

Trends in Ellen White Studies  
Reports on Ford and Rea  
Recounting the Sanctuary Debate

# SPECTRUM

A Quarterly Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

Volume 10, Number 4

COMMEMORATING  
THE  
FIRST DECADE

# SPECTRUM

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## About This Issue

This expanded issue celebrates the publication of ten full volumes of SPECTRUM since it first appeared in the Winter of 1969. The issue also commemorates the founding, in 1967, of the Association of Adventist Forums, SPECTRUM's publisher.

Apart from the article providing an account of the establishing of the Forum and SPECTRUM, the other essays in our special cluster review developments within the denomination during the last decade generally. The articles by Donald McAdams and by Ray Cottrell are personal essays, in which they candidly express their own informed judgments. The two essays that begin the issue attempt to report accurately developments that have precipitated considerable discussion and even rumor.

The enlarged size of this issue has been made possible by contributions from three families that have been intimately involved in SPECTRUM and AAF. We think it appropriate that we especially thank in this commemorative issue Betty and Bruce Branson, Dos and Molleurus Couperus, and Verla and Alvin Kwiram.

These individuals have been joined by others on an Advisory Council for SPECTRUM. Members of the Council will be

informed of the editors' future plans and will provide advice concerning possible authors, improved promotion and financial planning. Each member has pledged to support SPECTRUM by contributing a minimum of \$500 a year for three years. Dr. Ray Damazo, an Adventist dentist and businessman in Seattle, is the Council's chairman.

The volunteer staff that edits SPECTRUM has received some welcome additions. Carolyn Stevens, a Victorian scholar who is associate professor of English at Walla Walla College, has agreed to become assistant editor. Roy Benton, who teaches mathematics at Columbia Union College, has joined SPECTRUM's consulting editors. Edward Lugenbeal, an anthropologist and for many years a member of the Geoscience Research Institute, has also agreed to become a consulting editor. Dr. Lugenbeal's considerable editorial skills are already reflected in this issue.

Finally, we are pleased to acknowledge that the English translation of articles from the Soviet *Journal of Science and Religion* published in SPECTRUM (Vol. 10, No. 3) were originally translated at the direction of Elder Alf Lohne, vice president of the General Conference.

The Editors

## *Editorial*

# A New Era

This year the Seventh-day Adventist Church enters a new era and so does SPECTRUM. As a new General Conference president leads the church to undertake fresh challenges, SPECTRUM enters its second decade committed to both the pursuit of truth and the importance of Adventism.

SPECTRUM was begun with the assumption that Protestant Christianity particularly adheres to the priesthood of all believers—the responsibility of each person to seek the truth—and that this belief implies a commitment to a democratic form of church. Furthermore, the journal has held that within a community of free persons an independent press is essential to maintain unity. Only if members can freely exchange ideas, proposals and interpretations can a church quickly benefit from new insights and valid suggestions for innovation, while at the same time criticizing and rejecting those proposals that are foolish and erroneous. It is only through open discussion that a strong consensus can emerge for either continuity or change. Such was true in the early days of the Adventist movement and is true today.

Much of this issue explores how contributors to SPECTRUM have shared with the church their pursuit of truth. These contributors are people who insist that their lives remain integrated by religion rather than by their academic, professional, commercial or political affiliations. They refused to allow their lives to be split into separate halves, to be productive and respected scientists or historians or theologians, who merely happened to belong to the Seventh-day Advent-

ist Church. Rather, the contributors to the first ten volumes of SPECTRUM are Adventists who are so serious about their spiritual commitment that they felt compelled to grapple with what they considered to be central issues. They believed that it was healthier to publicly debate crucial issues than to gnaw distractedly on trivia, or even worse, quietly and dispiritedly to drift away from the church.

During the past decade, most of SPECTRUM's articles have discussed issues of particular interest to Adventists. The journal will continue to print diverse viewpoints regarding issues of concern to those within the denomination. But the journal's greatest task will be to encourage its most thoughtful and articulate contributors to reflect on the unique mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the years to come, SPECTRUM is dedicated to participating in nothing less than renewing Adventist identity within the world.

SPECTRUM would like nothing better than to help launch Adventist authors into a lifetime of making the Adventist experience accessible and significant for the wider community. It is anxious to publish creative expressions of how the quality of Adventism's communal life not only renews its own members, but also embodies the gospel to become a redemptive force within contemporary culture. The journal is committed to being not simply a place for publishing a range of opinions, but a spectrum of ways in which Adventists can and do incarnate God's gracious yes to the world.

Roy Branson

# Desmond Ford Raises The Sanctuary Question

by Walter Utt

A news item headed “Teacher given leave to prepare doctrinal paper”<sup>\*</sup> appeared in the *Adventist Review* of December 20, 1979, the *Pacific Union Recorder* of December 17 and in other journals in Australia and elsewhere. It read in part:

Some administrative decisions of the church are of interest to the membership at large. When there is a possibility that these decisions may be misinterpreted or misunderstood it is desirable, and necessary to the unity of the church, that an informational statement be issued. A recent decision by one of the educational institutions of the church impacts on two world divisions and seems to require such a statement.

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<sup>\*</sup>The *Recorder* head read “statement” instead of “paper” and differed in capitalization. The Pacific Union version was signed by J. W. Cassell, president of Pacific Union College; C. O. Granz signed the item in the *Review*. I have not seen the others.

Walter Utt, who holds his doctorate in French history from Berkeley, is chairman of the department of history at Pacific Union College.

The board of trustees of Pacific Union College, after consulting with representatives of the General Conference and the Australasian Division, has voted to give Desmond Ford, a visiting professor from the Australasian Division, a leave of absence with salary to provide him an opportunity to devote his full time to continued research and preparation of a documented statement on the topic of the sanctuary and related issues.

This board action was a result of a public presentation by Dr. Ford on the subject of the investigative judgment in a meeting of the Association of Adventist Forums held on the campus of Pacific Union College October 27, 1979, in which he took issue with basic theological positions held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. . . .

A century earlier, Adventist doctrine and polity had been hammered out in vigorous debate and Ellen White had confirmed the conclusions. Committed against a formal creed but with various “pillars” set in the concrete of tradition and with a view of inspiration approaching the verbal, despite disclaimers from the prophetess herself, the church in 1979 found itself facing a reexamination of a “pillar.” Was it merely a decora-

tive one or was it basic to the stability of the structure? Do the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church rest on Scripture alone or must the Spirit of Prophecy be employed to support that which could not otherwise be demonstrated?

The challenge by Desmond Ford at the Forum meeting was nothing new. His concern for the biblicity of the Adventist doctrine of the Sanctuary, the ministry of Christ and the significance of 1844 had been shared by many Bible students for years. The difference in the present situation was the necessity

**“In his presentation, Ford stated that the doctrine of the Sanctuary as traditionally held by Adventists could not be supported by Scripture.”**

for the church in the 1980s to address a question of doctrine publicly rather than discreetly in some theological dovecote. Ford's use of a public forum, plus the peculiar and controversial chemistry of the man himself, precipitated the affair. He is a veteran of the intense and seemingly continuous theological battles in his homeland which have suggested to bemused Americans a kind of stereotype for the antipodes—an “Australian disease.”

Professor of religion at Avondale College, Ford arrived at Pacific Union College (PUC) in 1977 well equipped with enemies, some of whom tried to prevent his welcome on the California campus. PUC, long affiliated with Avondale, was a logical place for his sojourn when the Australian situation appeared in need of cooling, and PUC accepted him in part as an accommodation to the Australasian Division and the General Conference. The visiting professorship was for two years, but was extended for a third, to end in June 1980. That he proved a charismatic teacher and preacher and was in demand for speaking engagements was no surprise. The familiar

but indecisive battle over Sanctification/Justification continued. Ford's obvious love of debate and his skill in handling both biblical and Ellen White materials gained him numerous and fervent admirers. His opponents seemed to see his dazzling style and cheerful courtesy as further affront. To be neutral about Desmond Ford was very difficult.

The local Forum chapter, then in its second year, had already stirred some criticism. Hearing of a remark by Ford in a Sabbath School class, the Forum co-leaders, Adrian Zytkoskee, chairman of the behavioral science department, and Wayne Judd, of the religion department, invited Ford to speak on the investigative judgment for the first meeting of the school year. They also chose his title, later alleged to have been a provocation: “The Investigative Judgment: Theological Milestone or Historical Necessity?” Even before the meeting, Zytkoskee and Judd picked up some adverse comment and asked Ford if he would prefer to withdraw, but he said he was willing to proceed. He explained that he had accepted the invitation partly because he had tried for years to get a hearing on the question of the Sanctuary and the 1844 event. He well knew that his remarks would be distorted and misused.

**I**n his presentation, Ford stated that the doctrine of the Sanctuary as traditionally held by Adventists could not be supported by Scripture. He rejected the literal heavenly sanctuary, the confinement of Christ in the Holy Place for 1,800 years, and saw 1844 rather as the launching of a movement carrying God's last warning. There was indeed a judgment, but not in the manner commonly conceived by Adventists.

Contrary to some reports, Ford did not “throw out the Spirit of Prophecy,” but rather raised the basic question of the nature of inspiration and the role of Mrs. White in establishment and validation of doctrine. Her function, he asserted, was “pastoral,” not “canonical.” He insisted that her role in the development and survival of the Advent movement was absolutely indispensable. Her inspired messages had, however, been

misused not infrequently over the years, and she herself would have been scandalized by the way in which Bible study among Adventists had been replaced by use of her writings. "To overdo," he declared, "is to undo." He found Mrs. White herself had been open to "new light" and reason in a way which her modern defenders frequently and conspicuously failed to be.\*

Eric Syme, professor of religion and history, was commentator and supported Ford's position in general, which he stated to be in the finest Adventist tradition of inquiry. He particularly agreed with Ford's strictures on the misuse of Mrs. White's writings by those in what he called "a stupid literalistic miasma." Although he did not refer to it in the Forum session, Syme does, however, strongly disagree with certain of Ford's eschatological conclusions.

The speed and violence of the response to Ford may indicate lines were already drawn and Ford himself was the issue. Certainly, his view of the investigative judgment offered a clearer target than the debate over justification by faith. PUC's president, J. W. Cassell, and academic dean, Gordon Madgwick, were visiting schools in Australia and the Far East when the meeting took place. The first word (and tapes) reached them in Singapore a few days later. The college officers, the union president and the president of the General Conference were bombarded by messages in unheard-of quantities, both pro and con. Agitation was more overt and vehement in the surrounding Adventist colonies than on the campus itself.

Returning to a *fait accompli* on November 16, the president and the dean left again on the 26th, on their own initiative and with a proposal of their own devising, to consult with the president and officers of the General Conference. Cassell and Madgwick saw their plan as protecting Ford from those demanding his instant dismissal. They would also be returning a hot potato to the General Confer-

ence. To keep Ford in the classroom at that juncture would be difficult for a union conference institution, subject, it was rumored, to threats, at least obliquely. The president and the dean hoped their plan would be a precedent for handling such controversial cases as might arise in the future. They thought that had such a procedure been available in the past, some regrettable ruptures in the church might have been avoided.

After vigorous debate in PREXAD, the action quoted at the beginning of this article was jointly agreed upon (November 28, 1979). Ford would be provided with accommodations near his source material, and time to put his arguments, previously presented orally and informally, into proper scholarly form. He would be in regular contact with theologians. As he remained technically a Pacific Union College faculty member at least until June 1980, he would continue his liaison with PUC's department of religion, through Fred Veltman, chairman. From the very start, Veltman had urged Ford to prepare an extended written elaboration of his controversial remarks.

At the end of six months, in the summer of 1980, it was envisaged that his work would be reviewed by a widely representative group yet to be selected.\*\* A small, working interim committee was named in the next few days by President Neal Wilson to be chaired by Richard Hammill, General Conference vice president and formerly president of Andrews University. This committee would work out procedures for the selection and work of the larger body. In mid-December, Hammill's committee had already met with Ford and Veltman to discuss plans. That the proponent of a disputed concept should be given time and facilities to work out his position seemed eminently fair; it was the uncertainty about what was to happen next that caused concern.

Rumor worked overtime, of course. The

\*A cursory glance through *Counsels to Writers and Editors* suggests the compilers found the best quotes in favor of openness and receptivity to "new light" originate after the 1888 controversy; the quotes which refuse to consider modification or examination of "landmarks" come with the Kellogg affair.

\*\*The meeting of administrators and theologians already scheduled for Glacier View in Colorado for the summer of 1980 has been suggested as a good place for the discussion. This meeting, while fortuitous, might not necessarily have the appropriate balance in its composition which the review of the Ford documents would require.

best ones seemed to come from Takoma Park; for example, that Ford was to be brought to Washington to be fired. Contrary to other reports, most of the PUC faculty, whether agreeing with Ford's thesis or not, were concerned for Ford's freedom as an Adventist scholar to express himself and receive a fair hearing. That he and his family had been required to move so abruptly in midyear, leaving his classes to be covered by others, was the principal reason given for unease.\*

**I**n the faculty meeting of December 4, President Cassell and Dean Madgwick addressed these apprehensions, elaborating on the explanations they had given the previous day to several department chairmen. President Cassell mentioned the reassurance he felt from the attitude of openness and understanding he and the dean found in Neal Wilson. Ford was not being punished, he insisted, but indeed welcomed the opportunity for study being offered him on a topic in which he had been interested for 30 years. Because the issue was larger than the concerns of one college, the church at large had to be involved. "A delay until the end of the school year," said Dr. Cassell, "will only lead to further entrenchment and polarization within the Church."

Ford publicly stated that he was in complete sympathy with the decision (though some of his friends said that he was privately less happy than his "good soldier" public statement indicated). The president conceded he did not know what would happen after Ford's paper was considered and evaluated by the committee. He bore personal testimony to the effect of Ford's ministry in his own life, and deplored the tactics of some of Ford's opponents. His only criticism, and one in which Ford appears to concur, was that in presenting the topic to a large, unselected audience, the controversy had be-

come larger and more violent than it needed to have.

Several commented later that Ford's presence in Washington would be useful, for the message can hardly be disassociated from the messenger, and it would be well for Ford the human being to be better known.

In spite of assurances, the disappearance of the Fords appeared to threaten the atmosphere of free but responsible discussion which the present administration has fostered on the PUC campus. That Ford might eventually return to Angwin would have been a reassurance, but Cassell said that question had to remain open. The confidence the president and dean were able to convey to the faculty suffered with the appearance in the December 13 issue of the *Review* of a con-

**"If there are too many faces friendly to Ford and it appears he may escape a decapitation, there will be accusations of softness on heresy and surmisings about Adventist schools as nests of subversion."**

denser version of an address given by Neal Wilson at the annual council. The timing was perhaps coincidental, but the tone seemed to strongly suggest that discussion on any items denominated "landmarks" or "pillars" was already foreclosed.

When the joint release to Adventist periodicals quoted at the beginning of this report arrived a few days later, it stated Ford "took issue with *basic* theological positions," rather than "*certain* theological positions," a wording requested by Ford. The pejorative term again implied judgment had already been rendered—doubtless true enough for many on both sides of the question. In spite of oral assurances by President Wilson to Cassell, Madgwick and Veltman that Ford would be treated fairly and the outcome was not prejudged, pessimism remained. Veltman urged that biblical scholars and the administrators be left to work out the issue decently and in

\* In a letter to religion department chairmen, Fred Veltman said: "All attempts to parallel Dr. Ford's move to Washington and Luther's being called to Rome are baseless and unfounded" (Dec. 28, 1979). In response to questions, Dean Madgwick admitted being aware of the episode of Calvin and Servetus but hoped that it had no application to this case.



order, but it seems that despite appeals to Christian charity and forbearance, restraint cannot be expected from either side in such debates. There was a preemptive strike from the pulpit of the college church, January 5, and the same day another speaker left little doubt who he meant when he spoke of Satan's agents being "beautiful, attractive people." The *Review* has continued to print a great deal of material on the topic.

As Dr. Cassell very accurately observed, the issues do transcend the California campus. Once again, the church is invited to consider "new light." Once again, a basic, underlying issue was revived—the nature and role of the inspiration of Ellen G. White. Sixty years before, at the 1919 Bible Conference, church leaders looked at the question, realized its complexity and divisiveness, blanched, and swept it back under the rug. Later, there was the committee in the Figuiera era which considered the Daniel question for five years with no consensus, no publication, not even any minutes. Both groups had met in comparative secrecy. Unlike Ford, they did not "talk in front of the children." The value of such discretion may be questioned when the phenomenon of an inerrant, verbally inspired view of inspiration has continued and been encouraged to grow and rigidify in the intervening decades.

**W**hat are the possible scenarios in the Ford Question? A very critical aspect will be the work of the committee headed by Dr. Hammill in recommending members and procedures for the larger group. If there are too many faces friendly to Ford and it appears he may escape a decapitation, there will be accusations of softness on heresy and surmising about Adventist schools as nests of subversion. Choosing too many members preoccupied with administrative imperatives would frighten academic and professional elements in the church. To some suspicious laymen, such a committee would be a case of the blind leading the one-eyed (the theologians). If the primary concern is preventing a damaging schism, the leaders might feel compelled to say to Ford and the "experts": "What you tell us may very well be true, but

our pastoral responsibility is to keep the Church functional. The traditional view of Mrs. White is the cement which is perceived as holding this movement together, and at this time we cannot risk disruption."

Ford has said that a great number of Bible scholars of the denomination agree with him, at least in part. Few would claim he should not be permitted to explain himself. What if the committee—or the scholars on it—endorsed or at least found permissible Ford's interpretation? What of the "children" then, the laity? Could the general membership be reeducated in a more biblical use of the Spirit of Prophecy? In the interest of pastoral concern, would the scholars simply have to be ignored? The loss of confidence in denominational leadership on the part of scholars, lay and cleric, should be in the long run very costly, but it might be a price which would have to be paid to maintain the confidence of a not-so-silent majority. (Recent Roman Catholic and Mormon disciplinary actions could serve as timely precedents.) A church embarrassed by its intellectuals would almost inevitably have to turn to creeds, whatever name they went by. College faculties, particularly the younger and more idealistic members, are watching with some apprehension to see how fairly frankness and free discussion can be handled. If a hard line is taken, a signal would be perceived that teachers—and not just in theology—should be obsequious hacks and reflectors of an official line.

Unless a committee in which informed Adventists have confidence comes to a well-reasoned and carefully substantiated decision against Ford, the worst verdict against Ford is likely to be that his argument remains "not proven," and he will be able to return to his duties at PUC. Certainly, administrators will wish to avoid creating martyrs, with all the attendant disunity and turmoil.

Certainly, many respond to the position Ford advocates with not only anger, but also fear. Was not the investigative judgment the Adventists' only "original" contribution? If it is understood in a new way, would any reason remain for a Remnant Church? Ford says "yes"; his critics say "no." Even if one could be saved without a correct understand-

ing of the sanctuary doctrine, could there be an Adventist Church without it?

Can a worldwide church of increasing diversity survive with an essential unity—perhaps as suggested by the name Seventh-day Adventist—but with various views and understandings coexisting in fruitful tension? (In one passage, Ellen White suggested two basics—the Sabbath and the Commandments — and that to quarrel about lesser issues was harmful.\* Certainly, other “pillars” could be added to this short list). To survive, an organization must set limits and enforce them, *but* in ways which are perceived as reasonable and fair. To maintain the unity and purpose of the church while protecting this fairness and openness is the dilemma faced by Neal Wilson and his associates in 1980.

In his letter, previously referred to, Fred Veltman sees the times in an essentially optimistic way. In a world of change, to which the church must ever be able to speak, he

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\*CWE, p. 77 (from letter 37, 1887).

hopes the administrators will be “very careful in their statements and their proclamations lest they be viewed by others as being obscurantists. At the same time, as biblical scholars we need to be very careful lest we be perceived as iconoclastic and unnecessarily disruptive of orderly progression in theological development.” With care and cooperation, he sees advance for the church in “all lines,” but hastiness could create “a backlash that might set the church back decades.”

A sobering thought is that in 1888, a shift in direction which threatened traditional belief patterns could not be effectively introduced to the church even with a living prophetess vigorously supporting it. What chance is there for a redefinition of an article of dogma in 1980, even if the leadership of the church agreed with the redefinition or saw it as a permissible alternative? As one PUC faculty member observed, people feel on very thin ice in these matters, and there is a lot of open water out there, dark and very cold.

# GC Committee Studies

## Ellen White's Sources

by Douglas Hackleman

On an otherwise ordinary February morning in Takoma Park, Neal C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, called the available members of the General Conference Committee to a special meeting to listen to a report by six members, plus two unofficial observers, of an *ad hoc* committee that had convened in Glendale, California, two weeks before (January 28-29). Wilson had appointed the committee to hear Elder Walter Rea, pastor of the Long Beach, California, Seventh-day Adventist Church, present the results of several years' research in the writings of Ellen White, specifically on her use of literary sources.

The eight-person report was informal but significant — and perhaps historic — because of its theological and practical implications for the church. As speaker after speaker related his observations, impressions and reflections, three points became unmistakably clear. In the first place, the amount of evident borrowing — including facts, ideas and

wording — in the Ellen White writings is much greater than has been generally recognized by the church. In the second place, the church must come to terms with this fact; it will be impossible to ignore it or evade it, and it would be undesirable to try. And therefore, in the third place, the church should undertake a major program of education (or re-education) regarding the way(s) in which the Ellen White books were produced.

The account of the two-day session in Glendale began with the comments of G. Ralph Thompson, a General Conference vice president, who had been chairman of the *ad hoc* committee and who told his Takoma Park colleagues that many Adventists have used Ellen White wrongly, and that a “verbal inerrancy” view of inspiration is untenable. The report was concluded an hour and a half later by Robert Olson, secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, who as the secretary of the *ad hoc* committee had prepared its unanimous formal recommendations to the administrative leadership of the church.

The other committee members who made additional comments were Fred Harder, executive secretary of the General Conference Board of Higher Education; Richard Leshar, director of the Biblical Research In-

Douglas Hackleman, a graduate of Columbia Union College, holds his master's degree in psychology from Pepperdine University and is a freelance writer and illustrator living in Grand Terrace, California.

stitute; William Johnson, associate dean of the theological seminary at Andrews University; and Herbert Douglass, book editor of the Pacific Press Publishing Association. The observers were Ron Graybill, assistant secretary of the White Estate; and Fred Veltman, chairman of the department of religion at Pacific Union College.

The comments were even-handed and candid, both about the proceedings in Glendale and about their significance. And they were in substantial agreement that in spite of various problems of organization and scholarship, the materials collected and presented by Elder Rea conclusively demonstrated Ellen White's extensive use of literary sources.

Who is Walter Rea, and what specifically has his extensive research shown? Described in a letter by Elder Wilson as one who "has been a strong promoter of the blessing that comes to each of us. . . [through] the ministry of Ellen White," Pastor Rea has had a deep

appreciation for Ellen White's writings since his youth, when he compiled and published three exhaustive volumes of Mrs. White's quotations, one about Daniel and Revelation, the others on Old and New Testament personages.<sup>1</sup> In the last few years, however, Elder Rea has been finding widespread paraphrasing from other nineteenth century writers throughout Mrs. White's writings, a situation which, President Wilson continued in his letter, "is not entirely new to us as a people, because Ellen White herself acknowledges that she used various sources. She used descriptive, biographical, historical, spiritual and scientific information from other authors. We have never emphasized this fact, but neither has this been something we have tried to cover up." Rea, however, had discovered far more unacknowledged than acknowledged borrowing, and felt, as Wilson wrote, "that the degree of borrowed material and literary dependency is of alarming proportions."

#### JOHN HARRIS, D.D.

##### THE GREAT TEACHER: 1842 158-60 His Originality

But the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is that only object on earth on which he bestows his supreme regard.

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. . . stimulated by implacable hatred against God, he no sooner found our world created, than he came to efface from it the image of God, and to stamp his own on its breast. . . . Unable to expel God from his throne, and thus succeed to the homage of man, he had, by a universal system of idolatry, planted his throne between the human worshipper and the Divine Being, intercepting and appropriating the adoration which belonged to God alone.

##### 32 His Authority

His name was to be their watchword, their badge of distinction, the principle of their piety, the bond of their union, the end of their action, the authority of their conduct, and the source of their success. Nothing was to be recognized or received in his kingdom which did not bear the superscription of his name. . . .

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. . . in perfect harmony with our free volitions, can so identify it with our thoughts and aims, so blend it with the stream and current of our consciousness, that in yielding obedience to his word we are only obeying the actings and impulses of our own minds.

#### ELLEN G. WHITE

##### TO MINISTERS AND WORKERS 15-17 The Object of His Supreme Regard

I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard.

##### SDA BIBLE COMMENTARY, Volume 6 1119 Ellen White Comment—Ephesians

No sooner was man created than Satan resolved to efface in him the image of God, and to place his stamp where God's should be. . . . He desired to usurp the throne of God. Failing in this, he has worked in darkness, in crookedness, in deception, to usurp his place in the hearts of men. He has set up his throne between God and man, to appropriate the adoration that belongs to God alone (MS 33, 1911).

##### THE DESIRE OF AGES 826 Go Teach All Nations

Christ's name is their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success. Nothing that does not bear His superscription is to be recognized in His kingdom.

##### 668 Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.

Elder Wilson noted in his letter, “We have had several scholarly studies done by men such as Dr. Walter Specht and Elder Raymond Cottrell in connection with the book, *The Desire of Ages*.” Before returning to Elder Wilson’s letter to the Glendale committee of 17, we should look briefly at the conclusions of the Cottrell-Specht studies.

At the end of 1979, the two scholars completed their careful, scholarly comparisons of Ellen White’s *The Desire of Ages* with *The Life of Christ* by William Hanna, D. D., LL. D., published in 1863. Each took half of *The Desire of Ages* and compared it with Hanna’s *The Life of Christ* to establish the extent of literary dependency and came to similar conclusions. Dr. Specht announced “a small amount of actual literary dependence by Ellen White on the work of William Hanna.” Elder Cottrell discovered roughly 2.6 per-

cent literary indebtedness to Hanna. Specht and Cottrell, it must be remembered, compared White only with Hanna, whereas Rea has demonstrated the utilization of more than eight nineteenth-century authors in *The Desire of Ages*.

Cottrell, noticing the use — some credited, more uncredited — of various other authors in Ellen White’s books, deduced that “evidently, originality is not essential to inspiration.” It is the “grand theme that runs, unbroken, like the proverbial thread of gold, from the very first sentence in *The Desire of Ages*,” that for Cottrell “relegates attention to her use of these [other] authors to a simple matter of purely academic interest.”

One curious example of this “academic interest” is Cottrell’s claim that the first three chapters of the *The Desire of Ages* “have no parallel in Hanna; they are basically original with Ellen White.” He proceeds to quote a winsome passage from the first chapter of *The Desire of Ages* to explain Ellen White’s

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JOHN HARRIS, D.D.  
THE GREAT TEACHER: 1842  
88 His Originality

The office of revealing and representing the character of the Deity was reserved for Him who had been from eternity in the bosom of the Father — the image of the invisible God.

71 His Originality

He came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment in the temple of creation, that every worshipper might have free and equal access to the God of the temple.

110 His Originality

Justice moved from its high and awful position on Sinai; and, with all the armies of holiness, brightening and still brightening with complacency as it approached, bowed with reverence at the cross, and said, “It is enough.”

WILLIAM HANNA, D.D.LL.D.  
THE LIFE OF CHRIST: 1863  
34-35

How little did that Jewish priest, who took the infant Saviour and held him up before the altar, imagine that one greater than Moses, one greater than the temple, was in his arms. How little did he imagine, as he inscribed the new name of Jesus in the roll of the firstborn of Israel, that he was signing the death-warrant of the Mosaic economy.

ELLEN WHITE  
THE MINISTRY OF HEALING  
422 A True Knowledge of God

He who had been in the presence of the Father from the beginning, He who was the express image of the invisible God, was alone able to reveal the character of the Deity to mankind.

CHRIST’S OBJECT LESSONS  
386 “Who Is My Neighbor?”

Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God.

ADVENTIST COMMENTARY, Volume 7  
936

Justice moved from its exalted throne, and with all the armies of heaven approached the cross. There it saw One equal with God bearing the penalty for all injustice and sin. With perfect satisfaction Justice bowed in reverence at the cross, saying, It is enough. (MS 94:1899)

THE DESIRE OF AGES  
52 The Dedication

He did not think that this babe was He whose glory Moses had asked to see. But One greater than Moses lay in the priest’s arms; and when he enrolled the child’s name, he was enrolling the name of One who was the foundation of the whole Jewish economy. That name was to be its death warrant; . . .

purpose in writing: "He pitched His tent by the side of the tents of man, that He might dwell among us, and make us familiar with His Divine character and life" (p. 23). Interestingly, years before, in 1842, John Harris, D.D., had written in *The Great Teacher* (p. 90): "He came and set up His tabernacle in the midst of the human encampment, pitched His tent side by side with our tents, to attest the presence of God, to make us familiar with His character, and sensible of His love."

Dr. Specht, in his paper, makes much of the many instances where Hanna's extrabib-

lical speculations are paralleled by Ellen White but stated as fact. One example suffices: Hanna, describing the crucifixion scene and Jesus' cry, "I thirst," suggests that there "appears to have been [one] touched with momentary pity, *perhaps a Roman soldier*, . . . [who] took a stalk of hyssop" (*The Life of Christ*, p. 743). Ellen White seems certain: "*One of the Roman soldiers*, touched with pity, . . . took a sponge on a stalk of hyssop" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 754f.).

Because of the Cottrell and Specht studies, President Wilson wrote: "We do not at this

DANIEL MARCH, D.D.

WALKS AND HOMES OF JESUS: 1867  
318

. . . We must consider more earnestly the shame and the glory, the life and the death, the justice and the mercy that so meet and harmonize in the cross.

WALKS AND HOMES OF JESUS: 1867  
313

Nevertheless it will do us all good, frequently and solemnly to review the closing scenes in the Saviour's earthly life. Amid all the material and worldly passions, by which we are beset and tempted, we shall learn many salutary lessons, by going back in memory, and spending a thoughtful hour, in the endeavor to strengthen our faith and quicken our love at the foot of the cross. What then are the lessons which the divine passion, the infinite sacrifice, the true and redemptive cross of Christ is fitted to teach?

OUR FATHER'S HOUSE: 1871  
254 The Fowls of the Air

. . . The eagle of the Alps is sometimes beaten down by the tempest into the narrow defiles of the mountains. The clouds in black and angry masses sweep between the mighty bird and the sunny heights where she builds her nests and basks in the full day. For a while she dashes to and fro, buffeting the storm with her strong wings and waking the echoes of the mountains with her wild cry, vainly endeavoring to find some way out of her dark and high-walled prison. At length she dashes upward with a scream of triumph into the midst of the black clouds, and in a moment she is above them in the calm sunshine, with the darkness and the tempest all beneath, the light of heaven shining in full blaze upon her conquering pinions, and her loved home on the lofty crag in full sight waiting to receive her. It is through the darkness that she rushes into the light. It is by a mighty effort to ascend that she leaves the clouds and the storms of earth beneath.

ELLEN WHITE

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY  
651

. . . With our finite comprehension we may consider most earnestly the shame and the glory, the life and the death, the justice and the mercy, that meet in the cross; . . .

TESTIMONIES, Volume 4  
374

It will do you good, and our ministers generally, to frequently review the closing scenes in the life of our Redeemer. Here, beset with temptations as He was, we may all learn lessons of the utmost importance to us. It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Saviour.

MESSAGES TO YOUNG PEOPLE  
102-103 The Fight of Faith

In her endeavors to reach her home, the eagle is often beaten down by the tempest to the narrow defiles of the mountains. The clouds, in black, angry masses sweep between her and the sunny heights where she secures her nest. For a while she seems bewildered, and dashes this way and that, beating her strong wings as if to sweep back the dense clouds. She awakens the doves of the mountains with her wild cry in her vain endeavors to find a way out of her prison. At last she dashes upward into the blackness, and gives a shrill scream of triumph as she emerges, a moment later, in the calm sunshine above. The darkness and tempest are all below her, and the light of heaven is shining about her. She reaches her loved home in the lofty crag, and is satisfied. It was through darkness that she reached the light. It cost her an effort to do this, but she is rewarded in gaining the object which she sought.

time feel that Elder Rea's alleged percentages of borrowed material in this specific book [*The Desire of Ages*] can be supported." Wilson continued candidly, "We do not really know, and I believe that we should know. I would like to be able to clearly face people, critics or friends, and say that we have looked at the evidence. . . . I have told Elder Rea that the burden of proof will be on him and that I have confidence in the committee that PREXAD (the President's Executive Advi-

**“Rea presented parallels in . . . non-Adventist books for passages in many different works of Ellen White. He displayed a color-coded copy of *The Desire of Ages* showing parallels with six different non-Adventist books.”**

sory Committee) has named to review his findings and evidence.”

Throughout 1979, the White Estate and Rea's Southern California Conference leadership felt he was overstating his findings. Rea, for his part, was concerned that the papers coming out of the White Estate, Arthur White's *Adventist Review* articles, the Cottrell-Specht papers (misleading to the extent that Hanna's *The Life of Christ* might be understood by readers to be the primary source of borrowing in the *The Desire of Ages*), and White Estate representatives on the lecture circuit, were all minimizing the extent of borrowing.

Rea's agitation led to a presentation of his findings at a Southern California Conference workers' meeting, a public presentation at his own Long Beach pastorate (both available on tape),<sup>2</sup> and finally, the meeting on January 18 of the General Conference-appointed committee. It is obvious from a quick glance at the list of members that the committee was not a credulous group, nor was it (apologies to Otilie Stafford) a collection of “company men.”

Rea's immediate concern at Glendale, in view of Wilson's letter stressing that the burden of proof rested on him, was to demonstrate to the committee the scope of Ellen

White's borrowing from the writings of her contemporaries. But Rea was also concerned with the larger question of “whether or not Mrs. White's extensive and continued use of other writers' thoughts and words over an extended period of her life, means that she gained her knowledge and insights by natural or supernatural means.”<sup>3</sup>

Just before Rea began his presentation, several committee members indicated casually that they had known about the borrowing for decades. Some seemed to be indicating that they were not in the dark, like many, while others seemed to be implying that Ellen White's borrowing was widely known, but did not create a problem. Several committee members had done their own scholarly research on her writings.

During the entire first day, Rea presented parallels in contemporary non-Adventist books for passages in many different works of Ellen White (see box). He displayed a color-coded copy of *The Desire of Ages* showing parallels with six different non-Adventist books. The committee did not have time to examine each passage, but they noted that Rea's copy was almost entirely colored.

Toward the end of the second afternoon, the committee was ready to acknowledge that the extent of borrowing surprised them. Although some objected to his emotive terms, one educator said that the evidence was of “alarming proportions.” He went on to list three facts that had emerged from Ellen White scholarship in the past decade: 1) Ellen White was a product of her times; 2) the extent of her literary dependency had been opened up and had been demonstrated to go beyond historical information; 3) she made mistakes and errors.

A theologian on the committee was “moved and also surprised how much more stuff is there,” and expressed “need [for] a broad-based approach for getting this out. . . to the laity.” The lone woman member concurred: “It would be sad if it were another ten years before this was shared with the laity.” One General Conference man pleaded, “G.C. brethren must understand what has happened here; also union and conference

men.” He recommended a “graded release,” but a “constant release,” to the laity, warning that the flow of information must not “stall.”

Another General Conference leader required that all “agree not to cover up,” and recommended that the Biblical Research Committee, under the leadership of Richard Leshner, “plan a first presentation with G.C. leaders as soon as possible after April.” His suggestion was followed immediately by someone’s qualifier, “We know enough *now* to take some steps.” A west coast administrator added, “Something in the *Review* before April.”

Although several committee members noted the amount of work obviously required for Rea to find the parallels from many different nineteenth-century writers throughout Ellen White’s writing, most of the committee also stressed the sloppiness of Rea’s methodology. One professor at the two-day discussion said that while he had amassed a large number of parallels, he had not effectively analyzed his data. However, the committee agreed that Rea’s method was a subsidiary issue. As one scholar put it, “The evidence is stronger than his presentation.”

As time for the voting of resolutions neared, suggestions about the importance and possible means of expanding the study of Ellen White’s writing methods were offered by Ron Graybill, joining Robert Olson from the White Estate for the second day. A participant opined that “PREXAD ought to spend as much time with this topic as with the closing of Southern Pub.” And, with the Geoscience Foundation’s \$150,000 yearly budget in mind, he continued, “I believe this topic is more important than that one.”

Dr. Olson, secretary of the White Estate and also of the committee, voiced a concern just before the group penned its formal recommendations: “I just want to make one brief recommendation, and that is that whatever study we do, I believe it must include a study of the sources used by Scripture writers. That’s my main defense. If I find a Bible parallel, it satisfies me.”

After the usual drafting and redrafting, the following formal recommendations emerged:

*Voted:*

1) That we recognize that Ellen White, in her writing, used various sources more extensively than we had previously believed. In a number of her books, the similarity between Ellen White and other authors is great enough to require the serious attention of our church leaders in order to determine the degree and significance of her dependence on other writers;

2) That, as soon as possible, a plan be developed for thoroughly informing our church administrators concerning the nature and extent of Ellen White’s use of sources;

3) That immediate study be given to a plan for educating the church in easily grasped steps on the subject of inspiration and Ellen White’s use of sources. Some means of accomplishing this could be inspiration seminars, articles in the *Adventist Review* and the *Ministry* magazine, and through the Sabbath School lessons;

4) That an in-depth study on the writing of *The Desire of Ages* be implemented, and that some suitable person, working under the supervision of a broad-based committee, be asked to foster the project. This detailed study should attempt to discover not only the similarities between Ellen White and other authors, but also the dissimilarities and the unique, positive contributions to be found in her works;

5) That a person trained in scholarly methodology be asked to work with Elder Rea. This individual, to be chosen from the Los Angeles area if possible, should be someone with whom Elder Rea would be pleased to work;

6) That this committee, or another similar committee, should continue to serve, and should meet at some future date to evaluate the results of further research.

*Appreciation to Walter Rea*

*Voted:*

To express our appreciation to Elder Rea for the enormous amount of work he has done in his research over the past several years, and also for the preparation of the material presented to the committee.

*Appreciation to Elder Wilson and PREXAD*

*Voted:*

To express our gratitude to Elder Neal Wilson and PREXAD for arranging for this



two-day committee meeting and for their readiness to consider our recommendations.

### *Tape Recordings*

#### *Voted:*

That three copies of the taped record of the committee be made, and that these be given to Elder Walter Rea, Elder Neal Wilson and

the White Estate. Additional copies of any portion of the tapes are not to be made without the mutual concurrence of Elder Rea and PREXAD. The committee extends its gratitude to Elder Gayland Richardson, pastor of the Alhambra Church, for making the recordings.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Walter Rea, compiler, *Bible Biographies of the Old Testament, Bible Biographies of the New Testament, Daniel & Revelation* (self-published).

2. "Southern Cal. Conf. Workers' Meeting," Walter Rea presenting, Raymond Cottrell responding, two cassettes (\$6.50 per set, plus \$.75 shipping). "Ellen G. White and Her Contemporary Authors," Walter Rea

presenting, Robert Olson responding plus panel, Long Beach SDA Church, Sept. 15, 1979, two cassettes (price same as above). Tapes available through R. & L. Peifer, 4732 Rey Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92649.

3. From Walter Rea correspondence to White Estate Secretary Robert Olson (Dec. 26, 1979).

### Committee Members

G. Ralph Thompson  
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### Guests

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Ellen G. White Estate

Frederick Veltman  
Chairman, Religion and Biblical  
Languages Department  
Pacific Union College

# Sanctuary Debate: A Question of Method

by Raymond F. Cottrell

Time and again competent non-Adventist Bible scholars have acknowledged that there is a biblical basis for cardinal points of Adventist faith such as the Sabbath, the second Advent and the nature of man. But without exception, and often in the most emphatic terms, they denounce our interpretation of Daniel 8:14 as eisegesis of the worst sort, that is as reading *into* Scripture concepts that cannot, by any fair application of generally recognized principles of interpretation, be drawn *from* Scripture. Seventh-day Adventists identify the sanctuary mentioned in Daniel 8:40 as the sanctuary in heaven referred to in the book of Hebrews, and they understand its cleansing as the blotting out of the confessed sins of God's repentant people during the course of an investigative judgment, on an antitypical day of atonement that began in 1844.

Upon more than one occasion, Adventist teachings that cluster around Daniel 8:14

Raymond Cottrell, a former missionary to China and religion teacher at Pacific Union College, has been associate editor of the *SDA Bible Commentary* and the *Adventist Review*, and book editor of the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

have proved to be an impassible barrier to the thoughtful consideration of the Advent message as a credible, authentic message from God for our time. This comment by Dr. Harold Lindsell in *Christianity Today* ten years before he became editor of that journal is typical:

SDA claims its teachings are based upon the Bible. But an examination of its "Fundamental Beliefs" published in the volume *Questions on Doctrine* reveals some interesting exceptions. "Fundamental Beliefs" contain 22 propositions, beginning with a statement on the Scriptures and the Trinity, then moving through the gamut of theology. In each instance the biblical passages are listed at the end of each statement showing the grounds on which their convictions are founded. Without biblical backing, however, are statements 13, 14, and 15. These deal with one of the touchiest segments of Adventist teaching — the 70 weeks and 2300 years and the cleansing of the sanctuary. The date 1844, which involves the 2300 years and the cleansing of the sanctuary, are pivotal of SDA faith. Destroy these and certain conclusions are self-evident. There would be no adequate basis for the existence of SDA.

But there are *no* definite statements in the Bible which support the view of SDA on this point. Their conclusions are derived from the teachings of Mrs. White, which, in turn, are the result of her *interpretation* of the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

The invariable rule appears to be that the more a non-Adventist knows about the Bible, the less disposed he is to look with favor on the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 or to become a Seventh-day Adventist.<sup>2</sup> The fact that no competent non-Adventist Bible scholar, whatever his position on the conservative-liberal spectrum, has ever accepted the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 should be a matter for sober reflection on our part. It also suggests the desirability of (1) a careful reexamination of the basic assumptions and the principles of exegesis on which we have based our interpretation of this — for Adventism — indispensable passage of Scripture, (2) the formulation of a valid, adequate hermeneutic, if such be possible, and (3) an application of this hermeneutic to the passage in question.

**M**y personal quest for an acceptable hermeneutic for Daniel 8:14 began when a series of events culminated in 1958. I first became aware of the problem while teaching the class in Daniel and the Revelation over a period of years prior to taking up editorial work in 1952. However, there seemed to be no pressing reason at that time for an in-depth study of Daniel, especially in view of the fact that during those earlier years I was involved in a series of major Bible study projects focusing on the book of Revelation and on sound principles of biblical interpretation.

The first major incentive to devote serious attention to the problem in Daniel 8:14 arose during the course of editing the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, between 1952 and 1957. It came into sharp focus for the first time as we were preparing Volume 4 of the *Commentary* (which includes comment on the Book of Daniel) for publication. The editors' basic principle was to be faithful to the meaning of each passage of Scripture, as determined by its own language, context and historical setting. The endeavor to apply these

principles to Daniel 8:14 made the *Commentary* editors more keenly aware of the problem than we had been before. However, the rigorous publication schedule prevented further consideration of the matter at that time.

Within a few months after the publication of Volume 4 of the *Commentary* came the series of protracted doctrinal discussions with Walter R. Martin and Donald Grey Barnhouse. The editors of the *Commentary* were not directly involved in those discussions, but those who were — not having a knowledge of biblical languages themselves — came to us almost daily over a period of several months for assistance on a wide range of matters of biblical interpretation, including Daniel 8 and 9. This made us still further aware of problems in the book of Daniel.

Toward the close of the Martin-Barnhouse discussions, it was decided to publish Adventist replies to their questions about our beliefs, under the title, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*. Members of the editorial committee appointed by the General Conference officers to shape the material for publication likewise consulted at length with the *Commentary* editors on matters of exegesis. Walter Martin had asked for an official statement of Adventist beliefs to which he could refer in his book, and *Questions on Doctrine* was intended to come as close to being such an official statement as an unofficial publication could be.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, in 1958, it was necessary to prepare new plates for the book *Bible Readings*, inasmuch as the old plates were worn out. It was desired to bring *Bible Readings* up to date and, wherever necessary, into harmony with the recently published *Bible Commentary*. For this reason, the work of revision was assigned to the editors of the *Bible Commentary* — F. D. Nichol, Don Neufeld and myself. Quite by accident, the portion of *Bible Readings* Elder Nichol assigned to me included the section on the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. With the statements by Lindsell, Barnhouse, Martin and others ringing in my ears, I cast about for a more effective and convincing way of presenting our beliefs related to Daniel 8:14, in order — if possible — to surmount the barrage of criticism that had come

to focus on our interpretation of this text. The 1958 edition of *Bible Readings* reflects this attempt. I was well aware of the inadequacy of what appears there, but it was the best that could be done at that time.

While editing *Bible Readings*, and in counsel with Elder Nichol as chief editor of the revision, I wrote to 27 leading Adventist Bible scholars for their response to a series of six carefully formulated questions designed to bring the best contemporary Adventist biblical scholarship to bear on the question. All 27 responded, many at considerable length. A careful analysis and synthesis of their replies provided no additional help with respect to the problems arising from our interpretation of Daniel 8:14, and made evident that we had no satisfactory answer to the criticisms being directed against our interpretation of this key Adventist passage. Thirteen replied that they knew of no other valid basis for making such an application; seven based it on analogy; five, on the authority of Ellen White; two, on what they referred to as a “fortunate accident” in translation.<sup>4</sup> Not one of the 27 believed that there was a linguistic or contextual basis for applying Daniel 8:14 to the heavenly sanctuary, an antitypical day of atonement, or 1844.

As a result, Elder Nichol brought the results of the questionnaire to the attention of the president of the General Conference and the General Conference officers, who appointed a select “Committee on Problems in the Book of Daniel” and assigned it the task of giving careful study to the problems centering around Daniel 8:14.<sup>5</sup> Members of the “Daniel Committee,” as it came to be called, were in agreement with respect to key Adventist teachings on the heavenly sanctuary and its cleansing, the investigative judgment and the 1844 experience.<sup>6</sup> There were, however, decided differences of opinion as to a valid hermeneutic, or interpretation, on which to base these conclusions, and eventually two basic patterns of interpretation emerged. The majority considered it possible to establish the Adventist exposition of Daniel 8:14 directly from the Bible, chiefly by analogy with Genesis 1:5, Leviticus 16 and

Hebrews 9. To the minority, these were not valid analogies, from the viewpoint of biblical exegesis, and Ellen White’s confirmation of the explanations given and her reinterpretation were necessary as well.<sup>7</sup> The majority and the minority both reached the same conclusions, but by different routes.

**“Not one of the 27 believed that there was a linguistic or contextual basis for applying Daniel 8:14 to the heavenly sanctuary, an antitypical day of atonement, or 1844.”**

The majority proposed, finally, that the traditional hermeneutic and interpretation be accepted as the consensus of the committee and as the basis of its report to the General Conference officers, along with inspirational and practical lessons designed to strengthen the faith of our people in the sanctuary doctrine as taught by Seventh-day Adventists. The report they suggested would mention neither the problems nor the minority hermeneutic as a possible solution to them.

To the minority, the proposed report would vitiate the original intention of the General Conference officers in setting up a committee they had designated, “Committee on *Problems* in the Book of Daniel.” Those to whom the traditional hermeneutic seemed so inadequate did not wish their names attached to it.

The minority, with a sincere desire not to stand in the way of the majority, but to be as cooperative with their expressed wish as possible, suggested four possible alternatives to the proposed report: (1) preferably, that a report be prepared fairly setting forth both points of view, or (2) that the proposed report be published without the names of the committee members attached to it, or (3) that members of the committee be authorized to submit papers for publication under their own names, without reference to the committee, or (4) that the minority, as a last re-

sort, be permitted to withdraw from the committee, thereby permitting *de facto* unanimity and the report the majority desired.

The minority felt that it would be dishonest on their part to agree to their names being attached to a report that would, in some circles, be acclaimed as a definitive solution to the problem by a blue ribbon committee and in others as an obscurantist whitewash of the problem, and which would in fact leave matters precisely where they had been when the committee took up its task four years earlier. As a result of this impasse, the committee finally agreed to issue no formal report, and authorized individual members to present papers on the subject for publication under their own names.<sup>8</sup>

About the time the revision of *Bible Readings* was complete—in 1958—I began a thorough investigation of Daniel 8:14, for my own information and in the hope of being able to provide something that would be useful to the church in view of the exegetical impasse. My 900-page manuscript entitled *The Eschatology of Daniel* is a report of this protracted study, which occupied a major part of my spare time over a period of nearly 15 years.<sup>9</sup> The purpose of this study was not to *interpret* the eschatological passages of Daniel nor to *apply* them to the recorded events of history, but to ascertain as accurately as possible, from the words, the context and the historical setting Daniel himself provides, what the angel and the prophet intended readers of the book of Daniel to understand.

This study involved many steps. I first memorized the entire eschatological text of Daniel in Hebrew, until it flowed as freely and smoothly through my own mind, hopefully, as it had through the mind of Daniel. There followed an exhaustive word study of every significant Hebrew word (150 of them) that occurs in the eschatological text of Daniel, in every occurrence throughout the Old Testament but with special attention to its use by other Bible writers more or less contemporary with Daniel (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai,

Zechariah), and most particularly by Daniel himself in the context in which he uses it. These Hebrew terms were placed in their own immediate context, and in analogous contexts in the other eschatological passages of Daniel. Daniel's own thinking as he contemplated the information the angel revealed to him in vision was studied against the background of the eschatology of the entire Old Testament. This entire study formed the background for a paraphrastic translation that seeks to reflect the authentic import of what Daniel and the Holy Spirit intended his messages to convey, but avoids any attempt to ascertain or determine their import beyond what Daniel actually wrote.

It was necessary to formulate a method of interpretation by which to attain as accurate an understanding as possible of the import of the eschatological passages of Daniel for our time.<sup>10</sup> This document of 200 pages is based on a detailed, inductive investigation of every passage of Scripture that sheds light on such matters as the manner in which God enters history to effect the plan of salvation, His relationship to ancient Israel under the covenant, the nature of predictive prophecy, the eschatology of the Old Testament, and that of the New Testament and Ellen White.

This exhaustive study of the eschatological text of Daniel, and a hermeneutic for understanding it, concluded that the exegesis of apocalyptic predictive prophecy is susceptible to historical-linguistic-contextual norms rigorously applied, as a necessary means by which to determine as precisely as possible what the inspired writer meant by what he wrote. Furthermore, when interpreting apocalyptic predictive prophecy, it is essential to consider the nature and purpose of apocalyptic as a literary genre, and to let the inspired writer himself determine the meaning of his symbolic figures and cryptic expressions. Thus, apocalyptic predictive prophecy should be understood in the terms of the historical situation that called it forth and to which it was originally addressed. Any application beyond that historical situation should be determined by later inspired writers. All predictive prophecy applicable to events within probationary time constitutes a declaration of the divine *purpose* and is al-

ways conditional on the cooperation of God's covenant people.

The study also recognized that the eschatological sections of Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, 10-12 are all parallel, each with the others, and that each traces the future from Daniel's time down to and including the eschaton. Yet, two fundamental, discrete prophetic cycles appear in Daniel, one consisting of chapters 2 and 7, and the other of chapters 8-12. The vision of chapters 8:1-14 constitutes the basis for the explanatory passages of chapters 8:20-27, 9:24-27, and 11:1 to 12:13. The second cycle, consisting of chapters 8-12, constitutes a disclosure of the divine purpose with respect to ancient Israel for the restoration era designated as 70 weeks of years. Thus, the eschatology of Daniel, originally given within the historical setting of Israel as God's covenant people and the chosen instrument of His purpose in salvation history, was originally intended to apply strictly and exclusively to ancient Israel under the covenant relationship, and that everything Daniel wrote was originally to have been fulfilled to

**“The proof text method tends to go to the Bible with an idea, searching for statements that can be construed as providing support for that idea, and in so doing read that idea into Scripture.”**

them within the 70 weeks of years of the restoration era following the Babylonian exile.

The eschatology of Daniel is consonant with all other Old Testament eschatology, particularly that of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah. A study of Old Testament eschatology as a whole clarifies, and is essential to, an understanding of Daniel's eschatology. We must realize, however, that Israel's withdrawal from the covenant relationship at the cross rendered the fulfillment of the eschatological predictions of Daniel moot, and that—like everything else related

to God's covenant with Israel — reinterpreted by a later inspired writer was necessary in order to reactivate the predictions and to ascertain their fulfillment within the new historical setting with the church as the covenant people and chosen instrument of the divine purpose. For example, Christ and the New Testament writers envisioned His return and the fulfillment of the eschatological predictions of Daniel within their own generation. Also, Christ (Matthew 24), Paul (2 Thessalonians 2) and John (Revelation 12-20) provide a reinterpretation of Daniel for New Testament times, and Ellen White provides a continuing reinterpretation appropriate for our time.<sup>11</sup>

**M**y study also concluded that in their original intent the he-goat, its four horns and its little horn were all originally intended to continue down to, and to include, the eschaton; that *Ereb-boqer* in Daniel 8:14 and 26 originally referred to the daily morning and evening ritual worship services in the temple; that each of these ritual services, in and of itself, constituted a complete and discrete unit, one each morning and another each evening; that 2,300 ritual services would be conducted over a period of 1,150 literal days which Daniel, in chapter 9, assigns to the last half of the seventieth of the 70 weeks of years. Furthermore, the study showed that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 is the same sanctuary referred to in verses 11-13, that is, the ancient temple in Jerusalem; that the “cleansing” or “restoration” of the temple to its “rightful state” constituted its purification and rededication after desecration by the little horn tyrant as described in verses 9-13; that chapter 9:24-27, in its entirety, parallels Daniel 8:9-14 and explains it; that the decree of chapter 9:25 is identical with the decree of verse 23, which “went forth” at the moment Daniel began to pray—as the angel explicitly told Daniel that the 70 weeks of years thus commenced in 538/7 B.C., when the 70 years of Daniel's exile terminated; that Daniel 9:27, in its entirety, describes the career of the tyrant “prince who is to come” set forth in verse 26, and that this conclusion is required both by the context and to com-

plete the parallel between chapters 8 and 9.

I believe that the hermeneutical principles outlined above provided an adequate inspired basis for applying the 2,300 evenings-mornings to 2,300 literal years terminating in 1844, the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 to the sanctuary and Christ's ministry in heaven, and its cleansing to a pre-Advent judgment commencing in that year. These principles of interpretation give faithful attention to the original import of the eschatological sections of Daniel according to accepted historical-linguistic-contextual norms, and at the same time provide an equally consistent reinterpretation in terms of their historic interpretation by Seventh-day Adventists. This hermeneutic thus preserves both the historical-contextual exegesis of Daniel, and the historic Adventist interpretation, each in its full and undiminished integrity and with complete harmony between the two.

Let it be clearly understood that the hermeneutic here proposed in no way alters the teachings we have traditionally based on Daniel 8:14. It does not affect the *content* of these teachings, but the *method* by which they are established as truth—present truth—for our time.

**I**n view of all of this, how did the church arrive at its traditional interpretation, and how did our present incipient crisis arise?

Seventh-day Adventism grew out of the concept of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary as the true explanation of the 1844 experience, which had been based on a particular interpretation of Daniel 8:14. This and the seventh-day Sabbath proved to be the unifying factors that transformed a mere handful of scattered believers into "the little flock" that later adopted the name "Seventh-day Adventists."

In arriving at these conclusions, William Miller and other early Adventists basically followed the proof text method in their study of the Bible. This method assumes—correctly—that the Bible is God's word addressed to us today, but in practice it forgets that the messages of the Bible were originally addressed to ancient Israel and applied to

them within the covenant perspective of salvation history. It operates on the basis of a false concept of the unity of Scripture that, for practical purposes, ignores the human aspect of Scripture and the different points of view expressed by the various inspired writers. The proof text method considers Bible truth to be propositional, with the result that it often isolates Bible statements from their literary as well as historical context. An English translation of the Bible, preferably the King James Version, is considered as normative, and its words and statements are understood in a sense meaningful to modern readers—from our perspective of salvation history. Definition of Bible words are taken from an English dictionary. The proof text method is unaware that the same Hebrew or Greek word may have different meanings, which can be determined only by the context in which they are used, or that the translators may have rendered it by different English words, and that different Hebrew and Greek words are sometimes rendered into English by the same English word. It commonly applies the analogy of Scripture — "comparing scripture with scripture" — primarily on a verbal level, with inadequate, if any, endeavor to ascertain the meaning of each statement in its own literary and historical context.

In applying the proof text method, a person's presuppositions and subjective judgment tend to determine his selection and evaluation of evidence, and his conclusions. Because he has no objective means by which to test his conclusions, it is inevitable that those who follow this method find it difficult, if not impossible, to reach a consensus with respect to the meaning of Scripture. Instead of going to the Bible and listening intently to the inspired writers in order to ascertain the meaning *they* intend their words to convey, the proof text method tends to go to the Bible with an idea, searching for statements that can be construed as providing support for that idea, and in so doing read that idea *into* Scripture. The proof text method is basically what Bible scholars call eisegesis, in contrast to exegesis.

Let it be said, however, that the proof text method *is* adequate for finding the way to

salvation in Jesus Christ, for being a real Christian, and for learning much about the will and purposes of God. But at the same time it is severely limited, at many points, in its ability to ascertain the true meaning of Scripture and to deal adequately with many important issues.

The pioneers of the Advent message followed the proof text method in their study of the Bible. It was the best they could do, and as always God accepted and blessed their dedicated efforts. It was nothing less than a miracle that our spiritual forefathers found any consensus to unite them on important points of faith, and that their conclusions have, generally speaking, endured the test of time and more adequate methods of Bible study we make use of today. That miracle was the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the person and ministry of Ellen White, to guide the infant church in its dedicated quest for truth. When the pioneers had done their best, her selective choice among the resulting alternatives determined which of the various interpretations the infant church should adopt. Whether or not this selection comported with strict exegesis of the Bible is irrelevant. The New Testament writers do precisely the same with the Old Testament. Sometimes Ellen White's choice consisted of setting forth "present truth" for our time *based* on a passage of Scripture without necessarily being the intended meaning of the Bible passage itself, but it was nevertheless *present* truth for *us* today—based on the teaching authority of the new inspired witness. Ellen White's living presence—or rather, the presence of the Holy Spirit—entrusted Seventh-day Adventists with present truth appropriate for the church today and provided the church with the unifying influence it needed to transform the "little flock scattered abroad" into the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**T**he death of Ellen White in 1915 confronted Seventh-day Adventists with a major problem in their study of the Bible. Over the next two or three decades, we would often hear someone say wistfully, "I wish Sister White were here, then we could ask her." But

she was no longer here, in person, and without her the old proof text method was no longer viable.

At the 1919 Bible conference in Washington, D.C., four years later, the Bible scholars and administrators of the church momentarily faced up to the problem, and from the transcript of their discussion<sup>12</sup> it is evident that the door to a solution of the problem of the relation of Ellen White to the Bible briefly stood ajar. But instead of courageously going through the open door and fully exploring the uncharted region beyond, the church timorously closed it and elected to follow an obscurantist policy that kept it closed for another 20 years or so. Instead, the church chose to accord the voluminous writings of Ellen White the same role she had filled in

**“There is something grievously wrong about the way in which the church began to use her writings as a norm for interpreting Scripture, and the way some continue to do today.”**

person for 70 years, and began to use her writings to determine points of exegesis. "Sister White says . . ." was supposed to settle every difference of opinion as the meaning of a passage of Scripture on which she commented, despite the fact that she had repeatedly protested against such use of her writings.<sup>13</sup>

The problem in using her writings to determine the meaning of Scripture lay in the fact that she used the Bible in many different modes, all the way from comment on a passage in context, recognizing its inherent meaning, to borrowing the words of Scripture to set forth truth in no way related to the original import of the words. Furthermore, the church began to apply the proof text method to her writings as it was already doing to the Bible, and the inherent weaknesses of that method often produced a vari-



ety of interpretations of what Ellen White meant by what she wrote. As a result, people could quote Ellen White on both sides of a moot question, sometimes in apparent contradiction of herself. The upshot of this unwise attitude toward the writings of Ellen White was that, whereas her living presence had compensated for the inherent weaknesses of the proof text method and was a strong force for unity in the church, this misuse of her writings—of which she herself disapproved—became a potent source of disunity. It opened up a can of theological worms, some of which are still crawling about. Willingness on the part of the church to go through the hermeneutical door that momentarily stood ajar in 1919 would have spared us many a needless doctrinal debate and many an unnecessary personal heartache in the years since then.

Make no mistake. There is nothing whatever wrong with Ellen White's use of the Bible *when we understand how and why she uses it as she does*, but there *is* something grievously wrong about the way in which the church began to use her writings as a norm for interpreting Scripture, and the way some continue to do today. This egregious error on *our* part, coupled with continued use of the proof text method in studying both the Bible and her writings, has been at the root of practically every theological problem that has confronted the church over the 65 years since her death. It has been at the root of the problems posed by such men as L. R. Conradi, W. W. Fletcher, Victor Houteff, Robert Brinsmead and numerous others. It is at the root of our continuing problems with Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9. Suffice it to say that by the mid-1930s we were far up a theological *cul de sac*, with no way out in the direction in which we were headed.

Curiously, as long ago at 1871 Ellen White herself had pointed the way out of this *cul de sac*, and to a resolution of the theological impasse. In that year, she wrote: "If you had made God's word your study, with a desire to reach the Bible standard and attain to Christian perfection, you would not have needed the *Testimonies*."<sup>14</sup> A careful reading

of the context makes evident that she was here speaking of practical matters of Christian conduct, but her statement applies with equal force to matters of exegesis and doctrine.

During the 1930s Adventist college Bible teachers began to make consistent use of the historical-linguistic-contextual method of Bible study, instead of the proof text method. They began consistently to study the Bible in its original languages and in its historical and literary setting. By careful attention to language and context, both literary and historical, they were able to let the Bible serve as its own interpreter, to let Scripture interpret Scripture in a safe, reliable way. The result was a much more accurate understanding of the Bible — in terms of what the Bible itself actually says rather than what the modern reader with his modern concepts and perspective of salvation history may suppose it says. At long last, Adventist Bible scholars began to do what Ellen White had counseled so many years before — go to the Scriptures and listen attentively to what the inspired writers meant by what they wrote.

The aim of the historical method is precisely that—to ascertain as accurately as possible the meaning the Bible writers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, intended their words to convey, as a basis for understanding the spiritual truth their writings have for us today. It does so by a careful study of each statement of Scripture in its own historical setting and literary context, and each word of the passage in the original language, as it is used in that particular context and elsewhere in the Bible. With the historical method of exegesis and interpretation, a high degree of accuracy becomes possible. It becomes possible, also, to test one's conclusions by objective criteria and achieve greater consensus.

The Bible Research Fellowship (1940-1952), the first professional organization of Adventist Bible scholars, encouraged its use, and out of the Fellowship grew the Office of Bible Research in the General Conference and the Biblical Research Committee, in 1952.<sup>15</sup> The Bible Research Fellowship provided an atmosphere in which Adventist Bible scholars could work together in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence in one

another, with complete dedication to the church and the Advent Message, and above all, with complete loyalty to the Bible. The principal importance of the Fellowship to the church was the fact that it fostered the historical method of Bible study on the part of persons qualified to use it, and united the college Bible teachers of the church in much of their understanding of the Bible.

However, the General Conference administration that took office in 1966 favored the proof text method and distrusted those who made use of the historical method. It was the declared policy of the administration that administrators, and not the Bible scholars of the church, should make its theological decisions. It appointed persons who had no training, experience, or expertise in biblical studies on the research level to govern Adventist Bible research and to monitor those who engaged in it. In all of this, it was utterly and impeccably sincere, but implementation of this policy gave rise to most of the vicissitudes that overtook the Bible scholars and the biblical research program of the church over the past 14 years. It contributed to our

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inability to resolve a number of theological issues that arose during this time, and among others, our failure to reach concensus with respect to Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9.

For 25 years or more, the Bible scholars of the church have been well aware of the exegetical problems our conventional interpretation of Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9 encounters in these passages. Earlier, such men as A. F. Ballenger, L. R. Conradi and W. W. Fletcher, among others, had called attention to these problems. But the proof text method of their day had no viable hermeneu-

tic adequate to resolve them. As a result, they rejected the teaching authority of Ellen White and left the church.

Both before and since the denouement of the “Daniel Committee” in 1966, a few individuals carefully studied the exegetical problems posed by Daniel 8:14. But by the time these studies approached maturity, in the early 1970s, an atmosphere of obscurantism had settled over the biblical research program of the church. Repeated opportunities arose for the Bible scholars of the church to give consideration to the exegetical problems and to evaluate hermeneutics that were proposed for resolving them but, unfortunately, denominational policy aborted *objective* study. Over the past ten years, Bible scholars have been unable to work together effectively and reach a working consensus with respect to these problems. This is the basic reason why the present incipient crisis has caught the church unprepared.

**N**on-Adventist critics of the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 object that it cannot be derived *from* the words of Scripture but is superimposed *upon* them. This criticism is directed, not so much at our teachings concerning the sanctuary, as at the fact that we base them on Daniel 8:14. To be sure, critics usually zero in on the conclusions, but careful analysis of their objections makes evident that the real problem, from their point of view, is our methodology. They do not object so much to our belief in an investigative judgment going on in heaven since 1844, as they do to our use of that unbiblical term, and to our insistence that any valid principles of interpretation can derive this from Daniel 8:14. The basic issue is one of method much more than it is of content. The problem is clear, especially if one remembers the unanimous acknowledgment of leading Adventist biblical scholars, clearly expressed in the 1958 poll, that there is *no* linguistic or contextual basis for our traditional interpretation of this passage.<sup>16</sup>

The validity of the method by which we reach truth is our only reliable and convincing guarantee that our conclusions are true. A

demonstrably invalid method inevitably places the conclusions to which it leads in doubt as well, and that is the crux of our critics' argument. A mathematics student may be in possession of the right answer to a complex problem, but unless he is able to demonstrate, step by step, that his method for reaching the right answer is valid in terms of recognized mathematical principles, and that his reasoning process does, in fact, lead to that solution, those who examine his paper will not only question his understanding of the problem, but also his intellectual honesty and personal integrity as well. In a similar way, the credibility and integrity of the Advent message are at stake in the way we as a church relate to the exegetical problems in Daniel 8:14 and in the hermeneutic by which we arrive at our traditional conclusions.

The issue of Daniel 8:14 is still with us because we have been unwilling, thus far, to face up to the fact that a very real exegetical problem does exist. That issue will not go away so long as we keep pretending that there is no problem, so long as we insist on holding our heads, individually and collectively, in the sand of our preconceived opinions. It won't go away until we face up to it and accord it the respect and attention it deserves. It won't go away so long as our search for truth consists primarily in looking for proof of what we already think we believe. It won't go away until we learn to listen attentively and with humble hearts to what the divine Spirit *is* saying through the words of Holy Writ, and until we do this we will continue—unnecessarily—to alienate the respect and confidence of thinking, biblically literate Adventists and non-Adventists alike.

First exposure to the fact that these exegetical problems are for real and not the product of someone's perverted imagination is understandably a traumatic experience for any dedicated, thinking Seventh-day Adventist.

But now that the issue is clearly drawn and can no longer be ignored, it would be highly irresponsible on our part not to deal objectively and fairly with it. A conclusive case for the heavenly sanctuary and a pre-Advent judgment can be made directly from Scripture,<sup>17</sup> wholly apart from Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9,<sup>18</sup> as most of our critics would agree. Can we not be willing to rely on these other passages, be content to affirm as the teaching of Scripture only such concepts as the Scriptures themselves *plainly* teach, and use biblical terminology to express these concepts? When we affirm more than the Bible plainly states, or use strange, nonbiblical terminology,<sup>19</sup> we invite misunderstanding and criticism—needlessly. We object when others do so; should we not be willing to live up to the same standards we expect of them? The golden rule is fully as valid for biblical exegesis as it is for interpersonal relationships.

If we are able and willing to face up to the facts in a mature, responsible way, we will find an even firmer foundation for our faith and for the proclamation of the Advent message to the world than we have had in the past—one that will be immune to attack on biblical grounds. There *is* a way to say what needs to be said, in a way that will not lay us open to justified criticism.<sup>20</sup> The pillars of the temple need not crumble; there is no intrinsic reason why they should even shake. Their foundation will be firmer than before. Let us face the issue together and go forward in faith as fellow pilgrims in the quest for truth; let us listen attentively and with respect to one another; let us be absolutely fair with the facts and with one another; let us be willing to modify our presuppositions where the facts may indicate; and let us press forward under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with enlightened zeal to finish the task we believe God in His providence has entrusted to us.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Harold Lindsell, "What of Seventh-day Adventism," *Christianity Today*, 2 (March, 31, 1958), 6, emphasis his. A second article appeared in the April 14 issue. At the request of the General Conference, Dr. Frank H. Yost, then secretary of the Religious Liberty Department and editor of *Liberty*, prepared an extended response to the Lindsell articles, which *Chris-*

*tianity Today* printed in its July 21 issue. Also as a direct result of the Lindsell articles, the 1970 General Conference session added certain Bible references to statements 13, 14 and 15 of "Fundamental Beliefs," which appeared for the first time in the 1971 edition of the *Yearbook*.

2. See Donald Grey Barnhouse, "Are Seventh-day

Adventists Christians?" *Eternity*, 7 (September 1956), 6.

3. Only statements of doctrine approved by the General Conference in session are considered official in the formal sense of the word. For the most recent statement of Adventist beliefs, see "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," *Adventist Review*, 157 (February 21, 1980), 192.

4. The six questions were: (1) What linguistic basis is there for translating *nišdaq* as "cleansed," (2) Why did the translators of the LXX render *nišdaq* as *katharistesetai*? (3) What is the relation of *nišdaq* to its context? (4) How would you render *nišdaq* in terms of its context? (5) What linguistic or contextual reasons can you suggest for applying *nišdaq* to the services of the day of atonement and thus to the investigative judgment beginning in 1844? (6) What reasons other than language and context would you suggest for applying *nišdaq* to the services of the day of atonement and thus to the investigative judgment beginning in 1844? This questionnaire was sent to every teacher of Hebrew, to the head of every college Bible department in North America, to all biblical studies teachers at the Theological Seminary, and to several Bible scholars in administrative and editorial assignments.

5. This committee, appointed in the autumn of 1960, devoted 16 full days to the assignment between January 1962 and March 1966.

6. Appointed members were H. W. Lowe, chairman; R. A. Anderson, Raymond F. Cottrell, Richard Hammill, Edward Heppenstall, W. G. C. Murdoch, Don F. Neufeld, Leo Odom and W. E. Read. Invited members were Earle Hilgert, S. H. Horn, Alger Johns, Graham Maxwell and M. R. Thurber.

7. The minority recognized Ellen White's comment relative to Daniel 8:14 as reinterpretation by a later inspired writer, not as exegesis—as "present truth" appropriate for our time.

8. Forty-five formal papers were presented and discussed. My personal, complete file has been deposited in the General Conference Archives.

9. This manuscript has not been published and is not available. A fair knowledge of Hebrew would be necessary to make intelligent use of it in its present form. One of our publishing houses, and more recently some persons in the General Conference, have requested that it be condensed, adapted for English readers, and submitted for publication.

10. The 200-page document provides full documentation, point by point. There may be a better hermeneutical solution to the problem than the one here proposed. If so, let us have it; the church needs it. The hermeneutic here suggested is tentative, not definitive. We should examine other proposed solutions to the problem with an open mind and be willing to

make adjustments in our presuppositions as the evidence requires.

11. A comparison of the Greek text of these passages with the LXX of Daniel makes evident that all three New Testament writers are consciously commenting on the prophecies of Daniel. Inasmuch as all three are applying the prophecies of Daniel *outside* of the time limits Daniel specified, it is evident that they are *reinterpreting* Daniel for New Testament times.

12. See "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History" and "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible," *SPECTRUM*, 10 (May 1979), 23-57.

13. For example: "I request that my writings shall not be used as the leading argument to settle questions over which there is now so much controversy. I entreat of Elders H, I, J, and others of our leading brethren, that they make no reference to my writings to sustain their views of 'the daily.' . . . I cannot consent that any of my writings shall be taken as settling this matter. . . . I now ask that my ministering brethren shall not make use of my writings in their argument regarding this question ['the daily'], for I have had no instruction on the point under discussion, and I see no need for the controversy. Regarding this matter under present conditions, silence is eloquence."—Ellen White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 164.

14. Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 605.

15. Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Bible Research Fellowship: A Pioneering Seventh-day Adventist Organization in Retrospect," *Adventist Heritage*, 5 (Summer 1978), 39.

16. A poll of Adventist Bible scholars concerning Daniel 8:14 and Hebrews 9 is currently being taken, to ascertain their thinking now, 22 years after the first poll already referred to. The new poll lists 74 items to which a response is requested.

17. The heavenly sanctuary as presented in the Book of Hebrews; the judgment as set forth in Daniel 7; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16; 3:6; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5; Revelation 11:18; 19:11; 20:12-13.

18. Hebrews 9 is not a valid source for information on the investigative judgment.

19. In context, the judgment of Daniel 7 deals with those who oppose God's will, not with God's faithful people.

20. See Raymond F. Cottrell, *Beyond Tomorrow*, pp. 307-316, for an attempt to be faithful to context when presenting the Adventist approach to Daniel 8:14 in relation to 1844. During the 17 years since its publication, the author has received no criticism of the volume's methodology and conclusions.

# Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen G. White Studies in the 1970s

by Donald R. McAdams

In 1970, 55 years after the death of Ellen G. White, Adventist scholars began for the first time to examine critically her writings and to share their conclusions with the community of Adventist intellectuals.<sup>1</sup> The scholarship started with a cluster of articles in the autumn 1970 number of *SPECTRUM*. Other articles, a book and several unpublished manuscripts followed. Ten years later, we can see that the 1970s introduced a new era in the study of Ellen White.

The scholarship of this decade differs significantly from what has gone before. One of the reasons for this difference is *SPECTRUM*. Not only has an outlet for their work stimulated Adventist scholars to engage in systematic research, but also the dissemination of the research to the Adventist intellectual community has enabled scholars to build on what has gone before. Just as scientific periodicals were essential for the “Scientific Revolution,” *SPECTRUM* has been essential for the development of Ellen White studies.

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A more fundamental reason for the critical work done in the 1970s is that, considering the historical development of Adventism, it was inevitable. A religious or revolutionary movement that becomes a historical force must have a first generation of leaders we might call founding fathers. The founding fathers endure opposition, privation, suffering, and, in the face of great odds, create a revolution, establish a new nation or create a religious movement. They are characterized by tremendous energy, unswerving commitment to a goal and the charisma to translate theory into practice.

It is the task of the second-generation leaders to hold the movement together without the charisma and prestige of the founding fathers. Faced with the possibility of disintegration, the second-generation leaders elevate the symbol of the movement onto a lofty pedestal and claim great virtue, wisdom and authority for the now-dead founder. Nothing gives the second-generation leaders more authority than to claim all wisdom for the founder and claim for themselves the exclusive right to interpret his legacy.

But, inevitably, a third generation arises — a generation that has been reared in what is no longer a young and struggling movement,

but a well-established and apparently indestructible party, nation or church. Secure in the stability and strength of the organization, the third generation will commence the critical examination of the movement's origin. If this paradigm is even a little accurate, by 1970 the time had come for Adventists to conduct a critical examination of Ellen White's spiritual gift.

There were, of course, questions about Ellen White before 1970. From the time of her first vision in December 1844 until her death in July 1915, the originality and authority of Ellen White's writings were debated frequently. Occasionally, the debate became bitter and public as the names D. M. Canright, John Harvey Kellogg and A. T. Jones remind us. But the examination of Ellen White's gift that took place before her death came not from believing scholars seeking to understand how God's Spirit had worked in her life. The critics were either active participants in the political life of the church, making points in a struggle for power, or bitter apostates.

Following Ellen White's death, ministers and teachers continued to discuss the nature and proper use of the "Spirit of Prophecy." This ferment has been dramatically revealed by the publication in the May 1979 SPECTRUM of selected transcripts from the Bible and History Teachers Conference held in Takoma Park in 1919. An unpublished paper by Bert Haloviak, assistant director of the General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics, describes the passionate and sometimes heated controversy that swirled around the Bible Conference and the debate on the meaning of the "Daily" in Daniel 8:11-13. The interpretation and use of the "Spirit of Prophecy" was the real issue in this debate which began as early as 1898 and continued into the 1930s. And charges that they were weak on the "Spirit of Prophecy" contributed to the termination of E. F. Albertsworth, H. C. Lacey and C. M. Sorenson from the Bible department of Washington Foreign Mission Seminary in 1920 and the nonreelection of A. G. Daniells as General Conference president in 1922.<sup>2</sup>

In response to the attacks on Ellen White by Canright and others and in an attempt to

settle the disputes of the 1920s and 1930s, Adventists published several significant books on Ellen White: W. H. Branson's *In Defense of the Faith: The Truth About Seventh-day Adventists, A Reply to Canright* (1933),<sup>3</sup> F. M. Wilcox's *The Testimony of Jesus, A Review of the Work and Teachings of Mrs. Ellen Gould White* (1934),<sup>4</sup> and Francis D. Nichol's exhaustive *Ellen G. White and Her Critics: An Answer to the Major Charges that Critics Have Brought Against Mrs. Ellen G. White* (1951).<sup>5</sup> These books, and others, were based on careful research and were the products of first-class minds. They are extremely valuable for what they tell us about Ellen White and how the church leaders viewed her writings and expected Adventists to use them. One could not say, however, that these books were critical examinations of the "Spirit of Prophecy." They were apologetic books written to answer the charges of critics and bolster the faith of believers.

The scholarship of the 1970s had a different origin and purpose. It began with a bang in the autumn 1970 SPECTRUM. Richard B. Lewis, professor of English at Loma Linda University, pointed out that to use the expression "Spirit of Prophecy" to refer to Ellen White or her writings was neither precise use of language nor unquestionably sound exegesis of Revelation 14:12 and Revelation 12:17.<sup>6</sup>

Frederick E. J. Harder, dean of the School of Graduate Studies at Andrews University, in a sophisticated theological analysis of divine revelation, suggested a flexible and experiential view of revelation and emphasized the work of the Spirit of God on the contemporary church both individually and collectively.<sup>7</sup> "The Holy Spirit," said Harder, "acts on the mind by expanding its powers, enlightening its understanding, impressing it with flashes of insight and conviction, guiding it into attitudes, and impressing upon it a character. By such concursive action God reveals Himself to man and man apprehends God."<sup>8</sup> Harder made two very significant statements regarding Ellen White's historical work: "She was not writing history, she was interpreting it";<sup>9</sup> and

“the history was learned by ordinary means, but the activity of God in the historical situation was seen by revelation.”<sup>10</sup> Harder’s article anticipated some of the major conclusions of the decade. The research of the past ten years can be easily fit into the model of inspiration he suggested.

Unfortunately, Harder’s article did not receive the attention it deserved because of the furor created by the articles prepared by Roy Branson and Herold Weiss, both assistant professors in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and by William S. Peterson, an associate professor of English at Andrews University. The Branson and Weiss article asserted that it was an essential and immediate task for the church to establish “more objective ways of understanding what Ellen White said.” Specifically, they called on Adventist scholars to “discover the nature of Mrs. White’s relationship to other authors,” “recover the social and intellectual milieu in which she lived and wrote” and “give close attention to the

**“If this paradigm is even a little accurate, by 1970 the time had come for Adventists to conduct a critical examination of Ellen White’s spiritual gift.”**

development of Ellen White’s writings within her own lifetime, and also to the development of the church.”<sup>11</sup>

Nothing could more clearly distinguish the Ellen White scholarship of the 1970s from the controversies of her own lifetime and the arguments of the 1920s and 1930s than these three steps suggested by Branson and Weiss. Their motive was not to tear down, but to understand Ellen White. Branson and Weiss wanted a more “consistent interpretation of these inspired writings.” They wanted to “recapture Ellen White’s original intentions or the absolute truth of what she meant.” They wanted her influence to become more

pervasive, not less. But they insisted upon objective scholarship and a critical examination of sources. Their questions have been the major questions of the decade.

William S. Peterson’s article, “A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen White’s Account of the French Revolution,”<sup>12</sup> was the first article to examine critically Ellen White’s sources. Peterson asked the following questions:

What historians did Ellen White regard most highly? Do they have in common any particular social or political bias? How careful was she in her use of historical evidence? Did she ever make copying errors in transcribing material from her sources? Is there any particular category of historical information which she consistently ignored? Did she make use of the best scholarship available in her day? What did the revisions and the successive editions of *The Great Controversy* reveal about her changing intentions?

After a brief survey of the development of the chapter on the French Revolution, Peterson examined nine of the historians cited in the chapter. He concluded that all were anti-Catholic and anti-Democratic, strong on “moral fervor and weak on factual evidence.”<sup>13</sup> Second, Peterson examined how Ellen White used these sources. He concluded that she used them carelessly, sometimes simply misreading them, other times exaggerating them, and occasionally leaving out crucial facts, thereby distorting the significance of the event.

W. Paul Bradley, chairman of the board of the Ellen G. White Estate, responded to all the articles in the spring 1971 *SPECTRUM*.<sup>14</sup> While acknowledging to Branson and Weiss that Ellen White was sometimes quoted out of context, he asserted that Adventists did not need to use the tools of scholarship to understand her properly. In response to Harder’s article, Bradley cautioned Adventists not to define revelation so generally that “every sincere believer living in the right relationship to God becomes a prophet.”<sup>15</sup>

Bradley directed his most detailed reply to

Peterson. His basic objection was the assumption that Ellen White based her writings on the writings of others. Although she consulted historical writers for “supplemental data, her basic source,” said Bradley, “was the visions God gave to her.”<sup>16</sup> Dealing with Peterson’s specific points, Bradley pointed out that, though citations had not been supplied in the 1888 edition, copied passages were placed within quotation marks, and in the 1911 edition, proper sources were given for all quotations. And why should not Ellen White use strongly anti-Catholic authors? They described events in harmony with the prophecies of the Bible and the visions God had given to her.

Bradley did not reject the possibility that Ellen White incorporated some of the errors of the historians into her own text. Her preoccupation, he said, was with the meaning of events and not with the “names of all the places, the exact identity of the people, the hour of the day, and other minor details over which historians differ.”<sup>17</sup> Because she focused attention on the “controversy issue,” and not on “the minutia of the historical account,” Bradley believed that “an inaccuracy brought over from a historian into her writings would not cause too great concern.”<sup>18</sup> Bradley’s article was restrained and judicious. He took no cheap shots at Peterson and displayed in his article the same Christian character that had marked his previous years of service as missionary and church administrator.

Peterson’s response to Bradley which appeared in the summer 1971 SPECTUM was humorously entitled “An Imaginary Conversation on Ellen G. White: A One-Act Play for Seventh-day Adventists.”<sup>19</sup> In this imaginary, and slightly condescending, conversation between Bradley and himself, Peterson highlighted their disagreement. He contributed no new evidence to the debate, but did pick up Bradley’s acknowledgment that Ellen White used historical sources and could occasionally make small errors in factual matters. Peterson pressed this point to highlight the implication in the area of science and religion. If statements of chronology are not always reliable, he said, then perhaps Ellen White’s chronological statements about the

age of the earth are also open to reevaluation.

The most detailed and abrasive response to Peterson was an article in the autumn 1971 SPECTRUM by John W. Wood, Jr., a master of divinity student at Andrews University.<sup>20</sup> His conclusion can be best summarized in his own words: “I have shown that the sources used [by Ellen White] were not poor ones, nor were they mishandled. Instead, they were used soundly and consistently to present those things which Mrs. White had seen in vision.”<sup>21</sup> Wood was industrious; and he did catch Peterson in several errors, though in no case significant errors. But all his industry failed to rescue the reputation of the historians in question or alter Peterson’s conclusion that the chapter on the French Revolution in the 1888 *The Great Controversy* contained historical errors. Unfortunately,

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the article was also marred by frequent sarcastic comments disparaging Peterson’s scholarship.

Peterson’s specific and bitter reply, “Ellen White’s Literary Indebtedness,” immediately followed Wood’s article.<sup>22</sup> After accusing Wood of “(a) manipulating evidence to his own advantage, (b) offering misleading generalizations about the historiography of the French Revolution, (c) repeatedly asserting what he cannot prove, and (d) concealing the dogmatic assumptions upon which his argument rests,” Peterson proceeded to refute systematically the fine points of Wood’s article. The historians were poor ones; the historical errors were real.

The ironic aftermath to the entire Peterson affair was an article by Ronald Graybill, a research assistant at the White Estate, in the



summer 1972 SPECTRUM, entitled "How Did Ellen White Choose and Use Historical Sources? The French Revolution Chapter of *Great Controversy*."<sup>23</sup> Graybill undermined crucial aspects of Peterson's hypothesis and made irrelevant many of the criticisms put forth by John Wood and others. A study of the notes left by Clarence C. Crisler, Ellen White's secretary when the 1911 revision of *The Great Controversy* was being prepared, disclosed that the literary source for the chapter on the French Revolution was not a collection of historians, whether good ones or poor ones, but primarily one writer, Uriah Smith. His *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation* was the basic source for the chapter. One discovers, wrote Graybill, that Ellen White . . . used nothing from Scott, Gleig, Thiers, or Alison that Smith did not have. Every time Smith deleted material, she deleted the same material. Although occasionally she deleted more. She even used the quotations in exactly the same order on pages 275 and 276. There can be no doubt that she drew the historical quotations from Smith, not from the original works.

So it was not Ellen White who selected poor historians and misread or distorted the evidence found in them. It was Uriah Smith!

Peterson had noted in his response to Wood that this chapter

. . . was an untypical chapter in its use of a wide variety of historical sources. Some of the earlier chapters of *The Great Controversy* are based almost exclusively on D'Aubigné—that is, virtually every paragraph is a quotation, close paraphrase, or summary of D'Aubigné.

Peterson added, "D'Aubigné, in these chapters, is supplying the *structure* and *perspective* of the book, not merely a few illustrative details."<sup>24</sup> Graybill's articles made it clear that the chapter on the French Revolution was not untypical after all. Ellen White was continuing with this chapter the pattern of the book.

Graybill's article may have satisfied many who thought Peterson had been finally put in his place. But, in fact, Graybill's article opened the can of worms even farther. At least in Peterson's view, Ellen White had been doing historical research, albeit poor

historical research. Graybill's article made it clear that she was not doing historical research at all, merely following one major source. Graybill's discovery also illustrated what would become increasingly evident during the decade: that the White Estate vault held many undisclosed and unexamined sources crucial to a proper understanding of Ellen White.

The most significant work on Ellen White in the 1970s was *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* by Ronald L. Numbers.<sup>25</sup> By the time of publication in May of 1976, Numbers had been appointed an assistant professor of the history of medicine and history of science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, but most of the research and writing had been completed while Numbers served on the faculty of the School of Medicine at Loma Linda University. Numbers' small volume, thoroughly researched and clearly written, was a first-class piece of historical scholarship and recognized as such in professional journals.<sup>26</sup>

Numbers opened his book with a clear statement on his methodology:

. . . this is, I believe, the first book written about her [Ellen White] that seeks neither to defend nor to damn but simply to understand. As one raised and educated within Adventism, I admittedly have more than an academic interest in Mrs. White's historical fate; but I have tried to be as objective as possible. Thus I have refrained from using divine inspiration as an historical explanation.

In so doing, I have parted company with those Adventist scholars who insist on the following presuppositions: (1) that the Holy Spirit has guided the Advent movement since the early 1840's; (2) "that Ellen Harmon White was chosen by God as His messenger and her work embodied that of a prophet," (3) "that as a sincere, dedicated Christian and a prophet, Ellen White would not and did not falsify," and (4) that the testimony of Mrs. White's fellow believers "may be accepted as true and correct to the best of the memory of the individuals who reported."\* It seems to me

that such statements, particularly the last two, are more properly conclusions than presuppositions.<sup>27</sup>

Numbers' basic thesis was that Ellen White derived her health reform ideas from contemporary health reformers such as James C. Jackson, William Alcott, Sylvester Graham, Dio Lewis, L. B. Coles and others while asserting that she did not borrow from others but obtained her views from God. In addition, Numbers showed Ellen White's claiming divine revelation for changing views and unscientific statements about health reform.

The inevitable controversy broke even before the book was published. Much discussion swept through Adventist intellectual circles as a result of clandestinely obtained and circulated typescripts of the first draft. Also, as a courtesy to the White Estate staff, Numbers had provided them with a typescript

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before sending the final draft to the publisher.

The White Estate, hoping that Numbers would delete or alter offensive passages, provided him, in February of 1975, with an extensive paragraph-by-paragraph critique of his manuscript. As a result of this strategy, the White Estate placed in Numbers' hands probably the most exhaustive critique of a manuscript any author has ever had the privilege of receiving before publication. Numbers could alter his manuscript in response to criticisms he considered valid and present additional evidence to support his positions where he considered the criticisms invalid.

Gary Land has summarized well the official church response to Numbers in this SPECTRUM. A paperback edition of D. E. Robin-

son's *Story of Our Health Message*, along with study guides, was prepared for use in the churches, and a 23-page pamphlet refuting Numbers put into immediate circulation. In the autumn, the White estate sent a 127-page, double-columned pamphlet to all religion and history teachers in Adventist colleges and universities. *A Critique of the Book, "Prophetess of Health"* reviewed chapter by chapter alleged errors in Numbers' book. While admitting some problems and acknowledging some borrowing from other authors, the *Critique* charged Numbers with misreading sources and leaving out important evidence.

Once again, SPECTRUM was at the center of the debate. The January 1977 issue contained a series of reviews of Numbers' book, in addition to Numbers' response. In addition to an abstract of the White Estate *Critique* published under the title "A Biased, Disappointing Book," the issue included reviews by William Frederick Norwood, Richard Schwarz, Fritz Guy and two non-Adventist historians — Fawn M. Brodie and Ernest R. Sandeen.<sup>28</sup> These reviews and Numbers' response, along with Gary Land's review of the White Estate critique in the March 1978 SPECTRUM,<sup>29</sup> should be read by all Adventists who want to evaluate fairly *Prophetess of Health*.

W. F. Norwood, retired professor of cultural medicine at Loma Linda University and one of the few Adventist historians to achieve distinction as a scholar, gave Numbers high marks for accuracy and asserted that the book "need be disturbing only to those who have come to exalt Ellen White to a pedestal of inerrancy or infallibility, a position she did not claim for herself or even for the Bible writers."<sup>30</sup>

Richard Schwarz, professor of history and chairman of the history and political science department at Andrews University and author of *John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.*, dealt gently with his friend and former colleague. He acknowledged that Numbers' facts were essentially correct, though he believed Numbers had relied too much on hostile witnesses. The two disagreed on the in-

terpretation of the facts, rather than the facts themselves.

The review by Fritz Guy, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Loma Linda University, accepted the errors charged to Numbers by the White Estate critique, but at the same time accepted the human fallibility of Ellen White and called on the church to develop a concept of inspiration that could handle these facts. His own brief analysis of inspiration was cogent and succinct.

The review by Fawn M. Brodie, U.C.L.A. professor, psychohistorian and controversial biographer of Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Smith, was undoubtedly the most shocking article ever to appear in SPECTRUM. The heat on the SPECTRUM editors for publishing it was justifiably intense. She first praised the book as "excellent, meticulously documented social history."<sup>31</sup> Then noting that Numbers had deliberately avoided an analysis of Ellen White's mental health and psychic abilities, she proceeded to use the data in the book to proffer her own. Ellen White's visions, she asserted, were a form of self-hypnosis springing from the psychic conflicts of her repressed sexuality.

In many ways, the most perceptive of the reviews was the one by Ernest R. Sandeen, author of the *Roots of Fundamentalism* and a historian on the faculty at McAlester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. Sandeen commended Numbers' scholarship and then commented specifically on the intellectual dilemma presented by the book, both to Numbers and to the church: "When the historian and the believer are the same person, the writing of a book can become an enterprise fraught with tension and, occasionally, agony. One must be an obtuse reader, indeed, not to see this tension and even feel this agony in the pages of Numbers' book." At the very heart of the dilemma, said Sandeen, was the conflict between belief and skepticism:

Whatever the personal pain it produces in the historian, it does produce good historical scholarship. It almost seems like a historiographical law that the best scholarship is produced by the skeptical believer. That Numbers cares deeply about the history of Ellen G. White is apparent on almost every page. He feels strongly about the importance of his subject, as every good historian must. But he has not

accepted tradition or someone else's word concerning the career and teaching of this amazing woman. He has discovered things that appear to shock and surprise him, but he has had the courage to state them clearly.<sup>32</sup>

In a very profound conclusion, Sandeen challenged the Adventist church to not fight historical scholarship, but to struggle openly with the problem and establish the truth for today.

The last words were given to Numbers himself. Clearly and forcibly, Numbers took on his critics and point by point laid almost every one of their charges of factual error to rest. Thanks in part to his prepublication discussions with the White Estate, he was well prepared to defend his points and did so convincingly.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter?

Some facts must be considered to have been established by Numbers in *Prophets of Health*: (1) Ellen White was a part of the nineteenth-century American health reform movement and was influenced by other health reformers. (2) During the course of her life, Ellen White's views on health reform changed. (3) Ellen White held some views about the laws of health that few Adventists today consider scientifically valid.

Implicit in Numbers' book was the methodology suggested by Branson and Weiss six years before. Numbers had examined the nature of Ellen White's relationship to other authors, attempted to recover the social and intellectual milieu in which she lived and wrote, and given close attention to the development of her writings within her own lifetime and also to the development of the church. The Numbers' book, though by far the most controversial of the works published on Ellen White in the 1970s, was part and parcel of the general intellectual movement. He approached his research from the same background and asked the same questions.

But one basic difference separates Numbers from the other scholars who have critically examined Ellen White. They explicitly accept the supernatural inspiration of Ellen

White, and he does not. They assert her inspiration and maintain its compatibility with literary indebtedness and fallibility. Numbers stands uncommitted. But the uncommitted stance of his book looks to many Adventists like unbelief.

At the same time that the White Estate was combating the work of Ronald Numbers, it was considering how to respond to another study on Ellen White, a 244-page typescript entitled "Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: The Evidence from an Unpublished Manuscript on John Huss." This paper, the result of my own research, was sent to the White Estate with a request for criticism in March of 1974.<sup>33</sup>

During the summer of 1973, while reading letters and documents in the White Estate on the history of the Adventist publishing work, I became acquainted with several Ellen White manuscript fragments that appeared to be portions of the first draft of the 1888 *The Great Controversy*. The longest manuscript, consisting of 64 sheets of full-size writing paper with writing filling the front of each sheet and on 11 pages filling some portion of the back, turned out to be the rough draft for the half-chapter on John Huss. The White Estate allowed me to transcribe this manuscript into typescript.

I had completed in February of 1973 a 105-page study that examined Ellen White's use of historians in Chapter XIV, "Later English Reformers," and the first half of Chapter VI, "Huss and Jerome." Discovery of the Huss manuscript seemed providential. I was now able to present in a revised paper in one column James A. Wylie's account of Huss from *The History of Protestantism*, in a second column Ellen White's rough draft, and in a third column her account as published in *The Great Controversy*. I presented this, along with some introductory and explanatory material, to the White Estate in March of 1974.

What did the evidence prove?

. . . the historical portions of *The Great Controversy* that I have examined are selective abridgements and adaptation of historians. Ellen White was not just borrowing paragraphs here and there that she ran across in her reading, but in fact following the historians page after page, leaving out

much material, but using their sequence, some of their ideas, and often their words. In the examples I have examined I have found no historical fact in her text that is not in their text. The hand-written manuscript on John Huss follows the historian so closely that it does not even seem to have gone through an intermediary stage, but rather from the historian's printed page to Mrs. White's manuscript, including historical errors and moral exhortations.<sup>34</sup>

Study of the Huss manuscript also revealed that Mrs. White's literary assistant at the time, Miss Marian Davis, not only improved Mrs. White's English usage but also played a very significant role in deleting a large amount of original material dealing with the spiritual significance of events and adding additional material from Wylie.

I believed when I wrote "Ellen G. White

**" 'Ellen White was not just borrowing paragraphs here and there that she ran across in her reading, but in fact following the historians page after page . . . using their sequence, some of their ideas, and often their words.' "**

and the Protestant Historians," and still do, that the evidence is compatible with Ellen White's statements claiming inspiration regarding historical events and describing her use of Protestant historians. A belief that God revealed to Ellen White the activities of Christ and His angels and Satan and his angels in the great-controversy struggle, along with occasional flashlight views of historical events with explanations about the spiritual significance of those events, is compatible with the evidence. A belief that God showed Ellen White one historical scene after another making up the continuous historical narrative that appears in *The Great Controversy* is not.

The Numbers' controversy and the illness

of Arthur White, secretary of the White Estate, delayed the response to my paper. Also, the White Estate desired to examine independently a fourth chapter in *The Great Controversy*. Ron Graybill completed this in May 1977. His "Ellen G. White's Account of Martin Luther's Experience from Worms to Wartburg" was an analysis of the first six pages of a 51-page Ellen White manuscript. In this manuscript, Ellen White is once again copying and closely paraphrasing a historian; but in this case the historian is not d'Aubigné, the primary source, but a popularized version of d'Aubigné prepared by the Reverend Charles Adams for youthful readers. And the material on Luther is not taken over directly into *The Great Controversy*, but first appears in a *Signs of the Times* article, October 11, 1883, entitled "Luther in the Wartburg."

To present his material, Graybill needed seven columns. D'Aubigné's account is in column one; Adams' condensation of the story appears in column two. Column three is a typescript of Ellen White's manuscript, column four, the article from the *Signs of the Times*, column five, the same account condensed for the *Spirit of Prophecy*, and column six and seven, the passages from the 1888 and 1911 *The Great Controversy*.

The scholarship is flawless and gives a fascinating insight into how Ellen White used sources and modified them for different publication objectives. Graybill concluded that "there does not appear to be any objective historical fact in Mrs. White's account that she could not have gained from the literary sources on which she was drawing except in one detail." "The overall impression gained from this study by this researcher is that it sustains McAdams' main point — that the objective and mundane historical narrative was based on the work of historians, not on visions."<sup>35</sup>

At last, the White Estate was ready to respond to my paper. At the time of the Annual Council in October of 1977, I met with the staff members and went over the paper page by page. In most cases, I accepted their suggestions and made appropriate revisions. I presented the revised paper to the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians at their annual meeting held in Dallas in December of 1977.

The paper was not written for a wide audience, and cannot be published because the White Estate has chosen not to release the Huss manuscript. I believe it would be unwise for me to present my conclusions without displaying the evidence upon which they are based. However, the paper was available, under careful restrictions, for a few months at Adventist college libraries in North America during the spring of 1978 and can now be read at any of the Ellen G. White research centers.

During the fall and winter of 1977-1978, the White Estate was finally putting together its official response. The document went through several drafts and received criticism from seminary professors and General Conference officers. "Toward a Factual Concept of Inspiration, II: The Role of the Visions in the Use of Historical Sources in *The Great Controversy*" was issued over the name of Arthur L. White in April of 1978. Copies were sent to college and university history and religion teachers.

The 58-page typescript, with notes and appendices, is very carefully developed and thorough. The paper deals specifically with distinctions between thought inspiration and verbal inspiration, the use of other authors in inspired texts and the possibility of discrepancies in inspired writings. After a brief examination of these points as they relate to the Bible, Elder White looks specifically at *The Great Controversy*. Numerous Ellen White quotes and W. C. White quotes are presented, and then Graybill's work on the Luther manuscript and my work on the Huss manuscript are reviewed.

The document holds the traditional view that the reformation historians "helped her [Ellen White] to locate and describe many of the events and movements presented to her in vision."<sup>36</sup> But at the same time, the paper acknowledges that Ellen White does "not claim the visions alone as the basis for every historical detail that she presents in *The Great Controversy*."<sup>37</sup> The possibility of historical error is also tepidly acknowledged: "It is always possible that the discovery in the future of documents believed to be more correct

would modify our knowledge of some historical details.”<sup>38</sup> The paper, in short, acknowledges the new data and puts it into a broad interpretation of inspiration.

Surprisingly, “Toward a Factual Concept of Inspiration, II” is less candid in acknowledging that Ellen White did not see every historical event in vision and made historical errors than W. Paul Bradley’s response to William S. Peterson seven years earlier. Also, the document hangs onto at least one W. C. White quote that does not fit the evidence: “Of this you may be sure, because I know whereof I speak. Her use of the language of the historians was not for the sake of bringing into the book something that had not been revealed to her, but was an effort to utilize in the best language she could find, the description of scenes presented to her. . . .”<sup>39</sup>

About the time the White Estate was responding to the evidence that Ellen White had borrowed extensively from Protestant historians in the preparation of *The Great Controversy*, another researcher was bringing to their attention evidence that she had also borrowed from secular authors for other books in the Conflict of the Ages series, especially *Prophets and Kings* and *The Desire of Ages*. Walter Rea, pastor of the Long Beach, California, Church, asserted, on the basis of inconclusive evidence presented in several unpublished papers, that the major source for *Prophets and Kings* was *Bible History, Old Testament* by Alfred Edersheim, originally published in seven volumes between 1876 and 1877,<sup>40</sup> and that Edersheim’s *The Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah*, first published in 1883, was a major source for *The Desire of Ages*.<sup>41</sup>

The *Review and Herald* responded to the Numbers’ book with an editorial in the August 1976 number entitled “An Important Challenge to the Faith?”<sup>42</sup> Now the growing awareness in Adventist circles of Walter Rea’s research and the studies of *The Great Controversy* called for another response in the *Review*. “Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration” by Arthur White appeared in four parts in the *Adventist Review* beginning with the January 12, 1978 number.<sup>43</sup> In this series, Arthur White acknowledged the facts without ever drawing specific attention to them:

Was Ellen White shown in each instance in minute detail all of the names of the places and the dates of the events which she beheld? The evidence is that she was not. She saw events occur — events significant as a part of the controversy story. Minor details and incidental references not basic to the account were of less importance. Some of this information could be ascertained from the sacred writings, some from common sources of knowledge, such as reliable historians.<sup>44</sup>

In conclusion, Elder White pointed out that a “rigid and distorted” concept of inspiration could easily set up a person for discouragement and eventual rejection of God’s gift to Ellen White. No mention was made in this series of any of the research taking place.

Eighteen months later, in a seven-part series in the *Adventist Review* entitled “The E. G. White Historical Writings,” Arthur White became far more specific.<sup>45</sup> He still made no specific reference to the research of others or to the decade of critical scholarship on Ellen White. But clearly the readers of the *Review* were being prepared for the evidence that Ellen White borrowed extensively from secular sources. Elder White acknowledged the discussions going on in Adventist intellectual circles by introducing the first article with the following comment: “In recent months there has been an increasing interest in what have been termed Ellen White’s ‘sources’ for the Conflict of the Ages books in general, and *The Great Controversy* and *The Desire of Ages* in particular.”<sup>46</sup> “The articles,” continued White, “will lead us some distance from the narrow concepts held by some of a mechanical, verbal inspiration\* according to which Ellen White wrote only what was revealed to her in vision or dictated to her by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>47</sup>

The third article of the series dealt specifically with the sources for *The Great Controversy* and included facsimile reproductions from both the Luther manuscript and the Huss manuscript. Referring to the Huss manuscript, Arthur White said, “She condensed materials from Wylie and others and interspersed with spiritual lessons and com-

ments the portions she used.” Then in the second paragraph following, he added, “Unfortunately, for space reasons, the spiritual lessons that she had set forth in the Huss manuscript could not be included. This left the bare historical record as a part of the overall great-controversy narrative.” The careful reader of the *Review* article who put these two statements together could see that Elder White was acknowledging that the material left for publication in the *The Great Controversy* on Huss was taken from Wylie and others.<sup>48</sup> Also in the third article, Elder White asked specifically the question, “Would it have been possible for some inaccuracy to have crept into Ellen White’s descriptions of historical events or that the historians from whom she quoted may have been mistaken in some points of detail and thus, Ellen White, not being especially informed, allowed these mistakes to slip

**“Elder White pointed out that a ‘rigid and distorted’ concept of inspiration could easily set up a person for discouragement and eventual rejection of God’s gift to Ellen White.”**

through into her narrative?” His answer was a straightforward affirmative.<sup>49</sup>

The last four articles in the series dealt with the writing of *The Desire of Ages*. Elder White described the role of Ellen White’s literary assistants in the preparation of the manuscript and considered Ellen White’s relationship to other authors of the life of Christ, such as William Hanna, Alfred Edersheim, Frederick William Farrar and John Cunningham Geike. He presented examples illustrating Ellen White’s use of Hanna that showed her originality in adding historical information and spiritual lessons not present in her secular sources. Some of the research of the past decade was reaching the wider Adventist public.

Judging from the samples used by Arthur White to illustrate Ellen White’s relationship with Hanna in articles 4, 6 and 7, he must

have already had available to him the very thorough and careful study by Walter Specht. Desiring to know the truth about Ellen White’s sources for *The Desire of Ages* and not wishing to be caught unprepared by the research of Walter Rea, or someone else, the White Estate commissioned two eminent Adventist scholars to study thoroughly the relationship of *The Desire of Ages* to William Hanna’s *The Life of Our Lord*. Raymond F. Cottrell, longtime book editor at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, took the first 45 chapters; and Walter F. Specht, professor of New Testament at Loma Linda University, took chapters 46 to 48.

Cottrell’s 39-page paper, dated November 1, 1979, “The Relationship Between *The Desire of Ages* by Ellen G. White and *The Life of Christ* by William Hanna,” and Specht’s 83-page paper with the same title and the sub-heading “Part II” are reassuring. Both authors examined their half of the book, paragraph by paragraph, sentence by sentence, and word by word. Whatever might yet be discovered regarding other sources, it is clear that *The Desire of Ages* stands independent of Hanna’s book. Indeed, there are some closely paraphrased paragraphs and other paragraphs where, although Ellen White’s words are different, it is clear she is following the ideas presented by Hanna. But the many other similarities between Ellen White and Hanna can be explained by the assumption that both authors were closely following the Gospels. Cottrell estimated that Ellen White borrowed only 2.6 percent of the first half of *The Desire of Ages* from Hanna. Specht gave no percentage, but came to the same basic conclusion for the last half of *The Desire of Ages*.

Both Cottrell and Specht concluded that Ellen White made creative use of Hanna, improving his language, adding certainty where he was tentative, including new material, giving different theological explanations of some events, and, overall, adding a deep spiritual interpretation by showing the life of Christ in the context of the great-controversy struggle between Christ and Satan. Cottrell also included in his paper a most interesting analysis of literary borrowing by an inspired writer and pointed out several

examples of literary borrowing in the Bible.

The White Estate had commendably taken the initiative, commissioning trusted and credentialed scholars to establish facts and sharing these facts with the readers of the *Review*. But meanwhile Walter Rea had broadened his research and, with the help of others, was attempting to locate every major source for every Ellen White book. In response to his assertions that an alarming proportion of her published work had been borrowed from nineteenth-century writers, Neal Wilson, president of the General Conference, appointed a committee to examine his evidence (see p. 15). The committee, mostly scholars and church administrators, met at the Glendale Adventist Hospital on January 28 and 29, 1980, with G. Ralph Thompson, a General Conference general vice president in the chair.

In the March 20, 1980 *Adventist Review* in an article entitled "This I Believe About Ellen G. White,"<sup>50</sup> Neal Wilson informed the church about the Rea committee. The initial report indicates that "in her writing Ellen White used sources more extensively than we have heretofore been aware of or recognized. The committee, however, cautions against the loose use of such terms as 'literary dependency' and 'extensive borrowing and paraphrasing.'" Wilson went on to make five points about the work of a prophet. (1) "Originality is not a test of inspiration." (2) "God inspires people, not words." (3) "The Holy Spirit helps the messenger to select his material carefully." (4) "The prophet's use of existing materials does not necessarily mean that the prophet is dependent upon these sources" and (5) "Whenever we recognize similarities we must also see the dissimilarities."

The statement is a most significant article to appear in the *Review* in this century. The president of the General Conference is openly and honestly acknowledging the facts about Ellen White's use of sources and pointing the church toward a definition of inspiration that will be new to most Adventists and threatening to some. A full response to Walter Rea must wait until he has presented his

evidence to the church in definitive written form.

Most of the researchers of the 1970s have been asking historical questions and answering them with the tools of the historian's craft. No doubt, scholars will continue to ask questions about Mrs. White's relationship to her culture and specifically the relationship of her writings to literary sources. Some major areas remain uninvestigated. But recent developments indicate that theological questions may replace historical questions as the major concerns of the 1980s. Joseph J. Battistone, pastor of the Fletcher, North Carolina, Church, anticipated this interest with a short, provocative article in the January 1977 *SPECTRUM*. In "Ellen White's Authority as Bible Commentator,"<sup>51</sup> Battistone

**"The president of the General Conference is openly and honestly acknowledging the facts about Ellen White's use of sources and pointing the church toward a definition of inspiration that will be new to most Adventists."**

suggested that "her writings tend to be more homiletical than exegetical," and concluded that "it would be inappropriate to use her writings to settle questions relating to the reading of a text, the meaning of a word, the authorship or date of a Biblical book."<sup>52</sup>

Jonathan Butler, associate professor of church history at Loma Linda University, combined historical and theological perspectives in "The World of E. G. White and the End of the World" published in the August 1979 *SPECTRUM*.<sup>53</sup> Butler suggested that Ellen White's understanding of Bible prophecy about last-day events was a reflection of her knowledge of religious currents in nineteenth-century America. Implicit, but not explicit, in his article was the conclusion that Ellen White's apocalyptic views were not based only on visions and need to be revised by contemporary Adventists.



As second or third generation Adventists educated in the 1950s and 1960s, these young men grew up unaware of the criticism of Ellen White in her own lifetime and the disagreements about how to interpret her writings in the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1950s, these problems seemed to have been swept into the dustbin of history, and the church appeared to be firmly united and settled in its view of Ellen White's spiritual gift. Although verbal inspiration was specifically rejected, Ellen White's words were accepted as the final authority on every question and every topic that she addressed. The publication of the three-volume *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* in 1962-1963, and ever more of her writings in ever more accessible form, gave Adventists an authoritative guide to nearly every question they faced.

The scholars of the 1970s did not question this consensus because of a link with the questions of the 1920s and 1930s. Their questions arose out of their own experience. Ironically, the very push of the church to make the writings of Ellen White more central and more available and at the same time establish a high-quality educational system that called for the training of Adventist teachers as first-class historians, scientists and biblical scholars made inevitable the discovery once again that Ellen White borrowed significantly from secular authors and that some of her statements did not agree with the facts of history, science or biblical scholarship.

The Ellen White scholars of the 1970s began their research as committed Adventists who fully accepted the authenticity of Ellen White's spiritual gift. They were not seeking to "tear down" Ellen White or to undermine confidence in the "Spirit of Prophecy." They began their research because they had become aware in the course of their study of statements that appeared to be inaccurate. The easy thing to do, and certainly from the point of view of their careers in the Adventist church, the wise thing to do, would have been to drop the topic like the hot potato it was. But the facts, the brute facts, to use Alfred North Whitehead's phrase,<sup>54</sup> would not go away.

After one decade of critical examination of Ellen White's writings, where do we now stand? What questions have been answered? What facts have been established? What are the implications of this research for the Adventist Church, and where do we go from here?

Three points have been clearly established. One is that Ellen White took much material from other authors. And she did not use secular literary sources just to provide clear descriptions of historical events, health principles or other information revealed to her in vision; she also used these sources to provide information not seen in vision.

Second, Ellen White was a part of late nineteenth-century American culture and was influenced by contemporary health reformers, authors and fellow Adventist church leaders. This fact should not surprise us, for no one can live outside the culture and be uninfluenced by contemporary values and contemporary tastes. Ellen White traveled extensively, read widely, and learned from experience. Without diminishing one whit from the special revelation of the Holy Spirit to Ellen White, we must acknowledge that she was shaped by her environment just as all of us have been shaped by ours.

The third point which recent Ellen White scholarship has established is that Ellen White was not inerrant. Inevitably, as she incorporated into her own articles and books contemporary ideas and the words of contemporary historians, health reformers and devotional writers, she passed along errors of fact and some of the misconceptions of her generation.

At the present time, these conclusions are not widely accepted by Adventists. Less than 20 percent of the members of the Adventist church live in the North American Division; and of this group of over 574,000 people, probably less than 5,000 have read the Numbers' book or the articles published in SPECTRUM on Ellen White.

The impact of this research will nevertheless be great. Because of the high percentage of college graduates and the large number of professional, business and academic laymen in our church, the ideas shared by a few can quickly reach the thought leaders of practi-

cally every congregation. Also, either in response to SPECTRUM or the same social forces that called forth SPECTRUM, the *Adventist Review* is more open than it has ever been before and is itself disseminating some of these very conclusions. Inevitably, these issues will be discussed widely in the Adventist Church.

The significance of this debate can hardly be overemphasized. Ellen White is so central to the lives of Seventh-day Adventists that her words impinge on practically every area of Adventist teaching and practice both individually and institutionally. Our dress, our diet, what we read and how we spend our leisure time are all influenced greatly by what we believe the Lord revealed to us through His servant, Ellen White. Our interpretation of the Bible, especially the texts which support some of our landmark doctrines, rests on Ellen White. Even the administrative procedures and policies of the church owe much to our understanding of what God was telling us through Ellen White. To consider her words as possibly derived from someone else and not necessarily the final authority introduces an element of chaos into the very heart of Adventism that makes all of us uneasy. Benjamin McArthur, assistant professor of history at Southern Missionary College, has made this point in the November 1979 SPECTRUM in an article entitled "Where Are Historians Taking the Church?"<sup>55</sup> And yet we have no choice but to be honest at heart, acknowledge facts, and seek the truth. The search for truth is, after all, the basic premise upon which Adventism is founded.

This is the dilemma that confronted those who accepted Ellen White's spiritual gift even in her day. The publication of partial transcripts of the 1919 Bible Conference makes this abundantly clear. On the one hand, these college Bible teachers, editors and General Conference administrators had personal knowledge of Ellen White's unique spiritual gift.

But alongside this, some of these men—like A. G. Daniells, president of the General Conference, W. W. Prescott, former editor of the *Review and Herald* and H. C. Lacey, teacher of religion at the Washington Foreign Mission Seminary—also knew that Ellen White copied from other sources and made statements that were not correct. Her works were not entirely original and they were not infallible. This was, and still is, the dilemma for Adventists.

One of the great tragedies of Adventist history is that the generation of 1919 did not take the risks, which we can acknowledge were formidable, and share with the church the dilemma that they faced. That generation of church leaders lived too close to the prophet and were subject to historical forces that made it almost impossible for them to take this enlightened and wholesome step. Today's generation of church leaders have the opportunity, indeed the obligation, to open to the entire church the fascinating question of how God has worked through Ellen White. A perilous and yet exciting and ultimately victorious period lies ahead if today's generation of Adventists face honestly and openly the question of inspiration.

We need to recognize that while God has always worked through prophets, he also worked through communities that nurture the prophets and interpret the prophecies. The Holy Spirit gave the early Christian community the wisdom to identify those books that belonged in the Canon of Holy Scriptures. The Holy Spirit gave the early Adventist community the wisdom to recognize and accept the spiritual gift of Ellen White. Certainly, the Holy Spirit can and will work through God's remnant today to lead us into a fuller understanding of this unique revelation to Ellen White. We will undoubtedly never understand fully the gift of prophecy in Ellen White's life, but together we must try. The risks are already great because of the long delay. To delay longer will only increase them.

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3. Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1933.
4. Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1934.
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6. "The 'Spirit of Prophecy,'" pp. 69-72.
7. "Divine Revelation: A Review of Some of Ellen G. White's Concepts," pp. 35-56.
8. Harder, p. 44.
9. Harder, p. 40.
10. Harder, p. 49.
11. "Ellen White: A Subject for Adventist Scholarship," pp. 30-33.
12. Pp. 57-69.
13. Peterson, "A Textual and Historical Study," p. 63.
14. "Ellen G. White and Her Writings," pp. 43-64.
15. Bradley, p. 51.
16. Bradley, p. 54.
17. Bradley, p. 58.
18. Bradley, p. 58.
19. Pp. 84-91.
20. "The Bible and the French Revolution: An Answer," pp. 55-72.
21. Wood, p. 69.
22. Peterson, pp. 73-84.
23. Graybill, pp. 49-53.
24. Peterson, "Ellen White's Literary Indebtedness," p. 76.
25. Numbers (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976).
26. Writing in the authoritative *American Historical Review*, James Harvey Young of Emory University called the book "an excellent case study" and concluded: "If Numbers' fine book has any fault, it is in failing to convey adequately the charisma that Ellen White must have possessed to permit her, aided by her husband's talents at administration and publicity, to overcome considerable opposition to her health ideas and fasten them as articles of faith upon her expanding body of disciples." *AHR*, 82 (April 1977), 464.
27. Pp. xi-xiii. The asterisk indicates that Numbers is quoting Arthur L. White, "Ellen G. White and the Shut-Door Question." (Mimeographed copy of a statement to appear in his forthcoming biography of Ellen G. White).
28. Norwood, "The Prophet and Her Contemporaries," pp. 2-4; Ellen G. White Estate, "A Biased, Disappointing Book," pp. 4-13; Brodie, "Ellen White's Emotional Life," pp. 13-15; Sandeen, "The State of a Church's Soul," pp. 15-16; Schwartz, "On Writing and Reading History," pp. 16-20; Guy, "What Should We Expect from a Prophet?" pp. 20-27; Numbers, "An Author Replies to His Critics," pp. 27-36.
29. "Faith, History and Ellen White," pp. 51-55.
30. Norwood, p. 4.
31. Brodie, p. 14.
32. Sandeen, p. 16.
33. My work on Ellen White's use of Protestant historians in the preparation of *The Great Controversy* has been described by Eric Anderson in the July 1978 SPECTRUM. "Ellen White and Reformation Historians," pp. 23-26.
34. McAdams, "Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians," pp. 18-19.
35. Graybill, pp. 5-6.
36. White, "Toward a Factual Concept," p. 21.
37. White, "Toward a Factual Concept," p. 19.
38. White, "Toward a Factual Concept," pp. 38-39.
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40. Edersheim's volumes have been reprinted complete and unabridged in one volume by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 1977.
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43. "Toward an Adventist Concept of Inspiration," January 12, 1978, pp. 28-30; "The Prophet Bears Testimony," January 19, 1978, pp. 7-9; "The Question of Infallibility," January 26, 1978, pp. 6-8; "The Importance of Understanding Inspiration," February 2, 1978, pp. 6-8.
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46. White, "The E. G. W. Historical Writings," July 12, 1979, p. 4.
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48. White, "The E. G. W. Historical Writings," July 26, 1979, p. 7.
49. White, "The E. G. W. Historical Writings," July 26, 1979, p. 9.
50. Wilson, pp. 8-10.
51. Battistone, pp. 37-40.
52. Battistone, p. 39.
53. Butler, pp. 2-13.
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55. McArthur, pp. 8-14.

# The First Decade

## The Establishment of The Adventist Forum

by Richard C. Osborn

. . . a place where Adventists interested in ideas, both theoretical and practical, can talk to one another in chapter meetings, regional conferences, pages of SPECTRUM.

. . . an important last link connecting many individuals to the church and a halfway house for Adventists going through withdrawal.

. . . saved numerous intellectuals for the church whose mission sorely needs their expertise and commitment.

Richard Osborn, recently appointed principal of Takoma Academy, is a graduate of Columbia Union College and is completing his master's degree in history at the University of Maryland.

. . . the greatest accomplishment of the AAF has been the publication of nine volumes of SPECTRUM, providing an outlet for the most creative thought within Adventism. . . I am sure that future denominational historians will view the appearance of SPECTRUM as a major step toward the intellectual maturation of the church, when for the first time since the nineteenth century thoughtful Adventists could critically examine their church's ideology and institutions.

. . . a group of intellectuals who seek to tear down the pillars of the faith.

. . . the only independent lay organization of the church with official approval of the General Conference.

Ten years of existence for the Association of Adventist Forums bring different assessments from members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Few probably expected this independent volunteer organization to last so long since its founding in 1968. Not only has it lasted, but it has grown to its highest membership level of over 3,400 members. As with any organization, growth, change, conflict and consensus characterize its first decade.

As religious movements mature, they face the increasing challenge of maintaining enthusiasm for membership and participation in the church among later generations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church faced this problem during the late 1960s as significant numbers of church members began attending non-Adventist graduate schools and as the level of academic training increased throughout the church. As these individuals sharpened critical thinking in their academic areas, they naturally began to study what meant most to them — their church's beliefs and practices. The mood of the United States during the 1960s also helped create a climate of inquiry as the country debated ecology, civil rights, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs and the Vietnam War.

With this background, Adventist graduate students, professionals and academicians began meeting for fellowship and discussion. Many felt that their local churches, which in

**“Many of these second, third and fourth generation Adventists began leaving the church because their questions and needs were not being addressed — indeed, they were held in suspicion.”**

some cases ostracized them, did not understand their needs, nor did they feel that the world church, which held the power over future employment, encouraged the discus-

sion of major issues by laymen. As one graduate student wrote retrospectively,

Many pastoral sermons and many denominational journal articles seemed unreasoned if not unreasonable, shallow if not irrelevant, and illogical if not downright anti-intellectual.

Many of these second, third and fourth generation Adventists began leaving the church because their questions and needs were not being addressed — indeed, they were held in suspicion. So many were leaving that some who still desired to remain Adventists saw a need for forming groups to maintain ties to a church they had been reared in. Many of them thought they might be able to grow within the church and ultimately serve it if someone could help them through this critical transition in their maturation process.

In major educational centers such as Cambridge, Massachusetts, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the San Francisco Bay Area, California, groups of concerned Adventists began informal discussion groups. Although some remained very informal with home meetings, the Cambridge group experienced rapid growth. The Cambridge group had started in 1963 under Roy Branson's direction with a few people meeting socially on Sabbath afternoons as a book discussion group, which included such individuals as Joe and Adrienne Battistone, Bruce Wilcox and Vinson Bushnell. In 1964, Alvin and Verla Kwiram joined the group when he took a position in Harvard's chemistry department. In 1966, as a result of Verla Kwiram's initiative, the group's mailing list had reached 150 and resulted in a constitution and membership dues. Throughout this period, the Cambridge and Ann Arbor groups began to talk of communicating with like groups in other parts of the United States, and of possibly tying them together in one organization with a newsletter or journal. Vinson Bushnell, a Harvard graduate student in music, even worked on a constitution.

Although many individuals promoted an Adventist graduate professional association, two individuals can be singled out as major motivators — one a fourth-generation Ad-

ventist attending graduate school, Roy Branson, the other one of the church's most respected administrators, Reinhold R. Bietz, president of the Pacific Union Conference. Branson typified many of those graduate students with questions, who wanted to remain in the church. His grandfather, W. H. Branson, served as General Conference president between 1950 and 1954, and his father, Ernest Branson, served as a conference president and had been a missionary in the Middle

**“Wilson became the key church contact and liaison for the association’s beginning and throughout its first decade. In fact, without Wilson’s support there would have been no association.”**

East where his son Roy had grown up. In the 1960s, Branson attended Harvard University, pursuing a doctorate in Christian ethics. As early as 1959, while still an undergraduate at Atlantic Union College, Branson had proposed a magazine containing scholarly articles written by Adventist professors in Adventist and non-Adventist colleges, professionally trained self-employed Adventists and college undergraduates. Ironically, graduate students were not even mentioned. After being a key leader in the Cambridge discussions about a national organization, Branson left in 1967 for travel in California, having been “commissioned — unofficially, of course — to spy out the land” to see what prospects existed for a new journal.

Reinhold R. Bietz’s two sons, one of whom had just finished medical school, the other a seminarian at Andrews University, helped make their father aware of the concerns of later generation Adventists. In addition, Bietz served as president of a large, sophisticated union where two local churches already published magazines — Claremont’s *Dialogue* and Burbank’s *Perspec-*

*tive*. Because of the controversial reputation of these publications, many Adventist employees felt uneasy writing for them, some for philosophical reasons and others because of the possible impact on their jobs. At a Southern California Conference constituency meeting in March 1967, attended by Bietz, one of *Perspective*’s editors attempted to get a resolution passed commending his journal and *Dialogue*. Bietz spoke against the resolution, but at the same time mentioned that the denomination needed a journal for college students. Branson was attending the meeting and spoke with Bietz about possible problems if the denomination published an official publication which could limit the openness of the proposed journal.

A few days later, Bietz, still considering such a journal, by chance met with a group of single adults attending a weekend retreat at Camp Cedar Falls, California. This group, including Roy Branson and Tom Walters, was also discussing the need for a new journal. Bietz suggested that an organization tying the various graduate student groups together might publish it. In this way, the church would not be publishing the journal, but an association approved by the church would be performing the job and thus have more credibility.

During April 1967, Branson and Walters drafted a written proposal for a Society of Adventist Scholars or an Association of Adventist Graduate Students and a journal. This proposal was circulated to existing discussion groups. According to the proposal, full membership in the society would be limited to those who had completed at least one year of graduate study or were current graduate students. Associate membership would be granted to undergraduate students. For the proposed board of the organization, each chapter would elect one representative. This group, in turn, would select three representatives from Adventist educational institutions who were viewed as “natural soulmates of the graduate students.” Two would be selected from denominational administration. The latter were viewed by some as the “price for denominational approval.”

The journal proposal viewed the limited editorial and financial base of *Perspective* and

*Dialogue* as well as their tone of “anger” and “disillusionment” as a problem. In contrast, the new journal would “be a place where individuals with academic background could come and reason together, inviting all who would, to join.” The new journal would, because of its public approval by the church, be able to publish articles by church employees from all over the world. Experts in one discipline would write so that others could understand their discipline’s contribution to Adventism. Already Branson began suggesting Molleurus Couperus, head of the dermatology department at Loma Linda’s School of Medicine, as editor for the journal.

Branson and Walters now presented the written proposal for an association and journal to Bietz, who expressed approval and promised to promote the plan with Robert Pierson, General Conference president, Neal Wilson, North American Division president, and other church leaders. Meanwhile, the proposal was sent to church leaders and discussion groups around the United States, and a lobbying effort began. In a letter to Pierson, Branson stressed that the proposal would “be a means of building up the church. If it didn’t, I wouldn’t waste my time on it.” Letters of support came back from church administrator W. J. Hackett, educators T. S. Geraty, Winton Beaven, R. E. Cleveland and Joseph Barnes, pastor M. Jerry Davis and editor Arthur S. Maxwell. In the late spring, Branson and Kwiram also met on separate occasions with Wilson, who expressed happiness that something was being done for Adventists who had taken graduate work.

During May 1967, Bietz and Wilson led out in a discussion of the proposal in Washington, D.C., where Bietz felt most of the leaders displayed “very good interest.” Next, the ideas were taken to a group of college presidents, academic deans and board chairmen, which resulted in the establishment by the General Conference of a 23-member Committee on SDA Graduate Students in Non-SDA Schools chaired by Wilson.

From this stage on, Wilson became the key church contact and liaison for the associa-

tion’s beginning and throughout its first decade. In fact, without Wilson’s support there would have been no association. In Wilson’s initial letter to the committee, he wrote of a total Adventist graduate student population of between five and six hundred students, some motivated in a wrong direction, but comprised largely of a group who wanted to stay close to the church and desired a closer liaison. He mentioned three areas of possible development. First would be a “Forum” which could “be an outlet for exchange, thoughts and ideas” coordinated by an association with a governing board consisting of graduate students and “an almost equal number of denominational leaders.” Second would be “a Journal or some form of expression for these young people. They want a level where they can discuss differing opinions.” And third would be the development of a chaplaincy program for non-Adventist campuses. This committee met in early autumn and unanimously approved the idea of an association and left details to a small committee to meet with graduate student representatives.

Meanwhile, feedback from graduate students and others indicated a fear of denominational control of both the board and the journal, whereas others felt such an arrangement represented a reasonable compromise. As word began to filter to the discussion groups during the summer of 1967 about the initial success of proposals for a graduate student organization, the feeling grew that an announcement in the *Review and Herald*, official publication of the church, represented a key ingredient to the association’s success. Such an announcement would represent official recognition and allay the fears of many who might contribute money or join.

By midsummer, Ronald Numbers, a graduate student at Berkeley, urged that a journal editor be chosen soon while “enthusiasm is still high — and while some of us are still graduate students.” Many of those pushing hardest for a graduate student association were either finished or nearly through their degree programs. In fact, several of these individuals never viewed what they were attempting to organize as a graduate

student organization. They wanted a broad, lay-based organization which addressed issues of concern for Adventist graduate students, professionals and academically oriented individuals. In order to have a focused constituency in their General Conference approach, they concentrated on graduate students. Numbers' comment looked ahead to a later problem of keeping new graduate students enthusiastic for an association.

Plans progressed rapidly, and on October 6, 1967, the General Conference convened a Committee on National Association of Graduate Students with the church paying for the travel expenses of three discussion group representatives out of the seven who came to Washington, D.C. The committee was chaired by Charles Hirsch, director of the General Conference department of education. Other church representatives included Walton J. Brown and W. A. Howe of the education department, R. R. Frame and D. W. Hunter of the secretariat, J. C. Kozel of treasury, Neal Wilson and *Review* editor, Kenneth H. Wood. Representatives of the discussion groups included Roy Branson, David Claridge, doctoral candidate in physics from Stanford, J. L. Gilliland, a medical doctor in residency from Seattle, Washington, Alvin Kwiram, Ronald Numbers, doctoral candidate in the history of science from Berkeley, Charles "Tom" Smith, doctoral candidate in higher educational administration at Michigan, and Tom Walters. By this time, only Claridge, Numbers and Smith were still graduate students.

The discussion group representatives met the day before the meeting to hammer out their proposals. Kwiram served as the group's spokesman since he was an articulate advocate of an association, was not denominationally employed, and had no plans to be. At the actual Friday morning committee, the members worked on a consensus basis with no official votes. The committee decided on the following five objectives for the association:

- 1) to provide an organization which will facilitate fellowship between graduate students in different geographical areas of the country;

- 2) to stimulate evangelistic contact through cultural interaction with non-Seventh-day Adventist scholars;
- 3) to serve as a point of contact between graduate students and the Seventh-day Adventist organization, and to encourage and facilitate the service of these students to the church;
- 4) to encourage pastoral guidance from Seventh-day Adventist students on non-Seventh-day Adventist campuses;
- 5) to maintain an organ of communication wherein Seventh-day Adventist scholars may exchange academic information, thoughts, and opinions.

**“The group felt that a journal could provide a kind of ‘loyal opposition’ in which sophisticated informed analysis and evaluation could be provided the church through constructive study reports and articles . . . .”**

In two significant categories, the group expanded the purposes beyond serving just graduate students, which had been the focus of the committee. The second objective saw an evangelistic purpose of meeting with “non-Seventh-day Adventist scholars,” and, more significantly, the “organ of communication” did not mention graduate students but “scholars.”

The committee also developed a plan of organization which later became the basis for the association constitution. It consisted of the graduate student or holder of more than a bachelor's degree requirement for regular membership as developed in the original proposal; and an 18-member national board to include eight representatives from eight regions made up of the North American Division union territories, four at-large representatives, an executive secretary, at least five General Conference representatives (or not more than one-third of the board) to be chosen by the General Conference, and a nonvot-



ing journal editor. The president and president-elect were to be chosen from the board.

The proposed journal proved to be the most controversial aspect of the committee's work. Agreement came easily on the purpose of the journal basically following the original proposal. However, Wilson insisted that each article be read and approved by one of the General Conference representatives, thus giving the denomination veto power. He noted that the church had never recognized such an organization where it did not have such controls. The graduate student representatives could not agree to this condition. Kwiram, for one, wanted an independent organization established on the basis of mutual respect and admiration. The group felt that a journal could provide a kind of "loyal opposition" in which sophisticated, informed analysis and evaluation could be provided the church through constructive study reports and articles in a journal. At one point, someone suggested that the journal be completely on its own, but the lay people wanted a church relationship. Over the noon hour, Branson met with Wilson in his office to see if any accommodation could be achieved. Although Wilson pressed his points vigorously, he was not ready to break off negotiations. During the afternoon session, the church's representatives agreed that their tie to the journal would be through five out of 20 editorial consultants. These five would be selected by the association board from a list of 12 names to be submitted by the North American Division Committee on Administration (NADCA). Other editorial consultants would include five graduate students, five SDA faculty members and five from other categories. The minutes of the meeting specifically noted that the editorial consultants "are not to have veto power over material, a right reserved to the editor, who in turn is responsible to the National Board for his activities."

The committee then developed a procedural plan which called for the "chapters" to refine further the plan, purpose, structure,

editorial guidelines, board membership and constitution of the proposed association. The General Conference department of education was to submit these written proposals to the North American Division president who, in turn, would place the plan on the agenda of Autumn Council. If approved at this meeting, NADCA would name its representatives to the board and submit 12 names for editorial consultants.

Part of the plan called for the association proponents to elect two officers then in case Autumn Council approved the plan. Chosen by the graduate student representatives as first association president was Alvin Kwiram, a lecturer in chemistry at Harvard University; as executive secretary, Roy Branson, then a teacher at the Andrews University Theological Seminary; and as journal editor, Mollerus Couperus.

Four days after the meeting, Kwiram, on behalf of the newly forming association, wrote Wilson in regard to reservations about some of the committee's decisions. First, he expressed questions about so large a number of official church representatives on the association board. As originally conceived by the students, church representatives were to consist of one-fifth of the board rather than over one-fourth as agreed upon at the committee. Kwiram termed this shift "significant and somewhat unanticipated"; however, he did not

feel any of us object strongly. The question that was raised was whether it was really wise for the formal organization to involve itself so explicitly in the Association and not whether that would mean complete control. So although this is a considerable shift in emphasis, it is not inimical to our purpose. . .

Second, Kwiram urged the General Conference not to seek official representatives among the editorial consultants of the journal. He warned that the new journal would not be the "equivalent to the *Review* merely rewritten in the language of the intellectual. There will be times where articles of a controversial nature will appear and times when questions will be asked that will not have simple answers." He cautioned that the church would be in a "more secure position"

without a direct involvement, and warned that if Autumn Council felt a need for greater control than originally agreed upon, "I fear that we will have to sadly conclude our quest, and progress in these matters will await another generation." To highlight the point further, he also advised Wilson that no financial support from the church for the journal, although originally discussed, would be requested.

If Kwiram's proposal were followed, the association would truly be independent. Furthermore, the journal would not have any official or financial ties which would limit its publication policies. Also significant in Kwiram's letter was a continuing shift in emphasis from graduate students to "scholars." This also marked an important emphasis as the original "founding fathers" maintained a concern for not only graduate students, but also for Adventist scholars or individuals with an intellectual orientation. Some of the graduate students, including Numbers, insisted on a prescribed number of graduate students on the board. However, this emphasis begun at the October meeting prevailed throughout the first decade of the association until by the end of the period only tacit concern was paid to the graduate student.

On October 25, the Autumn Council through a session of NADCA approved the plans of the committee for an association of graduate students with a local and regional organization and a magazine to serve as a forum for the students. The church leaders no longer demanded official representatives on either the association board or journal. Rather, they agreed to serve in an advisory capacity at the invitation of the association.

The "founding fathers" were delighted at the outcome, and by a telephone vote decided to ask Neal Wilson, Charles Hirsch and Wilber Alexander to serve as the first official church guests. Meanwhile, the first board meeting was scheduled for December in Loma Linda, California.

**A**t the first board meeting, the direction of the association began to take shape. SPECTRUM became the name of the journal,

membership dues were established and international participation was discussed. The association continued to broaden its concerns beyond graduate students. The board did send a proposal for specialized student evangelism to NADCA and voted to select five graduate students as consulting editors; but other decisions reflected a broader constituency.

The Constitution as approved at the meeting stated the association's objectives as:

. . . to encourage thoughtful persons of Seventh-day Adventist orientation to examine and discuss freely ideas and issues relevant to the Church in all its aspects and to its members as Christians in society.

The objectives of SPECTRUM were

. . . to be instrumental in the exchange of the ideas of Adventist scholars among themselves and their communication to the Adventist Church as a whole and in addition give the outside world an opportunity to see what Adventists are thinking and doing.

This broad orientation of "scholars" and "thoughtful persons of Seventh-day Adventist orientation" defined the association's future as it would actually develop.

A name for the association remained the major unfinished business. The board tentatively approved the name, "The Adventist Forum," tentatively because of the need for further consultation with church leaders who objected to the word "Adventist" appearing so early in the title lest people think the association was being given official status. New names suggested included "*Forum: An Association of Academic and Professional Adventists*," "FORE (Forum of Responsible Exploration): A Forum of Adventists dedicated to responsible exploration of truth," and "Associated Adventist Forums." Finally, both the association and church leadership compromised on "Association of Adventist Forums" (hereafter referred to as AAF).

During 1968, the hard work of building membership and developing a journal proceeded. The *Review* on January 11 printed the all-important NADCA action approving the association. However, without a tangible product to sell, membership grew slowly. Initially, some AAF leaders thought optimis-

tically that as many as 5,000 might join, but only 600 members joined by November. Andrews University provided AAF valuable help by giving Executive Secretary Branson a phone budget and the right to use his Andrews University secretary part time on AAF business.

SPECTRUM Editor Couperus spent 1968 soliciting articles for the journal. He had es-

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tablished as a condition for taking the job that he be allowed time to collect enough manuscripts for four issues before beginning publication. Loma Linda University also gave help by providing free office space for SPECTRUM.

Meanwhile, local chapters grew in New England, New York, Washington, D.C., Ann Arbor, Andrews University, Walla Walla College, Seattle, Berkeley and Stanford University. Popular topics during these years included the church’s relationship to civil rights, inner city ministry, politics, war and the arts. In some areas such as the Southern New England Conference, a part-time chaplain, Charles Teel, Jr., graduate student at Boston and Harvard University, was provided to minister to graduate students with the support of conference president, Lowell Bock. The association’s relations with the General Conference remained cordial, but as Branson pointed out in a newsletter to AAF members, “the journal hasn’t appeared yet.”

SPECTRUM first appeared in March 1969, representing the organization’s first tangible product and its most successful accomplishment of the first decade. Couperus proved to be an excellent choice for editor. Early in his career, he had studied theology in

the United States and served as a missionary in Indonesia. Even after training as a medical doctor with a specialty in dermatology, he retained a lifelong interest in theology with special emphasis on the relationship between science and religion. During the 1950s, he edited a journal devoted to the defense of creationism. Because of his independent financial status and friendship with affluent individuals, he also aided the journal’s financial undergirding. Couperus solicited articles and made the crucial decisions about balance of topics and articles that would appear in each issue. Fritz Guy, then a religion teacher at Loma Linda University’s La Sierra campus, did a great deal of editorial rewriting. Major credit for the appearance and accuracy of the journal goes to Ada Turner, the well-trained and tireless executive editor. She was largely responsible for the journal’s design, and followed the “old school” of editing copy — checking every footnote. This Loma Linda-based group produced six volumes of SPECTRUM, each volume consisting of four issues with each issue averaging 80 pages.

The first two issues of SPECTRUM contained the blend of articles typical throughout the Couperus years of scholarly articles focused on theology, science and church history; art, poetry, book reviews; and suggestions for changes in church institutions and policies. As an example, Charles Hirsch wrote of the need to coordinate Adventist higher education; Alonzo Baker studied federal aid to education; Richard Ritland analyzed the fossil record found in rocks; Jack Provonsha focused on the term “ethics” as used by Christians; and a series of writers argued various positions Christians could have toward war. These articles were not merely ideas, because in two cases they helped bring about changes. Hirsch’s proposal, first published for a broader lay audience in SPECTRUM and discussed at AAF chapter meetings, eventually helped the General Conference establish the Board of Higher Education. Kwiram became a member of this board as a result of requests by AAF to have representatives on the board.

The church agreed also for the first time to help Adventists registering for the draft in the United States obtain a conscientious objector status, whereas before they had usually supported only the noncombatant position. Other issues presented for the first time to a lay audience included proposals for black unions and Gottfried Oosterwal's specific proposals for changes in the way Adventists approached missions. By 1969, General Conference President Robert Pierson at an Andrews University Faculty-Board Retreat pointed to SPECTRUM as proof the church did have channels of communication for divergent views.

The publication of SPECTRUM also brought tension to AAF. Couperus and his volunteer staff did not always publish SPECTRUM as regularly as some felt they should. At one point, some AAF leaders actually contemplated finding another editor, but fortunately stayed with Couperus. The editorial staff's meticulousness and care did cause production delays, but no one could question the quality of their work. AAF members finally had a product to display and be proud of. In addition, church members and leaders began discussing articles from SPECTRUM, and an outlet existed for Adventist scholars in which they could openly express convictions in areas of their expertise for a broader church audience.

The difficulty of maintaining a regular production schedule of four issues a year plagued AAF during its entire first decade. When becoming an AAF member, an individual received four issues of SPECTRUM. In the beginning, it posed problems for fundraising, membership drives and renewal efforts when the journal was published on an irregular schedule. Because membership increased so slowly, even after SPECTRUM's first year, AAF leaders named the lack of regularity as the major problem. By the end of 1969 membership reached 1,063, but by 1972 membership had grown only slightly to 1,330, whereas 2,500 was viewed as the break-even point. Low membership also affected the unit cost of printing the journal. In addition, a larger number of copies of each issue than the actual number of subscribers was printed in order to meet the anticipated

growth in membership and future demand for back issues. After the first two issues were printed, no money remained for the second two issues. Extensive fundraising efforts during 1969 resulted in more money's coming from gifts (\$13,616) than memberships (\$10,981). In spite of these efforts, by the end of 1969 AAF's deficit reached \$5,000. The problem of paying for future issues from current subscriptions continued until the end of the first decade when a more regular financial plan was established and when membership reached the break-even point for meeting expenses.

The first few issues did not raise nearly the level of controversy the last issue of volume two did. For the first time, SPECTRUM tackled questions about Ellen White in what

**“One of AAF's biggest failures during its first decade was convincing church leaders that SPECTRUM was not out to destroy the basic tenets of the church.”**

became one of its most controversial issues. Roy Branson and Herold Weiss called for broad-ranged interdisciplinary study of Ellen White in order to present her as “a more believable person.” F. E. J. Harder reviewed some of her concepts of revelation and Richard Lewis questioned using the term “Spirit of Prophecy.” However, William S. Peterson's textual and historical analysis of Ellen White's chapter in *The Great Controversy* on the French Revolution stirred the most passion. Peterson, an English teacher at Andrews University, asserted that Ellen White used biased anti-Catholic historians in constructing her views of the French Revolution. He further charged that she accepted proven errors in the writings of these authors, in spite of her claim that visions formed the basis of her views.

Publication of Peterson's article represented the first time such assertions had been published in a journal with Adventist ties. Many church leaders failed to understand that Couperus and his editors did not publish the article because they agreed with Peterson, but because of the stated editorial position of SPECTRUM printed at the beginning of each issue:

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

In this context, future issues contained two vigorous attacks on Peterson's article by W. Paul Bradley, chairman of the Ellen G. White Estate Board, and John W. Wood, Jr., an Andrews University seminarian. Peterson also presented responses to these articles and further research.

Throughout the history of SPECTRUM, the editors faced the charge that they agreed with what they published, especially articles critical of church doctrines. Yet, if one follows the history of an article's development, an effort to balance is made, either through several articles from differing viewpoints or in letters from readers.

As an illustration of this misunderstanding, R. R. Bietz in June 1971, felt that after SPECTRUM's first issue, it had

. . . gone a bit astray in my opinion. I cannot endorse at all some of the recent articles which have appeared. I was under the impression that when SPECTRUM started it had as its objective the strengthening of the unity of the church. I believe it is veering away from that purpose.

Couperus responded by expressing regret over those feelings, but argued that

. . . the editorial staff has put forth every effort to carry out its objective to foster the growth of our church through the sympathetic discussion of those issues that are a subject of discussion within our church. The fact that one does not agree with every author or participant in a discussion is of course part of the process of dialogue, so that by a responsible discussion of the various aspects of a problem the issues may be clarified and this in turn be of help in the growth of our church.

One of AAF's biggest failures during its first decade was convincing church leaders that SPECTRUM was not out to destroy the basic tenets of the church. The greatest strains between church leadership and AAF always came after controversial articles in SPECTRUM, especially articles on Ellen White. Yet, many Adventists were leaving the church over their questions about the church's prophetess. Graduate students questioned traditional beliefs because of their studies in specialized subjects. Some AAF leaders felt that the open discussion of this topic enabled educated Adventists to look more honestly at the role of a prophet and still remain loyal Adventists.

The publication of the finest thought in Adventism represents one of SPECTRUM's greatest accomplishments. The first ten volumes presented 270 articles, 45 poems, 74 book reviews, 92 letters and 37 pieces of art or photographs and one short story. The authors ranged from church leaders to graduate students, college professors to pastors, and concerned laymen to non-Adventist theologians.

In addition to the introduction of SPECTRUM, 1969 represented a year of growth for AAF as the number of local chapters increased and regional retreats became popular. However, two problems which persisted in AAF throughout the first decade arose in 1969. As SPECTRUM came increasingly to demand major attention by the AAF Board, the role of graduate and undergraduate students was debated. The journal obviously focused on a wide audience, publishing only a few articles by graduate students. On the other hand, SPECTRUM presented articles of concern to graduate students by focusing

on educational issues. In the early years, most AAF leaders did not question the elitist requirements for membership. In fact, Numbers argued that undergraduate students should not be allowed to vote in national AAF elections, "though the threat of an undergraduate takeover is remote." Early AAF leaders had decided to focus on scholars and those engaged in advanced studies, and thus wanted a membership able to deal with difficult issues in a dispassionate, scholarly manner.

Questions about AAF's purpose presented another major problem. Even before publication of the first SPECTRUM, word came to Tom Walters, AAF's president-elect, that John Hancock, then associate Missionary Volunteer secretary of the General Conference, expressed doubt about AAF's objectives and methods. In reply to Walters' inquiry, Hancock denied saying this, but admitted that AAF was "a very controversial organization in the minds of many" due to the interpretation of certain published articles and viewpoints held to be "subversive" by some church members. Hancock encouraged Walters to keep AAF constructive, and felt certain issues should be discussed only in private or in church committees. He placed the debate in AAF chapters over the draft as one of these areas which should definitely not be published lest it cause "division" among young people. Amazingly, Hancock's letter came even before the first SPECTRUM appeared.

During the first decade, the "founding fathers" and others closely associated with AAF's beginning passed the presidency among each other. During the two-year term beginning in 1970-71, Walters became president, Branson served as president-elect, and Numbers took the executive secretary job. Not a single executive officer at the national level was a full-time graduate student during the first decade. Occasionally, graduate students would serve as regional or local chapter officers, or as contributing editors of SPECTRUM, but the thrust throughout the first decade was to involve the broader concerns of Adventist laymen.

In line with a broader lay concern, the *Review and Herald* published an article in 1970 by Branson on AAF subtitled "another bul-

wark against indifference and apostasy." The article outlined the history of AAF, stressed its base with Adventist graduate students, professionals and teachers, but also emphasized that AAF's "primary goal is to continue producing a journal that will encourage communication among the highly educated within the church." In addition, at the 1970 General Conference Session in Atlantic City, New Jersey, AAF maintained a strong lay presence with a table located at the General Conference department of education booth and a hospitality suite in a local hotel. Ernest Plata, cancer researcher at the National Institutes of Health, coordinated AAF's participation. At the request of Neal Wilson, copies of SPECTRUM were distributed to North American Division delegates.

Roy Branson's 1971-72 presidency can be described as the years of projects. Most AAF leaders had felt a need for innovative projects from the beginning, but believed SPECTRUM should be the only focus until the organization stabilized. During these years, Ron Numbers, vice president, and Dolores Clark, the "unsung hero of the whole AAF story," according to Numbers, brought high efficiency to the officer group. However, once AAF began developing projects, tensions developed between the activists, who frequently were idealistic but had problems organizing projects, and the pragmatists, who wanted to stay with what was working already.

Projects initiated during Branson's presidency included Project Potential, a summer inner-city tutoring and recreation program conducted by Leslie Pitton, Jr., in Orlando, Florida, using Forest Lake Academy students with money raised largely by Vern Carner. Another project was reproducing SPECTRUM articles for use by teachers in Adventist college classes. Not all the suggested projects were successful, however. An effort by Charles Teel, Jr., to get cooperation from the Sabbath School department for a supplement to the *Sabbath School Quarterly* with essays geared to the college and university student population failed when the department did not support the idea. The possibility of AAF's

publishing books never reached fruition. Other projects discussed at the idea stage in AAF's earlier years included an anthropological mission field school in South America, microfilming Ellen White's library, a one-volume history of Seventh-day Adventists, opinion polls, a psychological study of apos-

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tasy among young Adventists, a film workshop, conferences on such topics as labor relations and medical institutions, and sponsored lectureships. Many of these projects never were launched due to a lack of financing. The magnitude of the projects meant that volunteers simply could not find the time to complete them in the midst of already busy careers. Toward the end of AAF'S first decade, money and personnel were devoted to developing other projects such as a further development of experimental secular campus ministries, a study of the Adventist family and an Adventist merit program for Adventist high school seniors.

One successful project initiated during Branson's presidency was the publication of *Forum* in 1972. Initially edited by Eric Anderson and later by Viveca Black, *Forum* presented general church news as well as reports on local AAF chapter happenings. Anderson's background as editor of Andrews University's *Student Movement* carried over to *Forum*, and also brought problems to Lawrence Geraty, AAF's new president in 1972-73. Geraty, an archaeologist on the Andrews University Seminary staff, and Vice President Charles Teel, Jr., a teacher at Loma Linda University's La Sierra campus, were the first “non-founding father” individuals to hold the top

positions of AAF, although both had been involved in AAF's establishment at the local level. When an article in the first *Forum* incorrectly gave credit to a local chapter of AAF for a conference president's not being reelected at a conference constituency meeting, Geraty had the issue reprinted. When he insisted that *Forum* reporters writing a story on the developing lawsuit involving Merikay Silver and Pacific Press Publishing Association contact church leaders to learn their perspective, some church leaders put intense pressure on Geraty not to publish any story. Although he was threatened with the loss of his job if he allowed the story's publication, Geraty insisted that the story be published. The story was published, and he resigned from AAF's presidency in April 1973. This led him to urge the election of an individual as president who was financially independent of the church, because “only then will he be able to act as a free moral agent in the best interests of both the Church and AAF.”

The AAF Board, through phone calls and letters, selected Ernest Plata, a Washington, D.C.,-based layman with long-time AAF ties and broad experience in church affairs and innovative outreach programs, as the new president. His orientation led to a period of reassessment of AAF's direction. Six months after Plata's election, an executive committee meeting in California evaluated AAF's successes and failures. The successes at this midpoint in the decade included the publication of *SPECTRUM*, heightened visibility for the student, professional and academic community, successful projects and policy changes on the local level (such as the adoption by the Southern New England Conference of an AAF-sponsored resolution on race relations, later adopted also by the General Conference). The committee also thought AAF had influenced the General Conference decision to replace the *Youth's Instructor*, to approve a graduate student chaplaincy program, and to take a new position on the draft. In the opinion of this group, AAF had failed in four respects. These criticisms, interestingly, give an indication of the direction Plata's presidency would go:

- 1) AAF had grown old and paunchy with its leadership;

- 2) AAF leadership had sought to hold on to power rather than to share same with the now emerging post-B. A. crowd;
- 3) AAF had tended toward navel gazing and talking to members only rather than communicating with the church at large;
- 4) AAF had not communicated extensively with the General Conference since the initial formulation of the Association.

In line with these failures, Plata undertook to engage new blood into active leadership positions and attempted to define AAF as *the* lay organization of the church.

Communication posed the biggest problem during the Plata years. As an already overinvolved layman, he simply did not have enough hours in the day or adequate staffing to handle all his responsibilities. An additional problem was that most of AAF's executive officers lived in California, which made communication difficult. Consequently, AAF began to flounder, and aggressive Vice President Teel became so frustrated that he resigned. Richard Osborn, a Washington-based elementary schoolteacher, became the new vice president so that a local committee could support Plata.

Plata reached out and involved many new names in AAF activities — people such as Glenn Bidwell, a recent Atlantic Union College graduate, Harvey Bidwell, a Boston physician, Joe Mesar, a recent Atlantic Union College graduate, and Tom Dybdahl, a recent graduate of the Columbia School of Journalism. Glenn Bidwell even traveled around the country supported by his brother to create active support for AAF.

All of these activities led to the first national meeting of AAF at Takoma Park, Maryland, in April 1974, with over 60 delegates in attendance from such places as Florida, California, Washington and Michigan. Topics discussed included organization, evangelism, expanding AAF's constituency, SPECTRUM and long-range goals. The meeting turned into the most activist in AAF's history, with resolutions passed in favor of migrant farm workers, plans laid for broader international participation and for-

mation of a Speaker's Bureau for local chapters. A vice presidential structure with vice presidents for academic affairs, development, finance, international affairs and outreach replaced the national representatives.

Of even more significance than these actions was the adoption of a resolution stating,

The Forum shall be a spokesperson for thoughtful, concerned and active laypeople of the Church; consequently, the Forum shall establish mechanisms so that its decisions, issues and directions are set by, and appropriately communicated to, the membership of Forum and its pertinent organizations.

In line with this activist position statement, two new publications in addition to SPEC-

**“So many projects were being talked about that basic considerations such as membership renewals began to lag due to a lack of notices’ being sent out.”**

TRUM were approved. A *Forum Monthly* newspaper was to be created to include broader news coverage of church news, more popularly oriented articles than the scholarly approach of SPECTRUM and editorials with positions on important issues. This newspaper was to be edited by Tom Dybdahl, a minister in Boston with graduate training in journalism, who was to receive a full-time salary from AAF for his work. The other publication, edited by Monte Sahlin, was to be a technical assistance journal for witness and ministry paid for by advertising. Since Couperus had earlier announced his intentions to resign as SPECTRUM editor in January 1975 after publication of volume six, a search began for a new editor.

At the national meeting, these plans were approved readily, although Plata had a tough time being reelected. Objections were raised to the lack of communication during earlier



months, but a more serious split developed between those who wanted AAF to become a lay lobby for Adventists and those who saw AAF functioning as previously with a primary focus on Adventists with scholarly and intellectual leanings. Essentially, the battle occurred between the “founding fathers” element and the newer individuals being involved by Plata who viewed the time as ripe for broadening the narrow base of AAF.

Plata worked hard raising money for *Forum Monthly* and its editor’s salary, and significant contributions came in. However, so many projects were being talked about that basic considerations such as membership renewals began to lag due to a lack of notices’s being sent out. The proposed six-month budget for the last half of 1974 came to \$10,000 and the anticipated budget for 1975 amounted to \$66,500 — up from an annual budget in previous years of approximately \$13,000.

The search committee for a new SPECTRUM editor had a difficult time finding someone to replace Couperus. Finally, it recommended that instead of a single editor, a Board of Editors be appointed in order to insulate and protect SPECTRUM from attacks being placed on a single editor. The search committee recommended Bruce Branson, a surgeon at Loma Linda University, as chairman of the Board of Editors, with Roy Branson and Charles Scriven, former associate editor of *Insight*, set to act as the editorial board members responsible for editing SPECTRUM. In order for an article to be published, two of these three board members had to approve. When Bruce Branson declined the appointment, Alvin Kwiram, AAF’s first president, accepted the chairmanship.

Living in the Washington area, Branson met regularly with the Executive Committee and questioned the AAF’s decision to begin new publications rather than to place priority on SPECTRUM. In the midst of uncertainty and increased job responsibilities, Plata resigned in January 1975.

At the March 1975 board meeting, the split became even more apparent with one group’s arguing AAF should focus on stabilizing the production of SPECTRUM, and

another group’s viewing *Forum Monthly* as the only way for AAF to involve more laypeople. It became apparent that over \$30,000 would have to be raised from contributions alone in order for *Forum Monthly* to succeed. In this context and after a walkout by one side, the board renewed its commitment to eventually publish *Forum Monthly* when economically feasible, and agreed to publish a quarterly instead with volunteer help.

Glenn Coe’s election as president and Leslie Pitton, Jr.’s, as vice president represented the most significant actions of the board. Coe, an attorney with the Connecticut judicial department and founder of the Washington, D.C., Chapter of AAF, became the compromise candidate. His ties to both sides enabled AAF to weather this dispute, although in essence AAF focused on the audience already cultivated over earlier years. Staff continued to be built up in the Washington, D.C., area, which represented a shift from Loma Linda.

The Coe years were filled with steady growth and accomplishment. Coe worked hard on fund-raising efforts, new projects, membership growth and regular communications. He was aided in particular by several individuals who gave hours of volunteer time. Viveca Black, executive secretary, published *Forum* and communicated with members regularly, which brought chapters to an all-time high and improved morale in the organization. Strong local chapters represent one of AAF’s major contributions to Adventism. As a place for not only discussions, but also fellowship, many Adventists maintained their ties to their church and made positive contributions. Vice President Leslie Pitton, Jr., chaired an effective Promotions Committee which aided membership growth. Ronald Cople developed a systematic plan of membership renewals by computerizing the membership list and actually typing in much of the computer input. He and his wife, Pat, spent hours mailing renewal and promotion notices to thousands of people. This work, along with the new look of SPECTRUM, resulted in AAF’s membership’s rising from a low of 360 to a high of nearly 3,000 member-

ships within two years. Another key factor was the effort of Ray Damazo, a businessman and dentist in Seattle, Washington, along with Kwiram, who now resided in Seattle, and Katie Jo Johnson, who helped AAF establish a more professional and regular approach for seeking new members by instituting a successful promotion campaign based on alumni mailing lists of Adventist colleges. Toward the end of the decade, more new blood came as Lyndrey Niles and Claire Hosten served as officers.

SPECTRUM's two editors, Branson and Scriven, aided AAF's visibility by publishing a vibrant journal. Scriven provided a new colorful design for the journal, and Branson suggested including a cluster of articles on a particular theme in each issue. Among the themes covered were Church and Politics, Women, The Church and the Arts, and Adventist Eschatology. Their first issue focused on the General Conference Session held in Vienna, Austria, in 1975. The issue included interviews with leading church officials, an article on how a General Conference election

**“Some church leaders felt so strongly about the Brodie review that they threatened to condemn AAF and even spoke of not allowing denominational employees to be listed on the masthead of SPECTRUM . . . .”**

works, and an analysis of how the Adventist organizational structure developed. Some of these articles were reprinted in a special *Forum* newspaper intended for General Conference delegates. Couperus spent several days coordinating AAF's presence in Vienna. He was unable to get *Forum* distributed due to resistance by Robert Pierson, but a table was set up by the Adventist university booths from which hundreds of contacts were made with delegates and European members. The *Christianity Today* reporter became so interested in AAF in his report of the session that he quoted only from AAF publications.

As during the Couperus editorship, articles devoted to Ellen White represented the most controversial issue published. It contained reviews of Ronald Numbers' book, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*. Although reviews were published by strong critics of Numbers such as the Ellen G. White Estate, Fritz Guy and Richard Schwarz, church leaders focused on well-known historian Fawn Brodie's comments in which she made some postulations about Ellen White's mental health instead of reviewing the book. Church leaders felt SPECTRUM published this review because they agreed with its content.

Even within the editorial board, controversy existed over the Brodie review. Kwiram had agreed to be chairman of the editorial board only if he could have veto power over proposed articles for SPECTRUM, although because of his long-established relationship with Branson and Scriven, he did not anticipate ever having to exercise it. Among seven members of the editorial board, five favored publication of the Brodie review. However, Couperus, the former editor, and Kwiram, board chairman, did not want the review printed because they felt it was in poor taste, did not review the book and might damage AAF. Branson and Scriven felt the review should be published since Brodie was a recognized scholar whom the editors had asked to write the review, and since they felt some of the issues she raised were significant, although they did not agree with her position. At that point, Kwiram did not veto the article, because he had pledged to himself that he would never do such a thing.

Some church leaders felt so strongly about the Brodie review that they threatened to condemn AAF and even spoke of not allowing denominational employees to continue to be listed on the masthead of SPECTRUM or publish articles in the journal. This led to an emergency, late-night meeting in Philadelphia between AAF leaders and church officials in March 1977. This meeting brought into focus the constant problem existing between AAF and the denomination of maintaining a

loyal yet independent organization within the church. The AAF leaders, most of whom were either church employees or active laymen in their local churches, attempted to allay the fears while at the same time maintaining the need for independent thought within the church. Due to the strong efforts of Neal Wilson, Robert Reynolds and others, the General Conference did not take any actions against AAF and, in turn, AAF began working more actively on projects such as secular campus ministries and a study of the Adventist family, which would directly aid the church's mission.

As a result of Branson's and Scriven's decision to publish the review with Coe's support, Kwiram resigned instead of vetoing. The dispute was over the concept of an editorial board with Coe acting as middleman. Kwiram felt the chairman should serve as a "check and balance" over editorial decisions, whereas Branson and Scriven felt that the editors, who spent many hours editing the journal, should have the final say over what was published, with the AAF Board serving as the "check" through its power to appoint the editors. Kwiram later recalled that this personal confrontation had been "sad, but the severance from SPECTRUM was equally sad. I did so with reluctance but with firmness. It was a matter of conviction." In spite of his resignation, he continued to work actively for AAF by preparing a major report on how to reach intellectuals and, along with his wife, Verla, by making significant financial contributions to AAF. Meanwhile, at the April AAF board meeting, the board agreed to return to the structure of a single editor (or co-editors) with an editorial board as during the Couperus years.

Several issues of SPECTRUM have had an impact beyond the journal's regular subscribers. Pastors in some of the major Adventist pulpits in North America have urged their members to read articles in issues devoted to "Adventist Eschatology Today," "The Church and Politics" and "Festival of the Sabbath." The entire issue devoted to the meaning of the Sabbath had to be reprinted, since over 3,000 copies beyond the regular distribution were ordered by Adventist schools, camp meetings and churches. Jewish

rabbis have even ordered copies in response to a notice about the issue in the house organ of conservative Judaism in the United States. Subsequent issues that have resulted in sizable orders from nonsubscribers are "The Shaking of Adventism?" "The 1919 Bible Conference" and "Adventism in America," indicating that righteousness by faith, Adventist history and the role of Ellen White are topics about which Adventist care deeply.

With the necessity of Chuck Scriven's relinquishing his co-editorship in order to complete his doctoral studies at Berkeley, Richard Emmerson, who holds his Stanford doctorate in medieval studies and is associate professor of English at Walla Walla College, became executive editor of SPECTRUM in 1977. Starting with the Sabbath issue, he volunteered time from a burgeoning scholarly career to be involved in every aspect of editing the journal. His assumption of Scriven's special responsibilities to organize copy for publication has made possible a continuity of editing important for the flourishing of a journal. In the future, Branson and Emmerson plan to continue formal essays exploring topics of substance, but also informal essays, short stories and succinct reports and analyses of current developments within the organized life of the church.

In addition to the *Forum*, the association's newsletter, AAF has recently sponsored a newsletter by and about women, called *Adventist Woman*. Under the leadership of Viveca Black, who suggested the idea to AAF, the first eight-page issue appeared in February 1980.

The financial position of AAF also improved considerably during the Coe years. Larger sums of money spent on promotion came from donations of interested members such as Bruce Branson. Frequently, these members also gave money to send specific issues to thought leaders. The largest donation came from the estate of William and Pearl Abildgaard, parents of Doss Couperus, whose \$25,000 bequest was placed in long-term certificates of deposit with interest used for special projects. In 1979, the AAF established an advisory board of supporters of

SPECTRUM with Dr. Ray Damazo, a dentist and businessman in Seattle, Washington, as chairman. Members of the board have committed themselves to contribute a minimum of \$500 a year for three years in order to expand the circulation of the journal and secure its continuity. They will receive reports about SPECTRUM plans and be invited to meet once a year to share their views with the editors of SPECTRUM and the elected leaders of AAF.

The first decade of AAF has now ended. Beginning as the idea of several dedicated laymen, AAF has lasted longer than many would have predicted. It has had its share of problems, from internal tensions to external confrontations with church leaders. However, it has performed a vital service to Seventh-day Adventism as best expressed in the February 1977 Forum:

Along with their fellow Protestants, Adventists believe in a church whose authority is God, whose will is revealed in the Bible, which is available to all members. The church is not just the clergy, but *all* the members. The Association of Adventist Forums is committed to what is implicit in

this concept of the priesthood of all believers — a democratic church. The only way democracy can function is by constant and full communication among members of the community.

AAF's base of leadership and membership may be small, as many volunteer organizations are, but AAF has made the mission of many church members easier to attain and, in turn, has aided the church's mission by creating a more open environment. For this one contribution above all others, church members can be grateful for the vision of a few laymen in 1967.

This history is based upon extensive administrative files located in the Association of Adventist Forums office in Takoma Park, Maryland, interviews and correspondence from Roy Branson, David Claridge, Molleurus Couperus, Lawrence Geraty, Alvin Kwiram, Joe Mesar, Ronald Numbers and Ernest Plata. Janet Minesinger provided valuable editorial help. In addition, since 1971 the author has been involved in AAF affairs as a local chapter officer, as well as national officerships as a regional representative, vice president, executive secretary and treasurer. Because of his close involvement during these years, the account may show some bias in certain areas — something every historian attempts to avoid but usually fails to do.

## Dominant Themes in Adventist Theology

by Richard Rice

The word "theology" refers both to religious beliefs and to the task of reflecting on these beliefs. Since the first issue of SPECTRUM appeared in the late sixties, a lot has happened in Adventist theology in both senses of the term.

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As we look over the recent developments in SDA theology, we notice that different segments of the church's membership have somewhat different theological concerns. The primary concern of the world leadership during this time, as represented by Robert H. Pierson, has certainly been eschatology, with its emphasis on finishing the work and preparing a people to meet the Lord. Other theological matters are clearly subordinate to this. Concern for church unity thus arises from the desire to create an efficient

evangelistic effort which will hasten the fulfillment of the hope of the church. And church leaders are likely to be at least as concerned with the potentially divisive effects of the discussion of, say, righteousness by faith, as with which of the various views expressed is valid.

If the content of SPECTRUM reflects the interests of what may be roughly designated as the intellectual or academic-oriented branch of the church, the theological concerns of this group are typically related to the intelligibility of the Christian faith as Adventists understand it. Its members are committed to examining the credibility of traditional Adventist beliefs from the perspectives of modern science and history, as the extensive discussion of such topics in SPECTRUM as the age of the earth and the literary dependence of Ellen G. White indicate. And they are also interested in explaining the significance of Adventist beliefs to an intellectual audience outside, as well as within, the church, as past articles exploring the meaning of the Second Coming and of the Sabbath indicate. In addition, as SPECTRUM articles on the proposed statements of belief reveal, they are also anxious to preserve "room" in the Adventist community, both intellectually and politically, for reflection of this kind.

We can review the developments in Adventist beliefs by following the general sequence of Christian doctrines found in almost all systematic theologies, from Augustus Hopkins Strong's to Paul Tillich's.<sup>1</sup> The usual procedure is to consider first the topic of revelation, or knowledge of God, and then to deal with the doctrines of God, man, salvation, church, and last things.<sup>2</sup>

### Revelation

In the area of revelation, the question which most concerns Adventists is the factual or historical reliability of inspired writings. Is the Bible completely trustworthy, not only in its general view of man and God, but also when it makes historical claims, when it speaks of the origins and early history of life on this planet? This has been an important issue in Adventism for some time, but in view of the division it has recently

caused in other conservative churches, such as the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,<sup>3</sup> some leading Adventists are anxious to resolve it in a decisive way. Thus, the recent documents on inspiration and creation are intended to "preserve the landmarks" of Adventism by stating an official church position on the matter.<sup>4</sup>

The North American Bible Conferences of 1974 dealt in part with this aspect of inspiration. In the opening essay of the Conference publication, *A Symposium of Biblical Hermeneutics*, Raoul Dederen rejects interpretations which construe revelation exclusively in terms of personal encounter and minimize or eliminate its factual significance. He insists that revelation comprises both divine-human encounter and the verbal interpretation of such encounter. So the factual claims of scripture are integral to divine revelation, not subsequent or secondary to it.<sup>5</sup>

Adventists often decry the consequences of abandoning the historical reliability of scriptures, arguing that scripture is unreliable in all respects if it is unreliable in any. Therefore, if the plain statements about the origins of life on earth are not taken simply as they read, the Bible cannot be trusted when it speaks of God's love for man or His provision for man's salvation. Even when not explicitly stated, this view of doctrinal breakdown, the fear that the whole system of belief will cave in if this crucial position is surrendered, underlies a great deal of Adventist discussion of inspiration.

### Creation

The most important portion of Scripture in this connection is Genesis 1-11, and attempts to reconcile these chapters with historical and scientific data appear in the regular *Ministry* columns "Science and Religion" and "Archaeology and the Bible," in the publications of the Geoscience Research Institute, and in numerous SPECTRUM articles by Adventist scientists. Adventists usually insist that a factual interpretation of these chapters entails belief in a literal seven-day creation week and a "short chronology" for a history of life on this planet, meaning roughly 6,000 years. The difficulty of main-

taining these views in the face of conventional biological and geological theories is obvious, and Seventh-day Adventist scientists have responded in a variety of ways.

The best-known and least controversial response is to emphasize the complexity of life as supporting belief in an intelligent designer of the universe. Another is to argue that the data thought to support conventional theories are not conclusive. And a third is to argue that certain data are accounted for with equal, or even superior, adequacy on the model of catastrophism, or by means of a short chronology.<sup>6</sup> For example, some Adventist scientists argue that the Yellowstone fossil forests can be accounted for by a “transport model,” compatible with a relatively short chronology. Others, however, including Richard Ritland, insist that the data support the more generally accepted “position of growth” explanation, which requires much longer periods of time.<sup>7</sup>

In comparison with the interest in the factual reliability of Genesis 1-11, much less attention has been given to the precise nature of these chapters. Many Adventists merely assume that a factual interpretation of Genesis 1-11 necessarily entails a chronology of a few thousand years. But some of the church’s biblical scholars have questioned that assumption. Writing in SPECTRUM, Larry Geraty concludes that ancient genealogies do not provide a basis for precise chronology. Their basic purpose is to establish descent from some particular ancestor, and the list of names they contain is typically selective, rather than exhaustive. Consequently, the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 set no outside limits to the number of years that life has existed on this earth.<sup>8</sup>

#### Ellen White

Believing that God is revealed in the writings of Ellen White, as well as in the Bible, Seventh-day Adventists have also reviewed the nature and purpose of her ministry. SPECTRUM articles by Herold Weiss and Joseph J. Battistone deal with the important question of her relation to the Bible.<sup>9</sup> Weiss observes that the tendency of many Adventists to give her writings “hermeneutical mastery over Scripture” closely parallels the Roman Catholic attitude toward tradition.

To remain faithful to the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, he states, Adventists must not allow her writings to distract from the direct study of the Bible, or regard them as a shortcut to its meaning.

By far, the most vigorous discussion of Ellen White concerns her literary dependence and its implications for the claim that she was divinely inspired. One stage of this discussion appeared in the pages of SPECTRUM in the early 1970s, beginning with William S. Peterson’s study of Ellen White’s account of the French Revolution. Another surrounds the publication of Ronald L. Numbers’

**“One cannot help wondering what would have happened to the church in this century if . . . the participants in the conference had continued a frank discussion of the questions they raised.”**

*Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White.*<sup>10</sup> Peterson and Numbers find striking similarities between Ellen White’s views on history and health, respectively, and those in various writings she was familiar with. They observe that the similarities often extend beyond a limited amount of data or language to the basic concepts she propounds. According to Peterson, Ellen White not only borrowed certain descriptions from such writers as D’Aubigne, for example, but her general perspective is indistinguishable from theirs.<sup>11</sup> And Numbers notes that the relation between masturbation and disease described in *Appeal to Mothers* was widely held in the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Numbers disputes Ellen White’s denials that she was acquainted with certain materials before expressing the messages she received in vision.

Both Peterson and Numbers describe their work as “historical”; neither explicitly addresses the question of Ellen White’s inspiration. But as far as many Adventists are con-

cerned, this is clearly the issue the two have raised. For one thing, their findings call into question the familiar explanation that she received the broad outlines of her views in vision, and turned to other sources simply to fill in the details. They also render problematic the claim that while Ellen White's views were not always unique, her selection of the right views among the many available to her substantiate the supernatural origin of her work.

The availability of Donald R. McAdams' study of Ellen White's use of sources in the writing of *The Great Controversy* has further stimulated the church's thinking on the nature and purpose of Ellen White's prophetic gift. Besides corroborating the conclusions of others that Ellen White made extensive use of the historical writings available to her, McAdams' work shows that she incorporated many of the historical errors found in her sources. His research also brings to light the considerable extent to which Ellen White's manuscript was reworked by her literary assistant, Marian Davis.<sup>13</sup>

Among the various respondents to these studies, none has taken them more seriously than the Ellen G. White Estate. Its representatives have replied to Peterson and Numbers, and it has published an extensive critique of Numbers' book.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the *Adventist Review* recently presented a seven-part series by Arthur L. White, secretary of the White Estate for 41 years, on the use of historical sources in the writing of the Conflict of the Ages books, particularly *The Great Controversy* and *The Desire of Ages*.<sup>15</sup>

The responses take several tacks, all designed to minimize the impact of these studies on the church's traditional understanding of Ellen White's prophetic inspiration. One is to argue that some of the supposed errors discovered in Ellen White's writings are not really errors, after all. Another is to insist that what questionable material there is comprises an infinitesimal portion of her writings. However, such approaches presuppose an inerrancy view of inspiration, as Gary Land observes in his SPECTRUM review of the White Estate's critique of Numbers' book. He suggests that the dichotomy *either God or man*, is false

when it comes to explaining the source of a prophet's messages.<sup>16</sup> The possibility exists that divinely inspired ideas may coincide with naturalistically acquired ones.

Along somewhat similar lines, Fritz Guy reminds us that since an inspired prophet is not necessarily an infallible human being, as the Bible clearly shows, the discernment of personal failings in Ellen White's life does not discredit the divine source of her messages. He also maintains that there is a difference between recognizing a prophetic ministry and fully understanding it. With this distinction in mind, he argues, we can carefully study questions like those which Numbers raises, and consequently revise our understanding of Ellen White's inspiration, without surrendering our basic confidence in the divine authority of her ministry.<sup>17</sup>

The discovery of the minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference some 60 years later shows that the problem of interpreting Ellen G. White's writings accurately has been with the church a long time.<sup>18</sup> The minutes reveal that some prominent Adventist leaders around the turn of the century, including A. G. Daniells, W. W. Prescott and F. M. Wilcox, all of whom were personally acquainted with Mrs. White, affirmed their complete confidence in her prophetic gift, but rejected the idea that her messages were verbally inspired and provide an infallible historical or even doctrinal authority. At the same time, these leaders were sensitive to the fact that many Adventists did believe in the verbal inspiration of her writings and would be distressed to find this concept criticized. So they urged Adventist teachers to be exceedingly careful in dealing with the topic and to avoid disrupting the faith of church members. Reading the minutes leaves one with a sense of astonishment, so closely do the issues of that day parallel those which now concern Adventist scholars, teachers and administrators. One cannot help wondering what would have happened to the church in this century if, instead of burying the minutes of their meeting in a vault, the participants in the conference had continued a frank discussion of the questions they raised.

### God and Man

The doctrines of God and man are fundamental to any theological system, and in the work of contemporary theologians their significance had increased. Indeed, for many today, theology is essentially anthropology, the attempt to formulate an adequate understanding of man. Thus, Paul Tillich offers no independent doctrine of man in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*, because the entire system represents an interpretation of human existence. And in his most recent work, the Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner develops an explanation of Christianity on the basis of an extensive analysis of man as the potential recipient of divine revelation.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to this increasing emphasis on God and man, Seventh-day Adventists have devoted comparatively little of their theological attention specifically to these two topics. Instead, they typically deal with these themes

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as they arise in connection with other doctrinal concerns. Recent interest in the nature of human sin, for example, arises out of a primary concern for the question of perfection, rather than from a basic interest in understanding human nature. There are several exceptions to this trend, however, including two anthropological treatises by European Adventists, Jean Zurcher’s *The Nature and Destiny of Man*,<sup>20</sup> and Carsten Johnsen’s *Man the Indivisible*.<sup>21</sup> Both works deal with the unity of man, a familiar concern of Seventh-day Adventists, and both approach this topic from a philosophical, rather than a theological, perspective. In the area of the doctrine of God, a notable exception is the work of A. Graham Maxwell, a professor of religion at

Loma Linda University and its predecessor for the past 18 years.

The central concern of Maxwell’s teaching and preaching is the character, or trustworthiness, of God, which he explores almost exclusively within the framework of the great controversy concept that permeates Ellen G. White’s writings. His most recent book, *Can God Be Trusted?*, develops this theme in relation to such topics as the incarnation and atonement, and distinctive Adventist concerns like the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14, the Sabbath, the judgment and the Second Coming of Christ. According to Maxwell, the essence of the Gospel is that “God is not the kind of person Satan has made him out to be,”<sup>22</sup> and the true picture of God is supported by abundant evidence that appeals to the reasonable person.<sup>23</sup>

### Salvation

The doctrine of salvation is the central and most comprehensive division of Christian theology. As generally formulated, it concerns both the person and work of Christ and the different aspects of the experience of salvation, such as justification and sanctification. Salvation had probably received more attention from Adventists than any other doctrine in recent years. At the same time, no area of theology has generated more sharply divergent opinions within the church. Indeed, the discussion of these issues has become so heated that some are fearful of its effects on the unity of the church. Five months after assuming the presidency of the General Conference, Neal C. Wilson issued an open letter to the church calling for a moratorium on public presentations dealing with “the fine points and the controversial aspects of the theology of righteousness by faith.” He proposes that the General Conference appoint a representative committee from different branches of the church to provide “helpful and practical direction” on these matters under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup>

We can review some of the controverted aspects of Adventist soteriology by referring to the work of Edward Heppenstall, long a major influence in Adventist theology, and for 12 years professor of theology at the SDA



Theological Seminary. Since retiring, he has written three books devoted to soteriological themes: *Our High Priest*, *Salvation Unlimited* and *The Man Who Was God*.<sup>25</sup> These books are noteworthy for several reasons, including their discussion of some traditional Adventist positions, such as the investigative judgment, which have not received as much attention lately as in the past, and their incorporation of other doctrinal themes, such as man, church and last things, within the overall rubric of salvation. However, the number of issues on which Heppenstall and other Adventists differ underscores the current diversity within the church's soteriology.

One of these is the question of perfection. The symposium volume, *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*,<sup>26</sup> illustrates the different approaches to the subject of perfection prevalent in Adventism and offers different views of the possibility and necessity of perfection in this life. For two of the book's contributors, Herbert E. Douglass and C. Mervyn Maxwell, the question of perfection is closely related to the mission of the Advent people at the end of earth's history. On the basis of the "harvest principle," Douglass argues that Christ is waiting to return "until the gospel has produced a sizable and significant group of mature Christians in the last generation."<sup>27</sup> According to him, the individuals in this group will reach a point in their experience which actually reproduces Christ's success in resisting sin. They will thus demonstrate the justice of God's requirements of man even more decisively than did Christ, who was divine as well as human.<sup>28</sup>

Maxwell, too, maintains that the unique destiny of the Advent people ultimately requires them to develop perfect characters, since they must eventually stand in the presence of God without a mediator and live to be translated at Christ's return. While "justification by faith suffices for resurrection," it is not adequate for translation. For this, a "more than ordinary preparation is needed."<sup>29</sup> This "harvest readiness" requires one to appropriate the significance of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary and the seventh-day Sabbath.

The book's other contributors, Edward Heppenstall and Hans K. LaRondelle, base their interpretations of perfection upon biblical uses of the word. They describe the content of perfection as a positive orientation to the will of God and the manifestation of love toward others. In contrast to Maxwell and Douglass, Heppenstall denies that a special level of moral attainment, comparable to that of Christ, will be reached by God's people at the end of time, and emphasizes the distance between Christ's achievement and that of every other human being.<sup>30</sup> Adventists disagree, then, as to the level of moral development attainable in this life.

A related difference of opinion concerns the condition of Christ's human nature. Theologians disagree as to whether or not Christ's humanity was identical to that of other men, and both views find support in various statements of Ellen G. White. Not surprisingly, those who maintain that Christ's moral achievement can be "reproduced" by others also emphasize Christ's similarity to other human beings. In a controversial series of Sabbath School lessons entitled "Jesus, the Model Man," Herbert E. Douglass argues the possibility of moral victory in the Christian life on the grounds that Christ inherited the same nature as other men.<sup>31</sup>

Directly opposing this view, Edward Heppenstall asserts that "the Christ presented as a human being with a sinful nature is not the God-man of the Scriptures, but only a god-like man." In fact, Christ was not born as all others in a condition of self-centeredness and alienation from God, but enjoyed "conscious and unbroken oneness in fellowship with God through every phase of His life." According to Heppenstall, the view that Christ's humanity was sinful contributes to a mistaken concept of Christian living which distracts one from Christ as the only hope of salvation and ultimately "reduces the gospel to concentration upon self."<sup>32</sup>

The humanity of Jesus is also the subject of two recent book-length studies. Drawing largely upon the writings of Ellen White,

Thomas A. Davis presents a strongly exemplarist interpretation of Christ in *Was Jesus Really Like Us?* His basic purpose is to assure Christians that they can live the victorious life which Jesus did, on the grounds that he was subject to all our liabilities and we have access to all his resources.<sup>33</sup> The thesis of Davis' Christology is that Jesus' human nature is best understood as that of the person who has been born again.<sup>34</sup> Though he never sinned, Jesus nevertheless possessed fallen human nature, that is, "human nature affected by the Fall of Adam and Eve, in which the whole person is susceptible to the temptations and weaknesses of mankind, and is inadequate of itself to conform to the will of God."<sup>35</sup> While insisting that Jesus was really like us, Davis acknowledges that in many respects he was different, including the height of his spiritual achievements, his inherent divinity, the absence of a sinful past, and most significantly, the possession of an unfallen will.<sup>36</sup> Since a distorted will is certainly the most important moral effect of sin, it is not clear how Davis can consistently maintain that Jesus assumed fallen human nature and at the same time deny that his will was affected by sin.

In *Jesus the Man*, Edward W. H. Vick examines the way in which Jesus functions as the central object of Christian faith. He emphasizes that all that Christianity claims for Jesus has its basis in faith, including his humanity, his divinity and his resurrection.<sup>37</sup> Christianity involves not only the recognition that God was uniquely active in the life of Jesus, but also the recognition that this recognition itself is due to God's activity. This does not mean that faith creates its object, but it means that the claims of faith cannot be substantiated on grounds that are independent of faith, such as the conclusions of scientific or historical investigation.<sup>38</sup> It also means that attempts to describe the object of faith, such as the classic christological formulas, should be regarded as exploratory expressions of Christian experience rather than final, authoritative statements.<sup>39</sup> In contrast to these classical formulas and in harmony with contemporary theology in general, Vick's own approach is to develop a Christology "from below," which affirms

the full humanity of Jesus at all costs, including his participation in the sinful structures of human existence.<sup>40</sup> Vick does not pursue this concept along the lines of Adventist writers like Davis, however, for he criticizes the exemplarist approach to Christology. In his view, our condition is such that we need a savior, not merely an example, and regarding Jesus primarily as example may lead us either to despair of ever reaching the standard he sets or to the unchristian view that he could conceivably be surpassed.<sup>41</sup>

Recent Adventist treatments of the work of Christ contain contrasts in viewpoint no less striking than those surrounding the question of his person. In *God Is With Us*, Jack Provonsha presents what is essentially a "subjective" theory of atonement, emphasizing the transforming impact of the cross

**"Paxton reads more into their claim to be heirs of the Reformation than most Adventists do."**

upon man's perception of God. Provonsha interprets the cross primarily as a revelation of the suffering which sin has caused God from its very inception, because of his unfailing love for man. And since "man's sin did not alienate God—it only alienated man," there is no need for God's attitude toward man to change, only man's attitude toward God. Accordingly, the purpose of salvation is to deal with man's misperception of the divine character. In the effort to communicate His acceptance of man, God has provided various "aids to trust," of which Christ's death is the most effective. The saving aspect of the cross is its power to inspire men to trust in God after all. In Provonsha's words, "the central event in the at-one-ment, properly understood, is the possibility it opens up for faith."<sup>42</sup> What makes atonement necessary is thus man's distorted view of God, not some aspect of the divine nature, such as wrath or justice.

To the contrary, Edward Heppenstall asserts, "the necessity for Christ's death lies in

the righteousness of God rather than in the radical nature of man's rebellion."<sup>43</sup> Subjective theories of atonement are inadequate because the cross is more than a demonstration of love. Indeed, the spectacle of undeserved suffering may create hostility rather than awaken trust. The cross is appropriately understood, therefore, as required by God's righteousness, not merely by His love.<sup>44</sup>

**G**eoffrey J. Paxton's book, *The Shaking of Adventism*, produced a shaking of its own within the Adventist Church.<sup>45</sup> For one reason, the author is a non-Adventist who is keenly interested in Adventist theology. For another, the book deals with righteousness by faith, which has long been a sensitive issue for Seventh-day Adventists. A third reason for the wide attention the book has received may be its author's association with Robert D. Brinsmead, who for nearly 20 years has agitated the church's thinking, first with his perfectionist views on the cleansing of the sanctuary, and more recently with his anti-perfectionist views of righteousness by faith.

The general purpose of the book is to assess the claim of Seventh-day Adventists to be the authentic heirs of the Protestant Reformation. To evaluate this claim, Paxton examines the Adventist understanding of salvation in light of the Reformation doctrine of righteousness by faith, and by this standard he finds it wanting. While a few Adventists now steadfastly affirm the Reformation understanding of righteousness by faith as justification only, many synthesize sanctification with justification by their emphasis on character development as a condition of salvation. And with any such synthesis, Paxton insists, the Reformer's principal insight is lost.

Paxton reads more into their claim to be heirs of the Reformation than most Adventists do, and his interpretation of the Reformation doctrine of justification oversimplifies the Reformers' actual understanding. In fact, the Reformers themselves held that justification and sanctification are inseparable. So the rigid standard by which Paxton evaluates Adventist views is somewhat artificial. But,

if the general strategy of the book can be faulted, its review of the development of the doctrine of salvation within Adventism and its analysis of the diverse views of salvation among contemporary Adventist theologians are well informed and generally accurate. The experience of salvation is one aspect of Adventist theology which exhibits a notable lack of consensus.

### Church

Traditionally one of the least developed aspects of Adventist theology, the doctrine of church has become a major topic of interest. This is due largely to social and political developments, which, as the history of Christianity reveals, often provide a powerful stimulus to theological reflection. In current Adventist ecclesiology, the principal issues fall into two categories: relations within the church, and relations between the church and other people and institutions. In the area of intrachurch relations, the major questions concern the nature and scope of church authority. Who should participate in the leadership of the church and to what extent should the lives of its members be subject to church authority?

**O**ne of the most important questions confronting the church is the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, an issue which Adventism shares with many other Christian groups. A subcommittee of the Biblical Research Institute has examined the various biblical and historical aspects of this question, but the 1974 Annual Council decided for social, rather than theological, reasons not to extend ordination to women at this time. The rationale is that the attitude toward women prevalent in certain parts of the world makes their ordination there impossible, so the church should not ordain women anywhere in the interest of uniformity.<sup>46</sup>

The participation of black Adventists in church leadership is also a matter of recent concern, although the issue has a long history. One of the questions discussed is whether the church should establish black union conferences within the North American Division.<sup>47</sup> Some maintain that the increased opportunities for black leadership created by these institutions would lead to

dramatic growth in black church membership. But others argue that this development would widen the gap between blacks and whites within the church just when we need increased communication and understanding, and that the logical conclusion of such a development is an entirely separate church organization for black Adventists.

The question of church authority has received a lot of attention, mainly because of some rather widely publicized litigation involving several Adventist institutions.<sup>48</sup> On one level, the lawsuits are concerned with the status of women employees within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whether or not their wages should be equal to those of men doing the same work. But the suits have raised several other questions, too. One is whether the U.S. government has the right to require the Adventist Church to meet employment practices established by federal law. Church leaders have argued that such a

**“To some, the attempt to establish doctrinal consensus by administrative action is a disturbing departure from historic Adventism. . . .”**

requirement violates the separation of church and state guaranteed by the constitution. Another concerns the scope of church authority within its members' lives. Should an Adventist who sues one of the church's institutions be subjected to church discipline?

The most important theological question arises from the use of the expressions “spiritual leader,” “first minister” and “hierarchical system” to describe the leaders and organizations of the Adventist Church in the affidavits of church officers. In his “Report to the Church” two years ago explaining the lawsuits, Robert H. Pierson, then General Conference president, attributed the use of these terms to non-Adventist attorneys and denies that they indicate a new church polity.<sup>49</sup> But he did not deny—indeed, his discussion as a whole affirmed—what these terms imply, namely,

that the authority of the church is concentrated at the highest level of elected leadership, that is, in the officers of the General Conference. In a SPECTRUM article, Ron Walden compares the idea of church which emerges from the legal documents recently filed by our church leaders with the classical Roman Catholic doctrine of the church. The most striking parallel he finds is precisely this concentration of the power and essence of the church in the highest church offices. According to Walden, our church leaders' understandable desire to protect church unity accounts for their emphasis on the church's highest authority. Nevertheless, he argues, by shifting the center of gravity in Adventist church polity toward its hierarchical pole and away from its congregational pole, this development poses a threat to the important value of diversity within the church.<sup>50</sup>

This concern for church unity is also reflected in the proposed statements of belief which officials of the General Conference have presented to various academic groups within the past several years. In a *Review* editorial entitled “Preserve the Landmarks,”<sup>51</sup> W. J. Hackett, vice president of the General Conference, declares that statements clearly defining the church's position in various doctrinal areas are needed in order to preserve the church's identity and prevent the erosion of faith evident in many other Christian bodies. Thus, the documents circulated so far are attempts to formulate a “centrist position” or a “statement of consensus” on the issues of inspiration and creation. Actually, however, they have stimulated little discussion on these matters. As several of the items appearing in SPECTRUM indicate,<sup>52</sup> the church's academic community in general is much more concerned about the use to which these documents will be put and the possible effects of making them a standard of orthodoxy. The letters published in the *Review* responding to Hackett's editorial reveal that the most pressing question in the minds of many church members is what this whole development represents in light of the historic approach to truth within the Adventist Church. To some, the attempt to establish doctrinal consensus by administrative action is a disturbing departure from historic Ad-

ventism, with its rejection of creeds in deference to the ultimate authority of the Bible, its commitment to the ongoing discovery of truth, and its belief that the development of doctrine is the responsibility of church members in general and not the special province of official leaders. Since a religious community's view of how to arrive at truth is fundamental to its self-understanding, the basic issue here is the essential nature of the church. The questions raised by the recent statements are thus very similar to those emerging from the lawsuits. These attempts to achieve doctrinal conformity also reveal an increasing emphasis on the authority of "elected leadership," to use Neal C. Wilson's expression,<sup>53</sup> and an expanding conception of its role.

**I**n the area of extrachurch relations, or relations between the church and people and institutions outside the church, the church's understanding of its mission has undergone careful examination in recent years. In several writings, beginning with two articles in *SPECTRUM*,<sup>54</sup> Gottfried Oosterwal, the most prolific contributor to this discussion, challenges the church to rethink its conception of mission and to establish its missionary endeavors on a firm theoretical foundation. His basic claim is that "mission" defines the essential purpose of the church, and he calls for a new understanding as to what constitutes mission activity and who represent "missionaries." According to Oosterwal, mission is not merely one among the several responsibilities of the church, but its one fundamental task. Every church activity should be evaluated in light of its contribution to the fulfillment of this task. Because mission is the work of the church as a whole, not of a special class of church members, the conventional distinction between ministers and laymen must give way to a new concept of the laity as the whole people of God committed to one common goal. Besides his constructive reformulation of the concept of mission and the procedural innovations that logically follow, Oosterwal's work is notable for its use of mission as the most fundamental ecclesiological category. For Oosterwal, missiology—or doctrine of mission—is not

merely one aspect of ecclesiology. When properly formulated, it is nothing less than a full-fledged doctrine of the church.

The general surge of social consciousness in the past several years, particularly in the United States, has also had its counterpart in the Adventist Church. A number of Adventists are convinced that the church should take a position on certain topics of social and political importance. In particular, the church should officially become involved with the struggle for equal rights among minorities in the United States.<sup>55</sup> The question of theological significance here is whether the church as a corporate entity, and not merely its members as individuals, should assert itself vis-à-vis other institutions in society and cooperate with other institutions for social improvements. A number of Adventists have answered "yes" to this question, insisting that the church cannot avoid its responsibility to speak out on social issues, indeed, that such action is integral to its witness in the world.<sup>56</sup> Others, however, argue that such activity will distract the church from its principal task and divert its attention and energy to matters secondary to its ultimate concern.<sup>57</sup>

### **Eschatology**

The doctrine of last things, which concludes the standard systematic theology, is especially important to Seventh-day Adventists, and they have given it considerable attention. Since Adventism arose from the Millerite expectation of Christ's imminent return, its nature and purpose have always been related to its situation at "the end of time." Adventists describe themselves as the "remnant church" entrusted with God's last warning message to the world. Consequently, the continued passage of time without the fulfillment of their hopes challenges the basic self-understanding of Adventists, despite their generally remarkable progress in areas such as institutional size and complexity.

Adventist theologians have responded to this challenge in different ways. One is by examining the cause for the delay and suggesting ways of bringing it to an end. According to Herbert Douglass, Christ has postponed His return because His people

have failed to develop their characters sufficiently. They have not yet become the “quality people” who will reproduce Christ’s moral achievement and decisively vindicate God’s government.<sup>58</sup> Others attribute the delay to a widespread lack of enthusiasm for evangelism among Adventists, especially among ministers, and call for deeper commitment and more efficient programs for finishing the work.<sup>59</sup>

**I**n contrast to these various forms of self-criticism, Adventists have also responded to the delay in more positive terms. Contributors to the SPECTRUM issue on eschatology offer several reasons for a revised assessment of the delay.<sup>60</sup> From an analysis of apocalyptic movements in general, Jonathan Butler concludes that the apocalyptic perspective of Adventism is validated by its critique of civilization and the quality of life it affirms, whether or not its chronology turns out to be accurate. Recalling the change in attitude toward the time of Christ’s return in the New Testament writings, Roy Branson discerns a parallel shift in Adventist eschatology, from the Millerite period, when the Second Coming was immediately expected, to the turn of the century, when Christ’s return was clearly in the future. By putting the present in a new perspective, he argues, this shift opened the way for the extensive development of institutions for which Adventists are well known, and provides the permanent justification for active involvement in the concerns of this world. Richard W. Coffen insists that the writer of the Apocalypse anticipated the advent in the near rather than the distant future, and Tom Dybdahl argues that we properly await and hasten the Second Coming by faithfully doing our work each day, rather than trying to figure out when it will happen or what it will take to hurry it along.

Although the views expressed in these articles are by no means unanimous—the contributions of Branson and Coffen disagree, for example, as to whether the New Testament writers uniformly expected Christ’s immediate return—they generally illustrate two features of some of the church’s recent

thinking on the advent. One is the conviction, expressed elsewhere by Jack Provonsha and Sakae Kubo,<sup>61</sup> that the advent hope has as much to do with life in the present as with life in the future. The other is that this concern for the meaning of the present in no way diminishes the expectation of Christ’s eventual return. If anything, Branson maintains, it expresses the confidence that what Christ has already accomplished guarantees the certainty of His return in the near future.<sup>62</sup>

### **Sabbath**

Adventist theologians have probably been most creative in recent years in their interpretations of the Sabbath, a topic which is hardly more than mentioned in many systematic theologies. (Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* is a happy exception.) Several Adventist scholars, including Niels-Erik Andreasen, Samuele Bacchiocchi, Fritz Guy and Sakae Kubo, have devoted doctoral dissertations and/or subsequent books to a discussion of some aspect of the Sabbath.<sup>63</sup> And a number of articles exploring the meaning of the Sabbath have appeared, notably in *Insight*, the church’s publication for young people. The SPECTRUM issue entitled “The Festival of the Sabbath” testifies to this growing interest and contains some of the principal themes in this developing theology of the Sabbath.<sup>64</sup>

### **“Adventist thought on theological method is still in an early stage of development.”**

What is especially striking about these SPECTRUM articles is not only the freshness of their approach to this traditional pillar of Adventist belief, but also the scope of ideas encompassed by the Sabbath theme. One interpreter sees the Sabbath as a symbol of the relatedness and ultimacy of God.<sup>65</sup> For another, the Sabbath illuminates the temporal quality of human existence.<sup>66</sup> Others find in the Sabbath a powerful expression of redemption, both as accomplished by Christ and as experienced by the believer.<sup>67</sup> The

Sabbath is also related to the believing community as a symbol of covenant fellowship and as a means of establishing social harmony.<sup>68</sup> Finally, the Sabbath presents an answer to the transience of all human accomplishments and points in various ways to man's ultimate destiny in eternity.<sup>69</sup>

Going beyond the familiar legal aspects of the fourth commandment, these writers have found in the Sabbath a deeper understanding of God, man, salvation, church and human destiny. When the themes in these articles are sketched in this (by now) familiar sequence, the Sabbath emerges as a potential organizing principle for all aspects of Christian faith. In other words, these articles suggest that a fully developed theology of the Sabbath can assume the proportions of a comprehensive systematic theology. In addition, almost all the contributors emphasize the role of the Sabbath experience as the means of appropriating personally the various truths described. Far more than just one of Adventism's distinctive doctrines, then, the Sabbath may represent its most profound theological and experiential resource.

We noticed earlier that theology can refer both to religious beliefs and to the enterprise of reflecting on these beliefs. Having looked at some of the ways in which the beliefs of Adventists have developed in recent years, we now need to ask how the ways in which Adventists reflect upon their beliefs have also changed. On the most general level, Adventists have simply become more theologically conscious. They believe that it is important not only to be doctrinally correct, but also to articulate their beliefs as carefully and systematically as possible. This growing interest in theological reflection can be seen in the establishment of doctoral programs at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and in the rising number of Adventists who have pursued graduate study in systematic theology or closely related areas such as philosophy of religion and Christian ethics. The establishment of the Association of Adventist Forums and its official journal, *SPECTRUM*, also testifies to the strength of the conviction that

Adventists' beliefs need sophisticated reflection.

Explicit calls for such reflection have been issued in *SPECTRUM* articles by Herold Weiss and William G. Johnsson.<sup>70</sup> In addition, the series on Adventist theologians emphasizes the contributions of those who have led the way in fulfilling this task, such as Edward W. H. Vick and Jean Zurcher.<sup>71</sup>

Adventists have also suggested some rather specific criteria for theological reflection. Wrestling with the problem of how to avoid destructive innovation while attempting to communicate the Adventist message with greater sophistication, Charles Scriven suggests that the theologian "work within the tradition." That is, he should treat it, however critically, with love and respect, rather than "come at it from the outside," or regard it with hostility and disrespect.<sup>72</sup> Others, however, propose a more formal guarantee of theological adequacy. In a long supplement to *Ministry* entitled "A Conservative Approach to Theology,"<sup>73</sup> E. Edward Zinke of the Bible Research Institute, asserts that Adventist theology is distinguished by an approach to theology that arises out of Scripture. Occasionally, sounding like Karl Barth, Zinke maintains that the revelation in Scripture is simply a "given," and must be accepted solely on its own terms. Any attempt to apply to the claims of Scripture some external criterion, he insists, inevitably results in a distortion of the biblical truth, the forcing of Scripture's message to an alien mold.

Neither of these positions is really satisfactory. The personal sincerity of the theologian can be neither a criterion nor an objective in evaluating theology for a number of reasons, not the least of which is its notorious inaccessibility. And Zinke's position, among other things, leaves us without any means of identifying divine revelation or evaluating rival claims to revealed authority. Nevertheless, whereas Adventist thought on theological method is still in an early stage of development, it is now a matter of explicit concern within the Adventist community, and articles such as these have helped to make it so.

In addition to establishing certain criteria for appropriate theological reflection, Ad-

ventists have begun to offer theological proposals with such criteria specifically in mind. One example is Jack Provonsha's *God Is With Us*.<sup>74</sup> It deals with a number of familiar themes, such as the Atonement and the Second Coming, but it attempts to do so with the aid of reason and in a way sensitive to the difficulty of the modern mind under the traditional claims of Christianity. Moreover, the author makes use of contemporary resources such as behavioral science to interpret ancient ideas like sin and salvation.

Charles Scriven's book, *The Demons Have Had It: A Theological ABC*<sup>75</sup> is also sensitive to the problems of modern man. It begins by considering the prevalent question of meaning in life and goes on to argue that the truths expressed in the various doctrines of Christianity provide the only adequate basis for an affirmative answer to the question. Like Provonsha, Scriven, too, makes use of contemporary interpretations of Christianity, such as those of Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Reinhold Niebuhr, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Paul Tillich. In both their general approach to Christian beliefs and the resources they employ, works like these indicate that Seventh-day Adventists have begun to take seriously what Christian theology in general now regards as its most pressing challenge—the task of interpreting the Christian message to a contemporary audience who finds its historic claims increasingly problematic.

Some important theological questions have not been treated at any length in *SPECTRUM*. In the area of soteriology, for example, the widely discussed topics of righteousness by faith, perfection and the nature of Christ received relatively little attention until the issue which devoted several articles to Paxton's *The Shaking of Adventism*.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps the editors believe that these topics have received sufficient consideration in other denominational publications. Or they may feel that Adventists do not have anything particularly distinctive to say about them, in comparison with other Christian groups.

The typical theological concerns of the most elusive, and important, segment of church membership, the "general" or "aver-

age" church member, are, of course, the most difficult to identify. They probably are primarily soteriological, focusing on what is needed for personal salvation. This may explain the continuing interest in the question of what righteousness by faith really is and in whether or not the church has ever grasped this doctrine in its clarity.

### Future Work

Our review indicates that there is no single pervasive concern or dominant emphasis in current Seventh-day Adventist theology. While a diversity of theological interests and opinions is certainly healthy for the church, it would also be beneficial if a good share of the church's theologians would work from a few basic theological themes. If we were to suggest an agenda for the church's theologians, therefore, its most important items would be to define the essential theme of Seventh-day Adventist theology and to explain the contents of Christian faith as a whole on this basis, or construct a comprehensive Seventh-day Adventist theology whose various parts are integrated by means of this central idea. The richness of the recent studies on the Sabbath suggests that this doctrine may provide just the basis for this undertaking. The fulfillment of this constructive task could establish the unity of Adventist thought, and it could also lead to further work in comparatively neglected aspects of Adventist theology, such as the doctrines of God and man. Such a theological endeavor will meet the needs of Adventists today, however, only if it is contemporary as well as comprehensive. That is to say, only if it consciously attempts to speak to the particular problems of ultimately believing in anything in the modern world.

Besides this general need for comprehensive and constructive theological reflection, there are also more specific items which deserve immediate attention. One is to define the nature and function of Ellen G. White's ministry. This need is evident from a variety of questions, including not only the age of the earth question and the literary dependence discussion, but also the sharply contrasting interpretations of Christ's humanity, whose proponents appeal with equal certainty to her statements. Far too much



“theological” discussion consists of merely stringing together quotations from Ellen G. White and announcing a conclusion, rather than carefully interpreting the material appealed to. Her wide-ranging writings need to be carefully reflected upon, interrelated and analyzed in light of their historical context. The formulation of some basic principles of interpretation would prevent her from being misused and would clarify the relation of her writings to the Bible. In short, what is needed is a full-fledged hermeneutic of Ellen White’s writings.

**“Far too much ‘theological’ discussion consists of merely stringing together quotations from Ellen G. White and announcing a conclusion, rather than carefully interpreting the material appealed to.”**

Another specific issue which deserves immediate theological attention is the doctrine of the church. No doctrinal developments in recent years are likely to have more far-reaching effects for Adventists than the implicit theological developments in this area. But the doctrine of the church is far too important to be allowed to develop implicitly. It demands the concerted effort of the church’s entire theological community.

If the challenges to Seventh-day Adventist theology are formidable, the opportunities confronting Adventist theology have probably never been more favorable. Besides an increasing number of theologians within the church, the situation outside the church may have become particularly receptive to their work. There is a growing sense of theological identity on the part of conservative Christians in America, and a greater willingness on the part of the general theological community to hear what they have to say. Harper and Row recently published a two-volume work by Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, and the fourth volume has just appeared of what may become the definitive statement of the evangel-

ical position, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, by Carl F. H. Henry.<sup>77</sup> An example of the interest stimulated by such efforts is the fact that *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* devoted its Winter 1977 issue to a consideration of “The Evangelicals.” All of this indicates that the religious world at large may now be more interested in a scholarly presentation of Adventist theology than ever before.

To determine whether the church can meet this opportunity, we need to take a close look at the vehicles for scholarly theological expression available to Adventists. Among the church’s official periodicals, *Insight*, *Ministry* and the *Adventist Review* regularly contain articles of theological significance. Of these, the *Ministry* is probably the only one to reach a sizable number of non-Adventists, due to the project which regularly sends copies of the journal to Christian clergymen of all denominations in North America. During the past ten years, SPECTRUM has provided a helpful outlet for theological reflection, although its articles are geared primarily for the educated Adventist layman and it includes a wide variety of material. Because of its independent status, SPECTRUM has been able to present articles of an innovative or provocative nature that would not likely appear within the church’s official publications. It is encouraging to see the church’s publishing houses offering substantial theological works, like the Anvil Series of Southern Publishing Association. But denominational publishing houses are principally concerned with sales among Adventist readers, and their books have little circulation outside the church.

It is significant that there is no journal devoted primarily to Adventist theology as such. The most obvious place to look for a scholarly presentation of Adventist theology is the official publication of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, which is sent to university and seminary libraries throughout the country. However, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* is noteworthy for its paucity of theological articles. Over the years, it has been much more concerned with archaeology and history than with theological matters. One suggestion deserves careful consideration as a way of encouraging

theological reflection within the church and its communication to the non-Adventist theological world. This is the formation of a scholarly society of the church's theologians with a regular publication of its own. The opportunity to meet together on a regular basis, as do members of other professional societies, and a more or less autonomous or-

ganization might help to provide the freedom and cohesiveness needed to stimulate significant theological conversation.

At any rate, the SDA theological community has its work cut out for it. It has growing resources, growing challenges and growing opportunities. We can hope that its accomplishments will be equally impressive.

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44. Seventh-day Adventists have also examined the experience of salvation from the perspective of psychology of religion as well as from theology proper. *Religious Conversion and Personal Identity* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1979), by V. Bailey Gillespie, explores the similarities and differences of these two distinct but closely related experiences. Its thesis is that religious conversion plays an important role in the development of personal identity (pp. 36, 161). At the same time, it shows that a knowledge of the dynamics of personal identity formation can help us to understand the nature of religious conversion itself. Though psychological in its orientation, the book has many theological implications. In particular, it reminds us that what one thinks of God will affect the way he ultimately comes to think of himself (p. 158).

45. Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism* (Wilmington, Delaware: Zenith Publishers, Inc., 1977).

46. This action is quoted in *Ministry*, vol. 52, no. 2 (February 1978), p. 24.

47. See the articles in SPECTRUM, vol. 2, no. 2 (Spring 1970): Calvin B. Rock, "A Better Way," pp. 21-30; Frank W. Hale, Jr., "Commitment vs. Capitulation," pp. 31-40; E. Earl Cleveland, "Regional Union Conferences," pp. 41-46; and in SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 3: Benjamin Reeves, "The Call for Black Unions," pp. 2-3; Calvin B. Rock, "Cultural Pluralism and Black Unions," pp. 4-12; and Lorenzo Grant, "Ethical Implications of the Quest for Black Power," pp. 13-22.

48. For a discussion of this litigation, see Tom Dybdahl, "MeriKay and the Pacific Press: Money, Courts and Church Authority," SPECTRUM, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 44-53; "Church Settles Court Cases," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 2 (March, 1978), pp. 2-5; Douglas Welebir, "Is the Church Above the Law? God and Caesar and the California Lawsuits," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 6-15; John VanHorne, "Why Do Church Lawyers Use Hierarchy Language?" SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 23-29.

49. Robert H. Pierson, "When The Church Is Taken to Court," *Review and Herald* (March 24, 1977), pp. 6-8.

50. Ron Walden, "How Hierarchical Views of the Church Emerge," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 2 (March, 1978), pp. 16-22.

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

52. See the special section in SPECTRUM, vol. 8, no. 4 (August 1977), entitled "An Adventist Creed," particularly "A Response from PUC," pp. 43-44, "The West Coast Bible Teachers: A Statement of Concern," pp. 44-47.

53. See "Wilson Answers Questions Concerning Faith Statements," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 2 (March 1978), pp. 32-33.

54. Gottfried Oosterwal, "Seventh-day Adventist Mission in the Seventies," SPECTRUM, vol. 2, no. 2 (Spring 1970), pp. 5-20. "Mission in a New Key," SPECTRUM, vol. 3, no. 3 (Summer 1971), pp. 13-23. These articles were later incorporated in the book *Mission: Possible—The Challenge of Mission Today* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1972).

55. See "A Christian Declaration on Race Relations Adopted by the Southern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Session March 1, 1970," reprinted in SPECTRUM, vol. 2, no. 2 (Spring, 1970), pp. 53-55.

56. See the SPECTRUM issue devoted to the question of the church's relation to politics, vol. 8, no. 3.

57. See Arthur L. White's series, "Adventist's Responsibility to the Inner City," which contained the following articles: "Adventist Responsibility to the Inner City," *Review and Herald* (November 5, 1970), "A Shift in Emphasis," *Review and Herald* (November 12, 1970), pp. 7-10; "Strategy of Diversion," *Review and Herald* (November 19, 1970), pp. 8-11; and "A Work Others Will Not Do," *Review and Herald* (November 26, 1970), pp. 4-6.

58. *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility*, pp. 18-19; cf. Herbert E. Douglass, *Why Jesus Waits* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1976), pp. 45-51.

59. See "Annual Council Action on Evangelism and Finishing God's Work," *Ministry* (December 1976), pp. 3-10.

60. Jonathan Butler, "When Prophecy Fails: The Validity of Apocalypticism," SPECTRUM, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 1976), pp. 15-26. Richard Coffen, "John's Apocalypse: Some Second Thoughts on Interpretation," SPECTRUM, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 1976), pp. 27-31. Tom Dybdahl, "How To Wait for the Second Coming," SPECTRUM, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 1976), pp. 32-35.

61. Jack Provonsha, *God Is With Us*, pp. 136-147; in *God Meets Man: A Theology of the Sabbath and Second Advent* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), Sakae Kubo discusses the meaning of the second advent under two headings, "The Advent and the Present Life" and "The Advent and Future Events."

62. "Adventists Between the Times: The Shift in the Church's Eschatology," p. 25.

63. Niels-Erick A. Andreasen, "The Old Testament Sabbath: A Tradition-Historical Investigation," Society of Biblical Literature. Dissertation Series, No. 7, 1972; *The Christian Use of Time* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978); Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1977); *Rest for Modern Man: The Sabbath for Today* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1977); Fritz Guy, "Man and His Time," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1971; cf. "The Meaning of the Sabbath," *Insight*, February 5, 12, 19, 1974; Sakae Kubo, *God Meets*

*Man: A Theology of the Sabbath and Second Advent.*

64. SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 1. This special issue also contains a selected bibliography on the theology of the Sabbath compiled by Sakae Kubo and Fritz Guy.

65. Fritz Guy, "The Presence of Ultimacy," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 48-54.

66. Gerald Winslow, "Moment of Eternity," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 55-60.

67. Sakae Kubo, "The Experience of Liberation," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 9-14; Samuele Bacchiocchi, "A Memorial of Redemption," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 15-20.

68. Roy Branson, "A Festival of Fellowship," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 37-42; Niels-Erik Andreasen, "Jubilee of Freedom and Equality," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 43-47.

69. Otilie Stafford, "These Bright Ends of Time," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 21-24.

70. Herold D. Weiss, "The Theological Task," SPECTRUM, vol. 4, no. 1 (Autumn 1969), pp. 13-22. William G. Johnsson, "Needed—Constructive Adventist Theology," SPECTRUM, vol. 6, nos. 3/4 (1974), pp. 71-77.

71. Ron Walden, "Edward Vick's Passion for Theol-

ogy," SPECTRUM, vol. 8, no. 3; James J. Londis, "Jean Zurcher, Philosopher of Man," SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 2 (March 1978), pp. 38-44.

72. Charles Scriven, "The Case for Renewal in Adventist Theology," SPECTRUM, vol. 8, no. 1 (September 1976), p. 4.

73. E. Edward Zinke, "The Conservative Approach to Theology," *Ministry* (October 1977), pp. 24a-24p.

74. Jack W. Provonsha, *God Is With Us* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974).

75. Charles Scriven, *The Demons Have Had It: A Theological ABC* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1976).

76. SPECTRUM, vol. 9, no. 3, devoted a special section to Paxton's book, entitled "The Shaking of Adventism?" It included the following articles: Fritz Guy, "A View from the Outside"; Herbert Douglass, "Paxton's Misunderstanding of Adventism"; Desmond Ford, "The Truth of Paxton's Thesis"; Hans LaRondelle, "Paxton and the Reformers"; and Jonathan Butler, "An Interview with Paxton."

77. Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vols. 1-4 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1976-79).

## Tensions Between Religion and Science

by Molleurus Couperus

Are scientific and religious views of reality complementary or conflicting? Can one accept the Bible as divine revelation and also accept the validity of scientific theories regarding origins? Can a competent and honest scientist also be a committed and sincere Seventh-day Adventist? Attempting to answer such questions led to a decade of tension and struggle for Adventist intellectuals and church administrators.

Two General Conference institutions were directly immersed in issues of science and theology: the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI) and Biblical Research Institute (BRI). During the seventies, both were pushed into apologetic roles that saw them promote

strongly conservative, if not fundamentalist, attitudes toward the nature and authority of science and Scripture.

Those who resisted change in the relation of science and religion feared especially that the findings of science would weaken the authority of Ellen White. In order to protect the Bible and Ellen White from the theories of modern science, they questioned the authority of science as an independent avenue to truth. In general, efforts to practice "true science" as a search for substantiation of long-treasured beliefs and authorities characterized church-sponsored publications.

But at the same time, the church's continued commitment to higher education produced a whole new generation of Adventist scholars with advanced degrees and personal commitments to the open and critical methods of scholarship. Godfrey Anderson (1969) expressed the viewpoint of these scholars:

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A scholar cannot devote his efforts to proving a pet viewpoint — no matter how enamored of it he has become — while ignoring or discarding all evidence that does not fit his theories and accepting all those things that prove his point. Rather, as objectively as he can, as a finite human being, he must evaluate all the material that his search unearths. If a long-treasured theory fades under the glaring light of truth, this is a hazard and a sadness of the search for truth.<sup>1</sup>

Reflecting this basic assumption, Cottrell (1966–67) discussed the relation of reason and faith in a series of 11 articles published in the *Review and Herald*. The shading of his emphasis was quite different.

The Bible. . . was not given to acquaint us with such things as the facts of secular history or the natural world, except to the extent that these subordinate facts are essential to its primary purpose.

Furthermore, this revelation was not intended to be a substitute for man's natural faculties. . . . The Bible was never intended for use as a textbook on such subjects as history, botany, zoology, geology, or astronomy.<sup>2</sup>

Ritland (1970) observed that the self-correcting nature of science with its willingness to allow its theories to be challenged by investigators was a source of its extraordinary strength and resilience. He counseled: . . . those who search for clues regarding basic questions — the origins of our world order, the meaning of existence — must [also] remain open to truth from any source. . . . Those who fail to do this may be unable to make certain breakthroughs, may be self-limited to discern shades of meaning, to the extent that the accepted theoretical framework in which they work is not adequate.<sup>3</sup>

However, the tensions of the decade should not be allowed to obscure the broad agreements that also characterized the Adventist literature on science and theology. This broad agreement, as we shall see, found expression in the way many issues were handled as well as in the type of issues that captured the interest of Adventists writing about science and religion.

### General Theory

During the seventies, Adventists continued to worry relatively little about the tensions between scientific and religious world views or the tensions between scientific and theological approaches to truth. But they did worry constantly about conflicts between scientific theories and biblical or Ellen White statements. Therefore, origins was the most important topic. As Jack Provonsa (1974) noted, Adventists were primarily interested in the *natural history* and not the theology of creation.<sup>4</sup> Most Adventist authors assumed information from the Bible and Ellen White was more reliable (if less specific) for building creation theories than scientific information. Hence, Adventist scholars were interested in defending the historical integrity and authenticity of the creation accounts.

To cite an example, William Shea (1977) of the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary summarized the many striking similarities in the Mesopotamian and Genesis creation accounts, but also emphasized the differences. He accounted for the similarities by postulating that a common source was available to them both, but that a deterioration occurred in the Mesopotamian accounts. The Bible therefore presents the most authentic account.<sup>5</sup>

Based therefore on the assumption that the Bible and Ellen White contain true descriptions of the natural history of origins, Adventist writers proposed their creation theories. Harold Clark (1973), a prolific contributor to Adventist literature for five decades, outlined a theory that is typical of mainstream Adventist views: an emphasis on a literal creation week, a recent creation, a universal Flood, limited evolutionary change within created kinds and a sharp qualitative distinction between man and the animals.<sup>6</sup>

Neufeld (1974) offered the most comprehensive formulation of creation theory to be published during the decade.<sup>7</sup> He began by expressing the belief of a creationist with the quotation “. . . the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is. . .” (Exodus 20:11). The differences of opinion, he noted were usually with the *when* and the *how*, rarely with the *why*.

Neufeld then presented his theory of creation in a series of 11 postulates which included most of the traditional Adventist convictions. According to Neufeld, the general acceptance of the theory of evolution was guaranteed by the ineffective and inept response to the theory by the nineteenth century advocates of creationism.

But Neufeld then noted that recent discoveries in science, particularly in genetics and molecular biology, “make it increasingly clear that the Creator cannot be ruled out on scientific grounds” and that a reasonable and calm presentation of the creation theory can be effective.

In the German annual, *Der Adventglaube in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Klausewitz (1975) defended the viewpoint that all references to nature in the Bible have a religious implication and are not intended to be scientific statements. Klausewitz reached the conclusion that the actual history of the earth agrees

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in principle with current scientific theories. Biblical references to natural processes, he concluded, must be evaluated from the standpoint of faith, not science.<sup>8</sup>

**Creation Theology**

Although Adventist interest in creation theories was not matched by a corresponding interest in creation theology, some theological issues were aired in the Adventist literature on creation.

One traditional kind of creation theology, natural theology, includes the attempt to use features of the natural world as evidence for an intelligent Creator. It is of interest that although Adventist theologians of the past decade were only mildly interested in natural theology, many scientists were keenly interested. Adventist scientists testified frequently to their conviction that a study of

nature led them to a concept of a Designer-Creator.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, the earth often seems perverse as well as benign. Numerous Adventists writing about creation theory were lured into a consideration of the problem of evil by the obvious dark side of nature.<sup>10</sup> For example, in his article “Who Put the Worm in the Apple?” Wheeler (1975) confronted his readers with the cruelty of nature and its relationship to the concept of a loving Creator. He showed how this question troubled Darwin and claimed evolution was Darwin’s solution.

**R**elated to the problem of evil in nature is the question of freedom and determination. How do the catastrophes and accidents in nature harmonize with belief in divine providence? Is God really in control, or is our world a world of chance? An Adventist physicist, Smith (1977) discussed the opposing naturalistic and theistic world views from the standpoint of quantum mechanics:

The world is sustained by [God] and is subject to His will both in a general way and in specific cases. It, however, does not reflect His immediate will in all things. Man, as he appears in Scripture, stands between, He is part of the created world of things, but is given responsibilities that transcend the rest of nature. He is able to make judgments and to introduce novelty.<sup>11</sup>

Some Adventist theologians lamented the limited interest in creation theology. Jack Provonsa (1974) called the concept of God as Creator the fundamental and central tenet of the Christian faith and warned that creation theology can be obscured by the controversies about creation as “natural history,” and that it is more important to focus on the three major biblical elements of a theology of creation: that God is one, a unity; that God is the source of all that is; and that God is good — Creator, not destroyer.<sup>12</sup> Most Adventist writers, while simply taking these theological assertions for granted, were obviously more interested in the contentious issues surrounding the “when” and the “how” of origins.

### Creation Versus Evolution

Evolutionary concepts have been applied at various levels in the study of origins. Astronomical science speaks of stellar evolution in its attempt to understand the origin of the universe. Unlike many evangelical Christians who insist Genesis 1 teaches the whole universe was created during creation week, Adventists have traditionally applied the creation account only to the earth or, at most, the solar system. Therefore, stellar evolution has not been a burning issue for most Adventist scientists.

At least four major kinds of criticisms were launched against the evolutionary theory. It was called 1) “unscientific” — a metaphysical, not scientific theory; 2) a violation of a basic law of physics (the Second Law of Thermodynamics); 3) inadequate, because it could not account for the origin of life, and 4) incompatible with the facts of the fossil record. Theistic evolution was specifically attacked by some.<sup>13</sup>

John Clark (1976)<sup>14</sup> was one who charged that evolution was a metaphysical world view, not (primarily) a scientific theory. The “frightening implications” which he saw in an evolutionary world view were the impossibility of finding truth, the difficulties in a search for a basis of knowing, the denial of human freedom, and an inadequate basis for a system of ethics.

Roth (1977)<sup>15</sup> also questioned whether evolution qualified as a scientific principle and observed: “The concept of survival of the fittest of itself does not necessarily imply any evolution. Would not the fittest survive, whether they evolved or were created?” According to Roth, evolution cannot be adequately tested and has no predictive value. Therefore it can not be accepted as a scientific principle.

These philosophical attacks on evolution are examples of a creationist argument expressed more traditionally by Leonard Brand (1976-77):

The difference between a creationist and an evolutionist isn't a difference in the scientific data, but a difference in philosophy — a difference in the presuppositions. . . .<sup>16</sup>

Creationists have repeatedly invoked the Second Law of Thermodynamics against evolution. This critique occurs also in the Adventist literature of the past decade, but not without some reservations. Watson (1973)<sup>17</sup> wrote that the Second Law is “diametrically opposed to the basic idea of evolution” since it seems to indicate a continual running down of the universe. Ritland (1970)<sup>18</sup> spoke of the “progressive disorganization of matter” and saw the action of a Creator, Designer and Organizer as a reasonable answer to the dilemma presented by the ever-increasing degradation of matter and energy, while Jost (1978)<sup>19</sup> asserted that from the viewpoint of thermodynamics, the evolutionary origin of living organisms was an impossibility.

But other Adventist authors were not quite as certain. Brown (1976)<sup>20</sup> opposed the view advocated by well-known creationist Henry Morris that the Second Law of Thermodynamics is a consequence of sin. And some Adventist scientists reminded their readers that open systems like the earth could theoretically show increasing levels of organization.

Adventist scientists took particular satisfaction during this past decade in challenging evolutionists with their inability to explain the origin of life in scientific terms. This is the one anti-evolutionist argument used by all major segments of Adventist science.

One of the best presentations of this argument was by Evard and Schrodetzki (1976).<sup>21</sup> They focused particularly on the attempts to produce amino acids synthetically by passing electrical charges through a reducing atmosphere thought to simulate the original atmosphere of the primitive earth. Such methods have produced some 18 amino acids during the past 25 years. However, the authors pointed out that the same energy that produces these amino acids also destroys them. The experimental apparatus needed a trap to remove the condensate containing the amino acids. Was there such a trap in the environment of the primitive earth? If not, the amino acid precursors to life would have been destroyed as fast as they were produced. Many other problems plaguing attempts to explain the origin of life scientifically were

also reviewed by Evard and Schrodetzki and other authors.<sup>22</sup>

A fourth anti-evolutionist argument favored by Adventist authors of the last decade cited the physical discontinuities separating the major forms of life, whether living or fossil. The position is as old as Darwin, but the passing years have added substance to it for increased knowledge of the fossil record has not filled in the notorious gaps. In other words — the missing links are missing still.<sup>23</sup>

Anderson and Coffin (1977)<sup>24</sup> coauthored a book, *Fossils in Focus*, that develops this approach at length. The book, after analyzing the fossil record of the major groups of animals and plants, concludes that numerous unbreached gaps exist between these groups. Anderson and Coffin claimed that, on the basis of this record, the creation model has more evidence to support it than evolution. They proposed a creation model in which all major kinds of organisms were created individually and given the genetic variability to adapt to different environments or habitats. Russell Mixter, who wrote a closing response in his book, concluded: “Logically then, one may say that within an order the varied species may have come from a common ancestor, but that the missing links testify to special creations of the first members of the orders.”

The thought arises that, if this is the true interpretation of the fossil record, the original world must have been very poor biologically at the time of creation (one species per order), and an overwhelming degree of variation must have occurred during the period of 6,000 years claimed to have elapsed since creation.

It would appear that although the “creation model” offered by Anderson and Coffin is typical of Adventist thought during the last decade, it nonetheless finds itself impaled on the horns of an uncomfortable dilemma. It must either reject a short chronology, or else accept truly fantastic rates of descent with variation — in other words “out-evolutionize” even the evolutionists! Oddly enough, it makes bedfellows of creationists and those modern evolutionists who are

looking for processes and conditions that can produce evolution sufficiently rapid to explain the gaps in the fossil record!

Both Coffin (1975)<sup>25</sup> and Ritland (1970)<sup>26</sup> called attention to a “gap” in the fossil record. The sudden appearance of complex fossils in the earth’s crust is a problem for evolutionary theory that is also as old as Darwin, who puzzled over it and admitted it was a valid objection to his theory. Creationists have speculated that sterile rocks below the layers containing the earliest complex fossils (the Precambrian) represent rocks that formed before creation week with the sudden appearance of complex fossils in Cambrian rocks representing creation.

Unfortunately, by the end of this past decade, this explanation had lost some of its force. Repeatedly, paleontologists reported finding single-celled microfossils in Precambrian rock layers. Moreover, just below the Cambrian levels, complex fossils are

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known that could be precursors to the Cambrian faunas, while the burrows of wormlike organisms have been reported well down into Precambrian rocks.

Adventist earth scientists showed an understandable reluctance to accept the new findings and clung to the hope the reports were erroneous. If major portions of the oldest layers in the earth’s crust contain only the fossils of single-celled organisms, how should these rock layers be interpreted by creation theories? On the one hand, if the rocks formed *before* creation week, why do they contain *any* fossils, even single-celled organisms? On the other hand, if they formed *after* creation week (or during the Flood), why are there no fossils of higher life forms? Clearly, a cherished argument is in need of refurbishment, although the sudden appearance of many complex types of fossils



in the Cambrian does continue to offer another example of “missing links.”

Although written at the beginning of the decade, Ritland’s (1970) summary of the fossil record relative to the evolution-creation controversy is still appropriate:

The theory of evolution must account for missing links between certain families and orders in all types of habitats and at all time levels except the “recent epochs.” By contrast, to interpret the data within the perspective of special creation one must explain the apparent absence of certain higher types of life in the lower or older deposits.<sup>27</sup>

### Geology and the Flood

Adventist literature has always emphasized the importance of harmonizing “Genesis and geology.” The emphasis on Flood geology increased in the last decade as the Geoscience Research Institute of the General Conference devoted itself to “building a Flood model” as its major tactic in defending a short chronology.

Typical of the research sponsored or encouraged by the Geoscience Research Institute in its effort to build a “Flood model” was the work of Leonard Brand (1978),<sup>28</sup> who restudied the fossil animal footprints in a sandstone layer exposed in the Grand Canyon. Previous scientific workers had concluded the footprints were made originally on dry windblown sand dunes — a conclusion that made it difficult to relate the formation of the sandstone to a watery event like the Flood. But Brand’s field studies and laboratory experiments led him to conclude the tracks were made below water. The fact that the tracks seemed almost always to be headed “uphill” relative to sedimentary structures in the rock layer encouraged Brand to speculate they were made as the animals fled the rising waters of the Flood.

Although church-sponsored publications expressed no doubts about a universal Flood responsible for most of the geological features of the earth’s crust, many doubts were raised about the so-called “New Geology” of George McCready Price, the famous Adventist “crusader for creationism” of the

first half of the present century. A process begun by H. W. Clark nearly 40 years ago was completed during the past decade. Price’s “New Geology,” with its rejection of the geologic column, its denial that the fossils occurred in a systematic order, its refusal to accept the reality of an Ice Age, and its insistence that “overthrusts” (older layers “thrust” over younger layers by compressive forces) were an invention of uniformitarian geologists to save their preconceived evolutionary ordering of the fossils, became officially the “Old Geology.”

The new geology follows H. W. Clark’s rejection of Price’s geological system. It accepts the validity of the geological column (and the order of the fossils in the earth’s crust). It accepts the evidence for extensive past glaciation. And it follows H. W. Clark in substituting for Price’s system an ecological zonation theory as the primary explanation for the systematic distribution of fossils in the earth’s crust. According to the ecological zonation model, the order of the fossils does not represent an evolutionary order through time, but rather the order in which different antediluvian ecological zones were buried by the slowly rising waters of the Flood.

Over the last decade, a number of Adventist writers directly or indirectly expressed their discomfort with some of the arguments and methods employed in the literature of creationists. Typical is the reaction of Adventist writers to the reported association of human and dinosaur fossil footprints in the Paluxy riverbed near Glen Rose, Texas. If this association were true, it would be devastating to current evolutionary theory (dinosaurs supposedly died out 60,000,000 years before man appeared on earth). Creationist literature touts this association as a clear falsification of standard evolutionary geology. But Adventist writers were skeptical of these reports. B. Neufeld (1975), after studying the tracks, reported:

The Glen Rose region of the Paluxy River does not provide good evidence for the past existence of giant men. Nor does it provide evidence for the co-existence of such man (or other large mammals) and the giant dinosaurs.<sup>29</sup>

Also illustrative of the scientific restraint of

some Adventist authors in the past decade was their caution about the claims made by groups searching for Noah's ark. Significantly, Adventist authors wrote comparatively little about the ark. And when they did publish on the topic, they usually tended to focus on the errors and inconsistencies they saw in the reports that were circulating. Shea (1977), for example, reviewed two films that claimed to show the finding of the ark on Mount Ararat, pointing out the errors both films contained.<sup>30</sup> Shea concluded the wood brought down from the mountain may have come from crosses or a shrine built by Armenian Christians, one of which was dated by experts at A. D. 586.

Taylor and Berger (1979) also reported on the wood brought down from Ararat. Taylor presented a table of the results of seven radiocarbon determinations by six different

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laboratories. The results obtained vary between 1,190-1,690 radiocarbon years, much too young to be ark wood. Taylor commented:

Some commentators have suggested that the samples had been “contaminated” by some unspecified mechanism(s) as a result of their association with the glacier environment. We are not aware of any known physical or chemical contamination that would not be removed by standard pretreatment methods. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Another consequence of the increasing sophistication of Adventist earth scientists was a widening concern over the scientific credibility of Flood geology. Serious doubts about the scientific status of Flood geology were rarely expressed in church-sponsored publications during this past decade; nevertheless, indications that Flood geology faced difficult problems were not lacking. The promotion by church officials of a Crea-

tion Statement affirming Flood geology was a tacit admission that fundamental (and threatening) differences of opinion existed. SPECTRUM provided an outlet for a variety of ideas, including the dissenting opinions of some Adventist scientists employed outside the denomination. And finally, reports filtering back from the summer Geological Field Conferences sponsored by the Geoscience Research Institute revealed that even some denominationally employed scientists had serious reservations about the scientific viability of Flood geology.

For many years, almost annually, guided geological tours have been held in North America under the auspices of the Geoscience Research Institute, originally under the direction of Richard Ritland, and more recently under Robert Brown. From time to time, brief reports of these tours have appeared in the *Adventist Review*. But as far as I am aware, the 1978 tour was the first one to be the subject of two critical appraisals<sup>32</sup> that made it clear that sharp differences of opinion characterized the tours.

Geraty's (1979) review in SPECTRUM of the 1978 Geoscience field trip analyzed some of the specific questions raised about Flood geology. For example, he linked the well-known problems posed by the Yellowstone Fossil Forests for Flood geology with those of the Wyoming oil-shale beds studied intensively by a young Adventist geologist, Paul Buchheim. Buchheim concluded the oil shales accumulated under an ancient lake, not during the Flood. Geraty comments:

The Green River Formation [oil shales] is approximately the same geological age as the Yellowstone Fossil Forests; consequently, it is difficult to have the latter being floated into place by the Noachian Flood, while just to the south one has the fluctuating fortunes of a living lake. Nor can one escape this dilemma by claiming that Eocene in one location is not contemporary with Eocene at the other, because in this case there is a physical stratigraphic tie between the formations in question.<sup>33</sup>

The formation of coal beds also was studied on the field trip. Coffin suggested

that these beds were due to floating masses of vegetation during the Flood. Geraty comments: "Deep in a coal mine, we observed perhaps the most dramatic counter evidence — dinosaur tracks and trackways on top of coal seams. . . . If coal seams represent mats of vegetation afloat in flood waters, how were they able to bear the tonnage of so many dinosaurs at so many levels, and where were the beasts going?"

Geraty also commented on the evidence the group saw for not just one but many lengthy "Ice Ages" scattered throughout the geologic history of the earth.

Several Adventist authors discussed the scientific problems faced by Flood geology in other SPECTRUM articles. Most notably, the fossil forests of the Yellowstone region were analyzed by Ritland and Ritland in a 1974 SPECTRUM article. The Ritlands recognized more than 40 successive layers with stumps of petrified trees up to 12 feet in diameter and 20 feet in height "spaced through approximately 1,500 feet of volcanic strata." They concluded:

. . . there is no question that the time problem to which the fossil forests contribute has an important bearing on fundamental theological issues. We are entirely sympathetic with any thorough and careful effort to solve the problem by endeavoring to encompass earth history in a short period. Nevertheless, as we have carefully studied the fossil forest outcrops throughout the volcanic field and evaluated the converging lines of data bearing on their deposition together with the broader geological picture in which they fit, the weight of evidence has led us to conclude that successive forests are represented.<sup>34</sup>

The Ritlands' article was highly significant. It directly challenged traditional viewpoints by presenting as their *studied conclusion* a model incompatible with either Flood geology or a short chronology for life. The Ritlands, however, explicitly concluded that the upright stumps of the fossil forests grew right where we find them today. This conclusion required a much longer history for life on earth than traditionally accepted by the church.

While still a colleague of Ritland at the Geoscience Research Institute, Harold Coffin began his own study of the Fossil Forests. Coffin acknowledged that he, too, believed the forests to be *in situ* — until he realized the temporal implications. He then devoted his energies to the search for a Flood model interpretation. Based on many summers of field work, Coffin was able to develop a flotation theory. He summarized his theory in a 1979 SPECTRUM article that should be read against the background of the Ritland article.

Volcanic activity in the Yellowstone region occurred while the area was at least partly under water. Trees, some vertical, floated in the water along with organic debris. As trees and vegetable matter became water saturated, they settled down onto the breccia at the bottom. Within a relatively short time (days or weeks), another slide moved over and around the trees and organic debris. Before the appearance of each succeeding breccia flow, more trees and organic matter settled to the bottom. Thus, layer upon layer of trees and organic zones were built up in a relatively short period of time.<sup>35</sup>

The Fossil Forest debate has brought to the surface some of the sharp differences of Adventist opinion that are often muted. As in the articles discussing the Fossil Forests, the differences are usually debated as scientific differences — but the nature of the debate suggests they can be better understood as a theological and cultural struggle couched in scientific categories.<sup>36</sup>

### The Age of the Earth

The age of the earth was very much in the minds of many Adventist authors in the past decade. This unusual interest may be partially ascribed to a historical commitment to the belief that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and statements by Ellen G. White demand an earth only about 6,000 years old.

Adventist publications presented three main views of the age of the earth. Nearly all the authors attempted to base their theories on both Scripture and scientific data. Advocates of the first main view held that the planet earth was only about 6,000 years old. Proponents of the second view insisted that

the earth was indeed very old, but that life was created only 6,000 years ago. The third view was that both the earth and life on this planet were *much* older than 6,000 years and that the length of time since the creation of life on earth was not indicated in Scripture. This final view was not published in church-sponsored literature, however, and was specifically rejected in the Creation Statement developed by church officials.

Although most Adventist authors of the past decade defended a recent creation week, relatively few insisted the earth itself was young. Most were satisfied to allow for the possibility of an old (although lifeless) earth that was created in a primordial creation event long before the creation week of Genesis 1.

The most interesting and controversial scientific defense of a young earth was offered by Robert Gentry, who published a series of articles in the scientific literature on pleochroic halos and their implications.<sup>37</sup> Pleochroic halos are produced in minerals such as mica by the bombardment of alpha particles from radioactive nuclei enclosed in the mineral. Gentry implied that his halos indicated some of the earth's oldest rocks were created instantaneously and recently.

Gentry emphasized the presence of halos of an extremely short-lived element, polonium, which he felt was difficult to explain on the basis of currently accepted cosmological models of the earth's formation. In other words, the rocks of the earth came into existence instantaneously only a few thousand years ago.

Answers to Gentry's views were not slow to appear in the scientific literature.<sup>38</sup> Adventist physicists also gave little support to Gentry's views, and many actively opposed them. Robert Brown (1978) observed:

. . . the data provided by pleochroic halos give essentially no information as to how rapidly these halos have been formed. . . [instead] Pleochroic halos provide one of the best evidences that radioactive decay rates have not changed by more than approximately 30% during the time minerals found in planet Earth have been in exist-

tence. . . a change. . . of only 30% accomplishes nothing with respect to bringing radiometric dates within a 6,000-year time span. . . it must be stated that the uranium and thorium halo investigations made by Mr. Gentry provide absolutely no physical evidence for change in radioactive decay rates during geological time. . .<sup>39</sup>

Robert Brown, director of the Geoscience Research Institute, continued to be the most vigorous champion of the theory that the earth was as old as science claims (approximately 4.5 billion years), but that creation week and all fossils were recent. Brown argued in several papers that the combination of an old earth and a recent creation week did no violence to the literal meaning of the text in Genesis 1 and allowed one to accept the basic validity of inorganic radiometric dating techniques.<sup>40</sup> Brown wrote repeatedly of the "Graveyard Hoax." By this he meant that

**"Defense of chronological schemes based on the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 came primarily from scientists (not biblical scholars) during the last decade."**

just as a skeleton in a graveyard is not as old as the soil in which it is buried, so also fossils are not necessarily as old as the rocks in which they are found.

Brown presented numerous powerful arguments for the chronological significance of inorganic radiometric dating techniques. He noted, for example, that five different techniques for determining radioisotope age when applied to a rock sample from the Bear-tooth Mountains in Montana yielded ages ranging between 2.5 and 2.8 billion years. When so many different methods give the same results, the results must mean something, Brown claimed. He asked: "Can one believe these radioisotope ages?" His answer? A firm "Yes."<sup>41</sup>

Brown's defense of the radiometric dating techniques was impressive to most of his peers. But many of his colleagues in physics and the earth sciences were not convinced by

his arguments for separating the age of the rocks from the age of the fossils found in the rocks. They felt that the logic of his arguments led inevitably (if pursued consistently) to acceptance of the geologic time scale for the age of the fossils.

**B**asic to the conviction of many Adventist authors that creation week was a recent event (about 6,000 years ago) was their interpretation of the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11. These genealogies were the subject of several articles. Tuland (1974) approached them from the standpoint of linguistics and pointed to the evidence for important spoken and written languages in major cultures many centuries before the traditional dates assigned to the Flood.<sup>42</sup> Geraty asked whether the biblical genealogies should be used as an index of time (1974). He concluded:

It must be stated then, that our present knowledge of human civilization in the ancient Near East apparently goes back (at Jericho, for instance) to the seventh millennium B.C. This information was not available to earlier generations of Bible students, and they assumed that the Genesis genealogies were unbroken chains. The evidence indicates, however, that this assumption may legitimately be called into question. . . . The Bible does *not* assign a 6,000-year history to the span of human life on the earth. This is done only by a particular *interpretation* of the Genesis genealogies — an interpretation which we have seen does not rest on very solid ground.<sup>43</sup>

It is interesting to note that defense of chronological schemes based on the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 came primarily from scientists (not biblical scholars) during the last decade. Robert Brown (1975)<sup>44</sup>, for instance, defended the time relationships of these genealogies, but Don Neufeld (1975) an editor of the *Adventist Review* and an Old Testament scholar, retorted, “We must not demand of the Bible information that God did not place there. . . . although chronological schemes have been worked out, such as the one Dr. Brown demonstrated, it is dif-

ficult satisfactorily to integrate all the chronological data in the Bible into any one scheme.”<sup>45</sup>

Many Adventist scholars were keenly aware of the challenge posed by the carbon 14 dating method to a chronology based on the genealogies of Genesis. Carbon 14 dating was the subject of more papers than any other dating technique. The method was especially troubling to many Adventists because of its widespread applicability, its ability to date the organic remains of past life, and its provision of a time scale for the historical period and its immediate antecedents that seemed to be generally dependable but that exceeded by far traditionally allotted time for post-Flood history.

Robert Brown (1969)<sup>46</sup>, although agreeing that the premises and methods were sound, and that the dates obtained by this method were acceptable up to about 2000 B.C., postulated that there was more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere prior to the Flood, and that the pre-Flood biosphere contained eight times as much nonradioactive carbon and at most 1/100, and possibly as little as 1/1000, of the present value of radioactive carbon. By suggesting these markedly different values, Brown could reduce all C-14 dates prior to 2000 B.C. to fall within the timespan of the 6,000 years concept which he sought to rescue. The problem Brown faced with this hypothesis is that he offered no convincing supporting evidence for it and that other dating methods which have no relation to radioactive carbon yield dates similar to the ones obtained by carbon-14 (see Barnes, 1971).<sup>47</sup>

The strongest defense of the C-14 method was offered by Ervin Taylor, director of a radiocarbon dating laboratory at the University of California at Riverside.<sup>48</sup> In a 1977 article, Taylor reviewed the experiments leading to the use of the method for dating purposes.<sup>49</sup> He described W. F. Libby’s specific research program to test the possibility of using radiocarbon as a dating method which resulted in a 1949 report on the C-14 dating for many samples of known age. Since that time, thousands of archaeological specimens have been dated by this method by more than 100 carbon dating laboratories all

over the world. Are these dates reliable? Taylor (1974)<sup>50</sup> suggested they are, emphasizing that many other methods — obsidian hydration, thermoluminescence, archaeomagnetic data, the potassium-argon method, fission track dating, dendrochronology, varve dating, fluorine diffusion and archaeological sequences — support and confirm the C-14 results.

Another dating method of particular interest to Adventists came to the fore in the last decade and also provided general confirmation of C-14 ages. The amino acid dating method based on changes in proteins was developed largely by P. E. Hare, an Adventist scientist who once was a member of the Geoscience Research Institute, but now is affiliated with the Carnegie Geophysical Laboratory in Washington, D.C.<sup>51</sup> Hare originally developed the method in order to undermine the credibility of C-14, but, to his consternation, the results he achieved were consistent with C-14 ages. In 1974, Hare, reviewing the history of amino acid dating, stated:

Each of the nearly 20 different amino acids found in recent shells, bones and teeth has its own characteristic reaction rate constant and activation energy for the various chemical reactions involved. There is a sufficient number of different amino acids to define both the time and temperature history of the fossils in question.<sup>52</sup>

The apparent consistency of results achieved by so many different, often independent, dating methods was recognized as a serious problem by Adventist authors. Those who defended traditional short-chronology views argued that the consistency was only apparent. They pointed to inconsistent dates that appeared at times in the scientific literature and argued that other inconsistent dates were ignored and not published by secular scientists. But this very serious charge was never adequately documented.

The profound differences of opinion expressed by authors analyzing the age of the earth appear to be similar to the differences expressed about the scientific credibility of Flood geology. They appear to be at heart

theological, not scientific, differences. Robert Brown, foremost Adventist critic of all dating methods yielding ages for life greater than 6,000 years, admitted as much. He forthrightly informed the ministerial pre-session before the Vienna General Conference meetings in July 8, 1975:

In the areas of time problems and evidence for the Flood described in Genesis, chapters 6-9, one must depend on faith in the testimony of Scripture for in these areas there is less convincing support from scientific evidence. . . .the scientific evidence in support of biblical testimony is weakest with respect to the amount of time that has passed since Creation Week and since the Flood.<sup>53</sup>

In short, a careful review of the Adventist literature of the last decade on dating methods reveals that the defense of a recent creation week about 6,000 years ago and young fossils is based not on the weight of the scientific evidence, nor on any fatal weaknesses in the evidence supporting the commonly accepted scientific time scale, nor even on the clear teaching of Scripture (many careful exegetes concluded Scripture does not specify a date for the Flood or Creation), but rather on the statements of Ellen G. White. Colin Standish (1974) seems to have recognized this when he wrote:

While the Bible does not give a precise date for Creation Week, its internal evidence supports the six-thousand year approximation. However, as the Bible makes no direct statement to this effect, it is the Spirit of Prophecy references that become most significant.<sup>54</sup>

### Fossil Man

The problems and questions associated with fossil man are many, both within paleoanthropology and in theological thought.<sup>55</sup> Adventist theologians and scientists agree that there is a gap between the mental and cultural characteristics of man and other mammals.<sup>55</sup>

Harold Clark (1976),<sup>57</sup> after discussing the position of the Australopithecines (the so-called "ape-men"), accepted a paleolithic stone age in the history of man, with a progressive refinement of stone tools in the suc-

cessive layers of cave deposits, followed by the bronze and iron periods. He assumed this stone age could have been of relatively short duration until postdiluvial man again found sources of metal.

However, Harold Coffin has some interesting and provocative conjectures about early man:

Although nature does indicate that major categories such as families, orders, and larger taxa have been fixed to a great extent, the Bible does not say that there can be no crossing between these larger groups. May it be possible that such behavior has actually been a part of the history of life in the past. . . there is support for this view in both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy writings, as well as in nature. . .

It is attractive to think that. . . the so-called ape-men with what appear to be human and ape characteristics, were crosses between . . . man and ape. . .<sup>58</sup>

Coffin goes on to say that we ought to keep our

**“The profound differences of opinion expressed by authors analyzing the age of the earth appear . . . to be at heart theological, not scientific, differences.”**

minds open to the possibility that before the Flood crossing between more diverse kinds of animals may have occurred on a greater scale than today.

He carefully avoids the word, but he seems to have in mind Ellen White’s comments on amalgamation. Frank Marsh (1973) urged the church to reject the view that amalgamation meant man and beast had ever crossed. He felt such a concept was “unscientific” and that crosses between created “kinds” was impossible.<sup>59</sup> Apparently, Coffin sees in the interpretation of that theory prior to Marsh a way of accounting for the rapid biological change necessitated by his interpretation of the fossil record. He wondered if specimens such as the Java man skulls could represent “primitive and degenerate human beings who had wandered away from the centers of civilization and lapsed gradually

into a crude and degraded social and economic culture that included cannibalism?”<sup>60</sup>

Lugenbeal (1974) reviewed the significance of Richard Leakey’s find of skull 1470 and its impact on theories of human history, and suggested that Java man (*Pithecanthropus erectus*, *Homo erectus*) is a reality, a variety of fossil man with a wide distribution. Lugenbeal (1978) counseled:

Conservative creationists would do well to pay heed to this find in view of the tendency of some creationist literature to dispute the authenticity of *Homo erectus*. . . In my judgment, Leakey’s latest finds should lead creationists to stop trying to hide from *Homo erectus* by calling him an ape.<sup>61</sup>

Lugenbeal treated at some length the more recent findings in paleoanthropology, particularly the *Australopithecines*, and asked if they were “ape-men” or just apes, and if man could have evolved from them. He observed that they “may be neither missing links nor ‘simply apes.’” He based this especially on the evidence of an upright bipedal gait from the fossil skeleton of Lucy found by Johanson in the Hadar region in Ethiopia in 1974. An additional problem was added when Richard Leakey discovered a specimen of *Homo erectus* in the same beds in which one specie of *Australopithecine* was found.

Lugenbeal also listed a number of questions which must be answered by a biblically based model that considers the East African hominids. These problems include the fact that the new *Homo* fossils may be true man, yet they are quite different from modern man, with a smaller brain size and stature, certainly not giants. The East African fossils represent the oldest human fossils yet found, situated deep in rocks in which they are associated with extinct species of animals and with extremely crude stone tools. According to Lugenbeal, “The characteristics of these rocks do not seem compatible with extensive transport or deposition below the waters of the Flood.”<sup>62</sup> Some of the layers, for example, include “buried soil horizons with root markings.” Lugenbeal noted that a theory of pre-Flood or post-Flood deposition must deal with these problems.

Creationists can be grateful that the new finds leave earliest man, as Mary Leakey puts it, with “largely hypothetical ancestors.” But creationists must also be ready and eager to confront the whole spectrum of information coming out of East Africa and to look at the early-man fossils in their full geological and archeological context.<sup>63</sup>

Elsewhere Lugenbeal (1978) reviewed the main types of fossil man found so far and asked if any of them could qualify as the missing link in human ancestry and thus replace Adam. He concluded: “Maybe — just maybe — we can’t prove our suspects guilty because there never was a murder! Maybe Adam’s death is an illusion created by evolutionary theory, not a reality supported by fossil facts.”<sup>64</sup>

### Epilogue

Several concluding observations arise from consideration of the interplay between science and religion during the past decade. Throughout the seventies, official Adventist literature continued to insist that the Flood was universal and the history of life short.<sup>65</sup> During the last years of the Pierson administration, the church sought to buttress its theological and scientific commitment to these concepts by developing a statement of Creation. The controversy that surrounded the promulgation of this statement belied, perhaps, the apparent uniformity of opinion expressed in church-sponsored publications concerning earth history. Nevertheless, after considerable debate over its purpose and content, the statement was ultimately published in the *Adventist Review* for consideration by the church at large.<sup>66</sup>

The emphasis on origins has been striking. This emphasis was surely an outgrowth of the conservative theological convictions of most Adventist authors. Within the general topic of origins, the issues of time and geology dominated the literature. A topical bibliography of recent studies shows 59 entries under the “Age of the Earth,” more than twice the entries logged under any other category!

This apparent fixation on the issue of time invites comment. Was it overblown and unnecessary? Many Adventists would say “yes.” Surely time is intrinsically of limited importance to our understanding of God’s nature and

character. Are not a 1,000 years as a day for God?

There is another side to this question, though. Most participants in the debate about origins sensed that if modern science is right about time, Adventists will probably have to do theology differently — perhaps very differently. Furthermore, some of the most knowledgeable scientists suggested that if science is right about time, Adventists will probably have to reevaluate the church’s posture relative to *many* scientific theories that model the origin of our world as we know it. The “when” and “how” of origins are not easy to disentangle.

Projecting future developments is foolhardy. But it is safe to say that the struggles and topical emphasis of the seventies will persist. A marriage of sorts between Adventism and geology has taken root. George McCready Price midwived the courtship, and the Geoscience Research institutionalized the marriage.

Established to help the church solve intelligently the problems raised by modern geology, the Geoscience Research Institute, in spite of its best efforts, has probably opened Pandora’s box. It certainly has propelled us into a more informed and serious confrontation with the earth sciences — the church can never again be satisfied with simplistic armchair speculations. It took us to the outcrops and showed us the problems — even when we didn’t want to see them. It inspired our young to study geology academically and led to the establishment of a graduate program in earth science at an Adventist university. The church can no longer escape the explanatory power of modern geological theories. We have lost our innocence, and the challenge of making Flood geology a persuasive way of doing geology can never be easy again.

Therefore, the tensions will continue. How acute they become in the next decade may well be determined by the way the church understands the role of Ellen White in the scholarly exegesis of the Bible and the scientific interpretation of nature.

Can the tensions over origins in Adventism be defused — either theologically or scientifically? How will the church ultimately come to terms with these issues? In more ways than one, time will be telling.



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# From Apologetics to History: The Professionalization of Adventist Historians

by Gary Land

The first decade of the Association of Adventist Forums has been an eventful period for Seventh-day Adventist historians. When I entered graduate school in 1966, there was no perceptible movement among Adventist history teachers. With few exceptions, they saw themselves as teachers rather than researchers. At most colleges, Adventist history had long since been consigned to the religion department. Little serious discussion addressed the problem of a philosophy of history; even less effort was made to publish scholarly work.

As I look at Adventist historians now, however, a considerable change has taken place. Several Adventists have published scholarly articles and books. An interest in Adventist history has developed, resulting in books, essays in *SPECTRUM*, the journal *Adventist Heritage* and a belated attempt to draw courses in Adventist history back into the history departments. Some members of the profession are seriously discussing philosophy of history. The historians have formed the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians—such groups are a sure sign of professionalization—and are meeting together at least once a year and publishing a newsletter. And, for good or ill, the growing activity of Adventist historians has posed some challenges to traditional Adventist thinking, with the result that the profession is beginning to share the controversy formerly monopolized by scientists and theologians.

The most significant development of recent years has been the emergence of a schol-

arly approach to the Adventist past. Earlier SDA “history” had been primarily of three kinds: memoirs, apologetics and story books. Only twice had professional historians contributed, Everett Dick in *Founders of the Message* and Harold O. McCumber in *Pioneering the Message in the Golden West*<sup>1</sup>, but both of these works had been considerably popularized. In the late 1960s, though, scholarly books began appearing alongside the more traditional kinds of Adventist history.

In the traditional approach, several significant works of apologetics came from denominational presses. One major topic that they addressed was righteousness by faith. Ever since R. J. Wieland and D. K. Short had written a paper<sup>2</sup> in the 1950s arguing that Adventists had rejected this doctrine after its presentation at the 1888 General Conference, denominational leaders had been seeking avenues of response. One such means was via history. In 1962, a theologian, Norval F. Pease, had sought to trace historically Seventh-day Adventist teaching on the subject in *By Faith Alone*.<sup>3</sup> But A. V. Olsen’s 1966 work, *Through Crisis to Victory*,<sup>4</sup> gave more thorough coverage of the 1888 General Conference and its aftermath. Drawing upon material in the White Estate, Olsen argued that no action was taken against the doctrine in Minneapolis in 1888 and that many of those who had opposed it there, such as G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith, accepted it within the next few years. Ellen White, he said, had fully supported both the doctrine and those who defended it, and the church itself had accepted righteousness by faith by 1901.

A few years later, LeRoy Edwin Froom took up the issue in *Movement of Destiny*.<sup>5</sup> First, he argued that Seventh-day Adventist doctrines came from the Bible rather than

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Ellen G. White. Second, he stated that the debate over Arianism had ended by the 1860s in favor of the full deity of Christ. And third, in contrast to both Pease and Olsen, he concluded that while the 1888 General Conference had set in motion denominational concern over the doctrine of righteousness by faith, advance toward full acceptance of the doctrine had been uneven until the 1930s. That latter period, however, proved to be a turning point, as denominational leaders studied the Bible and writings of Ellen G. White. The triumph of this doctrine made possible, he concluded, the discussions with members of the evangelical community that led to the publication of *Questions on Doctrine*.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these clergymen, two professionally trained historians also contributed to this apologetic literature. Jerome L. Clark, who chaired the history department at Southern Missionary College, sought in *1844*<sup>7</sup> to place the Millerite movement within its social and cultural context. Basing his three volumes almost entirely on secondary sources and providing no general interpretive framework, Clark offered a series of descriptive chapters on such topics as Millerism, antislavery and the temperance movement. What little interpretation he did venture was theological, as when he asserted that the Millerite movement was “ordained of God”<sup>8</sup> and that evolution arose in the mid-nineteenth century “because Satan feared the Advent Movement and did not want its truths to be taught.”<sup>9</sup>

Mervyn Maxwell, chairman of the church history department at the SDA Theological Seminary, wrote a different kind of work in *Tell It to the World*,<sup>10</sup> which appeared in 1976. Writing primarily for a Seventh-day Adventist audience, Maxwell wanted to identify the denomination’s uniqueness. While his footnotes indicated a mind trained in the critical method, Maxwell’s text revealed his concern to be primarily theological rather than historical. He argued that there were a number of Bible texts that could have prevented Miller from misunderstanding the phrase “cleansing of the sanctuary” and applying it to Christ’s Second Coming. But God had allowed Miller to preach because the world

needed to know that “Jesus was about to enter upon a *great process of atonement*.”<sup>11</sup> The Sabbath doctrine, although it came from the Seventh-day Baptists, took on a fuller meaning in Adventism, according to Maxwell, because “In these *last days* He is blotting out sin [the sanctuary doctrine] and Sabbathbreaking is, of course, sin.”<sup>12</sup> The sanctuary doctrine, he further argued, is the foundation of Adventism,<sup>13</sup> which led to his final conclusion and the ultimate point of his book: because Christ is blotting out sins in the heavenly sanctuary, “We must cleanse ourselves from all defilement,”<sup>14</sup> which is accomplished through Christ’s power. When such perfection is achieved, enabling the church to “tell it to the world,” then the Second Advent will take place.<sup>15</sup> In short, Maxwell was not so much interested in interpreting history as he was in using history as a springboard for arguing a particular theology. Not surprisingly, *Tell It to the World* appeared at a time when Seventh-day Adventists were arguing over whether perfection was to be achieved by God’s people before Christ could come.<sup>16</sup>

The apologetic approach to history received rather rough treatment at the hands of Adventist historians, however. The appearance of SPECTRUM and, later, *Adventist Heritage* gave an opportunity for critical evaluation of these works, and Adventist historians consistently measured them on the basis of generally accepted standards of scholarship. Although Richard Schwartz found Olsen’s *Through Crisis to Victory* useful, he stated, “It appears that the author was so determined to counter those church critics who see the dismal side of the 1888 experience, that he has leaned over backwards to show that Seventh-day Adventists . . . had accepted the concepts of righteousness by faith by 1901.”<sup>17</sup> More strongly, Ingemar Linden said that, in *Movement of Destiny*, Froom “has given a biased and one-sided treatment of what has often been very rich source material.”<sup>18</sup> I can still remember my own disappointment, after having just completed four years of graduate training, upon reading Clark’s *1844* and finding how much

it differed in both conception and execution from the historical work I had learned to admire. Consequently, I objected to the author's mixing of theology and history and concluded that the volumes "reveal that Clark is a committed and sincere Christian; one wishes that he had held the standards of historical scholarship as high."<sup>19</sup>

Fortunately, Adventist historians, in addition to criticizing the work of the apologists,

**“The apologetic approach to history received rather rough treatment at the hands of Adventist historians.”**

began producing scholarship that sought to live up to the standards they were promulgating. Some published articles in their fields of specialization,<sup>20</sup> but the work that caught the most attention was in the field of Adventist history. Everett Dick had made an attempt to publish Adventist history in the 1930s but had been rebuffed,<sup>21</sup> and apart from some scattered dissertations, little had been done until the 1960s.

One of the first truly scholarly published works in Adventist history came not from a historian, however, but from Howard B. Weeks, who wrote a dissertation for a degree in speech at Michigan State University. This study, published in 1967 as *Adventist Evangelism in the Twentieth Century*, argued that when “Seventh-day Adventists mobilized their resources for evangelism, they were, in part at least, paralleling a nationwide rebirth of conservative protestantism.”<sup>22</sup> An awareness of Adventism's cultural context was now beginning to affect historical writing about the church. As Weeks traced the development of Adventist evangelism, he found it working best during times of crisis such as World War I and the Great Depression. A new element in Weeks' approach to Adventist history was his examination of failures as well as successes. He told, for example, how the sensational apocalypticism which brought large numbers

temporarily into the church during World War I had to be reevaluated when the war did not turn out as predicted. Weeks also forthrightly dealt with the attitudes evangelists expressed toward other churches and how their hostility diminished over the years. Examining the roles of men, techniques and institutional adjustments, looking at the relationship of Adventism to the wider culture and recognizing the negative as well as the positive, Weeks ushered in a new era of Adventist history. Evangelism was probably a good topic with which to introduce such an approach, for it was not in itself tied to doctrine or Ellen G. White. As such critical history was applied to other subjects, some church leaders became increasingly suspicious.

A few Adventists felt discomfort when Richard W. Schwarz of Andrews University in the early 1960s began writing his dissertation on John Harvey Kellogg, the controversial doctor who had helped precipitate a split in the church. Although the potential for conflict over the historical record existed, Schwarz was able to examine, in addition to Kellogg's own papers and other materials, the correspondence between Kellogg and Ellen G. White located in the White Estate. As William Frederick Norwood commented, “Schwarz has lifted the veil that tends to shroud the mass of significant papers, correspondence, and memorabilia still waiting in various depositories for historical examination and evaluation.”<sup>23</sup>

The popularized book resulting from this dissertation, *John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.*,<sup>24</sup> proved to be another milestone in the development of a professional Adventist history. Like Weeks on evangelism, Schwarz examined Kellogg in the context of nineteenth century medical history and, in the case of his city mission program, the social gospel movement. But even more significant in the light of previous histories, he approached the conflict between Kellogg and the church in an evenhanded manner. Eschewing a single cause approach, he found the sources of the trouble in differences in personality, attitudes and philosophy, as well

as theology. Although dwelling on Kellogg's role in the controversy far more extensively than that of other church leaders, Schwarz indicated that demominational leadership was not entirely without blame. In a later article, he explored the causes of the conflict in more detail, arguing that the issue of pantheism was only the tip of the iceberg.<sup>25</sup>

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Other significant works of denominational history also came from the church's presses in the 1970s. Reflecting the racial concerns of the previous decade, Ronald D. Graybill attempted in *E. G. White and Church Race Relations*<sup>26</sup> to place the prophet's apparently conflicting advice within its historical context. While written to address a contemporary problem and prepared by a seminary rather than a history graduate, in its reexamination of primary sources, treatment of previously ignored topics and attention to the broader cultural context, the volume was part of the developing professionalization of Adventist history.

Emmett K. VandeVere's *The Wisdom Seekers*, a history of Andrews University, made another contribution to the growing literature. Like Schwarz's volume, and unlike those of Weeks and Graybill, the book appeared without footnotes, a decision made by the publisher. VandeVere had thoroughly researched his subject, however, and the reader could find the documented manuscript in the Andrews University library. Although this research uncovered useful information, the volume made little interpretive contribution to Adventist history, for VandeVere framed his narrative around people and tried not to “overmoralize.”<sup>27</sup> As a result, he gave little attention to the broader social context both within and without the church, a characteristic that led to the impression, Maurice Hodgkin complained, “that growth and development toward the

present were inevitable.”<sup>28</sup> A few years later, VandeVere produced a volume of readings, *Windows*,<sup>29</sup> on the history of the church that likewise concentrated upon the thoughts and feelings of individual people.

VandeVere's style of excellent research, but little interpretation, characterized other recent books as well. Eric Syme's *A History of SDA Church-State Relations in the United States*,<sup>30</sup> based primarily on published sources, traced chronologically the development of Adventist attitudes. Although arguing no general thesis, it did observe that Adventists had consistently recognized that they needed to have good relations with both the government and the general public. Searching out unpublished manuscripts as well as obscure books, Godfrey T. Anderson, in *Outrider of the Apocalypse*,<sup>31</sup> reconstructed in considerable detail the life of Joseph Bates, but declined to evaluate his subject's contributions to Seventh-day Adventism.

The most exhaustive recent study of Adventist history, P. Gerard Damsteegt's *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, also consciously chose to avoid interpretation in favor of a “descriptive historical-theological and missiological approach.”<sup>32</sup> The result was a detailed account of the development of Adventist theology between 1831 and 1874, particularly as it related to mission, in terms of Seventh-day Adventist self-understanding as revealed in the primary sources. Although Damsteegt argued no obvious thesis, he did emphasize throughout his study the significance of a historicist hermeneutic in shaping Adventist theology. In contrast to the direction that Adventist historical studies were taking, he made little attempt to understand Adventist theology within its intellectual and social setting or ask questions regarding the validity of the Seventh-day Adventist self-understanding. Nevertheless, Damsteegt's work was a substantive contribution upon which future scholarship will much depend.

Except for Graybill, these authors were older men who had worked for the denomination for many years and their works were relatively uncontroversial. The appearance of SPECTRUM, however, reflected the interests of a younger generation of scholars, most of whom entered graduate school right after college and at a time when social activism per-

meated the nation's campuses. Not surprisingly, they expressed a greater professional consciousness and felt strongly the need to look critically at the religious tradition in which they had been reared. Ellen White quickly became the center of concern in a discussion that involved theologians, literary critics and historians as well as the church leadership.

The discussion began when the autumn 1970 issue of SPECTRUM offered several articles on Ellen White. Two theologians, Herold Weiss and Roy Branson, called for a reexamination of Mrs. White's writings in terms of her relationship to other authors, her intellectual and social milieu and her own intellectual development.<sup>33</sup> As if in answer to this proposition, William S. Peterson, who taught English at Andrews University, examined Mrs. White's account of the French Revolution in *The Great Controversy*. He argued that instead of writing from vision the prophet had drawn both her ideas and information primarily from Sir Walter Scott's *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* and James A. Wylie's *The History of Protestantism*, both works based on poor research and written with considerable bias. "It simply will not suffice to say that God showed her the broad outline of events," he concluded, "and she then filled in the gaps with her readings. In the case of the French Revolution, there was no 'broad outline' until she had read the historians."<sup>34</sup>

Although two other articles about Ellen White appeared in that same issue, those by Weiss and Branson and Peterson caused the most discussion. W. Paul Bradley, speaking for the White Estate, saw no need for critical scholarship, stating that "no reinterpretation is required to make us know God's messages for us."<sup>35</sup> He further rejected the suggestion that Mrs. White had obtained her ideas from other authors. "While it is true that Ellen White did use certain historical quotations," Bradley argued, "it does not follow that she searched histories to develop a theme or plot."<sup>36</sup> "In forming one's personal judgment about the validity of the gift that resulted in the work of Ellen G. White. . . ," he

concluded, "one must doubt whether historical criticism will have a preponderance of weight. There will always have to be present a strong element of faith."<sup>37</sup>

This reluctance to reexamine traditionally held opinions had been common in the history of Christianity, indeed of all cultures; for Seventh-day Adventists, however, to raise questions about Ellen White was to strike at a foundation stone of the faith. Hence the concern. The debate continuing, Peterson defended the legitimacy of historical criticism.<sup>38</sup> Then John W. Wood, a religion teacher at Atlantic Union College, reexamined the historians that Ellen White had used, concluding that they held little in common, that they were good sources, and that Ellen White had not mishandled them.<sup>39</sup> Peterson rejected these arguments on the grounds that Wood had manipulated evidence, offered misleading generalizations, asserted rather than proved, and concealed "the dogmatic assumptions upon which his argument rests."<sup>40</sup> The debate closed when Ronald Graybill, a research assistant at the White Estate, showed Ellen White drawing her material from Uriah Smith, who had, in turn, obtained it from the historians.<sup>42</sup>

The subject of this debate may seem a minor one — a single chapter in one book of a prolific author. But the issues involved — the validity of historical criticism and the relationship of its findings to an understanding of Ellen White — were large. Not simply the findings of scholarship, suggestions that the prophet had borrowed and mishandled information threatened the authoritative role that Ellen White had come to play in the church.

The next major contribution came from a historian of medicine and science, Ronald L. Numbers, whose *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* reexamined the development of Mrs. White as a health reformer. In his preface, Numbers noted that he was parting from traditional Adventist scholarship in that he did not presuppose inspiration or ignore witnesses who rejected Ellen White as inspired.<sup>42</sup> Cast in the form of a biographical study, Numbers' book developed two major

themes. First, he argued that Ellen White drew upon the ideas of health reformers such as James C. Jackson and R. T. Trall, although she had consistently denied any relationship of that sort. Second, he pointed out that Ellen White had changed her ideas on whether an Adventist should consult physicians, don “reform” clothing, or adopt the two-meal-a-day plan, among other matters. Her historic function, he concluded, had been to make a religion out of health reform.<sup>43</sup>

Even before its publication, Numbers’ book aroused a storm of controversy, as clandestinely obtained copies of his first draft typescript circulated within the church community. The denomination early in 1976 published a paperback edition of D. E. Robinson’s *Story of Our Health Message*, together with a study guide for use in the churches.<sup>44</sup> The White Estate sent speakers to Adventist centers to present the official church position, and letters went out to ministers warning against those who questioned Ellen White’s inspiration.<sup>45</sup> After publication of the volume, the controversy caught the attention of *Time*<sup>46</sup> which, in turn, inspired a *Review and Herald* editorial that claimed the book really presented no challenge to the faith of a knowledgeable Adventist.<sup>47</sup> The White Estate prepared a 23-page response to Numbers that was immediately available,<sup>48</sup> and a larger printed critique that appeared in the fall and was delivered free of charge to all history and religion teachers in the denomination’s colleges in addition to being sold to the Adventist public.<sup>49</sup>

The White Estate response followed Bradley’s earlier argument. “If divine inspiration is excluded *a priori*,” the Estate argued, “then one is left with nothing but a secularist-historicist interpretation of Ellen White’s life and with the implicit denial of the validity or truthfulness of her claim to divine inspiration.”<sup>50</sup> After expressing this philosophical objection to Numbers’ methodology, the Estate then provided a chapter-by-chapter critique of *Prophets of Health*. Although admitting that there were some problems in Mrs. White’s writings and that she had borrowed from other writers, the Estate asserted that Numbers had misread his sources on

crucial points and had left out evidence necessary to a true understanding of Ellen White. “This late-hour attack upon the validity of her messages,” it concluded, “does not stand the test of history nor the judgment through the years of the church’s trusted spiritual leaders.”<sup>51</sup>

SPECTRUM, in early 1977, published several articles on the Numbers book, including a brief version of the White Estate critique.<sup>52</sup> Of the two Adventist historians writing in that issue, W. Frederick Norwood supported Numbers’ refusal to use the supernatural as a category of explanation,<sup>53</sup> while Richard W. Schwarz expressed dissatisfaction with this approach and criticized Numbers for relying on hostile witnesses.<sup>54</sup> Both historians, however, believed that Numbers’ study should lead to a reexamination of the denomination’s understanding of Ellen White. Two non-Adventist historians also commented on the book. Psychohistorian Fawn Brodie, in what became the most controversial article of the issue, interpreted Ellen White as a hysteric who deluded

**“Psychohistorian Fawn Brodie . . . interpreted Ellen White as a hysteric who deluded herself into believing that she was a prophet chosen by God.”**

herself into believing that she was a prophet chosen by God.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, Ernest Sandeen, author of *The Roots of Fundamentalism*, concentrated on the problem of being a believer and historian at the same time, stating that one could “see this tension and even feel this agony in the pages of Numbers’ book.”<sup>56</sup> In addition to a commentary by a theologian,<sup>57</sup> Numbers replied to his critics, primarily the White Estate, arguing that judged by the evidence his study stood validated.<sup>58</sup>

This ended the immediate response to the book. In 1978, however, I reviewed the White Estate critique, arguing that its criticisms did not hold up to scrutiny and concluding that we may need to reexamine our



understanding of inspiration and authority.<sup>59</sup> The long-term effect of Numbers' work upon Adventist scholarship remained to be seen. But *Prophets of Health* made clear a problem that had existed from the time that Everett Dick had first proposed to apply professional standards to the writing of Adventist history. Namely, the church could not live easily with attempts to understand Adventism, particularly Ellen G. White, within its historical context and on the basis of critically reexamined and more extensive documentation. Nor could the historian expect to pursue his work without raising questions about Adventism's uniqueness and the meaning of inspiration.

Not all was controversy in the 1970s, though. Vern Carner, a teacher of religion at Loma Linda University, organized on that campus a lecture series presented in 1972-1973 on the social and intellectual milieu of the Millerite movement. Involving some of the leading names in the field of American religious history as well as one Seventh-day Adventist historian, the lectures appeared in print in 1974 as *The Rise of Adventism*.<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Butler's closing essay on "Adventism and the American Experience" made a groundbreaking exploration into the nature of Adventism and its relationship to the larger American culture.<sup>61</sup> He argued that between the 1850s and 1880, Seventh-day Adventists had shifted from a sectarian to denominational identity and from apocalypticism to a "between the times" eschatology. Politically, they had moved from withdrawal to moderate Republicanism. In the end, he concluded disturbingly, "these American Adventists came to *use the Republic*, in a sense, to fulfill their millennial dream."<sup>62</sup>

Carner also worked on two other projects. In conjunction with Ronald Numbers and Godfrey T. Anderson, both of Loma Linda University, he initiated *Studies in Adventist History* in 1971. These individuals envisioned the publication of a series of volumes on Adventist history that would gain the respect of the historical profession. Drawing upon more than a score of Adventist historians to

write the essays, they asked me to edit the volume treating the chronological development of the church, and Jonathan Butler, then of Union College, to prepare the volumes containing topical essays. The project is still in progress.

The other effort involved publication of *Adventist Heritage: A Magazine of Adventist History*. Begun in 1974 as a semiprivate venture by Carner, the biannual publication proposed to present Adventist history in a popular form that nevertheless adhered to the standards of historical scholarship.<sup>63</sup> Edited at first by Jonathan Butler, Ronald Numbers and myself, the magazine touched on a wide variety of topics from Millerism to Adventist involvement in the chaplaincy program of the United States armed forces. Although we intended to cover other Adventist groups as well as Seventh-day Adventists, we have seldom done so. In 1975, partly because of the magazine's financial problems, Loma Linda University took over its publication. Denominational control meant the possibility of editorial censorship. Numbers was dropped from the Board of Editors because of the impending publication of his book, and a new managing board requested delay in the publication of an article by him. (Numbers subsequently withdrew the article.) Fortunately, no censorship has taken place since that time. Despite some unevenness in quality, largely because the editors have had few articles to choose from, *Adventist Heritage* has provided a previously unavailable outlet for denominational history. At this writing, however, lack of a solid subscription base makes its future questionable.

In addition to the activities of Adventist historians, the denomination also promoted the development of Adventist history. In 1974, the education department of the General Conference requested Richard Schwarz to write a textbook on the history of the church for use in college classes. This volume, *Lightbearers to the Remnant*, appeared in 1979.<sup>64</sup> Also, partly in response to a recommendation from the newly organized Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians, the denomination in 1973 established an official archives that organized and made avail-

able historical materials for research. Although the denomination had some problems with its scholars, it was apparently still encouraging them, hoping perhaps that cooperation and further work would resolve the dilemmas that were appearing.

While this interest in Adventist history was developing, Adventist historians began seriously discussing the problem of a philosophy of history. Because of the denomination's historicist approach to the interpretation of biblical prophecy, there had long been an interest in establishing a specifically Adventist approach to history. But apart from Raymond Cottrell's master's thesis at Pacific Union College in the 1940s and some papers presented at the College History Teacher's Council in 1962, little formal effort had taken place. But the publication of two books in 1967 and 1970 on the subject prompted a debate that has yet to close.

When George Edgar Shankel of Atlantic Union College published *God and Man in History*, he made the first extensively developed statement of an Adventist philosophy. Focusing on God's intervention in human affairs, he stated,

In the larger view, all history is the struggle between two great spiritual forces. The nations of earth seem to shape the events we call history. In reality, the powers of earth are frequently the instrumentalities in the hands of God to accomplish his purpose, although they may be entirely unconscious of fulfilling any such divine mission. Likewise, they may serve to promote an adverse spiritual power.<sup>65</sup>

Developing his thesis further, Shankel argued that God intervenes in history in two ways. Indirect intervention takes place through "making the forces and laws operating the world the expression of divine will"; direct action occurs "when God by supernatural intervention causes matters to take a different course than they would in the natural course of events."<sup>66</sup> All interventions and all history revolve around the pivotal fact of Christ as Lord of history. "The emergence of Christ injected into history something more

than an accelerated movement in time," Shankel wrote. "He brought into history a revolutionary set of values. When man violates these values or by his misdirected effort interferes seriously with God's eternal purpose, God intervenes."<sup>67</sup>

Three years later, a theologian, Siegfried J. Schwantes, carried this theme further in his *The Biblical Meaning of History*. Schwantes rejected determinism and chance, replacing them with providence,<sup>68</sup> which he described as "an all-pervasive and silent influence shaping the whole course of history, rather than a punctiliar and cataclysmic one."<sup>69</sup> Not everything that happens in history meets God's approval, Schwantes argued, but everything "that happens is allowed to happen by God and remains under his judgment."<sup>70</sup>

Schwantes went beyond the work of most previous Adventist historians on the philosophy of history in his attempt to apply his general philosophical understanding to the actual course of historical events. He found his points of application in two areas: the history of the church and the history of freedom. Arguing that if a divine goal is to be found anywhere in history, it would appear in the story of the church, he concluded that "the rationale of all history should be illumined by ecclesiastical history and not vice versa."<sup>71</sup> The task of the historian, therefore, is to discover where the histories of the church and the world have interacted "and whether one or both bear the evidence of providential guidance."<sup>72</sup> The history of freedom was in his view closely related to that of the church, for God works through spiritual renewal, which can best take place in an atmosphere of freedom. Therefore, "God's effective presence in secular history is best recognized in every movement that promotes human freedom and dignity."<sup>73</sup>

The appearance of Shankel's and Schwantes' books prompted the first critical discussion of an Adventist philosophy of history that appeared in print, an event made possible by the establishment of SPECTRUM. In its pages, Ronald Numbers began the debate by taking a dim view of *God and Man in History*, stating that Shankel's emphasis upon divine intervention produced a strange conception of freedom and criticiz-

ing Shankel's speculations about particular points of history where God had intervened.<sup>74</sup>

These issues received more extended attention in a discussion of Schwantes' *The Biblical Meaning of History* originally presented by Gary Ross of Loma Linda University to the Western Adventist Historians. Ross concentrated on what he called the "freedom device" which he found unsuccessful on two counts. On theological grounds, it violated Christianity's portrayal of men as both free and determined. On historical grounds, it

**“Because of the denomination’s historicist approach to the interpretation of biblical prophecy, there had long been an interest in establishing a specifically Adventist approach to history.”**

retrogressed, Ross argued, “to monocausality; to a politicized, libertarian, or Whig interpretation of history; to a simplistic and romanticized dialectic; and to that fondness for eulogy which we call filiopietism.”<sup>75</sup> Despite his severe criticism, Ross appreciated Schwantes' attempt to do what Adventist historians needed to do, namely, develop a workable philosophy of history. But his confidence in the possibility of a Christian approach to history did not find agreement among his commentators. Walter Utt suggested that there was no necessity for a specifically Christian history, for the primary influence is the teacher himself. Likewise, Ronald Numbers criticized the revival of the providential approach to history preferring “honest agnosticism to pious fraud.”<sup>76</sup>

Just as Adventist historians and theologians were most fully discussing a unique philosophy of history, therefore, a deep pessimism appeared regarding the possibilities of such an approach. Emphasis upon divine intervention as the key element of an Adventist philosophy of history had resulted in the feeling that it raised crucial questions regarding the scope of human freedom. Furthermore, it was difficult, if not impossible, to

interpret history providentially, because of the historians' inability to determine the actions of the supernatural.

Sharing this pessimism, I suggested, first in my review of Clark's *1844* and then in a more expanded way to a group of students and faculty at Andrews University in 1972, a different approach to a Christian philosophy of history. I pointed out that the traditional way of describing God's hand in history implied an almost deistic separation of God and the world, whereas the Bible presented God as both immanent and transcendent. This meant, then, that God is always active in history. But because, in the light of revelation, some events are more meaningful than others, the Christian historian, rather than emphasizing God's intervention, will seek to understand the meaning of events within a Christian framework. Concerned that we should develop a philosophy that would be applicable to classroom teaching, I suggested that such elements as the Christian understanding of man and ethics and the significance of the Christian religion are possible avenues to a Christian approach to history.<sup>77</sup>

A revised version of this paper appeared in *SPECTRUM* in 1976<sup>78</sup> and I presented another paper expressing similar ideas to the history section of the North American Higher Education Conference that same year<sup>79</sup> but there has been little critical discussion of this approach as yet. With the traditional understanding of providential history apparently at a dead end, and my own approach (which is not necessarily the only alternative) yet unexplored, the future direction of the Adventist philosophy of history is uncertain.

**M**uch work remains to be done, it is clear, in both Adventist history and the philosophy of history, for serious efforts are still in the beginning stages. One individual cannot imagine all the possibilities, but a few suggestions can perhaps provide some direction for the future.

To date, Adventist history has followed certain established patterns. The favorite subject is biography. The popular histories have been mostly biographical as well as the recent

scholarly works of Schwarz, Graybill and Numbers. Second, most Adventist historical writing concentrates upon the nineteenth century, and when it does push into the twentieth, makes little or no attempt at conceptualization. Arthur W. Spalding's work<sup>80</sup> is a good example of this approach, but even the recently published textbook for the most part treats twentieth century developments topically. Finally, Adventist history has depended primarily upon published sources. As a result, there has been little analysis of the process by which the organization has arrived at its public actions.

These characteristics indicate some of the problems Adventist historians need to address. Much of the institutional history at the several levels of organization and in the many aspects of denominational activity remains to be written. Twentieth century Adventism is a virtually virgin field for historical research. In addition to specialized studies, there must be attempts at synthesis offering general interpretations and periodization. The archival material being organized at the General Conference and the Heritage Rooms of Loma Linda and Andrews universities needs to be utilized in an effort to gain insight into the internal workings of the church.

Such are a few of the more obvious directions in which Adventist history must move. But there are other modes of the historical quest that would be fruitful to apply as well. The intellectual history of the church — its ideas, attitudes and emotions — is a tremendously interesting subject that would contribute greatly to our self-understanding. Jonathan Butler's "Adventism and the American Experience" has shown how valuable such an enterprise can be. We know little about the kind of people who have become Adventists and how the church has developed as a social group over the years. Answers to questions posed about topics such as these would require the use of social science techniques including statistical and comparative analysis, in which most Adventist historians have no training. A start in this area has been made by Ronald Graybill, however, in a study of the economic status of early Adventists.<sup>81</sup> Despite the difficulty of such work, it would be a boon to Adventist studies if one

or more historians would undertake it. In addition to our lack of knowledge about the Adventist masses, we really know little about the kind of men who have become leaders in the church. Collective biographies combined with the theoretical underpinning afforded by social scientists in such works as William Whyte's *The Organization Man* and Michael Maccoby's *The Gamesman*<sup>82</sup> would, I believe, provide rich insight into the development of the church. And, of course, controversial and filled with pitfalls as it is, there must be continuing research on Ellen White and the role she has played in the denomination.

Something else needs to be done as well.

Adventist history is almost totally the possession of Adventist historians. Apart from several discussions of the Millerite movement and Peter Brock's examination of the Seventh-day Adventist response to the Civil War,<sup>83</sup> non-Adventist historians know little of Adventist history. One step toward correcting this will be for Adventist historians to begin publishing research on Adventist history in scholarly journals. To do this, we will have to begin looking at Adventism not only in the light of our own narrow concerns, but also in terms of how it contributes to an understanding of larger historical problems. The occasional appearance of such an article might awaken the interest of others in our history, and out of that interest a scholarly dialogue may emerge that would be of value to historians both within and without the church.

At the same time that we are developing Adventist history in a highly professional manner, we need to remember our responsibility to the general Adventist public. As specialized research takes place, it must be synthesized and translated into a popular form that still maintains scholarly integrity. Only through such means can we keep an understanding and appreciation of the Adventist past alive within our denominational community.

As Numbers' work on Ellen White has revealed, however, research into Adventist history carries certain risks, especially where

it impinges upon deeply held beliefs and attitudes. For this reason, I believe that we must take seriously the problem of a philosophy of history. Most historians are not particularly philosophical, and Adventist historians are no different. But if we are to survive and make our research understood, we must be able to articulate the relationship between critical history and religious belief.

In addition to discussing the ultimate meanings and patterns of history, a task most relevant to the classes we teach, we need to analyze the nature of historical knowledge. While making a commitment to the possibility of obtaining real knowledge, we need to establish the limits of that knowledge. We must further identify the interpretive concepts of the Christian historian and contrast them with non-Christian concepts. We need to examine the process of applying the Christian view, recognizing that the Christian perspective becomes less clear as we move toward a narrow focus. As Christian philosopher Arthur F. Holmes told me, theological concepts affect the historian's work more clearly "in construing the overall pattern of history than in explaining the rise and fall of Rome — more in explaining that than in giving a causal account of Caesar's invasion

of Britain — more in that than in reconstructing the size and equipment of his army, etc."<sup>84</sup> And above all, we need to engage theologians and denominational administrators in dialogue about the meaning of our history and its implication for our beliefs and practice.

Through efforts along these lines, both historical and philosophical, Adventist historians can help fulfill the promise of the recent past. Although the reawakened interest in Adventist history holds both opportunities and dangers, it offers a unique path, though not the only one, to Adventism's understanding of itself. As one who a few years ago never envisioned himself working in the field of Adventist history, I have found it an increasingly important subject, giving direction to my professional life and helping explain the thinking and actions of both myself and those around me. In a period when history is often dismissed as irrelevant to the practical world, growing numbers of students are discovering through Adventist history that the past can add meaning to the present. Perhaps Adventist history provides a route by which we historians can once again make our discipline important to our audience.

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