

# Responses From Readers

## Dallas Statement

To the Editors: It has been suggested that I add a little further information concerning the evolution of the new Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. In the following paragraphs, I accede to that suggestion. For brevity's sake, I number the successive points.

1) In 1965, I wrote from Berne to the General Conference administration and expressed my conviction that our Statement of Fundamental Beliefs needed revision both from a theological and a literary point of view. The administration's reply revealed that no such need was felt at the GC, so the matter was dropped.

2) In 1970, I became an associate secretary of the General Conference, and found that one of my duties was to serve as secretary of the *Church Manual* Committee. It became clear that the *Manual* needed revision. It had grown like Topsy, with additions being made in random fashion as individuals and groups became aware of deficiencies in the original Statement. The 1967 edition revealed the patchwork nature of the volume, and cried out for editorial attention. But, as page 22 recorded: " 'All changes or revisions of policy that are to be made in the *Manual* shall be authorized by a General Conference session.' " —*Review and Herald Bulletin*, June 14, 1946." This quotation proved to be a roadblock in every effort to revise any part of the *Manual*. It took several months of interpretative endeavor to convince the committee that editorial/literary revisions in the interest of clarity and consistency were not covered by the above declaration. When that light dawned, many pages of editorial emendations were accepted and eventually presented to the 1975 Session of the GC in Vienna.

3) Because of the official reluctance to

change a jot or tittle of the *Manual*, I had refrained from including the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs in the initial editorial suggestions. After the 1975 Session, however, the time seemed ripe for attention to the Fundamentals. They seemed surrounded with an aura of untouchability, and the secretary of the committee seemed to be the only one convinced of the need for revision. He therefore produced a complete but cautious revision for presentation to the chairman of the committee and, at an early date, to a subcommittee that was appointed on the chairman's initiative. With the initial one-man revision as its base, that subcommittee spent many hours producing a revision for presentation to the full *Church Manual* Committee. At every step, however, it was dogged by the tradition of untouchability concerning the Fundamentals: indeed, there appeared to be an aura of "inspiration" that hamstrung most suggestions for refinement and improvement of each Statement of Belief. This greatly hampered the work of the committee. If that aura could have been laid to rest, the way would have been open for a much more effective revision. Under that weighty handicap the subcommittee revised the original Statement and presented it to the full committee for its reaction. An *ad hoc* committee was then appointed, early 1978, with the specific task of preparing a document that, via the *Church Manual* Committee, would prepare a Statement for presentation to the 1980 Session.

4) That *ad hoc* committee was commissioned to work within the framework of minimal revisions in deference to the generally held idea of the sacrosanct nature of the *Manual* and the sensitivities of the church membership respecting any change that

might appear to touch the doctrinal beliefs of the Church. Once again, the brakes were on, and revision had to be carried out on a very limited basis.

5) When that further limited revision was completed in mid-1979, I ventured to suggest that it would be wise to submit the document to our professional theologians, on the basis that it would be better to have their reactions before the document went further rather than await their strictures on the Session floor. There was some hesitation, but eventually the suggestion was accepted, and the document went to Andrews University, with the request that it be studied, that comments and emendations be referred back to the *ad hoc* committee. Those terms of reference did not register, for the University prepared its own set of fundamentals, which were presented to the 1979 Annual Council for eventual presentation to the 1980 Session.

6) The University's action accomplished what a timorous interpretation of *Church Manual* procedure had failed to effect. Hindsight suggests that it would have been wiser if the *Church Manual* Committee had worked closely with Andrews' theologians from an early date — but the traditional reticence to touch the *Manual* would probably have made that a too-revolutionary suggestion!

The above paragraphs are intended to supplement the very acceptable account given by Larry Geraty in Volume 11, Number 1. This addendum may serve to complete the historical record.

Bernard E. Seton  
Etowah, North Carolina

To the Editors: It is difficult to conceive how anyone who heard the discussion in Dallas on the statement of fundamental beliefs could conclude that I advocated consideration of the Bible as “*all-sufficient* in matters of history” (Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 10).

I proposed, and the General Conference session delegates affirmed, that our Statement of Fundamental Beliefs include an explicit expression of confidence that the Bible is a reliable and authoritative witness to God's acts in human history, as well as an

authoritative revelation with respect to faith and morals. Before reading the last issue of SPECTRUM, it never occurred to me that anyone would propose that every activity of God related to the history of man or Planet Earth is referenced in the Bible, or propose that the historical testimony in the Bible is all sufficient. My only intention at Dallas was to secure a formal recognition that the Bible does contain historical data (e.g., Creation Week, Fall of Adam, Noachian Flood, Exodus of the Hebrews), and that such testimony is trustworthy and authoritative.

R. H. Brown  
Geoscience Research Institute

## Sanctuary Issue

To the Editors: I've just concluded a profitable Friday evening by reading at one sitting the special “Sanctuary Issue” of SPECTRUM. Kudos to both authors and editors. What many of us earnestly desire to see in denominationally published periodicals — a balanced presentation of news and views that includes a spectrum of responsible opinion — we have come to rely on in SPECTRUM. Once again we were not disappointed. From my point of view as a member of the Sanctuary Review Committee, I would say that Cottrell's account of what happened at Glacier View is by far the most authoritative report that has yet appeared in print. Not only was it accurate and fair, but his analysis of the event and its aftermath was perceptive and constructive. Ford's article was the only condensation of his own (1,000 page) views in context that I have read and thus provided your readers with a genuine service. Shea's critique contained some important biblical/historical insights and suggestions that might be otherwise unavailable to readers who felt they could not take time to read his original (430 page) manuscript. Guy's presentation at Glacier View was the most creative attempt by an Adventist theologian in years to make the sanctuary truth “present truth” for our generation and your publication of it is a real “coup.” It is also useful to have the relevant documents and letters under one cover. So

thanks again for providing meat in due season.

Lawrence T. Geraty  
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Andrews University

## On Chronology

**T**o the Editors: The discussion on chronology (Vol. 10, No. 3) alludes to the widely held impression that the fifth and eleventh chapters of Genesis present a list of firstborn sons. The second individual in this list, Seth, is easily identified as at least the third male descendant of Adam.

The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (p. 997 of the 1960 edition) points out that Shem was the secondborn of the three sons of Noah who are mentioned in Genesis 5:32. With the virility the human race possessed less than 2,000 years after Creation and when individual life spans typically approached 1,000 years, it would be most unexpected for a man not to have children until the 500th year of his life. Therefore, it is reasonable to presume that the Bible names only the three youngest male children in Noah's family, those who accompanied their parents in the Ark. (We might suggest that Shem, Ham and Japheth were saved as a consequence of identifying with their father in witness to the impending destruction and in construction of the Ark. Also, we might speculate on the sadness with which Noah and his wife left their many sons and daughters who refused to join them in the Ark.)

From Genesis 11:32 and 12:4, it is evident that Abram was not the oldest of the three sons of Terah named in Genesis 11:26. Either Nahor or Haran, most probably Haran, was 60 years older than Abram.

In view of these insights from Scripture, I must conclude that the fifth and eleventh chapters of Genesis list out of the Adam-Noah-Abraham lineage only the most prominent individuals who maintained integrity to God. There is no way to be certain as to what proportion of these individuals were firstborn sons. We are only given the age of

one at the time the next-named was born.

It is also widely held that Abraham moved into Palestine 430 years before the Exodus. This view is based on priority of the interpretation given by an inspired New Testament writer. There appears to be a problem in finding the correct interpretation of the interpretation given by Paul. Many Bible students are aware of the apparent inconsistency between Galatians 3:17 and Acts 7:6, Exodus 12:40, 41 and Genesis 15:13. These four passages are in perfect harmony if the "ratification" spoken of by Paul is understood to be the final confirmation given to Jacob immediately before he relocated in Egypt (Genesis 46:1-7), 215 years after Abraham took up residence in Palestine.

A hasty review of the changes that have occurred in human society over the past 215 years will readily point out the value of an additional 215 years in an effort to find a harmonious interpretation of archaeological data and the stipulations of Scripture.

R. H. Brown  
Berrien Springs, Michigan

**T**o the Editors: Siegfried H. Horn's "Can the Bible Establish the Age of the Earth?" (Vol. 10 No. 3) is a valuable contribution on the discussion on biblical chronology.

It is a pity, however, that Horn, who recognizes the difficulties of the New Testament's use of the Septuagint, should base the date of the covenant with Abraham on Paul's statement in Galatians. (Incidentally, Paul's interest was not chronological). There is much archaeological and secular historical evidence that supports a long chronology for the Israelite Egyptian bondage (cf. Gen. 15:13). This, then, would place Abraham's covenant event somewhere between his entry into Canaan in 2095 B.C. when he was 75 (Gen. 12:4) and the birth of Ishmael in 2085 B.C. when he was 86 (Gen. 16:16).

Let me also note briefly that William Shea in an unpublished syllabus has demonstrated fairly convincingly a March 15, 1450 B.C., date for the Exodus. Using Sothic agete dating technique, new moon dates, as well as biblical, historical and archaeological data, he has been able to correlate the biblical event

with the actual secular occurrence. In this case, of course, we take into consideration the four-year coregency of Solomon in our evaluation of I Kings 6:1; and thus instead of counting back from 966 (which date is questionable even without taking cognizance of the coregency), we count back from 971 and arrive at 1450 (on the basis of inclusive reckoning).

P. U. Maynard-Reid  
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## Against Reason

**T**o the Editors: The varied articles in the commemorative edition of the SPECTRUM do a good job of summing up the work and purpose of the AAF since its inception.

During these years, I found myself moving along with what was, with but few exceptions, the steady advance of reason. It is impossible to read each issue without sensing the conviction of most of the writers that truth will yield to honest and painstaking research. Indeed, one is easily borne along this current by the certainty of the contributors that intellectual might will prove right and prevail in the end.

It has been easy to sympathize with the staff as it tirelessly worked in what was not always encouraging circumstances. They appear to have borne up well under an atmosphere of continued misunderstanding. However, with the emergence of the work of Desmond Ford, Walter Rea, and others, I am overwhelmed with second thoughts. At first, I attributed this to a normal aversion to abrupt change. After all, the movement of the earth beneath one's feet is always disquieting.

Now, however, an attitude among some of my colleagues and fellow Adventists is sounding an alarm that grows louder with each issue of SPECTRUM. There is among them an unmistakable satisfaction with the exacting investigation of our traditional values. There is an increasing tendency for some to confess that they have harbored similar suspicions concerning the Spirit of

Prophecy and traditional biblical supports for the "message."

The current agitation and increased attitudes of questioning are well launched. No end of controversy is in sight. However heated the discussions concerning our basic belief become, and regardless of how near some may feel we are to a solution, I find myself backing away from what yawns increasingly as a fearsome black hole. Countless billions have been pulled into such an abyss of no return by the delicious and siren call of reason. The misuse of intellect felled the "light-bearer" so that at the present time the ether is filled with countless individual reasoning personalities who out-thought God. To me the present course seems far too pell-mell and hell-bent. The "end" of present historical research and scientific method looms as a certainty.

I do not believe that the Gift of Prophecy or the book of Genesis can stand this exposure. These two witnesses are being done to death and will soon lie in our streets. Even pure gold can be vaporized. It is not that the present efforts toward truth are careless; on the contrary, the ongoing work will become more and more precise and irrefragable. The evidence against the supernatural origin of the Spirit of Prophecy and the accuracy of the book of Genesis will become conclusive. Every intellectual will have enough unassailable proof to make a rational decision.

Surely, within five years every thoughtful Adventist scientist or historian can say with certainty, "It can never rain." It is not the intention of this letter to list the warning from Scripture concerning the pitiful inadequacy of human thought, or to show that the thoughts and actions of God are mega light years apart from man's brief and tumultuous achievements. However, the work of the Forum in the past dozen years would seem to indicate that there are those who would deny that we are all blind, pitiful and helpless.

In mercy to human nature, the entrance into salvation has been made to appear simple. All are invited and all may receive eternal life. However, the ways and works of God and His creation should warn us that His work of salvation is in most particulars beyond the understanding of His creatures. In-

tellectual achievement by any creature or the most sincere reasoning of any human being must stand outside the door, head down and shamefaced.

Your heavy tread upon, or near, sacred thresholds and hallowed ground frightens me. I wish you well, brethren, but I take my leave of you to seek with all my resolve, purpose and strength a way of utter surrender, self-abnegation, childlike humility and simplicity. I will work, pray, sing and strive to trust, to believe, and to hate every second of doubt. Should my senses and my mind be shown absolute proof against some segment of the Scripture or the Spirit of Prophecy, I will beg God for the strength to disbelieve my own eyes and trust the Word. Any other course I take will place me in peril of my soul.

H. N. Sheffield, M.D.  
Madera, California

## Forum Newspaper

To the Editors: I am mystified by Richard Osborn's hostile and inaccurate remarks

about *Forum*, the AAF newspaper (Vol. 10, No. 4). What does he mean by his statement "Anderson's background as editor of Andrews University's *Student Movement* . . . brought problems to Lawrence Geraty"? The only two specific remarks about *Forum* picture Geraty as restraining unwise journalism. Is Osborn trying to suggest recklessness on my part led to an adversary relationship between Geraty and me? That my background somehow led to Geraty's unfortunate resignation?

Osborn's comments might have been more accurate if he had taken the time to talk to me about the newspaper. Geraty and I worked well together and neither of the incidents described is entirely correct. Osborn could have mentioned some of the positive contributions of *Forum*. We were the first Adventist publication to cover the Merikay case — and our coverage was successful in stirring up wide interest in the matter. Also, *Forum* published the first independent, behind-the-scenes report of an Annual Council meeting.

Eric Anderson  
Pacific Union College

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