

Volume 1, Number 3

Learning From  
the Adventists

Glad Tidings From  
Southern College

The "Greening"  
of Graybill

Interview with  
ROBERT D.  
BRINSMEAD

Marian the  
"Bookmaker"



AN UNAUTHORIZED, FREE PRESS SUPPLEMENT TO OFFICIAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PUBLICATIONS

# **adventist currents**

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P.O. BOX 362, LOMA LINDA, CALIFORNIA 92354

## FROM THE PUBLISHER:

The publisher and editorial staff of *Adventist Currents* are committed to the belief that Christian freedom is enhanced by information that makes judicious choice a possibility.

*Adventist Currents* represents an effort to put before Seventh-day Adventists, in a careful, creative, and lively way, information and ideas not usually discussed in official, denominational publications.

Readers should find *Adventist Currents* stimulating and accurate at all times, even when they disagree with its editorial posture. Also, it must not be assumed that the publisher of *Adventist Currents* subscribes to the opinions of its contributors.

It is expected that readers will understand the humor sprinkled throughout the magazine as a useful relief to the curse of protracted seriousness. Amen.

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## CURRENTS NEEDS

### PEOPLE

*Adventist Currents* needs people in a variety of geographical locations who will report to the magazine local matters that are of interest to the general readership.

Particularly needed are individuals in or around church administrative offices who can help *Currents* to better understand the minds and actions of conference, union, and General Conference officers.

Also needed are reporters from Seventh-day Adventist college campuses — continuing sources of information and news.

Friends of *Currents* who can assist in its distribution and/or the acquiring of mailing lists are essential.

### INFORMATION

*Adventist Currents* welcomes carefully written articles about Adventism's past, present, and future — articles about issues, events or individuals (maximum length, 5,500 words).

*Currents* needs brief, specific, and documented news items that provide information that is generally not available through the "General Organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (maximum length, 1,800 words).

Guest editorials are welcome, so long as they do not address the characters of individuals or employ language that is untoward (maximum length, 1,200).

Letters to the editor are encouraged. Those that are not published will be polled.

### CONTRIBUTIONS

*Adventist Currents* needs contributions to promote the growth in size, quality, and readership of the magazine.

*Currents* needs friends with stamina who will send tax-free contributions on a regular basis — what is elsewhere termed "systematic benevolence."

*Adventist Currents'* publisher, Mars Hill Publications, Inc., intends to publish books that address various issues of interest to *Currents'* subscribers. Suggestions for topics and potential authors are welcome.

# The “Dance Along a Precipice”

by Douglas Hackleman

Even without claiming the prophetic office, I offer this testimony to my brethren by paraphrasing a twentieth-century Christian writer:

*Those who work for the church, if they will not surrender on its terms, must maneuver within its terms. That is what workers must decide: how much to give in order to survive at all; how much to give in without giving up their integ-*

these days is the failure of moderate Adventists — outraged by the score or so million dollars frittered away by careless church administrators — to generalize from the fact of such a high percentage of casual financial ethics among high-level Adventist leaders to the possibility (likelihood?) that they might have a similarly shallow understanding of our roots and our theology. (Adam's fall was

contradicted his belief that he was dead. The psychiatrist decided to use the simple truth that dead men do not bleed. He put his patient to work reading medical texts, observing autopsies, etc. After weeks of effort, the patient finally said, “All right, all right! You’ve convinced me. Dead men do not bleed.” Whereupon the psychiatrist stuck him in the arm with a needle, and the blood flowed. The man looked down with a contorted, ashen face and cried: “Good Lord! Dead men do bleed after all.”

The parable illustrates the fact that unsound, tenaciously held presuppositions can make information and logic useless. Worse, they can also make us mean.

While Adventists believe in kindness and object to dancing, it is those less knowledgeable and nonintrospective Adventists who continue to force their more learned and contemplative brethren out onto the floor.

***It is his failure to share the evidence — given its implications for an Adventist icon — that keeps him on, rather than below, the cliff.***

rity. And, of course, that results in a dance along a precipice. Many will drop over, and, always the cliff dancers will hear the screams of those who fall, or be numbed by the sullen silence of those — nobler souls perhaps — who will not join in the dance.<sup>1</sup>

What brings about the dance? Original sin, of course; but more particularly the way sin makes many human beings respond when some members of a community know (and share) more than others know about the icons of the community.

The icons of a community are easily identified by the un-Christian way some members of the community treat those who question, doubt, or even challenge. The Hindus have their cows. The Catholics have Mary. The Mormons have (or do they?) their golden tablets. Seventh-day Adventists have....

But back to the dance. Often participation in the dance begins with denominational employment. Adventist teachers, administrators, and pastors are most susceptible. They often know things about our icons, the mention of which less knowledgeable Adventists take to be iconoclastic.

For instance, while our community insists that Ellen White had a fallen, human nature, those cliff dancers who try to present, even sympathetically, examples of her humanity are sometimes shoved over the precipice. (See “The ‘Greening’ of Graybill.”)

A failure in analysis all around Adventism

not limited to greed.) This sort of logical lapse in the life of the community makes existence more treacherous for the cliff dancers.

One of the more successful cliff dancers is an Adventist editor who has demonstrated that Ellen White’s statements about the age of the earth were merely her parrottings of Bishop Ussher’s mistaken chronology, and that she requisitioned his mistakes along with his views. It is his failure to share the evidence — given its implications for an Adventist icon — that keeps him on, rather than below, the cliff.

His kind of discovery would normally make one wonder what else may be lurking out there in the dark. But few are willing to don robe and slippers, grab a flashlight, and have a look. Lately, of course, it hasn’t been so much dark figures crossing the lawn as fingers on the windowsill.

The cracks in our icons have usually been pointed out by those who slipped, those who leaped, or those who would not join the dance. But our fear of the dark keeps most of us from joining those — “nobler souls perhaps” — who are willing to scrutinize our longstanding premises. Josh McDowell recounts a parable that makes the point:

*Once upon a time there was a man who thought he was dead. His concerned wife and friends sent him to the friendly neighborhood psychiatrist. The psychiatrist determined to cure him by convincing him of one fact that*

1. Whittaker Chambers letter to William F. Buckley, Jr., quoted in *The Governor Listeth: A Book of Inspired Political Revelations*, New York: Putnam, 1970, p. 101.



Photo: courtesy Verdict Publications

About the cover:

*The cover picture of Robert Brinsmead is Currents’ way of thanking him for over two decades of stimulating contribution to theological discussion within and without the Seventh-day Adventist church.*

# Learning from the Adventists

by Edward E. Ericson, Jr.

(Reprinted with permission from *The Reformed Journal*, September, 1980)

Almost a year before the event, I received a telephone call asking me to come to Andrews University to lecture. I knew little about Andrews except that it is a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher learning and that there is a standard government-issue sign pointing to it along the highway running between my parents' home in Chicago and mine in Grand Rapids. I might have known more if Andrews fielded intercollegiate athletic teams, but Adventists discourage the competition ethic fostered thereby. I accepted the invitation partly out of a sense of duty but, I confess, partly out of a sense of curiosity, too. I had never been on a Seventh-day Adventist campus and, indeed, I knew almost no Adventists personally (one, to be precise).

I have just returned from that engagement. My experience was exhilarating. I was there for only twenty-seven hours, but I have already developed a real affection for the place, its people, its sense of mission.

Andrews is certainly not your typical institution of higher learning. In addition to the still-prevalent prohibitions against smoking, drinking alcoholic beverages, and dancing, Adventists have, as an integral part of their faith, no meat, no coffee, no tea, no cola. Dress codes are rather strict. What beards appear are modest, and hair is short. The stated position is that the earth was created in six twenty-four-hour days six thousand years ago. There is required *everything*, especially chapel talks by Seventh-day Adventist traveling firemen. The campus committee for the Staley Foundation lectureship, which sponsored my appearance, saw this occasion as a desperately needed opportunity to hear from an outsider. (At that, students could get "worship credit" for hearing me talk on "Milton and the Reformation" — not much of a worship experience!) While a majority of the faculty hold earned doctorates, a good many others have master's degrees from Andrews or other Adventist institutions.

*Edward E. Ericson, Jr., is professor of English at Calvin College. His major study of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision, was published by Eerdmans in 1982.*

And everyone is stuck with the existence of a nineteenth-century prophet, Ellen White, whose works take up more than two full drawers in the card catalog of a well-stocked library (named for her husband, James). One bright young faculty member asked the correct rhetorical question, "You at Calvin don't view John Calvin as a prophet, do you?" *Stuck* is, of course, my word. Adventists would say that Ellen White's presence in the history of the Christian church has been a great blessing, since through her God spoke a needed message in these latter days. Yet, while most faithful Adventists revere her teachings as virtually of equal authority with that of the Bible, the intellectuals in their midst are keenly aware of some problems which her voluminous utterances pose. Currently, there rages within the denomination a controversy about how to interpret certain of the teachings of this prophet who cribbed large passages from popular historians of her time. Days of some turmoil may be ahead for the Seventh-day Adventists. In this matter, they are simply experiencing the same pangs of growth through which all Protestant sectarian groups have gone or will go.

Since I teach at an institution which is widely viewed as unique, distinctive, sometimes even bizarre, I could not help making comparisons between Calvin College and Andrews University. Both institutions are committed to the evangelical gospel. Both have a unified, loyal constituency. Both have a clearly defined sense of their basic

school, and a doctorate-granting seminary. Calvin has roughly twice as many students as Andrews. Professors are much better paid at Calvin than at Andrews, especially at the senior levels. At the same time, Andrews impressed me with the seriousness of its academic purpose. It deserves and enjoys full accreditation and it seeks to move academically from strength to strength. My opinion — based admittedly on insufficient evidence — is that it is solid at the undergraduate level but rather less so at the graduate level (I am not here referring to the seminary). I wish more people in Berrien Springs would go fifteen miles down the road to Notre Dame for their master's degrees — at least, those who are designated for teaching positions in Adventist colleges. (Here residual anti-Catholicism may present a problem.)

Similarities and differences between Andrews and Calvin are so intermixed that it is difficult to determine which should be emphasized. My non-Christian Reformed friends in Grand Rapids find the local Christian Reformed Churches very self-contained; Andrews is much more so. Christian Reformed folk in Grand Rapids shop at each other's stores, buy cars from each other, book flights through Christian Reformed travel agents, vacation in Christian Reformed ghettos away from home. Andrews SDAs run their own little shopping center. Where else could all their foreign students — about whom more shortly — find food from their own countries in a

***If some people in Grand Rapids think Calvin is insular and separatistic, they should see Andrews!***

purpose, and in both cases the center of the educational mission can be stated in terms of seeking to integrate faith and learning. Both have lovely campuses with healthy-looking students.

The academic advantage seems clearly to be in Calvin's favor, even though Andrews is a university with a college of arts and sciences, a college of technology, a graduate

village of 3000? Only seldom are their campus speakers not SDA. They run their own university press. They seldom see non-SDA campuses. They have on campus a farm, an airport, a bindery, a woodworking shop, a garage, and on and on (partly to provide jobs for foreigners who are not allowed otherwise to work in the US). Both CRCs and SDAs run their own private schools, from kinder-

garden up. If some people in Grand Rapids think Calvin is insular and separatistic, they should see Andrews!

It is certainly safe to say that both Calvin and Andrews contribute to the sense of religious diversity which has historically been a trait of American society. But even Calvinists are able to look at Adventists as parochial. The Adventists, it strikes me, would not yet think of putting out a periodical which seeks to speak to those outside its immediate constituency. With few exceptions they live in their own world.

Why then did I find my visit to this bastion of a provincial, separatistic, almost self-contained sect a cause for exhilaration? Well, first of all, and most obviously, I found at Andrews that faith in Jesus Christ is alive and very well; these folk have a depth of commitment which is enviable. They know what they are doing, and they are doing it with all their might. But that much could be said of many Christian groups; there is more.

Seventh-day Adventism originated in the United States in the nineteenth century. It has grown from a minuscule following into a united body of a half million Americans. No thoroughly Reformed community can match those figures. But they are only the beginning of the numbers game.

There are now, worldwide, three million Seventh-day Adventists. That is to say, five out of every six Adventists on earth are not in the United States. What other Christian community can claim such success in missionary efforts? (The earlier name of Andrews University was Emmanuel Missionary College.) The Adventists have a "worldwide view" (to borrow a phrase from Solzhenitsyn). As an exercise in imagination, one might try to conceive of what the Christian Reformed Church or the Reformed Church in America (or add your own) might look like if five of every six members in the denomination were not North American.

Adventists are scattered across the whole world. They are admittedly weak in Muslim countries, though I met a professor from Jordan. Their number in the Soviet Union may approach 120,000. The church in China has survived underground since the Communist takeover in 1949 and is now coming out from "under the rubble." Leaders from Rumania, Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia are or soon will be coming to Andrews to participate in the life of the seminary. Africa, India, Asia, South America, the West Indies, and Australia are well represented on the Berrien Springs campus of Andrews. Although Ad-

ventists have colleges scattered throughout the world, their American institutions are the strongest academically. So to Andrews, Loma Linda (with its justly lauded medical and dental schools), Pacific Union, Atlantic Union, Columbia Union, Southern Missionary, Walla Walla, and others come students from all corners of the globe.

So let go the potential criticism that Andrews is a provincial campus with an enrollment of 90-95 percent Adventists. The much larger and more important picture is that of a highly cosmopolitan campus. Despite the obstacles to foreign participation in North American higher education, well known to anyone with experience as a college administrator or professor, Andrews has in its student body thirty percent foreign students. (Fashionable academics call them international students, as they speak of women's dorms, instead of Andrews' girls' dorms.)

Andrews also has twenty-five percent

ment of believers in the Soviet Union. (Some knew more than I did; after all, their brothers and sisters were among the sufferers, and they know that). I can still see the eager eyes of nonwhite questioners about the appeal of Marxism in the Third World, and I know how unprepared I felt.

The course title for the seminary class in which I lectured was "History of Religious Liberty." The subject is important to people who drop out of society from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday each week. Try to understand what this fact means to one of my student hosts who wants to go to law school but who cannot take the Law School Aptitude Test because it is always scheduled on Saturday. Try to understand how an English professor feels when the Michigan College English Association consistently holds its meetings on Saturday. Then you will begin to understand why a denominational magazine is entitled *Liberty*.

Of course, Andrews is neither heaven nor

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## ***What I observed at Andrews is something like what I hope and expect to see in heaven.***

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black students, both from the US and elsewhere. Blacks and whites (and others) mingle with an ease which other colleges can only envy. I have visited a good many evangelical Christian campuses, but never in my life have I experienced the interracial, international mixture that I experienced at Andrews. May I say it? Never in my life have I had such a keen sense of what the body of Christ in this world is supposed to look like.

At the risk of sounding terribly extravagant, I shall say that what I observed at Andrews is something like what I hope and expect to see in heaven. Externally, in any case, it is surely much closer to that desideratum than what I observe on my own campus. I can still see the white American girl who was working at the snackshop counter (in which I waited much too long for a 7-Up — no cokes, remember) asking a visiting Oriental girl just where in Singapore she lived, for the American had spent time living in Singapore as a missionary. I can still see the young mother from India seeking information about registering, while her husband tended their toddler. I can still see the black professor in whose class I lectured (no one prepared me for a black professor in the seminary — it never crossed anyone's mind) announcing that I would speak on the treat-

innocent paradise. It is earth, where sin is never absent. So a hand-scrawled notice on the blackboard of a classroom announces a special session on the relationship between the races. There is apparently a problem. The notice ends, "Let us come together in love." The convener is a black professor.

I know that I could never be one of them, these vegetarian, sometimes narrow Christian friends of mine. But I have learned much from them; I have learned things from them that my highly valued, cultured Christian colleagues and friends could not teach me. I feel, after a very short time, a part of them. If they ever ask me back, I shall go with alacrity. I have not yet begun to absorb all that these my brothers and sisters can teach me. I am sure that I learned more from them than they did from me.

The final pleasure is that they are eager to learn from us who participate in Christian traditions other than theirs. Let those of us who are in the scholastic tradition of Calvinism (which the Adventists know and appreciate more than I could have predicted) offer to them what are our strengths. Let us also be ready to learn from them what they have which we do not. Let us help each other. And let us leave to God which is the weaker, and which is the stronger, vessel. □

# God over drugs in Adventist Academy

"God is alive but the address has changed," wrote sociologists Robert Wuthnow and Charles Glock ten years ago after analyzing 40,000 respondents to a religious questionnaire devised by them and published in the December 1973 *Psychology Today*. (The results were published in the November 1974 *Psychology Today*.)

A decade later graduate student E. J. Irish administered the same 118-question instrument to 106 Glendale Academy students (ages 14-18) and compared the results with the response of the *Psychology Today* readers of the early seventies.

Here are a few of the thought-provoking findings from chapter 3 of Irish's sixty-one page comparison study, *Religious Experience and Values of Seventh-day Adventist Adolescents at Glendale Academy*.

	P.T.	G.A.
I don't believe in God	9.5%	4.4%
We can't know whether God exists	10.5%	0.0%
Lean toward not believing	3.5%	3.5%
Lean toward believing	11.5%	18.4%
Definitely believe in God	38.0%	70.2%
I am uncomfortable about the word God but I do believe in something more	27.0%	3.5%

Keeping in mind that the *Psychology Today* sample represented readers of all ages, Irish notes that despite the youth of the Glendale Academy respondents, already "one out of five were struggling toward belief" (p. 25).

The answers to social and political questions that could be related to religious experience and attitudes are also interesting. Here are some of those percentage scores generated by Irish from his academy population, compared again with the larger cross-section of *Psychology Today* readers:

	P.T.	G.A.
Firm believers in astrology	13.2%	0.0%
Those who have experienced telepathy	65.2%	50.0%
Those who have experienced clairvoyance	38.5%	40.0%
Those who have experienced precognition	55.0%	52.7%

While the Adventist students reported a comparable incidence of parapsychological experience, they seemed to reject any systematized approach to the paranormal.

*Psychology Today* readers appeared to have twice the interest in and involvement with drugs as the younger Adventist Academy students:

	P.T.	G.A.
Those who have been high on drugs	52.5%	24.5%
Those who report drugs had a lasting influence	20.2%	10.8%
Those who favor legalization of marijuana	67.7%	31.0%

## OF CURRENT INTEREST

Irish felt that the figures on Glendale Academy students and drugs should balance both "reports of drugs running rampant in Adventist academies" and the naivete of those people who "believe there are no such problems whatsoever at Adventist schools" (p. 35).

In spite of Adventist views of "the time of trouble," the Glendale students seem to be far more authoritarian than their *Psychology Today* counterparts:

	P.T.	G.A.
Those who favor more power to the police	12.5%	42.0%
Those who favor more freedom for homosexuals	74.5%	16.0%
Those who would slap a screaming child	22.2%	27.0%

Irish concludes from his findings that both *Psychology Today* readers and Glendale Academy students have been influenced by the sexual revolution. "Almost four out of five of the *Psychology Today* group favored unmarried couples living together. The surprise was that slightly more than one out of two of the Glendale Academy group also favored cohabitation" (p. 36).

Although some may have approved of both, it is encouraging to note that more than twice as many Glendale Academy students were high on God than were high on drugs.

## The Great Controversy to the whole world

General Conference president Neal C. Wilson, in his sermon delivered to the La Sierra Church (6-25-83), announced with obvious pleasure that "The authorities in Poland look with great favor upon the activities of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Poland."

Wilson's very next sentence was even more interesting: "I've had visits with the highest authorities in that country, and they've affirmed their belief in the Seventh-day Adventist church [all 27 fundamentals?] and state their gratitude because we are non-political in our activities — which is contrary to some of the other great religious bodies."

Wilson continued, "But do you know what the most popular book today is on the streets of Warsaw? *The Great Controversy*. Our literature evangelists have put up little tables along those beautiful streets in the main, central railroad station of Warsaw; and the people line up in long queues to buy the book *The Great Controversy*. We can't keep them supplied with enough copies."

International observers have commented

that the Soviet-backed, puppet government leaders of Poland could be expected to appreciate *The Great Controversy* because of its intensely antiumion and anti-Catholic bias — that aversion to Catholicism that church leaders, through affidavit in the Merikay Silver case, swore had "now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned."



Neal C. Wilson

Photo: courtesy David S. Baker portfolio

Church historian Jonathan Butler, discussing the limitations in Ellen White's *Great Controversy* vision of end-time events, pointed out "how tragic" it was "that Seventh-day Adventists in Germany of the 1930s identified only Catholicism as a beast and either ignored or supported Nazism" (*Spectrum*, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 12).

Similarly, *The Great Controversy* buyers in Poland may read Ellen White's interpretation of the beast (Catholicism) while sitting in the slowly closing iron jaws of another. Had Ellen White's vision of the end taken her just a few years beyond her death, to the Marxist revolution, *The Great Controversy* might have ended differently. Still, many Adventists continue to read or watch the news through the window of Ellen White's nineteenth-century world view, seeing the end of the world in every move or statement made by the Pope.

A minority of Adventists, however, question the wisdom of representing Adventism around the world through the massive distribution of a book whose version of the investigative judgment no Seventh-day Adventist theologian has been known recently to defend from Scripture. (See "Currently Posted," page 30.)

Other Adventists have pointed to different *Great Controversy* liabilities. In the autumn of 1970, William S. Peterson specified a number of historical errors in the chapter "The Bible and the French Revolution" that re-

sulted from White's indiscriminating reliance on several nineteenth-century historians such as Sir Walter Scott, George R. Gleig, and L.A. Thiers (*Spectrum*, vol. 2, no. 4). Two years later Ronald Graybill explained in the summer issue of *Spectrum* that Mrs. White's source was actually Uriah Smith's *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation*. Said Graybill, "Ellen White used nothing [directly] from Scott, Gleig, Thiers or Alison that Smith did not have."

Historian Donald McAdams, president of Southwestern Adventist College, completed a 105-page study in 1973 that he presented to the White Estate in 1974 demonstrating that *The Great Controversy* chapter "Later English Reformers," and the first half of the chapter "Huss and Jerome," were "selective abridgements and adaptation of historians." Ellen White, said McAdams, was "following the historians page after page..." "I have found no historical fact in her text that is not in their text" (*Spectrum*, vol. 10, no. 4, p. 34).

In 1977 Ronald Graybill completed a detailed analysis of a fourth chapter in *The Great Controversy*. His study, titled "Ellen G. White's Account of Martin Luther's Experience from Worms to Wartburg," concludes "that the objective and mundane historical narrative was based on the work of historians, not on visions." "There does not appear to be any objective historical fact in Mrs. White's account that she could not have gained from the literary sources on which she was drawing except in one detail."

More recently (*Spectrum*, vol. 11, no. 3) Donald Casebolt demonstrated that Mrs. White's contention in *The Great Controversy* that the Waldenses and Albigenses had maintained a continuous line of faith in the true religion of Christ — including fidelity to the true Sabbath — is not historically supportable.

It is this book, revised for the last time in 1911, that the North American Division has chosen to proliferate "as one of its major programs for the One Thousand Days of Reaping," says J. Clyde Kinder, director of the publishing work. Kinder estimates "that within North America 5,000,000 copies of *Cosmic Conflict* and/or *The Great Controversy* will be circulated between January 1983 and July 1985" (*Adventist Review* 7 July 1983).

"We can explain all the problems with the book, its history and theology, after its readers are baptized," said one cynical Adventist.

## Stufening down

*Stufen* is the German word for steps. It is also the name of the journal sponsored by the Adventistischer Wissenschaftlicher — Association of Adventist Scholars (AWA) in the Federal Republic of Germany. *Stufen* and the AWA are German counterparts of *Spectrum* and the Association of Adventist Forums.

In its most recent issue, *Stufen* reprinted from an earlier number of *Evangelica* (November 1981) an article by pediatric neurologist Delbert Hodder titled "Visions or Partial-Complex Seizures?" The article is based on a professional paper that Hodder wrote in conjunction with an associate professor of both pediatrics and neurology, Gregory Holmes, and presented to the American Academy of Neurology in 1981.

Hodder compared the residual and episodic altered consciousness state that sometimes remains with the otherwise recovered victims of severe head trauma to the vision state of Ellen White, as reported by her and by those around her:

*There are several unique characteristics of partial-complex seizures that occur during the altered consciousness and these include: eyes being open, staring, and frequently turned up, automatisms, hallucinations, and various psychic phenomena. All of these unique characteristics were present in Mrs. White's "visions."*

Having noticed the similarities between their presenting symptoms, Hodder added that sometimes it is nearly impossible to convince the victims of partial-complex seizures that their altered state experiences are primarily subjective.

*Stufen's* reprint of Hodder's article raised enough blood pressure among some German Adventist readers that the Euro-African Division requested discussions with the board of Adventistischer Wissenschaftlicher. In the meantime, the AWA board chairman of more than a dozen years resigned.

Stepping down is Dr. Lothar E. Traeder, because he does not wish to jeopardize his responsibilities as professor of church history at Marienhoehe Seminary in Darmstadt.

It appears that there are barriers to freedom in Germany other than the Berlin wall.

## "Guarding the edges"

An innovative rejection of legalism appeared in seven consecutive issues of the Loma Linda University Church bulletin.

Four campmeeting and three regular Sabbath editions of the church bulletin announced sundown times in a unique and thought provoking manner. For example, the bulletin for Sabbath, July 30, at the bottom of one page (three inches below the picture and biographical sketch of South-eastern California Conference president Thomas J. Mostert, Jr., who was teaching the Sabbath School lesson) read:

"Sunset tonight: Shortly before 8 p.m. Sunset next Friday: Shortly before 8 p.m."

One member commented, saying, "Louis Venden and the pastoral staff have to be appreciated for creatively and forcefully reminding us that Sabbath is much more than a 24-hour period hemmed in by tightly

drawn ropes of time."

Other members overheard discussing the innovation felt that those who valued the Sabbath were very likely to begin it early and end it late.

The pastoral staff received very little mail regarding the nonspecific sundown times. One critical letter of response, however, clearly missed the point. The writer wanted to know how the pastors would like to receive his next tithe check made out "approximately \$47.00."

## Van Rooyen goes home

When Pastor J.C. Smuts Van Rooyen was pressured from his teaching post in the religion department of Andrews University's College of Arts and Sciences, the organized Seventh-day Adventist church lost one of its premiere communicators.

Now "Good News Unlimited" — an independent gospel ministry from Auburn, California — has just lost the same premiere communicator. When Andrews University let Van Rooyen go, "Good News Unlimited" was delighted to welcome him to its staff. There he, Desmond Ford, Calvin Edwards, and Noel Mason together carried on a rigorous traveling and radio ministry for over two years.

With "Good News Unlimited" firmly on its feet, Van Rooyen was feeling the urgency of returning to South Africa where he was



J. C. Smuts VanRooyen

raised, and, specifically, to the University of South Africa where the time was running short during which he would be allowed to complete the requirements for a Th.D. in systematic theology. Van Rooyen told *Currents* that his classwork (including languages) and comprehensives are already out of the way. He now has to write his dissertation and plans to work simultaneously selling real estate.

Photo courtesy Good News Unlimited



For those who are curious, Van Rooyen is still a Seventh-day Adventist. His membership resides, for the time being, at the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Sad to leave "Good News Unlimited" but relieved to be out of the controversy for the moment, Van Rooyen with his wife Arlene and three children — Craig, Andre, and Natasha — left for South Africa on November 14, 1983.

## G.C. may sue members if

The Seventh-day Adventist church, defined as the General Conference Corporation, trademark registered the word "Adventist" with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (Reg. No. 1,176,153) on 3 November 1981.

Two years later the *Adventist Review* (24 November 1983) specified the adoption, by the General Conference at the 1983 Annual Council, of guidelines regarding church trademarks such as "Seventh-day Adventist," "Adventist," and "Ministry."

The "guidelines" declare that these words "may be used only in connection with denominational ministries and noncommercial activities of approved lay and professional groups. Use of these trademarks shall be controlled by the General Conference...."

Ways of responding to the commercial use (for example, book or magazine titles) of the words "Seventh-day Adventist," "Adventist," or "Ministry" without the authorization of the General Conference, were also voted:

*If officers so authorize, Office of General Counsel sends conciliatory letter stating the problem and offering to discuss possible solutions.*

*If response is negative, Trademark Committee and then officers again consider the problem. If officers so authorize, trademark counsel sends polite cease-and-desist letter.*

*If trademark counsel receives negative response, Trademark Committee and officers reconsider the situation for possible litigation or other action.*

The General Conference appears to be prepared to initiate legal action against Seventh-day Adventist church members who insist upon using the words "Seventh-day Adventist," "Adventist," or "Ministry" without permission from the General Conference. The idea of the church bringing suit against its members seems to be potentially hypocritical, considering the General Conference president's admonition to the laity printed in the *Adventist Review* (4 February 1982). Alluding to the authority of both Scripture and Ellen White, Neal Wilson wrote:

*According to God's Word, litigation is definitely not the Christian answer to resolving*

*disputes and misunderstandings....*

*While it seems clear from the counsel we have that courts and attorneys are needed in our world, they were never ordained to settle matters arising within the church.*

Wilson went on to recommend a "Conciliation Panel approach.... designed to help settle grievances between individuals or with an official church entity."

The question of how the church might respond to unauthorized appropriation of the word "Adventist" by its members may be moot. A southern California patent, trademark, and copyright attorney explains that the word "Adventist" is descriptive and not properly subject to service or trademark registration. The attorney argues that the term "Adventist" describes a group of people in the same sense that the words "Presbyterian," "Catholic," or "Jewish" describe other religious groups. Therefore, no group should be entitled under law (35 U.S.C. Section 1052(e)) to exclusive appropriation of the descriptive, adjectival word "Adventist."

The General Conference appears to have recognized tacitly that a court is unlikely to uphold its trademark registration of the word "Adventist." Before the word was registered, independent parties were using the word in publication titles such as *Adventist Women's UPDATE* (Fall 1979). The Association of Adventist Women's newsletter, *Adventist Woman*, continues undisturbed to the present time.

Other independent publishers have been pestered but not prosecuted. John Adams, editor, and John Felts, publisher, of *SDA Press Release*, received a letter (14 February 1983) from Neal Wilson, who was somewhat provoked by their reporting and editorializing on the Davenport scandal:

*I seriously question the honesty of using the initials "SDA" in connection with your press release.... There is only one legitimate "SDA" organization. Your organization and publication do not represent the Seventh-day Adventist Church or any significant segment of its membership.*

Three months later (12 May 1983), General Conference Catholic patent and trademark attorney Vincent Ramik wrote to the editor of *Adventist Currents*, having "been requested by the Seventh-day Adventist Church to review your proposed publication activities." Ramik's foremost concern was the plan to use the word "Adventist" in *Adventist Currents*:

*To proceed as you intend to use this mark on identical goods (magazines) would infringe this registration and dilute the rights therein of the Seventh-day Adventist Church....*

*Your proposed publication activities would have an adverse legal effect upon the proprietary intellectual property rights of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

*All we request is that you confirm that your magazine will not utilize in its name or masthead the word "ADVENTIST" or any colorable imitation thereof....*

Ramik is the same attorney that the General Conference's chief counsel hired to provide his opinion of Ellen White's theoretical vulnerability to nineteenth-century infringement statutes. (See *Adventist Currents*, vol. 1, no. 1.) Now Ramik is demanding an "immediate" response from *Currents'* editor. Instead, a letter was written to Wilson, including a copy of Ramik's letter, expressing disappointment that the very first word of any concern from anyone at all regarding the forthcoming *Adventist Currents* came through a Catholic trademark attorney. It was explained to Wilson that the magazine was written for, by, and about Adventists; and that its publisher, Mars Hill Publications, would not negotiate with Ramik until more appropriate, and less drastic, forms of remedy had been exhausted. Wilson did not respond, and Ramik has not written again.

If a church is defined as its membership, then it is the members who own trademark on the word "Adventist," and the members who have the legal right — so long as they are members — to use the word. The irony occurs when the church (General Conference Corporation) contemplates suing the church (its members).

The question that now remains is whether Wilson's counsel to church members — "You can win a court case and lose your soul" — applies to the General Conference Corporation. But that raises the more difficult question of whether a corporation has a soul.

## AAF Second National Congress near

The Second National Conference of the Association of Adventist Forums will be held March 15-18, 1984, in the combined facilities of the Azure Hills and Loma Linda University Seventh-day Adventist churches.

A number of non-Adventist speakers should add fresh thoughts and objectivity to the meetings. *Newsweek's* Kenneth Woodward will address the Thursday evening banquet. Oxford professor Bryan Wilson will open Friday's session with a presentation on church growth stages. Sabbath meetings will begin with a talk entitled "The Day of the Lord and the Lord's Day," by Samuel Terrien, an editor of the *Interpreter's Bible*. And the recently retired Bishop of Cuernavaca, Sergio Mendez Arceo, will explain (Sabbath afternoon) what he believes North American Christians should know about church and social change in Central America.

Many familiar Adventist speakers will provide their expertise as well. After the AAF Task Force on Church Structure reports on its work and the progress of other committees studying church reorganization Friday morning, Pacific Union College be-



havioral science professor Greg Schneider will lead a discussion of personal relationships with religion and church. He will be joined in the discussion by Steve Daly, Jonathan Butler, and Lorna Tobler.

Friday evening will feature SDA artists, and the Sabbath service will feature an apocalypse liturgy created by Charles Teel, Jr.

Sunday morning, economist Charles J. Stokes will provoke discussion of Adventist institutional life with his presentation, "Megachurch, Megafailure?"

AAF members (*Spectrum* subscribers) who register prior to 20 February 1984 are eligible for reduced registration fees (\$55). Students may also register any time at this reduced rate. Non-AAF members may register before February 20 for \$70. Five meals are included in the registration fee. Preregistration information and forms can be obtained by writing P.O. Box 903, Loma Linda, CA 92354.

## Glad Tidings from Southern College

The board and the budget of Southern College came to terms in November of 1983. Facing a \$500,000-plus projected deficit, the board voted that the college budget for the 1984-85 school year *must* be balanced. Consequently, a dozen or so Southern College faculty members were not expected to be back next school year. At least two of that rough dozen projected for removal were from the eight-member Division of Religion.

Given the history of theological agitation at Southern College (documented up to the 1983 leave-taking of former president Frank Knittel by *Spectrum* vol. 13, no. 2), faculty reductions raised suspicions — based on long-standing conflicts — that cuts would be made along theological lines. And pointed fingers of blame for enrollment decline aimed in various directions.

New Southern College president John Wagner, previously academic dean at Union College, occupies an unenviable position. Some within the faculty and community feel that he was hired with a mandate to finish the "clean-up" of the college, demanded by "heresy-hunting" critics, that began with Knittel's exit. Knittel was considered by many to be a protector of the integrity and the academic freedom of the college faculty — particularly the religion faculty — from unsubstantiated heresy charges.

Religion teachers under fire have included: Douglas Bennett (religion department chairman until Gordon Hyde became chairman in January 1983), Helmut Ott, Ron Springett, Norman Gulley, Jerry Gladson, Edwin Zackrison, and Lorenzo Grant — virtually the entire staff, excepting the most recent arrival Jack Blanco. Even Gordon Hyde, who has been at Southern College just a year and a half, has been chastised by college critics.

In the spring of 1982, Ott (who has a master's degree in Spanish) was moved into the modern language department. Gulley, under fire for his first quarter 1983 Sabbath School lesson quarterly, was defended quite staunchly (after all, it was a General Conference publication). Bennett and Springett seem to have faded from importance in critics' minds for the time being. But Gladson, Zackrison, and Grant continue to be targeted — although no charge against them has ever been substantiated.

According to Grant, he was asked to resign at the beginning of this school year by president Wagner, but declined to do so. Wagner also asked Zackrison to resign in October of this year. (Wagner told *Currents* he did not recall asking either man to resign.) Curiously, the only "charge" against either Grant or Zackrison is vague reference to their rumor-tarnished reputations being somehow detrimental to the college. Since neither teacher would resign, those pressing for their termination needed some other way to remove them. A letter to the board of trustees dated 15 November 1983 from Wagner seemed to hint at the means to be employed:

*Preliminary study of the situation leads me to the tentative conclusion that a [religion division] faculty of six could adequately carry the present and projected teaching load.*

*Listed on a separate page are the faculty in the Division of Religion and some pertinent data about each one [see box].... I would appreciate it very much if you would indicate by a check mark which six people you believe would be most able as a team to carry on the fine work of the Division of Religion if, indeed, a reduction of six faculty members is necessary.*

No one around Southern College doubts the need for a general faculty reduction or the need to reduce the number of faculty in the religion division. Interestingly, in the 1981-82 school year the religion faculty requested that a new teacher be hired in the area of pastoral theology. Frank Holbrook was leaving the division to join the Biblical Research Institute, and this seemed to be a good time to broaden the religion class offerings. But the faculty was told at that time that there were insufficient funds to hire another teacher. Yet, at the beginning of the next school year (the fall of 1982), Gordon Hyde was added to the division without prior consultation with the religion division. And rather than being a specialist in the area of pastoral theology, Hyde's expertise duplicated Bennett's area — homiletics.

Most extraordinary, however, was the action of Southern Union president and Southern College board chairman Al McClure. In the autumn of 1982, McClure — without consulting Southern College administration — informed the newly appointed Hyde that he would soon become religion division chairman and that two religion teachers would be gone by the time he assumed the chairmanship in January 1983.

Deeply hurt, department chairman Bennett stepped down, knowing that the union president would have it no other way.

Furthermore, after Gordon Hyde came in the fall of 1982, still another teacher was hired in January of 1983 — Jack Blanco. Following the July/August 1982 board meeting, McClure and academic dean Cyril Fitcher (Gordon Hyde's brother-in-law) told then-president Knittel that he must hire Blanco, in spite of Knittel's objections that there was insufficient budget and that Blanco wasn't needed. Blanco's field is systematic theology, an area already well represented by Zackrison and Gulley. Some observant faculty were puzzled about the hiring of Blanco in the middle of the school year — when faculty cutbacks were already a reality and when there was no apparent need for additional religion teachers. Some speculated that Blanco, and perhaps Hyde as well — both of whom enjoyed conservative reputations — were hired to replace religion division members who were under criticism.

It was a difficult situation: faculty were facing cuts in other departments while the religion division was over-staffed. According to some observers, both recently employed teachers — Hyde and Blanco — had to be kept until the firing/resigning of other religion teachers could be brought about. (Whether Hyde and/or Blanco were aware of their awkward positions when hired is not known.)

Given this background, it is understandable that Wagner's November 15 letter to the board stirred strong feelings. Many, inside and outside the college, saw it as a not-so-subtle attempt to finally eliminate Zackrison and Grant without having to prove the longstanding allegations against them.

But the concern of the faculty for a fair determination of which teachers should be let go was aroused by the letter. Many won-



JOHN WAGNER

JACK BLANCO

GORDON HYDE

dered whether choices would be made on the subjective criterion of "who would work most successfully as a team" (as the letter indicated), or on the basis of established, objective criteria having to do with teaching record, length of service (tenure), and area of specialty (see box). The more subjective the evaluation, the more individual faculty members feared they might be evaluated on the basis of unjust rumor, the prejudices of community "witch hunters," or the whims of the board chairman.

Based on the religion faculty list accompanying Wagner's letter, it appeared that by most applicable, objective criteria Hyde and Blanco would be the faculty to leave. They

had been at Southern College the shortest time and duplicated specialties already covered. However, if it was true that their leaving would be unacceptable to those who allegedly had brought them in to "clean-up" the religion division — and, conversely, if it was true that the dropping of Zackrison and Grant would be rejected by the faculty as unfair — what was Wagner to do? The very evening that his letter to the board became available on campus, the college division heads called a meeting with him to make known their concerns.

One paragraph in a 21 November 1983



JERRY GLADSON LORENZO GRANT EDWIN ZACKRISON

letter from Hyde to his religion faculty only added to the suspicions that a conspiracy existed. Hyde, who is already past retirement age, seemed to be saying that he would not be one of the two religion teachers to leave:

*Some of us are at a stage in our experience when we could step out of this trauma and let someone else carry it all, but this is probably not the best answer either in terms of the impact on our majors who have had several shake-ups already in the last couple or three years.*

A faculty meeting November 22 turned into a two-hour confrontation over the issue. Many faculty from a variety of disciplines expressed their misgivings. Wagner's letter to the board was a significant factor in those fears. Most discussion centered around the need for faculty input and for a fair, es-

tablished procedure for decision making during retrenchment. At one point, halfway through the meeting, a faculty member openly addressed the issue as it was perceived by many. "We have talked for an hour or so about all of this without getting to the bottom line," he asserted. "Some of us suspect this is simply old business under a new name — to get rid of Ed Zackrison and Lorenzo Grant." Wagner neither confirmed nor denied this but commented: "The letter probably intensified this point of view."

On 14 December 1983 the administration was to have released a list of the ten to twelve teachers who would be leaving. This would have fulfilled a policy requirement that the persons affected be notified at least sixty days before the next board meeting. The faculty, however, by an overwhelming margin, voted to ignore the sixty-day requirement, sacrificing time left for their notice to give more time toward the establishment of an adequate retrenchment policy.

By 15 December 1983 the faculty ad hoc committee on retrenchment presented the administration with seven, ordered "Normal Criteria for Termination of Faculty due to Financial Exigency" (see box).

President Wagner took the ad hoc committee's criteria to an attorney and decided that it was written to protect the faculty but not the college. He removed the "order of priority" statement from the committee's criteria and added three subjective indices. On January 4, after a little fine tuning, the board approved the revised and expanded list (see box).

Sunday evening, 29 January 1984, less than three days before the board-mandated February 1 date by which the president was to give faculty slated for termination verbal

notice, *Currents* spoke with Wagner. It was explained to him that a box would be published within this story, placing three exhibits in parallel columns: the ad hoc faculty committee's ordered criteria for faculty termination, the board-approved amended and expanded version, and the retrenchment survey that Wagner attached to his 15 November 1983 letter to the board listing the eight religion division teachers, their years in the division, and their specialty area. Wagner was asked for any information that could be passed on to *Currents*' readers that would provide them some basis — in



DOUGLAS BENNETT NORMAN GULLEY RONALD SPRINGETT

the event that Grant and Zackrison were dropped from their teaching appointments — for not believing that they had been removed because of behind-the-scenes insistence by wealthy and powerful individuals who had a theological ax to grind.

Wagner agreed that, based on the juxtaposition of the three documents, Grant and Zackrison were not the "logical" choices. But, he said, there were "other, subjective things to consider"; and "it depends on where you're coming from as to how you apply the criteria."

The college was being as kind as it could be under the circumstances, Wagner felt — offering to purchase the teachers' homes for as much as 92% of their appraised value;

*(concluded on page 28)*

#### RETRENCHMENT SURVEY

(President John Wagner to Southern College board)

15 November 1983

Please check names of the six people you believe would work most successfully as a team in carrying out the important work of the Division of Religion if reduction there is recommended.

Name	Years in Division	Area of Specialty
Douglas Bennett	22 years	Homiletics & Biblical Studies
Jerry Gladson	11 years	Old Testament Studies
Ron Springett	11 years	New Testament Studies
Ed Zackrison	11 years	Systematic Theology
Lorenzo Grant	8 years	Christian Ethics
Norman Gulley	6 years	Systematic Theology
Gordon Hyde	1½ years (13 yrs. prior)	Homiletics
Jack Blanco	1 year	Systematic Theology

PLEASE RETURN IN ENVELOPE PROVIDED

#### NORMAL CRITERIA FOR TERMINATION OF FACULTY DUE TO FINANCIAL EXIGENCY

(faculty generated)

15 December 1983

After the Board of Trustees has declared a state of financial exigency the following seven criteria, listed in order of priority, are to be applied as the basis for terminating faculty due to financial exigency. These criteria are to be applied on an equal basis to each degree-granting discipline as a unit.

1. *Employment Agreement Status.* Part-time and/or temporary teachers are to be terminated first, teachers with one-year contracts second, teachers with three-year contracts third, and teachers with continuous contracts last.

2. *Length of Service at Southern College.* Teachers with the shortest time of service to the college are to be terminated first.

3. *Length of Service in Specialty Field.* Teachers with the shortest time of service in their specialty field are to be terminated first.

4. *Length of Service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in General.* Teachers with the shortest length of service in general to the Seventh-day Adventist Church are to be terminated first.

5. *Academic Rank.* Instructors are to be terminated first, assistant professors second, associate professors third, and professors last.

6. *Academic Degree.* Teachers holding the bachelor's degree are to be terminated first, teachers holding the master's degree second, teachers holding the doctor's degree last.

7. *Specialized Skills/Contributions.* In certain specific cases specialized skills and/or other significant contributions to the purposes of the college may be deemed more essential than the previous categories and may thus take priority over them.

#### CRITERIA FOR TERMINATION OF FACULTY DUE TO FINANCIAL EXIGENCY

(board approved)

4 January 1984

The Board of Trustees has declared a state of financial exigency. The following criteria for termination will be considered in determining which faculty members will be terminated due to the present financial exigency. These criteria will be considered on an equal basis with respect to each degree-granting discipline as a unit.

- Type of employment agreement
- Length of service at Southern College
- Length of service in specialty field
- Length of service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in general
- Academic rank
- Academic degree
- Meritorious teaching performance
- Specialized skills
- Significant contributions to the purposes of the College
- Compliance with the general terms of employment as stated in the Faculty Handbook

# The “Greening” of Graybill

by Douglas Hackleman

Those Adventists who know how to read between the lines read the back page of the 24 November 1983 *Adventist Review* with alarm.

Ten-year White Estate employee, associate secretary Ronald D. Graybill, was placed on “administrative leave” by the White Estate board of trustees, wrote White Estate secretary Robert Olson. He explained that Graybill’s “relationship to Ellen White and her writings have come into question.” Olson’s notice implied that the questions had been raised by the White Estate board of trustees and others as a result of reading “unauthorized” copies of Graybill’s recently completed (April 1983) doctoral dissertation, *The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century*.

Unelaborated assertions by Olson in the *Review* about “a third party” obtaining “an unauthorized copy” of Graybill’s dissertation — copyrighted, Olson claimed, “as an unpublished work” — which became the source of many more copies “circulating without Graybill’s permission,” should be explained.

The column and a half story itself — whether calculated to do so or not — raised questions in the minds of many readers about Graybill’s convictions. The White Estate directors would not place him on “administrative leave” and require written answers to their questions unless there was good cause to question his “relationship to Ellen White and her writings,” reasoned many *Review* readers. And, after all, haven’t Adventists been conditioned to expect the most serious attacks on “the Spirit of Prophecy” to come from within? What could be more “within” than within the White Estate?

Denomination watchers saw the wording of the *Review* notice as Graybill’s personal fourth down and long. Unless the board had already made up its collective mind concerning Graybill’s future, it seemed there could be little point in creating question about him throughout the world field by printing in the general church paper that his relationship to Ellen White had been called into question.

## Summer 1983

I was aware that Graybill had completed, as a partial requirement for his doctorate in history, a dissertation about Ellen White and other nineteenth century female charismatics. I asked a number of people about it, but no one seemed to know much about it or to have a copy.

## August 1983

Two or three of my academically oriented friends suggested that I send for Graybill’s dissertation through University Microfilms International in Ann Arbor, Michigan. (All doctoral dissertations completed in American universities are sent there to be microfilmed, microfiched, and reproduced in paperback editions for sale to libraries and individual researchers in any of the three formats.) I doubted whether they would have it yet and decided to call Graybill to get the title and a two- or three-sentence abstract from him for a brief, congratulatory news item to be run in *Adventist Currents*, specifying his acquisition of a Ph.D (something positive).

## August 19 (Friday, 7:29 a.m.)

The General Conference operator connected me with Graybill in his White Estate office. I told him that I was calling in my capacity as editor of *Currents* and explained why I needed the title of his dissertation and a few words from him describing its con-



Ronald D. Graybill

tents. His immediate response was very negative. He said, “I don’t think I want to be congratulated in the pages of your magazine; matter of fact, I’m asking you not to say anything about me or my dissertation in your magazine, ever.”

Graybill flatly refused to divulge the title of his manuscript, and then went on to strongly criticize the editorial decision to publish in *Currents*’ first issue a partial transcript of the tape from a public meeting at the Chattanooga First SDA Church dur-

ing which Graybill innocently let slip the fact that attorney Vincent Ramik had been hired to write his legal opinion of Ellen White’s theoretical liability under nineteenth-century fair use statutes.

The transcript, I pointed out to Graybill, clearly indicates that he had no way of knowing that he wasn’t supposed to discuss the Ramik hiring; and that he and Robert Olson (also on the transcript) both came across as rather open and good humored. Yes, he said, but on the tape he had referred to the General Conference as hiring Ramik, when, in fact, Warren Johns had hired him. I countered that the distinction was immaterial since Warren Johns is General Conference chief legal counsel and the head executive officer of General Conference Legal Services. Further, and most importantly, it was the General Conference Legal Services department that paid for Mr. Ramik’s opinion.

Then Graybill wanted to know why I had “felt free to go ahead and use the word ‘adventist’ in *Adventist Currents* when the General Conference [in the person of Vincent Ramik] asked you not to.” I explained that the magazine was published by, for, and about Adventists; and that I had paid a couple of hundred dollars to be informed by a copyright and trademark attorney that the word “adventist” may no more receive a valid trademark registration than the words “catholic,” “Jewish,” or “methodist.”

Finally, Graybill demanded to know why, if I was concerned about candor and honesty, I hadn’t bothered to tell my readers how I had “unethically” acquired the *Spectrum* mailing list. So I had to explain that my readers probably would not find it particularly newsworthy to learn that I had assembled an up-to-date, 7,000-name list of SDA physicians, dentists, and attorneys; the list was computer entered, zip code sorted, and printed on self-adhesive labels — all for about \$400. This list was then traded — straight across — to the *Spectrum* officer in charge of their mailing list.

After about twenty minutes of self defense, I asked Graybill again about his dissertation title. He still refused to name it but said he’d call back on Monday or Tuesday, after giving my request some thought.

## August 22 (Monday morning)

The unpleasant and accusatory nature of the conversation left me no confidence that when he called back Graybill would tell me anything. So, Monday morning (August 22)

I called the registrar at Johns Hopkins University and asked her to read me the title of Graybill's dissertation from the graduation ceremonies program.

A few minutes later Graybill called and talked in a gentlemanly way about the content of his dissertation. He described the work as if it was primarily a comparing and contrasting of Ellen White's leadership role in the founding and forming of Adventism with three other nineteenth-century female, religious institution founders. The notes I took, as Graybill spoke, did not prepare me for the dissertation itself in which Alma White, Catherine Booth, and Mary Baker Eddy actually play small parts — primarily providing "ground" for the "figure" of Ellen White and elaborations of her use of power.

Thinking that it sounded interesting, and that I could do a better job of accurately representing my hastily scribbled notes if I actually had the dissertation in hand, I decided to see if it was available from University Microfilms International (UMI).

### August 25 (Thursday)

On Thursday I called the Johns Hopkins University graduate division secretary, Ellie Clark, to acquire the dissertation serial number, and then dialed UMI's toll-free number. I gave the phone representative my name, address, Mastercard number, and requested two copies of *The Power of Prophecy* — one to mark up and a copy to keep for my collection. Total bill: \$48.40.

### September 7

Thirteen days later the two paperbound copies of Graybill's work arrived at *Currents'* Loma Linda post office box. With just a glance at the books, I proceeded directly to the Loma Linda University Library Heritage Room, where I had some references to look up. I showed the Heritage Room proprietors my acquisitions and suggested that the Heritage Room order a copy for its patrons. I then loaned one copy to a friend who knew I had ordered it. That same evening I read the dissertation, and the next day I wrote out longhand the rough draft of the digest that appeared in the second issue of *Adventist Currents*.

### September 10 (Sabbath)

On Sabbath afternoon I spoke to the San Diego chapter of the Association of Adventist Forums in a massive bowling alley that had been converted to a Masonic temple. I presented, as had been requested, an overview of current issues in Adventism, including a few excerpts from my draft review of Graybill's dissertation. During the question/answer period quite a number of the audience of approximately one hundred wanted to know how to acquire Graybill's manuscript. I recited UMI's toll-free number, the dissertation title, and its serial number. (Those Forum members who subse-

quently attempted to order the dissertation may be wondering if I was putting them on.)

### September 13 (Tuesday)

Another friend phoned an order to UMI for a copy of Graybill's dissertation. He received a card in the Loma Linda mail the following Sunday, September 18, advising him that the work was available for sale only to the author. On Monday or Tuesday, September 19 or 20, I called UMI and asked specifically regarding the status of the Graybill manuscript. I was told that it was not for sale until May of 1988 — five years in the future. I began to suspect that I might be in possession of a collector's item — a very limited edition.



Arthur L. White

Later that week, September 21 or 22, Graybill called. He'd heard that I had a copy of his dissertation. He said that UMI had sold it to me in violation of an agreement they had with him. He wanted to know if I planned to write a review of it. I told him that I had. He said that if I were to publish it in *Adventist Currents* that Arthur White would want to read it. At that point I began to wonder just how secretive he'd been. On a hunch I suggested that his real problem was that he had used unreleased manuscripts. He replied that that was not a problem because he had "an arrangement." Later in the conversation I brought up the same point and he insisted again that there was no problem because he had "an arrangement."

Although after talking with Graybill it was clear that publishing a review of his dissertation would greatly strain his relations with Arthur White (White is now semi-retired and spends six months out of a year in California), Graybill's "arrangement" statements precluded any logical reason for thinking his manuscript contained a great vulnerability — a ticking bomb. (In fact, Graybill did not correct himself on this point, in conversation with me, until October 26.)

When I failed to promise not to publish

my review of the dissertation, Graybill said that he might make some additions to it and make it available. He was certain there would be a flood of requests for it once it was reviewed, and he wanted to add some indications of his faith that God was leading in Ellen White's ministry. These he had not included in his doctoral dissertation because it was written for a secular graduate committee that is interested only in demonstrable evidence. The conversation ended with my promise to represent his concerns to the Mars Hill Publications board of directors before proceeding.

### September 25 (Sunday)

Graybill called again, this time to register his doubt that it would be legal to quote from what he insisted was his "unpublished" dissertation. We batted around various definitions of the term "published" — whether the author had sanctioned it; how many copies are in the public domain; whether a dissertation submitted to a graduate committee is in the public domain, etc. (Dissertations have been kept from the public for national security purposes; and, occasionally, a dissertation is maintained secret while patent is pending on a process that is explained in the manuscript.)

Graybill said he was working on an expanded version of his dissertation for a general readership. Nothing would be left out, he said; but some words would be replaced by synonyms. He said that he was certain that even the thought of releasing some of the material that was in *The Power of Prophecy* would make Arthur White "apoplectic." I already understood that Arthur White was not in on the "arrangement." My guess was that it must include at least Kenneth Wood, chairman of the board, and probably Graybill's administrative superior, White Estate secretary Robert Olson. I learned later that doctoral candidates are allowed to use unpublished material when writing their dissertations, but they must present their rough drafts to the board of trustees for its ruling on the quotes they've chosen before the completed work is submitted to a graduate committee. Although Graybill had not intentionally published his manuscript, he appeared to have stretched the spirit of the unwritten rule by not presenting his rough draft to the board.

Before the call ended I promised Graybill that I would pay for expert legal counsel regarding the legality of reviewing his dissertation publicly before publishing it.

### September 27

Some homework was necessary before visiting a copyright attorney on the afternoon of September 27. A lunch hour call to Mr. David Azzolina at the Johns Hopkins University Milton Eisenhower Library reference desk proved informative. Graybill's dissertation was not yet listed among the library holdings, Azzolina said, after check-

ing; but he was curious to know if the dissertation was about Ellen White. I said it was, and he asked where I was calling from. I said "California." He asked, "Loma Linda?" "Yes," I answered. Azzolina then wanted to know why the dissertation was such a big deal. He said that some guy had come to the library earlier expressing a nervous concern regarding it. I wondered if that would be Graybill himself.

Not only was Azzolina aware of Graybill's dissertation, but he asked me if I knew of a fellow who had written a book about White a few years earlier, "Prophetess of something . . ." "Sure," I said, "*Prophetess of Health* by Ronald Numbers." Then he remembered. I told him that both Rons — Numbers and Graybill — were well acquainted with each other.

Azzolina still wanted to know what the big deal was about Graybill's work; and I tried to explain that the dissertation, while friendly to Ellen White, included documentation that tended to contradict the rather saintly image of the lady presented by the White Estate representatives and other church leaders in public presentations and church-controlled publications. For Azzolina the case was interesting to the extent that it paralleled the differences between the ways Mormon apologists and historians handled Joseph Smith.

## September 28

The next morning Azzolina called back with more specific information. A microfilm copy of Graybill's dissertation was at that moment in the cataloging department of the library, he had discovered. It would be assigned a reference number, and the proper paperwork would be completed before it would go to the audiovisual department for researchers to read on microfilm scanners. Azzolina also said that Johns Hopkins' hard copy had not yet returned from University Microfilm International.

## September 30

An attorney who specializes in patent, trademark, copyright, and unfair competition matters opined in a letter of September 30 that the utilization of brief quotes (no longer than eight to ten lines) from Graybill's dissertation could not violate his copyright. Counsel added that in the event either Graybill or the church were to sue for violation of copyright or invasion of privacy, a court of law would exonerate Mars Hill Publications from any liability.

## October

October had hardly arrived when I began receiving calls from different parties in different parts of the country telling me that Graybill had told them that I was behaving "illegally," "unethically," and even "immorally" in regard to his dissertation.

Since I had gone to the trouble and expense of acquiring a written opinion of our

legal exposure, and had discussed the ethics of scholarship involved with several — some highly placed — Adventist academics, I was baffled and rather angered by Graybill's characterization of me. The academics I queried all felt that it was very unusual, and certainly not in the spirit of scholarship, to hide a dissertation — the purpose of dissertation writing being to enhance the general body of knowledge regarding a given subject. Some felt that Graybill was "crazy" to write on such a topic while working for the White Estate, and certainly naive to think he could hide it. Still others speculated that he might have a subconscious desire to be caught.

Graybill's unkind references to me were all the more galling since I had already, and



Robert W. Olson

of my own initiative, tried to review his dissertation honestly but nonprovocatively. I had apologized for his lack of faith statements by explaining that his audience was a secular graduate committee. And I pointed out a number of instances in which Graybill could have provided much more compelling evidence for Mrs. White's excesses than he had.

## October 4

Graybill's intemperate remarks, I believed, were the result of his desperation; and so I wrote him a restrained but serious letter of complaint, asking him to reply in writing.

## October 7

Graybill called in response to my letter of October 4 and made the same accusations to me directly. After some rather heated discussion, he agreed that he and I were not able to pronounce on the legal question definitively — not being lawyers or judges. He also agreed that if I had not known, when I acquired and loaned his dissertation to friends, that University Microfilms was not supposed to have sold it to me, that I was also ethically and morally clear. I told him that I would appreciate his correcting that

with those he had misinformed. He tried to think who they might be and was able to come up with three names, two of which are well known to most educated Adventists. Unfortunately, none of those he named were those who had reported his remarks to me. I was learning about the sociology of rumor firsthand.

## October 9

I wrote Graybill thanking him for his call and set down in three pages the saga of his dissertation's acquisition by me and what had happened to it and when. By now the photocopies had multiplied; and two different individuals had sent me copies, thinking I might be interested in it. Also, Walter Rea called to say that someone had given him a copy, the reading of which had motivated him to write a letter to Neal Wilson, Graybill, PREXAD, and other thought leaders and interested parties, gloating over what he'd read in the leaked dissertation.

## October 13

From the time I received the two original copies of *The Power of Prophecy* from University Microfilms (September 7), it was a long month before White Estate secretary Robert Olson laid eyes on Graybill's dissertation for "the first time . . . on October 13." Even then, it was not identical to the manuscript Graybill had submitted to his dissertation committee. Graybill says that when he gave the manuscript to Olson, he told him that it was a revised edition, but that he probably stressed the additions and not the deletions.

(For example, in the revision Graybill deleted the names of *Spectrum* editor Roy Branson and his wife Viveca Black from those he had originally thanked for their "helpful historical criticisms and editorial suggestions.")

Although I'm not privy to what led him to do it, after receiving a copy of Graybill's troubling scholarship, Robert Olson phoned one of the Ellen G. White Research Centers and asked its curator to read aloud the preface to a photocopy of the original that someone had provided this particular White Estate outpost. The wording was obviously different in spots.

Based on this, other reports from the East, and what Graybill told Walter Rea he had done (during a phone call Rea placed to Graybill), it is quite clear that when Graybill knew his manuscript was on the wing, he decided that it would be best if he provided his superiors copies before someone else did.

## October 23

By October 23 Professor Ingemar Linden had written Robert Olson from Rimbo, Sweden: "When reading this work [Graybill's dissertation] for the first time, I hardly believed what my eyes noted!" "I must congratulate him sincerely for the honest way in which he has written several chapters

in this diss[ertation].” Then Linden raised the pregnant question of whether the White Estate board of trustees had condoned the use of previously unreleased documents, or “has Ron used the rich materials at his sole disposal at his own risk?”

Olson dictated a reply to Linden on October 28 that makes Graybill’s repeated assertion of “an arrangement” regarding his use of previously unpublished Ellen White source material perplexing. Said Olson: “No, we did not approve of Ron’s use of the material which he has included in his dissertation. As a matter of fact, I did not even see [sic] the dissertation until several months after he had turned it in to his professor [Timothy Smith] at Johns Hopkins University. The first time I saw it was on October 13 — about three weeks ago. I am very sorry that Ron did not counsel with us on this matter, because I think that we could have saved him, and all of us, a lot of heartache.”

A subsequent letter to another North American Adventist (18 November 1983) from Linden indicated that the dissertation’s “contents are being discussed all over Scandinavia....”

## October 26

Early on the evening of October 26, Graybill called for the last time. Given the way events were developing, he now felt it unlikely that he could make an amended or expanded version of his dissertation available in the immediate future, or possibly ever. Graybill indicated that he had been having certain brethren in the Washington area read it. Apparently, they felt it was too politically sensitive to condone making it available. He asked if I could still remove the notice, slated for *Adventist Currents*’ second issue, announcing that a slightly expanded version of *The Power of Prophecy* could be obtained by sending \$12.50 to Ronald Graybill at the White Estate. The issue was already at the press, but the notice was changed before a plate was made.

Graybill also said he had very recently checked with Johns Hopkins’ Milton Eisenhower Library and discovered that the microfilm copy of his work was still in the cataloging department. He then spoke with Dr. Timothy Smith — his major professor — who then either removed the dissertation microfilm from the library or had it removed. The ostensible purpose of this move was legally motivated. In the event that there should be litigation regarding the copying, distributing, or quoting of the dissertation, it appeared that Graybill wished to be able to argue that the manuscript had never been available to researchers through regular channels — the Johns Hopkins University Library, for instance — and through University Microfilms International only by mistake.

It was an irenic conversation. Graybill was taping the call and promised to send me

a duplicate. We both agreed not to quote from the tape. I promised to mail him an early copy of my review of his dissertation.

Copies of the dissertation were available by now on most North American SDA college campuses. Although Graybill had labored with the administrative personnel from at least three different campus libraries in an effort to persuade them not to carry it, he met with limited success. Loma Linda agreed not to catalog or shelve the docu-



Kenneth Wood

Photo courtesy David S. Baker portfolio

ment, but insisted on having it available for patrons who might request it spontaneously. At least two other libraries followed Loma Linda’s lead.

## November 3 (Thursday)

The Ellen G. White Estate board of trustees assembled November 3 and “voted to place Graybill on administrative leave, to suggest that he prepare a written response to questions raised concerning the dissertation, and to invite him to meet with the board at its next session (December 5), when the matter” was to be considered in greater detail (*Adventist Review* 24 November 1983).

While on administrative leave, Graybill continued on salary but could not in any way represent the White Estate. This led to the canceling of at least one (December) weekend speaking engagement for the San Joaquin Valley chapter of The Association of Adventist Forums.

## November 4 (Friday)

A copy of *Adventist Currents*’ second issue, fresh from the press, was mailed first class to Graybill several days before it was bulk-rate mailed to *Currents*’ subscribers. Coming so far behind the massive proliferation of the dissertation itself, and even trailing the administrative action of the White Estate board, the *Currents* review of *The Power of Prophecy* that Graybill had so dreaded turned out to be of little consequence. One White Estate Research Center head termed

the review “superb.” Another graduate school religion professor commented that *Currents* was being “very gentle with Ron.” Not everyone, however, seemed to think so.

## November 5 (Sabbath, 3:59 a.m.)

The telephone’s ring arrested my sleep at 3:59 Sabbath morning. There was a lot of hiss in the line, and the woman who asked to speak with me refused to identify herself. She wanted to know if I considered myself to be a friend of Graybill’s. I suggested that “friendly acquaintance” might be more accurate. She then asked, “Why are you treating him like an enemy?” I replied by saying that I did not understand myself to be doing so. She insisted I was; and when I asked her to explain, she said that I knew what she was talking about. She soon hung up.

I deduced from her call that she identified rather closely with Graybill and had assumed the truth of rumors claiming that I had known the dissertation was not to be released but had proceeded in some devious way to acquire a copy.

The phone call was unique, but I have received letters based on the same kind of misinformation and have faced similar accusations from different parties in private and public.

## November 15

*Christianity Today*’s assistant news editor, Randy Frame, called November 15 asking what I could tell him about the Graybill situation. He had not called Graybill or Kenneth Wood. I told him that they would be his best source of information, and gave him the phone number at the General Conference as a starting point.

Frame wanted to know if Graybill’s difficulty was analogous to that of Desmond Ford’s. I said only in so far as the crunch point in both cases was potential damage to Ellen White’s authority. I predicted that any discipline of Graybill would be publicly predicated on his use without permission of unreleased Ellen White source documents; while the real concern would be that the circulation of the dissertation, however unintentional, tended to reduce the saintly image of White so long fostered by White Estate representatives and church leaders. The difference between the recently aired facts and the usual representation of White raised again the question that a group of Pacific Union College teachers asked White Estate representative Roger Coon: “What else are they hiding at the White Estate?”

Once Graybill was put on administrative leave, the White Estate was inundated with calls and letters, many strongly recommending caution and restraint in dealing with him. Others felt just the opposite and wanted Graybill excised.

One of those letters to White Estate secretary Robert Olson (November 28) came from a member of what Graybill has designated “the vicious far right.” This particular letter



was from *Pilgrims' Waymarks* editor Vance Ferrell. Without having even read the dissertation, he pronounced Graybill's views "inimicable to a firm and decided belief in the inspiration and content of the Spirit of Prophecy." Ferrell applied not so subtle pressure by saying that "the confidence our people have in the E. G. White Estate" would be justified "if you make the right decision in regard to Dr. Graybill." However, Ferrell continued, "If you compromise in regard to Dr. Graybill," we "will encourage our people to write you additional comments ...." Ferrell's greatest concern was that Graybill might one day "move on up to lifetime membership in the Board.... that decides the future of ... its policies, decisions and publications."

Robert Olson advised at least one scholar not to bother with a letter writing campaign on Graybill's behalf. It won't do any good, he said; the board already knows where the scholars stand. Later (December 18), however, General Conference vice president for North America, Charles Bradford, told twenty-five to thirty SDA religion teachers, gathered in Dallas for Andrews' Society for

Religious Studies meetings, that church leaders are affected by mail even if they sometimes say they are not.

By the last week in November the saturation of Australian Adventism with *The Power of Prophecy* was well under way (letter from Australia, November 28), with one Australian alone having distributed fifty copies and planning another run of fifty.

## November 24

"The Back Page" of the November 24 *Review* carried a restrained but balanced notice of Graybill's difficulty, including quotes from Graybill and Olson. But the *Review* write-up caused alarm because its statement that Graybill's "relationship to Ellen White and her writings have come into question," with the pivotal board meeting only days away (December 5), seemed calculated to prepare people for the board's removal of Graybill's White Estate appointment.

## December 5

Toward the end of an agonizing board

meeting (a couple of hours of it with Graybill present), a straw vote was taken by the eleven board members — who included the just-voted appointment of one of Graybill's associates to the board, Paul Gordon. Seven board members voted to relieve Graybill of his position as associate secretary of the White Estate. The four board members who voted that Graybill should remain at the White Estate included *Adventist Review* editor William Johnsson; special assistant to the General Conference president, W. Duncan Eva; General Conference vice president for North America, Charles Bradford; and White Estate secretary, Robert Olson.

Sustained and adamant argument for Graybill's removal came from board chairman Kenneth Wood. The prophet's grandson, Arthur White, and his long-time friend, D. A. Delafield, both agreed with Wood. The depth of their anger may be illustrated by their willingness to misunderstand the indication in Graybill's preface that he was "the first student to have immediate and unlimited access to her personal and unpublished papers ...." Arthur White had main-

(concluded on page 28)

# Candor from the White Estate

During a joint weekend presentation to the Chattanooga First Church (27 June 1981), White Estate secretary Robert Olson and associate secretary Ronald Graybill were asked by then Chattanooga First pastor Dan Appel what limitations an Adventist layperson might encounter at the White Estate regarding access to unpublished Ellen White manuscripts and letters.

Olson and Graybill indicated that there were a couple of particularly "sensitive" letters from Ellen White in Oakland to Lucinda Hall (who, Olson said, "turned out to be Ellen White's best friend") in Battle Creek during 1876 that are not indexed.

"In fact," Olson continued, "some of them it's clear that Ellen White didn't want anybody to read at anytime, because she wrote at the top of one letter, 'After you have read this, please burn it.' Lucinda didn't burn it. So we have that now. And what would the brethren say all over the world, what kind of rumors would spread, if they would hear that we were burning stuff now at the White Estate? So, even though we know that that was Ellen White's original wish, we don't dare."

Nevertheless, Olson added, "Anything that's in the indexes, even if it is in the Z-file, we'll let you look at it."

Graybill explained the indexes and the Z-file:

*There are 120 file drawers to house these 60,000 pages. Two of those file drawers are Z-file material, and that's more sensitive*

*stuff. Some of it deals with adultery cases; and some of it deals with Edson White and his financial career, which was somewhat checkered, to say the least .... I use the Z-file to sort of alert me that that particular letter may have something sensitive and I'd better look at it very carefully before I give it to a researcher, to make sure that those confidences won't be violated.*

Then Graybill discussed one of the two letters to which researchers have not had access, and Olson described the other.

GRAYBILL: *The spring of 1876 was when Mrs. White was working in Oakland, working on the life of Christ .... And, apparently, James White felt she ought to be back in Battle Creek with him in whatever he was doing. (He didn't want to be in Oakland because Edson was there, and he and Edson were at swords points over Edson's financial shenanigans. And I think at one point he said, "I don't ever want to be in the same state again with Edson ....") Well, near the end of this time ... James wrote a letter to her. We don't have his letter. We only have her anguished recital of some of the things that he said in this letter. And, judging from what she said about it, it was a very nasty letter .... She writes, then, this anguished letter to Lucinda, who is back in Battle Creek with James, and repeats some of these things that James had said. Well ... [in] this letter, she is just a bit miffed at him for saying all these things. But the very next day she writes a letter to him in which she ... apologizes to him. Now, really, he should have apologized to her .... James should*

*have apologized. But Sister White says, "Please forgive me if I have said anything to hurt you," and so on. And then she says, "I do not claim infallibility or even perfection of Christian character. I am not free from mistakes and errors in my life. Had I followed my Saviour more closely, I should not have to mourn so much my unlikeness to His dear image." And when I read something like that, after that other letter. But Elder [Arthur] White was a little bit sensitive about it. After all, this is his grandmother and grandfather; and so that letter is in a different file. But that's the only one. And let me tell you, I have snooped around in that vault unattended for ten years now; and if there is anything else, I don't know where it is.*

OLSON: *I'm going to mention the other one.*

GRAYBILL: *Okay, confession is good for the soul.*

OLSON: *.... Now this is the letter I was mentioning a while ago — I believe I'm correct — where she said please burn it .... But in this letter to Lucinda Hall, she made a comment like this: "Did he take God with him when he went back East?" You know, he seemed to be the only one that knew what God's will was, and he was trying to tell his wife what she ought to do. And she wasn't going to do it. And so she, in a letter that we have had of hers there, she sort of sassed him. She said, "I can understand myself much better than you understand me," and so on. "And I do not accept your opinion of me," and this kind of thing. And this is what she wrote ... apologetically [for] a couple of days later — you know, "I shouldn't have said that," and so on. She was human, and I just love to see that humanity.*



# CURRENTS INTERVIEW: ROBERT D. BRINSMEAD

*An Australian avocado farmer reminisces about his former life as a Seventh-day Adventist theological gadfly.*

"Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Currents asked Robert D. Brinsmead in a 13 June 1983 interview at the Fallbrook, California, offices of Verdict Publications. "Not anymore," he replied.

The name Brinsmead has elicited fear and anger from Seventh-day Adventist church leaders for at least two decades. It has been for them the symbol of theological heresy — a thorn in their administrative flesh. For years, to be labeled a Brinsmeadite — whatever that really meant — was to be cursed with theological herpes.

Many Adventists know little more than that about Brinsmead. Consequently, it seemed good to get a first-hand look at the man and to hear from him directly about his theological "passages."

Brinsmead is a third-generation, Australian Adventist; a man who earns his living from the soil; an individual who pursues unrelentingly a personal understanding of the source and meaning of his Christian faith. It is his indefatigable delight in sharing with others what he learns along the way that has earned him a pariahship from those who fear uncertainty, plurality, and change.

Whether he is establishing an avocado farm, playing squash with friends, or debating theology, Brinsmead does it with all his might. This includes his publishing ventures — beginning with the magazine *Present Truth and Verdict*; and finally books such as his farewell to Adventism, *Judged by the Gospel*.

While it is the Brinsmead manner to speak with absolute certainty, he has been willing, nevertheless, to make major changes in his understanding of the things that matter most. "I'm committed to the idea of always beginning again," he says — "living in the tents of faith with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is no stopping place."

What follows is a conversation with a theologian/farmer who invites Seventh-day Adventists to "take all that apocalyptic religious tradition, back up a big dump truck, shovel it all in, and go join the human race." — Ed.

**BRINSMEAD:** I think the entire history of Adventism has been characterized by ambiguity and virtual deviousness. Adventism has always tried to project a catholic image to outsiders and another image for those inside. That's represented in the *Ministry* journal, in which every other issue goes to the Protestant clergy and emphasizes the catholic truths of Adventism.

**CURRENTS:** "Mere Christianity."

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes. And the alternate issue deals with cultic concerns. They are two different journals. Therefore it is not diffi-

cult to present Adventism at its best or even Mrs. White at her best. It is not difficult to review the theology of Ellen White, as I did a number of years ago, and to present the catholic Ellen White. I did my best to eliminate the cultic Ellen White from my presentations for certain reasons.

**CURRENTS:** During the early 1970s?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes. So there is the catholic Adventist and there is the cultic Adventist. This has caused considerable tension within the movement because many people basically want to be catholic Adventists and don't

care for the cultic trappings. Others are just the opposite. They don't care for the catholic aspects of Adventism but want to emphasize the cultic traits of Adventism. These cultic aspects make the Adventist church unique.

**CURRENTS:** If the cultic elements concern you, you will emphasize them. You find that tension even within individual families — leaving them divided on this issue.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes. For example, we would take the argument between Desmond Ford and the brethren on the sanctuary. Des



Someone has rightly said that no one believes Ellen White in the area of his competence. Adventists believe Ellen White only in the area of their incompetence.



We tried to preserve the Adventist idea that the final generation must be perfect along with the good news that Christ is our righteousness and in Him alone we triumph.



The Gentile churches never were sabbatarian. Nobody could objectively read the early history of the primitive Church and see that sabbatarianism was a moral issue.

picked out the statements of the catholic Ellen White and the influence of the best Protestant authors on her mind. The brethren, on the other hand, took the cultic Ellen White — the Ellen White of *Early Writings* or of *The Great Controversy* or of the Ballenger controversy. There's no question that the brethren had the better argument, because in any final confrontation, as with Ballenger, Ellen White returned to her cultic beginnings and ultimately refused to let that go.

**CURRENTS:** What do you think is the explanation for this? Do you think Ellen White was afraid that Ballenger's arguments would drive her back to the Great Disappointment, which she could not face again?

**BRINSMEAD:** It would have to be more than that, because the movement, and the Whites in particular, based the authenticity of her prophetic office on what she said was a redemptive event (or what the movement claimed was an event of redemptive significance) which took place in 1844. That is so crucial to the integrity of Adventism that to deny it really is to deny the validity of Adventism. And I think that if you were to make a comparison, you would have to go back and look at the relation between historic Christianity and the resurrection.

**CURRENTS:** Yet hardly any Adventist today will acknowledge that the basis of salvation changed in any way in 1844.

**BRINSMEAD:** Mrs. White specifically declares in *The Great Controversy* that it did change in 1844. That is a monstrous heresy if judged by the New Testament documents. She simply bent over backwards to give a rationale for the "shut door" fiasco. In *The Great Controversy* chapter, "In the Holy of Holies," she is very specific. Following Uriah Smith's argument and almost copying his line of reasoning verbatim, she said, In 1844 the "door of hope and mercy by which men had for eighteen hundred years found access to God was closed and another door was opened." She specifically indicated that the way men found God for eighteen hundred years and the responsive duties attendant thereto were no longer adequate. As I said in my book, *Judged by the Gospel*, Ellen White at her best didn't really believe that. The Ellen White of *Steps to Christ* and *The Desire of Ages* proclaimed more of the catholic Christ. So there is this tension in Ellen White.

**CURRENTS:** How conscious do you think Mrs. White was of this tension? Do you have any evidence?

**BRINSMEAD:** I don't think we could be adamant on that. There is no question that a severe tension existed. First of all, Adventism was overwhelmingly cultic. The early *Present Truths*, edited by James White, were entirely devoted to emphasizing two points: the seventh day as the Sabbath and the door of mercy being closed in 1844. That was absolutely bizarre. It was lunatic. Those pioneers were as crazy as March hares. They were the nuttiest people, religiously speak-

ing, you could find in America. They were emphasizing their apocalyptic fantasies and could not give up their dream of 1844, their belief that God was in it, or admit to any early fanaticism or extremism. So they rationalized the 1844 fiasco by creating a mass of apocalyptic nonsense. Out of all this emerged the visionary activity of Ellen White. She was consequently invested with the heavy mantle of the prophetic office. That was difficult for her to live up to.

**CURRENTS:** It also provided her with a lot of meaning that she hadn't had in her life to that point.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes.

**CURRENTS:** If you were homely and sick and had no community or role, and all of a sudden you had this —

**BRINSMEAD:** And by her own testimony she was a very ambitious person.

**CURRENTS:** Ambitious?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, that's in her own autobiography.

**CURRENTS:** *Life Sketches*?

**BRINSMEAD:** Some in *Life Sketches*. She was a very ambitious person. So early Adventism had this apocalyptic fantasy. They were preoccupied with their cultic interpretations. And after a few years this became desperately dry. People like Ellen White must have felt a terrible loss, a kind of spiritual claustrophobia. There was no spirit of revivalism; and she did remember the better times of the Millerite Movement and her Methodist background. This cultic, apocalyptic, legalistic dryness began to concern her. Nevertheless her prophetic mantle was tightened.

**CURRENTS:** This didn't allow for rapid change, did it?

**BRINSMEAD:** As the "prophet," she was given the heavy responsibility of passing the word of the Lord to the people; and with her education and background, she did not have the resources to meet the high expectations of her community. So what did she do? She did a very resourceful thing, and she did it quite surreptitiously. She went to the very sources that this cultic movement had unsparingly condemned as Babylon, gathered the best spiritual food she could find, and

tween Ellen White and her peers and ultimately led them to invest her with more power and authority, as it seemed to support the credibility of her prophetic claims. How could she produce such lovely, spiritual, heartwarming material unless she were inspired? All they had to do was compare her with other Adventist writers.

**CURRENTS:** Ellen White's early writings — both the accounts of her visions and expository material — contain much material from apocryphal, intertestamental books. Do you know what the general feeling of Christians was toward apocryphal writings in the nineteenth century?

**BRINSMEAD:** No, but we were aware from our research that she borrowed a great deal from apocryphal books like Esdras.

**CURRENTS:** Maccabees?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes.

**CURRENTS:** Jubilees?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, Jubilees. She borrowed the language and the terminology of these books, which might explain the similarity of language, figures of speech, and mention of dreams between Ellen White and Joseph Smith. I doubt whether Ellen White read Joseph Smith, but there are some remarkable similarities.

**CURRENTS:** In imagery.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, in imagery, in some of her dreams, and in her expressions. Joseph Smith might have obtained some of his inspiration from these apocryphal books, as Ellen White did, and then moved in a different direction.

**CURRENTS:** I don't think many people know much about you as a human being — what you have done and are doing for a living. Would you say a little about your journey in and out of Adventism and about yourself as a human being.

**BRINSMEAD:** Let me digress a moment. If I ever wrote an autobiography, which I doubt I will, I'd have to call it something like *The Incredible Journey*. It's had the tensions, and I suppose sometimes it has been an agonizing journey. But I have to confess we also had a lot of fun on the way.

**CURRENTS:** Desmond Ford was in our home a couple of years ago, and we talked a

***Those pioneers were as crazy as March hares. They were the nuttiest people, religiously speaking, you could find in America.***

made it suitable for her community's consumption. What happened — and this is the irony of it — was that this material of Ellen White's, borrowed from the Protestant authors and selected for spirituality and Christocentricity, was obviously more soul-sustaining and superior to that written by Smith, Andrews, Loughborough, and others who had had to live on their own thoughts. This only increased the gap be-

bit about you. He said that a typical Brinsmeadian day was to farm in the morning and to go into the library in the afternoon and study. Is that typical?

**BRINSMEAD:** Often with me it's the other way around. Study in the morning and farming in the afternoon.

**CURRENTS:** That's been your life for the last twenty-five to thirty years?

**BRINSMEAD:** I'm not a methodist in my

lifestyle. I'm not a programmed person. I often work in the study in the morning and farm in the afternoon, or often I get up early in the morning and arrange the day, get things going, see that the men are working, phone someone to fix my tractor, and then I go into my study.

**CURRENTS:** What kind of farming have you done?

**BRINSMEAD:** As a young fellow I went into bananas. I started a banana plantation and then left that to become a sugar grower in North Queensland. Later I went into land

good things from my Adventist heritage, everything seems to indicate that the main thing is to live within sensible parameters. People live about as long as their genes are programmed for, unless they are run over by a truck. The effects of a cup of tea or an occasional cup of coffee or a slice of meat are not measurable. I agree with Malcolm Muggeridge that to be always preoccupied with your body and always thinking about getting a few more years out of it is a cult of the body. To be so body conscious is a sickness.

**CURRENTS:** But what about your theologi-

“thus sayeth Ellen”?

**BRINSMEAD:** Ellen White has a lot to do with it. Des was converted by reading Ellen White. She is his spiritual mother.

**CURRENTS:** How long have you and Des been acquainted?

**BRINSMEAD:** We became personal acquaintances in 1958 when we were both at college. I was a student, and he returned to Avondale College for one more year of preparation before going overseas to take graduate study. So we became friends and got involved in all kinds of theological issues and discussions. I learned that Des had become an Adventist as a young fellow and had read his way into Adventism largely by reading Ellen White.

**CURRENTS:** Were your family already Adventists?

**BRINSMEAD:** My father became an Adventist in 1913.

**CURRENTS:** Were you personally interested in explaining how a person could hope to stand before God without a mediator after the close of probation? Was that the impetus behind your teaching immediately after your student days?

**BRINSMEAD:** Well, I think to explain it you have to look at everybody as a product of his age — a product of his community, his church, and his family. Everyone begins with a given framework. I began as an ardent Ellen White believer. I was greatly influenced by the Ellen White of *Early Writings*. I suppose that being from a farming family would probably predispose a person to be conservative.

**CURRENTS:** The cornfield?

**BRINSMEAD:** Sure, cornfield theology. On the other hand, I must say this. I was a different breed of Adventist. Although I took the visions, the pioneers, and *Early Writings* seriously, I never had an inordinate respect or superstitious regard for the Adventist hierarchy or the institutional church.

**CURRENTS:** They noticed.

**BRINSMEAD:** I think the brethren did notice. Many people regarded the institution more highly than perhaps even Ellen White. But no one is self-made. No one makes his own theology. We are the products of interaction. My father became an Adventist in 1913. He was an ardent Adventist and brought his entire family, including his father, into Adventism. They took the apocalyptic baggage seriously. And when my father moved into an Adventist community, he was astounded by the disparity between the great vision of Adventism portrayed by Ellen White and the low standard of social behavior in the church. I think it occurred to him — which I think was a mistake on his part — that the failure of Adventism was largely the result of not following Ellen White. He died not long ago. He was like a great patriarch. He died at the age of ninety-three, still very bright even on his deathbed. With a little assistance from his son, I think, he reflected a great deal on his pilgrimage.

## *She went to the very sources that this cultic movement had unsparingly condemned as Babylon....*

investment because I was too busy to farm while I was running around the United States in the 1960s. I really like farming. In fact, I'm a bit addicted to the land. Near the end of our agitation in Adventism I returned to farming, this time with avocados and other tropical and exotic fruit. I've been developing property over the last ten years in a tourist area overlooking beautiful beaches. I'm near the Gold Coast, which is a large tourist resort in Australia. It has a jet airport nearby. It's a beautiful area. And I've developed my farm as a type of showplace for growing tropical and exotic fruit. Over the last twelve months I've been developing the property into a tourist farm. So now I'm up to my ears in business as well as in farming. Farming is a serious economic venture for me.

**CURRENTS:** How do you explain the origins and the intensity of your theological journey?

**BRINSMEAD:** I do a lot of things with all my might. I play tennis and belong to a tennis club. I also play squash, and tend to do that with all my might, too.

**CURRENTS:** I was telling my associate that you've been viewed by some as the John McEnroe of Adventist theology — sort of the bad boy on the court.

**BRINSMEAD:** I have a tennis partner, and we belt it out on the tennis court sometimes, and sometimes with my brother in squash. Several times over the last few years I have had problems with my heart skipping a bit. So I went to see a cardiologist in Australia. He told me that for a man turning fifty, I was in good shape. But I said, “What I want to know is, when I get on the squash court and push things a bit hard, am I doing anything dangerous?”

**CURRENTS:** He didn't think so?

**BRINSMEAD:** No. He said, “I think, if I were a betting man, I'd wager you'll be around in thirty years.”

**CURRENTS:** Is that due to health reform?

**BRINSMEAD:** I don't think so. Not much. I've reappraised my view of certain aspects of health reform. Although I retain some

cal beginnings? How do you understand the intensity of your interest, and did it start in college or before that?

**BRINSMEAD:** It began before that. I got it from the atmosphere in our family and among our friends. I began my spiritual pilgrimage as a right-wing Adventist.

**CURRENTS:** Was Des Ford also a right-winger when you met him in college?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, unquestionably he was. But Des Ford has had a spiritual pilgrimage, too. He is growing. However, in certain respects Des Ford is still a right-wing Adventist. He is still very much an apocalyptic spirit. That is the interesting fact about Des. Someone has rightly said that no one believes Ellen White in the area of his competence. Adventists believe Ellen White only in the area of their incompetence. Let me give you an illustration. Mervyn Maxwell is an ardent follower of Ellen White. But Mervyn Maxwell is a historian. He openly disagrees with Ellen White on the beginnings of Sunday sabbatarianism. He is adamant that she is wrong. He does not believe Ellen White in the area of his competence. As another example, a number of Adventist doctors were associated with me in the early days. They, too, were right-wing Adventists. The interesting thing about these men, even today, is that they don't believe what Ellen White said about drugs and the practice of medicine. Adventists believe Ellen White only in the area of their incompetence.

**CURRENTS:** That's true of scholars in any field. Most people are liberal in the area of their expertise.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes. Let's consider Des Ford. Des is more liberal in the area of his expertise. He's too well read, too well informed, to buy the entire 1844 baggage. On the other hand, he has taken Ellen White seriously in the area of lifestyle, education, and in rearing his family.

**CURRENTS:** But don't you think that he lives abstemiously now because he recognizes that most health reform is scientifically backable and prudent, not because of a

He made the discovery that the problem of official Adventism was not so much its tension with Ellen White but that it was really the inevitable product of being a cult of Ellen White.

But to answer your question, I got involved in the eschatological climate of Adventism that confronted us with the reality of a soon-coming investigative judgment. That was more our point of interest than even the time of trouble. We were impelled to discover an evangelical solution to what seemed to be an insurmountable problem.

**CURRENTS:** How to live perfectly, you mean?

**BRINSMEAD:** No. Many folk misunderstood our position on perfection. They thought that the center of the “awakening” agitation was the question of perfection. It never was. That wasn’t the motivating force behind everything. We were simply using the tools and framework that we had available. Working within that framework, we were confronted with the imminence of an investigative judgment and the prospect of standing in the investigative judgment — and after that, of course, the question of how to negotiate the time of trouble. Our contemporaries — our teachers, preachers and writers — and everything that we could examine had no answer to the problem, except from a sanctificational point of view. Then there was the whole question of preparing for the latter rain, which was always an important issue in Adventism. For example, Ellen White made such statements as:

*Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God while our characters have one spot or stain upon them. It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall.*

This was an absolutely insurmountable problem. If one assumed that the latter rain was about to fall and looked honestly at his own spiritual progress, he was doomed.

**CURRENTS:** You need the latter rain to prepare for the latter rain, don’t you?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, that’s a good insight. But the only assistance that contemporary authors and preachers of Adventism could suggest was more sanctification. You need more faith in the power of God in your life, you need to surrender more, and all that garbage. We were then wrestling, unconsciously of course, with the problem which some theologians would call “original sin.”

**CURRENTS:** The Adventist leaders weren’t really headed in that direction then, were they?

**BRINSMEAD:** No. In studying the Bible, particularly the Day of Atonement imagery, we made a basic and simple but what to us was a fantastic evangelical discovery. We noticed that the Israelites didn’t come to the Day of Atonement already perfect. They had a yearly ritual. They were there afflicting themselves, confessing their sin. And the high priest went in as their representative,

not by virtue of what they were but by virtue of the representative power of the high priest. He went in with blood and incense while the people acknowledged their need of grace. It was by virtue of what the high priest did and what he had in his hands that the Israelites triumphed. Everything depended on him. So we took that image and linked it with the book of Hebrews. We understood that although the law in the most holy place was to judge us, the idea that one had to get rid of every defect of character before he could stand in the judgment, that one had to cleanse the soul temple from every defilement before he could receive the latter rain, was garbage. If we had a hundred — even a thousand — years to pursue the normal course of sanctification, we could never get rid of sin. At that point traditional Adventists thought we were almost antinomian. We had touched the problem of original sin, although we weren’t clearly articulating it. In those early days I spoke of the scars of sin and of how sin leaves a record. When we come to the judgment, when we stand in the investigative judgment, we are just as much sinners in ourselves as we were when we first accepted Christ. We need His forgiveness in the day of judgment just as much as we ever did, and God only asks that we repent with a broken and contrite spirit. Here is our High Priest. He has kept the law perfectly. His blood has been shed on the cross. His hands are full of blood and incense. We used Revelation — in the midst of the throne is a lamb all mangled and bleeding. Therefore come with boldness and freedom and fearlessness — not wondering whether I am perfect yet, whether I am ready yet, whether I am good enough to stand in the judgment. We were quite evangelical then because we felt that this door was opened in 1844. The reason why the work wasn’t finished, we said, was because everyone was trying to get themselves so sanctified that they would feel ready for the judgment; and then, being ready, they could say, “Lord, now I am ready for the judgment; now I can get the latter rain.” But we

was sweet release. I can remember that in those early days people wept for sheer joy. Everything is ready; you don’t have to wait. You don’t have to wait to get yourself so perfect that you can have the boldness by virtue of your sanctification. All things are ready.

We were trying to explain the gospel the best we knew how, but it was very, very primitive. We were really trying to put the gospel into the apocalyptic Adventist framework. And for ten years we had the same tension that Ellen White had. We tried to reconcile these cultic things with evangelical truth. We sang songs. They were songs like, “Jesus stands for me in judgment, He the Lamb all bleeding, torn.” Then we asked ourselves, “How are we going to live through the time of trouble?” Well, we devised some apocalyptic magic. We decided that before the time of trouble God would miraculously blot out sin, not just from a book in heaven but from the pathways of our brains. Those were all rationales to accommodate the time of trouble. So we tried to preserve the Adventist idea that the final generation must be perfect along with the good news that Christ is our righteousness and in Him alone we triumph. This idea swept Avondale College by storm, and we were like zealots rushing all around the area. In the ten succeeding years we were attacked from all directions.

**CURRENTS:** Did you set out self-consciously to share this good news, or was this simply something you were talking to your friends about? How did it get so big and so dangerous?

**BRINSMEAD:** Well, it was rather spontaneous.

**CURRENTS:** You didn’t set up a nonprofit corporation?

**BRINSMEAD:** I have never set up any corporation in my life. Others have done that. I am not even on the board of Verdict Publications. The agitation simply began when I looked at these issues intentionally, found a solution meaningful to me, and shared it with a young ministerial student at college. In my conversation with him I saw that he,

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***I agree with Malcolm Muggeridge that to be always preoccupied with your body ... is a cult of the body.***

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said that on this program the work would never be finished. The insight came to us that the door had already been open for 120 years. Adventists had never had the boldness and the freedom and the confidence — not by virtue of what they were but by virtue of what the High Priest was — to march boldly into that judgment and demand the latter rain on the virtues of Christ. So to the people who were in this program of trying to perfect themselves for the judgment and trying to get ready for the time of trouble, this

too, was thinking about the investigative judgment and the time of trouble and trying to get ready for the day of the Lord. As we talked I observed that he was despondent. In fact, he acknowledged that he wasn’t sleeping too well. I could understand his dilemma perfectly; because the more he convinced himself that the end was near, the more uncertain he was that he was ever going to make it even though he was ardently exhorting other people to get more sanctified so that they could make it. So I simply

explained to him what, in an Adventist context, Hebrews 10:19 meant — “having boldness to enter.” I told him that he could have the utmost freedom and boldness to enter the judgment right then. He had never heard such a thing. It seemed to him so amazing that he even refused to finish our work — he was on one end of a crosscut saw and I on the other. He had to leave and tell some of his friends. So really that message started from there to go all over Australia. It was completely spontaneous.

**CURRENTS:** So people who shared your theological concerns felt relieved by what they were hearing?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, it was something to sing about.

**CURRENTS:** It is often represented that Desmond Ford and the original Brinsmead were theologically opposed. Is it true that Des spent the next ten years resisting your message?

**BRINSMEAD:** When that spontaneous “awakening” took place in 1959, Des had left Australia and was in America. So he was away from the scene at the time.

**CURRENTS:** When did you first come to the States?

**BRINSMEAD:** That was at the end of 1960.

**CURRENTS:** Did you come with a plan? Or did you come to study?

**BRINSMEAD:** No, I came at the invitation of a few friends who had heard something about what was going on in Australia. Men like Al Hudson said, “Come over; let’s sit down and talk about it.”

**CURRENTS:** Is Al Hudson still alive?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, I believe he is.

**CURRENTS:** In the first issue of *Adventist Currents* there are excerpts from a phone call that Hudson made to *Eternity* editor Donald Barnhouse in the late 1950s.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, that was a delightful conversation. Barnhouse jumped all over Hudson. I think Barnhouse was magnificent. But let me explain the early opposition from the brethren in Australia. For the first few years they opposed us on the ground that we were now resisting the power of God to get ourselves perfect. Later in the 1960s Edward Heppenstall attacked us from what seemed to us a surprising new angle altogether. Heppenstall said that no one would ever be perfect in this life. In response we said that this was denying fundamental Adventism.

**CURRENTS:** Is that what Heppenstall was saying?

**BRINSMEAD:** Heppenstall took a historical Protestant position. We began with an Adventist framework and in that framework tried to take the gospel and synthesize it with the apocalyptic, perfectionistic Adventist framework. For ten years my theologizing was a desperate systematic attempt to hold those two poles together. By the end of the 1960s it became apparent to me that I could not hold these two things together. I was going to be an apocalyptic Adventist or I was

going to hold to the gospel itself. One had to go. And ultimately there was no question in my mind which one had to go.

**CURRENTS:** What critics forced you to come to that conclusion? You didn’t just weary of the tension?

**BRINSMEAD:** No, and Desmond Ford also knows this because he was involved in the discussion. Near the end of the 1960s, Des was urged by the brethren to critique my theology. His critique of my theology was a lot of apocalyptic garbage. As I look back, my response to Des about it is, “Des, we were a couple of lunatics.” Interestingly, Des also had some gospel insights in the 1960s, but he was clearly not articulating a New Testament gospel in opposition to me. His critique of me was the most esoteric nonsense you could imagine. His major point was on when the universal death decree would come — before or after the close of probation. What does he mean by universal Sunday-law death decree? The entire matter was a fantasy.

**CURRENTS:** Was that ever published?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, the brethren published and circulated it, and I answered it. Because he attacked me on the grounds of such esoteric matters, Des’ critique was more of a hindrance, I suppose, than a help. Both Des and I could quote Ellen White and all the other pioneers until it came out of our ears. It was almost humorous what got me going in a new direction. The Pope was coming to Australia. And, crazy sectarians that we were, we felt the prophetic burden to oppose the Pope.

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## *It was almost humorous what got me going in a new direction. The Pope was coming to Australia.*

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**CURRENTS:** You mean you gave an eschatological significance to the Pope’s coming to Australia?

**BRINSMEAD:** We printed and circulated a little brochure entitled *Australia and Others United for a Fair Papal Visit*. The local paper had headlines about Pope Paul’s being opposed by this group of people. And then someone from a television station in Brisbane called with some talk about inviting me to a debate.

**CURRENTS:** With the Pope?

**BRINSMEAD:** No, but with a priest. And I thought, Oh my, what are we getting into? Where is this papal visit going to lead? I’d better become an expert on Roman Catholic theology. The more I read, the more I was amazed to discover that I had been misled by propaganda which utterly distorted and misrepresented what Roman Catholics stood for. If you read *The Great Controversy*, for example, you get the idea that Roman Catholics stand for a bald legalism — that you are saved by your own good works rather

than by the grace of God. But I discovered that Roman Catholics believe in grace, too. And I thought, What on earth is going on here?

So I went to the Banyo Seminary, which is the largest Roman Catholic Seminary in Queensland, met Father Murphy, and said: “Look, I’m doing some research on Roman Catholic theology, and I am a bit confused. Let me tell you about my Protestant background and my perception of Roman Catholic theology.” “Well, son,” he said — very relaxed and with a big smile on his face, not a bit defensive — “we believe that salvation is wholly of grace from beginning to end.” “But is that what the Catholic Church has always taught?” I asked. “Of course it has always taught that,” he said. And he gave me the evidence. They’ve always opposed Pelagianism. And they have always opposed semi-Pelagianism.

So, as I reflected on Roman Catholic theology and studied the Reformers and the original arguments between Rome and the Reformation, I had to confront the fact that I didn’t know what the sixteenth-century argument was all about. How was I, as an Adventist, to take this heritage seriously, to finish the work of the Reformation, if I didn’t know what the Reformation was about? I had been living in the dark, and with fury I attacked this issue. With increasing discomfort I became aware that many of our theological propositions were more in harmony with Roman Catholic thought than with Protestant thought.

So around this time we abandoned Ad-

ventist perfectionism. We abandoned the Adventist framework of thinking and doing theology and moved into the reformational, Protestant stream of thought. We confronted the charismatic movement with a vengeance, because the charismatics were preoccupied with their inner experience just as the Adventists were preoccupied with getting sanctified enough to stand in the judgment.

**CURRENTS:** In a manuscript written by Ed Zackrisson published in *Southern Columns*, he explained that in the 1970s Adventism moved from a rather reformational approach, emphasizing justification, toward the perfectionism you had just abandoned.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, we passed each other going in different directions.

**CURRENTS:** That’s the point of Zackrisson’s paper.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, I saw it.

**CURRENTS:** Was it a good representation?

**BRINSMEAD:** There are certain things he never understood about the old “awakening.” He thought it was all about perfection.

But that's not really true.

A lot of people didn't know what was going on. Because we were able to emphasize pioneer Adventism, we made many friends; and because we also emphasized the solution to the problem of standing in the judgment, we made friends. Consequently, during the 1960s we had a number of clandestine friends in the background — Herbert Douglass, for example. And he wasn't the only one. In fact, when we finally went to the General Conference in 1971 and tried to effect a reconciliation, we met a group of besieged men. We still laugh about it to this day. They thought it was a final, ultimate trick we were trying to spring on them. They didn't know how many supporters we had in their own circle. They were distrustful of one another. At that time we had sympathizers and friends right in "Caesar's household."

Consequently, when we did change in the 1970s and adopted a reformational theology, many people felt we had jumped the wrong way. When I quit agitating the question of perfectionism, these other men felt that now was their opportune time. It no longer had the stigma of Brinsmead. They could give it due emphasis without the idiosyncracies of the old "awakening." They jettisoned the

conference was this. In response to the 1974 special issue of the *Review*, I wrote a six-page essay, entitled *A Statement to My S.D.A. Friends*, in which I critiqued the theology of that 1974 *Review* and succinctly focused the issue. The issue was the meaning of righteousness by faith. Biblically speaking, righteousness by faith was justification alone; but the *Review* had taken a position more in harmony with classical Roman Catholicism. That was the substance of my short essay. My essay was the first in Adventist debate to articulate righteousness by faith as justification alone. At that time a young minister in Australia by the name of Noel Mason got the essay that I wrote in response to the 1974 issue of the *Review* and read it. It was startling to him. He had never seen the issue presented like this before — that sanctification is not included in the article of righteousness by faith. Mason took my essay to his friend, Desmond Ford, and asked Des to look it over. In about a week's time Noel returned and asked Des about it, and Des acknowledged that Brinsmead was right.

**CURRENTS:** Was that when Des was teaching at Avondale?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, and Des said that righteousness by faith is justification by faith

critics of Desmond Ford dug it up and went racing around the entire church with it. So my story ended, Yes, someone was following Brinsmead.

**CURRENTS:** How do you explain the hatred of the brethren for you and your message? Around 1975 or 1976 I was aware that you had taken a Reformation position on the nature of justification alone, and I asked a high-ranking General Conference officer, "Why can't you forgive Brinsmead for whatever it is he has done to you?" "Oh," he said, "you just can't imagine how badly he hurt us, how damaging he has been to us." What do the brethren see as having been so terrible? Was it the way you presented your views or their substance that was so threatening?

**BRINSMEAD:** They were somewhat paranoid about this. And of course we were quite young then. I was in my mid-twenties when the agitation began. No doubt we appeared cocksure about our positions, and that certainly aggravated them. Perhaps an anti-establishment spirit made them fearful.

**CURRENTS:** Did the brethren feel they were losing control? That is threatening, of course, to someone who is in an authoritarian position.

**BRINSMEAD:** It was a bit like guerrilla warfare. The old "awakening" was difficult to nail down. Probably it would be safer to let an objective third party analyze it. I would have to confess it has always been a bit of a mystery to me.

**CURRENTS:** You've noticed it all along?

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes. Now my understanding of the gospel has increasingly come into tension with classical Protestant theology. The Protestant church at large is not much different from Adventism. The same spirit of sectarianism exists there. I'm in the process of re-examining the entire gamut of classic, systematic theology in both the Catholic and the Protestant tradition. I'm seeing cracks all along the wall of traditional theology, produced partly by the historical-critical method, but even more by the New Testament gospel itself.

**CURRENTS:** In your recent theological explorations I notice that you have worked with Geoffrey Paxton. Why don't you briefly explain how he came to be associated with you. North American Adventists know him best for his book, *The Shaking of Adventism*, and the General Conference attempts to ban him from Adventist centers.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes. We met at the time when the charismatic movement had come to Australia and was taking the place by storm. We both had serious reservations about its validity on the grounds of our commitment to the Protestant heritage and to true Protestant theology. He had been trained in a good Protestant tradition at Moore Theological College, and at that time I had newly rediscovered the doctrine of justification by faith as taught by Luther and Calvin and the greats of the Protestant movement. Because

## *The only assistance that contemporary ... preachers of Adventism could suggest was more sanctification.*

baggage of the conscious and subconscious but kept the basic theological tenets of final-generation perfectability. And in a series of conferences on hermeneutics, chaired by Gordon Hyde, in contrast to *Questions on Doctrine*, they returned to what they felt was authentic Adventism.

**CURRENTS:** So the Fighr administration of the 1960s — with his Froom, Read, and Anderson — passed to the Pierson administration in the 1970s — with his Hyde, Wood, Douglass, and other individuals sympathetic to an eschatology that required end-time perfection.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, then they began to attack Des Ford.

**CURRENTS:** When was that?

**BRINSMEAD:** In the mid-1970s.

**CURRENTS:** Because he was also Reformation-oriented?

**BRINSMEAD:** When we moved to a reformational position, he took a position that was unique to Adventism. When we moved to a reformational position and a rapidly growing mailing list for *Present Truth*, the *Review* decided they must do something to meet this. They published a special issue entitled "Righteousness by Faith."

**CURRENTS:** Then came the Palmdale conference, right?

**BRINSMEAD:** What led up to the Palmdale

alone. When Des came to that conviction, his wife Gillian circulated a paper, entitled *The Soteriological Implications of the Human Nature of Christ*, in which she stated that righteousness by faith is justification alone. As soon as that was released, there was a storm in Australia. The conservative brethren jumped on Ford for teaching Brinsmeadism. This was the major reason they were to remove him from Avondale College. I could see the embarrassing position Des was in. On the one hand the charge wasn't really true. What didn't do justice to the facts was that Des did have gospel insights in the 1960s that were in advance of what we were standing for. He was then opposing perfectionism consistently, and these men weren't giving him credit for that. So I wrote a story especially for Des' benefit. It was entitled "Someone Is Following Brinsmead." In it I told of two dogs we had when I was a boy. One dog, Rover, used to get a bone; and the other dog, Monte, would pretend he wasn't interested in the bone at all. So Rover would become bored with the bone and bury it. When Rover disappeared, Monte — who had been watching out of the corner of one eye — would go, dig up the bone, and race around everywhere with his great find. This happened in the area of perfection. In 1970 we buried the perfection bone, but then the



of mutual interests we participated in forums together.

**CURRENTS:** How did you meet each other? He was an Anglican, and you were —

**BRINSMEAD:** He was an Anglican and at that time the principal of a small, interdenominational Bible college near me in Brisbane. A friend gave him a copy of what was then the *Present Truth* journal. There was a sympathetic response. Then I saw him on television in a debate on the charismatic movement, and his position brought a sympathetic response from me. Because of his contact with me, he found that more and more of his friends were evangelical or reformational Adventists. That's the stance we had at that time. Then he did some postgraduate work at the University of Queensland, and he decided to do his master's thesis on justification by faith in Adventism. Based on his research, he published a book, *The Shaking of Adventism*, in which he gave the history of this struggle to the time of his writing.

**CURRENTS:** It seems to me that you have now gone from Reformation theology to what Paxton labeled in Loma Linda as "sloppy, sentimentalistic Babylonianism;" what Robert Parr calls "damnable heresy;" what Ford, Spangler, Van Rooyen, and others label "the moral influence theory." This weekend you called the traditional Latin or Western views of law and justice into question. Your critique of Western or Latin concepts of justice is similar to what Ed Vick, Jack Provonsa, Paul Heubach, both Graham and Malcolm Maxwell, Paul Grove, Louis Venden, and others have been talking about for some time. How did you come to this?

**BRINSMEAD:** As you know, the critique of the Latin view of the atonement is nothing new. It has occasioned a long-running debate in the history of theology.

**CURRENTS:** But you used to be strongly opposed to it.

**BRINSMEAD:** I would have to say that the alternatives proposed by those who are satisfied with the Latin theory of atonement have not been satisfying either. In fact, I think they've been worse than the Latin theory of atonement. One ought to appreciate the strengths of the Latin position, its valid points, and why it has often served the Church quite well. It has served the Church better than the alternative theories presented by Abelard and his proponents. If I were given the choice between an objective view of atonement, which is the Latin view, and a subjective interpretation of atonement, I would take the Latin view of the atonement.

**CURRENTS:** Then what started you examining and then eventually appreciating the critiques of Latin views of the justice of God?

**BRINSMEAD:** In the last three years or so our theological methodology has moved from doing theology in a traditional, systematic, propositional framework to a historical-

redemptive theological framework. I believe in the validity of the historical-critical method. I favor theologians who write their theology in the salvation-history framework. In developing the implications of the salvation-history framework and in wrestling with my Adventist heritage, I consciously abandoned doing theology based on propositional revelation and began to increasingly appreciate a more dynamic way of dealing with the Bible. The Christian movement has generally done the same thing with ethics. For example, in the popular view of the Ten Commandments, God handed down a divine legislation in propositions that were to structure Christian ethics for all time. But as I have reviewed the history of the Church, I could see that sabbatarianism was unhistorical; it was against the New Testament. The Gentile churches never were sabbatarian. Nobody could objectively read the early history of the primitive Church and see that sabbatarianism was a moral issue. But to honestly repudiate sabbatarianism was not simply a matter of rejecting some Adventist tenets. I had to return to Puritanism and find my Adventist roots in the Puritan age where they came from. That is where the roots of the Adventist view of the law and sabbatarianism are. So I was confronted not only with rejecting a few tenets of Adventism, but also with jettisoning the entire tradition of Protestantism on the third use of the law.

After reading many of the best authors of the twentieth century, I realized that the traditional theology of Christendom was now defunct. It could not stand up to the historical-critical method. And, most seriously, it was inconsistent with the gospel. I therefore took an entirely new position on Christian ethics. To express it simply, Christ is not just the gospel — Christ is the law. And I can prove from the New Testament that this is the biblical position. Christ supersedes both law and prophets. He is the promise of the prophets fulfilled. He is the *real* Lawgiver. He is the Word of God and the final expression of the will of God. And I was led to the explosive conclusion that most of Christian history, both Catholic and Protestant, is a synthesis between New Testam-

mouse. I think you must be consistent; therefore you burn down the house.

**CURRENTS:** You have pointed out the specious tension between mercy and justice, between law and love, or between law and gospel. In response to a letter I wrote to Hans LaRondelle on this subject, he replied, saying that the burden of proof was on those who would say that justice in Scripture does not mean retributive justice. I answered by quoting him Romans 3:25, 26, where Paul says that at the cross God's justice was revealed; and also Christ's statement in the Sermon on the Mount: "It has been said of old time, an eye for an eye, but I say . . . ." And I pointed out to him that Christ had died, the ultimate turned cheek, by allowing his own creation to kill Him. And I asked, "Doesn't that put the burden of proof on those who would say that justice is retributive, when our Lord has said and acted out the opposite?" He never responded. I mentioned the same texts and interpretation to Des Ford. He said, "Paul is a theologian; Jesus is not a theologian." I can only find a few men who are willing to let Christ either correct our understanding of the Old Testament writers or correct the Old Testament writers.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, but the best scholars know that the biblical word *sadaq* in itself does not have the meaning of punishment.

**CURRENTS:** But hadn't you read Provonsa's books —

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, I've read that.

**CURRENTS:** *God Is With Us?* And then more recently, *You Can Go Home Again*, or Maxwell's *Can God Be Trusted?* They make all these points very clearly. What made you unsympathetic to those views in the past?

**BRINSMEAD:** Probably I'd still be unsympathetic with their positions, because in the final analysis they impose a Christian nominalism, too. These men are also working within a law-based theology. And even though they are trying to rework it, they begin with the same basic premise. They might be trying to rework the gospel as I did back in the 1960s, but I was trying to rework the gospel while retaining the 1844 heritage. I could not articulate a clear gospel until I abandoned that 1844 heritage. These men are trying to re-

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## ***I never had an inordinate respect or superstitious regard for the Adventist hierarchy....***

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ment grace and Old Testament law. The Christian movement has been riddled with Christian nominalism. Christianity has such an ugly face because it is so often a form of Christian Pharisaism. The Christian Church has not allowed Paul's insights in the book of Galatians to have full sway. Some would say it is a matter of burning down the house to get the mouse — to get the sabbatarianism

work certain aspects of the doctrine of atonement, but they are retaining the basic presuppositions of Adventism — sabbatarianism, 1844, and the rest.

**CURRENTS:** Several years ago when you were in Riverside, I asked where you found forensic justification in the prodigal son story, and you jumped all over me. But I really liked the way you used the prodigal

*(concluded on page 28)*



# Marian the "Bookmaker"

## *Part II of The Unfinished Story of Fannie Bolton and Marian Davis*

by Alice Elizabeth Gregg

The story of Fannie Bolton, Ellen G. White's most controversial literary associate, cannot be told adequately or completely without the story of Ellen's long-time literary associate, Marian Davis.

Marian was born on August 21, 1847, at North Berwick, Maine, to Obadiah and Elmira O. Davis. Her given name was Mary Ann, which she used until she was in her thirties. She was the oldest of four children, Grace being the next younger, then Obadiah, and last Ella. If there are any extant pictures of Marian, none has been found thus far. If she looked anything like her sister Ella, she had brown hair and a small, serious face with pleasing features.

When Marian was four years old, her mother became a Seventh-day Adventist; and soon afterward her father, who had been in California during the gold rush, also accepted the faith. In 1868, the year she was twenty-one, she went with her family to live in Battle Creek, Michigan. Shortly after that, Marian accepted a position teaching in a country school. Teaching proved to be so taxing that her health was affected, and she had to stay home a year to recuperate. Later she took work as a proofreader at the Review and Herald publishing plant.

Double tragedy struck the family in 1876. Grace died of "lung fever" on March 17, and then ten days later, on March 27, their mother died. Marian and her father wrote the obituaries for the Review.<sup>1</sup>

In 1880 Ella married William K. Kellogg, owner of the W.K. Kellogg Cornflakes Company. Obadiah went into business and became known for the durability of his electric water pumps.

When James and Ellen White took a wagon train trip to Colorado in 1879, they invited Marian to accompany them. Marian went by railway from Michigan to Texas to join the eight wagons already en route. The story of the trip is told by Eileen E. Lantry in a children's book entitled *Miss Marian's Gold*.<sup>2</sup> Marian was thirty-two years of age when she started this journey that was to be the beginning of a quarter century's adventure to exotic and interesting places. When Ellen traveled — to California in 1882, to Europe in 1885, again to California in 1887, to Michigan in 1889, to Australia in 1891,

and again to California in 1900 — Marian accompanied her to do her manuscript editing.

Marian became what Ellen called her "bookmaker." "She takes my articles which are published in the papers, and pastes them in blank books," Ellen wrote to George A. Irwin, who would soon become the next president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. "She also has a copy of all the letters I write. In preparing a chapter for a book, Marian remembers that I have written something on that special point, which may make the matter more forcible. She begins to search for this, and if when she finds it, she sees that it will make the chapter more clear, she adds it."<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately, Marian's memory was very good. To draw from, she had at least "thirty scrapbooks, a half dozen bound volumes, and fifty manuscripts, all covering thousands of pages" of Ellen White's materials, besides a large library of books.<sup>4</sup> Also she attended classes and meetings and took notes that would help cover a given

her "own thing," whatever it might be at the time.

On one occasion Ellen wrote to Mary, her daughter-in-law: "Willie is in meeting early and late, devising, planning for the doing of better and more efficient work in the cause of God. . . . Marian will go to him for some little matters that it seems she could settle for herself. She is nervous and hurried and he so worn he has to just shut his teeth together and hold his nerves as best he can. I have had a talk with her and told her she must settle many things herself that she has been bringing Willie. . . . She must just carry some of these things that belong to her part of the work, and not bring them before him nor worry his mind with them. Sometimes I think she will kill us both, all unnecessarily, with her little things she can just as well settle herself as to bring them before us. Every little change of a word she wants us to see. I am about tired of this business."<sup>5</sup>

Marian's experience, for one thing, taught her that the omission, addition, or

***Marian, who researched for content ideas, organization, and expression . . . was not called "bookmaker" without reason.***

subject, such as the life of Christ.

Ellen had been "an interested reader of religious journals," according to William C. White, her son, "and during the many years that Uriah Smith was editor of the Review, it was her custom to request him after [he had] made use of the religious exchanges, to pass them over to her and she would spend a portion of her time in scanning them in selecting precious things which sometimes appeared in the Review. In these she also gathered information regarding what was going on in the religious world."<sup>6</sup> This was information that was also available for Marian to peruse for her bookmaking activities.

Marian was extremely conscientious about her work and would be very painstaking about bringing numerous details to the attention of Ellen or Willie for clarification. This could be very annoying to Ellen at times, as she wanted to get on with

misuse of a word or a comma can make all the difference in the world to meaning and clarity and can confuse or mislead rather than enlighten the reader. In other words, she was a well skilled editor.

Further, Marian herself was clearly searching, studying, and selecting pertinent material not from Ellen's scrapbooks alone but from the works of other religious writers (Alfred Edersheim, William Hanna, John Harris, Daniel March, Henry Melvill, to name some) and from various Adventist ministers she heard lecture or obtained advice from in order to familiarize herself with the subject. Certainly it would follow, then, that she would be anxious that the manuscript work resulting from her searchings,

*Currents thanks Ada Turner for being guest editor of both "Fannie's Folly" and "Marian the Bookmaker."*

Alice Gregg is retired, Acting Director of Libraries, Loma Linda University.

incorporatings, and organizings be scrutinized thoroughly. Whose work should be more carefully done than that of "the prophet" speaking for God?

Zealous supporters of Ellen at times referred to Marian, Fannie, and others loosely as "copyists" (which means their editing would be limited to "mechanics" such as correcting simple grammar, spelling, punctuation) — thus subtly minimizing the associate. There are numerous pieces of evidence to indicate that Ellen's literary assistants, by whatever title, in fact did what is called *substantive editing* — that is, re-writing, reorganizing, and suggesting ways to reinforce or modify the content — plus much more. Marian, who researched for content ideas, organization, and expression and who attended to paraphrasing, was not called "bookmaker" without reason.

The matter of using quotation marks for material drawn from the work of other religious writers eventually came up for discussion. William C. White and Dores E. Robinson wrote: "Mrs. White made no effort to conceal the fact that she had copied from other writers, statements that exactly suited her purpose. And in her handwritten manuscripts, most of the passages that she had copied word for word, were enclosed in quotation marks. But there were also many passages that were paraphrased.... The question arose, How shall these passages be handled? Much time would be required to study each passage and mark it consistently. The printers were waiting for copy, and the public were waiting for the book. Then it was decided to leave out quotation marks entirely. And in that way the book was printed."<sup>7</sup>

Vesta J. Farnsworth, who was in Australia during the time Ellen was there, wrote that Marian "had shared in the decision to leave out quotation marks in the early edition of [The] *Great Controversy* and to the using of the general acknowledgment in the Preface. Then when there came severe criticism for this, she, with Sister White and her associates, felt it very keenly."<sup>8</sup>

That Marian was upset and weeping herself to sleep night after night eventually got back to the family, according to Obadiah, and they worried about her because the health of their sister was not robust.<sup>9</sup>

Dudley M. Canright, one of Ellen's biographers, wrote that Marian "was one day heard moaning in her room. Going in, another worker inquired the cause of her trouble. Miss Davis replied: 'I wish I could die! I wish I could die!' 'Why, what is the matter?' asked the other. 'Oh,' Miss Davis said, 'this terrible plagiarism!'"<sup>10</sup>

Farnsworth commented on that story: "If this be true, it is only one of the many things connected with her [Marian's] work over which she was deeply distressed. Sister Marian Davis was exceedingly faithful and conscientious in her labors, and felt keenly her responsibility in the work entrusted to her in connection with Sister White's writ-

ings. She was frail of body and often low spirited. Many times she besought the prayers and the counsel of her associates and fellow workers. And by the help of God she did a noble work. She loved the work better than her life, and anything which affected it affected her."<sup>11</sup>

When Marian talked with Charles E. Stewart, a doctor in Battle Creek, she told him about her problems with her editing.

## ***... when Ellen returned to California from her trip, she could not succeed in persuading Marian to eat.***

He referred to this incident, without divulging the person's name, in a lengthy letter that he wrote to Ellen in 1907: "I am informed by a trustworthy person, who has had an opportunity to know, that you in the preparation of your various works, consulted freely other authors; and that it was sometimes very difficult to arrange the matter for your books in such a way as to prevent the readers from detecting that many of the ideas had been taken from other authors."<sup>12</sup>

The work seemed to go fairly smoothly between Ellen and Marian until Fannie joined them. Then things began to happen. Ellen wrote that Fannie "would talk to my workers, especially Marian, and get her stirred up so that I could hardly get along with Marian. She was like another person, infused with a spirit that was excitable and unexplainable."<sup>13</sup>

What the editors talked about was the giving of credit to authors and editors. Fannie, according to Ellen in a letter to Ole A. Olsen, General Conference president at the time, "talked these things to Marian and Marian has been led into much of the same views, but not to the extent of Fannie."<sup>14</sup> Fannie had talked to various ones about how the works were organized and written, and Ellen wrote, "she presented the matter to them in such a way that they thought injustice had been done to Fannie and Marian.... Fannie represented that she and Marian had brought all the talent and sharpness into my books, yet [they] were both ignored and set aside, and all the credit came to me."<sup>15</sup>

Fannie had "created such a state of things in her representations," Ellen wrote to John Harvey Kellogg, "that you would have supposed her to be the author of the articles she prepared, and maintained that it should be acknowledged that Marian and Fannie were in copartnership with me in the publications bearing my signature."<sup>16</sup>

Ellen finally brought this to a head one day in a conversation with Fannie. She recounted the incident thus to Willie: "Should [my writings] be published Mrs. E.G. White, Fannie Bolton, and Marian Davis are a company concern in these pro-

ductions? 'Oh,' she says, 'I do not know, I do not know. I have been tempted. I am full of pride.'"<sup>17</sup>

After Fannie was discharged, Marian, according to Ellen, became "just as peaceable as she used to be."<sup>18</sup> However, when Ellen was upset with Marian, she was relegated from the "trustworthy bookmaker" to "poor little Marian."

Marian's father died in Battle Creek on

March 1, 1903. In May of the same year Marian attended the General Conference meeting in Oakland, California. While she was there she caught a cold that settled in her lungs, and she was hospitalized at the St. Helena Sanitarium and Hospital. Gradually she seemed to recover from her lung problem, and she went back to work on Ellen's latest tome, *The Ministry of Healing*. But her appetite and strength never returned. Finally, when she became so weak that she could no longer sit at her typewriter, she was hospitalized again. Because she was unable to eat or sleep, she continued wasting away and never recovered.<sup>19</sup>

According to Canright, "it is said that before her death Miss Davis was greatly troubled over the connection she had had with Mrs. White's plagiarism, for she knew how extensively it had been carried on."<sup>20</sup>

That Marian was troubled can be read in letters written to her during that time by Ellen, who was traveling in the East. On August 24, 1904: "Let not one anxious thought come into your mind." On September 16: "I am grieved that you are troubled in mind.... He [God] has no such feelings of condemnation as you imagine. I want you to stop thinking that the Lord does not love you.... You need not think that you have done anything which would lead God to treat you with severity. I know better."<sup>21</sup> Even on October 9, when Ellen returned to California from her trip, she could not succeed in persuading Marian to eat.

At four o'clock on the afternoon of October 25, 1904, Marian — who had made *The Desire of Ages* sing, and who had given sinew and beauty to many other works for Ellen — was dead. Her funeral was held the next day in the St. Helena Church, and she was buried at St. Helena. In attendance were her sister, Ella Kellogg, and her niece, Beth Kellogg.

Willie wrote the obituary, a full column in length, for the *Review*. He described her as an "efficient laborer in the literary departments of our work.... [She] has been a most efficient and trusted worker, preparing for the press tracts, pamphlets, and books, and articles for our numerous periodicals." As for the thoughts that were

troubling Marian at the time, Willie wrote that "Sister Davis sometimes, during her sickness, mourned because of the imperfections of her work and experience, but at the last she grasped the firm promises of God, and found peace and rest and joy in the Lord."<sup>22</sup>

One further account stated that Marian died of tuberculosis. But, curiously, her death certificate states that she died of anemia. She was fifty-seven years old, and she weighed fifty-seven pounds. Could it have been that starvation was the only way out of a situation that she could no longer tolerate?

Even after the deaths of Marian and Fannie, the seeds of doubt about the authorship of Ellen's writings continued to sprout and flourish.

White and Robinson spent the year of 1933 endeavoring to compose an explanation of Ellen's writings so that members of the Adventist denomination would understand, once and for all time, how the "gift" worked. Together they wrote "A Statement Regarding the Experiences of Fannie Bolton in Relation to Her Work for Mrs. Ellen G. White," "Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of Ellen G. White," and "The Work of Mrs. E. G. White's Editors." Also, White wrote "The Story of a Popular Book, *Steps to Christ*," and Robinson wrote "The Authorship of *Steps to Christ*." All of these were issued at the time in typewritten form.

In their "Brief Statements" they recorded that "in later years when Mrs. White became aware that some of the readers of her books were perplexed over the question as to whether her copying from other writers was an infringement on somebody's rights, the inquiry was raised, 'Who has been injured?' No injustice or injury could be named."<sup>23</sup>

But Ellen knew who would be injured. "Fannie Bolton can hurt me as no other person can," she had said with some warmth to Merritt Kellogg.<sup>24</sup> In 1895, Ellen had said: "She [Fannie] has misrepresented me and hurt me terribly. Only in connection with my work has she hurt me. She has reported to others that she has the same as

yourself, your work, your editors and readers, you yourself should have acknowledged your editor's work. In this matter I thought if I did not tell what I thought to be true, I would be a party in what I thought was not perfectly honest, open dealing."<sup>26</sup>

*The Fannie Bolton Story* was released by the White Estate in 1982 with the expectation, one suspects, of vindicating Ellen. Ironically, Walter T. Rea's *The White Lie*, which came out almost simultaneously demonstrating that much of Ellen's material was copied, in effect vindicated Fannie and Marian.<sup>27</sup>

The conflict between the protagonist and the two antagonists ended with their deaths — Ellen died in 1915, Marian in 1904, and Fannie in 1926. But the central conflict — with its significant literary, ethical, and theological implications — has never been resolved, and hence the story cannot yet end.

Throughout the years, from the earliest Adventist beginnings, there have been protests — sometimes as muffled mutterings, but in this century as crescendoing cacophony. Officials and apologists in the church have always responded by shifting from one justification to another:

1. *Ellen did not copy.* "I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision — the precious rays of light shining from the throne."<sup>28</sup> This explanation faded away after assistants for research, writing, and editing were employed for Ellen.

2. *Ellen used the words of only historians.* "In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but in some instances no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject."<sup>29</sup> That line of justifying was dropped when it became necessary to concede that subject matter other than history was copied: "She was told that in the reading of

By giving the inquirer a more lurid topic to pursue, she got him off the subject of copying, a subject about which Ellen could not speak.

4. *Paraphrasing was said to be acceptable a century ago.* Since "everybody was doing it," it was all right for Ellen to paraphrase ideas. "In the nineteenth century, plagiarism was known and condemned, but uncredited paraphrasing was widely practiced."<sup>31</sup> (It has also been widely practiced by college students whose teachers judged them cheaters.) Do two wrongs make a right? One can use the same analogy to excuse adultery or tax cheating.

5. *Bible writers copied.* "An instructive parallel" is found among the Gospels. More than ninety percent of the Gospel of Mark, the apologists point out, is paralleled by passages in Matthew and Luke.<sup>32</sup> This kind of argument for license is akin to the ad hominem argument; turn your eyes to the Bible and see what its writers did. Published material, however, is not the same as oral tradition.

6. *Ellen's copying was not illegal.* On the basis of "our review of the facts and legal precedents, we conclude that Ellen G. White was not a plagiarist and her works did not constitute copyright infringement/piracy," wrote Vincent L. Ramik of Diller, Ramik & Wight, Ltd.<sup>33</sup> It must be said here that any lawyer worth his salt brings forward arguments intended to support or vindicate the clients paying him. Today the problem of legality under the copyright law is not the major issue in the conflict pertaining to the writings of Ellen White. The problems are those of questionable *ethics* (taking and camouflaging matter already published by other writers) and of a muddled meaning of *inspiration* (presenting the White version of others' material as "precious rays of truth shining from the throne," usually interpreted to mean having come direct to her from God).

7. *Ellen was uninformed about literary standards.* "She acted without knowledge of the literary standards that would count a moderate use of [others'] writings as unfair or worthy of condemnation."<sup>34</sup> Not so. She had to know, rather early in her experience, that John N. Andrews, her close associate and friend (whose material she copied without crediting him), carefully credited the works he had studied in his preparations. She had to know that Edersheim, and those others from whom she read and drew, credited their sources. That was what Fannie's message was all about (and likewise what was thought to have troubled Marian).

8. *God's words belong to everyone.* "God is the author and owner of all truth, just as the tree is the author and owner of its fruit. God provides truth unstintingly to all who will receive it and use it."<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the same argument could hold true for the money in the bank and the cattle on a thousand hills.

(concluded on page 29)

## Perhaps the same argument could hold true for the money in the bank and the cattle on a thousand hills.

made over my articles, that she has put her whole soul into them, and I had the credit of the ability she had given to these writings."<sup>25</sup>

According to Ellen, one of the greatest sins was Fannie's talking. Fannie wrote her in 1897: "I thought the only thing you disliked in me was speaking of the matter at all, that you wanted me to maintain secrecy about it all, but I thought that in justice to

religious books and journals, she would find precious gems of truth expressed in acceptable language, and that she would be given help from heaven to recognize these and to separate them from the rubbish of error with which she would sometimes find them associated."<sup>30</sup>

3. *Ellen used the ad hominem approach.* Fannie is the problem. She is unbalanced; therefore you cannot believe what she says.

## Book Review

*The Australian Years, 1891-1900*, by Arthur Lacey White. Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1983.

Reviewed by Alice Gregg

The canon of literary biography stating that the biographer must be sympathetic with his subject may be axiomatic, but it is the canon on which Arthur Lacey White scores highest in his monumental biography of six planned volumes of *Ellen G. White*. She is his grandmother. Having worked more than half a century expatiating her scriptures, he takes up the task of telling her life story and work with boldness and unmitigated love.

*Ellen G. White: The Australian Years, 1891-1900*, brought out this year by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, is volume four of the six-volume set. Volume five (*The Early Elmshaven Years, 1900-1905*) and volume six (*The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905-1915*) have already made their appearance. Volumes three, one, and two, in that order, are expected to be published by 1986.

Although the publication of her diaries and letters might have been more valuable to researchers, the set is not being written for researchers. It is being written for the Adventist who is already prepared to open the books with solemn reverence. White's volumes can be useful to scholars, however, as a straightforward itinerary of the travel, preaching, and writing schedules of Ellen White. On the move most of her adult life, she traveled extensively in the United States, Europe, and Australia; and she was called on for a great deal of preaching. One wonders, in the face of all that activity, at the biographer's lack of weariness of her peregrinations. One wonders also about the amount of time she had left to devote to writing the number of volumes credited to her.

not a human being with any foibles — and certainly not one with even a touch of poor judgment or an occasional moment of ill temperament. One can expect this work, then, to be a perpetuation of the "Arthurian legend" of Ellen White; and one should not expect to find the woman who wrote the barbed letters to Fannie Bolton that appeared in *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents*, released by the White Estate in 1982.

The comparison of "Fannie Bolton and Her Witness," a chapter in *The Australian Years*, with *The Fannie Bolton Story* is revealing. Gone are Ellen White's ragings at Bolton ("I will cut off the influence of your tongue in every way I can!"). Gone are the bitter passages like "poor misshapen character," "practicer of deception," "poor shallow soul" that Ellen White heaped on Bolton. White knows (as his father, Willie White knew) that what one writes reveals more about the writer than about the subject (Bolton); and he provides a more peaceable, benign Ellen White and a less turbulent Bolton.

With reference to the case of W.F. Caldwell, comparison of the same two works makes clear that White again shows his hand. Caldwell had a significant role to play in the life of Ellen White in Australia. Yet in that chapter on Bolton, White chooses to pass over lightly that series of incidents and letters released in toto in *The Fannie Bolton Story*. Caldwell was employed as a typist for Bolton. He was a married man, separated by three years of time, the Pacific Ocean and the United States, and disinterested in his wife. He was not yet divorced when he and Bolton fell in love with each other. The idea of their romance was unthinkable to Ellen White, and she wrote numerous letters about their sins of commission under the biblical injunction that one should not lust in his heart after another when he has no biblical right to do so.

One of Ellen White's letters to Bolton included in *The Story*, but not in the book

brain, and his memory is weakened." The romance eventually withered and died under Ellen White's verbal onslaught. In the course of her correspondence she wrote to all of the top administrators she knew, including the president of Caldwell's own conference. Did Arthur White think all this was mere piffle and thus disentangle Ellen White from the fracas by his silence?

In view of the toughness with which Ellen White handled Bolton and certain other people, it is curious that she handled her own family with kid gloves. Her public disclosure of her family in her "visions" and "dreams" seems to have stopped when James White left her after she had had a dream about him. She sent Willie White to fetch him home, and he sent word by Willie that he would return home if she never had another dream or vision about him. In Australia when Willie White was courting Ethel "May" Lacey, Ellen White never revealed any vision or dream that she may have had concerning whether or not they should be married. According to the July 7, 1983, *Adventist Review*, when she asked May about her decision, May very adroitly answered that she herself was looking for several "signs" that would show whether or not she should marry him.

Because researchers like Walter T. Rea and Ronald L. Numbers have found out much about the "creation" of her works, White has chosen to divulge some of the purloining of Ellen White, although he certainly doesn't call it that. He lists in two different places some of her sources, but he makes it quite clear that "the many visions given to her by God through the years constituted the main source of her information and insights." He gives the impression that all is well with such activities — perfectly all right.

Having Ellen White tell much of her own story by quotations from her own writing — the literary device used by Arthur White — is what many layfolk will like the most. Here at their tongue-tips are many choice statements that have never before been published. Because she tells much of her own story, however, we see little that we can identify with. We see very little of our human selves in this elevated Ellen White. The biographer would probably consider that comment a compliment, since no one could emulate a saint. For insight and personal growth, however, the reader rightly expects to find in literature some common ground of humanity, some means of identification with the subject — not the icon of someone imprisoned in "sweetness and light."

White does choose passages that would have Ellen White persuading by joy, rather than by fear — a great improvement over many of his grandmother's own writings.

## ***It is being written for the Adventist who is already prepared to open the books with solemn reverence.***

True love, of course, does not sharpen a person's objectivity; and although a biographer must make his subject believable, one does not expect a biographer to lay bare his grandmother. This work, then, must not be considered a definitive biography in terms of the humanity of the persona. Perhaps a journal would be a genre more fitting than biography. White's bias is to picture a saintly figure, sweetly Christian,

chapter on Bolton, got right down to the gut level in her comments about Caldwell: "The Lord has a controversy with Brother Caldwell. His love of self, his love of self-gratification, and his determination to have his own way, have made him unreasonable, overbearing, dictatorial. His practice of over-eating has taxed his digestive organs, distended his stomach, and taxed his nature to endure a burden that has reacted upon the

## Ford speaks to Annual Council

Dr. Desmond Ford submitted an appeal to church leaders at the 1983 Annual Council by way of a brief, prerecorded (9-26-83) tape. The General Conference transcribed the tape and circulated it to some extent among the brethren.

From the beginning Ford said he was "deeply sympathetic with problems of men whose gifts are administration and whose task it is to keep the church on a steady course and yet be honest to God and to the community."

He referred to one of his church administrator friends as saying that "morale was never lower in the Adventist church." And he noted some symptoms: (1) significant drops in tithe and offerings; (2) drastically reduced matriculation of theology majors in Seventh-day Adventist colleges ("In one senior college there was about one new student ... for the ministerial course"); (3) deflated enthusiasm and zeal among Australian Division workers; and, (4) the departure of scores of American, European, and Australian workers from the church.

Chief among Ford's concerns for his church was "the matter of openness and fidelity. I am not referring," Ford cautioned, "to vicious the practice of willful deception but to the frequent lapses which can overtake even good men when they rationalize that the end justifies the means."

Ford voiced sympathy for another difficulty administrators face by reminding his listeners that "they are forced too often to decide on issues about which they know very little." As an example, Ford said, "The administrators at Consultation II didn't even know how to define the historical critical method. They didn't even know what it was, let alone how to use it."

Ford listed three examples from his own experience that he felt "suggest a lack of openness and a lack of fidelity." (1) When Ford was invited, on loan from Avondale College, to teach at Pacific Union College: "I was promised that I would be on the Biblical Research Committee for investigating the problems connected with the investigative judgment. The promise was never kept." (2) "Prior to that time I was asked to write a lesson quarterly (*Prophets of the Living God*, slated originally for fourth quarter 1979), which I gladly did and which both American and Australian administrators judged to be theologically acceptable. But because one Australian administrator thought the name of the author would rouse some questions, the lesson was dropped at a very late stage." (3) I was assured, Ford says, "that I would return to Avondale College and ... remain chairman of the department



Photo: courtesy David S. Baker portfolio

of theology while ... away. But that position was changed without consultation with me and without even informing me...."

Turning to the problem of candor in difficult doctrinal areas, Ford recalled the late associate *Review* editor Don Neufeld's *Review* article of 5 April 1979 minimizing the viability of the year/day principle and noticing the New Testament implications for a first-century Second Coming — suggesting, Ford argues, that therefore 1844 was not in the original plan of God.

Ford recalled several conversations with Adventist administrators: Neal Wilson, he said, "Told me that Dr. Leroy Froom had informed him of our doctrinal problems on the sanctuary in connection with Hebrews 9." Elder Bradford laughed ... as he told how he'd known the problems for years, since he'd conducted meetings at New York." Biblical Research Institute head Richard Leshner, when he went to Angwin to visit Ford, told him that "he too had been familiar with the problems." "Of course," Ford says, "none of these men suggested they had the answers."

Although on the tape Ford continues recounting many of the issues inadequately addressed at Glacier View or since, one of his suggestions, if accepted, could throw considerable light on lingering doubts of whether either Ford or the doctrinal questions he raised have been dealt with honestly and candidly.

The suggestion hinges on the fact that tapes were made of three lengthy meetings preceding Glacier View involving Ford and a 14-man "guiding committee." The guiding committee members (scholars and administrators) were supposed to be reading drafts of Ford's Glacier View manuscript, as he was completing sections, and providing him with

written and verbal suggestions and criticisms.

To give some idea of the kind of thing listeners might hear if the tapes were available, Ford quoted from a letter he had written to the guiding committee chairman, retired Andrews University President Richard Hammill (1 July 1980): (1) "When I asked you on the committee as to why you believed in the investigative judgment, your reply was so frank and honest that it devastated some, such as Bob Spangler...." (2) "You frankly have admitted to all of us that there is no linguistic connection between Daniel 8:14 and Leviticus 16." (3) Reminding us that Dr. Hasel is preparing a statement as to whether sacrificial blood defiles the sanctuary — you affirmed it would be useful, for 'when Dr. Hasel had done his best, there is very little evidence for this traditional position.'" (4) "On guiding committee several times you have alluded to the fact that the context of Daniel 8:14 does not support out usual interpretation of that verse." (5) "You have also stated that the New Testament does not teach actual apartments in heaven and that Christ certainly went direct into the presence of God at His ascension."

Says Ford, "I wish that the church would release the tapes of those meetings." But he generously adds, "I affirm my faith in the integrity of the leaders of our church [while] expressing my fears that the supreme desire to keep peace in the church has led to a sacrifice of honesty and fidelity. It's not a matter of Christ dying that an institution might live; if Christ is not alive as the truth in an institution, then that institution is dead already."

*Ford's brief appeal to Annual Council participants is available on cassette tape for a \$2.00 donation to Good News Unlimited, P.O. Box GN, Auburn, CA 95603.*

## Glad Tidings concluded

providing them a year's termination pay; and, in Zackrisson's case, forgiving his \$70,000 education debt to Andrews University for his just-completed Ph.D. Wagner was reminded that if Zackrisson, Grant, and Gladson were dropped, that kindness alone would cost the school approximately \$400,000 — 80% of the projected deficit. Wagner responded by saying that the \$70,000 for Zackrisson's education was a "paper figure."

After all the sound and fury, *Currents* received the joyful news early on the morning of February 1 that no religion teachers will be dropped! In fact, it now appears that the only teachers to leave the college will be those who initiated negotiated termination settlements involving reassignment, retraining, retirement, or resignation.

The only explanation that *Currents* has been offered for this eleventh-hour turn around is twofold. One, there really wasn't a serious financial exigency; it was a ploy. Two, the administration feared a lawsuit in which the plaintiffs would probably have been supported by the American Association of University Professors, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

One thing, it is claimed, that would help to stem the decline in enrollment at Southern College — and, concomitantly, relieve its financial weakness — would be for Southern Union president and Southern College board chairman Al McClure to show his enthusiastic support — by voice and by pen — for the college, its faculty, and, particularly, its religion division. Then perhaps even more "glad tidings" may be anticipated from Southern College. □

## The "Greening" of Graybill concluded

tained "immediate and unlimited access" for half a century. "Isn't he a student?" the question was indignantly asked.

Wood's attitude during the board meeting does not appear to have been consistent with the quotes attributed to him by the December 16 *Christianity Today* article titled "Another Adventist Scholar Is in Jeopardy over Ellen White": "Nobody feels that Ron is a disloyal Adventist," said Wood. "The issue is whether he can continue as a credible representative of the White Estate." Wood did not say who was making it an issue.

Two days after the pivotal December 5 board meeting, Wood wrote to an Adventist layman who had inquired about Graybill's situation: "I have discovered that, given all the facts and circumstances, were I in the place of those who are confronted with various problems, I would make just about the decisions they do." Yet Wood could not have been more at odds, two days earlier,

with those board members who wished Graybill to remain at the White Estate.

Although the board and Graybill were agreed that he had exercised poor judgment and erred in breaking Estate manuscript release policy, Graybill might well have argued that the policy on unreleased Ellen White material is broken frequently by White Estate representatives on the speaking circuit. (See box titled "Candor from the White Estate" for an example.) But Graybill was not in a defensive mood. In fact, Neal Wilson told a friend of *Currents* he had never seen anyone so contrite or repentant.

At one point during the board meeting, Wilson asked Graybill whether he intended to try to remain at the White Estate at any cost. Graybill replied, saying, No, that there were those at the Estate who would not even look at him, let alone speak to him. Nevertheless, he did not feel that he should leave.

Wilson's announcement in the 2 February 1984 *Adventist Review* indicates that the board's decision was based on three considerations:

- (1) Graybill's failure to seek counsel.
- (2) The breaking of White Estate manuscript release policy.
- (3) The wrong impression of Ellen White created by the dissertation.

The first two points are essentially the same issue, and Graybill acknowledges and regrets his failure there. But point three would seem to be more a matter of opinion. Graybill told *Christianity Today* (16 December 1983) that the dissertation was "an incomplete statement . . . but there's nothing in it that is inconsistent with the Adventist church's understanding of Ellen White." Graybill maintains staunchly and told *Currents* that he did his "best to deal honestly with all the evidence."

It is interesting that the accuracy of the dissertation was almost a nonissue with the board. Senior board member W. P. Bradley had counseled that there should be no quibbling about the content of the manuscript. However, Robert Olson did tell *Currents* that he was troubled that some chapters of the dissertation seem to create the impression that Ellen White was power hungry and sometimes had visions at her convenience. Nevertheless, he voted to keep Graybill.

## January 9, 1984

Graybill submitted a formal request for reassignment on January 9. The board of trustees accepted the request retroactive to the date of their most recent (January 5) meeting. The board also referred Graybill's request to the General Conference for implementation. It appears now that the General Conference will be reimbursing Home Study Institute (HSI) for Graybill's salary. Delmer Holbrook, HSI president, has asked him to write a syllabus/workbook to complement Richard Schwarz's textbook on denominational history, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*.

On the matter of the continuing distribu-

tion of his dissertation, Graybill maintains that it is illegal. He particularly resents those who are reproducing and selling his work — not because he is jealous for the money, but because it is such a flagrant violation of his right to determine the use of his scholarly effort.

As of January 24, Graybill told *Currents*: "I want to continue to serve the church." "I am not defiant or discouraged." "The White Estate has been through a lot, and I do not wish the White Estate or church leaders to appear in a bad light." "Some of them have defended, forgiven, and encouraged me."

Whatever Graybill's sins of omission and commission at the White Estate may have been, the editor of *Adventist Currents* is sorry to have been a link in the chain of events that led to his dismissal. Along with that sorrow, however, is indignation — indignation at the idolatry that makes it so dangerous for serious students to scrutinize publicly much of the material that could provide a more accurate picture of Ellen White's place in our Adventist past.

"What are they hiding at the White Estate?" Graybill asked rhetorically in a 26 February 1980 *Insight* article. Can anyone today — including Graybill — believe the answer he gave then?:

*We are not hiding anything. We are, however, protecting something; we are protecting the treasured counsels from misuse and misunderstanding even as we provide for their orderly publication and use by the church.* □

## Interview: Robert Brinsmead concluded

son story this weekend to point out the kind of heavenly Father one would wish to go home to.

**BRINSMEAD:** In the early twentieth century the prodigal son story was a favorite with liberals who emphasized the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. There was no blood theology in the prodigal son story, they said. The liberals loved it. So as soon as anyone raised the question of the prodigal son, you said to yourself, "Here is this old liberalism again," and you got on your charger.

**CURRENTS:** Does Desmond Ford know what you are doing now?

**BRINSMEAD:** We sat on the beach some weeks ago in Australia and spent an afternoon together, and I mentioned one or two directions where my thought was moving. The only thing I remember him saying about this was that no theories of the atonement do justice to it, and that the classical view is more specific than the Scripture is. He was quite candid about that.

**CURRENTS:** Do you think this is the clubhouse turn for Bob Brinsmead? Or do you look for much more change?

**BRINSMEAD:** I'm committed to the idea of always beginning again.

**CURRENTS:** Continual pilgrim.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes — living in the tents of

faith with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is no stopping place. Occasionally this doesn't do us a lot of good with some of our friends.

**CURRENTS:** They want certainty.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes, some want security. Some want to settle down a bit. I say fine; but if you want that, read some other publi-

human race." That became a slogan to many in this country — "Join the human race." Many who never knew what it was to mix with society or participate in life as normal human beings have now been catapulted out of their cult and a cultic mentality. They used to have a lean and hungry look, but now you would hardly know them. They are

ings."

Creative as these various justifications for copying may be, they are no substitute for truth.

Credit must be given to the White Estate, the Biblical Research Institute, and the President of the General Conference for conceding that "the amount of borrowing was greater than they had previously known."<sup>39</sup> However, when the officials, apologists, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church at large can go that one step further and acknowledge that Ellen was wrong to copy without giving credit to the sources used, then the conflict recounted in "The Unfinished Story of Fannie Bolton and Marian Davis" will end.

## *I began as an ardent Ellen White believer. I was greatly influenced by the Ellen White of Early Writings.*

cation. We are involved in something that will continually disturb you and perhaps even make you feel angry with us. I don't know how we continue to exist, because we continually operate on a program of doing ourselves in. But we continue to fly. Ten years down the road, however, I'll be somewhere else.

**CURRENTS:** But you've taken some new premises, and at least for the moment you like them.

**BRINSMEAD:** In our development there seem to be plateaus and then what seems to be real progress. We are now articulating things that are exciting, threatening, promising. In 1970 we went through a period of radical refocusing as we came out of perfectionistic, final-generation Adventism into the Reformation position. That was a revolution. That upset many of our friends. But what we have done this time is even more radical.

**CURRENTS:** I agree entirely. The traditional emphasis on sanctification and the Reformation emphasis on justification alone are both really legalistic to my way of thinking. It is just a matter of who has to keep the law: you and I, or Jesus. Both views are legalistic in terms of salvation's basis. But this is a break of a different order, and deeper, as you say, than the 1970 change.

**BRINSMEAD:** Yes. It's been so profound that over the last three years it has probably taken much effort to see its implications and to negotiate it. It has already had a profound effect.

**CURRENTS:** I feel that your audience this weekend understood what you were critiquing, but I doubt whether they had much idea what the implications were.

**BRINSMEAD:** It was so radical that I think some may need to chew it over. But our primary venture is publishing. So it is the writing that provides the exact meaning, and not the speaking. Personally, I far prefer to write than I do to speak. Many of our readers have now gone through such a devastating shaking that I think they are just about ready for anything. My last volley as far as Adventism is concerned was about three years ago. I gave a talk entitled "Farewell to Adventism." My appeal was, "Take all that apocalyptic religious tradition, back up a big dump truck, shovel it all in, and go join the

in a mental state that enables them to grapple with this now.

**CURRENTS:** Would it be appropriate to say that when we interview you we should end it with a comma instead of with a period?

**BRINSMEAD:** I hope so. You know, when you started talking with me about Adventism, it was like calling up something in my mind that had become quite rusty. Sitting on the beach with Des Ford a few weeks ago, I said: "I closed my cupboard door on all Adventist research back there. I never open it, and I don't have any further interest in opening it again. I think the issues we used to discuss have absolutely no relevance to the rest of mankind. People walking past us on the beach have no interest in such matters. These people never will be interested, nor should they be. Those things have no relevance to the real issues of humanity."

**CURRENTS:** I enjoyed hearing you reminisce. □

### **Marian the "Bookmaker" concluded**

They belong to God. Is it all right, then, to steal them for God's cause? The end does not justify the means in either case.

9. *The words are not the important part of Ellen's writings.* "Ellen White closed her letter [July 17, 1906] with a statement suggesting that the problems surrounding her work were the result of focusing on the words rather than the message of her writings," said the White Estate.<sup>36</sup> One wonders if that is really what they meant to say. One cannot have messages without words, unless the messages are on the nonverbal level — and that is another study. Words — their denotation, connotation, and signification — are the symbols or signs that convey meaning when they are arranged in relational patterns.<sup>37</sup> "The essential act of thought is symbolization.... One cannot think without symbols."<sup>38</sup>

This technical and complex philosophical subject in the field of logical empiricism is probably not what the White Estate wanted to get into at all. What they no doubt meant, but could not say, was that "the problems surrounding her work were the result of focusing on the [unacknowledged use of] words rather than the message of her writ-

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# CURRENTLY POSTED

Dear Editor:

I want to commend you for your accurate description (*Currents*, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 33) of our meeting in Fresno last May involving Drs. Desmond Ford and William Shea and Pastors Smuts Van Rooyen and Alex Ortega.

A few further comments might be of interest. The topic of the investigative judgment was selected for presentation as it is considered to be one of the "pillars," and as many individuals are now attempting to understand the subject for themselves. While seeking to identify knowledgeable speakers, I was most surprised to discover the great reticence on the part of many who were asked to present the traditional understanding of the doctrine. Contacts were made at two West coast colleges, Weimar Institute, the Pacific Press, and the seminary. Dr. Shea and Pastor Ortega are particularly to be thanked for their willingness to be involved.

It was disconcerting to some to hear that what was presented as the traditional view made no reference to concepts outlined in *The Great Controversy*; that this view is, perhaps, the fifth or sixth iteration of the development of the doctrine; and that the last development occurred in the 1950s. Perhaps the definition of "new theology" should be broadened.

In retrospect, an interesting contradiction in outlook has become evident. The meeting in question could not be held in any area Adventist church. Yet, the complete proceedings were transcribed by the Biblical Research Institute and have been placed in the Heritage Rooms on Adventist college campuses.

Finally, I believe that your last paragraph is most applicable. With the level of intolerant behavior (separation of wheat from tares) being evidenced these days within Adventism, it was a challenge to attempt to structure a meeting where persons on differing sides of an issue could disagree without being disagreeable. We were happy that the presenters and the audience could illustrate that, at least in one place, this very important principle of Christian behavior still could be exemplified.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Battenburg, President  
San Joaquin Valley Chapter of AAF

To the Editor,

Re: "Davenport Disfellowshipped Again," vol. 1, no. 2 of *Adventist Currents*. I would like to raise the issue of what are valid criteria for disfellowshipping a member. Reasons mentioned for disfellowshipping Dr. Davenport include: 1) fraud, 2) lack of cooperation with bankruptcy court and trustees, 3) encouraging others to violate usury laws, and 4) bringing reproach

to the SDA church.

Although such conduct is ethically and morally unacceptable, does it necessarily follow that such conduct provides valid grounds for dismissal of a member? The given reasons for dismissal obviously cannot be considered absolute criteria for disfellowshipping, since one can hardly argue that the conduct mentioned is unprecedented in the history of our church or that such conduct has uniformly resulted in disfellowshipping. In fact, such a rigid posture would be dictatorial and would have no place in a Christian setting.

The action taken was rather a more democratic process of group (membership/committee/constituency) consensus. However, I would question whether group consensus is adequate for determining membership eligibility/ineligibility status; emotion and self-appearance are too likely to be overriding determinants in such a decision-making process.

Granted that the church is meant to function as God's representative on earth, it follows that the principles of church action should attempt to be consistent with the principles of heaven (those of harmony, personal freedom, and love). Let me then suggest an alternative method of determining eligibility for disfellowship status — one that has a basis in the teachings of Christ. The proposed criterion is very simple, really — that a member have sole authority for the choice to drop his/her membership with the church, and that membership may be reinstated if that person should so choose. Such a policy would avoid the deplorable task of human minds trying to judge a member's motives or his/her eligibility as a part of the "body of Christ." (After all, that's a task for God.)

Noteworthy examples supporting such a criterion from a biblical perspective include the story of God's forgiveness for David's immoral and unethical behavior (2 Samuel 11, 12:1-13), Christ's action regarding the adulteress of John 8:1-11, and the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Indeed, the life of Christ and even the whole Bible are clear revelations of God's unconditional acceptance and forgiveness — though unfortunately rejected by the vast majority of people.

Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate the issue of who rejects whom. Does God reject man or does man reject God? Should the church reject its members, or should the choice of membership be left up to the individual?

Sincerely,  
Craig Miller  
Bend, Oregon

Dear Sirs:

Bravo! on your second issue of *Currents*. Praise God for the "free press."

Now that many of us are becoming bet-

ter informed on Adventist issues (step 1), what do you suggest a lay member (a woman at that) do to influence the Adventist institution in a positive way? *Currents* and *Spectrum* provide a sounding board, but is anyone out there listening who can make all of this count? Even the Association of Adventist Forums isn't moving fast enough for most!

I have spoken with numerous people (lay members and clergy) who feel that they have little influence on the doctrinal stances and organizational policies set by the church. Maybe an article on the church's political process would help us as lay people to understand how to properly intervene and be heard.

I've had enough reading about issues that I care about; now I'd like to do something about it. Is anyone out there listening? Neal Wilson can you hear us?

Sincerely,

Mrs. Evonne Peryea  
Public Administration Graduate  
Olympia, Washington

Dear Editor:

Thanks to a concerned friend, I have access to *Adventist Currents*, vol. 1, no. 2. Having worked with Charles Bradford, I am sure that his use of "awesome" in relation to the "power" of the General Conference is facetious. As an organic part of a very small, very tightly closed system, who could know better than he that the smaller and more closed the system, the less power it takes to reach awesome proportions? Whereas, in an open system, the same power would not cause a tempest in a teapot.

What puzzles me is why otherwise intelligent, informed, and rational men and women keep on insisting on getting inside such a tiny sphere, when the real world and power is all on the outside. The accumulated evidence demonstrates that the "system" will never open or get bigger. It amuses me that it is still called the "work." Is not work defined as the change or movement caused by expended power? What change or movement have you observed or measured?

Even if others ever get "in", would the system necessarily get better? No closed system has ever confirmed such improvement potential.

Furthermore, I thought that the Christ Event broke down every barrier. Why then waste energy either on erecting barricades to prevent change or on storming the ramparts to effect change? In the light of Calvary, does not the vanity of the Defense Literature Committee match the futility of Mars Hill Publications?

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Zwemer  
Augusta, Georgia

# The Investigative Judgment: An Adventist Poland

by Jeffrey Smith

I have just finished reading *Currents'* report of the last great debate over the investigative judgment, between Ford and Van Rooyen on the one side and Shea and Ortega on the other (vol. 1, no. 2). The article hints that if the disputants have their way, the debate will be repeated "all over the country." This set me to wondering why it is that an esoteric doctrine, which for many years though of concern only to Adventists was rarely mentioned even in Adventist pulpits, can now command the attention of so many for so long. After four years of intense scrutiny by scholars and laymen alike, no end to the controversy surrounding the doctrine appears on the horizon. "How long, O Lord . . .?"

The present debates seem to follow the pattern established at Glacier View and its aftermath: Dr. Ford criticizes the traditional doctrine; the "loyal" scholars then pounce on a few technical points of Dr. Ford's critique — but without bothering to defend the traditional doctrine themselves; finally, the loyalists' critique of Dr. Ford's critique is championed by conference presidents and denominational editors as a triumphant defense of the traditional doctrine and Spirit of Prophecy against the insidious attacks upon both by Dr. Ford and proponents of the "new theology."

and White Estate officials from proclaiming Dr. Shea to be a stalwart defender of the old truth, just as three years ago the editors of the *Review* and *Ministry* proclaimed the Glacier View Consensus Statement to be a rebuttal of Dr. Ford's critique, when in reality it was more of a concession to it.

After due consideration of this consistent pattern since Glacier View, I am forced to conclude that the real issue at hand is not the doctrine of investigative judgment at all, for no intelligent and informed person seems willing to defend it. Many have remarked that the only reason the doctrine receives attention is that it was taught by Ellen White; that not the doctrine *per se* but Ellen White's authority is the real issue. But I must now question even this judgment; for, as it was reported in *Currents*, Shea and Ortega refused to discuss Ellen White's description of the investigative judgment after Van Rooyen read it.

What most concerns denominational leaders seems not to be any particular doctrine as such, or even whether Ellen White taught it or not. What concerns them, rather, is that the so-called "landmark" doctrines, along with Ellen White's utterance of them, be *perceived* by clergy and laity to have been vindicated. By vigorously promoting a document such as the Glacier

perceived to have upheld tradition is now crowned victor and proclaimed champion. Never mind what the fight was actually about. Don't bother to ask who was fighting for what. The champion and his promoters do not like to be pressed for details. Poor Smuts! He had to find out the hard way.

Now back to my original question, Why does all this continue to go on? Ford and the GNU team obviously hope to persuade more Adventists that the investigative judgment can be found nowhere in Scripture. Yet even should they argue this from now till eternity, what impact can they have if Adventist leaders, pastors, and laity choose to contradict reality by interpreting whatever concessions are evoked by Dr. Ford's criticism as definitive replies to it? The sad truth is that very few leaders or pastors or laity even care about the investigative judgment or what their revered prophetess said about it. You cannot get them to defend it any more than you can get them to admit that it is wrong.

What they do care about, however, is the flow of Adventist history. It must not be perceived that the remnant people of God have reversed themselves. On this single point Adventism might correctly be compared to Marxism. The men in the Kremlin cannot let Poland go the way of bourgeois liberalism without belying the central tenet of the Marxist creed — that communist revolution is historically inevitable, and once having occurred cannot be reversed. For a similar reason, if Adventists in Takoma Park were to permit the critics to reverse the church's historic position on a "landmark" doctrine (providentially arrived at and then placed beyond criticism by the *magisterium* of Mrs. White), they would run the terrible risk of undermining the very basis of the movement's ideology. Belief in the Adventist mission as an historically inevitable enterprise, proceeding in a more or less straight line from 1844 to the millennium with no major reversals, might well then be exposed as a myth. But so long as the ideological heirs of James White and Uriah Smith can maintain the preception that nothing much has changed, neither will the myth itself change.

## On this single point Adventism might correctly be compared to Marxism.

In all honesty, however, it should be pointed out to those who would still adhere to the traditional doctrine of the investigative judgment that no competent Adventist scholar has yet shown himself either able or willing to defend it. When during the last debate Smuts Van Rooyen read from *The Great Controversy*, rightly assuming that Ellen White's description of the investigative judgment was what those who stood for the "traditional view" had had in mind, he was cavalierly ignored by his opponents — who presumably were there to defend the "traditional view." Dr. Shea proceeded thereafter to present his own peculiar interpretation of Daniel 7 — different from Dr. Ford's to be sure, but *not* the traditional doctrine as stated in *The Great Controversy*! But this did not stop General Conference

View Statement or the Ford-Shea debate tapes as a scholarly defense of the investigative judgment, as stated by Ellen White, conference officials hope to create the impression that both the doctrine and Ellen White have actually been defended, when in fact nothing of the sort has even been undertaken, much less accomplished.

The actual positions taken by those chosen to defend the church's position are no less revisionist than those taught by Dr. Ford and differ from his only slightly. But this does not seem to concern the authorities because they know perfectly well that, when it comes to governing, it is only the preception that counts. Hence, he who was perceived to have challenged traditional teaching was sacked and defrocked *pour l'encouragement les autres*; while he who was

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# **adventist**

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