

# On Waldenses, Soviet Union and Other Issues

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## A Problem of Records

To the Editors: I read with interest Donald Casebolt's article "Ellen White, the Waldenses, and Historical Interpretation." I also reread the chapter "The Waldenses" in *The Great Controversy*. I have some observations.

I believe it is apparent that favorable records of the opponents of Rome are few, and this seems to be especially true of the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. Concerning the Waldenses, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says: "The origins of the movement begun by Valdes are obscure. The sources are few, mostly of late date and largely hostile, since they are from Catholic writers or inquisition records."<sup>1</sup> It further suggests that there were variations of belief and practice among the Waldenses.

Casebolt faults Mrs. White for saying the Waldenses "saw the plan of salvation clearly revealed."<sup>2</sup> He wonders how they could merit such "glowing words" from a prophet. We might note here that an ancient prophet quoted God as saying, "I have found a man after My own heart who will do all My will."<sup>3</sup> We accept this evaluation, knowing all the while that the man was a liar, a murderer, an adulterer, and a polygamist. Surely David was a man after God's own heart and he did God's will — yet we wouldn't try to make everything he did fit this picture.

Mrs. White speaks of Huss and Jerome as being "faithful light-bearers" and of Luther as a "righteous man standing upon the sure foundation of the Word of God."<sup>4</sup> If these three men could come today requesting baptism, would we baptize them? Not, I am sure, until they straightened out their doctrine. It may seem unlikely that they should deserve glowing words of praise from the pen of a prophet — yet when they are immersed in their time and world, we see that they, along with some of the Waldenses and many others as well, were true reformers. They didn't see all that we see, or understand all that we understand, but with eyes heavenward and with a faith that risked everything, they kept the light burning amid midnight darkness. They were God's people, preserving His truth for generations to follow, preserving it in the face of fierce and bitter opposition.

Casebolt makes the assertion that Mrs. White ascribes a one-thousand-year history to the Waldenses. From volume 4 of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, he quotes her as saying "behind the lofty bulwarks of the mountains . . . the Waldenses found a hiding-place. . . . Here for a thousand years they

maintained their ancient faith. . . ."<sup>5</sup> It is my opinion that the paragraph that contains this statement does not demand that "the Waldenses" be the antecedent of "they." I think the antecedent is found in the sentences which were omitted in the SPECTRUM quotation. The complete quotation reads: "Behind the lofty bulwarks of the mountains — in all ages the refuge of the persecuted and oppressed — the Waldenses found a hiding-place. Here the lamp of truth was kept burning during the long night that descended upon Christendom. Here for a thousand years they maintained their ancient faith."<sup>6</sup>

I do not believe it was the purpose of this paragraph to date the Waldenses. There were other places in the chapter where it would have been more natural to do that. The intent of this paragraph is to show that "the persecuted and oppressed" (among whom were the Waldenses) have in all ages found refuge in the bulwarks of the mountains and that this was especially true during a thousand years of papal supremacy.

My conclusion that this was the intent of the author is based on the idea that the whole, "the persecuted and oppressed," is greater than a part, "the Waldenses." This conclusion is sharpened by her wording of this paragraph in *The Great Controversy* where (seemingly to clarify her former statement), she replaced "they" with "witnesses," making the last sentence to read: "Here [in the bulwarks of the mountains] for a thousand years, witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith."<sup>7</sup>

Casebolt suggests that Mrs. White was misinformed when she speaks of the witness to the truth by the Waldenses and a similar witness by their "brethren" the Albigenses. Since their beliefs were divergent, Casebolt concludes that they could not be brethren, nor could they bear a similar witness to the truth. From the context, it is evident that Mrs. White is not speaking of similar witness to the truth borne by teaching, preaching, or published Bible doctrines. The similarity I find expressed on pages 271 and 272 of *The Great Controversy* is not the similarity of belief, but of sacrifice. Mrs. White is showing how France had "crucified Christ in the person of His saints," and secondarily she is describing the heroic witness borne by Protestants as they gave their all for the Word of God. The Waldenses "laid down their lives"; the Albigenses were "put to death with horrible tortures"; the Huguenots "poured out their blood." The various Protestant groups were, I conclude, "brethren," not necessarily in agreement of beliefs, or even in cooperation. There was a fellowship of suffering. They were brethren in the witness of their shed blood.

There seems to be little doubt that Mrs. White used the

writings of historians in the compilation of her writings, but Casebolt's article failed to convince me that her comments about the Waldenses contain "clear-out, gross historical errors."

C. B. Harris  
Calxico Mission School  
Calxico, California

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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1. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1971, vol. 23, p. 149.
2. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1911), p. 72, quoted in SPECTRUM (February, 1981), p. 39.
3. 1 Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22.
4. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 115 and 160.
5. SPECTRUM, p. 38.
6. Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, pp. 70-71.
7. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 66.

## Poor Scholarship?

To the Editors: One stands somewhat aghast to see a journal which claims to be intellectual and scholarly in content filled with charges and assertions based on poor scholarship such as mostly comprises the article by Donald Casebolt, "Ellen White, the Waldenses, and Historical Interpretation" (Vol. 11, No. 3).

We are all aware that one can find conflicting historical opinions and accounts. It is not always easy to determine which account is exaggerating or distorting history, either in ignorance or with an ulterior motive, and which is presenting a factual account. A quick surface survey may give one a false impression if one is examining only biased sources. As an example of surface skimming let us consider the claim that the Waldenses originated with Peter Waldo of comparatively recent times, as stated by Donald Casebolt. It is most interesting to note that we find records of Catholic origin for just such assertions, of course with a self-serving purpose. The Catholics hated these dissenting groups fiercely, recognizing them as very antagonistic and threatening to Catholic concepts.

One point to keep in mind is that the Roman church classed all these dissenting groups as one, and used their names interchangeably. At this time we generally refer to all of them by the general term, "Waldenses." Benedict stated it this way: "Whenever, therefore, in the following sketches, the terms Berensarians, Petrobrussians, Henricians, Arnoldists, Waldenses, Albigenses, Leonists, or the poor men of Lyons, Lollards, Cathari, etc., occur, it must be understood that they intend a people, who agreed in certain leading principles, however they might differ in some smaller matters, and that all of them were, by the Catholics, comprehended under the general name of Waldenses."<sup>1</sup>

The Catholics did everything they could to reduce the impact of the Waldenses, including trying to remove their historical validity. B. G. Wilkinson notes that Bishop Bossuet, a papal antagonist of the Waldenses, attempted to date their origin at about 1160. "With almost undetectable shrewdness he analyzed every item of history which he thought might give the Waldenses an early origin, and then drew his false conclusions."<sup>2</sup> Mosheim states, "This writer certainly did not go to the sources, and being influenced by party zeal, he was willing to make mistakes."<sup>3</sup>

A former Waldensian minister who apostatized and became antagonistic to his former friends gives three reasons

why their faith was pernicious. "First, because it is of longer duration; for some say that it hath endured from the time of Pope Sylvester; others from the time of the apostles; second, because it is more general. For there is scarcely any country wherein this sect is not. Third, because when all other sects beget horror in the hearers by the outrageousness of their blasphemies against God, this of the Leonists hath a great appearance of piety: because they live justly before men and believe all things rightly concerning God and all the articles which are contained in the creed; only they blaspheme the Church of Rome and the clergy."<sup>4</sup>

Here are a couple of quotations which show the antiquity of the Waldenses. Dr. Faber states: "Now this district, on the eastern side of the Cottian Alps, is the precise country of the Vallenses (Waldenses). Hither their ancestors retired during the persecutions of the second and third and fourth centuries: here providentially secluded from the world, they retained the precise doctrines and practices of the primitive church endeared to them by suffering and exile."<sup>5</sup>

According to Alexis Muston, "The patois of the Vaudois valleys has a radical structure far more regular than the Piedmontese idiom. The origin of this patois was anterior to the growth of Italian and French — antecedent even to the Romance language, whose earliest documents exhibit still more analogy with the present language of the Vaudois mountaineers, than with that of the troubadours of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The existence of this patois is of itself proof of the high antiquity of these mountaineers, and of their constant preservation from foreign intermixture and changes. Their popular idiom is a precious monument."<sup>6</sup>

These points seem to me to be pertinent to any truly scholarly dissertation or paper about the Waldenses.

Raymond O. Whitley  
John Swartzel  
Adventist Research and  
Development Association  
Portland, Oregon

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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1. Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination*, vol. 1, pp. 112, 113.
2. Wilkinson, *Truth Triumphant*, p. 220.
3. Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*, b. 3, cent. 9, pt. 2, ch. 5, par. 4, note 5.
4. Saccho, *Contra Waldenses*, found in *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, vol. 25, p. 264.
5. Faber, *The Ancient Vallenses and Albigenses*, pp. 293, 294.
6. Muston, *The Israel of the Alps*, vol. 2, p. 406.

## Casebolt Replies

I first heard the argument that Mr. Harris raises in regard to the antecedent of "they" about three years ago via C. M. Maxwell. Implicit in this argument is the admission that Waldensian history does *not* extend to the first centuries A.D. Mr. Harris, by citing the *Britannica* as an authority for the fact that the Waldenses *did* begin with Valdes [=Peter Waldo ca. 1170 A.D.], evidently realizes this, while Whitley and Swartzel do not. Evidence within Mrs. White's Waldenses chapter indicates that she did not realize this either, and thus contradicts the interpretation which Harris wishes to give the word "they." This evidence includes (1) several other phrases which distinctly show that Mrs. White believed in the great antiquity of the Waldenses: a) she speaks of them resisting the papacy "for centuries"; b) she states

that "theirs was not a faith newly received"; and c) she asserts that "through ages of darkness . . . there were Waldenses . . . who kept the true Sabbath." (2) The title of the chapter and subject of discussion is "The Waldenses," not persecuted groups in general. (3) The placement and function of this chapter within the book is to fill the thousand year gap between "Persecution in the First Centuries" and the time of Reformation precursors. (4) The phrase "persecuted and oppressed" is a parentheses, not the focus of emphasis within the sentence, and thus "the Waldenses" is the *closest* and most likely antecedent. (5) The original statement parallels a statement by Wylie who most certainly did believe in a great Waldensian antiquity. The later slight change in wording in no way affects the above overwhelming contextual evidence. No one denies that Mrs. White was entirely misinformed regarding the Albigenses' actual doctrine. Why deny that she erred as to the Waldenses' antiquity on the basis of a phrase interpreted out of context?

The interpretation that the Waldenses and Albigenses were brethren — in suffering — is artificial. The Moslems suffered from the Catholic crusades and were not brethren of either Waldenses or Albigenses. Mrs. White clearly stated that the Albigenses preserved the "true faith" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 97) and gave "witness to the truth" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 271) when they obviously did not, as I originally stated.

Harris contradicts both himself and Mrs. White when he faults my criticism of her for stating that the Waldenses "saw the plan of salvation clearly revealed." First, he agrees with Mrs. White's assessment, then admits that the Waldenses "didn't see all that we see." How clearly did they see, then? Mrs. White credits them with keeping Sabbath, rejecting salvation by works, and in general likens them to the apostolic church. Apart from paraphrasing Wylie and Andrews, her main original contribution to the chapter is a long panegyric on the Waldensian gospel ministry on justification by faith alone. This is what Mrs. White meant by "clearly revealed," yet as my article points out, the Waldenses did think that works and alms played a role in salvation, were uneasy with the concept of Christ as their "sole justification," and did not keep the Sabbath.

I stated in my original article that along with Wylie "other Protestant historians of his time" believed in the great antiquity of the Waldenses. Now Whitley and Swartzel, mainly on the basis of quotations from precisely such historians, charge with "poor scholarship" and "surface skimming." I have read most of the sources they mention, and on the points in question, these sources are unreliable. In particular, Faber has not a shred of historical evidence to support the assertion he makes which they quote. For example, with all the time and resources that L. E. Froom had available in writing *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, the best argument in favor of a great Waldensian antiquity he could raise was the concept that the Waldenses absorbed other older dissident groups in their spread during the thirteenth century. This is analogous to claiming that Seventh-day Adventists existed prior to the mid-nineteenth century on the basis that some of its adherents were members of older church groups such as Seventh Day Baptists or Methodists. Yet even he admits that there are problems in the theory that the Waldenses literally descended from early-era Christians and prefers to see their succession in spiritual terms. In any case, there is *no* mention of the Waldenses prior to the late twelfth century in any primary source material, regardless of the nineteenth-century historians quoted by Whitley and Schwartzel.

Don Casebolt  
Roseburg, Oregon

## Adventists in the Soviet Union

To the Editors: Your issue on the Soviet Union was very interesting and informative. Just as a reflection on the Shelkov issue, I would like to quote one portion of my interview with M. P. Kulakov and N. A. Zikaluk for the January 1981 issue of *Znaki Czasu* (*Signs of the Times*) in Poland. I visited officially the Soviet Union in September 1980 and in October 1980 and both Russian leaders have visited Poland. Following are two questions and answers from that conversation, which, I hope, will interest your readers:

Q. *Western mass media have recently reported information that there are arrests among Seventh-day Adventists [in the USSR]. What is the real situation?*

N. A. Zikaluk: I can say that in recent years there have been no arrests among Seventh-day Adventists. If there were arrests at all, they did not deal with our believers.

Q. *There was a specific mention about 84-year-old Shelkov. Who was he?*

N. A. Zikaluk: Oldrich Sladek, president of the Czechoslovakian Union, whom I was with in September of last year, was able to speak with a son-in-law and daughter of Shelkov. He himself asked whether Shelkov was an Adventist. The answer he received was that not only wasn't he an Adventist, but that he even wasn't a believer, nor a Christian. He was arrested, not for religious reasons, but for his antistate activities and sharing of false propaganda.

You may want to share this with SPECTRUM readers. Facts presented in your magazine differ somewhat from the above-mentioned statements.

Ray Dabrowski  
Editor  
*Znaki Czasu*

## Amnesty International Help

To the Editors: I would like to tell you a little about Arseny Stepanovich Matsyuk, the Seventh-day Adventist who is our group's prisoner of conscience. Arseny Matsyuk is one of five Seventh-day Adventists who were arrested on July 17, 1980, for distributing "unofficial" religious literature, i.e., literature not printed and distributed by the Soviet government. These people were distributing a bulletin of the "breakaway" Adventist sect called "Open Letter, number 12," published, we think, by the Seventh-day Adventists' unofficial publishing house called "The True Witness."

All the five prisoners belong to the breakaway Seventh-day Adventist sect in the USSR. Breakaway Adventists do not accept the Soviet state's stringent restrictions on organized religious activity. Those Adventists (and likewise Baptists and Pentecostals) who accept the state's guidelines for religious practices are allowed to worship in congregations which are registered with the authorities. They do so at the cost of not being able to give organized religious instruction to their children and having to submit

to other official interference in their choice of ministers and the content of their sermons. Adventists who refuse to accept these restrictions are not allowed to register their congregations and are in an illegal position. Arsenty Matsyuk refused to accept them and, in consequence, has been imprisoned for well over a year. We think that he is now in what the Soviet's call a Camp for Common Criminals.

If you know of any people who might be willing to write to the Soviet authorities on Arsenty Matsyuk's behalf, would you kindly give them the following address:

SSSR  
Ukrainskaya SSR  
Zhitomirskaya oblast  
g. Zhitomir  
Oblastnaya Prokuratura  
Prokuroru

The correct salutation is: "Dear Mr. Procurator:"

This is the address of the procurator of the Zhitomir region of the USSR, the region in which Arsenty Matsyuk was arrested. The procurator is an exceedingly important official, and we are concentrating our appeals on Matsyuk's behalf to him.

Any letters addressed to the procurator should be extremely polite and should express concern that Arsenty Matsyuk has been imprisoned because he gave expression to his religion's beliefs. The letters should not contain religious expressions. Our idea is to let the Soviet authorities know that all sorts of people everywhere are concerned about Matsyuk's well-being.

Kim McCormick  
Amnesty International  
Group 56  
26 Locust Avenue  
Lexington, Massachusetts 02173

*SPECTRUM* readers may wish to circulate petitions that will be sent to the procurator. These petitions are available from Ms. McCormick, who will mail them to the USSR. The Editors.

## Foundation Helps Adventists

To the Editors: Readers of your issue on Adventism in Russia may be interested in the work of the Christian Forum Reserch\* Foundation which is being organized. As God leads, the foundation will study the plight of Adventists under repressive governments and will cooperate with other organizations in publicizing instances of oppression.

We also hope to provide encouragement and assistance to those facing persecution or discrimination, including supplying Bibles and Adventist literature where they are forbidden or difficult to obtain.

The foundation has applied for, and expects to receive, tax-deductible status. Full financial disclosure will be made annually. Anyone interested in further information should send a large, self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Christian Forum Reserch Foundation, 1111 Fairgrounds Road, Grand Rapids, MN 55744.

Sidney Reiners

\*This spelling is correct.

## On Openness of God

To the Editors: Thank you so much for printing two very different reactions to Richard Rice's book, *The Openness of God*. Once again, *SPECTRUM* has lived up to its name by publishing an array of alternatives which can only enrich our conversations and enhance our lives.

If I had to choose between them, I'd side with the reviewer who suggested that Rice didn't go far enough, instead of with the reviewer who implied that Rice went too far. But there is a third way of viewing Rice's work and this is to see it as a genuine flowering of true Adventism. This is how the matter presently appears to me.

Richard Rice, like every modern Seventh-day Adventist, has been profoundly influenced by Ellen White (1827-1915). Ellen White, in turn, was deeply influenced by the teachings of John Wesley (1703-1791). And John Wesley was greatly influenced by the views of Jacob Arminius (1560-1609), who persuasively argued that the ideas of John Calvin (1509-1564) regarding the relationships between God and humanity were neither biblical nor reasonable. Indeed, the Remonstrants, as the followers of Arminius called themselves, were condemned by the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) because they remonstrated against five central beliefs of Calvinism then and now: (1) God predestines some for salvation and some for damnation; (2) Christ lived and died only for those previously predestined to be saved; (3) the Holy Spirit is truly effective only among those predestined for salvation; (4) those whom God has elected to be saved cannot resist God's mercy; and (5) these persons ultimately will be saved irrespective of their personal decisions. By protesting these doctrines, Arminius and his followers contended for a more "open" view of God. And, it must be remembered, many theological descendants of the Remonstrants have given everything, sometimes even surrendering life itself, for their more scriptural and rational view of God.

*The Openness of God* does not merely expound and explain the views of Arminius, Wesley, and White, because it is written by a theologian rather than an historian. Instead, it identifies the central aspects of the Arminian alternative to Calvinism and articulates the logical assumptions and implications of this option. True, Arminius and Wesley resisted the logical consequences of their own understandings of God with respect to the question of divine foreknowledge. It is somewhat less certain that this is the case with Ellen White as evidenced by her unembarrassed assertion that God's promises and threatenings are conditional. But the important point is that Rice has done exactly what we ask our systematic theologians to do. He has surveyed our theological heritage and identified an emphasis which appears to be of continuing importance. He has pondered this emphasis until he can see at least some of its assumptions and implications. And he has eloquently related these results of reflection to practical existence. What more could we possibly desire?

I agree that no mere mortal knows enough to say exactly what God does and does not know. But I also agree that the doctrine of absolute divine foreknowledge has been linked in Protestantism, both historically and logically, with doctrines that every Seventh-day Adventist rightly rejects.

There is room, therefore, for Rice's book which dares to take the logical implications of our theological inheritance seriously.

David R. Larson  
Christian Ethics  
Loma Linda University

## Book Fills Real Need

To the Editors: I would like to disagree with Hollibert Phillips' review of *The Openness of God*. Phillips belittles the central issue of the book by asking: "What is this turning point, this bit of logic, upon which so much is made to depend? It is the claim that 'the idea of absolute foreknowledge excludes creaturely freedom.'" Having thus dismissed any who agree with this as only "purportedly logical," Phillips states that if we persist in seeing a problem here, we must be confused. "God's foreknowledge," he declares, "or anyone's for that matter, imposes no causal necessity whatever on any state of affairs that is fore-known."

It is argued that John's freedom is intact even though, having chosen to buy a Lincoln yesterday, he cannot today choose to have done differently. By implication God's foreknowledge is thus the same as our knowledge of what we did yesterday. However this example offers no solution to the dilemma so carefully addressed by Rice. For if John cannot today choose to change his behavior of yesterday, then John is not free with respect to his behavior of yesterday. And it follows that if God's foreknowledge operates in this way, then we are not free with regard to our behavior of tomorrow. Not if freedom means the ability to change or choose to do differently.

Rice's attempt to resolve this basic contradiction has filled a real need.

Karen W. Hallock  
Renton, Washington

## A Theological Achievement

To the Editors: George L. Goodwin speaks of a contradiction between Richard Rice's view that there is an assured outcome to the course of human events and his concurrent view of authentic human freedom. In doing so, Goodwin fails to do justice to Rice's insistence that while God does not know in advance precisely how any individual will morally act, His wisdom and power are such that He can respond to whatever choices men make in such a manner that His will ultimately triumphs.

One needs to read Rice's book in its entirety to fully appreciate the skill and ingenuity with which he meets the many objections which can be raised to his position. Whether or not he disposes of all of them is of course arguable, but *The Openness of God* is an extraordinary theological achievement well worth the thoughtful reader's attention.

Reo M. Christenson  
Miami University

## Misinformation?

To the Editors: I was rather appalled at the misinformation that you presented in the article, "Must the Crisis Continue?" in your February, 1981 (Vol. 11, No. 3) issue. The Board of Good News Unlimited did vote to support selected ministers who were defrocked over the gospel, and so far we have only supported ministers in our area who have been deprived of their source of livelihood. As a Board, we felt this action was a neighborly act that any responsible Christian would have taken.

Your statement, "Kime holds gospel meetings in his Sacramento home on a weekly basis for another group of 120," is certainly a misstatement. In the last two years we have held exactly two meetings in our home for gospel groups. One was a meeting where 120 may have attended. At another, a month later, there may have been forty or fifty.

Your next statement, "that so far, he is far more interested in promoting separate church organization than his friend Ford is" is even more farfetched. Dr. Ford and I have always been in agreement on the issue of separate church organization. We both plan to maintain membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church unless thrown out, which may not be in the far-too-distant future if this sort of misinformed, inflammatory journalism continues.

Yours for more responsible journalism before SPECTRUM develops a major credibility gap.

Zane R. Kime, MD  
Chairman, Board of Directors  
Good News Unlimited

*SPECTRUM regrets the misstatement on meetings in Dr. Kime's home. One of our reporters misunderstood a comment made by Dr. Kime in a telephone interview. We stand by the other statement protested by Dr. Kime. On the basis of conversations with close associates of Dr. Kime, we believe that the statement was accurate when written, though Dr. Kime has since changed his views. There was nothing "farfetched" or "inflammatory" in the observation that (at the time the article was written) Dr. Kime seemed "more interested" in encouraging the gospel fellowship movement that did Dr. Ford.*

## Health Care Report

To the Editors: The SPECTRUM (Vol. 11, No. 4) article on "The New Adventist Health Care Corporations" gave what I feel is an erroneous impression. The contention "that the disparity between hospital corporation salaries and denominational wages is one of the most sensitive problems raised by the formation of Adventist health care corporations" seems a bit biased. To imply that the four regional Adventist health care corporations are responsible for making or demanding community salaries for people in their hospitals is not true. These community salaries have been, and would continue to be paid, whether or not there was an Adventist Health System.

Second, the fact that hospitals are labeled "big business" seems to be another bias. Hospitals today are a big business,

but if one consider the assets and large sums of money spent by the church's schools, conferences, and other entities, the church too is big business. Let us not fool ourselves into thinking that the church and its hospitals are different because the hospitals are being forced by competition, regulations, and their need for survival, to be run as sound businesses.

The Adventist Health System is still the "right arm" of the church. By working together, we are able to reach more people than ever before, providing them with quality health care through a compassionate commitment to people. It is this commitment, to people and their communities, which has made the Adventist Health system respected both inside and outside the church.

David L. Gray  
Director of Communication  
Adventist Health System North

## Against Reason?

To the Editors: I appreciate SPECTRUM more with each issue. It truly presents a spectrum of viewpoints, which, though I may not agree with all, I find interesting, helpful and informative. In its present function I believe SPECTRUM is standing in the tradition of the early years of the *Review* far better than does the current *Adventist Review*. The current narrow editorial policy which is admittedly followed by the *Adventist Review* is a far cry from the early editorial policy of that paper under James White's leadership.

SPECTRUM Vol. 11, No. 3, was a good case in point. While I am sure the letter by H. N. Sheffield, M.D., which you entitled "Against Reason," found some responsive chords in many of our hearts, yet few of us would choose to take the stance that Rome took against Galileo. Faith and reason need not be antagonists, nor mutually exclusive.

Arlin Baldwin  
Mariposa, California

## Value of Questioning

To the Editors: My heart goes out to Dr. Sheffield, whose deeply significant letter reflects the feeling of many thoughtful but loyal Seventh-day Adventists. He reveals an honesty and a faith much needed by all of us at this time of crisis.

May I suggest to him that the painful surgery the church is undergoing (and each of us in particular) is not necessarily as destructive as it seems. Scripture warns us that "everything which can be shaken will be shaken in order that the things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. 12:27). Goethe affirmed that "the struggle between belief and unbelief is the only thing in the memoirs of humanity worth considering."

Much of the emotional upset we share is a result of two things in particular — first, a superstitious view of how God operates in inspiration, and second, a similarly erroneous understanding of how He works in providence. We have forgotten, for example, that wherever sin exists, so must error — however holy the heart or institution. We are demanding better bread than can be made of grain. Elton Trueblood has a word for us: "It is as much evil to say that

we know the truth perfectly as it is to say that there is no truth to know."

All honest doubt has a quasi-religious or at least a moral character about it, because it shows an overriding concern for the truth. Those who do not care tremendously about the truth do not bother to doubt, for doubt entails work. The dangerous man is not the man who doubts, but the man who does not care. (D. Elton Trueblood, *Philosophy of Religion* [New York, 1957], pp. 45-46).

God is not really terribly concerned about our having everything "sewn up." He is more interested in developing sons and daughters who will hold His hand in the darkness and count that walking with Him at midnight over a moonless sea is privilege indeed.

But none of this should be understood as advocating an extreme agnosticism. There are things we can and should know — that He, Christ, is there as surely as we are here; that He has spoken forgiveness and comfort through inspired messengers; that right and wrong are eternal realities; that He has a purpose in every movement launched by those seeking to please Him; that He has His way in the whirlwind and begins His greatest works (like creation) with chaos. There is such a thing as the wreck of a bursting seed, and if we live amidst such wreckage let us rejoice that the flower and fruit will come inevitably. I, for one, thank God for His leading into the Advent message, and my boyhood experience of finding Christ through Ellen G. White leads me to praise Him though He has not yet sundered all gordian knots of intellectual difficulty.

Desmond Ford  
Auburn, California

## Celebrating Adventism

To The Editors: I wanted to thank Roy Branson for his very thoughtful and articulate editorial ("Celebrating the Adventist Experience") in the September SPECTRUM. Since marrying into a strong Adventist family last fall, I have been simultaneously impressed and bemused by the level of theological discussion all around me. I've been quietly trying to clarify and define the issues for myself, without asking questions which would label me an "outsider." By managing to be both basic and thorough, Roy's editorial helped me achieve a quantum jump in my understanding of "the Adventist experience."

One of the questions I have been asking is asked, in a slightly larger context, by Roy: Why aren't more Adventists expending a greater portion of their formidable energies in explaining Adventism to their friends and neighbors? Intramural discussion is fine, but any organization flourishes or withers in direct proportion to its ability to attract new people who are reasonably bright, open-minded and willing to contribute time, talents or funds. It would seem to me that SPECTRUM could be an ideal vehicle for communicating Adventist concerns and objectives to a larger audience, and scholars like Dr. Branson who are able to reach that audience are invaluable. Roy, we "outsiders" thank you.

Albert S. Farver  
The Pacific Institute  
Washington, D.C./Seattle, Wash.

## Editorial a Blessing

To the Editors: I do not often add to your incoming mail, but my reading of the latest issue of SPECTRUM prompts me to add to your fan mail!

Your editorial, "Celebrating the Adventist Experience" brought this reader a blessing, a reassurance and a hope that we shall come out of present traumas a little wiser than at our entering in. Your analysis of the Adventist experience impresses me as being wise, positive, and heartening. I have been blessed by its insights, by its calm analysis, and quiet assurances. I am also cheered by its stimuli, the challenges you pose to Adventist artists of several different types, and am encouraged as I think of Alan Collins' accomplishments and what some of our musicians are doing (in spite of the abysmal levels of official taste!).

I would breathe a hearty though regretful "Amen" to the sentence "The besetting sin of Adventism today is preoccupation with itself." There still ring in my ears, after many decades, the words of a non-Adventist father as I showed him around the grounds and buildings of Helderberg College some three decades ago — "The trouble with you Adventists is you're so d— smug!" That smote me, and I have never forgotten its unpalatable truth. I hope your appeal for a broader outlook will be heeded.

Thanking you for SPECTRUM, of which I am a faithful and appreciative reader, and wishing you God's own blessing in all areas of life.

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## Third World Perspective

To the Editors: Your issue on "The Church and Its Future" (Vol. 12, No. 1) was very timely — especially for the North American scene. I emphasize the last phrase because that is where the focus of attention of most of the issues of SPECTRUM lies.

It is, therefore, not surprising that throughout the issue there is no extended discussion or concern for the social dimension of theological understanding and ecclesiology in the Third World. The closest the discussion came to this was Roy Branson's editorial, which devoted the whole of three lines to SAWS' agricultural projects in Chad, Haiti and Zimbabwe.

This was, however, overshadowed by Fritz Guy's reaction to social theology. He asserts that "it is not the business of Adventist theology to propose specific political or economic reforms" (p. 11, cf. p. 12). We ask: Are these not moral problems? Did not the ancient prophets and the New Testament, particularly Jesus and James, treat them thus? Did not these prophetic voices propose the very reforms which Guy advocates we not agitate for?

Perspectives such as this (of which Guy's is but one example) do say something about our theological reflection: it is still Western and Northern in its outlook — even though the shift in the Christian population is Southern.

Adventist theology must respond to problems and perplexities of contemporary society (cf. Guy, p. 7). Therefore, what does our theology have to say concerning poverty? How does it address itself to oppression — a major

motif in the Bible, but which is left out of the theological categories of traditional Christianity?

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## On Prophetic Minority

To the Editors: I have no quarrel with Prof. Provonsha's definition of the Adventist "remnant" mission as that of a Prophetic Minority within the Church Universal, in either its invisible or visible forms. Indeed, I found his diagram quite helpful. But with such a promising beginning to the article, 'tis a pity it never quite got around to stating just what it is that a prophet does which would distinguish his activity as prophetic.

Surely, if this Prophetic Minority is to play the central role in the denouement of earth's history that Prof. Provonsha hopes it will, serving as "a catalytic presence around which the remnant become visible as a testimony to their trust in a trustworthy God," it will not be because of this minority's peculiar habits of dress, diet or deportment during moments of leisure. Quite true, John the Baptist wore camel's hair and, in contrast to our Lord, adhered to a stringent diet. These distinguished John all right, but they did not distinguish him as a prophet. Neither was he distinguished as such because he spoke loudly to draw attention, or even because he spoke disinterestedly. John was a prophet for the single reason that he spoke the *Word of God* preparing the way for the Lord.

This consideration naturally leads one back to the chief question now facing the church, which the author's analysis falls short of answering: What is to form the *content* of this prophetic message to the Church Universal and the world? Any other question serves only to obscure the real one. Is it to be the three angels' messages or the gospel as preached by Dr. Ford? Or perhaps, as it is becoming increasingly fashionable to suggest, our prophetic message should consist of a thundering against the evils of our time — war, poverty, racism, oppression — at the risk, of course, of mimicking the holy fools who have brought the National Council of Churches so much recent scorn. The church will have to decide which or witness its prophetic voice fragment into Babylonish confusion.

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## Correction

The editors wish to make note of two errors in the last issue of SPECTRUM, Vol. 12, No. 2. The last paragraph of Alden Thompson's "Theological Consultation II" was mistakenly printed in the wrong location. The last paragraph on page 50 should be read as preceding the last paragraph on page 49.

A typographical error in Walter Utt's review of *Omega* may also cause confusion. On page 59 the line that now reads "no where does he mention she" should read "no where does he mention who." We apologize to our authors and readers for any misunderstanding or inconvenience that may have arisen due to these errors.