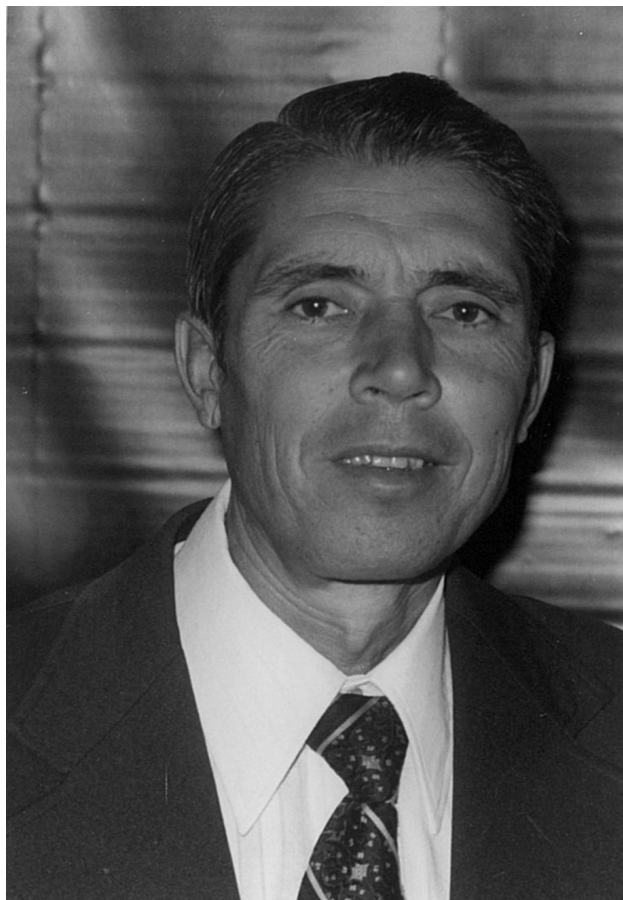


Fear *and the* Hidden Agendas of the FORD CONTROVERSY (1979–1980)

BY GILBERT M. VALENTINE



Desmond Ford, photo courtesy of Adventist Heritage Centre, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia

Introduction

Desmond Ford's late-October 1979, Adventist Forum presentation at Pacific Union College (PUC) on the investigative judgment, led to a six-month leave of absence granted by church administrators so that Ford could develop a more comprehensive statement on the problems he had attempted to address. This would be followed by a formal church hearing of his concerns.

When Ford gave his Forum presentation, he believed he was confronting and attempting to resolve long-standing problems with the doctrine. For many others, the address was perceived as a full-frontal challenge to the central founding story of the Adventist church as expressed in its sanctuary doctrine and the investigative judgment. The widely circulated recording of the meeting riveted the attention of the church, worldwide. Consideration of Ford's approach, written up in a 991-page document, was undertaken at a specially convened theological consultation at a church-owned convention center at Glacier View Ranch, northwest of Denver, Colorado. Formally known as the Sanctuary Review Committee, (SRC) the group, comprising approximately 115 international Bible scholars and church administrators, met from August 10 to 15, 1980. This gathering, also fraught with significance, riveted the attention of the worldwide church.

Former Review and Herald editor, Raymond Cottrell, described the 1980 consultation as "the most important event of this nature in Adventist history since the 1888

General Conference in Minneapolis.”¹ In the view of Richard Hammill, former president of Andrews University and coordinator of the consultation, the meetings represented “the most earnest endeavor and the greatest investment of funds and in time of Adventist workers from all parts of the world field that have ever been given to the discussion of a doctrinal problem in the Adventist Church.”²

The theological consultation was intended to confine itself to an assessment of Dr. Ford’s ideas. At the beginning of the meeting, President Neal Wilson clearly asserted that Ford himself was not on trial, only his ideas. As Richard Hammill, the General Conference official coordinating the event, later observed, however, “it turned out both had been on trial.”³ The process ultimately resulted in Dr. Ford’s dismissal from church employment and huge theological turmoil in North America and in the South Pacific, with the loss of large numbers of ministers in the decade that followed.

A close study of the correspondence and other documents, and of the background to the traumatic upheaval, indicates a number of hidden or underlying agendas and other important contextual influences at play. I argue in this paper that these agendas and influences appear to have held more sway over the outcome of Ford’s formal 1980 hearing than the specific exegetical and doctrinal issues he addressed in his comprehensive manuscript. Fear played a large role in them all. Hidden agendas and contextual factors included the following:

- Perceptions and formal charges that Ford was antinomian and did not believe in the doctrine of sanctification. A deep, cultural, conservative reaction to large-scale change at Avondale during

Ford’s sixteen-year tenure there exacerbated this perception.

- The sense that Ford was disloyal to the church through his suspected collusion with Robert Brinsmead.
- Perceptions that Ford was arrogant and unwilling to learn—a view fed by cultural misunderstanding.
- Problems of administrative weakness and vulnerability in the church in Australasia.

- Fear and insecurity about exposure on the part of scholars who felt vulnerable about talking openly in what became an intimidating environment at the conference.

Fear, misunderstanding, and the pressure of the underlying agendas took precedence over theological and exegetical issues. As a result, church administrators sought an urgent management solution to what had become a highly polarized and conflicted church community. The need for a solution to the “pastoral problem” created by Ford going public with a doctrinal problem became the priority. This had more influence on the outcome of the meeting

than the discussion about the specific topic of the investigative judgment. This paper seeks to explore and explain these underlying agendas and contextual issues.

Hidden Agenda 1: The Fear of Antinomianism

In a church where, historically, the law has been easier to obey than grace celebrated, antinomianism has been seen as a natural enemy. Prominent voices in Robert Pier-son’s administration of the late 1970s perceived Desmond

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Ford as an antinomian and that, whatever he might say in his Glacier View manuscript, he was a danger to the church and should be let go. He was not in harmony with “historic” Adventism. This was a significant item not formally on the agenda at Glacier View, but it was nevertheless the understanding in many administrators’ minds. The background to this hidden agenda item is important.

In early 1978, *Review* editor, Kenneth Wood, sought to explain the origins of the controversies surrounding Ford in Australia to fellow General Conference leaders at a special retreat called to study the problems. He made the case that the conflicts found their source in the evangelical dialogues of the mid-1950s.⁴ Undertaken by R. A. Anderson and L. E. Froom during Reuben Figuhr’s administration, the dialogues addressed evangelical criticism

of the Adventist understanding of the atonement and the investigative judgment doctrine. In *Questions on Doctrine*, the volume published in response to the dialogue, Wood argued, concessions were made that led thousands of Adventists to believe that the leaders had abandoned “historic” Adventism in its distinctive teaching on the atonement and the nature of Christ. Wood cited one

“respected denominational worker” who believed that Froom and Anderson had “sold us down the river,” resulting in a church crippled by evangelical antinomianism.⁵ Wood’s lengthy explanation clearly sympathized with the strident protests of eighty-year-old, retired seminary teacher, M. L. Andreasen, whose six inflammatory “Letters to the Churches,” issued during 1959, alleged that *Questions on Doctrine* taught “heresy” concerning the atonement. It was “more than apostasy. This is the giving up of Adventism.”⁶ An influential committee of supporters in Loma Linda agreed with Andreasen and advocated for him with President Figuhr, but Andreasen’s hostility and animosity to the General Conference eventually led to the removal of his ministerial credentials in 1961.⁷ In 1978, Kenneth Wood knew that Figuhr’s successor, Robert Pierson, identified much more with the last-

generation theology of Andreasen than he did with the progressivism of Froom and Anderson. Desmond Ford’s perceived antinomianism was just what Andreasen had predicted.

Reacting to the furor surrounding Andreasen’s open protests in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Robert Brinsmead, an activist theology student at Avondale College in Australia, began to agitate for an unorthodox, end-time, sinless perfectionism that would make Andreasen’s last-generation exhibition of law-keeping possible.⁸ Brinsmead’s teaching also appeared to present a solution to the widespread lack of Christian assurance of salvation among church members facing an end-time judgment and needing a way to be able to live without a mediator.⁹ Brinsmead taught that in Christ’s final work of cleansing the sanctuary, begun in 1844, human sinful nature would be physically eradicated, “blotted out” from the subconscious mind of the believer just prior to the close of probation under a “latter rain” of the Holy Spirit. This would result in a final cleansing of the “soul temple.” Thus, a believer could become sinless and be able to live without need of a mediator after the close of probation.

Brinsmead’s agitation led to the forming of a schismatic group known as the Sanctuary Awakening movement which developed a strong following in both the South Pacific and North America.¹⁰ The Australian “awakeners” took courage from the quiet endorsement of American religion teachers, such as Herbert Douglass at Atlantic Union College and Peter Jarnes at Union College.¹¹

The first direct public response in Adventism to Brinsmead’s teaching on sinless perfection came from British-born Edward Heppenstall, a leading teacher at the church’s seminary, who argued that such teaching negated grace because “sinless people do not need grace.”¹² He also argued that such teaching resulted from a fundamental misunderstanding of the New Testament teaching on justification by faith. Heppenstall was joined by other scholars such as Norval F. Pease and Harry E. Lowe.¹³

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In the South Pacific region of the church, Desmond Ford, a student of Heppenstall, became the primary respondent to Brinsmead's schismatic movement and its perfectionism. Through a strong program of preaching and teaching from Paul's epistle to the Romans, Ford emphasized that justification by faith was the cardinal meaning of righteousness by faith and recommended that Brinsmead would benefit by a careful study of the Protestant reformers rather than Jones and Waggoner.¹⁴ These were the key themes in his approach with his students at Avondale College. Ford had the confident endorsement and grateful support of division presidents Laurie C. Naden and his successor Robert R. Frame in this endeavor.

While Ford emphasized justification, he did not undervalue sanctification nor separate the two, though he did distinguish between them. Justification addressed the relationship of being righteous by faith and this was the ground for sanctification as the inevitable fruit of the life of faith.¹⁶ During the 1960s, this emphasis effectively protected Avondale from the insidious appeal of the Awakening movement. Pfandl, among others, observes that Ford's emphasis on righteousness by faith was "a necessary course correction to the prevailing perfectionism of the 1960s." In 1971, Brinsmead abandoned his esoteric ideas of perfectionism in the light of his study of scripture and the Protestant reformers. He became, instead, a strong advocate of justification by faith, presenting it as a core teaching of the sixteenth-century Reformation.

Ironically, as the influence of the Sanctuary Awakening movement gradually subsided, a renewed advocacy for Andreasen's traditional last-generation perfectionism (without Brinsmead's aberration) spread more widely and intensified, fostered by strong voices in the United States. Church members persuaded by Andreasen's arguments came to perceive Heppenstall and Ford as teaching "cheap grace," undermining the distinctive Adventist teaching on obedience to the law in preparation for the end times. Large numbers of church members on the other hand, responded positively to Ford and Heppenstall. They had experienced release from legalism and feared that the Andreasen emphasis would take them back into a form of spiritual bondage. The debate intensified as the 1970s progressed.

Pushing back against the Ford-Heppenstall emphasis on soteriology, the *Adventist Review* editor, Kenneth Wood, with the assistance of Herbert Douglas and Don F. Neufeld, published in 1974 a "Special" edition of the *Review* on the topic of righteousness by faith, which strongly advocated the M. L. Andreasen perspective.¹⁷ The *Review* editors claimed to have the support of General Conference President Robert H. Pierson and others in his administration who were intent on "reversing" things back to "solid historic Adventist thought."¹⁸ In Australia, the special issue of the *Review* complicated the pastoral task of division leadership, who interpreted the "Special" issue as a veiled attack on Avondale and Dr. Ford.

In February 1976, a two-day meeting of the Australasian Division Biblical Research Institute (ABRI), with all local and union conference presidents attending, heard the complaints of a self-appointed committee of Concerned Brethren (CBs), the principle voices of an anti-Ford faction. They also heard Dr. Ford and other faculty respond that Avondale was in fact teaching a moderate Adventist position—similar to what was being taught at other Adventist colleges. The ABRI fully vindicated Ford. Unhappy with the outcome of the ABRI hearings, the CBs continued to agitate even more vigorously against Ford and Avondale and through personal correspondence took their complaints to Pierson and *Review* editor, Kenneth Wood.

The ongoing debate led to the *Australasian Record*, under the editorship of Robert H. Parr, taking a strongly defensive stance on behalf of both the Avondale faculty and Dr. Ford, and an opposition to the soteriological position of the *Adventist Review*. Division leaders in Australia, "alarmed by the promotion of perfectionism in American SDA literature," appealed to the General Conference for a consultation to resolve the issue. The touchstone of the debate was whether the Pauline term "righteousness by faith" referred to justification only or to a fusion of both justification and sanctification.¹⁹

In an effort to resolve the issues, the General Conference convened a theological consultation involving nine scholars and church administrators from Australia and eleven from the United States, during April 23–30, 1976. The Palmdale Conference convened in the high-desert town of Palmdale, California.

Delegates concluded the conference with a statement that they did not wish to be taken "as an official

pronouncement by church leaders” but “as a statement of consensus.” It was published a month later as a two-and-a-half-page, fine-print article in the *Review*.²⁰ The opening paragraph of the statement was taken as a direct affirmation of the unanimous understanding of the Australasian delegation.

Three paragraphs further down in the document, however, the statement conceded that “Seventh-day Adventists have often used the phrase ‘righteousness by faith,’ theologically to include both justification and sanctification.” As Pfandl notes, there was no explanation as to whether such usage was even appropriate or biblical, or whether it should continue or not.²¹ The balance of the statement addressed the two perspectives on the human nature of Christ without expressing a judgment on the correctness of either. Subsequently, both sides of the conflict claimed that the consensus statement supported their position. The Palmdale Conference thus did nothing to calm the debate and the conflict continued unabated. With the continued open promotion of their last-generation perfectionism, the *Adventist Review* provided resources for the now highly charged right-wing faction in Australia. Ford had inescapably become a lightning rod for this theological opposition. In 1977, a teaching exchange was arranged for Ford at PUC as a safety-valve activation to try and settle the turmoil.

In February 1978, General Conference leaders met for ten days at Nosoca Pines Ranch in South Carolina to try and achieve some consensus.²² Though planned beforehand, this consultation convened conveniently just after the publication of Geoffrey Paxton’s book, *The Shaking of Adventism*, which had drawn public attention to the ongoing turmoil in the Church and had heightened the tensions.²³

In August 1978, a further six days of discussions were convened at the General Conference with another small group of officers and scholars, half of whom had been at the Palmdale Conference. The meeting was another attempt to achieve a more unified understanding on the soteriological issues dividing the church. This time, however, no formal consensus statement was attempted. The only thing delegates could agree on, according to Gordon Hyde, the secretary of the General Conference BRI, was the fear each party had of the convictions of the other. Both General Conference and

Review leadership feared that the emphasis on justification by faith in the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ was “cheap grace,” antinomianism, and “attitudes that led to lower standards of Christian living.” Ford and those who shared his convictions held the opposite fear, that the *Review* was teaching “a form of legalism” that gave nominal assent to the initial need for justification by faith but then became “absorbed with the performance of good works. . . .”²⁴ The disputants were united in their fear of each other. According to Gillian Ford, the accusations of antinomianism were circulating even more widely in late 1978 and were largely the reason Parmenter had communicated to Ford that he should stay in America and that if he wanted to return to Australia he would be placed in a field appointment or in evangelism, not at the college. At the time, both Ford and his wife feared that this initiative was the “first step to removing him [Ford] from the work altogether,” and Gillian wrote to Neal Wilson to protest the action.²⁵

The fear of antinomianism was expressed widely in the church. Prominent voices of opposition, such as Morris Venden, became very specific in their public warning of danger. “Beware! Icebergs Ahead,” he wrote in a popular volume published in early 1980.²⁶ At headquarters, the fear was entertained by many and it formed a large hidden agenda that provided a background of suspicion and prejudice against Ford at the Glacier View Conference. Editorials in the *Review* in the lead-up to the Glacier Conference had focused on a defense of Kenneth Wood’s last-generation, victorious-life perfectionism, and had portrayed this as a core historic teaching of Adventism under attack by Ford.²⁷ In the view of Wood and Douglass, Ford’s gospel preaching was an attack on the distinctive message of Seventh-day Adventism. His Forum presentation had only made it much worse and was a fulfillment of Andreasen’s prediction.

Ford’s understanding of righteousness by faith, which he had taken to have been endorsed at Palmdale, was not mentioned as an issue in the Glacier View Consensus Statements, nor in the ten-point statement of differences, where Ford was perceived to differ from traditional Adventist teaching. The subtle, underlying opposition at Glacier View to Ford’s gospel emphasis, however, was clearly reflected in Robert Pierson’s influential appeal,

read to Glacier View participants on Wednesday evening. Pierson's manuscript reflected the views of Wood and Douglass and the distorted perceptions of Ford's teaching that had been articulated in Russell Standish and John Clifford's book *Conflicting Concepts*, which Pierson had read and applauded in 1974.²⁸ Pierson, directly challenging Ford's ethics and honesty in continuing to receive a church salary, spoke of "an adapted Calvinist theology, cheap grace and lowered standards," and saw in the background "a new doctrine of original sin, a Calvinistic predestination, a life of spiritual defeat, a salvaged conscience."²⁹ Ford was deeply hurt by Pierson's attack, with its sharp *ad hominem* edge and its Standish brothers' perspective. The appeal is reported to have been met with many administrative "amens." Australasian Division president, Keith Parmenter, also informed PREXAD, during the discussions held later with Ford after the close of the conference, that he too viewed Ford as being "too extreme in the area of justification." The fear of antinomianism shaped a negative view of Ford at Glacier View.

Hidden Agenda II: A Context of Fear and Reaction to Cultural and Social Change

The fear that Ford represented antinomianism had been sharpened in Australia and in America by an underlying fear of wider disturbing social and cultural changes on college campuses during the late 1960s and '70s. At Avondale College, during the period Des Ford taught there, the campus had seen numerous large-scale changes of which he was a part but was not responsible for. These changes, notes Don Neufeld, speaking of similar changes on American college campuses, created something of a conservative reaction in the wider

church. This culture of conservative reaction, channeled through theological conflict, constituted an underlying influence that helped prejudice the ultimate outcome of Ford's hearing more than the specific biblical issues involved.³¹

The changes at Avondale were the result of the college needing to adjust to rising educational standards across the church and society. Beginning in the 1950s, PUC had provided accreditation for Avondale academic programs because local, state-government accreditation was not possible. During the mid-1960s, however, the Australian

government slowly began to adopt a more welcoming attitude to private providers of education, and over time, national accreditation of courses and access to government student-tuition assistance became possible even for a private tertiary college like Avondale.³² Forward-looking college principals like Gordon McDowell in the 1960s and Eric Magnusson in the 1970s, cast their vision for improved facilities at the college and the need for local-government accreditation in the context of these societal changes. Pressure from Pacific Union College accreditation visits had also driven the need for better facilities and a better-resourced library, for example. Govern-

ment training schools lengthened their teacher education programs to cope with rising expectations in the school system and Avondale felt the pressure to follow suit. As a church institution, Avondale thus sought to help address the rising standards required for teachers. This pressure was also felt in the area of theology. All Adventist teacher trainees had to take a series of religion classes. And pastors needed more extensive training.

The kind of changes at Avondale that these pressures led to included:

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- External recognition of the science and education academic awards by state universities and then by local state governments.
- The extension of training courses from two years for teachers to three- and then to four-year programs within the space of a fairly short time. The same was true for ministerial training—from a licentiate to a diploma and then to a degree. Then nursing training came onto campus—hospital-based training down in Sydney was no longer adequate. It too went from two to three years and eventually to four.
- This lengthening of courses, and increased academic standards, required more lecturers at the college with terminal degrees and, during the 1960s and 1970s, staff were increasingly required to have at least a master's degree and preferably a doctorate. The number of doctorates on campus steadily increased during the two decades.
- As the courses lengthened and curriculum content expanded to meet state and church certification requirements, there was pressure on the work-study system and students could not keep up with the previous twenty-hour work-week requirement. It dropped to sixteen, then to twelve, then to eight. Numerous students found it difficult to work at all. This had a major impact on campus culture and proved unsettling to those who valued the Ellen White blueprint.
- This was also the time of the hippy period, and changes in dress and in sexual mores. In 1966, Joseph Fletcher published his disturbing *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, questioning the

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adequacy of an absolute moral order and generating a firestorm of controversy in religious circles.³³ The book, though sharply critiqued in Avondale classes, created significant waves of discussion on campus. Then, during the 1970s, students became even more “hip.” They lost interest in participating in the band or attending concerts. Modern music was more appealing. Engaging in such things as the Master Guide Certificate program became passé. The tightknit campus social culture began to fray. In Hook’s account, the faculty began to feel that the “treasured fabric of campus life was threadbare.”³⁴

These cultural changes discomforted the faculty. But they greatly unsettled alumni—particularly retired ministers and evangelists for whom “short” ministerial and teacher training courses were all that were needed for a successful ministry. It became a very difficult time for college administrators, for it helped to provoke a highly critical backlash against the college often expressed as theological criticism and charges of a lack of commitment to Spirit of Prophecy counsel.³⁵

Retired clergy and conservative, somewhat anti-intellectual, laymen reacted negatively to the rising educational standards and the impact these had on both the patterns and content of learning. They perceived it all as “worldly influence.” The group circulated pamphlets and lodged formal complaints with the division officers. Much of the criticism focused on the theology department and its charismatic chair, Dr. Desmond Ford. He became a lightning rod of dissent because his widespread preaching on righteousness by faith was perceived as a form of antinomianism, in keeping with the spirit of the times, if not actually nurturing the changes on campus.³⁶ His teaching was seen as a serious departure from historic Adventism and

in some way reflecting and/or fostering the lowering of standards on campus. The criticism from the Concerned Brethren, (CBs) expressed in pamphlets such as “Doctor Desmond Ford’s Dangerous Doctrines,” however, was not just about his allegedly antinomian gospel preaching. Formal charges against him alleged that Ford introduced students to the problems of maintaining traditional concepts of biblical inerrancy and the weaknesses of Ussher’s chronology for the age of the earth. This reportedly deeply unsettled his students. The CBs were concerned, however, about the whole tenor of the changes and the direction of things on campus. In many respects, Ford was an easy target. These troubles led in 1977 to the transfer of Ford to PUC on a teaching exchange and his eventual dismissal from college employment three years later. As Walter Utt noted in *Spectrum*, when Des arrived at Angwin he was already “well equipped with enemies.”³⁷

The Avondale science department also became a target during this period because it too at times addressed such issues as the inadequacies of Ussher’s chronology in relationship to new data from geology, radiometric dating methods, and their implications for traditional time spans for life on earth. By the end of the 1970s, the extent of the conservative backlash and severe theological ferment within the constituency severely challenged senior church administrators in Australia, constrained by their own limited educational and theological preparation.

This was the social-cultural background to much of the tension in Australian Adventism prior to Ford’s 1979 Forum presentation. At Glacier View, it was part of the underlying (and largely unrecognized) undercurrent pulling administrators toward the urgent need to find a solution to the turmoil through the dismissal of Ford.

Australian church leaders also felt that they should not renew Eric Magnusson’s appointment as president of the college at the end of his term in 1980. Magnusson, a distinguished scientist, was forty-seven years of age. Not seeing his way clear to accept a pastoral assignment, or to take an appointment to America, he was granted a two-year leave of absence. Faculty, staff, and family members were deeply unsettled at the decision. Many felt that he had been treated unfairly and saw his departure as “a considerable loss for the institution.”³⁸ Robert Parr, the editor of the *Australasian Record*, was also replaced at this time in an attempt to deal with the ferment.

Hidden Agenda III: Fear and Administrative Vulnerability

Part of the back story for the development of a heightened-conflict environment in Australia in the late 1970s, relates directly to a change in division administration at the end of 1976. In the early years of Ford’s and Heppenstall’s response to the perfectionism of the early Brinsmead, senior division leadership had been grateful for Ford’s preaching and writing and his theological emphasis, and had enthusiastically supported Ford, facilitating his apologetic work throughout the division territory. L. C. Naden, the fatherly radio preacher who had helped Ford become an Adventist and served as division president from 1962 to 1970, defended Ford against right-wing, old-school, fundamentalist critics.³⁹ Robert Frame, president from 1970 to 1976, also valued Ford’s teaching and preaching, although he himself had a college studies background in business administration, not theology or ministry.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, in the tradition of Naden, he was active in Ford’s defense against those who would object to his teaching of such new perspectives as Turkey not being the King of the North in Daniel 11, or to his alerting students to the weaknesses of Ussher’s chronology. During these years, Ford was requested to serve as the official theological correspondent for the division, answering letters of enquiry and questions on theological and doctrinal matters that were forwarded to him from the headquarters office. Two of his publications resulted from this extensive writing on questions and answers.⁴¹

Frame strenuously defended Ford, knowing that he had been “denigrated and completely misrepresented” by Russell Standish and John Clifford in their book, *Conflicting Concepts*. He was also concerned that the two men and their book seemed to have “access” to the General Conference and to personnel at the Review and Herald. Frame reported that his Australian colleagues viewed the book as being “defamatory” and he viewed the correspondence the men had with Pierson and Wood as in poor taste, making allegations “completely without foundation.” He appealed to Pierson to call Russell’s brother, Colin, (then a senior administrator at Columbia Union College) to “give an account” for his schismatic activity and that someone should bring him “into line.”⁴²

The intensity of the attacks increased at this time through a coalition of retired ministers and the Standish

brothers, who fostered organized opposition through a “Get Rid of Ford,” (GROF) initiative. The GROF movement claimed covert and sometime open support from the *Review* editors and, in 1977, the senior leadership in Australia became more unwilling to defend Ford. Keith Samuel Parmenter had been elected president of the division in November 1976, when Robert Frame had been called to California to direct the new Adventist Media enterprise at Thousand Oaks. Parmenter, like Frame, had also not graduated from college, because of a failure in his final year. He had previously attempted a one-year business program and then, according to Hook, he returned in 1944 and, against the advice of the faculty, he apparently attempted the ministerial program, but his name was withdrawn from the graduation list when he was unable to complete. Contemporaries appreciated Parmenter’s skills as a committee chairman, but he “lacked the benefit of a strong academic background,” and was not as theologically attuned as his predecessors.⁴³ Ronald W. Taylor, the division secretary, proceeded into ministry from a nursing background while in mission service in the South Pacific. When it came to theological conflict, Parmenter was distressed over the activities of Russell Standish and John Clifford and grieved “immensely” by their “inability to state the facts as they really are” and to “draw unwarranted conclusions.” He objected to the two doctors’ “monstrous defamation of the Australasian Division,” and their attempt to go around the local division to have their complaints against Ford heard by Pierson and his officers in Washington. But he was hesitant to be seen as publicly defending Avondale in soteriological issues, choosing rather to simply say that his administration was “in harmony with the Palmdale Statement.”⁴⁴ Milton Hook observes that Parmenter “was not of the same mettle,” and over time did not have the same inclination to stand up to the group of Concerned Brethren.⁴⁵ The public criticism of Ford and the issues raised were no different than those that had been repeatedly raised and answered when protective support had been given during the previous two administrations. What had changed? As Ford himself expressed it later, church critics apparently “threatened that his [Parmenter’s] life would be intolerable,” unless he removed Ford.⁴⁶ Parmenter arranged a teaching exchange for Ford at Pacific Union College in California.

Other factors also strained the relationship between Ford and Parmenter. Sometime earlier, at the invitation of the General Conference Sabbath School department, Ford had prepared a Sabbath School lesson quarterly which had been approved through all the processes. When it came time for circulation of the pamphlet in the mid-1970s, apparently Parmenter had personally objected to its release and it had been withdrawn. This upset Ford, particularly the anonymous way in which the intervention had been undertaken and that Parmenter had not informed him.⁴⁷ Then, in mid-1978, after further pressure from Ford’s critics, Parmenter informed Ford that should he return to Australia he would be assigned to pastoral work in the field and not to teaching. Ford understood that this was a “prospective sacking from my position” and was deeply distressed, particularly because Parmenter had come to this conclusion without discussing the issue with Ford or giving him a “hearing.” The decision disturbed Ford because it had been taken in response to the usual critics. “You question my methodology more than my theology,” Ford observed, but then noted that Parmenter had accused him of downgrading sanctification and of “antinomianism.”⁴⁸ Ford could not believe how Parmenter could think this of him. Parmenter had not talked to Ford to hear his side of affairs about how things were proceeding at the time in America. He apparently had not talked to any of the numerous conference presidents who had invited Ford to speak at the camp meetings in their conferences in America and who had appreciated his ministry. L. C. Naden had heard that PUC had received seventy-five requests from the field for Ford’s services.⁴⁹ If Parmenter had talked to *Ministry* editor, J. R. Spangler, Duncan Eva, Phil Follett, or Neal Wilson, Ford responded, he could certainly not have laid the accusation of antinomianism. He cited Neal Wilson, whom he reported as saying to him in the presence of Spangler in a personal conversation just six weeks previously, “Des, you cannot fairly be accused of not believing or not preaching sanctification.”⁵⁰ According to the PUC President, Dr. Jack Caswell, Ford’s public camp meeting activity was well received with the only criticism coming from “known quarters.”⁵² Ford pointed out that Frame and Naden had defended him, even though they had “pressures similar to those now bearing on you.” They resisted. Frame had reported to him “again and again” that complaints did not come

from men “in the active working force,” only, it seems, from the retirees. Why could not Parmenter “oppose men actuated by motives that are highly questionable?” Ford had begun his letter noting that “we must soon meet at the bar of God to give an account of our stewardship,” and he concluded his challenge to Parmenter’s “present conclusions,” with a reminder again that they both stood under “the Eye of the Omniscient one.”⁵²

Parmenter had advised Ford to seek an extension to his exchange at PUC. According to Ford, the division leader had already tried to negotiate this with Cassell at PUC, offering to contribute to the salary, and then had attempted to disguise the remuneration arrangements to keep them from the knowledge of the Concerned Brethren back in Australia. Ford saw this failure of Parmenter to honor his word and ensure his return to his teaching position in Australia after the exchange at PUC as a deeply hurtful betrayal.⁴³ The fact that the Australian leader was less than transparent and dissembled in explaining the new arrangements to Ford, shattered his confidence in Parmenter’s integrity and his leadership.⁵⁴

As he began his third year at PUC, Ford was further dispirited by the failure in Washington, DC to carry through on earlier assurances that the BRI would soon begin to take up the study of the exegetical issues, because he knew they were becoming urgent. He was aware that Brinsmead was now discussing them publicly at meetings on the West Coast. Somewhat goaded by this double sense of betrayal and a loss of confidence in the Australasian leadership, compounded by frustration, impatience, and the recent challenge of Brinsmead’s public criticism of the church’s sanctuary theology, Ford himself became vulnerable and felt less the need to continue to be circumspect and exercise restraint. Although he was assured of

the safety net of academic freedom, there was also a sense that the exegetical matters had to be addressed and what was there now to lose? Thus, he accepted the invitation to address the PUC Forum in October 1979. The sense of betrayal, lack of trust, and a failure to continue support forms a strong, underlying current affecting attitudes and outcomes at the Glacier View meeting.

According to church officials close to Neal Wilson, the world-church leader’s assessment of the Australasian president and his secretary, R. A. Taylor, was not glowing. They were “not great

leaders in style and integrity.” Wilson was aware of “complaints” made to him by other General Conference leaders and from personnel from within the South Pacific field itself. If Wilson, from an administrative point of view, felt that there had to be a “conclusion” and that Glacier View somehow had to “bring closure,” he nevertheless felt pushed by Parmenter to deal with the matter quickly and dismiss Ford before they left Colorado.⁵⁵ Richard Hammill, whose view of the Australian leaders was that they were “inept” in their management

of the events surrounding Glacier View in Australia, believed that Parmenter “forced his [Wilson’s] hand.”⁵⁶ Even if Wilson may have known instinctively in advance and from his conversations with the Australian leaders that the outcome for Ford would be negative, he at least “hoped” that he might be able to save him and that there might possibly have been “a better outcome.”⁵⁷

Hidden Agenda IV: Fear of a Collusion between Desmond Ford and Robert Brinsmead

The specter of Robert Brinsmead loomed large over the Glacier View conference and accounts for a surprisingly large part of the explanation as to why the Glacier View conference had such a negative outcome for Ford and for

Ford’s perceived collusion with Brinsmead was the dominant agenda item at Glacier View as the meeting proceeded from theological considerations to administrative concerns with the future of Ford’s employment.

the church. Ford's perceived collusion with Brinsmead was the dominant agenda item at Glacier View as the meeting proceeded from theological considerations to administrative concerns with the future of Ford's employment. Collusion there was not—but their relationship was complex and for the right-wing it invited conspiracy theories.

As already noted, Robert Brinsmead and his brother John had played a contentious, highly divisive role in Australian Adventism, during the 1960s, in spearheading a schismatic movement. After an encounter with the writings of Luther and Martin Chemnitz in preparation for a debate with a Catholic priest in 1970, Robert had turned full circle from a strident and idiosyncratic view of end-time, sinless perfectionism, to an impassioned emphasis on righteousness by faith as articulated by the sixteenth-century reformers, with its balancing corrective by Wesley. Brinsmead's adoption of this new perspective exposed incongruities that he now saw between the legalistic soteriology embedded in the traditional understanding of the doctrine of the investigative judgement and the gospel. His journal, *Present Truth*, later to become *Verdict*, was widely read by Adventists in Australia and it soon became a journal of outreach to other Christian clergy.⁵⁸

Ford had been instrumental in rebutting Brinsmead's perfectionism in the '60s and was an agent of change in Brinsmead becoming fervently evangelical. Ford could only applaud and endorse this reformation of Brinsmead, as did others, such as former president L. C. Naden, even as he cautioned Ford about the need for care in relating to Brinsmead, until "the man is fully aligned with us again."⁵⁹ Brinsmead's evangelical enthusiasm soon led to a biting critique of traditional Adventist soteriology by Anglican theologian, Geoffrey Paxton,

in his book *The Shaking of Adventism* (1977). Brinsmead had befriended Paxton through his *Verdict* publishing enterprise. Ford's public general agreement with the thesis of Paxton's book greatly annoyed Parmenter and led to widespread rumors that Ford had helped Paxton write the book. This was not true, but Parmenter apparently was inclined to give some credence to the rumors.

In 1978, when Brinsmead published his critique of the investigative judgment doctrine, *1844 Re-examined*, rumors again circulated that Ford had helped Brinsmead write the book because his October Forum talk dealt

broadly with the same exegetical issues. It was believed by the Australasian Division administrators that it was the Brinsmead organization that had circulated Ford's Forum tape. Later at Glacier View, Parmenter reported to PREXAD that turmoil in the church in Australia had been sharply exacerbated by the widespread, unauthorized circulation of Ford's 991-page study document. He assumed that Ford was responsible and was again working through a backdoor arrangement with Brinsmead.⁶⁰ None of this was actually true in any way, but the rumors shaped and sharpened Parmenter's suspicions and became the basis for his

The misrepresentation and mistrust concerning Ford's relationship to Brinsmead, and Ford's "lack of judgment" in not being concerned about the circulation of the materials, had a hugely damaging impact on the perceptions of Ford's attitude and thus on the outcome of Glacier View.

actions. Unfortunately, the rumors, given credence, distorted the perception of Ford—at least on the part of Parmenter and his associates and PREXAD. A large part of the discussions between Ford and the administration on the Friday afternoon of the Glacier View meetings, and in later conversations between Parmenter and Wilson, concerned Ford's perceived disloyal and pernicious collusion with Brinsmead. The requirement that Ford "dissociate himself" from the unofficial distribution of his materials (thought to be by Brinsmead) and "certain activities considered to be subversive" (Brinsmead's teaching and

publishing), was a repeated concern of PREXAD and the smaller administrative group that met with Ford on Friday afternoon to discuss his continued employment.⁶¹

In the Friday afternoon meeting, Parmenter chided Ford for not responding to his many previous requests “to show where you differ from Robert Brinsmead.” He reported to the administrative group that some in Australia were declaring Ford was behind the *1844 Re-examined* book. “Why have you never been willing to identify where you stand, and disassociate yourself from Brinsmead?” he asked. “Your views are either so close to his, or you are in collusion. . . . it looks like you endorse each other.” Parmenter even handed to Ford a copy of *Judged by the Gospel: A Review of Adventism*, Brinsmead’s most recent publication then circulating in Australia and asked if he recognized it. Ford acknowledged that he had seen the book and that there were several points in the book which he disagreed with. He identified these and affirmed that he disagreed with Brinsmead’s methodology, meaning, it seems, his critical attitude. But he declared firmly “that there was no collusion between them.” On the other hand, he affirmed that he could not “oppose Brinsmead for his emphasis on righteousness by faith, especially justification.”⁶² Since Brinsmead had changed, they understood this doctrine in the same way. He did not want in any way to impede the preaching of the gospel or critically attack those attempting to preach it. Wilson later recalled this meeting and his own appeal to Ford to help the Australasian Division by “disassociating himself from the kind of approach that is used by Bob Brinsmead and from [his] objectives.” He remembered Ford replying “I don’t want to denigrate a person, I don’t want to denounce a person. He is a good man.” When Wilson pressed him again to specify publicly what the many things were that he did not agree with Brinsmead on, Ford responded again, “you know he is a good man. He is doing a lot of good for lots of people, and he is sending out *Verdict* magazine to evangelical and other ministers.” Ford in fact felt that his own understanding of righteousness by faith had been clarified in the light of Brinsmead’s study of the reformers, particularly Martin Chemnitz.⁶³

Wilson’s assessment of this problem was that if Ford could not identify the differences between them, “we have to assume there is nothing that you disagree with.” Wilson, who wanted to resist the conclusion of collusion that Parmenter had drawn, nevertheless reported that many

administrators had already concluded that “he and Bob Brinsmead are so close in their theology that you can hardly draw much of a line between them.” He respected the fact that Ford had always had “a great concern” for the man, but Wilson found it “a very puzzling thing.”⁶⁴ He felt strongly that it was not “a fair position” in which to put the Australasian Division.⁶⁵ Why did Ford feel unable to comply with this request?

Ford’s relationship with Robert Brinsmead and his extended family was complex. Robert Brinsmead and he had been college students together at Avondale and both had North Queensland roots (a source of a deeply distinctive, remote-rural-location camaraderie) and their shared interest in things theological was intense. When Brinsmead launched his schismatic initiatives, Ford became a firm opponent—but a “friendly enemy.” They were sparring partners theologically but, in an effort to maintain the prospect of reconciliation, Ford had maintained cordial relationships. There were walks in the bush and invitations to meals.⁶⁶ Ford’s approach was not to use *ad hominem* attacks or do the bidding of Brinsmead’s critics among the brethren. To simply teach and preach the gospel with a clear focus on justification by faith as the cardinal doctrine of the Christian life was, for Ford, the basis for victorious Christian living. Apart from matters of theology, Australian Adventism was a rather close-knit community. Though disagreeing theologically with Brinsmead and opposing his organizational activities, Ford remained a friend.

When Ford’s first wife, Gwen, became ill with terminal cancer in the mid-1960s, Mrs. Verna Brinsmead, Robert’s sister-in-law (wife of Lawrence Brinsmead, whom Ford would refer to as “a very decent man”) helped care for her for several months. A sister to Robert, Mrs. Hope Taylor, gave hydrotherapy treatments and other natural health remedies. John Brinsmead’s family provided a temporary home for Des’ young son Paul, so that he could be near his mother during this time. This meant visits to the Brinsmead homesteads in the Tweed Valley for Ford.⁶⁷ There developed a fellowship of respect and shared suffering and unconditional assistance offered despite theological differences. The relationship between the two men might be best understood in the context of the unique Australian cultural value of “mateship.”⁶⁸ Ford called Brinsmead a “friend.”⁶⁹ He may not have thought of him consciously

as a “mate,” but if asked casually in the Australian context he could perhaps have easily said, “yes, Bob is a good mate.” Occasional social visits between the men in later years, which Ford did not seek but would not avoid, were sometimes interpreted by church members almost as consorting with the enemy.

According to a later account by Robert Brinsmead, sometime in 1977, his younger brother John became very upset by Robert’s switch to publishing critically on the topic of 1844. Robert had come home from a visit to California supporters determined to write on the investigative judgment. Robert had challenged Ford to write on 1844 but he steadfastly refused. John Brinsmead mistakenly believed that Ford had put Robert up to this and had possibly assisted him in writing what was a very provocative *1844 Re-examined*. John travelled to Sydney to visit with Claude Judd, his union president, who then took him to Parmenter. Thereafter, apparently on several occasions, he conveyed his idea of a suspected collusion to Parmenter. He also seems to have fed the story to others because it became a public rumor. John Brinsmead also apparently reported to Parmenter; later in 1979, his understanding that Ford had colluded with Brinsmead’s organization in the circulation of the 1979 Forum tape.⁷⁰ Again, the report from John Brinsmead was quite untrue. He had seriously misunderstood the situation and misrepresented Ford, who firmly denied any involvement in the release of the tape or transcript, and any cooperation or collusion in any way between himself or his wife, Gillian, as a mediator with Robert Brinsmead. The Australasian administration nevertheless concluded that Brinsmead had colluded with Ford in circulating the 1980 manuscript during the lead up to the Glacier View conference. Such reports, Ford asserted indignantly, were “sheer rubbish.”⁷¹

It was not until 2007 that Gillian Ford learned who was responsible for the mass distribution of the Forum tape. The Fords knew that Dr. Dean Jennings, a physician at the St. Helena Sanitarium, had recorded the 1979 meeting and sent copies to seven close acquaintances, one of whom was Heppenstall. A person in New Mexico, however, unrelated to the Brinsmead group, had obtained a copy of a copy of one of the tapes and, without the permission of Ford or the Forum organizers, had circulated approximately 1,000 copies domestically and internationally. Recipients often then re-copied the tape themselves.

Within a very short time copies of the tape were very widely distributed.⁷² It was, again, only in 2007 that Gillian Ford learned that it had been Dr. Dean Jennings who had obtained permission from Mrs. Reuben Figuhr in St. Helena to read her husband’s copy of the 991-page manuscript. Jennings had copied it to read it and then made it available to people in Australia—sending a copy it seems to Robert Parr, the editor of the *Australasian Record*.⁷³ The misrepresentation and mistrust concerning Ford’s relationship to Brinsmead, and Ford’s “lack of judgment” in not being concerned about the circulation of the materials, had a hugely damaging impact on the perceptions of Ford’s attitude and thus on the outcome of Glacier View. Ford’s lack of willingness to speak against Brinsmead was taken as an indication of a lack of pastoral care and a lack of loyalty to the denomination. In the context of the emotional intensity of the Friday afternoon meeting, Ford “heard” the request concerning Brinsmead as a requirement to “damn Brinsmead.” This he could not do. The inability to meet this request was more damaging than any of the particular issues of his theological position.

Hidden Agenda V: Charisma, Australian Assertiveness, and Cross-Cultural Misunderstanding

Ford was a charismatic preacher and teacher, whose biblical knowledge and sharp intellect were widely admired. And he spoke with an Australian accent. Walter Utt, a colleague at PUC, reported that his “dazzling style” moved and inspired both students and church members. He was thus much in demand for speaking engagements off campus. But his charismatic personality, quickness of wit, and over-readiness with a confident answer to almost everything also put some people off. His Australian penchant for forthright assertiveness could be taken as dogmatic egotism.

For American church administrators, Ford the person was somewhat of an enigma. His personality and cultural background unavoidably tangled together at the center of the debate at Glacier View. Although at the outset Wilson had said Ford was not on trial as a person, in fact as things turned out, he was. And in that trial, his personality and his “Australian-ness” counted heavily against him. His personality and his temperament were a significant part of the underlying agenda at Glacier View.

Ford was highly respected by his teaching colleagues at Avondale. His nimble, rapier-sharp intellect, prodigious memory, and rapid recall were matched by a warm, charitable spirit and a deeply compassionate modeling of Christian grace and winsomeness. His faculty in the department found him easy to work with. Students loved his classes. As New Testament scholar and former student of Ford, Norman Young, notes, his style was “fast and free flowing” but he “always allowed time for questions,” and always “seemed to have a reasonable answer.” On occasion, reports Young, the registrar was obliged to go to the lecture theatre and request that “unregistered students leave so the legitimate students might find a seat.”⁷⁴ Students also loved his preaching. Chapels, vespers, and church services when Ford spoke were transformative occasions—times to be remembered. Ford’s rhetorical ability to communicate gospel principles with homely illustration and memorable aphorism drew large audiences at camp meetings around the country. His confident assertiveness of a point of view was not off-putting to South Pacific colleagues and most of those who knew and admired him. In Australia, his self-assured, assertive

style was simply part of who he was, and it drew in many conversation partners who entered with enthusiasm into good-natured, earnest debate and banter. Australian culture with its emphasis on camaraderie, “mateship,” and direct, even blunt, exchanges did not perceive him as offensive. Others, outside his own country often did.

To administrators unfamiliar with Australian conversational culture, and for those who did not share his point of view or who were not persuaded by his arguments, he came across as an over-confident crusader with a “know it all” attitude bordering on arrogance. To those who disagreed with him, particularly on points of doctrine, or on

the way he emphasized justification by faith as the basis of the Christian life, the disagreement was often passionate. For those church leaders who found his ministry a blessing—and there were many in Australia—he was a huge asset. To those who found his emphasis on the gospel overdrawn, he was an enigma and a potentially dangerous influence to be silenced, if he could not, at least, make himself sound more traditional.

On one occasion at a meeting, Ford reported Pierson saying to him that he was “too dogmatic.” Ford conceded, “he has a point. I am too dogmatic. He was right.”

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Pierson continued, “I wish, Brother Ford, that sometimes you would say, ‘It seems to me.’” Ford recalled, “my answer was typically Australian. ‘In these particular matters it doesn’t seem to me; I know it is biblical.’”⁷⁵ Ford, with a keen sense of integrity, found himself needing to be his Australian self, wherever, and with whomever, he was. He could not, not be himself. In a sense, in these matters he demonstrated a political naiveté and was somewhat idealistic. The idealism and naiveté perceived through a smoky screen of cultural differences at Glacier View led to serious misunderstanding on Ford’s part and on the

part of his interlocutors.

According to Neal Wilson, the “impression” that “most people” gained at the Glacier View meetings was a Desmond Ford who was “totally unyielding and contentious.” He and his colleagues in leadership, he told Ford directly, felt that it was “quite impossible for you to be wrong.” He appeared to be “always the teacher” and not able “to learn from anyone else.” In order to be a team, there was need for flexibility in attitudes, Wilson stressed. Members of the SRC panel were aware that he had a “charisma, a disarming way to rally people” about him, reported Wilson, but they were concerned

that he gave the impression that he was “the one person who could lead the church out of its theological morass.”⁷⁶ Years later, Wilson would still feel that Ford had been “on a mission” at Glacier View and could not understand his unwillingness to show “a more conciliatory tone.”⁷⁷

Even Dr. Fred Veltman, department of religion chair at PUC, who had been very protective of Ford and held the same view as Ford on many of the exegetical and theological issues, was unable to understand the rigidity and unwillingness of Ford to be conciliatory in tone in the Glacier View meetings. Prior to the Colorado meeting, Veltman had written to his president, Dr. Jack Cassell, offering to resign his position as chair if it would make things easier for the college. He anticipated that at Glacier View, if he was to continue to be a person of integrity, he would have to “declare myself.” He anticipated that this would also be true for “a good number of others” because the views Ford had raised were not “original with Ford and should not be associated primarily with Des.” They were taught by “teachers teaching at PUC and at other colleges.”⁷⁸ In his notes on the meeting recorded in the days immediately following and before Ford’s dismissal, Veltman recalled that he and close colleagues had talked with Ford, urging him to “present his viewpoints in a non-controversial [way] and with as much traditional language as possible.” Ford needed to be “as teachable as possible if he wanted to have the best perspective put on his work,” advised Veltman. It seemed however that Ford was unable to “make a presentation in a non-polemical, non-divisive way,” and in Veltman’s view at the time, Ford’s approach made “the case difficult for himself [Ford].” At the end of the meetings, just as Ford was preparing to leave, they discussed together Ford’s initial response to Parmenter’s letter, setting out

Ford recognized that his Forum speech had caused the church pain even as it had brought light—as had his earlier preaching. But his idealism, adamant perception of the truth, and his keen sense of integrity overrode pastoral concerns as a priority.

conditions of further employment. Veltman said to Ford that he “regretted” seeing Ford take a “rather hard line” approach and that it seemed that Ford “lacked a pastoral sensitivity to the church.” Veltman worried about this because he knew that such a stance would force his scholarly colleagues at Glacier View “to withdraw some of their support” for Ford.⁷⁹

In part, it was these dynamics that had created the problem in the first place, in Ford’s willingness to give the Forum talk. For this he was perceived as having a “lack of judgment.” His expressed lack of concern about the damage being done by unauthorized circulation of the tapes

and the document also reinforced the perception that he lacked genuine pastoral care.

Ford was aware that both Cottrell and Hammill shared many of his positions concerning the exegetical problems. But they had not gotten into trouble. And there were others of similar persuasion, such as retired and much-respected, British-born, General Conference field secretary, Harry Lowe, who had been chair of the GC Research Committee on the Book of Daniel. Lowe wrote to Hammill reporting that in his view the sanctuary doctrine could not be defended “without using Sister White.”

Over many years he had asked “scores of ministers” if they could and “have yet to find a man who can.”⁸⁰ Hammill had given Lowe’s very frank letter to Neal Wilson to read.⁸¹ In fact, Ford knew that Wilson had been to talk to Cottrell and Hammill and that they had spent several hours together on the eve of the Glacier view conference. Cottrell had reported to Wilson that “many of the scholars, if not most,” agreed with Ford on the problem. “Our men have wrestled with it for years,” Ford later recalled Cottrell telling him. His “fault” they argued was “not so much theology.” Rather, he had “done a grave pastoral disservice to the church.”⁸²

Ford recognized that his Forum speech had caused the church pain even as it had brought light—as had his earlier preaching. But his idealism, adamant perception of the truth, and his keen sense of integrity overrode pastoral concerns as a priority. Idealism and integrity were his best expressions of genuine pastoral care. In this regard many of his colleagues in the scholarly community considered him lacking.

Later, in his letters of reply to Parmenter, he attempted with integrity to nuance carefully his willingness to preach in harmony with the fundamental beliefs of the church, speak out on the need for unity, and commit himself to remaining silent in public on troubling unresolved issues of doctrine. But this nuance failed to persuade the distrustful and suspicious leaders on PREXAD. The issue of temperament and personality, exacerbated by cultural differences, was a major underlying problem at Glacier View. The issue had simmered through the week and then boiled over on Friday afternoon, where it occupied a dominant place on the agenda.

Hidden Agenda VI: Fear, Intimidation, and Scholarly Silence

In the years after Glacier View, Ford would repeatedly claim, often with rhetorical hyperbole, that “all” the scholars at Glacier View agreed with him. Correspondence with fellow teachers and conversations with them in the years leading up to Glacier View had informed Ford that many of his teaching colleagues recognized the difficulties, even if each one had to make their own adjustments in their thinking. But, at Glacier View, the scholars hunkered down largely in silence, apparently because of a subtle climate of intimidation and fear concerning their own continued employment. Fear and a sense of intimidation were important underlying concerns that complicated the outcome for Ford at Glacier View. These were complex multi-dimensional issues, not quite as clear cut and straightforward as Ford would often present them.

Many of the scholars felt intimidated and unable to speak openly and honestly about their personal views on the problems because the discussions occurred in the presence of administrators who were also employers. General Conference officers served on the boards of trustees at Loma Linda and at Andrews. Union conference presidents chaired the boards at the union colleges. All held

significant and probably controlling influence in matters of teaching employment of the scholars. Conservative and traditionally minded scholars of course had no difficulty speaking openly. But those who held viewpoints at variance with the tradition and who agreed with Ford to varying degrees felt otherwise. Some simply sat quietly and listened to the debate. Others found it easier to simply ask questions rather than offer viewpoints. Yet others very cautiously addressed alternative perspectives. This multi-faceted dynamic began to manifest itself even amongst the twelve-member advisory committee that consulted with Ford in the preparation of his manuscript. Hammill observed that some scholars became frustrated at Ford’s seeming unwillingness to adopt suggested changes. Others, known to be fully aware of the exegetical problems, did not engage with the issues in the manuscript at all after it was decided to tape the conversations for historical purposes.⁸³

Many scholars recognized the problems Ford raised in his manuscript and saw merit in the solution he proposed. Some, as the recollections of both Veltman and Review and Herald book editor, Richard Coffen, clearly indicate, were already quietly teaching some variation of the approach in their classrooms.⁸⁴ William Johnsson would inform Hammill that on the exegesis of Hebrews, for example, he agreed with Ford “on the bottom line” but not necessarily in some details. “Des has many scholars in support of his views [on Hebrews]—probably the majority in fact.”⁸⁵ Others agreed that there were serious problems with the traditional Adventist attempts to exegete the problem texts, but they may have preferred other solutions. Such scholars could and did say they “disagreed” with Ford. Yet other scholars disagreed with Ford for even raising the issue of the investigative judgment publicly, for they were convinced that the doctrine was unsustainable, and that over time it would simply wither away from neglect and would be quietly discarded.⁸⁶ While some of these scholars could say and did that they disagreed with Ford, they were in fact in agreement that the doctrine was fatally flawed and ill-fated. These scholars were already in a sense on a different hermeneutical planet.

The sense of intimidation and apprehension about being exposed in a way that would risk one’s future employment could be dealt with in an upfront way by Fred

Veltman, for his relationship with his administration was healthy and trusting. Veltman felt comfortable, reportedly, even telling Neal Wilson that he had a problem accepting the investigative judgement doctrine as traditionally taught, and that Wilson replied that that was not a problem as long as he did not “go public” on the matter.⁸⁷ Veltman had worked earlier with Wilson in the Middle East field and there was understanding between the two.

The extent of scholarly support and the willingness of those who agreed with Ford to speak out in open support was complicated by the perception of many that Ford was not a team player. Veltman noted after one conversation with Ford over strategy that Ford advised him not to get involved “in coming to his defense.” This caused Veltman to wonder if Ford saw himself in the mode of Luther before the Diet of Worms and that he needed to “stand apart and independent.” Clearly, the pressures on all were intense, complex and uncomfortable, but it seemed to Veltman that Ford’s inability to accommodate his language and his position to embrace a more “conciliatory” stance “was disappointing to the scholars who were trying to

It seemed to Veltman that Ford’s inability to accommodate his language and his position to embrace a more “conciliatory” stance “was disappointing to the scholars who were trying to work out a compromise.”

work out a compromise.”⁸⁸ Thus it was true that many, if not most, scholars at Glacier View agreed with Ford at some level but were self-protectively guarded about their agreement, nuancing it carefully. Veltman understood Ford correctly. Ford would observe to his friend and colleague, Arthur Patrick, two decades later in 2001, when Patrick was trying to effect a reconciliation between Ford and the church, “I know that no teacher of conflict resolution would follow the path I have chosen . . . But it seems to me [that] the way of the Old Testament prophets has the edge on modern tacticians.”⁸⁹

As Veltman pointed out to Neal Wilson during the process of Ford’s dismissal, to cite theological reasons for

his termination was in fact a serious misreading of the scholarly consensus at Glacier View. The conclusion being drawn by General Conference administration and the Australians, that Ford’s views had been rejected, was “quite different from the actual facts of the case.” The consensus had clearly indicated that “many were in substantial agreement” with Ford and, though parsing matters differently, “many of us hold similar positions.” To read the consensus as had been done by the *Review* and *Ministry*, gave Veltman the feeling of having been “duped.” The theological outcomes at Glacier View were not a sound basis for disciplining Ford, argued Veltman, even as he acknowledged the seriousness of

the conflict situation in Australia. But as he saw it, the initial “hardline” taken by Ford towards Parmenter’s ultimatums had softened and his reply now seemed “quite positive.” Clearly, he observed, Parmenter did not view the Consensus Document or the ten-point statement noting interpretive differences “in the same way as did many of the scholars.” If Ford needed discipline, let it be on the basis of pastoral responsibility or perceived lack thereof but do not base it on theological “orthodoxy or non-orthodoxy,” he wrote

in clear distress. There was a scholarly consensus that had moved in the direction of Ford. “Let us not implicate SDA theology and its biblical scholars to get at a pastoral problem.”⁹⁰

Conclusion

Glacier View was a milestone in the theological development of Adventism. It was a complex series of events and it will take several more decades before a complete history and analysis of it can be adequately undertaken, and for it to be fully appreciated in the flow of Adventist history. When such an undertaking is attempted, hidden agendas, undercurrents of fear and

wider social and historical contexts will need to be considered. Problems apart from the exegesis of Daniel, Hebrews, and Leviticus will be seen as figuring more largely in the outcomes of Glacier View. Administrators needed a practical management solution to a highly polarized church conflict generated by the responses to Ford's Forum presentation and colored by a history of troubles over righteousness by faith, reactions to his charisma, distinctive temperament, cultural manners, and values. The cultural context and the skills of administration in managing church conflict also factored strongly in the background. These together created misunderstanding and had more influence on the negative outcome than the discussion about the specific topic: the investigative judgment.

Endnotes

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2. Richard Hammill, *Pilgrimage: Memoirs of an Adventist Administrator* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1992), 197.
3. *Ibid.*, 196.
4. Kenneth H. Wood, "How We Got Where We Are," unpublished paper presented at Nosoca Pines Retreat, February 10–20, 1978. GC Archives.
5. *Ibid.*, 43.
6. Cited in Wood, "How We Got Where We Are," 86. In his "Review and A Protest" issued on October 15, 1957, Andreasen warned that "our doctrine of the sanctuary, of the investigative judgment, of the 2300 days, all will fall to the ground." Andreasen's letters had been published and widely circulated by A. L. Hudson of Baker, Oregon. *Ibid.*, 79, 86. See also, Julius Nam "Questions on Doctrine and M. L. Andreasen: The Behind-the-Scenes Interactions," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 46: 2 (2018): 229–244.
7. Wood, "How We Got Where We Are," 86. Andreasen's credentials were restored posthumously after a deathbed reconciliation with church leaders. Nam, "Questions on Doctrine," 241, 242.
8. See M. L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 59; and *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 299–304, 310–321, for his arguments for last-generation perfectionism.
9. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 625.
10. In 1971, the movement counted 225 fellowship groups, a donor list of 10,000 and a mailing list of 20,000. See Robert Gardner, "The Awakening: A Religious Movement in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (MA Thesis, Loma Linda University, 1971), 84, 92, 102.
11. H. E. Douglass to C. L. Conley, January 19, 1963 cited in Lowell Tarling, *The Edges of Seventh-day Adventism* (Barragga, NSW: Galilee Publications, 1981), 200; Peter Jarnes, *The Sanctuary Restored* (Lincoln, NE: Peter C. Jarnes, 1968), <http://awakeandsing.com/Sanctuary%20Restored/sres.pdf>. Accessed November 29, 2018.
12. Edward Heppenstall, "Is Perfection Possible?" *Signs of the Times*, December 1963: 10–11, 30.
13. Norval F. Pease, *By Faith Alone* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962).
14. A detailed analysis of these events is given in Gilbert M. Valentine, "The Reformation and the Shaping of Conflict over the Meaning of 'Righteousness by Faith' in Seventh-day Adventism. 1960–1978" in *Perceptions of the Protestant Reformation in Seventh-day Adventism*, ed. Rolf J. Pöhler (Möckern-Friedensau, Germany: Institute of Adventist Studies, 2018), 287–310.
15. Gerhard Pfandl, "Desmond Ford and the Righteousness by Faith Controversy," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 27:1–2 (2016): 345; Valentine, "The Reformation," 294.
16. Pfandl, "Desmond Ford," 350.
17. "Righteousness by Faith: Special Issue," *Adventist Review*, May 16, 1974.
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19. L. C. Naden to R. R. Frame, November 13, 1975, cited in Hook, *Desmond Ford*, 158, 159.
20. "Christ our Righteousness," *Adventist Review*, May 27, 1976: 4–7.
21. Pfandl, "Desmond Ford," 349.
22. The confidential papers for this conference, held February 10–20, 1978, were presented by Kenneth Wood, G. R. Thompson, Donald Neufeld, Richard Hammill, Robert W. Olson, C. E. Bradford, W. Richard Leshner, N. R. Dower, Gordon M. Hyde, W. Duncan Eva, W. J. Hackett, C. D. Henri, Alf Lohne, and R. H. Brown. See C. O. Franz to "Dear Friends," August 17, 1978, Nosoca Pines Retreat Papers (1978), GC Archives.
23. Anglican clergyman Geoffrey Paxton became acquainted with Adventism through a friendship with Brinsmead. His book irritated church leadership when it argued that the Adventist understanding of righteousness by faith was more in keeping with Roman Catholic theology than Protestant. Geoffrey J. Paxton, *The Shaking of Adventism* (Wilmington, DE: Zenith Publications, 1977), 99, 100.
24. Gordon M. Hyde, "Righteousness by Faith Consultation in Washington," *Adventist Review*, September 7, 1978: 944.
25. Gillian Ford to Neal C. Wilson, November 6, 1978. It is not clear that this letter was actually mailed to Wilson. Copy in author's possession.
26. Morris Venden, *Our Times as I See Them* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1980), 64–74. The 92-page volume gave an opportunity for Ford to express his viewpoint and others who also warned of antinomianism such as Kenneth Wood and Ferdinand Chajj.
27. Kenneth H. Wood, "Satan versus the Church," *Adventist Review*, January 24, 1980: 13; Kenneth H. Wood, "Church of

Destiny: A People Who Will Triumph,” *Adventist Review*, August 21, 1980: 11.

28. Russell R. Standish and A. John Clifford, *Conflicting Concepts of Righteousness by Faith in the Seventh-day Adventist Church-Australasian Division* (Wahroonga, NSW: George Burnside Press, 1978), 1. The book had been widely circulated in an earlier form in 1974.

29. Robert H. Pierson, “An Appeal to the Sanctuary Review Committee,” 6. RG 17: R. Leshar GV Files, GC Archives. The letter was read by Clyde Franz. W. D. Eva indicates that the Pierson manuscript distressed Ford. “Notes on Meeting with Dr. Desmond Ford, [August 15, 1980],” RG 11: NCW, GV Files (1980), GC Archives..

30. “Notes on Meeting with Dr. Desmond Ford,” 3. This document is a “reconstruction of what took place” at the meeting “based on notes taken by J. R. Spangler and Charles Hirsch.” The contents correlate closely with the personal manuscript Wilson used to report to members of the Theological Consultation that met at Glacier View commencing Sunday, August 17. RG 11. Neal C Wilson GV Files (1980), GC Archives.

31. Michael Chamberlain provides a broad overview of the social and cultural changes at Avondale in *Beyond Ellen White: Seventh-Day Adventism in Transition: A Sociocultural History and Analysis of the Australian Church and Its Higher Education System* (Tenneriffe, Qld: Post Pressed, 2008).

32. In his history of the college, Milton Hook cites the Australian Government’s 1964 “Martin Report” as being a “watershed” in Australian higher education and for the college. *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora* (Cooranbong, NSW: Avondale Academic Press, 1998), 257.

33. Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1966).

34. Hook, *Experiment on the Dora*, 281.

35. Milton Hook has an extensive discussion of these issues. Hook, *Experiment on the Dora*, 256-96.

36. Standish and Clifford, *Conflicting Concepts*, 1.

37. Walter Utt, “Desmond Ford Raises the Sanctuary Question,” *Spectrum* 10.4 (Winter 1980): 3.

38. Hook, *Experiment on the Dora*, 293; Trevor Lloyd, email to author, April 7, 2019; Roger Magnusson, email to author, March 22, 2109; G. A. Madigan, email to author, March 18, 2019.

39. Trevor Lloyd, “Interview with Desmond Ford,” Sydney, March 12, 1995. Adventist Heritage Center, Avondale College, Cooranbong, NSW, Australia..

40. Frame undertook the business course at Avondale but failed one subject in his last year and did not graduate. “R. R. Frame: Biographical Information Blank,” (1941), South Pacific Division Archives.

41. *Ibid.*, 23; Desmond Ford, *Discovering God’s Treasures* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1972); Desmond Ford, *Answers on the Way* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1977).

42. R. R. Frame to R. H. Pierson, July 12, 1976. Copy in author’s possession.

43. Australasian Missionary College Faculty Minutes, November 30, 1943, Adventist Heritage Center, Avondale College,

Cooranbong, NSW, Australia.. Hook, *Avondale*, 290. Although his photograph appears in the yearbook among the graduates, academic records indicate he did not complete the course.

44. K. S. Parmenter to W. Duncan Eva, June 1, 1978. Copy in author’s possession. Parmenter objected to a respected local conference president, Clem Christian, who reported to one of his church members that when the Australian Division BRI condemned the Standish-Clifford publication and exonerated Ford and his colleagues from any charge of heresy, it “threw its weight behind the teachings of righteousness by faith as taught at Avondale.”

45. Hook, *Desmond Ford*, 187.

46. “Before that, Robert Frame and L. C. Naden were my very good friends. Frame said to me, ‘I get many complaints about you, but when I see the boys you trained who are now in the mission field and elsewhere, I have the utmost confidence in what you are doing’. And he resisted all the retired ministers who opposed me. But Parmenter was a man of a different calibre, no doubt wanting the best for the church, but he found it hard to withstand his attackers who threatened that his life would be intolerable unless he got rid of me.” Gillian Ford Interview with Desmond Ford, Shelley Beach, Qld. Australia, (28 August 2007), 6. Copy in author’s possession. Geoff Bull in a comment on William Johnsson’s article “The Peril of Being Right,” notes that Ford was “too much of a gentleman” to ever expose whatever the issues were that he had in mind: <https://conversation.spectrummagazine.org/t/des-ford-the-perils-of-being-right/18026/39>, (comment #36). Accessed September 14, 2019.

47. Lloyd, “Interview,” 10.

48. Desmond Ford to K. S. Parmenter, November 3, 1978. Copy in author’s possession.

49. L. C. Naden to Gill and Des Ford, March 7, 1978. Copy in author’s possession.

50. Desmond Ford to K. S. Parmenter, November 3, 1978. Copy in author’s possession.

51. Lloyd, “Interview,” 10. Cassell reports that there had been “minimal” controversy on the PUC campus and some murmuring off campus but he and Gordon Madgwick, the academic dean, had counselled with Ford in September 1979 about being “sensitive” to this. J. W. Cassell, “Notes for Meeting with PREXAD,” [1979] “DF” Folder, J. W. Cassell Collection, Walter Utt Center for Adventist History, Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA. Thirty years later, when donating his papers to PUC, Cassell added the following note to this document: “As I reflect after 30 years, I can only come to the conclusion that the decision to refer the Ford issue to Glacier View was both tragic and counterproductive. Had it been handled utilizing the well-defined academic procedure as recommended initially, the result would have been much better accepted by the academic community of which Ford was a member.”

52. Desmond Ford to K. S. Parmenter, November 3, 1978. Copy in author’s possession.

53. *Ibid.*, 9. The sense of betrayal is clear in Ford’s letter to Parmenter.

54. *Ibid.*, 13.

55. Lynn Bartlett, “Recollections on Glacier View

as Gathered from Association with Neal Wilson,” March 26, 2019. Bartlett, who served as the provost at Columbia Union College, was a next-door neighbor to Neal Wilson from 1994 to 1998. Copy in author’s possession.

56. Richard Hammill, *Pilgrimage: Memoirs of an Adventist Administrator* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1992), 197.

57. Bartlett, “Recollections on Glacier View.”

58. J. R. Spangler was to model the outreach of *Ministry* magazine to non-Adventist clergy through the “Preach” program on the outreach program of Brinsmead.

59. L. C. Naden, to Gill and Des Ford, March 7, 1978. Copy in author’s possession.

60. R. D. Brinsmead email to Gillian Ford, October 18, 2007. Copy in author’s possession.

61. PREXAD Minutes August 14, September 2, 1980, DF PREXAD (1980), GC Archives.

62. Notes on Meeting with Desmond Ford,” 6, 7, 9.

63. Lloyd, “Interview,” 25; Valentine, “The Reformation,” 299, 300.

64. Years later Ford would say, “‘Bob, the Day of Atonement was fulfilled at the cross. It has nothing to do with 1844.’ At that time [the 1950s], he rejected it, but he came to see it was true, and he expanded on that in *1844 Re-examined*. Both books are excellent.” Lloyd, “Interview,” 37.

65. Neal C Wilson, “Report to Theological Consultation,” August 18, 17, 1980, 6–8, RG11: NCW, GV Files (1980), GC Archives.

66. Lloyd, “Interview,” 19. Ford would say of Brinsmead, “He is a good man to disagree with.”

67. *Ibid.*, 47.

68. “Mateship” is an Australian cultural idiom that embodies equality, loyalty and friendship, usually among men. Herbert Douglass used the term derisively to speak of the relationship between Ford and Brinsmead when they were in agreement on the meaning of the gospel, which Douglass regarded as heresy.

69. Lloyd, “Interview,” 18.

70. Gillian Ford, “The Distribution of the October 27, 1980 Forum Cassette,” (2007).

71. Lloyd, “Interview,” 47.

72. Gillian Ford to Ted N. C. Wilson, October 22, 2017. Copy in Author’s possession. Robert Brinsmead was not responsible, nor did Ford have a part in it. Jennings was a physician who worked at St. Helena Sanitarium and Elder R. R. Figuhr was his patient.

73. Gillian Ford, “Glacier View Reflections,” (2017) Copy in author’s possession.

74. Norman J. Young, “Desmond Ford: Preacher, Teacher, Writer and Scholar,” (2019). Copy in author’s possession. This moving tribute to Ford at the time of his death in March 2019 was published for a week on the Avondale College blog before instructions were received for the item to be taken down.

75. Lloyd, “Interview,” 33.

76. “Notes on Meeting with Dr. Desmond Ford,” 3. See footnote 30.

77. Bartlett, “Recollections on Glacier View.”

78. Fred Veltman to J. W. Cassell and Gordon Madgwick, July 12, 1980, Fred Veltman Papers, Walter Utt Center for Adventist History, Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA.

79. Fred Veltman, “Sanctuary Review Committee,” [August 1980], Fred Veltman Papers, Walter Utt Center for Adventist History, Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA.

80. H. W. Lowe to Richard Hammill, July 28, 1980. Copy in author’s possession.

81. Richard Hammill to H. W. Lowe, September 18, 1980. Copy in author’s possession.

82. Lloyd, “Interview,” 47.

83. Hammill, *Pilgrimage*, 189.

84. Fred Veltman to J. W. Cassell and Gordon Madgwick, July 12, (1980), Fred Veltman Papers, Walter Utt Center for Adventist History, Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA; Veltman, “The Sanctuary Review Committee.” See Richard Coffen, “Richard Coffen Remembers the most important event in Adventist history since the 1888 General Conference,” (August 10, 2016), <https://atoday.org/glacier-view-a-retrospective/>. Accessed April 9, 2019.

85. W. G. Johnsson to Richard Hammill, March 19, 1980. Cited in Hook, *Desmond Ford*, 240.

86. Jon Paulien recalls Raoul Dederen sharing this perspective with him at Andrews in the days after the 1979 Forum talk. New Testament scholars at the Seminary, Walla Walla, and at Loma Linda shared this perspective. The viewpoint has been recently expressed by Herrold Weiss and David Larsen. See comments on William Johnsson’s article “The Peril of Being Right,” <https://conversation.spectrummagazine.org/t/desford-the-perils-of-being-right/18026/17>. Accessed September 14, 2019.

87. Lloyd, “Interview,” 41.

88. Veltman, “Sanctuary Review Committee.”

89. Desmond Ford to Arthur Patrick, October 6, 2001. Copy in author’s possession.

90. Fred Veltman to Neal C. Wilson, C. E. Bradford, F. W. Wernick and W. Duncan Eva, September 15, 1980, Fred Veltman Papers, Walter Utt Center for Adventist History, Pacific Union College, Angwin, CA.



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