Reviews of *Omega*
Theological Consultation II
Prize-Winning Adventist Play

SPECTRUM

A Quarterly Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

Volume 12, Number 2

MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS

Toward an Adventist Ethic
Adventist Views on Abortion
Approaching Ethical Decisions

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Editorial Correspondence: SPECTRUM is published quarterly by the Association of Adventist Forums. Direct all editorial correspondence to SPECTRUM, Box 431, College Place, WA 99324. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double spaced and in matters of style and documentation, conform to *A Manual of Style* (University of Chicago Press). Submit the original and two copies, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Responses from readers may be shortened before publication.

Subscription Information: In order to receive SPECTRUM, send a membership fee ($15 per 4 issues, except $18 in Canada and in other foreign countries; $2 less for students) to Association of Adventist Forums, Box 4330, Takoma Park, Maryland 20912. Single copies may be purchased for $4. Pay by check made out to the Association of Adventist Forums. For address changes, send old address label along with the new address.

Litho U.S.A. 31472

In This Issue

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About This Issue

Although a relatively new area of study among Seventh-day Adventists, Christian ethics has increasingly gained the attention of theologians and pastors as they guide the church through the complex social and religious issues of the late twentieth century. In this issue, three Adventist ethicists present their views on a variety of topics of significance to church members. These range from the possibility of an "Adventist ethics" and a discussion of how to make decisions based on ethical considerations, to an in-depth analysis of the Adventist position on a major social problem — abortion.

The creative arts are also a relatively new area of accomplishment for Seventh-day Adventists. In the past, SPECTRUM has published poetry and art work by church members, and the editors continue to seek work that reflects the Adventist Christian contribution to the arts. For the first time in this issue we publish a play. Highlighting a central event in Adventist history, it has much to say about the Adventist experience today.

Committed to the fair yet rigorous analysis of important issues within the church, SPECTRUM presents a detailed overview of last October's theological consultation between church administrators, pastors and theologians. This issue also includes two reviews of Walton's *Omega*. Applauded by some and condemned by others, the book is analyzed according to its theological and historical positions.

The Editors

Toward an Adventist Ethic

by James Walters

Adventists often end their prayers with a plea for the hastening of Christ's return and the ending of life on this sinful world. Adventists, indeed, interpret nearly all their doctrines in terms of the Second Coming, and because of this, it is understandable that their ethic is also oriented toward the consummation of human history. This compelling sense of urgency has been so strong in Adventist history that the traditional Adventist ethic has understandably been: Act so as to promote the Second Coming.[1]

Because Adventists keenly anticipate a soon-coming, perfect world, they are typically not so concerned with how persons ought to relate to one another here and now, but with how to reach future goals or ends. An ethic of ends, to which Adventists have traditionally adhered, is one of two dominant ethical theories. In judging the rightness or wrongness of an act, an ethic of ends, or teleology (derived from the Greek word *telos,* or end), emphasizes the intended goal or consequence of the contemplated action. The major competing theory of ethics emphasizes present duty, or deontology (derived from the Greek word *deon,* or duty), regardless of the ends realized.

The traditional Adventist ethic is inadequate because it is not clear who should benefit from the fulfillment of the Second Coming, and because there has been inadequate reflection on the means proper to the promotion of the Second Coming. There are three potential human beneficiaries of the traditional Adventist ethic: The Adventist individual, the Adventist church, and the universal community. Of course, the three choices are not exclusive. An act can extend into increasingly wider concentric circles.

The person who lives his life by the first alternative chooses a view which is labeled, according to ethical theory, "ethical egoism." Even when the end sought is as commendable as the Second Coming, if a person has himself exclusively in mind as the beneficiary, he is an ethical egoist. I am reminded that one of my former parishioners once blurted out, "I'm in this thing for eternal life, and I will do anything it takes to get it." Such exclusive focus on self is contrary to the spirit of Christianity and to no less an

James Walters, who teaches ethics at Loma Linda University, is a graduate of Southern Missionary College and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. He took his doctorate at Claremont.

authoritative voice within Adventism than Ellen White. The hearts of some people, she stated, "are not moved by any deep sense of the love of Christ, but they seek to perform the duties of the Christian life as that which God requires of them in order to gain heaven. Such religion is worth nothing."[2]

A person who makes ethical decisions oriented only to the good of his "in-group" or denomination follows the second alternative, an ethic of corporate egoism. This form of egoism is more insidious because, in serving the ends of the group, one suffers little of the guilt associated with serving exclusively private interests. Reinhold Niebuhr quotes the Italian statesman Cavour as saying, "If we did for ourselves what we do for our country, what rascals we would be."[3] Just as a nation and its citizens can confuse national interests with those that are ultimate, so a denomination and its members have a temptation to mistake its interests for ultimate concerns.

Regrettably, the Adventist church has not been free from this temptation. For example, the Adventist interest in religious liberty originally came from concern about protecting our own religious interests, not from universal concern that human beings, by virtue of being human, have the inalienable right to autonomy of religious practice.[4]

If personal egoism and corporate egoism are inadequate, the answer must be found in the third alternative: enlarging the circle of concern to include everyone. Such a view is called ethical universalism. Surely the Adventist denomination has seen itself as ethically universal; as promoting the greatest good — eternal life — for the greatest number — the universal community of mankind.

Historically, Adventism has assumed a distinctly spiritual mission to prepare the "remnant" people for the second Advent. Consequently, the "end" of evangelism was so all-compelling and more thought was given to the efficiency than to the morality of the means. But in addition to the question of *who* should benefit from the realization of the Second Coming, there is the question of appropriate and inappropriate *means* to use in promotion of the "end." The question is whether the end justifies the means. In the minds of some Adventist thinkers, the traditional ends orientation has been found to be incomplete and is being supplemented by a duty-oriented emphasis.

This increased concern for not only the value of ends, but also for duties concerning means, can be illustrated by the denomination's involvement in health care. Historically, Adventists undertook health care primarily because it was an effective entering wedge for Adventist evangelism.[5] Today, Adventist health institutions are not creating the large numbers of converts envisioned by earlier Adventists. Nevertheless, Adventist hospitals are respected in their communities for exhibiting exemplary Christian attitudes in their caring for the sick. As one Adventist clergyman, now working in a denominational hospital ministry, put it, "I used to worry about being successful; now I am committed to being faithful." Such a duty-oriented emphasis is not in opposition to the traditional key doctrines of the church, but it calls into question the sufficiency of the traditional Adventist ethic rooted so deeply in the promotion of the eschaton.

Whereas the traditional ends-oriented ethic is directed toward the Second Coming, an ethics of duty is concerned with respecting what the Sabbath celebrates — God's creation — which He sustains here and now. The fundamental Christian conviction that God is creator makes Christian ethics possible. Adventism's stress on the angel's message in Revelation 14:7 provides a special mandate for deriving ethics from the order of God's creation: "Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water."

In the original creation story, God looked over His creation and declared the created order "good" (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25) and finally "very good" (verse 31). At the end of creation week, God's purposes for His creation had been realized — it existed in its own right and was good. God's creation was an end in itself — not deriving goodness from some other, external source. The Sabbath, a particular emphasis of our denomination

within Christianity, is a celebration of the inherent goodness of God's creation, of its not merely being valued for achieving some other good end.

Certainly the culmination of creation was the Creator's calling into existence human beings with inherent worth and the freedom to choose for or against God. So sacred was the autonomy of humanity that God allowed the Fall rather than sacrifice the integrity of the elevated beings He had created. Achieving even laudable ends does not justify compromising our duty to respect human beings and their autonomy. God continued to regard human life after the Fall as so inherently worthy that He sacrificed Himself for its sake.

"Our actions must continue to be made with one eye fixed on that goal of the Kingdom. But not exclusively."

Because Jesus was in accord with this elevated view of personhood, He saw the Sabbath as important, but even that was not an end in itself. When Jesus was queried by the Pharisees about His disciples' Sabbathbreaking, He talked about the Sabbath, and by extension all law, as conveying respect for persons as ends in themselves, not to be used as instruments to achieve some other, greater good.

> The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, and he and those with him: how he entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:24-27).

Christian norms and directives are not free-floating and arbitrary, but part of a divine creation that places autonomous humanity at the appex of God's moral order.[6] The Sabbath provides time for celebrating God's creation and remembering our duty to respect the creatures He has brought into existence.

God not only created a humanity that continues to have inherent worth in God's eyes, but He sustains a consistent moral sensibility among human beings.[7] The revelation of the Bible and human reflection on life both establish that humanity consistently exhibits the following moral sensibilities: 1) we ought to promote societal well-being or happiness; 2) we ought to act according to basic societal justice; 3) we ought to recognize each person's autonomy. These can be described as "near absolute" moral duties of, respectively, beneficence, justice and autonomy.

It is wrong to violate these duties because they emerge from the nature of human existence as God created it. Of course, how those moral duties are applied in specific times and places will vary. But that variation need not and should not ignore the sense of duty God has implanted in his human creation.

Duty-oriented ethical considerations must be given their full due. Human beings, even after the Fall, have a sense of oughtness. If they did not, humanity would be beyond the realm of responsibility, and hence of being able to be judged. A duty-oriented creation ethic, then, is necessary. However, this in itself is not sufficient for a complete ethic within the Adventist church.

Both duty and ends-oriented moral reasoning are needed, since both emphases are valid. Seventh-day Adventists must not abandon the ends-oriented element in ethical thinking. Our God's desires for His creation are only served as "[His] will is done on earth as it is in heaven," and that will cannot be fully realized until the kingdom comes. Our actions must continue to be made with one eye fixed on that goal of the Kingdom. But not exclusively.

A duty ethic and an ends ethic can be drawn together in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist church. We believe that the kingdom of God is not only a goal where the redeemed receive all the blessings they have

hoped for.[8] It is also a community where God's creatures forever maintain their moral autonomy to decide for or against Him; where the actions of all continue to be governed by the duty to treat others justly and with respect.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. In putting forward this end-oriented ethical model, I do not mean to deny other ethical elements in traditional Adventism. David Johnson, writing in the *Collegiate Quarterly* (vol. 4, no. 2, April-June 1981, pp. 50, 51), adequately documents the keen moral concern over slavery shown by Adventist pioneers Ellen and James White, Uriah Smith and J. N. Andrews. The second section of this essay will argue that, in addition to the focus on consequences, Adventism should foster an emphasis on intrinsically right actions. However laudable the latter is, it has not been determinative in Adventist history.

2. *Steps to Christ,* p. 44. A more enlightened form of ethical egoism could be argued. The rationale would focus on the psychological observation that every act one performs is, at its basis, self-interested. Regardless of whatever one may accomplish for others — or even God Himself — all persons act with the interest of self-benefit. Bishop Butler conclusively answered this sophisticated form of egoism 250 years ago by demonstrating from human experience that there are at least some actions which are done by the agent whose object is not the benefit of oneself. Nevertheless, Butler agrees that self-concern is a strong component of human existence, and he saw it as a *healthy* concern. He argued, "the thing to be lamented is not that men have so great regard for their own good or interest in the present world, for they have not enough; but, that they have so little to the good of others." *Fifteen Sermons,* published at the Rolls Chapel (London 1926, from the preface).

3. *Nature and Destiny of Man.* (New York: Charles Sons, 1964), New York, I, 209.

4. The church's religious liberty interest is considerably more "mature" (less egocentric?) today. The Adventist appeal to the courts in behalf of the Amish people's right to their distinctive lifestyle is well known. In an editorial in *Liberty,* Roland Hegstad mentions a "sad" story about the Idaho state penitentiary. Roman Catholic priests and Jewish rabbis were ordered to stop giving inmates wine as part of holy communion and passover services, respectively. The editorial concludes: "might as well confess that we're advocates of unfermented-grape-juice-for-communion brigade. And childhood temperance pledges of total abstinence exert a strong pull. But so do *our matured concepts of religious liberty* (what about it, you *Listen* staffers — in this case wouldn't a little wine be good for the conscience's sake?)." *Liberty,* vol. 74, no. 4 (July-Aug. 1979), italics added.

5. See Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1963), pp. 25-28.

6. In *Eschatology and Ethics,* Carl Braaten argues for an eschatological ethics which has *agape* for its contents. Although Braaten never refers to creation, his ethic is quite this-worldly and does assume what I have argued is the basic meaning of creation for Christian ethics: "the power of this future (ethic) does not seduce those who love it to leave the world; rather, it invites them to direct their love of God back into the world, to care for the earth and all His living creatures" (p. 12).

7. The Apostle Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, and a host of other thinkers in the Christian tradition have appealed to a basic moral continuity in human existence. Contemporary theological ethicist James Gustafson has especially influenced me.

8. It could be argued that the content I have developed as a creation ethic might just as well have been developed as a kingdom ethic, with the added benefit that the traditional Adventist pure teologic emphasis is left intact. This reasoning could not hold because the normative content ascribed to mice in the kingdom is not teological in character but rather duty-oriented, having its foundation in the created order of reality.

Adventists and Abortion: A Principled Approach

by Gerald Winslow

It may seem odd that a church with stated positions on such matters as card playing and theater attendance has no official stance toward one of the most widely debated moral issues of modern times — abortion. But such is the case with Seventh-day Adventists today.[1] Though we have published "suggestive guidelines," we have not legislated hard-and-fast rules on abortion for church members or church institutions. Nor is this paper a call for such legislation. No one would be more dismayed than I if our present efforts to address the moral questions in human biology and medicine were to result in attempts to produce moral conformity through policy-making.

What is needed, I will suggest, is a continuing discussion of the general moral principles which should guide decision-making about abortion. If moral consensus ever emerges, it will be because we have engaged one another in serious discourse at the principled level of moral thought. Several years ago in a significant essay on abortion, Jack Provonsha indicated that his work "should be considered as one more contribution to what should remain, as yet, an ongoing conversation."[2] The present paper is based in part on the conviction that the possibility of such a conversation remains open. My purpose is twofold: to seek understanding of the evolution of Adventist thought on abortion during recent years, and, in the light of this understanding, to invite consideration of three moral principles which I think should inform decisions about abortion.

It should be obvious at the outset that even if consensus were possible at the principled level of moral thought, this would in no way imply the possibility of uniform moral judgments at the level of specific cases. By any calculation, abortion presents us with a dilemma of immense complexity. The intricacies of borderline cases bring us to the edges of our ability to reason morally and threaten to reduce us to babbling.

But tough dilemmas, such as abortion, may also lead us toward moral maturity. The fact that an issue is called a moral *dilemma* generally reveals that two or more of our firmly held values are in conflict. If we do not rush to resolve the conflict in facile, one-

Gerald Winslow, a graduate of Walla Walla College, the Seminary, and the Graduate Theological Union, teaches ethics at Walla Walla College. His book *Triage and Justice* is forthcoming from the University of California Press.

dimensional ways, if we pause long enough to explore in some depth our colliding values, we may become clearer about why the problem troubles us so. And, as a result, we may be able to state with greater clarity and force those principles which we must balance if we are to remain true to our Christian convictions and honest about the complexity of the moral dilemma confronting us.

It seems important to describe briefly the kind of abortion case I consider paradigmatic. Too often, I am convinced, there is a tendency to concentrate a disproportionate amount of the discussion on the types of cases which are almost never encountered. My own view of a typical case is shaped, of course, by my experience. Let me illustrate with a bit of recent biography. In one week of a recent school year, four students came to my office at different times to talk about abortion. One had recently had an abortion; the other three were thinking about seeking abortions. All four were church members. Two were married, and two were not. Many of the basic elements of their situations were similar: unexpected pregnancies, fear of financial and academic difficulties, social embarrassment, generally disrupted plans, and varying degrees of guilt. Their stories would, I think, elicit profound feelings of compassion from any sensitive person. And few of us would have ready-made solutions to offer. But, if we are to maintain integrity, such cases prompt us to scrutinize our own moral convictions.

There is value in knowing where we have been before we proceed; otherwise we may be like the driver who did not want to check which road he was traveling because he was making such good time. I will therefore attempt briefly to reconstruct Adventist thought on abortion during the past few years. I base these remarks partly on personal experience and partly on the small amount of literature which Adventists have written on the topic. Since I can lay no claim to be doing thorough church history on the matter, I must offer these observations in the form of an extended hunch. I trust that others with more experience can add essential details and correct inaccuracies.

Let me begin this reconstruction with another biographical note. In 1967, I was a newly graduated minister serving as a hospital chaplain. Early in my experience, the physician in charge of the obstetrics and gynecology department asked for a conference. Had I known at that time that he was a Roman Catholic, I might not have been so surprised at his concern: He was troubled by what he considered dubious therapeutic abortions. These abortions, he claimed, were being done for the most trivial of medical reasons, if indeed any medical reasons could be given at all. If Adventists had no moral compunctions about such cases, he wondered, were we not at least concerned that such procedures were against the spirit and letter of the state's abortion law? He closed the conference with a question which could not be easily forgotten: "Do you Adventist theologians have nothing to say on such matters?"

I was, I knew, a fledgling in the Adventist theological ranks. So I attributed my own lack of a position to the fact that I might have missed something in my education or experience. But a search for articles by others treating the subject from the perspective of Adventist theology led to the conclusion that little, if anything, had been written.

Why were we relatively silent on abortion? There were, no doubt, many reasons. But my guess is that two or three factors would rank near the top. First, there are no biblical passages explicitly prescribing or proscribing abortion. Nor do the writings of Ellen White offer direct guidance. With these sources silent, it is not surprising that Adventists would be reluctant to take a definite position. Second, Adventists have roots in a conservative type of Protestantism which, as Ralph Potter has pointed out, has traditionally disapproved of abortion except in those rare cases when the life or health of the mother is seriously threatened.[3] Though it is empirically unsubstantiated, my guess is that a large proportion of rank-and-file Adventists still holds essentially to this conservative position. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, state laws until the late 1960s and early 1970s generally reflected a conservative stance toward

abortion.[4] These laws provided an umbrella which protected many people from the moral ambiguities of abortion. This point is illustrated by the reported words of one Adventist minister when he was asked about the "church's position on abortion." He replied: "It's illegal in this state, and the church's position is that we should abide by the laws of the state in such matters."[5] My hunch, then, is that the basically conservative attitude of many church members coincided with conservative state laws and made taking a definite position unnecessary.

What happened in the late '60s and early '70s was a rapid liberalization of the state laws. This process culminated in the Supreme Court decision of 1973 which ruled that the abortion decision during the early months of pregnancy is a private matter to be settled by the pregnant woman and her physician.[6]

The movement toward more liberal abortion laws left many people in a moral quandary. People whose traditional attitudes had been largely unexamined now had to take conscious positions. As early as 1968, Potter made what turned out to be an accurate prediction. He suggested that a large segment of Protestantism would support reform abortion legislation and judicial rulings. And he predicted that the reform would probably be patterned after the Model Penal Code of the American Law Institute.[7] According to that code, a physician is justified in performing an abortion if "there is substantial risk that continuance of the pregnancy would gravely impair the physical or mental health of the mother, or that the child would be born with grave physical or mental defect, or that the pregnancy resulted from rape, incest, or other felonious intercourse."[8]

Only three years after Potter's prediction, Seventh-day Adventists published the first, and, so far as I know, only set of "suggestive guidelines" for therapeutic abortions. The similarity to the Model Penal Code is striking. Even the order of indications is the same:

> It is believed that therapeutic abortions may be performed for the following established indications:
>
> 1. When continuation of the pregnancy may threaten the life of the woman or seriously impair her health.
> 2. When continuation of the pregnancy is likely to result in the birth of a child with grave physical deformities or mental retardation.
> 3. When conception has occurred as a result of rape or incest.[9]

I have no idea whether or not the authors of the guidelines had the Model Penal Code in mind. My point is that when we did formulate guidelines on abortion, they reflected the general tenor of a moderate reform position. The guidelines can be located somewhere between the very restrictive traditions of earlier years and the very liberal position of those calling for abortion on demand. Perhaps the element which is most obviously new in this moderate reform position was the inclusion of the likelihood of birth defects as a legitimate indication for "therapeutic" abortions. This indication expands the earlier meanings of "therapeutic" beyond the immediate well-being of the pregnant woman. Further evidence of the reform nature of the guidelines is revealed by the two indications which were later added to the statement which was sent to Adventist institutions:

> 4. When the case involves an unwed child under 15 years of age.
> 5. When for some reason the requirements of functional human life demand the sacrifice of the lesser potential human value.[10]

More important, for our present purposes, than an analysis of these specific indications for abortion are the theological and moral warrants for the positions taken. The

"The movement toward more liberal abortion laws left many people in a moral quandary. People whose traditional attitudes had been largely unexamined now had to take conscious positions."

guidelines are prefaced with the following words:

> The basis for these guidelines exists on the person-image concept, which is governed by a system of priorities with an ascending scale of values. It is believed that this person-image concept is the Biblical basis enjoined upon the church, is one that can be defended, and is one that we should support.[11]

What is this "person-image concept?" The preface does not elaborate, but an article by R. F. Waddell does discuss this notion. The author affirms that human beings were created in the image of God, and it is this image which gives human beings their value. Therefore, the author adds, "man should attempt by every means at his disposal to ensure that offspring be perfect in mind, body, and spirit."[12]

One of the means for ensuring the best possible reproduction of the image of God is apparently the abortion of defective fetuses. The author says that the pregnancy may be terminated if there is evidence that the fetus has been "mutilated, deformed, or maldeveloped to the extent that it cannot become a normal individual."[13]

It is not entirely clear from this article how close to normal one must be in order to be deemed a possessor of the "person-image." But it is clear that during the early months of pregnancy the "person-image" is not considered to be present. It is said that justified abortions should be done early in the pregnancy because "During those first three months the embryo . . . has not reached the stage where it can be considered an identity."[14] The author adds that during the first trimester the embryo cannot be deemed to "possess life in itself."[15]

It seems fairly clear, then, that the "person-image concept" encompasses the following set of ideas: The embryo does not have a "person-image" during the first trimester. From that time forward the "person-image" gradually develops. No time is designated for the completion of the "person-image." However, any serious defects — as examples, the article lists mental retardation, being crippled, and having an incurable disease[16] — lessen or limit the potential for attaining the "person-image." Thus, on the view of fetal life which apparently undergirds the "suggestive guidelines," the fetus achieves whatever protectable value it has on the basis of its *potential* personhood.

Probably the most significant Adventist statement of a type of potentiality perspective is Jack Provonsha's essay on therapeutic abortion published about the same time as the "suggestive guidelines." According to Provonsha, the fetus is a potential human being at least from the time of implantation. The quality which makes a being truly human is the capacity to experience value and meaning made possible by the ability to use symbols. On this view, the fetus is not yet human. But the fetus stands for or symbolizes the human. In Provonsha's words: "The increasingly potential human organism developing in its mother's body is not yet human — but it 'means' human and can serve human values by crystallizing and conditioning respect for human life."[17] Thus, the fetus is a "secondary symbolic value." Full human value is achieved only when the being is able to join in the community of those who use symbols, experience value, and make moral decisions.

Since the publication of this essay and the guidelines, most Adventist authors have continued to develop a moderate position, attempting to balance the life of the fetus (variously described) against the life, health, and choices of the pregnant woman.[18] Less prevalent, but not unknown, are Adventists whose stated positions are similar to the 1973 Supreme Court decision — the pregnant woman's choice is the basic indication for abortion.[19] The other end of the spectrum is also represented in Adventist literature. In what may be a growing reaction to rapid liberalization of the last decade, some authors appear to be taking a fairly conservative stance. Typical of this view is a recent editorial in which the writer says that a pregnant woman "holds in her hands the future of at least two human beings: herself and that of the child within her body."[20] And apparently rejecting something akin to the "person-image con-

cept," the editorial adds: "Even during the first trimester . . . we see too much evidence that the creature growing within her [i.e., the pregnant woman] is a living human being, not merely a mass of cells or protoplasm."[21]

If the foregoing reconstruction is at all accurate, then it seems clear that the mainstream of published Adventist thought can be described as moderate on abortion, reforming the more restrictive positions of the past but generally unwilling to endorse abortion on demand. My own perception is that a significant proportion of the Adventist membership holds views somewhat more conservative than the mainstream of published statements, while much of Adventist practice could be characterized as more liberal than the published statements. What seems almost totally lacking is any sustained moral discourse in which Adventist thinkers engage one another in published discussion at the level of moral principles. It is with the goal of promoting such a discussion that I now wish to consider three examples of moral principles which I believe should inform decisions about abortion.

The statement of general principles, no matter how carefully formulated, will not assure responsible moral judgments. Moral decision-making requires, in addition, virtues such as sensitivity, imagination, compassion and courage. And, from beginning to end, the Christian acknowledges the essential guidance of God's Spirit. Even then, there is no total escape from all uncertainty. Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the value of systematic reflection on and the precise exposition of moral principles with supportive reasoning. Such principles establish presumptions in favor of certain types of actions and against others. And exceptions to the principles are required to bear the burden of proof.[22]

With this understanding of the purpose of principles in mind, I now wish to state three which I believe are relevant to the discussion of abortion.

1. *The principle of respect for human life.* The Bible leaves no doubt: human life is the precious gift of God.[23] The expensive plan of salvation reveals God's incalculable commitment to bring life to dying human beings. But what quality gives this human life such great value?

The answer often given in Christian theology is that human life is valued because of God's overflowing love. We love and respect others because He first loved us.[24] The worth of a human life is not seen to reside in any identifiable quality in the life itself. Whatever worth or dignity human beings have is attributed to them because of God's steadfast love. Thus, Christians have sometimes referred to the value of human life in terms of an "alien dignity."[25] This is a dignity bestowed upon human life by the choices of God in creation and redemption, and not by the achievements of human beings themselves. This means that the fundamental respect we have for human life is not dependent on measurements of some developed capacity. Such measurements would always be in terms of "more or less," but our respect for human life is unconditional. Helmut Thielicke does well to remind us that "Even the most pitiful life still shares in the protection of alien dignity."[26] We stand in awe of human life because we stand in awe of God and His abiding love.

But the question with regard to abortion is: Does the principle of respect for human life extend to prenatal life? Should the life of a human embryo or fetus also be accorded respect? Those who turn to Scripture for a definitive answer are likely to be disappointed. The Bible offers no specific instructions about how prenatal life should be treated.[27] But the Bible informs our decision-making in many more ways than simply by direct commands.[28] Scripture provides an over-arching universe of symbolic meaning which lends value or disvalue to specific acts. Through its stories and symbols, the Bible enlivens moral imagination.

An illustration of how moral imagination may be shaped by the Bible is provided by the familiar story of John the Baptist's birth. At least four elements of this story merit scrutiny because of their potential for affecting our view of prenatal life:

a) The conception of John is portrayed as the miraculous fulfillment of the divine mandate. Many times in biblical stories, God's power is pictured as being revealed in the conception of a child.[29] Indeed, it seems to be a favored strategy for reaffirming God's intimate presence in the lives of His chosen ones.

b) John's mission in life was designated even prior to his conception. This is also an oft-repeated theme in the Bible. Take, for example, Jeremiah's poetic description of his own prenatal call:

> Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
>
> And before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."[30]

c) Even John's prenatal movements were given symbolic significance and were interpreted as an earnest of his later service as forerunner of the Christ. In a similar manner, the prenatal movements of the twins, Jacob and Esau, were understood to have significance for their adult lives.[31]

d) John's name was chosen by God prior to his conception and birth. This last point may be of greatest symbolic significance for imagining the value of prenatal life. In modern cultures, children's names are often selected without reasons more significant than the fame of a movie star or the latest fad. But anyone who is acquainted with the Bible knows that God takes names seriously. When one was especially designated for a unique calling, when one returned to God, or when an important change in the life occurred, God would take care that the name was appropriate. Abram became Abraham. Sarai became Sarah. To name, then, is symbolic of the recognition of one's uniqueness, one's character, and one's mission. Naming represents caring.

". . . the Bible leads us, through its stories and symbols, to value prenatal life and to consider the fetus one whom God has called by name. This view of prenatal life is also supported in the works of Ellen White."

It seems clear that the Bible leads us, through its stories and symbols, to value prenatal life and to consider the fetus one whom God has called by name. This view of prenatal life is also supported in the works of Ellen White. The absence of specific passages about abortion should not cause Adventists to overlook the clear-cut significance which Ellen White assigns to the prenatal period of human life. "The [pregnant] mother's needs," she writes, "should in no case be neglected. *Two lives* are dependent upon her. . . ."[32] Explicitly rejected is the idea that prenatal life may be treated casually. One who "endangers the physical, mental, and moral health of the child" through negligence during the time of pregnancy is "committing a direct sin against [the] Creator."[33] The life which develops prenatally is not the possession of other human beings:

> Children derive life and being from their parents, and yet it is through the creative power of God that your children have life, for God is the Life-giver. Let it be remembered that children are not to be treated as though they were our own personal property.[34]

(With regard to this passage, it is important to note that Ellen White uses the world "child" for the fetus *in utero*.) I cannot imagine a line of argument which would begin by saying that great care should be taken to safeguard prenatal life and thus enhance the later life of the person and would end by saying that abortion is a matter of little consequence.

The thrust of this discussion of respect for human life calls into question the frequent attempts to determine when human life *really* begins. In one very important sense, since the sixth day of creation, human life *never* begins but is always a gift of earlier human life. As fire is passed from one torch to another, so life is the gift of previous life. Ultimately,

this gift is the endowment of the Lifegiver. When human gametes unite, as my medical dictionary puts it, "to initiate the development of a new individual,"[35] human life has been transmitted to a unique and unrepeatable new form — a new genotype. To search for the period of time when this new individual life may be destroyed without regret is to miss the point of respect for God's magnificent gift of human life.

Yet, in their own way, nearly all the "times" which have been proposed as the "true" beginning of human life remind us that something important is transpiring: the unique form of human life initiated at conception is on its way to becoming *personal*.[36]

"But few who consider abortion a moral dilemma would deny that one of the values at stake is the personal autonomy of the pregnant woman."

For example, the transition from embryo to fetus reminds us that the human body is taking shape. The onset of brain waves is a promise of future thought. "Quickening" informs at least the mother that someone with nerves and muscles is "alive and kicking." Certainly by the time of viability and birth we know that we have a new member of the human community.

Obviously, this new member does not function as a *person,* in the full sense, either before birth or for a long time thereafter. Potentiality principles, such as those based on the "person-image concept" discussed earlier, remind us of this fact. To be sure, what we value about human life, as opposed to plant or lower animal life, has much to do with those traits which led us to call a human being a person. Among these traits are self-awareness, the ability to make plans, the ability to use symbols, the ability to deliberate rationally, and so forth. One of the reasons we value bodily human life is that such life serves as the basis for the exercise of these personal traits. And one of the reasons we should respect and protect prenatal life is that in most cases it has the potential for later personal life. Moreover, this developmental perspective with its emphasis on potentiality helps us to realize that in cases of tragic conflict prepersonal human life may have to yield to personal human life. (More on this later.)

I would suggest, however, that the clarity of both our language and our moral judgments is better served by referring to life with a human genotype as human life and the potential of that life as personal life. Otherwise, when confronted with a normal six-month-old infant, we must say that this is not *human* life. This point deserves special emphasis if we are to avoid a new kind of anthropological dualism which once again denies or diminishes the value of bodily human life and claims that what really counts is the "interior" functioning of some type of mentation. In my view, it is tenable to affirm that personal human life deserves respect and protection without denying that prepersonal and postpersonal life also deserve respect and protection. This conclusion need not entail an idolatrous vitalism in which life is worshipped in place of the Lifegiver. Rather, respect for human life should be part of our appropriate response to the love of the Creator. Acceptance of the principle of respect for human life establishes a strong moral presumption in favor of preserving human life, including prenatal human life. Exceptions such as abortion must bear a heavy burden of proof.

2. *The principle of respect for personal autonomy.* If the principle of respect for human life encompassed all that we consider morally valuable, then our discussion would be nearly finished. The dilemma of abortion, if indeed it could be called a dilemma, would be resolved for nearly all cases. Abortion simply would not be permissible except, perhaps, in those extremely rare cases when the life of the fetus is in direct conflict with the physical life of the mother. But most of us sense, at least intuitively, that the problem of abortion is not so simple. As precious and irreplaceable as each individual human life is, life itself is

not the only human good. Nor is it the highest. Christians know that other goods may sometimes take priority: loyalty to God, the life of another, justice, personal integrity, freedom.

Few of us would really mean it if we said, "Give me liberty or give me death!" Nevertheless, personal liberty is a value for which many lives have been willingly sacrificed. And Christian faith has helped to foster a high regard for individual autonomy. God's people are liberated from all types of worldly bondage so that they may serve their Lord in a relationship of true freedom.[37]

Seventh-day Adventists have been made keenly aware of the importance of personal autonomy: "In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammeled. No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions."[38] When we value personal autonomy, we imitate God. For God created human beings with the ability to make free choices. And God valued human freedom so much that He was willing to permit the grave misuse of freedom rather than reduce human beings to automatons.[39] Much of what we mean when we say that we respect a person is that we are unwilling to restrict his or her autonomy.

Surely, one of the most basic elements of personal autonomy is the freedom to decide what happens to one's own body. In recent years, much of the abortion debate has focused on this one aspect of personal autonomy: the right of the pregnant woman freely to determine what she does with her own body. As one author states the case: "The only criterion [for abortion] should be whether such an induced abortion is consistent with the individual woman's personal set of moral and religious values, and that is something only she can judge."[40]

If we fail to comprehend the thrust of this line of reasoning, we certainly will not understand an important factor in the worldwide trend toward liberalized abortion laws. Even if the embryo or fetus is accorded *full* human rights, it can still be argued that the decision to continue or terminate the pregnancy properly belongs to the pregnant woman (and possibly her spouse).[41] Ordinarily we do not coerce a person to use his or her body for the good of another even if that good is exceedingly important. For example, there are many people with end-stage renal disease whose lives might be greatly improved or extended if only there were no shortage of transplantable kidneys. Yet we have not conscripted kidney donors. We do not even require a person to make provision for donating his or her kidneys at death. Nor do we force people to participate as subjects of human experimentation. And, so far as I know, we require no one to give even a pint of blood in order to save the life of another. Such actions are permitted, and in some instances, encouraged as acts of moral heroism. But, partly because we value personal autonomy, these actions are not required. Why, then, should a woman be enjoined to provide her body to preserve another human life?

Some will find this line of argument less than entirely convincing. But few who consider abortion a moral dilemma would deny that one of the values at stake is the personal autonomy of the pregnant woman. And few would claim to be so wise that they could specify in every case just what the pregnant woman should decide.

It seems likely that future events will place more, not less, emphasis on the woman's freedom to control her own procreation. There is little evidence that the general drift of societies toward more liberal abortion laws will soon be reversed.[42] Moreover, those who wish to restrict the woman's decision for abortion are likely to find their efforts annulled by developments in medicine such as the use of prostaglandins. Thus, the decision to abort may become a very private matter which only the pregnant woman need know about.

3. *The principle of justice.* To conclude that the abortion decision will (or should) continue to be governed by the pregnant woman obviously does not resolve all questions about what constitutes morally responsible reasons for the decision to abort. It is not illogical to say that the decision to have an

abortion belongs to the pregnant woman, while at the same time insisting that the choice should be informed by appropriate moral principles. Nor is it illogical to add that the decision to perform an abortion belongs to the involved medical personnel. Medical practitioners need to remember that they are caring for two patients. And the pregnant woman needs to remember that two lives are dependent on her actions.

When abortion is sought, it should generally be assumed that a conflict exists between the rights and interests of the fetus and the rights and interests of the pregnant woman.[43] What reasons for the abortion could the pregnant woman give which would lead us to say that her decision would be morally justified? In situations of this type, when human lives and interests are in conflict, the moral decision-maker generally must make some appeal to the concept of justice.

Justice may seem an appropriate word to use at this point. For reasons somewhat obscure to me, some people tend to associate justice primarily with the concept of retribution. Justice is viewed as an antonym for mercy. But justice may also refer to a much broader range of actions: the appropriate distribution of both burdens and benefits. When used in this way, justice is associated with our concepts of fairness and impartiality. The first (formal) principle of justice is, "Give to each what he or she is due." And a corollary of this principle is that equals should be treated equally. Such principles, often discussed by moral philosophers, are only formal; they prescribe the *form* of just action, but they do not specify the material or substantive criteria for making just decisions.[44]

But in the Bible we find the substance of justice which can give the formal principles meaning and direction. According to the biblical faith, each human being is considered no less than a child of God. And God loves His children impartially. The alien dignity which God bestows on human life is given without gradation or qualification. God's love is for those who, from a human standpoint, appear unworthy as well as for those who seem worthy. Indeed, without God's saving love, all human beings are unworthy and deserving of condemnation. Therefore, God is not influenced by what humans call excellence, nor can His love or justice be purchased:

> For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.[45]

In this passage and throughout the Bible, those who have accepted God's love are enjoined to imitate God by caring for others in need. And special care is prescribed for those who are most in need. As Bennett has stated: "God's love for all persons implies a strategic concentration on the victims of society, on the weak, the exploited, the neglected. . . ."[46] This strategic concern for the disadvantaged is not a denial of an essential human equality, but rather an outgrowth of it. Precisely because human beings are loved equally, the weak and vulnerable require special attention.

". . . many of the 'typical' cases of abortion seem unacceptable. The reasons of convenience and expedience . . . could only be deemed sufficient if a very low value were attached to prenatal life."

Thus, response to God's love entails a view of justice which begins with the affirmation of basic human equality. This is not simply the formal equality of the philosophers' principles of justice. Rather, as Mott has recently written: "Love has changed justice from merely the equal treatment of equals to the equal treatment of all human beings solely on the grounds that as human they are bestowed worth by God."[47]

Biblical justice, then, is a reflection in judgment and action of God's impartial love.

If we seek justice of this sort, we must be prepared to resolve human conflicts by sacrificing personal bias and adopting the impartial "perspective of eternity." With regard to abortion, we must be willing to imagine ourselves in the position of all those, including the fetus, who are substantially affected by the decision.[48] And we must ask what, on balance, we would consider a just or fair decision. It must be granted that adopting this impartial perspective is exceedingly difficult when we are among those who will be substantially affected. But this fact does not argue against attempting to seek justice, so much as it argues for serious reflection on moral dilemmas such as abortion prior to the "crunch" of actual decision-making. Without careful attention to principle ahead of time, we can generally expect decisions to be made in an ad hoc and capricious manner.

At this point, I must invite my readers to adopt the impartial perspective of justice and ask which abortions, if any, would be warranted. Even if it were possible, I have no desire to complete this work for others by describing a wide variety of cases and arguing for the courses of action I would consider just. I must say, however, that when I try to assume the perspective of justice and weigh the various claims and interests, many of the "typical" cases of abortion seem unacceptable. The reasons of convenience and expedience which sometimes characterize such decisions could only be deemed sufficient if a very low value were attached to prenatal life.

But if one discerns with compassion, reasons of apparent convenience are often found to mask reasons of genuine despair. No woman ever becomes pregnant in order to have an abortion. An unexpected and unwanted pregnancy can threaten the personhood of the woman in multifarious ways, some evident and some hidden. No one is better able to assess these factors than the pregnant woman who must live with the decision.

All this means that there are exceptional cases. Some are fairly obvious. In those cases when the life or health of the mother is seriously threatened, I have little difficulty believing that an impartial judge would protect her life over the prenatal life. The claims and interests of the established personal life (including the likelihood of responsibility to other persons) are greater in such cases. And in the unusal instance when a pregnancy results from rape, it seems unconscionable to compound the injustice of the original crime by urging that the woman continue the pregnancy. But some exceptional cases are less obvious. Life may endanger other life at many different levels of well-being. The principle of justice prescribes fair consideration of such exceptional cases, even the ones which bring us to the borders of our other principles.

From the foregoing, it should be clear that I have little or no quarrel with the first and third indications for therapeutic abortions as published in the church's "suggestive guidelines." But from the perspective of justice, the second indication raises a number of troublesome questions: Why should potentially defective fetuses be aborted? How many normal fetuses are we willing to abort in order to assure that no defective baby will be born? How normal must a human life be in order to deserve respect and protection? For whose sake is the selective abortion performed? Answering these and related questions must be the work of another paper. But, whatever else we might mean by the "person-image concept," I hope we do not mean that human life must meet some standard we have set in order to earn our fundamental respect and protection. On this point, I am inclined to agree with Karen Lebacqz: "If indeed the strength of a people can be measured by their attitude toward the weak, the defenseless, and the outcast, then selective abortion points to the weaknesses in our society and in ourselves."[49]

Those who have been waiting for extensive casuistry — the application of moral principles to a variety of specific cases — will now be disappointed. The desire for casuistry is always present. But for me to produce such at this point would counter part of my own thesis: What the church needs throughout its membership is a sustained discussion of the

moral principles which stem from our shared faith and which should guide decisions about specific cases. Principles such as the three I have tried to enunciate are often like the unmatching pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. One of the great values of engaging one another in serious moral discourse about such principles is that we may be better able to balance and match our principles.

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18. See, for example, James J. Londis, "Abortion: What Shall Christians Do?" *Insight,* March 19, 1974, pp. 12-17; Sakae Kubo, "Abortion," in *Theology and Ethics of Sex* (in press, 1979), Chapter 15; Robert Lee Osmunson, "Protest . . . Feticide," in *Protest and Promise* (Review and Herald: Washington, D.C., 1973), pp. 55-68. In spite of the title of Osmonson's chapter and in spite of the general drift of the first part of his argument, he appears to arrive at what I would call a moderate reform position.

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24. I John 4:19.

25. See, for example, Helmut Thielicke, "The Doctor as Judge of Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die," in *Who Shall Live?* ed. Kenneth Vaux (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 146-86; Paul Ramsey, "The Morality of Abortion," in *Life or Death: Ethics and Options* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), pp. 60-93.

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of human life from both philosophical and biological perspectives, see Daniel Callahan, *Abortion: Law, Choice and Morality,* pp. 348-404.

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Four Ways of Making Ethical Decisions

by David R. Larson

War. Eugenics. Euthanasia. Racism. Cloning. Money. Starvation. Abortion. In vitro fertilization. Pollution. Feminism. Urbanization.

The list of issues now attracting serious ethical analysis is as fascinating as it is long! One important branch of such analysis is that of "normative ethics." It helps us discover what sorts of persons and things are really valuable and what methods of making ethical decisions are truly valid. Before we can know if we are obligated to be or to do something — before, indeed, we can deal responsibly with timely ethical questions — we must know how to make such decisions. We need some decision-making methods, some conceptual tools.

This essay surveys four ways of making

David Larson, a graduate of Pacific Union College and the Seminary, is completing his doctorate in ethics at Claremont. He teaches ethics at Loma Linda University.

ethical decisions. It describes and evaluates the features and forms of these general approaches. It also reviews, in connection with each approach, the contribution of one Christian thinker who has used the approach influentially, paying particular attention to what he has said about abortion and euthanasia. The essay ends with some concluding remarks about rules in moral life.

One way to make ethical decisions is to do whatever some authority commands us to do. If we question a moral requirement, the only answers which remain within the limits of this method are those which establish the authority's credentials. We utilize some other method if we appeal to any other factor. According to this method, the rightness or wrongness of a deed, rule, or trait depends upon the command of some superior and upon nothing else.

"None of us fully avoids the way of authority. We therefore should choose our authorities with care and apply their commands with skill."

This approach's weaknesses are so apparent that the frequency or the severity with which it is criticized is not surprising. Its exclusive use makes us vulnerable to poor advice. It gives no help in deciding which commander should be obeyed. It causes us to defer to the thinking of others instead of knowing for ourselves why something is right or wrong. But worst of all, it makes moral requirements seem arbitrary, as if everything which is immoral would be moral and vice versa if only the authority decided differently.

But these weaknesses should not blind us to the method's strengths. It can save time, a contribution which might make the difference between life and death in a crisis. It can help us benefit from the wider experience and greater wisdom of others. It can give us unusual ethical courage which makes us willing to sacrifice greatly for that which is commanded. It can give us firmness against the changing tides of popular opinion. It can provide a culture or subculture with the corporate loyalties it needs to prevail against the forces of internal division. And, most importantly, this method can help us realize how dependent we are upon the many ethical authorities to which we are subservient, whether we realize it or not.

Our dependency upon ethical authority can be seen if we review some of its forms. We have documentary authorities (codes, constitutions, scriptures), charismatic authorities (prophets, entertainers, mystics), legal authorities (laws, courts, enforcers), consensual authorities (polls, tallies, surveys), professional authorities (doctors, lawyers, teachers), and kinship authorities (parents, uncles, aunts). We know that tradition can function as an authority and so can nature, fate, and, for some people, the position of the stars. Even our own whims can become authorities which we permit no one to question. And we may mention, too, of course, religious authorities (creeds, councils, God).

None of us fully avoids the way of authority. We therefore should choose our authorities with care and apply their commands with skill. This leads us to consider the use of religious literature in moral reasoning. The best of religious literature does not usually command us to accept its ethical conclusions on the basis of its authority alone. Such documents ordinarily try to persuade us by their lines of reasoning. This applies to the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White, both of which are important in differing ways for Seventh-day Adventists, even if the reasoning available in these collections is sometimes difficult to decipher. If we want to understand such reasoning, we must interpret it in the light of its literary and its historical and theological contexts. As we do so, we should remind ourselves that religious literature is more able to provide us theological doctrines, exemplary characters, ethical themes, and illustrative analogies than detailed specifications of what we ought to do in any cir-

cumstance. Its most important ethical contribution is the understanding of God it communicates. This is so because we become like the One we worship.

These suggestions apply to the story about Abraham's apparent willingness to kill his own son at God's command. Some claim that this account teaches us to do whatever we sincerely believe God commands us no matter how unreasonable or immoral this may seem. This conclusion should be viewed with suspicion. The primary hero of Genesis 22 is neither Abraham nor Isaac, but God. These two men demonstrated impressive courage, to be sure. But in their time and in ours there have been many others who have been willing to sacrifice human life to their ultimate values. The distinctive thing about the story of Abraham and Isaac is not their willingness to obey, but God's final unwillingness to have them shed human blood as an act of devotion. This insight regarding God's true character is harmonious with everything we learn about divine love from Jesus and from the best moralists. We therefore should be hesitant to say that this story teaches us that divine authority may obligate us to do that which would be immoral if commanded by any lesser source.

The late Karl Barth, the Swiss theologian who was one of the most influential Christians of our century, took a somewhat different view of these things. He stressed God's loving and sovereign freedom to command whatever he deemed best in any given moment. Rejecting all attempts to draw lines of connection between the moment-by-moment commands of God and the most cogent moral wisdom of any age, he called upon Christians to obey. He believed that the command of God authenticates itself in the moment of decision, that those who wonder if they have mistaken it for some other voice have yet to hear the divine word. Barth therefore refused to develop a theoretical casuistry, a systematic application of general principles to particular problems. He formulated a practical casuistry which used biblical analogies and references to God's desire to create fellowship to prepare persons for the reception of God's command.

In applying his general views to the questions of abortion and euthanasia, Barth wrote that human life belongs to God and, therefore, only God is authorized to decide when it should end. God usually commands us to respect human life by preserving and protecting it. But, in exceptional cases, God may command us to respect life by terminating it. When the life of a fetus threatens the life of its mother, for instance, God may command an abortion. Barth believed that God virtually never commands active euthanasia, taking deliberate steps which cause a person to die. He admitted that passive euthanasia, allowing a terminally ill patient to die by not using all possible medical options, presented tempting and impressive questions. But he maintained that if passive euthanasia is ever permissible as an exception, it must be justified by God's specific and direct command in some particular circumstance and not by a general desire to relieve suffering. Those who doubt that God's commands are ever received with the degree of obviousness Barth described necessarily employ some other method.

If moral requirements are justified by appeals to anything other than the qualifications of those who issue commands, some method other than the way of authority is utilized. One of these other approaches is the way of teleology. As we might suspect from the Greek word *telos* (end, purpose, goal), this method determines the rightness or wrongness of things by appealing to the goodness or badness of their consequences alone. Teleology's exclusive emphasis upon results is its mark of identification. A deed, rule, or trait is permissible or obligatory if its outcomes are positive; otherwise not. Those who use the way of teleology are not necessarily required to disregard the commands of God or any other authority. But they are compelled to justify obedience by appealing only to the goodness of its consequences.

The way of teleology requires us to acquire a standard of value by which to distinguish good outcomes from bad ones. This standard must also help us to differentiate between the things desirable for their own sake (intrinsic values), and things desirable as a means to

something else (extrinsic values). Ethical hedonism makes happiness defined as pleasure the supreme intrinsic value. Ethical nonhedonism either denies that we ought to regard happiness so highly or denies that happiness is accurately depicted as pleasure. It holds (depending on the writer defending it) that we ought to value intellectual excellence, communion with God, self-realization, beauty, power, the triad of truth-beauty-goodness, conformity with our natural ends, or something else more highly than pleasure or perhaps even happiness. Teleologists are either ethical hedonists or ethical nonhedonists, depending upon their standards of value.

"Everyone can imagine some circumstances in which the greatest good for the greatest number would come from abortion or euthanasia. But does this make either right?"

The way of teleology also requires us to have some convictions regarding whose interests should be favored when we are considering the outcomes of our decisions. Ethical egoism holds that each person always ought to be or do that which is to his or her own advantage and that this should be the first priority. This perspective sometimes describes selfishness as a virtue. But it does so with the assumption that the interests of society are best served when each person attends to his or her well-being in an intelligent manner. If a conflict emerges between what is good for the community and what is good for the individual, ethical egoism requires a person to place greater emphasis upon his or her own welfare.

Ethical universalism, more commonly called utilitarianism, makes the opposite case. It requires us to increase the total amount of value in the universe with no primary regard for how it should be allocated. This time the assumption is that each person's best interests are served if he or she attends to the interests of the larger community. And this time, if a conflict emerges, the interests of society take precedence over those of the individual. Modified forms of utilitarianism alter its classical expression in different ways so as to incorporate greater concern for the welfare of individuals. The slogan, "The greatest good for the greatest number," is one such modification.

Many ethical egoists and ethical universalists are also ethical hedonists and vice versa. But this is neither necessarily nor exclusively the case. Teleology merely requires us to have some standard of value, hedonistic or nonhedonistic, and some convictions regarding whose interests are primary, egoistic or universalistic.

It is not difficult to understand why the way of teleology often receives better reviews than does the way of authority. It requires us to think about right and wrong and to reflect about positive and negative values. It also invites us to consider the consequences of our choices so that we will have as few regrets as possible. It protects us from too much reliance upon authorities who frequently prove unworthy of our trust. And it encourages us to increase that which is truly valuable. All this is very helpful.

But the way of teleology exhibits a number of weaknesses as well. For one thing, it is difficult to predict all the consequences of our choices, a severe limitation for a method which considers nothing but results. Another difficulty is that this method's imperatives are always hypothetical or conditional. They always say something such as, "If you want to be happy, treat others with respect." The question is whether or not ethical mandates should be dependent upon the contingencies of human desire. But teleology's most significant weakness is that it includes a potential justification for oppressing the weak. If exploiting others is to anyone's true advantage, ethical egoism approves it. If oppressing minorities really benefits any society, ethical universalism or utilitarianism approves it.

Teleologists can respond to this final criti-

cism in at least two ways. One option is to contend that it never is to any individual's true advantage to exploit others or to any society's actual benefit to oppress minorities. This response is impressive because it does seem that those who trample upon others eventually trip and destroy themselves in the process. The other option is to argue that some principle requiring us to respect each person can be derived from the principle encouraging us to increase value. This response is less impressive because the two principles are logically distinct. Every attempt to deduce one solely from the other, therefore, fails.

Joseph Fletcher, who has taught at the Episcopal Theological School in Boston and at the University of Virginia Medical School, offers a teleological interpretation of Christian ethics. He declares that in every circumstance we ought to do that which is most loving. For Fletcher, that means doing what will produce the greatest good for the greatest number. This is utilitarianism, but Fletcher does not favor the classical versions of it which are unconcerned about the allocation of value. He is dedicated to distributing value as widely as possible. Also, Fletcher's utilitarianism is nonhedonistic. He replaced hedonism's emphasis upon pleasure with his own concern for comprehensive human well-being. Fletcher's concern for human welfare is present in his focus upon the quality of life. Like others who emphasize this theme, he believes that there are some lives which are so deficient or so anguished they aren't worth living. In order to qualify for the greatest protection, human life, he holds, must meet a minimal degree of excellence. He therefore proposes standards by which to indentify levels of human excellency.

Fletcher recognizes that clinical consideration of abortion and euthanasia occurs when life is not sublime. On the one hand, children can be born with handicaps so great or into environments so hostile they have no opportunity for fulfilled lives. On the other hand, dying can be a very painful and expensive process, one which frees a terminal patient from agony or unconscious functioning only after it has left his or her relatives exhausted emotionally and financially. Everyone can imagine some circumstances in which the greatest good for the greatest number would come from abortion or euthanasia. But does this make either right? Fletcher answers "yes." Like all teleologists, he holds that the morality of any choice is determined solely by its consequences. He also believes that a fetus does not possess human dignity until it is about to experience normal birth and that the distinction between active and passive euthanasia is a theoretical quibble with little clinical relevance. Those who disagree with Fletcher's conclusions might argue that they will produce negative consequences. This criticism remains within the boundaries of his method. But someone who faults Fletcher's positions by appealing to something other than their results employs some other method.

Those who are satisfied with neither the way of authority nor the way of teleology might consider the way of deontology, the theory of duty or obligation. It agrees with teleology that rightness or wrongness cannot be defined merely by the command of some superior. But, in disgreement with teleology, it contends that the consequences of our choices are not the only relevant considerations. According to this method, the rightness or wrongness of a deed, rule, or trait depends upon our duties as well as upon the consequences of our choices.

The various deontological approaches can be distinguished in part by how they identify their duties. Some contend that certain options are self-evidently right or wrong regardless of the goodness or badness of their consequences. We know this, it is held, by direct insight, by intuition. Some deontologists who appeal to intuition distinguish prima facie duties from actual duties. "Prima facie" means at first appearance. Prima facie duties indicate what we are obliged to do in the absence of overriding considerations. Actual duties stipulate our obligations when both our prima facie duties and the distinctive features of any circumstance are considered. Our prima facie duty to keep promises, for instance, is overridden if we discover that this involves us in someone's plot to commit

murder. We then have an actual duty to break our promises of this nature. And we know this, say some, by intuition.

Other deontological approaches appeal to the psychological unacceptability of certain alternatives. The rule of reversibility invites us to imagine that we are on the receiving end of our decisions. Would we like this? The rule of universalizability suggests that we imagine a world in which everyone in circumstances similar to our own chooses as we do. Would this be thinkable? Some writers suggest that we picture a spectator who is informed, impartial, reflective, benevolent, clear-headed, and otherwise well qualified. Would this umpire endorse our decisions? Or sometimes we are invited to imagine we are sitting around a hypothetical table behind a veil of ignorance which permits general facts to enter but screens all specific information about our own lives. If we didn't know our ages, genders, races, nationalities, religious professions, social positions, or anything else about ourselves which might prejudice our decisions, would we make the same choices? None of these approaches proves beyond the shadow of doubt that something is right or wrong. But each one points to relevant considerations other than consequences, without resting its case upon intuition.

"This understanding of each person's inviolability is a litmus test for morality. It indicates whether or not our moral beliefs are truly ethical instead of being guises for opportunism."

Still other deontological approaches contend that considerations such as those surveyed in the preceding paragraph demonstrate that some deeds, rules, or traits are logically inconsistent and not merely psychologically unacceptable. One theory of this sort holds that unless a person is willing to cease being a moral agent, he or she must claim rights to freedom and well-being. Not to claim these rights is to surrender the necessary and sufficient requirements for being a moral agent. But one must also honor the rights of others to freedom and well-being. This is so because the foundation of one person's necessary claim is identical to the other person's necessary claim. In both cases the foundation is what a person must have in order to remain a moral agent. To say that this need is an adequate justification for its fulfillment in one case and that it is not an adequate justification in another case, when there is no relevant difference between the two cases, is self-contradictory. Positions which contradict themselves cannot be true, and those which are not true are not worthy of our respect. Therefore, deeds, rules, or traits which deny freedom and well-being to others are questionable ethically.

One advantage of the way of deontology is that it protects those who are often sacrificed when we seek to better our personal and social fortunes. Women, children, those who are poor, uneducated, or ill, as well as those whose racial, national, or religious identities differ from our own, are sheltered from abuse by deontology's insistence that no person be treated as though he or she were merely a thing. This understanding of each person's inviolability is a litmus test for morality. It indicates whether or not our moral beliefs are truly ethical instead of being guises for opportunism. Another advantage of deontology is that its imperatives are categorical or unconditional and not hypothetical. They always say something such as "Treat persons with respect," instead of something such as "If you want to be happy, treat persons with respect." This also provides protection for vulnerable people.

One problem with deontology is that it often overlooks our duties to subhuman forms of life in its concern for the rights of humans. Another difficulty is that some deontologists posit a false dichotomy between duty and desire, between obligation and inclination. There are times when there is a sharp difference between what we ought to do and what we want to do. But this experience of inner conflict should not be accepted

as the norm for humans. Another disadvantage is that deontology finds it easier to warn us against treating people as things than to explain what it means to treat them as persons. Still further, deontology can become so inflexible and uncompromising that it is of no assistance when each of our alternatives seems questionable. This is especially true of those deontological approaches which do not distinguish between prima facie and actual duties or do not rank our duties in a hierarchy of importance. One other problem is that deontology can underestimate the importance of increasing the amount of value in its concern for fair allocations.

Paul Ramsey, who teaches at Princeton University, employs the way of deontology in his interpretations of Christian morality. Emphasizing themes such as covenant, faithfulness, loyalty, and fidelity, he portrays Christian love as deeds, rules, or traits which treat each person with respect. Anything which replaces, exchanges, substitutes, or sacrifices one person for another is to be viewed with suspicion. Because each person's value flows from God's love for that individual, his or her worth cannot vary in proportion to age, health, natural abilities, personal achievements, wealth, or contributions to society. Ramsey expresses dissatisfaction with every attempt to specify the quality of life or to use this criterion as a standard for treatment. He emphasizes the sanctity of life, the sacredness of each human in the fullness of his or her uniqueness. Ramsey believes his conclusions are rooted in his Christian convictions. But he sees the possibility of a convergence between truly Christian and truly humanistic ethical stances in their mutual respect for particular persons.

Given his emphasis upon life's sanctity, it is not surprising that Ramsey expresses reservations about abortion and active euthanasia, unless these are allowed by the rule of double effect. This principle stipulates that an evil deed may be performed if it is unintentionally and unavoidably connected with a moral act. The rule applies to the question of abortion when a fetus threatens the life of its mother. A physician may terminate such a pregnancy, it is held, because the intention is to save the woman's life and this cannot be done without removing the fetus. The rule of double effect might apply to the question of euthanasia if a physican determines that the dosage of drugs required to relieve a patient's pain may also hasten his or her death somewhat. This too is permissible because attempts to decrease suffering are noble even when they unavoidably and unintentionally shorten life. Except for cases such as these, Ramsey does not ordinarily approve of abortion or active euthanasia. But he does not oppose passive euthanasia. Ramsey knows that there is a difference between prolonging life and extending the process of dying. He favors the first, not the second.

The way of responsibility advises us to respond fittingly. But what is a fitting response? The advocates of this fourth method agree that a fitting response exhibits clarity regarding the persons to whom we are responsible and the things for which we are responsible. Beyond this there is little consensus. Because this method is a relative newcomer to explicit ethical theory, it is given a variety of interpretations.

One possibility is that this approach is a disguised version of one of the first three methods. Perhaps it is practically equivalent to the way of authority or to the way of teleology or to the way of deontology. If so, the distinguishing feature of a fitting response is that it is either obedient, productive of value, or dutiful. The trouble with this interpretation is that the advocates of the way of responsibility maintain that it is a distinctive option which cannot be reduced to one of the other three. Perhaps they are wrong. But maybe we should resist this conclusion until we have exhausted the other possibilities.

A second alternative is that responsibility combines teleology and deontology in a mixed theory of moral abligation with two equally important but independent principles. The teleological principle requires us to increase value. The deontological principle requires us to treat people as persons rather than as things. The fitting response is that deed, rule, or trait which comes closest to fulfilling both requirements simultaneously. We are irrespon-

sible if we neglect either one. Because its two principles are equally binding, this mixed theory can give us no guidance regarding which one to favor when they conflict, except to suggest that we rely upon intuition.

A third option is that responsibility requires us to treat others in ways which are congruent with the ways God has treated us. A fitting response is a deed, rule, or trait which dovetails with God's graciousness. This interpretation does not indicate in detail what does or does not correspond with God's attitudes and actions. But detailed specifications may be unnecessary. Most people who read the story Jesus told about the man who refused to forgive a small matter after he had been forgiven a large matter discern that his choices were reprehensible. And they were blameworthy, not primarily because they were disobedient or unproductive of value or negligent of duty. They were reproachable because there was an incongruity between the man's acceptance of mercy and his refusal to be merciful toward others.

Many interpretations of responsibility leave much room for intuitionism, doing what appears appropriate at the moment of decision with greater reliance upon insight than upon deliberation. This can be a severe limitation if it encourages us to exaggerate the distinctive features of any circumstance or to justify our decisions, without presenting reasons which can be discussed and tested. Another limitation is that some advocates of the way of responsibility give the impression that our responses are wholly determined by other agents or things. If we have no freedom, if we are compelled by forces over which we have no control, it seems empty to ask if we are responding fittingly. This is so even if the one who is said to determine our responses is God.

One advantage of the way of responsibility is that it can provide interpretations of moral identity or character which seem more biblical and more modern than many others. Instead of contending that we discover who we are as we obey commands, increase value, or act dutifully, it can suggest that we learn this through responding to others. Character, therefore, emerges from a complex process of contemplation, communication, interpretation, and anticipation of responses to communication. Another advantage of this method is that it often portrays the moral life as a series of grateful responses to God and to others who have acted favorably toward us, a vision which can have strong motivational appeal. Of all the reasons for being moral, none is quite so appealing as the realization that one is valued supremely and unconditionally. We love, says the New Testament, because God first loved us.

James Nelson, who teaches at the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and at the University of Minnesota Medical School, uses the way of responsibility in his interpretation of Christian ethics. His understanding of the method seems akin to the second and third possibilities we have just reviewed. On the one hand, a fitting response occurs when we treat others as God has treated us. On the other hand, it is that option which comes closest to meeting the dual requirements to increase value and to treat people as persons. Nelson discusses these two requirements under the rubrics of the quality of life and the sanctity of life. Instead of placing greater importance upon one or the other, he emphasizes both equally. He believes that human life is sacred. But he distinguishes between prepersonal, personal, and postpersonal humanness, the first and third referring to an individual before and after he or she can experience sociality, limited freedom, and religiosity. All three forms of humanness deserve respect in keeping with their sanctity. But the higher quality of fully personal humanity merits greater protection.

"Of all the reasons for being moral, none is quite so appealing as the realization that one is valued supremely and unconditionally. We love, says the New Testament, because God first loved us."

It is not always easy to predict what Nelson's conclusions will be when the sanctity of life and the quality of life criteria conflict.

Perhaps the best clue is that his method of responsibility usually charts a moderate course between the more liberal conclusions of Joseph Fletcher's teleology and the more conservative ones of Paul Ramsey's deontology. This certainly is the case with regard to abortion and euthanasia. His presumptions against terminating prepersonal and postpersonal forms of human life are stronger than Fletcher's. But his willingness to overrule these presumptions in tragic circumstances is greater than Ramsey's. He maintains that it is always morally ambiguous to terminate human life even if in some circumstances this is the most fitting response. This seems about halfway between saying, on the one hand, that abortion and active euthanasia are proper if they produce the greatest good for the greatest number and saying, on the other hand, that both are questionable unless allowed by the rule of double effect. Nelson has few reservations about passive euthanasia. Of special interest is his published account of how he and his wife sought and finally found a physician who agreed not to prescribe insulin, digitalis, and diuretics for her aged father who was debilitated by diabetes and several strokes. When their loved one died, they were sorrowful. But they were comforted by their belief that they had acted responsibly.

Christians agree that they should be and do that which is loving. But, as we have seen, they differ in their understandings of *agapé*'s meaning. It is equated with obedience, increasing value, treating people as persons, responding fittingly, or some other alternative depending in part upon the preferred method of making ethical decisions. This diversity of opinion is not unfortunate. But we do well to remember that it exists so that we can be on guard against simplistic applications of Augustine's advice to love and do then as we please.

Because the four methods provide different ultimate justifications for ethical choices, it seems difficult to arrange them in a hierarchy which is satisfying theoretically. But this does not necessarily preclude the possibility of a practical hierarchy. Such an arrangement might begin by recognizing the importance of ethical authorities in everyday life. We can test the rightness of what we are commanded by considering its consequences and then by the requirement to treat people as persons. When the principles of increasing value and respecting humans conflict, we can seek that alternative which meets more of the objective need of more of the involved parties and which comes closest to our understandings of God's graciousness. This practical hierarchy will not eliminate all uncertainty. But it may reduce our perplexity somewhat. Beyond this we can trust God, accepting divine mercy to forgive our failures and appropriating divine power to increase our wisdom.

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A Prize-Winning Play: *The Waiting*

by Ken Greenman

Ken Greenman's *The Waiting* won one of the six prizes (from among 200 entries) awarded by the New Playwrights Theatre in Washington, D.C. Each prize winner was professionally produced this spring and ran for 12 performances. The play was also selected to be performed in the drama competition sponsored in 1981 for the centennial celebration of Atlantic Union College. It has been performed there and at the Rockville, Sligo, and Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist churches in the Washington, D.C., area. Those wishing to produce the play, which has been copyrighted, should contact Ken Greenman at Takoma Academy, 81209 Carroll Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20012.

Ken Greenman grew up in New York City, graduated with an English major from Atlantic Union College, received an M.Div. degree from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University and is currently pursuing a doctorate in drama education at the University of Maryland. He teaches English at Takoma Academy.

After the performance of *The Waiting,* November 6, 1981, at Sligo Church, Richard Osborn, principal of Takoma Academy and treasurer of the Association of Adventist Forums, interviewed the author. Greenman's edited comments reveal a passion for plumbing the distinctive features of the Adventist experience in order to make a universal statement:

"The play came from a long interest in a couple of fields. One was history. For a class in Seventh-day Adventist denominational history, I went to the University of Chicago and read old newspapers from October 20-25, 1844, and eventually wrote a paper on the social context of those five days.

"The other area was literature. At Atlantic Union College I had gotten fascinated with Emerson and Thoreau. At Andrews I taught a course in freshman composition and got into discussions with some of the English teachers there as to whether we could find important and contempory themes within our own Adventist culture that people outside would be interested in seeing in some form of art. The discussion started when we read Chaim Potok's books, *The Chosen* and *The Promise.* At the New Playwrights Theatre I was asked a lot of questions about the period covered by the play — whether it really happened or not — by both the director and people who talked to me after seeing a performance of the play.

"So, if you combine an interest in an histori-

cal period with whether the Adventist experience could be made significant to a wider community, you have the background to this play. The other thing that contributed to it was my observation of the dialogue and interaction among my sister's family on a farm in Vermont, and how they treated each other."

* * * * *

On October 22, 1844, many people in the northeastern United States, believers in William Miller's interpretation of biblical prophecy, awaited the second coming of Jesus. Their belief was that He would come on that day. He didn't. This is a story of one of those waiting families.

Place: A dairy farm, west of Barton, Vermont, just south of Irasburg, north and west of St. Johnsbury. On a clear day, which is almost always, you can see Jay Peak. And from Jay Peak, even on a cloudy day, you can see Canada.

Characters: *Jeremiah Slatter:* Father — 49; farmer, third generation on the farm, "and likely to remain so." Believes in the coming, but is always going on "just in case."

Mom Slatter: Farmer's wife — 47; town girl married a farmer and brings some niceties to the farm as well as surety. She believes completely. She will cook no more breakfasts!

Sister Rachael: The daughter — 19; a happy young lady. A good farmer's wife-to-be. Looking forward to a husband, her Jesse Andrews, with a farm of his own. But now — this. So, with mixed emotions, she waits.

Thomas Slatter: The oldest — 29; the believer in the soil, the seasons, the security of cycles. The unbeliever in "this man, Miller" and "all his business." Thus, a theological antagonist to Momma, yet the son who loves his mother.

Jonathan Slatter: The youngest — 15; the eyes of the story. A follower who believes because the others believe. To Jon, Thomas is wrong, not so much because he disbelieves Miller, but rather, because he disbelieves Mom and Pa. Jon will grow some in all this.

Jesse Andrews: Rachel's betrothed. A believer, but a "hope-not." He wants Rachael more than any coming. Is far from disappointed come the end of the wait.

Scene I: The Evening Before

7:00 p.m., October 21, 1844

When the lights go up: Jonathan, the narrator, appears on the steps to the porch. The other characters are at various spots on stage. Tom is splitting wood outside the house. Ma in kitchen, fixing supper. Pa walks on stage into house, to kitchen, washes hands and sits with Ma. Rachael is knitting in living room, looking out window, not up at sky, but down the road, awaiting a husband, not a Messiah.

Jon: We'd heard all there was to hear, so now, we're waitin'. Momma believes, a lot. Pa, believes some, but right up to now, he's been layin' in the hay for the winter that just might come. Rachael believes, but she don't want to 'cause Jesse and she aren't married yet. They ain't had a chance to be together like married folks. I guess she don't want to get to heaven a virgin. Thomas don't believe at all. Called Miller a phony right to my face. Course he wouldn't say it in front of Momma, since she believes so. There isn't a doubt in his mind about the comin'. It just isn't, plain and simple. So he's there splittin' wood for the winter.

Tom: (Calls to Jon.) Miller's a phony! Tomorrow will come and go and we'll still need wood.

Jon: He almost convinced *me*! But I still believe. Heck, it's three believing, against one not. And I rather be in heaven with Momma, Pa, and Rachael than in hell with Thomas. (*He realizes the sadness of the opposite.*) And anyway, if the three of them are wrong, we'll still be warm.

Ma: (*Calls from the kitchen to the children.*) Rachel, come set the table, please. (*Rachael looks towards the kitchen, back to the road, rises and walks to the kitchen, procedes to set table.*) Jonathan, come in here now. No matter how amazing this is, you still have to eat. (*Jon walks towards Tom instead of kitchen. Tom is still splitting logs. Ma looks out the window at her two sons, sighs and looks to Pa. Pa stands and calls.*)

Pa: Tom! You can stop the splittin'. We're not gonna be needing it against any cold this winter! (*By now Jon is beside Tom.*)

Jon: Ma and Pa are really upset with you, Tom. They don't understand why you can't believe.

Tom: You think I don't know that?

Jon: Why don't you, Tom? All of them preachers, preachin' away. . . . They're educated, Tom! More that just readin' and stuff. They know! If it was just Mom and Pa, well, then maybe, but them preachers, and Mr. Andrews and Mr. Wilamont. . . .

Tom: Jon — The more people believin' something don't necessarily make it the more true. Could just as easily make it the more wrong. The Millerites might be good people. That doesn't mean we should jump to believe them.

"*Tom:* Ma, the Lord works in the seasons, in cycles. . . . I've seen how careful He works to make this farm what it is. . . . He's not about to come breakin' in on that calm order."

Jon: (*After a thoughtful think.*) You'd be better off if you could come to heaven with us, Tom.

Tom: (Angrily) Stop bothering me, Jon! (*Tom walks away sullen. Not a glance towards the sky.*)

Jon: (*Alone again*) I sure don't like to push Tom. He's a sight bigger than me, and he's got more of a temper than even Pa. I sure hope the Lord manages to forgive him. (*Tom, followed by Jon, joins the others at the table. Tom, sullen; Rachael, distracted; Jon fidgety; Ma, fervent; and Pa, hungry. They all stand, bow as a ritual. Pa prays.)*

Pa: Lord, we hope you hear this prayer, travelin' as you are. Bless us and bless this food. We pray that we've got everything taken care of enough so you'll see fit to take all of us when you get here. Amen.

All: Amen. (*All sit and eat – Jon a bit too quickly for Momma's liking. . . .)*

Ma: Jonathan, will you stop swallowing your food whole long enough to chew it? It's a wonder you've lived 15 years without choking to death at least twice.

Jon: (Mouth full) But Momma, I want to get outside to watch. . . .

Ma: You won't see Him till sometime after midnight tonight. Then "every eye shall see Him."

Pa: Jon's worried He'll come like "the thief in the night. . . ."

Tom: You all sound like children at Christmas, in a faint — waitin' on presents. . . .

Ma: (Mild) Why won't *you* wait *with* us Tom? He's coming, the Bible shows it. . . . Why can't you see that? Why?

Tom: Ma, the Lord works in the seasons, in cycles . . . the cows freshen' . . . the leaves turn all the colors they can . . . the sap runs into the buckets. I've seen how careful He works to make this farm what it is . . . to make us what we are. He's not about to come breakin' in on that calm order. He's not about to give the only warning to some Bible-beatin', black-suited windbag. . . .

Rachael: Tom! Please. . . .

Tom: (A breath) He's not about to come like Miller says, so quick and mean . . . with no word except from a man — that *almost* every self-respectin' preacher and farmer around mocks. . . .

Pa: All right Tom. . . . We've gone over this enough. It just brings more pain. Let it stop.

Tom: I'm going outside. . . .

Jon: You gonna cut more wood?

Tom: (Ignores Jon's question. He rises and looks to Ma.) Ma, please understand how I feel. . . . (*Ma looks down at her plate, forking her food. Tom goes outside and sits on the logs, holding the ax. Ma sits in silence as Jon, still swallowing his food whole, finishes and Pa, close behind Jon, does the same. Rachael, in the meantime, continues to look towards the window and door.)*

Pa: Expecting someone? (*A nonintended pun.)*

Rachael: Jesse is coming to wait with us.

Pa: Is that an askin' or a tellin'?

Rachael: Pa, please . . . we want to be together.

Ma: Don't you think his folks might want him with them? This is a time for families to be together.

Rachael: Ma — Jesse *is my family (scandal!)*, at least, he will be . . . I mean, if there's no. . . .

Ma: Rachael, the Lord is coming. . . . This is no normal time. . . . You can't be thinking that everything's going to be like it's always been. . . .

Rachael: But when I have to face up to something as out-of-the-ordinary, as amazing as this, the only way I can do it is to keep being normal like I am every day. . . . That's the only way I can stand it! So I need to have Jesse here. And he needs to be with me. . . .

Pa: (Laughs to Ma) Can't argue with that sort of illogic, can you. . . . When's he going to be here?

Rachael: Soon. . . .

Ma: Finish your supper, if you can. . . . You've got yourself so churned up with waiting. . . . And I'm not sure just yet whose coming is looked forward to more! *(Said with a sigh of resignation. There is worry within her.)*

Jon: (Has now finished all his food.) Can I go outside now?

Pa: Go on . . . and make sure the gates are locked shut. Don't want the cows wandering all over kingdom-come by morning. *(Jon runs out.)*

Ma: There'll be no need to worry about that, Jeremiah. By tomorrow night. . . .

Pa: I know, Mother, but it's good for the boy to have somethin' to do. . . . *(Jon has gone out on the porch; Tom has seen Jesse walking down the road. . . . Jesse walks to Tom.)*

Tom: Evening, Jesse.

Jesse: Evening, Tom.

Tom: Come for Rachael?

Jesse: We'll wait together. . . .

Tom: Going to be a long wait — long enough to plan the wedding!

Jesse: (Hopeful, but resigned) Wish it was long enough to *have* the wedding. . . . I guess we'll just have to see. . . .

Tom: You believe He's coming, don't you?

Jesse: More than you do, but less than your Ma or my Pa — that's for sure. . . . All I really want, is. . . . *(He looks toward the farmhouse.)*

Jon: (Sees Tom and Jesse talking in the dark.) Rachael! He's here!

Rachael: (Almost ready to bolt, then calms herself into a composed fiancee.) Is it all right if Jesse waits with us? *(This to Pa.)*

Pa: Mother? *(Ma nods.)* Then it's fine with me. . . . *(Rachael then runs out to the porch door, slows and walks, restrained, out to the porch.)*

Rachael: What took you, Jesse? I've been waitin'.

"*Ma:* Rachael, the Lord is coming. . . . This is no normal time. . . . You can't be thinking that everything's going to be like it's always been. . . ."

Jesse: We've all been. Is it all right for me to wait with you? *(Rachael nods.)* Good. . . . *(They sit on the porch steps. Holding hands. Jonathan is still standing on the porch, looking up to the sky and back to them. They stare at him, he gets the hint.)*

Jon: Maybe Tom wants someone to talk to. *(Walks toward Tom, then out toward the audience.)* We all sit around, waiting. Each of us waiting with different thoughts. That surprises me when I think of it. . . . Ain't it something, how the same thing, like a person or a thought, or a happenin' can bring up so many ways to look at it? Surprising! *(Looks to Rachael and Jesse, who are no longer looking into the sky, but at each other, love-struck. Jon says sarcastically.)*

Jon: There goes Rachael . . . bein' normal. *(Jon walks to Tom and sits on a log next to him.)*

Jon: Mind if I set here with you?

Tom: Suit yourself.

Jon: (Uncomfortable pause, small talk.) Nice night. . . .

Tom: It was clouding up in the west before dark. . . . Might rain tomorrow. . . . Maybe snow if it gets any colder.

Jon: Won't be time to get colder, Tom.

Miller says it's gonna get awful hot, awful quick.

Tom: We'll have snow in two or three weeks. *(Positive) (Jon looks into the sky. Tom starts stacking the wood he has split. Jon remembers the gates.)*

Jon: I better do what Pa told me. *(He gets up and walks to the barn.)*

Tom: What'd he tell you to do?

Jon: Lock the gate.

Tom: (Smiling) Thinks he may have to search for the cows tomorrow?

Jon: I guess? . . . maybe. *(Surprised at the implications.)*

Tom: That's what he thinks. . . . *(Jon walks to barn – Tom keeps on stacking. Jon looks to Tom, scratches his head – goes. Rachael and Jesse have been sitting and looking up at the sky and at each other. Mostly at each other. . . . Mom and Pa are in kitchen – mime dishes away and talking . . . then reading Bible. Rachael and Jesse speak.)*

Rachael: (Unsure about reality or possibility of question.) What do you think it will be like up there? I mean . . . what will we be like?

Jesse: No one seems to know for sure. Maybe we'll be learning a new way of life. *(Dreading missing what he hasn't had yet.)*

Rachael: (She brings Jesse's head to her and kisses his forehead.) What I mean is . . . will we be able to be together . . . together like . . . well, in a husband and wife way. . . ? You know what I'm saying. . . .

Jesse: Rachael — I know what you're askin' about . . . I don't know . . . I just don't know. . . . *(Pregnant pause)* I hope so!

Rachael: We've done what was right. We've behaved like engaged folks are supposed to. . . .

Jesse: It ain't been easy. Remember that night when we almost. . . . I've never wanted anyone the likes of how I wanted you that night. I still want you. . . . This is the last chance we'll ever have . . . tonight, now.

Rachael: Don't even talk about it! We shouldn't be thinking these things. Especially now! I know you want to . . . *(Shyly)* I do, too. . . . We would have, someday . . . but now, . . . we'll never.

Jesse: It doesn't have to be.

Rachael: Have to be what?

Jesse: Never. *(Puts his hand behind Rachael's head – down to back)* Rachael, I want. . . .

Rachael: No, Jesse, no, please. . . .

Jesse: Why not? *(His passion increases.)* Just once, our only time. . . .

Rachael: (She tries to change the subject.) We have a new calf in the barn. She's so pretty . . . and so soft. . . . Would you like to see her? Please . . . it's all we can do . . . we can't give in now. . . . I love you, . . . but, . . . please, Jesse, no. . . .

Jesse: Why? It can't be wrong with times as they are. . . . The Lord wouldn't leave us here for doing what loving each other makes us do. . . . You and I are made for this. . . . Please, Rachael, let's. Before we can't.

Rachael: (Rachael pushes away from Jesse's advances – stands off and talks.) No! Jesse . . . I love you, but we can't do this *now*. . . . It's wrong, no matter when. It would hurt Momma so! And it's wrong. We'll just have to wait. No one knows what the Lord has in store. . . . No, Jesse, it's wrong. Come see the calf. *(They walk past Tom and Rachael asks.)* How is the new calf tonight?

Tom: Don't know . . . Haven't been in there lately.

Rachael: Jesse wants to see her.

Tom: Not exactly the most unusual sight. Just a calf.

Jesse: Just curious to see. *(Disgruntled, but resigned.)*

Tom: Sure. . . .

Rachael: We'll be back in a bit.

Tom: If the Lord comes I'll give ya a shout!

Rachael: Tom . . . don't joke about that. . . .

Tom: Sorry. I'm going in to bed. Good night. . . . *(Tom walks to porch – pauses on steps.)*

Jesse: Rachael? *(He's not finished. She leads him. Silently she says, "No." They pass Jon as he is returning from the barnyard and gates.)*

Jesse: (As friendly as he can.) What you up to Jon?

Jon: Just doing some chores. Where're you going? *(He walks past them.)*

Rachael: To see how the new calf 's doin'.

Jon: Don't forget to lock the gate. *(Jesse and Rachael walk quickly to the barn, stop to look at each other, then enter, closing the door behind. Jon walks to the porch, from where Tom has been watching Jesse and Rachael walk to the barn.)*

Jon: Thought you were going to bed.

Tom: Will in a minute. . . . Gates locked?

Jon: Yep . . . Oh! No! I forgot to feed the new calf . . . better do it now. . . . *(He starts to go to the barn.)*

Tom: Rachael and Jesse can do it.

Jon: Rachael won't remember to do it. She don't remember nothing when she's with Jesse. *(He keeps walking toward the barn.)*

Tom: Jonathan, they'll take care of things in the barn. Let 'em be.

Jon: Pa'll get angry at me if. . . .

Tom: Let them alone. *(He breaks through the stern look with a smile.)* Besides, with tomorrow being what it is, the calves won't get a chance to be hungry, right? *(Pause)*

Jon: Maybe . . . Well. . . .

Tom: Certain. *(Tom walks back to the woodpile and sits. Jon goes in and sits with Pa and Ma. They are sitting in the kitchen near the stove or fireplace. Pa is reading the Bible, Ma just rocking gently, quiet. She looks up.)*

Ma: Jeremiah, it seems as though we ought to be singing, or praying, or at a meeting. . . . Something different than just sitting here by the fire.

Pa: I'm afraid the meeting wouldn't be much bigger than us, the Andrews, and the Wilamonts. You know the rest don't believe what Brother Miller has to say. . . . That's why we decided to wait as families. . . .

Ma: Yes, I know . . . but just sitting here. . . . It's like what Rachael said about being normal in the middle of amazement. . . .

Jon: (As he enters and sits.) I locked the gates, Pa, and Tom said Rachael and Jesse would feed the calf. . . . They wanted to see the new one.

Pa: Rachael must feel sorry for it only having but just a few days.

Jon: They're in there looking at the calf now. . . . *(Pa goes to window.)*

Jon: Do you figure the Lord will take Tom, even though he don't believe in the coming? He's not a heathen. Just don't accept the coming. He'll sure believe when he sees the angels!

Pa: I don't suppose the Lord will cut anyone out just because He caught them by surprise. Tom's led a good life . . . been a loner, but never turned down a call for help. It's sad he never married. A man, 29, should'a had a wife.

Jon: He would have married Ruth if she hadn't passed away. . . .

Pa: Still — Six years is a long time to hurt.

Ma: That's just the way my Thomas is.

Jon: He laughed when I told him you wanted me to lock the gates. *(There is an embarrassed squirming. Ma looks over to Pa, as he avoids her stare. . . .)*

Ma: (Sadly) Jeremiah . . . you see? You give Thomas reasons to not believe by your not fully believing.

Pa: Ma, I don't think Thomas needs any help not believing. He has a mind of his own.

"*Jon:* Do you figure the Lord will take Tom, even though he don't believe in the coming? He's not a heathen. Just don't accept the coming. He'll sure believe when he sees the angels!"

Ma: I suppose . . . *(Then Ma begins to softly sing and hum "Amazing Grace." . . . When she gets to "When we've been there ten thousand years. . . ," she sings aloud. Pa joins in. Jonathan sits awhile and walks out to the porch. The singing of Mom and Pa is heard beneath Jon's monologue. The songs go from "Amazing Grace" to "Just Over the Mountain Is the Promised Land," "We Are Nearing Home," "Blessed Assurance." Then to a quiet hum . . . to silence. Tom is still sitting on the woodpile, carving. Jesse and Rachael are still looking at the calf. Jon is on the porch looking up. . . .)*

Jon: That's how we wait out the Last Night. Mom and Pa sitting and reading. Tom whittling by the woodpile, Rachael and Jesse spending time looking at the calf, . . . Feedin' her and the rest of them, I expect. Our last night on earth . . . Unless it took Him longer to come than we expected. *(He walks off the porch and stands out looking at his home, his sky, his earth.)* My, but it sure is pretty. This earth, Vermont, this farm, the woods. . . . Miller and his people say it's all

evil. Seems they can't wait for the consumin' fire to burn it all away. . . . *(Walks some more.)* I can wait. . . . *(Looks over at Tom.)* I mean, if. . . . *(pause; then pleading.)* But it's pretty. *(He walks over to Tom and sits.)* What you doing'?

Tom: (Obviously) Whittling. *(A wait.)*

Jon: What you thinkin'?

Tom: How peaceful and calm this all is. . . . *(Smiles at his brother.)* What about you?

Jon: I'm takin' it all in. . . . I'm gonna miss it.

Tom: You won't have the chance.

Jon: What do you mean?

Tom: I mean it will be here tomorrow and next week . . . and so will you.

Jon: (Pause) I hope so, but. . . . *(Jon sits in quiet with Tom. Pa stands and takes some hot drink from fire. Ma watches and goes to window – looks out back and says.)*

Ma: It's going to be so beautiful. . . . The Lord made this world so beautiful, even with all the hurt. Heaven will be so much more grand.

Pa: This world isn't so beautiful. A lot of tears and sweat. Some blood. There's more pain than beauty.

Ma: Think of the beauty without the pain, though. Think of holding Baby Matthew. . . . Tom walking with Ruth instead of grieving her passing.

Pa: I'm looking forward to not havin' to work so hard an' long. . . . That's my reward; a good long rest from my work. . . . *(Pause)* You want Him to come more than anything else, don't you. . . .

Ma: (After a wait.) I want Tom to be with us. My heart wants that more than anything.

Pa: Tom's always meant the most to you of all the children. . . . He's had the love you would have given Matthew plus what love would naturally be his.

Ma: I want so much for him to believe . . . so much. To leave Tom behind would just. . . .

Pa: If the Lord comes, He's not going to leave a man as good as Tom behind. I believe *that* more than I believe He's coming.

Ma: (Half jesting, half serious.) Jeremiah, do you really believe He's coming? You say you do, but you've worked the fields and stored the hay as though tomorrow is just another day.

Pa: I *want* Him to come more than I *believe* He will. And if He doesn't come, I'm not going to have all my eggs crushed. I'm keeping one or two in other baskets. I haven't dug the potatoes.

Ma: But you've cut and stored the hay.

Pa: Compromise.

Ma: Jeremiah. *(A maternal moment, sweetly.)*

Pa: Mother, I'm a *farmer.* Don't ask me to be a saint. If the Lord takes me, it will be with the good earth under my fingernails.

Ma: (Smile and pause.) Jeremiah Slatter, I love you. And the Lord loves you more than I love you, so you'll be in heaven, dirty hands and all.

Pa: You'll still hold my hand through the Pearly Gates?

Ma: Right down the streets of gold. . . . *(She moves to Jeremiah and kisses him. A smile . . . Pause.)* I wish Rachael and Jesse had had the chance to have what we've had. *(Pa looks to barn.)*

Pa: They've been waiting for it long enough.

Ma: I'm sure the Lord has some things even better. If we're here tomorrow morning, I'm going to fix us the biggest, best breakfast ever eaten . . . and it will be the last breakfast I'll ever make, on earth.

Pa: You suppose you'll be cooking in heaven?

Ma: The Lord may make us into perfect beings, but even a perfect woman will *fix breakfast.* Only there, maybe, perfect men will help!

Pa: Don't go gettin' uppity on me — our last night on earth. . . . *(All is in jest . . . they sit and continue to read. Pause. Jesse and Rachael walk from barn. They are tender to each other. They speak in whispers.)*

Rachael: Isn't the calf beautiful? . . . all new. She's like a promise . . . that somehow our love will still grow. I love you, Jesse. And if we can, someday, it will be the way I've always dreamed. . . . I've always wanted it to be beautiful. and if we have the chance, it will be. *(They've been walking towards Tom and Jon. As they approach, Tom rises and stretches.)*

Tom: Well, I'm ready for sleep. You?

Jon: (Still sitting . . . stretching . . . imitating his brother.) No, I want to sit here a while longer. *(Rachael and Jesse get closer.)*

Tom: No, I think you want to come in. . . .

Jon: (Oblivious of Tom's "hint." Sees the two lovers.) Hey, Rachael! Did you feed the calves?

Rachael: (Startled from her reverie) What? No! We were. . . .

Jon: See, Tom! I told you, she forgets everything when she's with Jesse. Now I have to do it myself anyway. . . .

"*Rachael:* Tom, it's going to mean Jesse and I can be married. You know how I've wanted that. *Tom:* Yep. I imagine you've wanted Jesse more than Jesus all along."

Tom: Well, just go do it then! *(Jon is shocked at Tom's hard tone. He walks past Rachael, Jesse, confused.)*

Tom: How is the calf? *(He smiles warmly, touches her arm, big-brother. She knows – he knows.)*

Rachael: Lovely, Tom, and so new.

Tom: Good. 'Night, Jesse. . . .

Jesse: (Confused) Good night . . . I. . . .

Tom: See ya in the morning. I'll have lots of work to do.

Rachael: You're sure, aren't you?

Tom: I'm positive.

Rachael: Goodnight, Tom. *(Tom goes into the house; Rachael and Jesse walk on past for a stroll. . . . Jon comes out of the barn in a huff. Runs to the porch. Stops, turns to the audience.)*

Jon: Makes me mad. I figure — the Lord's coming . . . it's almost time . . . and here I am feedin' the calves and shoveling that mess! I'm sure glad He's coming!! I can leave all the barns behind! *(Pauses . . . walks up to the porch. Stops, looks.)* My, but it *is* beautiful. *(Enters the house – lights.)*

Scene II: The Night

11:30 p.m. October 22.

The 24-hour period of return is almost over. The discouragement is evident in degree. Except for Ma, who interprets the delay as an ultimate test of her faith. He will come – even at the 11th hour, or 11:59. But He will come. *The rest of the family does not concur. A pervasive gloom. Mom is out, off stage. Rachael and Jesse are walking in from stage left, but in darkness almost total. Jonathan is busying himself with whittling (like Tom) by the woodstack, left. Pa and Tom sitting on porch discussing the obvious.*

Tom: How is Momma going to be, once the time to wait is past?

Pa: She's a very strong woman. She'll hurt for a while . . . be disappointed . . . but, she'll get beyond it. . . . But we might be talking about this a bit early. I mean, it is not midnight yet.

Tom: (With a slight edge.) What do you want to talk about, instead? Clearing off some more of the trees for grazing in the spring? We could argue over that for a half hour or so.

Pa: (With resignation.) I suppose one conversation is just as good as the next . . . under the circumstances.

Tom: Did you ever *really* believe He was coming?

Pa: Yes, I did, most of the time, in fact. The rest of the time your Ma believed for me.

Tom: When'd you finally stop? *(Pa looks off for awhile, "the truth will come out.")*

Pa: I suppose it was something Rachael said at supper a while back. She wished she might be fixing Jesse's suppers in her own kitchen. I found myself wanting her to have the chance. It wasn't a big step from wanting that for Rachael, to not wanting Him to come at all. What a man wants he generally believes to be possible. So I suppose not wanting something is just a step away from not believing it.

Tom: I wouldn't want to be Miller tomorrow morning.

Pa: He'll figure out why he was wrong. One thing I've learned studying the Bible. . . . Every rock-bottom belief has at

least a half a dozen ways to be wrong. . . .

Tom: Figure the Lord may come tomorrow instead?

Pa: No. *(Finality.)*

Tom: (Change tone and subject as Tom walks across porch and looks at Jesse and Rachael.) I suppose we'll be having a wedding now. They've put it off too long, waiting on this day. Rachael needn't waste any more time.

Pa: You're right. . . . There needs to be a wedding, quick. *(Mom enters scene – yard, porch, etc.)*

Tom: When do you figure it'll be?

Pa: As soon as we can marry them off, now that they can be.

Tom: (Innocently.) What's the hurry?

Pa: (Stares at Tom with a whimsey.) Here's your Momma. You know.

Tom: They can't hold off much longer. . . . *(Pa nods as Mom enters. She is like the excited child, waiting for Santa. No doubt of faith. The Lord is on His way.)*

Ma: It's nearly time. Any moment now!

Tom: You still believe He's coming. . . . ?

Ma: Of course, Thomas! Nothing's changed! He's closer now than before. Jeremiah, how can you hold yourself so calm, knowing how close He must be.

Pa: (Dreading saying it.) I haven't held on as long as you, I don't believe He's coming. It seems Miller's been mistak. . . .

Ma: (Interrupting.) Don't lose the gift right when it's offered! It's so close to the time. The waiting is almost done. The good Lord chooses this late hour to find those who truly believe His word. Don't you see? This is the last test, the last moments in His refining fire. . . . Surely you see that! Surely you . . . *(She does not finish. She sits, rocks and says.)* Wait, Jeremiah, just a little longer. Please wait. *(Pa moves to Ma to embrace her. At his touch, hand on shoulder, she stands, they embrace.)*

Ma: Please, hold on. Believe, please, and help my unbelief. *(Pa holds Ma close, Tom looks on, invisible. He moves to speak, decides against, and goes out, off the porch. He encounters Rachael and Jesse as they return.)*

Jesse: Looks like you were right all along.

Tom: Giving up early, Jesse? Still some time to go. Wouldn't hurt to wait.

Jesse: Whose side you on, anyway?

Tom: Just don't want anyone to be hasty.

Rachael: Tom, it's going to mean Jesse and I can be married. You know how I've wanted that.

Tom: Yep. I imagine you've wanted Jesse more than Jesus all along. *(A joke, but not taken thus.)*

Jesse: Now hold on, Tom. That's not fair. She's been waiting just as sure and faithful as your Mom. And it's been harder on Rachael than anyone, including your Mom.

Tom: I know it's been hard on you, Rachael. I imagine you feel relieved.

Rachael: I'm happy the way it's turned out, and I would have been happy if the Lord *had* come.

Jesse: I'm happier now!

Tom: I know, Jesse.

Rachael: How's Mom going to feel?

Tom: Pa says she'll get past it.

Jesse: I hope so. I don't want her to be so upset that she'll try to stop Rachael and me from . . .

Rachael: Mom would never do something like that. Especially now that. . . . *(She pauses.)*

Tom: Now that what . . . ?

Jesse: (Too quickly.) Now that the Lord's not coming.

Tom: . . . But don't you figure He's coming. . . . Just not right now?

Jesse: Sure! He's coming some time . . . but now it won't stop us from getting married. *(To Rachael.)* Right?

Rachael: (To Tom more than Jesse.) Soon, more than ever before.

Tom: Of course. And Mom won't go to stop you. . . .

Rachael: Please make sure, Tom. . . . *(A plea.)*

Tom: I promise, Rachael. *(It is obvious that Jesse has been totally left out of this brief, but important exchange. His discomfort over this, added to his impatience about the marriage, begins to show.)*

Jesse: I'll talk to her . . . she'll see that. . . .

Rachael: Jesse, I don't think you'll. . . .

Tom: The less *you* say to Mom, the better. Let Rachael and I do the talking. . . . *(Jonathan has been the observer in all this. He wants to speak, but he has a prior question in his mind, unanswered. He moves to the group.)*

Jon: You all figure He's not coming? What about if Miller was just a day or two off? I mean, it's possible He might come next Tuesday, or on Sunday while we're meeting with the others. Wouldn't that be like Him, to come while we're singing hymns together? *(Rachael has been aggravated by Jon's grasping at straws. When she speaks, her patience has parked and popped.)*

Rachael: If that's the way the Lord wants me to live, never sure, never able to start something for fear we can't finish it — I can't. I won't live that way. I don't care if He comes tomorrow, or next week. I'm going to live my life like He's never coming. *Never.*

Tom: Don't you think that's going a bit too far, Rachael?

Jon: You could get into lots of trouble talking like that.

Jesse: With who?

Jon: Pa, and *Ma.*

Tom: Not to forget our soon-coming Lord. *(This has been said, of course, with sarcasm. And for this, he is made immediately sorry.)*

Rachael: Tom, please don't make fun. I'm scared about tomorrow and next week, and next year. I'm scared because now I don't know whether they're going to come or not! I want them to come, so I can live them with Jesse. I feel guilty for wanting them. But I want them. *(To Jesse, now)* Each day . . . and each night. . . . *(Rachael walks away a few steps, Jesse follows, hoping to be helpful. He touches her shoulder. She turns, his arm goes around her shoulder. She speaks to Tom.)* I've envied you, Tom, these last few months. . . .

Tom: (A contrite young man.) Envied? Why?

Rachael: I've envied your not believing. You've always been sure. You haven't had to face giving up everything. It's been easy for you. All you had to do is go on, one day, one night, one day, as though it would go on forever. It's been easy for you, Tom, easy.

Jon: Momma hasn't made it easy for him, Rachael. Every time he's sat down, she preached at him. There's not much easiness when someone's preaching at you. . . . And Momma hasn't given Tom a peaceful mo. . .

Tom: (Interrupting.) I don't need anyone to defend me, Jonathan. It's been hard on all of us, Momma included.

Jesse: And now it's over.

Rachael: Almost. *(Through this conversation, Ma and Pa have been in the kitchen. At the point that Rachael says, "Now that the Lord's not coming," Ma moves upstairs off. Pa has been alone in the kitchen. At Rachael's "almost," a pause and Pa takes his watch, opens it, looks, sighs, and calls to Ma, low, sympathetic.)*

Pa: Bess, Bessie? Come on down. It's time.

Ma: (From off and up.) No, Jeremiah, not yet. *(Pleading.)*

Pa: Momma, *(A statement of fact.)* it's midnight. *(A silence, then an order.)* Bess, come down. We all have to talk. *(This is loud enough for all to hear, but not threateningly loud.)*

Tom: (To Jesse.) No matter what, *you be gentle. (Ma comes down and into living/dining room where Pa waits – Silence as Mom stands.)*

Pa: The waiting's over.

Ma: How could we have been wrong? The Bible doesn't lie? How could. . . .

Pa: There wasn't any lying going on. . . . There was just being wrong. . . . A mistake, somehow, a mistake.

Ma: Maybe he was off just a day. Or two. . . .

Pa: Maybe a week, a year. Maybe a lifetime. It doesn't matter now. What matters now is picking up and starting again. Each day, living each day.

Ma: But He may come soon, and if we're just doing what we do each day. . . .

Pa: If the Lord won't take me when I'm being myself, I don't imagine He'll take me when I'm pretending to be someone I'm not. It's not a matter of what I do, it's a matter of what He's done . . . you know that, Momma. You knew before you heard of Miller. *(Ma's silence bears consent? Pa doesn't know, waits for answer, none comes – so on to the next order of business.)* It's late. Let's talk with the children — then we'll turn in. There's lots of work to catch up on. We'll start tomorrow.

Ma: (Bitterly still. The silence was not yet consent.) With a breakfast I thought I'd never have to make.

Pa: I'll fix it tomorrow.

Ma: No. That's my chore.

Pa: Come on outside. . . . *(A gentle request. They go out to speak to the kids, lights up*

on porch.)

Rachael: Momma . . . I'm sorry . . . I'm sorry that it didn't happen like you wanted. *(Pa cuts in quickly.)*

Pa: It's a sad time for all of us, not just for your Ma, Rachael.

Jon: What do you figure happened? I didn't expect that Brother Miller would be wrong. I mean, he used the Bible to prove what he was saying.

Pa: For every text in the Bible, there's many possible ways of looking. It shouldn't come as all that surprising that Miller was wrong. Disappointing maybe, but when you think about it, not surprising.

Jon: Tom wasn't surprised or disappointed! *(A burst of pride that fails. The looks from all, especially Tom, makes Jon try to backtrack, which makes it worse.)* I mean, I'm sure you're relieved, right, Tom? You were right all along.

"*Pa:* For every text in the Bible, there's many possible ways of looking. It shouldn't come as all that surprising that Miller was wrong."

Tom: Jon — will you just shut up?

Rachael: What does it mean for us, now, I mean? What about tomorrow? Momma? What about the waiting?

Ma: (A pause, then a plea.) Just because Miller missed the time for the Lord's return, it doesn't mean he was wrong completely. It might be Jesus is coming right now. Maybe tomorrow. Maybe next week. If we're just patient enough. . . . If we just wait on Him.

Jesse: No!

Tom: Jesse!

Jesse: No! I won't put our weddin' off any more! Just so *(To Momma) you* can hold on to a hope that won't come true!

Tom: (Mild threatening.) I asked you to keep quiet.

Jesse: You're asking too much. There's no way I'm waiting any more. And it ain't right for *her* to ask us to. . . . How can she expect us to hold up our lives? I'm like a horse hitched to a plow . . . pulling hard, but the plow's rock-bound. . . . I'm going to move on or bust my harness.

Rachael: Momma, you *must* understand how Jesse feels. *(To him.)* I don't like how hard he sounds talking to you, *(back to Momma)* but you've got to know how we want to be together. We put it off 'cause of the coming. . . .

Tom: (To Rachael.) You needn't run on so . . . Momma understands how you feel. You've got to see how she sees. It's like everything else is too small compared to the Lord's coming. *(To mom.)* Momma can't see anything else but the glory and she wants us to see, like she sees. . . .

Ma: I don't like being talked about like I'm not here.

Tom: You're *not* here! You think you're on your way to heaven in a train, but that train never came. Momma, come back to earth. Come back to us.

Ma: I know the feelings you have, Rachael. Don't you think I felt that way for your father! *(To Pa.)* I was longing for you long before you asked me to come with you. . . . *(She looks back to Rachael.)* You want to be together like only married folk can be. You want that being close and warm . . . you want. . . .

Rachael: Momma, *(quietly)* we are going to have all of that no matter how you feel about it. *(Jesse nearly chokes, general upset. Mom is confused and shocked.)*

Tom: (Too quickly.) What she means is that. . .

Rachael: (Interrupting.) It doesn't need tellin' what I mean. *(She goes to Jess, who stands with arms around, to face the music together.)* We've never been together *(awkward)* like that. But we're going to now as man and wife. We got the right. It's all wrapped up in our tomorrows together.

Jesse: (Low, intense.) We have a right to tomorrows. . . .

Ma: (Intense, pleading.) You'll lose heaven just to use that right? Don't you taste the sourness in the sweet temptation? You want

a good thing, but the time's wrong . . . now is not the time. It's time to wait on the Lord.

Pa: Seems to me they waited as long as they could. You're asking them to hold off too long.

Tom: The waiting is over, Ma. Rachael and Jesse need to move on.

Pa: Looks like we're going to have a wedding, sooner the better.

Jon: Momma, please see it like they see it. At least for their sake. . . . We've got to let them have tomorrow.

Tom: (Tom looks off.) There's going to be a sunrise, Momma. It may cloud up later on,

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"*Rachael:* It's just because tomorrow *may* be the last day that I want to live now as hard and full as I can."

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but the morning will come. . . .

Ma: (Anger, coming from a hurting spirit.) And you'll expect a breakfast from me, won't you?

Pa: It's no more or less that you've done every morning for 30 years.

Ma: Act as though nothing has changed on heaven or earth . . . as though tomorrow may *not* be earth's last day. . . .

Rachael: It's just because tomorrow *may* be the last day that I want to live now as hard and as full as I can.

Ma: If only you could see what you're doing. . . .

Pa: All she's doing is getting ready to live a normal life. And we're not going to stand in her way.

Tom: And I figure that tonight the Lord showed us He won't stand in her way either. . . .

Rachael: Momma, please . . . be happy with us.

Ma: (Angry, bitter.) I will pray for you. *(She walks up into the house – gone. . . . Rachael begins to follow. Pa stops her.)*

Pa: Leave her be. She'll work this out better alone than with us pesterin' her. It's late. We all better get some sleep. Jesse, go home and see how your parents are. No doubt there will be some more talking you have to do. . . . *(Pa turns and follows Ma's trail.)* As I will. *(Exits into house.)*

Tom: Good night, Jesse, Rachael. Jon, come on in. . . .

Jon: (A firm "No" to an older brother; surprise!) I got some thinking to do. Good night. *(Tom pauses, goes in; Jon walks down stage; Jesse and Rachael head off stage. Jon looks out to the audience . . . talks as a prayer and drifting thought. . . .)* I'm worried about Mom. . . . The coming meant so much to all of us, but to her most of all. I hope she doesn't come to hate. She's been so disappointed. . . . What's she going to do about it? She really can't blame any of us. We believed like her. Who then? Brother Miller? Tom?

God, please see that Mom doesn't blame anyone. It's no one's fault that you didn't come. You had your reasons. . . . You must'a. . . . I sure wish you could show me what they are. Or, at least, show Momma. She needs something to hold on to. She needs something to help her see how important tomorrow and the next day is. . . . I've never seen her so upset. Help her, please, just to see. *(He exits into house – lights fade off. House – yard – barn last.)*

Scene III: Early Morning Before Breakfast

5 a.m., October 23.

Momma comes into kitchen to prepare breakfast. Tom is there already, sitting in the dark. Mom lights two lanterns. After the second she sees Tom. She is startled.)

Ma: Tom! You gave me a fright.

Tom: I'm sorry . . . couldn't sleep much. I wanted to be here with you this morning.

Ma: (Suddenly becoming angry.) Why? Haven't you done enough already? Why do you want to make it worse. . . .

Tom: I did nothing but be honest. It would have been worse if I'd lied, said I believed when I really didn't.

Ma: But why couldn't you believe? If more people believed instead of thinking like you, we'd be in heaven right now. It's your fault. And now you're going to scoff even more.

Tom: Whether I believed or not didn't have a thing to do with the Lord not coming. I

don't believe He'll ever come in the way you talk about Him coming. . . . He's orderly. He goes step by step. He's not going to come in destroying all that's so beautiful. Why would He burn that rabbit warren in the woods. . . . Does your God bake baby rabbits like you fry potatoes? That's a terrible God you have!

Ma: You don't understand how sinful this world is!

Tom: How sinful are those new calves in the barn? Or Mrs. Preston's new baby? You mean to tell me that baby would be burned by God just because the Prestons didn't believe in Miller's prophecies?

Ma: They weren't Miller's! The prophecies are in the Bible, they're God's warnings to us. Miller preaches God's words. Not his own.

Tom: Whose ever words! They were wrong. He's wrong. You're wrong. You've got to see now that life is going to go on. Those calves in there are going to grow up, freshin' an' nurse their young, give milk. This whole world is going to go on doing whatever nature tells it to do. . . . And that isn't sinful, it's natural, so it's right.

Ma: Tom, you're saying that whatever *is*, is *right*. . . . No! I won't accept that. Suffering *is*, death *is*, pain *is*, but that doesn't make them right. I won't accept a world where tears and trouble are "right." God is a maker of joy, not tears.

Tom: Then will you let Rachael and Jesse have the measure of joy that's beginning to come to them?

Ma: But what about the tears? Just starting off like they are there's bound to be tears. It would be so much better if they could spend tomorrow and forever in heaven, without the tears. . . .

Tom: Momma, if Rachael finds reason to cry, tomorrow or whenever, it's Jesse who will be drying those tears. . . . And if they laugh, they'll laugh together. But at least they'll have the years with each other here, starting today, and going one day after the next. . . . All the time they need together.

Ma: You make it sound as though the Lord's coming was a bad thing, something to dread. . . . I don't dread it . . . I long for it! And I will live as though He was coming tomorrow. . . . My only plan will be heaven . . . always, tomorrow in heaven.

Tom: That's a waste of life. . . . You've got to have plans, a future . . . a body has to have tomorrow to plan on! You'll miss so much if you don't. You've got to plan to stock up for tomorrow so you'll *have* something tomorrow.

Ma: I don't need to depend on anything but the Lord. . . .

Tom: That's not living, that's being a tree in the woods waiting on the ax. Never feeling, just waiting . . . never looking forward to anything. . . . It's a waste. . . . *(Tom walks out . . . goes to the woodpile, handles the ax. Ma moves about the kitchen, in preparation for breakfast. She soon moves to the stove and the box next to the stove that holds the wood. . . . She looks in, bends down and takes the one remaining piece out. The box is now empty. One small piece of wood doth not a fire make. Momma realizes this. One needs to plan ahead for wood. She has not permitted a restocking of the box. . . But now. . . . And so a compromise must be reached, or there is no food, no heat. She goes to the door, porch, out to Tom. He stands. . . .)*

Ma: I need some of the fruits of your planning ahead. *(Willing to bend.)*

Tom: What do you mean? *(The shoulder chip begins to slip.)*

Ma: The woodbox, Thomas. I didn't let you fill it. So there's no wood in it. No wood means no breakfast. I need some of your wood. *(Vulnerable.)*

Tom: (He could be mean, but instead he is conciliatory.) You wouldn't let me put any. . . . *(He sees the truce flag of peace.)* Sure! . . . Big pieces? . . . Kindling? . . . How much? . . .

Ma: At least enough for breakfast.

Tom: How about if I fill the box while you cook?

Ma: (A silent sigh.) Enough wood for a few days. . . .

Tom: Just a few. . . .

Ma: All right . . . a few days. . . .

Tom: For all of us. *(Mom goes into the kitchen with some wood, Tom follows with more. He has stacked up a huge armload, almost too much, in his happiness. He goes in and dumps all the wood in the box. . . They look at each other as the lights go off.)*

Report

Theological Consultation II

by Alden Thompson

Tuesday — apprehension; Wednesday — despair; Thursday — euphoria; Friday and Sabbath — realism, but a realism laden with hope and etched with the conviction that a significant healing process had begun.

Such was the experience of the church's scholars as they met with denominational leaders for Consultation II in Washington, D.C., from September 30 to October 3. The post-Glacier View turmoil in the church had cast suspicion on the church's teaching ministry. Consultation II was an attempt to resolve the crisis and to rebuild bridges between the church's scholars and administrators.

The discussions were frank. Even in the plenary sessions the participants confronted the divisive and misunderstood issues that had contributed to the crisis. But it was the smaller discussion groups that really brought the delegates together. There they came to grips with the issues and the tensions. They wept and laughed and prayed. They opened and cleansed old wounds and began to apply the healing salves — gingerly at first, but with growing confidence as brothers and sisters in Christ began to understand how and why they had hurt each other so deeply.

As Consultation II drew to a close, the euphoria had been tempered with realism. Lowell Bock, General Conference vice president, talked about the bridge that had been built, describing it as a "good walking bridge, even if it probably wouldn't take a ten-ton truck." C. E. Bradford, North American Division president, used the metaphor of a marriage. Numerous factors had effectively driven a wedge between the partners. The fact that they were now at least talking with each other again was a good sign. But they could still expect difficult days ahead.

The group experience on Sabbath underscored the cogency of Bradford's remarks. Traces of pre-Consultation II vocabulary brought twinges of pain to wounds that had begun to heal; strikingly different perspectives on how the church should carry out its work reminded the participants that a certain pluralism was here to stay and could be uncomfortable. Clearly, the gains made at Consultation II would need to be protected. But scarcely a delegate did not feel a deep commitment to guard those gains with his life.

Alden Thompson teaches Old Testament and denominational history at Walla Walla College. He holds degrees from Walla Walla College, Andrews University and the University of Edinburgh.

As participants gathered September 29, the more immediate causes of the crisis stood out in everyone's mind. At the Sanctuary Review Committee meeting at Glacier View in August 1980, the church's scholars and administrators had agonized through to a consensus statement on the doctrine of the sanctuary, a "solution" that many thought would stave off confrontation. When efforts to retain Desmond Ford within the church's official ministry broke down and his credentials were removed, the academic community was stunned. The reaction was particularly acute at Andrews University where the more notable symptoms included the birth of the journal *Evangelica* and the departure of a well-known teacher, Smuts van Rooyen. The appearance of *Omega,* a controversial book focusing on the crisis, intensified feelings on both sides. Even attempts to bring reconciliation, such as the issuance of the Atlanta Affirmation by a group of concerned scholars,[1] were misunderstood, widening the gulf even more.

Meanwhile, as the time for Consultation II approached, developments within the so-called "Evangelical Adventist" movement formed a tantalizing backdrop for the discussions in Washington, D.C. Robert Brinsmead and Verdict Publications had become increasingly strident in their criticism of "Adventist distinctives": the 1844 event, Ellen White, and Sabbatarianism.[2] *Evangelica* seemed to be following a similar course. The review of the book *Omega* in the September 1981 issue spoke of "the overwhelming biblical evidence against the 1844 theology and the alarming discovery that the visionary was a plagiarist."

By contrast, Desmond Ford had clearly separated himself and his organization from the more radical evangelical Adventists, even publishing a book-length defense of the Sabbath doctrine. But persistent press reports quoting Ford to the effect that virtually all Adventist scholars secretly supported his views on the church's sanctuary teachings[3] complicated matters, underscoring the view entertained by some that there is a "conspiracy" in Adventism paralleling the one Harold Lindsell and others claim to have found within the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and its Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.[4] Understandably, the matter of trust was a primary concern at Consultation II.

But the underlying issues at Consultation II were really the Adventist view of inspiration and the methods deemed appropriate for the study of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. Many of the church's administrative leaders apparently had come to believe that a so-called "high view" of Scripture emphasizing the divine element in inspiration is essential in order for Adventism to ward off the inroads of liberalism. In non-Adventist circles, Harold Lindsell had become the primary spokesman for this "high view" of Scripture. His book *Battle for the Bible,* held in high regard by several leading Adventists, had focused on the issue of inerrancy, and Concordia Seminary had become the most famous test case: "A Battle Fought and Won," in Lindsell's own words,[5] by the defenders of inerrancy.

In Adventism, the Bible Conference of 1974, which had dealt with the question of inspiration, stood largely in the Lindsell tradition and had suggested to the church's scholars that the church was on the way to a Missouri Synod-style confrontation between administration and academia.

But Adventists have Ellen White, whose views of Scripture and whose own writing practice preserve an awareness of the human element in the inspiration process. Minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference, where her own work as a prophet had been discussed, had been published in 1979.[6] They show that in 1919 the issue was the same as now: Ellen White, inspiration and the Bible. Furthermore, they show several leading Adventists, including General Conference president Arthur G. Daniells, frankly emphasizing the *humanity* of inspired writings.

Together with developments mentioned so far, two other factors had served to heighten tensions. One was the recent effort by certain church leaders to develop creed-like statements on inspiration and creation, that seemed to many to be out of step with traditional Adventism. The other was the rising number of critical studies on the question of Ellen White's relationship to literary sources and cultural influences.

It was in this tumultuous context that, 13 months after Consultation I — a meeting overshadowed by the church's dealing with Desmond Ford — a group of uneasy and apprehensive delegates streamed into the General Conference chapel for the opening session of Consultation II. Except for an initial two-page agenda and a cover letter from Neal Wilson, General Conference president, most delegates knew virtually nothing about the plans for the session. No prepared papers had been circulated. Not even a list of delegates had been released.[7]

As Wilson delivered the opening devotional and moved into his introductory remarks, the delegates listened intently. He frankly addressed the evident tensions, suggesting that it might take a couple of days before the delegates could really open their hearts. But open them they must if the church was to work together as a community.

Wilson assumed full responsibility for the agenda. "You can blame me," he said. "I did not seek a lot of counsel, but I have become aware of a number of key questions from my own observations in the last couple of years. Unless we face them honestly and openly, we will have continual difficulties." He also revealed that many in the church had informed him personally of their strong objections to the idea of Consultation II. Once the meetings had been announced, however, the General Conference had been deluged by requests to attend.

The daily plan called for the delegates to meet in plenary session each morning for the devotional and general instructions. The rest of the morning and early afternoon would be spent in the discussion groups, with group reports coming in a plenary session from 3 to 5 p.m. No evening meetings were planned.

Each delegate received a packet containing a revised agenda,[8] several statements and position papers pertinent to the agenda items, and a list of the delegates by group, the item of most immediate interest as the delegates prepared to disperse from the plenary session. The delegates had been divided into 10 groups of about 20 members each. A chairman and vice chairman for each group had already been named, but each group was asked to name its own secretary.[9]

The actual agenda for the first day came under the heading: "Toward unity in the message we hold," and listed such items as "academic freedom," "pluralism," and "central vs. peripheral beliefs." But at least in Group 9, the group to which I had been assigned, the official agenda was overpowered almost immediately by the intense interest in the basic issue of trust.[10]

"One General Conference officer in the group admitted that, as far as the content of the Affirmation was concerned, he saw no problem. But the procedure had been inappropriate. . . . college religion teachers had no right to meet together outside their union without official permission. . . ."

At the cheerful insistence of our chairman, we dutifully began discussing academic freedom. It was only a matter of moments, however, before the issue of the Atlanta Affirmation arose. One of the few Atlanta participants in attendance at Consultation II, Jack Provonsha (Loma Linda University), was willing to give a first-hand report, something we all agreed we wanted to hear before returning to the plenary session. For the moment, however, the mention of the Affirmation simply provided the occasion for discussing the reaction of church administrators to the Atlanta meeting. One General Conference officer in the group admitted that, as far as the content of the Affirmation was concerned, he saw no problem. But the procedure had been inappropriate. To be more blunt, college religion teachers had no right to meet together outside their union without official permission, even when church funds were not involved. The ensuing discussion could perhaps best be described as a friendly up-

roar. On what basis, when, and where could General Conference personnel meet together for "official" business? In a private home? On the golf course? And who was authorized to give them permission? Could not brothers meet anywhere "in Christ?" Or did they really need official permission?

The exchange was frank and clearly reflected different perspectives. But very little hostility was evident even at that early stage in our discussions. Furthermore, even though certain participants tended to be more dominant, helpful and meaningful contributions came from virtually all members of the group. We were already working together remarkably well.

Before we returned to the plenary session, Jack Provonsha gave his report on the Atlanta meeting. From the standpoint of those who participated in the Atlanta meeting, the Affirmation was a sincerely motivated attempt to bring healing to the church. But certain tactical errors, the publishing of some pirated personal minutes by church "loyalists," and a general suspicion of scholars' "meeting across union boundaries" had actually resulted in heightened tensions rather than reconciliation.

"I was amazed and saddened," Provonsha noted, "to see such an event interpreted almost instantly as hostile in intent, without any recognition of the sincere motivation of the participants." Provonsha went on to describe the concerns that had led the group to Atlanta. He told of worship, of prayer, and of a common longing that the church could work together in harmony.[11]

The group voted to ask Provonsha to give a synopsis of his report on Atlanta to the plenary session, essentially the only thing of substance that Group 9 had to report on day one.

The plenary session revealed how differently the various groups had reacted to the agenda. The reports were diverse, ranging from Provonsha's informal analysis of the Atlanta meeting to a line-by-line editing of the study document on academic freedom. Several groups submitted cautious analyses of the term "pluralism," a word almost as emotive as "Ford" in the context of Consultation II.[12]

But the greatest perplexity for Wilson as chairman and for the entire group was the statement on academic freedom. One report politely noted that it would have been nice if the delegates could have had the documents ahead of time. Another group reported that 15 minutes had been taken right at the beginning simply to read through the documents silently. The report from Group 3 by its secretary, Rudy Klimes (General Conference), was noteworthy for its brevity and for the fact that it evoked the first hearty laugh of the plenary sessions: "We recommend that the document on academic freedom be referred to a broadly-based committee, period." The plenary session finally decided that it had no other choice but to do just that. The questions were simply too complex to solve quickly, much less by a large group.[13]

As Wednesday's plenary session drew to a close, two events sent shock waves rippling through the delegates. After the final group report, Wilson turned to Provonsha, who was sitting on the front row, and spoke with reference to the report that Provonsha had given an hour and a half before. Wilson's voice was tinged with emotion, betraying the fact that he had been deeply hurt. "If the scholars wanted to bring healing, they did not set a very good example." Then gesturing briefly with a copy of the Affirmation he continued: "No one contacted me personally about this document. In here you talk about a war mentality and generals planning for war. You mention my name. But no one talked to me about it." For an agonizing moment he paused — and then quickly concluded, "Well, so much for that."

The second event was not so startling as it was unsettling. As the delegates prepared to go their various ways for the evening, additional position papers and study documents were handed to the delegates. Wilson pointed out that Thursday's agenda would concentrate on the historical-critical method. The position papers which we were receiving would need our careful attention, for they represented a view accepted by a large majority of the General Conference officers. For the delegates the question loomed large:

How could we possibly digest these many papers overnight and come to a consensus on the next day? The task appeared impossible and almost unfair.

That evening the informal conversations unavoidably centered on Neal Wilson and on the new position papers. The specific items to which Wilson had referred in his comments to Provonsha actually did not come from the Affirmation itself, but from the pirated minutes published by the Adventist "loyalist." Technically, Wilson should have distinguished between public and private information, but we all realized that such a distinction would only be possible in theory. In practice, our emotions are affected by what we know, be the information official or unofficial.[14]

One thing was painfully clear, however: the Adventist underground press was working incredible mischief, regardless of whether it was attacking the administration or academia. It was blurring the distinction between the public and the private. It was robbing us of the privilege of praying out our bitterness, of tearing up our tainted notes and speaking peace.

No one knew how Wilson would react the next day. He had shouldered the burden of Consultation II almost singlehandedly. The success of the meetings seemed to depend on his leadership. But we had caught a glimpse of Neal Wilson, not as a leader of men, but as a human being — with emotions — a man like the rest of us, a man who could be deeply hurt. Could the Lord bring healing to us all so that we could begin to work together again? Wednesday night was not just a night of despair — in many a home and hotel room it was also a night of prayer.

The other major concern on Wednesday night centered on the new position papers. They stood firmly in the Lindsell tradition, emphasizing the divine element and virtually ignoring the human element in inspiration, an approach which virtually the entire Adventist teaching ministry believed to be catastrophic. The church simply knows too much about the human aspect of inspiration from the experience and writings of Ellen White. Was the church as a whole really prepared to follow in the steps of the Bible Conference of 1974? Or was there still hope that we could learn from the Bible Conference of 1919? The events of Thursday could prove decisive. But the pragmatic issue remained the more urgent one: How could the church's biblical scholars successfully condense the work of a full semester or more into a couple of hours? To that question there were no easy answers.

The devotional on Thursday morning was given by the new dean of the seminary, Gerhard Hasel. He spoke with conviction and his message was warmly received. When Wilson stepped to the podium and began to address the delegates, pens suddenly came alive across the chapel. This was no ordinary speech. "I hope you will understand and not misunderstand," stated Wilson in measured tones. "It will help us if you can respond. Some feel that the papers you have received are extreme. But there is deep concern over what appears to be an attempt to eliminate the proof-text method. We have long held to the principle that the Bible is its own interpreter and to the principle of the unity of Scripture. Do the scholars of the church still support these principles?"

"One thing was painfully clear, however: the Adventist underground press was working incredible mischief, regardless of whether it was attacking the administration or academia."

As Wilson continued, he described the church as standing at the crossroads. "We must go one way or the other. That is the reason for this meeting." He depicted the church as "largely conservative," but as not "extreme in its conservatism." "Adventism has always developed its own approach to Scripture. We have not adopted inerrancy, though some of our group may hold that view."

Addressing the church's scholars, Wilson urged them to speak their convictions clear-

ly. "We can see through the nice words," he observed — adding a few moments later that the position of the scholars is "now murky."

As for the use of critical methods, he declared that he was hearing mixed messages. Some had claimed that if we accept the normal presuppositions of the historical-critical method, we would "diminish the authority of Ellen White as an inspired commentary on Scripture." Others had said that the only way we can "give credibility to Ellen White is to use the historical-critical method." Wilson described those who had pleaded the latter position with him as "devoted servants of this church." They had claimed that any other approach would mean that "Ellen White will be made out to be a liar." On the other hand, he declared: "Some have told me that if our pioneers had used the historical-critical method, we never would have had the message that we have."

The effect on the delegates was electrifying. Don McAdams, president of Southwestern Adventist College, captured the spirit admirably, exclaiming as he stood to his feet: "Now I know why we are here!"

Wilson's speech was remarkable for several reasons. First, he not only had challenged the groups to confront the issues directly, he had also pinpointed the crux of the problem: In view of the Adventist understanding of inspiration, what methods are appropriate to use in the study of Scripture? Second, he had implied that the Adventist scholarly community was dangerously close to rejecting the principle of the unity of Scripture, the principle of the Bible as its own interpreter, and the validity of any form of the proof-text method.[15] If that description was a reflection of the way in which the church generally was perceiving its teaching ministry, small wonder that tensions had increased dramatically.

In preparation for Thursday's work, the delegates had received photocopies of articles from a standard reference work defining the key terms: Form Criticism (Old Testament and New Testament), Redaction Criticism (Old Testament and New Testament), Source Criticism (Old Testament) and Tradition Criticism (Old Testament).[16] For the most part, these articles presented the descriptive methodologies in conjunction with the classical naturalistic presuppositions, an approach that has never been acceptable within Adventism.

The position papers, in attempting to describe an Adventist position, had rejected one extreme, but had virtually gone to the opposite extreme by declaring that the descriptive methodologies could not be separated from their presuppositions and therefore could not be used at all by Adventist scholars. In other words, Adventist scholars should not presume to describe the human processes by which the Word of God has been handed down to the present generation.

Thus the delegates seemed to be faced with one of two choices: the radical critics on the far left who treat the Bible as a mere human document, or the extreme conservatives on the far right who treat the Bible as divine to the neglect of the human. But from the standpoint of the clear majority of the Adventist teaching ministry, a third option had been overlooked, namely, an understanding of the Bible as both human and divine. If Adventists take advantage of all that is known about inspiration from the writings of Ellen White, including her explicit statements on the subject, then it is possible to admit that an inspired writer has used sources (source criticism), that the inspired writer has a particular theological purpose and a particular message in mind which becomes evident in the way he handles his material (redaction criticism), that the original form of the material used by the inspired writer can be categorized by type as hymn, poem, letter, proverb, etc. (form criticism), and that the history of these various forms can be traced either before the inspired writer has used them or afterward in the successive editions written by the inspired writer himself (tradition criticism).

The clear majority of Adventist biblical scholars not only favor the use of such descriptive methodologies, but are concerned that failure to recognize that God has used human beings and human methods to bring his word to his people can lead to sudden loss of faith in inspired writings. The church was finally awakened to that reality in dealing

with the writings of Ellen White.[17] The question it was now facing was as crucial: Can we also be realistic in our treatment of the human element in Scripture without denying its divine origin?

The full agenda for Thursday carried the heading: "Terms of employment of pastors and teachers" and touched on such items as the church's expectations from its scholars, the causes of suspicion, and termination procedures. But the key issue was formulated clearly as follows: "Should an Adventist college or university employ as a Bible teacher a person who is committed to the historical-critical method (including such methods as form criticism, redaction criticism, tradition criticism)? Theistic evolution? Liberation Theology? Denial of catastrophism? Neo-Orthodox view of inspiration?" Both the form of the agenda and the context of Consultation II implied that the answer to all items should be "no." Judging by the group reports, theistic evolution and the denial of catastrophism were disposed of with dispatch by *all* groups. Not a single group reported on "Neo-Orthodox view of inspiration," and liberation theology was touched only lightly. But the historical-critical method had its day in court and that was the story of Thursday at Consultation II.

As Group 9 assembled, we began our work together by dividing into small prayer groups. The seriousness of the task before us had heightened our sense of need — both of divine assistance and of human cooperation. We then settled down to our task. The scholars were intent on explaining why the two extreme positions were inappropriate in an Adventist context. The discussion was lively and to the point. We used our Bibles to describe what we meant and what we did not mean. Several members of the group had brought along Adventist and non-Adventist literature to illustrate the points under discussion.

Before long, it became evident that the church's scholars were not doing something which differed radically from that which Adventists had been doing all along. The scholars were no doubt attempting to be more consistent and more precise, but in actual practice continuity with traditional Adventism was clearly evident.

As a group we adopted a position which clearly stated that the descriptive methodologies could be useful in Bible study and need not imply an acceptance of naturalistic presuppositions. In response to Wilson's comments that morning, the group also formulated a statement explaining that Adventists still found the proof-text method helpful. The concern of the scholars was simply that texts be cited according to their original context.

The members of Group 9 made their way to the plenary session with a tantalizing question foremost in their minds. Would there be anything like unanimity in the plenary session? Our group had worked together very well and with very little friction. But admittedly, our group was overloaded with outspoken academicians. Would the same results be forthcoming from the other groups? And what would the various groups do with the position papers, especially the one entitled: "Bible Study and Historical Method," the one that Wilson had especially requested that the delegates critique?

The secretary for Group 1, Ivan Blazen (Andrews University, seminary), was the first to report. But he kept us in suspense, noting that his group would not be prepared to report on the matter of historical criticism until the next day. Instead, his report consisted of a few items of unfinished business from section I of the agenda. Group 2, however, was ready to speak. Its secretary, Niels-Erik Andreasen (Loma Linda University) delivered a well-written report which politely but firmly critiqued the position paper, recommending in addition that the matter be referred to a study group. The substance of the report clearly pointed to a rejection of the two extreme positions and sought to lay out an appropriate middle road for Adventism.

Here was a report identical in spirit to ours. In view of his comments that morning, what would Wilson say? He thanked Andreasen, adding, "There might be a few areas that we can quiz them on. But it sounds good." Wilson had indeed caught the implications of the

report, but was not yet ready to pass judgment. Nine reports remained to be heard.

Groups 3, 4 and 5 followed the lead of Group 1 and simply reported on some unfinished business.[18] Wilson then asked for the report from Group 6. Raoul Dederen (Andrews University, seminary), gave a brief report which left open the question of which methods were appropriate. But significantly, the report ignored the position paper, simply recommending that PREXAD establish "a study group to further explore the matter of historical criticism and related areas."

When William Johnsson *(Adventist Review)* reported for Group 7, the plenary session heard its most explicit statement yet rejecting the two extremes. Johnsson's group

"Before long it became evident that the church's scholars were not doing something which differed radically from that which Adventists had been doing all along."

further listed what they affirmed and what they denied relative to the Bible, concluding with a statement about the historical-critical method: "Any use of aspects of the method by Adventists must be partial, and with discrimination, and confined to the descriptive functions." Wilson thanked Johnsson warmly, but still added an observation reminiscent of his response to Andreasen and Group 2: "We might want to quiz them on certain areas."

Group 8 had gone ahead to part III of the agenda and so was not yet ready to speak to the issue of historical criticism. Groups 9 and 10 did speak to the issue and simply continued in the spirit of Groups 2 and 7. But by now the direction of Consultation II had become so clear that Wilson no longer spoke of "quizzing" the various groups. A consensus had already formed rejecting the two extreme positions. When the remaining groups reported the next day, the consensus was unanimous. Each group, *without exception,* had voted to recognize that Scripture was both human and divine, a moderate approach growing out of Adventism's experience with Scripture and Ellen White.

In his concluding remarks, Wilson suggested the need for fresh terminology (perhaps "historical analysis" instead of "historical criticism") to describe the Adventist approach since the classical terminology was often misleading. Here he had explicit support from a number of the group reports.

At that point James Cox, president of Avondale College, stood and moved that a committee of administrators and scholars be set up to take a closer look at the way in which Adventists approach the Bible. Such a group should describe "both presuppositions and methodologies, giving illustrations of the latter." Cox also suggested that each division set up satellite committees to report to the central committee. Wilson clearly favored the motion and assured the delegates that any papers produced by such a committee would be given "wide circulation." The motion passed with ease, signalling a remarkable triumph for the spirit of cooperation.[19] Furthermore, given the gloom of the preceding day, it was not hard for the delegates to believe in miracles. They had experienced one that very day.

But before the day came to an end, one more piece of good news awaited the delegates. It came in the form of two comments from Wilson. In his concluding remarks, he mentioned the need to be open but gentle with one another, but then added: "Except Dr. Jack and I; we can be frank with one another and still understand" — an unmistakable reference to the exchange between Wilson and Provonsha that had so startled the delegates on Wednesday. Moments later, Wilson asked the delegates to stand for prayer. Not often does a benediction attract the attention that this one did, but it formed a fitting conclusion to the day as Wilson called out to Provonsha who was sitting toward the rear of the chapel: "Dr. Jack, would you close our meeting today with prayer?" Provonsha would and did.

The remarkable unanimity in the group reports on a highly volatile topic, plus Wil-

son's invitation and Provonsha's prayer explains Thursday night's euphoria. The only question that remained was: What could Friday and Sabbath possibly offer as an encore?

By Friday, all the groups were working well together and concentrating on finishing their areas of interest, a freedom that Wilson had encouraged the groups to take, since it had become obvious that no group could cover the whole agenda in any kind of depth. The final plenary session had been moved up to 1 p.m. to allow time for an open question-and-answer period with Wilson in the chair.

In Group 9, both Harold Lance, an attorney from Ontario, California, and Robert Reynolds, (chairman, Board of Higher Education) had drawn up tentative proposals on procedures for termination of pastors and teachers. These the group discussed, voted, and passed on to the plenary session. In addition, Ben Reaves (Oakwood) suggested that one of the group reports from the preceding day had been a little too categorical in its rejection of liberation theology. The movement was much too complex for such cursory treatment. Accordingly, a statement on liberation theology was developed, discussed and incorporated into the Group 9 report.

Friday's reports in the plenary session were diverse as each group sought to get its last word into the official minutes.[20] Particularly noteworthy, however, was the dramatic easing of tensions. The chairmen were in the best of humor as they introduced their secretaries. The introductions became longer and more anecdotal in nature as each chairman put in a good word for the "superior" way in which his group had functioned. Enoch Oliveira, a General Conference vice president who had developed a reputation as being one of the church's "hard liners," frankly admitted what had happened in his group. "I have an identity problem," he said. "In Brazil I was known as an incurable liberal, but at the General Conference I am seen as a dangerous conservative." He then told how he had expected a "great confrontation" in his group, but his expectations had simply been met with a "great disappointment." Private reports confirmed that some of the more remarkable experiences and touching reconciliations had indeed occurred in Group 6, the group to which Oliveira had referred.

Friday afternoon was nearly over when Wilson began a question-and-answer period. Time was going to be a limiting factor. The first two questions were missions oriented, asking about the work in Russia and China. Since neither question could be answered briefly, it appeared as though the conference might not get down to some of the issues which had contributed to the build-up of tensions in the church.

But then Louis Venden, Loma Linda University Church pastor, stood and carefully opened Pandora's box. The issue was *Omega,* the best-selling book by Lewis Walton which had caused strong reaction in the church (see reviews, pp. 53-62).[21] Venden was choosing each word with care as he referred to the back cover of the book and the description of Walton as one who was "rapidly" "becoming a spokesman for his church." "By what procedure does one become a "spokesman?" inquired Venden. "And is it true that the General Conference president is planning to endorse the book in the *Adventist Review*?"

The question put Wilson in an awkward position and his uneasiness was evident. But he answered with candor, explaining that the description of Walton on the book's jacket was strictly unofficial and hardly appropriate since no procedure exists for designating a layman as a "spokesman." Wilson admitted that he personally had been blessed by the book which he had read for the first time as he was en route to Russia. It had helped him realize the seriousness of the times in which we are living. He could not vouch for the scholarship in the book nor for the actual identity of the "omega" apostasy.

As for the "endorsement" in the *Adventist Review,* it consisted of a one-paragraph reference in a (then) up-coming "From the President" page. Wilson stated that the reference to the book was not essential to the context and that he could have accomplished the same purpose by another means. It was too late to retract the statement, however, since it was already "in print."[22] Wilson obviously was concerned about the polarization caused

by the book, a reaction not suggested by the initial positive response from colleagues and General Conference mail. Only later had the negative reaction begun to trickle in.

The press conference touched on several other issues before the delegates hurried home to prepare for Sabbath.

If the first three days had been dominated by the academics, then Sabbath was the day for the administrators, at least until midafternoon. The traditional Sabbath school time as well as the early afternoon hours were occupied by reports from each of the division presidents. The worship-hour sermon was delivered by C. D. Brooks, a general field secretary of the General Conference.

The closing hours of Consultation II, however, occasioned again a display of pluralism. The setting was an open discussion, chaired by Wilson, on the theme "Message vs. Mission."

"I must admit that throwing the participants together with only their Bibles and Christian experience to rely on was probably the best way to confront the crisis facing the church."

After several initial contributions of a testimonial nature, the public evangelists took over. The delegates were deluged with forceful comments, coming largely from delegates representing the rapidly growing third-world divisions, underscoring the importance of mission. The phrase "example leadership" was drilled home again and again: the administrators ought to feel "guilty" and "embarrassed" if they did not hold at least one public evangelistic series a year. One delegate told of a desperately reluctant college president and a treasurer who did not want to hold public meetings, "But we made them hold meetings anyway." Wilson himself was addressed personally and urged to set an example for the church.

But then the tide turned. Charles Bradford, the articulate president of the North American Divison, gave the key speech and urged the delegates from the world field to be considerate of the particular needs of North America. "I believe in public evangelism," he said, "but I believe that administrative leaders must be humble and helpful, asking what they can do to be of service rather than simply telling the front line workers what they must do." Moments later Walter Scragg, president of the Northern European Division, followed with another carefully worded comment emphasizing that message and mission belong together. "Now is not the time for us to send out ministers who are less well trained," he urged.

That more balanced tone was reflected in the final four testimonies given from the desk. Wilson had asked a layman, a college president, a pastor, and a division president to speak in conclusion.[23] All four spoke with evident conviction, but the words of James Cox and Norman Versteeg, in particular, stood out, for they represented the academicians and the pastors — those who had come under the greatest suspicion in the church. Versteeg even mentioned the uneasiness experienced that very afternoon, while Cox referred to the deeper misunderstandings of the past.

After expressing his own commitment to the continuing work of the church, Cox appealed to his fellow teachers and to his fellow college presidents to join him in renewed commitment and to indicate that commitment by standing. It was a fitting climax to the four days that the participants had spent together. As Robert Pierson, former General Conference president, offered the benediction, the Adventist family somehow seemed more like a family again.

A second observation about Consultation II concerns methodology. In general, academics like to have a hand in planning their own destiny, especially when it concerns theological discussions. Furthermore, they like to do their homework in advance. From those perspectives, Consultation II broke all the rules, a cause for considerable frustration. But in retrospect, I must admit that throwing the participants together with only their Bibles and Christian experience to

rely on was probably the best way to confront the crisis facing the church. From the standpoint of the clear majority of the church's scholars, the position papers were extreme. Had they been distributed in advance, opposition would have been so well organized and so vigorous that dialogue would have been virtually impossible. Whether by accident or design, Wilson selected an effective procedure. I personally hope that we can return to careful planning in the future, but for this one emergency, the blind approach worked.

"Consultation II demonstrated that not just two or three of its scholars are dedicated Adventists, but that the vast majority are committed to the Word and to the church."

A third observation touches on the potential impact of Consultation II on the church. Those who participated in the healing process at Consultation II are now in a position to see the church in a fresh and more hopeful perspective. But when surrounded again by colleagues who did not participate in that experience, be they administrators or academics, the participants face the very real danger of reverting to old patterns of thought and old rhetoric. Even the reporting of pre-Consultation II words and events runs the risk of opening old wounds and destroying the healing process.

If healing is to come to the church, a spirit of trust must predominate. Nowhere is that more urgent than with reference to the teachers in the seminary at Andrews University, who have suffered disproportionately in the crisis. Both before Consultation II and after, some church leaders have stated openly that the church has only two or three scholars who really love the Bible. Such an attitude fails to recognize both the spirit and content of Consultation II, and tragically places under a cloud of suspicion many committed Adventists who have dedicated their lives to the work of the church and the search for truth. Consultation II demonstrated that not just two or three of its scholars are dedicated Adventists, but that the vast majority are committed to the Word and to the church.

In the past, an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust has made it too easy to believe the worst about fellow believers in Christ. When a problem arises, the principles outlined in Matthew 18 clearly point to the Christian's responsibility to go directly to the person involved. It is a positive Christian duty to reject secondhand reports that question the methods, convictions, or loyalty of brothers and sisters in Christ. Investigation and close scrutiny are quite in order, but must be carried out in an atmosphere of trust. If the Adventist community can begin to learn that lesson as a result of Consultation II, the cost of bringing the delegates together will have been rewarded many times over.

By way of analysis, a multitude of things could be said about Consultation II, but I see three things as particularly significant. First, the capacity of harsh words to wound. Consultation II clearly demonstrated a remarkable unity in diversity. But injudicious rhetoric during the period of the crisis had inflicted incredible damage and pain. Significantly, not only the teachers but also the pastors at Consultation II felt themselves under suspicion. From at least five different delegates, all of them teachers or pastors, I had personally heard the agonizing wish simply to run away somewhere and hide from it all. Consultation II helped us realize that all God's children are human beings with feelings.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A brief discussion along with the text of the Atlanta Affirmation was published in SPECTRUM, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 41-43.

2. Shortly after Consultation II, in a letter dated October 12, 1981, Verdict Publications announced the reissue of two July 4 tapes by Brinsmead under the new title, "Farewell, Adventism."

3. *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*, for example, published after Consultation II (October 23, 1981) the following: "But today Ford claims his views are held secretly by virtually all scholars and professors within Adventism. 'I really don't believe anything that the scholars of the church don't hold. The only thing is I said it publicly,' he said during an interview."

Ford's letter, published in response to the feature a few days later (November 8, 1981), contained the following: "For many years the Investigative Judgment has been considered 'dead and buried' by scholars in the Adventist church. . . . No scholarly exegetical work wrestling with its problem has appeared in the last hundred years. The nearest approach was one by Dr. Edward Heppenstall which purposely held back many things that the professor would have liked to have said."

4. Under the leadership of a new Synod president, Jacob Preus, the Missouri Synod had confronted the problem of "liberalism" at its seminary, a confrontation that ultimately led to a split in the church and the exodus of 44 of 49 professors from Concordia along with all but 50 of its 680 students.

In describing the causes of the Concordia situation, Lindsell, a former editor of *Christianity Today,* traced the problem back to an "underground movement" which involved "constructive subversion, encirclement and infiltration." The documentation is found in Lindsell's *The Bible in the Balance* (Zondervan, 1979), pp. 254, 255. The entire chapter details the Concordia situation (pp. 244-274), though it is largely dependent on Kurt E. Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion* (Fort Wayne: Concordia, 1977).

5. "A Battle Fought and Won" is the subtitle to Lindsell's chapter describing the Missouri Synod struggle in *The Bible in the Balance.*

6. The minutes of the 1919 Bible Conference were published in SPECTRUM, vol. 10, no. 1 (May 1979). They are also currently available from the Ellen G. White Estate.

7. Some information about the composition of the group and the selection process could be gleaned from incidental remarks in Wilson's opening comments. He noted that invitations had gone to about 200, 40 percent of whom came from the academic community. (The Back Page newsnote in the October 22, 1981, *Adventist Review* indicated an actual attendance of 186.) The delegates included about 35 overseas divisional officers who were in Washington, D.C., for the Annual Council, about 20 seminary faculty, and 12 lay persons nominated by the various union conferences of North America. Wilson did not elaborate further, except to emphasize that the General Conference had not selected the delegates, apparently a reference to those sent from the unions, colleges, and universities of North America. An analysis of the delegate list suggested that each union had selected one administrator and one pastor to attend in addition to its union president. Each college had sent its president, the head of the religion department and one additional religion teacher.

8. Momentary consternation was evident among some of the delegates when it appeared that a key section of the agenda had been deleted. The revised agenda contained three major sections, one for each of the three working days. The original agenda had contained a fourth section entitled: "Mutual trust between scholars and administrators," a theme that many of the delegates felt was actually the unwritten agenda for the entire session. A closer look revealed that nothing had been lost; the individual points had simply been redistributed into the other three agenda sections.

Aside from the reorganization of the original agenda items, the only noteworthy change involved the softening of a question dealing with seminary training. Originally the agenda had read: "Evaluate the proposition that the SDA Church should have a Bible college instead of a seminary." The revised agenda read: "Define the word seminary in the context of the SDA Church and/or describe the kind of institution an Adventist seminary should be."

9. With the exception of Joseph Smoot, Andrews University president, all the chairmen were General Conference officers. The vice chairmen were a more diverse group and included college presidents, union and division officers, along with one pastor and one local conference president. By contrast, the secretaries came largely from academic circles. Six currently hold teaching positions. The other four, though presently in the General Conference in some capacity, all have academic backgrounds.

10. Several delegates observed that Group 9 was particularly well represented on the academic side. But there was also no shortage of vocal administrators to maintain a balance. The actual composition of Group 9 was as follows: Ralph Thompson, chairman (secretary, General Conference), Don McAdams, vice chairman (president, Southwestern Adventist College), Alden Thompson, secretary (Walla Walla College); seven additional officers from the General Conference: C. D. Brooks (general field secretary), G. O. Bruce (assistant treasurer), Marion Hartlein (associate director, education department), Gordon Hyde (associate director, Sabbath school department), L. A. Ramirez (director, publishing department), Robert Reynolds (associate director, education department, (chairman, Board of Higher Education), Roy Williams (associate secretary); five additional teachers: Jack Provonsha (Loma Linda University), Ben Reaves (Oakwood), George Reid (Southwestern Adventist College), Kenneth Strand (Andrews University, seminary), Robert Johnston (Andrews University, seminary); three overseas divisional officers: N. R. Arit (president, North Philippine Union Mission), K. S. Parmenter (president, Autralasian Division), A. C. Segovia (secretary, Far Eastern Division); one pastor: James Londis (Sligo Church, Washington, D.C.); one local conference president: John Loor (Northern New England Conference); one lay person: Harold Lance (attorney, Ontario, California). Attendance was remarkably stable; of the General Conference contingent, Hartlein and Ramirez were absent on

Wednesday, Hyde was absent on Thursday, Brooks all three days. From the academic contingent, Reaves was absent on Wednesday, Strand on Wednesday and Thursday. The only other absentee was Parmenter who was taken ill and missed Friday.

11. With reference to the contraband minutes published and circulated by defenders of the faith, Provonsha observed that he had actually been unable to recognize them as minutes of the meetings he had attended. They were fragmentary and personal, susceptible to a negative interpretation if one approached them with suspicion.

Additional details from other members of Group 9 fleshed out the picture of the post-Atlanta reaction. The participants had been labeled as "Ford sympathizers"; in at least one instance, a participant was informed by his academic superiors that his presence at Atlanta made it inappropriate for him to participate in Consultation II.

12. The administrative attitude towards "pluralism" could be detected best from the short preview of Consultation II which appeared in the *Adventist Review* (August 13, 1981) where one of the discussion questions was listed as follows: "Is it healthy to have pluralistic views expressed in college Bible departments?" A companion question listed in the *Review* was "What is the proper way to terminate the service of a pastor, biblical scholar, or teacher?" The note concluded with a reference to the concern of the General Conference president "over developing pluralistic views of our message."

In his very first words to the delegates on Wednesday, Wilson chose to distance himself from the note in the *Review*, stating that he had been out of the country and was not responsible for what had appeared in print. The official agenda questions were much more neutrally formulated, though they still made very clear that the church's teaching ministry stood under considerable suspicion.

13. The motion passed by the delegates left many procedural questions open. The official minutes read: "Voted, to recommend appointment of a committee to develop a document on freedom and the stewardship of workers in the SDA church, not only academicians, using the paper on academic freedom as an initial base. However, the document to be developed shall include a section specifically on academic freedom."

14. Additional information had also come to light about the Atlanta Affirmation. The carefully laid plans of hand-delivering the first copy of the Affirmation to Wilson with a personal word of explanation had fallen through because he had been out of the country. By now, official minutes had been prepared which were to be delivered personally to Wilson by two other participants of the Atlanta meeting, Jerry Gladson (Southern Missionary College) and Doug Clark (Southwestern Adventist College).

15. As several of the group reports would later confirm, the scholars were indeed critical of the proof-text method when it was used indiscriminately. The method could still be useful, however, provided that passages cited were used in a manner faithful to the original context.

16. The articles had been copied (with permission) from the Supplementary Volume of the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Abingdon, 1976), and from the forward to *From Criticism of the Old Testament,* by Gene M. Tucker (Fortress, 1971).

17. The *Adventist Review* of September 17, 1981, had just appeared with a seven-page feature detailing the legal and personal reaction of a non-Adventist lawyer to Ellen White's use of sources. When the lawyer, Vincent L. Ramik, stated that "What really counts is the *message* of Mrs. White . . . ," he was using a form of redaction criticism and was assuming Ellen White's use of sources. Yet no one would deny that the extent of Ellen White's literary borrowing had come as a surprise to virtually everyone in the church. The mere fact that the *Review* took seven pages to deal with the issue is evidence enough of the seriousness of the questions that had been raised.

18. The report from Group 5 came out of sequence and was actually the last report of the day.

19. In the official minutes the motion reads as follows: "Voted, to recommend to the General Conference the appointment of a committee to prepare a document on SDA Biblical study setting forth the church's presuppositions and describing methodologies which are in harmony with those presuppositions. Further, to set up satellite committees in each division to prepare papers on the topic for use by the committee appointed by the General Conference."

The open-ended nature of the motion is to be seen against the background of the purpose of Consultation II as described in the introduction to the official minutes: "The purpose of the meeting was to provide a forum for discussion between administrators, Bible teachers, et al., of issues that have tended to be divisive. From this discussion it was expected there would arise suggestions for solving some or all of these issues. These suggestions would be presented to PREXAD for study, and for implementation of those that would be regarded as viable."

20. Wilson had requested Richard Lesher, chairman of the Biblical Research Institute and secretary for Consultation II, to meet with the group secretaries to decide how the official minutes would be handled. Their recommendation, which was also adopted by the plenary session, was that the separate contributions appear in the minutes under each question and identified by group. As one secretary good-naturedly observed: "Why should we give SPECTRUM the privilege of doing source criticism?" Simply reproducing the results of each group would result in some unevenness, but the advantage would be that the nature of the consensus could thus be preserved for future reference.

21. One pastor at Consultation II noted that *Omega* had been "more divisive in its influence than Desmond Ford." The academics were generally appalled at the level of scholarship in the book; many church administrators were enthusiastically endorsing it.

22. Wilson's remarks appeared in the November 5 issue of the *Adventist Reveiw*. The tangential nature of the paragraph was confirmed by the primary thrust of the column, which was clearly irenic in tone.

23. Harold Lance, attorney from Ontario, California; James Cox, president of Avondale College in Australia; Norman Versteeg, pastor of the Garden Grove, California, church; and George Brown, president of the Inter-American Division.

Reviews

OMEGA

A Theological View

Lewis R. Walton. *Omega*. 96 pp. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981. $4.95 (paper).

reviewed by Robert Johnston

In *Omega,* Seventh-day Adventist attorney Lewis R. Walton offers his speculations on the enigmatic omega heresy that many believe will appear in the end-time and cause a great shaking in the Adventist church. Simply summarized, Walton argues that in the early twentieth century the behavior and teachings of John Harvey Kellogg, conflated with those of Albion F. Ballenger, raised the grave danger of the alpha heresy for Adventism. The omega will be similar to the alpha but since *omega* is at the opposite end of the Greek alphabet, the omega heresy will be theologically opposite. Thus, whereas Kellogg erred by teaching extreme views of sanctification, followers of omega will err by holding extreme views of justification. Such a doctrine will appeal to fatigued Adventists who have lost the nerve to rise to the "challenge" of a perfectionistic Pelagian soteriology. Walton regards such perfectionism as the great contribution of Adventists to Christendom in these last days.

Robert Johnston, a former missionary in the Far East, is associate professor of theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary. He is a graduate of Pacific Union College, Andrews University and the Hartford Seminary.

Since the alpha blunted the efforts of the church in a great time of opportunity at the turn of the century, says Walton, we must beware lest the omega apostasy now hinder us from finishing our task. We can avoid this fate by watching for nine indicia that characterize the omega: (1) deception, including misuse and manipulation of Spirit of Prophecy writings; (2) divisiveness; (3) attack on fundamental beliefs; (4) covert attacks on the structure of the church by attempting to unseat incumbents, and including also manipulation of church funds; (5) special efforts to attract the youth; (6) special attacks on the Spirit of Prophecy; (7) a climate of personal attack; (8) attacks on church standards; and (9) the claim of a reform message for the church.

Walton does not conduct an impartial investigation but rather ruthlessly attempts to win a case. The foreword by K. H. Wood disingenuously disclaims that Walton "draws parallels between the 'alpha' and current events within the church, but he does this primarily to stimulate thought, not to end discussion" (p. 7).

But it is not a matter of "If the shoe fits wear it," but rather a customized cobbling of the shoe for a targetted customer. The target is not only Desmond Ford and his disciples, but everyone else not in sympathy with the perfectionistic wing of Adventism, as well as most reflective thinkers and scholars within Adventism (pp. 58, 66, 69), believers in the primacy of Scripture (pp. 91, 92), all would-be reformers of the denomination's structure (whether legitimate or illegitimate,

anyone who considers voting out an incumbent at a constituency meeting (pp. 64, 65), and anyone who thinks dialogue between the various tendencies within Adventism is useful (p. 75).

Omega stands in a tradition characterized by attempts to interpret cryptic expressions that appeared in two letters Ellen White addressed in the summer of 1904 to Adventist physicians. Referring to the quasipantheistic theology that had been made dominant by Kellogg and several leading ministers, she declared: "We have now before us the alpha of this danger. The omega will be of a most startling nature." Two weeks later she wrote: "In the book *Living Temple* there is presented the alpha of deadly heresies. The omega will follow, and will be received by those who are not willing to heed the warning God has given." She further recounted how at the urging of her son she read parts of that book and recognized in it the same sort of sentiments she had had to combat in the early days of her ministry in New England: "*Living Temple* contains the alpha of these theories. I knew that the omega would follow in a little while; and I trembled for our people."[1]

If the publication of *The Living Temple* (1903) and Kellogg's theology in 1904 were the sinister alpha, what was to be the omega? Since Mrs. White did not seem to make an explicit identification, the question has become an irresistible source of speculation down through the years. Adventists have had varying reasons for their preoccupation with the omega: tendencies toward paranoia, inclinations to discover heretical conspiracies, or demagogic desires to ascribe demonic origins to ideas and persons that they dislike.

In 1920 J. S. Washburn, the Columbia Union Conference nemesis of the president of the General Conference, A. G. Daniels, printed a tract entitled *The Startling Omega and Its True Genealogy*. He attacked Daniels and W. W. Prescott for promulgating new interpretations of key prophecies in Daniel and for undermining the Spirit of Prophecy at the 1919 Bible Conference. But his clinching argument was that since the alpha had been at headquarters the omega must also be found there. Later Washburn saw yet another omega: The plans for reorganization proposed at the Omaha conference of 1932.

Washburn set the pattern. By about 1936 W. C. White could say, "I think there are not less than twelve different things that have been urged by good-hearted brethren as the omega," whereupon he himself suggested the thirteenth: "It has always seemed to me that when the omega came it would bear two characteristics, somewhat similar to the alpha. The movement embraced a deep laid plan on the part of the great adversary of truth to introduce false doctrine which struck at the very vitals of Christian belief. It also embraced a persistent and strongly sustained effort to wrest the leadership of this people from the General Conference Committee and place it in the hands of other men."

Since Elder White's time, many other Adventists have tried to apply the omega to their time. Often they have been poorly written, crudely printed or even mimeographed, and sent out from small towns in Texas or California. Walton's *Omega* is another in this long line, except his is skillfully written, nicely printed, and sent out from Takoma Park.

The decisive fallacy of all speculations about the identity of the omega and the root problem of Walton's book is their failure to recognize that the omega of which Mrs. White wrote in 1904 *has already occurred.* It was to be in the "end-time" only in the sense that Mrs. White spoke of her own time as "these last days."[2] The omega is not the opposite of the alpha — a bizarre absurdity (pp. 54, 55). *Omega* was the *completion* of the alpha, and thus its meaning can be found in the events culminating in the separation from the church of Kellogg and his several prominent ministerial colleagues, and the loss of the institutions over which he had gained control. What could have been more startling than the loss of men like Kellogg, A. T. Jones, E. J. Waggoner, and of the Battle Creek Sanitarium? It followed within a space of five years after the alpha, as Mrs. White said, "in a little while." Thus Mrs. White in a diary entry of August 25, 1904, could refer to the

"Alpha of the Omega." In other words, the alpha was the beginning of the development of Kellogg's theology, and the omega was its logical conclusion — a full-blown pantheism, infidelity and immorality.

"The target is not only Desmond Ford and his disciples, but everyone else not in sympathy with the perfectionistic wing of Adventism, as well as most reflective thinkers and scholars within Adventism, . . ."

Mrs. White frequently used the alpha-omega metaphor for other things, but never with the meaning of opposites, and always with the meaning of beginning and end, start and completion, or parts of a simple and direct continuum.[3] At the time of the Kellogg crisis Mrs. White used different but parallel expressions to describe the same thing as the alpha-omega, and those parallel expressions made her meaning quite clear. Sometimes she even used the expression "alpha" and filled in the omega-blank with other language. To select only one example from an abundance, Mrs. White wrote in a letter addressed to "Dr. Kellogg and His Associates," November 26, 1903: "One, and another, and still another are presented to me as having been led to accept the pleasing fables that mean the sanctification of sin. 'Living Temple' contains the alpha of a train of heresies. These heresies are similar to those that I met in my first labors in connection with the cause in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, then in Boston, Roxbury, Portsmouth, New Bedford, and other parts of Massachusetts."

There is no mystery as to what Mrs. White thought was the alpha-omega heresy. She frequently identified it as a specific type of fanaticism that she had to deal with in her early ministry, an enthusiastic perfectionism that regarded sanctification as a miraculous divine infusion allowing a person to be free from both sin and the ability to sin. According to this derivation of the Wesleyan "second-blessing" doctrine, one could stand guiltless before God without a mediator. Whatever such a sanctified person did was, by definition, not sinful. In a word, a heightened Methodist perfectionism boldly claiming sinlessness was what Mrs. White frequently and unambiguously attacked. (Especially interesting is her explicit denunciation of "a theory of Methodist sanctification" that led to "that dreadful fanaticism."[4]

Walton conflates the Kellogg heresy with the deviations of A. F. Ballenger, but for the wrong reasons. It was not until a decade after the Kellogg controversy in 1905 that Ballenger gave up belief in the investigative judgment. His real link to Kellogg was the Holy Flesh Movement, which Ballenger helped to inspire.

It is in the areas of the nature of God and soteriology that Mrs. White consistently applied the alpha-omega metaphor. Note, for example, her letter to A. G. Daniells dated December 14, 1903:

> I have often been warned against overstrained ideas of sanctification. They lead to an objectionable feature of experience that will swamp us, unless we are wide awake. Extreme views of sanctification which lead men to suppose they are appointed to criticise and condemn their brethren are to be feared and shunned. During the General Conference of 1901, the Lord warned me against sentiments that were . . . then held by Brethren Prescott and Waggoner. Instruction was given me that these sentiments received have been as leaven put into meal. Many minds have received them. The ideas of some regarding a great experience called and supposed to be sanctification have been the alpha of a train of deception which will deceive and ruin the souls of those who receive them.

The alpha and omega phases of this doctrinal development can be clearly seen in the language Mrs. White used to oppose it at the 1901 General Conference:

> In showing the fallacy of their assumptions in regard to holy flesh, the Lord is seeking to prevent men and women from putting on His words a construction which leads to

pollution of body, soul, and spirit. Let this phase of doctrine be carried a little further, and it will lead to the claim that its advocates cannot sin; that since they have holy flesh, their actions are all holy. What a door of temptation would thus be opened.[5]

My interpretation of the omega differs from Walton's more sensational type of interpretation, but it is no novelty. D. E. Robinson, the only man to read every one of Mrs. White's published and unpublished writings, held the same opinion.[6] The evidence for this interpretation is abundant. Much more could be offered than is possible in this short review. Some of this evidence is already presented by Mervyn Maxwell in his essay entitled "Sanctuary and Atonement in SDA Theology: An Historical Survey."[7] Much more could be supplied if the White Estate released numerous unpublished materials. There are those who accept the interpretation I have presented but who go on to suggest (by some sort of "apotelesmatic" application) that there could also be other omegas in the future. A more careful way to put it would be to ask whether there might be future alphas that would subsequently develop into their omegas. If so, the way to identify them should now be clear. Look for the thread of similarity that runs through the fanaticism that broke out among Adventists after 1844, the Holy Flesh Movement, and the Kellogg heresy. It is an immanentist theology and perfectionistic soteriology, which begins by saying that sinless nature is possible (alpha) and ends by claiming that it has been achieved (omega). Ascetic legalism and oppressiveness characterize the whole continuum.[8]

On this point Walton grossly misunderstands Kellogg when he suggests that Kellogg challenged the message of "personal victory and personal witness" (p. 38). He did nothing of the sort, as can be seen in a letter he addressed to Mrs. White in 1898:

> I spent last Sabbath in College View. Spoke to the people in the church, from Rom. 12:1 and I Thess. 5:23. These texts in conjunction with others . . . make it very clear to me that those who meet the Lord when He comes will be above the power of disease as well as above the power of sin and that they will reach this condition by obedience to the truth.

The very core of Kellogg's message was perfection through the power of the indwelling God.

Walton misunderstands or misrepresents Kellogg's views because he misuses Ellen White's writings. After asserting that Kellogg challenged the message of personal victory (p. 38), Walton cites a passage from *Special Testimonies,* Series B, No. 7, p. 37: "These doctrines, followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy. . . ." Examination of the testimony from which this is taken, including the immediate context, reveals that the passage has nothing to do with the point that Walton has made. On the page cited, Mrs. White said:

> Will our people acknowledge God as the supreme Ruler, or will they choose the misleading arguments and views that, when fully developed, make Him, in the minds of those who accept them, as nothingness? . . . The sentiments in "Living Temple" regarding the personality of God have been received even by men who have had a long experience in the truth. . . . It is something that cannot be treated as a small matter that men who have had so much light, and such clear evidence as to the genuineness of the truth we hold, should become unsettled, and led to accept spiritualistic theories regarding the personality of God. Those doctrines, followed to their logical conclusion, sweep away the whole Christian economy.

"It is difficult to deal with someone who has a conspiracy mentality, for when you try to disabuse him of it, you only succeed in convincing him that you are part of the conspiracy!"

Often, if not typically, Walton mismatches Ellen White quotations with his own assertions, and I could cite numerous examples even more glaring than the foregoing (see pp. 69, 70). By his method of mixing apples and oranges, as well as taking statements addressing a particular problem and then unduly broadening their application, Walton puts sentiments into Mrs. White's mouth that were not hers but his.

The book seeks to add a more authoritative aura to itself by making impressive references to the secular history of the time. Unfortunately, on one occassion, at least, this betrays it into a gratuitous blunder. In spite of what is said on page 40, the Russian fleet that was destroyed at Port Archur in 1904 was not the Baltic Fleet, which was destroyed more than a year later at Tsushima; and the Japanese naval hero in both engagements was Admiral Togo, whose given name was Heihachiro. But the carelessness here is no worse than the handling of denominational history.

Why is this book already in its third printing? The fact that the publisher sent three thousand free copies to ministers and that it has received influential recommendations does not seem a sufficient explanation. The sad truth is that there is something in the psyche of many Adventists that craves this kind of thing. Not too long ago the sensation was John Todd and the sinister Illuminati, and *Omega* is simply another reincarnation of the same archetypal mythos. It is difficult to deal with someone who has a conspiracy mentality, for when you try to disabuse him of it, you only succeed in convincing him that you are part of the conspiracy![9] This mischievous little book has already wrought havoc in Adventist churches, raised unwarranted suspicions, and set brother against brother; and it is likely to continue to do so. It is hard to imagine anything better calculated to tear the church apart.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See *Selected Messages,* vol. 1, pp. 197, 200, 203.
2. See, for example, *Review and Herald,* October 22, 1903, p. 8.
3. See *Testimonies to Ministers,* p. 335; *Evangelism,* p. 485, *Testimonies,* vol. 9, p. 49; *Review and Herald,* June 8, 1897; *Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 367; *Testimonies,* vol. 8, p. 299.
4. *Testimonies,* vol. 1, pp. 334-36.
5. *General Conference Bulletin,* April 23, 1901.
6. See D. E. Robinson, "Memories #5," July 2, 1953.
7. *Sanctuary and Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies,* edited by Wallenkampf and Tesher (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publish Association, 1981).
8. See *Selected Messages,* vol. 2, pp. 26-28.
9. I wonder whether this book may be part of a plot by the Perfectionistic party in Adventism to get rid of the rest of us and capture the church once and for all (see p. 69). After all, was not an oppressive authoritarianism one of the characteristics for which Mrs. White so often rebuked Kellogg (see, e.g., "Freedom in Christ," *Special Testimonies,* Series B, No. 2, pp. 44-48)? And does not this book tend to such a result? Would it not be a master stroke for Satan to introduce a new alpha-omega while pretending to warn against it? I think I detect a conspiracy!

An Historical View

Lewis R. Walton. *Omega.* 96 pp. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981. $4.95 (paper).

reviewed by Walter Utt

To try to review *Omega* as history is probably a mistake. Its indifference to narrative and chronology suggests not a history but a polemic, a weapon, or an example of skillful manipulation of the printed media. The poorly informed reader, carried along by the emotive writing, the portentious supposings, the constant repetitions, may be led to identify the omega more certainly than any responsible theologian or historian feels is possible. Unfortunately, many readers will assume it is a factual account of the great crises facing our church at the turn of the century.

What leaps out at first glance is the absence of references to basic historical sources. For example, there are no citations to any of the relevant historical writings of Richard Schwarz, vice president of academic affairs at Andrews University, an impeccably or-

Walter Utt is chairman of the history department at Pacific Union College. He holds a bachelor's degree from Pacific Union College and master's and doctoral degrees from the University of California, Berkeley.

thodox Adventist and *the* authority on John Harvey Kellogg.[1]

Rather than attention to careful scholarship, Walton attempts to draw his readers into a conviction that the events in Adventist history he describes are the result of a conspiracy. He writes in an intense, sensational, and insinuative style that builds its effect through the constant use of superlatives and iteration. Though the bedazzled reader may not notice it, the author treats few events, names, dates, or concrete issues with anything beyond veiled allusion, and sprinkles his narrative with countless caveats and throwaways — "may well have," "probably," "no doubt," and "perhaps." Yet Walton purports to tell the inside story of important events. Breathless and spooky, the style leaves the reader with a delicious feeling of danger and deviltry, but comforted in the certainty that the frightened flock will again be saved.

Theologians may wish to comment on the validity of Walton's drawing of parallels between the Kellogg-Ballenger heresies and current teachings. As a historian, I will focus upon the historical inaccuracies that Walton distributes liberally throughout the book.[2] His appeal to the context of world events, which is praised in the preface, unfortunately suggests a quick and careless dip into *Guns of August*.

To be sure, some of his minor errors, like calling Admiral Togo only by his given name, should have been caught by an alert copy editor (p. 40). But a more significant and surely intentional indifference to historical reality is Walton's attempt to make 1900 a significant year of peace and tranquility. This ignores the Boer War (Britain's greatest military effort for a century), our own ugly Philippine Insurrection, troubles in the Dowager's China, not to mention the relations of Britain with the Continental powers. Further imprecision conveys the idea that a

An Interview with Lewis Walton

On November 29, 1981, SPECTRUM asked Lewis Walton to respond to a few questions concerning his book. He was informed that the individuals whom the editors had asked to review his book were trained in disciplines relevant to the subject matter of Omega *– history and theology – and that he would probably feel that the reviews they had chosen to write expressed negative judgments about his work. We appreciate Mr. Walton's willingness to respond promptly to the queries put to him, thus enabling us to include the following brief interview in this issue. We print Mr. Walton's answers without any editorial change, as he requested.*

The Editors

SPECTRUM: Why did you write *Omega?*

Walton: My answer to that question starts with a question to you: Why did neither of your book reviewers bother to ask that question or to contact me in any way? Had they done so, they could have learned my research philosophy for this particular book as well as why I used certain historical sources and not others — information which your historical critic, at least, ought to have found vital. They also could have learned, among many other things, that *Omega* is the result of some 18 years of my own historical research. Particularly at the turn of the century, I see great opportunities for the gospel to go far and fast. I also see the church crippled at a golden moment by attacks on mission, organization, and doctrine. Several years ago I planned a book on the subject called "For Adventists Only." I intended to emphasize the need for moving quickly when the Lord gives us such outstanding opportunities. As further research disclosed the fas-

national Sunday law was a current issue (it was over a decade earlier), and that the cycle craze had reached its peak (that had occurred in 1894).

Much more serious is Walton's compression and distortion of Adventist denominational history. Since Walton leaps easily from the pioneers of 1844 to the crisis 50 years later (p. 56), the unwary reader could assume Adventism would have progressed steadily toward fulfilling its worldwide task (by 1914?), if Kellogg and his cronies had not diverted the denomination from its harmony and purpose (p. 88). Walton suggests that unwholesome things went on in Battle Creek before the turn of the century — assuredly Kellogg's doing — but fails to recall that the controversies, concerns and developments that brought on the 1888 confrontation and its aftermath played no small part in the troubles of the succeeding 20 years.[3] In short, the author scarcely hints at the complexity of the issues in Adventist history — it is simply a story of Good Guys *vs* Bad Guys.

An example of Walton's distortion of denominational events is the episode of the Chicago building (1899). It appears to have been an important turning point in the psychology of Kellogg and his ability to maintain confidence in the *Testimonies*.[4] The evidence certainly shows increasing deterioration after this date. Whereas Walton mentions that Mrs. White "wrote to Dr. Kellogg advising him about a large building in Chicago" (p. 77), and adds that "the project got stopped," nowhere does he mention she stopped the project and when. Since Walton wants to demonstrate that Dr. Kellogg was a liar, he neglects to inform his audience of the complicated nature of what has been called a "perplexing" affair. G. I. Butler wrote, "I thought the Doctor believed the *Testimonies*

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cinating involvement of the omega issue in this era, I broadened the book to include that. And both your "reviewers" and readers are going to have to wonder what else I would have said if you had called me in a timely fashion!

SPECTRUM: How did you get started?

Walton: By intensive historical research as an undergraduate history major, followed by additional work while in graduate and professional school. I then continued research at libraries across the country while stationed at such places as Washington, D.C.

SPECTRUM: At how many places have you spoken?

Walton: My policy is to speak to organized church groups as time allows. Because of your late deadline, I cannot supply the specific data you are asking.

SPECTRUM: What are the present sales of *Omega?*

Walton: I couldn't give you much of a guess. Other concerns, such as maintaining a law practice, keep me a bit too busy to constantly retrieve that sort of information.

SPECTRUM: Are you surprised by the wide reaction the book has had?

Walton: No, not really. When I sent the manuscript off, I left it with the Lord and asked Him to use it as He saw fit. For whatever it acomplishes, I give Him the credit.

I have been delighted at the overwhelming positive reaction. Which leads me to a point. You say that both your reviews will be negative and critical of the book. Isn't that strange for a magazine that is supposed to reflect all points of view, yet ignores the majority view of the church on this book?

SPECTRUM: Are you planning other books, and on what topics?

Walton: I suppose I will always be writing. *Omega* is number 6. I see no reason to quit now, but can't be more specific than that right now.

The editors have learned directly from the Review and Herald Publishing Association that from May to November 20, 1981, over 66,800 copies of Omega *have been sold. There have already been six printings; there will be more as demand requires.*

more than he did the Bible."[5] Although Kellogg's belief was strained by the messages criticizing his personal defects, the building episode stung him even more, shaking his very literal attitude to the *Testimonies.* He was still feeling badly used in that affair the year of his death.

In a testimony not in the White Estate files, Mrs. White told Kellogg that she "had observed a large and expensive building." He was upset by the accusation and denied any such building existed. She was puzzled by his denial. Walton does not indicate that it was only after four years that an exchange of letters allowed the matter to be clarified, if that is the word. By then, Mrs. White had learned of the plans Kellogg's subordinates had drawn up, which he had canceled on his return from Europe. She wrote him (October 28, 1903) that her testimony had been to tell him not to build the structure proposed by his subordinates. His reaction was to the effect "How was he supposed to know what she meant if she didn't know herself?" He did reply (November 12, 1903) that he regretted the misunderstanding and the aforementioned remarks he had been making, but the damage was done. He affected at least to think that the building in question was not the medical building, which, in the meantime, the leaders had authorized *on a motion of W. C. White himself,* to be built in Chicago for $100,000 (General Conference Minutes of April 17 and 19, 1901). In retroactive self-justification, Kellogg in 1906 claimed that "no hint was given that any one had been shown that it was wrong to put up a building in Chicago for the medical school."[6] It was never built, needless to say. "Perplexing" does seem the word for it; "misleading" is the word for Walton's account of this incident in *Omega.*

"If Walton had not furnished Adventists with an omega, we would have had to invent one. For certainly *Omega* is a handy guide by which one may identify heresy in others and feel justified in ruthlessly smiting them."

The rebuilding of the Battle Creek Sanitarium after the fire of 1902 further hurt Kellogg's relationship to Mrs. White. In his *Omega* account Walton makes obvious misstatements about the role of Mrs. White in the controversy and accuses Kellogg of duplicity. He speaks of Mrs. White's collision course with Kellogg on her "advice" that he "under no circumstances rebuild at Battle Creek." Further, "though Ellen White's warnings were less than a month old," the church leaders on March 17, 1902, voted to rebuild at Battle Creek (pp. 18-20). A more principled historian would have mentioned that the testimony Walton quotes, dated two days after the fire, was not sent at that time to Kellogg. Further, a careful historian would have told his readers that the testimony did not prohibit reconstruction, but urged Kellogg carefully to consider rebuilding in the light of her previous messages about overexpansion at Battle Creek. As of March 20, a month after the fire, Kellogg wrote Mrs. White, with as much sincerity as one may wish to credit him, that he had "been waiting anxiously for some providential indication as to our duty about rebuilding here in Battle Creek. The Lord seems to be opening the way . . . and it now looks as though we shall begin the work of rebuilding in a short time."

Kellogg certainly ignored the previous criticisms by Mrs. White, but she wrote him no testimony *until August 6,* when she told him that his project was too large and should have been scattered in many places in smaller units. Only later did she publicly state that the fire was a warning, which should have been heeded. Walton does not explain the delay nor mention *any* facts to complicate his thesis. Kellogg was indignant when several years later material was circulated to make it appear that Mrs. White had told him two days after the fire that he should not rebuild.[7] By this time, Kellogg was already just about out, but he knew a point worth scoring when he saw one. He wrote furiously:

> If the Lord showed this to Sister White two days after the fire, what excuse can be

> offered for the withholding of this information for four months [the August 6 testimony] and until we had reached the fourth story? The *Review and Herald* and our local papers containing reports of what we were doing were sent to Sister White, and how she could permit us to go right ahead and get into such awful trouble, when she had in her hands information from the Lord that we ought not to do it, is a mystery which someone will have to explain before we get through with this business.[8]

Readers of *Omega* could never suspect that there were legitimate grievances and miscalculations on *both* sides. Experience in real life has taught most of us that not only our misguided opponents — the losers — are stubborn, get angry when challenged in public, show authoritarian tendencies, and shade the truth a bit in debate. Mrs. White understood the complexity of real life. She labored hard and at some risk to her reputation to rebuke both sides of disputes for their pride and all-too-human behavior and attempt to heal breaches. But from the quotations from Ellen White selected by Walton, it would be hard to guess that Mrs. White had irenic tendencies.

Kellogg, Albion F. Ballenger, and their friends, such as A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, at first regarded the counsels of Mrs. White with an excessive literalism. As A. T. Jones said, "I never explain the testimonies. I believe them."[9] A similar attitude may explain Walton's capricious application of Mrs. White's testimonies, with little regard for context. If one accepts verbal inspiration, then the *words* are literally infallible and may be applied anywhere for any purpose. However, when Kellogg and Jones encountered discrepancies in the *Testimonies,* they threw their confidence in Mrs. White out altogether — a not unusual consequence of verbal inspiration.

Leaving heresy for the moment, Walton states on pages 63 and 64 that the "real issue was control of the church," and paints a frightening picture of political machinations that threatened a takeover of the denominational machinery. Is Walton speaking to some present, if unclear, danger? If lay representation at the recent General Conference was two percent, it does not seem that political scheming of the kind attributed to Kellogg need be greatly feared today.

If Walton had not furnished Adventists with an omega, we would have had to invent one. For certainly *Omega* is a handy guide by which one may identify heresy in others and feel justified in ruthlessly smiting them. With its "inside dope," *Omega* comforts Adventists of 1981 in much the same way John Robison's *Proofs of a Conspiracy* comforted devout Britons and Americans who feared atheistical subversion in 1797. *Omega* confirms the fears but dismisses the complexities; it simplifies everything by giving conspiracy as *the* explanation. Communication and discussion are scary because they risk unpredictable consequences, so to even talk to the errant is not only a mistaken policy but a dangerous and positive evil (p. 75). On page 91 Walton even appears to say that the Holy Spirit *cannot* guide an individual into all truth; that unless a student accepts the corporate decision of the church, he, like Ballenger, must walk "straight off into darkness." It seems totally foreign to the message of *Omega* to believe that the church would gain if members recognized the basics that they hold in common, honestly and sincerely worked out their disagreements, trusted opponents to be human and sincere, *and* left a bit of room for the Holy Spirit to operate on bruised human beings. As one reads *Omega,* one is reminded of this word from *Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 309:

> All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood.

It is a sad commentary on the state of Adventism that a work of this low caliber has been raised to such prominence and authority. If historical fiction is an unreliable but gripping mixture of fact and fiction, one of our denominational publishers has produced in *Omega* a work of historical fiction.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Richard William Schwarz, "John Harvey Kellogg: American Health Reformer," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1964; R. W. Schwarz, *Lightbearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979); Richard W. Schwarz, *John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1970); Richard W. Schwarz, "The Kellogg Schism," SPECTRUM, vol. 4, no. 4 (Autumn 1972), pp. 19-35. See also Bert Haloviak, "Pioneers, Pantheists, and Progressives: A. F. Ballenger and the Divergent Paths to the Sanctuary," and "In the Shadow of the Daily," unpublished manuscripts.

2. Identifying omega has challenged more than one Adventist writer. For example, the pamphlet entitled "The Future of Loma Linda" (ca. 1962) identified omega as a conspiracy of medical persons who tried to move the medical school to Los Angeles. This plan, it was noted, "in contravention of Divine instruction, might be part of omega, developing once more through the medical branch of our work." Roger Coon's six-page article in *Ministry* (April 1980), with a viewpoint similar to Walton's, packs in more information and scholarship than the latter, while avoiding emotionalism.

3. See Schwarz, *Lightbearers,* chapter 16 on the grim nineties and issues little related to Kellogg, if at all. Financial, organizational, and doctrinal issues involved the leadership in divisive battles in which Mrs. White's efforts at redirection of thinking on justification bore disappointingly little fruit at the time.

4. Schwarz, *Lightbearers,* p. 286; Schwarz, dissertation, pp. 365, 369-373.

5. Schwarz, dissertation, p. 362.

6. Schwarz, SPECTRUM, p. 34.

7. Probably Ms. 76 of 1903, according to Schwarz, SPECTRUM, p. 35.

8. Schwarz, dissertation, pp. 372-374; SPECTRUM, p. 35. Walton quotes Mrs. White as "suggesting" one hundred to be the ideal number of patients for hospitals (p. 20), but he does not say whether that limitation is operative for Adventist hospitals today.

9. Haloviak, "In the Shadow of the Daily," pp. 13-15.

In Memoriam

Benjamin McAdoo, Jr., a member of SPECTRUM's advisory board and faithful financial supporter of the magazine since the middle seventies, died on June 18, 1981. Born on October 29, 1920, he received his education at the University of Southern California and the University of Washington, from which he received a degree in architecture in 1946. Deeply involved in the pursuit of justice and the cause of human rights, he was widely traveled in Africa, a continent with whose fate he strongly identified. Under appointment of the U.S. State Department, he served as advisor to the Jamaican government. He was a member of the Green Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church in Seattle.

Betty Stirling was one of the most prominent Adventist educators of her time. She served as chairman of the sociology department at Loma Linda University, as director of institutional research for the Board of Higher Education, and as provost of the University of Baltimore. A reader and writer for SPECTRUM from its earliest days, she served the journal as a consulting editor until her death. She died at her home in Baltimore, Maryland on November 12, 1981, at 58.

Responses

Sabbath Keeping

Brinsmead on Ford

To the Editors: Dr. Desmond Ford's review of my essay entitled "Sabbatarianism Re-Examined" (SPECTRUM, vol. 12, no. 1) imputes to me a number of positions I do not hold. For example, I do not believe, nor have I ever taught, that love replaces the need for guidance by concrete commandments. I do not believe that spiritual realities make form unnecessary. Nor have I said that the historical elements of the Decalogue exclude any application to us. Those who have read "Sabbatarianism Re-Examined" could be excused for thinking that Dr. Ford has created a strawman rather than grappling with the issues I raised.

Dr. Ford's most serious misrepresentation of "Sabbatarianism Re-Examined" consists in calling it a polemic against the fourth commandment. My essay can be termed a polemic only in the sense that it opposes a Sabbatarianism which takes a harsh and judgmental attitude toward Christians who have adopted another pattern of worship. I agree with Dr. Ford that Colossians 2:16, 17 does not condemn those who keep the Sabbath. As most scholars now agree, the primitive church at Jerusalem and her apostles were Sabbathkeepers. But Colossians 2:16, 17, does condemn making such matters as food, religious festivals and Sabbaths a test by which other Christians are regarded as "apostate," "Babylon," "outsiders" or candidates for "the mark of the beast."

If I understand the New Testament, the gospel means the end of a sectarian spirit which invents religious tests that alienate Christian from Christian. There is no valid religious test except confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and no valid ethical test other than common Christian morality.

The pioneers of Adventism made their apocalyptic speculations obligatory for other Christians. And Seventh-day Adventism is still inclined to make tests of its unique doctrines. Dr. Ford was dismissed from the Adventist ministry because he failed to pass the test on the investigative judgment. Ironically, he now insists that his own form of Sabbatarianism is a test. As SPECTRUM vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 47,48 correctly reported, I was excluded from Dr. Ford's Gospel Congress because I flunked his "final test."

I would suggest that the New Testament has no interest in making tests of such issues as which dates apocalyptic speculators set, what people eat, and where or when they worship.

Dr. Ford's use of such Christian scholars as Ridderbos, Ladd, Bultmann and Schrenk to support his stance on the Ten Commandments is unconscionable. Of course "the evangelical Christian church in all ages" (Ford) has held that the moral principles of the Ten Commandments are valid in the Christian age. But none of the scholars cited by Ford believes that the Ten Commandments are still binding according to their literal Palestinian letter. Every one of those scholars, including the great John Calvin, takes Colossians 2:16, 17 at face value and agrees that the Old Testament Sabbath regulations are not obligatory for the Christian church. Ford, therefore, misrepresents the position of these scholars just as he misrepresents my position.

Contemporary Christian scholars have reached a remarkable consensus on the Sabbath question in the early church. They acknowledge that diversity then existed on the church's attitude toward the Sabbath. Passages such as Romans 14 address this phenomenon of diversity and plead for charity and tolerance in the face of strident dogmatism. R. E. O. White's comment in his *Biblical Ethics* represents the broad consensus achieved among scholars:

> The *sabbath* was to Jewish Christians a sacred obligation and priceless privilege; to gentile Christians a novel idea resembling pagans' days of ill omen — at worst, a remnant of legalism.

In harmony with this scholarly consensus, I stated in the conclusion of my essay, "Sabbatarianism Re-Examined":

> People with a particular religious heritage may feel that keeping a certain day is most honoring to God. The gospel does not require violent dislocation from their heritage. It gives one person freedom to keep his Sabbath just as it gives another freedom not to keep it. Each needs to remember that if both should ransack the New Testament for evidence, neither could find support for imposing his pattern of worship on the conscience of the other. If what they both do is to the Lord, both are accepted by God, and they ought, therefore, to accept one another.

In an essay reviewing Dr. Ford's book, *The Forgotten Day*, I have dealt in detail with the points he has raised on the issue of Sabbatarianism.

Robert D. Brinsmead
Duranbah, N.S.W., Australia

Ford Responds

To the Editors: I appreciate greatly your request to make some brief comments on Robert Brinsmead's letter. For brevity's sake, I will itemize these:

Have I misrepresented my friend's teaching? Readers of the previous SPECTRUM will see I have given the Brinsmead references alongside each position. Let all read for themselves. For example, Brinsmead *did* and *does* teach that the *Ten Commandments* are replaced by the new law of love, and that the form of the *Sabbath* (which is the issue under discussion) is unnecessary. This does *not* mean that Brinsmead thinks a Christian can violate laws of common morality and has no need for a time of worship.

Brinsmead says my "most serious representation" is to accuse him of a polemic against the fourth commandment. Pray, what is the significance of the last three entire issues of *Verdict,* if not that? Why have scores of Sabbathkeepers, upon reading these issues, given up the Sabbath? Have all misunderstood him? Of course, Bob is not saying that Sabbathkeepers will be lost, but he comes perilously close to proclaiming that all who insist on the binding obligation of the Sabbath commandment are no longer Christian. Again, as regards this "most serious misrepresentation," let all read *Verdict* for themselves and conclude as to its central thrust.

I agree that the New Testament gospel "means the end of a sectarian spirit which invents religious tests that alienate Christian from Christian." But the key words here are "invent" and "alienate." God does call the Sabbath His test (Ex. 16:4) and our Lord who went to the cross for our sins, from a human standpoint was crucified because of His reforms on the Decalogue (particularly the Sabbath) and His opposition to religious traditions (see Mark 3:6; Luke 6:7, 11; Matt. 12:14; John 5:18; Mark 7:9). As for the alienation charge, see pp. ix, 180 of my book, *The Forgotten Day.* Regarding the cited scholars and the Ten Commandments: In no place have I suggested that the former believed that the latter should be applied "according to their literal Palestinian letter." For example, Christians today do not hold slaves, but the word for "servant" in the fourth commandment also means slave. My comments on Ridderbos, etc., was to the effect that they acknowledge that the New Testament still maintains the Ten Commandments as a moral norm (see I Cor. 7:19; Eph. 6:1-3; Rom. 13:9; James 2:8-12).

Bob again uses Romans 14 and links it to the fourth commandment. But there is not a syllable in Romans 14 about the Decalogue. It is only saying that those who wish to fast on certain days should not be judged by those who do not. Similarly, Colossians 2:16 is not discussing specific foods but fasting (see Col. 2:20-23).

I am puzzled by Bob's comment that he was "excluded from Dr. Ford's Gospel Congress because [he] flunked his 'final test.' *Evangelica* originally called a congress and invited Brinsmead and myself to participate. Brinsmead gave no assurance that he could be there. When his material against the Sabbath began to circulate, I wrote him that *for pastoral reasons I* was withdrawing from the congress. At that stage *Evangelica* pulled out from the project, and Good News Unlimited called its own congress. A congress fighting over the secondary issue of the Sabbath would not have been a gospel congress!

In the next to the last paragraph of his letter, Brinsmead again asserts that the gospel gives "freedom" "not to keep it [the Sabbath]." Why then these protests against misrepresentation? I am contending that the gospel no more gives freedom to break the fourth commandment than the seventh, or eight, or indeed any of the others.

John Calvin was not a Sabbathkeeper. This fact makes the following comments of great significance: ". . . if it (the rest day) were abolished, the Church would be in imminent danger of immediate convulsion and ruin" (John Calvin, *Institutes* 11:viii). Only the gospel is primary, but other matters such as purity, honesty, truthfulness, and worship in God's appointed way are not therefore unnecessary.

I salute Robert Brinsmead as a great preacher of "the everlasting gospel," but I suggest that that gospel will only be enduring if the depths of the divine law as represented by the Decalogue are ever recognized and proclaimed alongside the good news of grace. That which is no longer a *method of* righteousness, forever remains its standard.

May I conclude by correcting an unfortunate typographical error in my review of Brinsmead's article (SPECTRUM, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 66). The first paragraph of the review has me saying that I agree with all of Brinsmead's conclusions in his valuable work, *Judged by the Gospel.* The little word "not" was accidentally omitted after the words "as this reviewer does." Although I agree with Brinsmead that the Investigative Judgment and 1844 are not biblical datums, and that Ellen White was dependent upon the many sources that Walter Rea has indicated, I do not believe that this means that the Adventist awakening was a tissue of errors from start to finish as some might conclude from *Judged by the Gospel.* Every human system of thought is inevitably streaked with error, but God works through imperfect individuals and movements nonetheless. The unfolding of truth is always like the coming in of the tide — progress on the whole, not the miraculous delivery of a complete package from heaven.

Desmond Ford
Auburn, California

Glacier View Report

To the Editors: An expression of appreciation is overdue for the superb reporting of the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee by Ray Cottrell. As one who also was a member of Study Group 2 and who was quoted several times, I read this report with critical interest. Naturally, my ego would have been stroked had I been quoted fully each time within the total context, but this was a report of a four-day conference, not a chronicle of any particular individual's participation it it.

Ray Cottrell's many years of experience as a minister, teacher, writer, editor, Bible scholar, and student of the book of Daniel, combined with his exacting integrity to qualify him uniquely for this demanding assignment. If one scrutinizes the report to discover the theological positions of attendees at the conference, he will be disappointed. However, for a fair overview of the meeting — its organization, issues addresssed, the prevading spirit, etc. — Cottrell's account is without an equal. He and SPECTRUM are to be congratulated for providing what must be regarded as the normative description of that unprecedented and historic session for the Seventh-day Adventist church.

F. E. J. Harder
College Place, Washington

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Dr. Raymond S. Damazo, Chairman
855 106th Avenue N.E.
Bellevue, WA 98004

(206) 454-2722 Office
(206) 455-4522 Residence