

Letters From Readers

To the editors: I don't know when I have appreciated reading anything more than "The Case for Renewal in Adventist Theology," by Charles Scriven, and "Can Intellectuals Be at Home in the Church?" by Alvin Kwiram (SPECTRUM, Vol. 8, No. 1). The subjects dealt with in these two articles, in my opinion, deserve careful consideration by Seventh-day Adventist leaders. Much concern has been expressed about revival and reformation. Surely a maturing theology, intellectual honesty and appreciation of fellow believers are essential to any anticipated renewal in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A. E. Randall
Columbia, Maryland

To the editors: I appreciate Alvin Kwiram's article "Can Intellectuals Be at Home in the Church?" (Vol. 8, No. 1), and especially so since I have been appointed chairman of a General Conference committee studying how to reach the educated. Obviously, in addition to trying to reach the educated, we must try to help educated persons already in the church to feel at home in it.

Dr. Kwiram's point about the necessity of developing ministers who understand and appreciate intellectuals is well taken. I believe the church is making progress in this area. As younger ministers who have received seminary training gain more experience and maturity, they will be pastors in major churches, which will help to meet this need.

I don't agree that ministers of an intellectual bent of mind are edged out of the church. I've known a number of ministers of this type who

are very much at home in and appreciated by the church. Ministers must realize, however, that many in their congregations do not have highly developed intellectual interests. As long as ministers carry a balanced program, providing for the needs of all the members of their congregations, those of them who have intellectual interests do not generally encounter problems from administrators. Dr. Kwiram's suggestion that we should publish more articles dealing with intellectual problems is a good one, but I do believe that such articles should not be published in our general church papers. Rather, they should be confined to those journals aimed directly toward the ministry or, as with SPECTRUM, to those persons with these types of concern.

Elsewhere in the same issue of SPECTRUM, Charles Scriven suggests that a wide discussion of various ideological and theological viewpoints among all the "priesthood of believers" would be helpful, and that bad ideas would "die a natural death and good ones be joyously embraced." This cannot be faulted ideologically, but in actual practice it has been proven that a great many people within the church are not able to handle a hodgepodge of conflicting ideas about religious matters without losing their faith. The church leadership has never stood in the way of this type of discussion in specialized publications. But the church has been counseled by Ellen White that our general church papers are not to be of this nature. (See *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 76.)

Our church leaders have tried to follow Ellen White's counsel; experience has shown that bad ideas do not always die a natural death, nor are good ones always "joyously embraced." This is due to the fact that not everyone has the train-

ing, the analytical judgment and the discretion to be able to differentiate between sound ideas and those that are not.

I believe that some special conferences of the type Dr. Kwiram suggested could be held with much profit. I suggest that such conferences be jointly sponsored by our church leaders and the Association of Adventist Forums.

Having expressed general agreement with Dr. Kwiram's article, I now mention an area of disagreement. I think it is simplistic to attribute the defection of intellectually minded Adventists to inhospitable church members or church leaders. While agreeing that the church has not provided adequate spiritual assistance to intellectually minded persons through specialized publications or its church services, yet other even more vital factors cause these people to drop out of the church.

An important one is that many of them do not understand the true nature of Christian religion, namely, that it is an experience of faith in God, an infinite being which the finite mind of man cannot fully understand. It is vital that teachers, ministers and persons of an intellectual frame of mind keep emphasizing this primary aspect of the Seventh-day Adventist faith, and thus help intellectuals to keep a balanced perspective—not turning away from seeking solutions to intellectual problems, but not attaching supreme importance to this, either.

It always concerns me to see so many of our intellectually minded youth in our institutions of higher education grow spiritually cold and eventually leave the church. In some way, we have not gotten across to them the idea of the primacy of faith, nor the fact that the Holy Spirit, who is the teacher of all truth, continues His process of enlightening our minds all through our lives. We haven't helped these young people to learn to live with ambiguity until further maturity will help them to solve some of their problems, or until they accept that there are issues so complex that the greatest human intellects are not able to solve them.

Let me say one last thing: it would also be helpful if intellectuals would accept that there are always reasons why the church takes certain positions. At times these reasons may be inadequate, but at least leaders who wrestle with problems and must make decisions do the best they can on the basis of the data that they can

obtain. Our intellectuals ought to follow the procedure of asking our leaders more frequently to clarify the bases on which decisions are made or policies formulated before they criticize them. Our leaders are much aware of their fallibility, and most of them are pleased to explain the basis upon which they work.

Richard Hammill
Washington, D.C.

Before his recent move to the General Conference, the author was president of Andrews University.

The Editors

To the editors: I wish to thank you for the article, "Can Intellectuals Be at Home in the Church?" by Alvin Kwiram. . . .

Ella M. Rydzewski
Mifflintown, Pennsylvania

To the editors: I am a new reader of SPECTRUM and want you to know that your magazine has been, to me, a breath of fresh air. I have had many frustrations as of late concerning my membership in the Seventh-day Adventist church. The approach that SPECTRUM is taking in dealing so openly with the issues that really matter is very helpful to me. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I would also like to take this opportunity to respond to the article (Vol. 8, No. 1) by Alvin Kwiram concerning intellectuals and the church. Specifically, I have some suggestions for consideration in a program for reaching out to the secular intellectual.

I agree that the most responsive intellectual audience will most likely be the university student. It has been about three years since I was a student on a state campus and about six years since I was such a student as a non-Christian. I would encourage an outreach using such programs as vegetarianism, Christian meditation, etc., as mentioned by Dr. Kwiram, but be sure to keep in mind that these "veiled" programs appeal to only a portion of the university audience. For many thinking students, the integrity of the direct Christian approach will do much more than any round-about method we may contrive. However, when I say "direct," I mean

something much different from our usual evangelical tactics. These students don't want more theoretical information. They want a challenge. They want something that will make a fundamental difference in their outlook on reality. For this reason, I suggest also a well-understood philosophical discussion of the basic tenets of Christianity. This kind of openness will appeal to many that the more "trendy" programs will not, and vice versa.

Jon Jackson
Grand Terrace, California

To the editors: This is to express my appreciation for Charles Scriven's article in the current issue of SPECTRUM (Vol. 8, No. 1), "The Case for Renewal in Adventist Theology." To one who believes in "*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*"—the church reformed and always reforming—the article comes as a refreshing drink of cool water.

I sincerely hope we will take seriously Abraham Joshua Heschel's words to "learn to communicate it (our message) with greater sophistication so that it will be taken seriously." We have had much experience in the "traditional evangelistic" line. Perhaps the time is ripe to experiment with others to appeal to and attract with a "sophisticated message" both the intellectual and the wealthy. Hopefully, we are mature enough in the church to allow things heretofore termed "radical" to be tried, carefully bearing in mind that yesterday's radicals are tomorrow's heroes.

I thoroughly enjoy and read each issue of SPECTRUM. I cannot agree with all, yet appreciate the role you play in our church.

Wesley E. Amundson
Southeast Asia Adventist Seminary
Singapore

To the editors: The clarity and thoroughness with which the author addressed himself to some current issues in Adventist theology in "The Case for Renewal in Adventist Theology" has been gratifying.

One question regarding the first of the Notes and References: Is the reference to an article-editorial by Kenneth Wood in the July 1, 1971 *Review*, instead of 1972?

Lanny L. Collins
Home Study Institute
Washington, D.C.

The writer has correctly noted a misprint. The article did appear in 1971.

The Editors

To the editors: I would like to express my agreement with the views set forth by William G. Johnson in his article "The Mythos of the Mission Story" (Vol. 8, No. 1). Too often the mission stories are written for the primary purpose of entertainment, emphasizing the exotic, the shocking and the miraculous. While such stories may hold the attention of audiences, they do little to acquaint the local members with the genuine need for mission funds or the use of such funds.

I would especially like to emphasize Mr. Johnson's point about the role of the missionary. More attention should be focused on the nationals and their activities. Our church needs to dispel the stereotype of foreign missionaries as being synonymous with missions and mission work. Certainly, true success in mission work is measured by the phasing out of missionaries and the increased use of national or native workers.

Rudy A. Bata, Jr.
Rocky Mount, North Carolina