

Volume 1, Number 5

Reviewing the
Review

Getting it Wrong:
Neal Wilson
and the AAF

Lynching at
Orlando Central

BETRAYAL —
an excerpt

Who is the
Head?



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

adventist currents

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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.

“Where should I go?”

by Douglas Hackleman

Much of this issue of *Adventist Currents* is devoted to documenting the kind of unfortunate events that motivated the appearance of the magazine to begin with.

Adventist Currents is predicated, at least partly, on the hope that some of the intra-denominational meanness, experienced by those who know more at the hands of those who know less, might be mitigated somewhat through education about our roots and our doctrine that could make dogma — and the viciousness that often goes with trying to protect it — less attractive.

The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is, to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth, to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such. — J.N. Loughborough

In his recent *Adventist Review* series (beginning 12 July 1984), Arthur White insisted that Adventism does not have — in fact, emphatically rejects — a creed. A paraphrase from Robert Bolt's *A Man For All Seasons* is applicable: “If the world is round, will Arthur White’s saying it’s flat make it so?”

To support his contention, White quotes from remarks by J.N. Loughborough, during an 1861 conference called to consider the possibility of organizing a sabbatarian Adventist church:

The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is, to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth, to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such.

Since Glacier View, the question may be

asked sincerely, in what sense does the Seventh-day Adventist, twenty-seven-point Statement of Fundamental Beliefs not qualify, in practice, under Loughborough’s five creedal concerns?

So many times, in discussions with various individual church leaders, we have conversed to an impasse. Then, not wanting to leave things on an unpleasant note, I have sometimes said, “Well, at least we love the same Lord.” Frequently my conversationalist’s response is very affirming: “Oh, yes. And that’s all that really matters, isn’t it?”

Unfortunately, the doctrinal witch hunting

that has erupted in various conferences since Glacier View indicates that loving the same Lord is not, apparently, “all that matters” (see “Lynching at Orlando Central”).

Adventist Review associate editor Eugene Durand’s attitude is illustrative. He wrote to Shirley Pulliam (6 October 1980) shortly after Glacier View to say that “Dr. Ford and his followers, of course, have every right to believe and teach whatever they wish, but they do not have a right to do this and remain as employees or members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

What kind of religious doublethink or “dialectic” enables church leaders to say, on the one hand, that loving the same Lord “is all that really matters,” while insisting, on the other hand, that those who disagree with us — about the human nature of Christ or the authority of Ellen White or the investigative judgment — should be disfellowshipped?

Our friends in leadership should contemplate two propositions:

1. If Christianity is enough, then Seventh-day Adventism is a Christian club.
2. If Christianity is not enough, then Seventh-day Adventism claims to be a new way of salvation.

If the Adventist church is the way to salvation, then none of us has any business suggesting that anyone be dropped from membership. If, on the other hand, Adventism is a Christian club, then all “the sound and fury” really does signify nothing — except to illustrate that too few Adventists have learned “the way” of our Lord or His “new” commandment.

The editorial contributors and board of *Adventist Currents* are less concerned with doctrinal particulars or peculiarities than they are that justice reign within the body. *Currents* pleads so ardently for candor only because it is clear that injustice thrives best in secret.

It is sad to think that the bleat in Ken Madema’s song about church could fall on deaf ears: “If this is not the place where my questions can be asked, where should I go?” □



Cover:

Currents is pleased to share again the photography of David S. Baker

Reviewing the *Review*

by J. B. Goodner

By printing Arthur White's series of articles on "Ellen White and Adventist Doctrine" in three, consecutive, July 1984 issues of the *Adventist Review*,¹ the editors fumbled their commission to provide Adventist readers with only truth-filled literature. The last two of White's three pieces are revised (for the worse) editions of articles that he prepared for *Ministry Magazine* forty-three years ago.²

The purpose of this critique is to demonstrate that radical revision of Arthur White's thesis is demanded by a more careful examination of the early documents that indicate how and when Ellen White and other Seventh-day Adventist pioneers were introduced to the "distinctive" sanctuary message. Consequently, the focus here will be limited to several paragraphs in Arthur White's second installment, "How Basic Doctrines Came to Adventists."³

In his recent *Review* presentation, White took pains to repudiate the notion "that the principal doctrines held by Seventh-day Adventists, or at least part of them, came initially through the Spirit of Prophecy."⁴ Instead he asserted his thesis that "the pioneers first discovered these doctrines in the Scriptures."⁵

Specifying the sanctuary doctrine, White says: "In the development of this teaching also may be seen a firm scriptural basis and confirmation through visions given to Ellen White."⁶ White then sets right to work contradicting himself by introducing Hiram Edson's late-life memory statement describing what he experienced on 23 October 1844 — the morning following the Great Disappointment. White quotes at some length, ignoring the paragraph's opening phrase (bracketed below), which probably sounded too much like his grandmother:

[Heaven seemed open to my view and] I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, He, for the first time, entered on that day into the second apartment of that sanctuary, and that He had a work to perform in the most holy place before coming to the earth; that He came to the marriage, or in other words, to the Ancient of days, to receive a kingdom, dominion, and glory; and that we must wait for His return from the wedding.⁷

Edson continued with more detail, but White concludes this much of Edson's memory with the comment: "There followed an earnest investigation of Scripture by Hiram Edson, Dr. F.B. Hahn, and school teacher O.R.L. Crosier."⁸

If, on the morning after the disappointment, Hiram Edson did indeed see "distinctly and clearly" the points delineated in his memory statement, it can no longer be denied logically that the "unique" pillar in our doctrinal structure was *first* introduced by direct revelation to Hiram Edson and *later* "confirmed" through the earnest investigation of Scripture. This is precisely the reverse of the sequence that White suggests describes the arrival of Adventist doctrine.

Perhaps, then, Arthur White will be a little less pained by the following correction of his scenario for the sanctuary doctrine's arrival — realizing that the evidence will implicitly suggest again the fanciful nature of Edson's cornfield memory,⁹ leaving room for White's thesis that sincere seekers of truth originated the sanctuary doctrine through the study of Scripture after all.

But even with Edson's memory discounted, how can White's sequence (Bible study followed by visions) be sustained? Some hypothetical students of the Word must have derived an understanding of Christ's antitypical second-apartment ministry (beginning in 1844) from Scripture — *before* the revelation Ellen White claimed (a year later)¹⁰ to have had in February of 1845, describing the Bridegroom's chariot ride into the heavenly holy of holies.

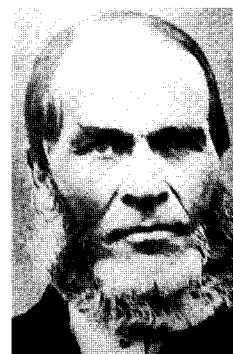
What does Arthur White say happened, and when?

The group [Edson, Hahn, Crosier] came to the conclusion that the two phases of ministry in the earthly sanctuary were a type of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Edson, Crosier, and Hahn published their conclusions in the *Day-Dawn* (Canaan-daigua, New York) in the winter of 1844-1845.¹¹

There simply is no evidence demonstrating that Crosier and his friends were considering in the winter of 1844-1845 a two-phased heavenly ministry of Christ based on Levitical typology, much less that they published it. Rather, the early documents refute White's supposition.

In an article dated March 8 but published in April 1845, Crosier used the parable of the virgins as a springboard for his "watches of the night" -based prediction "that before its [the fourth watch] termination in April, we shall see the King in His beauty — our trials will have ended, our perils o'er, and our sighs and groans be changed to shouts of victory."¹²

"Heaven seemed open to my view and I saw distinctly and clearly that . . . at the end of the 2300 days, He, for the first time, entered . . . into the second apartment of that sanctuary, . . ."



Hiram Edson

Crosier first considered day-of-atonement typology (the seed of Adventist sanctuary theology) in the spring of 1845 for two probable reasons: First, "the King in His beauty" did not appear by the end of the fourth (morning) watch, as he'd expected. Second, John Howell, one of Ellen Harmon's Maine friends, had sent Crosier a number of shut-door publications, including *The Hope of Israel* and *The Advent Mirror* which were co-edited by John Pearson, Jr., Joseph Turner, and Apollos Hale. Hale was also an associate editor of the *Advent Herald*, to which Crosier had contributed material. The *Herald* began a two-part article in late February 1845¹³ in which Hale argued that

there must be a change in His office and work, in reference to the world at large, . . . and this change must precede the appearing of Christ as King, . . . for He performs the work typified by the "daily ministering" of the priests, until His enemies are made His footstool.¹⁴

We suppose the condition of things, at the shutting of the door, would be very much as it was after the day of atonement among the ancient Jews It is the tenth day of the seventh month — the day of atonement

On 4 April 1845 Crosier wrote to *The Hope of Israel* editor John Pearson enthusiastically:

I think I see a chain of evidences in the Scripture full of assurance and comfort, which has never yet been published. It is in the day of atonement

If we regard it only literal it seems to have little meaning; but when understood as a symbol of a year, it is replete with meaning.¹⁵

The logical extrapolation of Crosier's thought was the expectation of Christ on 22 October 1845, following a one-year day of atonement beginning 22 October 1844. Whether from reading Crosier or other

sources for the idea, many, including James White,¹⁶ were disappointed again at Christ's failure to appear in the autumn of 1845.

Although Arthur White asserts that "Edson, Crosier, and Hahn published their conclusions in the *Day-Dawn* (Canandaigua, New York) in the winter of 1844-1845,"¹⁷ there is, again, absolutely no evidence to suggest such an article had been published even by the end of 1845. There is, however, strong evidence contradicting White's claim. As late as 26 September 1845, Crosier's sanctuary theorizing still had not taken a direction that Ellen White could endorse. Writing to *Day Star* editor Enoch Jacobs, Crosier argued:

But to say that Christ entered the Holy of Holies, the tenth of the seventh month is saying He is in the secret chamber. Well, in this, we have good company; for Paul said he had entered *within the Vail which is the Holy of Holies* Heb. 6:19, 20 (emphasis supplied).¹⁸

Three months later (7 February 1846) Crosier reversed his interpretation of "within the vail":

[Hebrews] Chap. 6:19, 20, is supposed to prove that Christ entered the Holy of Holies at his ascension, because Paul said he had entered within the vail. But the vail which divides between the Holy and the Holy of Holies is "the second vail," ch. 9:3; hence there are two vails, and that in ch. 6, being the first of which he speaks, must be the first vail, which hung before the Holy, and in Ex. was called a curtain. When he entered *within the vail*, he entered his tabernacle, *of course the Holy*, as that was the first apartment; . . . (emphasis supplied).¹⁹

It was this latter interpretation of Hebrews 9 — finally rejected by the Adventist church at Glacier View in 1980 — that Ellen and James White, Joseph Bates, Otis Nichols, and others endorsed in 1846. Wrote Ellen White:

The Lord showed me in vision, more than one year ago, that

Brother Crosier had the true light on the cleansing of the sanctuary, etc., and that it was His will that brother C. should write out the view which he gave us in the *Day-Star Extra*, February 7, 1846.²⁰

Unlike Edson's reminiscences, Crosier's late-life memory statement is in perfect agreement with the evidence:

Our study [of the sanctuary] was put into an article of fifty foolscap pages and published in 1846 in a large extra edition of the *Day Star*, published at Cincinnati, Ohio, by Enoch Jacobs, and widely distributed. The article was written at Dr. Hahn's house, he helped very materially in its preparation, and bearing a large share of the expense . . .²¹

But what about Arthur White's thesis that Seventh-day Adventist doctrine arrived first by careful Bible study and then was "confirmed," or "ratified," by vision?

Knowing that Ellen White claimed a sanctuary doctrine vision for mid-February 1845 in at least two documents (one published statement, one letter),²² Arthur White decided to make Edson, Crosier, and Hahn those first, careful Bible students — by fiat. He simply arbitrarily moved Crosier's publishing of "their conclusions in the *Day-Dawn*" from "the winter of 1845-46," as he'd written in the April 1941 *Ministry* (p. 13), to "the winter of 1844-1845," as he stated in the 19 July 1984 *Adventist Review*.

While Joshua only managed to stop the sun for a day over Gibeon so that the Israeli army could complete the destruction of the Amorite armies (see Joshua 10), Arthur White has scrolled the calendar back a full year in order to serve his thesis that the sanctuary doctrine was born of Bible study rather than handed down stork-like through vision.

Arthur White's thesis may yet be saved, but he will have to pay a price. Notice his next point:

During February, 1845, while the three men were studying the

Arthur White's Deletions

What Ellen White said in February 1846 that she had seen in February of 1845 resembles closely what Joseph Turner had published the previous month (January 1845) — not what O.R.L. Crosier published a year later in the *Day-Star Extra* of 7 February 1846. Arthur White's tendentious deletions are indicated by italics.

Joseph Turner, January 1845

. . . Now, if Christ is spoken of in the character of Bridegroom, and the word of God informs us of a marriage scene in which he is to be present as the Bridegroom, why should we suppose that this parable speaks of his coming as the King of glory, . . . the wonder now is, that we should have confounded one with the other as we have . . .

Is it not clear . . . that the coming of the Bridegroom, in the sense of the parable, and the marriage itself, must precede the change to a state of immortality? . . .

The prevailing opinion, which supposes the church to be the bride, is so deeply rooted, that it is difficult to see that anything else can be the truth . . . But the words of the Revelator must settle the question . . . and he informs us that "the bride, the Lamb's wife," is "that great city, the holy Jerusalem." . . .

The coming of the bridegroom would point out some change of work or office, on the part of our Lord, in the invisible world; and the going in with him a corresponding change on the part of his true people, With him it is within the veil — where he has gone to prepare a place for us; with them it is outside the veil, where they are to wait and keep themselves ready till they pass in to the marriage supper . . .

If there is good reason to believe that the history of the Adventists is found there [in the parable of Matthew], it would seem to be as clear that the Bridegroom has come, and that they who were ready have gone in with him to the marriage, and that the door is shut, as that any other part of the parable has been fulfilled . . .

(A. Hale and J. Turner, eds., *The Advent Mirror* 1, no. 1 (January 1845).

Ellen Harmon, February 1845

Bro. Jacobs: —

. . . God showed me the following, one year ago this month [February 1845]:

. . . Then I saw the Father rise from the throne and in a flaming chariot go into the Holy of Holies within the vail [sic], and did sit. *There I saw thrones which I had not seen before. Then Jesus rose up from the throne, and most of those who were bowed down rose up with him. And I did not see one ray of light pass from Jesus to the careless multitude after he rose up, and they were left in perfect darkness. Those who rose up when Jesus did, kept their eyes fixed on him as he left the throne, and led them out a little way, then he raised his right arm and we heard his lovely voice saying, wait ye, I am going to my Father to receive the Kingdom. Keep your garments spotless and in a little while I will return from the wedding, and receive you to myself.* — And I saw a cloudy chariot with wheels like flaming fire, Angels were all about the chariot as it came where Jesus was; he stepped into it and was borne to the Holiest where the Father sat. Then I beheld Jesus as he was before the Father a great High Priest. On the hem of his garment was a bell and a pomgranite [sic], a bell and a pomgranite [sic]. Then Jesus shewed me the difference between faith and feeling. And I saw those who rose up with Jesus send up their faith to Jesus in the Holiest, and praying, Father give us thy spirit. Then Jesus would breathe on them the Holy Ghost. In the breath was light, power and much love, joy and peace. . . (Enoch Jacobs, ed., *The Day-Star* vol. X [14 March 1846], p. 7).

question of the sanctuary, Ellen Harmon received “a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His Kingdom” (Ellen G. White letter, July 13, 1847).²³

From the exhibits quoted in the foregoing, it is clear that Crosier was not “studying the question of the sanctuary” in February of 1845; he was stuck on the “watches of the night” and predicting Christ’s return by April.

But two men were studying and writing about the heavenly role and location of Christ in connection with the disappointment, even before Ellen Harmon’s first, sketchy vision on the topic in February of 1845 — Apollos Hale and Joseph Turner.²⁴ And here is the price that Arthur White did not wish to pay for his thesis: White wanted to have the Bible study come first, to avoid the charge that the Adventist sanctuary doctrine was based on his grandmother’s visions — understandable. But he also wanted to avoid the suspicion that her visions were influenced by or derived from the earlier publications of her Bible studying friends, Hale and Turner.

it is clear that Crosier was not “studying the question of the sanctuary” in February of 1845; he was stuck on the “watches of the night” and predicting Christ’s return by April.

So it was much more convenient, however mistaken, to have the Bible student who originated the sanctuary doctrine be a man (O.R.L. Crosier) who Ellen Harmon did not know, who lived in western New York (400 miles from her home in Portland, Maine) — even if he did abandon the idea in 1848.²⁵

The problem for Arthur White is that one of the two men who in the winter of 1844-1845 was publishing his articles about Christ’s change of heavenly location and activity, Joseph Turner, was a friend and neighbor of Ellen Harmon’s at that very time.

In his next recent *Review* paragraph, White writes that “Ellen Harmon wrote out what had been revealed to her on the sanctuary [a year earlier] in [February] 1845 and sent it to” the *Day-Star* editor Enoch Jacobs on 15 February 1846 — eight days after the *Day-Star* Extra containing Crosier’s description of Christ’s antitypical day-of-atonement work in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary.²⁶ Arthur White quotes part of Harmon’s statement, published by Jacobs a month later, in the 14 March 1846 *Day-Star*:

I saw the Father rise from the throne and in a flaming chariot go into the Holy of Holies within the veil, and did sit . . . I saw a cloudy chariot with wheels like flaming fire. Angels were all about the chariot as it came where Jesus was; He stepped into it and was borne to the Holiest, where the Father sat. Then I beheld Jesus as He was before the Father, a great High Priest.

As is so often the case with Arthur White’s writings, the key to understanding the quotation under scrutiny is unavailable because White has replaced the passage containing the necessary evidence with ellipses. His excerpt, just quoted, from Ellen Harmon’s mid-February 1845 “Bridegroom” vision is a typical example of this peculiar practice.

Both the date of Harmon’s Bridegroom vision and the deleted passages, taken together, support the correctness of White’s thesis that Ellen did not originate the sanctuary doctrine — that it was developed by others through independent Bible study. At the same time, however, those two lines of evidence invalidate his tale of how and when the sanctuary doctrine first came to Seventh-day Adventists.

First, the mid-February 1845 date for Harmon’s Bridegroom vision eliminates Edson, Crosier, and Hahn as candidates for simultaneous but independent study of day-of-atonement antitypology. (Actually, Harmon’s Bridegroom vision contains no such antitypology either.) But there are those other two candidates for previous and simultaneous Bible study — Apollos Hale and Joseph Turner.

That these men fit the requirements of Arthur White’s thesis can be seen by comparing what White deleted in his quotation from the mid-February 1845 Bridegroom vision with what Hale and Turner had

published a month before the vision in the *Advent Mirror*²⁷ (see box).

Among the five sentences missing from the middle of Arthur White’s excerpt of the vision (indicated by ellipses) are two sentences in which Ellen Harmon purports to be quoting Christ explaining to His followers the purpose for His chariot ride to the Holy of Holies:

I am going to my Father to receive the Kingdom. Keep your garments spotless and in a little while I will return from the wedding, and receive you to myself.

This, and Ellen White’s 13 July 1847 letter explaining the vision to Joseph Bates, indicate that her understanding of the vision was in complete harmony with what Hale and Turner had already published in their *Advent Mirror*, based on the Matthew 25 parable of the Bridegroom. Wrote Ellen: “The view about the Bridegroom’s coming I had about the middle of February [1845].” “It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His Kingdom.”²⁸ Hale and Turner’s article was titled, “Has not the Savior come as the Bridegroom?”

Arthur White’s thesis is maintained intact because there is no concept in Ellen’s Bridegroom vision (February 1845) that is not spelled out more specifically in Hale and Turner’s earlier *Advent Mirror* effort. The price for maintaining the thesis is the doubt cast upon the independence of the vision. Mrs. White later admitted to Joseph Bates that Turner’s publication was in her home; but she said, “I took no interest in reading, for it injured my head and made me nervous.”²⁹ She further insisted, “I did not hear a lecture or a word in any way relating to the Bridegroom’s going to the holiest”³⁰ — even though Turner was a frequent guest in the Harmon home.

Given what is known now about the sustained use of sources throughout Mrs. White’s writings — including examples of “borrowing” even in the handwritten transcripts of her visions³¹ — and her denials of dependency,³² it is difficult to accept at face value her claim that she had never heard “a word in any way relating to the Bridegroom’s going to the holiest.”

In her autobiographical accounts, Mrs. White denounces Turner for practicing fanaticism in the mid-1840s but forgets to chronicle her own involvement in some of it.³³ This, and her collaborating with Turner for the shut-door doctrine during that same period (Turner from Scripture, Harmon through vision),³⁴ may explain Arthur White’s reluctance to include Joseph Turner in his sanctuary saga.

A final, entirely academic example from the same recent *Review* article indicates that Arthur White is not intimately acquainted with the early Adventist publications about which he writes so confidently. Still assuming that Edson, Hahn, and Crosier were gleaning from Scripture in February of 1845 what Ellen Harmon was receiving in vision that same month, White saw a base that needed covering.

Since Crosier’s *Day-Star* Extra sanctuary piece was published 7 February 1846,³⁵ and because Ellen Harmon wrote to the *Day-Star* editor eight days later (15 February 1846) asking him to publish her Bridegroom vision, her grandson feared some people might suspect that she had based her vision on Crosier’s just-published article. Arthur White writes:

But Ellen was unaware of their study. Postal schedules indicate that her communication of February 15, 1846, had been mailed before she could have seen the Crosier article in the *Day Star Extra* of February 7.³⁶

This is another unsupported and mistaken assertion. In fact, documentation from letters to the editor from *Day-Star* readers indicates that the *Day-Star* was reaching New England readers from its Cincinnati offices within four days of its publication date. For instance, E.L.H. Chamberlain writes from Middletown, Connecticut, on 30 October 1845:

Dear Bro. Jacobs:

. . . I received the “Day Star” yesterday, (29th) and my soul was truly made happy to hear once more from my dear Bro. & Sister Cook.

Later in the paragraph Chamberlain quotes from Cook’s letter published in the October 25 *Day-Star* — Arthur White’s “postal schedules” notwithstanding.

(Reviewing the *Review* concluded on page 56)

SDA Church faces criminal charges

Attornies for former Pacific Union Conference Legal Association assistant secretary-treasurer/trust officer Reid C. Granke filed criminal charges on 22 January 1985 against the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and a number of subordinate institutions and personnel, under the Racketeering Influence and Corrupt Organization (RICO) statute in the United States District Court for the Western District of Missouri Western Division (Kansas City).

The plaintiff, Reid Granke, is demanding relief for injury to himself and his business, in excess of \$1,000,000 plus interest and costs.

Granke charges that the defendants "engaged in actions in conflict with their fiduciary duties as trust committee members," including:

- a. Accepting finders' fees from Donald Davenport in consideration for loan approval votes.
- b. Receiving higher rates of interest on personal loans to Davenport in consideration for approving votes of church institution loans to Davenport.
- c. Exerting undue pressure on members of trust committees to assure that Davenport-requested loans were voted up.
- d. Accepting first deeds of trust from Davenport as security for loans while conspiring with other defendants not to record the deeds, thereby allowing Davenport to sell or otherwise encumber the property.

Granke in his suit also charges "that defendants did aid, abet, and conspire with one or more church member donors of real estate 'gifts' to avoid state and federal income tax" A draft of the suit lists "certain nursing homes including but not limited to Parkside Manor, Crestview Nursing Home, Hawthorne House, and Cashmere Nursing Home" in Washington state.

What appears to be the motivation behind Granke's suit is set down in a draft of his filing papers:

"Beginning on or about August 1, 1978, and while employed by defendants, plaintiff began to discover the aforesaid wrong doings concerning the Davenport loans and the nursing home 'gifts' all of which he began to call to the attention of others in defendants' hierarchies. As a result of the knowledge gained by plaintiff concerning the wrong doings and above described and because of his persistent complaints concerning them, plaintiff was instructed by defendants that he was not to deal with the Davenport loans or the nursing home 'gifts'. Subsequently, and on March 21, 1982, plaintiff was transferred from the Upper Columbia Corporation to Pacific Union Association of Seventh-day Adventists where he worked until May 21, 1983, when he was fired from his positions as trust officer and treasurer because

of his knowledge and persistence in rectifying wrongs above described."

The progress and outcome of this suit will be particularly interesting because of the possibility that the church membership may learn —through depositions, affidavits, and courtroom testimony — much about the Davenport affair that church leaders have refused to make known. Also, the case is potentially more serious than other celebrated cases involving the church in which the charges were civil rather than criminal.

The General Conference Legal Services office has contracted with attorney Douglas Welebir, former mayor of Loma Linda, to defend the church.

The humiliation of J.N. Andrews

The spring 1984 issue of *Adventist Heritage* contains some interesting revelations about John Nevins Andrews' relationship to Ellen White.

Of the seven articles devoted to Andrews' life and work, the most provocative was written by Joseph G. Smoot, entitled "John N. Andrews: Humblest Man in All Our Ranks." Smoot recounts the lifelong roller coaster relationship between the Whites and the brothers-in-law J.N. Andrews and Uriah Smith.



J.N. Andrews

Mrs. White wrote to Smith's wife, Harriet, in 1860 about her brother-in-law:

Brother John must yet see all the past and realize what influence he has exerted; that his influence told on the side of the enemy's ranks and his family do not stand clear They will not stand in the light until they wipe out the past by confessing their wrong course in opposing the testimonies given them of God Either their feelings must be

yielded . . . or the visions must be given up.

In 1868 Mrs. White had begun reproving Andrews for the amount of time he devoted to study. Andrews was preparing to "re-write the Sabbath History, and prepare one other work that I have long had on my mind."

"Andrews received two blows in 1872," writes Smoot. The less severe of the two "in all likelihood," he added was "the one from Ellen White." She was after Andrews again about his research. Smoot quotes her:

There are very few minds that can follow you unless they give the subject the depth of thought you have done Minds become weary in reading and following you The "History of the Sabbath" should have been out long ago. You should not wait to have everything so exactly as strong as you can possibly make it before giving it to the people.

"The more severe blow," Smoot records, "was one from which Andrews never recovered. His beloved Angeline died on March 19, 1872."

Nearly three years later (15 September 1874), Andrews and his two children (seventeen-year-old Charles and twelve-year-old Mary) sailed for Europe, to establish "the work" on the continent from Switzerland.

Andrews returned to this country and buried both his daughter, Mary, and his brother, William, in 1878. Andrews was in poor health and did not return to Europe until the next year.

In 1883 Ellen White wrote a letter to B.L. Whitney, Andrews' assistant, sharply criticizing Andrews. Smoot describes the letter:

She said that Andrews had "given the impression of suffering when he has endured no more than ordinary laborers in their first experience in this work." She regarded Andrews as having "a diseased mind." Mrs. White thought that John Andrews would die and said she "could not pray for his life, for I consider he has held and is still holding [up] the work in Switzerland." . . . She concluded that she did not want Andrews "injured, neither do I want the cause of God to bear the hindrance and the mold of his diseased imagination."

Then Ellen White wrote Andrews a letter that Smoot describes as "the most severe rebuke she had ever given to him."

She said that "if you go down into the grave, I do not want you should go down in deception." Referring to him as "my dear and much respected brother," she proceeded to enumerate his character defects. Feeling that the Andrews and Stevens families had been a bad mix from the beginning, she believed they had fostered his desire "to crave for sympathy, to love to be pitied, to be regarded as one suffering privations and

OF CURRENT INTEREST

as a martyr." She told him of his sin of dwelling on himself, of mourning for his wife and daughter as he had done, of fostering his strong will and determination as a leader, and his worship of intellect . . . Dwelling at length on his rejection of her counsel regarding his remarriage [he never did], she told him that he had not been a good father to his son, Charles . . . His "near and dear associates in your early experience," she said, "have flattered you, petted you, and construed your defects into virtues."

Smoot believes that "this letter must have broken Andrews' spirit and will to live." Nevertheless, Andrews replied to "Sister White," saying, "I humble myself before God to receive from His hand the severe rebuke which He has given you for me." Smoot notes that Andrews "declared with courage, though, that 'my feet are on the Rock of Ages and that the Lord holds me by my right hand.'" Andrews closed by welcoming any "other reproofs" that Mrs. White might send. "I beg you," he pleaded, "to believe me as ever, one who sincerely desires to follow the right."

Andrews died a few months later (21 October 1883); and it would be interesting to know whether Mrs. White felt any guilt over her final, harsh letter to the dying Andrews.

Close friend and colleague to Andrews, one-time General Conference president G.I. Butler, was less bending to the straight testimonies from Ellen White. He described one such occasion that occurred late in his General Conference presidency to J.H. Kellogg in a letter of 9 June 1904. Butler had been running a fever for weeks:

Sister White called me up to your Hospital, and talked to me two or three hours, when my head seemed as though it would just about wreck me. It seemed as though it would split. I nerved up, with every ounce of energy I had, and listened to it all. Some things, I tell you, were about as cutting as a man could hear. Occasionally I would throw in a word. She said, "You ought to have been out of office for years." After she had gone on on that line a while I says, "Sister White, was I responsible for being put in Office those times?" It rather threw the old lady off her base, for a little while.

How interesting — and liberating — it would be to have an unabridged history of the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers. In the meantime, readers may wish to subscribe to *Adventist Heritage* by sending \$6.00 to *Adventist Heritage*, Loma Linda University, Box 1844, Riverside, CA 92515. Back issues are \$5.00 each.

Jan the baptist

Sligo Church associate pastor Jan Daffern recieved a gift from her senior pastor, Jim

Londis, a few days after she conducted her first baptism (10 March 1984). It was a tee shirt specially imprinted with the words, "Jan the baptist."

Daffern's baptism was preceded by the Fairfax-Arlington Church's co-pastor (with her husband) Marsha Frost's 25 February 1984 baptismal service. A third woman associate pastor, Frances Wiegand, baptized several candidates on 2 June 1984 at the Beltsville Church.

These baptisms, which took place in the Potomac Conference, led to a confrontation with General Conference officers. The five-hour, August 16 meeting between the General Conference officers and the Potomac Conference executive committee, headed by president Ronald Whisbey, concluded in an arrangement: The Potomac Conference would table its May 16 vote to license women pastors; and the General Conference officers would discuss the possibility of reworking the *Church Manual*.

The General Conference officers brought the question of the role of women in the Seventh-day Adventist ministry before Annual Council in October. There the responsibility of reconsidering the issue of women and ordination was placed on approximately forty leaders representing the world church. After deliberations in March 1985, this group will make recommendations to be acted on at the New Orleans General Conference session in July.

Those who support the full participation by women in every aspect of the church believe that there are reasons for hope. Here are excerpts from the remarks of several church leaders quoted in the November 1984 *Adventist Woman*:

Charles Bradford, vice-president for North America: "We have required women to meet all the requirements and they have done so and they have been serving alongside men who have been their [Seminary] classmates. Consider how these dear women feel as they work with their peers who have been ordained. . . ."

Ronald Whisbey, president, Potomac Conference: "Our committee voted to permit baptism [by women pastors] only after intense counsel. . . . This is not a Potomac problem. This is a problem that affects us all."

W.C. Scragg, president, Australasian Division: "It is important to have a balanced representation from the world field . . . I am opposed to special interest groups, but not opposed to the ordination of women. Let us move forward . . ."

W. Duncan Eva, retired General Conference vice-president: "It took 1800 years to settle the slavery issue. In the 20th century we need to resolve male nor female. We must not close the doors . . . Let us not walk backward into the future."

G.J. Christo, president, Southern Asia Division: "One of our two representatives will be a lady — already an ordained elder . . . Let each division move as it wishes to implement."

Neal J. Wilson, president, General Conference: "I must say to you that most of the documentation we have says that neither the Bible nor the Spirit of Prophecy provides for or prohibits ordination. Is it safe to base a decision of this kind on the silence of the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy?"

Of course, neither the Bible nor Mrs. White says much about airplanes or computers; but we have incorporated both into the work of the church.

Currents has been informed of a poster that depicts a couple of four-year-olds standing together and pulling forward on the waist bands of their pants. The little girl has peeked over at the little boy, and in a moment of illumination, says, "So that's why you can baptize!"

It may be hoped that this July, in New Orleans, the General Conference in session will exercise the kind of judgment that will lead to many more "inspired" and inspiring tee shirts.

She came; she yawned; she left

On television she yawned shamelessly into millions of homes, and the Western world was smitten; only the animal rights advocates were offended.



Courtesy Duane Miller LLUMC Audiovisual Service

Baby Fae was an overnight celebrity who put Loma Linda on the media map, but would never know it.

During her brief stay, she motivated humor that only Seventh-day Adventists could understand: We always thought "the amalgamation of man and beast" was sexual, not surgical.

She stimulated jokes that everyone could share: "What's the fastest thing on wheels? A baboon on a bike, pedalling through Loma Linda." And, "What did the doctors hear when they put the stethoscope to Baby Fae's chest? 'Baboon, baboon.'"

Whether Fae's brief suffering or her medical team's heroics taught us anything about cross-specie transplants (xenotransplantation) remains to be seen. It is, however, certain that her experience generated much thought — something that goes begging most of the time.

Besides jokes, ratiocination, and considerable debate, her life and death brought moisture to the eyes of those who hardly knew her. Why? Perhaps because she reminds us that the "miracles" of modern medicine notwithstanding, even the innocent — as both our faith and experience remind us — are "so easily called away."

Recently Seventh-day Adventists have suffered and enjoyed, in Australia and the United States, an unprecedented degree of media coverage. And perhaps it is not ironic that in both cases beasts would figure prominently — a dingo and a baboon. And although those are not the beasts of our Revelation seminars, perhaps this is the way it will have to be for us, until the lion and the lamb begin grazing together.

Butler's book endowed

For a number of years the rumor circuit has carried various versions of a story that La Sierra professor of church history Jonathan Butler was writing a book about Ellen White. That rumor was confirmed through an interview given by Butler in the 8 January 1985 Loma Linda University *Observer*. He was interviewed primarily because he had set an Adventist academic precedent, by becoming the first Adventist scholar to receive secular funding for a study of Adventist history.

Butler learned in December 1984 that he had been awarded a \$27,000 fellowship by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), to finish a book-length manuscript on "The World's End: Ellen G. White and the Passing of Victorian America."

Butler applied for the NEH funding because "with a twelve-hour teaching load," he said, "it's very hard to build any momentum and see a project through . . ." Butler wanted "to have the luxury of writing while the sun is up."

Perhaps with Ronald Graybill's recent difficulties in mind, Butler took pains to specify that while it is footing the bill, "the government expects me to deal with the topic as a humanist, not a sectarian."

"It would be unprofessional of me as an historian to approach her [Ellen White] in any other way when writing an academic monograph. More than that, it would be immoral of me to take government money to write about Mrs. White in an apologetic or 'supernaturalistic' manner."

Martin Marty's historical survey of American religion, entitled *Pilgrims in Their Own Land*, was cited by Butler as proof that Adventists

need to be writing their own history in a scholarly manner. Marty, he explained, had relied exclusively on Ronald Numbers' *Prophets of Health* for his coverage of Adventism.

"It is inconsistent of Adventists," Butler asserted, "to discourage this sort of scholarly analysis and then complain about misimpressions outsiders have of them."

Butler has until April 1986 to begin his endowed year of writing about "just how Mrs. White contributed to the shape and development of 19th century Adventism and how she continues to affect 20th century Adventism."

While Butler is writing, he will be saving La Sierra one year's salary — about eighty percent of the \$27,000 endowment. But when he has finished his Caesar-sponsored redacting, will La Sierra have him back? Butler has been on the ideological brink before — especially in August 1979, when he suggested in *Spectrum* that Ellen White's interpretation of certain apocalyptic passages of Scripture resulted from her perception of nineteenth-century religious currents. White Estate secretary Robert Olson, among others, took strong exception to this, as he has to both Numbers' and Graybill's descriptions of the person and place of Mrs. White.

Whatever the outcome of his writing, may it be said of Butler that he emulated those who "signed the air with their honor."

"Deadly wound" Reopened

The first half of the year of the crash, 1929, found the *Signs of the Times* fixated on the healing of the papacy's "deadly wound." From January to July, more than twenty pages of the journal — then subtitled "The World's Prophetic Weekly" — reacted with prophetic paranoia to the signing of an agreement between Italian prime minister Benito Mussolini and Papal secretary of state, Cardinal Gasparri, on 11 February 1929.

Adventist interpretations of this "Concordat" between Italy and the Roman church were both understandable and predictable. Adventists believed that the Papacy was represented by the beast of Revelation. They believed further that this beast received the "deadly wound" of Revelation 13 when Napoleon's General Berthier took the Pope prisoner in 1798.

Then came the Italy/Vatican treaty consummated on 11 February 1929, and Arthur S. Maxwell was galvanized to write:

"Listen to the words of the inspired Book: ' . . . and his deadly wound was healed; and all the world wondered after the beast.' " Revelation 13:3.

" 'Healed!' Could words be plainer? Surely here we have a prophetic picture of the revival of the papal fortunes."

Maxwell added, "Fulfilling the prophecy of

Revelation 18, it [the Papacy] can say 'I sit a queen and am no widow . . .'"

It is hard to believe that Uncle Arthur would be pleased to learn that fifty-five years later the "deadly wound" was reopened by the signing of a new Concordat between the socialist government of Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi and Vatican secretary of state Agostino Casaroli on 18 February 1984.



Arthur S. Maxwell

The new agreement ends Catholicism as Italy's "sole religion," discards the concept of the "sacred character" of Rome, and leaves Italian parents to decide whether their children will have religious education.

Most painful of the new bleeders is the termination of over \$200 million annually in state aid to the Catholic hierarchy (where have we heard that word before?) and its clergy.

Juxtapose this reversal in Italo-Vatican affairs with a complaint in the 8 January 1985 *Atlantic Union Gleaner* decrying the "very disappointing" response by 74,000 Adventists who had been sent a copy of *Liberty* magazine's "Confidential Newsletter." The "Newsletter" recipients were asked to write to legislators and the media "protesting the appointment of an American ambassador to the Vatican, and also to register their objections to an amendment to allow prayers in the nation's public schools."

The *Gleaner's* uncommonly frank response to the Adventist membership's lack of response to *Liberty's* appeal was to call its "apparent apathy" "appalling." Then the *Gleaner* sermonized its readers with a long passage from *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p.452, excerpted here briefly:

"While men are sleeping, Satan is actively arranging matters so that the Lord's people may not have mercy or justice. The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness . . ."

The apathy that the *Gleaner* finds so "appalling" should come as no surprise, when those who have been chosen to lead this people swear that our aversion to Catholicism has "now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned."

Even "the Lord's people" are not interminably susceptible to the cry of "Wolf!"

Association of Adventist Forums and *Spectrum*

Neal C. Wilson Statement, 16 October 1984

VOTED, To include the following statement made by Neal C. Wilson in regard to the Association of Adventist Forums and its magazine, *Spectrum* (The first two paragraphs are a summary of his informal remarks preliminary to the statement):

There do come times in the life of a leader when he knows that he must do something that he dislikes to do. But a leader has to do some things because he knows the people are looking for a signal from him, and that's true of all of you. There are some who may misunderstand when a leader makes certain statements, and that's always a risk you have to take. It can also at times strain personal relationships and friendships, and that's something too that you desperately try to avoid. But in spite of all this, there are times when people expect a signal from you and as a leader you need to make a statement. This morning I would like to share some of the questions in my own heart regarding the relationship of the Church to the Association of Adventist Forums and its magazine, *Spectrum*. I've modified my statement a number of times and I'm going to try to be kind, but I'm also going to be very clear. I'm not asking, Brother Chairman, for debate, discussion, or a vote on this item. I would like you to know this comes from Neal Wilson. I do represent an office in the Church that people look to for signals, and because of this I feel it is necessary to make a statement.

It is a pleasure this morning to see several of my friends here. I hope they will continue to be my friends in spite of the fact that we may look at some things differently. I think in particular of the President of the Association of Adventist Forums, Dr. Lindrey Niles, for whom I have great regard. I see others here of those who

serve with him as officers. Yesterday I had a telephone conversation with the past president who is in the Attorney General's office, Hartford, Connecticut, Glen Coe, one whose friendship I cherish, and there are others here about whom I feel the same way. So I hope that in the little statement that I shall make you will try to put the best construction on it. If there are those of you who feel that I have overstated the cases; or I have been too severe, please let me know afterwards and I'll be glad to make whatever apology seems to be indicated. I ask you to share with me the next few minutes attentively so that you will really understand the sentiment of my heart. But there do come times, as I say, when something needs to be said. And I think that today may be the right day.

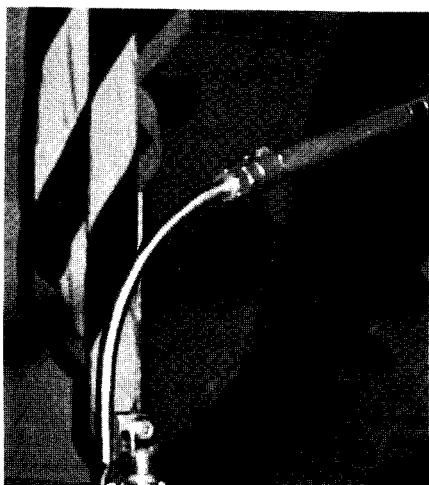
This statement is intended to clarify the relationship between the Association of Adventist Forums (the AAF) and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Apparently considerable ambiguity and misunderstanding exist at the present time. This being true, it is both necessary and wise to make this statement, and also because so many individuals and groups have asked if Church leadership has given approval or endorsement to the activities of the AAF and its journal, *Spectrum*, and if so, why?

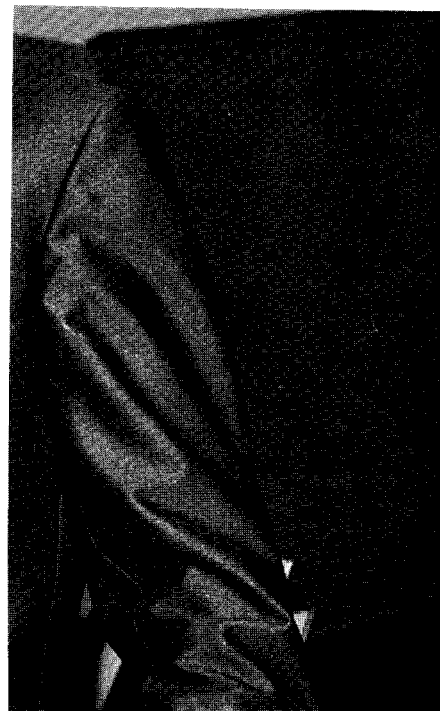
To begin with, perhaps a little historical background will help.

In early 1967 a small group of Seventh-day Adventist graduate students and a few college and university teachers felt that they needed a forum in which to discuss perplexing questions that arose as a result of research and scholarly pursuits.

In addition they expressed disappointment that their church seemed slow or reluctant to express itself with regard to some of the social issues and injustices typical of the 60s. In reaching out for answers and in order to formulate suggestions and possible solutions that might be useful to the Church, they felt the need to organize loosely structured discussion groups. They stated that some young people felt that there were no existing Church channels



Courtesy David S. Baker portfolio



where controversial subjects could be discussed. Some of these young people were discouraged and were being alienated through frustration and isolation. It was felt that an organization such as was being proposed could provide fellowship and also offer a forum for discussing such subjects and in this way serve a redemptive purpose. A little later in 1967 the initiators of the AAF came to Washington, DC, and discussed this matter with me and several in the North American Division and General Conference. They indicated they were anxious to work in harmony with the Church and did not want to create problems or be misunderstood. They were seeking counsel from Church leadership and wanted to maintain a proper relationship with the Church.

The stated aims and objectives of the proposed association were:

"1. To provide an organization which will facilitate fellowship between graduate students in different geographical areas of the United States.

"2. To stimulate evangelistic contact through cultural interaction with non-Seventh-day Adventist scholars.

"3. To serve as a point of contact between graduate students and the Seventh-day Adventist organization, and to encourage and facilitate the service of these students to the church.

"4. To encourage pastoral guidance for Seventh-day Adventist students on non-Seventh-day Adventist campuses.

"5. To maintain an organ of communication wherein Seventh-day Adventist scholars may exchange academic information, thoughts, and opinions."

Membership in the association, in one form or another, was to be open to all Adventist teachers, graduate and undergraduate students, and persons with professional interest.

Knowing most of these early organizers as committed Seventh-day Adventists and believing that their motives were honorable, we were impressed that perhaps this could be a useful venture. When I presented this matter to the General Conference officers and North American union presidents at the time of the 1967 Annual Council, it was not felt wise to take any official action authorizing or approving or opposing this new organization. We reasoned that the group could organize such an association without even discussing it with us. Since they wanted to stay in close touch with Church leadership in order to avoid misunderstanding, and since they were seeking counsel and guidance, we felt it was desirable to maintain contact with them on an unofficial basis.

The record of our discussion at the 1967 North American Division Committee on Administration reads as follows:

"1. That we express our interest in strengthening the relationship of graduate students to the church and our desire to cooperate as far as possible to the development of any means which will serve to make this relationship more meaningful and mutually beneficial.

"2. That we express our sympathy with the stated aims and objectives of the proposed association.

"3. That we express our opinion that presently these objectives can be better served if the church leadership were to serve the Association in an advisory capacity and at its invitation."

As you can see, this was a position of sympathy, of maintaining an advisory relationship, and of suspended judgment until the "fruits" of an organization of this kind could emerge and be tested.

Seventeen years have gone by, and the AAF has now grown in membership and the number of subscribers to *Spectrum* has increased. In spite of this growth, the AAF and its publi-

cation *Spectrum* appeared in *Spectrum*. On the other hand, and to be fair, I have also expressed appreciation for the quality and content of certain other articles. I want to register the fact that, in my opinion, not all that has been done by the AAF or what has appeared in *Spectrum* has been negative or bad. On the contrary, much has been good! However, as is true in life, the wholesome and the pure can be contaminated, polluted, or destroyed by mixing just a little error or poison with the good. Repeatedly I have been requested to make a statement disassociating myself and the Church from the AAF and officially de-

We do not consider Spectrum to be the voice for the Seventh-day Adventist academic world . . .

cation *Spectrum* are still unknown to the majority of our members in most parts of the world. Several of us, as denominational leaders, have served as consultants to the officers of the AAF. My role has been strictly advisory and I have never been a board member as some have erroneously stated. My attitude has been consistently friendly and sympathetic in spite of the fact that, in my opinion, my counsel has seldom been accepted; and some things sponsored by the AAF have embarrassed and perplexed me.

It is no secret to my fellow General Conference leaders and to certain officers of the AAF that in the past few years I have grown more and more troubled over what appears to be a decided shift away from some of the original attitudes, aims, and objectives of the AAF for which we expressed sympathy. I fully expected that the Association would follow the pattern established by other professional associations of Seventh-day Adventists and be positive and supportive of the of the Church's teachings and programs, even when not in agreement with everything that happens in the Church. Instead, in my view the Association and its publication *Spectrum* have followed an increasingly controversial course of speech and recommended action.

The vast majority of elected Church leadership invite and appreciate the input of thinking and supportive lay persons. Most of us are able to profit from criticism, provided it is constructive and not destructive. In the opinion of many, there has been a noticeable drift, on the part of the AAF, in the direction of undermining leadership and criticizing the Church — and at times in a cynical manner. Some feel that because some of us have 'smiled' on the AAF instead of "frowning," it has been taken as license. The opinion seems to prevail that since General Conference leadership has not made a public disclaimer concerning the AAF, we must actually condone what the organization does, what it says, and what it publishes. Unfortunately, our silence has been misinterpreted.

On various occasions I have privately remonstrated with the AAF leaders and have strongly protested certain articles and items which have

nouncing *Spectrum*. In good conscience, I have been reluctant to do this because, especially at the outset, the AAF did participate in helping to anchor some lives to the Church. I refrained from responding to these requests to make a public statement because I hoped that if given a little more time it might never become necessary.

Unfortunately, with the passing of time, it has become more and more evident that the emphasis of *Spectrum* has not been on nurturing evangelism or on providing positive, inspirational, yet scholarly, interaction between academicians and their Church organization. In the opinion of many, the 'fruits' have not been the building of faith, confidence, and trust in an atmosphere of apostolic optimism. Subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, faultfinding has not helped to build up confidence in the authority of the Word, in the Spirit of Prophecy, and the role and function of church organization. To the casual reader the material is perceived as planting seeds of criticism, polarization, negative questioning, undermining confidence in Church organization, and lessening respect for the legitimacy and authority of Church leadership.

It is evident that the time has come when we need to reexamine our relationship with the AAF and our 1967 expression of "sympathy." Among our concerns are the following:

1. We do not agree with what appears to be a practice and basic approach of the AAF — namely, that it is necessary or productive to listen to and discuss all viewpoints, whether positive or negative, truth or error. We cannot accept the premise that our journals and pulpits should give equal time and exposure to all viewpoints with the idea that ultimately truth will prevail. We have a distinctive message that needs to be presented with emphasis and conviction.

2. It seems to us that the AAF and *Spectrum* do not take any definite or clearly stated positions regarding doctrinal subjects and issues. Much seems to be rationalized and left tentative. Pluralism seems to be advocated, and even some spiritual values seem to be negotiable.

3. We weary of always being told what is wrong with the Church! Why do we not hear

about some positive, workable, and tested solutions and alternatives? Especially do we feel this way when negative comments come from individuals who appear to pose as experts, but who have never had Church leadership responsibility or the more awesome and sacred responsibility of trying to maintain unity in a spiritual world family.

4. We are disappointed that the AAF takes the initiative to provide a platform and arrange meetings for known and declared dissident individuals and groups within the Church.

5. We reject the implication or inference that *Spectrum* is the most authentic source of information regarding Church affairs. We hope it is obvious to many readers that *Spectrum* not infrequently contains factual inaccuracies and faulty conclusions.

6. We observe with concern the persistent involvement of the AAF and *Spectrum* in actively urging what appears to us to be irresponsible concepts of, and changes in, denominational administration, operations, structure, and organization. Unfortunately these ideas are propagated with little apparent concern for what the results might be.

7. Finally, we find it difficult to explain why the pages of *Spectrum* so seldom defend or endorse positions of the Church or say anything positive about its evangelistic thrust.

In addition to these concerns, people often remind us that the name, "Association of Adventist Forums," can be misleading. When the word "Adventist" is used to qualify a particular organization, it usually denotes that such an organization is promoted by the Church and enjoys at least a semi-official status.

In summation, we find it necessary to state that the activities of the AAF and the content of *Spectrum* do not carry the endorsement of Church leadership; and we seriously question that they are helpful in proclaiming the message of the Church or in fulfilling its mission. Those who participate in the activities of the AAF and who read *Spectrum* should be aware of the foregoing. Realizing the above, and to avoid being the cause of stumbling, I must, at least for the present, no longer serve as advisor and consultant. On the other hand, I do not wish to be severed from my friends, and if requested will always be willing to offer personal counsel. This decision is made with a heavy heart, but with a settled sense of duty.

After counseling with the General Conference officers and the division presidents, I wish to record and make clear that:

1. The AAF is not a denominationally sponsored or endorsed organization.

2. The Seventh-day Adventist Church encourages honest and balanced research and discussion. In fact, creative discussion is welcome, but not divisive and destructive criticism which tends to undermine our message and church organization and impedes the successful accomplishment of the mission of God's prophetic movement.

3. *Spectrum* is not a publication of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

4. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has at no time endorsed *Spectrum* or given approval to its content.

5. We do not consider *Spectrum* to be the voice for the Seventh-day Adventist academic world; but rather we consider it the voice for a

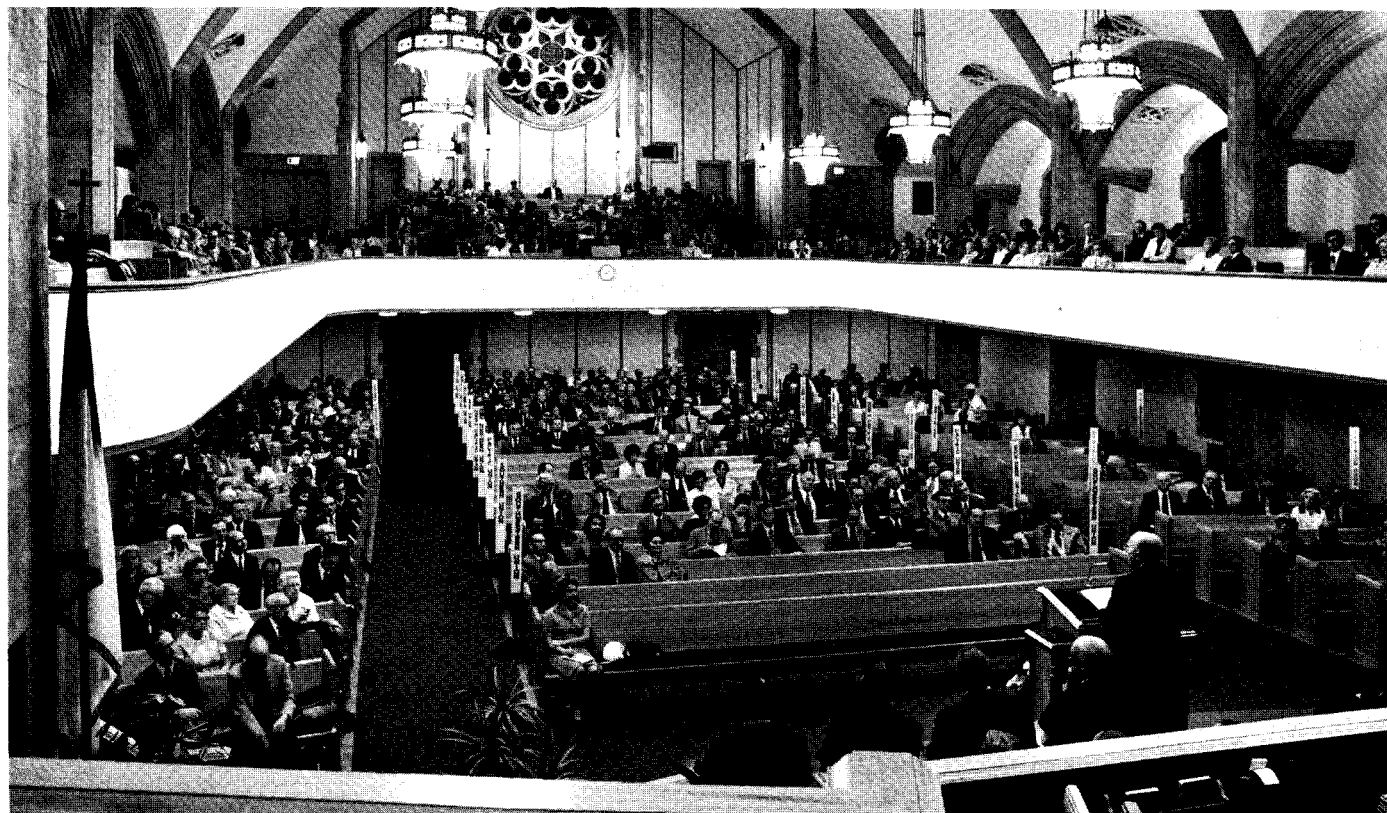
relatively small, self-appointed segment.

6. Any Adventist institution which distributes *Spectrum* does so without Church approval.

Having said all of this, I would now like to conclude with an earnest and personal appeal to the AAF. In the name of our Lord and Saviour, I urge the AAF to reconsider its priorities and return to its original spiritual, pastoral, fellowship, and evangelistic aims. If the AAF and *Spectrum* would exalt Christ and His saving grace and make known His soon coming, they could become a valuable adjunct in the Church. Nothing would make me happier than to see healing take place, but this cannot be at the expense of truth and principle.

I have a further important appeal. Please do not condemn individuals because of their association with an organization. Please be slow to judge the motives of individuals based on their participation with the AAF. In my opinion, many, if not most, of these individuals are not radicals but are supporters of the Church, participate in soul winning, are active in community outreach, and uphold the teachings and standards of the Church.

Finally, we are living in the time when the watchmen on the walls are expected to give the trumpet a certain sound, or otherwise the people will be confused and quickly become vulnerable to every wind that blows. In the relationship of the Church with the AAF or any other organization or publication, the biblical principle identified by Christ is worthy of consideration: "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). □



Another General Conference Annual Council in the Takoma Park Church.

Courtesy David S. Baker portfolio

Getting It Wrong: Neal Wilson and the AAF

by George Colvin

A dramatic moment at the recent General Conference Annual Council occurred on October 16 when General Conference president Neal Wilson presented his views about the Association of Adventist Forums (AAF). Observers agreed that the speech was not impromptu. Elder Wilson spoke from a printed text — a third draft of his original ideas. The revision process included talks with Dr. Lyndrey Niles, Glenn Coe, and Dr. Roy Branson — respectively the AAF's current and immediately past presidents and editor of the AAF's major journal, *Spectrum*. Because of the effort put into the speech, the importance of Elder Wilson's position, the imminence of the General Conference session, and the enthusiastic reception the talk was given by the assembled church leaders, this speech deserves close attention.

This attention is even more warranted because Elder Wilson, who began his talk by avowing that it was only a personal expression of opinion, rather rapidly shifted into talking about "our concerns." He finished by citing the conclusions of various conferences on AAF he had had with other leaders, which led to what sounded like policy statements about AAF. This speech cannot, therefore, be considered a merely personal statement.

Unfortunately, close examination shows that Elder Wilson's talk revealed the limited vision, poor grasp of facts and issues, authoritarian tendencies, and poorly concealed uncharity that have so often in recent years characterized pronouncements by Adventist leaders about groups deemed "dissident."

One of Elder Wilson's introductory remarks requires particular attention, because its theme underlay much else in his talk. When AAF was founded (with the sympathy if not the active blessing of the General Conference), Elder Wilson apparently expected AAF to behave much like "other professional associations of Seventh-day Adventists" by supporting leadership's ideas and programs, whatever its own views; and he was thus very disappointed when AAF took a more critical tack.

But the cheerleading approach was never likely for AAF. When AAF was founded, the Adventist church was beginning a long, anti-intellectual binge. And the AAF, as an *omnium gathrum* intellectual organization, was bound to be pushed into opposition by such policies.

Also likely to move it in this direction was the fact that many of AAF's leaders were educated not in professional fields largely irrelevant to the church's doctrines and activities (such as optometry or agriculture), but in such highly sensitive areas as history, ethics, theology, and the physical sciences. Their education equipped them for analysis in these areas; and their Adventist orientation (and, in many cases, church employment) moved them to use those tools to "help the church" — particularly since they could readily perceive so many areas in which the church desperately needed the assistance. Such assistance was unlikely to be worshipful.

As church leaders (themselves largely lacking, and sometimes resenting, the education of AAF members) began to make clear that they did not regard such activities as helpful, these young intellectuals — some directly affected by the leaders' attitudes, and others simply unwilling to accept the leaders' evaluation of their contributions — began to turn their activities toward the organization itself. They thought that knowing the truth about an organization to which they were committed (and by which many of them were employed) was good in itself and might encourage necessary structural reforms. These reforms would in turn create an atmosphere more hospitable to consideration of their theological and philosophical concerns.

Church leadership assisted this orientation by providing the material for seemingly endless accounts of maladministration, dishonesty in office, shaky theological positions, and repressive disregard for the truth in a search for organizational "unity." That the responsibility for these problems rested with their administrative authors rather than their AAF reporters and analysts seemed unimportant.

Thus AAF became the principal source of substantial Adventist church news reporting and critical analysis, thereby earning the leadership's redoubled wrath. AAF provided a substantial organizational base for constant examination, in public, of leadership's views and actions and of the ideas by which the leadership defined the nature of Adventism. That Elder Wilson considered it important that AAF is not widely known outside North America only revealed his failure to understand the nature of communications. AAF is quite widely enough known in North America, the major source of church funds, to be a substantial influence on

the Adventist scene — which is, of course, why Elder Wilson spoke out about it.

It is for this reason that Elder Wilson emphasized as AAF's cardinal sin "undermining confidence in Church organization and lessening respect for the legitimacy and authority of Church leadership." One cannot help thinking that Adventist leaders have managed to undermine confidence pretty effectively on their own recently. AAF's assistance was hardly necessary — particularly in view of increased coverage of the Adventist church in the secular press.

AAF has done these things primarily by serving as an alternative source of "news and views" to the approved administrative press. On this point in Elder Wilson's talk an authoritarian tendency surfaced — for only authoritarians desire, or need, to control all opinion and news about their activities. Leaders who understood, and governed by, the precepts of representativeness to which the Adventist church is theoretically committed would have no such interest.

Unfortunately, the administrative policies actually pursued — whose theoretical basis is so clearly shown in this speech — have tended to discourage subordinate leaders from involvement with the best-educated Adventists. These people, in turn, have been driven out of the church or into sullen resentfulness within it — hardly a desirable result. Many of the best of those previously in church employ have left it, some going into the more open (and much better paid) medical system. This system, being in contact with the world and driven by competition in a way that the insular Adventism of the church itself is not, has rapidly left church administration behind — a monument to the folly of subsidizing ignorance in an age of information.

The heart of Elder Wilson's talk, however, was its seven-point bill of indictment against AAF for various types of deviationism. Because of its centrality, and because Elder Wilson's difficulties became particularly congested at this point, these points merit special scrutiny.

1. *Free discussion.* "We" — the collective "we"? the editorial "we"? — disagreed, said Elder Wilson, with AAF's "basic approach" of discussing "all viewpoints, whether positive or negative, truth or error." "We" particularly resented any idea that such pluralism should be found in official "journals and pulpits" (a danger with which, for all such journals and most pulpits, Elder Wilson was needlessly concerned).

On the assumption, of course, that Adventism

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already has both doctrinal truth and organizational quality in plenitude, such practices are indeed unnecessary. What is difficult to understand is how, in light of the last twenty years of Adventist history, any sane person could believe such an assumption. In administration, the Davenport affair, the absurd contentions in the Pacific Press cases, and the reports of the various church structure groups; and in doctrine, the vulnerability of the sanctuary teaching, the tenuousness of the church's traditional reading of Genesis, and especially the origin, nature, and authority of Ellen G. White's teachings — all these instances and many others suggest there is room for disagreement.

2. *Uncertain positions.* Elder Wilson seemed to believe that AAF should function like the church itself, with settled dogma on doctrines and issues. But if AAF had functioned this way, what need would there have been for it? He misunderstood the nature of the academic mind, which naturally lives with a high degree of tentativeness. He also failed to appreciate the real need for such an open area in a church so often rigidly closed. And Elder Wilson had been warned. The original aims of the AAF, cited by him, included providing "an organ of communication wherein Seventh-day Adventist

by various church structure groups must conclude that the General Conference Role and Function Committee, dominated by precisely those administrators Elder Wilson considered most qualified to speak, produced by far the weakest document. Its report was a thing so rushed in its preparation and so lacking in any consistent, creative, justifiable line of thought that its authors should have been ashamed to produce it and the Annual Council to consider it.

By contrast, the Task Force worked for two years and hundreds of man-hours, gaining wide input from outside the AAF, to produce its report — the single most substantial contribution in this area by an unofficial group in Adventist history. Elder Wilson's hostility to this work showed the real meaning of his earlier assertion that church leaders "invite and appreciate the input of thinking and supportive lay persons" (emphasis mine). That is, church leaders are happy to receive comments from individual lay persons whose views agree with their own (the decoded meaning of being "supportive" and "positive" and building "trust" and "confidence") and who do not organize themselves to make their views heard beyond individual conversations and letters.

. . . only authoritarians desire, or need, to control all opinion and news about their activities.

scholars may exchange academic information, thoughts, and opinions." This purpose required maintaining an area not of defined and received truth but of discussion — a forum, in fact.

3. *Negativism and the inexperienced experts.* That AAF publications are indeed often doubtful rather than boosterish about various matters is really not their responsibility. Church publications are devoted to "building faith" — an enterprise that seems to exclude most discussion of the faith that is being built or most truly informative news reporting on the methods being used. AAF publications have by default provided these things. The need for them is undoubtable; it is said that many General Conference men themselves found AAF's coverage of the Davenport affair the most informative material available.

Wilson's point three, however, was even more severely flawed. It seemed to be aimed at the AAF Task Force on Church Structure (the "individuals" who "appear to pose as experts"). The reader can judge whether these people are really experts and whether, if they are not, a more expert panel could be assembled.

Furthermore, Elder Wilson's comment tended to restrict the right to comment on church structure to church leaders, especially those in the General Conference (those who oversee the "spiritual world family"). But any intelligent reading of the several reports recently submitted

regarding Church affairs." The other half — an attack on *Spectrum's* accuracy that, like the rest of Elder Wilson's talk, presented no proof — was dead wrong.

Spectrum, like any news-reporting journal, makes its quota of mistakes. But those who have labored on its news coverage can testify to the great labor put into researching major pieces in *Spectrum*. The work involved is far more extensive, and generally of higher professional quality, than is found in news reporting in the *Adventist Review*, despite the much greater "access" and financial backing of the latter.

Though deprived of such assets, *Spectrum* in instance after instance (the Adventist food industry, the 1919 Bible Conference, the church publishing work, and the Davenport affair) has produced analyses far beyond the quality of those available through the official press. The extraordinary dedication of *Spectrum's* workers, and the priceless boon of independent judgment, have more than made up for its lack of institutional muscle. This point is so clearly true that Elder Wilson's assertions about inaccuracy appeared merely mean-spirited. Much of the labor put into such pieces in *Spectrum*, after all, is devoted precisely to trying to achieve balance and factual correctness by extensively interviewing church administrators about matters reported on.

6. *Irresponsibility.* This point, like number 3, seemed directed at the Task Force on Church Structure. The reader, again, can judge whether those in this group were notably irresponsible people; and the reader can also determine by reading the Task Force's work in *Spectrum* (XIV:4, March 1984) whether the work itself was "irresponsible" or, as Elder Wilson added, "propagated with little concern for what the results might be." That the Task Force was very concerned, however, about making a report that was both as integritous and as practical as possible can be testified to by anyone who participated in the consultations that produced the report.

Indeed, the Task Force report itself attempted only to say: "Given that the Adventist Church is representative, what does 'representativeness' mean, and how can it be perfected?" It is notable that the attacks on the Task Force's work to date have concentrated solely on its detailed suggestions given in the Model Conference Constitution without attempting to grapple with the ecclesiological theory and research that lay behind them. This question-dodging, of which Elder Thomas Mostert's comments in *Spectrum* (XV:2, August 1984) were a classic example, is rapidly coming to seem cowardly. One longs for an answer to the most important questions: "Was the Task Force wrong in its understanding of the nature of representativeness — as distinguished from the means of implementing it? And if so, how?"

The failure to address the nature of representativeness, which must be the central ecclesiological concern for an assertedly "representa-

4. *Providing platforms.* AAF operates on the principle that Adventists should hear the views of all appropriately informed persons on subjects of interest — even if the leadership of the moment considers them "dissidents." That Elder Wilson considered "dissidence" (a very elastic term indeed in recent usage) a sufficient reason for denying such people a hearing suggested an unwillingness to hear, or to allow others to hear, anything but the official line. If Elder Wilson had imagined how he would like to be treated were he to find himself in a "dissident" position in some organization he cared for, he might have found more reason for the AAF's position.

Furthermore, the vast majority of those whom Elder Wilson labeled "dissident", to whom AAF publications and chapter meetings are opened, are in fact Adventists in good and regular standing. AAF publications and chapter meetings do not regularly publicize the views of ex-Adventists (though they could and perhaps should do so). Elder Wilson's views in practice thus reduced to the proposition that those Adventists whom the leadership labels "dissident" should have no church-related platform from which to communicate, regardless of the truth or falsity of the "dissident's" views.

5. *Informational accuracy.* Half of Elder Wilson's attack on this point was misguided, since the AAF makes no claim that *Spectrum* is "the most authentic source of information

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tive" church, lies at the heart both of the substantial failure of the General Conference Role and Function Commission's work and the great weaknesses of the report of the Pacific Union Conference Commission on Church Structure. Both reports slighted this question—the General Conference group in favor of vapid theologizing and relatively unimportant administrative tinkering, and the Pacific Union group in favor of managerial improvement. The superiority of the report of the North Pacific Union Conference's Commission on Church Governance to both of these documents, in contrast, arose from its honest, if still very imperfect, recognition of the importance of this concern.

7. *Positiveness.* The answer to Elder Wilson's contention on this point is quite simple. Given that denominational publications — so much more numerous, so much better financed, and so much more frequent in publication than those of the AAF — are constantly devoted to "end[ing] positions of the Church" and saying positive (if, in context, often deceptive) things about evangelism, it is not unreasonable for AAF publications to spend their few precious pages in other ways. If, however, Elder Wilson were to encourage official publications to develop more professional and honest news reporting and to provide *some* space for Adventists to discuss the future of what is supposed to be a church based on the "priesthood of all believers," perhaps he would see a "convergence" in content between official and AAF publications.

Perhaps the most curious part of Elder Wilson's talk was its conclusion. A talk that began as a purely personal statement ended as something close to a position paper from top church administration — yet without any official action.

Most of this six-point statement was routine. Some points, however, were worth noting. Though Elder Wilson indicated that the church "encourages honest and balanced research and discussion" (a surprise to the many Adventist scholars whose "honest . . . research" in sensitive areas has led to administrative censure and even loss of employment), he seemed to consider that *Spectrum* provides only "divisive

and destructive criticism" presumably lacking in honesty and "balance." Where, however, could Elder Wilson find greater honesty and balance than *Spectrum* has exhibited? Elder Wilson's statement in this area thus appeared to be either a failure to recognize *Spectrum's* actual achievements or a counsel of perfection.

Elder Wilson also claimed that "we" did not consider *Spectrum* the voice of Adventist academics, "but, rather, we consider it the voice for a relatively small, self-appointed segment." The minor problems with this statement were

so without Church approval." Aside from the unfortunate mannerism of making "administrative" and "Church" approval synonymous, this step moved somewhat from the previous situation, in which college bookstores (almost the only institutions regularly distributing *Spectrum*) were given essentially benign neglect about doing so. The position is now that they are doing so "without Church approval." This position itself may not change many bookstore policies, but it prefigures the next logical position: that they are doing so "against Church

He misunderstood the nature of the academic mind, which naturally lives with a high degree of tentativeness.

its continued use of loaded but unsupported language ("self-appointed" in this case) and its odd assumption that the number of people supporting a view somehow has something to do with its truth or value. This idea, if true, bodes badly for the Adventist church (four million members) by comparison with the Roman Catholic church (500 million members).

The major problem was that there is much evidence that Elder Wilson's statement was factually wrong. *Spectrum* certainly makes no claim to be "the voice for the Seventh-day Adventist academic world". But Elder Wilson and his fellow leaders were deluded if they did not understand that most Adventist academics, particularly those in the liberal arts areas, recognize the validity and importance of the questions raised in *Spectrum* and similar publications, whether or not they come to exactly the same answers as the authors in those journals. To fail to realize this point was so complete a misreading of the concerns of educated Adventists that it raises the question whether the leaders in general and Elder Wilson in particular are really familiar with this important section of their flock.

Elder Wilson also made the first administrative step toward excluding *Spectrum* from Adventism altogether by stating: "Any Adventist institution which distributes *Spectrum* does

approval." That, in turn, could easily move to further efforts against the AAF, such as tacitly or explicitly forbidding church employees from contributing to *Spectrum* or serving as AAF officials. That such moves would injure AAF is probable. That they would in any way further the cause of truth or honesty in general, or assist Elder Wilson in dealing with the pluralism of which AAF is only an expression, is very doubtful.

Perhaps the saddest part of Elder Wilson's talk was its reception. According to reports, the Adventist church's highest leaders were impatiently gripping their chairs in their fever to have a chance to denounce the AAF. It was viewed as a favor to AAF that Elder Wilson asked that no discussion or vote follow his talk. Despite this request, the Annual Council could not be prevented from voting overwhelmingly to include Elder Wilson's talk officially in the minutes; and it has since occupied disproportionate space in the *Adventist Review* (November 15, 1984).

Such an attitude among the church's top leadership is at the least disheartening. It reflected an absolute failure to understand that the AAF and other alternative groups and publications exist for a perfectly justifiable reason: because many Adventists and persons interested in Adventism want and need to know ideas and news not presented or reported through official channels. Because of this fact, there is no reason to believe that if the AAF folded up immediately, it would not be immediately replaced; and there is also no reason to believe that its replacement would be an improvement — from the leaders' point of view or any other.

In justice to Elder Wilson and the other leaders, however, they were certainly provoked. In Elder Wilson's case, the provocation appeared to be an editorial by Roy Branson in the August 1984 issue of *Spectrum* (XV:2). In this generally well-reasoned piece, Dr. Branson asserted that the present Adventist governmental structure is most similar to "the forms of government found in the Union of Soviet



A January 1985 paparazzo shot of Neal Wilson crossing Loma Linda traffic.

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Socialist Republics and the People's Republic of China." This bit of billingsgate — unsupported by the report of the AAF Task Force on Church Structure and poorly supported by Dr. Branson's analysis in the editorial itself — was naturally resented by Elder Wilson.

What is most notable from this exchange, as well as many recent events in Adventism, is the degradation of language involved. There is some danger that the various groups will become so involved in hurling epithets at each other ("tyrant!" from one side being responded

That church supports both a vigorous administration with undoubted authority and a large number of groups and publications interested in influencing developments within the church. Catholic publications include many official journals, issued under the authority of the various bishops. But they also include many independent publications, usually lay-edited, that range from *The Wanderer* on the Catholic (and political) right wing through *Our Sunday Visitor* approximately at the center to *The National Catholic Reporter* on the Catholic

periodicals) only to those publications that adhered to professional standards.

2. *Rethink the goals of AAF.* In practice, AAF has defined itself largely as a provider of news about and comments on church teachings and administration. This role is legitimate, but it is certain to produce friction. Without necessarily abandoning such activities, can AAF pursue others? One such "alternate activity" might be greater emphasis on the needs of persons raised as Adventists who no longer believe certain traditional Adventist doctrinal positions. Though AAF in general and *Spectrum* in particular have been a fertile source of comment on traditional doctrines, they have both been quite silent on what should be done by those persuaded by the critiques. Should they leave or remain "underground" as cultural but not doctrinal Adventists? And if they do leave, where should they go? Indeed, where have the many Adventists who have left gone — and why?

To achieve such a rethinking, AAF may have to retool its structure somewhat. There is considerable evidence, for example, that AAF is dominated by an entrenched leadership group not particularly interested in or responsive to many AAF members. One evidence of this is the extremely low level of self-assessment in AAF publications or conferences. Another evidence is the rather secretive operating methods often adopted. For example, the current issue of *Forum* (October 1984), the AAF newsletter now bound with *Spectrum*, noted that the AAF Board in March 1984 discussed and referred to committee changes in AAF's constitution which "will be announced when passed." One can imagine the displeasure of AAF leaders if church administrators approached constitutional revisions so clandestinely. AAF president Lyndrey Niles made comments in early 1983 suggesting that re-examination of AAF structure was under consideration; but to date no progress in this area has been reported.

3. *Recognize reality.* Perhaps the principal flaw in Elder Wilson's talk was its failure to deal with the reality of an Adventism that is now inescapably committed to including persons of various cultures, ethnic groups, educational levels, doctrinal views, and methods of living who nonetheless all want to call themselves Adventists and even to serve as church employees. This diversity is obvious for the world church, but it is also expressed within its divisions as well. Adventist ecclesiastical statesmanship should act in light of this reality; and the sooner it does, the fewer people will be hurt. Similarly, AAF leadership must conduct itself in the light of a clear assessment of the church as it really is, not as its leaders might like it to be.

The present ructions between AAF and church leadership can be productive — mileposts on the way to a better understanding by each of the other. Through greater charity and clarity on all sides, the work of the church and of AAF may be improved. □

The trick — for organizations as for human beings individually — is to maintain asserting and questioning in a creative tension

to by "dissident!" from the other) that they will forget, in their rapturous enjoyment of it all, that they both probably will be around for the foreseeable future in about their present form. They *will* function together, either creatively or destructively. And if they are to do so creatively, a certain level of civility is going to be necessary. Furthermore, the hobgoblinizing now appearing is no service to clear thought.

Within human beings individually, as well as within organizations, two tendencies exist: one toward declarative statements of fact and faith, which may be exemplified by the period (.) as a punctuation mark; and one toward querying and doubt, exemplified by the question mark (?). No human being, and no human organization, lives entirely in either of these areas. Administrators and pastors, because of their responsibility for maintaining a community that requires a substantial foundation of agreed ideas to survive, tend to incline toward the period; and AAF activists, because their tendency is more individualistic and their education more questioning, incline more toward the question mark. But both groups, and all of the people in both groups, contain these two tendencies in tension. Many pastors and administrators have areas in which they question and are uncertain; and AAF members, being almost entirely Adventists, have substantial areas of certainty.

The trick — for organizations as for human beings individually — is to maintain asserting and questioning in a creative tension, not to resolve the tension on either side. Without assertion the community collapses and the individual lacks any basis but whim for decision; and without questioning, the community ossifies and the individual becomes dogmatic and arrogant.

In the present situation the first step toward maintaining this tension would be for church administrators and AAF leaders to avoid trying to make each other illegitimate within the Adventist system. Both groups are necessary.

A model for achieving this goal could be the Roman Catholic church in the United States.

(and political) left. Catholic bishops not only make no effort to illegitimize these publications, they in fact permit their distribution in churches. And the publications, though they may take strong exception to administrative stands, recognize the need for and propriety of administrative authority.

A somewhat similar situation, absent the mutual recognitions of legitimacy, exists in the Adventist church in the United States, which has grown large and diverse enough also to support a range of publications. This situation, creatively used, can be highly beneficial to the church. The challenge is for editors of independent publications to maintain thorough responsibility in the statements made in them and for administrators to use their teaching function to educate Adventist members about the need for, not the dubiousness of, such endeavors. To nurture this process, AAF and church administrators can consider certain concrete steps:

1. *Reconsider the "special relationship."* Elder Wilson's talk was clear evidence that the "special relationship" between administration and AAF is certainly too vague and may be a hindrance rather than a help, particularly if some administrators believe it gives them a leash on which they can deliver admonitory yanks. The important question is: what do AAF and administrators need from each other? The 1967 understanding seems no longer able to provide a useful answer to this question.

If church leaders accept the legitimacy of alternative Adventist publications, one way to deal with them would be to adopt a "code of ethics and practices," drawn from professional journalistic standards, to which church administrators would expect such publications to adhere. This standard would not demand doctrinal fidelity — only professionalism in conduct; and it would not distinguish among the views represented by the alternative publications. Administrators and workers could be encouraged to provide "access" to themselves and to church information, as well as certain privileges (such as advertising in church

A veteran Seventh-day Adventist pastor discovers that the “caring church” cares more about its “distinctives” than people, truth, or justice.

Phillip Wilson was, in many ways, the paradigmatic Seventh-day Adventist minister. He had a master's degree in divinity from the Seminary at Andrews University; he had a wife, Judy (still does), who was a piano major in college; he had fifteen years of pastoral experience; and he was a member of the conference committee.

But the week before he was to have baptized his son, the conference committee abruptly removed Wilson (27 September 1983) from his position as pastor of the Orlando Central Church.

Wilson's case is such a clean one. He had an unblemished pastoral record as a kind and nurturing human being. His conference leaders do not hint at some dark secrets that, if known, would better justify his ouster; nor do they claim that he was hard to work with.

Wilson was fired because it became known (as the result of a request from his church board) that he had doubts about the traditional explanations for certain Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal positions. His superiors at the Florida Conference had understood his doctrinal views for nearly two years. So it wasn't what he believed that mattered to them, but rather that he talked in front of the children — a paternalistic view of the membership that pervades the Florida Conference office.

One of the ironies of the story is that Wilson was baptized by the same man who presided over his sacking — the just-resigned Florida Conference president, Henry Carubba.

*By the time **Currents** contributing editor J.B. Goodner visited with them (6 July 1984), Wilson and his wife had each acquired real estate licenses and were supporting their family through property management; but they had not yet been disfellowshipped. That came later (see “Lynching at Orlando Central”). Goodner was the ideal interviewer, having been a member of the Birmingham Roebuck District Church when Wilson pastored there in the early 1970s.*

CURRENTS: Brother Wilson, the questions involving your termination as an ordained minister in September 1983 by the Florida Conference have travelled the Adventist grapevine. Would you relate the circumstances that led to your firing?

WILSON: I was fired Tuesday, September 27, 1983, after fifteen years of service in the gospel ministry for the Seventh-day Adventist church. The events which brought about that termination are quite lengthy and complex.

For a number of years I have been reevaluating, in my own mind, some of the traditional doctrinal positions of Adventism. Having come to a clearer understanding of the gospel, I was forced into that reevaluation.

CURRENTS: What led you initially to begin this reevaluation?

WILSON: Actually, that started about twelve or thirteen years ago when I first began to understand more clearly what the gospel of Jesus Christ was all about — that we are saved by grace through faith alone, not of works lest any man should boast.

Once that great article of truth became clear to me, it necessitated my reevaluation of the basis for many cherished and longstanding doctrinal positions. And that reevaluation has taken place over a protracted period of approximately twelve years. When I moved to the Florida Conference in 1979, I had spent eleven happy years of ministry in the Alabama-

Mississippi Conference and expected to continue doing the same thing in the Florida Conference. Every day in the ministry was a delight to me.

CURRENTS: Was all of your time in the Florida Conference at the same church?

WILSON: Yes, at the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church in downtown Orlando — which I enjoyed immensely. Nevertheless, and quite naturally, questions arose from time to time about the issues that were agitating Adventism; and these I did discuss privately with the pastoral staff and with other interested church members. In those discussions I expressed some of my own convictions regarding the issues — convictions that were nontra-



... if I had committed adultery or had squandered or stolen the church's money, I probably could have been transferred into the Adventist Health System and received a salary increase.



After all, she's the wife of a heretic. He just couldn't understand how the pastor could use such poor judgment as to ask my wife to play the piano on sabbath . . .



. . . I said, “If you're looking for everyone to believe the same way on policy and the same way on doctrine, then you don't need a committee — one person will do.”

ditional and positions that were less than orthodox.

I did not preach in the pulpit any doctrine or any position that was inconsistent with traditional Adventism. I was content to preach the gospel and minister to the needs of the congregation as I understood them. At no time did I try to agitate the issues that were being agitated by others throughout the denomination.

So there never was, up to the time of my termination, any significant criticism of my Sabbath morning sermons — that they were that which was not acceptable to Adventism.

I did not preach in the pulpit any doctrine that was inconsistent with traditional Adventism.

For a period of time, at the outset without my knowledge, tapes of my sermons were personally delivered by one of the pastoral staff to the conference office for the president to review. He never questioned me about any of my sermons.

What raised the concern of the conference leadership had to do with statements that I made privately to individuals when they asked me what I understood these issues to be.

CURRENTS: During this time were you not a member of the Executive Committee in the Florida Conference?

WILSON: I was elected to the Conference Executive Committee at the last Triennial Session of the Florida Conference. Anyway, from January to March of 1983 there was a great deal of concern among a few individuals within the Central Church (I would say half a dozen at the most) and some of the conference officials with whom they spoke about what they understood to be some of my doctrinal convictions. I was called to the conference office on two different occasions (21 January 1983, 14 March 1984) to give an account of myself before the brethren. Apparently at that time I passed enough of an orthodoxy litmus test to continue in the ministry. Things went along fine through April, May, June, and July of 1983; but in August question was raised once again by one individual in the church concerning my position on certain traditional doctrines. This church member felt it necessary to ask conference president Henry Carubba to interview me again regarding my orthodoxy. This member also came to the church Board one night and expressed her concern about my positions on certain doctrines and asked the Board to give some attention to them. The Board discussed her concern at significant length in my absence and in this church member's absence; and it was concluded that since the issues that had been raised were the same issues that were now being raised throughout Adventism, it would be beneficial for the entire church family to hear a discussion of these issues.

CURRENTS: That seems reasonable.

WILSON: So the church Board voted its

pleasure that the pastor should make a series of Sabbath afternoon presentations regarding the doctrines under discussion — including some basic handouts to make it easier to follow the discussion.

CURRENTS: All this was a request from the church Board?

WILSON: Yes, they specified the issues they wanted discussed. They decided that they wanted both the traditional position given and questions regarding the traditional position, or other nontraditional positions; they wanted those to be given as well for the purpose of

comparison and study.

And they decided the topics; they decided the format; they decided who they wanted to lead out; they decided even the time that they wanted these meetings to take place and they asked me if I would do that. I, of course, said I would be most willing to comply.

Well, President Carubba heard that these meetings were to take place on three consecutive Sabbath afternoons; and a few days before the first one, he advised me that he preferred them not to take place. I told him that since I had not requested the meetings, that this was a decision of the church Board and they had asked me to do it. I certainly felt obligated to follow the direction of my church Board.

And so the meetings were scheduled. The first one took place on Sabbath afternoon, September 24, 1983; and we discussed very briefly the subject of Daniel 8:14, the investigative judgment, the 2300 days, 1844 — you know, that cluster of subjects. Obviously, it had to be a very brief discussion. We had that one meeting and three days later I was fired.

CURRENTS: At that meeting, Phil, were there any representatives from conference or union leadership present?

WILSON: To my knowledge, there were not any from the Southern Union; but there were several representatives from the conference. I might add that in talking with Elder Carubba and indicating to him my intention to follow the church Board's request, I suggested to him that it would be good if some representation from the conference could be at the meeting. Knowing that they would hear about it, it seemed best that they hear it first hand. Elder Carubba said he couldn't be there but he would try to see that someone could be. And so there were several conference representatives there. There was also a departmental director from the General Conference present that afternoon who just happened to be visiting relatives in the Orlando area. Obviously he didn't come down specifically for that meeting. Other members from the Adventist community around the Orlando area attended as well.

CURRENTS: How did that afternoon meeting go?

WILSON: Well, it didn't go as anticipated. First of all, the church Board had envisioned a meeting specifically for the Orlando Central Church family. It was never intended to be an open meeting for the entire Adventist community.

CURRENTS: But the word does get around.

WILSON: Oh, yes. And there was a lot of agitation, charges, and countercharges; and some warm exchanges. There seemed to be those there who were not concerned about discussing the issues at all. All they wanted was to have me state openly and publicly what my positions were on certain matters so that they could say — like at the trial of Jesus, "What need we any further witnesses?" (Mark 14:63). And that seemed to be the mentality of those who came from outside our immediate church family.

Our church members came because they wanted to be involved in a serious dialogue about these matters. I think that, generally speaking, the rest came simply to make lines of demarcation very clear and to polarize.

CURRENTS: Did the conference officials have much to say publicly?

WILSON: Some did, and some never said a word. Purely by coincidence, there was a conference committee meeting scheduled three days after our first Sabbath afternoon discussion. At that conference committee meeting my case was presented for the first and only time; and the committee immediately decided to terminate me that day.

CURRENTS: Since you were a member of the conference committee, and since this was a regularly scheduled conference committee meeting, were you present?

WILSON: No, I was not present. I discussed that with President Carubba and he suggested that it might be easier to deal with the whole matter if I was not there; and I simply complied. I did request, however, that I be allowed to go before the conference committee and make a statement of my own convictions rather than to have someone else try to convey that for me. I was allowed to do that. But after I made that statement, I left while the committee deliberated.

CURRENTS: Is there a record of what you said at this conference committee meeting?

WILSON: That's an interesting question. There is a manuscript based on what I said, but it's not a complete transcript. We have a very interesting situation here in the Florida Conference. Anybody that works in the Florida Conference office has the privilege of attending any conference committee meeting, whether they are a member of the conference committee or not. And many of them participate quite vigorously in discussions; but they never participate in the voting, of course, because they're not elected members. But they do have the privilege to attend and participate.

CURRENTS: Does that courtesy apply to any laymen in the conference?

WILSON: Oh, no. Any layperson who would desire to meet with the committee has to have special permission to do that.

Well, Mrs. Millie Reiter, who works in the office of the conference treasurer was sitting in the conference committee meeting at the time I

made my presentation and she was taking my statement down in shorthand. After the committee meeting was over, she took her manuscript back and typed it up and presented the copy to Elder Carubba.

Now, it is my understanding that no conference officer had asked her to do that, nor did they know that she was doing it. [Carubba confirmed this for *Currents* on 5 November 1984.] I didn't know that I was being recorded in shorthand.

CURRENTS: Were you given a copy of that manuscript?

WILSON: No. I asked for it on three different occasions, but I never have been given a copy. However, I was allowed to go to Elder Carubba's office and read it over. And I must say that it was an accurate reflection of what I said. The only problem is it is not a complete statement. You see, I spoke for about forty minutes to the committee and then answered questions for about ten minutes. The shorthand notes that were typed could easily be read aloud in less than ten minutes.

What was transcribed was accurate. It was just far from complete. But that document has been used on a number of occasions now by conference officers as an official statement of my position. And I wouldn't have a problem with that if it were simply complete, but it's far from complete.

CURRENTS: I wonder if *Adventist Currents* would be granted a copy of that manuscript if they were to request it?

WILSON: Well, I would hope that it would be readily forthcoming. It should be. But in all honesty, I would have to confess that I think there would be a great deal of difficulty in trying to get it. If they are able to get a copy of it, and God bless them if they can, it would really be quite an amazing feat; because I've asked for it on three different occasions, and I've not been given one. [*Currents* tried (5 November 1984) and was refused by Florida conference president Henry Carubba.]

CURRENTS: To what do you attribute this fortress mentality at Florida Conference headquarters.

WILSON: Well, I believe that those in leadership positions are very conscientious and very sincere in their concern for the purity and the orthodoxy of the church.

CURRENTS: Whether it be correct or not?

WILSON: That would be my appraisal. Of course, conference leaders would question quite strongly even the suggestion that it was incorrect, or any part of it incorrect.

CURRENTS: What's happened to the Central Church in that area since your termination?

WILSON: Well, I think it could be truthfully said that in the greater Adventist community, nothing of any obvious significance has happened. Within Central Church, unfortunately, there has been very profound polarization of the membership — those who want to maintain orthodoxy on one hand and those who would like to reevaluate and study our traditional heritage in the light of our present understanding of Scripture on the other hand. This polarization didn't seem to crystalize really until between six

and nine months after my termination. The first six months after my termination I don't think that polarization was making any headway at all. But from about March on it has become very pronounced, and people are unfortunately pretty much locked in to opposing sides of the issues.

CURRENTS: A friend shared with me some documents, including a letter from conference President Carubba to the members of the Orlando Central Church, mailed about six months following your termination, and also a letter from you to your former flock, responding to Carruba's letter. What brought that about?

WILSON: After my termination, Central Church had an interim pastor for about six months. All the while I continued to attend Central Church with my family, not doing anything except going to church. In February the permanent pastor, Kenneth Coonley, was installed; and apparently from what he said, he encountered a significant desire on the part of many Central Church members to respond to my ouster. Up until this time, a good six months since my termination, not one official word had ever come from the conference office to the church family regarding the fact that I was fired, or why. Now they did meet with some of the church officers the day after I was fired; but never at any time did they ever speak to or write to the entire church family in an attempt to explain the situation. It was left to some of the local members to sort of pass the word around.

Well, for six months the church members were unsatisfied with both what they had heard and the fact that they were simply ignored. And so the present pastoral staff advised President Carubba to write a letter to the entire Central Church family explaining all of the details regarding my termination. Then they reviewed the letter with him, I understand, before he sent it out — to make sure that there was nothing, as they understood it, that would be rebuttable. And so the letter was mailed to the Central Church family March 26, 1984.

When I received my copy of the letter, I was just overwhelmed by what seemed to me to be an inaccurate appraisal of the entire situation. And so I responded to it with a lengthy letter of

seemed to be so much in need of clarifying information that I just could not let it pass without a response.

CURRENTS: In this group of documents I received there is also a General Conference document entitled "A Theological Statement on Freedom and Accountability." I understand from talking to laymen in Orlando that that document was pretty hard to come by.

WILSON: Very difficult. As a matter of fact, it was impossible to acquire through the regular channels here. Those who desired it ran headlong into the mentality that treats all information and documentation of this nature as classified. Betsy Cushman, the wife of our head elder, had seen a little blurb in the January 19, 1984, *Adventist Review* announcing the fact that the church was going to be reviewing a draft statement on freedom and accountability; and if anyone wanted to make suggestions about it, they could address their comments to the appropriate office at the General Conference. Well, she asked, "How can I make suggestions unless I have the document to comment on?" So, she tried to acquire the document through the proper General Conference office in Washington, D.C., which I think was Dr. Charles Hirsch's office. There she was referred to her local conference president and his associates. And she was given the runaround from January into March. The Florida Conference told her that they had misplaced the document but that when they got another they would give her a copy. When they finally got the document, it was passed to Obed Graham the ministerial secretary; he discussed it with President Carubba, and they in turn discussed it with General Conference vice president Charles Bradford in North America. And they were told that under no circumstances were they to give it out. So, because they didn't like some of the wording, and since it was being revised, they didn't want to give it out until it was polished.

The long and short of it was that she ran up against a brick wall here in the Florida Conference. They had it and just refused to give it to her. I then contacted a minister friend of mine in California and asked him if he could get us a copy. He sent it to me. And he said that the

... the head usher suggested that we should have been met at the door and refused admittance into the church.

my own [See "Testimonies to the Orlando Central Church"], trying to fill in information gaps so that people could have a more complete understanding of what really happened. And I mailed that to the entire church family in response to Elder Carubba's letter. That was the first time that I had ever said anything publicly or had ever written anything publicly about the details of my termination. I had never sought to agitate, have any private meetings, look for a soapbox, write letters to the church family, or anything of that kind, until Elder Carubba's letter came six months after I was fired. And it

same document was passed out by the conference president to every minister in his conference out there, saying, "You all take this and look it over and see what you think about it. If you have any comments, send them back to me." There was nothing clandestine, secretive, or classified about it in California.

The lady who was requesting the document also contacted another conference president in another part of the country and asked him if she could have a copy. He quite readily sent her one and said anything of that nature should be available to any of the members who wanted

them. So we wound up getting several copies, but we couldn't get them from Florida Conference leadership. [See "Lynching at Orlando Central"]

CURRENTS: Has the conference leadership made any response to your letter of April 3, 1984?

WILSON: They've not responded in writing to me, nor have they responded by telephone call or personal conversation. But to say that they have not responded would certainly be wide of the mark, because they have spoken about it unofficially to various people. I have gotten some feedback about what administration thinks of the letter. It's been variously described as a pack of lies, a maligning and distortion of the truth, and so forth. I really question that evaluation quite seriously. I would be willing to discuss every paragraph of that letter openly. And if I'm in error, I would be willing to retract it. I think of the words of Jesus: "If I've spoken evil, bear witness against me." But there will never, ever be a willingness by Florida Conference leadership to sit down and discuss these things openly.

CURRENTS: Why do you think the conference administration has not sought any dialogue with you since your termination?

WILSON: By responding to the letter and responding to me, they would legitimize the right to ask questions and dialogue. But they apparently don't feel that is in the best interest of the church.

CURRENTS: In view of the religious intolerance in the Florida Conference, what experience have you had in trying to continue worshipping within the Adventist community?

WILSON: For the first six months after my termination I continued to worship very regularly at the same church that I had pastored for four and one-half years. But as the polarization developed, it was communicated to my family and me by the pastoral staff that it would be better if we sought fellowship elsewhere. So, since March, we have been floating from one Adventist church to another but have not yet found a place where we feel comfortable.

Since we quit attending Central Church on a regular basis, we sought to attend other churches; and we haven't found any great acceptance. There was one church we attended and later learned that the head usher suggested that we should have been met at the door and refused admittance into the church.

CURRENTS: You've got to be kidding!

WILSON: A very interesting thing happened that involved this same church. In May the church pianist was not able to be present, and there was a need for a temporary pianist. The pastor of this church recommended that the regular pianist contact my wife to see if she could play that Sabbath. (My wife was a piano major in college and plays the piano and the organ quite well.) So, the lady from the church called my wife and asked if she could play. It so happened that our schedule didn't permit it, so she didn't play. But later on one of the church members, who happened to be this lady's husband, took the pastor to task quite seriously for suggesting that of all people my wife be

asked to play the piano. After, all, she's the wife of a heretic. He just couldn't understand how the pastor could use such poor judgment as to ask my wife to play the piano on Sabbath, or suggest that she be asked.

CURRENTS: And this is from the "caring" church?

WILSON: Yes. That's not all. A few weeks later, at campmeeting time, the pastor of this church was called aside by the conference president and the ministerial secretary and counselled quite strongly about his poor judgment in asking my wife to play the piano.

CURRENTS: You are just fortunate that this is the twentieth century.

WILSON: Yes. But you know, the Adventist mind is a very peculiar mind. By and large I think the general membership would agree that there is nothing worse in the Adventist church than a doctrinal heretic. Consequently, when

... they told me they had specific directions from the conference president to "take it off the shelf."

individuals — particularly pastors or teachers — with variant views are identified, they are considered so bad that one does not have to be ethical in dealing with them.

You don't have to be fair, you don't have to follow due process; you don't even have to be honest with them. Because, after all, this person is so bad, why should they have the privilege of being treated ethically, fairly, or have the truth told about them?

Unfortunately, I fear that a large percentage of the church membership feel the same way. I think our leaders realize that the general membership would say, "Well, maybe the leadership didn't deal fairly or ethically in this situation; but, after all, that person was such a heretic it really doesn't matter whether he was dealt with justly or not. The end justifies the means.

CURRENTS: Yes. This attitude was evident recently in the dismissal of two Southern College religion teachers.

WILSON: I know a little bit about that case, and it's very saddening what I hear about it.

CURRENTS: Have any other church members shown an interest in the issues raised in your area?

WILSON: Yes. There are literally scores of people in the Central Florida area who have indicated to me that they are interested in understanding the issues, and they would like to hear more about them. Many also indicated their reluctance to be involved in any open discussion or study for fear their jobs would be in jeopardy, since they worked for the church in either pastoral, educational, or health-related fields.

CURRENTS: Well, what has been the response to their interest?

WILSON: Unfortunately, some of the responses have been quite bad. I can only speak knowingly of a few situations at the Central Church.

There is a couple there who became quite involved in studying some of the issues. And the day after my termination, when the conference officers and the ministerial secretary came to meet with the church Board and a few other leading members to explain why I was terminated, this couple expressed a great deal of sympathy for our difficulty. And they suggested that there was a great need on the part of the conference administration to study the issues themselves so that they could respond meaningfully to the great interest and concern over these issues among the Florida Conference membership.

This same couple was in the process of transferring their membership back to Central Church. They had been members here for years but had moved out to the edge of town. So they had transferred their membership out there. But Central Church still seemed like home to them;

so they had decided they were going to come back. And at the time of my termination they were in the process of having their membership transferred back to Central Church from one of Orlando's suburban Adventist churches.

Immediately after the Wednesday night meeting that the conference officers and the ministerial secretary had with the Central Church Board and a few other leaders, Ministerial Secretary Graham advised the pastor of the church from which this couple was transferring to intercept their membership transfer and bring their names before the church Board and ask that they be disfellowshipped because of their heretical leanings, and also because the husband had embarrassed the conference president with his questions that night.

CURRENTS: You mean those instructions to the local church came from a conference official.

WILSON: Yes, they came from Obed Graham, the ministerial secretary and they went specifically to the pastor of this other church.

CURRENTS: What came of those instructions?

WILSON: The pastor was between a rock and a hard place. His sense of ethics and fair play indicated to him that that was a very improper thing to do. But feeling the pressure of the conference office, he tried to cooperate as much as possible. Their membership transfer was held up for a period of time; but after some wrangling, they did manage to get voted back into membership in the Central Church.

CURRENTS: Well, as of this date does that couple still have their Seventh-day Adventist church membership?

WILSON: Oh, yes. [Since this interview Ronn and Susan Schwenn have been disfellowshipped. See "Lynching at Orlando Central"]

CURRENTS: So, Elder Graham's plans were thwarted?

WILSON: They were frustrated this time around.

CURRENTS: Do you think he will try again?

WILSON: Well, I don't know. Of course, he steadfastly denies that he ever issued those kinds of instructions; but the testimony of those to whom he spoke and of those who were involved is so overwhelming that it certainly stands in stark contrast to his disclaimers.

CURRENTS: What have you been doing since you were fired as far as your work, your church affiliation and your ministry are concerned?

WILSON: That's really an interesting question because since my sin in the eyes of the brethren was one of questioning orthodoxy, that placed me in a different category than some who may have been guilty of other sins. I have thought many times that if I had committed adultery or had squandered or stolen the church's money, I probably could have been transferred into the Adventist Health System and received a salary increase. But since mine was the sin of questioning orthodoxy, that avenue was not available to me. So, after considering several options I went into the house painting business for a number of months. I enjoyed that, but I'm now working at real estate full time.

As far as my church affiliation is concerned, my wife and I sought fellowship at Central Church for six months. But then, as I mentioned, it was made clear to us by the pastoral staff that it would be better if we sought fellowship elsewhere. Since then we've been floating around like a family without a spiritual country.

As far as my ministry is concerned, as requests have come for me to speak, I have accepted those opportunities. A number of people who were interested in hearing these doctrinal issues explained more fully got together with me and organized a program called "Gospel Seminars." I've been asked to speak at these gospel seminars. Generally they meet for a few hours every other Sabbath afternoon.

CURRENTS: You mentioned "Gospel Seminars." Why did this organization develop?

WILSON: In the September 22, 1983, issue of the *Adventist Review*, the editor, William Johnsson, in his editorial states this: "Observers of Adventism need to realize that because we

interested parties must study the issues independently. That's the alternative provided by Gospel Seminars.

As a matter of fact, the Florida Conference leadership and the new pastoral staff at the Central Church have sought to frustrate our efforts to do the very thing that Editor Johnsson has indicated is simply part of the Adventist spirit.

CURRENTS: Do you know of any place within Adventism where free inquiry and open discussion are normative?

WILSON: Not specifically. I am satisfied that there are a few areas in North America where there is not nearly the fear of open discussion that exists here in the Florida Conference — places where these issues can be discussed rationally, intelligently, prayerfully and openly, without incurring the wrath of the brethren. I don't know how widespread that climate is, but I do believe there are a few such oases within the Adventist community.

CURRENTS: What is the purpose of Gospel Seminars?

WILSON: The purpose of Gospel Seminars is simply to provide a platform for free and open discussion. It's committed to the belief that Christian freedom is enhanced by information that makes judicious choice a possibility.

CURRENTS: What has been the response to these Gospel Seminars from the people in the community and from the church leadership?

WILSON: There's been a good response from the Adventist community. People come and listen and dialogue; and sometimes they agree and sometimes they disagree. But it's all done in a good, Christ-like spirit.

The official response of the Central Church pastoral leadership has been to write a letter to the church family indicating that the church pastoral leadership and the Board of Elders agree that in order to bring healing and unity to the Central Church, no one should support the Gospel Seminar meetings either by their attendance or any other means. In fact, the Board of Elders was quite divided over the issue. Some pastors of other SDA churches in this area have also advised their congregations not to attend.

CURRENTS: To what do you attribute this

feel it's better to keep the church ignorant but orthodox.

CURRENTS: If things are as you represent them, how do the conference officials and many local pastors get away with these attitudes?

WILSON: Well, the typical Adventist church member is very fiercely — almost blindly — loyal. The basic belief of the members is that these men are ordained to their positions by God. To question their judgment is tantamount to reaching out and putting a hand on the Lord's anointed.

CURRENTS: For too long, too many of us sitting in the pew have not wanted to do our thinking. We have let others do the thinking for us. Can you specify other instances in which conference leaders have restricted the laity's access to information concerning the issues within Adventism?

WILSON: There are a number of things that have happened which seem to indicate that that mentality is quite strong.

From time to time the ministerial secretary of this conference has ploughed the interns for information regarding their senior pastors.

CURRENTS: You mean soliciting information?

WILSON: That's correct. It happened quite significantly with me between January and March of 1983, but my situation certainly was not unique. I can remember a number of such instances while I worked in the Florida Conference. You must keep in mind, however, that this accusation will be vigorously denied by administration.

CURRENTS: Can you provide other examples of information suppression by the conference?

WILSON: For a number of years the Ministerial Department has had a tape library at the conference office, including taped presentations by various speakers, teachers, and pastors. Anyone can request specific tapes and the Ministerial Department will duplicate them at cost for the individual. It is a very nice service to have.

Now, in the library of tapes at the conference office there was a whole section of tapes by Dr. Desmond Ford, which had been there for several years before Glacier View. And the Ministerial Department had duplicated many sets of these tapes and passed them out to interested people through the years.

But a very strange thing happened after Glacier View. We were told at a ministerial meeting one day that all of these tapes by Dr. Ford had just mysteriously disappeared from the library. And nobody knew what happened to them.

Well, you know, that's an insult to people's intelligence. Those tapes that had been there for years did not just mysteriously disappear after Glacier View.

To me that is a type of censorship. That which was perfectly acceptable for years prior to Glacier View was no longer acceptable after Glacier View. Let me give you a related example. As you know, Dr. Ford also wrote a commentary on Daniel.

CURRENTS: Yes.

... the ministerial secretary of this conference has ploughed the interns for information regarding their senior pastors.

are fiercely Protestant people, we relish the spirit of open inquiry and discussion of doctrine." That pretty well explains the existence of "Gospel Seminars."

CURRENTS: I remember that issue.

WILSON: I believe Dr. Johnsson meant what he said. However, the events of September 24 through 27, 1983, at the Orlando Central Church indicate very clearly that the Florida Conference leadership does not "relish the spirit of open inquiry and discussion of doctrine." And because no forum exists within the church,

obscurantist reaction by the conference leadership?

WILSON: I think it's an attitude based on the assumption that we have all the truth; we just don't need to be reevaluating these things, and anyone who suggests the need to reevaluate must be of the devil.

CURRENTS: That borders on paranoia.

WILSON: It may be. But I think there is a concern among leaders that if these issues are discussed openly, many members would embrace less traditional views. Consequently, they

WILSON: It was printed by the Southern Publishing Association and widely distributed through Adventist Book Centers. I went into the Adventist Book Center one day around the time of Glacier View to purchase a copy of that book. I didn't find it on the shelf, so I went to the desk and asked about the book. I was told that they no longer displayed that volume. "Now, we can order you a copy," they said; "but we don't display it anymore." And I asked, "Why in the world don't you have it on the shelf?" And they told me they had specific directions from the conference president to "take it off the shelf."

At the same time I was looking for Ford's volume, I found another commentary on Daniel that was written by a non-Adventist writer, but it was prominently displayed on the Adventist book shelf. I thumbed through it briefly and found several things that differed significantly from the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel. Yet, there it was on the shelves; and one printed by our own publishing house had been removed.

When this kind of thing happens in Poland or Russia, we advance it as proof of religious repression and censorship. But when it happens right here, it hardly raises an eyebrow.

CURRENTS: It seems so childish.

WILSON: The ironic thing is, when you look around the Adventist Book Center shelves, you find scores of books by non-Adventist authors there — some of them espousing doctrines or teachings with which Adventists would not agree. And there they are on the shelves. But when an Adventist writes something about which there can be the least amount of question, someone has to play faith protecting censor and take it off the shelf so it can't be easily available to our people. I doubt seriously that the men who give these orders have even read the material themselves.

CURRENTS: This brings to mind the article that appeared in the *Ministry Magazine* by Gordon Bietz entitled "Crisis in Leadership." Many of our leaders do not stay abreast of what is being learned and written about.

WILSON: I think we must understand that our church leaders are very busy with a great deal of administrative work. Consequently, they do not have the time — or at least they don't take the time — to keep abreast of

that you are quite competent to hear the doctrines and evaluate them for yourself on the weight of evidence. But once you are baptized, you are treated as if you are no longer competent to continue evaluating SDA doctrinal issues. This is a peculiar mentality.

What is it about Adventism that makes its members incapable of making good doctrinal judgments after they get into the Adventist church, judgments which they are quite competent to make before they came into the Adventist church?

CURRENTS: That's one of those ironies. It must have been a traumatic experience when you were terminated after sixteen years as an ordained minister in the Seventh-day Adventist church. But inasmuch as you were elected by the laity to the Florida Conference Executive Committee, what effect did it have on you when you were put off that committee; and how was that done?

WILSON: That was actually a more disappointing thing to me than being dismissed from the ministry, for this simple reason: I think I can understand the rationale behind why I was fired, and I can accept that. The only problem I have is with how they went about it — it was precipitous, decisive, and without due process. And I was immediately treated by the conference leadership as though I had also been terminated from the conference committee — which, of course, was not true. I was treated that way, particularly by the conference secretary who quit sending me information about the conference committee (including minutes of the meetings) and then claimed that it was just an oversight. After I pointed out that I was still a member of the conference committee and ought to be treated that way, I did get a notice of the next meeting as well as the minutes which I had been lacking.

By the way, in those minutes is the only official statement that I have ever received from the conference office regarding why I was terminated. I have never been sent a letter by the conference president stating to me that I was fired and the reasons for my termination even though I specifically asked for such a letter. He talked to me personally about it, but he never put anything in writing to me. And I wondered if I would ever have seen that in writing had I not been a member of the conference committee

to them.

And so, at the next meeting the conference committee considered my membership on the committee. I went to that conference committee meeting because I was a member of the committee; but I have to confess that it was a very, very difficult and traumatic experience for me. I didn't want to go. But I just made myself go because of the principle of the thing.

CURRENTS: That must have taken some intestinal fortitude.

WILSON: Well, they thought I was just being belligerent, arrogant, and pushy. At any rate, they gave consideration to my continued membership on the committee and decided that, because I didn't espouse all of the teachings of traditional Adventism, it wouldn't be right for them to continue me on the committee.

CURRENTS: Even as a layman?

WILSON: Even as a layman. My only response was that since I was elected just as fairly and legitimately as any of the rest of the committee members, and since I remained a church member in good and regular standing, the fact that I think differently on certain issues does not seem to me to be a compelling reason to terminate me from the committee.

But they thought it was; so I said, "If you're looking for everyone to believe the same way on policy and the same way on doctrine, then you don't need a committee — one person will do." Some didn't seem to appreciate that appraisal. So I was asked to step out of the room while they deliberated; then I was told later that I had been voted off the committee. That seemed somewhat saddening to me because it is my understanding that the conference committee should be a place where a spectrum of opinion is entertained. But I guess they didn't want the spectrum to be wide enough to include that Adventist constituency whose views I represented.

CURRENTS: A final question. What effect, emotionally and psychologically, has this experience had on you, your wife, and children?

WILSON: I think emotionally and psychologically the effect has not been terribly traumatic. There has been trauma involved with it. But we have managed to adjust quite well to this change of situation.

A major factor assisting our readjustment is our family on both sides — both long-standing SDAs, incidentally. They have been extremely positive in their response to our situation in that they recognize that we have been and are sincere, dedicated Christians. It has not strained our relationship with our family at all. As a matter of fact, it has drawn us much closer to each other.

Another blessing emerging out of this experience has been a group of wonderful Christian people who are our real friends, who did not forsake us in spite of the fact that they may have differed with us on various points. They showed us genuine Christian concern and love. They opened their arms, their hearts, and their resources. They gathered us in and continued to treat us as brothers and sisters in Christ. We would have been thrown out on a

(concluded on page 48)

When this kind of thing happens in Poland or Russia, we advance it as proof of religious repression and censorship.

theological development within the church. And I don't know that they could be faulted so much for that. However, if they are not going to keep abreast of the issues themselves, at least they ought to defer judgment on these issues to the people who do keep themselves abreast of them.

Another curious component of the Adventist psyche is this: If you are a non-Adventist considering the Adventist message, you are told

and received a copy of the minutes.

Of course, it seemed extremely problematic to them to have a pastor who had been terminated continue with the conference committee as a layman. My membership in the Adventist church never had been questioned. I've not been disciplined in any way. I am a lay member in good and regular standing just like all of the rest of the laymen on the conference committee. And that seemed to be disquieting

Testimonies to the Orlando Central Church

Six months after the Florida Conference terminated Phillip Wilson as pastor of the Orlando Central Church, the conference leadership, in the person of President Carubba, communicated for the first time with the Orlando Central Church family about their pastor's dismissal.

Carubba's 26 March 1984 letter was sent to every Central member. When Wilson read it, he responded with one of his own dated 3 April 1984.

Since Wilson's letter contains all except the closing, homiletic paragraph from Carubba's letter, only Wilson's longer letter of response has been printed below.

Carubba's letter may be read straight through by simply reading all the italicised paragraphs printed below, in order.

For the sake of brevity, portions of Wilson's letter have been omitted (indicated by ellipses); and exhibits with which he appended his letter have not been reprinted.



Henry Carubba



Phillip Wilson

April 3, 1984

To my friends in Christ at Central Church

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I received in the mail Tuesday, March 27, my copy of a letter to the members of Central Church from our conference president, Elder Carubba....

In his letter Elder Carubba has apparently sought to raise the level of information about my termination from the realm of hearsay to the more respectable level of fact, and for this he is to be commended....

I will place quotations from his letter in italics and my comments will follow.

It has come to my attention by the pastoral staff of the church that there is a question in the minds of some as to why Brother Phillip Wilson was terminated from the Seventh-day Adventist ministry.

From the time I was fired, September 27, 1983, there has been a continual expression of concern to Elder Carubba about my termination from church members and friends, both locally and from across the country, by letter, phone and visit. This has been taking place for six months so he certainly did not need the pastoral staff to bring this to his attention....

This comes as a surprise to me, [and I apologize for this dilemma].

Why this should come as a surprise is a mystery to many concerned church members. Why should there be surprise that church members are concerned when one Sabbath, September 24, their pastor is in the pulpit and the next sabbath, October 1, a guest speaker is at the desk and the first elder has to tell the church their pastor has been fired....

For six months not one official word of explanation has been expressed either by voice or letter to the church at large by our president or any of his associates.

The next Sabbath, October 8, there was no representative from the conference office to introduce our interim pastor, Elder Adams, or explain his role to the congregation. This once again became the responsibility of the first elder. Strange indeed that a local church official must take that responsibility, since the local church was given no voice whatsoever involving my termination, nor was their opinion sought as to what they understood their pastoral needs to be. Why has Central Church heard nothing from those who are in charge of "the work," who guard jealously that authority, and who actually made the decisions?...

I had planned to write a letter of explanation to the entire membership of the church following the termination.

If a letter of explanation were seriously planned, why was it not forthcoming within days of their decision to terminate me?

However, I was informed this would not be necessary, inasmuch as a concerted visitation of each individual member home would be made for the purpose of making this explanation.

The discussion with the first elder about the benefit of a letter to the congregation took place an entire month after the events of September 27. It was made clear from the outset that the board of elders' visitation program was their responsible duty during this time of trauma, but never was there any thought on the part of the elders that this visitation would make unnecessary any communication from the conference office.

Since this apparently was insufficient to clarify the issue, the letter of communication is now being initiated.

If the issue is still not clarified, why only a letter? How much better would be a letter and face-to-face communication with the church family. Then there would be opportunity for dialogue where things can really be clarified.

To begin with, brothers and sisters, the dismissal of Brother Wilson was not on the spur of the moment. For approximately two years, the officers of the conference as well as the Ministerial Association were quite concerned about Brother Wilson's theological concepts which are contrary to the doctrinal teachings of our church.

If the conference officers and ministerial secretary were collectively concerned about my theological concepts for 2 years prior to my termination, they never made that known to me. They must have talked it among themselves or with others because they didn't with me. When I talked with my colleagues at the conference they always had only a positive appraisal of my work and stated that all the comments they received from Central Church were positive. My first meeting with the conference officers and ministerial secretary concerning my theological concepts was January 31, 1983, only 8 months prior to my termination.

Understanding the personal conflicts he was experiencing, efforts were made to clarify the points of truth with which Brother Wilson was having difficulty.

I was not having personal conflicts. I was having doctrinal questions. What efforts were made to clarify points of truth with which I was having difficulty? Never at any time has any representative of the conference office sought to open the Bible and study with me or show me one text of Scripture to point out my error.

These efforts continued until the time of his termination.

Through the entire 8 months, from my first meeting on January 31, 1983, to my termination September 27, I had only two meetings with the conference administration and ministerial secretary about these matters. On both occasions my wife, Judy, was with me.

The first meeting on Monday, January 31, was about 3 hours in length. Those conference representatives present were Elders Carubba, Ulmer, Rogers, Graham and Zuchowski. During the entire time we discussed the various points of my doctrinal concern, but no one tried to persuade me from the Bible that I was wrong. The major sources of authority alluded to were Ellen White and the Church Manual. At the conclusion of that meeting it was agreed that I would study suggested materials and meet from time to time with Elders Graham and Zuchowski for study. I received from Elder Graham two books which were to assist me in my study and convince me of my error—both of which I later discovered he had never read himself. I read the books. They were unconvincing to me. I believe had he read the books he would have observed their weaknesses and possibly suggested other ones. But what was he to do? These were apparently the best the conference had to offer.

I waited and waited for a call to meet together and study. None came for weeks. Finally, near the time of our church's Twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration, Elder Graham called and suggested we get together. We settled on the Monday after the Anniversary weekend, March 14.

I met a second time on March 14 at the conference office but only with Elders Carubba and Graham—I requested that Elder Carubba be present. We met for about 30 minutes. There was no study at all. The only point of discussion was whether or not I could support the 27 "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists". I told them I could "as I understand them." And I could as long as I was not required to believe that some of these points—especially prophetic interpretations—were the only valid ones which a study of the Scriptures would yield. That seemed to be tolerable, although they would have preferred a more enthusiastic and unqualified endorsement. This was the last meeting I ever had for the purpose of study. We agreed that a statement should be made to the church that an accommodation had been reached. They preferred to meet with as small a group as possible—the board of elders. I preferred as large a group as possible—the entire church family. We compromised on the church board and other church leaders. That meeting was held Tuesday evening, March 15, at Central Church. I assumed that meeting was the end of the matter.

In August some question arose again about my doctrinal beliefs. The church board considered the matter and voted that I be asked to hold a series of meetings for the Central Church family to familiarize them with the traditional doctrines and some questions which had been raised concerning them. The board decided the topics, the time, the place, who was to lead out, and the printed materials they wanted. The first of three consecutive Sabbath afternoon meetings was scheduled for Sabbath, September 24.

A few days prior to the September 24 church meeting I met with Elder Carubba again because he had heard about the scheduled meetings and was concerned about them. We talked again about my positions and he urged me not to hold the meetings. Does not that seem strange when the "Review" editorial of that same week stated, "Observers of Adventism need to realize that because we are fiercely Protestant people, we relish the spirit of open inquiry and discussion of doctrine..." (*Adventist Review*, September 22, 1983, William G. Johnsson, "Three Years after Glacier View," page 14). Apparently the Florida Conference is excepted. I explained that I felt I had an obligation to follow the directive of my church board. The first meeting—and only meeting—was held September 24.

I met with Elder Carubba again on September 26. At that time he indicated he had no choice but to recommend my termination. The conference committee met Tuesday, September 27, and I was fired that day—I was allowed no farewell sermon or meeting. I was not even allowed to baptize my son who was scheduled for baptism that Sabbath immediately upcoming. I have no bitterness at all about those two things. I only mention them to illustrate the swift finality with which the end came.

I would like to emphasize again that never at any time has any conference official ever opened his Bible to show me so much as one text of Scripture pointing out my error. Also, the study meetings with Elders Graham and Zuchowski never materialized. I was ready and willing. I am not sure why they never took place.

It was suggested that I could go to Washington, D.C., or Andrews University for several days if necessary. I repeatedly said that it was unnecessary to have the conference spend that kind of money when position papers were surely available which I could study at home and we could discuss together logically.

It was even suggested that the Florida Conference would be willing to send him to the Seminary for one year to help clarify these issues to his thinking. However, he declined the offer.

The day before my termination, Elder Carubba suggested the possibility that he would consider recommending to the conference committee that I be sent at conference expense to the Seminary for a year to study. That was a magnanimous gesture on his part. It did seem somewhat unusual from my perspective because I perceive that a majority of the professors there hold to many, if not most, of the beliefs I do. Furthermore those professors who are considered to be the most traditional are in reality only conservative revisionists. I told Elder Carubba that the position papers I had read from those professors defending a more traditional position were unconvincing to me, and that the chances of my changing my mind as a result of my study there seemed less than 50 percent although my mind was open and I was not unwilling to change in the face of compelling scriptural proof. He agreed with me that if there was not a strong possibility of my changing that the expenditure of time, money, and disruption of family could not be justified.

In the meantime, observations were made by fellow peer workers within the conference, as well as church members, which led them to believe that Phillip had variant views from what we as Adventists believe.

Jesus asked the woman, "Where are those thine accusers?" (John 8:10). The Apostle, Paul, in his own defense asked, "I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up any one before the accused met the accusers face to face, and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him." (Acts 25:16). I have repeatedly asked who my accusers are that we may meet face to face to answer the charges against me and I have always been denied that information. I was left only to guess. At the time of my termination I was able to count possibly 5 to 7 out of a membership of 600.

Realizing this was a problem, interviews were arranged with him, both with the ministerial secretary and the conference officers. This was over a period of several months.

As I mentioned earlier, over a period of 8 months I had two meetings with these officials, January 31 and March 14. Others were planned but never took place. At no time was there ever any Bible study.

When it became apparent that Brother Wilson could not reconcile his views with those of the church, I arranged to have breakfast with him to discuss the situation. We talked quite candidly together for perhaps an hour and a half, or more. I explained to him that we had come to the place where I as the president had to take a position on the issue. Phillip agreed there was nothing else I could do, and stated he expected me to.

This is correct as I remember it. However, it must be noted that the suggestion of a "Peer Review Committee," of which I was largely unaware at the time, was never mentioned by Elder Carubba—who should have known in detail about it. Being unaware of this option—I will refer to this in more detail later—I certainly agreed that there seemed nothing else he could do.

It was pointed out in our discussions that it was virtually impossible for a Seventh-day Adventist minister to prepare people for entrance into the church by baptism if the minister himself did not believe what the church teaches. He conceded to this fact and I stated that in all probability he would have to be terminated as a minister.

There was mention in the discussion, and also later at my hearing before the conference committee, the difference between the "Baptismal Vows" and the 27 "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists". The Baptismal Vows outline the necessary instruction of a candidate preparing for entrance into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I mentioned that the Baptismal Vows as I understand them were positions with which I had little difficulty. It is interesting to note that I was fired for not holding to certain doctrinal positions which are not even required to be taught to potential church members, the most significant one being the Investigative Judgment. Nowhere is it even mentioned in the Baptismal Vows.

We talked about the termination and agreed on his writing a letter of resignation, to be presented to the Conference Executive Committee on September 27, 1983. The day came and Phillip telephoned me while the Committee was in session. He stated he could not conscientiously present the letter, but wished to express his convictions to the Committee in person. I invited him to do so which he did.

This is an accurate rehearsal of the events and our understanding together. My request to make a statement in person before the Conference Committee should not be considered unusual, especially given the fact that at the time I was a member of that committee.

It is important to understand that the reason I decided not to submit a letter of resignation was the result of counsel from several friends whose judgment I have valued through the years. It was pointed out that to resign would mean that I would forfeit all rights of appeal or due process, and the conference would be relieved of its obligation to follow denominational policies relative to the termination of its ministers.

Brother Wilson stated before the Committee that there are certain points of doctrine in the Seventh-day Adventist church, such as the sanctuary, which have made an impact on his ministry and have altered his thinking in a profound way. He then elaborated to a degree on what he believes. The following are views he has presented.

*1. He believes there is a remnant but that the remnant church does not have a denominational tag on it. Therefore, he does **not** believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church necessarily is the remnant church.*

Ellen White has stated in *The Great Controversy*, page 390, "Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ's true followers are still to be found in their communion."

God's true church, His remnant, are to be found in every religious communion, and some even in no religious communion at all. This is God's invisible church — the true Israel of God.

This body of believers is variously described as follows:

Gal. 3:29 "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Rom. 3:22 "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

I Cor. 12:13 "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks . . ."

John 10:16 "I have other sheep that are not of this pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

Eph. 4: 4, 5 "There is one body and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism . . ."

The only basis upon which Christ separates the "sheep" and "goats" at the second coming is how we have responded to the saving love of Christ in the way we treat other people (see Matt. 25:31-46). There is no other religious test . . .

2. His concepts of Sabbath observance differ significantly from those taught by the Seventh-day Adventist church and which we as a people believe to be supported by scripture.

My concepts of Sabbath observance have not changed at all. I continue to celebrate the Sabbath the same way I always have. I attend Sabbath services, avoid secular activities, guard the edges of the Sabbath, etc. What I do object to however, is making a particular form of Sabbath observance a religious test one must hurdle before being received into the body of Christ.

I do believe the New Testament church worshipped on the Sabbath — as well as every other day according to Acts 2:46. There is however, *not* a single instance in the New Testament where believers were required to adopt a particular Sabbath-keeping routine, to change or be fired from jobs because of Sabbath problems, to get special Sabbath privileges from their employers or the military, or anything of that kind before being accepted into the church. These were personal matters individuals worked out as they matured in their understanding of Christian obligation. They lived by Paul's dictum, "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5) . . .

While the church teaches its physicians and dentists to close their offices on the Sabbath, yet through its hospital system it operates free-standing medical clinics, open 7 days a week, with doctors and other medical personnel performing routine non-emergency procedures. I have not heard our conference administrators lamenting this practice, yet I am labeled heretic for only an opinion . . .

*3. He believes that Mrs. E. G. White was influenced by the "time" in which she wrote, and that there were times she erred doctrinally. At the same time, he believes she was led by the Holy Spirit, but **only** in the same way as was Martin Luther or other religious leaders.*

The majority of research into this matter over the last 12 years by our own historians and Bible scholars has more than substantiated the fact that Ellen White was influenced by her peers, was a product of her times, and was dependent to a profound degree upon the historical, religious, and health writings available to her.

As far as infallibility is concerned either doctrinally or otherwise, Sister White never claimed it. She said God and Heaven alone are infallible. Our researchers have shown that at times Ellen White did take wrong doctrinal positions while claiming visionary support for her positions. A prime example is the theory of the "shut door" which she and most of the pioneers held for about 7 years (1844-1851), yet the church has never accepted that as compatible with scripture.

Sister White was an amazing woman whose gifts were truly extraordinary. She was a committed Christian and contributed greatly to the rise and development of the Seventh-day Adventist church. I believe Paul's counsel to the Thessalonians is applicable, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good" (I Thess. 5:19-21).

When it comes to making Ellen White a religious test for entrance into the church we would do well to rehearse James White's own opinion. He wrote in the *"Review and Herald"*, October 16, 1855, that whether a person believes or does not believe the visions was not a test among Adventists, and that one's convictions on the matter were his own business and no one else's.

4. He does not believe there is any Biblical basis for the Seventh-day Adventist position on clean and unclean meats.

One should be reassured that I maintain the same principles of healthful living I have practiced for years. I continue to be a vegetarian as I have been for 25 years because I believe it to be a healthful way to live. However, I do believe that all ceremonial distinctions ended at the cross. I further believe that Christians should concern themselves about dietary matters from the standpoint of health and not from the standpoint of Old Testament ceremonial distinctions.

I would recommend for your study on this matter the attached article at the end of this letter by Dr. John Brunt, "Unclean or Unhealthful? An Adventist Perspective." Dr. Brunt is a theology teacher at Walla Walla College whose fidelity to the church has never been challenged.

5. He believes that baptism may be granted to any individual who professes and accepts Christ, regardless of what the person believes theologically, thus gaining entrance into the church.

The repeated testimony of the New Testament is that baptism was the result of the believer's confession of Christ as Saviour and Lord Who covers our sins with His blood. There was not a long period of Bible study to convince the believers of 27 doctrines or 39 articles of faith before baptism was

administered. They had only to believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and they could receive baptism.

Mark 16:16 "whoever believes and is baptized"

Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized"

Acts 8:35-36 Philip told the Ethiopian "the good news about Jesus" . . . and he asked "Why shouldn't I be baptized?"

Acts 18:8 "many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized."

Baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and parallels the Christian's change from old life to new life through faith in Christ (Rom. 6:1-4).

Also, it must be noted that the New Testament believer was not baptized into a denomination (religious party). They were baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). As a matter of fact Paul chastised the Corinthian believers for trying to create religious parties and be baptized into them (I Cor. 1:13-17). As he mentions in verse 17 this type of sectarian mentality empties the cross of its power.

There certainly was teaching, instruction, and training in the New Testament church and I believe there should be today; but the only requirement for baptism was a belief in Christ and the forgiveness of sins. All other instruction came after that

6. *He does not believe that the rise of the Seventh-day Adventist church was a direct fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14.*

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been the environment of spiritual birth and growth. I treasure very much my religious heritage. I do believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church has much to offer the world, and I believe the Holy Spirit is at work in and through the church to bring many to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. I believe it is possible for God to use a church or movement to preach a message of mercy to the world without that church or movement having to have a specific prophetic fulfillment. An obvious case in point would be the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. That movement has shaken, and continues to shake the world infinitely more than the Advent movement of the 1840's. Yet there is no prophecy in the Scripture which yields the specific date of October 31, 1517, when Luther nailed his "95 Theses" to the church door in Wittenberg and set the Christian world ablaze.

As far as the Seventh-day Adventist church's rise out of the proclamation of the prophetic message of Daniel 8:14 is concerned, it must be remembered that the Millerite movement — which was the cradle of Adventism — was based on a *misinterpretation* of that prophecy. Miller and his followers preached that Christ would return on October 22, 1844; an event which one does not need to be reminded simply didn't happen.

7. *He does not believe there are two apartments of the heavenly sanctuary, but rather that all heaven constitutes the sanctuary.*

Hebrews 9:24 plainly states that Christ "entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence." One of the points which came out of Glacier View was actually a concession to Dr. Ford's contention that the book of Hebrews does not teach a two-apartment ministry of Christ in Heaven. Please see the attached letter entitled, "An Open Letter to President Wilson"

One should consider seriously why, when the veil of the earthly sanctuary was rent by God at the crucifixion of Christ (Matt. 27:51) bringing an end to that divided ministry, Seventh-day Adventists insist on rehanging that veil in Heaven for 1800 years.

It is also interesting to note that with the latest revision of our "Fundamental Beliefs" at the 1980 General Conference all reference to two apartments of the heavenly sanctuary was discontinued.

8. *He believes that there has not been a change in the ministry of Christ (from the Holy to the Most Holy Place) that took place in 1844. Instead he professes the ministry of Christ is the same since His ascension.*

There are at least 12 texts in the New Testament which state clearly that Jesus went directly into the Father's presence at His ascension. Consider the following texts: Mk. 16:19; Acts 2:33; Acts 5:31; Acts 7:55; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; Heb. 8:1; Heb. 10:12; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22. There is no evidence that He ever left the Father's presence. On the contrary He is ever there to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25).

I would also call your attention to an article by Dr. Erwin R. Gane in the December, 1983, issue of *Ministry* in which he states, "The throne in the earthly sanctuary was *always* in the Most Holy Apartment. There is no passage of Scripture that locates a throne in the holy place. Therefore, Christ surely went into the Most Holy Apartment at His ascension in A.D. 31 and was still occupying that position years later when the book of Hebrews was written."

Two questions obtain at this point which must be satisfactorily answered by those who wish to maintain a two-apartment, two-phase ministry of Christ: 1) How and why did Jesus leave the Father's right hand so He could re-appear in 1844? 2) If the Old Testament sanctuary and its services were to parallel in every respect the heavenly, then why do Seventh-day Adventists separate the sacrifice of Christ at the cross with the offering of that Sacrifice in Heaven on the antitypical day of atonement by 1800 years? In the Old Testament service the sacrifice was made and offered in one service on the same day.

9. *He has a problem with the judgment in that he does not believe in a particular phase of judgment beginning in 1844, such as the "Investigative Judgment."*

10. *He believes that Daniel 8:14 is a 2,300 day prophecy but does not interpret those days to be years and ending in 1844.*

The sole distinctive of Seventh-day Adventism is its claim to be the fulfillment of Daniel 8:14 — a special message raised up in fulfillment of Bible prophecy to give a warning to those whose fate is being decided by an investigative judgment in Heaven that began at the very same hour as the birth of Adventism itself

[Wilson quoted Raymond F. Cottrell:] "The issue of Daniel 8:14 is still with us because we have been unwilling, thus far, to face up to the fact that very real exegetical problems exist. That issue will not go away so long as we keep pretending that there is no problem, so long as we insist on holding our heads, individually and collectively, in the sand of our preconceived opinions. It won't go away until we face up to it and accord it the respect and attention it deserves. It won't go away so long as our search for truth consists primarily in looking for proof of what we think we already believe. It won't go away until we learn to listen attentively with humble hearts to what the divine Spirit is saying through the words of Holy Writ, and until we do this, we will continue — unnecessarily — to alienate the respected confidence of thinking, Biblically literate Adventists and non-Adventists alike" (*Spectrum*, March 1980, pages 18-25). [At this point Wilson listed fourteen difficulties with the traditional Adventist sanctuary scenario that need solving. The fourteen are included with six others in a box entitled Twenty Questions]

11. *He does not believe that the Year-Day Principle is an obvious tool for interpreting time prophecies of the Bible.*

This is another point upon which the two consensus statements arising from Glacier View actually affirmed Dr. Ford's contention that the year-day principle is not an obvious tool for the interpretation of prophetic time prophecies

Where is the proof for the year-day principle? Num. 14:34 and Eze. 4:6 and Dan. 9:24-27 are usually volunteered, but these certainly do not yield what is demanded of them. None of these passages state it as a rule for all symbolic prophecy that a day signifies a year. Num. 14:34 is not symbolic prophecy, and it speaks of years in the future — not days. In Eze. 4:6 the years are in the past, and actual days ahead are contemplated. Dan. 9:24, as with Dan. 8, does not use the word "day." The Hebrew term translated "weeks" is actually "sevens," and is not related to days at all.

Dr. L. E. Froom, in his monumental and scholarly work, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Volumes I-IV, substantiates the fact that the year-day principle was not used by Christians until 900 years after Christ. Further, it did not really become an established tool until some 300 years after that when the arguments were refined by a Jesuit priest, Joachim of Floris.

12. *He does not believe that the Old Testament prophecies reach far into the Christian era.*

(concluded on page 48)

Lynching at Orlando Central

by Douglas Hackleman

Lynch: To execute without due process.

There was a lynching party at the Orlando Central Seventh-day Adventist Church on 8 September 1984, presided over by forty-six-year-old senior pastor Kenneth Coonley and his twenty-eight-year-young associate Jim Davidson.

As with most lynchings, it happened because the participants were more concerned with sating their fear-inspired anger than with preserving justice or truth.

Christians everywhere will mourn the regrettable fact that it is not unusual (1800 years of Church history remind us) that it took place in a Christian church.

What is discouraging to Adventist observers is that this lynching could happen so late in history, in a comparatively civilized nation; and, worst of all, among those who claim to be God's special, end-time, remnant people—a people who Ellen White said have a message of love to deliver to the world.

This 8 September 1984 lynching really began nearly a year earlier (24 September 1983). With their pastor excused from the meeting, the Central Church Board had voted (12 September 1983)

That discussions are to be held with a "teacher" format, open to members who wish to attend. Pastor Phillip Wilson is to be in charge of the discussions and provide study outlines. Subjects to be discussed include . . . 1844, Sanctuary, 2300 days, Sabbath at the end of time, prophetic interpretations of E.G. White, mark of the beast.

At the September 17 board meeting it was voted to begin the series of three Sabbath afternoon study and discussion sessions the next Sabbath afternoon (September 24).



On that fateful afternoon, Pastor Wilson had hardly finished articulating a twenty-minute overview of the traditional Adventist interpretation of the 2300 days when the sharks began to circle.

A local member, physical therapist Madeline Gloss, who had brought to the church board formally her suspicions that her pastor privately held heretical views on two or three of Adventism's twenty-seven fundamental beliefs, read for his and the audience's benefit a quote from Ellen White:

The sanctuary question stands in righteousness and truth just as we have held it for so many years. This truth was revealed to us by the Holy Spirit (Letter 50, 1906).

Then Claxton Henry, an agitated church elder, closed in:

I want to know clear and distinct. Do you feel that the Advent message have any fault in it presently? Or, do you believe like Elder Ford believes? . . .

Wilson: The most important thing is not whether my beliefs coincide with Dr. Ford's or not, but whether they coincide with Scripture . . .

Henry: His ideas are conflictin' with what Adventists presently believes.

Wilson: Well, there's a possibility that mine will too, Claxton. Is that clear enough?

Henry: Are you then having this discussion to prove that Adventists is wrong in certain of their beliefs?

Wilson: The whole purpose of this meeting was not my idea, but the church board's idea. And it was because questions had been raised, and they desired a presentation of both sides of the issue. And certainly it is my intention to present some questions that have been raised about traditional positions. If I did not do that, I would be derelict in the responsibility that has been given me by the board.

Lexa Cauthern, guest/friend of a Central Church member, picked up where Henry quit:

What do you think is happening right now in the heavenly sanctuary?

Wilson: Well, there's not a great deal that's told us in the Bible about what's going on in the heavenly sanctuary save the fact that Jesus Christ is mediating His merits [there] in our behalf. And I certainly believe that . . .

Cauthern: Where do you think He is right now?

Wilson: Who? Christ?

Cauthern: Christ?

Wilson: In heaven.

Cauthern: Where in heaven?

Wilson: In the sanctuary.

Cauthern: Where in the sanctuary?

Wilson: By the throne of God.

Cauthern: The Bible says that He went into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary; and this happened in 1844, according to our interpretation and understanding of the Scriptures. Now, is this your understanding — that this is where He is, in the most holy place?

Wilson: I believe that He is in the most holy place, because that's where the throne of God is . . . I feel like either you're dancing around the question or you think I'm dancing around the answer. You know, either way, dancing is not permitted in the Adventist church. So we're going to have to be a little clearer.

Cauthern: When do you think He went in to the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary?

Wilson: To give you a very simple answer, I believe He went in at the ascension.

Cauthern: Into the most holy place?

Wilson: I think He entered into the very presence of God at His ascension and that He has been involved in His intercessory work, in our behalf, since that day.

Cauthern: That's not biblical.

Wilson did not hear Cauthern's last remark, but he proceeded to read from the Glacier View Consensus Statement that appeared in the October 1980 *Ministry*:

"He was inaugurated as our High Priest," which ministers only in the most holy place, "and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension."

Wilson might have added that the quotation was grafted into the Consensus Statement from the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs adopted by the General Conference at Dallas in April 1980.

For the second half of his presentation, Wilson listed and explained twenty assertions that need to be established clearly from Scripture if the

integrity of the traditional Adventist interpretation of the 2300-day prophecy is to be maintained (see box). As Wilson completed his elaboration of the twenty points, it was clear that some visitors in the audience smelled blood. Then executive secretary and director of Seventh-day Adventist World Services, Inc., Richard O'Fill (a surprise visitor) took the microphone and delivered a speech that was so blatantly obscurantist that much of it is preserved below as an antireason period piece:

... I was looking at the list of [twenty] questions and I thought of another question that was asked one time. It was, "Has God said that you shouldn't eat from this tree?"

What I'm saying is... I'm not sure I want to answer any of these; because I don't know that they're from the Spirit of God. I want to answer the questions that the Holy Spirit is putting to me. I'm just saying that I'm not sure. 'Cause there was a question asked that was asked by the devil one time. In fact, they asked our Lord questions, and He wouldn't even answer. Remember that time He said, "I'm not going to answer your question unless you answer me one." He knew it was going to come out wrong either way....

Also, I heard someone ask the question that if we use the principle of biblical interpretation that we're working on here [attempting to be mindful of the context], can we find Jesus in the Old Testament? No, we can't.

You see, the Scripture makes it very clear that prophecy is not a start from here and, you know, we're not in; it's not 400 B.C., Phillip. It's 1983. [That must have come as a shock to Wilson.] And so prophecy is to be from here backward, not from there forward. Prophecy is for when it comes to pass, you know about it, you see.

And so, I was just looking at the other day reading in Matthew where Matthew said (and he made a mistake; he said) "thus fulfilling the words of Jeremiah the prophet." But it wasn't Jeremiah; it was Zechariah—about the potters' field and the thirty pieces of silver. And I whipped over to Zechariah and I tried to find Jesus in that text; and I couldn't find it [Him] anywhere, using this principle of herma, you know, whatever you call it. I don't know what it's called—exegesis or context or what have you. Jesus wasn't in that thirty pieces of silver potters' field. Yet Matthew would say, using prophecy from its fulfillment

TWENTY QUESTIONS

These are the twenty points that during his Sabbath afternoon presentation (24 September 1983) Phillip Wilson suggested the need to establish from Scripture, in order to maintain the integrity of the traditional, Seventh-day Adventist sanctuary teaching.

1. It should be explained why the context of Daniel 8 is not considered and why the question of Daniel 8:13 is ignored, when seeking to interpret its answer given in Daniel 8:14.
2. It must be proved that 2300 evening and morning sacrifices equal 2300 full days, when there is no conclusive evidence from Daniel 8:14 itself — and no other text of Scripture to confirm — that it means full days.
3. It must not only be proved that a day equals a year in prophecy but that an evening and a morning sacrifice equal one year.
4. In the face of the contextual implication that the 2300-year period would commence when the daily sacrifice was suspended, it must be argued that it began, rather, in 457 B.C. — a date which had nothing to do with taking away the regular burnt offering.
5. It must be proved that the heavenly sanctuary is in view, when the context is referring to the earthly sanctuary and activity against it by the little horn.
6. It must be proved that the cleansing of the sanctuary means cleansing it from the confessed sins of the saints, when the context refers to cleansing it from pollution by the desolating activities of the little horn.
7. It must be proved that confessed sins defile the sanctuary; and that the blood of individual sin offerings was taken into the sanctuary, that such blood was sin laden, and, therefore, defiled the holy places.
8. It must be assumed that 490 years are cut off from the 2300 years, when there is nothing in Daniel 8 or Daniel 9 that requires it.
9. It must be assumed that the 2300 years and the 490 years begin together, although there is no proof of this.
10. It must be maintained that the reconsecration of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 and the anointing of the sanctuary in Daniel 9:24 are not the same, but are separated by nearly 2,000 years.
11. It must be proved that there is both contextual and linguistic linkage between Daniel 8:14 and Leviticus 16.
12. It must be demonstrated that the word that was issued in Daniel 9:25 refers to the kingly decree and that Artaxerxes made such a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, when there is no evidence that he did.
13. It must be proved that the cleansing of the sanctuary commenced — when Daniel 8:14 says nothing about commencing — not just in 1844, but on October 22, 1844. Since such detail is not in the Bible, it must be shown that the Karaite calendar is more reliable than the more orthodox rabbinical calendar. This entire exercise depends, of course, upon proving that the cleansing of the sanctuary in Daniel 8:14 is the same as that typified in Leviticus 16.
14. It must be explained why, in giving the 2300 days a New Testament application, it is still necessary to be tied to the Jewish ceremonies and practices — since Seventh-day Adventists teach that since the cross, Judaism, as a system, has been disqualified; and today the true Israel of God is His church.
15. It must be shown that the antitypical day of atonement began in 1844; and it must be explained why Christ's great act of atonement [Calvary] is not the day of atonement, but is separated from it by 1800 years.
16. It must be proved that the two-apartment schema of the Old Testament sanctuary parallels a two-apartment ministry by Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, when Hebrews does not suggest such a conclusion.
17. It must be shown that there are two apartments in the heavenly sanctuary, and that Christ moved from the holy place to the most holy place in 1844. It must be explained also how, when the New Testament says that Christ entered God's presence and sat down on the throne in the heavenly sanctuary (as Hebrews 9:12 says), this only means the first apartment in Heaven.
18. It must be shown further why Christ must function as a priest after the order of Aaron, when Hebrews teaches that He has transcended that priesthood and functions as a priest after the order of Melchizedek.
19. It must be proved that the judgment that began in 1844 was an investigative judgment only for the professed people of God — not a judgment of the wicked horn or of Babylon.
20. It must be shown or assumed that this is what Revelation 14:7 is describing, though it gives no such details on this trial of the saints. Does Revelation 14:7 ("for the hour of His judgment has come") refer to this investigative judgment? Or does it refer to the great judgment hour of God that commenced at the cross?

back, he would say that was a fulfillment of prophecy.

And I would just close with this . . . I want to know the truth as it is in Jesus. I want to love Him more and more. I want to be consistent in my preaching of the gospel. But I don't want to lose the faith that's delivered to the saints. I want to be a part, with you, with all these dear ones, of the great group that Jesus is preparing to translate without seeing death.

And so, as we look at these things, let's look at it from that perspective. I'm not going to try to answer these questions in my own mind, because they remind me of that first one: "Has God said you shouldn't eat of this tree?"

The implications of the General Conference official's remarks were not lost on Phil Wilson:

Well, I guess that's certainly one approach to take. We can assume that all these questions are of the devil, and those who articulate them are of the same spirit . . . I feel that the Spirit of God has led me in my study to the point where I desire more cogent answers to these questions . . .

Then Claxton Henry was back at the microphone; and although he seemed to be far more concerned with whether what his pastor said was Adventism than whether it was true, he was also mindful of the potential consequences of the moment:

. . . I don't want to feel and neither would I like by my questioning or my explanation now that you will be called from the ministry. I have no intention for that, and I don't think our brethren should take that as a pretext . . . to question you further . . .

Nevertheless, Henry pushed Wilson hard to take a stand on Ellen White's view of the 2300 days. "Is what she said wrong?" Henry asked; and Wilson did not dance around in answering:

. . . I have some grave reservations about our traditional interpretation of the 2300-day prophecy. And I would like the answer[s] to those questions. I think they are significant questions. I do not think those questions are from the devil nor of the devil . . .

Orlando Central Church member Karen Wickliff spoke with some feeling of her confidence that Jesus

wants us to use our brains to His honor and glory. He put in us the ability . . . to ask questions. And I think He fields questions . . . What is wrong is when I question my brother's commitment for asking questions . . .

Wickliff's point was lost on Florida Conference evangelism coordinator Victor Zuchowski, sometimes referred to by Florida Conference president Henry Carubba as the "conference theologian":

. . . There are certain truths which are self-evident. . . . And one of the truths that is self-evident, dear friends, as decided by this church, is the message of the investigative judgment and the 2300-year prophecy . . .

And we have a question here, do you believe this or not? Or are you going to say, well, I go by the Bible only. We've gone over this thing over and over again, and we feel that the Spirit of God has settled this thing for us as a self-evident truth . . .

In the days of Jesus, we had present truth, which, when the people received this present truth, it was something that stimulated them to action; and they ran from house to house. The present truth then was, Is Jesus God? and has He been resurrected from the dead? Is He more powerful than death? When the disciples knew that, you couldn't stop them. They ran from house to house and presented that truth: Christ is alive!

What is the great present truth for today? It's the investigative judgment, dear friends. The judgment is begun in 1844. It's been going on now for 139 years and you better get ready. How soon is it going to end? We're concerned. We ought to be running around from door to door. But here we have a great big question mark, with twenty points asking some questions . . .

And then, claiming a wisdom worthy of Solomon, Zuchowski continued:

I want to say that I can answer every one of them very, very conclusively to be in harmony with our traditional stand. I have no problem with that whatsoever in any one of these points that have been raised . . .

Then, by elaborating the answer to one that hadn't even been raised, the "conference theologian" made it obvious to everyone that he hadn't even understood the questions. But his incomprehension meant nothing, as it became clear from the next speaker's report of what Zuchowski, seated with Florida Conference treasurer J.P. Rodgers, had already decided. At the microphone was a first-time visitor to Orlando Central, Dr. J. R. Mensick, who addressed Wilson:

. . . I feel very concerned about you. Because the brother that just was behind me talking [Zuchowski] five minutes earlier said that your job is on the line if you don't change; and that you're not going to remain a minister. Please, be careful.

Central Church elder James Alford responded to Zuchowski next by testifying that

the thing that brought me out of the bars of Orlando and into the Seventh-day Adventist church in Orlando was that message that the disciples had—not the investigative judgment.

Alford's protest was ignored, and three days later (27 September 1983) the Florida Conference Committee met and relieved Phillip Wilson of his pastorate and his credentials—effective immediately. Wilson was not even permitted to say goodbye to his church family, much less perform a baptism of his son slated for the coming Sabbath.

September 28, Wednesday, the day after the Florida Conference Committee had cancelled Wilson's employment, the conference president, Henry Carubba, with several of his lieutenants, came to the Central Church to meet with its board. Jim Alford was waiting for them with a placard outside a door leading to the church fellowship room. Across the top third his picket read: "Present truth is the investigative judgment. Began 1844."

When the conference president arrived at Alford's place on the sidewalk, he said, "Young man, what's this?" And Alford explained that Victor Zuchowski had declared what was on the sign to be true at the previous Sabbath afternoon's presentation by Phil Wilson. Carubba turned to his men who had also been present and asked if it was true. Conference treasurer J.P. Rogers denied it. The transcript quoted earlier, of course, squarely contradicts Roger's memory.

There are certain truths which are self-evident And one . . . is the message of the investigative judgment What is the great present truth for today? It's the investigative judgment, dear friends.



Vic Zuchowski

Three days later it was left to Central Church first elder Robert Cushman to try to explain to the congregation why their pastor of four-and-one-half years had been fired on Tuesday. It became Cushman's duty again the following Sabbath to introduce an interim pastor, Russell Adams, to his fellow members.

Although ex-pastor Wilson and his family seemed content simply to attend their old church quietly like any other members (Judy Wilson was still the head organist), many Orlando Central constituents were less than satisfied with either the fact of Wilson's termination or the manner in which it was accomplished. The head elder's wife, Betsy Cushman, saw a 19 January 1984 *Adventist Review* "Newsbeat" item entitled "Guidelines to Freedom" that piqued her interest. The story continues in her words:

"I understood this item to mean that there existed a twelve-page draft statement on 'Theological Freedom and Accountability' proposing guidelines for assessing divergent views and for disciplining dissident workers. I also understood that this statement was to be studied with possible revision in mind. Suggestions for revision were to be addressed

to Dr. Charles Hirsch at the General Conference by March 1, 1984.

"I was extremely interested in such a document because the pastor of my church, Phil Wilson, had been fired for divergent doctrinal interpretations in a way that was, to my thinking, a mockery of due process.

"Since our church recently had experienced the trauma of losing our pastor through an abrupt action of the conference committee, perhaps we could make suggestions for the proposed guideline document from the lay-members' perspective. Perhaps our church board would have suggestions, but I needed to secure the document first.

"When I called Dr. Hirsch's office on January 16 he was not available; so my conversation was with his secretary, Miriam Gaire, who told me that the document was for officers only. She suggested that since Orlando Central did not have a regular pastor, I might contact my local conference office. Since there was a March 1 deadline for suggestions, I pressed her for more information. If only the officers could make suggestions, I asked, why did the *Review* offer it to the church at large? She told me Dr. Hirsch would call me when he returned to town January 25.

"Since Florida Conference president Henry Carubba was out when I phoned him January 20, I explained my request to his secretary, Margaretta Cone, and asked her to have him call me. When he didn't, I called again to discover that Carubba could not locate his copy of the document; but it was indicated that another copy would be requested from the General Conference and passed along to me.

"By January 30 I had not heard from either the Florida Conference or Hirsch. I called Hirsch's office and spoke with his secretary again. I told her that my conference president had misplaced his copy of the document, that he was to have requested another, and asked if she had sent him one. She replied saying that they were not trying to 'cover-up' anything, but that the document could only be released with Dr. Hirsch's permission. He had many problems to care for, she said. He had not had an opportunity to call me, and he was gone now until February 10. With the March 1 deadline for suggestions in mind, I asked if someone in authority other than Dr. Hirsch might help me.

"I spoke with Elder Arthur Patzer, Neal Wilson's administrative assistant. I explained to him the difficulty in responding to the document when I wasn't able to read a copy, even though it was offered through the *Review*. Patzer expressed surprise that such notice had been in the *Review*. He said that the document was to be rewritten, that nothing had been voted, and that there were pros and cons to be discussed at the Annual Council. I had assumed all that. Patzer also said that the March 1 deadline would not be met, and that all the delegates to the 1983 Annual Council had draft copies.



Obed Graham

According to Graham, Bradford told them not to release it; since it was tentative, the laity should not have it.

Elder Graham assured me that he believed in lay involvement.

"On February 16 I phoned the secretary to the Florida Conference president. Her response: 'Has no one called you? The document came in two weeks ago.' It had been given to the conference ministerial secretary, Obed Graham. He told me that he and president Carubba felt the document was 'ambiguous' and had questions regarding its content. They called Elder Charles Bradford at the General Conference and told him of my request and their questions. According to Graham, Bradford told them not to release it; since it was tentative, the laity should not have it.

"Elder Graham assured me that he believed in lay involvement. I

asked him what the document said. He replied that 'dissident' pastors will be worked and studied with to see if their problems can be resolved. If dissident pastors divulge problems to the church, they can be terminated immediately. The process to resolve problems is carried on through administrative personnel and they have input on who will be involved.'

"Graham referred to the case at my church in which Phillip Wilson, he said, had taught error at Central Church for four years. There were no questions regarding his dismissal, Graham added.

"Of course, those were not my sentiments about Phil Wilson. During those four years his sermons were taped each week and available to anyone wishing to check their content. Obed Graham himself had declared at Central Church Board meeting that 'we should always remember that Phillip Wilson had for four years taught us about the of Jesus.'

"Frustrated by feelings that I was being given the run around by church leaders, I began to discuss my concern with friends. I soon learned that the document I was being denied had been circulated to all of the pastors in one California conference. Was it only a secret in Florida? I wondered. Had Elder Bradford really said the things ascribed to him?

"When I called Elder Bradford on March 7 he was just leaving for an appointment. I left a message requesting that he call me, collect.

"The president of another conference who had been out earlier returned my call. He assured me that the document was available to the laity. He said that the comment ascribed to Elder Bradford did not sound like his usual attitude. He promised me a copy of the document and explained that a decision regarding its acceptance had been deferred until the 1984 Annual Council, with the possibility there might finally be two documents instead of one.

"Elder Bradford was out of the office when I tried to reach him again on March 12, but I was informed that my note requesting a collect call from him was on his desk. (To date, I have not received such a call.)

"By April I had finally received two copies of the twelve-page draft statement from other than official sources.

"I tried to reach Dr. Hirsch again on April 19 but he was on a two-week trip to Africa. His secretary referred me to Martha Horn for additional information. After asking her about the current status of the draft statement and revisions, I asked her if there was a document dealing with guidelines for worker discipline that is presently available for use in the field. Martha Horn said she had given me all the information she was authorized to give.

"Nine long-distance phone calls and three months later I would have known little more than what was said in the *Review* 'Newsbeat' item, except for sources outside regular channels. It all seems rather incredible to me."

A few weeks before the conclusion of Betsy Cushman's document saga and six full months after Phil Wilson was fired, the Florida Conference finally provided the Orlando Central Church family with an explanation. The letter to the membership from President Carubba (26 March 1984) was quickly followed by one from Wilson (3 April 1984) to his former flock. Carubba's and Wilson's letters are printed together on page twenty-three under the title "Testimonies to the Central Church."

Wilson's letter is particularly enlightening because in the defense of his doctrinal positions may be seen what a large percentage of Adventist pastors — especially younger ones — basically believe but keep hidden in their hearts.

Also in March, head elder Robert Cushman drafted a letter inviting the membership to a March 25 "family council" to talk over "unsettled questions and/or issues that divide us."

Recently, Pastors Ken Coonley and Jim Davidson have come to serve us. Yet the effectiveness of their ministry is subject to events of the past at Central Church, events over which they had no control.

At the elders' meeting where Cushman's letter draft was considered, it was the consensus of the group that a church business meeting should be called. However, the pastoral staff neither used the letter nor called a business meeting. Rather they began a vigorous, personal visitation campaign to the membership.

In April a small group of Orlando Central members sent out a general

mailing under the heading Gospel Seminars, inviting anyone interested "to attend a premier Gospel Seminar that will be the first of ten [Sabbath afternoon] seminars dealing with the theme 'The Gospel and the Church.'" Those interested were to bring their Bibles and meet in the Semoran Conference Room of the Altamonte Springs Inn where, beginning May 5, Phillip Wilson would be facilitating study of the following topics:

- The Gospel and the Church
- The Gospel and the Law
- The Gospel and Christian Ethics
- The Gospel and Prophetic Interpretation
- The Gospel and Eschatology
- The Gospel and the Judgment
- The Gospel and the Prophetic Spirit
- The Gospel and the Priesthood of All Believers
- The Gospel and the Christian Rest
- The Gospel and the Mark of the Beast

At a May elders' meeting, Robert Cushman again stressed the need for a church business meeting to discuss ways of reconciling the divided Central Church congregation. The pastoral staff was more interested in eliciting an action from the church elders recommending that no church officers should attend or support Gospel Seminars in any way. One elder leaped to his feet stating, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Seven others stood in favor of the action; while four remained seated in opposition, and four were absent. The church newsletter item that appeared the following week (21 May 1984) over the signature of the pastoral staff did not indicate that the elders' action was limited to church officers, and it implied the total support of the elders as well:

The pastors and the board of elders have agreed, as the spiritual leaders of the Central Church, that we should not support these meetings by our attendance or in any other way.

Central Church lay leader and director of Gospel Seminars, Ronn Schwenn, responded to the Board of Elders' "recent vote . . . regarding their desire to effect a 'healing' in the church" with a June 5 letter to head elder Cushman. After pledging to "eagerly support them in such an effort," Schwenn noted some concerns:

Phillip [Wilson] is a member in good standing at Central Church and as such he should enjoy the fellowship attendant with membership. But to date, . . . the only official contact he has had from the church membership has been in the capacity of the present pastoral staff that indicated that he was possessed of the devil and should voluntarily leave the church.

I hesitate to belabor the point, but we are referring to a man that showed nothing but unconditional love for his entire flock . . .

I fear that many interpret healing as surgery. Just excise the problem and you will feel better . . .

But I would suggest that you will not heal the church. To affect "healing" you must deal with Phillip Wilson; not the pastor without credentials, . . . If you fail to do this you will never rid yourself of this failure, for even if Phillip Wilson moved away, forever you will still be a church in need of "healing."

Cushman responded by writing that he had not supported the Board of Elders' condemnation of Gospel Seminars. He also indicated how poorly informed the elders' vote had been:

No discussion regarding the intent and purpose of Gospel Seminars took place prior to the vote. None of the Elders who were in favor of the positive vote [against Gospel Seminars] had attended a Gospel Seminars meeting so were not informed as to the quality or content of the presentations. The same could be said for the Pastoral Staff.

On June 19, a "shocked" Central Church secretary/clerk, Irene Strickle, wrote President Carubba regarding a conversation she had overheard between Florida Conference Community Services director/Inner-city coordinator Stanley L. Dombrosky and a Central Church deacon, Harvey Edenfield:

Dear Brother Carubba:

I feel compelled to share a conversation I overheard a week or so ago. One speaker has a very loud, carrying voice. I couldn't help but overhear.

". . . the highest authority is the General Conference and E.G. White. The message they have is all we need and no one should question this authority. Those that do are the lowest of sinners and sinners of that nature should not be allowed membership in the Adventist church. If Central was my church, I would do everything in my power to have Wilson removed from the membership. I had considered having my membership transferred here, but not now. Not with this mess . . ."

This is not verbatim and only one side of the conversation, but it rambled on besmirching Phil's character.

The speaker was S.L. Dombrosky, and the conversation took place in front of Central Church.

I am the secretary of Central Church and I can honestly say that I was greatly shocked, dismayed and deeply disturbed by this attitude.

How can Central Church ever even begin to heal if this form of persecution is allowed to happen? It distresses me considerably that this attitude comes from the Conference, is prevalent and spreading throughout our membership and our sister churches . . .

I worked for Phillip Wilson for two years and six months. I have never met another person whose attitude of complete servitude to GOD has impressed me more. I have never heard him say an unkind word against another person . . .

An unsolicited letter from General Conference administrative assistant Robert L. Dale (5 July 1984) was sent to head elder Cushman:

We have reviewed the termination of Pastor Wilson and have found that the conference has followed the generally prescribed method for terminating a pastor. There were problems that caused his termination.

We hope, Brither [sic] Cushman, that you will accept the fact that this termination was done in the best interests of the Church.

The obligatory prayer "that the Lord will bless you at the Orlando Central Church" was followed by a rubber stamped signature — xerox copy to H.J. Carubba.

While Phil Wilson had earned a Master of Divinity degree at Andrews University's Theological Seminary, his permanent replacement pastor at the Central Church, Kenneth Coonley, had only completed a two-year, Associate in Science degree in religion at then Southern Missionary College. It was, therefore, a seemingly prudent step for Coonley — when he found himself over his head theologically — to take Wilson's twenty-point handout and other material to the General Conference Biblical Research Institute headquarters for help, sometime during the winter/spring months of 1984 (probably March or April).



Ronn and Susan Schwenn

Snow cancelled a scheduled face-to-face visit between Coonley and his would-be BRI counselor. But he left the handouts at the institute and some weeks later received a long letter from the individual he'd missed.

Although Coonley refuses to say which BRI officer wrote the letter, he didn't mind later reading from it selectively to the Central Church family, any more than the BRI author of the letter seemed to mind commenting on the spiritual standing of a man he'd never met:

I would say this, Ken, in closing, that what Phil needs is not more theoretical knowledge but a spiritual regeneration. You can argue against anything if you wish to take that position. We must

have the eye salve of the Holy Spirit to understand spiritual matters; and Phil hardened his mind, evidently, against the truths that we teach as a people. He is deceived if he thinks he is acting as Jesus would act, to not only give up his faith, but to want to stay and be divisive in the church. If you would find down deep in the bottom of his heart what is really his trouble, you might be able to help him. I'm sure it's not doctrine. My guess is that it's something, that all this rather, is a facade for trouble that lies much deeper.

Phil Wilson says that the letter writer (any BRI officer at that time) would not know him if they shook hands. (*Currents'* candidate is Frank Holbrook — least-progressive member of the Southern College religion faculty — who left his teaching post in 1981 to become an associate director of the BRI.)

When *Currents* phoned Holbrook at his BRI office (12 November 1984), the topic of Orlando Central difficulties was raised as the purpose of the call. Holbrook immediately and gruffly said, "I'm not interested in talking with you. We've worked with you before and you have misrepresented us. [Read: *Currents* didn't place BRI in the most favorable possible light.] You aren't trustworthy." As the attempt was made to ask how *Currents* had betrayed his trust, Holbrook said, "I don't have anything to say to you." *Currents* began another sentence, but the phone went dead.

With the BRI letter, at least figuratively speaking, on his desk, Coonley wrote one of his own to the Central Church congregation (31 August 1984). Although the head elder had been pleading for six months for a reconciling family council, Coonley and his associate, young Jim Davidson, had something a little more permanent in mind:

Dear Central Family,

The Central Church Family has experienced a great deal of confusion, strife, and heartache over the past year . . .

We pastors had hoped that time might help to bring some peace to the situation in which the church finds itself. However, we see more must be done. Many of you have experienced strong feelings that a meeting should be held to confront these issues. The issues are grave and of great importance. The church's future will depend a great deal on how we deal with the issues.

Because of the many requests to have a meeting, we will have a business meeting of the church on September 8th immediately following vespers . . .

We pastors would like to encourage every member to be present so the whole church body can speak. We urge you to attend and share your views . . .

Rather than a calming, tension-reducing invitation to a family council, the pastors' letter spoke of "confront[ing]" issues of "grave and great importance. The church's future will depend . . ." Bring a sword!

It is crucial to keep in mind — because of what took place a week later, at the business meeting on Saturday evening September 8 — what the pastoral letter of invitation gave as the purpose of the meeting: "... to confront these [unnamed] issues." "... to attend and share your views."

Another document that is critically important for determining whether what took place at the specially called business meeting was legitimate or not is the transcript of a conversation that took place on Friday morning, September 7, between the two pastors (Coonley, Davidson) and, primarily, Betsy Cushman the day before the ill-fated business meeting. This brief meeting was called at the request of the pastors:

Ken Coonley: We want to talk to you a few minutes about this meeting that's coming up Saturday night. And, I'm sure you're aware of the fact that, that ah, you're probably going to come up in the meeting. As far as the, as the church is concerned about this organization [Gospel Seminars] that's been formed and that you have put your name on, Betsy, as one of the members of that corporation. And I would like to urge you to please disassociate yourself with that, so that the church doesn't have to address that issue Saturday night. But if you choose to, to leave your name on there, then the church, the church members are going to address the issue; and some of the church members have, have come to a decision themselves. And they just feel like that, you know, that things have gone too far. That in being patient and hoping that

things could get settled down hasn't worked. It just seems as though its gone from bad to worse, and, and, now the church is ready to say something.

I think the church has been forced into a corner. And as pastors, we, I wish I could be someplace else Saturday night. But, ah, you can avoid having the church go through this if you disassociate yourself. And we wanted to give you the opportunity this morning to do that, so the church doesn't have to face that issue. Of course the decision is up to you.

Betsy Cushman: Are you saying were I to disassociate myself from Gospel Seminars, there would be no meeting Saturday night — that the church does not have to face this issue?

Ken Coonley: I'm not saying that. I'm saying they would not have to face the issue as far as you're concerned. And I don't think, you know, I don't think anybody wants to. I mean you have been involved with this church for a long time. But you, you know, you have put your friends in a bad position. And whatever reason you have chosen to do it — whether it's loyalty, or whether it's, it's stubbornness, or whether it's to show us as pastors, whatever the reason you, you have chosen to do it, it's your friends that are receiving the repercussions of it. And at least they wouldn't have to stand and say anything that's regarding you, if you would disassociate yourself from it.

The church is going to have to face the issue. We've known that all along. But I don't think the church ever thought for a minute that you were going to be part of the issue. And so, you know, we're not here to, to argue with you, we're just here to ask you please not to, to put the church through that Saturday night.

Betsy Cushman: Well, the church is going to go through it, regardless of me.

Ken Coonley: Well, the church is going to go through settling this issue Saturday night, yes. But it does not have to involve you to the extent it will if your name [is] on that, on that list.

I ah, I really don't know what it is that, that you hope to prove by this, by insisting on the church going through this. But, but you have an awful lot of people who've cared for you through the years. And you've put them in a corner now where they've got to make a decision, either for their church and against their friend, or for their friend and against their church; and that's an unfair position to have to be in. And while we, all we, all we're asking is that, that you reconsider your position and let us begin to tell the congregation that, that you've done that.

Betsy Cushman: If the congregation wants to know, and if they want this meeting, I feel like at that time, I would, were I to change my mind, I would tell them.

Ken Coonley: Why, well if you want to carry it down to the line, that's up to you.

Betsy Cushman: Because I feel they're the ones I have to answer to; they're the ones who are my friends.

Ken Coonley: Are you intimating that we're not your friends?

Betsy Cushman: No, I don't. But if they're the ones that are crying for the meeting, and this is the issue . . .

Ken Coonley: They're not the only ones crying for the meeting. I mean, you folks have pressured for a meeting ever since I've been here. I think that the majority of the congregation would like for this thing to have, have just withered away and died and never have to face it. These people don't want to have to face this issue any more than, than I want to face it.

I have never in my life, all my, in my years as a non-Christian, have never faced a situation that I dread as much as this. And ah, and these church members, you know these church members, these people are as sincere as they can be; and they don't want to face the issue any more than you want to face it or I want to face it.

But it's down to the point now where something, one way or the other, has to be said about which direction this church is going to go. Now, and the church has finally said, "Look, if it's up to us to say it, then we're going to say it."

And I know that it may appear as though ah, that Jim [Davidson] and I have brought it to this place; but I'll tell you this

much, that Jim and I have responded to the appeals of the church members. We have not been the ones motivating the church members. The situation is what's inspired the church members.

To see the thing take one step right after the other and to know that people in their leadership are involved in it, and then see this organization formed and to come out in a letter that three members of the congregation are officers of that organization is more than they can take — and more than they should have to take.

And so, that's, that's basically what I want to say to you, Betsy; and I don't know — do you have anything you feel you want to say?

Jim Davidson: Not really anything in addition — just that, you know, we hate to see anyone, especially you folks, associate yourselves with something that is not in harmony with the church; and we're just appealing to you that you don't.

Ken Coonley: And I don't know if you have anything you want to say to us or not. If you do, now's the time to say it.

Bob Cushman: I don't.



Robert and Betsy Cushman

The next morning, Sabbath (8 September 1984), found deaconesses Marcia Alford, and Susan Schwenn greeting and welcoming worshippers in the Central Church foyer. Marcia's husband, Jim Alford, was occupied with his duties as an elder. Susan's husband, Ronn Schwenn, was teaching a Sabbath School class for young marrieds. Betsy Cushman's head elder-husband, Robert, was also teaching a Sabbath School class. Judy Wilson, wife of the former pastor, was playing the organ. None of them realized, as they ministered in their Orlando Central Church home, that by shortly after midnight not one of them would be any longer a member of God's "remnant church."

Ken Coonley opened the Saturday night business meeting innocuously and innocently with a homily about the woman described in the fifth chapter of Mark who was healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment. But soon he was quoting what "the servant of the Lord" had said in *Selected Messages* book two (p. 379) about the diversity of doctrine in the world:

There is many a religion current that numbers its thousands and tens of thousands, but there is but one that bears the superscription and the stamp of God.

Coonley added this from *Testimonies*, volume 9, page 18:

Do not these words point us out as God's denominated people?

And do they not declare to us that so long as time shall last, we are to cherish the sacred, denominational distinction placed upon us?

Following three prayers, Coonley explained that the agenda would "be as it was stated in the letter that you received." And then: "in order for you not to flounder around, wondering what issues need to be addressed, I want to present the issues as we of the pastoral staff, anyway, see those issues."

Coonley had two concerns: First, the former pastor had begun "to speak in public forum [Gospel Seminars] against the doctrines of the church." Second, "members of the church who hold office in our church have given their support to this forum and this organization called Gospel Seminars."

"Tonight," Coonley continued, "we feel these are the issues that must

be settled, must be dealt with; . . . As the church of Christ," he insisted, "you must make some decisions."

Specifying that neither "this church nor this denomination nor its doctrines should be put on trial — that's not the issue," Coonley opened the floor and made available three aisle microphones so that anyone wishing to speak could be heard.

From here to the epilogue, all copy is excerpted directly from the business meeting tapes, except for occasional clarifications or comments that appear in brackets.

Kenneth Coonley: Why don't you go to a microphone, Marty, so everybody can hear you?

Marthelle Tindall: My husband brought me here fifty-one years ago, and I have loved this message for sixty-three years . . . I love it more today, and everyday, than I have ever loved it in the past. I'm anxious to see that this church maintain its purity in its message and that we all be of one accord, because I stand here to tell you that I love our former pastor and his family. I love every member of this church. But I realize that we do have issues to face. We're living in a very serious time in this world's history . . .

If I shake a little bit, I am a little emotional. But I can't tell you how many I have talked with, and they have a lot of love in their hearts. But I appeal to everyone here tonight to remember that this message is going to go through to the end, whether we go with it or not . . . I've studied it [the Adventist message] diligently for the past year, I've always read it, but I've been digging; and I have found no contradictions.

Kenneth Coonley: [after thirty seconds] My, the silence is deafening. I've been told for the last number of months that people had so much on their heart they wanted to say. But evidently you don't really have that much on your heart you want to say. If no one has anything further they want to say, then I think we need to — Yes, Herb.

Herbert Davis: The message that this church has promulgated throughout this community and through my heart will live forever. And these dear brothers . . . who have separated themselves from us . . . I beg . . . of those who have separated themselves from us by the change of their beliefs and their actions to separate themselves from the church that the church might go on and grow.

Nelson Acosta: The only thing that is keeping me away from the microphone is because my English vocabulary is not that great . . . So I might not express my feeling the way that they should be expressed . . . My heart is in a real bad burden . . . I know and I recognize that for some of you that have been in this message for many, many years . . . this is a true and the real message. Some of us, like myself . . . come from a different church . . . and have been taught a different message . . . Then for the first time I hear this message, and I understand and . . . I believe it. And I come to become part of the church . . . because I do believe in the church. I love the church. But at the same time, [because of] my experience through life and my age, I got to the point that I understand that no church [has] the truth completely and only the truth. No church . . .

There's something, something always missing somewhere.

I compare the church to, to a ship, I feel safe enough in this ship to take me to the next shore. But . . . it scares me when a church tells me this is the way you have to be or else. That really scares me. I mean, if you're telling me you have to believe this or else you won't make it, that really scares me. But on the other hand I think that the ship is safe enough, and that's why I love the church. And as long . . . as you can support me, I'm going to stay in it . . . Somehow when we see a brother or a sister . . . jumping out of the ship because that brother [or] that sister feels safer out of the ship than in the ship, if we believe that that person is wrong, [then] what we have to try to do is to bring that person back on the ship and not try to push that person off the ship again. So I beg you brothers and sisters to help whoever you believe is against the church . . . We do not have . . . 100% [of] the truth; there's . . . always some room for improving. Thank you.

Kenneth Coonley: For your benefit folks, this is being taped tonight; and the men in the sound booth ask that you please identify yourself when you speak, so that it will be recorded on the tape.

Jim Alford: We call the Seventh-day Adventist message the truth . . . [but] the question that . . . is in my heart, the reason that I have been a part of Gospel Seminars is, if the truth's so great — which I believe the truth is great — and if the truth is so important — which I believe the truth's

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8:30

important — why can't we investigate it? And I have repeatedly asked the pastoral staff of this church for an opportunity to investigate the truth And to this point we have not had an open forum to discuss this truth or these doctrines or these issues. And the times that I have brought it up I was told that it had been dealt with before; these issues had been settled within the Seventh-day Adventist church many, many years previous. Well, quite honestly, I've only been a Seventh-day Adventist for a little over eight years; so a lot of these issues and doctrinal disputes or questions are new to me. They are just that. They're news to me, new news.

There are those who would have us separate ourselves. It's already been mentioned tonight by Brother Davis that he's invited us to separate ourselves from this church since we no longer support the doctrines of the church But I would remind you that before you invite me to separate from your congregation, you might want to come study with me. You might want to come visit with me. So far [since the establishment of Gospel Seminars] there's only been one brother come visit with me, and I appreciate that visit. And we had a good discussion If you've got some light that I don't have, then I think you ought to share that light with me. I support Gospel Seminars because at this time, within what I know of the Seventh-day Adventist church, it's the only forum that I can study these issues. These doctrinal differences are new to me and I want to study them. If somebody within this church has some light, I want to know about that light

The Church Board of Central Church voted to have Phil Wilson, when he was our pastor, talk about these issues within our church. We had set aside, if I remember right, three Sabbaths...[during which] we were going to talk about these issues. He was not given that platform. I was deprived and you were deprived of the opportunity of hearing these issues. That to me is not religious liberty



Jim and Marcia Alford

Sherilyn Greene: Why is this being taped? . . . Why is this being taped?

Kenneth Coonley: It is being taped at the request of a number of people so there won't be any question about what is said or done So there won't be any room for gossip or rumor.

Sherilyn Greene: It was kind of a shock to hear that. You know, I've been listening over the last few weeks to rumors fly and got a letter in the mail and I couldn't quite get any specific information about what was happening, you know, what action is being considered. And my first real inkling of the extent of the action being considered tonight was when someone asked for those who are involved in Gospel Seminars to separate themselves from the church. And, if that action is successful, it may seem that a problem has been neatly dispersed and taken care of; but there are a number of us who are silent supporters of Gospel Seminars. My name isn't on their letterhead or anything, because I don't have a large number of funds to support them. I've not been to any of their meetings because I have had other obligations, but I am a strong supporter of Gospel Seminars. And I wonder if you're going to come and dis-fellowship me?

Joe Angelini: I was baptised right here in this church. I come out of a religion...where there was so much freedom — let's put it that way; there was so much freedom on what I could do with my spare time: I could do what I felt like, I could drink what I felt like, I could go where I wanted,

and things like that. And this [Adventism] was more a restrictive religion; as you start entering into it . . . it feels this way. And then as you become closer and closer to the people of this church and of this denomination you find that rather than it being a restrictive denomination, it's a freedom denomination. This is a denomination that puts us so close with Jesus that we become one . . . and we become brothers and sisters together, and brothers with Him. And I haven't found anywhere else I would like to go. I think all the answers that I was looking for in my lifetime have been answered through the Seventh-day Adventist religion and through the Seventh-day Adventist doctrines. Now, all organizations, religions, or whatever, may have some problems with their hierarchy

We are going to be the people that are going to give the message to the rest of the world. We are the ones that are going to give it, with the help of Jesus. And if we don't finish it, He's going to finish it by Himself . . .

I cannot see why some people are looking to leave. And, Jim, to answer your question — I'd not like to see you leave. I don't care what anybody else said Your suggestion may be right; we may need to study a little bit more together. Maybe we can both learn something through some of our pastors, some of our former pastors, and some of our higher-ups I'm just talking to you, Jim, straight, because I love you as a brother. I don't want to see you go anyplace; and if you do, you're still going to be my friend and brother.

Kim Drury: I'm looking forward to getting older in the Seventh-day Adventist church. But, you know, as a young person the people I look up to have discrepancies between each other I was raised as a Seventh-day Adventist. I went to Baptist college; and people respected me as being a Seventh-day Adventist, because I believed in going to church on the Sabbath. I felt that Saturday was the Sabbath. [But] Pastor Wilson hasn't said that Saturday isn't the Sabbath

What we need to ask ourselves is, "What's more important — loving God and loving everybody else and following the Word, or putting all of our emphasis on the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine?" That's something we all need to ask ourself

Luc Cashmir: [Luc Cashmir's wife was not a Seventh-day Adventist, and he had stopped coming to church. But in 1978 Pastor Phil Wilson had been giving Bible studies to Mrs. Cashmir; and as a result, Luc decided to be baptised.]

And just before the time I was to be baptised something had happened, and I talked to Pastor Wilson and he was not in the position at that time to baptise me because something had happened with him, with the Conference, [that] I was not aware of. And when I heard what was going on, believe me, it brought tears to my eyes, because I loved the man dearly. And I held a lot of respect for Pastor Wilson. . . . I have received [a] letter [from] Gospel Seminar to my house, but . . . I didn't feel . . . that I should go to visit Gospel Seminar, even though I love Pastor Wilson very much, and I still do. But I think I'll do him much good praying for him and his family that some day again we can be one in Christ and at the coming of the Lord we can all be together . . .

Hal Nash: Gospel Seminars doesn't seem to be merely a forum for the discussion of ideas, but it seems to be more of a . . . direct attack against those things that many people have cherished for many years And it's the critical spirit that several who are associated with Gospel Seminars have towards the pastoral staff and the local Conference office that disturbs me That just isn't the Gospel being lived out in a life, though they may be called Gospel Seminars. And I think that's what we need to address tonight.

Lucille Monday: This is an issue that has cut us deeply; because as the other people have said, they love Pastor Wilson and his family. We love every member of this church. All we want to do is to see our church go forward in Christ We all know as we approach the end of time that we're going to have very difficult decisions to make Satan, we all know, is going to use every means and every method he can think of to separate the church and divide it It is our conviction that when it becomes necessary to alter doctrine, principles and policies, or change them, this should be done by the bodies who are responsible for these duties

Elton Miles: I chose to become a Seventh-day Adventist. At the time of my baptism I was finishing up in high school. It was the Holy Spirit that made me make my decision. As I was sitting in the library one day,

8:45

studying my lessons, I got a feeling that was like pins and needles sticking all over my body, which was by the Holy Spirit. I says I can't sit here anymore . . . and I rushed out of the room. Nobody had spoken to me. As I walked past the principal's office, he stepped out; he called to me. He wanted to talk to me, and [he] invited me to be baptised . . . You must have the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon you before you can accept doctrine, before you can follow the doctrine, before you can understand it . . .

8:58 Paul warns us about heresies that come into the church. When he heard about things that [were] going wrong in Ephesus, he warned the people about being led astray. And he says weed out these people. And I think that is what we must do today. We must study our doctrine, know where we stand, feel as the doctrine is going to go through to the end; but we cannot allow for unsound doctrine to be taught in our churches. It must be the true doctrine. There'll be many that will try to bring false doctrines to us. But it's up to us to stand firm and follow the straight and narrow way, and the Lord expects us to do that.

Karen Wickliff: I'd like to draw our attention to the Corinthian church that Paul had to deal with. It was a church that had problems that if possible far surpass the ones we have today here. There were factions in that church . . . [and] hotly debated personality differences. Then there was the problem of blatant, open incest going on in the church. And then one that I didn't realize until just recently; there was a whole group of people that did not believe in the resurrection . . . And Paul dealt with these people [and] with the factions, and he dealt with the people that didn't believe in the resurrection, rather gently . . . Christ in His parable of the sower and the wheat and the tares meant to point out the fact that weeding is His job. And it scares me that we try to sometimes push His elbows over and take over. And I think that before we make any moves we need to carefully consider what our moves mean . . . God is more concerned in how we treat those that believe differently than we do than He is in the different belief that we have from the other person.

Miner Myers: Up until now, Brother Wilson, Elder Wilson, or whatever you might call [him] — I've never talked to him. I've thought many a time going to him . . . visiting with him, [and] finding out what he believes; but tonight I have heard nothing, and I hope someday that we can study where that he is off . . .

Betty Matthews: I like some of the others here tonight, have been a member of this church for a long time — in all my life, in fact. These doctrines are very precious to most of us here tonight . . . When God made us, He made us [and] gave us free choice . . . If I should choose next week to go and become a Baptist or a Methodist, He's given me that choice. I have the freedom, the liberty, Jim. I can do that. But folks, the brightest lights in this church apparently are involved in this Gospel Seminars; and I don't know exactly what they're teaching, but I know it apparently is not the doctrine that we've all known all our lives. And they have a choice to do that. If they want to follow any other doctrine, they have the choice just like I have. But the thing is, if I became a Baptist next week, and I went down and supported the Baptist Church with my tithe and with my body and with my soul, and then came back here and tried to hold on to an office here and be an officer in the Baptist church, I would be doing them both an injustice. And doing my God an injustice. We all love these people, whoever they are . . . But if they now choose to do something else other than be part of this doctrine, they themselves should realize that and know they can't keep one foot in each camp and hope to succeed at either, other than to tear our church apart. We need to stand together and love each other, but this meeting tonight is something that's been very necessary for a long time.

9:10 **Bertha Wilikinson:** I would just like to say that all of the members in this church could have done the same thing that I did, that Davis' did; we visited with Phil right from the beginning. He told us that he didn't agree with the doctrines of the church as we teach them. Now, this church was established on the prophecies of the 2300 days; you all know what it was established on. And Sister White told us in *Great Controversy* that these prophecies will stand the test of time — without impeachment. And you know that that means that we cannot change it by delving into the writings of this person and that person. We've gone through a good many "isms" in the years that I've been an Adventist from the Shepherd's Rod to the Brinsmeads and on; and, like the Gospel Seminars, that too shall pass. And I hate to say it, but I feel sorry for the

people who choose to go that way because I feel that they will regret it. And I think the time has come when we ought to ask these people who hold offices in the church to do as Betty Barber (Matthews) said; they should resign. If they want to keep coming to church, that's OK, too; but I do not feel that they should be holding offices in the church as long as they continue to be involved in another "ism," which is what the Gospel Seminars is. If they don't, if they aren't with us, they are against us.

Mary Brooks: I'm like Sister Wilkinson. I think the time has come when if you believe what this church teaches from the Conference on down, and our pastors, then stay with it. But, if you think something else is better, then go to it . . .

Jim Alford I've known for a long time; and, Jim, you're sure mixed up somewhere 'cause God's Holy Word, the Spirit of Prophecy, and our pastors, are fitting right into that Bible. And if you don't think so, you'd better stop what you're listening at and get 'em down and look 'em over and do what you knows is right because this is no time. How do you know before you go home tonight whether your last breath will be gone? . . . Pastor Wilson knows I love him, [and] so does Judy; and I love the rest of you. But let's stop and think: If your time was to close tonight, would you be where you're suppose to be?

Heather Cavanaugh: It's been brought up tonight that maybe we should get together and study or discuss the truth or who has the truth and who has the wrong truth and then decide. It's obvious to me, I would imagine that what you believe now is what you're going to keep on believing . . . People who believe what they have are not going to change to another persons' beliefs if they're already set in their ways. There are people who, like me, are set. I believe in the Seventh-day adventist church . . .

Dan Smith: I think Heather made an important point. Brothers and sisters, don't you see tonight what we're doing? Shall we open a forum for every idea and every viewpoint that comes into the church? . . . This church needs to go on to work with people and not issues.

Art Bryant: We had an interesting experience, my wife and me, a few years ago. We visited Lebanon. And we attended church there in the college on Sabbath. And I couldn't understand a word that was being said, but I felt right at home because I was, quote, "in God's church." We have an organization that I believe was established by God. We're told that God's highest authority upon earth is the General Conference in session. And I believe our organization is strong and our church is strong today because of our organization that has been blessed of God. And I would just urge all of us this evening that we all, in love and in Christ, could support our church and our organization.

David Peterson: I've been a friend of Phil's for a few years . . . I heard a statement on the radio that said that the Christian army is the only army in the world that shoots its wounded . . . I think it's important that we exercise love to those that may differ from us. We spend thousands and thousands of dollars in evangelism, and we just dearly beg the heathen to come to worship with us . . . I would want to extend and have my church extend that same love and acceptance, regardless of what anybody believes. Because after all, even though we are a red, white and blue, dyed-in-the-wool, Seventh-day Adventist, many of us, if we came right down to it, [would] have many differences even within our own thinking.

Marguerite Attle: When I was teaching church school, I think my name was on the list, because we got literature from places we never heard of . . . Now some of this literature looked very appealing. But we made a decision. We were Seventh-day Adventists; we had plenty of literature to read. We just didn't have time to read all these other things that might possibly split our allegiance. Well, they made good fire to start the fire in the fireplace with. We just threw them away. And I don't think that this whole situation is the question of doctrine; it's a question of allegiance. As one of our members said when we joined this church, we pledged our allegiance to this church, to its doctrines — to uphold them and to love them. And it seems as though when something happens and someone varies from it, that love kind of goes out the window, and there's a spirit of . . . criticism and even hatred. And it's not in God's plan that there be those feelings in His church. And if there are those who feel differently, perhaps it would be best if they had their own place.

Corrine Wallace: I think this love thing goes both ways. I've heard a lot tonight about we should love these people who want to be different,

and that's fine; but the people who want to be different need to do some loving too I tell you I love this church and I love all of you and I love Phil and all of the rest. I love all those that go to Gospel Seminars; I feel really close to them. I just feel like there's more [than love] at stake here though. We've got to go on . . . and get to heaven one way or another, and we can't throw out these doctrines and trash this and trash that just because we happen to think that we've found new light. Anyway, I pray that you will pray for us as we continue to work here; we surely love each one of you.

9:28

Ken Kirkham: I've always believed in progressive revelation — that God has led His people as they were ready to be led. And as a result of that, I don't feel that we stand as a church, with all the truth yet. But I do feel that any [illumination?] (unintelligible word) in your life that is added to what we already have will be in agreement with the light that has been shared with us to this point

I defend the right of the Gospel Seminars to have their activities and search for truth as they see fit. But in studying what they have to say, I reached a point where I realized that their teachings conflict with, I feel, God's Word, with the Spirit of Prophecy; and at that point I had to stop listening. I love Phil dearly; he was a classmate of mine in college. I'd give my life for him, and I think he'd do the same for me. But I think one of the very bright lights of the church has been snuffed out.

9:30

Gus Alvarez: There's nothing wrong with our gospel. [There] will be new light coming, but it will not diminish the light that we have. We are an organization. The Lord led us in this way; and if we deviate from that, we as men and women are changing. I believe that we are Shadrach, Meshach and Abednegos, and we are Ruth and Esther, among us. We need to stand for what is true and what is right, even though it may hurt us. It may hurt those that it comes in conflict with, but God is a God of order; He needs to have discipline and love in order for us to go through. Thank you.

Eva Hayes: Are you folks aware of the fact that this that is going on in our church tonight is going on all over the the United States and all over the world? I believe very definitely that it is the fulfillment of prophecy And I believe very definitely that we are living in the sifting time

Frank Palmour: I have very strong feelings, if I can quote Jefferson, against any form of tyranny of the mind. The truth whoever has it, can stand up to the closest scrutiny — whether it be the intelligence of a Phil Wilson, or a Ronn Schwenn, or a Ken Coonley, or an Albert Einstein. The truth can stand up under scrutiny.

Why in the world can't we as a church focus on those aspects of the gospel which are important: loving our neighbor as ourselves and loving God. Why can't we focus on that? If that was the focus from the pulpit of this church, if that were the focus of the members of this church, then Gospel Seminars if, if it is wrong, will fall by the wayside. There's no doubt about it, absolutely no doubt about it. Instead people are so concerned about someone going out to Gospel Seminars and discussing issues — and the discussion out there may in fact be wrong.

Now, I will tell you I support the right of Gospel Seminars to exist; I formed their corporation, I act as their legal counsel. They have the right to exist. As I understand it — and I have been to most of the meetings — they're not trying to set up a separate church. They were organized for the specific purpose of providing a forum within which people could discuss these issues.

And I'd like to go back to a statement made by Hal Nash on attitudes. I'd like to ask you who, when something needed to be done down here at the church on a Sunday, was doing it? Some of the people involved in Gospel Seminars. who, when people needed to be visited, were personally involved? Some of the people in Gospel Seminars. Who were the people that provided money? Who were the people that loved those who maybe . . . were unlovable? They were the people in Gospel Seminars.

Attitude is how you perceive something. If you perceive something as a threat to you, then the attitude is wrong. I have had an opportunity to know Phil Wilson for a number of years, Ronn Schwenn [and] some of the others not so many years; but I do know that they have an attitude of love, an attitude of caring for others. And it is my opinion — and it's simply my opinion — that they have the right, and anyone in this church has the right, to go out there and discuss those issues which Phil was precluded from discussing . . . and not be subject to censure by this

church or by the church's organization. Anything that would challenge our right to learn and discuss cannot be . . . right. It's totally out of accord with the gospel. It's totally out of accord with what Mrs. White has written. Thank You.

9:42

Nina Cheshire: I been in this message for fifty-six years. And it's been such a wonderful privilege to be a Seventh-day Adventist. But I want to say I love Phil Wilson, next to my grandson. He's been the best pastor I have ever seen Bob Cushman [has] been the best . . . head elder anyone could ever wish to have. Do you see these blocks up here; he laid every one of them with his own hands. And he's worked day and night for this church. He been a good . . . head elder, and I don't want to lose him. I don't want to lose the others; I love them dearly. But we can't be a divided church; so what are we gonna do? [Have] fasting and prayer gone out of style? I been wishing we would do it If we can't stand this now what will we do at the swelling of the Jordan?

Jocelyn Abernathy: I believe that . . . if we polled everyone in this room, we'd have different beliefs on quite a few of our doctrinal issues. But I don't feel that's what Jesus is going to ask of us in the end. No matter what I believe on the doctrinal issues — the 2300 days, the investigative judgment, or any of those points — what He's going to want to know is if I've fed the hungry and clothed the naked And if they don't know about Christ and His love when I'm administering [to] those needs, then everything I've done is for naught. My concern is that, as wonderful as this church is, that we don't consider that our salvation is tied in it — that we continue to look to Jesus Christ.

There's been a lot of speculation about what's been going on at Gospel Seminars. I'd like to say as one that has frequently attended, that I have never been asked what I believe in, I've never been told I had to believe in something different than I did, or I never was strongly encouraged that I had to believe differently

I think we do a great injustice if we start with one person and we find out what each one believes, and then go to the next person; because what are we going to do if censureship is given to Phil Wilson and then the next person has to be asked what they believe? And who can be the judge for who is found righteous in the eyes of God? As Karen mentioned, the wheat and the tares will grow together until the harvest. He [God] hasn't made me the weeder.

9:52

Robert Cushman: It's strange that we get together as a church family so infrequently. I think we all agree that after being here for the last couple of hours, we should have done it more frequently, that there'd be much to benefit from it. Perhaps we learn from problems of the past. I wish we were here tonight for a different reason. But it seems in my own mind, and in the minds of my brothers and sisters, sometimes we have difficulty sorting out issues. And we get a lot of other things brought in, and the real issues never become clear. Because we're not all in the same place. We're like a school where everybody's in a different grade; some people are studying one thing and some another. I know the hour is late, and I'm going to try to put into as few words as possible, as your first elder for the last nine and one-half years, what I feel is important.

Some of you may not like what I say; but what I say, I say with conviction. This church in the twenty-seven years that I've been a member and the twenty-four years I have been an Elder, has made many mistakes. I wish we were here tonight to beg forgiveness of Betty Tucker for doing her an injustice over a very stupid point that seemed to be very important about twelve or fifteen years ago, and today it isn't anything. And that was the wedding ring. Because it worked a very traumatic experience on her life and the life of her family. But the church was very sincere, at least the Nominating Committee [was] in what it did by not asking her to continue in office.

Now a lot of you don't even know what I'm talking about; so I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it. But this church does injustice to its family from time to time in pursuit of the protection of purity. Sometimes we do it in a very self-righteous and pious way. But hopefully it is with sincerity. But it may still be wrong, sincere or not.

I wish we were here tonight to tell the Wilson family; "You are part of our family. We may not agree with you, but you're part of our family. It is our responsibility because Christ forgave and accepted and pardoned us on the cross before we knew we were even sinners. So we accept you in that same light."

Agreement is not essential in a family as husband and wife and

children often do not see things the same way. But then we have the problem of how do we handle what we view as being very important —namely, the day and age in which we find ourselves this night, the question of doctrine. I have personally appreciated the testimonies that I've heard. Some of them speak of glorious histories, of being raised in the Adventist church, and the faith that you hold. Those are very important because we all must base our faith in something. I would ask of you, those who feel that and identify with that feeling tonight (I'm a third-generation Adventist except for four years of my life), do you believe in the Spirit of Prophecy? And I think most people would agree that they probably do. If we observe each other's life we might question that. But verbally we will mostly say that we do. I'd like to share with you something that I think is important, that I think focuses on the issue that we are a part of but is not totally contained within this church.

Now, brothers and sisters, we can sit here tonight and say whatever the outcome of this meeting is, it's going to be the Lord's will. We'd have to be pretty blind to say that that's the case, . . .

I have in my hand what you will find inside of the *Revelation Seminar Manual* that is used by this denomination in Revelation Seminars around the circle of the globe. This is part of what it says.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has no formalized creed, defining theological concepts which will never be given up. We hold that the basic truths of God's Word will, indeed, never change; our understanding of them may be altered by further light from deeper study of that precious Word. Consequently, we are ready to change our views at any time it is conclusively shown from God's Word we must if we are to remain in true harmony with the Bible. This means that the Bible is our only creed, and church teaching or tradition must bow and yield to that only rule of faith and practice for the church today; the infallible Word of the Living God.

That makes good sense. I think we could all agree that that's the way it ought to be. The problem exists when we do not see complementary writings to the Scripture in the same way, namely the Spirit of Prophecy. We don't even all agree, within the church's theologians, on interpretation of some Scripture. There's been a committee for twenty years entitled the Committee on Problems with the Interpretation of Daniel. Now they wouldn't have a twenty-year standing committed if . . . no problems existed. So let's be honest with ourselves and face up to the fact that we don't have all the answers, and it probably is not important that we have as many as we think we have.

Tonight some . . . have mentioned some very important things in terms of what is important to them. And because it's important to them, it's important to God; and it should be important to each of us. But that may bring conflict within the family. How do we deal with it?

As I look out across this congregation, I see many people — people who have conceived children out of wedlock; they're still in the church. People who have been unfaithful in their marriage vows, they're still in the church. I could go on, and I could open my own coat and you could look inside; but I am probably more obvious than many of you. And if you looked at my deficiencies and inefficiencies, the list would be long . . . What are we going to do about it, and how do we handle it? Do we throw everybody out who does not agree? Hopefully not, because we may not be moving at the same speed in trying to discover what God's will is for our lives and also for His church.

10:00 I'd like to share another quotation from the Spirit of Prophecy because I think it is important.

Precious light is to shine forth from the word of God, and let no one presume to dictate what shall or shall not be brought before the people in the messages of enlightenment that He shall send, and so quench the Spirit of God. Whatever may be his position of authority, no one has the right to shut away the light from the people. When a message comes in the name of the Lord to His people, no one can excuse himself from an investigation of its

claims. No one can afford to stand back in an attitude of indifference and self-confidence, and say: "I know what is truth. I am satisfied with my position. I have set my stakes, and I will not be moved away from my position, whatever may come. I will not listen to the message of this messenger; for I know that it cannot be truth." It is from pursuing this very course that the popular churches were left in partial darkness, and that is why the message of heaven has not reached them.

We seem to be living in a time of a second creation. We think because somebody says something of importance and with authority, and they are an authority, that it's true. They spoke and it's so. And we have a tendency as a church to generally accept that. Because as I have visited in some of your homes, brothers and sisters, some of you have admitted to me that for the first time in many years you've blown the dust off your Bible. Praise the Lord! It took a very traumatic experience to do that for you. I have done likewise. What is God going to reveal to us? Well, we would all like to think that we can identify that the Holy Spirit is using us, and we even pray for desired outcome because it is the Holy Spirit's will. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. It will work as It sees fit.

Now, brothers and sisters, we can sit here tonight and say whatever the outcome of this meeting is, it's going to be the Lord's will. We'd have to be pretty blind to say that that's the case, because this church has just been exposed to one of the most dramatic financial crises, because in committees they sat and prayed for God's will to be done, but they overlooked policy and invested money that's cost this church 21 million dollars in loss. So let's not presume on the Holy Spirit.

Our church has problems, but it is our church. What are we going to do about it? Are we going to tear it down? [Are] we going to take a look and see that changes need to be made doctrinally or whatever? Now I talked about my own inefficiency, and I'm not up here trying to be falsely humble, brothers and sisters. I believe it with all my heart; because the Lord has revealed to me some things about my own dereliction of duty. There are those of you who are probably sitting here tonight who have felt more keenly . . . than others that I betrayed your trust because I did not react when Phillip Wilson was terminated, as I should have.

I'd like to share with you something because I think it is important. We have conducted in this area, six times in eight years, a course called "The Work of the Church Elder". It was written by the [ministerial] secretary of the [General] Conference, Robert Spangler; and it was written for the Home Study Institute. I have taught this course six times. And until this year it completely went over my head the importance of these words that I want to share with you. And this points a finger right at me:

The great responsibility of the church Elder is emphasized by the fact that he is the last link in the chain of officers reaching from the leaders of the world church to the church membership, from whence come the recruits for the world work and for its support. The Elder therefore should faithfully pass on to the members denominational decisions and plans that keep the Lord's work and His church operating efficiently.

We are totally derelict in duty, as Elders of this church, of doing that. Do you agree with that? What forum do you have to hear what is happening? In fact, should you even care? It is important because we are not isolated as one congregation. We are part of a world church. Of that I plead guilty. I think it's time that we changed it.

Now I also heard another quotation paraphrased which is often heard. In many books you will read it in what we term the Spirit of Prophecy. And I will read it for you verbatim. "In the mighty sifting soon to take place . . . many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy, will then go out in darkness." Does that sound familiar? Or other paraphrases like it? Let me tell you where that originated and where it found its beginning. And it is a very effective tool to strike fear into the hearts of people who are conscientiously trying to serve a God of love.

In March 28, 1882, these were the words that were written by Ellen White in a letter to Uriah Smith. You see Uriah Smith was given some material to put in the *Review and Herald*. (Uriah Smith, by the way, was fifty years editor of the *Review*.) He did not agree with those articles that were given to him by Ellen White. He felt that they were her opinions and not testimonies, because they did not stand the test of scriptural comparison. So he refused to print them as the editor. She wrote him a

scathing letter, criticizing him for this and demanding a retraction. She wrote a letter to the Battle Creek Church to inform them that someone had rejected the testimonies and refused to print them. Just a human reaction, but the prediction in the time in which it was written...had a very decided intent. The mighty sifting soon to take place did not occur during the thirty-five years [of Ellen White's life after] the prediction [was] made; and Smith, though doubting, still remained in the church. He had to make a decision.

Now, brother and sisters, I stand before you as one who has felt that everything that Ellen White has written is infallible and the very thoughts that she thought. There may be some of you who identify with that. I have learned to recognize that she had some of the same weaknesses as the Bible writers did. But what she had to say was important. Most of what she has to say is devotional. But in matters of doctrine, what anybody writes, and what you read from any author, must measure up to the Bible standard. And that is the question that we each must settle. But it is not one that the church has been able to settle. Now I'm going to ask for your indulgence for about three minutes....

[At this point Cushman introduced a three-minute tape segment from a talk given by former *Review and Herald* associate editor and *Review and Herald* Publishing Association book editor, Raymond Cottrell, to an audience at the Loma Linda University Church, in 1979, on problems with traditional Seventh-day Adventist interpretations of the book of Daniel. The tape segment was played over the Central Church public address system.]

10:12 People have been confronted with this paradox, with this dilemma, of an imminent Advent indefinitely delayed, of a sanctuary doctrine that is really not the explicit teaching of Scripture.... again and again and again.... Paradoxically, the sanctuary doctrine which gave birth to the Seventh-day Adventist church has been the target of more criticism by the Christian community generally, and the cause of more defections from the church on theological grounds, than any other facet of our teachings....

Periodically over the past century, respected Adventist ministers, administrators and Bible teachers — many of them with decades of faithful service to the church, some of them over more than fifty years — have abandoned the doctrine as unscriptural and either voluntarily severed their relationship with the church or been disfellowshipped....

“Again and again the church has sought to dispose of the questions by disposing of the people who ask them — a procedure as... effective as attempting to cure cancer by disposing of the doctor who diagnosed it.”

Inasmuch as Ellen White affirms the sanctuary doctrine with it's investigative judgment, questions concerning the doctrine itself have inevitably involved the question of her authority on doctrinal matters. Over the past century the church has consistently reacted to questions relating to the traditional interpretation of Daniel 8:14, the sanctuary, the investigative judgment, as if those who ask the questions are themselves the problem.... Again and again the church has sought to dispose of the questions by disposing of the people who ask them — a procedure as eminently logical and effective as attempting to cure cancer by disposing of the doctor who diagnosed it....

10:15

If you would listen to this tape, it concludes by saying that these things are not really essential to our salvation anyway. Why are we so hung up on them? But they do become very important to us when we feel someone is in disagreement with them. We want to see the proper judgment meted out; that's only human nature.

I have supported Gospel Seminars for two basic reasons. When the church board of this church voted to openly discuss these issues that are being discussed in the church today, it afforded and decided to give it's pastor, at the time Phillip Wilson, under some guidelines the direction that it wanted followed — mainly to provide in an outline form the issues

traditional versus those that are being discussed. That was the vote of the church through the board. That process was cut short.... Many of you still had questions.... We have a problem, brothers and sisters, with what we think other people ought to hear. Not so much with what we hear, but it's what we think each other ought to hear. Censorship is always for your benefit....

I support the preaching of the gospel wherever I hear it — whether it's in this church, in the sanctuary, or on a street corner, or in somebody's living room. I will evaluate what is truth and what is not and make my own decision. And I cherish your right to do the same thing. If you choose not to, that is your right. But do not castigate people who do not see as you do....

10:20

Parents, my only concern for this church is primarily for the children and young people that you not give some of the dumb answers I gave my two children when I couldn't answer a question that they asked: the church believes it; or Daddy says it's so, so you believe it. That is no answer at all. You must arrive at a decision for yourself and be able to give an answer about spiritual things and what your church believes. And if you do not know, then you should find out. And individually the Holy Spirit will respond to that search for truth. Gospel Seminars encourages the personal, diligent search to verify that which is truth....

Let's keep first things first, important things in their proper perspective. Let's decide what is important in our relationship to God and make our decisions thereby and allow the latitude and flexibility for our brothers and sisters in the church to do the same.

10:25

Don Barlow: One thing I do believe is that the General Conference is in fact the authority that God has set here on earth and... I do support it....

Concerning organizations such as Gospel Seminars, if I may take just a moment and read this to you I think it would probably say clearer than what I can what I'm trying to say....

[Don Barlow quoted from the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*:]

.... Although all members have equal rights within the church, no individual member or group of members should start a movement or form an organization or seek to encourage a following for the attainment of any objective or for the teaching of any doctrine or message not in harmony with the fundamental religious objectives and teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Brethren... I believe that if Gospel Seminars was in fact a new light.... the direction would be different.... I like to think that they really are searching for new light, but I wonder about the motives behind the organization.... I think we as a church have the responsibility to police our church body. I think we were told in the Bible to do this. We're given ways and means to do this....

10:30

Frank Palmour: I'd like to read one other brief statement from the *Church Manual* if I might — if you won't rule that out of order. Page 249 of the *Church Manual*, I think it's the 1976 edition, deals with caution in disciplining members. And the statement was just made that we have to question the motives of Gospel Seminars. Now this, as I understand it, is a quote from *Christ's Object Lessons*, which would therefore be from Mrs. White, which would therefore be acceptable:

Christ has plainly taught that those who persist in open sin must be separated from the church, but He has not committed to us the work of judging character and motive. He knows our nature too well to entrust this work to us. Should we try to uproot from the church those whom we suppose to be spurious Christians, we should be sure to make mistakes. Often we regard as hopeless subjects the very ones whom Christ is drawing to Himself. Were we to deal with these souls according to our imperfect judgment, it would perhaps extinguish their last hope. Many who think themselves Christians will at last be found wanting. Many will be in heaven who their neighbors supposed would never enter there. Man judges from appearance, but God judges the heart. The tares and the wheat are to grow together until the harvest; and the harvest is the end of probationary time.

[At this point — and without relinquishing his chairmanship of the meeting — Pastor Coonley began to inveigh heavily, point by point, against everything Robert Cushman had said.]

Kenneth Coonley: The hour is late and there has been much said tonight. And I would like to say some things. First of all, I would like to say that I am very jealous for Jesus Christ and for His messages of truth. I am jealous for this church. For I believe that this church is God's instrument that He desires to use to finish the great work of the gospel. There have been some suggestions made tonight that this church has problems. And I suppose you couldn't get as many people together as belong to this church without so many opinions and problems. However, I believe it is the responsibility of the church to focus on the good that's in the church and try to develop that which is good. And there are appointed organizations within the church to deal with those problems. Now the statement has been made tonight that these issues have not been addressed by the church. But, my friends, they have been addressed by the church. And the church has spent thousands of dollars in addressing these questions. There were thousands of dollars spent at Glacier View in Colorado just recently to address these very questions.

Now you may say, well, these are not the same questions. But I sent — no, I did not send — I took a copy of the statements made by Phil to the Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference and asked for their opinion. I hold in my hand a letter sent to me from the Biblical Research Department. And it says:

I'm sorry to be so late in responding to the list of Phil's questions which you left. And truly sorry that the snow knocked out our face-to-face visit, but I guess we don't have much to say about the weather. I've looked over the questions, and really they are the same that Dr. Ford proposed.

This letter has run to some length, and I must close. I would say this, Ken, in closing, that what Phil needs is not more theoretical knowledge but a spiritual regeneration. You can argue against anything if you wish to take that position. We must have the eye salve of the Holy Spirit to understand spiritual matters, and Phil hardened his mind evidently against the truths that we teach as a people. He is deceived if he thinks he is acting as Jesus would act, to not only give up his faith but to want to stay and be divisive in the church. If you would find down deep in the bottom of his heart what is really his trouble, you might be able to help him. I'm sure it's not doctrine. My guess is that it's something, that all this rather, is a facade for trouble that lies much deeper.

This is the opinion of the Biblical Research Department of the General Conference after reviewing the comments that I left there for them.

There was a statement made that many of you have fallen into sin. Some of you may have committed adultery, some of you may have committed other sins — and that you're still in the church. And praise God you are. There is a difference, my friends, in falling into sin and looking to Jesus for deliverance from that sin and deliberately trying to destroy His church.

There was a statement made that we ought to be feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, and taking care of the blind. And I agree with that 100 percent. But if I believe this is God's remnant church and that the messages that we hold are precious and important, then part of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked and helping the blind to see is giving them the messages of truth.

It was said that there's a standing committee, and has been for some twenty years, because of problems within the church. There is not a standing committee for over twenty years because of problems, my friends; it is because of an earnest desire for this denomination to find all the truth that there is in these prophecies in Daniel.

It has been said that it is good for the church to face these dilemmas that we face here tonight because it has caused many of you to dust off your Bibles. But there is a statement in *Gospel Workers*, my friends, that says it is heresy that comes into the church that will cause you to dust off your Bibles and seek the truth.

It was said that we cannot believe [Cushman said, assume] that what is done here tonight is God's will; then we should never have come together, my friends; and there should never have been a prayer for the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit. If we cannot believe that the decisions made by this body tonight are divine, are divinely inspired, then we should not come.

The tape you heard tonight was rather interesting, and it was rather

interesting that it was Ray Cottrell who was chosen to speak to you tonight. And that it was prefaced by the remarks that Ray Cottrell was a respected theologian in this church and that he teaches at Loma Linda University. The facts of the matter are he is not a member of the staff at Loma Linda University. [Elder Cottrell is listed as a lecturer in the 1984-1986 Loma Linda University Division of Religion bulletin.] He does teach occasionally there, on special classes. And on asking the Biblical Research Department for Ray Cottrell's credentials, I found that he is not as well respected as a theologian as you would have been led to believe. [Elder Cottrell proposed the idea of a biblical research committee or fellowship to the General Conference in 1951. Annual Council voted it into existence in 1952. Cottrell was an active member until 1975.]

We were told that there's too much censure. And we were told that the administration of this conference is afraid that there's going to be too much open speech. Well I do not necessarily believe that, my friends; but I think there is a responsibility upon leadership to protect to the best of its ability those who are under its care and keeping. There is a statement in *Selected Messages*, book two...regarding statements made by Elder Canright. And Ellen White was challenged to listen to those statements. And she says:

Brother Stone wished for me to read these letters but I refused to hear it. The breath of doubt, of complaint and unbelief is contagious. If I make my mind a channel for the filthy stream, the turbid defiling water proceeding from Satan's fountain, some suggestion may linger in my mind, polluting it. If his suggestions have had such power on you as to lead you to sell your birthright for a mess of pottage, the friendship of the Lord's enemies, I want not to hear anything of your doubts, and I hope you will be guarded lest you contaminate other minds for the very atmosphere surrounding a man who dares to make these statements you have made, is a poisonous miasma.

It is important that your leaders take the position of protecting the flock. On page 368 in this same book you are told that it is difficult to hold fast to the beginnings of your confidence firm unto the end. And the difficulty increases when there are hidden influences constantly at work to bring in another spirit, a counter-working element on Satan's side of the question. So if your leaders in zealous activity encourage you not to do something, do not think that it is to try to restrict you, my friends; it is to try to protect you.

It was stated that there was an organization of Gospel Seminars [and] that those who were interested could hear the truth, or discuss and search for truth. I have asked those of our members that I felt that I should ask, who attend Gospel Seminars, if there is a search for truth. It has been suggested that our early forefathers were rebels and nothing was said to them; and that when one is considered a rebel today, that he is persecuted. To put oneself in the category of the early fathers of this church who spent hours and days and nights upon their knees begging and pleading for God to give light on any point of truth, and say that Gospel Seminars is a search for truth, when those who tell me who attend, there is no pleading for light on any point. It is a forum where you hear the opinions of the speaker.

It is said that anyone who wanted to go could go. And I agree with that. Anyone who could go, or wanted to go, could go. But I find, as many of you members have reported to me, that there has been pressure put on you to attend Gospel Seminars by visits from people in this congregation who support Gospel Seminars encouraging you to attend, asking you why you're not attending, and putting pressure on you because they are your friends to attend Gospel Seminars. So obviously it is not just those who are interested in a search for truth that are expected to be there, for if they wanted to be there they would be there.

I believe, with all my heart, that this issue that we face as a church is not just an issue of doctrine and it's not just an issue of petty differences between people. It is an issue of God's church fighting against principalities and powers in high places. We cannot take the position that it makes no difference what you believe and consider yourself a part of God's remnant. It can. We cannot take the position that it makes no difference what you teach as a church and feel that you are fulfilling the responsibility of God's remnant as it's outlined in Revelation chapter 14. I believe that those issues that are pointed out in *Great Controversy* and

10:45 in other places in the Spirit of Prophecy as well as the Scriptures as those events which we can expect to take place in the last days are now taking place. I believe that this church is in the shaking time. And there are numerous statments in this one book alone that says that there will be those who will try to destroy the foundations of this church, that there will be those who will set up their own beliefs, that there will be those who will form their own confederacies. And with those statements are statements which say now is no time for you to hide your colors. Now is no time for God's people to be cowards, she says. Now is the time for you to decide which way this church is going to go. Is this God's remnant? Are you going to tolerate an infiltration of every belief and doctrine that comes along? Or are you going to stand firm for this church and support it and do what God has called you to do as a part of the membership of God's remnant?

Now I was asked tonight to be quiet and not to use my influence. And I don't want to use my influence as a pastor, but I do want to use my influence as a brother in this church; because I consider this church the dearest thing that God has ever brought me to on the face of this earth. And if you think for one moment that I shall stand idly by and see it torn apart, you're foolish.

You must make up your mind what you're going to do when you are faced with this issue. And the word "motive" has been mentioned, and Frank spoke very clearly to that and positively and correctly. However, many people's motives have been questioned, and Gospel Seminars is at a point now where the motive is evident. It does not have to be questioned as to the motive of Gospel Seminar.

It was read from the *Church Manual* that you have a responsibility as a church to do something. You have a responsibility as a church to speak clearly about how you feel about this. You cannot sit idle; you must speak. You either must speak vocally or you must speak in silence, but you must speak. And a clear message needs to come forth from this meeting tonight; for I would have you know that I have received phone calls from numerous members of other congregations in this city that know that this meeting is being held tonight, and they want to know what Central Church believes about the Seventh-day Adventist message. What you do tonight is going to send a message to your fellow churches in Orlando. I have received telephone calls from out of state assuring me that there was a great interest in what was taking place here tonight. [Did Coonley tell them, as he told *Currents*, that it was none of their business?] And there are people all over this country, and some of your own church members who have, are not able to be here tonight, have told me that they'll be on their knees during these hours praying that God's will will be done here. And that's another reason why I believe that we can say that the will of God has been done.

10:50 You must speak, my friends, as to how you feel about a divisive organization that has support from some of your church members, particularly those in leadership. No one came into this meeting tonight, as a part of your pastoral staff, with any plans or any suggestions as to what you should do. That's up to you. But you have elders in your congregation who do not support the church and support Gospel Seminars. You must ask yourself how long shall these people continue to be in leadership? And how long are you going to allow this to go on? And tonight (it is 10 minutes of 11) . . . you dare not leave this place tonight until as a church body, you speak, one way or the other. And how you speak is going to determine the future of this church. Jim, did you have something you want to say? Just a moment, Herb.

James Davidson: Tonight I have heard many of you mention and speak correctly that one of the great needs in this church, within the Christian Church, among all of us, whoever we may be, is love. And I agree with that. And I am heartened by the fact that so many of you have stood up and you've all said the same thing in that respect, that we need to love each other; and I believe that in that love you also believe that we need to be concerned about each other as well. And I agree with that. And I would hope that tonight that if we would ask you if you loved everyone in this church and we would name names, my hope and my prayer would be that every single one of you could stand up and you could say "yes, I love that person." And you could name them by name.

Dear people, the issue before us tonight is not whether we should love each other; you see, that's not what is dividing us, because I believe on that issue we all agree that, yes, we should. And my prayer is, dear

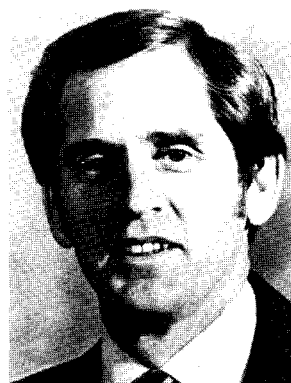
people, that you do love everyone regardless of who they are, regardless of what position they may take.

In the Adventist church down through the years . . . the church administration continues it today — a great deal of prayer and thought; and I believe revelation has come to God's church regarding the direction that it should take, regarding the truths of Scripture. And you know tonight someone said . . . we should be concerned with Scripture. I agree with that.

Dear people, I believe with all my heart that our doctrines are Scripture. It's not an either/or case. You see, what the Bible says is where our doctrines have come from. Certainly in the world today there are those that don't believe that. There are those when we hold evangelistic meetings that, when we talk about the seventh day Sabbath, they walk away and they say I'm not convinced that's true. That doesn't make it any less true, does it? There are those in the Adventist church today that say that the doctrines that we have are not true, and some tragically walk away. But that doesn't make them any less true either.

The question was raised tonight, well, that personally I've not heard what is being taught at Gospel Seminars. And perhaps that's true. I've listened tonight and I've listened this week as I've visited with Pastor Coonley and some of the members here in our church. And tonight, even yet, I want you folks to know one thing; and that was that when we got here together as a family, there's not anything that would have warmed our hearts more tonight, not anything that would have warmed our heart more during this past week, than for those whose names have been discussed tonight, to stand up and say we want you to know that we believe the doctrines of this church, that we hold them dear and we teach them as the church teaches them.

How long are you going to allow this to go on? And tonight . . . you dare not leave this place tonight until you as a church body, you speak, one way or the other.



Ken Coonley

But for those of you who haven't been to Gospel Seminars, I must urge you to ask yourself the question, did you hear tonight from any of these a denial that they do not believe the doctrines of the church? As I say, that would warm our hearts. It's not the intent of any of us ever to have someone who walks away and says that they no longer believe like this, the Adventist church.

You see, dear people, there's an issue that is at stake, I believe, tonight. And that issue again is not whether we love each other, because I believe we all can say we do; and I pray we act that we do. The issue tonight is those doctrines that have been prayed over, those doctrines which have been studied, and those doctrines which, I believe, have been divinely revealed, in many instances, to us. Those doctrines help us to know Jesus Christ. And, dear people, as we say, there's only one way to enter into heaven — and that is by knowing Jesus Christ. Can you agree with that? And, dear people, those doctrines that we have are not rules; they're not "thou shalt not's" or "thou shalt's". Those doctrines are there to lead us to one Man, the Man Jesus Christ. That's why they're dear — not because they're doctrines but because they lead us to Him.

And so certainly when we see someone who would attempt to tear down those doctrines, certainly when we see those who would follow those who no longer believe in the doctrines of this church, [it] saddens us; and it makes us concerned . . . out of love. Because it's the belief of this church that those doctrines which we hold, those doctrines which we believe, lead someone to Jesus Christ. [It] is our belief that when a person throws those out, that they're also going to be led away from Jesus

Christ; and when that happens, dear people, we become concerned. And so tonight it's not an issue of do we love that person; it's an issue of what can we do.

It's been a year now, a year that I'm sure has been in some ways a lot longer for you folks than us because we haven't been here all year. And many of you, I know, have told me personally that you have labored with these people; you have talked with them; you've prayed with them; and, yes, some of you have said that you've pleaded with them. This last week we did that with some of them. We wish again that they could have stood up and they could have said, "Yes, we want you to know that we believe in those doctrines, those doctrines that the church holds, that will lead us to Jesus Christ. "But they would not; tonight they would not.

11:00 And I want you folks to know that it's still my concern; [it is] because of the fact that I believe that those doctrines lead us to Christ that I'm concerned for these people. And I'm concerned that they remain true and they remain firm to that which this church holds dear. And in talking with them, and you folks talking with them, tragically that's not happened.

Sometimes there has to be other steps taken, perhaps, that would lead a person back. And my challenge to you people tonight is this, that if you love — and I believe you do — whatever it takes, even perhaps if it's a course of action that some would consider not loving . . . I urge you to do it. Because we want these people, do we not?

And so tonight, I don't have a lot else to say other than the fact that when you really love, you care about a person; and sometimes that care leads us to decisions that we have to make as perhaps a last recourse. That decision certainly is up to all of us and up to you. And again our only prayer tonight is that the beliefs that this church holds, the beliefs that, as I say, have been studied and over and over have been proved again, that you remain true to those — not because they're a creed and not because they're simply doctrines. We urge you to remain true to those because of the millions who have been led to Jesus Christ through them, 'cause that's why they exist.

[Herb Davis took his cue from the two pastoral speeches. The awful moment had arrived.]

Herb Davis: Pastor Coonley, Pastor Davidson, brothers and sisters of Central Church, members of the household of God, tonight I come to you as one who has been through this before. It is not new to me. I went through the same thing when I was transferred from here to Kentucky. Same problems that we face here tonight. You know, brethren and sisters, I don't enjoy sitting here in the pews and having people stand in the front and indicate that everybody else is ignorant. I don't enjoy that; I didn't appreciate it. Yet, there's one thing I want to say. Bob and Betsy Cushman has been two of the dearest friends that I have ever had. Yet I cannot stand, let my friendship for them, stand in the way of what I feel God wants me to do tonight. And I have a motion to make to this church tonight; it is a two-part motion. And the first part of this motion and the second part of the motion I think will take care of the major part of the problem. The first part of my motion is that Pastor Phillip Wilson, Betsy Cushman, and Ronn Schwenn be dropped from membership of this church. That is the first part of my motion. The second part of my motion is that our first elder Bob Cushman and Frank Palmour be placed under censorship. I thank you. [It is a tribute to Davis' sense of propriety that he stopped short of kissing each of his victims.]

Sherilyn Green: I don't know parliamentary procedure, so I'm probably not supposed to speak. But there was a misquotation made, and I would like to make it clear that both Bob Cushman and Frank Palmour affirmed their belief in the doctrines of this church.

Kenneth Coonley: I don't believe that the motion indicated that they didn't believe the doctrines of the church. The motion indicated they didn't support the doctrines of the church. Betsy, do you want to use the microphone?

Betsy Cushman: Since Sherilyn spoke out of turn, may I?

Kenneth Coonley: You may use the microphone, yes.

Betsy Cushman: I have been designated as the secretary/treasurer of Gospel Seminars; and . . . since my name has come up, [there's] something that I would like to say. I almost heard the violins play while Jim [Davidson] was talking there. They talked about the people in this church sincerely laboring. This week Hal Nash caught me and talked with me about Gospel Seminars. Herb Davis, who has loved me so long,

has never mentioned the subject. You know, I really have a problem with this. I'd like to read you something, and I think this is the bottom line:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Frank Palmour: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to [suggest] a point of order if I might. The *Church Manual* provides that

it is the fundamental principle of justice that every member has the right to be heard in his own defense and to introduce evidence and produce witnesses in his own behalf. No church should vote to disfellowship a member under circumstances that deprive him of this right, if he chooses to exercise it. Due notice should be given by the church to the member under discipline of intention to try his case, thus giving him an opportunity to appear in his own behalf.

Tonight. I don't think there has been any notice to any member that they would be placed under disfellowship [or] discipline tonight, and I would like to suggest to the Chair that that motion is out of order. Back on page 246 of the *Church Manual*, it talks about censure defined. It says, "An erring member may be placed under censure by a vote of the church at any duly called meeting of the church, provided the member concerned has been notified." Now when . . . the word . . . "notified" is used there, it obviously implies that he will be notified that that charge is being placed against him because it's provided later on in the *Church Manual*, approximately two pages later, that he is entitled to be present and present witnesses in his own defense. And I would suggest that both of those motions are out of order.

Kenneth Coonley: I might suggest to you, Frank, that there was a visit made to Phillip Wilson this week; and Phillip was told that his name would be discussed tonight and would most likely be brought up for discipline. There was a visit with Bob and Betsy Cushman this week for just a few moments, for that's all we were allowed; and Betsy was pleaded with by Jim and myself to remove her name from the officer list of Gospel Seminars so that you would not have to deal with her name tonight. We were told they had nothing to say to us. I called Ronn Schwenn and asked for an appointment to see Ronn Schwenn. And his remark was that he was as busy as a cat with diarrhea and did not think he'd be able to see me. Therefore there was no visit made with Ronn Schwenn. So the motion is in order. Yes.

Betty Matthews: I'd like to second the two-part motion that Herb Davis made.

Kenneth Coonley: I beg your pardon.

Betty Matthews: I second the two-part motion that Herb Davis made.

Kenneth Coonley: Alright. There is a motion and second on the floor. And you must now vote one way or the other on the motion. And the question is how do you choose to vote. Do you choose to vote by the showing of hand, or do you choose to show vote by secret ballot. It's up to you.

Susan Schwenn: When do we get discussion on the motion?

Kenneth Coonley: You can discuss the motion whenever you want to discuss it. The floor is open for discussion. Would you like to discuss the motion?

Susan Schwenn: Okay, the motion is for Ronn . . .

Kenneth Coonley: Would you go to the microphone so you can be heard?

Susan Schwenn: I just wanted to clarify the motion. Was the motion to disfellowship Betsy, Ronn, and Phil?

Kenneth Coonley: Yes.

Susan Schwenn: What was the second part?

Kenneth Coonley: The second part was to censure Bob Cushman and Frank Palmour.

Susan Schwenn: Okay . . . I would need clarification on what censuring is. But — I would like — is it now appropriate to amend, make a motion to amend before you vote on it?

Kenneth Coonley: Um-humm.

11:10

Susan Schwenn: That my name be added to that. I disagree with what the church is doing. I feel that . . .

Kenneth Coonley: The church hasn't done anything yet now, Susan.

Susan Schwenn: What it is alleged, okay?

Kenneth Coonley: There's a motion on the floor. The church must vote on the motion. Don't accuse the church until it does something.

Susan Schwenn: All I am stating is that at this point in time, I am displeased, disagree with what the church is doing. And I would like my name added to that list of the first three.

Kenneth Coonley: Okay.

Frank Palmour: Mr. Chairman, I object to the point that I was given some notice that I would be under censure . . . meeting approximately three hours this week . . . nothing mentioned to me that I would be placed under censure.

Kenneth Coonley: No, that's . . .

Frank Palmour: The *Church Manual* says that all should be appraised that if there's going to be disfellowshipping, that individuals be provided that information, not that it may be indicated to them that they may come under some discipline. The *Church Manual* is very specific in that regard.

Kenneth Coonley: The church makes a decision in business session. I am not the spokesman for the church. I can only speak to a person and tell the person what is likely to happen unless I intend to do something myself, as pastor. And I have done that with the exception of you, Frank; for I had no idea that your name would come up for censure.

Betsy Cushman: Pastor, you merely told me that my name would be an issue tonight; you did not say disfellowshipping or censure. You asked me to remove myself from my affiliation; you asked me to disassociate myself and save my friends the trauma of tonight in having to choose between me and their church.

Kenneth Coonley: That's right.

Betsy Cushman: That is not a notification, as I see it, of disfellowshipping.

Kenneth Coonley: Betsy, I cannot notify you of what I do not know. I notified you of what I did know. I, contrary to what a lot of people might think, have not campaigned for the disfellowshipping of anyone. Although it has been noised abroad all over this city that certain people were going to be disfellowshipped tonight. And it would almost appear that it has been set so that the church would be forced into this position. I did not encourage your disfellowshipping; therefore I could not tell you what the church was going to suggest tonight. I asked you please not to put them in a position where they had to make a decision regarding you, and you would not do it. Therefore you have created the situation that now exists.

Don Barlow: : Pastor, I would like a time limit put on the censureship before it was voted.

Kenneth Coonley: Amend the motion.

Don Barlow: I would like to amend it for a period of nine months.

Kenneth Coonley: Is there a second hold with that amendment? Betty?

Betty Matthews: Yes.

Kenneth Coonley: Yes . . . go to the microphone. Yes.

Nelson Acosta: I'd just like to add something to what I have already said and we have discussed here tonight. Before making any decision or doing the voting, either tonight or whenever, you should consider something. I hear talk about love in this church, and I hear talking about forgiving and all that; but I don't see that here. I can relate this to my own daughters. I got two daughters and they are in an age now where they are influenced by the world and they got many things against me. They don't go . . . in accord with me, in my beliefs, and in everything. A few things they think they are right and they believe it. They have their own beliefs and we have few discussions; and if I go along with them I'm a good father. If I disagree with them, I am bad. What I'm trying to say is, if this church see anyone disagreeing with the church as a bad person, or we have to be rejected, I don't see that . . . I don't do that with my daughter, even though I know that they, disagree with me and they are doing things wrong they should not be doing. I forgive them because they are my daughters. I love them.

Marthelle Tindall: Well perhaps there's two ways to look at forgiveness. I always thought that to forgive there was a repentance first. The Lord is long-suffering with us. I really hate to stand here before you

and say what I'm going to say . . . If I haven't contacted anyone that I should have, I stand before you to say that I'm sorry; but I did try to go to the one who instigated this. I didn't intend to say this. But I feel that I should. When this first came about, Phil will know that I wrote him, he and his family, a letter . . . Phil and I have talked on many occasions about things . . . I said open, let's open the Scriptures to Exodus 25 . . . 11:20 And it tells very clearly what the Lord had to say about the sanctuary in the wilderness, what it was to be like. Over in Revelation it tells us that in a vision one of the prophets in the New Testament saw in heaven the sanctuary, the two parts. Sister White says she walked through them in vision. Not in what she said but in vision. Now when I open the Scripture to Exodus 25, and the first words are, "And the Lord spake," I have to believe when the Lord speaks. And my testimony is tonight that if I don't believe what the Lord says, that I might just as well close the Book and do something else about it. So I'm going to, shall I say, second the motion? That we put an end to this divisiveness in our church and that we accept that that Herb [Davis] has suggested. And I do this with great sorrow, and I will open my arms, be the first one, if ever these people see this beautiful message that is presented in the Scripture. And I don't believe there's another one here that feels as I do that won't do the same thing. We'll open our arms just as wide as we can and say, welcome back, just like the father did to the prodigal son. [The prodigal son's father put no conditions on accepting his son home.]

Madeline Gloss: I know little about parliamentary procedure, but it seems to me that what just happened is not decent and in order. I don't know how to table the motion that Herb Davis made. I don't know what to do to do that. But I don't believe that we've questioned Betsy. Because these people are on the Gospel Seminar, does that mean that they totally believe in what Pastor Wilson is teaching and they totally disregard the doctrine of our church as we know it? . . . I don't know how to table that motion but if it can be tabled, I think it needs to be tabled. These people as Frank read, they haven't been questioned; they've affiliated themselves with a philosophy which I believe is detrimental to the Adventist Church in the future time. I believe that we are in the future time now, the time of the end — I do believe that. But this seems to be out of order; and because I don't know much about procedure, I don't know what to do about it. Maybe somebody can help me, or can nothing be done now?

Frank Palmour: Mr. Chairman, I would suggest that a motion to table is always in order. But I would like to find out from you, Pastor Coonley, whether you're saying that you will not, or you cannot, enforce the specific sections of the *Church Manual* which deal with church discipline, whether it be censure or disfellowship? Are you saying that you will not enforce them? They're very specific in what procedures are to be followed. If the church wants to disfellowship, then it says, "Notice must be given to that member." 11:25

And are you saying that you will not enforce that? It also says the same thing with regard to censure. Are you saying that you will not, or you cannot enforce that?

Kenneth Coonley: The church body is the one that shall speak, Frank. I cannot.

Frank Palmour: You as the leader who are here are required to make sure it follows certain rules of order that are set out in the *Church Manual*.

Kenneth Cooley: I can tell the church, but the church must vote this issue up or down. But you, Frank, are one who has accused me of being a dictator because I tell the church what to do.

Frank Palmour: I just asked you to answer a simple question.

Kenneth Coonley: Okay. And I cannot tell this church that it cannot act on the motion that is before it.

Frank Palmour: Okay. In other words . . .

Kenneth Coonley: If the church does not feel that it should act on that motion, it's up to the church to make that decision.

Frank Palmour: Okay. Thank you.

Kenneth Coonley: Just a moment. In regards to the statement that Madeline made . . . I just want to clear Madeline's point of view, for Madeline. The statement in the *Church Manual*, Madeline, does not say that one has to believe that which it joins itself with; it simply states that if one supports or encourages an organization or movement that has the objective of teaching any doctrine or message that is not in harmony with the fundamental religious objectives and teachings of the Seventh-

11:15

day Adventist church, that that person is subject to discipline. Not that they necessarily believe the doctrines, but they support an organization that is teaching a false doctrine as far as the church is concerned. Yes, brother.

Cecil Rolls: My name is Cecil Rolls. I've been a member here for over twenty years. I think the church made a mistake when they wouldn't let Phil Wilson speak what he wanted to speak, or what the board voted for. Now I think we're making another mistake in not following the rules as set forth in the *Church Manual*.

Now let me say this, that I think Phil Wilson is all wrong. I told him four years ago that I thought he was wrong. He told me four years ago that he believed that Ford was right and the brethren was wrong. So I'm not taking up for Phil Wilson; although I love Phil Wilson, I'm certainly not taking up. I think he's absolutely wrong in what he's presenting. But let's don't make another mistake tonight now and railroad this thing through if we're not doing it according to the rules and regulations set forth in the *Church Manual*.

Kenneth Coonley: Thank you.

Robert Cushman: Under discussion on the motion, I'd like to make a couple of comments for clarification. First of all, there was reference to a visit, a brief visit made with the pastoral staff. It was brief. Doctrine never entered the discussion. I guess if you labor with somebody you skirt the issues; you talk about something else. But a question of doctrine is the basis of this. You can put Gospel Seminars, and the title of an organization, up in the limelight; but it only confuses the real issue. Nobody has been to labor with me. Now, maybe you were afraid to [be] cause I'm the first elder; but my door is always open. Herb Davis and I go back a long time. But I think we have to recognize positions that we take and the influence we have on other people.

11:30 Brother Herb referred to a situation he had in Kentucky. And that was where there were some Brinsmeads that worked in the hospital; and so he fired them to clear up the problem, as he related it. Well, that's the way he saw the problem and acted very sincerely. But when people's economic future depends on their theological positions and slants, we're in a bad situation. But that's a decision Herb made.

I was instrumental in making a dumb one twelve [or] thirteen years ago, in Betty Tucker's case. She suffered because of it. My sorrow won't reclaim that.

I would like to find out from you, Pastor Coonley, whether you're saying that you will not, or you cannot, enforce the specific sections of the *Church Manual* which deal with church discipline

You like this sound system, folks, that's in this church, that we got a couple of years ago? It's second to none in this city. You agree with that, Jim? The money that paid for that came from a dear little couple who were shut-in for a number of years, partly voluntarily and then, involuntarily. But they shared some concepts that were different with this church; and even though they're dead, they wouldn't mind me telling you because we discussed those differences on a couple of occasions. They also shared some of the beliefs of Robert Brinsmead who's been characterized as an apostate. So it may be. But when their estate was handled, I was instructed what to do with the money. It bought our sound system. Now we aren't going to jerk it out and throw it away because it came from tainted money.

As to the motion, you can add my list [meant name] to that motion of the first three, because brothers and sisters, membership in this church is not more important than the freedom for people to make a decision on how they're going to find truth and what they are going to relate to in that search for truth, pure and simple.

Betty Tucker: I would like the church to know who I am tonight. I am Betty Tucker. I cannot understand why Bob Cushman brings my name up all the time as an issue when the ring issue didn't cause my family as much trouble as when he and Pastor Wilson took my son's name off the book. Now, Bob, how do you like for your wife's name to be taken off the book?

Sherilyn Greene: Yes, it's 11:30 p.m. Is there a way that we could maybe do this next Sabbath afternoon? . . . That's all I wanted. It's really late . . . Because I said what I said earlier, everybody's going to think I'm saying this because I support the right of the Gospel Seminars to continue; but I'm saying this because I'm tired and it's 11:30, and I have two children downstairs and I'm getting real mad.

Pat Palmour: We've had a lot of talking tonight, and I don't really have a lot more to say, but I do support the Christ-centered doctrines of our church; and I support the leadership of our church. It's been kind of tiring tonight to sit here and know that we're going to have to vote on this at the very end, and people have already left and are tired. I think I feel kind of a pressure to make a decision on some things that I feel are a little out of order, and a lot is at stake.

It's not just these people that have been censured or that we're about to censure or disfellowship that's at stake. I'm not really on the line; I'm not on the balance beam about to go one way or the other. I've made my decision. But I think maybe there are a few that haven't, and they feel maybe pressured to vote one way or the other on emotional issues and haven't really had a chance to think about it. And I think we really need to be careful not to hurt people, not to drive people away that still need some time.

And I don't know a proper way to handle. You know, I guess we have to vote on the motion; but I think it is a little unfair and an improper motion, and I think we need to consider that when we vote — not the way we feel about the names or the people that need to be disciplined. We've got to think of the impact of what we're doing tonight for the next six months, for the next six years, or as long as we're here, on people's lives. Maybe somebody has some suggestions on better ways to handle it.

If we do vote this motion down, I think maybe we could, you know, have the church board discuss some proper motions, some alternatives, bring it back to us, and let us decide again and talk to these people and give them, you know, a chance to clarify their positions to the church leadership, and give us a chance personally to go to them and find out . . . what type of discipline we think they really need that would help them.

Voice: Amen.

Don Barlow: Pastor . . . proceed with the vote taken.

Kenneth Coonley: Pardon?

Don Barlow: the vote taken.

Kenneth Coonley: Yes. There's a number of things that you can do tonight, my friends; and the last thing you want to do is to leave here feeling that you have railroaded something. If you do not wish to vote on this until you've given it further thought, you can table it to next Sabbath afternoon. You can just disregard the issue and nobody vote and reconsider another motion. You must do something one way or the other. If you want to bring this to a vote and vote it up or down, if it is voted down and then consider another motion, you can do that. If you vote it as it is and it passes, then you must live with it and not consider it as a railroad job.

Voice: Mr. Chairman, can we go ahead with the vote and get it over with one way or another?

Kenneth Coonley: Yes, you may. There's a question on the motion. Shall we go ahead and vote and make our decision by the vote. Vote it up or down. Do you want to vote by secret ballot or do you want to vote by show of hands? How many of you want to vote by secret ballot, may I see your hands? You'd rather vote by a show of hands apparently; so that we can get this settled tonight. Alright there is the motion on the floor. George, question has been called on the motion.

Gus Alvarez: Would you repeat the motion, please.

Kenneth Coonley: Alright. The original motion was that Phil Wilson, Betsy Cushman, and Ronn Schwenn be dropped from church membership; and that Bob Cushman and Frank Palmour be censured for a period of nine months. Then at the request of themselves, Susan Schwenn has asked that her name be added to those to be disfellowshipped and Bob has asked that the discipline suggested be disfellowshipping rather than censure. This is a very difficult decision that you must make, and only you can make it. And so it is time to vote. And, Jim, if you'll help me count the hands —

Marcia Alford: May I ask that my name be added, please, for disfellowshipping.

James Davidson: Question has been called.

11:35

Kenneth Coonley: Question has been called on this motion. If you want to make another motion after this one is voted.

Marcia Alford: Okay.

Kenneth Coonley: Listen folks, I think you ought to seriously consider a random casting of your name on the floor to be dropped from church membership.

Darl Wallace: Mr. Chairman, I believe parliamentary procedure is not being followed by the amendment to the motion that Susan Schwenn made. That amendment has not been voted on, if I'm correct.

Kenneth Coonley: Has not been? Okay.

Darl Wallace: More correctly, the amendment has not been seconded and it has not been voted upon. And the adding of names, for example Bob Cushman, was not put in the form of an amendment; so it's out of order.

Kenneth Coonley: Okay.

Susan Schwenn: Can we just back up and restate it and make one amendment to the motion, vote on it to include it?

Kenneth Coonley: Alright, there is the amendment that Susan Schwenn's name and Bob Cushman's name be added to . . .

Susan Schwenn: Was that Marcia, too, that wanted on or Judy? Was that Marcia that wanted on?

Kenneth Coonley: That was Marcia that wanted her name added.

Voice: Why don't you just ask people who want to be left in the church to come forward?

Kenneth Coonley: Yeah, that's, this, this is, this is (voices in background), getting out of hand with everybody wanting to just throw their name in the hat here, folks. It's tragic that you care no more about your church membership than that. Joe.

Joe Angelini: Will parliamentary procedure allow me to table this motion till next Saturday, right now?

Frank Palmour: Yes it will.

Kenneth Coonley: Yes it will.

Voice: . . . vote on that.

Joe Angelini: . . . can't vote on that?

Kenneth Coonley: Yes

Joe Angelini: I can?

Voices: . . . can table the motion anytime.

Kenneth Coonley: Yes, you can.

Joe Angelini: I make a motion that we table this motion until next Saturday and at that time we vote on it.

Voices: . . . no . . . no. (yelling)

Frank Palmour: . . . second to the motion.

Joe Angelini: There's a second to the motion. I call on the question.

Voices: (yelling) . . . cannot do this . . .

Joe Angelini: I think the people in this here audience need, in this congregation, need a little time.

Don Barlow: No.

Joe Angelini: to think about some real leaders.

Don Barlow: It's been a year, Joe. How much time do you want?

Joe Angelini: We need another week. We're talking about not one person anymore. We're talking about a lot of people.

Don Barlow: . . . motion on the floor . . . vote.

Voices: (yelling)

11:43

Kenneth Coonley: Let us do this, let us vote on the motion, the amendments to the motion. There's been so many motions and amendments and suggestions that I now, ah . . .

Darl Wallace: Mr. Chairman, if everyone agrees there is only one amendment to the motion, and that is the one that Susan Schwenn made herself. There is one amendment to the motion for Susan Schwenn's name to be added to the original three for disfellowshipping. Am I correct in that folks? And there has been no second to that amendment. And I'm not a parliamentarian, please help us here. We've got to do this right if we're going to do it.

Kenneth Coonley: Is there a second to that amendment?

Marthelle Tindall: Second.

Kenneth Coonley: Alright there is a second to the amendment.

Voices: ?

Kenneth Coonley: . . . Okay . . . well there was . . . The first amendment that was made was the amendment for censure for nine months that was not voted on. So we need to vote on that amendment

first of all. Is there a second to that amendment? There's a second to that amendment. All in favor of the amendment that the censure be for nine months may I see your hands? (Counting) Those opposed to that, may I see your hands? (Counting)

The vote is 81 to 24, so the amendment carries.

11:45

The second amendment is that of adding Susan Schwenn's name to the list of three to be dealt with as far as disfellowshipping is concerned. Is there a second to that motion? There's a second to that. All in favor of that motion, or amendment, may I see your hands? (Counting) Those opposed to that amendment? (Counting)

The vote is 90 to 25, so that amendment carries. Now —

Robert Cushman: I would offer as an amendment that my name be added. That is a motion for an amendment.

Kenneth Coonley: Bob you

Voice: I second the motion.

Kenneth Coonley: Are you certain you want to do that?

Robert Cushman: Absolutely.

Kenneth Coonley: There's a motion and a second to, to amend the motion to add Bob's name as well. Those in favor of that motion, may I see your hands? (Counting) Those opposed to the amendment? (Counting)

That motion carries with an 85 to 23 vote.

Marcia Alford: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make the motion that my name also, Marcia Alford, be included in that motion.

Jim Alford: I second that motion and ask that my name be added also.

Kenneth Coonley: Okay. If this is the way we're going to do it. Let's take the vote and see.

11:50

James Davidson: Was there a second?

Kenneth Coonley: There was a second, there was a second on the motion.

James Davidson: Was that a joint amendment?

Kenneth Coonley: It was a joint amendment with a second on the motion.

Voice: Pastor Coonley . . . Frank said that a table motion takes precedence over anything else in parliamentary procedure. If it does, we'd have to vote on that . . .

Kenneth Coonley: I'm not a parliamentarian. So I don't know whether it does or not.

Voice: I'm asking the question.

Kenneth Coonley: I don't know.

I'm very disappointed that you would allow this to take the course of action that you are . . . totally out of order and out of harmony with the Church Manual as stated in several instances.

Voice: If it does, we'd have to vote on that first.

Let's get this settled here. All those in favor of that motion, may I see your hands?

Voice: What motion?

Kenneth Coonley: The motion to add Jim and Marcia Alford to the list for disfellowshipping.

Voice: (inaudible)

Kenneth Coonley: To add to the list of disfellowshipping Jim and Marcia Alford.

Marthelle Tindall: If that is their request, then I think we could do nothing else.

Glen Kilgore: Anybody else who wants to go, speak so now.

Kenneth Coonley: May I see your hands? If you're in favor of adding those as they have suggested? (Counting) Those opposed to that motion, that amendment? (Counting)

That amendment carries 86 to 29.

Now, before anybody else speaks we need to vote on the issue on the floor that has been moved and seconded.

Judy Wilson: . . . Might as well include my name too, and not have to take a second vote and prolong this procedure any further. I would also like to make a motion that my name be added to be dropped from

church membership.

Voice: Second.

Voice: Question.

George Abernathy: Pastor, could I say a word, please, before we go any farther with this. It saddens my heart and I'm very disappointed that you would allow this to take the course of action that you are. It appears to me that we are totally out of order and out of harmony with the *Church Manual* as stated in several instances. I recollect that the *Manual* stated, and I believe Frank read it — if I'm . . . mistaken, correct me — but that individuals whose names are brought up for disfellowship or censure should be given an opportunity to speak in their own defense. Now I heard Betsy get up and say something, totally unprepared I'm sure; but initially the other two names, Ronn Schwenn and Phillip Wilson, they have not been given opportunity to say anything. And **Kenneth Coonley:** The floor is open, George. If anyone wishes to, if they wish to speak in their behalf, in their own defense, the floor is open for that.

11:55 **Miner Myers:** There is one thing I'd like to bring to your attention. Does these young people know what the penalty is, not knowing what they're voting for? We can make as much mistake for these young people not realizing. Maybe have been convinced, their names may be on the church board. But we do have a group, with teachers, and they can swing a vote one way or another. I've been in other churches. Does these young people realize when they hold their hands up what penalty will come if they be wrong? Do they realize that? That they can lose their life? I'd like to have you think about it a little bit.

Kenneth Coonley: Go ahead Jim.

Jim Alford: I'd like to speak to that just very briefly. I don't want to belabor the point too long. I have considered the issues, I think. I have prayed about it, and I have certainly considered whether I want to be a member of the Seventh-day Adventist church or not. But for the life of me, if I'm going to see my brothers and sisters censured and disfellowshipped because, as I understand it, they are a part of a divisive group, i.e. Gospel Seminars — and also, as I understand it, there have been no visits to Gospel Seminars by either member that made the motion, which is, I believe is Herb Davis (I don't think he's been to Gospel Seminars); as far as I know Betty hasn't been to Gospel Seminars; as far as I know Pastor Coonley has not been to Gospel Seminars; as far as I know Pastor Davidson has not been to Gospel Seminars; and as far as I know Hal Nash has been twice; and Corrine Wallace I think has listened to a tape on the investigative judgment, [in] which there is no gospel that I know of, well, let's say hardly any gospel can be in the investigative judgment — I just cannot see continuing on in an organization that would disfellowship people with this evidence that has been presented tonight.

Darl Wallace: Mr. Chairman, I hate to belabor technicalities, Mr. Chairman; but I believe we have a problem. I am not sure that a member can ask to be disfellowshipped. It is a technical point, but if you'll check the *Manual* I believe you'll find that a member can ask to be dropped and I don't know if that has to be in writing. But the technicality is that these people in defense of their friends and loved ones are asking to be disfellowshipped, and I believe that that is not correct.

[Frightened by the avalanche he'd started, Coonley began to backpedal]

Kenneth Coonley: There is a paragraph in the *Manual* relating to that, and that statement says, "Great care should be exercised in dealing with a member who requests that his own name be dropped from membership. Although we recognize the right of any individual to decide whether or not he will belong to a church, ample time should be given such a member for sober thought and reflection, and every effort made to restore him to a satisfactory experience." And since this has taken the course that it has, I feel like that I should suggest to you that this motion be tabled. Now, there's no question about the fact that, that something needs to be done; but there has been a wholesale of throw, wholesale throwing the name in a hat here tonight without much consideration being given to what's doing, what's being done, by these folks. There is no desire in my heart, as the pastor, to see all of these people disfellowshipped from the church, or any of them disfellowshipped from the church.

They've created a situation that's put you in trauma for the last year;

and now they've created a situation that puts you in more trauma; and I think it's unfair of you, of me as the pastor, to ask you to vote on this at this time. However, I will ask you to vote on whether or not you want to vote on this issue and give me some guidance as to what you as a church want to do. If you vote that you want to vote on this issue, then we'll take the vote. If you do not want to vote on the issue we'll table it to a future time. 12:00

Joe Angelini: Pastor Coonley, didn't I put a motion on the floor to table this?

Kenneth Coonley: Yes you did. And I don't, I don't know whether that precedes every other motion on the floor or not, I really don't.

Frank Palmour: Robert's Rules of Order which this church follows, as I understand it

Kenneth Coonley: Yes, it does, Frank.

Frank Palmour: We've got a motion on the floor, you've been to church board meetings and school board meetings and you're familiar

Kenneth Coonley: (interrupts) I am well; I, well I'm — thank you for telling me what I'm familiar with, Frank. I'm

Betsy Cushman: You certainly should have educated yourself.

Kenneth Coonley: I do know that there are motions to supercede a motion to table; and how much influence a motion to table has I really don't know. Do you have your Robert's Rules of Order with you, Frank?

Frank Palmour: No, I don't

Kenneth Coonley: Okay. So I don't really know and I do know that there are motions that will supercede a motion to table. So please as a church, give us

Herb Davis: Pastor Coonley: I think there's one thing that's overlooked by Brother Palmour. This motion received a first and a second, and after it receives a second it comes to a vote.

Voices: . . . No . . . second that . . .

Kenneth Coonley: There's been question called on the motion. Now folks, we could be here all night, and so tell me what you want to do.

Voices: . . . let us vote and see if . . . vote for this motion . . .

Kenneth Coonley: That's what I want you to tell me. How many of you want to vote on the issue tonight, may I see your hands? Hold them up high so I can count. (Counting)

Background voice: I think we ought to forget it for awhile . . .

Kenneth Coonley: Did you count those? (Counting)

Whispering: Did you count those?

James Davidson: (inaudible)

Kenneth Coonley: (Counting)

All right how many do you have? I counted those. Those who do not want to vote on the issue tonight, may I see your hands? (Counting) 12:06

I don't know how that can be. Well, the vote is carried to vote on tonight. Jim [has] brought up an issue and, as I stated, you've been put into a situation tonight where you have to vote on some things that you don't necessarily want to vote on by people requesting that their names be added to this list in a wholesale way. They're being unfair to you, to ask you to do that; but you've chosen now to vote on this, and I feel that you're going to have to vote it up or down now. You got, you got any light?

James Davidson: (chuckle) I don't know if I have any light or not. I just, I'm, you folks mentioning here about procedure, and I'm just questioning according to the *Manual* here; I fear that a person that requests their name to be dropped, such as has been done here tonight, is not in harmony with the *Manual*. And it's probably an incorrect motion to even act upon, given what the *Manual* states. And so I just, I have question as to whether or not we're following procedure to do that or not, if we're following the *Manual*? I don't know. What do you think?

Kenneth Coonley: What . . . do? We, we have a motion that was originally made; there have been numerous amendments made to that motion. And I'm, I am out of harmony with a wholesale adding to the list of names. And I feel that, as the pastor of this congregation, that Jim and I need time to talk to these people who are just wholesalely throwing their name in here.

Ronn Schwenn: Point of order, Mr. Chairman. The, the church just almost unanimously voted in favor of taking the vote.

Kenneth Coonley: (interrupts) I know that.

Ron Schwenn: And you've yo-yo'd this thing up and down.

Kenneth Coonley: (interrupts) Only because I'm concerned about you, Ronn.

Ronn Schwenn: you've castigated this group, and and the whole entire blame is on our shoulders. Alright, I'll take the blame, but deal with the church. The church wants to vote. Let them vote.

Kenneth Coonley: (interrupts) Okay.

Ronn Schwenn: Let them vote.

Kenneth Coonley: Alright. Let's vote.

Don Barlow: Pastor, Pastor. I agree with Darl Wallace. If there is a question of technicality here, let us stick to the original motion only — if there's any question at all — and let you have time to go to these people and talk to 'em. And if they want to . . . they can send you a letter dropping their membership. Right?

Ronn Schwenn: . . . Point of order. You took the vote, and it was almost the unanimous decision of this body . . . has come here in church business meeting . . . want to vote, the majority indicated they wanted to vote. Let them vote.

Donna Rupe: I was just going to say pretty much what Don just said. I think we should start over and stick with the motion that we originally set with, and those who request their memberships to be dropped, to you know, be able to talk with y'all; and if they still wish, you know, you know, settle that some other time, a letter or a request to the board or whatever.

12:10



Phillip and Judy Wilson

Ronn Schwenn: Point of order, Mr. Chairman . . . to do this whole thing over again . . . you either operate as a chairman and respect the wishes of the majority vote . . .

Paul Miller: Mr. Chairman, I haven't made any statements tonight, but I make a motion that we reconsider the ones, because there's a tec, there's a question on whether this is in harmony with the *Church Manual*.

Ronn Schwenn: Point of order, Mr. Chairman. We have . . . polled the august body assembled here; over three-fourths of them indicated to you that they want to take a vote

Paul Miller: (interrupts) I'm going back on the motion, Ronn, and we're gonna, I would make a motion we vote, we vote again.

Kenneth Coonley: . . . out of order, Paul

Ronn Schwenn: (continuing) . . . you can be here tomorrow morning at 6:30 doing exactly what you're doing; you need to vote this up or down. That's what you wanted to do; that's what's been made available to you; that's parliamentary procedure. You've indicated to your chairman your wishes and all this vacillation going on, that's part of the complaint . . . point of order.

Darl Wallace: Alright, Mr. Chairman, I have one suggestion. We can get this whole thing over in ten minutes. Those of us who disagree with the motion, which I do, I recommend that you vote no on this motion. Then I recommend that a new motion be made exactly what you want, and I'm not making any suggestion there. If you want those original names on that motion, then vote yes on that motion. But let's vote this motion down. That's my recommendation.

Voice: I second it.

Kenneth Coonley: The only problem with that is my friends, that if you make another motion, these folks evidently are going to go through this whole thing over again and add their names to the list again.

Ronn Schwenn: (interrupts) Point of order, Mr.

Darl Wallace: (interrupts) And again I'm sorry to interrupt you, Ronn

Schwenn, but let me speak to this

Ronn Schwenn: (continuing) on the motion.

Darl Wallace: (continuing) Let me speak according to the *Manual*. We are not following the *Church Manual*. The *Church Manual* suggests that members may drop their names after time to consider. This time is not being considered, and therefore the technicality of adding your name to be disfellowshipped is not correct.

Paul Miller: I second that motion.

Ronn Schwenn: Point of order, Mr. Chairman. They have the right to vote the motion up or down. They do not need another motion.

Voice: Mr. Chairman

Kenneth Coonley: Alright. Let's take the motion, the vote. That's what you want to do as a church body, and we'll take the motion, the vote. And if these dear people want to reconsider, we'll welcome them back into our church, if you vote them out. How many are in favor of the motion?

Voice: What motion?

Voice: Anybody know what we're doing? (Giggles.)

Voice: . . . in its entirety.

Kenneth Coonley: The motion in its entirety now is that Phil Wilson, Bob Cushman, Ronn Schwenn, Susan Schwenn, Betsy Cushman, Jim Alford, and Marcia Alford, and Frank, well no, and Judy Wilson be disfellowshipped from the church. And that Frank Palmour be placed under censure — if I understand the motion correctly — for nine months.

Frank Palmour: There were two motions, Mr. Chairman, one of them had to do with censure and the other had to do with disfellowshipping. It would be improper to vote on both of them at the same time.

Kenneth Coonley: It was one motion with two parts, Frank. Alright, if we're going to do this, let's vote and, and decide which way we're going to go here tonight. Those in favor of that motion. Those opposed . . . That motion carries with a vote of 93 to 48.

12:15

Now let me say that this is a serious thing that has been done here tonight. And I want everyone who has been involved in this motion to know that this congregation — in spite of what you may think — is a loving congregation. And they wouldn't do what they've done if they didn't love you . . .

EPILOGUE

The executions without due process that took place at Orlando Central may, in the end, not have served even those who wanted peace at any price. There has been a virtual evacuation of the Central Church by many who had served in lay leadership positions (see box Orlando Central exodus).

In December the president of the Florida Conference resigned. A man of less conscience than Henry Carubba might not have felt the stress of the Orlando Central situation that — added to the general burdens of his position — led to his recent resignation for health reasons. He will be replaced by Malcolm Gordon, president of the Carolina Conference.

During the Sabbath service a week after the lynching, Pastor Coonley called the church into business session. He had written to the congregation three days earlier (12 September 1984), saying he had "become convinced that a gross error was made in censuring Frank [Palmour] and I take full blame [f]or allowing it to happen."

This seemed to be a very strange statement, given Coonley's refusal to steer the church into orderly procedure the previous Saturday night. When repeated appeals were made to follow the *Church Manual*, Coonley had expressed the necessity of deferring to the will of the congregation. Now, by taking the blame himself, he was disenfranchising the will of the church and, presumably, the will of the Holy Spirit. After all, Coonley had argued that "if we cannot believe that the decisions made by this body tonight are divine, are divinely inspired, then we should not [have] come." But he had the cheek, four days later, to ask the congregation to "waive your option to discuss the motion Sabbath morning . . ."

On what basis (for what reason) had the Orlando Central Church voted to censure Frank Palmour in the first place? No reason was provided. Similarly, no reason was given, nor has subsequently been given, for disfellowshipping any of those who were turned out 'round

Orlando Central Exodus

DISFELLOWSHIPED:

Robert Cushman - head elder, S.S. teacher, finance committee member, church board member (that very day taught S.S. class, acted as head elder on platform, and welcomed in new members to church)

Betsy Cushman - chairman improvement and decorating committee and reception committee, assistant head deaconess, member of church board

Ronn Schwenn - S. S. teacher (taught S. S. class on Sept. 8)

Susan Schwenn - reception committee, just resigned as asst. senior S.S. superintendent (served in foyer on Sept. 8)

Jim Alford - elder, personal ministries leader, member of church board, finance committee member (led out in personal ministries Sept. 8)

Marcia Alford - deaconess, reception committee member (served in foyer Sept. 8)

Phillip Wilson

Judy Wilson - organist

CENSURED - (then re-instated)

Frank Palmour - elder, finance committee member, communications secretary, member of church board

RESIGNED POSITIONS:

George Abernathy - head deacon, member of church board
Jocelyn Abernathy - child evangelism coordinator, member of church board

Florence Frey - community services unit leader, member of church board

Joan Frazier - kindergarten S.S. teacher

Sherilyn Greene - kindergarten S.S. leader, organist

Irene Strickle - church clerk, personal ministries secretary, church board member

ASKED TO BE DROPPED FROM MEMBERSHIP:

Irene Strickle

Joan Frazier

TRANSFERS OUT:

Gary Sheffield - elder, church board member

Rebecca Sheffield - reception committee member, deaconess

David Peterson - choir director, church board member

Sherilyn Greene - kindergarten S.S. leader, organist

Lloyd Wickliff

Karen Wickliff - deaconess

Florence Frey - community services unit leader, member of church board

Isaiah Frey - assistant head deacon, church custodian, member of church board

Kim Drury

NO LONGER ATTENDING CENTRAL CHURCH:

Frank Palmour, Louella Drury, Gloria Wade, and 10 others who would prefer their names not be mentioned due to jobs and other church ties.

midnight the previous Saturday night.

Even some of those who favored the extreme discipline meted out to so many of the Central Church leaders became nervous when they reflected on the proceeding. On Monday, September 10, two days after the lynching, Hal Nash's three concerns regarding the September 8 business meeting were listed in the Central Church Board minutes:

1. Should the members that were disfellowshipped have had more prior visitation and notification of possibility of actions

which might be taken against them.

2. Priority of motion to table original motion.

3. Members recommending their own name for removal of membership.

After presenting his concerns in writing, Nash expressed his fears to the board extemporaneously:

... if there were procedural errors Saturday night, the actions taken by the church body may be invalid and unacceptable. Second, if procedural errors were indeed made, much strife, bitterness, unrest, dissatisfaction, wholesale dissent and criticism ... I feel are going to be a greater problem plaguing Central Church than that which we addressed Saturday night.

I think that there is more potential [for problems] after the meeting, if indeed it is determined that ... there were procedural errors. If there were, and if something is not done to correct that, I think we may have a bigger "bull by the horns" than we did before. Now, I think that the criticism will become such that this action by Central Church will become a millstone around the church's neck, and around the pastoral staff's neck. The church will drown itself in the ineffectiveness of a pastorate that may be made nil ...

Pastor Coonley is also represented in the same board minutes:

Pastor Coonley stated that he intends to take tape of Business Meeting to professional parliamentarian[sic] to determine whether or not procedures were handled properly at Business Meeting. He will write letters to those disfellowshipped[sic] members advising them of their rights to a hearing of [sic] it is found that the amended motions of the meeting were improperly made.

So far, none of the disfellowshipped members have received notice from anyone "advising them of their rights to a hearing." In fact, appeals to both the Central Church pastorate and the Florida Conference officers by several of the disfellowshipped either have been ignored or rejected.

... this congregation — in spite of what you may think — is a loving congregation. And they wouldn't do what they've done if they didn't love you

The board did vote "to ban distribution" of the business meeting tape and stated that "Pastor Coonley will have sole control of the tape." Fortunately, he does not; and *Currents* has a four-page "Memorandum Re: Breaches of Roberts' Rules of Order" during the Orlando Central Church business meeting of 8 September 1984, written by a practicing attorney and member of the bar association who heard the tapes. The attorney lists and describes seven "blatant breaches of Roberts' Rules of Order." Three of those breaches are excerpted here:

1. The thrust of the purpose of the meeting as stated by the Chairman was that the organization called Gospel Seminars be dealt with Since the thrust of the agenda was stated by the Chairman to be that the church deal with Gospel Seminars, the motion to discipline church members was in violation of Section 9 of Roberts' Rules of Order.

4. Section 42 of Roberts' Rules of Order specifically provides that in order to retain the impartiality required of the chair at a meeting, the Chairman is precluded from exercising the rights of commenting on the merits of a pending question In order to participate in debate, the Chairman must relinquish the chair

5. Section 60 of Roberts' Rules of Order, which are part of the organizational documents of the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, provides specific steps to be taken for discipline of a member This section provides . . . that there should be a charge specified against the member to be disciplined and he should be "formally notified" of the charge Member to be disciplined must also be given time to prepare his defense and be allowed to appear and defend himself None of these specific rules . . . were followed

Beyond these breaches of order, it has come out since the lynching that early-teen children, who were outside playing during the business meeting deliberations, were rushing in to vote with their parents. During the previous week, students in an Orlando Junior Academy Bible class were divided into groups, where one mother reports they were

told to break up into small groups and “pretend to be a Church Board.” They were to elect a chairman and were to discuss what action should be taken concerning a “person” whose case was remarkably similar to the case of Phillip Wilson.

There are those who casually shrug off the loss of a few “dissident” members from one congregation. Others use the excuse, as Hal Nash did, “that regardless of the procedures . . . the outcome would likely have been the same. . . .”

Perhaps, since the disfellowshipped are still Christians, it would be inappropriate to ask the Central Church lynching party to meditate upon the parable of the lost sheep — casting itself for the role of Shepherd. The thought may elicit a throw-away snort or two. But, if Ellen White was inspired, surely the writer of the following, applicable words was inspired when he wrote, from his own repertoire, that “large and awful faces watch from beyond; and on those faces there is no smile.” □

(Phillip Wilson interview concluded)

sea without any hope of safe passage to another port had it not been for these friends who encircled us so much and provided us with fellowship, support, and loving concern. A number of these friends, incidentally, are denominationally employed and continue their association with us even at the risk of consequences from the church leadership. Some have even expressed the fear of being seen talking with us in public — concerned that negative consequences may result.

Now, the Adventist church is supposed to be “the caring church.” But it’s interesting to note that the very ones who have demonstrated so much care and concern for us are now being looked at with a jaundiced eye by the leadership of the church, because they have demonstrated this “caring” attitude.

Throughout this experience, the thing my wife, Judy, and I have said repeatedly is that we have begun to understand what genuine friendship really is: People who reach out to you and express love and concern, and help you in time of need.

CURRENTS: That is gratifying.

WILSON: That is our real church — the church without sectarian definition. □

(Testimonies to the Orlando Central Church concluded)

The whole weight of New Testament testimony is that God’s ideal plan was that Jesus should have returned in the first century A.D., not long after His ascension to Heaven. This is clearly taught from Matthew to Revelation and recognized by the vast majority of New Testament scholars. Consider the following texts for support: Matt. 24:34; Matt. 10:23; Matt. 16:28; John 21:23; Acts 3:19, 20; Rom. 13:11; I Cor. 7:29-31; I Cor. 10:11; Heb. 1:1; Heb. 9:26; I John 2:18; James 5:1-3, 8, 9; Rev. 1:1, 3.

Part of our problem is that one half of the denomination does not know what the other half is saying. Our own *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* agrees with this position, and sets it forth at several points. The *Daniel* quarterly of 1967 teaches the same. More recently (April, 1979) [the late] Dr. Don Neufeld has written to the same effect in the “Review.”

Brothers and sisters, I have not elaborated on each point of issue, for this would necessitate a much longer letter. However, this should help you to understand the reason your Executive Committee took the action to terminate Brother Wilson.

I can well understand why my colleagues on the Conference Committee felt the way they did. They are all sincere men and women who want only to do what is right. I do feel, however, that had our church been more open in its discussion of these controversial matters so that all are more knowledgeable of the issues, we would move with much less haste in dealing with those who differ from us.

There are some other points that might be brought out, but those listed above are basically what Phillip has expressed.

This statement is of some concern because of its broad implications. Is it being implied that there are other doctrinal matters which could be raised? If so, let them be advanced and let us see if they withstand close scrutiny any better than the above 12. But, if the implication of “other points” is not doctrine, then what is he suggesting that the record will reveal which would justify my termination? We have a right to know! If nothing is forthcoming then this statement should be retracted.

After his presentation, the Committee felt there was no other alternative. Brother Wilson was asked to surrender his credentials and not return to the pulpit.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church for several years has had a policy which addresses how to deal with ministers and other workers who have doctrinal differences with the church. That policy stipulates the formation of a Peer Review Committee for the purpose of hearing and evaluating the beliefs of the person in question, then reporting to the appropriate governing body. Our chief administrators helped establish these policies. But when it came to implementing them our conference president and union president who had to vote on these policies, along with the conference secretary and conference ministerial secretary who should have because of their positions been well aware of these guidelines, sat there and never disclosed to the Conference Committee this procedure. Consequently, acting with an incomplete understanding of the policies, and not being properly advised by our elected leaders, the Committee did do the only thing they felt they could do consistent with their convictions. Unanswered questions which still go begging for answers are: “Why was not the Conference Committee more properly advised by our leadership?” “Why did our conference and union leaders not follow the very guidelines which they helped establish?”

I am sorry for the delay in this explanation. However, it was all presented to the church board by your conference officers and Elder Graham the following night after the action was taken. I might add that a number of non-board members were also in attendance.

It is true that on Wednesday, September 28, conference officials did meet with church leaders to advise them of recent events. But that is not reporting to the entire church. An entire congregation was traumatized by what happened and they too deserved a full explanation from those elected to serve them and whose salaries they pay.

Without question, this has been a most traumatic experience for Orlando Central. It has been that for me, also. However, Brother Wilson and I are still friends and I hope this friendship will always continue.

I can add that this was a traumatic experience for my family and me also. Elder Carubba and I remain friends and brothers in Christ. He was the minister of God who baptized me into the body of Christ and I shall be forever thankful for that.

[Here the points at issue in both letters end.] □

The shattering sex discrimination case of Silver vs Pacific Press Publishing Association

BETRAYAL

Merikay McLeod

*Adventist Currents' publisher, Mars Hill Publications, Inc., is pleased to share this excerpt from the galleys of Merikay McLeod's forthcoming book, **Betrayal**. For a review of **Betrayal**, read George Colvin's "The Memoirs of Merikay." Merikay's friend and sister in the work, Lorna Tobler, has provided an overview and analysis of the struggle for equal pay and opportunity at Pacific Press entitled "Who Is the Head?"*

March 1972

The biggest monkey wrench in the world has just been dropped into our life. My husband Kim has lost his job. He's really discouraged. Strange how important a job is to a person's self-image. Probably more so for a man than a woman.

At least when I first came to the Pacific Press he was working in Seattle and able to help with the bills. Now he's home and depressed. He's not sure what he wants to do. We've talked about his returning to school to get a master's degree.

I only want him to be happy, to feel good about himself, to feel as though he's doing something with his life. We both have a strong need to contribute, to feel as though we're doing something significant.

I'm sure that if he decides to enter school, I can ask for head-of-household allowance since I would be the financial "head" of our household. That extra money could cover all our bills plus Kim's college expenses.

I talk to Max Phillips, the other assistant book editor, about my requesting head-of-household allowance. He thinks it is a good idea. He's just finished putting Jeanette through her bachelor's degree. If I support Kim through his master's, I'll be in a similar position to Max's — sole wage earner in our family.

April 1972

I talk with Richard Utt, my supervisor, about asking Press manager Leonard Bohner for head-of-household allowance. He laughs, blinks rather nervously, then says it might not be a bad idea. He asks me to give him some time so he can write a letter to Bohner first and pave the way.

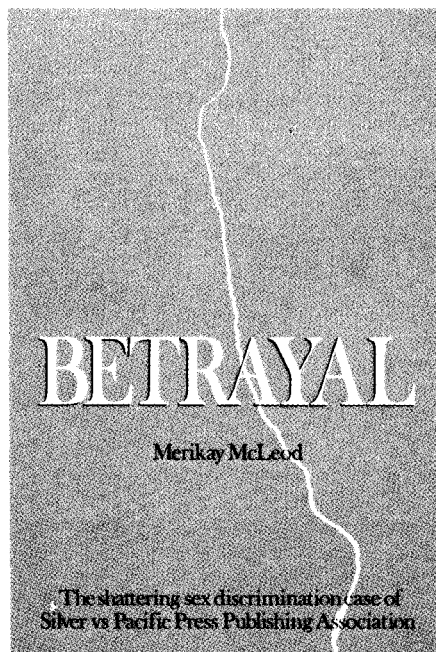
He asks if I want him to go along. I decline. It seems I should ask on my own. I should act like a head of household.

I tell my friend Lorna Tobler, Lawrence Maxwell's secretary. She just stares at me. Then she smiles a funny little smile as though she doesn't believe I'll go through with it. But later in the day she stops by, full of enthusiasm.

"You just might get head-of-household," she

waves a small pamphlet toward me. "Here are the new wage scale guidelines from the General Conference. They go into effect July 1. And listen to this." She reads aloud: "The wage scale provides one basic salary scale for each job classification based on education and experience to all employees without discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, age, national origin or color, with minimums and maximums expressed in percentages as well as in dollar amounts per month.

"While no recognition of the difference in financial responsibilities between those who are heads of families and those who are not is given in the basic wage scale, it is recognized that the differences are to be provided in the living allowance granted."



She looks at me. "Now here's the good part. 'On the basis of need determined by marital status, dependents and financial responsibility, an additional amount of money may be paid to employees without discrimination on the basis

of race, religion, sex, age, national origin or color.'"

We laugh, then giggle.

"Well, the government and the General Conference agree that I qualify," I say.



Kim registers for summer classes at San Jose State University this morning. He wants a master's degree in educational technology. In that course he can make films, and he's always wanted to be a film maker.

As excited as he is about school, he thinks my asking Bohner for head-of-household allowance is risky.

"I want you to take Max with you when you see Bohner," he insists. "If for no other reason, it will illustrate the similarities between you. Max just put Jeanette through school. You'll be putting me through. Max does the same kind of work you do. The two of you together should make a strong statement. And it will probably keep Bohner from eating you alive."

I don't think Len Bohner will eat me alive, but I'll ask Max. At least he'll make a good visual aid.



May 10, 1972

Elder L.F. Bohner, Manager
Pacific Press

Dear Len:

Merikay tells me she wants to talk with you about her personal financial affairs. She says her husband, Kim, is being laid off very soon, or has already been laid off, and without a job, plans to go back to school. She wonders if she could not receive some of the fringe benefits as the head of household, supporting the family.

I realize this is somewhat irregular and not according to the long traditions of church institutional policy.

I also realize that Merikay does not have the pleasing appearance or personality of Barbara. But I hope this will not influence you unduly. The important thing is that she is doing superb work in writing and editing for us. I don't know where we would go to get a replacement. She is doing as good work as any man could do, and better than any young man we might have brought in, that I know of.

I know that younger people today do not take the attitude that you or I might have taken 25 or 30 or 40 years ago — that we will gratefully accept whatever the church pays us and get along on it the best we can. We are living in a prosperous country; and young people have much higher expectations, even from the beginning of their employment, than we used to in earlier days. But I do hope that we will take a liberal, conciliatory attitude and not respond in such a way that it will create a situation which will discourage Merikay, who is certainly one of the outstanding writers of the denomination.



Courtesy Merikay McLeod

I realize that she is young, a bit controversial, and has not quite finished her college work. But on the other hand, she is far beyond most college graduates in her ability to do excellent writing and editing. So I hope this fact will balance out the other considerations.

Thank you for giving consideration to this viewpoint.

Cordially,

Richard H. Utt
Book Editor



Although I'm sure Bohner will give me head-of-household allowance, Kim is worried. He insists we meet with an attorney he heard lecture a few months ago. Her name is Joan Bradford.

It's a bright, sunny spring day when we meet her for the first time.

Joan Kurt Bradford is a tiny, fragile-looking woman with short black hair and snapping eyes. She's fifty-two years old, the same age as my mother.

She listens while I explain Pacific Press' head-of-household system. Then she says the system is illegal. She asks if I want to sue.

"Of course not," I laugh. "I just want to know if what I'm asking for — head-of-household allowance — is legal. Am I within my rights?"

She says, "The Press' head-of-household system is illegal; under the law you are entitled to equal pay for equal work. And since it seems you have a clear-cut male counterpart, asking for equal pay is certainly legal — and fair."

I feel better. Kim is still sure there's going to be trouble.

I think there'll be some shock, some confusion perhaps, but not much more. My request is too practical, too fair, too just.



Max is all excited, thinking we're going to have a fight when I ask for head-of-household pay.

Lorna just smiles, making me feel like a really stupid kid going in for the slaughter. She's encouraging, but I don't think she believes I'm going to get what I'm asking for.

Kim thinks I'm right.

I'm plain scared. I've never done anything like this in my life. I never even asked how much I'd earn when I was being interviewed for the job. And now I'm going to go in and ask a man old enough to be my grandfather for head-of-household allowance!

I stand in Lorna's office smiling confidently and saying, "Of course I'll get head-of-household. You just watch. It's only fair. I qualify — the General Conference and the U.S. Government agree on that. You know the old axiom: 'Ask and ye shall receive.'"

I hope I don't look as scared as I feel. I hope my voice doesn't quaver when I ask Bohner. I hope I don't throw up.

Why is it so hard to ask for things you really deserve — especially when your request concerns money? I always feel like a groveling beggar when it comes to money.

"Ready?" Max pokes his head in Lorna's office, where I'm confidently telling her there'll be no problem persuading Bohner. I nod, and off we go.

Bohner's secretary ushers us in. When I was here last, almost a year ago, Bohner quizzed me about my faith in Ellen G. White.

Now I'm in for another uncomfortable session with the big boss.

Leonard Bohner enters. I'm struck with how large he is. He seems to tower over us both. He shakes hands with Max, smiles and nods toward me, and takes his seat.

For a moment there is silence. I try to breathe deeply, to relax. He looks at me expectantly.

"Did you get Richard's letter?" I ask. The words sound louder, more confident than I feel.

He nods. "Basically, didn't it say Silver is no longer working and so you want some fringe benefits?"

"Uh huh."

The phone rings; he picks it up quickly and talks for several minutes.

Max sits near the door, back straight, eyes first on mine, then on Bohner's. I sit close to Bohner's desk. I wish I were prettier. I wish I didn't have so many butterflies in my stomach.

He sets the receiver on its cradle, then turns to me.

"Since you got Richard's letter, you know my need," I say. Bohner seems to straighten papers on his desk.

I continue, "The reason I asked Max to come with me is that I thought it would help you see the fairness of my request." Bohner seems to



Courtesy Merikay McLeod

brush dust or crumbs off his desk. "Because we are both doing the same work," I continue, "and we both have spouses who are in college. Yet he is receiving much higher wages."

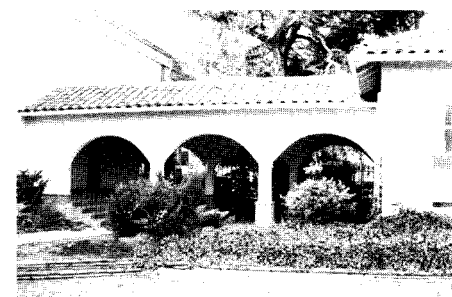
"Yes, but Max has an advanced degree, Merikay. And about six years of editing experience. You don't even have one year's experience yet."

"But I have ten years' professional writer's experience, plus my experience as assistant editor on the largest insurance trade magazine in the Northwest," I say quickly, surprised at my strength. "That might not be equal to a degree, but it is something. I'm not just a rank beginner."

"Well, I don't know. There are other women working here, four or five, who have children in school. And we help them out with their tuition." He is quiet for several seconds, as if considering my request. My hopes begin to rise. I'm sure he'll do what's fair. I begin to smile.

"If we do something for you, and those women in the bindery come in expecting the same thing, then where will we be?"

I'm confused. Am I understanding him?



Courtesy Merikay McLeod

"I really don't think a woman can do the same work as a man in everything. Like Max here, he goes out to the churches and preaches. He stands in the pulpit, representing us and *The Signs*. If we sent you, the churches would look down their noses at us."

My face begins to burn.

"Besides, I don't think the base salaries are that different. When Barbara was here, she and Max were making almost the same. I think he made \$2 more a week."

"But when I got married," Max speaks up, "my check took a big jump. I got all sorts of benefits added on."

"Just the rent subsidy," Bohner snorts. "That's the only thing you got increased. And it wasn't that much. Maybe \$15."

Max leans forward. "Well, it was so big I called the Treasury Department to see if the computer had made a mistake. And I got other benefits. For example, I can cover Jeanette with insurance."

"I'd like to get life and health insurance for Kim," I say.

Bohner sputters, his face turning pink. "Now do you really think we could do that?" His voice condescends. "Times may be changing, but the husband is still the head of the house. *He* should be supporting you. You should be the one going to college. You need a degree worse than he does."

My face burns again.

Max jumps in, "But we have men in the Book Department who haven't even finished high school. And they're making big salaries."

Bohner says, "Well, now, that's something different. A salesman doesn't need a B.A. to sell books. But an editor, an editor really needs a degree."

I try to steer the conversation back to the original point.

"I'm merely asking for the same pay and benefits you would give a married man with my qualifications."

"Well, we've never had anyone working in that department without a degree before; so there's no precedent," Bohner says. "I don't know what we can do."

"You could have hired a man," I say. "And if you had, you'd be paying him more and giving him more benefits than I'm receiving. I'd simply like equal pay for equal work. I do the same work Max does; I'd like the same benefits. I'm a married person with a dependent."

I couldn't believe my mouth. My fear had all but disappeared. I was actually talking with Bohner now, actually asking for what I wanted. And I wasn't groveling or apologizing.

"Merikay, your having a dependent is really not the Press' concern, is it? I mean, we can't be held accountable for a decision you and your husband came to," Bohner says. "Kim is supposed to be bringing home the bread. If you two decide that he'll return to school, why should we then have to raise your salary?"

"Because I'm doing the same work a married man is doing, and am getting paid so much less." I can't understand why he doesn't understand. It's so plain and simple.

Max speaks softly from his chair, "You know, the law states that equal pay should be paid for equal work, regardless of sex."

"I don't know about that," Bohner says.

"It could be very embarrassing for us," Max says.

Bohner doesn't seem to hear. He's looking at me. "Well, what if we give you 'head-of-household' and next week Kim goes out and gets a \$20,000 a year job. Are we supposed to cut you back?"

"You have men working here as heads of household whose wives work at jobs earning \$500 or \$800 a month," I say, "and you don't cut back those men's salaries."

Bohner turns red and nearly shouts, "Let's not throw a red herring on the table. We're talking about you and Kim."

I think it's amusing that he turns red just when he's shouting about red herrings. I don't like his question but I answer it.

"I don't think Kim's going to get a \$20,000-a-year job next week," Bohner doesn't respond but stares at me with a shocked and angry face.



Courtesy Merikay McLeod

"Basically, I'm just asking for the same pay and benefits that a married man in my position would receive. I think that's a fair request."

Bohner's voice is cold. "This could very well be our parting of the ways."

"Yes it could," I say, surprised at how calm I am, how confident my voice sounds. "Because I can't live on the money I'm earning now."



Courtesy Merikay McLeod

Bohner mumbles, "We usually tell women what they'll be getting and they can take it or leave it at the time of employment."

"I wish you'd told me."

"Well, it never came up. By the way, when are you going to finish your degree program?"

"I'm taking classes at San Jose State, and I'm doing correspondence classes."

"Good."

"You know," Max says, "the law states equal pay should be paid for equal work, not taking title into account. I really think we should think about that."

"Well, we'd really have a problem if those women out in the bindery asked for what Merikay wants. I don't know what we can do."

His words hit me like a freight train. *Those women in the bindery*. I had automatically assumed those who headed households were receiving head-of-household pay. Those bindery

women are widows and divorcees, raising children alone, doing the Press' grimmest, hardest work. Suddenly I realize that no woman in the entire institution receives head-of-household pay. My mouth drops open. It's as if someone just poured a bucket of ice water on me.

Bohner's secretary opens his door to say that his next appointment is waiting.

Bohner stands and walks us to the door. "We'll see what can be done. There's more than one way to skin a cat."

"Well, if you fire Merikay we're going to be in a horrible mess," Max says. "We need another editor right now; and if she goes, well, we're just swamped."

Bohner shakes hands with Max, then me. "Don't lose the faith," he says to me. "We'll see what we can do."

I can't believe what I've just been through. I went in there scared to death, did the best reasoning job I could, and came out with absolutely nothing. Not one indication that the man understood what I was saying. Not a word about anything except that the women who are the sole breadwinners and work in the bindery would really cause a problem if they wanted head-of-household pay.

We enter Max's office. "Well, what are you going to do?" he asks. He's always asking that.

"I'll write a follow-up letter, and then wait to see what happens." I sound so mature, as if this is the kind of thing I do every day.

"I'll tell you something," Max speaks slowly, seriously. "If you take on the big boys, you've got to be hard as diamonds, because they will be."

I walk back to my office.

As the excitement — the adrenalin — drains away, depression sets in.

Not only did Bohner miss my point, not only did he give nothing — not a word of understanding, not a word of sympathy, not a promise of change, not a hint that the Press would offer me something more than I'm already earning — but I learned that no women, not even those who are struggling to raise families and put children through church school, receive head-of-household pay.

In other words, head-of-household really means "male."

I compose a letter to Leonard Bohner.



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The Memoirs of Merikay

by George Colvin

Novelist Kurt Vonnegut once observed that organized religion was one of the best ways human beings now have, in the absence of extended families, to fight loneliness. Certainly this is true of Seventh-day Adventism, where references to "the church family" are constant and to a great degree justified. And in the coziness of it all, we often forget the cost. *Betrayal* reminds us.

It all began so innocently. A young woman, editing in an Adventist publishing house and rapidly developing a denominational reputation for sensitive and inspiring writing, went to the publishing house manager in May 1972 and asked for the same wages already being paid to a man doing the same work in the next office.

It wasn't as if she didn't need the money: her husband was out of work and wanted to go to school, their car was in bad repair, and they were being reduced to returning groceries to get enough change to do the laundry. It wasn't as if she didn't have support: her immediate boss and her male colleague both backed the request. And it wasn't as if the publishing house couldn't afford it: the house's income had doubled over the past ten years, and it was at that time the wealthiest publisher in the church.

But the manager not only said, "No"; he said, "Never!" And the results of that "Never!" are the stuff of the tragedy recounted in *Betrayal*. The young worker lost, one after the other, her trust in leadership, her creative zeal, her congregational and institutional "families," her denominational writing career, her health, her job, and her husband.

Nor were the losses all on one side. The Seventh-day Adventist church lost a talented writer — a subtraction that those who understand the often dismal quality of Adventist writing can appreciate. It lost an exceptionally talented secretary, Lorna Tobler — fired for assisting Merikay. It ended up paying out over \$1 million in legal fees and judgments. It received a good deal of largely unfavorable publicity. And the church found itself making, through the mouth of a Catholic attorney, arguments that were and remain shocking:

*that the Adventist church no longer has any aversion to Catholicism;

*that Adventist church structure is hierarchical, with all church power — including disciplinary power over employees and members — concentrated in the General Conference Committee;

*that the Adventist church is free to choose which laws it will obey and which it will disregard, but that government for its part must enforce the decisions of church leadership;

*that church leaders may sue members in the name of the church at will, but that employee-members who do likewise are committing a

heinous sin and making themselves eligible for firing and disfellowshipping.

But *Betrayal* is not primarily a legal analysis. Instead, it is written as Merikay's diary — the story of the events immediately before and during the challenge to a powerful organization by a few people who wanted to see right done, for the organization's sake as much as their own.

Their last point is central. Merikay and her colleagues deeply loved the Adventist church. They also deeply abhorred sex discrimination, and they therefore wished it removed from the church they loved. And they kept encountering the hostility of those who could not believe that in this matter the organization was not self-correcting. This hostility revealed the darker side of the "church family." While this "family" can be wonderfully sustaining to those it considers "faithful members," it can display toward those considered "traitors" and "apostates" a viciousness far beyond what most merely secular organizations are capable of. *Betrayal* records such conduct in detail.

An incident, not recorded in *Betrayal*, captures the essence of this attitude. After Merikay was driven to sue Pacific Press, one of Merikay's friends happened to be eating lunch with some Pacific Press employees. Talk turned to a hobby, parachute jumping, that Merikay had taken up; and one of the employees, with a pained look, said, "Why is the Lord doing this to us? How is it that He can keep letting Merikay's parachute open?"

"Why is the Lord doing this to us? How is it that He can keep letting Merikay's parachute open?"

Though engagingly written (what readers call "a real page-turner"), *Betrayal* is not a happy book. It is mainly a story of hope repeatedly renewed and constantly disappointed. The feeling is ever of steps going downward, or of someone lost underground and trying one dead-end passage after another in a vain attempt to find, somewhere, the light. Even the eventual — very eventual — victory occurs "off stage"; it is somehow irrelevant.

What, therefore, makes *Betrayal* so valuable?

For one thing, books like this one powerfully reinforce the message of a vitally important admonition: "Put not your trust in princes, neither in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (Psalms 146:3). The touching faith in leaders displayed by Merikay in the beginning and by many of her coworkers throughout — a faith to which the leaders continually fail to measure up — is one of the most painful parts

of *Betrayal*. *Betrayal* gives the lie decisively to those who urge that organizational problems will magically disappear if only a few good men are put in charge. For the men who were in charge, by and large, did not lack goodness, at least of a conventional kind. What they lacked was the desire or ability to do right when their own prerogatives or those of the organization they led were called into question.

Betrayal shows as well the mortal dangerousness of some of their ideas. Ideas, it has been observed, have consequences. And the ideas revealed in *Betrayal* — that women are fundamentally inferior to men, that one's religious community can and should be isolated from the general culture in which it functions, that organizational loyalty must transcend any particular principles — have profound consequences. Those who find these ideas appealing must understand those consequences.

Betrayal is also important as a contribution to a neglected field — twentieth-century Adventist church history. Though written as a first-person narrative, *Betrayal* reveals to those who read it with understanding how painfully far the Adventist church has come from those pioneers to whom purity of individual conscience was a far higher principle than corporate solidarity. In doing so, *Betrayal* implicitly poses a vital question: are the present problems in Adventism merely a temporary and transient difficulty, or are they systemic?

Finally, *Betrayal* shows clearly that the divide on questions of equity in matters of sex is not itself a sexual one. Some of Merikay's strongest supporters were men — and thus regarded by the men in authority as doubly traitorous. And some of those most bitterly hostile were women. This situation is not limited to Pacific Press; that women's worst

enemies are often other women is a widely observed if poorly understood phenomenon.

Because *Betrayal* is very much focused on Merikay, it does not really attempt an understanding of the motivations of her opponents. Those motivations, however, were complex, ranging from end-time fears inspired by overripe apocalypticism to a more sober appreciation of the real dangers of intrusive government — dangers more apparent now than when the Press cases began. This characteristic is more a limitation of *Betrayal* than a real fault, since it is simply outside the book's scope.

As has often been observed, Adventism is now in a time of transition, without consensus on many critical points. In its generally accurate, if not dispassionate, effort to discuss the vital personal effects of one of the major events in the recent Adventist past, *Betrayal* is a help to those trying to form the future. □

Who Is the Head?

by Lorna Tobler

In 1972 Merikay Silver had been at Pacific Press for a year when her husband lost his job. At that time she was twenty-four, and she — being very naive — thought that the head-of-household allowance was for the person financially responsible for a family. Pacific Press management, of course, informed her that only a man could be head of a household. They said that, by definition, women were not heads of households.

Head of household is the key to understanding what might otherwise not have been understandable at all. The issues sometimes were very confusing; but the case was all about the question of who is the head. Merikay, naturally, was refused head-of-household benefits. She was told that if she were granted a head-of-household allowance, then widows with children would have to have it. After having many discussions with various levels of management at Pacific Press (including their General Conference superiors), and having received no satisfaction, Merikay filed a class action lawsuit for herself and other women Press workers similarly discriminated against.

In 1974 another suit was filed strictly because of Pacific Press retaliation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that equal pay for equal work be given as well as equal opportunity for professional advancement. In addition, it prohibits any employer from discriminating against employees who insist on those rights or who complain about noncompliance.

This type of retaliation did occur. I was fired three times by Pacific Press, and Merikay received numerous threats of firing. As a matter of fact, in an attempt to manipulate me, even my husband was threatened with the loss of his job. So at that point the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), a federal agency, undertook a suit of its own. This was strictly for retaliation by the Press. We were not plaintiffs in that case. Both Merikay Silver and I were intervenors, but the plaintiff was the EEOC. It was that suit which brought the enormous reaction from the General Conference that surprised us very much.

The church's defense was known as the "hierarchy defense." It is a legal construct that superficially, at least, seems full of promise. The idea goes like this: In cases of a religious dispute, the government — on the principle of church-state separation — may not intervene. But in such cases, there is often a civil issue where property is concerned. If there is a schism in a congregation, for example, who gets the church? A cathedral might be involved, or a whole series of churches. And who determines true doctrine, or who is the true bishop? There is a history of case law on this very subject.

I was fired three times by Pacific Press, and Merikay received numerous threats of firing . . . even my husband was threatened with the loss of his job.

In such cases the court has traditionally looked to the official authority in the denomination involved. If the church has an official hierarchy, then that hierarchy usually is the trustee of the property; and the court awards the cathedral to the bishops. Needless to say, that didn't exactly fit our case. We were not schismatics; we were not ministers arguing about control of the church; we did not want any property. Nevertheless, church leaders, through attorneys, argued this way: Since Adventists have a hierarchy which controls the church, then that hierarchy is the

only source of authority among Adventist believers, — exercising control over Adventists in all matters of faith and practice. Over such matters the government has no say.

This is a very old argument. It goes back to the Middle Ages; in fact, the term "benefit of clergy" originally had nothing to do with marriage. It meant that clergy had special immunities — civil immunities — and could not be prosecuted by civil authorities. However old the argument, I had never heard it — and certainly not from Adventist pulpits. I had not learned it at Union College. I had also never read anything like it in the *Signs* or the *Review* or *Our Little Friend*. It was against all my Adventist training, and I was really shocked to hear it used against me by General Conference leaders in court.

To apply it specifically to our situation, General Conference and Pacific Press representatives said that this Adventist hierarchy had the authority to determine the status of my or any layperson's membership. The church's spokesmen said they could pronounce to the court whether we were Adventists and what kind; and, in fact, they did.

At this point, in one sentence of their brief, church counsel said:

If the church is a hierarchical one, as the Seventh-day Adventist church is, the resolution of the matter by whatever body in which the church reposes determination of ecclesiastical issues is conclusive. In this case, that is General Conference.

In order to push the matter a little further and to turn the case into a religious controversy, that assumption was followed with this statement: "Sister Tobler, by her long service and capability has attained the status of credentialed missionary and is a minister of the church." (In case you have pondered the subject of women ministers, this has implications for that issue.) Church counsel added: "Whether her recent action in becoming a plaintiff in this suit against the church requires any change in her status has not yet been determined by the ecclesiastical authorities."

These assertions required a little research on the part of the EEOC, which really did not want to get into this chamber of First Amendment legal horrors. Nevertheless, its representatives had no choice. Their investigation took them to the *SDA Encyclopedia*, the *Church Manual*, and other official church publications. One particular EEOC attorney had a good sense of humor, and he carried the day many times for us when things looked particularly bleak. In his reply brief he quoted from the *SDA Encyclopedia* under "minister" on page 798: "Authorized to conduct worship services, to preach, to perform the baptismal and marriage ceremonies; and to conduct the Lord's Supper." He then stated: "The Pacific Press management would be quite surprised to find its editorial secretaries and assistant book editors conducting the Lord's Supper and baptizing in the printing plant, or anywhere."

Understandably, the judge was not very impressed with the church's arguments on this point; and in his final opinion he simply stated, "Authority in the church rests in the church membership. None of the official Seventh-day Adventist documents refer to the church as hierarchical."

Since that time I have heard much discussion of the term "hierarchy" used as an off-hand reference to the leadership of the Adventist church. The term should be the subject of serious scrutiny; because name changes often come about incrementally — through *de facto* usage rather than through a considered application. There is the danger that we could transfer the locus of church authority from its members to an elite few by default.

The issue of Pacific Press retaliation against the plaintiffs eventually came to trial. It was a five-day trial, and it was the only real trial in all of this litigation. The ruling was in our favor, and an injunction was issued against the Press. The press appealed the injunction; and after about a

Lorna Tobler is now a legal assistant specializing in worker's compensation in San Jose, California.

year the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled, but not on the merits of the case. In fact, the ruling surprised everyone, including the defendants. The court ruled that the EEOC was in no position to bring this suit because it was really on behalf of a private party. Merikay should have amended her own complaint to include retaliation, the court said. And, after all that work, it turned out that the EEOC had no standing to represent her in court.

So, in 1977 the EEOC very patiently filed a suit on my behalf. I had filed no suit on my own behalf; therefore the EEOC had jurisdiction. In 1978 we attempted to settle both cases — the one brought by the EEOC on my behalf and the one that Merikay Silver had filed on her own behalf. We almost reached settlement, but the Press would not commit itself to a policy of nondiscrimination. Their concern was to preserve what they considered to be their First Amendment rights. They argued that neither the court nor any other secular body has the right to investigate — much less adjudicate — their pay policies; that they were answerable for their practices to the General Conference alone, and not in any case to civil authority.

We tried to accommodate their First Amendment sensitivities. I was agreeable to their voluntary commitment to nondiscrimination — a commitment that would not involve recognition of government authority. In other words, I would have been satisfied if the Press itself had made good on General Conference written policies. The church could say, "We are not bound by statute but we, on our own honor and of our own volition, pledge ourselves to nondiscriminatory wage policies." We thought we had it worked out; but at the last minute it was found unacceptable, and we headed for trial in both cases. But no trial occurred. In chambers the Press agreed to the voluntary commitment. Two months later, however, they had gotten cold feet — this time for good. They would not make that voluntary commitment to non-discriminatory practices.

After Merikay settled her suit, there was a trial in the EEOC's case on my behalf. It was a very brief one, and it was not on the issues. It was simply an attempt to determine the amount of damages.

The 1979 decision in my personal case was that head-of-household allowance had been denied me on the basis of sex alone. That decision was appealed by Pacific Press — an appeal decided against the Press in May 1982.

Meanwhile, in 1981 the Federal District Court ruled on a separate EEOC class action suit for all the other women in the class, based on the same set of facts — that head-of-household allowance had been denied them on the basis of sex and sex alone. The court ruled that the Press was also liable for that infraction of federal law.

Significantly, in three consecutive decisions the courts ruled that Pacific Press is subject to federal law and that it would be required to make restitution for the money withheld from women workers on account of sex discrimination. The Press leaders thought they would appeal the May 1982 decision to the Supreme Court. A year went by.

They asked for an extension of time. That extension was granted, and it expired in December of 1982. At that time the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a writ of mandate to the District Court, and the Press was required to make restitution in my case.

All that remains is for the Press to disburse restitution funds to all the women in the suit. The Press has put the money in trust with the EEOC. It is a large amount because of all the interest that it has drawn over this decade — over \$700,000 now for about 140 women. Some have died in the interim.

Actually the Pacific Press cases were about money and sex. These are subjects that always make people nervous. Any time jokes are told about either, there is nervous laughter. People don't know quite how to relate to them. In some ways money and sex seem unrelated, but they are in fact frequently joined. Balzak wrote a whole series (*The Human Comedy*) on the subject that seems to consume so many people's lives. With a little consideration the relatedness of the two comes into focus.

The common denominator is power. I didn't understand that at the beginning. I was almost as naive as Merikay. I didn't expect her to meet with the success that she expected to have; but I didn't understand quite why. I just thought it was tradition — that people get used to certain attitudes and it is hard for them to overcome the inertia of their prejudices. I didn't really examine the basis for it. I didn't know why it

was so important. Only through very hard experience did I see the large part that power played, and that is what I believe made it so difficult to resolve what should have been a straightforward question of simple justice.

The issues are mainly two: sex discrimination as practiced by Seventh-day Adventists, and the authority structure in the church under which this discrimination operates.

When examining the issue of sex discrimination and trying to decide whether or not Adventists practice it, socio-economic, legal, and religious elements must be considered.

There is a clear division of labor among Adventists. Some of it is informal, some of it is traditional, and sometimes the two overlap. But at Pacific Press the division was quite pronounced. That fact was even used by Press management as a defense in court. Press claimed, "we don't have to pay women the same as men because we segregate women from men by jobs. They don't have equal jobs." This didn't turn out to be entirely the case, but almost so.

In their jobs at Pacific Press, women were infrequently under perpetual tutelage. They were always assistants, always occupying the position of support. This is common in the medical professions. A physician will ask a nurse what the problem is and what she suggests should be done; then she will be told to do it. Then she thanks the doctor for telling her to do it. The nurse's authority of expertise was not enough; she had to have the official sort.

It is true that those occupations that women do most often are typically paid less. They receive less in status and authority as well.

In advertisements a male voice tells women which cleanser to use in the bathroom or kitchen. The voice of authority is male, even though the product involves occupations that women usually do. This kind of expertise is not convincing. We all know really what it is about.

Another aspect of sex discrimination is related to the question of whether women are considered self-reliant people or defined as "dependents." This is not a uniquely Adventist idea. It exists, for example, in the Internal Revenue Service. Is a couple's income for two people or is it income for one person who has a dependent in the form of a spouse — namely, a wife? The latter assumption carried over into the Adventist head of household pay policy.

A recent editorial on the subject of shelters for battered wives indicated the shocking extent of this problem. But there were protests from the legislature that making such shelters available would break up the home. In other words, give women an option and they might take it. The manager of Pacific Press said the same thing: If we give women an opportunity to have good jobs, they will take them, and the home will suffer. This made little sense because the women he was talking about were already working outside the home.

Wedded to the Pacific Press sex discrimination case are deep philosophical questions: Who controls work, the organization of work, and the remuneration of work? And who should control who does what work? It is not an easy question, even for one who is prejudiced from one point of view or another.

"The Pacific Press management would be quite surprised to find its editorial secretaries and assistant book editors conducting the Lord's Supper and baptizing . . ."

The legal questions are equally difficult: What is civil authority? Who gives government the right to rule? How far should that rule extend?

At least as complex are the religious questions: What is religious authority? Who decides that? What is religious freedom? Who is entitled to it? Who guarantees it?

Another religious authority question is, does Christianity provide for a ruling class? Is sex discrimination morally justified? Can a legitimate case be made for sex discrimination? There are those who have justified it. And, again, who will decide this question — specifically, among Adventists?

Although we hadn't posed them — we simply wanted equal

treatment — we received answers from the court on these very difficult questions. These questions came before the court because, for the defendants, it was a question of authority.

In the case the EEOC brought on my behalf, the court ruled on the legality of the General Conference wage scale because the Press had adopted wage scales that were recommended by the General Conference. These wage scales differentiated among employees on the basis of sex and marital status. Under this scale, married men received a higher rental allowance than single men of equivalent seniority, who, in turn, received a higher rental allowance than female employees of equivalent tenure, regardless of their marital status.

On the question of Adventist doctrine and sex discrimination, this is what the court found: "The Seventh-day Adventist church's basic doctrines are completely consistent with the policies set forth in Title VII of equal employment opportunity and equal compensation for men and women." As far as the court was concerned, there was no clash between law and Adventist belief, or at least Adventist teaching.

On the legal point, the individual right to nondiscriminatory employment and equal protection of law, the court ruled this way:

There are several interests that cumulatively outweigh the infringement alleged by the Press. First is the interest of all individual employees of religiously affiliated organizations in the protection of their statutory right to employment free from sexual, racial or ethnic discrimination, and the utilization of the relief mechanisms embodied in Title VII without fear of reprisal.

On the religious point, again this was the ruling of the court: Since the Press admits that the doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist church incorporates the principle of equal pay, Press cannot rely on an alleged exercise of any specific religious belief to immunize its head of household compensation practices from EEOC scrutiny."

In other words, the press cannot hide behind God's skirts. Perhaps "cloak" is the biblical word.

On authority structure (who is in charge here?), this is what the court had to say?

Tobler received living allowances not based on the nature of her duties or on any contribution she made to the faith, but solely on her sex. Plaintiff has established a prima facie case of sex discrimination under section 703, as to the payment of household allowances. Defendant has failed to produce a non-discriminatory reason justifying the different pay practices. This court has already found that the Press' termination of Tobler was in retaliation for Tobler's filing charges with the EEOC and intervening in the EEOC action, seeking preliminary relief. The Press has failed to come forward with a legitimate non-discriminatory explanation for its conduct. This summary reflects a compilation of information in the Press' wage scales, which were organized according to substantive job classifications, and information in an admission by the Press that the job categories, with the exception of three individual cases during the period 1970 to 1973 were staffed exclusively with employees of either one sex or the other.

In other words, the Press had to conform to the ruling of the court. The Press was not its own locus of authority. Its practices were, in fact, subject to scrutiny by the court to the extent of their pay records and of their employment practices, as far as job categories were concerned.

As to the point of legal authority, this is the court speaking again:

The Press argues that all the activities carried on at the Mountain View plant constitute an exercise of religion and, more particularly, that discharge of Tobler was the exercise of a specific belief that adherents of the Seventh-day Adventist faith are not to instigate or to continue civil action against the church. Presumably Press relies on the former for immunity from all facets of this litigation, including the claims for damages based on its former head of household compensation practices, and on the latter only to defeat jurisdiction over claims based on Tobler's retaliatory discharge.

The court was saying that it viewed the Press' assertion of immunity from law as simply a means to defeat this litigation and to question the

jurisdiction of the court in order to avoid the results of this particular action. The Press could exert a preference for coreligionists, however. This kind of discrimination is allowable under Title VII:

A religious employer may discriminate in favor of adherents of their own faith. But that is the only basis upon which they may discriminate, and could condition Tobler's continued employment on her membership in good standing in the Seventh-day Adventist church. However, no alteration in Tobler's membership formed the reason for her discharge. Control over this aspect rested not with the Press or the General Conference Executive Committee which recommended her discharge, but with her local church congregation."

This did not rest well with the defendants. However, they did not really, technically deny that membership does rest with the local congregation. One witness, former General Conference vice president for North America Neal Wilson, told the court that there is a kind of *de facto* power that operates to influence decisions of local congregations. But this is not official authority or one to which anybody had given consent.

We ought to have the intellectual freedom and the Christian maturity to employ organizational methods other than those based on authoritarian hierarchies.

Regarding the practice of religious beliefs, the court said this:

The state should not pry into individuals' minds or dispense benefits according to citizens' religious beliefs. At the same time acts harmful to society should not be immune from prohibition merely because the actor asserts religious inspiration.

To restate, the First Amendment, as interpreted by the court, does not allow the cloak of religion to become a behavioral license. Much conduct is subject to law even if we say it is religiously motivated. If it is harmful to others, it may not be lawful; and in such cases religionists are not immune from the law.

What the Pacific Press, and particularly the General Conference representatives on the board of Pacific Press, sought was both spiritual and judicial authority over press authorities, and (by extrapolation) all Adventist believers. The General Conference would act as the judiciary for Adventists, and civil courts would have no jurisdiction to hear any appeals by the subjects of General Conference decisions. On the contrary, the civil courts would be required to give force to the decisions made by that ecclesiastical hierarchy.

The court rejected this and confirmed the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of worship for individuals. This is not, the court ruled, just for religious organizations. The First Amendment is for all Americans — and anyone living in America, for that matter — not a special dispensation for organizations that are operated by religious clerics.

The court also confirmed that this same Constitution guarantees equal protection under the law. Religious freedom has little meaning if it isn't guaranteed. You can't practice a freedom that is successfully challenged. The civil government has undertaken to defend all citizens in the practice of their religion, so long as that practice does not injure some other citizen.

My involvement in this legal struggle with the Pacific Press and the General Conference has led me to ponder the relationship between clergy and laity. Some passages in Scripture have helped me to sort out that relationship. One is Matthew 20. There the disciples were arguing about who was going to be prime minister in the Kingdom. The mother of two of them came to Jesus and asked special favors for her sons, and the others were jealous. Jesus was always very patient with these requests, but also very firm in his response. He is quoted in Matthew 20 as describing this jockeying for position as heathenish. To expect to have dominion, to expect to have control over other believers in the Kingdom of God is to behave as if you were not a Christian at all.

Matthew 20 and 21 are interesting passages because in both the whole

question of authority was very much at issue. The church leaders of the day were consumed with this question of authority, especially where Jesus was concerned. He was not ordained. Apparently He could read, but they really wanted to know where He acquired the information upon which He based this authority; and they asked Him, "By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you this authority?" Jesus' response was rather spirited:

I also will ask you one thing, which if you will tell me, likewise I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or men? And they reasoned with themselves. If we shall say from heaven, He will say unto us, Then why didn't you believe him? But if we say of men, we fear the people for all hold John as a prophet.

They held a little caucus and then said they couldn't tell. So Jesus said: Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. But what do you think? A certain man had two sons and he came to the first and said, Son, go to work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whither of them twain did the will of his father? They said unto Him, The first.

Then Jesus said to them, "Verily I say unto you that the publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you." That was a very cheeky thing to say to the religious rulers of the synagogue. These were the highest religious authorities in the church. And Jesus had the nerve to tell them that whores were going to heaven before they. Obviously He was not interested in their assertions of official authority. How often has it been said that we should respect something because it is official and not to be questioned? When Jesus was rebuked for speaking to the high priest at His own trial, they asked Him, "Don't you know who you are speaking to?" He took no interest in that. He said, "Tell me what I said wrong." Jesus was concerned with what was said, not who said it.

Then there is that familiar text (Philippians 2:6) indicating that Jesus

"thought it not robbery to be equal with God," but "made Himself of no reputation." I think that is very interesting, because we are often urged to create a good reputation. It's a good thing; it's a good, middle-class virtue to have a good reputation. It is more to be treasured than jewels. But Jesus made Himself of no reputation and, in fact, became a slave. He demanded no social position. He didn't seem to be concerned with His place as head of the church. He didn't demand or accept any special privilege.

Finally, there is even support from Paul, who said: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, for all are one." Obviously he was talking about status. The condition of bond or free was not necessarily based on race or any other condition of birth. It was a condition of social status. In fact all of those counsels in Ephesians are based on status. Paul gives counsel to master and slave, to parents and children, to husbands and wives. All of this had to do with social status. Paul explains that Christians can act like God's children even in bondage; but, he advises, if you can get your liberty, get it. The entire counsel for Onesimus was to free the slave. I don't believe, as many people believe, that Paul was nearly the misogynist he is made out to be.

It must be remembered that his counsel works both ways. While we are to call no one "master," neither are we to be called "master." It is a very easy thing to challenge the authority claims of those who usurp authority in the name of the church and not to notice that we are doing the same thing in our families or in our relationships at work. We may find excuses for it, but it is alien to the Christian message. The problem of organization and of getting things done is a real one and has to be managed. But whether it always needs to be done in a military fashion is seriously open to question.

We ought to have the intellectual freedom and the Christian maturity to employ organizational methods other than those based on authoritarian hierarchies.

As Jesus said, "It ought not to be so among you." □

(Reviewing the *Review* concluded)

SUMMARY:

Arthur White's thesis is correct. The sanctuary doctrine, such as it is, did come to our pioneers through the independent study of Scripture. However, White's presentation of the historical facts is basically wrong:

1. Edson, Hahn, and Crosier did not study, write out, and publish their sanctuary theory, as White claims, "in the *Day-Dawn*... in the winter of 1844-1845."

2. They did initially publish Crosier's article theorizing an antitypical day-of-atonement work in a heavenly most holy place, beginning in 1844, in the 7 February 1846 *Day-Star* Extra.

3. Ellen Harmon's mid-February 1845 vision of "the Bridegroom's going to the holiest" could not confirm — or even affirm — Crosier's independent Bible study of sanctuary antitypes, for two reasons. First, as of February 1845 there is no evidence that Crosier had considered such a thing. Second, Ellen White's Bridegroom vision did not relate in any way to Crosier's much later antitypical day-of-atonement theory that eventually was adopted as Adventist sanctuary dogma. Her vision was only consistent with Hale and Turner's Bridegroom theory (based on the parable of Matthew 25), a theory that was abandoned after Crosier's work was published in 1846.

It must be supposed that Arthur White does his best. But with his history of misinterpreting the Seventh-day Adventist past — particularly where his grandmother is concerned — it behooves the *Review* staff to edit his articles more critically; and, in the meantime, to print some forthcoming corrections for his latest mistakes.

The credibility of our "general church paper" is at stake.³⁷

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Another Pamela, or, Virtue Still Rewarded

Reviewed by Alice Gregg

Shunning the novel because of the prohibition of Ellen White, most Seventh-day Adventists have grown up without seeing their own image in literature. Although the number of novels in which Adventists are protagonists is relatively few, the ones that have been written are illuminative and provocative, even if not too flattering.

Just when Upton Sinclair got the idea to choose an Adventist as the main character for his novel *Another Pamela, or, Virtue Still Rewarded* (New York, Viking Press, 1950) is not certain. In 1948 he had "found a little cottage in the hills above Arlington," California, according to his *Autobiography*, and had hired a student from La Sierra College, now Loma Linda University, named Ruth Howard Mitchell as one of his two secretaries. Whether he had *Another Pamela* in mind when he employed her or whether her demeanor kindled the creative spark in Sinclair is not known, but La Sierra lore and the facts both indicate that he used her as his model for Pamela.

Sinclair had met other Adventists in his earlier years. In 1908 when he went to join his first wife at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, he stayed for three weeks or so and tried their cure. He listened to Dr. John Harvey Kellogg "set forth the horrors of a carnivorous diet," and as a result he tried vegetarianism for the next three years. While he was there, he and Michael Williams, a former acquaintance, wrote a book called *Good Health: and How We Won It*.

but the 1950 critics picked it up at once, and members of the Adventist church immediately recognized *The Great Controversy*, even though White was not named as author, and other identifying characteristics.

Sinclair patterned *Another Pamela* after the first *Pamela* written by Samuel Richardson, published in 1740, and the precursor of the modern novel. Both are in the form of letters from the parlormaid Pamela to her family. The second *Pamela* wrote separate letters to her mother and sister. Although the first *Pamela*, according to one critic, made the fashionable ladies of London weep until their rouge ran at the trials of Pamela at the hands of her lecherous master, *Another Pamela* has just the opposite effect, having enough humor to make its 1950s readers laugh, but not really guffaw, in many places. For comparison one does not need to rush out to the local library to procure a copy of Richardson's novel. Sinclair has included enough passages from that classic to cover the subject more than adequately.

As the story went, Pamela lived with her mother and grandfather in a sweltering shack made of tin and unpainted boards on a four-acre plot of desert land near an imaginary Mesa Seco not far from Arlington. Pamela had one sister, who was away at La Sierra College working her way through school and taking the premedical course in preparation for medical school. The family had three goats and an onion patch to sustain them, besides the washing that

the prospect; talked it over with her mother, who made certain that the stipulations of the Adventist church would be upheld regarding Pamela; packed her bag with her meager belongings; and left that very day to live in the lap of luxury as a servant.

Almost immediately Pamela met Mrs. Harries' nephew — Master Charles, whose parents had been killed in an avalanche in Switzerland, and who had been adopted by the Harries. Pamela soon saw that he was a pampered and driven young man suffering from alcoholism, boredom, and acute lust. His "hands on" experience with the young ladies was met forthwith by Pamela's "hands off" policy — "people of our faith do not drink, they do not smoke, they do not gamble, and they do not go a-whoring." And the plot began to thicken — or clabber, as the case may be.

In between wrestling bouts with Master Charles over her virtue and tending to her duties, Pamela got acquainted with the first *Pamela*, which was given to her by a friend of the Harries, who had recognized their similar situation. Pamela's letters to her sister during those days became longer and longer, including passages from the first *Pamela*'s experiences, and her letters to her mother became shorter and shorter.

Being ambitious, Pamela learned enough secretarial skills during the next two years to become Mrs. Harries' secretary. She came in contact with various people whom she informed of her religious views, but it was with Charles that she discussed them the most. When he came home drunk, Pamela was commissioned to care for him and see that he didn't drink. When she talked about her faith, the sophisticated Charles retaliated with questions that would make a theologian squirm: Why should a good man suffer? What is the nature of Christ? What is God like? Why is there evil in the world?

It was not Pamela's youth or inexperience that made her confuse values, principles, doctrines, or opinions and give them the same importance. Church leaders have not sorted those out themselves, although many teachers and ministers keep trying to define the different beliefs and practices of the church.

Sinclair's interest, however, in writing *Another Pamela* was not to expose the peculiarity of the beliefs of the Adventist church, but to point out and slug away at the manipulation of the poor by the wealthy. Socialistic Sinclair was able to put into the pen of Pamela many of his own ideas: "I try to figure it out and I can see that Mrs. Harries' money paid the man who sold the chocolates, and may pay the man who will make some more; but it seems to me it is a question of who is to eat the chocolates when they are made. Mrs. Harries eats too many, and

"people of our faith do not drink, they do not smoke, they do not gamble, and they do not go a-whoring."

At another time the Sinclairs stayed at the Bernarr McFadden Institute down the street from the Battle Creek Sanitarium. It was there that he met his second wife, Mary Craig Kimbrough, who was staying at the Battle Creek Sanitarium.

He had also met a young student from Battle Creek College when he was summering with his family at Lake Placid in the Adirondacks. She had accompanied one of the Sinclairs' women friends to their summer camp, and Sinclair remembered her as "very religious, a Seventh-day Adventist."

As a result of all of his encounters with Adventists, and because of some of his own leanings as a social critic, Sinclair felt free to identify Pamela as an Adventist. He did not use the term "Seventh-day Adventist" in his book;

Pamela's mother took in for ready cash.

The desert was hot and dry, the onion patch tedious to water, and the barefoot Pamela hot and dirty the day she was discovered by the wealthy Mrs. Harries of Junipero, whose car had broken down on the road nearby. Mrs. Harries, who was a great do-gooder, saw the remarkable qualities of sixteen-year-old Pamela and asked her a number of questions. In just a few minutes Pamela was able to tell her that her faith did not permit her to eat flesh, that the end of the world was coming soon, and that she kept the seventh-day Sabbath. When Mrs. Harries asked her if her yellow hair was genuine or if she'd been dabbling in the dye, Pamela was quite indignant and explained that her church would "hold that for a sin." Mrs. Harries was so pleased with the conversation that she asked Pamela to become her parlormaid right then and there.

Pamela was overwhelmed but overjoyed at

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I am sure that has never been the case with the dear washerwoman [Pamela's mother] whom I love," thus sugar-coating his ideas into a most palatable symbol.

Sinclair wrote ninety books besides articles to put across his ideas for social reform, but he had a ninety-year life to write them in. Born on 20 September 1878, he died 25 November 1968, at the time the "new morality" was expressing itself. What would he have written about that? *Another Pamela* was set in the twenties when young men were expected to go to wild parties but pick a religious wife. That still held true, somewhat, in the fifties when the book was being read; but that double standard was thrown out the bedroom window in the sixties. The predatory person, male or female, under the new morality became anathema; and if a person chose the celibate way of life until marriage that, presumably, was respected.

Virtue triumphed in the end. Pamela converted her wealthy young man to almost all of her beliefs — except the movies — walked down the aisle with her simple wedding band firmly in place, and left the members of the Adventist church to pick up "the ring," the movies, and the other problems that she made so visible.

The image of Adventism made by *Another Pamela* demands a great deal of study and reflection. The problems that she raised are the seemingly never-ending problems that must be faced by any denomination that tries to take the mystery of faith and make it visible. Since it is easier "to do" good works than "to be" Christ-like, denominations, including the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, write up their series of propositions for people to follow; and the members gladly accept them because propositions seem to them so much more certain than "grace" that was freely given to them for their salvation. □

Dear Editor:

Since one of the main points made in the July 1984 issue of *Adventist Currents* is that Ellen White's later recollections about her position on the shut door do not accurately convey what she taught in A.D. 1844-51, one would have expected greater skepticism in analysing O.R.L. Crosier's reminiscences. However, Wes Ringer (*Adventist Currents*, July 1984, p. 31) seems to think that he can establish that Crosier wrote the article "The Law of Moses" in 1846 precisely to teach the shut-door idea simply by quoting what Crosier said in 1899 about his original intention. Ringer could have quoted a source a little nearer to the publication date, for Crosier made an identical appraisal of his *Day-Star* article in *The Advent Harbinger and Bible Advocate*, March 5, 1853, p. 301. By this date Crosier was hostile toward the Sabbatarian Adventists and opposed to his earlier views. Therefore Crosier's opinion about the meaning of his 1846 study cannot be accepted without question.

A careful reading of Crosier's article in the *Day-Star Extra* of Feb. 7, 1846, demonstrates that it says nothing about the shut door, and is in fact opposed to any idea of a shut door. Some historians have jumped to the conclusion that Crosier taught the shut-door position in his 1846 article because of his interpretation of the Day of Atonement antitype. Faithful to his Millerite tradition, Crosier believed that the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement began in A.D. 1844, which of course is the shut-door doctrine.

This conclusion is incorrect. One of Crosier's major theses in "The Law of Moses" is that the end of the "Gospel Dispensation" and the beginning of the "Age to Come" overlap. Hence the ministry of the gospel flourishes after A.D. 1844. Crosier uses a Millerite hermeneutical favourite—the argument from analogy. He argued that just as the "Dispensation of the Law" ending in A.D. 34 and the "Gospel Dispensation" beginning in A.D. 27 overlapped, so the "Gospel Dispensation" and the "Age to Come" (or "the Dispensation of the fullness of times") overlapped. He even tentatively suggested that the analogy might extend to the duration of the overlap, that is, seven years. Whatever, Crosier has the "Gospel Dispensation" extend to the Second Advent, and thus his scheme does not have the "daily" ministry of forgiveness terminating in A.D. 1844. (See the diagram below.)

Crosier's language concerning the overlapping of the dispensations is unequivocal. "... it is

manifest that the Dis. of the fullness of times begins before the Gos. Dis. ends — There is a short period of overlapping or running together of the two Dispensations in which the peculiarities of both mingle like the twilight minglings of light and darkness" (*Day-Star Extra*, Feb. 7, 1846, p. 44, col. 1). The Sabbatarian Adventists generally rejected Crosier's "Age to Come" dispensationalism. Therefore, when James White *et. al.* reprinted Crosier's article, they simply omitted the sections dealing with "the fullness of the times," including the final section headed "The Transition," in which is found the argument for an overlapping "crisis period between the Gos. Dis. and the Dispensation of the fullness of times" (*ibid.*).

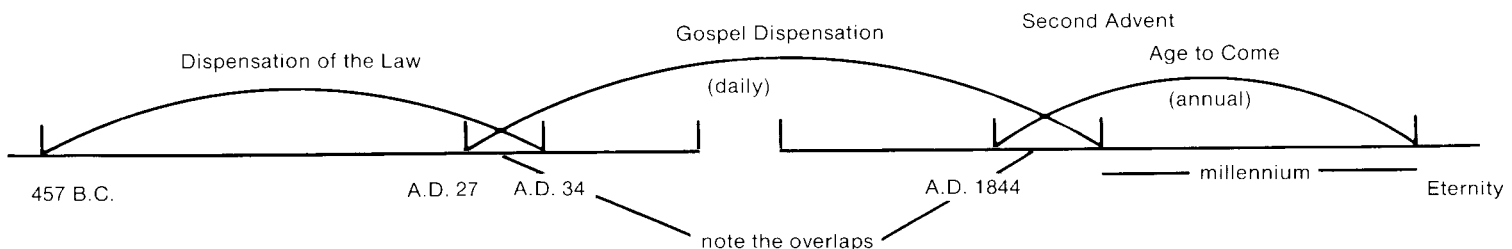
Furthermore, "The Age to Come" theory, of which Crosier was a staunch advocate, is irreconcilable with the shut-door belief. Basic to this *chilastic* view is the idea that a restored Israel, together with the resurrected and translated saints, will evangelize the inhabitants of the earth during the millenium. Crosier begins this "highly exalted" "age of restitution, of blotting out of sin," "an age of repairs," "a day of cleansing" in A.D. 1844 (*ibid.*, p. 42). It thus includes the millenium but extends prior to it. The main objection the Sabbatarian Adventists had against this position was that it offered a "second chance" (see their reaction to Adventism's first doctrinal dissidents, known as the "Messenger Party"). It is obviously impossible to teach both the shut door (the end of mercy) and the "Age to Come" (a second chance) at the same time.

Presumably the Sabbatarian Adventists—since they did not accept that an "Age to Come" began in A.D. 1844—believed that the "Gospel Dispensation" terminated in A.D. 1844. However, where Ellen White stood in this matter will have to be established on other grounds than her endorsement of Crosier's own assessment of his study "The Law of Moses"—an assessment made when he had become hostile to his earlier sentiments. Whatever merits Ellen White saw in Crosier's study, its teaching on the shut door was not one of them (*pace* Ringer), for it is silent on, indeed opposed to, the shut-door view.

This is not my only point of difference with Mr. Ringer's understanding, nevertheless, I am mostly appreciative of the material that he has otherwise so persuasively presented to us.

Crosier's scheme is clearest when presented diagrammatically as follows.

Yours sincerely,
Norman H. Young



CURRENTLY POSTED

Dear Editor:

Norman Young is correct in his observation that I should not uncritically accept O.R.L. Crosier's later (1899) memory statement that he had written his 7 February 1846 *Day-Star* Extra article in support of the shut door. Young's reminder applies particularly to me, since I do call into question the accuracy of much of Ellen White's post-1851 remembrances of her early shut-door views.

From a rereading of Crosier's *Day-Star* Extra article, I can also see why Young feels that Crosier could not have held a shut-door position while believing that the Gospel Dispensation continued past, and overlapped, "The Age to Come" — which he believed began in 1844. Young concludes that Crosier's hostility toward Sabbatarian Adventists led him incorrectly and, perhaps, prejudicially to assert in the 5 March 1853 *The Advent Harbinger* and *Bible Advocate* that his 1846 *Day-Star* Extra piece had been written to support the shut door.

Clearly, Young can demonstrate logical lapses in some of Crosier's reasoning. Unlike Young, the Adventist pioneers were not systematic theologians; and, following the disappointment, the sometimes self-contradicting evolution of their theology is, from this distance, obvious.

I maintain that it was Crosier's intention to support the shut door in his *Day-Star* Extra exposition. The evidence is as follows:

1. Crosier's article sought to prove that 22 October 1844 was the correct terminus for the 2300-day prophecy. This view was held, after the disappointment, by shut-door Adventists. Open-door Adventists held that the 2300 days had not yet ended because Christ had not yet come.

2. Crosier's article appeared in the *Day-Star*, an ardent shut-door publication.

3. Crosier shared editorial responsibility — with Hiram Edson and F.B. Hahn for another shut-door paper, the *Day-Dawn*. Edson and Hahn also wrote an endorsement at the end of Crosier's *Day-Star* Extra piece, urging readers to help them meet the expense of publishing that special issue.

4. Crosier wrote a letter published in the 11 October 1845 *Day-Star* that shows him then to have been an adamant shut-door believer, just four months before the Extra article in question. In his letter he laments the fact that C.H. Pearson and Sister E.C. Clemons — who published another shut-door paper, *Hope Within the Veil* — had discarded their shut-door convictions.

Crosier noted, "If the subject of the Atonement was perfectly clear to them, I am satisfied that they would not have made this precipitate retrograde move" He further noted that because of their changed theology, the *Hope Within the Veil* editors could not publish an article Crosier had submitted to them on the atonement.

5. In the 21 October 1845 *The Voice of Truth and Glad Tidings*, Crosier outlined his views on the atonement. In doing so he showed that he held to the shut door and to most of the views on the atonement that he published four months later in the 7 February 1846 *Day-Star* Extra.

6. In the 30 September 1848 *The Advent Harbinger*, Crosier states that for three years since the fall of 1844 he had held that the shut door prevented all genuine conversions of sinners. He had abandoned this belief eight months earlier (January 1848) and had only since that time resumed preaching to unbelievers. There is no hint in his letter that it was a polemic against Sabbatarian Adventists.

7. While Crosier's 5 March 1853 *The Advent Harbinger* article is directed against Sabbatarian Adventists, his contention then that he had written his 1846 *Day-Star* Extra article in support of the shut door is consistent with all of his statements before and after that time. Although he was not always logically consistent, Crosier was not afraid to admit his mistakes.

One final comment on Young's questioning the validity of using Ellen White's endorsement of Crosier's article as proof that she held the shut-door position: If her endorsement was the only evidence, it would not persuasively prove that she believed in the shut door. But her endorsement of Crosier's effort is only one small link in a well-documented chain of evidence. Her early visions, her 13 July 1847 letter to Joseph Bates, and James White's comments regarding her visions in *A Word to the Little Flock* are just a few of many vivid examples. When these are all taken together, they do show coercively that Ellen White believed that her early visions indicated that probation had closed for sinners on 22 October 1844 — although she was unable to remember this after the 1840's.

Sincerely

Wesley Ringer

Dear Doug:

I enjoyed your article on the shut door—in fact, the whole issue. By the way, I once asked Arthur White why F.D. Nichol and he had ignored Ellen White's July 13, 1847, letter to Joseph Bates when discussing the shut door in *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*. The reason was neither ignorance nor blindness, as you suggest, but a concern, as Arthur White phrased it, that the letter would raise more questions than it would answer. At least they were perceptive, if not honest.

Regards

Ron Numbers
Topeka, Kansas

Dear Editor:

It would appear that little needs be said hereafter on the Closed Door and of the unhappy efforts of later generations of Adventists to deal with the doctrine. It is sad that after 130 years, disclosure of facts still is threatening. It is commendable that denominational apologists, to their credit, wish the "facts" to be established. Their inability to accept the facts when they do not come out right is less commendable and has cost them and the investigators who have offended them a tremendous expenditure of energy and emotion which was not really necessary. To deny peccability in Founding Parents, yet make the documents available, puts the Custodians in a no-win situation where they must devise explanations item by item, at the cost of their own credibility.

They would have done better in protecting myths from historians had they followed the lead of the Mormons in recent years. As with the Adventist membership, most Mormons do not wish to have their assumptions troubled, and it is a relatively small group of "scholars" and/or "liberals" who wish to investigate what actually occurred in the formative stages of their church. However, the Mormon leadership has carried off potential embarrassment or presumed loss of face for the Founder much better than the White Estate has done. To be accused of denying access to sources and not permitting "pursuit of Truth" by scholars, worries the Mormon leadership not at all, [who are] confident that the membership and the church establishment do not wish to have their myths tampered with.

When Mormon professional historians, working on a project for a multivolume critical history of their church, got too close to some aspects of the actual events in Joseph's Smith days, the project was cancelled, the director fired, and some of the archives moved to be under better control and less accessible. Period. (These developments can be followed in the Mormon Journal *Sunstone* over the past several years.)

Cordially
Jack Badaud

Toward A Third Testament

by Richard J. Goyne

The defrocking of Desmond Ford in 1980 and subsequent dismissal of a number of other ministers for doctrinal dissent raises the question of the basis for the Seventh-day Adventist church's doctrines. The Adventist church in its statement of fundamental beliefs officially states that the Bible is the source of its teachings. It declares that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by divine inspiration and are the authoritative revealer of doctrine. At the same time the church affirms that the writings of Ellen White are a manifestation of the Spirit of Prophecy and an authoritative source of truth. This gift of prophecy in the ministry of Ellen White is believed to be one of the marks identifying the Seventh-day Adventist church as the remnant church.

Because the church has, by these statements, accepted two sources of authoritative written revelation, the question arises as to which of these — the Bible or the writings of Ellen White — is considered the norm of Adventist faith and practice. The church has attempted to answer this question with the assertion that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching, including Ellen White's, must be tested. She is said to be classed with the non canonical prophets such as Nathan and Iddo of the Old Testament or John Baptist and Agabus of the New (See *Questions on Doctrines*, pp. 89-91).

Classification of Ellen White's role with that of the non canonical prophets is not consistent, however, when one considers the volume of her writings and the influence they exert in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Ellen White was a prolific writer who commented extensively on the Bible and on every aspect of Christian life. Her works are published, studied, and quoted by Adventists to an extent never matched by any of the non canonical prophets. The Adventist explanation that Ellen White's writings are inspired by the same Spirit that inspired the biblical writers, yet are not to function as Scripture, is difficult to understand. Because Scripture is the written revelation which a religious community regards as being inspired. When the Adventist community accepts the divine inspiration of the White writings, has it not accorded them a position of Scripture in the community?

What happens when someone believes that the Bible and Ellen White disagree? Ford's dismissal from the Adventist ministry resulted from his questioning of the church's sanctuary doctrine (that Christ entered the most holy place in heaven in 1844, at the end of the 2300-day period of Daniel 8:14). His teaching on this topic was perceived as a challenge to the authority of Ellen White, who had written that Christ did enter the most holy place in the

heavenly sanctuary in 1844 (*Great Controversy*, p 422). The extent of the church's reliance upon Ellen White in its sanctuary doctrine can be judged by a two-part article entitled "The Sanctuary Truth," which appeared in the *Adventist Review* (November 6, 13, 1980), subsequent to Ford's dismissal. The article contains more than 250 lines quoted from Ellen White and only one verse from the Bible (Dan. 8:14).

But the emphasis on Ellen White's writings extends beyond the points of doctrine into all Adventist activities. Sermons quote Ellen White's statements in the same context as the Bible and usually to a greater extent. Sabbath School lesson leaflets in recent years contain ten times as many words from Ellen White as from the Bible. Articles in the *Adventist Review* frequently quote more extensively from Ellen White than from the Bible. Students in Adventist schools are indoctrinated in the writings of Ellen White from the earliest grades through college years. Even the tithe envelopes carry not texts of Scripture — but her statements on the subject of giving.

So the very sources by which the Adventist is instructed and informed place an emphasis upon the writings of Ellen White that is traditionally reserved for the Scriptures. Moreover, there is in operation a curious "ratchet effect" whereby the more questions that are raised about the White revelations, the more the revelations are promoted by the church's administration and publishing houses. Even though President Reagan designated 1983 as the "Year of the Bible" in honor of Gutenberg's achievement, the Adventist church named 1983 the "Year of the Spirit of Prophecy", i.e., the "Year of Ellen White."

At the church's 1919 Bible Conference, responsible Adventists criticized the then-current practice of making Ellen White's writings the interpreter of the Bible and the source of sermons [*Spectrum* 10 (1) 30, 39]. During the ensuing sixty-five years, that practice has proliferated. There has been a gradual evolution of the White writings into a functioning "Third Testament" within the Adventist church. Just as the Christian Church in general has interpreted the Old Testament by the New Testament, the Adventist church interprets both the Old Testament and New Testament by the messages of Ellen White. Having acknowledged her as the messenger of the Lord, Adventists accept her revelations on points of doctrine and in the interpretation of the Scriptures.

Hence, while the Adventist church professes that the Bible is the authoritative written revelation, in its practice every interpretation of the Bible must agree with Ellen White's state-

ments. From this perspective the Bible is no longer the unique revelation of God's purpose, nor is it the ultimate norm for the Christian life. It is functionally subordinate to Ellen White's comments, by which the biblical message must be understood. Such an attitude negates both the primacy of the Scripture and the personal leading of the Holy Spirit in the individual reader's understanding of Scripture. It also furnishes an explanation for the perfect agreement between Ellen White and the Bible, which Adventist apologists are invariably able to find. They simply interpret the Bible by Ellen White.

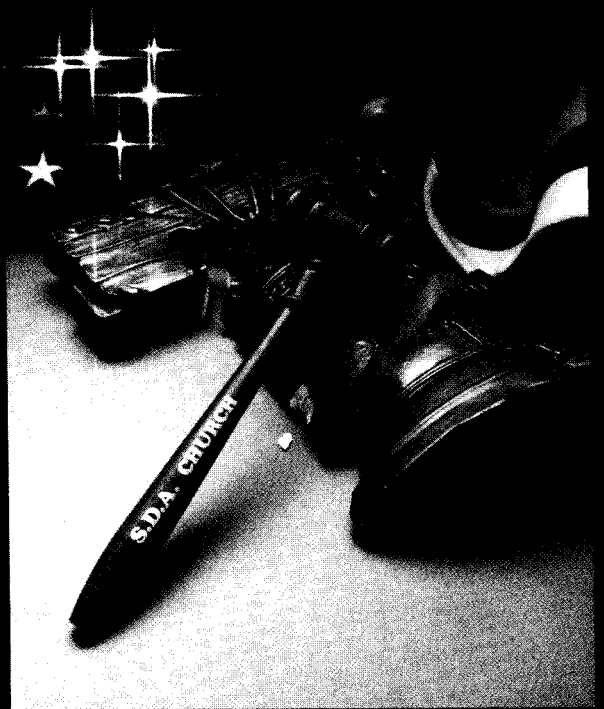
Desmond Ford's dismissal from the ministry means that in Adventism today, as in the past, there can be no disagreement with Ellen White in doctrinal matters. A Presbyterian minister may disagree with points of the Westminster Confession and still occupy his pulpit. A Catholic priest (such as Hans Kung) may publicly challenge Catholic doctrine and retain his priestly office. But any Adventist minister who has questions about Ellen White's writings has to choose between keeping his reservations or doubts concealed or seeking other employment. Appeals to the biblical text are useless in the face of a statement by Ellen White.

This basic contradiction between the Adventist profession of biblical primacy and the practical denial of that primacy goes unnoticed in Adventism until someone challenges a doctrinal position of Ellen White. The General Conference president alluded to this in his Glacier View statement that "the bottom line, of course, is the role of Ellen White in doctrinal matters [*Spectrum* 11 (2):5]." One might properly add that the resolution of all doctrinal problems will depend upon the settlement of this basic contradiction.

The church presently publishes in 183 languages. The translation and promotion of the White writings will eventually spread them worldwide. Unless the Adventist leadership is willing and able to take positive action to restore the primacy of the canon of Scripture and in its practice to agree with its profession, it is not unreasonable to foresee in Adventism a multinational form of "Third Testament Christianity" teaching a gospel according to Ellen White. The consequences of such a development will be more serious than the defrocking of non conforming ministers. It will mean nothing less than separation of the Adventist church from its Protestant heritage, which is based ostensibly upon *sola Scriptura*.

For the central issue of the Protestant Reformation was not so much a point of doctrine but the role of Scripture itself. The term "*sola Scriptura*" expressed the Reformers' stand that the Bible is the ultimate authority on any teaching, in contrast to their opponents' position that the Bible is authoritative only as it has been interpreted by the "inspired" leadership of the Church. It is important that Adventist ministers and laymen understand that the same central issue of the role of Scripture is present in the doctrinal controversies that exist in Adventism today. The present administrative leadership of the church thus far appears to have missed this point completely. □

Richard Goyne is a retired professional engineer with a master's degree in theology.



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