly, it will reserve the right to acknowledge that it has been mistaken at this point or that. This is not to consign faith to a permanent state of uncertainty, but to recognize one’s finite limitations and to be willing to shed one’s low-vaulted past from time to time in order to build more stately mansions of understanding, appropriate to the ultimate truth to which mature reason yields absolute allegiance, as mature faith does to its Author.

To be sure, “traditional Christianity” phrases its concepts in what seem to be “absolute statements.” By its very nature, revealed truth is as nearly absolute as anything within the realm of the finite can be. A mature Christian, however, recognizes that even these absolute declarations are probably not irreformable statements of ultimate reality, but are accommodations of that reality to the limited comprehension of finite minds. A residual margin of error in our finite understanding of even revealed truth is always possible.

The simplistic mentality that is content to dismiss a problem with the end-all argument that “God did it” or “Satan did it” is not ready to enter into rational dialogue. Some minds operate on a very literalistic level; others are able to function effectively on the level of abstractions. Some minds apparently were not endowed with the capacity — or perhaps never cultivated the willingness — to recognize and evaluate evidence and to reason through to logical conclusions. Those whose minds are better informed are obligated to be patient with the less well informed, to respect their needs and rights to be as they are, and to recognize that this frame of mind may not be susceptible to significant modification. We must live at peace with all men — respecting them as God’s children and accepting them as fellow pilgrims in quest of eternity — even though we may not be able to see everything through their eyes.

#### THE “BELIEF SYSTEM”

The Christian “belief system” — to use Ortner’s apt phrase — can hardly avoid being “absolute and unchanging” with respect to those ultimate realities that constitute its essence. However, human apprehension of ultimate reality is always incomplete and imperfect. A mature faith will hold unflinchingly to those ultimate realities and yet will be fully aware of the fact that its understanding of them is inherently finite, thus incomplete and imperfect. In its awareness of these limitations, a mature faith will be ready to

exchange preconceptions for truth and will not be embarrassed to acknowledge its flaws. A person who is least informed on a subject is often the most dogmatic in his concept of it; the more he learns, the more cautious he becomes. His adamant, dogmatic attitude reveals an immature mind seeking security. A well-informed person of mature faith does not need to be dogmatic in order to feel secure. In other words, a tendency to speak dogmatically is characteristic of immature intellectuality and immature faith.

Although it appeals to reason, and a man is free to accept or reject it, revelation is inherently authoritarian, inasmuch as it is extrinsic to human experience. How could it be otherwise as long as God is infinite and man is finite? Religion is concerned with absolutes that are not subject to direct sensory observation and rational evaluation, whereas science prescind from data that are not subject to such evaluation. It is desirable to maintain absolute faith in the ultimate realities about God, but too often this faith is a relatively blind faith in one's *opinions about* God and truth. Finite grasp of truth will always be relative, incomplete, imperfect. It is possible to have absolute faith in God and in his revealed Word without concluding that one's concepts of God and his Word are flawless. These observations, coupled with the agape principle, lead to the conclusion that, in the quest for truth, it is ever appropriate to maintain an attitude of humility and to regard with respect and confidence others who are engaged in the same quest, even when their perspective of truth differs considerably from our own.

#### DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION

Ortner observes that "probably no ability is more important in a scientist than the ability to view existing knowledge critically." This is just another way of saying that it is important to discriminate meticulously between fact and fiction. Is this frame of mind less important in our study of revelation than in our observation of natural phenomena? Ortner uses the word "critical," not in the negative sense, but in the positive sense of searching for facts, for reality, for truth — of unwillingness to be misled by the phantom of preconceived opinion or the mirage conjured up by such intellectual hocus-pocus as biased selection of data or the use of non sequiturs.

#### FACTS VERSUS INTERPRETATION

In both science and religion it is vital to distinguish between the facts and one's interpretation of the facts, inasmuch as the two may not always be identical. Science-related problems arise not so much from the seemingly disparate data of reason and faith as from faulty interpretation of the avail-

able data. It is not ultimate truth about the natural world that troubles us, but our limited understanding of it. God is the Author of both, and we assume that what he says to us through the natural world comports with what he says to us through his revealed Word. Otherwise the natural world would confront the Bible-believing Christian with an unsolvable paradox. The scientist may not have all the facts or an accurate understanding of what he accepts as fact; but it is equally possible for the theologian to have an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of the revealed Word.

One has only to remember the supposedly Bible-based, earth-centered attitude of the Church toward Galileo, or Darwin's mistaken understanding of the phrase "after his kind" in Genesis 1, to realize that a misinterpretation of the data of revelation can be just as fatal (both to faith in the revealed Word and to truth about the natural world) as a misinterpretation of the data of science can be. It was on the basis of such mistaken notions as that the biblical expression "four corners of the earth" required a flat earth, or that the sun standing still for Joshua implied a stationary earth, that the Church condemned Copernicus and Galileo. But, in time, facts concerning the natural universe overcame the incubus of these and other misconceptions, and it was in no small part because of such notions that the rationalism of the next two centuries drove God from the minds of men if not from the universe. Would the course of history perhaps have been different if the Church had not been so dogmatic in its erroneous interpretation of Scripture?

Darwin had been educated as a theologian and, presumably, was somewhat versed in the contemporary biblical interpretation. As a matter of fact, it was only with reluctance that he abandoned the biblical account of the origin of life, but he evidently did so on the basis of his untenable interpretation of the Genesis expression "after his kind," in the light of the observed phenomena of the natural world. What if he had had a correct understanding of this phrase and perhaps other statements of Scripture? Would he have spawned the theory of evolution, and would modern science have irrevocably pitted itself against the revealed Word?

Likewise, misconceptions as to what the Bible actually says may become, for us, roadblocks as hazardous to our dialogue between science and religion as are the misconceptions of evolution with respect to the observed phenomena of the natural world. There is danger in misreading the Bible, and thereby being diverted, as there is in misreading the fossil record. We would be naive and conceited to suppose that only Darwin and churchmen of Galileo's time were in danger of misinterpreting Scripture.

Ortner summarizes his father's estimate of the problem thus: "There is no conflict between religion and *true science*. The only problem that arises is between religion and science falsely so called." With equal logic, yet with no desire to be facetious, we might rephrase this observation to read: "There is no conflict between science and *true religion*. The only problem that arises is between science and religion falsely so called."

#### THE BOUNDS OF SPECIALIZATION

A wise man will avoid making dogmatic statements on any subject — scientific, theological, or other — that is outside his limited area of education and experience. This applies with equal force to a scientist presuming to operate in the realm of exegesis as to a theologian in the realm of science. In this age of specialization we are more dependent than was any past generation on others who specialize in areas for which we have had neither time nor opportunity to investigate. We are bound by our personal limitations to respect the insight and judgment of men of integrity who are specialists in such areas. The theologian will say a hearty *amen* to the scientist's plea for caution about making statements on subjects outside one's area of specialty. Nor should the scientist forget that the same rule applies to him when he essays to evaluate the revealed Word.

Writers and editors can properly heed Ortner's admonition to keep uninformed or outdated statements on scientific matters from getting into print. Experienced editors constantly endeavor to avoid this trap. Often they consult persons whom they consider competent in this field or that. Evidently, however, there is still room for improvement. Editors are bound by deadlines and by other practical realities of publishing; and in their endeavor to achieve a balance between the ideal and the possible, they may, and do, make mistakes at times. The best that anyone — including editors — can sometimes do is to aim for perfection and occasionally settle for a high batting average. But alas — while the errors of others may be buried and forgotten, the editor's mistakes are published for all to see!

#### FORMULATION AND TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

Ortner rightly considers valid hypothesis-formulation and hypothesis-testing to be vital. The role of hypotheses in advancing the frontiers of knowledge is well established. But here we encounter two equal and opposite errors. To elevate a hypothesis to the status of proved truth before it is adequately tested violates the elementary requirements of the hypothesis-building code. Generalization on the basis of inadequate data is a cardinal

intellectual sin. To treat evidence fairly, one must not attribute to a hypothesis a higher degree of validity than the evidence warrants, lest the entire edifice collapse under a load it is not able to support. On one hand, a person will not gullibly accept a hypothesis as fact until it is so proved; on the other hand, he will not reject a hypothesis without fair examination. To reject a hypothesis on a priori grounds is no more intellectually respectable than to accept it on such grounds. Faith can always afford to be fair with the evidence.

#### A MATURE ATTITUDE TOWARD INSPIRATION

Ortner observes that some look on "a religious writer" as either "correct in every statement" or "unworthy of consideration at all." An informed concept of inspiration recognizes the presence of both human and divine elements. Problems that arise in this area are usually the result of an a priori concept of what inspiration is and how it ought to operate. A mature concept of inspiration is an inductive one based on a careful study of what inspiration says about itself and of how it has operated to bring God's message to us. A mature concept accepts inspiration as it actually is rather than as we may theorize that it ought to be. This attitude recognizes the full inspiration and authority that the Holy Spirit sought to convey; it also recognizes its own limitations and its obligation to be guided by the principles of truth thus revealed. Any depreciation of an inspired statement with a view to evading truth or duty is inherently self-deceiving and self-defeating.

#### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Ortner concludes by restating the main point of his paper — the need for serious attention to "the basic differences that can compound existing misunderstandings." Thus far in the science-religion dialogue we have concerned ourselves primarily with "the explicit challenges created by rapidly expanding scientific knowledge." It is to be hoped that Ortner's suggestions will receive the attention they deserve from all who are involved in the dialogue currently in progress.

I would like to summarize with four suggestions that, in my estimation, would go far toward resolving the questions of dialogue between science and religion:

1. Let us be *honest with ourselves and fair with all the evidence* — on both sides of the debate. Let us acknowledge that we do not have all of the answers yet, either in the area of faith or in that of reason. To acknowledge these problems is not to deny faith, as long as we operate within the context



of faith and the a priori conviction that there are viable answers acceptable to both reason and faith.

Those of us who approach problems in the area of science and religion from the perspective of religion could not agree more with the concepts Ortner expresses in his final section on church responsibility. Several times Ellen White commended what he refers to as "an open and honest appraisal and review of any issue." We heartily concur with the idea of "openness of discussion between science and religion." Nothing is to be lost by facing these problems; much may be lost by a refusal to do so.

2. We need a higher degree of *interdisciplinary respect and confidence* than now exists between experts in science and in religion. Each needs to listen to the other with respect for, and confidence in, his personal integrity and good will. And, as Ortner points out, each should recognize his own limitations and the professional competence of others. Little progress can be expected in our dialogue unless there is a priori confidence (as well as a basis for that confidence) in the personal integrity of other dialogue participants — a belief that they are sincere, that they will approach problems objectively, that they mean well.

3. We need a much higher degree of *interdisciplinary cooperation* between science and theology than has heretofore prevailed. To date, this cooperation has been nominal at best. Without a significantly higher level of cooperation, it is doubtful that we can expect further significant progress. Dialogue cannot be conducted on an intermittent, uncoordinated, random basis. It requires the concerted application of the best that theology and science can offer.

4. We need to develop an *interdisciplinary methodology* to help coordinate our diverse ways of thinking, our diverse procedures for dealing with evidence, and our communication of ideas to minds of different background, preparation, and experience. The theologian and the scientist each need valid hermeneutics — one for dealing with matters of faith and revelation, the other for dealing with scientific data. Hermeneutics adequate to meet the needs of both can be formed from a careful synthesis of the two.

The key feature of the methodology I propose is to list all of the viable options that both science and revelation have to offer and then to select, tentatively, that pair of options that comport most closely with each other. On one hand, the scientist will avoid the temptation to assume, a priori, that his particular interpretation of data from the natural world is absolute and that inspired statements must conform to that particular interpretation, without first considering the possible validity of alternate interpretations of the ob-

served data. On the other hand, the theologian will avoid the temptation to assume, a priori, that his particular interpretation of the inspired Word is necessarily absolute and that the observed phenomena of the natural world must yield to his particular interpretation, without first considering the possible validity of alternate interpretations of the inspired Word. Only thus will it be possible to deal fairly with all of the evidence — and to arrive at truth. On the basis of such a procedure, it should be possible to build a model that reconciles the seemingly disparate data of the natural world with that of the revealed Word.

# God's first temples

FRØDE KRØLL NIELSEN

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned  
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,  
And spread the roof above them; ere he framed  
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back  
The sound of anthems — in the darkling wood,  
Amid the cool and silence, he knelt down,  
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks  
And supplication.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

My heart is awed within me when I think  
of the great miracle that still goes on,  
in silence, round me — the perpetual work  
of Thy creation, finished, yet renewed  
forever.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT





The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk and strut about so many walking monsters — a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man . . . a thing.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON



**Who forgets not — at the sight  
of these tremendous tokens of Thy power —  
his pride, and lays his strifes and follies by?**

**WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT**





Why should we, in the world's riper years,  
neglect God's ancient sanctuaries,  
and adore only among the crowd,  
and under roofs that our frail hands have raised?

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

FRØDE KRØLL NIELSEN,  
whose photographs were made available  
through the courtesy of Jorgen Henriksen,  
is a medical student at the University of Copenhagen.

Landscape and trees take on beautiful abstract form of black and white in the photographs by Frøde Krøll Nielsen. High contrast photographic printing has resulted in striking designs and patterns. It is fascinating to discover, through the photographer's view, abstract forms in nature. The possibilities of looking at God-created nature with a primary concern for pure form, rather than symbolic representation, is a spiritually moving experience.

JORGEN HENRIKSEN

SPECTRUM NUMBER THREE 1973

# The World Council of Churches and Seventh-day Adventists

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ELLA M. RYDZEWSKI

An interview in which Eugene Carson Blake, the father of modern ecumenicism, talks about the World Council of Churches and its relationship to certain areas of interest to Seventh-day Adventists.

When I went to work as a secretary to the associate pastor of the Pasadena Presbyterian Church in 1971, I learned that this was the church where Eugene Carson Blake, World Council of Churches leader, had been a pastor for eleven years. Many members remembered him with great affection. The church was proud when Dr. Blake became one of the first Christian leaders to take a stand for racial justice in the United States. On December 4, 1960, in Grace Cathedral (Episcopal) in San Francisco, Dr. Blake gave the sermon that contained his famous proposal for Christian unity and earned for him the name "the father of modern ecumenicism." In 1966 he became general secretary of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. He retired from this position in 1972.

I talked with Dr. Blake in my office at the Pasadena church. He was a large, broadshouldered man with an easy smile, and I soon relaxed. I explained to him that my questions would be limited to those of particular interest to Seventh-day Adventists, and our interview proceeded.

*Are you aware that Adventists have been talking with the World Council of Churches?*

Yes, I have known Mr. Beach for a long time, and I was involved in the planning of the first talks.<sup>1</sup> We have had some important discussions in

which we got acquainted and discussed the theological points of ecumenism.

*Have you had any contacts with Adventists outside this?*

Yes, but I have forgotten many names. An Adventist doctor took good care of me in Addis Ababa when I became ill there about two years ago. He was a fine doctor and Christian witness. I have seen Adventists in various places.

*I am sure you have been asked this question many times. What are the goals of the WCC? Is it to be a superchurch?*

No. That is the "organizational" question. What we are really saying is that there must be a *visible community of Christians* — which requires some form of organization of that community. Some people are worried about centralization, uniformity, and other negative aspects of organization. But the point is that no church taking itself seriously accepts the idea that it is merely a religious club. Each church feels that it is a part of the Church of Jesus Christ. In the past, some churches have taken the position that there aren't any other real Christians. But generally speaking, very few do that any more. They recognize that we all belong to Jesus Christ — rather than Jesus Christ belonging to any particular church.

In the past there has been a distortion of the division between churches, particularly with regard to evangelism. People outside our separated churches look at us and say, "But you are not a community in Jesus Christ; you are a group of competing churches." Unity will not solve all the problems of Christianity, and I would like to emphasize that we do not propose love at the expense of truth. Rather, the ecumenical movement really consists of people who believe that the various churches need each other in order to fully understand God and Jesus Christ. It is mutual enrichment rather than compromise.

*What is the relationship of the World Council of Churches to governments? Would they use governments?*

This varies from place to place. Because we are a *world* council, we are close to many of the activities of the United Nations — not so much its political activities as its work in education, with refugees, and in similar areas. We would cooperate with government institutions rather than be a structural — or coercive — part of government. The major point of the whole Christian Church is that now we see something Adventists have always seen — that service in the name of Christ and for humanity, rather than the

domination of people in the name of Christ is what is important. Certainly the WCC would not use governmental power to control or dominate.

*Your stand on aid to schools, tax exemption for church businesses, and prayer in public schools has been strongly based on church-state separation, hasn't it?*

On the whole it has been, yes. I think that Protestants ought to begin to discuss the difficult problem faced by the Roman Catholic church and other churches that support parochial education. I don't know any solution to the problem that is in harmony with separation of church and state, but we should take the problem seriously. That is one topic I hope I can spend my retirement time on.

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*In a recent article you mentioned that you thought President Nixon had compromised some of these separation of church and state concepts to buy certain religious votes. Is that right?*

I'm not sure. I may have been quoted as criticizing the church services in the White House. The President has emphasized his positive relationship with the Roman Catholic church and the so-called evangelical conservative wing of Protestantism and has ignored the mainline Protestant churches. It is obvious why he did this. They were critical of his Vietnam position and such internal policies as equality for all races in housing and employment.

*You mentioned the influence of the conservative evangelical wing, which seems to be in a position to influence the government, right now at least. Would you see this as more of a threat to church-state separation than the ecumenical movement?*

I don't think that is a great danger. Churches tend to want to have good relations with the government; and if they believe they have some insight into the morality of an issue, they will try to be heard. There is no reason the President should listen less to them than he listens to others. But I do think it is dangerous if a government makes its main religious concern how to get votes from these groups.

*Such a danger seems to enter into the eschatological concerns of some churches, doesn't it?*

The danger of taking a premillennial position, it seems to me, is that we tend to apply things only as if the particular time were the end of time. And throughout history it has turned out that such times were not the end times. I don't know the inside of the Adventist position. Donald G. Barnhouse, a

conservative Presbyterian, examined Adventist beliefs and thought we ought to be much closer to them than we had been.<sup>2</sup> But it seems to me the danger is that people will put on their white robes and wait for the Second Advent rather than do what I think the New Testament teaches — work.

*What is your position on the growth of the occult and spiritualism today?*

I am against spiritualism or spiritism, because I think that proving the existence of spirits and other phenomena tends to be unlikely, or at least difficult. Of course, it is impossible to prove that it doesn't exist. I remember that my sainted mother warned against spiritism by reminding us of Saul in the Old Testament and arguing that you always got into trouble when you went to mediums or witches.

*Do you see spiritism as something that does not exist?*

Well, I am never able to say that something does not exist — but I was born in Missouri and I am skeptical. I believe skepticism on this kind of thing is important. It is a very difficult thing to prove. Many of the people mixed up in it have discovered afterward that they are not quite so sure as they were at the time.

*Do you see this as related in any way to the emotional appeal of many churches today? I am thinking of the miracle workers, the faith healers, and so on.*

That is a different category. We do need to recognize the relationship of spirit and substance. Most of us tend not to have clear answers about health and that sort of thing. I would be a good Adventist concerning the effectiveness of good medical work with prayer and service. That is what I believe the Christian position should be.

*What would be the Council's attitude toward minority churches that would not join the WCC if in the future all other denominations were to do so?*

If you are talking about a concrete church union, you will never get 100 percent of the churches to join unless it is a coerced decision — which, of course, is unacceptable. Let me take an example from history. In 1907 there was a union of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in the United States. It was all legal, but a third of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church did not agree with the union. They did not like the way their assembly had entered into the union. It caused a good deal of heartbreak for many years, particularly in the South, but the Cumberland

Presbyterian Church still exists. In 1957 I was invited as the official officer of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America to the General Assembly of the Cumberland Church. We had much in common, and perhaps someday there will be a complete union. We are not enemies of those who disagree conscientiously. But neither can you give a small group veto power over the judgment and conscience of the majority.

*You don't see a time when all churches will unite?*

There I would speak eschatologically. I think that one must work toward it. Of course I do not agree with some interpretations of Revelation. But I do take seriously the fear of some WCC critics who see us in terms of the antichrist. This is serious — mainly because the higher you aim, the more dangerous you are in terms of biblical understanding. Satan was a fallen angel. Therefore, we should examine very carefully what we do so that we are truly followers of Christ and not of the antichrist. This applies to everybody — not only to those who are uniting churches.

*In this regard I would like to put to rest a rumor I understand appeared in print. You are purported to have made a statement to the effect that if minority churches in the United States would not join the movement, they should be charged with heresy and punished. Is this true?*

No, that is entirely false.

*Does the influence of the new humanism in churches present a possible barrier to serious merger? Might humanism make members believe that union is not necessary or important?*

All churches have some members who are less than faithful, but most churches do not give people theological examinations regularly. If people say they are following Jesus Christ and want to be a part of the Christian fellowship, they are accepted. They vary greatly in terms of piety, knowledge, and so on; but they do not have to be brilliant theologians to be Christians. A Christian is one who responds to Christ as a person. If there are humanists in the church, I would say that they probably divide the way the rest of the church does on being pro-union or con-union. In general, I believe American Christians are ready for more unity than the leaders of the churches have yet been able to produce. I do not believe that all American Christians are denominationalists and are going to live or die what they were born. Many people who are fifty years old have been in more than one denomination during their lifetime.

*In one article you stated that "no body has treated the Bible more seriously, centrally, and attentively than the WCC." How do you bring into agreement the goal of embracing all of Christianity in a large organization with the New Testament teaching that the church will suffer a falling away and God's people be a small remnant?*

As I commented before, I do not accept this interpretation of Revelation. I know that some people are quite sure they know the stages of history and the future from the Book of Revelation. I don't think they do.

*Would you say, perhaps, that Revelation sounds this way to people who do not have the theological background that you do?*

It is not as simple as that. Most persons who are unsophisticated in theology would not make any sense of Daniel and Revelation at all. I think you will find that most of us read the books with some interpretation in mind and one explanation is that apocalyptic writing is meant to be taken literally. Another explanation would be that it was a way to say things that are hidden, not right on the surface. You cannot understand Daniel and Revelation if you take them literally in the English translation. The interpretation is of a very complex kind. These books are much more difficult to understand than the rest of the Bible. I think the apocalyptic writings can be overemphasized. (There are other apocalyptic writings, nonbiblical, that we can compare them to.) You find this especially when there seems to be no hope in history and when people have a very great fear of disaster.

*Should the apocalyptic writings be ignored?*

No. On the other hand, I think that you are not understanding the biblical view of salvation if you do not take eschatology seriously.

*Couldn't this be one area in which we could learn from each other?*

This is what I am really saying about the WCC and what we have been doing for many years. Some of our conversations with the Adventists have been this kind of discussion. We want to know what the Bible says to you, how you interpret it, and why you interpret it this way rather than another way. Because the WCC is international and many of its members do not speak English, English translations are not the only ones studied. The Germans are not impressed with even the best English translations. Thus the WCC is often forced to study the original languages of the Bible. Some of our critics insist that we do not know the Bible. I wonder if we may not know it better than some of them.



*Do you ever consider the possibility that God might send a prophet in this modern age as he did in Old Testament times?*

What do you mean by *prophet*? If you mean has God sent anyone since biblical times who speaks his truth, I say yes. But to say that this person is a prophet of God is claiming too much, according to some people. However, every preacher who stands up on Sunday morning to preach, if he is serious, is a prophet in the sense that he is saying, "Thus saith the Lord."

*How do you test these prophets?*

Well, a good way is to read in the Old Testament about false and true prophets. Merely bearing an official title does not make a person right; or the fact that one is attacking the official positions of the churches does not make him right. I think that only by prayer and study can one come to at least a partial understanding of truth. No one has the truth *in his hands* — he is seeking truth.

*Which of the two sections of the WCC plan of union — "faith and order" or "structural" — has met greater opposition?*

The WCC has always been interested in being an instrument through which the churches can express the unity they do have, but it has never thought of itself as the ultimate organization. It is almost ridiculous — the idea that it should ever become a superchurch. It has no ecclesiastical power. The only power it has is its influence on the leaders and the people of the churches. In some areas it has influenced the churches; for instance, the ministry of the laity is now a common idea in all churches. That grew out of the ecumenical movement rather than out of any particular church.

*You don't see the WCC in any respect as a powerful religious organization such as the Vatican once was?*

No. It does not have any ecclesiastical power at all. I am a Presbyterian, and I had more ecclesiastical power in my former job as the stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church than I had as general secretary of the WCC. Again, people are afraid of unity because everyone is always afraid of bigness, organization, uniformity, and centralization. These are always dangers, and the only way to meet them is to structure against them so that there is decentralization — pluralformity rather than uniformity — and a spirit of love within the brotherhood and community. This is really what the church is — people in relationship to each other through Jesus Christ.

*I have worked in different denominations and I am impressed how much alike people are — they are not so “peculiar” or different as they like to think. Their “fruits” depend more on how well they know Jesus Christ than on their denomination, although there is a difference in knowledge in some areas. I would hope they could be more tolerant and consider the possibility that others may have something to contribute also and that God has his people in all denominations. What could the WCC do about this?*

This is most important. It even carries out into the whole new thing of dialogue with people of other faiths. When preaching a sermon in Indonesia not long ago, I used the word *God* many times, and it was translated “Allah.” When you hear that you begin to think: Is Allah of the Moslems the same Person as God? Does the French *Dieu* mean the same thing as the English *God*? Then you begin to see that the most important thing is that we belong to God — not that God is in our camp and belongs to us. We are able to listen to, and maybe learn about, God from people we had always been taught were wrong. Then sometimes we learn they were not so wrong about some things as our own background taught us they were.

*Do you think it possible that some organizations or groups have more information than others? Isn't this logical?*

Some do, I'm sure. That is the reason you don't take the secular view that it doesn't make any difference what you believe, since we all go to the same place anyway.

*But do we all have something to contribute?*

This is what I have been saying. The ecumenical movement believes that we need each other. That means you don't need a million-member church ten times as much as you need a ten-thousand-member church. You need them both.

*Does this necessarily mean that a group has to join the WCC to work with them?*

The WCC is an important instrument at the world level for certain limited objectives, but it does not solve all the problems of the world in all the places of the world. I would conclude by saying that I am convinced that sectarian Christianity — the idea that a group has a monopoly on God — is a thing of the past.

At this point in our interview my cassette tape ran out, and I concluded my visit with Dr. Blake. The following evening at a banquet in his honor,

Dr. Blake further elaborated on his definition of *sectarian Christianity*. My impression was that by this term he refers to a self-righteous mentality that sees itself as God's only chosen — in other words, a people who believe that God belongs only to them and uses no other method of communication to the world. When a church joins the wcc, however, it does not lose its identity as a church, its traditions, or its sense of history. It does not need to change its theology.

Needless to say, my visit led me to have an enlightened impression of how the wcc sees itself. Many of the rumors I had heard about the wcc and the ecumenical movement do not appear to be correct in the view of someone who presumably should know. The danger of the wcc seems to lie in its naiveté rather than in any threat of power. Its service to humanity in relief and medical work is beyond reproach. Its social concern is commendable. Because the wcc does not attempt to coerce others into accepting common beliefs, it is difficult to see it as a powerful organization in any sense.

The wcc does dare to criticize governments on moral issues — to stand up and be counted. For this reason it does not endear itself to the established governments in many cases; therefore, its goal does *not* appear to be popularity or a close, powerful union with the state. (One might question the possibility of its being used by other camps.) There is even a question as to whether the wcc is really uniting Christianity at all. The current charismatic movement seems to be a more unifying factor among peoples of various denominations — and, I might add, more acceptable to the established powers in many cases.

#### NOTES

- 1 Bert B. Beach, educational secretary of the Northern European Division.
- 2 For reading related to Donald G. Barnhouse's doctrinal study of Seventh-day Adventism, see Walter R. Martin, *The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House 1960).

# A History of Adventist Views on Church and State Relations

42

ERIC D. SYME

Although in general the Seventh-day Adventist church has remained separatist in its views on church-state relations, the practice has been pragmatic rather than absolute. Three matters in particular have affected the church outlook and actions: the educational establishment and its relation to the United States government, the proper role of the state in legislating for the welfare of its citizenry, and the effect of the seventh-day Sabbath observance on relationship to the government. This essay treats the two latter issues.

## I

Historically, the Adventist church began with a definite distrust of government. Most members were Millerites, "allergic" to legal church organization, in expectation of Christ's return shortly. Many members had been expelled from their former churches. With a reading of religious history that indicated powerful churches in the past had used governmental authority against religious minorities, Adventists disliked any relationship between the state and the church. Besides, if Christ were returning soon, what was the need of governmental recognition? Reliance on the civil arm of the state constituted the "fornication of Babylon with the kings of the earth" to many early Seventh-day Adventists. Yet, for a number of reasons, increasingly it became essential for the Adventists to organize.

Lack of recognized leadership was hurtful in a number of ways. It was hard to restrain the growing independence, and even fanaticism, of a number of church workers. Important undertakings essential to the church missionary program could not be financed. No one was appropriately responsi-

ble for church properties. These issues came to a crisis when James White, editor of the *Review and Herald*, refused to be personally responsible for its books and properties.<sup>1</sup>

The controversy following White's forthright action indicated the reluctance of some members to assume any kind of relationship with the federal government. After organization was effected in May 1863, the problem of how male church members should relate themselves to the Civil War arose. The church was critical of President Abraham Lincoln's position that he wished to save the Union rather than to free the slaves. Practical considerations took precedence over theoretical ones, however, and noncombatant arrangements satisfactory to both the state and the church were made. Adventist inductees entered alternate forms of national activity suggested by the War Department and this avoided the taking of life or the violation of the Sabbath.<sup>2</sup>

Acceptance of the Sabbath bequeathed to the church a particular theological understanding. To observe the seventh day as Sabbath was nothing unusual for Christians. Throughout Christian history, individuals and groups had recognized its significance. Adventist integration of the Sabbath and the sanctuary doctrines, together with belief in an investigative judgment, however, led to emphasis on the immutability of God's law — and consequently the need to observe the Sabbath appointed by God rather than by man. Adventists reasoned that not the state, nor a dominant church, nor human custom could rule that the Sabbath should be celebrated on another day. Two years before the church organized, John Nevins Andrews wrote his *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week* to demonstrate that the change in the day of observing the Sabbath came from man and not God.

Once organized, Adventists found the Sabbath-Sunday question to be an immediate problem. The founding of the National Reform Association in 1863 created an interdenominational union determined to place in the United States Constitution a religious amendment, to be followed with national laws reflecting God's moral laws. To this new society, Sunday enforcement was fundamental — important evidence of the nation's determination to atone for the tragedy of slavery and the Civil War.

Adventist leaders recognized the effectiveness of the public campaign launched by the National Reform Association. Protestant Americans — who already viewed with mounting dismay the increase of intemperance and secularization spawned by the war — feared that "liberals" were dechristianizing the nation. Their Protestant sensibilities and patriotic pride were

irritated by the immigration from Ireland and central Europe of an avalanche of Roman Catholics who observed the "Continental Sunday." After attending Sunday mass, these new Americans spent the rest of the "sacred hours" drinking in saloons, singing popular songs, and destroying a "proper" Sunday atmosphere. The solution offered by the National Reform Association — to close the saloons on Sunday — appealed to many legislators, senators, house representatives, judges, and educators. With the support thus provided, the Association worked to secure Sunday laws carrying severe penalties for violation.<sup>3</sup>

At first these reformers were unsuccessful. Their bill aroused not only the reaction of Congress but also the distinct interest of the public in religious liberty during 1874 and 1875. President Ulysses S. Grant demanded in 1875 that church and state be kept separate; both political parties included important resolutions on religious freedom in their respective campaign platforms; and Senator James G. Blaine unsuccessfully attempted, on December 14, 1875, to capitalize on the public enthusiasm by sponsoring a constitutional amendment bill designed to place the first clause of the Bill of Rights on the state scene. The National Reform Association waited, prepared, consolidated. Four years later it began a new campaign for a national Sunday bill: regional secretaries spoke at national conventions, wrote press articles, preached sermons, lobbied among eminent citizens, and visited seminaries and universities. As a result, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, and New Jersey passed Sunday laws carrying stiff penalties for violation.

In California, the issue became so serious that the Adventists allied with the League of Freedom (representing liquor dealers, saloon owners, and a diverse body of immigrants) to defeat pending Sunday measures sponsored by the Home Protection Society. This temporary partnership seemed to be necessary because the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Prohibition Party (which also sought Sunday enforcement legislation because long working hours prevented sustained drinking on most days of the week and only on Sunday could workers drink their fill) had joined the National Reform Association to make a powerful temperance alliance. The Adventist entry into California's political arena with these strange allies proved effective. Using all available media, in 1882 the Adventists helped the League of Freedom to defeat the Home Protection Society at the polls.<sup>4</sup>

Sunday arrests in Arkansas and Tennessee marked the continuation of the planned Sunday offensive. Arkansas courts arrested and convicted five Seventh-day Adventists. Tennessee courts sent others to the chain gang. In

this year, 1885, the General Conference debated measures to be taken to combat these new perils. By publishing the *Sabbath Sentinel*, and later the more successful *American Sentinel*, the Adventist church so publicized the Arkansas cases that freedom was restored to the imprisoned Adventists. Less successfully in Tennessee, the case of R. M. King, a farmer, was brought before a federal court. Admitting that Tennessee had punished King unjustly, this court emphasized that Tennessee's Sunday law was both impractical and unjust. On the basis of this ruling, the Adventist church proposed to take King's case before the United States Supreme Court. Unfortunately, King died, but publicizing the case convinced many Americans that Sunday enforcement was basically wrong. King's death aroused much indignation. The popular press agitated public opinion and created an effective opposition to the future activities of Sunday promotion groups.

Recognizing that the public had been alienated, the National Reform Association and its allies now emphasized their desire to prevent the exploitation of working people who were compelled to labor on Sunday. This pleased the trade unions and ensured some measure of support from them, as illustrated by the Blair bill. Representatives of the WCTU persuaded Senator Henry W. Blair to sponsor a bill designed to prohibit Sunday mails, Sunday trains, and both army and navy Sunday parades. Developing strong and coherent support from major churches (including the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church, the Baptist Home Missionary Society, the Presbyterian General Assembly, and other important religious groups), the bill's supporters stressed their keen interest in the measure as deriving from their concern for the industrial laborers. Thus the bill gained so much popular favor in 1888 that Ellen G. White wrote of its danger.<sup>5</sup>

The Blair Sunday legislation failed during the Fifty-first Session of Congress. Although the immediate danger had passed, the bill provided a foundation for a reactivated Sunday movement. Supported by strong political, social, and religious interests, Sunday law supporters continued to advocate Sunday enforcement in its new social guise. By 1889, the influence of the movement had become so strong that Cardinal James Gibbons, articulate primate of Baltimore, endorsed it. This endorsement came as a surprising change of attitude for the Catholic cardinal, who had previously been a leading spokesman for the "Continental Sunday" and an opponent of the "Puritan Sunday."<sup>6</sup>

The massing strength of Sunday enforcement support alarmed the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and the church formed press committees to alert Americans to the new threat to their religious freedom.

These committees formed a basis for the Religious Liberty Association, later to become an important department of the General Conference.

Sunday law supporters now introduced a legislative bill calling for prevention of Sunday labor within the District of Columbia. The bill was benevolently worded — stressing protection for the workers' interests and including an exemption clause for those observing a different Sabbath — but its real force was to provide the initial step for Congress on the road of Sunday religious legislation. The passage of such a bill for the District of Columbia could precipitate similar legislation on a national scale. Introduced by Representative John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky and supported by representatives from the Knights of Labor, the bill failed because Congress decided, despite all protests to the contrary, that it was religious.<sup>7</sup>

All attempts to secure national Sunday legislation had failed. However, in the closing months of 1891, Sunday legislation advocates chose the upcoming Chicago World Exposition as the occasion to introduce to the House a further legislative measure requiring that the Exposition be closed on Sundays if it accepted an appropriation from Congress. The bill was further strengthened by a Supreme Court ruling of February 29, 1892, in which Chief Justice David J. Brewer delivered a Court majority decision in *Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States* to the effect that a federal law banning alien contracts did not nullify the right of a Christian church to employ a foreign pastor. Of significance to the pending bill was the Court's reasoning in reaching this decision. America, the Court stressed, a "Christian nation" from earliest times, could not victimize a Christian church. This theocratic emphasis nullified in principle the whole idea of church-state separatism. Not surprisingly, both the Senate and the House accepted the Sunday proposals for the Chicago Exposition; and on August 5, 1892, President Grover Cleveland signed the bill into law.<sup>8</sup>

Alonzo T. Jones, leader of the Religious Liberty Association, argued that this Sunday law demonstrated the great pressure that combined religious groups could apply to Congress. He believed that other national Sunday laws would follow. But, despite the great momentum the Sunday question reached during the 1890s, in the last years of that century it lost the compelling and frightening dimensions it had once held. The Religious Liberty Association continued to defend Seventh-day Adventists accused of Sunday violation, but gradually the temperance societies recognized the folly of prosecuting individuals for observing a day other than Sunday. Intolerance, the societies realized, weakened their influence on the public. Besides, working hours were shorter, and merely to close saloons on Sunday no longer was



an effective temperance program. Rising public interest in temperance had developed when, in 1908, Will Irwin and Arthur Gleason wrote a series of articles in *Collier's* exposing the corrupt alliance of liquor interests, commercialized vice, business, and politics. To attack the whole liquor traffic now seemed the best policy.<sup>9</sup>

## II

This new strategy of the temperance bodies enabled the Adventist church to change its policy. Adventists recognized the value of an increasingly favorable climate of public opinion as a background for health evangelism work. Church reorganization in 1901 had provided a broader General Conference structure that included physicians and other lay professionals. This restructuring placed Adventists in a situation where they could mount a temperance educational endeavor to accompany the prohibitionist effort to secure national legislation that would close the liquor trade.

How far was the Adventist church's point of view on prohibitionist legislation consonant with its concepts of church-state separatism? The Presbyterian church, to avoid appearance of violating separatist theory, operated through such voluntary societies as the Prohibitionist Party and the WCTU. Adventists did not take this position. Rather, they considered that liquor dealers had no right to tempt individuals into vicious, habit-forming customs and that the state and the nation had no right to interfere with religious practice on the basis of their welfare powers. Governing bodies could justly legislate, however, to protect the citizen from physical danger. Adventists believed that the church had the right to lobby to save the public from the dangers of alcohol.

In other respects also Adventists have not followed a strict view of church-state separation. When the South Africa Land Company offered a free tract of land in Rhodesia, the Adventist church accepted it. The Religious Liberty Association leader, Alonzo T. Jones, insisted that the South African Land Company was an agent for Great Britain. However, Ellen White, then in Australia, wrote to General Conference leaders in Washington and advised them not only to accept the land, but also to accept tax-exemption privileges for church institutions. Her letter stressed that practical realities, rather than doctrinaire theory, should govern decisions in such situations. If no principle is violated, the church should act on the merits presented.<sup>10</sup>

During prohibition hearings in 1908, Seventh-day Adventist temperance leaders admitted that Adventists opposed temperance legislation when it

was associated with Sunday enforcement. But, since intemperance vitally affected the well-being of the individual, society, and the nation, legislation designed to prevent its spread fell within the proper scope of government; and the church would do all it could to secure such legislation.

Adventists played a major part in the prohibition drive. War shortages compelled Congress to assist the prohibition effort by forbidding the use of grain in the production of distilled spirits. Later legislation limited the amount of foodstuffs that could be used for the manufacture of beer. Prohibitionist endeavors, combined with these external factors, brought the passage of the Volstead Act. Referring to this act, Charles S. Longacre, strong Adventist temperance and religious liberty leader, commented on the greatly improved image of the Seventh-day Adventist church because of its role in the campaign.

This public image served the church well in years to come. During two world wars, Adventists developed excellent relationships with the government and learned how to work with state officials. During World War II the church instituted a General Conference War Service Commission to help ensure that Adventist draftees would receive noncombatant status and sabbatical rights and to train chaplains to serve in the armed forces.

The appointment of military chaplains was a significant departure from earlier Adventist views. In the September 18, 1890, issue of the *American Sentinel*, Alonzo T. Jones had written approvingly of a Baptist sermon that argued that church appointing of chaplains, with military concurrence, to entry into the armed forces struck at "the very first principle of free government."<sup>11</sup> However, for eminently sensible reasons, the church now recognized the value of securing army and navy officers able to protect young Adventists' constitutional rights during military service. Summarizing this change in church thinking as to its relations with the federal government, Francis D. Nichol, *Review and Herald* editor, stressed that Adventists were wartime *cooperators* with the state while continuing their essential work of Christian witnessing and healing.<sup>12</sup>

### III

The increased influence of the Roman Catholic church after the close of World War II led to a renewal of the Sunday enforcement threat. During the nineteenth century, Roman Catholics had generally supported the "Continental Sunday." Now the Catholic church changed its position and became a leading advocate of Sunday enforcement legislation. This new stance was more ominous because of Catholicism's increased power. Adventists became

deeply conscious of that power when President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Myron C. Taylor as his personal representative to the Vatican. The Adventist church protested that nomination, as did other Protestant groups and persons, including Charles Clayton Morrison, the eloquent editor of *Christian Century*.

This relationship between the United States and the Vatican presaged a new role for the Catholic church in the rebuilding of war-torn Europe after the Second World War. As Communism swept in from eastern Europe, threatening to play a decisive part in both Italy and France, Roman Catholicism constituted the only religious, political, and ideological force capable of stemming its onrushing tide. Catholic-oriented political parties developed in Italy, France, Austria, and elsewhere in western Europe. The uniting of American financial and economic aid with Catholic political activity seemed the best hope for shattered Europe. Even "Protestant England" maintained important diplomatic contacts with the Papacy.

Catholic significance abroad was matched by its influence at home. Because of the rising significance of Catholic votes, Alfred E. Smith, even though he lost the presidential election in 1928, gained a preponderance of support over Herbert C. Hoover in American urban centers.<sup>13</sup> These Catholic votes became even more important after World War II, as demonstrated by John F. Kennedy's victory in the 1960 presidential elections. Roman Catholicism exercised considerable influence both in trade unions and in governmental offices and thus compelled even city governments to consider its political strength.

Fears that this growing Catholic strength might now affect many church members were shared by Adventists and other Protestant groups. In 1948, Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (POAU) organized to oppose Roman Catholic encroachments on the educational scene. Disliking attempts by Catholic leaders to gain government funds for the Catholic parochial education system, Seventh-day Adventists joined POAU in resisting what they regarded as violation of the First Amendment.

Particularly concerned by the new developments affecting church-state matters in the United States, Adventist leaders discussed the church's views on this subject at the Autumn Council of 1948. For the first time the Adventist church formulated an official position on church-state relations, stressing a belief in strict separatism. But in practice, the Adventist position remained separatist only to the point where a risk might develop to the church's control over its institutions.

During the 1950s Adventists continued to oppose American presidents' practice of maintaining close relationships with the Vatican. But it was the revival of public interest in Sunday enforcement laws that was of particular concern. Initially this new interest stemmed from the superficial religious revival of the period. Fear of an uncertain future, the possibility of atomic destruction of civilization, the threat of Communism in the cold war, and the increase of crime in society caused many Americans to return to the churches. Lax Sunday observance seemed a plausible symbol of the materialism of the time. Recognizing the new interest in Sunday enforcement, religious leaders again supported the Sunday movement.

But now the movement seemed potentially more dangerous than it had in the 1890s. Many Americans were moving to the suburbs, even to rural districts. Businesses followed, utilizing rural locations that lessened land costs for building and parking. Discount stores discovered that they were able to sell more on Sundays than on all weekdays combined. American families welcomed the new urban shopping centers, which freed them from downtown traffic and parking problems. Naturally these new advantages took business away from downtown merchants, who then became ardent supporters of the Sunday closing movement. Trade unions also supported the Sunday program because it would provide free weekends for union members. And the Roman Catholic church placed its powerful influence on the side of Sunday law advocates.

Earlier, the Catholic church had endorsed the "Continental Sunday," because at that time most of its members were from Europe and were accustomed to their way of observing Sunday. Now, opposition to Communism in the cold war, dislike of the prevailing secularism, and the new standing of Catholics in American society altered American Catholicism's viewpoint. As Dean M. Kelley, church historian and commentator on religious issues, put it, Catholic officials supported Sunday laws because Rome constituted herself as "arbiter and proprietor of all legislation concerned with moral and religious issues."<sup>14</sup>

New pressures for Sunday enforcement laws brought varying decisions from federal courts. In Pennsylvania, one court supported the strict Sunday closing law vindicated by the state supreme court. Another federal court reversed the decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Court when it substantiated earlier Sunday law decisions. Thus the United States Supreme Court was forced to take several Sunday law cases under constitutional review.

Various religious and economic interests were involved in the cases to be reviewed by the United States Supreme Court. A Massachusetts case con-

cerned the Crown Kosher Supermarket, a Springfield Jewish firm that closed on Saturday for religious reasons. To recoup, it opened on Sunday to serve a large Jewish community. In Pennsylvania and Maryland, the principal plaintiffs were discount stores that opened on Sunday for economic reasons alone. These stores also claimed that Sunday laws violated the First Amendment, by establishing a religion, and the Fourteenth Amendment, by denying equal protection of the laws. The Adventist church entered an *amicus curiae* brief, stating that Adventists opposed Sunday enforcement laws as violating the First Amendment. But merchants such as the Retail Dealers International Association Union also filed *amicus curiae* briefs asking the Supreme Court to uphold a "community day of rest" acceptable to all Americans.

The decision of the Warren Supreme Court stated that Sunday closing laws operate like other health, welfare, or safety laws imposed by state governments. These laws, designed for the benefit and protection of the community, carry an incidental religious relationship. This relationship is unfortunate, but such laws are within the legitimate powers of the state. Dissenting statements by some of the Supreme Court justices opposed this interpretation, but the majority opinion established the long-sought position of advocates of Sunday enforcement laws that such laws are not religious in character.<sup>15</sup> Even more significant to the Adventist church was an accompanying ruling by the Court that exemptions on a one-day-in-seven basis are not satisfactory, since they undermine the government's desire to provide a rest day free of commercial noise and activity.

At first the thrust of this 1961 Supreme Court ruling was softened. Cities and districts that depended on tourist trade fought for a relaxation of enforcement because the bulk of their trade was on Sunday. People must be able to buy beer and ice cream, even if mothers were forbidden to purchase milk. Judges, too, differed in their enforcement of Sunday laws. Where courts were overloaded by such cases, judges refused to take additional Sunday cases, because more significant crimes required their attention.<sup>16</sup> In some states (for example, Massachusetts), Roman Catholic newspapers played an important part in forcing a rigorous Sunday code. *The Pilot*, for instance, forced state senators to reverse their vote on an exemption for observers of another day than Sunday.<sup>17</sup>

#### IV

The Sunday situation today remains similar to what it was after the 1961 Supreme Court decision. However, many Seventh-day Adventists wonder

whether the fuel crisis will provoke new legislation of Sunday laws. This view seems plausible, since legislative bills have in fact attempted to close most stores and gas stations on Sunday. Adventist religious liberty representatives are conscious of this situation, but consider that at this time they have insufficient reason to believe that the Sunday movements they anticipate will be the result of the present crisis. Even so, the Sunday movement is far advanced. An increasingly "religious" climate in society may bring important developments.

What should be the attitude of Adventists today? As this essay demonstrates, the church has been consistent in opposing combinations of church and state that could take from it control of its institutions or deprive members of free exercise of religion. With its specific mission in the world, the Adventist church hopes to promote the cause of religious freedom. History shows that when religious liberty ceases to be sufficiently valued, the democratic and Christian advantages resident in that liberty are quickly lost.

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COMMENT:

## “The Eschaton”

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54

As a Seventh-day Adventist minister, I am grateful to you for publishing Raymond F. Cottrell's "The Eschaton: A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective of the Second Coming" and Paul S. Minear's response (SPECTRUM, number one, 1973). I must confess deep sympathy for part of Minear's criticisms; some of his comments under his section VI are all too true. Cottrell cannot be faulted for representing accurately the prevalent contemporary Seventh-day Adventist view of eschatology.

Minear says: "What I miss most . . . is . . . a christological or christocentric orientation (or anchorage or control) of thinking about the end." As one reads Cottrell's "Eschaton," one is alarmed to see that this attitude is not there. Minear adds: "I must confess a sense of shock and deep revulsion in reading (subsection 10): 'It is the "day" when divine justice, untempered by mercy, metes out to every man his just deserts.' This explicit separation of God's grace from his wrath, . . . this portrait of Christ as a judge who divests himself of his willingness to forgive after a certain fixed date, . . . this use of the Second Coming of Christ to fulfill a function so antithetical to the purpose of his first coming . . . flagrantly contradicts . . . the gracious character of his justice."<sup>1</sup>

After reading both Cottrell and Minear, I reread the closing chapters of *The Great Controversy* to see if this picture of Christ as merciless judge comes through. Not at all. *The Great Controversy* does not represent Christ's character as changing during these eschatological events.

Rightly understood, *The Great Controversy* represents the wicked as judging and condemning themselves. All the Lord does is to reveal his law "as the rule of judgment . . . to the view of all the inhabitants of the earth." The wicked suffer "horror and despair" because "memory is aroused, the

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darkness of superstition and heresy is swept from every mind," and *they judge and condemn themselves*.<sup>2</sup> No divine voice is heard condemning them. They do the whole job on their own! This statement is fully in harmony with Ellen G. White's profound observation in *Our High Calling*: "God destroys no man. Every man who is destroyed will destroy himself."<sup>3</sup>

*The Great Controversy* version agrees also with our Lord's refusal to judge the lost. Jesus says that the Father refuses to have any part in judging mankind and has turned over the entire responsibility to Christ "because he is the Son of man."<sup>4</sup> Only those whose hearts respond to his love and who believe in him will Christ "judge," and this "judgment" will vindicate them.

This is the only "judgment" Christ will engage in. Of the person who hears his words and "believe[s] not," he says, "I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."<sup>5</sup> Here Jesus affirms that the gracious purposes of his First Advent will not be obscured at his Second Advent. It will be "this same Jesus" who will come in the clouds of heaven.<sup>6</sup> He refuses to judge the wicked. He says, "I judge him not." But Christ also says that the one who "receiveth not my words, *hath* [*italics mine*] one that judgeth him" (*his own conscience*).<sup>7</sup> These emphatic words of Jesus need close attention. When we find a text that on the surface appears to contradict them, we should give it a second look. Perhaps the text is telling us that at the Second Advent the *wicked* will look at Christ as a condemning judge.

I am disappointed that Adventists would represent to the World Council of Churches that they believe the Second Coming of Christ will be a dangerous event when he will emit a "lethal radiation" to slay the wicked.<sup>8</sup> However well we may understand the events of eschatology and fit them into proper order, is this a correct view of the character of Christ? What does "lethal radiation" imply? Can this idea be harmonized with what Jesus says in the Gospels? It is true that the wicked will be slain by the brightness of his coming, as Scripture says, but this will not be by "lethal radiation." Their own terrible sense of self-condemnation will be sufficient to kill them. Any assistance the Lord *might* provide will not be "lethal radiation." The Holy Spirit will simply cease to sustain them and to protect them from their well-earned "wages of sin" (Romans 6:23), which is death.

I realize that many contemporary Adventists sincerely believe that "the day of the Lord" is a day "when divine justice, untempered by mercy, metes out to every man his just deserts."<sup>9</sup> Statements in Scripture or the Ellen White writings that appear to give such an impression should be read more closely in context. I believe that such statements, most of them at least, belong in a category referred to in Revelation. It is the *wicked* who attribute

to the "Lamb" the aspect of hatred and terrible "wrath." To their last breath, they look upon God as a stern, severe judge. The Revelator pictures Jesus at the very moment of his Second Coming as "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood."<sup>10</sup> He is still the "Lamb." What right have we to picture Christ as harsh, cruel, gloating over the fate of his enemies? Recently I heard an evangelist tell his audience that God will personally "devour" the wicked in the last day. (The "from God," *apo tou theou*, of Revelation 20:9 does not appear in some of the important manuscripts.)

Thank God a World Council of Churches representative can tell us that our contemporary presentation of eschatology needs a christocentric appeal. We should have realized it ourselves. However embarrassing it may be to have someone else tell us, we should heed the criticism so gently and kindly given.

The fact is that it is impossible to understand eschatology rightly unless we first understand righteousness by faith in all its tremendous implications. Otherwise, our views will be distorted by a wrong concept of the character of God during the last events. Inspiration tells us that, in this area of righteousness by faith, of all the Seven Churches we are the one most particularly "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."<sup>11</sup> We greatly need a clearer understanding of the Atonement and how its principles relate to eschatological events. The whole idea of a virtually graceless, and therefore Christless, eschatology with "lethal radiation" is not "good news" and, indeed, is out of harmony with gospel principles.

If there is "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" when the lost meet their fate, we must treat these subjects with great compassion and pathos, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."<sup>12</sup> The fine line that separates the righteous from the wicked may not always be exactly where we think it is!

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## RESPONSE TO WIELAND'S COMMENT

RAYMOND F. COTTRELL

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It should be remembered that my assigned topic at the Second Ecumenical Consultation was the Second Advent, not the First Advent. The eschaton takes place *after* what we refer to as the *close* of probationary time — when the high priestly role that Christ began (subsequent to his First Advent) has ended, and he assumes his role as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. A paper specifically delimited to the eschaton would be wandering afield if it dealt with Christ's sacrificial and mediatorial ministry.

As a matter of fact, the Second Advent can hardly avoid being christocentric, in that all that is said about it focuses on what Christ does to deliver his people from the present evil age. This is as truly Christ-centered as the events clustering about, and his role in relation to, the First Advent. Certainly, to present Christ as Judge and King is no less christocentric than to present him as a Man among men, as the Atonement for man's sins, and as man's representative in the heavenly sanctuary.

Thus, the scope of my assignment may account for — at least in part — the absence of some things Wieland thinks should have been mentioned in order for the paper to be christocentric. He does not specify *which* things.

The consultations between representatives of the World Council of Churches and of the Seventh-day Adventist church explored Adventist theological and ecumenical concepts. At the First Consultation (1969), Adventist beliefs on such matters as the incarnation, the gospel, the means of salvation, the ministry of Christ on the cross and in heaven, and the Sabbath were considered. The World Council representatives concluded that Adventist views on practically every subject are conditioned by Adventist eschatological perspective. Hence, my paper, "The Eschaton: A Seventh-day Adventist Perspective," was presented at the Second Consultation (1970) at their request. I did not consider it necessary to repeat points already explained at the First Consultation; my assignment this time was specifically limited to the Second Advent.

By definition, the eschaton is concerned with man's ultimate destiny and, in Adventist thinking, the transition from this world to the next — all of which lies beyond the close of probation. At the First Advent, Christ pre-

sented himself as the Savior of men; at the Second Advent, he presents himself as their Judge and Lord. At the First Advent, he provided the means of salvation; at the Second Advent, he completes the work of salvation.<sup>1</sup>

The paper published in *SPECTRUM* was approximately one-third shorter than it was when presented at the Second Ecumenical Consultation. Certain passages that were omitted may have provided some of the emphasis Wieland feels is missing. Even in its abbreviated form for *SPECTRUM*, however, the paper is not without recognition of Christ, the gospel, and the individual Christian's response. Clearly and explicitly, it reflects the struggle between the forces of good and evil in the Christian's heart and life. Those who believe in the full deity of Christ will find him in my very first basic assumption, and in our response to Christ as God, in my second basic assumption.<sup>2</sup> Those who recognize Christ as Creator will find an affirmation of his infinite, beneficent, ardent concern for man's well-being and happiness and of God's purpose for man and man's appropriate response.<sup>3</sup> The effect of the gospel on the Christian's life is also emphasized.<sup>4</sup>

Wieland says that he "must confess deep sympathy for part of Minear's criticisms," some of which, he says, "are all too true." His ardent acceptance of Minear's conclusion that my paper lacks "a christological or christocentric orientation" requires consideration of Minear's reasons for arriving at that conclusion, inasmuch as acceptance of his conclusion implies acceptance of the reasons on which he based that conclusion.<sup>5</sup> To accept the conclusion without accepting the reasons would be logically inconsistent. Let us examine the reasons Minear gives.

Minear's first group of reasons is related to my emphasis on what he refers to as "the continuing conflict between God and Satan."<sup>6</sup> He identifies this "continuing conflict" as "the daily battles between right and wrong in the heart of the Christian and in the communal life of the church." To him, eschatology *consists of* this conflict and its outcome in the "daily experience" of the individual Christian. He says: "To objectify and to postpone the crucial struggle with Satan to a future attack by external enemies on the community which loyally observes the Sabbath encourages a fatal separation of the 'great controversy' from the daily battles between right and wrong in the heart of the Christian and in the communal life of the church." By "to objectify" Minear means to project the "great controversy" into history as an event that is literal — which he denies. Minear identifies the Second Coming as a subjective experience in the life of the individual Christian and rejects the idea that it is an objective event in history. He objects, also, because Adventists "postpone the crucial struggle" into the future, something he

likewise denies. To him, this crucial eschatological conflict is now in progress — “in the heart of the Christian.”

When Minear speaks of “the gospel and passion story of Jesus” and “the daily battles between right and wrong in the heart of the Christian,” he is affirming what is known in contemporary parlance as “realized eschatology.” Right here is the crux of the difference between Adventist eschatology and his. To him, “eschatology” consists in the establishment of the kingdom of divine grace at the First Advent (“the gospel and the passion story of Jesus”) and in the struggle between Christ and Satan in the heart of the individual Christian. To Adventists, the eschaton is what happens *in history after* the struggle in the hearts of men has determined each person’s destiny. It is the absence of *his* view of eschatology in my paper to which he takes exception and for which he indicts my paper as lacking “a christological or christocentric orientation.”

We recognize the crucial importance of “the gospel and passion story of Jesus” and “the daily battles between right and wrong in the heart of the Christian” as fully as does Minear. But we do not consider them as coming within the boundaries of what we call eschatology. That is basically why I did not dwell on them in my paper, which was intended to present the *Adventist* concept of eschatology.

Minear’s second group of objections to the Adventist concept of the eschaton grows out of his belief in “the irresistible power of God’s mercy” — by which he means that, ultimately, no man can resist God’s mercy but that, eventually, all men will find salvation.<sup>7</sup> He brands as “demonic” the concept that anyone will experience literal annihilation because of obdurate impenitence. He rejects the concept that God’s saving grace is limited to “the period before the day of judgment” and that after what we refer to as the close of probation (“a certain fixed date”) God is unwilling to forgive.

For Minear, the time will never come when God calls men to account and when obdurate impenitence removes them forever from the orbit of divine mercy, repentance, and forgiveness. He does not believe that probation, as Adventists understand it, will ever close or that the time will ever come when the opportunity for salvation is withdrawn. To Minear, “the final judgment” is not an objective event in history when some enter their eternal inheritance and others eternally separate themselves from God. He reacts to such concepts with “a sense of shock and deep revulsion.” To him, the idea that the Sabbath ever will become a test of loyalty to God is also “demonic.”

These are the reasons that Minear gives for his indictment of my paper as lacking in “a christological or christocentric orientation.” Therefore, if

Wieland accepts Minear's conclusion he must, perforce, accept the reasons on which Minear bases that conclusion. And if one accepts these, obviously he is no longer an Adventist. If one is unwilling to accept Minear's *reasons*, he logically forfeits the *conclusion* Minear draws from them. Minear is logically consistent; it would seem that Wieland is not. Minear clearly states his reasons, and his conclusion is logically consistent with the reasons he gives. But, as a dedicated Seventh-day Adventist, Wieland would find the reasons that prompted Minear's reaction both implausible and unacceptable. It is certain that when Wieland speaks of a "virtually graceless, and therefore Christless, eschatology" he is thinking of something entirely different from what Minear has in mind. What reasons, then, did Wieland have for arriving at what appears, on the surface at least, to be an identical conclusion — the lack of a christocentric emphasis?

Wieland devotes approximately two-thirds of his critique to a discussion of the question of whether the annihilation of the obdurately unrepentant is an act of God (as my paper affirms) or whether the same result occurs without divine initiative — at the hands of the wicked themselves (as he affirms). He sees the wicked as judging, condemning, and annihilating themselves: "They do the whole job on their own!" Christ is Judge of the righteous but not of the wicked: "This is the only 'judgment' Christ will engage in." Christ said that the words he spoke would judge every man, but Wieland interprets the passage to mean that a man's own conscience will be his judge.<sup>8</sup>

However one may interpret the words of Scripture, it is a fact that the inspired writers do speak, often and emphatically, of the "wrath" of God being poured out upon the wicked.<sup>9</sup> Christ is pictured as returning to earth with a robe dipped in blood; from his mouth issues a sharp sword with which he smites the nations; he rules them with a rod of iron; he treads out the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.<sup>10</sup> Again and again Ellen White speaks in similar terms.<sup>11</sup> Is it inappropriate for an un-inspired writer to quote from inspired writers and to use similar phraseology? It is important to note that Wieland's critique either ignores or explains away these and numerous other passages of Scripture. His explanation of the way in which God's wrath is poured out may be correct, but it remains *his opinion*.

Emphatically I protest that my paper does *not* present Christ as a "merciless judge," "harsh, cruel, gloating over the fate of his enemies." I, too, recoil from such a concept and wish to dissociate myself completely from it.

Wieland objects to the expression "lethal radiation" as being an appro-

priate equivalent to Paul's description of antichrist being destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming.<sup>12</sup> If the expression is offensive, it is expendable. I would not insist on using it. Wieland notes, further: "Their own terrible sense of self-condemnation will be sufficient to kill them." John says, by inspiration, that fire comes down *from God out of heaven* and destroys them.<sup>13</sup>

If the expression "righteousness by faith" means the same thing to Wieland that it did to Paul and to Ellen White, I could not agree more that a right understanding of it is vitally important, both in understanding the eschaton and in preparing for it. I agree that a clearer understanding of the Atonement is likewise important, especially as its principles relate to the eschaton. It would have been well at least to mention these in my paper. However, each is a major subject in its own right, and any extended discussion would be out of place in a paper devoted specifically to the eschaton itself.

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## REVIEW

### Mutual Illumination

BRIAN S. BULL

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#### SCIENCE AND CHRISTIANITY — A PARTNERSHIP

By Robert E. D. Clark

Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1972 192 pp \$2.25

"There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love . . . and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body."<sup>1</sup> As you read these familiar lines, did it strike you that in the New Earth the reactions of the redeemed scientist to "fresh objects" and of the redeemed saint to "the mysteries of redeeming love" are indistinguishable? It is the thesis of Robert Clark that the same can be said of science and Christianity here and now.

Many people view science as a monolithic body of irrefutable, experimentally proven facts and Christianity as a compilation of ecclesiastical statements; hence, they cannot conceive of any similarity. However, a closer observation of the individual scientist as he struggles — sometimes failing, sometimes winning, always learning — will reveal that the emotions he experiences and the faith he must exercise are very like those of a Christian pilgrim.

Throughout *Science and Christianity — A Partnership* Clark compares the experience of the individual scientist with that of the individual Christian in their mutual search for understanding. In the first chapter he shows how modern science arose and how it quite possibly could have arisen only from a Christian world view. In chapters 2, 3, and 4, by references to the scientist's own description of the discovery event, he documents the fact that reason plays a minor role in the early stages of scientific discovery. In chapters 5, 6, and 7, he shows that faith — such as the Christian would recognize immediately — is all important. In the final chapters, he appeals as a practicing scientist to other scientists to treat Christian beliefs in the "kindly" manner previously reserved for their scientific ideas.

A telling argument in favor of his position appears in chapter 6, where the heuristic theory is distinguished from the hypothesis. A hypothesis is a tentative explanation



that is killed or modified if not supported by experiments. A heuristic theory is a totally different matter. It partakes more of the nature of a warm feeling deep down in the heart — a firm conviction that is virtually immune to negative experimental evidence but that exercises a profound effect on the scientist who holds it. It is present in all successful scientists, although it is not always acknowledged by them.

In an attempt in 1850 to prove that electricity and gravity were related forces, Michael Faraday closed his paper thus: "Here end my trials for the present. The results are negative; but they do not shake my strong feelings of the existence of a relation between gravity and electricity" (p. 69). Ten years later, in the last paper he wrote, he used almost exactly the same words. Albert Einstein spent much of his later life looking for the same relationship, but he too died without securing any positive evidence. This "strong feeling" was obviously not a hypothesis to be discarded in the face of negative evidence, not when two of mankind's most brilliant scientific minds failed to prove it true and yet returned again and again to the attempt. In any non-scientific context, such an attitude would most certainly be labeled *faith*. Faith it is, and virtually all creative scientists seem to possess it in abundance. Scientists who do not, in most cases, are merely technicians.

Thus Clark disposes of the idea that faith is the exclusive province of the Christian. He next comes to grips with the concept that reason is to be found in its finest form only among scientists. Reason as the mainspring of scientific discovery takes quite a beating at the hands of Clark, himself a chemist and inventor: "There is nothing like clear thinking to protect one from making discoveries" (p. 35). And he quotes C. S. Lewis's barbed opinion on the limitations of reason: "If we are in a dark room and someone screams, I cannot by reason reckon that I am in agony and then find that I have made a mistake" (p. 36). Clark does not suggest that reason has no place. In both science and Christianity, once the initial step has been taken, reason is of inestimable value. However, it is no more vital to one pursuit than to the other.

The very emotions which accompany both the search and the discovery in science would be easily recognized by the Christian. Clark illustrates this point by quoting notable scientists. Claude Bernard wrote, "The joy of discovery is certainly the loveliest that the mind of man can ever feel," adding that "those who do not know the torment of the unknown can never have the joy of discovery." In Frazer-Harris's words, "The joy of scientific discovery is one of the most exalted human emotions" (p. 53).

The similarity between science and Christianity even extends to the ease with which man overlooks the demands of science as he does those of religion. "Today many trust in science, if they still trust in anything at all, rather than in God. But . . . scientific knowledge of the effects of alcoholism does not stop people from drinking more than is good for them. Scientific knowledge of drugs does not cure the addict, nor knowledge of overeating, obesity. . . . There is little or no evidence that social science makes men socially minded. . . . More often than not those who object to religion because they prefer a 'scientific attitude' do not permit their science to penetrate to their private lives" (p. 145-146). It is a sad commentary on the perfidy of the human race.

The idea that nature and revelation speak with one voice is not a new one to most Seventh-day Adventists. The unique aspect of this book is its brilliant delineation of

the thoughts and emotions of a scientist who is also a committed Christian. The Christian finds concord — not conflict — between science and theology. Each illuminates and complements the other. Clark's is a book that belongs in the library of every Seventh-day Adventist who is also a scientist or who counts among his friends scientists, Christian or non-Christian.

#### REFERENCE

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