

How to Reorganize SDA Publishing
Church Courts: Pro and Con

SPECTRUM

A Quarterly Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

Volume 8, Number 4

AN ADVENTIST CREED ?

A Call for Statements of Orthodoxy
College Religion Teachers Dissent
Our Historic Witness Against Creeds
Lessons from Other Churches

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The Association of Adventist Forums is a nonsubsidized, nonprofit organization for which gifts are deductible in the report of

income for purposes of taxation. The publishing of SPECTRUM depends on subscriptions, gifts from individuals and the voluntary efforts of the contributors and the staff.

SPECTRUM is published quarterly by the Association of Adventist Forums. Direct editorial correspondence to SPECTRUM, 1951 Olive Ave., St. Helena, CA 94574. Manuscripts should be double spaced and accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

In order to receive SPECTRUM, send a membership fee (\$10 per year, except \$11 in Canada and \$12 in other foreign countries) to Association of Adventist Forums, Box 4330, Takoma Park, Maryland 20012. Single copies may be purchased for \$3. Send correspondence concerning address changes to the same address, enclosing address labels. Pay by check made out to the Association of Adventist Forums. © 1977. All rights reserved.

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About This Issue

Alvin Kwiram is no longer chairman of SPECTRUM's editorial board. He has been an influential leader in the Association of Adventist Forums since the organization began, in Boston, ten years ago: he was the founding president of AAF. Now he has asked to step down from the chairmanship.

Kwiram will be no less busy now. He has recently become chairman of the chemistry department of the University of Washington and he will spend most of the coming school year doing cancer-related research in San Francisco on a Guggenheim fellowship. Moreover, as we are happy to report, he has agreed to stay on our editorial board and thus to continue his service to this publication.

When this issue was being planned, we

thought our cluster of articles on Adventist publishing would draw top billing on the cover. Certainly, the close link between the church's mission and what we call "literature evangelism" gives great importance to articles such as these. We learn from five contributors something of the history, problems and potential of the publishing work.

The cluster that came finally to headline this issue concerns a critically important matter of Adventist life. Some leaders of the church fear that the dissolution of our doctrinal identity may be in the offing, and they wish to forestall this development by formulating officially recognized statements of doctrine by which orthodox Adventism may be defined. This has recently caused a great amount of discussion, much of it in the form of dissent. We introduce, and publish criticism of, this new effort in our special section, "An Adventist Creed?"

The cover of SPECTRUM is by Concerned Communications, Arroyo Grande, California.

The Editors

The Case for Consolidating The Publishing Houses

by Dort F. Tikker

The denominational goal of sharing the Gospel with the world requires the highest possible efficiency in the church's publishing work. Yet, the current system here in North America does not work as well as it might—in large part, I believe, because of its lack of coherent structure. In this article, I will briefly describe this structure, suggest why it is inadequate, and set down a proposal as to how it might be improved.

The present structure involves, of course, three major publishing institutions in three separate sections of the United States. Each one is at least semiautonomous; each one acts more or less independently.

The printing function of these institutions has become the “tail that wags the dog,” overriding generally accepted, basic publishing principles and even internal editorial expertise. Each publishing house has developed its own history, pride, tradition, regional prerogatives, etc., and has become a jealously guarded barony, production oriented, tradition bound, and quite generally hostile to new market and editorial concepts. This is

only to be expected, since they were set up to serve different parts of the country 70 to 80 years ago, when communication between them was, understandably, almost nonexistent.

This situation has led to the following problems:

1) Territorial protectionism, resulting in obsolete marketing programs.

2) Redundant and inefficient inventory and distribution systems.

3) Tactically arranged, and often misleading, data on costs, expenses and cost control, resulting in large subsidies where none should be needed.

4) No meaningful or organized new product development program, resulting in neglected markets and out-of-date products.

5) Tolerance of poor quality for long periods of time—particularly in editorial quality.

6) No overall, denominationally significant goals or objectives, pursued in common effort to the benefit of the parent organization.

The current group of “cooperating” autonomous units cannot function optimally to further the goals of their parent organization, the church. The lack of coherent directional planning and of cooperation in production,

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distribution and marketing, all indicate that this is so.

Leading students of business and institutions have for many years accepted the premise that an enterprise's level of achievement is strongly affected, if not largely determined, by its structural organization.¹ But why is proper structural organization so important, and how does one determine what is an appropriate structure for an enterprise?

Any large enterprise consists, of course, of a number of subsystems, all of them dependent on each other for optimum performance. The more smoothly each of these subsystems integrates with the others, the fewer resources an organization uses for a given quantity of achievement.

Redundancy, waste of time, waste of material and manpower, friction and lack of direction—all occur when the structure does not require cooperative and timely effort among all of the organization's subsegments. Thus, the structure must be purposefully designed, designed to achieve a maximum effect for the enterprise.

Any reflection upon structure must stress certain organizational design criteria. These

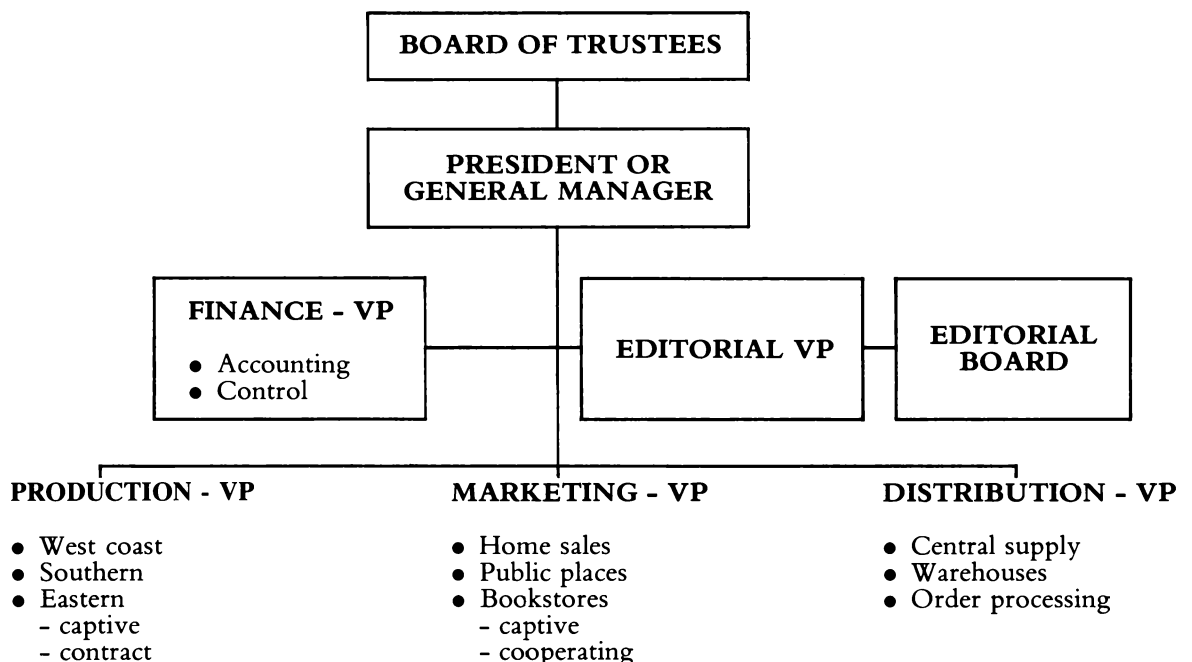
include: latitude and flexibility for managers, clearly defined responsibility and authority, as few decisional levels as possible and well-defined and operational control mechanisms.

Moreover, each department of the enterprise must also have its own goals, plans, program, budgets, controls, discipline, standards and regular review mechanisms. And it is especially important in the design of the organization to keep all relationships simple. The simpler the design, the less there is to go wrong.

Now the structure that works best for an enterprise (such as Adventist publishing) that has multiple units with a common goal, these units being geographically dispersed both in production and marketing, is the familiar and commonly used "federal decentralization" structure.

This is the simplest, most responsive, and most productive, structure available for the kind of business we are discussing. It is used for both large and small businesses, and has been the most successful structure for this type of enterprise for the past 50 years. This structure has logic, clarity, clearly defined responsibility and adaptability to a wide variety of situations. The accompanying chart illustrates such a structure.

FEDERAL DECENTRALIZED STRUCTURE AN EXAMPLE



Among the advantages of such a structure are the following:

1) *Planning*. Obviously, effective planning must occur in an appropriate organizational structure.² It should be clear that the publishing work cannot carry out the goals of the parent denomination if planning is done by disparate groups of people or institutions, each with their own individual goals first in mind.

2) *Marketing*. Whom are we trying to reach with our publications? What are we trying to tell them? What is the most cost-effective way to reach them? What causes people to buy printed material of a given editorial content and style? Where do they buy it? When? What is the effect of price?

The answers to these questions affect how products are designed, edited, produced and marketed. Only a central planning and managerial function will or can focus the resources and direction to do this as it should be done.

The best evidence for this proposition is the performance to date of the publishing units as they now are organized. Obvious mass markets are not now reached, e.g., paperback editions for racks in airports, "good" bookstores in major cities, drugstore racks and others. Products will have to be redesigned to take advantage of these markets.

3) *Production*. The proper "federal" structure would allow the optimization of printing runs as determined by press capability and market demand. This is a multifaceted problem, involving cost of printing at a given location, cost of inventory, cost of shipping, quality of presswork and primary markets for the products.

The savings in a consolidated organization could run in the millions when compared to what are now taken for granted as necessary costs.

4) *Distribution*. In a structure such as the one advocated here, the distribution system would be designed to get the greatest amount of published goods to the greatest number of people at the least cost. While this may seem a radical, if not heretical, idea to those beholden to the current traditional methods, it is the basis of all mass merchandising.

It involves selecting scientifically the points of distribution so as to give the lowest cost of distribution to the greatest market. It means inventories and product flow would be studied so as to minimize inventory and printing costs for any given product line. While this is a complex analysis, it is done routinely by commercial and industrial firms.

“The real obstacle to consolidation is seldom legal and economic. Persons who have responsibility, status and power seldom eagerly give those things up. But that, for the church’s sake, may be required.”

5) *Editorial Design*. The proper organizational structure would encourage, if not enforce, a stronger, more competent overall editorial program, one designed to fulfill more effectively the stated objectives of the parent organization.

With the exceptions of our better periodicals, the publishing work seems now to be a rather randomly inspired, all too often unappealing, unplanned program without specific goals or objectives.

The proper structure would give specific responsibility to carefully chosen people to design and develop effective and attractive products for the mass markets, i.e., "the world." These products would meet all standards of reasonable editorial orthodoxy, but would be designed to encourage purchase and ease of communication with the average reader or selected readerships.

6) *Board Responsibility and Effectiveness*. While a restructuring of the publishing work would not automatically guarantee improvement in this area, it would give the denomination a chance to try. What we have now is the traditional bureaucratic problem, namely, the placement of well-meaning, but ineffectual members of parent organizations on boards. They are often placed there for

political reasons, having little or no pertinent skill, expertise, or ability to make a contribution, however much they may try. At the same time, other people with specific skills and expertise who would be valuable to the enterprise are seldom used on such boards.

The new board, clearly, would include "outside" people representing the various key productive functions of the enterprise. Such a board, drawn from a wide range of executive and professional situations, would be able to understand, establish and implement that most fundamental responsibility of a board, namely, the development of goals and objectives, and of the strategy to attain these goals and objectives.

7) *Structure and Climate*. The structure of an enterprise can and does effect the personal behavior of those working in an organization. A diffuse, multilayered, multiheaded organization encourages personal and group politics, lack of standards, and poor performance by individual and institution.³ Experience in hundreds of organizations has shown that only in an appropriately structured enterprise can you develop a corporate climate that will allow significant achievement by individuals and the enterprise.⁴

The usual objections to reorganization have centered on what is supposedly a difficult and complex legal and financial problem. But in fact, unit consolidations and reorganizations have for many years been done with reason-

able ease and relatively low cost.⁵

There are several ways in which the publishing and distribution units being discussed could be consolidated, though the technical aspects of this cannot be pursued in detail here.

1) The individual units could be merged (pooled) into a new legal entity with stock or long-term debentures given as payment for the assets.

2) The newly formed corporation could assume liability and lease the assets from the current owners on long-term leases.

3) The newly formed corporation could assume all operating responsibility, liabilities and assets, making an arrangement for the long-term payment of the value of the assets, adding as an incentive a pro rata distribution of a portion of the profits as generated.

Consolidation could be made reasonable and attractive to the current "owners" if they could only agree to consolidation. The real obstacle to consolidation is seldom, if ever, legal and economic. Persons who have responsibility, status and power seldom eagerly give those things up.⁶ But that, for the sake of this church's mission, may be required. For it is exceedingly unlikely that any experienced manager would expect the current structure of the publishing effort to accomplish anywhere near what a consolidated structure, under competent management, could accomplish with the same resources.

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5. See Miskhin, *Techniques in Corporate Reorganization*, Presidents Publishing House, 1972.

6. See Berle, *Power*, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967, pp. 37, 39, 40.

Why We Should Use Nondenominational Printers And Bookstores

by Wilfred M. Hillock

If Adventists are to fulfill their commission to distribute their literature as cheaply and widely as possible, policies in two areas of denominational publishing must be changed: printing and distributing of books and periodicals. Action now toward better management can vastly enhance our success in reaching the public with our publications.

The Adventist publishing work is one of the larger enterprises of the church. Over the past century, we have built up three publishing houses in North America. In 1974, the 1,000 persons employed in these houses produced \$48 million worth of literature. The denomination's investment in these three enterprises is said to be \$29.5 million according to the Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, issued in 1974. A conservative estimate of replacement cost for plant and equipment would be \$60 million. It is only responsible to reflect on how such a large and expensive instrument for good can be improved.

In Adventist jargon, the publishing work encompasses much more than offering books

and periodicals for sale. It has been virtually unchallenged policy from the pioneer days of the church that what we publish we also produce. The publication system goes from the purchase of raw materials of manuscript, ink and paper, to consumer delivery of the printed materials. While the normal mode of operation for publishers is to specialize in editorial and sales work, we as a church have chosen to own and control the production-distribution process. Outside the Adventist church, the physical production of books and magazines is usually done at least to a degree by independent printer specialists on the basis of competitive bidding.

In trying to understand the church policy of owning, and thereby controlling the entire publication, printing and marketing process, we find several possible rationales. The policy may have arisen: from tradition, carrying forward the norm from a previous era; from the need to provide employment for Adventist printers; from the belief that it is less expensive to do it ourselves; from a desire to control the process for the flexibility of scheduling it affords; or simply from a failure to consider other possibilities.

In Adventist folklore, there is a widely accepted, but highly questionable assumption that the church can generally render a

Wilfred M. Hillock is chairman of the department of business and economics at Loma Linda University in California.

service or produce a product at a cost lower than it could be purchased from nondenominational enterprises. It does not appear that this is true for our medical, educational, food or publishing institutions, but the expectation persists. Possible reasons for this idea could be our so-called “sacrificial” wage structure and/or a general faith in the superior capacity of our institutions. Whatever the cause, the notion persists.

The limitations of this article do not permit a complete development of proof that our

“In Adventist folklore, there is a widely accepted, but questionable assumption that the church can generally render a service or produce a product at a lower cost than could nondenominational enterprises.”

costs are not lower than normal. It is instructive, however, to consider the case of college operating costs. Tuition rates for Adventist colleges approximate the norms for private colleges even though salaries to teachers are considerably lower than the norms. The conclusion is that with a normal income, a break-even operation and the largest element of cost (salaries) considerably below the norm, our costs other than salaries are higher than normal. One could say that the advantage of low salaries is dissipated in other costs. Prices of medical services, books, food and tuition would indicate that if there are cases where our costs are low these are not passed on to the consumers. It appears reasonable to conclude that we cannot as a general rule “do it for less,” and there is some evidence that in specific cases our costs are higher despite the wage structure.

The first proposal is that we promptly reconsider the policy that we must physically produce all the literature we distribute. In Adam Smith’s germinal book of modern economics, *The Wealth of Nations*, he pro-

claimed the principle of the “invisible hand” which would promote efficiency and reduce costs. He claimed, and most of the economic community has since agreed, that any interference with a freely competitive market is almost certain to be injurious. While it is true that publishing is by nature a monopolistic industry, the production of printing and distribution of books does not need to be so. Smith’s concern was with minimizing the wastes involved in monopolistic situations. Remember that a monopoly is any market with only one seller. The imperfectly competitive situation that he envisioned as evil involved unchallenged control over price — precisely the position Adventist publishers now enjoy.

The Adventist publishing industry and, in particular, its printing operations, have no rivals and there is little built-in incentive for the captive (totally controlled) printing plants to insure that costs are minimized. The absence of competition and the lack of a profit incentive can be expected to result in higher than competitive prices, a failure to maximize revenue, and costs well beyond possible minimums. In the church’s one significant experiment in competing with other commercial printing enterprises (the Canadian division of Pacific Press, Maracle Press Ltd.) we have a history of financial losses dating back for 25 or more years. In that case, our system has not been able to compete. This experience reinforces the expectations created by economic theory and raises the question whether there is a more economical way to produce Adventist literature than the exclusive use of denominationally controlled printing plants.

What forces would push our printing plants toward more economical production methods? So far we have built a bigger and better collusive oligopoly, that is, an industry in which there are only a few competitors who act in agreement with each other. The problem with this arrangement is that “informal collusion among oligopolists may yield price and output results similar to pure monopoly, yet maintains the outward appearance of several independent and competing firms.” What has happened is what economists would predict. “A purely

monopolistic firm will find it profitable to charge a higher price, produce a smaller output, and foster an allocation of resources inferior to that of a purely competitive firm."¹ We have developed an organizational structure for the production and distribution of Adventist literature that almost guarantees economic waste.

What are the alternatives? Not, certainly, immediate dismantling of our printing plants. The preferred approach, according to economic and managerial principles, would be to introduce competition by moving away from using completely captive printing plants.

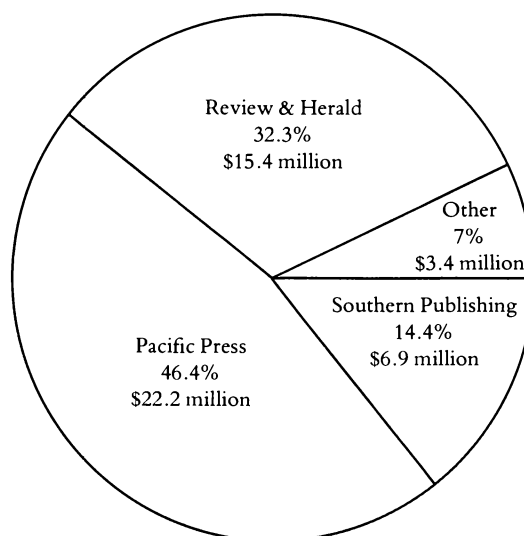
Management theory has suggestions concerning captive service departments, that is, departments which facilitate the operation of other departments, as our printing plants facilitate the publishing department, and which serve only their parent organization.

In discussing the typical problems of service departments, Koontz and O'Donnell say this:

The organization of a department for the purpose of performing certain services for all other departments is almost always accompanied by an edict that its service must be used. . . . Frequently, complaints result in improvement, but that can also result in the decentralization of the service activity or its abolition in favor of buying the service from independent outside entrepreneurs Observers are quick to recognize a striking parallel between the operating tendencies of service departments and the costly, rigid formalism in government. The private bureaucracy reaches its terrifying size not in one fell swoop but by minute accretions of function and procedure. It is here that the "empire builders" become visible The executive who criticizes the cost of the service knows full well that the whole department cannot be eliminated. . . . Elimination of centralized service and centralization of service represent the two extremes in organization The right kind and degree of partial decentralization of service activities can be attractive from several points of view. . . .²

We have chosen complete and total cen-

tralization; kinds and degrees of partial decentralization have not as yet been introduced. In North America we have developed three regionally located publishing houses and attached to each a production plant with an exclusive right to render the printing service. A distribution of North American publishing and printing activities (since they operate in tandem) is as follows:



Total: \$47.9 million³

³"Other" includes Christian Record, Conferences, Schools

What we need to do is balance the costs of the service against the benefits provided and decide whether the church stands to gain from modifying the scope and duties of its printing service. To assume that the edicts of the past apply to the present is to proceed on the basis of tradition as opposed to planning for efficiency and effectiveness in our present environment. In making this cost benefit decision, the

savings and costs of personnel and equipment can usually be accurately calculated; the total costs of operating a service department can rarely be set down in a neat row and summed. Much to the discouragement of cost analysts, many unmeasurable elements — among them poor service, poor communication, delays, failures to act and simple arrogance — must somehow be evaluated There is, however, the alternative of purchasing the service from another firm There are no general rules that can be summoned for a quick

solution of the problem of whether to own or purchase service But the framework of correct procedure is both clear and applicable to all kinds of service activities. The first step involves the careful calculation of the measurable costs of owned versus purchased service and the determinations of the net savings of the firm. The second step consists of the painstaking analysis of the unmeasurable relative costs of the alternatives. The third step requires the comparison of the results of the first steps and a decision in the best interest of the firm.⁴

Our typical reflex response to the suggestion of rescinding the edict to print what we publish is to argue that a church has special reasons for wanting control of the printing processes related to its publishing activities. But it is difficult to see how literature could become contaminated on printing presses. The crux of the debate is economic and must be settled according to sound economic theory.

It is time to consider the introduction of the invisible hand of competition as a guide to more economical production costs. We need to plan a printing industry at less than our total need capacity. This would result in benefits not the least of which would be the ability to allow commercial enterprises to provide for costly peak production needs. It is economical to use other firms to provide for those needs above the low point in the production cycle. Firms in a competitive market can regulate their intake and avoid the widely varied production swings that result from meeting the needs of only one customer. Moreover, the experience of dealing with outside enterprises on a bid basis would reduce costs related to indecision and expensive last-minute changes. Persons who have worked in our publishing houses know the frustration in both editorial and production areas that sometimes results from in-family expectations. We are normal in that we take advantage of each other within the family. This human cost should be seen along with other resource costs as one of the unnecessary penalties of the present system.

Finding the right kind and degree of partial decentralization of our printing activities will

necessitate a policy change that provides for some level of competitive bidding for the production of our literature. This multimillion dollar enterprise needs to follow such a procedure in an effort to become more efficient.

What is proposed should in no way affect the content of Adventist literature. The publisher always maintains complete control of the content and format of literature. Printers simply render the service of producing what publishers request.

The two primary channels of distribution for Adventist literature are the shortest, most direct — and the most expensive: the publisher either sells directly to the consumer (via literature evangelists) or through its own retail outlets (Adventist Book Centers).

Distribution by means of door-to-door salesmen is used successfully by producers of items that require a high level of personal point-of-purchase attention. But “it is generally true the most costly channels of distribution are those involving direct sale to household consumers”⁵ It is no wonder that our literature costs so much.

It is instructive that during the past half century the proportion of literature evangelists to ordained ministers has fallen drastically. In 1920, literature evangelists outnumbered ministers 2-1; now the reverse is true. Had the proportions of 1920 held we would have 16,000 literature evangelists today where the number is less than 6,000.⁶

The point is that literature evangelists as a method of distribution have not kept pace with the development of the work of the church along other lines. Apparently, our exclusive reliance on the colporteur ministry for book sales to the public may be outdated, at least in some environments.

Sales of literature to church members is accomplished through the Adventist Book Centers. The smallest of these centers does an annual volume of business approximating \$25,000 a year and the largest \$1,600,000.⁷ They are in existence, as *Adventist Book World* said in 1976, “for only one reason — putting

our Seventh-day Adventist literature in the hands of our members as conveniently and efficiently as we can." Since the retail outlets are church owned, and direct, this channel falls within the category marketing literature characterizes as exclusive and expensive.

In choosing its marketing channels, an organization should carefully analyze its market, its products, its middlemen and the organization itself. To conclude that existing channels are the most appropriate because of their existence and their approval by respected pioneers is to overlook potential opportunities. Multiple channels are an option that should be considered, either to increase sales in an existing market or to reach different markets.

Our desire to control the distribution system has caused us to limit our potential for a wider market. The natural result of this approach is that prices are higher than they would be with wider circulation.

What is needed is the adoption of a marketing viewpoint, a customer orientation to replace our preoccupation with producer orientation. The

marketing concept is the idea that the company [publishing work] should be organized around the marketing function, or as it is sometimes put, around the customer. Anticipating, stimulating and supplying customer wants are the primary company aims, and all other functions are auxiliary or secondary. The consumer, not the firm, becomes the center of the business universe.⁸

I propose that we undertake a major emphasis on meeting the spiritual needs of the

general public. In the choice of ways to meet this public, "the selection process begins by analyzing the consumer and then working backward through the various channels."⁹

This is not to suggest that we should abandon our present direct channels. It is likely that, for our message books, the customer does not recognize his need, and aggressive door-to-door selling efforts may be essential to market the books. This does not mean that literature evangelists or Adventist Book Centers are the best and only channels for all possible Adventist literature sales.

Mass market distribution becomes possible by first deciding that it is an option. In planning to meet the needs of new consumers, we should, for example, consider wholesale distribution of paperbacks to non-Adventist retail bookstores.

Of course, entrenched interests will oppose potential competition, however peripheral, with colporteurs or book centers. This should not deter us. We have the capacity — and we have a mission to satisfy human needs; it is time to approach the task systematically on a massive scale.

My intent has been to raise two policy issues: first, the question of giving denominational printing plants the exclusive right to produce denominational literature; second, the question of using alternate mass distribution channels. I have not suggested specific solutions in detail since the task of defining problems precedes the working out of solutions. But I do say this: It is time to reevaluate our obsession with ownership and control of all production and distribution. Let's use the avenues available to finish the work.

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Pacific Press Versus Review and Herald: The Rise of Territorial Monopolies

by Donald McAdams

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is, among other things, an enormous business enterprise. The church operates institutions large and small throughout the world. The first institution, the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, was incorporated in Battle Creek, Mich., on May 3, 1861. Throughout the nineteenth century publishing activity dominated Adventist institutional life, setting precedents for the developing medical and educational institutions.

The principle that Adventist institutions should not compete with one another developed after the establishment of a second publishing house. When the church opened the Pacific Press in 1874, it set up a competitive relationship between two denominational institutions. The inevitable result of this competition was an agreement in 1888 to divide the field. The relationship between the Review and the Pacific Press, 1874-1888, the subject of this article, illuminates the origin of the principle of territorial limitation, a principle that gives all educational and publishing institutions a territory in which they alone can promote, recruit or sell.

The publishing system today is, of course,

far more complex than it was in 1888. Fifty publishing houses produced over \$80 million worth of tracts, pamphlets, periodicals and books during 1975.¹

With respect to the division of territory in the North American Division, the Review and Herald has the Atlantic, Columbia and Lake Unions; the Southern Publishing Association has the Southern and Southwestern Unions; and the Pacific Press has the Pacific, North Pacific, Central, Northern and Canadian Unions (as well as the entire Inter-American Division). If literature evangelists want to sell in their field a subscription book not produced by their publishing house, they must ask their publishing house to procure the book from the original publisher. Similarly, Adventist Book Centers get all their denominational books through the publishing house in their territory, which serves as a sort of wholesale distributor for the other houses, reaping a two or three percent handling charge as the book passes through. Accordingly, each publishing house pushes its own books in its own territory and hopes that some of its books will be so desirable that the other publishing houses will buy from it. When a particular book sold by colporteurs becomes really "hot," such as Arthur Maxwell's *The Bible Story*, every publishing house desires, and in time obtains, the right to produce the book itself.

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Only the Adventist periodical can freely seek its own market. Since each periodical is designed for a specific reader market and does not compete with other periodicals, the publishing house can promote it throughout the division. The one exception involves the North American Division's two "missionary journals," *Signs of the Times*, published at the Pacific Press, and *These Times*, published at the Southern Publishing Association.

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Though any Adventist may subscribe to either of these two periodicals, *Signs of the Times* cannot be promoted east of the Mississippi (or outside Canada), and *These Times* cannot be promoted west of the Mississippi.

Behind this complex territorial system is the simple principle that no Adventist publishing house should compete with a sister institution. The fear, apparently, is that open competition might eventually eliminate the weak in favor of the strong. The Adventist Church has invested too much time and money, too many hopes and prayers, in each publishing house to allow this.

Why, then, were three publishing houses built in North America? One might suppose that the Pacific Press and the Southern Publishing Association were established at a time when poor transportation made it difficult for the *Review and Herald* to serve the American language market. But in 1874, when the Pacific Press was established, the transcontinental railway had been in operation for five years; the *Review and Herald* could have marketed its books throughout North America. The western publishing house was established for other reasons: be-

cause of the periodical needs of the new California field, the independence of the California believers, and the strong support of James and Ellen White. And the establishment of the Pacific Press called forth the system of territorial distribution that still prevails today.

The 1870s were a fecund decade for Adventist publishing work. In these years, the church perfected a system for the distribution of tracts and periodicals and established a second publishing house.

Stephen N. Haskell, newly elected president of the New England Conference, organized the first conference tract and missionary society in November of 1870. Borrowing on the ideas of several ladies, who in 1868 had organized a missionary society in South Lancaster, Haskell organized church members to circulate aggressively tracts, pamphlets and books, and to obtain subscriptions for church periodicals. The New England Tract and Missionary Society injected fresh energy into the Adventist work in New England, and with James White's blessing, Haskell began showing the members of other conferences how to organize tract societies. This work became his formal responsibility in March of 1873. From then until his missionary journey to Australia in 1885, Stephen Haskell was a full-time driving force behind the tract and missionary society work.²

The tract society began as a local church organization, which every church member was urged to join on the payment of \$1 dues. Members were required to keep a record of all visits, letters written, tracts given away or sold, or other missionary activities. These records went to the church librarian who passed them on to the district secretary at the quarterly district meeting. The district president, usually the minister for that division of the conference, was expected to visit the churches in his district once a month and promote the work, especially by recruiting canvassers to go from door to door selling subscriptions to the *Review*, *Health Reformer* or other church periodicals. The district societies pyramided into a state society led by a president, nearly always the conference

president, a vice president, a secretary and a treasurer.³

The tract societies dramatically increased the sale of denominational literature. The New England Tract and Missionary Society, for example, claimed in its report for 1874 that its members had obtained 1,659 subscriptions for denominational periodicals, given away 2,478 individual copies of denominational periodicals, visited 633 times the homes of non-Adventists and written 883 letters. It also placed 204 bound books in public libraries. In all, the 243 members had distributed 686,143 pages of Adventist literature.⁴

The church society ordered its literature from the district office and the district society ordered its literature from the state society. Only the state office could order directly from the *Review and Herald*. The tract societies, in short, were retail outlets for the *Review* and did much to increase the business of the house. By July of 1874, they had already raised \$5,000 for delinquent *Review* subscriptions and had obtained 15,000 new trial subscribers.⁵ By 1880, before the subscription book business had officially begun, tract societies were employing full-time canvassers to sell periodicals and books from door to door.⁶

Along with growth in the East came expansion into the West. The Adventist message first traveled to California in 1859 with Merritt Kellogg and his family in an oxen-drawn wagon. Kellogg's witness raised up a group of believers in San Francisco, and in 1868 two ministers, J. N. Loughborough and D. T. Bourdeau, came west at the invitation of these new believers to build up the work. Five years later, in February of 1873, 238 Californians in seven Adventist churches formed the California Conference and elected as their first president J. N. Loughborough.⁷ Present at this organizational meeting were James and Ellen White, who had arrived in California the previous autumn to attend the first California camp meeting, held at Windsor. Two months later, in March of 1873, they returned to the East. In their absence, at the second California

camp meeting, which met in October at Yountville, midway between St. Helena and Napa, plans were laid for establishing some type of publishing work in California.⁸

The Whites were undoubtedly pleased with this decision. In December, they returned to California with definite plans to publish a paper. James had already pulled together the original nucleus of the church in New England and New York with *Present Truth* and its successor, *The Review and Herald*. It must have seemed obvious to him that here in California the best way to unite the scattered believers and push forward the Adventist work was with a local periodical. A paper could announce new baptisms, report on offerings collected, and quickly and specifically answer the questions and meet the needs of the new believers. Moreover, James had recently recovered from the ill health which had forced him to give up his work as president of the General Conference in 1871 and his heavy editorial duties at the *Review* office in January of 1872. With no direct publishing or administrative responsibilities in the East, he could now repeat in his fifties the achievement of his twenties — build up a church with a periodical. Undoubtedly, James was encouraged in his desire to publish by the vision given to Ellen in Oakland on April 1, 1874. She had been shown, she wrote, that “a paper would be published on the Pacific Coast, and that not far in the future a publishing house must be established there.”⁹

By the summer of 1874, James and Ellen had settled in a house three miles from the center of Oakland, a city with easy access to rail and steam transport, and James had found a small printing plant willing to print his paper. The first number of the *Signs of the Times* soon appeared, bearing the date June 1874, and listing James White as editor and proprietor. As with *Present Truth* 25 years before, White offered the *Signs* free to all who could not pay, and asked those who could to support liberally the new paper. Over \$150 came in from 20 friends before the second number of the paper went to the press, and the third number acknowledged \$240 from nearly 100 names.

Given the personality of James White and

his position in the church, once the decision to publish a periodical had been made, the establishment of a fully developed publishing house was almost inevitable. Soon James was setting his own type and supervising the folding and mailing, hiring out only the presswork, and, of course, looking for a press to purchase.

Yet, despite liberal contributions and attempts to print the paper as cheaply as possible, the *Signs* was soon broke. The new paper needed help from the established church in the East in order to survive; so the Whites went east to visit camp meetings and raise money and then plead for support at the upcoming General Conference. Ellen, who preceded James, raised \$9,000 in Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota. At the General Conference session in Battle Creek in August of 1874, a resolution was passed calling upon the *Review* and *Herald* to establish a branch office on the Pacific Coast.¹⁰ Moreover, James proposed to the delegates that if eastern believers could raise \$6,000 to purchase printing equipment, western Adventists would raise \$10,000 for a building.

James' changing plans are a little hard to understand. In February 1874, six months before the General Conference session and four months before the first issue of the *Signs* appeared, he had argued against the construction of additional buildings for the *Review*, urging instead that the Battle Creek office produce stereotype plates of the *Review* and *Herald* and ship them to *branch offices* on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts where the periodicals could be printed along with the insertion of news and specialized articles relating to the local fields. Then, in the first number of the *Signs*, he stated that though he was starting the paper on his own, he would turn over all equipment to a *publishing association* if one could be formed by the Californians. It is clear that he had in mind a grand design, for in the second number he asked for 10,000 subscribers and 100 donors to give \$100 apiece for a steam press and accessories. By the fifth number, the goal had been doubled to \$20,000. Then two months later in Battle Creek, James supported making the Califor-

nia printing plant a branch office of the *Review*.

W. C. White, reflecting in 1938 on this decision, stated that some—we might guess the *Review* management—thought a new journal would hurt the *Review* and that if a new paper designed for nonbelievers were really needed it should be printed in Battle Creek. A few even pledged money to help the *Signs* only if the periodical were moved to Michigan. It seems quite possible that the

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decision to make the printing establishment on the west coast a branch of the *Review* was a compromise to please the opponents of any printing in California and to secure financial support from the East.

But the real decision, as it turned out, had not yet been made. California believers gathered at Yountville in October of 1874 for the third annual session of the California State Conference. There, again in the absence of James White, who had been elected president of the General Conference at the recent session and had not returned to California, the California Adventists determined to establish an independent publishing house in California, arguing that any tie to the *Review* would cause delay in conducting business. Following the decision of the conference to purchase the *Signs* and assume control “until such time as a legal organized association shall be formed and its officers elected,” the roughly 450 Adventists present gave or pledged almost \$20,000, much of it in gold coin and unminted bars. The show of financial strength impressed G. I. Butler, the representative of the General Conference; reporting on the event in the *Signs*, he wrote,

“We have financial strength in this state sufficient to do almost anything we wish to undertake. . . . There is a stability to this cause here; it is of no mushroom growth.”¹¹

From October 1874 till February 1875, the California Conference published the *Signs*, Elder Butler taking the chief responsibility, but when James and Ellen White returned in February, the conference transferred the office back to James while awaiting the formation of the association. Then, on April 8, the company organized as a nondividend stock company. The capital stock of the Pacific Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, soon to go by the name Pacific Press, was set at \$28,000 and the individual shares at \$10. James himself purchased 100 shares. There would be no turning back.

The establishment of an independent publishing house in California was clearly the act of the California believers, able and determined to be independent. But they must have had the blessing of James and Ellen White. Ellen, after all, had been shown in vision in April of 1874 that a “publishing house” should be established in California and when, in the year after the association was formed, it was suggested to James that the Review and the Pacific Press be put under one management, she told James to answer that the Lord did not approve of such a plan.¹²

Conflict between the two publishing houses began almost at once. The Pacific Press needed to increase the circulation of the *Signs*, raise money, and find a permanent home, but it faced immediate competition as a result of a decision made at the General Conference, apparently James’ idea, to start a “pioneer” paper at Battle Creek.¹³ The new weekly would compete directly with the *Signs* as an evangelistic paper directed to non-Adventists. Had James made further compromises in Battle Creek?

The December 1874 number of the *True Missionary* described the rationale for the new paper. The brethren felt that it made no sense to send tons of paper to California and then ship back the finished copies of the *Signs*, losing both time and money in the process.

Instead, the Review would print a missionary journal for the East, the *Voice of Truth*. All monies raised in the East for the *Signs* would be diverted to the *Voice of Truth*. The tract societies were urged to sign up 30,000 subscribers. In fact, the tract societies were able to find only 10,000 for the *Voice*,¹⁴ but the *Voice* hurt the *Signs* and brought the two publishing houses into direct competition. There was only one logical solution. At the end of 1875, the *Voice*, having seen its editor, James White, move to California in February, ceased publication in favor of the *Signs*; henceforth, the *Signs* had the entire field to itself as the denomination’s only pioneer journal. Once James White left Battle Creek for Oakland, any hope that the *Voice* would survive ended.

With the administrative and promotional ability of James White behind it and the wealth of the California Adventists to support it, the Pacific Press grew rapidly. A building was erected, machinery installed, and almost immediately additions to both required. Yet, though the California members were giving at three times the per capita of the denomination generally, and the circulation of the *Signs* was up to 8,000 in 1877, the Pacific Press carried a heavy debt, a burden its managers could not escape for many years.¹⁵

W. C. White gave outstanding leadership for a year, starting in April of 1876, but his older brother, Edson, was much less successful during the three years that followed. When he resigned, early in 1880—a decision C. H. Jones considered “about the wisest thing he ever did”—the press was in considerable financial difficulty and the directors looked longingly but unsuccessfully for W. C. to return and take charge of the institution.¹⁶

The Pacific Press did pick up two men of outstanding talent during the 1870s, J. H. Waggoner and C. H. Jones. Waggoner, a former editor and publisher of a political paper in Wisconsin and already one of the denomination’s most distinguished authors and preachers, became the resident editor of the *Signs* after his arrival in California in 1875. When James White died in 1881, Waggoner replaced him as editor, working for the

press with distinction until two years before his death in 1889.¹⁷ C. H. Jones joined the Pacific Press in 1879, at age 29, coming from Battle Creek where he had been superintendent of the factory. In 1882, he became general manager and in 1888 president of the board. In fact, following the departure of Edson White in early 1880, Jones had been the effective manager of the Pacific Press.¹⁸

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Jones and Waggoner oversaw phenomenal growth to the house during the 1880s. By the end of the decade, the press employed approximately 175 workers and utilized 12 cylinder presses and other modern equipment. It was one of the largest and most complete publishing plants west of the Rockies and, with an annual business nearing \$250,000, it rivaled the volume of the senior publishing house, the Review and Herald.¹⁹

From the beginning, the houses competed for the same Adventist market. After the Review’s *Voice of Truth* ceased to be published, aggressive promotion of the *Signs* as a missionary journal gradually cut into the subscriptions of the *Review* itself. The *Review* was enlarged in 1879 with the expectation that the tract societies and ministers would help double its subscription list; but though it cost more to publish, there was no increase in subscriptions.

“We appreciate your zeal for the *Signs*,” commented a resolution of the Review trustees, referring to the tract societies, “We also support the Pacific Press and at present carry \$10,000 of their debt. But as their debt goes

down, ours goes up, for the tract societies are pushing the *Signs* so hard that the circulation at the Review is falling off.” The resolution concluded by asking the publishing houses (obviously the Pacific Press) to stop selling books so cheaply because a low sales price robbed authors of their just recompense and, by making it unprofitable for agents and ministers to circulate them, cut sales. James White signed the resolution on behalf of the Review trustees.²⁰

During the 1880s, the rivalry between the two houses continued. In the 1881 edition of *Life Sketches of James and Ellen White*, the publisher added in an epilogue: “Elder White lived to see his judgment vindicated in establishing this office [the Pacific Press],” and “there can never be any rivalry between them [the Pacific Press and the Review], as the work will be large enough to require the full capacity of all that are likely to be built.”²¹ And at the General Conference session of 1884, a resolution was passed asking the chair to appoint a committee of four to act with the General Conference to consider a plan for promoting more perfect cooperation between the publishing houses in Battle Creek and Oakland.²² Obviously, all was not well.

The main source of friction in 1884 was not the circulation of journals, but the distribution of subscription books. By the late 1870s, the tract societies were supervising full-time canvassers selling periodicals and small books, and in March of 1880 the General Conference resolved that henceforth the state conferences should issue licenses to these colporteurs and, if they performed well, give them reasonable remuneration.²³

In Testimony Twenty-nine the previous year, 1879, Ellen White called for canvassers to obtain subscribers for the church’s periodicals and to introduce books and pamphlets into the homes. She specifically asked that men in responsible positions work up plans whereby books could be circulated. “Other publishers have regular systems of introducing into the market books of no vital interest. The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”²⁴ Adventists have interpreted this testimony as God’s instruction to the denomination to sell books by subscription—that is, first visiting the

homes and taking orders, and later returning to deliver the book. But I have seen no evidence that contemporaries understood it this way. On the contrary, at the General Conference session of March 1880, the Committee on Tract and Missionary Institutes, referring to this Testimony, called on each conference to hold a Tract and Missionary Institute and urged all church members to get behind the work of the tract societies.²⁵

The man who introduced into the denomination the idea of selling books by subscription was that ubiquitous genius, John Harvey Kellogg. Subscription book selling was quite common in post-Civil War America. Mark Twain's books had been sold successfully that way and it is not surprising that Kellogg, an author with a book to sell, would push to have his book sold by subscription.

Dr. Kellogg's *The Home Hand Book of Domestic Hygiene and Rational Medicine*, over 1,600 pages long, came off the presses of the Review in July 1880. While it was being printed, Dr. Kellogg personally instructed a group of canvassers in the art of selling by subscription. Among his salesmen were three young men who went to Indiana, including George A. King.²⁶ King, who had begun selling pamphlets and periodicals five months before, became convinced after a successful three months in Indiana with *Home Hand Book*, that doctrinal books could also be sold by subscription.

At the General Conference of 1880, King urged the brethren to bind as one book Uriah Smith's two small volumes, *Thoughts on Daniel* and *Thoughts on Revelation*. In response, the Review printed a limited special issue of *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation*, a combination of the sheets already printed with a new index added. George King evidently sold copies of this book with fair success.

Sometime during the year 1881, the Review began work on a completely new edition of *Daniel and Revelation* designed specifically for the subscription work. At the December meeting of the General Tract and Missionary Society, the prospectus was

shown to the delegates and the consensus was that large numbers of Adventist books could be sold by subscription if they were "prepared in a more acceptable form."²⁷ The volume, *Thoughts on Daniel and Thoughts on Revelation*, a handsome volume filled with pictures of beasts and battles and bound in blue and green linen for \$1.50, sheepskin for \$2.50, morocco for \$4, and with marbled or gilt edges for \$5, came off the press on April 3, 1882, and went on to become one of the all-time, best-selling Adventist subscription books.²⁸

At first, canvassers acted on their own, buying books from the Review at a 50 percent discount and delivering them at full price. It was a risky procedure since not everybody who ordered a book accepted delivery. Soon canvassers working in Wisconsin, Ohio and states farther afield began to order their subscription books from the state tract society offices, rather than directly from the Review. The first step to formalize this procedure occurred in Michigan. On November 13, 1883, the directors of the Michigan Tract and Missionary Society, voted that their society take the "State Agency" for all subscription books and periodicals, and appointed William C. Sisley the director of their state district. As state agent, Sisley became, in effect, the denomination's first conference publishing director. His job was to recruit and train canvassers and coordinate their work in the field.²⁹ Soon hundreds of canvassers flooded into the field, and other conferences followed the Michigan precedent.³⁰

The production of Adventist presses nearly tripled during the 1880s. The publishing houses did everything they could to increase the sales of subscription books. They provided books in bindings that they thought would sell, printed prospectuses, and prepared the canvass for the agent to memorize. The press at Oakland even hired a man to visit camp meetings, recruit canvassers and hold canvassing classes at the press.³¹ The houses supported canvassing wholeheartedly, not just to make profits—in fact, they lost on some books—but because they believed in the message contained in the books. C. H. Jones, for example, was un-

happy in 1884 that so many agents were pushing unimportant matters like *Sunshine at Home*. “If we made money on it,” he wrote to W. C. White, “it would be a little better, but if we are going to lose, we may as well lose with books that put the truth before the people.”³²

Indeed, the Pacific Press did lose money on the first printings of Volume 4 of Ellen White’s *Spirit of Prophecy* (usually called by its subtitle *The Great Controversy*) though in time the book sold 50,000 copies. Jones described some of the problems involved in producing subscription books in a letter written Ellen White on March 2, 1885, shortly after the book was first published.³³ Responding to her complaint that she was not receiving just returns from the book, Jones wrote, “You have been hasty in condemning the management of *The Great Controversy*, and people that tell you you should get \$10,000 from this book do not understand publishing.” W. C. White, who was handling the sale of the book, had employed canvassers in order to give it a wide distribution,

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but “the canvassers were most of them poor, and unless they could make enough to get a living, they would not handle the book.” “Using canvassers,” said Jones, “had enabled the press to sell twice as many copies of Volume 4 as of any of the previous three volumes.”

In response to this letter, Ellen pointed out her need for money to meet her own personal investment in the book’s preparation and declared:

Matters are so arranged that those who write books cannot receive proper compensation, because the books go through so many hands that the profits are consumed in this way. Whether canvassers, or tract and missionary societies, or whatever it may be that brings about this result, I protest against such an arrangement. If we should revive the old plan of our ministers disposing of the books, and receiving part of the profits themselves, I believe there would be a better state of things than exists today. Under present arrangements, it seems as if almost everything is absorbed by the tract and missionary societies, leaving very little profit for the author. I shall have something more to say on these things.³⁴

She did. In 1892 she wrote to General Conference leaders about organization, and in this connection spoke of complications in book distribution.

“In some parts of the work it is true,” she wrote, “the machinery has been made too complicated; especially has this been the case in the tract and missionary work; the multiplication of rules and regulations made it needlessly burdensome. An effort should be made to simplify the work, so as to avoid all needless labor and perplexity.”³⁵

Apparently, Ellen White did not understand all the intricacies of the distribution system. For the problem was not too much organization. The addition of state canvassing agents in 1886 had increased sales greatly, and in 1892, when Ellen wrote the above, the canvassing work was booming as it had never done before. In fact, the dismantling of the distribution apparatus in 1893, an over-reaction to the financial panic of that year, almost ruined the subscription book work. The real solution was not to cut back the distribution apparatus, but to raise the prices of the books. This was eventually done with great success, but not until after the turn of the century.

It is easy to see why tension developed between the two publishing houses. When losses mount, competition inevitably sharpens. Also, the publication of *The Great Controversy* brought the publishing houses into direct conflict over the handling of subscrip-

tion books. Many years later, in the midst of another controversy with the Review, Jones recalled to W. C. White how it all began:

You will remember the position the Review and Herald took in regard to your mother's works for fear that there was no money in them; and how we took hold of that work years ago. I remember very well your argument which Elder Haskell presented,—that even though we did not receive any immediate return for our investment, the time would come when your mother's works would have a large sale, and then the Pacific Press would reap the benefits; but we argued at that time that whether this was so or not, the books ought to be published, and therefore we took hold of the work. What effect this action had in stimulating the Review and Herald in bringing out more and better books, we will leave you to judge: but I do believe this, that a little healthy competition is beneficial sometimes.³⁶

Indeed, the Review did bring out books to compete with *The Great Controversy* and, consequently, *The Great Controversy* did not sell well in the East. At the time, Jones was not quite so happy with the competition. Once in a letter to W. C. White he referred to the Review publications *Daniel and Revelation* and *The United States in Prophecy* as “their two great hobbies just now.”³⁷ On November 17, 1885, he reported to W. C. that the Review would not circulate anything that did not emanate from their office.

As long as the two publishing houses tried to sell in the same market, they would be competitors. The Review favored letting each publishing house deal with all the state tract societies by which the books were distributed. They outlined this position in a letter to Jones in 1885: “We shall not find cause for complaint if you invade or even absorb our entire territory. We shall rejoice to see you do this, for certainly while this is being done, we will have the consolation in knowing that the truth is being scattered broadcast among the people. Of course, there should be a harmony between the two offices

in the establishment of prices, paying of freight”³⁹

But, the Pacific Press did not approve this proposal, for in the end it would pit book against book, publishing house against publishing house. The Review would want the same privileges in the West that they were granting the Pacific Press in the East, and Jones knew that in competition with the Review the smaller Pacific Press would suffer.

By the eleventh annual session of the International Tract and Missionary Society, which met in Battle Creek on November 21, 1886, it was clear that the subscription book business had to be organized in a more systematic way. The delegates first approved a resolution that the subscription book departments of the Review and the Pacific Press be recognized as the heads of the subscription book work in all territory controlled by them, “and that all engaged in the subscription book business work in harmony with the house in whose territory they work.” A second resolution called upon the tract societies in the states to act as “the sole agents of the said offices of publication for all of their subscription books provided that an efficient man is kept in the territory occupied by them who shall superintend the work of qualifying, appointing and working local subagents in accordance with principles of order and thoroughness.” A third resolution asked the conference committees, in conjunction with the presidents and secretaries of their state tract and missionary societies, to employ state canvassing agents. Other resolutions requested that state tract societies do only cash business with canvassing agents, that agents sell books at only one price, and that they solicit orders for only one book at a time.

With these resolutions and the understanding that each agent would have sole claim to assigned territory, the delegates completed their reorganization of the subscription book work.⁴⁰ What they had done in essence was to give the publishing houses primacy in their territory, the state societies a monopoly in their territory, and the individual canvasser a monopoly in his temporarily assigned

territory. No longer would canvassers be able to play off one tract society against another, and no longer would canvassers knock on a door and discover that another agent had already been there. System had been put into the business.

Furthermore, a full-time state canvassing agent would now push the work in each conference, recruiting and training canvassers, assigning territory, keeping up courage, and generally coordinating the work. Only one more refinement needed to be made in the system. Just as each canvasser had a monopoly in a certain town or county, and each state tract society was the sole distributor for the publishing houses in its territory, so each publishing house needed to have a monopoly in its territory.

Under the leadership of C. H. Jones, the Pacific Press pressed for such a settlement. After two years of discussion, the publishing houses finally came to an agreement. In a memorandum of October 9, 1888, signed in Battle Creek by Jones, representing the Pacific Press, and H. W. Kellogg, for the Review, the Pacific Press was given the exclusive right to sell all subscription books published by either house west of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico; the Review agreed to furnish bookplates for any of its books that the Pacific Press wanted to print in return for the cost of manufacturing the plates and five percent of the wholesale price of every book sold. The Review received the same privileges in its territory of Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Canada. The eastern and southern and Great Plains states were left open to both houses.⁴¹ Shortly after signing the memorandum of October 9, the two houses redivided the North American field according to the General Conference Districts. The Pacific Press took Districts 1, the East; 5, the Great Plains and Southwest; and 6, the West. The Review received Districts 2, the South; 3, the Midwest; and 4, the Northern Great Plains.⁴²

In the 1890s, an effort at consolidation which would have threatened the independence of the Pacific Press was attempted. The story of this threat and the successful defense

made by the Pacific Press, using the testimonies of Ellen White, has been told elsewhere and need not be repeated.⁴³ It is also not necessary to consider the establishment of the Southern Publishing Association in 1901, or the other English language publishing houses overseas. The precedent had by now been established that when a pioneer missionary entered a new field he needed a locally published pioneer periodical. (In the South, the periodical was James Edson White's *Gospel Herald*, later *The Southern Watchman*, and now *These Times*.) The pioneer missionary would soon print it himself, buying the type and then the press. For a while, the small publishing house would print only periodicals and be a depository for books published by the larger publishing houses. But gradually the new publishing house would come to handle even the largest subscription books and, in time, receive a territory. In most parts of the world where language barriers delineated the market, competition between publishing houses did not develop. For the English language territories of South Africa, Australia and England, territorial settlements were made just as they had been made previously between the Review and the Pacific Press.

Today, nationalism makes it obvious that each country is a publishing market and needs its own publishing house. But in North America, and only in North America, the church has three publishing houses serving one publishing market. These three publishing houses continue to follow a policy developed in the 1880s to insure that competition will be kept to a minimum. The system of publishing territories remains, a legacy of the evolution of the Adventist publishing system.

The history of the Adventist publishing work is in many ways a microcosm of the institutional history of the church. The church has established many, some members believe too many, publishing houses, schools and hospitals. But it has chosen not to place all medical institutions under one consolidated management, all colleges under the control of one educational system or make all publishing houses branches of one central publishing association; instead, it has made

each institution independent and guaranteed it freedom from competition. The epoch-making decision was made in the 1870s when

James and Ellen White and the California believers established an independent Pacific Press.

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40. *SDA Yearbook 1887*, pp. 49-63.

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The Problems and Potential Of the Union Papers

by Bonnie Dwyer

To inform Adventist church members about denominational news, union conferences in the United States will spend approximately a million dollars this year printing and mailing union papers.¹ Additional overhead costs, such as salaries, will be absorbed into the union budgets.

In the Pacific Union, a news-style paper will be mailed every week to 48,000 homes. Columbia Union Conference members will receive their *Visitor* as part of the *Review and Herald*. In the Southern Union, members will receive a four-color glossy monthly magazine. In whatever form, every church-member household will receive free a periodical from the local union.

As a Loma Linda University journalism student, in 1975, the author made two studies of the nine union papers in the United States, first an overview and, secondly, a survey of the editors, to learn what the papers are doing and why.² This article is based upon those two studies.

Besides being big business, union periodicals are a tradition that began around the turn of the century. Some areas of the country

even had papers before their organization into formal conferences. Evolving from mimeographed sheets to four-color magazines has not changed their ability to keep "the family" posted on all the latest news. A majority of the stories contain news about church members, with notices of church programs running a close second. Only one paper carried a letters section, and editorials about current specific issues, such as women in the ministry, are rare. Some union presidents write columns with devotional or news items not included elsewhere in the journal.

The author surveyed the editors of all nine union papers as to their objectives, receiving a variety of responses.

"My goal for the paper is that it stimulate loyalty to the message, the movement and to the organizations and programs of the denomination and the union by keeping the members interestingly informed," said one. Others agreed. "Strengthening the work and bringing the church family together," was the answer of one-third of the nine.

Three editors isolated promotion of church programs as an objective. One editor qualified the promotional aspect, however. The union paper "is primarily a news-information medium, only secondarily a promotional medium. It is a promotion in-

Bonnie Dwyer, a recent graduate of Loma Linda University, is now an information officer at the same institution.

strument from time to time, but we try to hold it down so that when it is so used it is more effective than if that were its primary use. I believe that, after all, the best promotion of any program is in action and human-interest stories of people and success in the program.”

Informing members of significant news events was the objective of a third of the editors. One respondent included evangelism as a goal, because the paper goes to thousands of homes where non-Seventh-day Adventists live. “It also helps remind inactive members of the church, and lets them know the church is advancing in its mission to reach people with the gospel,” he wrote.

To produce the news stories and inspirational articles in their papers, the unions depend on the local conferences, which, in turn, rely on the local churches for copy. One editor described the process this way: “We look to conference communications secretaries to submit all news from their conference. Churches send news items and advertising to them, they edit it, rejecting some of it, and send it on to us. We edit further, rejecting some of it, sometimes because we consider it inappropriate, but more often due to space limitations.”

So, while the papers are finally put together at the union level, much of the writing is done by local church communication secretaries. This system provides good stories, but limits the scope of the news coverage at the community level. Very few stories appear about conference policies or business dealings. The author’s survey noted only one report on a constituency meeting in which money matters or actual votes taken were discussed. Published news releases from the General Conference, the two universities and institutions such as the Voice of Prophecy provide readers with information from outside their region.

Some publications produce general interest stories which appear outside the conference news sections—the *North Pacific Union Gleaner*, for instance. *Southern Tidings* asks its conference correspondents to pro-

duce one feature story each issue in addition to the typical news notes.

Coverage of the Vienna General Conference varied greatly. Some editors used the news releases prepared by the General Conference, some wrote their own copy. A few stories before the session named union delegates, and during the session changes in union personnel were faithfully reported. Controversial issues, however, such as whether members can bring other members into court, were not even hinted at.

The present system has kept paid staffs small—because most of the hard work of finding and writing stories is done by volunteers.

“To produce a good publication requires, in my opinion, a minimum of four or five full-time writers and editors, or the equivalent,” lamented one editor, who is the only paid staff member on his publication. But three other editors said they need no additional help.

The editors of the union papers were asked what their readers expect.

“They expect what we have conditioned them to expect—conference news sections and feature stories of interest,” was one reply.

“Would you believe the laymen in our Union seem to expect us to be the voice of the church,” wrote an editor from a large union. “For example, if we publicize a new book or a new record, they believe it will be strictly kosher—and that’s difficult when it comes, say, to music standards. . . Members also expect accuracy, and while we have material separated by conference, we do know that many would like to have more in general news because ours is a mobile church with members thinking nothing of traveling scores, even hundreds of miles, to attend a meeting or anniversary or open house.”

Only one editor mentioned surveying readers about their expectations and reactions. He said first on a readers’ list of desires is news of churches, institutions and people within the union, and to a somewhat lesser degree, pertinent news from the church at large. “In personal comments, the readers are overwhelmingly in favor of more materials on what laymen are doing,” he noted.

“We get almost no complaints from our readers—laymen or workers,” wrote another editor. “In fact, I wonder sometimes whether there is some ill omen in the lack of criticism. As far as I know, judging from the commendations that we get somewhat more frequently, we must be giving our readers what they expect.”

The editors were asked whether there should be some sort of coordination among the union papers. “Would it help to have an Adventist News Service to help provide a wider variety of copy?” one question read.

“Union papers are a valuable communicative organ. They should meet the specific needs of the union they serve. I don’t see how they could be coordinated because of the local nature of the news they print,” said one.

“I think it is great for the various union papers to be independent and to work independently. It makes for interesting color locally, unionwide and nationwide. News is received from Andrews University, Loma Linda University, the publishing houses, General Conference, various unions and other institutions. . . and I feel that this is central enough and adequate for informing the people of the activities of the organizations,” another commented.

A third suggested an organization of union paper editors in lieu of coordination from a central location. “Circulation policies, advertising policies, as well as editorial policies could be more consistent on the part of all the publications if there could be a free, across-the-table exchange of ideas,” he said.

It has been suggested the papers could meet a greater need by becoming part of the *Review and Herald*, thus expanding news coverage and adding devotional material. Charles Beeler of the Columbia Union recommends it. He says his union has been pleased with their combination publication.

“We are thoroughly persuaded that this has been a worthwhile objective—that there are definite results in the spiritual uplift of the constituency with consequent increase in loyalty and support of the whole church program,” he wrote.

Other editors are not so enthusiastic about such a plan.

“This has several excellent features,” said

one concerning the *Visitor-Review*, “and a number of drawbacks. In my judgment, it is not practical for any other union conference to attempt the combination, due to distance, scheduling, proofreading, financial and other problems—which would increase as one got farther away from the editorial and publishing facilities of the *Review and Herald*.”

Beeler says these problems could be negated by unions’ doing their own typesetting, layout, pasteup and then sending fully complete page negatives ready for offset printing to the *Review*.

In summary, the picture of the union papers projected by the survey and questionnaire is of public relations periodicals attempting to keep the “family” together by disseminating good news about people and programs. They cannot be compared fairly to weekly news magazines, because summation stories combining unionwide efforts into an overall picture do not appear. Since commentary and letters are missing, they do not perform like newspapers, either.

As presently structured, the papers virtually lock out discussion of ideas and issues. Obviously, the local church secretary cannot

“It is easy to understand why members are reading only about church buildings and baptisms. The editors see their function as stimulating loyalty and strengthening the work, not examining issues.”

be expected to write about, say, the church’s official position in a court case. And as long as the union and conference communication secretaries delegate the duties of writing to the people down the line, the union papers will continue to be local newsletters.

Are these “family letters” worth a million dollars a year? They do perform an important function by attempting to make members feel as though they are part of the church

movement; business and industry depend on similar “house” publications to maintain good relations with employees, government and customers alike. But do the papers in their present form meet adequately the needs of the members and conferences? Since the conference officials oversee production of the present copy, it would seem the publications are fulfilling their expectations. As for the members, it is perhaps true that most expect what they have been conditioned to expect, as one editor mentioned. But some are beginning to demand more from their conference officials.

Recently, an editorial in *The Criterion*, the student newspaper of the La Sierra campus of Loma-Linda University, took the church to task for poor press coverage of significant church news such as the current lawsuits in California over hiring policies.

“While the church is certainly not trying to censor news of the lawsuits, neither is it encouraging any widespread coverage,” the editorial said.

“Staid Adventist publications such as the *Pacific Union Recorder* and the *Review* write articles on Five-Day Plans held in Glendale, new church buildings in Nebraska and river baptism in the jungles of New Guinea, but have very little to say about the lawsuits, and even less about the changes they’re causing within the church. And some of the changes could be momentous.”³

When the objectives of the editors are examined, it is easy to understand why members are reading only about church buildings and baptisms. The editors see their function as stimulating loyalty and strengthening the work, not examining issues. Perhaps as more daily city papers print stories about controversies within churches, including the Adventist church, and as magazines such as *Spectrum* and *Adventist Heritage* promote examination of church programs, union papers will be looked upon as a possible vehicle for regional discussion within the church, thus meeting the need of the constituency to be informed.

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1. Figure based on budget estimates provided by paper editors.

2. As a class project, three consecutive issues of each magazine were examined for the overview. Stories were logged according to categories, notations were made as to who had written articles, and graphics were commented on. Summer issues were examined

in order to see how each union handled the news from the General Conference session in Vienna. To follow up the overview, a questionnaire was sent to each of the editors with seven general questions about union conference papers; all nine editors responded.

3. “The Church Goes to Court” (editorial) *The Criterion*, Vol. 48, No. 1, Loma Linda University, Riverside, California, 1976, p. 2.

The New Independent Adventist Publishers

by Dave Schwantes

Some Seventh-day Adventists who publish books do not preside over church-owned institutions. They are independent of church structure, although they object to being labeled as dissidents. They are not even completely dissatisfied with denominational publishing policy.

Some even object to being called independent Adventist publishers. "We are a secular, general publishing company," explains Howard Weeks, director of Woodbridge Press, Santa Barbara, Calif. "All that can be said is that the owner happens to be a member of the Adventist church."

Barbra Coffey, executive director of Doubletree Press, College Place, Wash., prefers to use the term adjunct. "We provide adjunct editing services to the church," she comments. "We work with the church as do independent medical institutions."

However, some members of the General Conference Publishing Department apparently do not understand the intent of the independent publishers. To discourage the independents from producing works that might otherwise go to the denomination's

publishers, the Publishing Department's Book Review Committee has established a set of guidelines restricting distribution through church channels.

The guidelines read in part: "If the author chooses to use printers or publishers other than one of the three denominational publishing houses, he should not normally expect to use church channels for distribution."

The Publishing Department does not know exactly how many independent Adventist publishers it is dealing with. Operations range in size from the individual who publishes a single book presenting a particular viewpoint to stock-issuing corporations publishing as many as six titles a year.

Largest and most successful of the so-called independents is Woodbridge Press, which recorded sales of nearly \$500,000 last year. Established five years ago by Howard Weeks and his wife, Woodbridge has published 21 titles, with six titles now in production.

Subject matter is not specifically Adventist or denominational. In fact, Woodbridge has published more non-Adventist than Adventist authors.

"We do not publish any book that would depend on the Adventist market for its commercial success," maintains Weeks,

“and we do not publish any book that is religious in character or otherwise directly competitive with the output of denominational publishing houses.”

Woodbridge has exhibited its works at a number of major trade shows including the American Booksellers Association Convention, the American Library Association Convention and the International Book Fair in Frankfurt.

Doubletree Press was established two years ago by Cecil and Barbra Coffey to help fill gaps in denominational publishing related to what they call “the full Adventist way of life.”

“To discourage independents from producing works that might go to denominational publishers, a General Conference Committee has established guidelines restricting distribution through church channels.”

“Church publishing houses cannot be all things to all members,” contends Coffey. “By mandate, they must mainly deal with theology, church polity, missions and religiously oriented materials, with only a scattering of books in other areas.”

Doubletree has published eight titles for the general market. Subject matter includes such topics as country living, nature and health.

Concerned Communications, Arroyo Grande, Calif., did not get into publishing until it had existed for two years as a service agency. It had provided creative design and editing services to a number of denominational clients including Faith for Today, Christian Record Braille Foundation and Loma Linda University.

“Our publishing activities developed out of requests we received from various levels of church activity to provide much-needed materials not currently available from denominational publishing houses,” explains Russ Potter, creative director.

Concerned Communications has published 18 titles in the past two years. “There is no question that Adventists are reading what we produce,” continues Potter, “but we are less concerned with adding to what Adventists have for their own reading than with providing them with materials they can share with others.”

Freedom House, another independent, was organized to operate on a project-by-project basis, rather than as a continuing operation. Among its initial projects was a biography of H. M. S. Richards, Sr. It was filled with fancy graphics and numerous photographs.

“Although there were an initial couple of projects that had unique interest for an Adventist audience,” says Warren Johns, now an attorney for the General Conference in Washington, D.C., “Freedom House could not be presently characterized as an Adventist publisher.”

Although many of the independents have distributed their books through Adventist Book Centers, they rely on other means of distribution, too.

Woodbridge has representatives who call on bookstores and book distributors throughout the United States. Woodbridge has also established marketing channels in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and India.

Doubletree has placed its books in a number of college bookstores and health food stores. Concerned Communications uses medical and educational institutions, health educators and religious organizations to distribute its works.

Gaining approval from the General Conference Publishing Department’s Book Review Committee for advertising in denominational publications and distribution through Adventist Book Centers can be a lengthy process.

In evaluating books, the committee asks whether there is a need for such a book within the denomination, whether it is in harmony with Adventist doctrines, whether the book manuscript was first submitted to a denominational publishing house and whether the author’s personal life is above reproach.

Recently, it took the committee 18 months to approve one of Doubletree's works, *The Unsweetened Truth About Sugar*. The committee apparently lost the first copies of the book submitted to it and then postponed action twice until Doubletree could provide "further information concerning the operations and relationship of the publisher to our publishing policies." The committee finally approved the book last September.

"The whole procedure," contends Cecil Coffey, "needs overhauling. Undue delays seem to be directed only to Seventh-day Adventists who are in private publishing; other publishers whose works are being considered for approved ABC sales don't seem to get such suspicious treatment."

Russ Potter feels that there may be some in the denomination's publishing structure who

are somewhat threatened by what they see as competition on what they have viewed as "their turf."

"But our marketing methods and the character of the items we produce make it difficult to initiate problems for us," explains Potter. "It is difficult for the structure to openly or effectively exert much pressure on the ABC managers when people are asking for our productions."

In any event, independent Adventist publishers believe they will continue to operate with or without the cooperation of the denomination's publishing organization. As Howard Weeks says, "Dependency or independence in relation to denominational publishing should be no more a question than it would be if I were operating Woodbridge Furniture Company."

A Proposal for Church Tribunals: An Alternative To Secular Lawsuits

By Elvin Benton

When the Apostle Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians that “there is utterly a fault among you” (I Cor. 6:7), he was complaining about Christians’ settling their differences in secular courts. “Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?” (v. 5).

Paul’s concern and the admonition of Ellen White prompted denominational leaders at the 1975 General Conference session in Vienna to enact a *Church Manual* amendment to provide for imposition of church discipline—censure or disfellowshipping—for members who bring legal action against other church members, the church organization, or a church-oriented institution.

It is not my assignment to discuss whether or not the amendment was providently enacted. In my judgment, however, its adoption imposes on the church body a responsibility to provide the quality and availability of procedure that will make civil litigation unnecessary.

It is the purpose of this paper to set forth the issues involved when an employee of the

church (conference organization or church institution) has a nontheological grievance against the denominational employer, and to suggest an orderly structure and process for the acceptable settlement of that grievance without recourse to secular courts. This presentation does not encompass the adjudication of differences between individual church members nor the settlement of any dispute involving religious tenets of the church or its members.

It should be noted that the Corinthians in A.D. 59 were not being tempted to litigate against a General Conference or one of its publishing houses for there were no corporate organizations or institutions to sue. The apostle’s counsel was aimed at correcting the Christians’ propensity for bringing their pew-mates to court. Any consideration of a process for settling grievances of church employees against the church as employer, then, must be recognized as an *extension* of the reforms that Paul was urging the litigious Corinthians to adopt.

Unlike the first-century Jewish system, modern Christendom does not lay militant claim to the right of settling secular differences among its members. Even conferences and denominational institutions have been known to instigate legal action against church members, demonstrating that if there is adequate redress procedure within the

Elvin Benton took his law degree at the American University in Washington, D.C. He is a member of the Maryland Bar and director of the religious liberty department of the Columbia Union Conference.

church, it is either not widely known or simply ignored. It should not be surprising, then, that church members have occasionally brought lawsuits against the church in one form or another without realizing the gravity of their offense.

I wrote to or interviewed many persons about means of settling intrachurch disputes—present and former denominational administrators, both institutional and organizational; persons who have filed suits against church entities; persons who have been tempted to file such suits; persons who have had frustrating grievances but have not, because of principle, been tempted to sue; persons of both the masculine and feminine persuasions; persons of varied racial and national origins. Almost every person I contacted expressed consciousness of a need for an orderly process of grievance settlement within the church structure. At present, such a process, they said, is absent at worst or rudimentary at best.

An important reason, then, for setting up an intrachurch system of adjudication is to reduce the temptation for employees to seek

redress of their grievances in secular courts. It may well be that the degree of reduction of such temptation will be in direct proportion to the degree of the process's fairness as perceived by those employees.

An administrator of a major Adventist hospital wrote me: "An effective grievance procedure must generate confidence in the employee that it will work. This is nearly impossible to accomplish when each succeeding review is by someone in the system who is suspect of upholding the lower echelon manager regardless of how unfair his action might have been."

An Adventist executive of a major manufacturing corporation pinpointed part of the problem: "There is nothing that will aggravate a grievance more than the frustration an employee feels when he believes there is no one who will listen to him." The executive further spelled it out: "An employee at any level in an organization should understand that if he has a problem it can be heard and considered, not only by his immediate supervisor but also by another person or committee with enough authority to act, so

The 1976 Annual Council Action

The articles by Elvin Benton and Darren Michael (page 34) were presented, in somewhat different form, at a conference of selected Adventist attorneys and denominational leaders on April 9, 1976, in Washington, D.C.

In the fall of 1976, the Annual Council adopted a set of "Conciliation Procedures," thus responding to the need indicated at the beginning of Benton's article. Church leaders at the meeting also voted, however, to review these procedures in the fall of 1977. In the light of this action continuing discussion of the settling of grievances among church members remains immediately relevant.

As outlined by Benton in a letter, the salient differences between the Annual Council action and the proposal suggested in his article are as follows:

1. The adopted plan concerns differ-

ences not only between members and the church as employer, but also between one member and another. Benton's proposal deals only with the former question.

2. The adopted plan calls for conciliation panels on the local conference and institutional level, as well as on the union conference level, with procedures for appeal if satisfaction does not occur at lower levels.

3. Benton's proposal permits witnesses and perhaps counsel to appear before the panel. The adopted plan appears to preclude both.

4. The Benton proposal excludes church administrators from being chairmen of conciliation panels. The adopted plan specifically requires that the chairman of the union-conference-level panel be "a General Conference representative designated by the General Conference Secretariat on a case-by-case basis."

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that the element of personal bias, if it exists, can be neutralized.”

Some denominational entities — particularly institutions — have well-developed grievance procedures that should be studied by conference organizations with a view of possible adoption at the local level. The purpose of the remainder of this paper, however, is primarily to study the appropriate framework of a structure for dealing with problems that local procedures have somehow failed to alleviate — problems that might otherwise boil up into a full-fledged lawsuit.

The establishment of this kind of problem-solving process may well result in a

“Even denominational institutions have instigated legal action against church members, demonstrating that if there is adequate redress procedure within the church, it is either not widely known or ignored.”

“separation of powers” not heretofore prevalent in the church organization. Paul’s query about the availability of “a wise man among you . . . that shall be able to judge between his brethren” made no suggestion that such a person be of the clergy or an administrator of the church. When one of the parties to the lack of agreement is a church entity, positions taken by church administrators in their “legislative” or “executive” capacities may be at the very focus of the grievance under consideration. While it is not inherently impossible for such an administrator to attain sufficient objectivity to make a fair decision, such circumstances provide without question less than the ideal matrix for impartiality.

It may be time, then, for the church organization to recognize the pragmatic necessity of relinquishing some of the prerogatives

to which it has traditionally laid almost absolute claim.

A specific proposal for framework is not easy to formulate, partly because there seem to be several ways it could be accomplished. Believing that most good projects start from somebody’s succinct scheme, I have come up with a composite that I believe will at least start a good discussion.

A surprising consensus emerged from my correspondence and interviews: that the appropriate place for setting up a forum to adjudicate difficult differences is at the union conference level. This forum need not be large: If well chosen, five persons would be enough (witness the volume of important cases being decided by three-judge federal district courts). Because of the diversity of people whose problems the forum would face, it is important that it include both women and men, that it be racially integrated, and that not all its members be on the same side of forty.

While a goal of total objectivity might call for such a forum to exclude those with any connection with the church structure, either as employees or as administrators, it seems legitimate to consider that familiarity with the day-to-day problems at issue could justify their participation. Neither employees nor administrators should constitute a majority of the forum, however.

The chairperson of the forum should be neither an employee nor an administrator of any church entity. While it is not practicable to try to define constitutionally the chairperson’s pedigree, he or she must be a person with an earned reputation for fairness and calm judgment. Needed also is a working knowledge of ways to receive and evaluate evidence from all sides. An Adventist attorney might be somewhat more likely than the average church member to possess those qualifications.

Who should choose the people who constitute such a grievance forum? As in the choosing of judges for secular courts, no foolproof or bias-proof formula appears to exist. Of those from whom I sought counsel, a majority would, on balance and with some reluctance, leave the choice either to the union conference executive committee or to the

union conference constituency. Of the two, the union conference committee seems a better choice because it more nearly represents a cross-section of church membership than do the delegates to union conference constituency meetings in recent years. Replacements of forum members who can no longer serve should likewise be the responsibility of the union conference committee.

Such a forum should be a “standing” tribunal with term of office running concur-

“Paul’s query about the availability of ‘a wise man among you . . . that shall be able to judge between his brethren’ made no suggestion that such a person be of the clergy or an administrator of the church.”

rently with the term of union conference personnel. All employees of local and union conferences and of institutions within the union conferences should have ready access to the name and address of a person appointed by the forum to process applications for hearing their grievances. The forum should have broad discretion to determine which cases it will hear, after taking into consideration whether or not the applicants have exhausted all other reasonable means of effecting settlement of their grievances, and after making appropriate preliminary investigation of the apparent merits of the complaints.

No hard-and-fast schedule of frequency of hearings should be attempted at first, since it will be impossible accurately to predict the number of grievances that will be filed for adjudication. An initial schedule of three sessions a year would be a reasonable starting point. It is important that no person’s complaint be set aside for so long that it becomes moot before it is heard. The advisability of granting to the forum chairperson the authority to make preliminary investigation and to direct temporary “injunctive” relief should be considered.

The forum should have some discretion in determining who, in addition to the applicant bringing a grievance, should be permitted to appear before the forum. A reasonable number of witnesses must be considered. In exceptionally difficult cases, a Seventh-day Adventist counselor of the applicant’s choice, possibly a lawyer, might reasonably be expected to facilitate the orderly presentation of evidence. The process must not be expected to conform in every respect to the procedural and evidentiary rules of courts of law. Essential fairness demands, however, that the parties to a disagreement be accorded equal treatment in every proceeding.

A similar division-level forum appears to be needed, to handle appeals from decisions of the union-conference-level forums and to hear complaints arising in organizations or institutions above the union conference level. Hearing of appeals should be at the discretion of the division-level forum.

Decisions of this system of forums must be considered binding. The system will not work to avoid civil litigation unless both the church employer and the employee agree that they will be bound by what the forum decides.

Finality of decision may be a hard pill for both sides to swallow. Church administrators are reluctant to give over to any such “free-standing” entity, not controlled by the church organization, the power to make a final decision affecting the church. Employees, however, believe that if they are to be bound by such a decision, fairness demands that church employers agree to be bound also.

Prevalent current practice (differences “settled” after consideration by and decision of institutional boards or conference executive committees) is by its very nature more palatable to employer than to employee. Employees are reluctant to believe that such boards and committees could be expected to look at problems through unbiased eyes. Some are conditioned by documented experience with unfortunate unfairness. Said

one young conference employee: “Sometimes there’s a policy they’re upholding and, if not, often an ‘unwritten policy’: ‘It’s always been done this way; this is the way good Adventists think.’”

If such a person, young or old, believes he or she can depend on getting a fair hearing and an unbiased decision in a new kind of forum, the church’s agreement to be bound by that forum’s decision will have paid off. That person’s complaint is one that won’t be litigated “before the unbelievers.”

The system I have suggested could be brought about either by adoption of an enabling provision in the constitutions of union conferences and divisions or, even before that could happen, by action of union conference and division executive committees. The

concept, here necessarily tentative in suggestion, deserves serious denominational study and perhaps recommendation of a uniform churchwide system. Only trial and modification will provide the experience needed to perfect a workable design.

When the system gets going, I won’t get so many calls like the one earlier this week from a church schoolteacher who was reluctantly threatening to sue his conference for a year’s pay. Nobody would take seriously his view of the events that led to his being fired. He didn’t sound selfish. He didn’t even sound like he wanted a year’s pay. But he did want to believe that his hurt was important enough to be heard by some impartial person somewhere with enough clout to be sure he got a fair shake.

Would Church Tribunals Really Work?

by Darren L. Michael

Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy clearly present an ideal for Christian conduct with respect to the relationships that should exist among church members. The implication is clear that, if church members are truly converted, their conduct in business matters and their respect for one another's rights will preclude the development of differences of opinion that cannot be amicably resolved by the members themselves within the framework of the church. In fact, both the Apostle Paul and Ellen White suggest that some disputes may have to be resolved by personal sacrifice of rights or property, the rationale being that such sacrifice avoids the harm that would come to the church if these disputes had to be settled outside the "family of faith."

Where such differences prove difficult of resolution, Christ offers in Matthew 18:15ff. an outline for negotiation. He first suggests an attempt at face-to-face consultation. If this fails, the aggrieved member should take his problem to two or three impartial members

of the church. The third step is an appeal to the church body itself. Finally, "if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a pagan and a tax-collector" (v. 17, Amplified Bible).

It is clear, however, that the ideal will not always be achieved as long as we are dealing with human frailties. There will always be cases where honest people with high motives will have real differences of opinion based on their differing perceptions of issues. The early Christian believers in Corinth, for example, apparently decided that they could not reach the ideal. They, accordingly, resorted to the civil courts. Paul's criticism of this procedure focuses on the fact that in large measure the judges before whom Christians were appearing were anything but honorable men, and that it was a disgrace to expose the "dirty linen" of the church before pagan eyes. Paul, therefore, presents a cogent argument for resolving differences within the framework of the local congregation.

Implementing scriptural counsels (along with similar statements in the Spirit of Prophecy), however, raises some practical problems. In the first place, where is the church tribunal to which members can bring their grievances? What guidelines would such a tribunal follow to insure that its pro-

Darren Michael studied law at the Osgood Law School in Toronto, and is now an attorney with the firm of Ricketts, Farley, Lowndes and Jewell in Oshawa, Ontario. He is also attorney for the Canadian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

ceedings would be carried out in a fair manner with equal protection for rights of plaintiff and defendant? And even if such a tribunal existed, would it be able to enforce its decisions? Would its decisions be recognized by civil courts?

“Another question worth considering is whether the civil courts in North America are truly pagan and therefore morally unworthy of determining issues between dedicated church members.”

Consider some areas of potential dispute in which an ecclesiastical court might lack the authority to enforce its decisions:

1. *Automobile accident compensation claims not only for damaged property but also for personal injuries.* In most cases, insurance companies will not make payment unless the matter is adjudicated before civil courts.

2. *Compensation for injuries occurring on denominationally owned premises.* Many insurance policies do not permit unilateral settlements gratuitously offered by the potential defendant, insisting that the person claiming such compensation must at least institute proceedings for the recovery of his claim in the competent court of civil jurisdiction.

3. *Contractual disputes dealing with property assets.* A ruling by a church tribunal may be founded on equitable principles, but if it is not accepted by the party required to give up assets, what then takes place?

4. *Land transactions involving mortgage default or interpretation of terms of contracts.* Will the decisions of a church tribunal be recognized by civil authorities so that title to land can actually change hands without resort to the usual civil court procedures?

5. *Legal separations or divorces, especially where property distribution and child custody are involved.* Once more the question arises as to whether the church can enforce its decision in a manner that will enjoy recognition by gov-

ernmental authorities who also claim jurisdiction in these matters.

6. *The administration of estates and the interpretation of wills.* Seventh-day Adventist beneficiaries may honestly disagree on what the deceased meant by a particular phrase in a poorly drawn will. (There seems to be a growing trend for wills to be drawn by or for Seventh-day Adventists without much legal advice.) How can such matters be satisfactorily resolved when the practical implications of such settlements must also be given legal effect in the courts?

7. *Protection of corporate assets or industrial property rights involving patents, trademarks and copyrights.* Is the church competent to render decisions that will be binding upon both parties?

8. *Industrial relations.* As more and more Seventh-day Adventists operate their own businesses, there is inevitable involvement with their employees even if no trade union is certified to represent them. Does the church have adequate facilities to evaluate fair labor practices, an area that is becoming increasingly complex and technical?

Few church boards or conference committees would be competent to examine the above issues (and the list is far from complete) and render decisions that would commend themselves to the parties to the dispute. I do not intend to sound critical of the ideal expressed by the church, by Jesus, and by Ellen White. Serious effort should be given to dealing creatively and constructively with these counsels, trying to find a workable means of applying them to these complex areas of human relationships. Perhaps some sort of preliminary adjudicative procedure within the church could be employed which, if unsatisfactory to the parties involved, would then open the way for resort to the civil courts.

Another question worth considering is whether the civil courts in North America are truly pagan and therefore morally unworthy of determining issues between dedicated church members. Certainly, many of our judges are men and women of high principles and in some instances are devout

Christians. Most judges are appointed or elected to judicial office on the basis of their qualifications. Their experience in legal matters as well as in various technical areas of industry and commerce justify their position on the bench. On the other hand, while there may be no lack of devotion to Christian principles on the part of Seventh-day Adventists, do we have a sufficient reservoir of legally trained church members with adequate knowledge of the many technical and complex issues involved in many disputes to resolve these issues?

In 1975, the church decided to make lawsuits among members reason for church discipline. But it is not right to throw out an existing procedure without providing something practical to take its place. Should the church, now appearing to have embarked on a course of action that requires ecclesiastical courts, give careful study to the establishment of its own judicial system complete

with rules of procedure, rules of evidence, and the training of attorneys and judges?

I would hope, if the church is to undertake such a study, that it would feel free to draw upon the expertise of lawyers and judges in its membership. This seemingly obvious step might not be taken. For example, not one legally trained individual served on the committee for the revision of the *Church Manual* or on the committee on constitution and bylaws at the Vienna General Conference Session.

The church finds no contradiction in training and using qualified physicians even though our ideal is a simple, disease-free lifestyle. Why can the church not likewise use legally trained individuals to help achieve its ideal of harmony among members? If the addition to the *Church Manual* prohibiting litigation among church members is retained, the church will need all the competent help it can get.

AN ADVENTIST CREED?

I. Introduction

Key General Conference leaders are now acting on their fear that Genesis 1-11 is being seen in some quarters as a record of theological insight but not necessarily of scientific fact. Many Adventists, especially teachers and students on college campuses,* object strongly to the kind of action they are taking.

Willis Hackett, Duncan Eva and Richard Hammill, all General Conference vice presidents, are now in the process of visiting Adventist campuses in the United States and some campuses in other countries. At meetings of religion and science faculties they are presenting proposals for “centrist” theological statements on both creationism and the inspiration of the Bible, the latter serving, in effect, as the premise for literalistic positions taken in the former.

*News stories and editorials on this development have appeared in several college student newspapers. For example, a strongly worded editorial in the April 29, 1977 issue of *The Criterion* of Loma Linda University's La Sierra campus, spoke disapprovingly of a “move toward close-minded fundamentalism.”

In a May 26, 1977 guest editorial in the *Review and Herald*, Hackett described the reasons for the development of such statements. Other churches, he said, have allowed their basic doctrines to undergo revisions suggested by modern scientific understanding, with the result that they have “lost their identity.” To prevent among Seventh-day Adventists a similar trend toward “liberal theology,” he continued, church leadership “is preparing carefully formulated statements on what it considers to be its [*i.e.*, the church's] fundamental beliefs.” After receiving “wide input” on the contents of the statements, the leadership will publish them in church magazines and books. With these statements as guides, he wrote in a key paragraph,

administrators, church leaders, controlling boards and leaders at all levels of the church will find it easier to evaluate persons already serving the church, and those hereafter appointed, as to their commitment to what is considered basic Adventism.

To these overtures we present on the following pages a series of responses. As background for our readers, we first of all reprint the full text of Hackett's editorial. Then come three documents whose origin traces back to a May 1977, meeting at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California. On the weekend of the 13th to the 15th, the religion faculties of the three west coast Seventh-day Adventist colleges were together for their annual conference. The main interest of the teachers focused on the Sunday morning meeting, at which Hackett, Eva and Hammill would be presenting their proposed statements of belief. The devotional talk on Friday evening, by PUC's Fred Veltman, took the development of the Sabbath doctrine in the Old Testament as the basis for urging theological freedom within the church. The talk was obviously meant as background for the Sunday discussion, and we here publish it, virtually in the form in which it was originally spoken.

The same conference was enlivened by the circulation of a letter giving the PUC religion department's "preliminary general response" to the idea of developing official statements of belief. That letter is published on the pages that follow.

At the Sunday morning meeting, the three General Conference representatives hoped to spend the time refining drafts for the proposed statements on the inspiration of the Bible and on the interpretation of the creation story. The religion teachers (and some of PUC's science faculty) turned a large part of the morning into a discussion of whether such statements should even be prepared.

During this discussion, the three vice presidents pleaded for unity of doctrinal belief; that, it seemed to them, was the church's urgent need. Hackett was sure enough about this to say, without reservation, that, as board chairman at Andrews University, he would use the statements in the hiring of faculty. "When a man wants a job teaching at the seminary," he declared, "I'm going to use these statements to find out what he be-

lieves, and whether or not he should be teaching in one of our schools."

The teachers, on the other hand, pleaded for toleration of different views, for recognition that truth is progressive. They feared that a "creed" was developing, and objected, as one of them phrased it, to "putting the truth in a box." Hammill, however, described "all this concern about creeds" as "so much hot air," and suggested that "creeds have had a very positive influence throughout church history."

Before the discussion ended, however, Eva acknowledged that General Conference leaders should give further consideration to the "use" to which such statements would be put. He said he could not claim to have heard the teachers' concerns if he did not recommend to his colleagues the postponement of official endorsement of any statements until more study had been given to the question of their function.

But the publication a few days later of Hackett's editorial (it had been set in type before the meeting) helped keep alive the religion teachers' worries. In the month of June, the members of the three departments wrote a joint statement, signed by the three department chairmen, which was sent to various church officers. We also publish here the contents of that statement.

The series of responses continues with two articles written especially for this issue of SPECTRUM. One is an essay opposing the adoption of doctrinal statements, in which the author makes his argument by means of a review of Adventism's "historic witness" against credal formulas. The last article of the series briefly recounts recent developments in the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, and in the Southern Baptist Convention. The crises of authority that have afflicted both these communions have, as the author contends, "instructive relevance" for the problems now being faced by Seventh-day Adventists.

The Editors

II. Preserve the Landmarks

by W. J. Hackett

The following is the full text of the guest editorial in which W. J. Hackett, vice president of the General Conference, explained why church administrators are now urging the adoption of several official statements of Seventh-day Adventist belief. It first appeared in the May 26, 1977 *Review and Herald* and is here reprinted by permission.

The Editors

The present is a time of openness. Flouting confidentiality, people demand that such things as income-tax reports and personal holdings of candidates running for public office be examined. These advocates of openness are not afraid to question traditional views and established policies. Boasting a new climate of academic freedom and innovation, they champion individual opinion against group opinion or against the established policies, beliefs, and practices of an organization. In their quest for truth, students training for the professions are taught to challenge every facet of what formerly had been regarded as verified. Research-oriented persons are told to insist on the opportunity for unrestricted inquiry.

This spirit of openness has brought certain benefits. For example, it has advanced education, research, invention, and commerce. It has helped the church to find new and improved methods of meeting its objectives, as well as to establish policies benefiting the church's working force.

But how open can the church afford to be? How deviant should the church allow a member's viewpoints and life style to be and yet consider him a part of the fellowship? That the line must be drawn somewhere, everyone recognizes; for if it isn't, the church eventually loses its identity.

Since its founding, the church has insisted

that the Bible and the Bible only should be its rule of faith and practice. It has opposed a creed. It has recognized the writings of Ellen White as focusing on the Bible and as instructing members how to live by the Bible's teachings.

Many years ago it fixed certain landmarks of truth that, ever since, it has held to be nonnegotiable. Beyond these the church has allowed room for individual differences of viewpoint. In a church adding many new members each year it is necessary from time to time to spell out clearly and in contemporary terms the basic body of truth that accounts for the church's unique place.

Other church bodies facing similar challenges have lost their identity. Once zealous in the proclamation of the simple gospel of Jesus Christ, today they openly espouse a liberal theology. The history of these churches shows that the eroding of faith that occurred did not emanate from bad men or atheistic schemers. Rather, there occurred an almost imperceptible decline in the thrust of the gospel on the part of those who claimed to be the gospel's supporters. While their life style remained exemplary, somehow they lost touch with the Spirit of Christ and the Scriptures. An erosion of faith, once begun, often turns out to be irreversible.

None of us would like to see the Adventist Church travel down this road. Nor, if it should be nudged down this road, would we wish it to awaken too late to take remedial measures.

Is the Adventist Church doing anything to forestall possible tragedy? Yes. It is preparing carefully formulated statements on what it considers to be its fundamental beliefs. These statements will be presented to a large circle of church leaders and scholars, so that there may be wide input. After the input is pooled, these statements will be published in the church's papers, as well as in books.

Areas to be explored are those concerning

the church's positions that have been challenged. Some fall in the area of science and include topics such as a literal, seven-day Creation, a universal Flood, and the age of life on the earth. A clear definition here will enable teachers of science in our schools clearly to present to inquiring young minds the church's position.

Other areas that will receive attention are: the unity of the Bible, the unique mission of the remnant church, the nearness of the Advent, the doctrine of the sanctuary, the place and work of Ellen White, the historicist approach to prophetic interpretation, and standards of Christian living.

With the spelling out of what the church believes to be the basic tenets of faith, not as a creed but simply as the current majority understanding under the "Bible-and-the-Bible-alone" principle, administrators, church leaders, controlling boards, and leaders at all levels of the church will find it easier to evaluate persons already serving the church, and those hereafter appointed, as to their commitment to what is considered basic Adventism. Thus the church will be protected against the subtle influence of those who have become unclear and doubtful as to

God's self-revelation in His Word and in the counsels of the Holy Spirit.

No church has developed a system of higher education without finding itself nudged in the direction of change by those who advocate making the gospel more modern and science-oriented. Doubtless many, in doing this, have been motivated by an honest ambition to make the language of the faith more relevant, but at times it has turned out they have set in motion a movement that compromises the basic truths of Scripture.

In its concern to maintain its identity, the church must not assume the role of inquisitor. There must be dialog and counsel with the church's theologians, science teachers, school and university administrators, and well-trained laymen of the church. Although there must be nothing that resembles an inquisition, no effort to divide, hurt, or destroy those who may seem to have a slightly different orientation, those who lead the church must stand up and be counted, and guide the church into the unity of faith and practice that will be rewarded by the latter-rain experience.

The watchmen on the walls of Zion must constantly be watching, lest the church established by Jesus Christ cease to follow its Leader and begin to walk in the sparks of its own kindling. There is too much at stake. The coming King is at the door.

III. Some Reflections on Change and Continuity

by Fred Veltman

For our Sabbath meditation, let us read a Sabbath text, a few verses from Deuteronomy 5, where we find a second account of the giving of the law by the Lord

Fred Veltman, whose doctorate in New Testament is from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, teaches at Pacific Union College in California.

from Mt. Sinai. Verses 12 - 14a and 15 read as follows:

Observe the sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work . . . You shall remember that you

were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

You will remember that in the Exodus version of this event the people were asked to remember the Sabbath because it pointed to the creation of the world and the rest of God. In Deuteronomy, however, the people are told that the Sabbath is a reminder of their deliverance from Egypt's slavery. What concerns me tonight is not the source-critical question, important as that may be. I am interested in what these variations in the record may have to say to teachers gathered here this weekend to consider the problem of "Continuity and Change within the Adventist Church."

The people of Israel were able not only to live with but also to preserve two *differing* interpretations of their experience of and with their God. They were evidently more concerned with the covenant relationship between themselves and their God than with the particular formulation or codification of that relationship.

Here on the borders of Canaan, in one of his farewell speeches, looking from the vantage point of their recent past history forward to the new experience of the people soon to be established in their own land, Moses appears to be saying, "Don't forget the *new world* God has created for you out of the previous chaos of slavery." The creation and rest to which the Sabbath pointed was as meaningful in the context of their new existence as delivered slaves, as it had once been in the new world of Eden. This re-interpretation of the religious meaning of the Sabbath in the light of Israel's contemporary experience not only gave the Sabbath a relevance for the people, but also guaranteed the continuity of the Sabbath command and its important place in the religious life of the community.

This same kind of re-interpretation continues to take place in the ministry of the prophets to follow. And centuries later, when the full bloom of Judaism ripened into the fruit of Christianity, we find the writer of Hebrews once more re-interpreting the

meaning of the Sabbath for the Jewish-Christian community. The author in this case borrows from both Genesis and later accounts to provide the grounds for his new understanding that the Sabbath speaks to the

“The community must be not only permitted but also encouraged to continue its re-interpretation of its past for the sake of its present and its future.”

rest enjoyed by persons who fully trust in the merits of Christ for salvation.

In all of these accounts, the references to past experience are not made for the purpose of better understanding the *past*. Rather, the past is made to serve the interests of the present. In order for a community to exist it must have a shared past. But, in addition, its continuity can only be maintained as long as that past continues to speak to the needs of the present. So if responsible community leadership cannot permit a community to break from its past, neither can it afford to force a community to remain in its past. The community must be not only permitted but also encouraged to continue its re-interpretation of its past for the sake of its present and its future. Such a hermeneutical task is constantly being carried out on the individual and social levels of civilization. It is this constant re-interpretation that ensures the survival of any given community.

In this instance of the Sabbath command, the new interpretation was not diametrically opposed to what had been held in the past; if such had been the case, continuity would have been shattered. Rather, the new interpretation continued to speak to the fundamental concepts of creation and rest that were basic to the origin of the Sabbath. But, there *was* re-interpretation, and it helped to guarantee continuity.

Now we may turn our attention to our own situation. As a people we have been preaching the Advent message for over 130 years. Except for a few brave voices, the general

viewpoints on the Sabbath, sanctuary, investigative judgment, second coming, etc., remain largely the same, even to the extent of vocabulary, use of texts and illustrations. Let us honestly ask ourselves this question: Do they stir the church like they did a century ago? Do they speak to affluent, computerized, pagan, space-age society and third world groups as they did to agrarian Protestant America of the past?

And remember, it is not just the world out there that has changed; so has the church. It is much larger in size, more complex in the multiplicity of its tasks, more centralized in its organization, and the majority of its membership is found outside the North American continent. Even its theology and religion have undergone change, though such developments are only recognized unofficially.

We cannot, even if we would so desire, change the fact that people, their viewpoints, the questions they raise, their institutions, change. This has ever been so. A disturbing question does arise, however, and it is probably seriously affecting the sleep patterns of our church leadership. To what degree can such change go on, publicly recognized or not, without affecting the continuity of the church?

I am quite sure that if church leaders felt that some ecclesiastical dictum would calm the troubled seas, they would, wisely or not, rush to proclaim it. But they must know, as the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and other church bodies have discovered, that such dicta, rather than stopping change, destroy continuity. For in the eyes of many in the community, inflexibility among leaders is itself interpreted as the highest kind of heresy. It represents a rejection of the prophetic vision, a surrender to man's authority and power rather than commitment to God's power and sovereignty. And persons who, despite the charges of heresy, see themselves as faithful to the leadership of the Spirit, may either sever their membership from the church, or just absent themselves in spirit, in body, in finances, from the support of the church.

In my estimation, we, as a people, are not immune to such developments. It could be

that they have already begun among us. There does appear to be a disenchantment among us as a people, a loss of vision, a loss of momentum, and, on the other hand, a cry for change. For some, it is a desperate plea for change of any kind, an anxious concern for some indication that the church is alive and not dead or dying. They are not to be fooled by membership lists and baptism accounts, or even mission stories. They've been around too much, seen too much, heard too much.

Personally, I am not so pessimistic as to believe such a condition has already permeated the church. Still, there are those who strongly resist any changes of religious or theological viewpoints.

My fellow teachers, we today, as Adventists, have no guarantees of permanence as a people apart from faithfulness to God. And it would appear to me that faithfulness to God demands a dynamic, changing, involvement with God's sovereign rule in history, a sensitivity to our place and condition in the last quarter of the twentieth century, an openness to the ongoing revelation of God in our experience, in nature, in His Word.

This does not mean that interpreters of the Bible can speak with the authority of the prophets of Scripture; they must remain obedient to the authority of Scripture. But it does mean that the interpreter must seek new insights, and from man's experience and his study of nature as well as from Scripture. For if God is the author of all truth, we need not fear the investigation of truth.

Our Lord has promised us His Spirit to guide us. He speaks of Himself as "the way, the truth, the life." These descriptive terms are dynamic rather than static in the type of existence they point to. And so faithfulness to God's will—so it seems to me—runs diametrically counter to a dead or dying orthodoxy. The probability of a few good heresies in doctrine in the context of a passionate religious concern is not nearly so fearsome a future to avoid as is the possibility of a dead or dying orthodoxy propped up by religious and institutional "ho hum."

May I suggest in closing that, as Bible teachers, we stand, to use some Old Testament models, between the laity and the

priesthood—where we can offer a prophetic ministry. To the degree that my picture of the condition of the church is not to be dismissed as the ramblings of a constitutional pessimist, I hold that we, along with the leadership and the laity, are responsible for the condition of the church. We are the church even as they are.

Without claiming too much for ourselves, shouldn't we, as Bible teachers, take a stronger role in the continual development of church doctrine and theological viewpoint? Could we offer some possible re-interpretations of Scripture which would again strike a responding chord in the church and under the Holy Spirit bring the needed revival? Could we not provide some theological justification

for legitimate and responsible change which would at the same time foster continuity of the community?

Ellen White sought to encourage us with the words that we have nothing to fear for the future except as we forget God's leading and teaching in our past history. If this leading and teaching tell us anything, they speak of change and continuity, not only in the way of operating a church but in the religious self-consciousness of a community and in the interpretations of its faith. If change and continuity will be permitted to include these dimensions, then, I am confident, we have both a humbling and challenging future before us under the blessings of our Lord whom we are committed to serve.

IV. A Response from PUC

The following letter was circulated among participants at the annual conference of West Coast religion teachers, held in May 1977, in Angwin, California.

The Editors

To: DR. RICHARD HAMMILL, ELDER DUNCAN EVA, ELDER WILLIS HACKETT

RE: DENOMINATIONAL POSITION PAPERS ON INSPIRATION/REVELATION AND CREATION

Dear Brethren:

The statements on Inspiration/Revelation and Creation have received serious study by the Religion Department of Pacific Union College and we submit the following preliminary general response in the interest of a successful session together on Sunday, May 15. Once these fundamental issues are satisfactorily solved the way will be prepared for an intelligent and responsible evaluation of the specific doctrinal statements.

The following questions have been raised by the decision of the church leadership to "develop some more definitive statements"

on such topics as Inspiration/Revelation and Creation and by the procedure which is apparently being used to draw up such statements.

- 1) What problems are arising among the believers relative to the church's position on these two issues which are of greater significance than the problems arising over justification/sanctification and the sanctuary (for example) on which the Bible departments are not being asked for input?
- 2) On what grounds is it being argued that "more definitive statements" by the church would have the effect of solving rather than exacerbating such problems?
- 3) It can be shown from a study of church history that such descriptive extrapolations on church doctrines tend to lead the laity to depend upon the church as the authority for defining Christian doctrine rather than upon their personal study of Scripture as the authority for faith and practice. Would not such a tendency to lean upon the church's interpretation of Scripture militate against the historical Adventist position of elevating the Bible above the church?

Is not our entire evangelistic thrust geared to bringing the people to accept the authority of the Bible instead of that of their particular church?

- 4) How are such statements to be used by the church leadership? What authority will they carry, whether explicit or implicit? How will a teacher be viewed if he/she should find himself/herself unable to agree with such statements? Will teachers be asked to confess their faith in such statements before they are granted employment?
- 5) Why are the college teachers being asked for input on these particular questions? They were not involved in the discussion of proposals for changes in the church manual. They were not involved in the matter of the nature of Christ and the justification/sanctification issues which were discussed at Palmdale. Yet they are being asked for input on the two kinds of questions for which the General Conference has two research institutes particularly suited to provide such evaluation, the Biblical Research Institute and the Geo-Science Research Institute. Would not position papers produced and circulated by these two institutions

be adequate to meet the questions of those believers concerned over these issues?

- 6) The formulation of the statements is at present in its second (at least) revision. Some weeks ago we gave serious attention to the first revision and on Sunday we will be discussing the latest stage of the developing statement. Would you clarify for us the procedure being used in gathering, collating and correlating the responses to a statement which appears to be in a state of flux? How will its final form be established?
- 7) To which laity in the church are these statements to be directed? The vocabulary and direction of the content of these papers would indicate that the problems are not being raised by the "average" layman. The statement should carry the same level of sophistication as the nature of the question suggests. For example, the typical church member is not likely to divide the creation of the world into two phases, the primordial state and the "organized-life state."

Sincerely,
The Religion Department,
Pacific Union College

V. The West Coast Bible Teachers: A Statement of Concern

A covering letter accompanied the following statement by the religion faculties of the three west coast Seventh-day Adventist colleges. The letter was addressed to W. Duncan Eva, W. J. Hackett and Richard L. Hammill, and signed by the three departmental chairman, Walter F. Specht of Loma Linda University, John M. Staples of Pacific Union College and Gordon S. Balharrie of Walla Walla College. Copies were sent to Robert H. Pierson and Neal C. Wilson, of the General Conference, and to the presidents

**and academic deans of the three colleges.
The Editors**

A special meeting of Bible and Science teachers convened on Sunday morning, May 15, 1977, in connection with the West Coast Bible Teachers Conference held this year at Pacific Union College. The session was called at the request of Dr. Richard Hammill, who, along with Elders Duncan Eva and Willis Hackett, had asked that a special meeting

be arranged for the purpose of reviewing two doctrinal statements being developed by the leadership of the church, one having to do with the church's position on inspiration and revelation, and one concerned with the doctrine of creation.

The evident seriousness with which the religion faculties of Loma Linda University, Pacific Union College and Walla Walla College approached the discussion of such statements and their possible use makes it not only professionally advisable but also confessionally necessary that the response of these Bible department faculties to the presentation of the doctrinal statements be articulated

“Does the formulation of such statements harmonize with the historical Seventh-day Adventist commitment to a progressive understanding of truth?”

in writing. This intention to record the concern expressed only orally at the special meeting was under discussion unofficially during and immediately following the conference. There was some hesitancy to produce a written response because of the interest we shared that such action not be misunderstood as precipitant or provocative. With the appearance of Elder Hackett's editorial in the May 26 issue of the *Review and Herald* the recording of our response no longer remained a question to be discussed. It was now a duty to perform.

The statement of response which appears below has been composed through the cooperation of all three west coast schools and has been approved by all three faculties of religion as representative of the consensus which exists among them on the matter of these doctrinal statements. The statement is composed of three parts. The first two sections treat the general and specific concerns voiced during the special session on May 15. The third part attempts to concretize one of the constructive suggestions made at the conference which was supported by both teachers and General Conference personnel.

The religion faculties which met with Elders Eva, Hackett and Hammill at Pacific Union College on Sunday, May 15, 1977, appreciate the opportunity of free and open discussion of the proposed statements on *Inspiration and Revelation and Creation*. We express our gratitude to the three vice presidents of the General Conference for their manifest interest in the suggestions we might have relative to these doctrinal statements. We wish to assure our brethren from the General Conference that we share many of the same concerns for the future of the Adventist Church and its message that they have. We are wholeheartedly committed to the message, mission and unity of the church, and are gladly devoting our time, talents and life energies to it.

It is this dedication to the Seventh-day Adventist Church that motivates our response. It is because we wish to be constructive and supportive of church leadership as well as responsible and conscientious in the fulfillment of our duties as church members and Bible teachers that we question with all seriousness the advisability of producing such doctrinal statements. This grave concern over the nature, use and effect of such documents within the Adventist church community so occupied our attention during the special session that we were prevented from completing our review of the first paper (*Inspiration and Revelation*), the only paper discussed. The result was that the second paper was not even read and neither document was approved.

In order that the deep concerns expressed above not be misunderstood in terms of their importance and relevance for the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we think it would be helpful to articulate them more explicitly in the form of questions which for the purposes of clarity and understanding have been phrased rather pointedly. It is our hope and prayer that through this written expression of specific questions the dialogue among church leaders, whether organizational, institutional or ideological, over the message, mission and unity of the

church may not only continue but be enhanced.

- 1) Has not the Seventh-day Adventist Church historically held to the Protestant principle of the individual priesthood of the believer and its Scriptural corollary that each believer is to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by the teachings of the Bible?
- While such interpretations of biblical teachings as concisely stated in the baptismal vow serve to identify a community of faith, would not the extended official statements on church doctrines as are now being drawn up lead the believer to look to the church institution rather than to inspired revelation for his religious authority?
- 2) Does the formulation of such statements harmonize with the historic Seventh-day Adventist commitment to a progressive understanding of truth? Or, is there danger that we shall stifle the progressive spirit which has made the denomination what it is?
- 3) What guarantee is there that these statements will not assume a creedal function in the future? Does not the history of such statements and their use in other religious communions indicate that this could easily happen in the Adventist church?¹
- 4) What specific problems within the church justify the formulation of such statements? Is there a sizable contingent of members who are unclear over what inspiration has to say on these issues or who are being instructed erroneously on these subjects? Does this desire for such formulation and use of doctrinal statements reveal a basic distrust of the church's scholars, administrators and teachers on the part of the General Conference officers?²
- 5) Are the statements, when formulated and approved, ever to be used in an attempt to ascertain an individual's commitment to orthodox Adventism?³
- 6) As the church needs to re-examine doctrinal issues, should not such formulations be developed by a representative convocation, including church scholars

and administrators, and thereafter become part of the church's ongoing theological investigation?

- 7) Considering the present climate within the church, is there any danger that the effects of attempting to implement such statements as a test of commitment to orthodox Adventism will be more divisive than whatever heretical tendencies may currently exist among church members?

The religion teachers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, if we can judge by the comments made during the May 15 meeting of the west coast group, desire above all to be

“Is there any danger that the effects of attempting to implement such statements . . . will be more divisive than whatever heretical tendencies may currently exist among church members?”

constructive in this discussion over the developing position papers on the church doctrines. They take seriously their ordination to the gospel proclamation and are most ardent in their hope that they may be permitted to offer a redemptive ministry to the life of the church. In harmony with this commitment to present a team approach to the solution of the vexing problems facing the church leadership over the questions relative to the church doctrine, we propose the following concrete suggestion which was adumbrated at the May 15 session.

We would suggest that an association be formed of the Adventist Bible (or Religion) teachers consisting of three regional divisions. The western branch, composed of Loma Linda University, Pacific Union College and Walla Walla College is already functioning. The central regional grouping might

consist of the religion faculties of Andrews University, Southwestern Adventist College and Union College (perhaps also Canadian Union College). The eastern branch would include Atlantic Union College, Columbia Union College, Oakwood College and Southern Missionary College. Each division according to this arrangement would include a General Conference educational institution. The regional associations would meet once a year to deal with similar, related or identical issues and the conference papers would then be circulated throughout the national association. Once each year representatives from the sections would meet together with the General Conference personnel which had been in attendance at the various regional meetings. In this general session the work of the national association as conducted throughout the year within the divisions would be synthesized and the impact of the studies on the life and faith of the church could be reviewed in the context of informed discussion and prayer. The annual meetings of the professional societies to which we be-

long are hardly adequate for the type of serious work and dialogue necessary to treat successfully the problems facing the church, though we could take advantage of the wider representation usually in attendance at such meetings for handling association business matters.

While the suggestion above is only one model which might be considered,⁴ it does seek to take seriously the desire clearly expressed in our meeting that the administrators and theologians in the church need to meet together to discuss their common concerns. The unity and mutual understanding possible from such a fellowship would in our estimation be of inestimable value in advancing the work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to which we have dedicated our lives.

Respectfully submitted through
common Christian concern,
Division of Religion,
Loma Linda University
Religion Department, Pacific Union College
School of Theology, Walla Walla College

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A modern example of such a development was cited by Walter B. Shurden, the Baptist historian, in a paper presented at the American Society of Church History Convention (April 22-23, 1977, Louisville, Kentucky). In this report, which is to be published in the January 1978 issue of *Review and Expositor*, Shurden recalls how at the founding of the Southern Baptist church in 1845 the convention declared it would have no creed but the Bible. By 1925 the church felt it needed a confession of faith for use as a guide, not a creed. Shurden sadly affirms that the confession is now being used in the examination of Sunday School Board members, missionary aspirants and seminary teachers.

2. In the statement on academic freedom currently being reviewed by the Board of Higher Education of the General Conference, questions of orthodoxy are

to be settled by the local administration and a committee of peers.

3. The Board of Higher Education of the General Conference, according to its proposed statement on academic freedom, is evidently satisfied to evaluate the orthodoxy of teachers on the basis of the statement of "Fundamental Beliefs" as published in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*.

4. Perhaps the implementation of some such program which makes possible the meeting of minds between the administrators and scholars of the church would also fulfill one of the basic requirements necessary for academic freedom to exist in religious institutions of higher education. Cf. The Board of Higher Education statement on "Academic Freedom in Seventh-day Adventist Colleges and Universities in North America," pp. 2,3.

VI. Adventism's Historic Witness Against Creeds

by William Wright

“When God’s Word is studied, comprehended, and obeyed, a bright light will be reflected to the world; new truths, received and acted upon, will bind us in strong bonds to Jesus. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union; and all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own ideas must not control our efforts. Man is fallible, but God’s Word is infallible. Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, ‘It is written.’ Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, The Bible our rule of faith and discipline.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages, Book 1*, p. 416.

Ellen White’s clear declaration that the Bible must be our only creed, together with the historic Adventist witness against creeds, has made our church justifiably reluctant to legislate doctrine. Today, however, with some church leaders feeling it necessary to make a militant effort to preserve the landmarks of our faith, the question of creeds has arisen anew.

Two doctrinal statements, one on creation and the age of life on the earth, the other on the doctrine of inspiration and revelation, are currently being considered by our church. The process moves forward at two levels: first, the discussion about whether adopting such statements is the best way to preserve the landmarks; second, the effort to perfect the content of the statements themselves.

This article deals with the former problem,

William Wright is a pseudonym for a Seventh-day Adventist historian.

whether formal statements of a creedal nature (which is what these statements, if adopted, would amount to) are good and safe weapons with which to defend the faith. Although the article makes use of history, it is really a position paper. I here argue against the *adoption* of the proposed statements. This is a question of policy, not of doctrine. Hopefully, this article can provide evidence and arguments which those involved in these decisions and their consequences will want to weigh.

We must, of course, start with a definition of a “creed.” At its simplest level, a creed is any statement of belief. But here we are obviously concerned with *official* doctrinal statements promulgated by churches. The meaning of the word “creed” cannot be captured by any simple dictionary definition. It is a term overlaid with centuries of historical development and ecclesiastical controversy. Still, the semantic underbrush need not prevent our seeing the forest.

A first glance at our *Church Manual* might tempt us to throw up our hands. It contains at least three sets of statements which might be considered “creedal.” There are the “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” the “Doctrinal Instruction for Baptismal Candidates,” and the “Baptismal Vow.”¹ Does this mean we have already drifted from our historic position and the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy in this area? At least one has to admit that the trend has not been toward greater strictness in our effort to maintain our historic witness against creeds.

Still, there are significant differences between what we have done thus far, and what we are now in danger of doing.

Although these *Church Manual* statements

are “official” declarations on doctrine, they are all concise and brief, and are given either specific, limited functions, or very loose, ambiguous functions. For instance, when one looks at the reasons for which church members may be disfellowshipped, one finds that “denial of faith” in the “cardinal doctrines” of the church, or teaching doctrines contrary to the same, are grounds for dismissing members from fellowship. Still, nowhere are the “cardinal doctrines of the church” officially equated with the summary of the “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists” in the form in which it appears in the *Manual*. That may be intended, but the ambiguity is significant—it is a logical outgrowth of our historic witness.

Another important factor which distinguishes our present doctrinal formulas from the type of creed against which Ellen White and our pioneers protested is that we have never formed creeds to settle controversy or denounce heresy within the church. Indeed, L. E. Froom observes that variant opinions on doctrinal questions were the very reason why, for long periods of time, statements of fundamental belief were omitted from our annual yearbooks.²

Adventist statements of belief have always expressed the broad, general consensus of the church. They have, unlike many creeds, emerged in periods of calm and brotherly agreement, not in periods of suspicion and crisis. This again is a monument to the influence of the Spirit of Prophecy within our church and to the power of our historic position.

There is, of course, no way of knowing whether our pioneers would approve the statements of faith we have already adopted. But, I am fairly certain that the statements currently under consideration would alarm them.

Why? The statements on creation and revelation are much longer and more detailed than any we have previously adopted on any given doctrinal question. They do not emerge out of the broad consensus of the church, but as a result of debate at high levels of theological, scientific and administrative leadership. They employ technical terms and phraseology about which many of us know

little or nothing. They will, if enacted, represent the first attempt by our church to settle significant differences of opinion within the church through creedal enactments. Finally, they will represent the first use of creedal formulas to guard any passage beside the fundamental one—the door to church membership through baptism.

It has been repeatedly suggested that prospective teachers in our institutions should be confronted with such statements and asked whether they agree with them. The statements are also designed to help administrators “evaluate” those currently employed, without, as it is said, undertaking a witch hunt or instituting an inquisition. It has also been discussed at the highest levels whether it would be appropriate to have people sign such statements and whether individuals would be willing to sign them. I do not claim that such a use was recommended or urged, merely that it was considered and discussed. My guess is that no one would have dared even raise such a question in the days of the pioneers. In all these ways these new statements represent a significant departure from the past.

The Adventist witness against creeds goes back to William Miller. F. D. Nichol notes that Miller was not overwhelmed by the controversy which arose early in the Advent Movement.³ Nichol goes on to point out Miller’s “keen insight into human nature and his knowledge of church history.” Miller knew that in “past ages, when church authority was strong, controversy could sometimes be suppressed and a false appearance of calm be made to prevail. He neither possessed nor desired such authority,” Nichol tells us.

Miller’s own words are then quoted:

There is no sect or church under the whole heaven, where men enjoy religious freedom or liberty, but there will be various opinions. And our great men, leaders, and religious demagogues have long since discovered [this], and therefore come creeds, bishops and popes. We must then, either let our brethren have the freedom of

thought, opinion and speech, or we must resort to creeds and formulas, bishops and popes. . . . I see no other alternative.⁴

Millerites had been cast out of their former churches, not because they were proven wrong from the Bible, but because their beliefs were not in harmony with church creeds. But, unfortunately, the majority of the Millerites themselves, at the Albany Conference in 1845, drew a circle of narrow orthodoxy around their beliefs, excluding those who believed in the seventh-day Sabbath, the visions of Ellen White, and the ordinance of footwashing. That is how Sabbathkeeping Adventists acquired their original antipathy to creeds, an antipathy which echoes down to the present day.

It is little wonder Ellen White later wrote that the “creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils” should not be regarded as evidence for or against “any point of religious faith.”⁵

Still, the tension between this distrust of creeds and the need for some agreed-upon definition of Adventist doctrine became apparent early. At the organization of the Michigan Conference in 1861, a simple “church covenant” was proposed declaring that those who signed it associated them-

“ ‘We must, then, either let our brethren have the freedom of thought, opinion and speech, or we must resort to creeds and formulas, bishops and popes . . . I see no other alternative.’ ” —William Miller

selves together as a church, took the name Seventh-day Adventist, and covenanted to “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ.”

J. N. Loughborough, speaking with the majority, favored the covenant, and did not feel that it meant that Adventists were “patterning after the other churches in an unwarrantable sense.” Loughborough, nevertheless, took the occasion to voice his trenchant opposition to creeds:

The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such.⁶

About the same time, Loughborough supplied the *Review* with a long list of anti-creedal quotations from various religious figures and ecclesiastical manuals. In one of the many statements, the Puritan divine Richard Baxter noted two things which, down through the ages, have “set the church on fire.”

First, enlarging our creed, and making more fundamentals than God made; and second, composing, and so *imposing*, our creeds and confessions in our own words and phrases.⁷

A landmark in the development of Adventist statements of faith was reached in 1872 when Uriah Smith anonymously authored a pamphlet titled *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists*. Smith’s introductory remarks are worth quoting quite fully:

In presenting to the public this synopsis of our faith, we wish to have it distinctly understood that we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible. We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people, nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them. We often find it necessary to meet inquiries on this subject, and sometimes to correct false statements circulated against us, and to remove erroneous impressions which have obtained with those who have not had an opportunity to become acquainted with our faith and practice. Our only object is to meet this necessity.

As Seventh-day Adventists we desire simply that our position shall be understood; and we are the more solicitous for

this because there are many who call themselves Adventists who hold views with which we can have no sympathy, some of which, we think, are subversive of the plainest and most important principles set forth in the word of God.⁸

As strong as Smith's disclaimers were, the argument still had a certain ambivalence to it. He did, in fact, intend to secure a measure of uniformity among Adventists through his little pamphlet, at least he hoped to discredit the claims of some who said they were Adventists and yet held views with which Adventists had no sympathy. Still, his statement was an exercise in moral suasion rather than an effort on the part of the church to force the issue through "official" declaration and subsequent enforcement of the statement.

It is interesting to observe that Smith's pamphlet formed the basis for most of the subsequent statements of Adventist belief, and echoes of his language may be found in our current statement. Compare, for instance, these statements on Scripture:

Uriah Smith, 1872:

That the Holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testaments, were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of his will to man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Church Manual, 1976:

That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament were given by inspiration of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of His will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice. (2 Tim. 3:15-17.)

As time went on, Adventists continued to reflect on the consequences of creeds. In 1874, Uriah Smith listed what he saw as the source of confusion and schism within Protestantism. Three great errors were at fault, he declared.

1. A wrong principle of interpretation.
2. An effort to bring the Bible to support what we have pre-determined to believe.
3. Reforming in part, and then barring the way to all further progress by a human creed.

This last is perhaps the worst error of all, for it is a step backward toward the spiritual tyranny of Rome.⁹

But, someone may argue, is it necessary to rehash our fundamental beliefs in every generation, to study and discuss without ever being able to freeze anything into an enforceable standard of doctrine? Don't we have some "nonnegotiable" beliefs? The questions are misleading in the present context. Of course, there are some irreducible fundamentals in Adventism, but the issues confronting the church today on the subjects of the age of life on the earth and on the nature of revelation and inspiration have *not* been discussed and debated in each generation. Our pioneers were aware of some problems along these lines, but we are faced with a mass of new discoveries in the earth sciences, history and archeology. Most laymen have little awareness of, nor have they had opportunity to ponder, the implications of the technical language in which the proposed creedal statements are phrased. But the larger question remains: whether any doctrine, however nonnegotiable and irreducible, ought to be defended and enforced through the decisions of ecclesiastical councils.

The possibilities for abuse in the enforcement of these statements are enormous. How will they really be used to "evaluate" present and prospective employees of the church? If one administrator uses them fairly, can we be sure another administrator will not use them in a cruel or capricious manner? In 1879, the *Review* reprinted an article which insisted on the right of every man accused of teaching false doctrines to appeal to the Scripture, and be tried by the Scripture; and on the duty of every church which recognizes the Scripture as the only final authority in matters of religious doctrine to test all teaching by Scripture, and be always ready to defend its historic faith from Scripture, and abandon whatever in that faith it cannot so defend.¹⁰

Can we really maintain this noble position once we have asked administrators to evaluate their employees by our creedal statements? Can we really maintain this position when these creedal statements declare positions on subjects about which the Scripture is totally silent? One draft of the statement on creation, for instance, said that the fossil record of past life was largely the product of the

deluge. That, however, is obviously a *scientific* statement, not a doctrinal or theological one. The Bible does not concern itself with the problem of fossils. Should the church be asserting itself on scientific questions with which the Bible does not deal?

Another milestone on the path toward our present position was passed in 1883. The year before, the General Conference had recommended that a committee prepare a church manual. In a gesture of genuine good faith and openness, the proposed manual, containing some 30,000 words, was published serially for discussion and criticism in eighteen *Review and Herald* articles, from June 5 to October 9, 1883. The proposed manual declared that “it should never be regarded as a cast-iron creed to be enforced in all its minor details upon members of the S. D. Adventist church;”¹¹ even so, the manual idea was defeated at the 1883 General Conference session.

The committee explained why the church turned away from the proposed manual:

It is the unanimous judgment of the committee, that it would not be advisable to have a Church Manual. We consider it unnecessary because we have already surmounted the greatest difficulties connected with church organization without one; and perfect harmony exists among us on this subject. It would seem to many like a step toward the formation of a creed, or a discipline, other than the Bible, something we have always been opposed to as a denomination. If we had one, we fear many, especially those commencing to preach, would study it to obtain guidance in religious matters, rather than to seek for it in the Bible, and from the leadings of the Spirit of God, which would tend to their hindrance in genuine religious experience and in knowledge of the mind of the Spirit. It was in taking similar steps that other bodies of Christians first began to lose their simplicity and become formal and spiritually lifeless. Why should we imitate them? The committee feel, in short, that our tendency should be in the direction of

simplicity and close conformity to the Bible, rather than in elaborately defining every point in church management and church ordinances.¹²

Late in the 1880s Adventists for the first time read *Review* articles mildly favorable to creeds. L. A. Smith, son of Uriah Smith, wrote on the “Value of a ‘Creed,’ ” but argued not so much for a formal official creed as against the idea that it is immaterial what a person believes so long as he agrees on a few simple basics of Christianity. “If there is anything which Scripture plainly teaches,” Smith declared, “it is the importance of possessing a clear and definite faith, or summary of religious beliefs; in short, a ‘creed’ in harmony with the truths God’s word has revealed.”¹³ Smith did not stress that this had to be something officially enacted by the church—that was not the point at issue in this article.

A year later the younger Smith returned to the same theme, pointing out that in actuality, every person has a creed: “His creed is simply his belief.”¹⁴ Obviously, Smith was not using the same definition of “creed” that we are using in this article.

In this atmosphere of renewed interest in creeds, the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook of 1889 carried a statement of the Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists, offered as an informational statement of consensus. (The statement cropped up again in the Yearbook of 1905 and from 1907 to 1914.)

An outburst of Adventist comment on creeds occurred in early 1890, sparked, apparently, by the bitter and well-publicized struggle then in progress over the revision of the Presbyterian creed.¹⁵

The discussion began with a reprint in the *Review* of an article by a non-Adventist clergyman, Rev. J. M. Manning. Manning defended the use of creeds. If positive statements of Christian doctrine are neglected, Manning argued, the “descent to religious indifference” is swift—the very opposite of the argument which was advanced in 1883 when the General Conference rejected the proposed church manual.

Manning continued:

Such creeds are a safeguard against er-

ror. Having learned them in early childhood, and knowing that they contain the substance of the gospel, we are not deceived by new forms of error constantly springing up around us As good businessmen have their familiar tests by which to detect adulterations and counterfeits, so we have in a Christian creed, thoroughly learned and faithfully applied, a ready test by which we may distinguish all false gospels from the true. We know what human

“But the larger question remains: whether any doctrine, however non-negotiable and irreducible, ought to be defended and enforced through the decisions of ecclesiastical councils.”

doctrines to accept and what ones to reject. We can tell the movements in society about us which are opposed to Christ, and those which are a development of his kingdom.

It is needful to our self-respect that we hold some positive religious belief. Indecision makes a man weak, suspicious, untrustworthy Our use of that colloquial phrase, “on the fence,” shows how we forfeit all title to respect by being without clear and pronounced beliefs.¹⁶

Manning went on to argue how important a creed is for purposes of instruction. It “stimulates the mind to hold a positive faith; to stand pledged to something which we feel bound to defend, which obliges us to search the Scripture, for the universal acceptance of which we toil and pray.” Again, the argument directly opposes the view taken by the General Conference. While the General Conference session saw creeds as a diversion from Scripture, Reverend Manning believed they would lead to a searching of Scripture.

The very next week the *Review* carried a markedly different opinion on creeds,

penned by W. A. Blakely, editor of the *American State Papers* and a close associate of Adventist religious liberty workers. Blakely opened with a definition: “Creeds and confessions of faith are the designations given to the authorized or official expressions of the Church at large, or of some denomination or sect of the Church.”¹⁷

Blakely pointed out that creeds naturally spring out of theological arguments and controversies within the church, since there is a “natural inclination of humanity to desire to prevail in an argument,” especially where “one party considers that their views are the all-important thing, and at the same time that the views of the other party are extremely dangerous, and ought, by all means, to be suppressed.”

Then Blakely discussed the various objections to creeds. First, he pointed out that just because the views expressed in the creed are voted by the majority of some council, that does not necessarily make the view correct. “Is the truth,” Blakely asked, “to be determined by the *votes* of a majority in a conference, council or synod, especially when a percentage, sometimes large and sometimes small, do not fully understand the subject under consideration . . . ?”

Next, Blakely observed that the tendency of creeds “has invariably been to embitter the controversy, to multiply sects, to suggest and foster intolerance, and to transform persons who are naturally amiable, into acrimonious and malevolent persecutors.” Blakely admitted that this language might be strong, but insisted that it was nevertheless true.

Waxing Jeffersonian in eloquence, Blakely asserted that

just as soon as freedom of thought is hindered, just so soon and to just that extent progress and development are checked. The mind of man is the greatest and most wonderful creation of God. It was created for use And whenever any council, synod, conference, presbytery, or ecclesiastical power whatever dictates as to what a person shall believe, or what he shall not believe, that body is assuming prerogatives possessed by no earthly power.

For my own part, it is not because I trust the power of the human mind that I distrust creeds, but, quite to the contrary, that I am skeptical of the ability of uninspired minds to improve on the work of inspiration or to settle controversies which inspiration does not try to settle.

We come, now, to the genesis of our current statement of fundamental belief. In 1930, the African Division presented a request that a statement of Adventist beliefs be restored to the Yearbook, from which it had been absent since 1914.¹⁸ Division leaders wanted something they could present to government officials in countries in which Adventist missionaries sought to work. Thus our current statement grew out of a need to inform outsiders about our beliefs.

In response to this request, the General Conference Committee appointed a group to prepare such a statement for the Yearbook. It was actually, however, Elder F. M. Wilcox who drafted the statement, which was published in the 1931 Yearbook.¹⁹ No special authorizing action authorized the specific wording of the statement, nor was there any requirement that the statement be submitted to any further committees for approval. By common consent, it went into the 1931 Yearbook. The process was simple and noncontroversial because the statement was a general statement of a broad consensus directed at outsiders. It was not a razor designed to cut a fine line between orthodox and heterodox believers.

A *Church Manual* became a reality the following year, and it included a “suggested” outline for examination of baptismal candidates. In 1941 an Autumn Council approved a Summary of Fundamental Beliefs, and, in 1946, the General Conference assumed jurisdiction over the statement when it declared that it could no longer be changed except at a General Conference session.²⁰ Step by step, Adventist statements of belief have become ever more formal, ever more official.

Adventist experience with creeds has been so limited that it may be useful to go outside our own denomination for further evidence concerning their effect. I recently read

Harold Lindsell’s militant new book, *The Battle for the Bible*.²¹ Nothing could illustrate more clearly the dangers of counting as an ally everyone who contends (as Lindsell does in this book) for a “high view” of Scripture.

For our purposes here, the most instructive chapter is Lindsell’s attack on Fuller Theological Seminary and its alleged drift toward liberalism. Fuller has replied to Lindsell in a special issue of its alumni journal, *Theology, News and Notes*. From this exchange emerges a tale from which Adventists might indeed profit.

Lindsell criticizes the seminary for changing its statement of faith, which formerly declared that the Bible was without error “in the whole or in the part.” In Fuller’s reply, William LaSor, an Old Testament professor, deftly points out the inadequacy of that formulation by citing the very obvious errors which Scripture teaches if taken only “in the part,” that is, apart from the context of the entire Scripture: the lies of Satan, for example.

The point here is that Fuller Seminary got itself into difficulty by adopting an explicit statement of faith. It is instructive to notice the circumstances under which the original statement of faith was formed. Fuller had a professor, Bela Vasady, who was somewhat

“No matter how carefully some may handle such a tool, there are always those who will use it to coerce the conscience and impugn the motives and beliefs of their fellow church members.”

more liberal than his colleagues and whose participation in the World Council of Churches also provoked suspicion. Indeed, Vasady’s affiliation with the World Council so disgusted many of the financial supporters of Charles Fuller’s radio program, “The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour,” that Fuller finally appealed to the seminary to get rid of Vasady.

How was Vasady gotten rid of? By drafting a statement of faith which he could not and would not sign. The ploy worked, but it left a number of far more conservative professors with a dilemma because they had reservations about the new creed which, to meet the crisis, had been gotten up in such haste.

When the statement of faith finally was revised to accord better with the majority position, Fuller Seminary was left vulnerable to attacks like those of Lindsell, who took the opportunity to accuse it of a drift toward liberalism.

The episode points up the hazard that creeds are almost impossible to change without embarrassment and acrimony. Any changes are likely to unleash on the creed-revisors charges of having abandoned the faith of the fathers.

As we consider whether to adopt or reject the proposed statements on creation and revelation, a number of questions need to be answered. Are these statements really expressions of the nonnegotiable fundamentals of our faith?²² Or are they, on the other hand, merely the church's "current" understanding of its beliefs, subject to continued examination, discussion and reformulation? When one asks why the statements are needed, one gets the former answer: We have to defend the nonnegotiables. When one questions the credal nature of the statements, one gets the latter answer: These are not creeds because they are not to be cast in cement and declared the church's position for all time. But if they are nonnegotiable fundamentals, why not cast them in cement? The question remains: in what sense and by what criteria are these statements not creeds? And if they are creeds, how can they escape Ellen White's condemnation?

Of course, one may say, Yes, perhaps there is some danger in our enacting credal statements, but it's just the price we have to pay for the far greater value of preventing the church's loss of its faith. But is this really the only way to preserve the landmarks? Has it come to the place where with all the administrative talent, theological expertise, and Divine guidance with which the church is blessed it can think of no better way to defend the faith?

Another question. Suppose an administrator decides someone on his staff does not measure up to the test imposed by these statements? Then what? Does this person lose his chance for tenure or promotion? Is he to be fired? Does he go on trial? Before whom?

Creeds are tools. They may be sharp or blunt. The ones we are fashioning are particularly sharp. If we are to trust such sharp tools to human beings, we deserve to know who will be handling them and under what guidelines and protections. Will they be handled with the care, patience, training and concern of a surgeon or with the crude dispatch of a hooded executioner?

We should now summarize the various elements of the historic Adventist witness against creeds, along with some objections to creeds which grow out of our own study of the subject.

1) There is a tendency for the more specific doctrinal statement to seize interpretive control of the less specific. Thus when a credal statement attempts to define a doctrine more precisely than inspiration does, the creed becomes the authorized interpreter of Scripture rather than Scripture standing alone as its own interpreter. In trying to defend Scripture against the "opinions of learned men" and the "deductions of science," we need to do better than to substitute "the creeds and decisions of ecclesiastical councils." Not one of these, Ellen White says, should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith.²³

2) As the General Conference of 1883 pointed out, once a creed is promulgated, people begin to look to it to obtain guidance in religious matters. Bible study and the leadings of the Spirit are neglected, and the church becomes formal and spiritually lifeless. "The selfsame principle which was maintained by Rome," Ellen White writes, "prevents multitudes in Protestant churches from searching the Bible for themselves. They are taught to accept its teachings *as interpreted by the church*; and there are thousands who dare receive nothing, however plainly revealed in Scripture, that is

contrary to their creed or the established teaching of their church.”²⁴

3) As Blakely pointed out in the *Review* in 1890, creeds increase controversy, polarization and schism within a church rather than lessening it. There is potential for devisiveness not only in the content of the creed but also in the whole question of whether the creed should be adopted and how it should be used.

4) Truth cannot be determined by majority vote. Often a greater or lesser number of the majority are not even aware of what the issues are, but since creed-making involves official church actions invariably involving political and personal power relationships, creed-formation can easily be corrupted by personal or political ambitions.

5) Once a creed is enacted, any attempt to

change it will unleash charges of laxness and heresy on the very ones who are only attempting to safeguard the inspired writings. On the other hand, if the change is toward greater strictness and definition, similar charges of authoritarianism and narrowness are brought forward. This will be a greater hazard in direct proportion to the specificity of the creedal statement involved.

6) The enactment of a precise and detailed creed places a sharp tool in the hands of those in power. No matter how carefully some may handle such a tool, there are always those who will use it to coerce the conscience and impugn the motives and beliefs of their fellow church members.

For all these reasons, our church should seek other ways of defending and preserving the landmarks of our faith.

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18. Robert W. Olson and Bert Haloviak, “Who Decides What Adventists Believe?” (mimeographed, Washington D.C., 1977), p. 13. For this and a number of other items in this paper I was led to the sources by this excellent collection of documents on this subject brought together by these two men.
19. L. E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, p. 414.
20. Olson and Haloviak, “Who Decides What Adventists Believe?” pp. 16-23.
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VII. The Missouri Synod and the Southern Baptists: Lessons from Recent History

by Wayne Judd

The present effort by Seventh-day Adventist church administrators to develop official statements of doctrinal belief is not unprecedented in recent Protestant history. Nor is the near unanimous rejection of this trend by Seventh-day Adventist scholars a unique response. Few Adventists who read are unaware of the crisis of authority in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, a church now tragically split into two organizations.¹ Not so widely publicized is the creedal controversy within the largest denomination in the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention.

Three General Conference vice-presidents, W. Duncan Eva, W. J. Hackett and Richard Hammill, have been campaigning on Seventh-day Adventist college campuses for approval of two doctrinal statements, as a preliminary to formal adoption of these statements at Annual Council this fall. Formally approved statements are to be used, as Hackett has written, to "evaluate persons already serving the church, and those hereafter appointed, as to their commitment to what is considered basic Adventism."²

In what follows, I will review crises of authority that have affected the Missouri Synod and the Southern Baptist Convention. My summary is based largely on two papers read at the April 1977 convention of the American Society of Church History, in Louisville, Kentucky.³ The premise is that the information here presented has instructive relevance for our own situation.

Ironically, the kind of crisis that gave life to

the Missouri Synod in 1847 brought about a schism 130 years later. This crisis involved both administrative and biblical authority.⁴

In 1839, under the leadership of Martin Stephan, 600 Saxon Germans arrived in America to settle in St. Louis. Stephan outlined a hierarchical polity in which he would be the "first clergyman," or bishop. He secured a written Declaration of Submission from his followers, a loyalty that applied absolutely both to civil and religious affairs. Only a few months later, however, the Saxons disfellowshipped their first minister for having had sexual relations with three young women. Now it was necessary to redefine the meaning of church and authority, a task performed in 1841 by C. F. W. Walther, who located authority in Scripture and Sacrament rather than in persons.

In its Constitution (1847), the recovered Synod recognized the "Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice." The Constitution further declared that the Synod could not coerce individual congregations, but rather should serve as an advisory body, always operating in accordance with the Word of God. The bibliocentricity of the Constitution is revealed in Article II, "All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God." These articles have never been altered.

In 1920 Franz Pieper, Missouri Synod dogmatician, wrote:

Men have derided synods which have only advisory power. They have thought that nothing but 'confusion' and 'disorder' would have to result if synods were not vested with authority to enact ordinances binding the conscience in matters not regulated by God's word. This fear is groundless, as can be seen from the history of those Lutheran synods of

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America which have left consciences entirely unfettered in regard to synodical resolutions. We so-called Missourians have perhaps, as far as peace and order is concerned, experienced the most peaceful time, comparatively speaking, which the Church has ever en-

“What history makes abundantly clear . . . is that omitting offensive terms such as ‘creed’ and ‘infallibility’ provides little assurance that the intent of ‘carefully formulated statements’ will do anything but devastate unity and truth.”

joyed. We can truthfully say that government of the Church solely by God’s Word has stood the test of nearly a century among us. Of course, the flesh of Christians has sought to create disorder also among us. But God’s Word has proved its ability to rule and control everything.

But the stage for crisis was being set. In 1932 a Missouri convention resolved:

Since the Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical and secular matters.

In 1959 the Synod resolved that all confessional statements adopted by the Synod be imposed on pastors, teachers and professors of the church. This resolution, however, was declared unconstitutional three years later.

With the election of Dr. J. A. O. Preus as president of the Missouri Synod in 1969, the final conflict began. The 1971 Milwaukee convention adopted a resolution to speak more “authoritatively” to modern theological issues. Since the Lutheran conservatives’ concern was largely with critical methods applied to Scripture by Synod scholars, they needed a binding doctrinal statement to apply to these scholars. Such a statement could not easily be harmonized with Article II, which called for “all matters of doctrine and conscience” to be decided by the Bible. However, the 1971 conven-

tion skillfully applied another portion of Article II, “All other matters shall be decided by majority vote,” to an implied need for “restatement of doctrine with reference to contemporary issues.” The convention declared: “Be it *Resolved* that the Synod reaffirm the desirability of the formulation of doctrinal statements which clearly set forth the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.”

This resolution carried by a slim majority. However, since the resolution also stated that such doctrinal statements were subordinate to the Confessions, seminary teachers refused to be judged by them.

Two years later in New Orleans, the death knell struck when the 1973 convention voted by a fifty-five percent majority to require “formulation and adoption of synodical doctrinal statements,” and to declare the majority position of faculty at the Synod Seminary to be in violation of Article II of the Constitution. Twice during the convention the forty-five percent minority interrupted the proceedings to file written dissent.⁵

Jungkuntz said in his paper that what followed the New Orleans convention was “anticlimatic”—by the decision made there the church’s eventual split was assured. Already the church’s Concordia Seminary had seen the loss of the many students and faculty who in 1974 had formed the Concordia Seminary in Exile (Seminex). In 1976, largely over a disagreement as to whether Seminex graduates should be ordained, 150 congregations formally organized the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Church. The tragic schism had occurred.

Not so dramatic, but certainly as significant, is the ongoing crisis of authority in the Southern Baptist Convention. The issue focuses primarily on the freedom of Bible scholars to apply the historical-critical method of investigation, as well as on the related problem of the universal priesthood.

This conservative church has lived with the discomfort of constricting administrative attitudes since the early 1960s, when the “Elliott Controversy” challenged Southern Baptist unity. In July 1961, Ralph Elliott, professor of Old Testament at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, published his book *Message of Genesis*.

With Elliott's interpretation of Genesis 1-11 as theology rather than history, Elliott, Midwestern Seminary, and the Sunday School Board were immediately under attack. Responding to the Elliott Controversy, the June, 1962, convention of Southern Baptists in San Francisco unanimously adopted the statement that "the messengers to this convention, by standing vote, reaffirm their faith in the *entire* Bible as the authoritative, authentic, infallible Word of God." The convention further resolved to deal with teachers whose views threatened the church's "historic position." In October, Ralph Elliott, who would not agree not to seek another publisher when his book was not reprinted, was fired.

The 1962 convention also determined that a confessional statement similar to one that had existed since 1925 should be presented to the 1963 convention in Kansas City. This confession, which was in fact adopted in 1963, was entitled "The Baptist Faith and Message" (and came to be called "The Kansas City Confession"). The preface to this confession emphasized that it would be used only as a guide, not as a creed.

The theological controversies continued, and the 1969 convention in New Orleans presented a motion calling for signed statements of belief by all writers, as well as annual signed statements by seminary professors. The motion did not carry, but a few months later the first volume of *The Broadman Bible Commentary* alarmed conservative critics once again. In 1970 the Southern Baptist Convention asked that this volume, in which author Henton G. Davies applied the historical-critical method to Genesis, be withdrawn from further distribution by its publishers. At first it appeared that Davies himself might be involved in the re-writing, but in 1971, the Convention voted to dismiss him as author.⁶

When the Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1845, its central belief was, "We have constructed for our basis no new creed, acting in this matter upon a Baptist aversion for all creeds but the Bible." The 1963 revision of the 1925 confession of faith was designed to inform the churches and "serve as guidelines to the various agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention." The term "creed" was carefully avoided, since it might be used to "hamper freedom of thought or investigation." Shurden sadly reported, however, that the 1963 statement "has become a criterion of orthodoxy and a code-word for doctrinal purity" in the Southern Baptist Convention. He cited examples: The Foreign Mission Board has adopted the 1963 confession as a basis for examination of missionary candidates. The Sunday School Board has chosen the confession to measure doctrinal orthodoxy. In 1969, President W. A. Criswell asserted that those who did not believe the 1925 and 1963 confessions were not Baptists and should "join another denomination." In 1970 the Sunday School Board reported that new Board employees would be required to sign the confession.

Ironically, the General Conference administrators who have been promoting "carefully formulated statements" are aware of much of the information presented in this summary. Indeed, they say it is their awareness of trends toward "liberalism" in these other churches that goads them on in their confessional pursuit. What history makes abundantly clear, however, is that omitting offensive terms such as "creed" and "infallibility" provides little assurance that the intent and function of "carefully formulated statements" will do anything but devastate unity and truth in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

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2. W. J. Hackett, *Review and Herald* guest editorial, "Preserve the Landmarks," May 26, 1977, p. 2.

3. Richard Jungkuntz, "The Crisis of Authority in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," and Walter B. Shurden, "The Problem of Authority in the Southern Baptist Convention." These papers will be published in the January 1978 issue of *Review and Expositor*.

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6. Shurden suggested that the plight of the Southern Baptist scholar is not "publish or perish" but "publish and perish."

Letters from Readers

To the Editors: About a dozen years ago, I left the Adventist denomination because of what I considered to be irreparable deficiencies in its structure and theology. The church was irrelevant — its obsession with a hypothetical future world seemed out of sync with the demands of a substantial present; it was intellectually vacuous — Frank Marsh was obliged to assure us that man was formed from “without doubt, a damp lump of the very finest earth”; and it was inconsistent — the Protestant tradition of the “Priesthood of the Believer” was outwardly affirmed while the General Conference exhibited the contrary manifestation of having a death grip on Truth.

I do not know whether I could ever become an Adventist again, but (in reply to Alvin Kwiram’s “Can Intellectuals Be at Home in the Church?” Vol. 8, No. 1) I believe that the Forum represents the only avenue through which Adventism might attract the intellectual. However, the fact that the majority of Adventists reject intellectual confrontation creates a formidable problem. What I anticipate is that any reform significant enough to have intellectual appeal is likely to alienate the nonintellectual, and it seems likely that the General Conference will want to remain sensitive to the needs of the majority. The question that presses: to what degree can the Forum extend its practice of brinkmanship without precipitating schism?

Co-editor Scriven’s distinction between “working within a tradition and coming at it from the outside” has a nice ring to it, but I doubt that it can work at the practical level, and question whether it is even desirable.

The hypothetical Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith, when translated into their real counterparts are not usually as easy to distinguish as they are in the Scriven scenario, a point which Scriven seems willing to concede. Furthermore, the criticism of Mr. Smith that he is *outside* the church is, fundamentally, an *ad hominem* attack. It suggests that no matter how valid Mr. Smith’s criticism may be, they are somehow tainted or suspect because his psychological locus is not where the church would like it to be. Attention thus becomes focused on where Mr. Smith is coming from rather than on what he is saying. The possibility also exists that the church will subsequently adopt the position advocated by Mr. Smith and reject the arguments of Mr. Jones. Would the church tradition thereby be undermined? Not necessarily. Tradition can be enriched through the absorption of new ideas provided that the period of assimilation is long enough to allow for gradual paradigm shift. Indeed, SPECTRUM writers are currently expressing ideas that would have earned them their “walking papers” ten years ago.

D. Clarence Wilson
Simsbury, Connecticut

To the Editors: I find the whole controversy over intellectuals and the church puzzling. I am puzzled both by Alvin Kwiram’s position *and* Richard Hammill’s. (See SPECTRUM, Vol. 8, Nos. 1 and 3.) I wonder if they are discussing the same subject. Are they both using the term “intellectual” (a dreadful label!) the same way? What

is an intellectual, according to those two scholars? Is it someone whose life is guided by reason as opposed to emotion? But if so, Ellen White is certainly on the side of the intellectual, and every highly educated person is not such a person. Is it someone whose scholarly discipline gives him a superior approach to truth? But if that is so, only the area of his expertise is one in which he has the advantage. Perhaps the church is threatened only by highly disciplined theologians?

I am further puzzled by the assumption on the part of both scholars that the intellectual is certain of his positions, and, perhaps, proud. Surely any intensive study makes the student humble. Surely all serious scholars feel the vastness of the unknown behind the known. Arrogance and self-sufficiency, I would think, are more the product of ignorance than of knowledge.

Perhaps the real distinction in this argument between the "intellectual" and whatever the nonintellectual may be called is not so much a level of education or reputation for scholarship as it is an attitude toward authority. Is it possible that what disturbs the church is not so much the intellectuality of some individuals as it is their protestantism? The sense that one is responsible for what he believes and must choose for himself is not found solely among the educated, but may be more likely to be found there. Perhaps, however, the problems and questions that rise from such a position are more disturbing when they are posed logically, with substantiating evidence. Is the intellectual's threat not so much that he has questions, but that he articulates them clearly?

And does that mean the encouragement of the inarticulate?

To avoid being a destructive force and also to avoid being irresponsible and passive is to maintain a very precarious balance. But if we viewed the church as a community of believers helping one another even though all of us have imperfections, would we not avoid labeling and judging one another and see each one's talents, whatever they may be, as a contribution to the wholeness of the entire church?

Ottillie Stafford

Atlantic Union College
South Lancaster, Massachusetts

To the Editors: The question asked in Alvin Kwiram's courageous and perceptive article, "Can Intellectuals Be at Home in the Church?" (SPECTRUM, Vol. 8, No. 1), under present conditions can be answered emphatically, No! An intellectual is an individual with an inquiring mind who through life has asked questions and sought the answers. He is someone for whom a question-and-answer regimen under intellectual freedom has become a way of life.

Such a person would not find his (or her) accustomed intellectual freedom within the Seventh-day Adventist church. He would find a church laden with doctrines and prophetic interpretations that were established more than a century and a quarter ago, not "originally through the Spirit of Prophecy in the remnant church, as some apparently have supposed, but rather by earnest individual and group Bible study." Now, however, many of these cannot be questioned because they were "later confirmed by revelation" (Arthur White, in *Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant*, p. 34).

That is the situation an intellectual would have to accept to become a member. Anyone who asks questions on taboo subjects will soon become known as a "dissident" and will be made to feel very uncomfortable in the church.

Wrote Adventist pioneer Uriah Smith:

The idea has been studiously instilled into the minds of the people that to question the visions in the least is to become at once, a hopeless apostate and rebel; and too many, I am sorry to say, have not strength of character enough to shake off such a conception, hence the moment anything is done to shake them on the visions they lose faith in everything and go to destruction. I believe this state of things never would have occurred, had the position of our people on this manifestation of the gifts been correct. If our people would come together and calmly, candidly, and freely deliberate upon this matter, I believe, as I have said to you and others, that a consistent position could be found, which would free the subject from difficulties, meet and

satisfy the scouting intelligent public, and not rob the gift of a whit of the good it was intended to do. But there are many too doggedly bigoted and stubborn to offer any very flattering outlook in this direction. (From a facsimile copy of an April 6, 1883 letter by Uriah Smith to D. N. Canright.)

Until denominational leaders are willing to act upon Elder Smith's suggestion, there seems to be no prospect of reaching the "scouting intelligent public."

Neil W. Northey
Mariposa, California

To the Editors:
Timothy Crosby's review of *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* (SPECTRUM, Vol. 8, No. 2) cites LaRondelle's 232 Bible quotations as evidence that the "impossibles" have Bible scholarship on their side. This is something like putting an issue of the Sunday *Los Angeles Times* on a scale and declaring that it is of more "weighty" significance than an issue of SPECTRUM. One Scripture text truly elucidated is more weighty as evidence than thousands cited out of context.

The true context of biblical "perfection" is the doctrine of the cleansing of the sanctuary, just as the true context of Old Testament blood sacrifices is the offering of Christ on the cross. The offering of the Lamb of God on Calvary illuminates 4,000 years of otherwise unintelligible sacrifices and provides the only true perspective for understanding the Hebrew sanctuary ministries.

Likewise, Christ's high priestly ministry in the most holy apartment, as the cleansing of the sanctuary, illuminates an otherwise contradictory and unintelligible biblical doctrine of "perfection." No amount of Scripture citations outside of this perspective can be illuminating.

It seems significant that neither LaRondelle or Heppenstall offer any comment on this all-important aspect of the doctrine of "perfection"—for example, Ellen White's famous statement in her chapter entitled "In the Holy of Holies":

Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless . . . (*The Great Controversy*, p. 425).

Robert J. Wieland
Chula Vista Adventist Church
Chula Vista, California

To the Editors:
Timothy Crosby's review of *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* stimulated me to offer a few observations.

In every Seventh-day Adventist church, it seems, there is a faction which insists on "perfection now" and another which dissents. Doubtless, the dispute goes back into the distant Christian past. We know it was going on during the Reformation because while Roman Catholics believed their "saints" achieved "perfection now," the Protestant reformers denied this was possible for anyone in this life.

It must be conceded that some of Mrs. White's writings lend themselves to belief in "perfection now" while others leave a different impression. So far as the Bible is concerned, there is precious little support for the notion that we can attain perfection in this world. If we can, it is only because the term is interpreted differently from that which today's perfectionists insist upon. If the Bible anywhere establishes a double standard for salvation—one for most Christians but a higher one for those at the end of time—I have yet to see the evidence.

True, Jesus said, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect," but this was not directed at persons living in the last days of history. And the overwhelming majority of biblical scholars have always interpreted this as setting a goal for Christians to shoot for rather than representing a requirement for salvation.

I have long suspected that those who believe in "perfection now" have not thought much about what perfection really implies. It means not only keeping God's law flawlessly but also taking advantage of every opportunity to do good unto others—at whatever per-

sonal sacrifice. It means living in austerity and giving all that we can for the poor and for spreading the gospel. It means returning good for evil on every occasion and never harboring a grievance against anyone, not even for a moment. It means never speaking a cross word, whatever the provocation and no matter how tired or irritable or sick we may feel. It means never permitting an improper thought to enter our minds on the Sabbath day (or any other day, for that matter); always putting the most charitable interpretation on others' behavior; never expressing our ego-hunger in any of the myriad subtle ways to which we are prone; always being cheerful and uncomplaining in times of adversity.

Being perfect must also mean that when we reflect upon our life as we pray, we are unable to find a single aspect, whether of commission or omission, in which we fall short of Jesus' example. And doing all this (and more) without ever having a self-congratulatory thought!

When I think of what perfection truly means, in gritty, down-to-earth, realistic terms, I am tempted to say to the "perfection now" folks, "Oh, come off it. Who are you trying to kid?"

Reo M. Christenson
Oxford, Ohio

To the Editors: Your recent issue on "Adventist Eschatology Today" was one of the most thought provoking I have read. Concerning the failure of prophecy, the enigma of Matt. 24:34 has puzzled us for some time. Here Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place." The usual mental gymnastics we use to explain why this has apparently not been fulfilled are of two kinds: 1) there must be someone somewhere in the world who is old enough that he has seen the signs and is still alive, and 2) conditional prophecy. Either or both of these is possibly applicable to this prophecy; however, I would like to propose another point of view.

If, before the phrase "this generation," Christ had been speaking of the people who

saw the signs, we could logically say that he was referring to those people. However, He had been speaking only of the *signs*, not the people. Therefore, I think it is a more logical interpretation to say that "this generation" refers to the audience. I am proposing that it is as though He waved His hand toward the audience and said, "This generation . . .", i.e., the generation before Him in the audience.

Matthew was writing, as a reporter, 30-40 years after Christ's talk with the disciples. The talk referred to two events: the destruction of Jerusalem and Christ's second coming. Probably Matthew confused some predictions concerning these two events. The words, "this generation will not pass away till all these things take place," could refer to the destruction of Jerusalem as the event and the audience as the generation. If so, the sentence is a little out of context but no worse than other verses in the chapter.

The plausibility of this interpretation is enhanced by three factors: 1) Matthew is noted for ignoring chronological order in his writing (*Seventh-day Adventist Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 274); 2) Matthew did not necessarily know which comments referred to which of the two events; 3) the early Christian church expected Christ's second coming in their time and may have expected that the prophecy applied to both of the major events of the chapter.

Milo V. Anderson
Angwin, California

To the Editors: In your extensive discussion of the book, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, (SPECTRUM, Vol. 8, No. 2), both commentators and author miss a point that is vital, namely, the significance of whether or not Mrs. White was inspired.

Ronald Numbers is quoted as stating in his introduction that he has refrained from using the concept of divine inspiration as a historical explanation for Mrs. White's writings. He is also quoted as stating, "I am not saying that Ellen White was not inspired. This is a decision that each person must make on the basis of faith."

But the issue of Mrs. White's inspiration is not like other issues. We can discuss Abraham Lincoln or Voltaire as persons in their societies, subject to the influences and ideas of their times. Not so, Mrs. White.

Ellen White claimed to write under inspiration. She claimed to see visions, including visions of Jesus Christ. She claimed to have been told things by an angel, sometimes so specifically that she placed their statements in quotation marks. She claimed that she was indebted to the Lord for the things she wrote.

These are not statements by a person who was giving what *she* considered true; rather, they are statements that she received information from God and from no place else. These statements are either true or false. The inference from their not being true is that she was either insane or a fraud.

A very similar issue existed with respect to Jesus Christ. He was not an ordinary man in the context of His society in first-century Judea. He claimed the power to forgive sins, to be the son of God. He was either correct in these statements or He, too, had to be an imposter. We cannot logically accept Jesus Christ as simply being a good and wise man. This is one view that is not open to us.

Similarly, we cannot accept Mrs. White as simply being a good and wise woman, who was relying on her own ideas and the ones she picked up from publications and conversations for the source of her statements. This position is not open to us.

It is tempting to try to be objective, or, using Mr. Numbers' phrase, "neither to defend nor to damn but simply to understand." But in this case understanding requires that a decision be made—consciously and openly. Apparently, Mr. Numbers has not done this.

Let me close by stating that, as a man whose time is limited, I am making a conscious decision to confine my reading to professional literature, to news and, most important, to the study of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy with a view to personal and church development. Mr. Numbers' book does not seem to fit into the pattern that would be most productive of good for me, my family, and the congregation of which I am a

member. For this reason, I do not intend to read it, although I am not criticizing someone else who does see fit to read it.

I mention the fact that I have not read Mr. Numbers' book because it is fair to my reader. Ordinarily, this would disqualify me from discussing the book. In this instance, I don't think so. For there is no dispute on an issue vital to a consideration of this book, namely, whether it takes a position on whether or not Mrs. White was inspired in what she wrote.

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To the Editors: Volume 8, Number 1 is my first exposure to a very good journal. Of course, your writers almost go overboard in attacking (whether intentional or not) the unquestioning conservatism of many of our leaders and laymen. This, however, is good, for occasional pruning does make the tree more fruitful.

Of most interest to me, in a Socialist Third World country, was William G. Johnsson's article, "The Mythos of the Mission Story." Having listened to mission stories at Andrews University by even former missionaries to Jamaica, I wholeheartedly support his contentions. He was very amiable, however, and did not go far enough and condemn the plain hard lies that are told about the mission field. Let me hasten to say that these lies may not be intentional; but it is most likely the case that the Western (especially the American missionary) mind does not understand the Socialist or Third World mind. The former, therefore, interprets all he sees and all that is said and done in the "mission field" in terms of his mold. How sad.

I do look forward to a new mythos of the mission story. But I also look forward to our northern brethren's understanding us and accepting us as we are, yet one in Christ.

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