

LLU Quinquennial Constituency Meeting: A Personal View

by William Blythe



William Blythe has been on the faculty of San Jose State University since 1957, for 12 of those years as chairman of the Department of Civil Engineering and Applied Mechanics. He has been an active layman serving as local church elder, church board member, academy board chairman, local and union conference executive committee member, Union College board member, and as a delegate to two General Conference Sessions.

On Saturday evening, August 25, 1990, at 8:30 p.m., in the campus chapel of the University church, the quinquennial constituency meeting of the Loma Linda University, mandated by the Bylaws to occur shortly after the General Conference session, was called to order. At approximately 11:15 p.m., having spent nearly three hours on preliminaries and reports, Norman Woods, president of the university, moved that the assembled constituents "affirm the board decision to separate the two campuses." With no significant discussion, the motion was passed on a voice vote. Shortly afterward the meeting was adjourned. It had been a long meeting.

As a member of the Pacific Union Conference Committee, I received notification of my membership in the constituency and announcement of the constituency meeting some 30 days prior to the meeting, as required by the bylaws. Except for a return card to use to indicate that I would attend, there were no other enclosures with the announcement.

Although I had participated in discussions at Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee meetings concerning the relationship between the two campuses of the university, and particularly under what conditions the Pacific Union Conference should accept the return of the Riverside campus, and also had read related articles in the official Adventist press, I

felt totally unprepared to be an effective delegate. I established that no other delegates had received more information than I.

The meeting was called to order by Neal Wilson, immediate past president of the General Conference, who took some time to explain his presence, "because some of you are questioning why I am chairing this meeting." As I understood his explanation, his position on the board was not by virtue of his prior office as president of the church, but rather by being part of a quota on the board nominated by the General Conference.

Robert Folkenberg, president of the General Conference, provided a short devotional in which he defined three levels of values that required attention in Adventist institutes of higher education: (1) values common to all educational institutions, such as professional quality; (2) values held in common with other Christian institutions, such as ethics; and (3) values distinctly Seventh-day Adventist, relating primarily to the church's eschatological view of world history and its mission. He asserted that the first level of values was the responsibility of the faculty, the second level of values was to be ensured by the administration, and the third level of values was the responsibility of the board.

Wilson, as chairman of the meeting, indicated that 490 invitations to

constituent members had been mailed, that 196 members were present, and that only 75 members were needed to declare a quorum. The 40 percent of the constituency present completely filled the campus chapel.

Wilson then gave a lengthy introduction to Gwendolyn Foster, a member of the board of trustees, who sang "Amazing Grace." Wilson next introduced, also at great length, the General Conference auditors Raymond Wagner and Richard Salsbery.

Upon entering the meeting, each constituent was given a packet of information that included a 21-page financial report for Loma Linda University for the years 1985 through 1989. In addition, the packet included two audit letters from the General Conference auditing service. At the meeting, the financial statements were reviewed briefly, and there was an opportunity for questions. None were asked. The two audit letters then were read to the assembly. After brief discussion, Wilson made another long statement on the work of the General Conference auditing service and the efforts of the university to come into compliance.

University President Norman Woods then introduced the rest of the program, which would consist of financial reports of the university foundation, the Riverside campus, and the Loma Linda campus, as well as certain "corporation business."

Robert Frost, foundation manager, summed up the financial condition of the Loma Linda Foundation by saying that over the past five years, the net operating gain of the foundation was \$16.7 million, with \$12.95 million of that occurring in the 1989-1990 fiscal year, as a result of the maturing of one group of very large trusts.

Fritz Guy, president of the Riverside campus, presented a one-page

financial summary indicating that total operating loss for the Riverside campus for the prior five years was approximately \$1 million, including a loss of \$470,000 for the year 1989-1990. Enrollment figures for the past five years indicated a steady decrease in "financial full-time equivalent student enrollments" from 1,575 in 1985-1986, to 1,314 in 1989-1990.

William Dean, interim chief financial officer of the Loma Linda campus, then presented a five-page report with three attached graphs. The total operating loss for fiscal year 1990 was reported as \$1,515,675, after an undisclosed amount was transferred from plant funds to operations. The only capital debt of the university indicated in this report was approximately \$18 million related to construction costs for the co-generation plant, the chiller, plant, and a 66KV substation.

A response to a questioner seemed to sum up the financial condition of the university: although considerable belt-tightening and careful management was required, rumors of financial crisis were unfounded.

Finally, at approximately 11 p.m., Wilson gave a long introduction to the "corporate business," which I had assumed was the major purpose of the meeting. Following Wilson's lengthy remarks, that alluded to the hard work and difficult decisions that went into the proposal to separate the two campuses, Dr. Woods presented the motion to "affirm the board decision to separate the two campuses."

Dr. David Bieber, former president at different times at both Loma Linda University and La Sierra College, rose to plead that this separation be viewed by everyone as a "friendly" separation. This was heartily endorsed by the chairman and received a round

of applause.

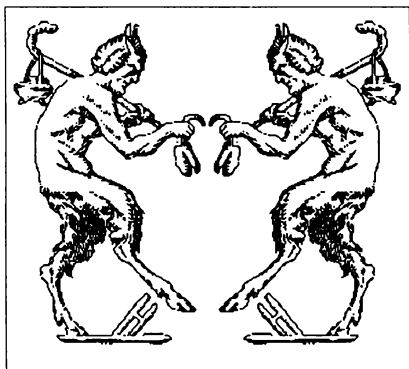
Another speaker rose to ask if the division of assets between the two campuses was proceeding equitably. He was assured that this was the case, although there were some decisions in that area still to be made. There were no other speakers, so a voice vote was taken with the motion clearly passing easily, but with a fairly strong "no" vote (not unanimously, as reported in the *Adventist Review* of September 13, 1990).

After the vote was taken, I rose to comment on the process. I stated that, since I had not enough information to make intelligent comments, I had refrained from speaking prior to the vote. I pointed out that considerable time would have been saved had we received the reports in advance of the meeting so they would not need to be read. We would also have had greater opportunity to formulate significant questions.

I also pointed out that, at least as a layman, I had insufficient background on the central issue of the campus split to be an effective participant in these proceedings. I would have needed information on the history, the discussions that had taken place at the board, the problems that were perceived, and the arguments for and against the proposed solution.

I concluded by making a plea that those responsible for conducting meetings remember that need of lay people to have information in order to be effective participants. Wilson thanked me for my remarks and, perhaps because my comments had been interrupted by applause, said that all those conference presidents and other administrators present should take note. The meeting adjourned.

After adjournment several people thanked me for my comments.



The Lucifer Files: He's Real, He's Mad, And He's Still Here

Reviewed by Deanna C. Davis

The Lucifer Files. Ken McFarland.
Boise: Pacific Press Publishing
Association, 1988. 128 pages.

T*he Lucifer Files*, by Ken McFarland, was the 1989 Missionary Book of the Year and was published in both English and Spanish by Pacific Press. The title, reminiscent of Os Guinness's *The Gravedigger File* (InterVarsity Press, 1983), refers to fictional diabolical writings after the style of Guinness's book and C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*. Lewis found that "the device of diabolical letters, once you have thought of it, exploits itself spontaneously. . . . It would run away with you for a thousand pages if you gave it head."¹ If this is so, McFarland demonstrates an exceedingly tight-reigned restraint. Of the book's 128 pages, the "Lucifer Files" fill only about a dozen. There are entire chapters without one file. The author explains in his first chapter that "this book will contain only a small sampling from the 'Lucifer Files'" (p. 14). The more than one hundred remaining pages of text are devoted to what the publisher calls, "a background narrative to the 'files.'" As a Missionary Book of the Year, the "background narrative" presents the doctrinal teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in areas such as

Creation, marriage and the family, the Sabbath, the Fall, and salvation.

My trouble with the work begins with "A Word From the Author." The first paragraph of the preface defends allegory as a means of communicating spiritual truth and asserts that Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Screwtape Letters*, by C. S. Lewis, are "well-known examples of this genre."

Apparently McFarland has not encountered Lewis's statement in his preface to the paperback edition of *The Screwtape Letters* explaining that to those who shared his opinion that devils were fallen angels "my devils will be symbols of a concrete reality; to others, they will be personification of abstractions, and the book will be an allegory."²

Neither *The Screwtape Letters* nor *The Lucifer Files* can be considered allegorical by one who believes in Lucifer as a created being, a concrete reality. The fictional device of allegory presents abstractions as concrete realities. Fictionalizing a concrete reality does not make it allegory.

I also stumbled over the last line of McFarland's preface, where he states, "If *The Lucifer Files* helps to heighten the reality of the unseen war behind all wars, it will have more than fulfilled its intended purpose." First of all, one does not "heighten" reality. Something is real or it is not. An author may heighten

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a reader's awareness of a reality and this no doubt was intended. But there is a larger problem. If heightening the reader's awareness of the reality of the great controversy between Christ and Satan is more than the book's intended purpose, what is its intended purpose?

While pondering that question, I moved on to the next sentence, the first of chapter one: "When you're really good at something, nothing beats getting paid to do it." Even my nodding acquaintance with Elder McFarland and the denomination's policies of remuneration for writers would lead me to suspect he had far purer motives than mere monetary gain when he wrote the manuscript.

While a bit of weak editing can be glossed over by the reader, the book's major structural flaws cannot. The "background narrative" so overwhelms *The Lucifer Files* that it renders them superfluous. The few lines of information the reader gains from the "Files" are hardly worth the abrupt shifting point of view.

McFarland's narrative background explains difficult doctrines in a manner that can be easily understood by the average reader. But I can't help wondering if themes from some chapters were not first developed in sermons. My curiosity

about this aspect of the work comes from the sudden interjection of new material that with proper pauses and changes of tone of voice might be quite acceptable to a listener but that are jarring to a reader.

A case in point is chapter three, which is only seven pages long. It begins with an anecdote on Abraham Lincoln, followed by a bit of theological exposition and a "strategy directive" from Lucifer. Immediately following Lucifer's closing, the reader is confronted by a narrator in the Garden of Eden describing the fall of humankind.

This section, which ends with the rhetorical question, "Adam, afraid of God?" is followed immediately by the boldface subhead, "A Cat Named Mittens." The reader, having been thus alerted to another sudden shift of point of view and subject matter is treated to a first-person story of the adventures of McFarland and his cat, Mittens.

The last section gallantly attempts to pull all of the above together. While the individual sections are well-written, I could not help but feel that I was reading a verbal patchwork.

But the final test of merit of a work of Christian literature is, in my opinion, not its structure, nor even

whether the author knows what genre he is attempting. The bottom line for me is "How is God's character represented in the work?" It is here that the book shines. By setting the doctrinal discussions in the context of the larger picture of the great controversy between Christ and Lucifer, McFarland anchors each belief to Christ and his character. God is shown to be a loving Father, Creator, Lord and Saviour, Companion and Friend, "who wants nothing more than to make me happy, healthy, and holy forever."

McFarland's depiction of Lucifer is also commendable. In giving "the devil his due," the author avoids the sort of sensationalism of some other contemporary authors dealing with the subject of spiritual warfare.

You won't get nightmares from reading this book. Nor is this the sort of work that will have you looking for a "demon under every doily." The adversary is shown to be a force to be reckoned with, one who seeks to undermine our well-being by influencing our thoughts, our feelings, and our will.

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1974). p. xiii.

2. *Ibid.*, p. xii.

Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God? Candor on Conundrums

Reviewed by Jerry Gladson

Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God? by Alden Thompson (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1989). 173 pp.

The Old Testament is a witness out of a non-Christian religion. . . . It is just that which gives the Old Testa-

ment its character of *Old Testament*; its witness does not come out of the gospel.¹

So writes Friedrich Baumgartel after examining the difficulties the Old Testament poses for Christian faith. Although Baumgartel's judgment is a professional one, his conclusion finds a chorus of popular echoes.

Given the New Testament, how *do* Christians appropriate the Old?

How do they deal with the "sub-Christian" behavior portrayed there? Its obscure laws and regulations? Its harsh, uncompromising picture of God? Alden Thompson, professor of Old Testament at Walla Walla College, attempts to show how a Christian can understand these difficulties in their original setting and still regard them as an inherent part of the divine revelation—as a witness to the gospel. Thompson writes from an avowedly conservative perspec-

tive. Although the work bears a Zondervan imprint, his approach is consistent with Adventist theology.

The New Testament period already raised the issue of how Christians were to regard the Old Testament. The Jerusalem Council, described in Acts 15, focused on whether the law of Moses, and hence, the legal portions of the Pentateuch, remained in force for Gentile Christians (Acts 15:1-5). The council concluded that only certain selective aspects were necessary:

It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity (Acts 15:28, 29, RSV).

Although there is discussion on the issue elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. Hebrews 9,10), nowhere are definitive guidelines laid down. Indeed, one of the most intractable problems in Christian history has been the dispute over the degree to which the laws and practices of the

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Old Testament are to be carried over into the Christian age.

The Sabbath/Sunday controversy, so familiar to Adventists, can be understood as part of this debate, as can the Adventist teaching about clean and unclean foods. Responses to this issue run the complete gamut of available options. In recent times, some scholars have defended the superiority of the New Testament over the Old,² denounced the Old as a product of a non-Christian religion, as noted above; or, conversely, regarded the Old as *the* Scripture, with the New Testament as some kind of extension, or "glossary" attached to the Old.³

More common has been the approach Thompson follows: reinterpreting the Old Testament from a Christian point of view. It is to the credit of Adventism in general, and Thompson in particular, that he remains committed to the entire Christian canon, Old and New Testaments included.

Thompson urges Christians to read the Old Testament in a straightforward, natural manner. He uses the analogy of a "high" road and a "low" road. The high road approach stresses the spirituality of the Old Testament, and hence its kinship with the New; the low road takes into account its seamier, darker side. Christians who read the Old Testament by the high road approach, and thus through Christian "glasses," are often unprepared, even shocked, at the realities they find in the actual text itself.

Since Ellen G. White generally uses a high road perspective, I might add, this is especially true for those who get their primary interpretation of the Old Testament from her. Thompson does not think these two approaches are incompatible, but insists that one begin with a serious study of the Old Testament before going on to a Christian reading of it. "I find the revelation of God in Christ a clearer and better revelation," he

admits, "but I certainly need not deny the marvelous experience that God gave to his people at Mount Sinai" (p. 17).

To synthesize this double focus Thompson employs an organic model. The movement within the Bible, taken as a whole, is one of gradual, persistent growth toward the climactic purpose of God in Jesus Christ.

Many things in the Old Testament anticipate in some way further development within the Bible. An organic model, of course, enjoys more compatibility with Adventist theology than models that find discontinuous, dispensational, or covenantal patterns in Scripture.

Reflecting further Adventist influence, Thompson also finds together with the organic movement hints of a cosmic struggle between good and evil (the "great controversy" motif) in the Old Testament. "When the larger picture of a cosmic struggle forms the background of the Old Testament, I find it much easier to understand the activities of God" (p. 41).

After introducing these ideas, in the remainder of the book Thompson examines several case studies applying the organic model to specific problems in the Old Testament.

The first difficulty concerns the almost complete silence regarding Satan in the Old Testament. Only three passages mention Satan (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Zechariah 3:1,2; 1 Chronicles 21:1). On the other hand, Hebrew writers often attribute evil to God. God "hardens" Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 7:3; 8:19; 9:12). The Lord puts a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets of Ahab, enticing him to disobey (1 Kings 22:19-23). "Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and evil come?" (Lamentations 3:38, RSV). Thompson finds explanation for this difficulty in a gradual shift in the Old Testa-

ment away from attributing the responsibility of evil to God to the identification of an adversarial personality whose full character only emerges in the New Testament as Satan.

Even more thorny are the strange, seemingly bizarre laws of the Old Testament. Laws that call for the death penalty when a child curses its parents (Exodus 21:17), or prohibit an illegitimate person, Ammonite, or Moabite to worship in the assembly of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:2-6) seem particularly offensive to Christians. Looking at these laws against the setting of the times and in the light of the growth God intended defuses them of much of their strangeness. Thompson explains:

Growth comes by choosing the right. Step by step, God led his people at a pace that they could manage. The strange laws for these strange people are a marvelous testimony to a kind and patient God and provide a fitting background for the God who would one day reveal himself in Jesus Christ (p. 81).

A third, related issue concerns the degree to which the Israelites assimilated the surrounding culture. In technical language, this is known as syncretism. Religions—including Adventism—inevitably appropriate customs and beliefs from their environment and blend these with their own rituals or doctrinal systems.

For Thompson this raises the problem of exactly how the people of God should be *in* the world but not *of* it. He concedes that Israel did borrow important features from its neighbors. Divine titles, such as 'el ("God"), 'el'ehyon ("God Most High"), baal ("master"), all common in

Canaanite parlance, are used to refer to Yahweh.

Israel's festal calendar, particularly the agricultural feasts such as Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles, resembles certain Canaanite celebrations. The Solomonic temple follows a Phoenician or Canaanite plan, while certain Psalms (18, 29, 93) appear to have been adapted from hymns originally devoted to Baal, the most popular Canaanite deity.

In each of these cases, Thompson thinks, Israel, under the guidance of God, "left those things alone which could destroy and adapted those things that she could use" (p. 104). The assimilation thus had selective controls.

However, more troubling to Christians than Old Testament law, the problem of Israel's assimilation, and the ethics practiced by people in Israel's history, is the difference between the Old Testament idea of the Messiah and that of the New. Thompson distinguishes several levels in the way New Testament writers appropriate Old Testament messianic prophecies.

On the first level are those messianic prophecies immediately understandable to the Old Testament readers (e.g. Isaiah 9:1-7). A second level involves those that became clear only as a result of Jesus' teaching (e.g. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45), or sometimes, in addition, the natural course of events in the life of Christ (e.g. Psalm 16; Acts 2:22-28).

Finally, a few passages came to be understood as messianic only in later Christian centuries (e.g. Genesis 3:15). "It was Jesus himself who brought the ministry of the suffering servant into focus as one of the 'messianic' prophecies" (p. 144). The Christ-event provides the hermeneutical key by which the New Testament writers develop their messianic understanding.

Thompson concludes his study with a look at the imprecatory Psalms. Shocked at the virulent language of these despondent songs and prayers, many Christians have turned away from the Psalter altogether, thinking it sub-Christian. Thompson demurs, claiming that Christians have much to learn from the honesty of these writers who felt free to tell God exactly how they felt. Honesty and realism are features necessary to a mature Christian devotional life, and these Psalms can be our teachers in discovering it.

Alden Thompson has produced a fascinating, exciting study on topics rarely treated outside scholarly circles. He does not try to white-wash difficulties, but faces them head on. He has published this book with Zondervan press, due, in part, I am sure, to the wider distribution and broader audience that Zondervan affords.

One cannot but reflect on how unfortunate it is that Adventist theological scholars must deal with critical, sensitive issues such as those addressed here outside normal denominational channels. Thompson deserves our praise for taking the risk of being misunderstood. Denominational leadership could well take a page on courage and candor out of Alden Thompson's notebook in dealing with both theological and ecclesiastical problems.

NOTES

1. "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Old Testament," *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westerman, tr. J. L. Mays (Richmond: John Knox, 1963), p. 134.

2. Rudolf Bultmann, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, pp. 50-75.

3. A. A. van Ruler, *The Christian Church and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971).