

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.

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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. Accord-

ing 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

"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!"

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.

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 occasion, 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 Teshner (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing 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 portentous 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-

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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 insinuating 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*

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 accomplishes, 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

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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*.

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 finished 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 govern-

ment. 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.