

Volume 2, Number 1

How "Fact"
Becomes Myth

The travail of
William Johnsson

General
Conference
Journal:
A Reporter's
Odyssey

Saul the
Unbeliever

The Cost of
Scholarship



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.

Of Cats and Goldfish

by Douglas Hackleman

There were no smoke-filled rooms at the Superdome, no balloons, no bands, no placards, no chants of "five more years"; but there was politics — as certainly as at either American political party's 1984 national convention. And the politics at the New Orleans General Conference quinquennium were all the more effective for being subterranean, not to mention disclaimed.

Without having attended a Seventh-day Adventist quinquennial session, Keith Bridston, author of *Church Politics*, understands us:

"If I were to pinpoint the difference between church and secular politics, I would say that the former is less honest . . . To call church politics 'dishonest' is only another way of saying that church politics has tended to be hidden and camouflaged and thus denied."

It is the unadmitted ("dishonest") aspect of the pervasive politicking among Adventist institutional leaders that makes their politicking so insidiously effective. The average General Conference delegate is someone who naively assumes (or has convinced himself/herself to believe) that institutional church leaders are all devoutly spiritual and, therefore, humble men (there are hardly any women) — empty vessels, desiring only to be filled by the Spirit. There are such men, but they hardly have a prayer in that political arena.

If the Adventist constituency generally realized just how political are the decisions, within the institutional church, regarding position and polity, perhaps more decisions would have to be made based on ethical and moral concerns.

As things stand, our conference, union, division, and general conference politicians are like cats with a constituency of unattended goldfish. And very few of the goldfish see the cats coming.

Beyond the false assumption that corporate church decision making is not political, the cats

quaintances, the reigning General Conference president is universally regarded as a purely political animal. This opinion of him is generally given either in the manner of simply stating the obvious or as a statement of rueful admiration — the way one might admire the deft efficiency of a predatory cat.

The Main Meow, they believe, is a master at convincing the goldfish that he serves them in great humility and stands in awe of the responsibility they have entrusted to him. A published example of this persuasive skill is found in the opening remarks of his initial acceptance of the General Conference presidency in October 1978: "If my face looks drained of color it is because I realize something of the sacredness of the vote that has just been taken."

Whether or not he was sincere, *Currents* does not understand what was "sacred" about the vote; however, calling it "sacred" effectively made the elite corps of voting cats feel important, and no doubt they purred. The newly elected president then said: "If I could have found a good reason to decline, I would have done it . . ."

Six years later this same cat publicly implied that the church is not political by warning a bloc of African goldfish in New Orleans who wanted a vice presidential representative at the General Conference that they "must refrain from becoming politically involved" to avoid "conflict with each other within the church." Within minutes the Top Tom had referred to the vice presidents five times as "cardinals" — a political cleverness that appeared calculated to make the desire for a vice presidential representative on the part of this large bloc of delegates seem inappropriate (even grasping). Otherwise, why use a term that our "inspired" literature has taught us to abhor? Not surprisingly, no one called it to the attention of the assembled delegates that if the vice presidents were

But there are always those, like the Ayatollah Khomeini, who are willing to wed them.

This misuse of prayer reminds *Currents* of the lion (cat) and the missionary (goldfish) who met on a dark jungle trail. Realizing he had only one option, the missionary sank to his knees and began to pray. After a few seconds the missionary peeked between his folded fingers to see the lion also on his knees, paws folded, obviously in prayer. At that moment the hungry lion opened one eye and, meeting the missionary's terrified gaze, said, "I don't know what you're doing, but I'm saying grace." So it is with the politics of prayer.

Whether or not former General Conference president Robert Pierson was correct when he maintained that "holy angels walk these [General Conference] halls and visit our offices," *Currents* believes (prays) that Christ will continue to request entrance to those halls and offices as well. It only remains for "the highest authority that God had upon the earth" to let him in.

While it writes under the pen of opinion rather than the "pen of inspiration," *Currents* is convinced that if there is not a reduction in the things of politics and an increase in the things of the Spirit, the north building at 6840 Eastern Avenue will continue to rise — as Malcolm Muggeridge said of the United Nations — "like one more tower of Babel arching inanely into the sky." □

If the vice presidents were "cardinals," then the man calling them cardinals must be pope.

have convinced most of the goldfish that they (the goldfish) either already have or really do not want better representation or more responsibility. This may not take much persuasion among a population that John Milton described as preferring "rather bondage with ease than strenuous liberty."

What goes down rather like an emetic with those who know better is when the same political cats proclaim their reluctance ("Who am I?") to "serve" the goldfish.

Among *Currents'* circle of friends and ac-

"cardinals," then the man calling them cardinals must be pope.

One way in which many cats effectively anesthetize the goldfish to the political nature of their leadership is through prayer. The cats politic before and during committees, pray before the vote, and then pronounce the decision to have been providential. This application of the perceived power of prayer to the power of politics, in *Currents'* opinion, is worse than presumption.

Politics and prayer are nearly antithetical.



The cover takeoff on Harry Anderson's well known illustration is by an anonymous but much appreciated artist.

How “Fact” Becomes Myth in Adventism

by Walter Rea

C.S. Lewis has described “the heart of Christianity” as “a myth which is also a fact. The old myth of the Dying God, without ceasing to be myth, comes down from the heaven of legend and imagination to the earth of history. It happens — at a particular date, in a particular place, followed by definable historical consequences.”¹

The heart of Ellen White’s place in Adventism, it is being discovered, is just the opposite. Much of what for so long has been presented as fact turns out to be myth.

The White Estate itself has sometimes participated in this discovery, this demythologization. A four-day International Prophetic Workshop — hosted in April of 1982 by the White Estate for seventy Adventist scholars and administrators — was such an occasion. The White Estate hosts focused their guests’ (Arthur White called them “trusted counselors”) attention on issues that have emerged because of Ellen White’s uncredited source utilization, her denial of such source usage, and contradictions and errors found scattered through her numerous publications.

Time also was spent at the workshop critiquing the published efforts by several Ellen White researchers of which the White Estate trustees and employees seemed to disapprove. Among these were articles such as Jonathan Butler’s “The World of E.G. White and the End of the World,”² and Donald Casebolt’s “Ellen White, the Waldenses, and Historical Interpretation;”³ Donald McAdam’s unpublished manuscript, “Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: the Evidence from an Unpublished Manuscript on John Huss;”⁴ and a book, *The White Lie*,⁵ by this writer. Only Butler was present at the workshop to defend his scholarship.⁶

One of the more interesting sessions of the workshop, and one that could have far-reaching effects (if the SDA membership is ever to become generally aware of it), was the discussion chaired by White Estate secretary Robert Olson and retired secretary and lifetime trustee, Arthur White. In that meeting Olson and White attempted to wrestle with a haunting problem from the past. They endeavored to make sense of articles Ellen White wrote for the *Health Reformer* (first published August 1866, retitled *Good Health* in 1879).⁷ The difficulty of their task becomes apparent as one reads the kind of things Mrs. White sometimes wrote for the *Health Reformer*. An example from 1871:

Fashion loads the heads of women with artificial braids and pads, which do not add to their beauty, but give an unnatural shape to the head. The hair is strained and forced into unnatural positions, and it is not possible for the heads of these fashionable ladies to be comfortable. The artificial hair and pads covering the base of the brain, heat and excite the spinal nerves centering in the brain. The head should ever be kept cool. The heat caused by these artificials induces the blood to the brain. The action of the blood upon the lower or animal organs of the brain, causes unnatural activity, tends to recklessness in morals, and the mind and heart is in danger of being corrupted. As the animal organs are excited and strengthened, the morals are enfeebled. The moral and intellectual powers of the mind become servants to the animal

Many have lost their reason, and become hopelessly insane, by following this deforming fashion.⁸

Also in 1871 Ellen White had introduced approvingly the words of another author under the heading “The Fatal Effects of Painting”:

Walter Rea is a deposed Seventh-day Adventist minister who writes from Patterson, California.

No one can ride or walk through the fashionable portion of New York City, attend any place of amusement, or go to any evening party, without becoming aware of the horrible fact that many women of whom better things might be expected, have fallen into the pernicious habit of applying to their skins the enamels which, under various attractive names, are advertised and sold in all parts of the land. . . .

This practice is as pernicious as it is disgusting — the seeds of death or paralysis being hidden in every pot and jar of those mixtures, which are supposed to be not only innocent, but also to possess the virtues of the undiscovered fountain of perpetual youth.

Some who use them will suddenly have a severe illness; and receiving a private warning from the family physician, will cease the use of the cause of their disorder, and recovering, go through life with an extremely bad complexion, as a reminder of their folly.

Others will drop suddenly, with their features twisted on one side, and perhaps deprived of the use of their limbs. Others will die outright, no one guessing why. The effect on any particular person cannot be calculated.⁹

What seemed to cause Olson and White the most anguish was an article Mrs. White prepared for the November 1871 *Health Reformer*. It was the following words to which they directed most of their comments:

By lacing, the internal organs of women are crowded out of their positions. There is scarcely a woman that is thoroughly healthy. The majority of women have numerous ailments. Many are troubled with weaknesses of most distressing nature. These fashionably dressed women cannot transmit good constitutions to their children. Some women have naturally small waists. But rather than regard such forms as beautiful, they should be viewed as defective. These wasp waists may have been transmitted to them from their mothers, as the result of their indulgence in the sinful practice of tight-lacing, and in consequence of imperfect breathing. Poor children born of these miserable slaves of fashion have diminished vitality, and are predisposed to take on disease. The impurities retained in the system in consequence of imperfect breathing are transmitted to their offspring.¹⁰

“I question whether some of the writing of Ellen White is inspired in the sense that others of her writings are . . .” — Robert Olson

It is easy to see why this “wasp waist” theory of acquired characteristics would concern Ellen White’s apologists. If this were a revelation from God, why are not Chinese girls, whose mothers’ feet had been bound for generations, born with small feet? And, of course, no man child has ever emerged from the womb circumcised.

Olson and White said they had agonized over this problem for many years. Finally, at the 1982 workshop, this is how they attempted to reconcile science, inspiration, and revelation:

Robert Olson:

I have a question about this. Did God tell her this? “These wasp waists may have been transmitted to them from their mothers, as a result of their indulgence in the sinful practice of tight-lacing, and in consequence of imperfect breathing.” And I

haven't quite been able to see how this acquired characteristic by the mother could be passed on through the genes to the child. But now when we turn on to the next page we see where Ellen White read something like this and even publishes it in this very issue of the *Health Reformer* — the very next page, the left-hand column, the first indentation: "The following excellent remarks are from *The Household*," another paper she is quoting from. We'll skip the first paragraph. "But my waist is naturally slender," says one woman. She means that she has inherited small lungs." You see, these are not Mrs. White's words; these are words Mrs. White is quoting from this magazine: "She means that she has inherited small lungs. Her ancestors, more or less of them, compressed their lungs in the same way that we do, and it has become in her case a congenital deformity. This leads us to one of the worst aspects of the whole matter — the transmitted results of indulgence in this deadly vice." So when Mrs. White is reading things like this, publishing things like this in her column, in her department, you can understand why she might write a few things like this herself. So brethren and sisters, what I have done just now is something that I have hesitated to do. I have never done it anywhere else; but I have hesitated to do it for fear somebody will get the wrong impression, you know. Because here I am stating, in effect, that I question whether some of the writing of Ellen White is inspired in the sense that others of her writings are — in fact, questioning the inspiration, you see, of some of these things. And it would have to be drawn in, the line between the common and the sacred. I am sort of baring my heart here, telling you how I am looking at some of these things. Now before we call on anybody for questions, . . . I want the liberty of calling on Elder White to see if he has a comment to make first. Elder White, I don't know how you look at these matters, if you look at them entirely as I do. I know we have talked about them. Do you have anything to add?

Arthur White:

I think it is very clear that during these four years that Ellen White was wearing two hats: that of a prophet, and that of an editor. When James White persuaded her to furnish three or four printed pages (which would be equivalent to between two and three thousand words) for each issue of the *Health Reformer*, published monthly, quite naturally she could bring into it those things which were shown to her in vision, which she set forth in her writings on health. But from the standpoint of volume they were rather limited. So here we find her in a different and unique position that she was never put in before. . . . We are faced, of course, with this problem of her counsel regarding [against, actually] degrees of inspiration. Now friends, I have got to deal with this in the biography in about another year. I am feeling around for how we should deal with it. As Bob says, we have bared our souls here to you who are trusted counselors. And I see no other way than to take the position that *when she took over the department in this Health Reformer she, in a sense, did it outside of her work in the prophetic office*¹¹ (emphasis supplied).

Predictably, this brave effort did not meet with enthusiasm from all present. And although White Estate officials stand by the position, church-sponsored periodicals have not printed a word about the problem or the suggested solution — that Ellen White was not writing as an inspired prophet when she put together her columns for the *Health Reformer*.

Whether or not the White Estate solution works, it certainly makes God look better than if it is assumed that the articles were written with His help and/or approval. But like many "solutions," it poses additional problems. For instance, from the *Health Reformer* articles it would appear that both Ellen and James White knew when to give credit to other authors, as Mrs. White repeatedly introduces various authors and brackets their words with quotation marks. Also, the editor or columnist solution contradicts both Mrs. White and her apologists' dogmatic insistence that her writings were all either inspired or not, of God or of the devil.

By suggesting the uninspired columnist or editor apologetic for Mrs. White's strange *Health Reformer* statements, Robert Olson and Arthur White risk finding themselves referred to in her writings:

When men in high positions of trust will, when under pressure, say that Sister White is influenced by any human being, they certainly have no more use for messages that come from such a source (MS release #761).¹²

The Ellen White-as-uninspired-columnist theory provides the impetus for further study and thought. Some of the articles from Mrs. White, when writing as an uninspired *Health Reformer* columnist, were reprinted in the *Adventist Review and Herald*.¹³ Arthur White recognized this fact at the workshop and expressed the thought that one should not put too much stock in the fact that an article of Ellen White's should be reprinted in the *Review*; this does not necessarily mean that it was inspired. That may come as a shock to those who thought that by paying the one-hundred-twenty-or-so dollars for the six volumes of the *Present Truth and Review and Herald Article Reprints*, they were purchasing specially illuminated counsel.

This problem does not end with *Review* article reprints. Some of Mrs. White's *Health Reformer* articles that later appeared in the *Review* also were adapted for some of her books. Some readers may have noticed this statement in the introduction to the *Review and Herald Reprints*:

Indeed, many of the chapters of the current [Ellen G. White] books are drawn from materials that first appeared in these articles in the *Review* In some instances entire articles now form book chapters, as in the case of a number of the very early articles that were included in *Early Writings* and the *Testimonies*, or in the 1923 compilation *Fundamentals of Christian Education* In most cases the articles in the E.G. White books were reproduced word for word from the article.¹⁴

Many people do not read introductions and remain unaware that some of the uninspired *Health Reformer* articles were included in, but

"When she took over the department in this *Health Reformer* she, in a sense, did it outside her . . . prophetic office." — Arthur White

not limited to, the *Testimonies*, where it has been presumed that Mrs. White wrote as a prophet. Volume three of the *Testimonies* provides an example:

Health Reformer, volume 7
no. 6, pp. 186-188

Experience is said to be the best teacher. Genuine experience is indeed valuable. But habits and customs gird men and women as with iron bands, and these false habits and customs are generally justified by experience, according to the common understanding of the word. Very many have abused precious experience. They have clung to their injurious habits which are decidedly enfeebling to physical, mental, and moral health, and when you seek to instruct them, they sanction their course by referring to their experience. But true experience is in harmony with natural law and science.

Testimonies, volume 3
pp. 69-78

Experience is said to be the best teacher. Genuine experience is indeed superior to book knowledge. But habits and customs gird men and women as with iron bands, and they are generally justified by experience, according to the common understanding of the term. Very many have abused precious experience. They have clung to their injurious habits, which are decidedly enfeebling to physical, mental and moral health; and when you seek to instruct them, they sanction their course by referring to their experience. But true experience is in harmony with natural law and science.

The article runs on for several pages in the *Testimonies*, but unlike its uninspired *Health Reformer* counterpart, the volume three version includes several "I was shown"s (pages 67, 68, 69).

Olson and White were very quick to point out that when material published earlier by Mrs. White was later transferred to the *Health Reformer* (such as *Testimonies*, vol. 1, into the May 1872 *Health Reformer*)

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Betrayal Pulls Response

by Merikay McLeod

I wrote *Betrayal* for several reasons. First, I believed the story behind the Silver vs PPPA case needed telling. After all, the Silver case is historically significant because it was the first time that the equal pay provisions of Title VII were applied to a religious employer. And although the story had been covered in the legal press, there seemed to be (at least within the church) a carefully maintained silence about it.

I wrote *Betrayal* because I personally needed to organize all the details of my story to chronologize and ponder the myriad happenings that had helped shape the person I am today.

As Dag Hammarskjöld once wrote: "We cannot afford to forget any experience, not even the most painful."

I wrote *Betrayal* because I believed that the life of denominationally employed women deserved to be exposed. The faithful female servants of the church needed to be recognized as workers who are often abused within our system.

There were other reasons, of course. The book was a cathartic event for me, and an educational one.

Completing *Betrayal* was just the beginning, however, of my education. For the past several weeks, dozens of letters have arrived from readers. These letters have taught me a new lesson — that my story is but a dew drop on the surface of life's Great Pool of pain and growth.

A woman from California wrote:

I graduated from PUC in 1947. Perhaps you did not come across the ridiculous answer I received when I asked why single men received more pay than single women. "Our single men have to entertain and the single women do not."

Also, we single women were supposed to move in with each other in order to save expenses, whether we were compatible or not.

A Woman from Massachusetts wrote:

In my childhood and youth, my mother and I survived on her meager earnings as a teacher for the denomination. Later, while teaching at EMC [Andrews University], I and several of the single women teachers felt we should receive the same pay as the single men. That heretical idea never got very far.

A man from Florida wrote:

As a former officer in the high echelons of the church, I can believe everything you have written. In fact, you only touched the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

I entered the denominational structure in 1947 and rapidly climbed to the top. As a financial officer I was appalled and still am about the discrimination used by those in power.

Retired ministers and teachers wrote, describing what they had observed (if they were men) and what they had suffered (if they were women). Many of the older women pointed out that there was no law on their side when they were young.

And, of course, the fact that there was a federal law "on my side" is the reason that we who struggled for equal pay at Pacific Press finally prevailed.

It is distressing to realize that we needed the force of the most powerful government on earth to secure, at least in the narrow realm of wages, the Christian equality-ideal of Galatians 3:28.

A man from Idaho wrote:

How sad it is that so many of us who began our work for the church fueled by idealism, eager to make a great contribution . . . have after years of disappointment and, yes, betrayal — become increasingly disillusioned and even cynical. Reading your book, I mourned all over again the death of those youthful visions — and grieved anew for what might have been.

A man from Oklahoma wrote:

I have also had church leaders lie to me. I have listened to less than truthful sermons. I have been to constituency meetings and watched leaders make fools of themselves by their use of politics.

Your book has forced me to answer for myself the question: Why is a truth-filled church like ours often led by such people as you have encountered?

A minister from Texas wrote:

I came to the conclusion several years ago that the denominational leadership, generally, is not concerned with the individual, except for what they can get out of them. And in the Bible I find a much different view.

A woman from California said:

It seems to me that the church administrators have always tried to save money by getting as much free labor out of women as possible; and for those whom they had to pay, they paid as little as possible.

Numerous letters expressed dismay with how certain church leaders are running things. I found personal experiences like the following in several letters:

My wife and I read with deep interest your book — not just because it was dynamically written, but we relived our experiences of some two decades ago involving other issues.

As I read your chapter on Wilson's visit to your apartment, I cried out, "Will she know what he is doing to her? Will she find him out?" You see, I had talked to Wilson by telephone on the issues in which we were involved, and assured my wife that Wilson would really help. I even accepted an appointment to meet with him . . . (we were using the church "legal" process to rectify, rather than the "civil").

That night, though a grown man and considered mature — I cried myself to sleep after the visit with him. It was traumatic and stressful to the breaking point. I could empathize with you every step of the way.

The feeling evident in many letters was one of outrage, yet helplessness in the face of abusive power. I, personally, accept the view of power expressed so eloquently in Elizabeth Janeway's book: *Powers of the Weak*. That view holds that power is a relationship in which both the rulers and the ruled play a part. The power of "the ruled" is the power of consent.

What the powerful need is the consent of the governed to their actions as proper, acceptable, free of blame; and this consent can be granted *only by the governed*, the other member of the power relationship.

What I hope *Betrayal* will do is illustrate how a few powerless people removed their consent — how we helped change our world by changing our role in the leader-follower power relationship.

As human beings, as Christian-Americans, as Seventh-day Adventists, we need not be the helpless victims of others (whether they occupy positions of authority or not). We can withdraw our consent to be abused or discriminated against.

And together we can work toward a more equitable, more humane world/life for us all.

As Janeway has stated:

The flexibility of humankind should both relieve us of fears that we are bound to go wrong if we change our institutions, and confirm our faith in our capacity to invent new ones.

I've received letters filled with the excitement (and agony) of personal/spiritual growth. They also express gratitude for the struggle Lorna Tobler and I waged (along with the help of many others). The enthusiastic words of thanks warm my heart. But I know I cannot accept them as fully my own. So many brave women have fought and suffered (yes, even died) for our freedoms, our privileges, our human rights.

(concluded on page 39)

The travail of William Johnsson

Not since R. A. Anderson's mauling on the late Joe Pine's television program has a Seventh-day Adventist leader's media experience aroused so much discussion as *Adventist Review* editor William Johnsson's appearance on the John Ankerberg Show.

When *Currents* called the *Review* office in November 1984 to confirm reports that Johnsson was to tape in December several half-hour segments with another guest, evangelical cult expert Walter Martin, and the host, John Ankerberg, *Review* office staff members expressed total ignorance of the plan. However, it is clear from a 26 February 1985 letter written by Johnsson that the General Conference president knew: Neal Wilson "and I have worked closely in this matter from the outset."

The Ankerberg Show titled the Martin/Johnsson segments "Who Is Telling the Truth?" The same question might apply to accusations and denials that have been expressed subsequent to the show's airing.

Embarrassed Adventists, such as White Estate board chairman and William Johnsson's predecessor at the *Review*, Kenneth Wood, were not willing to walk away and lick their wounds. Wood did some yelling and fist waving at a safe distance. He wrote Ankerberg (12 August 1985, see box) complaining that as the show's host Ankerberg was "extremely discourteous" to Johnsson and that Johnsson was "treated rudely" by both Ankerberg and Martin.

Embarrassed Adventists, such as Kenneth Wood, did some yelling and fist waving at a safe distance.

Earlier (27 June 1985) Wood had made more free-swinging and more public remarks about Walter Martin and John Ankerberg at a pre-session seminar hosted by the Ellen G. White Estate at the Superdome in New Orleans. Walter Martin's "influence among evangelicals is waning," Wood pronounced, "and he hoped to use the Ankerberg Show to reestablish his influence." Wood apparently knows little about Martin's influence. A 5 August 1985 *Newsweek* story on the most influential Christian books placed Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults* (circulation exceeding 500,000) fourth on the list.

Martin's audiocassette ministry distributor, Gospel Light Publications, says that his cassettes have reached a circulation of almost two million since 1972, and have been duplicated or listened to by as many as fifteen million people. Martin's "The Bible Answer Man" (heard in over fifty major radio markets) is the most popular Christian talk show. And his film series, "Walter Martin

Speaks Out on the Cults," has been rented during the past five years to thousands of churches.

Martin told *Currents* that "the only people who could possibly refer to my ministry as diminishing are those who simply do not read or listen to what is going on in the evangelical world."

Wood's next statement to the quinquennial pre-session gathering was both mistaken and loaded with misleading innuendo: "My successor [William Johnsson] had nothing to say about how the tapes were edited. [Edited] tapes can make people say the opposite of what they said."

Johnsson himself, in a letter to an Adventist layman, said that the tapes were edited to his satisfaction.

Except for one spot, where the discussion centered around the number of SDA pastors who left or were forced from their ministry following Glacier View, no conversation was lifted out of the taping at all; and in that one instance it was edited with Johnsson's permission. Most of the question-and-answer portion was dropped from the aired segments because of length; but that material is retained, verbatim, in the transcripts that are available from the Ankerberg Show for \$15.00.

Tapes indeed can be manipulated to "make people say the opposite of what they said," but the Ankerberg Show tapes manifestly do not.

Wood complained to his mostly minister audience in New Orleans that Martin and Ankerberg "took texts [he meant quotes from SDA publications] out of context," and he mentioned two examples. "What the [3 June] 1971 *Review* and *Herald* article ["The Source

of Final Appeal"] said," Wood claimed, "was totally distorted."

Was it distorted by Martin's use of it? Or was it distorted when Wood, as *Review* editor, published it in 1971? The article, written by Roderick S. Owen, an Adventist educator who died in 1927, argues that the only "reliable interpretation" of Scripture "must come to us through the same channel through which came the Scripture in the first place . . . the testimony of Jesus, or 'the spirit of prophecy' (Rev. 19:10)."

When it comes to understanding Scripture, Owen rejected "the uncertain sea of investigation." "Most denominations," he wrote, "have no satisfactory court of final appeal, that while the Bible is infallible and is the basis of all Christian faith, it needs to be infallibly interpreted to avoid confusion and division."

But what denomination has an infallible interpreter, a "satisfactory court of final appeal"? Owen supplies the answer by quoting Revelation 12:17 — those who "keep the com-

mandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus." Then he closed his article with this unmistakable admonition:

"When we come to the place where we place no trust in men nor in the wisdom of men, but unquestionably accept of and act upon what God says through this gift, then will the spirit of prophecy, as set before us in the Bible and as witnessed in the present manifestations of this gift, be confirmed among us and become, in fact, the counselor, guide, and final court of appeal among God's people."

Walter Martin quoted from Owen's 1971 *Review* article to illustrate the fact that fairly recent official SDA publications espouse Ellen White as the authoritative, "final court of appeal" for Adventist scriptural interpretation. It would be interesting to know what Wood was trying to accomplish by describing Martin's quoting from the article Wood had once published as "totally distorted." Johnsson flatly denied that Ellen White was the infallible interpreter of Scripture for Adventists; although he knows, of course, that many use her in just that way.

The White Estate board chairman grouched further about Martin's quoting from James White's comments in the 1880 edition of his *Life Sketches*, pages 328, 329: "They quoted the last sentence out of context," Wood said.



William Johnsson

"He [James White] isn't saying all her stuff is original."

Currents' readers may decide for themselves what James White's dumbfounding statements really mean. The paragraphs he numbered three and four in his book are reproduced entirely in an adjacent box. The portions Martin quoted are in italics.

Martin responded to Wood's accusation by agreeing that "technically, Mr. Wood has a point about the last sentence in the paragraph numbered point three on page 328 of *Life Sketches*. But the next paragraph (point four) is quite disingenuous as it reads; I was only summarizing.

courtesy John Ankerberg Show

"The quotations speak for themselves and justify that since it is now evident that Mrs. White is guilty of plagiarism, and has done those very things mentioned by James White, that his judgment on his wife's inspiration and authority should be final: 'If Mrs. W. has gathered the facts from a human mind in a single case, she has in thousands of cases, and God has not shown her these things which she has written in these personal testimonies.'"

Wood griped that "Ankerberg, instead of

taking the position of a moderator, took the attitude of a prosecuting attorney. He tried to pin Johnsson to the wall. No attempt was made to understand the truth."

Martin: "John Ankerberg is not only the moderator of the program but plays the role of a catalyst, pressuring his guests to communicate their views to the viewing audience, much as Phil Donahue does. William Johnsson had ample opportunity to respond, and was allegedly a responsible representative of the Sev-

enth-day Adventist denomination. His statements were not edited! He just simply did not have any real answers . . ."

Even Johnsson, in the 20 June 1985 *Review*, described the program as "a sort of religious Phil Donahue Show."

But all of Wood's remarks to the General Conference precession seminar combined could not match one astonishing statement by White Estate secretary Robert Olson a moment later: "Unfortunately, the devil will use

August 12, 1985

Dear Mr. Ankerberg:

A friend of mine recently sent me some cassette tapes featuring your interview with Dr. William Johnsson. I began to listen to them expectantly and with pleasure, feeling that perhaps you, as moderator of this show, would adopt a somewhat neutral stance in the discussion between Walter Martin and Dr. Johnsson. I must say, however, that I was exceedingly disappointed. Instead of your assuming the usual role of a host on a show, you adopted an adversary relationship with Dr. Johnsson, and you and Walter Martin cast yourselves in the role of prosecuting attorneys against Dr. Johnsson.

To say the least, I felt that this was extremely discourteous, since Dr. Johnsson was your guest. Although he was treated rudely by both you and Walter Martin, I felt that he conducted himself in a very Christian manner.

Other aspects of the show troubled me also. I had assumed that you and Walter Martin actually wanted to know what Seventh-day Adventists believe. This, however, was not apparent from your treatment of Dr. Johnsson. It seemed that both of you had already made up your minds about what Seventh-day Adventists believe, and that you were determined to bend the facts to suit your presuppositions. You had obtained information from critics of the church and assumed that these critics held the correct positions.

Having been a minister in the Seventh-day Adventist church for 47 years and editor of the *Adventist Review* for 17 years, I can assure you that the views set forth by Dr. Johnsson were accurate. Any thought that Dr. Johnsson's place in the church might be in jeopardy because of the views he holds is simply ridiculous.

I am well aware of the fact that some people in the communications media feel that the only way to obtain a reading or viewing audience is to engage in controversy. One way to start a controversy, of course, is to set critics and dissidents against the establishment. This may be a successful way of attracting an audience, but I feel it has not been helpful in seeking to obtain a true understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist church and its message. I feel particularly strongly about this, inasmuch as I was one of the editors of the *Adventist Review* for 27 years.

Very sincerely,

Kenneth H. Wood, Chairman
WHITE ESTATE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

August 14, 1985

Dear Mr. Wood:

Thank you for your letter of August 12. As one of the producers of the John Ankerberg Show, I am replying on John's behalf and will inform him of our correspondence as soon as possible.

I am sorry about your disappointment, but let me offer a few comments which are intended to put the format and content of our recent series into perspective.

First of all, we must not lose sight of the fact that Walter Martin has been a "defender" of Adventism since 1958. He has not called the Seventh-day Adventists a cult and as a result has taken a good deal of "heat" in your defense. Rather than cave in to the heat, he has elected to discuss it openly with qualified representatives of Adventism. Dr. Johnsson chose to respond to Dr. Martin in the context of the John Ankerberg Show. Rather than being a disinterested and uninformed outsider, or a "prosecuting attorney," Dr. Martin is a disappointed brother who is interested in truth content.

Secondly, I have enclosed for you a copy of the transcripts of that recent series. After reading them, I'm sure you will realize that the quotes and information used by Dr. Martin and Mr. Ankerberg were from Seventh-day Adventist sources. The fact that such a program was considered at all resulted from the contradictions which can be found between what Adventist texts, organizations, spokespersons, and publications are saying. No effort was made to manufacture controversy (as you have incorrectly hinted). Rather, the program represents an effort to try to figure out what was going on in Adventism in light of all the contradictory statements.

Thirdly, what Mr. Ankerberg said about Dr. Johnsson's job was not merely "hype." Don't forget Desmond Ford. He was saying similar things (as Johnsson) two years ago while at the same time *defending the denomination*. Where is he now? He is being treated as an outsider, or, as some of the SDA lay people have told us, "an apostate." Mr. Ankerberg's statements were offered in sincerity.

Fourthly, you must not fall prey to the notion that just because someone says something you disagree with that they are being rude to you. Mr. Ankerberg and Dr. Martin were attempting to seek the reconciliation of current Adventist doctrine with what the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures are teaching. To press for content, to respect sound principles of interpretation, and to base statements on legitimate evidence is not rudeness nor discourtesy. It does, however, make demands on *all* of us. To call it a name does not lessen those demands.

The primary points around which the discussion was set up in the first place are: first, "Is Ellen G. White the infallible interpreter of Scripture in Adventism?" Secondly, "Why are so many folks whose theology is essentially sound (Evangelical) disappearing from the ranks of Adventism?"

The information which occasioned these questions came from Adventist sources. We know better than to rely on the word of malcontents.

We respect Dr. Johnsson highly. After all, he was the *only* one of nearly a dozen folks in the General Conference who responded to our invitation. We also know that he is taking a lot of heat from within his own denomination now. The "official line" is evidently not the most popular one.

If you feel that the General Conference did not get a "fair hearing," or that the points could be answered better, please accept this my invitation to you to participate as a guest on the John Ankerberg Show. I will be happy to discuss with you the format, other guests, topics of discussion and other arrangements.

We do want to know what Seventh-day Adventists believe. Like you, however, we want to be sure that all of our beliefs square with God's Truth and with the evidences.

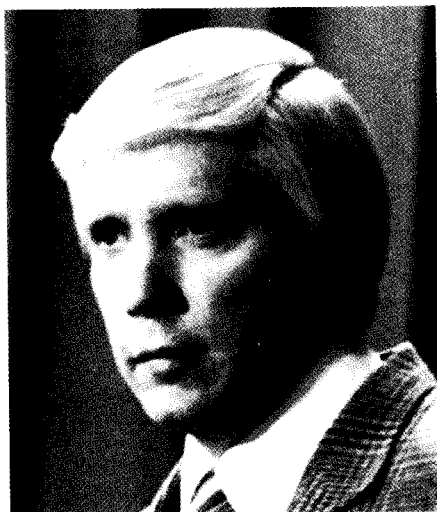
Thank you for your kind attention.

Cordially,

Robert H. Gerow
Executive Vice President
The John Ankerberg Show

methods we can't; we have to be absolutely truthful and fair." Olson really did say that.

Martin's reaction: "I will not bother to dignify Robert Olson's comments relative to the devil using methods that the Seventh-day Adventists cannot use, as if John Ankerberg and I are somehow employed by the dark powers to attack the remnant church."



John Ankerberg

courtesy John Ankerberg Show

Well aware that a common characteristic of cultic mentality is to ascribe the work of other Christian groups or individuals to the devil, Martin made a conditional prophecy: "If Seventh-day Adventism depends upon Ellen White's reputation rather than upon the gospel of grace alone, its classification as a cult will be well earned before the next twenty years has passed."

Ankerberg's executive vice president, Robert Gerow, offered Wood the opportunity to be a guest on the show and set the record



Kenneth Wood

courtesy David S. Baker portfolio

straight (see Wood/Gerow correspondence box). Johnsson was the only individual of approximately a dozen Adventist institutional church leaders invited to appear on the show who accepted the original offer. Among those invited were Neal Wilson, Robert Olson, Victor Cooper, and Warren H. Johns.

Gerow told *Currents* that since Johnsson's appearance on the show had been seen around the country, five or six Adventists had asked for the opportunity to appear on the show to defend their perception of Adventism. *Omega* author Lewis Walton is rumored to have been among them, but Gerow would only say that they included none of the institutional church leaders originally invited by Ankerberg.

A couple of weeks before the show's taping, *Currents* wrote Johnsson wishing him well — nevertheless predicting that if he were to try to

"If Mrs. W. has gathered the facts from a human mind in a single case, she has in thousands of cases, and God has not shown her these things . . ."

— James White

defend traditional Adventism, Walter Martin would tear him limb from limb; and that if he tried to defend an evolved Adventism, the loving and gentle right wing Adventist membership would crucify him. Johnsson chose the second alternative and the result was inevitable.

William Grotheer's monthly *"Watchman, what of the night?"* newsletter (XVIII-9) spent its entire seven pages under the fight card headline "Martin vs Johnsson." A subtitle head read "Johnsson unable to defend faith."

Like Kenneth Wood, Grotheer called the episode "a two against one court trial with the Church having a very poor 'defense lawyer.'" He described the "confrontation between Martin and Johnsson" as "nothing short of a disaster for Johnsson, and thus the leadership of the Church."

Citing Johnsson's theological training, his associate deanship of the Andrews University Seminary, and now his position as editor of the *Adventist Review*, Grotheer marvelled that "he could not stand before the adversaries of the Truth!" But Grotheer had an explanation based on Israel's failure at Ai — sin in the camp. "There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: Thou canst not stand before thine enemies (Joshua 7:13)."

"We are not left to find our way, drawing our conclusions from the writings of two thousand years and more ago . . ."

— Arthur White

For Grotheer, as for many Adventist traditionalists, that "accursed thing" is the out-of-print but unrepudiated book *Questions on Doctrine* — representing, as they believe, "a betrayal of truth committed in trust to . . . God's final movement . . ." Joshua prayed for God's merciful forgiveness after the failure at Ai, wrote Grotheer; but he fretted over the fact that he'd "heard nothing of such a prayer on the part of [Neal] Wilson because of this [Ankerberg Show] disaster."

Grotheer supplied his readers with an interesting statistic. He counted eighteen different occasions when Johnsson, faced with either a question or a quotation from a church publication, "ran for cover behind the 27 Statements of Belief voted at Dallas, Texas, in 1980."

Johnsson was very fortunate that after he had turned to the 27 fundamental beliefs a dozen or so times (what he described as "our statements of faith," "what we expect people to affirm," and "the bottom line") that neither Martin nor Ankerberg reminded him of the

historical Adventist antipathy for creeds — "the Bible and the Bible only . . ."

While Wood accused Ankerberg of obtaining "information from critics of the church and assumed that these critics held the correct positions," Grotheer listed the authors and sources from which Martin and Ankerberg had read to Johnsson: Robert Olson, D.A. Delafield, Neal Wilson, Arthur White, a 1976 Sabbath School quarterly, and the *SDA Bible Commentary*.

It was quotes read on the air like this one from Arthur White's *The Ellen G. White Writings* (page 15) that led Martin to insist that for Adventists Mrs. White has become "a pope above the Scripture":

"Seventh-day Adventists are uniquely fortunate . . . We are not left to find our way, drawing our conclusions from the writings of two thousand years and more ago that have come down to us through varied transcriptions and translations. With us it is almost a contemporary matter, for we have had a prophet in our midst."

Another right-wing Adventist pamphleteer, Vance Ferrell, filled two consecutive issues of his *Waymarks* (nos. 111, 112) with transcript splices from and analysis of Johnsson's Ankerberg Show appearance.

To Ferrell "it was not [Johnsson's] fumbling, but his theological stance, that was the most shocking." He could hardly believe Johnsson's contention that SDA doctrinal beliefs "are based on our Statement of Beliefs . . ."

And Ferrell spotted the creedal problem: "Such a position makes us exactly that which our forefathers feared: a creedal church; a church based on the opinions and decisions of men, and not the clear statements of the Word of God."

James White's 1880 Life Sketches

(Portions quoted by Walter Martin on the John Ankerberg Show are italicized.)

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3. Does unbelief suggest that what she writes in her personal testimonies has been learned from others? We inquire, What time has she had to learn all these facts? and who for a moment can regard her as a Christian woman, if she gives her ear to gossip, then writes it out as a vision from God? And where is the person of superior natural and acquired abilities who could listen to the description of one, two, or three thousand cases, all differing, and then write them out without getting them confused, laying the whole work liable to a thousand contradictions? If Mrs. W. has gathered the facts from a human mind in a single case, she has in thousands of cases, and God has not shown her these things which she has written in these personal testimonies.

4. In her published works there are many things set forth which cannot be found in other books, and yet they are so clear and beautiful that the unprejudiced mind grasps them at once as truth. A doctor of divinity once heard Mrs. W. speak upon her favorite theme, God in Nature. She dwelt largely upon the life and teachings of Christ. This Christian gentleman was instructed and highly edified; and at the close of the discourse, in private conversation, addressed her in these words: "Sister White, while you were speaking, I have been asking myself the question, Why

is it that none of us have thought of these precious things which you have brought out this morning?"

If commentators and theological writers generally had seen these gems of thought which strike the mind so forcibly, and had they been brought out in print, all the ministers in the land could have read them. These men gather thoughts from books, and as Mrs. W. has written and spoken a hundred things, as truthful as they are beautiful and harmonious, which cannot be found in the writings of

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others, they are new to the most intelligent readers and hearers. And if they are not to be found in print, and are not brought out in sermons from the pulpit, where did Mrs. W. find them? From what source has she received the new and rich thoughts which are to be found in her writings and oral addresses? She could not have learned them from books, from the fact that they do not contain such thoughts. And, certainly, she did not learn them from those ministers who had not thought of them. The case is a clear one. It evidently requires a hundred times the credulity to believe that Mrs. W. has learned these things of others, and has palmed them off as visions from God, that [sic] it does to believe that the Spirit of God has revealed them to her.

Ellen White's "favorite theme"

James White mentioned (see above) that his wife's "favorite theme" was "God in Nature." He went on to say of her "new and rich thoughts" that "she could not have learned them from books . . ." So "where did Mrs. W. find them?" he asked. *Currents* regrets the fact that Brother White is not around to learn at least part of the answer to his question found in an 85-page monograph entitled *Henry Melvill and Ellen G. White: A Study in Literary and Theological Relationships*, available from the Ellen G. White Estate. Slightly adapted from that monograph is its illustration of Ellen White's source for her "favorite theme":

Henry Melvill, "The Continued Agency of the Father and the Son," *Sermons* (1844), pp. 295, 296.

Ellen G. White, "God in Nature," Ms. 4, 1882 (in *General Conference Bulletin*, February 18, 1897, pp. 73, 74).

Melville — We shall consider the text as affirming, in the first place, the
White — Christ and the Father are

M continual working of the Father; in the second place, the continual
W continually working through the laws of nature.

M working of the Son . . . Now there is, perhaps, in all of us a tendency
W

M to the so dwelling on the laws of matter, and the operations of nature
W Those who dwell on the laws of matter and the laws of nature, in

M as to forget, if
W following their own limited, finite understanding, lose sight of, if they

M not deny, the continued agency of God. If our creed were
W do not deny, the continual and direct agency of God. Many express

M . . . gathered from our common forms of speech, it might be concluded
W themselves in a manner which would convey the idea

M that we regarded nature as some agent quite distinct from deity,
W that nature is distinct from the God of

M nature having its own sphere, and its own powers, in and with
W having in and of itself its own limits and its own powers wherewith

M which to work. We are wont to draw a line between what we call
W to work. There is with many a marked distinction between

M natural, and what supernatural; assigning the latter to an infinite power,
W natural and supernatural.

M but ascribing the former to ordinary causes unconnected with the . . .
W The natural is ascribed to ordinary causes, unconnected with the

M interference of God. . . . We thus give energy to matter, and
W interference of God. Vital power is attributed to matter, and nature

M make a deity of nature? . . . to say that matter was . . . placed in
W made a diety. Matter is supposed to be placed in

M certain relations, and then left to obey the laws . . .
W certain relations, and left to act from fixed laws, with which God

M that matter was endowed with certain properties,
W himself cannot interfere; that nature is endowed with certain properties

M . . . and perform the revolutions
W and then left to itself to obey these laws, and perform the work

M originally impressed and commanded. This is . . . unscientific as it is
W originally commanded. This is false science; there is

M unscriptural to contend. We do not indeed suppose that God
W nothing in the Word of God to sustain it. God

M exerts any such agency as to supersede the laws, or nullify the properties
W does not nullify his laws,

M of matter; but we believe that he is continually acting by and through
W but he is continually working through

M these laws and properties as his instruments.
W them, using them as his instruments.

M proofs of the presence and activity of a being who produces,
W ... presence and active agency of a being who moves in all his

M according to his own will ... I count it not owing to inherent
W works, according to his will. It is not by an original

M powers, originally impressed, that year by year this globe walks its orbit,
W power inherent in nature that year by year the earth produces its

M repeating its mysterious march round the sun in
W bounties, and the world keeps up its continual march around the sun.

M the firmament: I rather reckon that the hand of the Almighty
W The hand of infinite power is

M perpetually guides this planet, and that it is through his
W perpetually at work guiding this planet. It is God's

M energies, momentarily applied, that the ponderous mass effects
W power momentarily exercised that keeps it in position

M its rotations. ... It is through his immediate
W in its rotations. ... It is by his power ...

M agency that every leaf opens, and every flower blooms. I count it not the
W that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. It is not

M consequence of a physical organization, the effect of a curious mechanism,
W the result of a mechanism,

M which, once set in motion, continues to work, that pulse succeeds to
W that, once set in motion, continues its work, that the pulse beats

M pulse, and breath follows breath: I rather regard it as literally true,
W and breath follows breath.

M that in God "we live and move, and have our being," that each pulse is but
W In God we live and move and have our being. Every breath,

M the throb, each breath the inspiration of the
W every throb of the heart is the continual evidence of the power of an

M ever-present, all-actuating Divinity ... He it is, ... who maketh the sun
W ever-present god It is God that maketh the sun

M to arise, and the rain
W to rise in the heavens. He openeth the windows of heaven and giveth rain.

M to descend. He it is, saith the Psalmist, "who maketh grass to grow
W He maketh the grass to grow

M upon the mountains." "He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the
W upon the mountains. "He giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the

M hoar-frost like ashes." "When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude
W hoar-frost like ashes." "When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude

M of waters in the heavens; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth
W of waters in the heavens, he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth

M the wind out of his treasures." ... but that the Divine Being, though he
W the wind out of his treasures." Although the Lord

M have ceased from creating, is momentarily engaged in actuating
W has ceased his work in creating, he is constantly employed in

M and upholding the vast system which he originally
W upholding and using as his servants the things which he has

M constructed. ... the declaration of Christ, "Hitherto my Father worketh?"
W made. Said Christ, "My Father worketh"

Ferrell was put off by Johnsson's statement that "categorically, I can tell you that the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist church has not repudiated *Questions on Doctrine*." He was also displeased by Johnsson's triumphant announcement that in a new, committee-produced volume of studies in the book of Daniel "you will not find one reference to Ellen White, ... not one." On the other hand, Ferrell gave his hearty "Amen" to the *Review* article recommending that the Spirit of Prophecy "be confirmed among us and become, in fact, a ... final court of appeal ..."

Through a hearing or typing mistake in the published transcript, Johnsson's words "fundamental beliefs" were exchanged for "sentimental beliefs;" and on that basis Ferrell unwittingly accused him of "a quaint demeaning" of Ellen White's writings.

"Unfortunately, the devil will use methods we can't; we have to be absolutely truthful and fair."

— Robert Olson

Even though he claims to "feel sorry for the poor man," Ferrell wishes that Johnsson "would step down so that a genuine successor to the line of Woods, Nichol, Wilcox, and the other men of God who earlier headed the *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, could take the job."

Perhaps Ferrell can shame the only living of those "men of God," Kenneth Wood, into accepting Ankerberg's invitation to defend "the truth."

Johnsson himself, the apparent victim in the

whole episode, had some late complaints that seemed to a number of observers to be, if not beneath him, not worth his time in pursuing. He was irritated by two letters that appeared in the Ankerberg Show newsletter, *News & Views*. One dated 3 January 1985 was addressed to Johnsson by Walter Rea. "Never," said Rea, "have I seen such ducking and weaving and hemming and hawing in answers concerning Adventism." He further expressed his hope that Johnsson had not "become another loyal liar for the church."

Those comments may have disturbed Johnsson, but it was the fact that Rea's letter contained quotes from the taping session and was dated well before the program aired that really vexed him. He complained that he had been promised by Ankerberg no pre-airing release of the tapes.

Robert Gerow replied for Ankerberg, insisting that the promise had been kept; therefore someone in the audience must have taken notes and sent them to Rea. Johnsson wrote back (27 September 1985) unconvinced and evaluated what he felt was the imbalance in letters published in *News & Views*. "As one whose ministry is in the editorial lines, I would be deeply concerned about matters of credibility if I were associated with the John Ankerberg Show."

As it turns out, the Ankerberg Show had not prereleased tapes of the Johnsson/Martin con-

versations to anyone. A member of the live taping audience surreptitiously recorded the program on a vest pocket cassette recorder and sent copies to Walter Rea and *Currents* a few days after the taping in late December 1984.

The other letter printed in *News & Views* that aroused Johnsson's ire was one addressed to him by one-time *Review & Herald* Publishing Association photographer Skip Baker. Much of Baker's letter rather jeered at Johnsson's predicament — trying to defend the often indefensible. However, Baker felt that Johnsson had been too hard on himself when he reviewed his own performance in a 20 June 1985 *Review* editorial saying, "the experience gave me a greater appreciation for the ministry of Adventists such as George Vandeman, Dan Matthews, and Charles Brooks, who are able to appear so cool and composed in front of the cameras."

"Why shouldn't George [Vandeman] look 'cool and composed in front of the cameras,'" Baker asked. "He's in front of a 'controlled audience,' in his own studio, protected from probing questions by ... a staff who know what questions NEVER to ask."

Baker further argued that "if the Adventist 'truth' could stand investigation, when Ankerberg invited church leaders to come on his show ... they'd have clamored to get on, instead of turning him down to a man!"

But Johnsson's expressed concern to Ankerberg was that the Baker letter addressed him as "Dear Bill," and Johnsson claimed that they were not friends and that, in fact, their paths had never crossed. While the *Review* editor is wrong about that, Baker says he does not resent the fact that Johnsson has forgotten the contact they had during the month both

were employed at 6840 Eastern Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C.

The bottom line is that Johnsson did a perhaps reckless, but certainly courageous, thing by appearing on the Ankerberg Show; and for his trouble he has been left to twist slowly in the wind, while the wags on both the Adventist left and right riddle him with shot.

Many observers doubt whether anyone else could have done better, believing that the problem lay less with any ineptitude on Johnsson's part than with tensions inherent in the "truth" he was supposed to defend.

Recently *Currents* somewhat facetiously told Neal Wilson that it looked forward to seeing him mop up behind Bill Johnsson on the John Ankerberg Show. Wilson's reply was not for the record. But *Currents'* readers need not look for that kind of entertainment in this lifetime. □

"Where your treasure is ..."

Seventh-day Adventists have been making the headlines again this year for their involvement in a widely reported financial pyramid scam, operating under the sheeps' clothing of "arbitrage trading."

The story has appeared in newspapers around the nation as well as in publications directed especially to businessmen, such as *Forbes* and *The Wall Street Journal*. It is estimated that approximately half of the 4,600 investors, who deposited over \$70 million in a two-year period, were Seventh-day Adventists. All the depositors were attracted apparently by the 30-40 percent interest rate promised by the Elmas Trading Corporation of Reno, Nevada, through deposits in Republic Overseas Bank, Ltd. (ROBL) — essentially a post office box in the Marshall Islands.

The tangle of approximately a dozen shell corporations, mining companies, and off-shore banks all appear to have had common ownership — a Seventh-day Adventist entrepreneur, James Attarian, and his associate Donald D. Smith. The primary fronting corporation for these various entities was Elmas; and Elmas was the agent, specifically, for ROBL.

A report in the 7 April 1985 *Walla Walla Union Bulletin* referenced Nevada deputy attorney general Gregory Damm as claiming that Attarian denied ownership of the bank. Damm

told the *Bulletin* reporters, "When we asked him for names of the officers or principles in the bank, Mr. Attarian became very evasive and said he didn't know." Unfortunately, Damm has a letter from the Marshall Islands attorney general's office listing Attarian as the principal owner of Republic Overseas Bank. And a senior examiner with the Financial Institutions Division, Nevada Department of Commerce, Michael Whiteaker, in a written statement (18 April 1985), said that "the bank signature card for the account of Republic Overseas Bank, Ltd., at Security Bank of Nevada reflects that the officers of Republic Overseas Bank, Ltd., are Donald D. Smith, president; J.L. Attarian, secretary; and Phyllis W. Attarian, treasurer"

What Attarian and his associates appear to have done is bilked approximately 4,600 investors out of over \$70 million by promising them — either directly or through "consultants" — up to 41 percent annual interest on their money, after a mandatory \$5,100 initial investment.

The promotional materials of one Carson City "consultant," Robert F. Thompson, promised: "When compounded quarterly, the annual return is over 41 percent. Your original deposit will double in two years and three days."

Thompson also explained arbitrage trading — the practice touted as making ROBL's high interest payments possible — as "the simultaneous purchase and sale of the same commodities in different markets to profit from unequal prices."

Attarian quoted Scripture a lot, and always insisted that God was the Chairman of the Board.

Adventist consultants were sensitive to their potential depositors' Davenport jitters, decrying the doctor's real estate business "which was," one consultant wrote, "both deceptive and illegal in the way business was conducted." "I am glad," another consultant wrote, "that law enforcement agencies are putting a stop to these illegal practices."

This same consultant went on to make claims for which he had no basis, stating that after being "investigated by both federal and state authorities," Attarian's off-shore bank had "come out with flying colors."

In a letter inviting "family and friends" to

call "if you are not currently receiving substantially more than 24 percent interest on your money market account....," Tom and Betty Steele of Westlake Village, California, described a bank that practiced arbitrage trading "without risk of capital."

The Elmas Trading Corporation scheme involved a pyramid marketing plan that paid various percentage finder's fees. Consultants (there were approximately 450) were required to incorporate themselves so that they could not be accused of working for Elmas; rather they were independent contractors. This, of course, did not preclude individual "finders" from bringing potential investors to a consultant.

One such finder was attempting to bring investors to Mrs. Herbert (Norma) Douglass, a consultant incorporated under the name Wide World Investments, Incorporated. The finder's cover letter to potential investors explained that money entrusted to Wide World would be placed in Republic Overseas Bank of the Marshall Islands, adding: "Investments are now guaranteed by the FDIC [Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation] to \$100,000" This guarantee, of course, was impossible.

Unnameable sources suggest that Dr. Herbert Douglass' resignation from his vice presidency of development at Pacific Press to become director of Weimar Institute is at least partly due to animosity generated among fellow Press workers who were encouraged by Douglass to invest their savings in ROBL through his wife's Wide World Investments,

Inc. The Douglass' confidence in Elmas and ROBL probably stems from personal friendship with Attarian based at least in part on shared theological positions. *Currents* was told by the Weimar switchboard on October 8 that the Douglasses were out of the country.

Currents has acquired photocopies of a number of Attarian-signed, International Management & Accounting Corporation (IMAC) checks made out to, among others, "Norma C. Douglass" (\$2,337.50 — 5 December 1984) and the "Northern California Assoc. of S.D.A." (\$1,500.00 — 15 January 1985). These checks probably represent interest, finder's points, or both.

Currents does not believe that Northern California Conference Association had tithes or offerings invested with any of Attarian's schemes. Almost certainly, a trustor had insisted that part of his/her trust funds be deposited in ROBL. In fact, one of the distinguishing factors between this financial fiasco and the Davenport debacle is that in this instance it appears that church members unwisely invested their own money, rather than having church administrators risking the members' tithes and offerings.

(concluded on page 38)

Walter Martin recommends Weimar Institute

I recently had the opportunity to attend a special training program of the Weimar Institute in Weimar, California, which is staffed by Seventh-day Adventist doctors, nurses, and attendants. It was a most beneficial time, as the atmosphere was highly spiritual with many excellent insights into the word of God practically applied through diet and exercise.

I credit Weimar with helping me to begin and maintain a new lifestyle which I recommend heartily to ministers, educators, and Christians in general as a means of getting maximum output from our bodies for the continued service of the kingdom of God.

Weimar is a good illustration of the application of biblical principles to practical living, and since so many people seem to dig their graves with their knives and forks the Weimar message is not wasted.

— Walter Martin, president, Christian Research Institute

General Conference Journal: A Reporter's Odyssey

by George Colvin

Adventist Currents sent Ph.D. candidate in government George Colvin to the General Conference quinquennium in New Orleans as a reporter. He was granted a press pass by the General Conference Department of Communications and was probably the only full-time, nonchurch-sponsored, American reporter at the Session.

Without boasting it may be claimed that Colvin's reporting of the fifty-fourth quinquennium in this and succeeding issues of Currents will be the most thorough and objective General Conference Session coverage ever published.

Although the outcome was never in doubt — in a one-party system it rarely is — Colvin stayed for the last out. And Currents thanks him (and hopes the church can too) for his indefatigable, trenchant, and readable journalism. — Ed.

With this issue, *Currents* begins a series of articles on the 1985 General Conference Session in New Orleans, Louisiana. This article will provide a general introduction to the series and the Session. Many of the points mentioned here will be discussed in more depth in the other pieces that will appear in *Currents*.

Looking over a three-ring circus

Even in making arrangements for the Session, the increasing influence and organizational sophistication of Adventism was evident. The General Conference rented for more than two weeks not only one of the largest hotels in New Orleans but also the Superdome itself, making arrangements almost a decade in advance. Those hotels that did not work with the Session arrangers found their rooms temporarily empty. A travel agency obtained special reduced rates for travel to the Session, and one of the Adventist Health Systems devoted much of its effort for months planning more than two dozen vegetarian menus. And so, the menus of some New Orleans hotel restaurants shifted rapidly from shellfish, frog's legs, and bourbon to fruit, vegetables, and juices. Provisions had to be made for everything from armed guards for General Conference dignitaries to flags for paraders to carry and balloons to release at a French Quarter service. The logistical work needed to put on a Session is beyond accurate description, which may account for its being so little noted.

The flavor of the Session became obvious long before the delegates arrived. At Memphis, Tennessee, for example, one plane embarked with dozens of Australian Adventists; and the cabin was filled with their distinctive British-based accent. They displayed their freedom from traditional North American mores by ordering a surprisingly small number of vegetarian meals, yet some of them seemed less than pleased with what they had so far seen of North American Adventism. One administrator, on a world tour of educational institutions, deplored the looseness in jewelry-wearing he had observed and was very concerned at the high incidence of drinking he had been told of.

To a southern Californian, New Orleans in late June resembled Washington, D.C., in August — sultry, with sullen spattering rain and sudden overpowering downpours. Recently engineers have devised ways to sink piles through the swamp on which New Orleans floats to the bedrock hundreds of feet below. Fostered by this achievement, high-rise hotels and office buildings have grown up along almost the whole length of the mile-plus stretch between the Superdome, the Session's meeting site, and the New Orleans Hilton on the Mississippi River. The New Orleans downtown has thus come to resemble that of many other large convention cities, with towering structures competing like up-thrusting jungle plants for sun and altitude. Along or near this route, the delegates and other Session attendees spraddled out into five official hotels plus the Hilton, which rapidly attained semi-official status. At least it became a stop for the Session charter buses. The buses divided the attendees into two classes: the upper crust sufficiently well-heeled, well-positioned, or fortunate to stay at the

Hyatt Regency next to the Superdome; and the teeming multitudes in the outposts, who — squashed beyond strap-hanging into relay-breathing — thronged the buses just before and just after the day's activities began.

Once the delegates squeezed out of the buses, they had to confront the Superdome and the adjacent Hyatt Regency complex. As church propaganda has trumpeted, the Superdome is the largest building of its kind in the world. But nothing said about it is as persuasive as seeing it. The Superdome resembles an enormous gray concrete flying saucer that made an emergency landing in downtown New Orleans and got slightly squashed out of round in doing so. Inside, the building included the huge main hall (divided for the Session into meeting and eating areas) and a rabbit-warren of rooms on the main hall's perimeter. As they did at the Hyatt Regency (where the highest church officials stayed on the uppermost floor), official and physical altitudes matched, with top General Conference officers occupying the private boxes near the Superdome ceiling.



courtesy, George Colvin

Poydras Plaza and the Hyatt Regency

A Session attendee would immediately realize that the Session was a three-ring circus of events (including, some thought, a due proportion of clowns); and all of these rings were operating at once. During most of the Session itself, delegates were debating, committees were meeting, booths were hawking their sponsoring organizations, friends were chatting, bookstore salesclerks were selling, journalists were writing — all at once, and all in the middle of many other activities. The Session was the greatest combination of political rally, campmeeting, and after-church social that Adventism offers.

The organizational displays were an important part of the Session's atmosphere. Ranked in a long semicircle one level above the entrance, the displays included booths from virtually all General Conference institutions and all divisions, as well as exhibits from some unions and the Association of Adventist Women (AAW). AAW was one of the few unofficial organizations to have a display. As a result of recently soured relationships, the Association of Adventist Forums had none; although the right-wing Hartland Institute had a large and well-located booth on the floor before the Session proper began. Notable, too, was the North American Division exhibit. This multi-section panorama, probably the largest display of all, was some four times the size of any other division's booth.

The Superdome held two surprises, both unpleasant. Its size dwarfed anything most who came could imagine, and it always seemed that the event or booth or person one wanted was on the other side — a half-mile away around the circumference. And its temperature was like nothing anyone had expected. Allegedly to prevent condensation and rain inside the building, the Superdome was cooled to about 68 degrees Fahrenheit. Men in three-piece summer suits were quite comfortable; but women who had come prepared for the hot, humid weather of New Orleans gently froze. One speaker remarked from the podium, "I'm grateful for the air conditioning here, but I think the people who are running it came from Alaska." This situation led to a shocking micro-climate at the doors, where within fifty feet one went from cool, low humidity conditions to outside

up their faces as big as if they were only inches away. When the congregation was singing, the words of each hymn were projected onto the screen. And the names of speakers were sub-titled on the thirty-foot-high TV screen. Delegates from each Division sat together. Security guards prevented any non-delegates from entering [the Session floor]. The



Robert Nixon

visitors were able to sit in other galleries — although (except on Sabbath) there were few visitors.

One function that proved a pleasant surprise was the meal service. Except for the first meal, where unfamiliarity with the Superdome combined with breakdowns in facilities to cause a complete collapse in service, the meal service ran fairly smoothly. Although it was evident to those managing it that the Superdome was a ghastly place in which to prepare thousands of full meals a day, with some shortcomings they triumphed over the limitations of their situation. Especially for diners smart enough to come very early or very late in the meal-serving periods, the lines were not unbearable and at times were almost absent. Meal prices were fairly low by comparison to those available in the immediate area, and convenience was high.

These Ministerial Council seminars almost all separated into those that were conservative and those that were more so.

weather where 95-degree temperatures vied with 95-percent humidity in producing discomfort.

Independent Adventist journalist Phil Ward, publisher of the Australian journal *Adventist News*, described well the physical setting of the Superdome, as seen by the scattering of reporters.

From the press room at the back of the auditorium, speakers look the size of pins. But five giant TV screens showed

Another unexpected surprise was the quality of communications. The Adventist Amateur Radio Network (short-wave) functioned so well in 1980 that Session officials asked it to slow down so overseas areas could get information through regular channels first. It seemed to work as well this time. Also very important was the Session newsroom, by far the most sophisticated arrangement of its kind in Session history. Robert Nixon, an attorney who recently became General Conference communication director,

staffed the newsroom with helpful and generally courteous workers while keeping himself accessible. Reporters from the independent Adventist press were treated well, even if some comments betrayed considerable reserves of hostility toward such enterprises. They received all news releases, had pictures made for their publications, and even got press badges that enabled them to cover the floor events from the press gallery — conveniently located right next to the newsroom. That the newsroom for the competition-wary Adventist church was located in a room devoted to regional sports heroes was a minor absurdity; but it did not affect the professional dedication of the staff. Certainly the information distributed was hardly searching, and Session reporting and analysis in official church journals have been very short of incisive; but the newsroom did provide the basic information on which reporters could build by their own efforts.

The activities at the Session divided into two sections. From June 23 to June 27, the General Conference sponsored a World Ministerial Council. Its programs were intended to inform and encourage the overwhelmingly ministerial audience. The informational part, usually conducted in the afternoon, included dozens of four-and-one-half-hour long seminars. These seminars, usually conducted by well-qualified people, were devoted to institutional, theological, and pastoral topics that ranged from the use of computers in the church to the authority and inspiration of Ellen White. On theological issues, these seminars almost all separated into those that were conservative and those that were more so. In the people invited (and not invited) to put them on, the theological seminars reflected the hold that the Ellen White Estate and the Andrews University Seminary under Gerhard Hasel have established over Adventist thought.

Notably, two Spanish-language seminars on Latin-American evangelism and Ellen White were the only seminars conducted in any language but English; and in a Session where Adventists outside the developed Western world made up more than half the delegates, only one Spanish seminar and one English one, each presented only once, dealt with evangelism outside the West. No seminars examined missiology in general. The organizers evidently prepared for and got an audience of North American pastors (with a few wives scattered about) primarily interested in learning the latest church-management techniques and being reassured that none of the developments of recent years has affected the soundness and relevance of traditional Adventist teachings. It was not accidental that Hasel's seminar on "Current Issues in Prophetic Interpretation," in which Hasel emphasized the correctness of standard Adventist views on the interpretation of Daniel, drew one of the largest crowds.

One of the most stimulating seminars was "The Pastor and Medical-Ethical Issues," by ethicist Gerald Winslow. Among his topics was "The Right to Die," about which he showed a videotape of a horribly burned man that certainly topped all other seminars for graphic

depiction of the issue. Winslow showed mastery in presenting information while gently guiding discussion and allowing extensive participation by the audience, which was largely composed of medical professionals. That at-

minutes of the meetings that deal with them, which makes the debate hard to follow. Finally, some of the comments made presupposed information (including the bright blue binder of proposed actions given to each delegate) that

Adventist women received everyone's undying devotion and no one's political support.

tendance at this seminar was perhaps a fifth of that at Hasel's was also a graphic depiction, in this case of the interests of leading Adventist pastors. Pre-Session attendees had full liberty to choose the meetings they wished to attend, and Adventist pastors (especially in North America) are apparently more interested in being soothed about the rightness of historic Adventist positions than in being challenged to think about the general problem of moral decision making and the specific topics of abortion, new reproductive technologies, and terminating life — even though any of these concerns could become vital for a parishioner at any time.

The encouragement part of the pre-Session activities occurred in the morning, where excellent speakers gave a talk and a sermon each morning on Adventist theology, the pastor's work, and evangelism. Particularly well received, by several accounts, was the talk on Monday, June 24, by Richard Davidson of the Seminary, who explained how he had rescued himself from doubts about the sanctuary doctrine. Two different panels also gingerly discussed the Adventist crisis produced by the delayed Second Coming.

The Session itself began with a keynote speech by General Conference president Neal C. Wilson, and it largely ran on further speeches by the same person — alternating somewhat with statements by other high church officials. This pattern was followed throughout the major items dealt with by the Session: electing the General Conference and divisional leaders, debating and passing the church reorganizational plan proposed by a special General Conference committee, and amending the *Church Manual* and the General Conference Constitution and Bylaws. By and large, the expected occurred. The General Conference remained North American in personnel. African delegates, temporarily fractious on the Session floor, settled for greater indigenous control in their divisions and tokenism at the General Conference level. Adventist women received everyone's undying devotion and no one's political support. What had been predigested by Annual Councils and special groups (also almost entirely North American) was duly swallowed almost entirely by the delegates, even though they occasionally choked.

As the 1980 Session concentrated on doctrine, the 1985 Session dealt almost entirely with organization. Read in the minutes, the debates are both deadly and confusing. Part of this result comes from the editing of the minutes, which often removed interesting points. Also contributing to the confusion is the practice of printing motions passed at the end of the

most readers do not have. But beneath such murky surface waters were certain depths of thought and feeling.

The Session also produced pageantry and outside contributions. The former was represented by the two large delegate parades, one from the Superdome to the French Quarter and the other onto the Superdome floor. These programs proved that Adventists can wave flags and toss "throws" with the best of them; they were somewhat less creditable in some ways to Adventist logistics. The outside contributions came from many groups. The most extensive were luncheon meetings at the Hyatt Regency hosted by the Association of Adventist Forums (which overcame numerous General Conference roadblocks to hold them) and several meetings held at the Hilton by a more recently formed group called "Christians in Crisis." Both of these sets of meetings followed the same theme: the situation of Adventists in parts



Sidney Reiners

of the world not often discussed by the official church press. A person who attended all of these meetings would have learned about Adventists in mainland China, Romania, Hungary, Australia, and South Africa. These meetings partly filled a great void of information on overseas Adventists, a topic almost entirely unaddressed during the Session and pre-Session.

The Session certainly had achievements. The North American Division has inched further toward self-control — an achievement somewhat nullified by the reorganization plan, which made clear that divisions are only General Conference sections and that the General Conference retains almost absolute authority within the Adventist church. The overseas

delegates, especially those from Africa, served notice that they cannot be taken for granted, although the General Conference remained North Americanized. The reorganization plan made lines of authority much clearer; and if its theoretical basis is in many respects badly flawed, both the plan and its basis were widely accepted. According to one informed observer, the reorganizational plan abolishes the previous method of operations in which department directors at the president's behest handed down programs for pastors and congregations to fulfill. Instead, departments were reorganized and their staff reduced in an effort to make them responsive to congregational input. Because this program was joined to changes that more clearly centralize church authority in the General Conference, what effect they have remains to be seen.

The Session also represented a high point in Adventist recognition of the arts. It presented one of the most extensive art exhibits the church has yet staged — albeit without the professional catalogue that viewers should have been able to expect. If the exhibit leaned quite heavily toward pictorial art of the Harry Anderson type, it also allowed space for less obvious works. The alert observer would note that early Adventist evangelistic materials, which represent the core eschatological ideas to which the church still holds, were consigned to the art exhibit rather than being displayed as depictions of Adventist doctrine elsewhere. Sculpture was not much in evidence, although Loma Linda University professor and sculptor Alan Collins presented a program on "The Ages of Man" that was very well received.

As a rule, Adventist institutions have looked suspiciously on the arts, especially the representational ones, in the past. As a result, Adventist churches are often unnecessarily plain or ugly, and Adventist campuses are almost entirely devoid of paintings, beautiful chapels, or sculptures. One hopes that the events of the 1985 Session will remind church leaders that they can only have beauty by supporting properly those who can create it and giving them liberty to work according to their knowledge. Church artists should not exist solely to illustrate *The Desire of Ages*, nor Adventist sculptors solely to do biblical representations.

Unlike the 1980 Session, whose doctrinal emphasis permitted it to be studied on its own terms, the 1985 Session will best be viewed in a larger frame. Not until 1990, 1995, and even 2000 can the credits and debits of this Session be properly assessed. But some preliminary judgments can be made and initial accounts rendered, even if the books cannot finally be balanced. It is the purpose of this series to do so.

Heard at the Session

The Superdome was an echo chamber in more senses than one. The following stories, which have not been verified, were heard at the Session from sources believed to be trustworthy.

*At the Session, most of the North American Division (NAD) delegates stayed at the

Hyatt Regency Hotel, a complex adjacent to and connected with the Superdome. Despite this proximity, at least one union conference official rented a car for the Session at a high rental rate, charging the cost to the union.

*At the constituency meeting of an NAD union, the delegates voted against putting up an expensive sign identifying union headquarters. Union leadership, unfazed by this action, put up the sign anyway — a cost-saving measure, as it turned out, because they had pro-

duced the sign before the delegates ever voted.

was borne in on one official who ordered a jug of water from room service and was told on arrival that the order cost \$14. He sent it back.

*Adventist book sales in North America reportedly continue to decline.

*“Let’s Talk,” the Voice of Prophecy’s successful talk show that presents a very soft-sell religion, is up for discussion about renewal later this year. Voice staff suggest that supporters should write the Voice letting their opinions be known.

The recent departure of so many Seminary staffers has earned Seminary dean . . . Gerhard Hasel the local moniker of “The Pharaoh of the Exodus.”

duced the sign before the delegates ever voted.

*The delegates from one overseas division received their tickets and expenses to the Session, two additional weeks of vacation, \$650 in spending money, and airplane tickets to Europe after the Session. They were not the only delegates to receive spending money in addition to their other expenses. Delegates from the General Conference itself, who received no fringes, resented such lavishness.

*The strong U.S. dollar swaggered through the Session, generally to the Session’s detriment. The treasurer’s report showed that the dollar’s strength had lowered the dollar-denominated value of worldwide contributions recently; and some overseas delegates had to stay home because they couldn’t raise the financing.

*The Session showed the ability of the Adventist church to impact local businesses. When it was scouting for hotels to rent for Session delegates, the General Conference (GC) was told by the New Orleans Hilton (located about a mile from the Superdome) that the Hilton could not offer substantial discounts on hotel rooms. The Hilton’s attitude was that its rooms were worth what they were worth — period. As a result, the GC rented the entire 1,100-room Hyatt Regency Hotel, adjacent to the Superdome, for \$76 per night for 16 nights (\$1,337,600). GC officials told the Hilton that its attitude would result in a lot of empty rooms during the Session. Hilton management proved slow learners; only when they were faced with a largely empty hotel did they cut their rates. But then they did so with vigor — all the way to \$39 per night for a single. This produced a wash of delegates, especially from overseas divisions, to the Hilton from the suddenly more expensive digs — including the Hyatt. The GC then began urging NAD delegates to stay at the Hyatt — in order to recoup some of the rental costs of the now-abandoned rooms!

*Like many luxury hotels, the Hyatt runs a special “hotel within a hotel” — with extra-special registration, relaxation, and room service features for those who can afford it. At the Session, those “who could afford it” turned out to be top GC officials. The cost of it all

*The Voice is also going through major management changes. Most of its top staffers are retiring or transferring. Fundraising has been a particularly difficult staffing area; the last several chief fundraisers have lasted about two years each.

*Adventism is booming in Rwanda, which is up to 150,000 members (three percent of the population). (If Adventism in the U.S. were on the same scale, there would be about 7 million American Adventists rather than the actual 700,000.) As usual with such areas, Rwandan Adventism is outgrowing its support facilities and personnel, including the number of even modestly educated ministers.

*General Conference president Neal C. Wilson has no obvious successor in 1990, and he is widely considered to have the best understanding of the world church among Adventist leaders. Look for him to be a favorite of the delegates for yet another term in 1990 if he remains healthy.

*In addition to his work on the new *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, which debuted at the Session, Adventist musician Wayne Hooper is preparing a *Hymnal* handbook. This book, which should appear within two years, will include information on the hymns and composers, why the hymns were chosen, and other background material.

*The recent departure of so many Seminary staffers has earned Seminary dean and Old Testament scholar Gerhard Hasel the local moniker of “The Pharaoh of the Exodus.”

*Collonges professor Pierre Lanares has written a handbook on Marxism for European Adventists. A while back, European Adventists discussed this topic at a conference in Britain.

*The general ban on independent organizations at the Superdome, especially including the Association of Adventist Forums, seemingly did not apply to the right-wing Hartland Institute. Hartland had a very showy booth near the main entrance to the Superdome floor during the Ministerial Council pre-session.

*At the 1980 GC Session, the ham radio operators (working under the banner of the Adventist Amateur Radio Network, or AARN) were so efficient in getting the news of elections

and other events around the world that GC staff asked them to slow down so the hinterlands could get the word through official channels.

*Some delegates voiced high praise for Ralph Watts (Southern California Conference president) and Malcolm Gordon (of Florida) for participative leadership styles.

*Though they were not serious, several bomb threats at the Superdome and the Hyatt were made during the Session. These threats may have given some validity to the security at the Session, which was obvious enough to disturb some delegates. Apart from the seemingly omnipresent Superdome police, the Session meetings were reportedly adorned with people in plain clothes who stood with their backs to the podium watching the crowd. And the officers’ quarters at the Hyatt Regency were for at least part of the time supervised by guards.

*Egalitarianism, at least in travel, was in vogue at the GC. On the same shuttle bus one evening, one could sit between a returned missionary and an African chief, with one of the most prominent former NAD union presidents across the aisle.

*The 1985 Session was the first to be done on a budget. One example of Wilson’s new financial stringency: GC departments had to pay for their staffers’ travel out of their standard travel allowances rather than getting an extra amount. For some departments, the tab amounted to more than a quarter of their yearly allotment.

Changing a few guards: election at the Session

The most important meetings at the General Conference Session took place in a room in the southwest quadrant of the third level of the Superdome, just behind the small reception room designated as a temporary chapel. There the 238 members of the Nominating Committee for the 1985 General Conference Session met during most of the Session’s working hours. Isolated from the Session’s other activities, they labored on one task only: choosing the General Conference and division leaders for the next five years. Although being a member of this committee was an honor, it also meant being shut up in one room, away from friends and family, for hours on end. And in 1985 it also meant being involved in one of the stormiest of the Session activities.¹

The room itself was an undecorated standard meeting area with a high ceiling, of a kind found in any convention center. It differed from other meeting rooms only in its physical equipment. The rows of dark-colored tables covered with tablecloths in front of the members’ seats were the minor part of that equipment. The major and revolutionary part was the computer system.

In a nominating committee almost entirely made up of church employees, as the Session Nominating Committee was, open voting is

always a problem. Justified or not, there is a concern that the committee members can be intimidated by the prospect of voting on their ecclesiastical superiors. They might, for example, be afraid to vote against a likely General Conference president or other leading officer, even though no such people can themselves be members of the Nominating Committee. Yet writing out and collecting paper ballots is too cumbersome for a committee with scores of positions to fill.

To deal with this situation, the Session organizers provided the first computerized voting system to be used by an Adventist nominating committee. In this system, each member had a small pushbutton on a long cord. The cords led through an Apple IIc microcomputer to a display screen visible to all the members. This screen could show the names of up to ten nominees at a time for any position. (It was possible to show more names, but the screen would have to "roll," like a piece of paper in a typewriter, to display them.) As a person was nominated for the position being considered, his or her name would be added to the screen. When nominations were closed, the chairman (who had a small display screen on his desk) would ask the members to vote on each nominee in succession. While each nominee was being voted on, his name on the screen would blink. The total votes for each nominee were displayed only after all the votes were cast.

This system had many advantages. Votes could be cast quickly and tallied with absolute accuracy. The pushbutton cords were long enough to allow the members to conceal the buttons, ensuring that no one else would know how they voted. The system was dignified and quiet. And it was inexpensive, using an ordinary computer and a limited amount of special equipment. Although it took about two days to set the system up, the experience gained in doing so should make it much easier to repeat the procedure. Already some church administrators at the union and conference levels are considering using the system for their own constituency meetings. If it is used elsewhere, it probably will not be on the constituency floor; few constituency meetings have anywhere near the number of decisions the Session Nominating Committee had to make. But the high level of satisfaction with the system at the Session makes it certain to reappear in 1990.

According to the General Conference Constitution, each of the ten world divisions was entitled to one Nominating Committee member for each 20,000 members, with a minimum of eight members per division. In addition, nine General Conference institutions in North America and each of the three unions or union missions directly attached to the General Conference has one member. The divisions have wide latitude in the method by which they choose their members; but all members must be delegates to the Session, and delegates who must stand for reelection at the Session may not be members. Because the union conference presidents are not up for re-

election at the Session, they may be members; and the North American union presidents, who are invariably members, have traditionally been the most influential and cohesive group on the Nominating Committee.

Although this system allots the North American Division 34 delegates, they were not apportioned within the division according to the membership of each union. North American Division president Charles Bradford, explaining the method used, said that such a system had been discussed (by whom he did not say) and found unworkable. It would not, Bradford claimed, reflect the diversity of the division, which was "multi-everything." Instead, the 34 members were divided to serve certain purposes. Each of the nine unions received two members. North American educational and health institutions, as two separate groups, each chose one member. The regional (black) conferences got five members. The remaining nine members were parceled out to individual unions. Five unions received one additional member, who had to be a layman or laywoman. The Pacific and Southern Union Conferences each got two additional members, one of whom must be a woman and one of whom must be a Hispanic.

A question was asked about consideration for Asians. Bradford replied that such consideration could be given by the union conferences in choosing their delegates, but the system itself provided none.

The diversity that this system provided showed its value, as the question about Asian involvement showed its practical and theoretical weaknesses. About one-fourth of North America's 256 regular delegates were laity —almost certainly the highest proportion

others, and two of these were reserved for women. The system secured some diversity, but it tended (as all such systems of "allocating" positions do) to discriminate against those groups not specifically or sufficiently favored. Hispanic-Americans, Asians, black Adventists not part of regional conferences, and Adventist women make up larger (in the case of women, very much larger) proportions of the Adventist population in North America than they did of the Nominating Committee delegation from North America. Not coincidentally, all four of these groups are also shorted at other leadership levels.

As with the Nominating Committee, the tendency in the Adventist church has been to attack such problems with allocations of positions to particular groups. This method at least gets some members of these groups into the decision-making process. But it inevitably neglects those groups it does not favor, fragments the church, and advances the odious idea of group rights. A better approach is for members of disadvantaged groups to be more active and assertive at the conference, union, and General Conference levels. The white male ministers who still control the structure must also be more zealous in recognizing and advancing talented members of neglected groups — especially women, whose underrepresentation is very severe. Certainly there is no reason that qualified blacks, Hispanic-Americans, and Asians should not head regular conferences or be prominent at the union level in North America; and these levels form the pipeline through which future General Conference leaders, as well as Session Nominating Committee members come.

Women have a particular problem. Because

The Nominating Committee . . . received no curriculum vitae or other background information on any of those it considered.

among the ten divisions. Of the lay delegates from North America, about one-third were women. These proportions were closely reflected in the North American delegation to the Nominating Committee. Indeed, the two women from the Pacific and Southern Union Conferences made up fully one-third of the six female members of the Nominating Committee as a whole (2.5 percent of the 238 total Nominating Committee membership). At the same time, however, few blacks (other than the regional conference members) and few Asians were selected from North America. Indeed, the system hardly allowed it. All nine North American union presidents were on the Nominating Committee; and the tendency was to fill the other regular member position from each union with another leading administrator, which meant another white male. Of the remaining sixteen slots, two were for Hispanics and five were for the regional members. Only nine positions were left for all

they are not eligible for ordination, they cannot acquire full-scale ministerial experience; and most Adventist leaders believe such experience is a prerequisite for high church position. The shortage of women on the Nominating Committee, and the very limited number of women proposed by it for division or General Conference positions, reflect the application of this ministers-only policy on the union and local conference levels. To the extent that this situation reflects a conscientious view that ministerial experience is a job requirement to function well in leadership positions outside the medical and educational areas, it is a sincere if possibly fallacious opinion. But those who hold it need to ask themselves whether they are using it as an excuse to avoid even considering women for higher positions. They should also be concerned about the very large number of qualified Adventists in general that this policy excludes from leadership, especially in light of well-informed conclusions that min-

istry no longer attracts the best Adventist youth. A mediocre ministry is no proper basis for Adventist leadership.

In the North American Division, the Nominating Committee members were selected by union conference caucuses. The division delegates, who had gathered in a large room to hear the allocations explained, separated into their unions. There was nothing

Nominating Committee's decisions are essentially final; they are virtually never overturned on the Session floor. A computerized information system on church personnel is now being established, but it is unclear whether its contents will be available to Session nominating committees.

The 1985 Session Nominating Committee followed previous procedure where votes were

ject, the committee broke up into divisional caucuses, including a first-ever caucus for the North American Division. With the partial exception of North America, these caucuses functioned like divisional nominating committees; and the whole committee generally ratified their choices. Divisional nominations began to come to the floor on the afternoon of Tuesday, July 2, mixed with nominations for the General Conference staff. Because its choices depended on the General Conference selections, the North American Division brought in its report late in the Session.

The Nominating Committee's first job when it met on Thursday, June 27, was to select its leaders. In the past, the chairman has usually been one of the North American union presidents because they are seasoned administrators with much experience chairing church committees and because they have an adequate grasp of proper procedure. At the 1985 Session, however, the members chose as chairman Richard Lesher, formerly secretary of the Biblical Research Institute and now president of Andrews University. Lesher was thought by some to be more neutral on issues between North America and the other divisions because Andrews University is so internationalized. It was also believed that General Conference president Neal C. Wilson, whose influence on the Nominating Committee was profound, was more favorable to him. It was later reported that the principal alternative to Lesher was Pacific Union Conference president Walter Blehm, a more independent operator than Lesher and someone who did not owe his position to Wilson. The Nominating Committee also chose two vice chairpersons, a secretary, and three associate secretaries. Of these six officials, two were from the North American Division and one each came from the Australasian, East African, Far Eastern, and Inter-American divisions. The Australasian Division may have been honored as an old and wealthy division. The other three divisions were among the five with memberships over 500,000. The Nominating Committee followed custom by selecting overseas delegates as vice chairpersons.

Wrestling for Control

The Nominating Committee next turned to choosing the General Conference president. Neal Wilson was immediately nominated for a second full term. Lesher then stepped in, making the first of several errors. He suggested that the committee might be ready to close nominations. Although the committee was not hostile to Wilson, many members resented this suggestion as a method of limiting their options. They insisted that more names be placed on the board. In the end, six people were nominated. In the 45-minute discussion of Wilson's desirability, his age (65) was the biggest question mark. The members concluded, however, that age was not a factor while Wilson's health was good — a strikingly similar conclusion to the one made by American voters in reelecting the even older (73) President Ronald Reagan in 1984. On the first

Members began suggesting that Wilson was acting like a dictator and . . . that he might not have been reelected if he had behaved this way earlier.

secret about the procedures at this point; the 87 delegates from the Pacific Union Conference, for example, met in a hallway. For all the slots, rounds of voting were used, with the low vote-getters dropped out on each round until a majority was reached. The union's two regular slots were quickly filled by Walter Blehm, the union president, and Thomas Mostert, president of the Southeastern California Conference; Ralph Watts, president of the Southern California Conference, was a close third. Nominees were then asked for the female member and the Hispanic member successively. Interestingly, the five initial nominees for the female member came from five different conferences. Rounds of voting by show of hands were used, with those on the low end dropped out. This process produced an eventual majority for Naomi Yamashiro of Hawaii as the female Nominating Committee member and Manuel Vasquez, a Hispanic ministries administrator, as the Hispanic member. Discussions suggested that personal knowledge of Yamashiro and Vasquez or confidence in other delegates who supported them were decisive in their selection. Because the system did not provide for automatic Asian representation, Yamashiro's ethnic background no doubt also helped her.

Voting Blind

As with previous Sessions, the Nominating Committee in 1985 received no curriculum vitae or other background information on any of those it considered. This method of choosing denominational leaders who will administer structures involving thousands of employees and millions of dollars has been criticized as requiring decisions to be based on fragmentary information, image, and personality rather than factual data. Observers have suggested that this system places an anachronistically high priority on personal acquaintanceship in such a large committee making leadership choices for a large and diverse church. It is one of the anomalies of Adventist organization that a faculty committee hiring an assistant professor has more information about the candidates than the Session Nominating Committee often has about the highest leaders of the church. This situation is especially troubling because the

split among nominees. In a procedure identical to the way the Pacific Union Conference chose its Nominating Committee members, the lower vote-getters were dropped on each round, and further ballots were taken until one candidate had a simple majority. The committee then submitted the nominee's name to the Session floor for ratification.

As elsewhere in the Session, the declining influence of North America was reflected in the Nominating Committee. At the 1975 Session in Vienna, North America had about 20 percent of the members; in 1985 it had about 14 percent. Even when these totals are corrected to include the few members from General Conference institutions in North America, the North American total shows a continuing (and, under the rules, appropriate) proportionate decrease. Noteworthy, too, was the very small number of women on the Nominating Committee: six of the 238 members (2.5 percent).

From this time on, however, Nominating Committee processes were unreported and by tradition kept secret. Many of the delegates learned little of the Nominating Committee's activities except through its periodic reports. By custom, the Nominating Committee does not issue its report as a single document; instead, it reports its conclusions as it arrives at them, beginning with the General Conference president. *Currents* has been able to obtain information on the way at least some of those conclusions were arrived at.

In summary, the Nominating Committee's work proceeded as follows. It first selected its own leaders. After this, it chose the General Conference president and secretary. Because of the retirement of Lance Butler, the General Conference treasurer position was open; and the vacancy produced more discussion than reelection of an incumbent would have. At Wilson's request, the committee recessed for parts of Friday, June 28, and Sunday, June 30, so that its members (who included many of the church's most important administrators) could participate in the floor discussion of the reorganization plan that consumed the largest single amount of Session attention. On June 30 the committee began discussing General Conference general vice-presidents — a debate that immediately became contentious. After spending perhaps half a day on this sub-

ballot Wilson was nominated with 74 percent of the votes; votes for other candidates were scattered.

Immediately thereafter, the Nominating Committee proposed G. Ralph Thompson for reelection as General Conference secretary. Thompson's nomination involved even less discussion than Wilson's had, and no other names were suggested for his position.

The report went immediately to the floor, where Wilson and Thompson were unanimously reelected. One result of this quick reelection was that Wilson, previously barred, now joined the committee's leaders at the front of the room. Although he had no vote, he could now participate directly.

This proved fortunate at the committee's short meeting on Friday, June 28, when Leshar made another mistake. During the devotional before the meeting, Leshar read a quotation from the Spirit of Prophecy suggesting that the General Conference president should have strong influence over the choice of church staff. The overseas delegates reacted strongly, suggesting that Leshar was implying that the committee should approve whomever Wilson suggested. Leshar began to backtrack and explain, and Wilson had to intervene to bail him out.

The committee did little more that day. The restructuring program proposed by the General Conference Role and Function Committee, under the chairmanship of Francis Wernick, was the first important item discussed on the Session floor; and General Conference leaders requested that the Nominating Committee recess for most of June 28 and part of June 30 to permit its members to participate in the debate. The committee accepted this idea. Because June 29 was a Sabbath, the committee did not meet. As a result, the committee reconvened with only two positions filled.

Wilson then began presenting the committee with his proposed nominees for General Conference positions. At this point Leshar committed his third blunder, suggesting that the committee should vote yes or no on Wilson's candidates. The members began to react strongly against this idea, both because it seemed to limit their ability to act and because such a preponderance of Wilson's candidates were North Americans. Wilson again inter-

ventions; and although it used the "yea or nay" system on occasion, it do so from choice. After this episode, Wilson essentially took over the committee's direction from Leshar.

The debates over procedure slowed down the committee's work. On June 30 the committee proposed only one nominee: Donald F. Gilbert for General Conference treasurer. Gilbert



Neal Wilson

had an excellent background for the position. Born in South Dakota, he was 55 years of age. He had begun his church work in accounting and became a union treasurer, then served as assistant treasurer and treasurer of the Far Eastern Division until he returned to the United States in 1981 as a local conference treasurer. Six months before the Session, Gilbert had gone to the General Conference. He replaced Eugene Stiles, who became president of Pacific Press Publishing Association. In hindsight, this turned out to be a very well-timed career move. Unlike Thompson, Gilbert was selected from a long list of nominees. The most obvious candidate for this position was General Conference undertreasurer William Murrill, who had extensive budgeting experience and was much liked. Unfortunately for Murrill, his family connections as Wilson's brother-in-law intervened. As Wilson put it, "He married the wrong wife." To avoid any hint of nepotism, Wilson refused to propose Murrill as treasurer. Gilbert, who had the

delegates, who ratified the nomination.

(Observers of the Wilson family were not entirely disappointed, however. Wilson's son, N.C. "Ted" Wilson, continued his rise up the ecclesiastical ladder. In 1980 he was the director of a North American Division evangelistic project, Metropolitan Ministries in New York. The 1985 Session voted him in as secretary of the African-Indian Ocean Division. As expected, the younger Wilson continues to build a resume that will eventually make him a formidable candidate for top church positions.)

Soon thereafter the committee became mired again. In response to world sentiment that the General Conference headquarters was overstaffed, Wilson had produced proposals to cut that staff by up to 100 employees. One cut was at the top level, where Wilson wanted to reduce the number of General Conference general vice-presidents from six to five.

Selecting "Cardinals"

General Conference general vice-presidents are among the highest church officials. Part of the reason for their importance is that their duties give them wide acquaintanceship, great information, and many opportunities to influence decisions. Unlike the division presidents, who are General Conference vice-presidents by virtue of their divisional jobs, the general vice-presidents have no fixed responsibilities. Instead, they are individually assigned duties by the General Conference Committee soon after their election. These assignments, which usually follow the suggestions of the General Conference president, reflect the general vice-presidents' special responsibility to serve as the president's surrogates and the General Conference's voice. In particular, the general vice-presidents chair the boards of General Conference institutions, which number more than thirty and are concentrated in North America. This assignment means that the general vice-presidents must be people who are acceptable to North Americans and can function well within North American parliamentary processes, which are less centralized and closer to secular parliamentary practice than in some other places. Most overseas administrators do not have these qualifications, and as a result general vice-presidents tend to be North Americans. This arrangement has been acceptable in the past, but with the decrease in North America's proportion of the world membership, it is coming under question. To remove this problem, some have suggested turning over the General Conference institutions in North America to North American Division management. But Wilson's opposition to the establishment of a full North American Division, which such a transfer might require, and the unassertive posture of North American leader Charles Bradford have so far prevented this idea from being seriously considered.

Third World Offended

When Wilson listed his candidates, all of the general vice-president nominees except Enoch Oliveira were North Americans. In ad-

One of the Adventist educators ... remarked, "Wilson is the greatest disappointment the Adventist church has experienced since 1844."

vened to support Leshar. Wilson claimed that he needed the people on his list. Wilson's efforts only transferred the committee's animosity to himself. Members began suggesting that he was acting like a dictator; and a few commented that he might not have been reelected if he had behaved this way earlier. This was a battle Wilson had lost from the beginning. The committee voted to allow other

greatest overseas experience of those remaining and was well regarded, was chosen. (Later the Nominating Committee offered Gilbert's associate position and the treasurership of the Far Eastern Division to Robert Rawson of Southeastern California Conference; he turned down both offers.) Wilson, who confessed to only a limited acquaintanceship with Gilbert, nevertheless strongly recommended him to the

dition, most of the General Conference associate secretaries and general field secretaries (also positions of considerable importance, primarily in specialized areas) were North Americans.

This situation seemed to ignore the aspirations of overseas divisions to greater leadership responsibility at the General Conference headquarters. These aspirations were particularly strong at this Session because several of the former general vice-presidents were retiring, which provided open positions. Overseas leaders covet such duties not only because they are attractive in themselves but also because a transfer to the General Conference allows them to trade the often unpleasant conditions in their own countries for life in the United States. These reasons lay behind Wernick's comment on the Session floor that North America is "flooded with requests" by overseas Adventists, especially in Central and South America, to come to North America to work; and North America accommodates these requests to such an extent that bilingual North American Adventists are often excluded.

A resonance on this issue began to build on Sunday, June 30. As it happened, the portion of the Role and Function Committee's report then being discussed claimed that Adventist workers went "from everywhere to everywhere." Several African delegates, supported by North American black delegates, insisted that this phrase sounded good in the report but was violated in practice. They pointed out that North America was receptive to transfers from the Inter-American and South American divisions to work with North American Hispanics, but few Africans seemed to attain General Conference positions. At the same time, Westerners continued to govern large parts of the church in Africa, and indigenous leaders were excluded from authority even on their own continents. Delegates called for greater involvement of Africans (and, with less assertiveness, Asians) in the General Conference; and their comments received widespread applause.

This situation reflected and built upon the tensions in the Nominating Committee. Initially the African members wished to name a sixth general vice-president, to come from Africa. Wilson strongly resisted this demand, asserting that the General Conference budget would not allow it and that such efforts went against the world field's insistence on reducing headquarters staff. For a time many members were on the point of carrying the matter to the Session floor.

Eventually a bargain was struck, partly because one overseas delegate reminded the committee not to forget that North America still funded 80 percent of the General Conference budget, including aid to overseas divisions. As he put it, overseas delegates should not "forget where your blessings come from." Wilson agreed to having an additional general field secretary, who would be an indigenous African; and the African members dropped their idea of naming another general vice-president. The process, however, served notice on

General Conference leadership that African delegates were increasingly concerned about obtaining both indigenous administration of the African work and a share of influence in worldwide decision-making. The limited number of African Adventists with the necessary education, experience, and ability to make themselves comprehensible to North Americans will make the second of these concerns particularly challenging to accommodate.

North American dominance of the General Conference [was maintained] only with "fearful animosity" and at "great expense in goodwill."

With this understanding, the Nominating Committee approved Wilson's nominees for the five general vice-presidencies: Calvin B. Rock, Robert J. Kloosterhuis, Enoch Oliveira, Wallace O. Coe, and Kenneth J. Mittleider. This approval, however, did not quell the delegates on the Session floor. When the nominations of Rock and Kloosterhuis (the last of the five to be presented) were brought to the morning session on Tuesday, July 2, a West Indian delegate moved that they be referred back to the Nominating Committee (that is, rejected) because General Conference leadership was too North American in composition and was ignoring many areas with more members. His motion was rejected, but it was followed by further comments to the same effect, including a motion that the nominees for associate secretaries and field secretaries should "reflect the international nature of this church." This motion attracted passionate support from an African delegate.

Feeling the situation in danger, Wilson (who was conveniently on the Session rostrum) made a lengthy statement against the motion. He denounced the references to the "Third World" that several delegates had made. He asserted that such terminology, which divided Adventists into blocs, came from secular political problems and were not appropriate Adventist terms. He also pointed out that nobody was speaking about the absence from leadership of Adventists from "The Socialist Eastern European bloc." Because he immediately went on to claim that such Adventists were "not all in Europe" but were also in "Africa, Inter-America, the Western Hemisphere, and in the Far East," Wilson was evidently referring to Communist countries in general.

Wilson admitted that if the Third World countries formed a voting bloc, they would have "sufficient voting power to control this Session." He was grateful they had not done that. But he reminded the delegates that North America had financial problems and that the North American Division had demanded that the General Conference run a more efficient operation. This demand had produced a study of the General Conference operations, which had recommended staff reductions that would

save about \$1.25 million a year. He said that the General Conference would be happy to welcome even ten general vice-presidents if the Session required them, even though they were not needed; but such larding of church leadership with unnecessary personnel could provoke disgust from North America, which paid for the operation of world institutions for which some of the delegates worked.

Wilson called attention to the fact that the ten division presidents were also "cardinals" (a

term used by one delegate to refer to high Adventist leaders). Indeed, there was already one such "cardinal" from Africa (Bekele Heye, president of the Eastern Africa Division), and there might be still another — whereas there were no indigenous "cardinals" from the Far East. (The other African "cardinal" duly appeared in the form of Jacob Nortey, Africa-Indian Ocean Division president). He mentioned that the Nominating Committee had already taken much time to discuss just these concerns, which had placed it "far behind" in its work. He appealed to the delegates not to start dividing the Adventist church into groups identified with political ideology or to frustrate the General Conference's sincere efforts to economize by filling it with unnecessary staff to provide an appearance of international involvement in leadership.

This speech demonstrated Wilson's hold over the Session. As his impassioned talk continued, a great hush fell over the floor; as he concluded, he received a storm of applause.

There was still a little fight left, however. Joseph McCoy, a North America regional conference minister, denounced what he saw as improper exercises of authority, including Wilson's sitting with the Nominating Committee and directing their work. McCoy noted that a vote the day before had held that the church was run by committees, not presidents. But the reality contradicted this.

There are statements in yesterday's motion saying we should move away from the presidential system of government and prevent people from acquiring kingly powers. But as soon as a president is elected, he is asked who he wants to serve with him, and he works vigorously to get his men in place. That in my estimation does not sound like a committee system. There is a preoccupation with doing what the president wants, whether at the General Conference, division, union, or conference level; and at the local church there is a preoccupation with supporting the pastor. Many times the real will of the people is lost because one who has ascended to a position of responsibility is, by his charisma, determination, and

intellect, able to get his way. Such terms as "loyalty to the organization" and "support for administration" are used to intimidate the members.

I would not presume to speak for the people from Africa. I happen not to be an African, even though I am of African descent. But I understand where they are coming from. We should accept our responsibilities and not fear to displease people in order to further our political desires and ambitions. We have talked about being political; but I think, with all respect, when an assembly is told how to vote, **THAT IS POLITICAL!** We believe in the power of God to lead men. I think He will without sectarian politicians telling the Spirit what to do.

McCoy's response was as eloquent and passionate as it was futile. In the face of Wilson's strong denunciation of it, the motion to require internationalization of top General Conference leadership was withdrawn.

This incident, in which Wilson quelled the much-feared uprising of the Third World delegates, demonstrated Wilson's command over the Session, as did his effortless reelection at a fairly advanced age. The reasons for his position were explained by Shirley Burton, news director for the General Conference. She pointed out that the General Conference presidency now requires high multicultural sensitivity and extensive overseas experience. Wilson was educated in India and Africa, speaks several languages (including Afrikaans), and has traveled so extensively that he has met almost 100 heads of state. During the Session, Wilson at one point read a somewhat lengthy statement in Spanish; and although his accent was imperfect and the effort it cost him was apparent, the Spanish-speaking delegates were deeply impressed and applauded.

Others have noted also that Wilson has an extraordinary ability to remember names and faces, which he has exercised to good advantage from church platforms for years. Wilson also has excellent platform presence; his answering speech to the greeting by Louisiana governor Edwin Edwards at the opening of the Session was fully up to Edwards' performance. His command of the indirections and subtleties of Adventist parlance is very good; and he is adept at conveying an impression of sincerity and directness, even while evading a questioner's point — a skill highly developed in many successful politicians, including President Ronald Reagan. Such are Wilson's political gifts that it seems likely, absent the handicap of his Seventh-day Adventism, that he could have made a very successful American secular politician.

Wilson has also been very active as General Conference president, culminating in his risky and successful program of the "Thousand Days of Reaping." This program achieved its worldwide goal of an average of 1,000 accessions to the Adventist church each day for the 1,000 days preceding the 1985 Session — even though it predictably bombed in North

America, Australasia, and Europe. From an institutional standpoint, if not from some others, Wilson's record has been one of accomplishment.

Finally, Wilson has cultivated relationships with important political groups. Before his interim election to the General Conference presidency, Wilson was seen by many North Americans as relatively liberal, partly because of his long-standing friendly relationship with the Association of Adventist Forums. Adventist liberals were overjoyed by his election. A major reason for their ecstasy was that Wilson's election promised some relief from the repressive attitudes of Wilson's predecessor, Robert Pierson. (Of Pierson, one Adventist educator remarked, "It's too bad he didn't go to school." This attitude of mingled fear and disdain characterized the views of many such Adventists toward Pierson's administration.) In the event, however, these hopes proved to be merely more evidence of the liberals' naivete. Just before and after his election as president, Wilson took several overseas trips. On these trips, he found that the Adventist church outside North America was far more conservative than he had imagined. After he returned, he set his administration on a pronounced rightward course, where it has remained. A few months after his election, one of the Adventist educators who had been so happy about that event at the time remarked, "Wilson is the greatest disappointment the Adventist church has experienced since 1844." But Wilson's actions have met widespread approval, in North America as well as overseas. That those actions may be storing up troubles for the future, especially for Adventists in the developed world, seems much less important than their current popularity.

A seemingly trivial incident shows the sort of attitude that Wilson has cultivated and that other aspiring church leaders should consider. Early in the Session, Naomi Yamashiro came on the Session platform to give Wilson a lei. This gesture by a Hawaiian is very important; according to Burton, the lei represents the sentiment of "aloha," which may mean hello, goodbye, or love depending on the context. In this situation, it represented the sort of filial attitude in which Catholics offer native presents to the Pope. To exemplify the attitude of giving involved, Hawaiians (as did Yamashiro) take the lei from their own neck to place it on the neck of the receiver. But the proper position for a lei is not depending from the neck, but rather a little back on the shoulders. Wilson was about to deliver the keynote speech, and his inevitable arm gestures would certainly dislodge it. The resulting effect might be undignified. But it would violate the spirit of the gift merely to remove it; and it was not appropriate for Wilson to give the lei to any other man. He had only two proper options: to drape the lei over the podium and resume it after his speech; or to find a woman to whom to give it. Without evident reflection, Wilson chose the perfect woman, who happened to be on the podium at the time — his mother.

The election of some of the new general

vice-presidents was expected. Rumors at the Session suggested that Wilson was grooming Mittleider as his possible successor. The election of Kloosterhuis, however, was less obvious. Kloosterhuis was not a particularly successful administrator as president of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, and he seemed more qualified for a general field secretaryship than the exalted post he received.

By noon on July 2, the Nominating Committee was well behind its proper pace. Some delegates feared that the alternate procedure for electing church leaders (in which all positions unfilled at the Session are filled by the General Conference Committee) would have to be widely used. The Committee had only concluded business on the top General Conference leaders and one division presidency, the Far Eastern Division. Even that position had been decided with difficulty. An initial favorite of some delegates was Ralph Watts, president of the Southern California Conference. Watts had been an administrator in the Far East previously, and comments heard at the Session characterized him as much-loved there or as too heavy-handed an administrator for Asian sensibilities. Wilson made his preference for Watts known, but this expression of support was of little help to Watts.

This incident supports the view heard at the Session that "Wilson almost lost the line," maintaining North American dominance of the General Conference only with "fearful animosity" and at "great expense in goodwill." Despite his position, reports indicated that Wilson had to threaten to go to the Session floor for some of his candidates before the Nominating Committee would accept them. On another occasion, reports suggest, Wilson was so hard-pressed he threatened to withdraw altogether from participating in the committee's work. But in the end he insisted on getting his way, and he was quite willing to speak at length on the floor and in the Committee to do so. Observers agree that Wilson was by far the most influential person in choosing the church's leadership for the next five years — a fact which should be borne in mind when evaluating the performance of those leaders.

According to other unconfirmed reports, another reason for the delay was the prolonged waffle of Southern Union Conference president Alfred McClure about the desirability of accepting a General Conference general vice-presidency. McClure was originally on Wilson's list for this position, and the Nominating Committee offered it to him. But they did so late one afternoon, and McClure thought about it that evening. In that time several of his constituents reminded him that the Southern Union, of which he was president, had a completely new set of conference presidents and a new treasurer; and they asked him to remain on behalf of continuity. He agreed to do so, and Wallace Coe (president of the Columbia Union Conference) was elected in his place.

The Nominating Committee, however, soon began to move with greater speed. Tradi-

tionally the members from each division caucus with each other and sometimes with the delegates from their division to determine their candidates for division positions; and as a rule these candidates become the nominees. This procedure has become so common that it is recognized in the General Conference Bylaws. This practice and others limit the idea, often asserted from the podium during the Session, that the divisions are really only sections of a unified General Conference. Division administrators may have administrative responsibilities upward to the General Conference itself; but if they forget that their positions rest on the attitudes toward them of the local conference and union leaders who make up their division's Nominating Committee delegation, they may be sharply reminded.

Now that the Nominating Committee had broken through its initial logjam, its caucuses began to operate and divisional recommendations began to pour in. The afternoon of July 2 saw the approval of many officers for the Inter-American, Northern European, South American, South Pacific, and Southern Asia divisions. In the morning session on Wednesday, July 3, the Session ratified nominations for most of the positions in the Eastern Africa, Euro-Africa, and Far Eastern divisions and began to approve further General Conference nominees. Among these latter was Lowell Bock, who retired as general vice-president but became a general field secretary; he is widely expected to serve as an informal General Conference ambassador to the United States West Coast, where he will live.

North America: Creeping Toward a Division

From this point, on matters went much more quickly. Curiously, the North American Division report was one of the late ones. It was not submitted until the afternoon of July 3. Behind that lateness and the report itself lies one of the most important developments of the Session.

For some time, many North Americans have been chafing under the "special relationship" between the General Conference and the North American Division. For several reasons, the General Conference has always denied North America divisional standing on the same basis as the other nine divisions. This situation largely hands North America's administration over to the General Conference Committee and the General Conference headquarters staff. These groups have not always shown great sensitivity to North America's particular challenges, and North Americans are a decreasing minority of both. Wilson favored giving North America full divisional status when he was the General Conference vice-president for North America; and Robert Pierson, then General Conference president, opposed the idea. At that time Wilson wrote a plan of organization for a North American Division that has been highly praised; it is now a very rare document and one of the secrets of the Wilson presidency. Reports suggest that even quite highly placed administrators are

denied access to this paper. Since becoming General Conference president in 1979, Wilson has been strongly opposed to giving North America full division status; and his opposition has been an important reason it has not happened.

Within these constraints, leading North American Adventists have worked for greater

specifically reserved for North America. The result is that the departmental people designated for North America had to cooperate with the only boss who had any money for their activities. This situation left the North American Division leaders out in the cold; and disputes about the tangled lines of authority, as one observer put it, left "blood on the floor"



courtesy George Colvin

The "special relationship" Division on parade

ability by North America to influence its own affairs. The 1985 Session marked a considerable success for their efforts.

Before 1980, the North American Division was run directly by the General Conference staff. It was in practice scarcely in existence at all. At the 1980 Session in Dallas, for the first time specific persons were designated as North American administrators. At that Session the Nominating Committee elected General Conference departmental directors and associates as before; and the departmental directors then designated one of their subordinates as the head of the corresponding North American Division department. So, for example, William Murrill, elected as the General Conference undertreasurer, was also designated as the treasurer of the North American Division; and Les Pitton, an associate in the General Conference Youth Department, became the North American Division Youth Director.

This situation was inherently unstable and could not survive. The North American Division designees in effect had two bosses — the General Conference departmental director to whom they were responsible, and the fledgling North American Division administration (especially Bradford as vice-president for North America). Of these bosses, however, only the former had a budget; what passed for a North American budget was merely handed to North American leaders by the General Conference treasurer. Only the Youth Department among the General Conference departments designated a portion of its budget as

— the inevitable consequence of this half-measure.

The 1980 Session also took another action. It amended the General Conference Bylaws to permit the North American Division to recommend personnel for numerous General Conference positions. Implicit in this change was the idea that these people would be the North American Division administrators in their areas of responsibility.

As a result of this change, the North American Division members had for the first time the opportunity to propose people for positions. As a result, the North American Division members caucused for the first time; and they also met with division delegates. They chose not to press their rights quite as far as the Bylaws allowed. Instead of proposing people on their own, they merely designated a North American person on the departmental staff, while working informally with the General Conference leaders to ensure that a person acceptable to North America was among those he proposed. The most important change from 1980 was that the designation was coming from the North American Division caucus rather than the General Conference departmental leaders. The reason for this cautiousness is that although North America is scheduled to get its own budget, that change will not take effect until the fall of 1985. Until that time, the two budgets (General Conference and North America) remain mixed; and the budgetary arrangements drove the political considerations. (As management specialists

have indicated, this approach is improper; budgets should be the servants of policy rather than its masters. But North American leaders are disposed to go cautiously in a time of changing structures.)

Between 1985 and 1990, North American leaders will have a primary (solid-line) relationship to the North American Division administration and a secondary (dotted-line) relationship to the heads of the relevant General Conference departments. This relationship will come into full force with the adoption of a separate North American Division budget, after which the General Conference departmental leaders will lose their major element of influence over their North American subordinates. The logical culmination of this process should occur in 1990 with the North American Division caucus selecting its divisional leadership in a way similar to that of other divisions, although General Conference departmental leaders will still have considerable influence over North American choices as long as the North American Division-General Conference "special relationship" continues. And of course the General Conference Committee will remain deeply involved in North American Division policy and activities. These developments, however, should give North America much more ability to act on its own, partly because it will have control over its own finances and the sources of information about itself to the General Conference Committee. For a time, Bradford's cautiousness about leaving Wilson's shadow may limit the extent of North America's separate actions; but the groundwork for further change has been laid.

The North American delegation needed to impress some General Conference leaders about the changed state of affairs. In a revealing incident, newly designated General Conference treasurer Donald Gilbert brought the Nominating Committee a list of his candidates for undertreasurer and assistant treasurers with only one open spot. Gilbert had not consulted the North American members about his choices. In a body, the North Americans rebelled. They demanded the right to fill the open position; Gilbert pleaded that he had to have someone with overseas experience for that slot, which was intended for administration of non-North American financial matters. In the end, the North American members

North American wishes about North American leaders.

The North American delegation showed the same independent attitude in selecting the North American Church Ministries Department leader, where they had the advantage of filling a newly created spot. This department is a new and controversial creation of the 1985 Session. It combines under one department head the Lay Activities, Stewardship, Sabbath School, and Youth departments. First adopted for the General Conference itself, it is scheduled for later adoption at other levels. For the first director of this department in North America, the North American delegation reached outside the General Conference staff entirely and named J. Lynn Martell, formerly the Ministerial Department director of the Columbia Union Conference.

No Suffrage

As noted, women were almost invisible in the Nominating Committee; and they were equally imperceptible in the nominations coming out. In all, the Nominating Committee proposed nominees for 284 positions. (A few spots were left vacant at the Session; they will be filled by the General Conference Committee.) Of the 108 General Conference positions, six were filled by women (5.6 percent). As appalling as this figure is for a church largely composed of women, it is still better than the score racked up by the divisions: precisely two of 176 slots (1.1 percent). The two lucky women at the divisional level were Elizabeth Sterndale (North American Division nursing director) and Patricia Bailey (associate in the Far Eastern Division Church Ministries Department). The total figure was eight of 284 jobs (2.8 percent). Even this figure could only be achieved by counting Sterndale twice, in her divisional position and as an associate in the General Conference Health and Temperance Department. Indeed, that department and the General Conference Church Ministries Department accounted for five of the six women at the General Conference; the only woman outside these two areas is Burton of the Communications Department. Except for Sterndale's North American position, none of the seven women in church leadership heads a department at any level. As bad as they are, these results represent a slight improvement at

by the church's decision-making process. In practice, it has become (among other things) the major point of contact between the General Conference and Adventist women interested in advancing the position of women in the church. Its two leaders, however, are a black man (Banfield) and a Hispanic man (Eloy Martinez); it has not had a woman on its staff.

When the Nominating Committee report for this office initially came in, it included the name of Robert Woodfork (another black man) as an additional associate in the department. Obedient as ever, the Session voted him in. This action caused immediate consternation among women observers, who felt betrayed. They praised Banfield's performance, but they clearly believed that if an additional person were to be added to the Office of Human Relations staff, it should be a woman rather than a duplicative black man. Evidently their sense of outrage reached the podium. Some time later the floor chairman mentioned that this action had been taken in error; and although Woodfork's name appeared in this position in the seventh Session bulletin (*Adventist Review*, July 5, 1985, p. 17), it does not appear there in the final listing of positions filled at the Session (*Adventist Review*, July 18-25, 1985, pp. 14-15). In the later roster, Woodfork is listed as North American Division associate secretary only.

This incident indicates that if anyone is added to the Office of Human Relations, that person will almost certainly have to be female. Unfortunately, Wilson's economy drive at the General Conference will probably eliminate any such possibility, as it will also reduce the opportunity for women to advance in other areas by reducing the number of positions available. Having so long been denied leadership positions for reasons of traditional discrimination against them, Adventist women can now also be denied for reasons of economy.

As noted, this situation reflects the absence of women in leadership positions at lower levels. It is unlikely it will change greatly until women are ordained; and even if that were done, it would be problematic how many women would wish to enter the Adventist ministry. At this point the best prospect for women to reach General Conference or divisional posts appears to be through the medical and educational fields, including such lines as health and temperance activity and the Sabbath School. Because these lines are not so highly visible politically as officer positions and require specialized knowledge beyond ministerial education, they offer openings for people who are not ordained. Absent ordination, however, there is little prospect for Adventist women to be involved in most posts of General Conference and divisional leadership.

Changes and the Future

Among the Nominating Committee's actions was the replacement of Alva Appel as General Conference Trust Services Director

Almost invisible in the Nominating Committee... [women] were equally imperceptible in the nominations coming out.

compromised by choosing as the North American treasurer George Crumley, who had been on Gilbert's original list. In return, Gilbert apologized for his presumption and promised to support the North American Division budget. The incident highlighted the new state of affairs; and General Conference leaders in the future no doubt will profit by Gilbert's experience and show much more concern for

the General Conference level over the situation in 1980.

One incident illustrates the Nominating Committee's tendencies clearly. Some years ago, the General Conference set up the North American Division Office of Human Relations, now chaired by Warren Banfield. This office was intended to deal with the concerns of ethnic, racial, and other groups often ignored

with attorney Tom Carter. According to reports, Appel made himself obnoxious to many administrators by appearing excessively arrogant and self-confident, especially in his dealings with trust services at other levels. Wilson proposed Appel for another term, but he stated that he realized the reservations of some Nominating Committee members and would respect their choice. This left the way reasonably clear to reject Appel.

The Nominating Committee also made some odd nominations. Among these was Raymond Dabrowski as Communication Director of the Trans-European Division (formerly the Northern European Division). Dabrowski, formerly public relations director for the Polish Union Conference, has for some time been a faithful apologist for Marxist governments. Some European observers fear that his selection for this post will extend this attitude to the division level. These observers emphasize the need for great care in promoting leaders from Communist countries, who have of necessity been mouthpieces for government political propaganda for years, to positions of influence outside these areas.

Observation of the results of the Nominating Committee's work suggests that Adventist administration should continue for the next five years much as it has before, although with somewhat greater efficiency. Despite rumblings from outside North America, the vast majority of the General Conference staff remains North in American background. This development is one of the more surprising ones of the Session. Despite their evident dominance of the Committee and the floor in voting power, Third World delegates settled for relatively little in terms of positions.

This situation may not endure in 1990, although it seems possible that if Wilson remains healthy he could be reelected then. The evangelistic campaign adopted at the 1985 Session, called "Harvest 90," aims for 2 million accessions to the church over five years. These accessions should occur in the same places the "Thousand Days of Reaping" gains did — Central America, South America, and especially Africa. Under the present General Conference Constitution, that development will cause a still further voting shift toward those areas in 1990; and as was evident at the Session, delegates from Africa can expect support in their demands from North American blacks — who hold few (if very visible) General Conference positions. Some observers think that these delegates need only a charismatic leader and some organization to press their concerns irresistibly. Nor need such a leader look far; present developments indicate that within a few years African Adventists alone could number more than three million — or close to half of all Adventists. If no change of this kind occurs in 1990, it could very easily do so in 1995.

Third World members of the Nominating Committee will be the most important element in the selection of the person who succeeds Wilson as General Conference president; and among these members, the African

members will certainly have a veto power over that selection. The North American members will retain the advantages of greater information, wider acquaintanceship, and closer involvement with General Conference affairs, and they will still represent the church's financial base; but these assets are being devalued by their division's crushing numerical inferiority, and even the extra votes on the Nominating Committee that North America obtains by its heavy institutionalization cannot compensate for this shift. In 1985 the North American Division ranked second among the ten divisions in membership; by 1990 it will be no better than fifth.

Two often unnoticed factors may be at work here. Adventism has been a force for upward socioeconomic mobility in the Third World as it has elsewhere, although less rapidly because of the Third World's limited institutional base. As with Adventists elsewhere, Third World Adventists who develop talents for leadership as a result of improved socioeconomic status tend to put into their church the energies that others invest in the secular order, including secular politics. In the Third World, this tendency is redoubled because so few Third World governments offer opportunities for political participation. These conditions suggest that Third world Adventists will be increasingly concerned about the Third World's share of church leadership and will continue to make these concerns known.

The consequences of this insistence are uncertain. The vogue is to insist that Adventists all over the world are much more alike than different. There is much truth in this idea. For example, African Adventists have maintained amazing unity and resisted the fissiparous tendencies of African Christianity, which has produced more splinter groups than religious sociologists can count. But this does not eliminate the important differences between such Adventists and those in the developed world. Adventists in the developed world (Europe, North America, Australia, and South Africa) are much more likely to have inherited their Adventism than Third World Adventists are. They are on the average better educated and much wealthier. They have information about the church and the world incomparably better than any available in the Third World. They speak English (the Adventist *lingua franca*) with little accent, whereas those Third World Adventists who do speak English usually have a very strong British accent. They are accustomed to the highest degree of religious and political liberty ever available in history, whereas Third World Adventists often have almost as many restrictions as those in the Second (Communist) World. Most importantly, First World Adventists are aware of intellectual challenges that Third World Adventists will not understand for generations. Both external societal conditions and internal Adventist ones combine to make it unlikely, for example, that most Third World leaders could function well or be accepted in North American leadership. As long as North America remains as much tied to the General Conference

as it is, the possibility of an explosion produced by North American resistance to directives from a Third World-dominated General Conference exists.

A second and saving factor may be Andrews University, which has become the major North American educational center for overseas Adventists. It has thus become one of the most important elements in acclimatizing those Adventists to the ethos of Adventists in the developed world. Not coincidentally, many of the African Adventists who spoke so vigorously on the Session floor were educated at Andrews, which fills for the Adventist Church the same functions that leading British colleges such as the School of Oriental and African Studies at the London School of Economics did for colonial Africans. Such British-educated Africans, like Andrews-educated Africans, went on to become the leaders in their political framework of reference. It is thus vital that Andrews University, and especially the Seminary, press home the challenges that First World Adventists are experiencing. Unfortunately, the Seminary recently passed under reactionary leadership; and many of those best suited to do this work have left its staff or slump dissipatedly at their posts.

As with many other aspects of the 1985 Session, the Nominating Committee was transitional. It remains for the 1990 and 1995 Sessions to show the destination to which the events of 1985 moved.

1. An excellent short description of the Session nominating process is found in Alvin J. Kwiram, "How the General Conference Election Works," *Spectrum* 7 (Spring 1975), pp. 17-22.

Association of Adventist Women gives honors

At a breakfast at the Clarion Hotel in New Orleans on July 2, the Association of Adventist Women (AAW) awarded plaques to three women selected from dozens of nominees for their contributions to church activities. A special honorary plaque was given to Mabel Richards, widow of H.M.S. Richards, Sr., for her work in making possible her husband's evangelistic activities and the founding of the Voice of Prophecy. Those honored and the categories in which they were honored included: Dr. Kathleen Zolber of Loma Linda University, a nutritionist, for professional and career achievements; Eleanor Hetke, a missionary for 23 years and founder of a home for elderly women and a program for abandoned children, for home and community service; and Rosa Lee Jones, a Bible instructor, vocalist, and charity fundraiser, for activities in church life. Approximately 250 people were present, largely women with a mix of races and ages. The cost of the breakfast — \$12 a plate —

and the time of the program — 7:00-9:00 a.m. (the earliest at the Session) — made this turn-out impressive.

The keynote speaker was Betty Sue Ahnberg, known professionally as Aunt Sue of the radio program, "Your Story Hour." In discussing the role of women in the Adventist church, she emphasized the constant need for more love in the world, which she thought women were especially suited to provide. She also mentioned the need for evangelism, citing her use of *Happiness Digest* (a reworking of *Steps to Christ*) as a witnessing tool for two Jehovah's Witnesses who had come to her home.

General Conference president Neal C. Wilson was scheduled to speak briefly at the breakfast, but difficulties in the nominating committee kept him from doing so. In his place Robert Nixon, General Conference communications director, conveyed Wilson's greetings. Nixon mentioned that he came from a line of "strong women," one of his forebears having been a suffragette. He lauded the AAW's efforts to honor Adventist women's achievements.

The tone of the talks reflected the evolving direction of AAW: to show in a nonconfrontational and low-key way that Adventist women are helping the church, both internally and in the church's relationships to organizations and people outside it; and that this assistance should be recognized. When Zolber received her plaque, for example, she dwelt on the extensive support she had received from her husband, which had made her achievements possible.

The AAW has taken a firm position favoring the ordination of Adventist women. The lobbying effort for this view, conducted largely by the Michiana Chapter, has been one of the most professional campaigns of its type to have been done within the Adventist church. The "informational" materials distributed to the commission considering the ordination of women and to many church leaders have been particularly well prepared. Without being abrasive or strident, the AAW has called attention to the indispensable contributions of Adventist women and suggested that these activities indicate the appropriateness of ordaining them. Although the major goal of this program has not been realized, it has no doubt

America, any such orientation would relegate AAW to representing a decreasing minority. Instead, AAW chose a black woman, Rosa Lee Jones, as one of its honorees. It asked her



Rosa Lee Jones

pastor, Leon Cox, to set out her qualifications for the award (which he did most eloquently). And it asked Elder Warren Banfield, director of the General Conference Office of Human Relations and a steadfast supporter of the advancement of Adventist women, to present the honorees their plaques.

The AAW has been rewarded for its moderation. General Conference officers are accessible to its leaders. Announcements for the "Woman of the Year" awards have appeared in church publications. And although at the Session almost all other independent organizations were denied access to the Superdome, the AAW worked out an agreement that allowed it to set up its display about Adventist women among the other booths on the second floor. The agreement, however, did not permit AAW to distribute information at the booth. When one member attempted to hand out the AAW's publication, *The Adventist Woman*, a General Conference official reminded her of the agreement and required her to stop. As a result, the AAW display was one of the few with no human attendants. It looked deserted

vanced within the church as much in conflict with the establishment as in cooperation with it. The AAW must remember this point and recognize the women who have made these advancements possible, even at some risk to pleasant political relationships.

While doing so, it must also realize that Adventist women in general have a very limited desire for liberation and almost none for conflict with church authorities. Adventist women have often solved the conflict between their traditionalist attitudes and their desire for achievement in much the same way as well-known antiliberationist Phyllis Schlafly, for example, did. They have taken on prominent positions (Bible instructor, professor, attorney, women's group leader, local elder concerned with family issues) while refusing to become militant about women's issues. Younger Adventist women are often more favorable to those issues; but they represent only a portion of AAW's constituency. For AAW to maintain a proper course in such turbulent waters will require careful maneuvering.

These broader issues, however, were only implicit at the breakfast. In honoring women too often slighted, AAW performed one of the most useful actions of the Session; and it did so with great grace and dignity. If it can continue to maintain its purposes and to reach out to the increasingly diverse Adventist membership, it will be an important part of the Adventist future.

Lunching with the AAF

Among the most interesting events at the 1985 General Conference Session were the lunches on July 2, 3, and 5 presented by the Association of Adventist Forums (AAF) in the Imperial Palace Regency, a Chinese restaurant in the Hyatt Regency Hotel complex. These affairs were almost as interesting for their politics as they were for their presentations.

The AAF's first problem in organizing its 1985 Session programs was finding somewhere to hold them. Because of the recent falling-out with General Conference president Neal C. Wilson and a renewed General Conference unwillingness to provide facilities to any unofficial group, the AAF was forbidden to have any meetings on property rented by the General Conference during the Session. This prohibition took in the Superdome and the meeting rooms included in the Hyatt Regency Hotel; and these facilities are among the few that were easily accessible to Session attendees.

Some time before the Session, Roy Branson, editor of the AAF journal *Spectrum*, went with some other AAF personnel to examine the situation. They found that the Hyatt Regency Hotel did not own its own property; rather, it leased the property from investors who owned the entire complex. They also discovered that the complex in-

The agreement . . . did not permit AAW to distribute information at the booth . . . [such as its] publication, The Adventist Woman.

contributed to increasing the understanding of church leaders about the need to involve women at all levels of church activity.

Also notable at the breakfast was the substantial number of black men and women present. Groups such as AAW can have a tendency to turn into elite and largely white organizations of professional women. Because the Adventist church over the next few years will experience a sharp increase in black and Hispanic membership, even within North

and a little forlorn amid the general bustle and chatter. But it was present.

Such rewards have their dangers. AAW risks becoming so wedded to the desire for incremental advancement and maintaining good relationships with denominational authorities that it becomes unwilling to maintain pressure for the improvement of the status of Adventist women within the church or take the controversial stands that its purposes may require. Adventist women recently have ad-

cluded many independent merchants who were not included in the General Conference's rental arrangements. Among these merchants was the Imperial Palace Regency, a Chinese restaurant on the first floor of the complex. Getting to the restaurant from the Superdome required walking all the way through a mall

formerly a librarian and history teacher in Bucharest, the capital of Romania. Ward spoke on recent developments in the Azaria case, and Cimpoeru reviewed the situation of Adventists in Romania.

With location and program set, the final problem was publicity. Branson arrived a few

to speak in order to avoid creating problems for church-state relations in South Africa.

Losing Wakaba was not the only shock in store for the AAF. Top General Conference leaders, surprised by the presence of Hsu Hwa at the July 2 lunch, were disturbed by the willingness of Heye and Wakaba to appear at an AAF event. After they met to discuss the situation on the morning the copies were distributed, a general vice-president of the General Conference went to talk with Heye. He reminded Heye about the nature of the AAF and wondered whether Heye really understood what he was getting involved in. Although Heye was not ordered to stay away, the message of disapproval for his speaking at an AAF function was very clear and Heye did not want to oppose it. He called Branson and withdrew.

The organizers responded vigorously to the problem and secured two excellent replacements for the July 3 meeting: John Brunt, dean of the School of Theology at Walla Walla College, who had recently taught a seven-week exchange course at Helderberg College in South Africa; and Russell Staples, a professor at the Andrews University Seminary and the church's principal expert on African missiology.

As it turned out, the lunches attracted between 70 and 100 people each. This was a very respectable showing, particularly considering that many of those who attended had already purchased unrefundable Session meal tickets.

In his remarks on the situation in China, Hsu Hwa indicated that there were perhaps 60,000 Adventists in the country. The count was inexact, however, because a few years ago the Chinese government in the "Three Selves" program unified all Christian churches under one administrative group, the Trans-Christian Council. The "Three Selves" referred to the governmental requirements that churches be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-managed. These requirements arose in part from reaction to the assistance that foreign missionaries gave to the colonizing countries in forcing unequal laws on China after the Opium War (1839-1842). Among other things, the missionaries intervened in legal suits among Chinese citizens; and like other foreign nationals, they benefitted from laws that gave preferred status to the colonizers.

During the "Cultural Revolution" in the

Although Heye was not ordered to stay away, the message of disapproval ... was very clear and Heye did not want to oppose it.

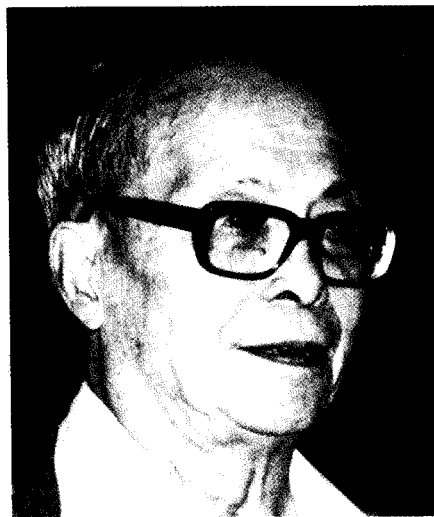
on the second floor and going downstairs — a confusing path to the uninitiated. But the restaurant offered a very pleasant ambience and an agreeable menu; and it also had a large combination dining and meeting room. The AAF thus made arrangements to hold lunches there as its programs for the Session. The lunches, which cost \$4.00 a plate (payable at the lunch), were subsidized by the AAF. The high quality of the food and the pleasant surroundings made them one of the greatest bargains at the Session.

The next problem was finding speakers for the three meetings, which were scheduled to run from noon to 2:00 p.m. and to focus on Adventists outside the United States. Here the organizers pulled off a real feat. They obtained as the speaker for the July 2 meeting Hsu Hwa, a prominent Adventist from Shanghai in mainland China. Hwa was attending the Session on a visitor's visa, and his presence there was no secret. The few General Conference officials who knew of it were told not to let the story out. Hwa, who was in his seventies, had obtained a B.A. degree in art from Oxford University at Redding, after which he had taken over the family textiles business. He had been the president of the China Division when Mao Tse-Tung established the People's Republic of China in 1949, after which he had been a prisoner of conscience for 24 years. Hwa was scheduled to speak on the history and present situation of the Adventist church in China.

Almost as substantial a coup were the scheduled speakers for the July 3 lunch on southern Africa: Bekele Heye, president of the Eastern Africa Division, and as such the highest indigenous church administrator in Africa; V.S. Wakaba, secretary of the Southern Union Mission, which serves the black Adventists in South Africa; and Alf Birch, president of the South African Union Conference which includes white, Asian, and colored/mixed race/Adventists in South Africa.

The luncheon on Friday, July 5, included two speakers with outstanding knowledge of the situation of Adventists in different countries: Phil Ward, publisher of a lay Adventist journal in Australia called the *Australian News* and author of *Azaria! What the jury were not told*, a book on the Azaria murder case; and Petre Cimpoeru, a Loma Linda University librarian, editorial secretary of the Romanian language *Signs of the Times*, and

days before the lunches with hundreds of copies of an issue of *Spectrum* published just before the Session. These copies included a noteworthy wraparound outside the cover. It carried short stories on touring New Orleans (including a "Third World Tour" that revealed the stark differences in living conditions in the city, noted for its extreme social stratification), where to find vegetarian food, and the New Orleans environment (everything from tips to fire ants). The cover of the wraparound, which was the first thing someone picking up



Hsu Hwa

the copy would see, gave a schedule for the lunches and their times and locations. Branson arranged with the hotels at which most of the Session delegates were staying to have a *Spectrum* with the wraparound placed early in the morning outside the door of each delegate. By

Chinese Catholics are not under the Pope's authority, even as Chinese Adventists do not receive instructions from the General Conference.

this maneuver and the lunches themselves, the AAF probably received more notice than it would have gotten by having a display in the Superdome.

However, in two respects the publicity was incorrect. Wakaba, whose situation was politically sensitive, decided at the last minute not

1970s, religious workers in China asked for protection for their churches. The recently revised Chinese constitution responded by granting freedom of worship within the boundaries of the "Three Selves." In practice, the "Three Selves" forbids Chinese churches from receiving funds from abroad, from bringing foreign mis-

sionaries into China, and from being administratively subject to any authority outside China. (Hwa did not mention it, but this program is an important reason that Chinese Catholics are not under the Pope's authority, even as Chinese Adventists do not receive instructions from the General Conference.)

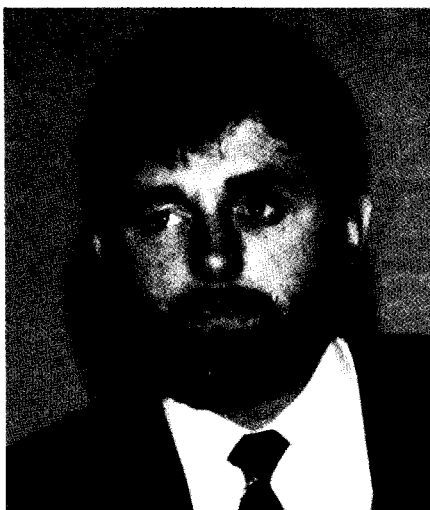
In China, Adventists are recognized as "Sabbath Keeping Christians," the title by which they are described in a recent Chinese encyclopedia. They can hold religious services on Saturday and believe Adventist teachings, although they may not own church buildings. In Shanghai, Adventists have joint meetings with non-Adventist Christians in which non-Adventists preach on Sabbath. Like other Christians, Chinese Adventists are grouped into districts; and those in one district are not supposed to help those in another to carry on church work. The number of Adventists is growing, but most of those who become Adventists are brought in from other Christian groups.

Hwa also reflected on his own life and the history of the Chinese Adventist church. Before the revolution in 1949 his family had been wealthy. His grandfather owned much land in Shanghai and was cofounder of the China Merchants Navigational Company, which owned merchant ships. His father began many industrial enterprises, including the Shanghai knitting factory that Hwa managed; and he was in charge of a major Manchurian railway line. His parents were not Adventists, and he became an Adventist through the influence of an Adventist aunt. Hwa noted the tendency of the Adventist church in China, of which he became the leading administrator, to build many publishing institutions and hospitals but no churches, leaving members to meet in small chapels.

After the 1949 revolution Hwa and the secretary of the China Division, David Lin, were imprisoned and charged with antirevolutionary action. Lin is now assigned to work as a translator in a coal mine. Because he has not been exonerated of this charge, he is not considered a minister by the government; but his case is soon to be re-examined by a three-judge panel. Asked whether Lin's extremely conservative religious views reflected the general thinking of Chinese Adventists, Hwa replied, "I don't think so."

The luncheon on July 3 dealing with South Africa proved to be at least as informative as Hwa's talk on China. Alf Birch, who at the Session became the director of the newly es-

and colored (mixed-race) South African Adventists in one union, and black Adventists in the other. These unions are not included in any division; they relate directly to the General Conference. Within Birch's union, two of the four conferences are fully integrated.



Phil Ward

The present situation is the outcome of a recent administrative reorganization that many church leaders opposed. Although it has brought black Adventists into complete control of the Southern Union, many South African Adventists of all races are concerned about the resulting division of the church. Since 1981, exploratory groups have been formed to study administrative cooperation and structural integration; and these groups are now unifying the way Adventists in South Africa relate to government. Birch's union, the South African Union, permits all Adventists to worship at and join any congregation they choose; and black Adventists from outside South Africa can study at Helderberg College. Birch, who became union president only two years ago, indicated that the Adventist church in South Africa has been somewhat apolitical. Rather than challenging governmental policies, it has worked to make the church's internal structures and policies as just as possible.

John Brunt, who next spoke, said that he had been teaching in an Andrews University four-summer extension program in theology leading to a master's degree from that institution. The students in the class he taught were very diverse, representing seven nations, three

Session) said that when he got married he did not have enough money to pay the "bride price" to the bride's family. After much bargaining, they agreed to let him pay it in installments. After he became a pastor, he fell behind in the payments; and he got a note that his wife's oldest brother would be coming to repossess her. His wife was so fearful she had a miscarriage the night before the brother was due. After more discussions, the student was allowed to keep his wife. After fifteen years of payments, he finally paid the debt off.

*A generous, popular, and prominent white Adventist layman said that he had worked with blacks and favored the South African government's "homelands" policy. (Under this policy, blacks are barred from citizenship in South Africa proper and assigned to rural tribal enclaves.) He said that blacks were happier in a rural setting and that they did not have the same mentality as the whites. He mentioned Zimbabwe (in which a white minority government was removed in favor of black majority rule in the late 1970s) as a place which had once been well ordered and was now chaotic; and he wondered why blacks could not see that they needed a supervisor.

*A white conference president, embarrassed by apartheid, supported progressive ideas on bringing people together. He said that any people of any race should be admitted to any Adventist congregation or institution.

*At lunch in the Helderberg College cafeteria, a black student there said he had found acceptance at the college; but he had to come there without his wife. They had been sent to a homeland against their will. The South African authorities would give him a permit to live at the college, but they would not give his wife one. It took a year and a half to get the permit. When they showed it to a local official some twenty miles from the college, he promptly tore it up and ordered her back to the homeland, threatening to tear up her husband's permit if she did not go. She went to the college anyway and lived covertly with her husband for two and a half years. This student and another black student seated with him said that black people's demands were not unreasonable; they just wanted to move about freely. They were pleased by the progress in the Adventist church itself. But they asserted that many white Adventists talked progressive and prayed Nationalist (the ruling white political party); and many black Adventists talked loyalty to the government and prayed for the boys in the bush (the revolutionaries).

*A saintly black Adventist man who had done much missionary work asked, "Is it true that Canaan's curse was black skin?" Told there was no biblical foundation for this idea, he was relieved; but he said he sometimes wondered why some people disliked blacks so much because of their color.

*A black student from Zimbabwe, a member of the minority N'debele tribe, said that the ruling political party sometimes held rallies in his village. All the people were supposed to come and praise the Zimbabwean

In the footwashing, most of the pairs were racially mixed, without prior encouragement.

tablished Church Ministries Department of the Australasian Division, spoke on two general topics. After describing the way the South African apartheid system operates, he described the administrative situation of the Adventist church in South Africa. At this point the church has two unions, with white, Indian,

major racial groups, and nine languages. Rather than commenting directly on his experiences, Brunt described several suggestive incidents.

*In a discussion of the New Testament perspective on love, marriage, and divorce, a student (who was a delegate to the 1985

ruler, Robert Mugabe. Because the student could not do this, he became a target for gangs of thugs who looked for those who did not show up at the rally. Just before he came to the college, a gang just missed him. "As much as I hate apartheid," he said, "I will try to emigrate to South Africa. I'd rather live there."

Brunt commented that he was most disconcerted because so many people he spoke with seemed to understand the problems well but threw up their hands about solutions. In class, discussions on apartheid were carried on with mutual respect and great openness. The

lectual problems with Christian ideas that Westerners did.

The growth of Adventism was helping to reduce endemic intertribal conflicts, Staples believed. In Zimbabwe, for example, members of the majority Shona tribe and the minority Ndebele tribe worshipped together amazingly well. Both in Zimbabwe and elsewhere, Adventism stretches across tribal lines and has shown much spiritual power to overcome often murderous tribal tensions.

Staples was concerned, however, that membership growth was greatly outstripping

governance.

On July 5 the two speakers were Phil Ward, who spoke on the Chamberlain case in Australia, and Petre Cimpoeru, who dealt with the situation of Adventists in Romania. Because Ward's remarks will be dealt with more fully in another article, this report will concentrate on Cimpoeru's views, including those he later expressed in an interview with *Currents*.

Cimpoeru began by pointing out that the 55,000 Adventists in Romania outnumbered the Adventist membership of many larger European countries; and the Adventist church in Romania was growing faster than it was elsewhere in Europe. He suggested several reasons for this situation, which might seem anomalous for an Iron Curtain country.

First, Romania differed from other Eastern European countries. It was "a Latin island in a Slavic sea" — that is, its religious and ethnic roots were similar to those of the Latin European countries, such as Italy and France; while many of its neighbors were Slavic. Christianity was old and strong in Romania, and the Romanian Orthodox church (which included 80 percent of the population) was a major tool of the state in preserving the Romanian national identity. When the Communist government came to power after World War II, the state church remained a state tool. Its priests (who received half of their salary from the government) followed the state's wishes to slow down Christian teaching and activities. As a result, they became unable to meet the spiritual needs of the people, who began to look elsewhere.

Second, the Romanian people were attracted by the Adventist prescriptions for living a good life, especially the health message and the holiness of marriage. In Adventism the people found an ethic of mutual concern rather than the fierce struggle preached by the state. The Adventist way of living was much more powerful than was Adventist theology in drawing to Adventism people who wanted a good life.

Third, the state's official materialism had palled. The people had responded enthusiastically in the beginning to the Marxist-Leninist idea of making man a king on earth and bringing in an earthly paradise by human effort. Forty years later, however, the happiness Marxism promised is very far off and the earthly kingdom even more distant than it was. And the effort to erase God from life had produced emptiness of spirit. They were ready to abandon these false promises which had produced so many true miseries.

Fourth, Adventism was attractive because, like Roman Catholicism, its headquarters was outside the reach of the Romanian government, which sought to control all Romanian institutions in the name of the advancement of Communism. As a result, pressure by the government on the Romanian Adventist church was not as strong as it was on the official church; nor could Romanian Adventists be controlled merely by controlling the Romanian Union. Romanians who joined the

Through this bureau the government controls virtually all the activities of the official Adventist church structure in Romania.

students agreed on the need for progress; they differed on pace and means.

One evening toward the end of the course, the students celebrated the Lord's Supper together. In the footwashing, most of the pairs were racially mixed, without prior encouragement. The students testified that evening that they had felt great fellowship in the course, for which Brunt was very grateful.

The lunch concluded with remarks by Russell Staples, a professor at the Andrews University seminary and the dean of African missiology in the Adventist church. Staples spoke generally about Christianity in Africa, where he was born and raised.

He pointed out that Christianity, which is young in Africa, has grown enormously from the colonial days, when black Africans thought that "a white face is nature's passport." From 1900 when only 2 million Africans were Christian, Christianity in 1985 has expanded to include more than 60 million Africans; and estimates suggest that more than half of the inhabitants of the African continent will be Christian in the year 2000. This is an expansion without parallel in Christian history. This numerical growth has been paralleled by a tremendous diversification as Christian groups have continually divided and subdivided. To Staples, Christianity was the religion of the future in Africa; but its form was uncertain.

As other Christian faiths have grown in Africa, so has the Adventist church. Estimates of the current number of African Adventists ranged from 1 to 1.5 million; and there will be perhaps 3 million African Adventists in the year 2000. This growth has been extraordinarily fast; 25 years ago there were only 40,000 or so Adventists on the continent. The increase is illustrated by projected growth in Kenya, where the Adventist population is expected almost to quadruple from the present 175,000 members over the next 15 years. This explosive growth was possible because most Africans lived in a sacral world, not the secular Western world. They had no difficulty believing Christian teachings and having faith, and they did not experience the intel-

lectual problems for it. There were not enough leaders in the pipeline, enough facilities, or enough money. And there was too much of a tendency to try to impose on Africa the multi-layered bureaucratic Adventist church found in North America and North American-style patterns of ministry, for which African Adventists had neither the personnel nor the funds.

Staples also commented on the history of missions in Africa. He saw them as having gone through three stages. In the first stage, a missionary station was set up and the missionary functioned as a local chief. Often the missionary, living among the people, was able to convert entire tribes. In the second stage, the missions turned to education. In many parts of Africa at this time, almost all of the primary education was in religious hands; and teachers doubled as religious instructors. The third stage arrived when African countries became independent in the 1960s and thereafter. The new governments took over education and much other institutional work. As a result, religious activities needed to be centered on the local churches rather than institutions.

The Adventist church came to Africa during the second of these three stages. Unfortunately, it never developed a consistent and continuing policy toward the government aid that the second-stage situation involved. In some places, large parts of the Adventist mission program were government funded; in other locations or at other times, aid was refused. There was no long-term policy, and as a result Adventist activities became too much dictated by the government funding programs available.

Staples concluded by commenting on the worldwide implications of the Adventist boom in Africa. As the events at the Session indicated, maintaining American dominance in the church required either rewriting its constitutional structure or strong arming the Session Nominating Committee. In his view, this expansion showed that the Adventist church needed to grow beyond such attempts by one part of the church to control the whole into more truly international and intercultural

Adventist church felt that they had a hope and strength in the General Conference.

Finally, many Romanian Adventists gave strong examples of their faith. Many went to prison, lost their jobs, gave up their education, and sacrificed their professional fulfillment because of their Adventist beliefs — especially the Sabbath, which interfered with state activities from education (a six-day-per-week process) to military service. Cimpoeru cited fifteen to twenty examples of Romanian Adventists who had paid heavily for their steadfastness in belief. These examples were powerful witnesses to other Romanians.

As a result, the Adventist church in Romania has grown greatly without any of the apparatus taken for granted elsewhere — no radio, television, or literature ministry; no Five-Day Programs; no evangelistic crusades; no hospitals, schools, or universities. Their evangelism has been done by word of mouth and almost entirely by the lay members. Their work has produced congregations with a healthy mix of young and old members, in strong contrast to the largely elderly attendees at other churches.

Cimpoeru also discussed the way the Romanian government treats religion in general. As he pointed out, the government is officially atheistic, and it is dedicated to uprooting the idea of God from the minds of the Romanian people. Government officials cannot believe that educated people in particular, who should be the guardians of Marxist orthodoxy, can be religious believers; and they tend to treat Christian intellectuals as crazy. Their attitude toward religion is shown in the Romanian Adventist church, which had 551 congregations for 19,000 believers in 1946 and now has 526 churches for 55,000 members. The main Adventist church in the capital city of Bucharest was badly damaged in a 1977 earthquake, but the government has not yet permitted it to be rebuilt. Bucharest Adventists have for years been worshipping in a ruinous building held together by bolted steel braces.

But the government's main method of undermining religion has not been the closing of churches; and Western visitors are often

the government controls virtually all the activities of the official Adventist church structure in Romania. Pastors may be employed or transferred only with the consent of the government, which gives pastors the identification card they need to function. Church funds are deposited in government banks, from which they may be withdrawn only by government permission. All church leaders cooperate with the government and may be elected only with the consent of the Department of Cults and the Securitate, the Romanian secret police. As Cimpoeru put it, "To be a church leader in Romania, you have to be a man of the government."

In addition, the Securitate infiltrates the churches with people who seem to be good believers in every respect, but who are actually spies. They note such things as statements made in sermons and prayers offered in services, and the congregation will find itself in trouble if it prays for Adventists imprisoned for their faith.

The most important method of attacking religion, however, is discrimination against believers. Romanian Adventists can expect problems in getting or keeping a good job, getting promoted, and getting recommendations to higher education for their children. Their own professional education will be limited, and they will find it hard to develop or use their abilities.

This discrimination program extends particularly to the schools. Students are required to be in school during the two major holy days, Easter and Christmas. Those marked absent can expect trouble. At the least, a note will be put in their personal file that they are "not reliable" and have "reactionary ideas." A collection of such notes guarantees that when the student graduates, he or she will receive the worst job possible in the remotest and least attractive part of the country; and the stigma will remain a lifelong attachment.

Cimpoeru's own experience showed the sorts of tactics used. Both his parents were Adventists, and when he was young he would not go to school on Sabbath. When he showed up on Monday, the teacher would give him twelve swats on each palm and force him to

thanked him warmly for his frankness — and Cimpoeru was fired the next day.

After this experience, Cimpoeru was able through a friend (who did not know about his Adventism) to get a job as a high school teacher in Bucharest. Because the school was large, he was able unobtrusively to arrange for Sabbaths off. He also worked as a guide for the state tourist agency, which helped to cover his absences from school. This situation fell apart when a high Adventist official in Romania denounced him as an Adventist. He was fired, and he eventually went to court about the firing. In court, Cimpoeru cited Romanian constitutional provisions for religious liberty. (Such statements are found in the constitutions of many Communist countries, and they are ordinarily eviscerated by the state's official atheism.) The court tried to find other reasons justifying the firing, but it could not. Eventually the judges had to admit that Cimpoeru was fired solely for keeping the Sabbath.

Cimpoeru, however, was unable to get another job. He described his situation to an acquaintance connected with a Romanian group that was trying to hold the government to the promises (including nonpersecution of religion) that the government had to make to Western countries to receive trade advantages. Through this group (which included some clergy but no Adventists, who naturally turned up their noses at such "political" activities), Cimpoeru's situation came to the attention of Radio Free Europe and Amnesty International; and by the efforts of these two organizations, Cimpoeru and his family were allowed to emigrate. Cimpoeru noted that General Conference religious liberty officials were not of much help in this process.

As he was leaving, Cimpoeru was told by a government official to behave himself in the United States, because "the arm of the Party is long, and we can reach you even in America." This was no idle threat. Cimpoeru became a librarian at Loma Linda University, where he became active in efforts to relieve religious persecution in Romania. One morning his wife was driving and suddenly discovered the car had no brakes. She got the car off the road, where it eventually stopped. A police investigation showed that the brake line had been tampered with so that the brakes would seem normal when the car started but would fail under use. Cimpoeru attributes this act to the Securitate.

Because of his experiences in Romania, Cimpoeru was very suspicious of the intentions of Romanian Adventist leaders, who toured the several Romanian Adventist congregations in the United States after the Session. He commented that Dumitru Popa, the Romanian Union Conference president, had published through government facilities a book on the history of the Adventist church in Romania. This book, taken without credit from a manuscript by deceased Adventist pastor Ion Batrina Voievodeni, favorably featured statements by the head of the Romanian government, Nicolae Ceausescu. It did not de-

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When a high Adventist official in Romania denounced him as an Adventist, he was fired . . .

deceived by the open churches into believing that Romanians have religious freedom. "Instead of trying to take the churches from the people," Cimpoeru claimed, "they try to take the people from the churches."

One part of this campaign involves control of the official church structures within the country, which simultaneously brings a major part of society under state control and weakens the churches' credibility. The government has a Department of Cults, which supervises the fourteen recognized religions, including Adventism (but not including Catholicism, which is unrecognized). Through this bureau

kneel in the corner for two or three hours. When he was let up, his knees were sometimes too swollen for him to walk.

Later in life he was able (partly by not being assertive about his religion) to obtain a position as the chief inspector of the Romanian national military library system. In 1973 the authorities checked on him and found that his parents and his wife were all Adventists. One of his superiors came to him for a friendly talk about the matter. Putting his arm around Cimpoeru, the official asked him very conversationally whether he really believed in God. Cimpoeru replied that he did. The official

The Gospel According to Saul the Unbeliever

by Max Gordon Phillips

Deplaning at Los Angeles International Airport, multimillionaire Saul Fellows felt the whole terminal building quiver under his feet. He ignored the minute tremors that had become commonplace along California's myriad fault zones. He did not ignore the LED newsflash readout on the wall. It said, "Congress Passes National Sunday Law."

It stabbed him in his gut.

It stabbed him so hard that the next readout — "President Warns Moscow: U.S. Nuclear Now Superior" — failed to register on his mind.

Wrapped up in his business dealings, he had never considered the possibility that the Sunday measure would actually pass. Now that it had, he tried to understand why the news cut him. It wasn't the obvious affront to such religious groups as Orthodox Jews and Seventh-day Adventists, who worshipped on Saturday and who resented having to close their businesses two days each week, once for God and once for Caesar. It cut, rather, because of a string of words that had paged up suddenly from deep in his memory — "the last act in the drama."

Ellen G. White, an obscure nineteenth-century author and prophet-founder of the Seventh-day Adventist religion, had written it. Something about the passage of a national Sunday law raising the curtain on the last act in what she called "the drama of the ages." She had prophesied that the end of the world would be signaled by the passage of this law. But Saul had rejected that prophecy because he had never accepted its prophet.

He had come back home to southern California specifically to try to convince Mary to come back to him. But now, for the first time in many years, Saul Fellows was being confronted by this long-dead prophet. If Ellen White was right, then he was wrong — and not only wrong, but "lost." Lost in an eternal sense, doomed, condemned to instant incineration by lethal radiation emitted by a spaceborne Jesus Christ in the company of millions of superhuman beings, angels. He, Saul, would be thus lost, while Mary and the minuscule fraction of humanity who believed as she did — the "righteous" — would not only survive, but would somehow "win" in the "conflict of the ages."

Of course Jesus would not incinerate these righteous winners, but would levitate them

safely upward through the air to Him to travel with Him through "the realms of illimitable space," through intergalactic canyons, from glory to ever-new glory in ever-fresh youth and beauty to arrive at last at the pearly entrance to the paradise of heaven.

There, for a thousand years, the "millennium," Mary, together with those other true believers who knew him, would occasionally sorrow over him, eternally lost, damned and burned alive, until after the millennium, when the holy city of heaven would come to Earth for the final confrontation in the "Great Controversy between Christ and Satan." Meanwhile, Saul, dead on Earth throughout the millennium, would be resurrected at the end of that thousand-year period to witness the final conflict from the evil side; while from the righteous side Mary and the rest of "God's family" looked on.

After that, for Saul, would descend the rain of fire followed by death and permanent nothingness, while for Mary "the years of eternity as they roll" would finally desensitize her to her memories of him and erase forever the figment of what was once Saul Fellows — heretic, apostate, infidel — Saul the unbeliever.

This was the reason the words on the LED wall readout stabbed into the gut of Saul Fellows.

The heavily tiled floor was trying to come up and slam into his face. He diverted it by steering himself into a heavily cushioned chair in an airline waiting bay. There he experienced darkness until floating before his eyes

"Mommie," he heard himself say, "Jeremy says some angels are bad!"

Mrs. Fellows pulled her gaze away from the flushing western sky and stared downward at the troubled waters of her son's eyes. She covered the chubby pink hands with her own chapped red hands. "Saul," she said quietly, "some angels are bad. But they are outnumbered by many, many more good angels. And any good angel is stronger than any bad angel. So if you're good, the good angels stay close around you all the time and protect you from the bad angels."

Saul's eyes probed upward, exploring the prematurely lined contours of his mother's still-beautiful face. After awhile he said, "Why did you name me Saul?"

She leaned down and hugged him close. "Why, Saul's a wonderful name. It means 'Asked.' You were named after Saul in the Bible. The Lord asked him to be the first king of Israel — and the Lord always chooses the right person. I think the Lord will ask you, too, to be a great leader for Him someday."

"But, Mommie, Jeremy says Saul was a bad man." The little lips compressed, curled downward, and trembled.

"Jeremy's wrong, Saul. Saul was a good man when the Lord chose him. Saul chose to do wrong later in his life. He didn't have to. And there was another Saul in the Bible, whose name was changed to Paul when he chose to believe in Jesus. He became a great leader for God. Everything depends on how you choose. And I know you won't choose the wrong, will you?"

He did not ignore the LED newsflash readout on the wall. It said, "Congress Passes National Sunday Law."

appeared an image of Mary. Beautiful saintly Mary who had rejected him because he had rejected Ellen G. White. Mary's stellar blue eyes, overbrimming with tears, gazed on him, through him, until he, through his own tears, willed the apparition away.

Now he saw himself many years ago in the roseate twilight following a dusty summer day in a barrio in San Antonio, Texas. With the fingers of both hands interlocked, he was hanging from his mother's knee staring openly up at her, tear trails glistening on his fat cheeks.

Saul shook his head no! no! no! Then he said, "Tell me about the bad angels. Jeremy says a bad angel could come as my mommie, and I couldn't tell, 'cause he would look just like you. Then he would change into a bad angel, a demon, and choke me to death. Unless I yelled out the name Jesus."

Mrs. Fellows momentarily showed the strain of five years working nights on minimum wage and raising Saul alone, then composed herself. She hugged him tighter and said, "You don't ever have to worry about the bad angels. As long as you love and obey Jesus, the good angels will never let the bad ones get

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close to you. You just tell Jeremy you don't want to hear about the bad angels, only the good ones."

Saul said nothing. Later he thought about good angels and bad angels. Good angels were interesting, but bad angels were more interesting. He decided he wanted to hear more about the bad ones.

As he cruised down Riverside Freeway the voice of the computer in Saul's rented Mercedes advised him to start looking for the upcoming exit to the La Serena campus of Loma Vista University. The ever increasing demand for petroleum had pumped the recoverable oil out of most existing wells, and the accelerated searching for new fields had nearly exhausted the planet's recoverable supplies. The consequent depletion of this resource had raised the price of gasoline to levels prohibitive to most consumers. Now few motorized vehicles shared the roads. Exiting the freeway, Saul drove down palm-lined streets populated with bicycles and an occasional moped ridden by one of the affluent few who could afford gasoline at nearly \$50.00 per gallon. Presently he was sitting in the La Serena campus office of Reginald F. Arbuckle, president of LVU.

President Arbuckle stubbed out the butt of his cigarette in a heavy ceramic bowl, a careful replica of a recently-discovered, fifteenth-century B.C. artifact carrying the likeness of Baal, Possessor of Canaan.

"Scotch?" he asked, pouring himself an exact dram, neat.

"No, thanks, Reg. I'll have some of your mixer, though, the 7-Up. You should have some left, since you never drink it."

Reg snorted, found the 7-Up, poured it over shaved ice for Saul, then narrowed his tired brown eyes and looked quizzically at him from under brambly brown eyebrows. "Tell me, Saul, old buddy, why do you continue to donate to the University? Since the, ah, the secularization and government takeover, alumni giving has all but dried up. Only you and a handful of other Adventists continue to give."

Saul sampled the biting cold lemon-lime. The exploding microbubbles tickled his nose. "I'm *not* an Adventist," he replied in a voice more curt than intended.

"What do you mean, you're not an Adventist? You don't work *Saturdays*. You don't *smoke*, you don't *drink*, you don't eat *meat*? You don't even drink *coffee*. You don't swear or tell dirty jokes. You don't mess around with women — you're still hung up on your wife — what's her name? Mary? — even though she left you a year ago for that ding-dong professor who used to work here."

"Herrholdt Heinrich? Ah, there's nothing between them except their religion. As for me, just say I need one day of rest per week and I don't indulge in things I don't like. But I'm *not* an Adventist. I just happen to be in love with one, that's all."

"As far as I'm concerned, Saul, you *are* an Adventist. And that goes double for most people around here who know you. They'll

get you, Saul. That's why I want to warn you to publically denounce that tribe of whackos — for your own good — because you're a buddy. Besides, you give a lot of money to this place. And heaven knows we need it."

"If I denounce the Adventists, Reg, I lose all hope of ever getting Mary back. My money doesn't mean as much to me as Mary does." Saul tried to keep his voice normal. He hadn't intended to tell Reg so much. But Reg had his way of digging in . . .

Reg slugged down the balance of his Scotch. "If I were you, Saul, I'd find some way — without, of course, offending Mary — of making a public dissociation from them. You know the media accuse them of causing the earthquakes, making God angry with the country for honoring Sunday instead of Saturday. This is hogwash, but with the worst depression in history and with Russia threatening to turn us into radiating rubble, the whole country's gone into religious hysteria. That's

But I'm not an Adventist. I just happen to be in love with one, that's all.

the only reason that idiotic Sunday bill got through Congress, you know. Those toads croaked for voters who want scapegoats."

"Why don't you let me worry about my own skin, Reg?" As Saul rose he dropped a slip of paper on Reg's desk. "Here's your usual check." He walked to the door, turned and said, "The answer to your question, Reg, about why I continue to give to this place, is that I continue to love this place — no matter what it has become."

A part of La Serena extended up the side of a hill called "Two-Bit Mountain" by generations of students. Saul strolled uphill on Hello Walk toward Hanover Memorial Auditorium. The air was crisp and smogless since the virtual demise of petroleum as a fuel had reduced air pollution to the lowest levels in many decades.

Saul thought of his check as his way of paying for the memories that flooded over him on every visit. Price for price, value for value. He considered his four years here as the happiest of his life. Here on Hello Walk he had met Mary — two freshmen on the first day of class trying to find the same Chemistry 101 Lab — and they had gone steady the full four years. During that whole time guys had shown their open jealousy — Saul had never given them a chance. Too bad. For her part, Mary had been devoted to two men only — himself — and Dr. Herrholdt Heinrich, the eschatologist.

Saul's time warped back to his last student year at LVU.

Dr. Heinrich was glaring through his thick glasses at the sandy-haired senior. Hot sun slanting in through the wide-open window

heated Saul's pants legs. He itched to be out on the tennis courts with Mary. But Dr. Heinrich had asked him to stay after class to discuss his term paper.

"So," Heinrich was saying, "you dared to critique the tests for Ellen White's gift of prophecy!"

Saul shifted his weight, said nothing.

"You said," Heinrich continued, "that the blamelessness of her life, even if it could be documented, was not necessarily a valid test, since many nonprophets led presumably blameless lives. You said that the accuracy of her predictions was not verifiable in enough instances to warrant a positive conclusion. You said that the biblical predictions of prophecy arising in the last days — 'your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions' — do in no way limit themselves to her or even specify her. You said that her fidelity to Scripture was no more valid a test than the so-called blamelessness of her life,

since she *misread and misinterpreted* Scripture. You said that she couldn't even be *considered* for biblical-level prophetic status because she was neither a witness to the Christ event as were the New Testament writers, nor a prophetic forerunner of it, as were the Old Testament writers. On and on! Heresy after heresy! Blasphemy after blasphemy!" Heinrich was breathing hard.

Saul found himself fearing for the man's heart. "I'm sorry you feel that way, sir," he managed. "What else could I do? This is what I *really think*. That's the real me in that paper. What did you expect?"

"Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!" Heinrich exploded. "Do you have the slightest inkling of what kind of position your paper puts *me* in? You obviously think only of yourself. If I were to give you an A or a B or even a C, and if word got out, my passing grade would be construed as *approving* those very blasphemies with which I most heartily disagree and detest with all my being!"

"You're going to give me an F?" Saul was trying mentally to compute his overall GPA. He had nearly straight A's in business, but his bullheaded demand for evidence had made his religion GPA another matter.

"I'm going to be merciful and give you a D."

"Thank you, sir."

"Don't thank me. Thank the Lord. Thank the Lord you're going to *graduate* — *if* you are. You *are* a religion major, aren't you?"

Heinrich was looking smugger than Saul felt was appropriate. "Religion and business," he said, watching the professor's face sag minutely.

"Yet still a religion major! A religion major who believes the way you do! That raises the question of whether you should even be al-

lowed to graduate at all. Far from *disproving* the authenticity of Ellen White's predictions, *you* are living proof of their *accuracy*! She *foretold* of doubters, wolves among sheep. You'd better go to your room, your closet, young man, get down on your knees, and stay there until you've cleared up this matter with your Maker. Your soul is in deadly peril, my boy.

"But I know you won't," Heinrich continued unabated. "I know where you're going. You're going out to play tennis with your girlfriend. I know. I've watched you from this window nearly every day at this time. Watched you with the most dedicated Adventist girl I've ever seen in my twenty years on this campus. What she sees in you I'll never understand. I only pray to God that she will see her error before you drag her down to your level."

Saul's mind emerged from the reverie. The intrusive thought that perhaps Mary *had indeed* seen "her error" — though from Heinrich's point of view, years late — and was now forever beyond his reach, had rendered it just too painful to continue.

The Science Museum, once called the *Creation Science Museum*, loomed before him. He remembered the time only a few years back at an alumni homecoming shortly before the sudden and unanticipated government takeover of the school . . .

Sitting in the pleasant mustiness of the *Creation Science Museum*, he had forgone the keynote address given by a nationally renowned news commentator, who was arguing that the U.S. had so big a nuclear stick now that it no longer needed to "speak softly" and therefore shouldn't. He had skipped the speech in order to continue talking with his longtime friend and one-time classmate Huw Borth.

Huw looked almost exactly the same, Saul thought, as he had as the short, sturdy Welsh transfer student with the outrageous bush of disobedient black hair. After graduating with Saul and Mary, Huw had gone on to finish his Ph.D. studies in geology and paleontology *summa cum laude*, then returned to La Serena where, earning less than an entry-level technician in industry, he strove mightily to interest students in the differences between metamorphic and igneous rock.

and that any belief that fossils were older than that resulted in the "worst kind of heresy."

"Saul," Huw was saying, his blue eyes hot with emphasis, "the evidence is just too massive and persuasive. There is only one way to get less than ten thousand years since the last ice age."

"And that is . . ."

"And that is to postulate that at creation God made the Earth's fossils to *appear* older, most much older, than ten thousand years. And that means He had to make some appear to be *millions* of years old, and some *billions*."

"To test our faith?"

Huw let his hands drop in exasperation. "You tell me," he said. "You were the religion major. According to that theory He could have created everything seven minutes ago to *appear older by consistently varied amounts* — including the rust on my old Subaru outside, this yellowed geology text here, this Bible and the memories in your brain and mine."

"How about, 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts,'" Saul suggested.

"Very funny, Saul," Huw said. "You don't have to deal with this. I do."

"I know scientists in the employ of Loma Vista University," Saul reminded Huw, "who say Noah's Flood caused these effects."

Huw caressed the smooth face of a piece of slickensides. "Well, for one thing, you've got to explain the evidences of glaciation within the postulated Flood strata — glaciers that *formed, then melted, during the forty days and forty nights of the Flood*. It takes a good thousand years just to melt a miles-deep continental ice sheet — and that only by postulating an improbably colossal 'heat event.' And don't get me started on sea-floor spreading — the problems for a 'young Earth' only get worse!"

"So what do you do with Ellen White's statements framing the time of the creation of the Earth — at least the creation of life on Earth — to seven literal days 'about six thousand years' ago?"

"Avoid them."

"But when a student raises the question . . ."

"In the first place, Saul, how could I tell a class of La Serena students what I've been telling you? That would only eventuate in the loss of my job here."

are as true to duty as the needle to the pole."

"Come on, Saul, don't quote Ellen White at me."

"I'm not quoting Ellen White. I'm quoting whomever she quoted."

"So then it's not inspired."

"Wrong, Huw. So then it *is* inspired. If it is inspired now, then it was inspired *before* she quoted it. Her copying doesn't detract one bit from the intrinsic *inspiration* of that statement. Nor add."

"Either you're making fun, Saul, or you really are a heretic."

"I am a heretic, Huw, a heretic. And I'm not afraid of being a heretic. I've always been a heretic. Face the fact that *I am a heretic*."

"I can't, Saul."

"I know that, Huw. You can't, because if you did you would have to face the fact that *you too* are a heretic."

"Don't be too sure of that, Saul."

"I don't mean to prejudge you, Huw. I've always considered you one of my best friends, and I always will. I just don't understand you, that's all."

"Nor I you, Saul."

Saul continued walking uphill, on past the last building toward the summit, up the steepening path, grooved deep in the degenerate granite regolith of the heavily bouldered slope by decades of student wear. Many times he and Mary had deepened it both as students and as graduates. Now he deepened it alone.

At the top rested the largest boulder, a rock the size of a two-room house, rent in two. Finding the ancient footholds and handholds he climbed quickly to its roof. From this vantage point he could see across the river valley and try to imagine the days when only the Indians and a few Californios . . .

An extravagant waste of reds and purples smeared the rugged clouds — like the work of an Expressionist painter gone mad. This land was not far from the land of Ramona and Allesandro . . .

Of Mary and Saul . . .

He scrubbed his hands bitterly on the rock's unforgiving granite texture and sprang to his feet, careless that he scarred high-gloss shoe leather. He remembered the time when he had come to the rock alone, and Mary had come looking for him. He had seen her far below, had jumped and waved and called out to her from this very spot, called to her to come to meet him at the summit to view a sunset very like this one. Now, as then — the evening breeze, rising rich with the bouquet of oncoming rain, blowing his hair out before him in the quickening darkness — now, just as he had long ago, he called out, "Mary! Mary! I'm up here!"

"Hey! Hey! Crazy man!"

What! Saul started, jumped, lost his footing and nearly tumbled the dozen feet off the boulder. He looked down the rift between the two halves of the rock and for the first time saw two students intertwined in the gloom. "Students!" he muttered. "I forgot about students."

Do what is necessary to survive then, Huw; but remember, "The greatest want of the world is the want of men . . . who . . . are true and honest . . ."

While Saul fingered calcium carbonate fossils, petrified dinosaur bones, stromatolite chunks and varve plates, Huw explained the large number of corroborating dating methods. In geology and paleontology it was the same old problem — if the scientific conclusions were right, then Ellen White's interpretation of Scripture was wrong. She had said the Earth was "about six thousand years old"

"So quit. You could make three times your salary doing geology for an oil company. If you found a large field you'd get a million-dollar bonus."

"I want to stay here, Saul."

"Do what is necessary to survive then, Huw; but remember, 'The greatest want of the world is the want of men — men who in their inmost souls are true and honest . . . men who

"Crazy man! Descend!"

Red and fumbling, Saul descended.

"A toke of the weed, we offer — in appreciation of the performance."

"Thanks, but I don't care for any, uh, for any marijuana." In the breeze he had failed to notice the characteristic smoke, but now, on the lee side, he could smell nothing else.

Back at the Mercedes he noticed deep dents in its high-gloss exterior. And the window on the driver's side was cracked, resembling a multiple spider web. On the asphalt lay jagged pieces of granite.

"Target practice for P.E. majors," he fumed. As the first few drops of the rainstorm splattered on the windshield, he got in the car and drove toward the distant mountains. By now it was fully night.

Away from the rain and most of the light pollution from the Inland Empire — as the tri-city area of Riverside-Redlands-San Bernardino was known — pine trees pointed upward to a ragged area not yet occulted by the nomadic, clotting clouds. This area almost perfectly framed the winter constellation Orion, the Hunter. So impressive was the Hunter that Saul pulled the Mercedes off the road onto a rest area with an unobstructed view, ordered the computer to slide back the roof opening and to raise and partially recline the driver's seat, then stared upward.

Ignoring the brightest visible star, the blue giant Rigel, Saul concentrated on the middle "star" in the sword that hung from the Hunter's belt. He knew this "star" was really an emission nebula, called the Great Nebula, an immense galactic mist glowing with the light of internal and external stars.

He tried to imagine the dizzying distances in light years, but gave up. In vision, Ellen White had seen this luminous gas cloud, this "emission" nebula, with an "opening," as though a large piece had been torn off, leaving a wide breach. Jesus, she saw, would travel through this breach on His way to Earth for His Second Advent. She had no way of knowing, astronomically speaking, that there was no such opening, no breach, there, that what the astronomers of her day had thought was a breach, through which to see the stars on the far side, was really an optical illusion. Black clouds, absorption nebulas, between Earth and the Great Nebula blocked some of the light coming from the mighty flowing emission nebula beyond. The stars he could see, rather than being on the far side of the Great Nebula, actually shone between Earth and the black clouds. Pictures from the radio wavelength, which penetrates black clouds as though they weren't there, pictures unavailable in Ellen White's day, showed no opening, no breach, only an unbroken, beautifully elliptical Great Nebula.

All this went through Saul's mind as he stared. Yet, as the computer closed the roof, and lowered and rectified his seat, he felt that knife still in his gut. It said, Maybe you're wrong, Saul. Maybe she's right. Maybe all of "science falsely so-called," in the words borrowed by Ellen White long ago, was wrong.

And maybe the 18th century view of Scripture as a book of science as well as of faith, was right.

"Would you care to hear the news, Mr. Fellows," said the Mercedes computer.

"Yes," Saul told it, "but only until I say off."

"Very good, sir. Stand by."

"Reports from Washington, the United Nations, and Moscow continue to indicate dramatically escalating nuclear-war rhetoric between the United States and the Soviet Union —"

"Off," Saul said.

"Very good, sir," the computer replied. "Would you care —"

"Shut up," Saul commanded.

"Very good, sir." It went silent.

"British accent!" Saul muttered. "Why would a German company program its American export with a British accent?" Then, afraid that the computer might reply, he said, "Don't answer that."

"Very good, sir," the computer said.

"Don't speak again unless I specifically ask you to speak — or I'll bash your PC boards in." He squelched the impulse to say, Understand?

The computer did not reply.

Soon the Mercedes headlights lit up the rustic sign that said "Saul's Sugar Pine Lake Resort." He drove in. At Mary's request he had closed his resort on Sugar Pine Lake to all but the Adventists who now hid there. In yet another EGW prediction fulfilled, vast numbers of SDAs had already abandoned their church and had joined "the easy, popular side." Maybe only fifty all told were staying at Saul's Resort. Others hid in surrounding mountainous areas. Charging them nothing, Saul was enduring the revenue lost and the expenses incurred because Mary had invited them. To reduce losses as much as he could, he had told the self-reliant Adventists they had to run it themselves. After all, they had run it themselves before he bought it from the nearly bankrupt Loma Vista University and had retained as much of the same staff as he could. He drove under the overhanging sugar pine boughs with their immense cones like ICBMs impending over the narrow, asphalt road to the Great Hall.

Mary greeted him with warm arms and lips that tickled his ear when she whispered, "I still

Seventh-day Adventist church, this microscopic minority, as God's only true people, God's last people on Earth, the remnant, the apple of God's eye, "the only object of His supreme regard," the sheep divided from the goats, the wheat from the tares. He must believe — now that the Testing time was upon them or had even passed — that all others — Protestants, Evangelicals, Catholics, Buddhists, Muhammadans — were fallen Babylon or the Beast or the Image to the Beast or in some other way on Satan's team. Because there were only two teams now, and everybody had to line up on one side or the other.

It meant believing in Ellen G. White as the Spirit of Prophecy, the sole infallible interpreter of Scripture in the "last days."

It meant believing that Saturday, the Seventh-day Sabbath, was the final binding test separating the saved from the lost. Anyone who worshipped on this day enjoyed the seal of God, while any who worshipped on Sunday bore the mark of the Beast, Satan, "in the forehead," if he worked with his mind, or "in the hand" if he worked with his hands.

And it meant that one's sins — and Saul admitted that he was indeed a sinner, i.e., imperfect — were not genuinely forgiven, but were stored or "covered" as damning evidence, if needed, in a heavenly sanctuary until one's probation was closed and one had achieved sinless perfection — at which point God would finally relent, would finally forgive and forget in an ultimate sense.

"You don't understand, Saul," Mary was telling him before the great log fire in the Great Hall, holding both his hands and watching his face with her cloudless blue eyes. "It's *because* I love you that I had to leave you. I had to do something to *shock* you into awareness that *time is so short* — *it may even now be too late!* Who knows when probation will close for you, Saul, if it hasn't already?"

"I'm not on probation," he countered. "I'm a forgiven sinner, and that's all I need. I believe Jesus took care of my sins — past, present, and future — once for all time on the cross. I believe the Sabbath is no more important than circumcision. I believe Ellen White may have been given spiritual gifts like a great number of other people both in her day and now; but that if so, she abused them, also like a great number of others. And I believe

Back at the Mercedes he noticed deep dents in its high-gloss exterior . . . "Target practice for P.E. majors," he fumed.

love you, Saul."

Mary could still be the sun to him, having dawned in his life at La Serena, illuminating and warming all his dark cold damp valleys. When she had left him, night had fallen. Any time, he knew, he could have her back — but on only one condition: he must "believe."

"Believe" — the most difficult word in the language — meant he must believe in the

that God's only true church is the invisible one, composed of people all over the world who only God can number and Christ alone can judge." But as he spoke he knew she wasn't listening and couldn't.

"Saul," she said, "You know I love you. But the passage of the national Sunday law has proven Ellen White right and you wrong. Isn't that evidence enough for you? To be saved

you must believe, *now!* If you have any urgings at all to believe, it's not yet too late for you, and the Spirit is still pleading. Please come back to God and me. Won't you do it now?"

Deep in his gut he felt the knife twist. And from the murky depths of his memory came the terrible quotation — "The summer is over, and the harvest is past, and we are *not saved!*" And still he couldn't force belief. "Mary," he said with geological slowness, "I only wish I could."

Mary turned her exquisite, tear-streaked face away and rose to go.

"Mary?"

"Yes?"

"Are you . . . going to your room . . . alone?"

"Yes, Saul. God knows I want to be with you tonight." Her tears were staining her bodice. "But I have to do everything I can to see you into heaven. I know you don't believe that, but it's true. And, please believe me that it's the *only* reason."

"Mary, I do believe you. You are the most honest person I've ever met. And I will always love only you." His own tears ran now. He reached out, grasped her hand.

But with a fresh outburst she pulled away.

"Then would you wake me in the morning for the worship service in the chapel?"

"Of course, Saul."

He retired alone to the special suite he had added for Mary, knowing she wouldn't sleep there until she could sleep with him there as "one flesh," which meant one belief — hers.

Then "the Lord himself would descend" to take them both to the New Jerusalem in heaven where, after a thousand years of "neither marriage nor giving in marriage," the holy city would descend to Earth with them, standing on its walls, to observe final confrontation with the dark lord of Earth, Satan, backed by his hordes of evil angels and evil human beings.

He woke to the rock 'n' roll beat of another low-level earthquake. Glancing out the win-

bled hope' — an early Adventist hymn, a song about three Adventist pioneers whose "blessed hope" was the Second Coming of Christ. It was a song buried deep in the hearts of these people, a song which surely echoed the sentiments of the apostles who had expected Christ to return before the last one died. Why, then, couldn't he believe as they did?

He met Mary at breakfast in the Great Hall. The smell of fresh baking surrounded them. She grasped both of his hands in hers and squeezed.

"I was on my way to wake you, darling, but Dr. Heinrich talked me out of it. He said it wouldn't be wise being alone in there with you at that hour." She kissed him, smiled, and started tugging him toward the cafeteria food line.

The knife in his gut twisted again. He reached out and pulled her to him. She did not attempt to resist. "Tell me," he said fiercely, "was it Dr. Heinrich's idea originally for you to leave me?"

Mary's smile vanished. She pulled abruptly from his grasp and ran from the room. He did not follow.

The Adventists were eating the food he had stocked; but they had provided their own cook, one Peter Weymouth, a man prominent among southern California Adventists as a superb vegetarian chef. But it was rumored that he ate pepper, an item expressly forbidden by Ellen White. In his favor, however, some argued that he ate only the uncommon white kind. And since it was presumably the common black kind that the Spirit of Prophecy forbade, Peter Weymouth could not be technically classified as "in error" on the point. Peter himself, however, insisted that whenever he prepared food for the remnant people, he never used "hot" pepper of any kind — black, white, red, orange, yellow, or green. Saul wondered fleetingly whether Peter had personally overcome the white kind, if it was necessary that he should.

Any time, he knew, he could have her back — but on only one condition: he must "believe."

dow he saw in their corral the riding horses who, as the ground shivered under them, screamed and pranced. Then he heard the singing. Opening the window he noticed the sweet sounds that issued from the chapel. Why had Mary failed to waken him? Again the knife twisted. He dressed slowly.

The gray, overcast day had brewed a stifening wind. It ruffled the lake like a deck of cards. Saul walked on the boardwalk that ran in front of the chapel. Its massive, carved-oak doors had been shut tight against both him and the wind. The doors said he could not now go in late and cause a disturbance. From inside the music reached out to him: "I asked what buoyed his spirits up; 'Oh, this,' said he, 'the

To Saul, who hadn't eaten since the plastic airline food, Peter's breakfast was indeed good — hot, whole, seven-grain cereal with an almost tasty soya milk; fresh whole wheat bread toasted and peanut buttered; sweet, pink grapefruit halves; foamy fresh orange juice . . .

Saul watched Dr. Heinrich taking his breakfast utensils up to the window into the kitchen for washing as was the custom at "the Resort," as Adventists always called it. He was looking snug in a strangely familiar, red-and-black plaid hunting jacket. Saul finally recognized it as his, one he had left in the dining hall coat-check room on a previous visit. He followed the professor up to the window.

Looking at the old man's wrinkles — holy

wrinkles, Saul thought — he fought his urge to confront him about Mary, hoping to say nothing which might further alienate her. He finally decided on — "Nice jacket, Dr. Heinrich."

Heinrich jerked around. "Oh, it's you! I, uh, I mean I, ah —" Heinrich floundered as an obviously forced smile faulted his face. "Heh, heh, I was cold and I just found this jacket here. No one was using it. The Lord just impressed me to try it on. The Lord helps those who help themselves, right, Saul? A bit loose on me, don't you think? Why, is it yours?"

"But you keep it. My gift."

Heinrich's smile fossilized. "Oh, but it's *not* yours to give, you know. God's. He owns everything, I think you'll agree. You only had it on trust, on loan, so to speak, from Him, right?"

"Right, to test my stewardship — like with everything else here," Saul added, hoping to convey irony.

But the irony apparently failed, for Heinrich replied: "You know, Saul, that's exactly the way I see it. For once you and I see eye-to-eye." He was rapidly regaining his lost panache.

"Tell me, Doctor," Saul said, deciding to change the subject to the old man's favorite, "have the remnant people reached sinless perfection yet?"

"We're having to stand without a Mediator, Saul, without Jesus Christ mediating between sinful people and His pure Father," Heinrich replied automatically. "That would imply that unless we have reached such a state, we could not stand for a single moment. For nothing even remotely sinful can stand in the penetrating gaze of that holy eye."

"So your sins, the character defects that have been stored in the heavenly sanctuary while you were on probation, have finally been put away and forever forgotten — is that right?"

"Well, I wouldn't use the term 'stored,' but that's essentially correct — they were 'covered' by Christ's blood in the sanctuary until the close of probation on Earth."

"So now you're perfectly sinless?"

"I would prefer not to have to say so, myself. I would prefer to have Christ say so."

"But that conclusion follows logically from everything you believe," Saul persisted.

"Yes, but I couldn't expect you to understand since 'spiritual things are spiritually discerned.'"

"So you still consider me unspiritual!"

"Nothing personal on my part, Saul. In the last days Scripture cannot be understood without the Spirit of Prophecy, and it is the Spirit of Prophecy which says we must now stand without a Mediator."

"Tell me again, Doctor, how you arrive at Ellen G. White as the Spirit of Prophecy? I've always thought of the Spirit of Prophecy as the Holy Spirit, not as a mere human being, Ellen G. White. Seems like blasphemy to me."

"Why, you *know* that already, Saul. I *taught* it to you at La Serena. Scripture says,

"The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy." So, since all of Ellen White's writings testify of Jesus, her writings are the Spirit of Prophecy. Of course, it's just by way of shorthand that we refer to the woman herself as the Spirit of Prophecy."

"So everything comes back full circle to Ellen G. White, doesn't it, Doctor? Because I can't accept her as the sole infallible interpreter of Scripture, I can't understand Scripture. And because I can't understand it, I'm unspiritual."

"You may draw your own conclusions, Saul."

"I have, Dr. Heinrich. They just happen to

not buy or sell because we have rightly refused to accept the National ID card, just as the Spirit of Prophecy predicted! I suppose *you* have one?"

"Yes, I do," Saul admitted.

"What further proof do we need? You are the only one here with one."

Saul suddenly recognized the probable truth of this assertion.

"So clearly you're not one of us! Even Mary realizes that — at least she does *now*! Ah, 'Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.' Indeed, 'Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone.' And, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord!'"

"What doth the Lord require of me," Saul whispered to Mary, "but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God?"

differ from yours."

"You know, Saul," Heinrich said, warming so to his point that he doffed Saul's gift jacket, "you haven't changed one iota, have you? Always the questioner, the doubter, the unbeliever. 'Be not faithless, but believing.' The Bible clearly states that 'the dragon' — that's Satan — 'was wroth with the woman' — that's the true church of all ages — 'and went to make war' — that's persecution — 'with the remnant of her seed' — that's the Seventh-day Adventists — 'which keep the commandments of God' — aren't we the only people who keep *all ten* of the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath commandment? — 'and have the testimony of Jesus Christ' — now there's Ellen White foretold in Scripture; for, as I just quoted to you, 'the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy.'"

"All right, Dr. Heinrich, you've told me what you believe. Now let me tell you what I believe. I believe that the only true church is made up only of those who worship Christ in their hearts, and that this church cannot be usurped by any group at any time in history by any kind of claims whatever. I believe that the expression of the Ten Commandments was *fulfilled and superceded* in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, and that being Christlike is the sole criterion for keeping 'all of the commandments.' And I believe that the Spirit of Prophecy is the Holy Spirit, whose title cannot be preempted by any human prophet or by any body of documents."

"I can only repeat, Saul," said Heinrich, his face dangerously red, "that 'spiritual things are spiritually discerned.'"

"So they are, Doctor. But the time has come for you to realize that neither you nor any self-appointed 'remnant' owns the keys to the gates of heaven and the gates of hell."

In reply, Heinrich handed Saul back his red-and-black plaid jacket. "Don't be too sure. Look around you, boy! Just wake up and look around you, boy! A national Sunday law has just been enacted by Congress — just as the Spirit of Prophecy predicted! Adventists can-

At the mention of Mary's name, Saul's combative attitude rapidly evaporated. "For my wife's sake, for Mary's sake," he said, "I would like to believe. ..." He just realized he was no longer talking to this old man but to himself, spilling out fumbling secrets not meant for an interloper's ears.

"Oh, *would* you, Saul? 'And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming —'"

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau," interrupted Saul with his own quote, trying to sidetrack Heinrich's onrushing theological freight train.

"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders," Heinrich continued as though Saul had said nothing. "'And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned —'"

"That is the sum and substance of the whole matter," Heinrich concluded, turning authoritatively on his heel and walking off to sip Peter Weymouth's delicious hot chocolate in front of a fireplace seemingly roaring of Saul's befitting future reward.

Saul remembered that Ellen White had forbidden coffee, presumably because of its caffeine content. But evidently chocolate had been overlooked, despite its own caffeine content — thus legitimizing Heinrich's morning energizer.

From behind him Saul heard the familiar sound of certain feminine feet, felt the soft warmth envelop him, the little chin dig into his back. He turned and looked down on the flower-like, tear-dewed face retroused in the morning sunshine now flooding through the window.

"Oh, Saul! I overheard. I can't believe it's too late for you. Come with us! I beg you!

Come with us! We're going to wait for Jesus where they can't find us. I'm not supposed to tell you, but we're leaving at four this afternoon. Please come with us. Come live forever with us in heaven!"

Saul noticed Dr. Heinrich had turned around and was staring at them in apparent openmouthed horror. At Saul's feral look he turned suddenly back around toward the fire.

"What doth the Lord require of me," Saul whispered to Mary, "but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with my God? Does He require me to carry all of Dr. Heinrich's baggage, too?"

"But, Saul, how do you know *your* god isn't Satan?" Dr. Heinrich says it is —" She gasped, then, covering her mouth with her hand, fled the Great Hall.

Numb, trying to marshal his thoughts, Saul hiked the rocky mountainside alone, not stopping until he had found the spot by the stream near the secret cave where he and Mary had come so often. The fragrant air susurrated through the pines. He sat down on a granite seat backed conveniently by a broad pine trunk, set his wrist watch alarm to be back at the Resort well before four p.m., pulled his Bible from his coat pocket, and found a passage that had been haunting him: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."

Perhaps they were right. Maybe the single thing keeping him from Mary was his indomitable, single-minded, inscrutable, thoroughly damnable demand for evidence. And maybe the passage of the national Sunday law was indeed precisely that evidence. Maybe Ellen White wasn't just lucky in her prediction. Maybe it was more than just her shrewd reading of human nature and sociopolitical trends. Maybe Huw Borth was right in refusing to sever his relationship with God's remnant people simply because their belief failed to coincide with empirical evidence. And maybe it didn't matter. Maybe all that mattered was Mary's love. And if that were true, then he could just tell her he believed — just tell her and hope that someday he truly would.

The soft wind on his burning cheek was like the touch of Mary's hand, and the sounds of the brook over the rocks were like a baby's laughter. Thus lulled, Saul Fellows slept.

The insistent wrist watch alarm jolted him awake. Three thirty. He rose and started jogging downhill. Soon his jog became a run, easily dodging trees, rocks and bushes. Whether or not he did, he would tell Mary he believed! Nothing — not his money, not his ego, not Dr. Heinrich's intransigence, not even the evidence, whatever that might be — would deter him. He was already beginning to think that for the first time in his life, he actually did!

The first three shocks came when Saul discovered the Resort apparently deserted.

(concluded in next issue)

Wright Morris

by Daniel Lamberton

There are plenty of reasons for reading Wright Morris. For the reader interested in authors who know of Seventh-day Adventists, he offers a view of SDA family and college life that is affectionate and recognizable. But more importantly, he writes well of things that touch all readers. He writes in the pensive vernacular of one who sees clearly, who knows that life is stark and tricky, and who confronts living with wit and integrity. His characters scratch for identity in a world that is growing soft, limbo-like, and noncommittal. Morris digs for concrete detail and uncovers wonderful relics of the commonplace, of a past that is not worn out but that gleams from hard use.

The earliest of his more than thirty books are photo-texts that combine simple and direct prose with photographs from the archives of America's heartland. His later works are insightful, at times offbeat, indictments of a world that knocks down the imaginative and honest person. In *The Works of Love*, one sad man who has failed at the egg business reads a speculative book on space travel and dreams of a more exciting life. As the novel concludes, he has found work only as a department store Santa Claus, but his reading has caused him to wonder and his dignity has been established. He has reconsidered his own cramped life and found that "what the world needed, it seemed, was a traveler who would stay right there in the bedroom, or open the door and walk slowly about his own house. Who would pound a note . . . on the piano, raise the blinds on the front-room windows, and walk with a candle into the room where the woman sleeps. A man who would recognize this woman, this stranger, as his wife." Morris writes of such travelers, of those who work to bridge the gap between husband and wife, between a hopeful past and a harder present, between reality and imagination.

Morris, the recipient of two Guggenheim fellowships for photography and fiction, won the National Book Award for *The Field of Vision* in 1956 and the American Book Award in 1981 for *Plains Song*. Although critically admired, Morris is too infrequently read. His works are like a trip to the home place, and perhaps too few of us have such a place. I have found him terrifically funny, in the way of Garrison Keillor, as I have recognized in his

world the small quirks that I thought were only mine. He has a bull's-eye insight into the details of memory that, when read, call up forgotten images from the reader's past. "He was a busy father; the bicycle he rode to and from his work often lay on its side, the front wheel still spinning" (*Will's Boy*).

He has the same sense of the horrific, the philistine, the mix of humor and anger as does Flannery O'Connor, but behind it all is a constant introspection and wonder. Morris calls up the reader's memory and goes beyond memory to invite the imagination. In *Earthly Delights, Unearthly Adornments* he writes: "If I attempt to distinguish between fiction and memory, and press my nose to memory's glass to see more clearly, the remembered image grows more illusive . . . I recognize it, more than I see it. This recognition is a fabric of emotion as immaterial as music. In this defect of memory do we have the emergence of imagination? . . . Precisely where memory is frail and emotion is strong, imagination takes fire." Morris's work intertwines fictions and remembered details to

competition for the first time.

Morris knows about Seventh-day Adventists, and his work is full of attractive speculations for readers who understand Adventist ways. What is most attractive, perhaps, to the Adventist reader is the genuine affection Morris has for those Adventists he has known. Like Wallace Stegner and other western American writers, Morris understands that the civility and decency of many small, western towns depended upon religion or shared traditions. The small-town values of the settled West were upheld by the Mormons, the Adventists, the Lutherans, and others who formed their communities in order to live freely and nurture those who needed care. Admittedly, such communities often became insular and hostile to nonconformists. Morris, however, directs his disillusionment toward the valueless person, who has no sense of tradition or respect for the ideals of others. Morris writes of an urbane drifter — a modern character, twice divorced — who turns for absolution to the steady old aunt from just outside Boise who has kept her Adventist faith.

He tells of how innocent boys at a religious college in Walla Walla, Washington, turn savage after tasting athletic competition . . .

form, at times fantastic but always believable, visions.

His readers may need patience. His texts aren't always strong on plot; between narrative sections one is frequently led into such wistful corners as one finds at the beginning of *Will's Boy*: "Few things are so wondrous as our assurance that we are each at the center of the cosmos. Nor does learning that we are not long disturb us. In the early thralldom of this feeling we accumulate the indelible impressions we will ceaselessly ponder but never question, pebbles that we will fondle in the mind's secret pockets." But before the reader can become lethargic, one of Morris's normally taciturn characters will come to life — like the gangly and knobby-headed house painter in *The Fork River Space Project*, who is also a writer of science fiction. This painter, who believes in the soon return of a UFO, has written a story called *The Taste of Blood*. He tells of how innocent boys at a religious college in Walla Walla, Washington, turn savage after tasting athletic

Morris was born in 1910 in Central City, Nebraska. In *Will's Boy* he writes:

"Six days after my birth my mother died. Having stated this bald fact, I ponder its meaning. In the wings of my mind I hear voices, I am attentive to the presence of invisible relations, I see the ghosts of people without faces. Almost twenty years will pass before I set knowing eyes on my mother's people. Her father, a farmer and preacher of the Seventh-day Adventist gospel, shortly after her death would gather up his family and move to a new Adventist settlement near Boise, Idaho. My life begins, and will have its ending, in this abiding chronicle of real losses and imaginary gains."

Will's Boy, the first book of Morris's three-volume autobiography, details his childhood and adolescence. It tells of his first acquaintance with the Seventh-day Adventist Osborns — his mother's family — and with the unusual society of a 1930s Adventist college.

Morris grew up "half an orphan" with his lively and preoccupied father. The two drifted

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along Nebraska's Platte River, dreaming of wealth in the egg business and putting up with various loose women brought home to be small-comfort mothers to the young boy. Generally Morris was left to his own devices or farmed out to homes more conventional than his father could provide, but not without their own eccentricities.

He first became interested in religion when he moved north to Chicago with his father. Will Morris was a railroad ticket agent, and young Wright hung out in the local YMCA, becoming the favorite of the directors for his ability to baffle the local ruffians with his remove and his skill at ping pong. In Chicago he learned he had talents for fiction and public prayer. He prayed at the Sunday Bible meetings and kept his girl enthralled with a "weekly adventure serial" of his "life and great times." In Chicago he also received from his mother's brother a copy of Sinclair Lewis's *Elmer Gantry* and an offer of work on a Texas dirt farm to turn the unplowed prairie's topsoil.

Morris's uncle, D.V. Osborn, was a man so like his Adventist preacher-father that he hated him. This uncle hoped to keep Morris away from the Christianity that had obsessed his mother's side of the family. So far, Morris had only considered Christian service from its most appealing side: "in those areas where I was good at it, counseling the Friendly Indians, divvying up their swag, and talking to them at night with the lights out." Morris eventually worked with this uncle and learned to respect his grit and flinty life. "If the great men I had heard of were gathered together around a stalled tractor on the Texas panhandle, my uncle would prove to be the equal or the superior to most of them. They would listen in silence and admiration as he cursed." As with many who leave Adventism, this uncle spent much of his energy proving he had shaken it. His dusty home was full of books, many of which exposed religious hypocrisy and fakery. He named his mongrel dog "Jesus" because of the way a dead rabbit would spring to life when it saw him.

But Morris's mother, Ethyl Grace Osborn, had another side to her family — a collection of loving and gentle women and husbands and a relic of a grandfather who had slipped away so far as to occasionally spend a night with the animals in the barn or hitch himself to a plow. Morris received a letter from his aunt, saying that all the family loved him and that his grandfather "was willing to pay all expenses if I would attend one of the Seventh-day Adventist colleges. One of these colleges was in the mountains north of San Francisco. On my way to this college, if I decided to attend it I could stop off . . . and visit my mother's people."

So began a tale of as gentle a family as could be wished for. In Boise, Morris "shared a bed with two of the men, one of them [Aunt] Marion's husband, and in the hushed darkness, the fire crackling, he explained that if I did not find the college what I had expected I need not feel bound to stay there. They would understand. In

their interest in me, in their loving remembrance, after all these years, of my mother, they were unlike any people I had ever met. Meeting them provided me with an image of human goodness that I had been lacking, and I sensed that it need not be good for me to be good in itself."

The account of Morris's unexpectedly short stay at Pacific Union College is a model of what many Adventist school students may have observed as they viewed other students, uninitiated in the SDA culture, trying to cope. Morris's account is also a model of fair-mindedness.

He arrived at PUC with Kirby, a new convert and ex-barber. Kirby had been exposed to vegetarian food in a Los Angeles health cafe-

ris, who couldn't understand a school that had a gymnasium but didn't allow for team play, and the students, who joined in a clandestine frenzy of discovering sports, were given a lesson in the dangers of undisciplined competition. The gymnasium combat spread to the dorms; and on a night when the halls were strewn with pillow feathers and a smaller boy was bound and locked in a closet, the sporting group was discovered. Morris, as organizer of the basketball teams, was called the culprit. The dean seemed grateful for the object lesson on the evils of competition. "When boys got excited and played to win they were soon indifferent to the pain they gave others."

As with many who leave Adventism, this uncle spent much of his energy proving he had shaken it.

teria, but "since his own health was good he hadn't required it." Morris found in Kirby and the other students a way of reading the Bible that was new. "What [Kirby] read he took to be fact." The ark, Jonah, and Jesus walking on the water, Kirby accepted as history.

Morris himself had become a staunch supporter of Jesus while at the Chicago Y. Jesus "took on and defeated the forces of evil," but Morris was unschooled in matters of doctrine. Every night after the 9:30 lights were out, boys would gather in Morris's room for discussion. They studied with flashlights, and everyone assumed that Morris, with his new Bible with two ribbon markers to keep his place, would soon be reading the Bible their way. He assumed the same of them. He explained how it took far longer than six days to create the earth; he had seen the fossils in the Chicago museums and he had seen petrified trees where there was nothing but desert. The boys howled with laughter. He had learned lies. "The word of God was written down in the Bible, and I could read it myself."

But, after nights of discussion, Morris began to make converts. It began to worry him. "I didn't know much more than they did. We believed what we had read, but we had read different books." Morris realized that although he was no prophet, Pacific Union College students were very good listeners. They carried what had been said to classes, and Morris soon met the college dean. This friendly and considerate man assured him that what he believed was his business, but that while he attended PUC he should not seek for a flock. Morris obeyed; but a course had been set, and soon only agnostics would risk eating with him in the dining room.

He then discovered an enigma. Wandering about the campus he found the school gymnasium, complete with a mirror-shiny floor, baskets, and three virtually new basketballs. No one had ever mentioned this place. What followed was a comedy of innocence. Both Mor-

Morris and the dean liked each other, but the young man's arrival had brought only disorder to the college. Morris had to be asked to leave. The dean wrote to the Osborns, assuring them that the expulsion was no reflection of bad character. In fact, Morris seemed to be a youth of good faith, but his opinions had created "an intolerable confusion."

"When I was asked to leave the school, I didn't want to. A budding evangelist myself, perhaps I enjoyed making converts . . . I could look forward — if left to my own persuasions — to modifying the nature of Adventist doctrine. The doctrine could also look forward, as I had told the dean, to modifying me." That Morris was open to eventual changes in belief was good news, but not welcome enough to alter the decision that he would make greater strides elsewhere. Morris moved to Texas where his uncle wanted him to see almighty nature as much as his aunts had wanted him to see God.

Morris's creative ties to Adventism did not end there. His writing style, simple and specific, was precise enough to be photographic. And as he was developing this approach to writing, he received in his Seventh-day Adventist grandfather's will, five hundred dollars. Part of this he used to buy a second-hand Rolleiflex camera. With word and expert photographic image, he was able to capture detail and reality. (Morris created five photo-text volumes, and a collection of his photography has been published as well.) He continued to visit his aunts, especially his Aunt Winona who had given up her love for a man to dedicate herself to Jesus. "The appalling facts of this world existed to be forgiven. In her presence I was subject to fevers of faith, to fits of stark belief . . . Like the Grandfather, she saw me as a preacher in search of a flock." At her death Morris wrote, "I always thought she needed me . . . now I find I'm the one who needs her. That's a miserable loss" (*Real Losses, Imaginary Gains*). Morris writes so uncommonly well that Adventist

readers are privileged to find, in his roots, some of the same subsoil as is in their own.

It would be both reductive and silly to recommend Wright Morris just because of his Adventist connections. He is a thoughtful, perceptive, and delightful author. His works show a depth of understanding that represents the best in modern fiction, criticism, and autobiographical writing. He insists that the true fiction writer does not write to say what he previously thought or felt, but to discover, through the process of writing, what it is he has learned and how he has learned it. By writing around his memory he discovers long-forgotten visions. By combining what he knows with what he imagines, he creates the new reality. His latest work, *A Cloak of Light* (1985), is a chronicle of how his works developed and how the imagination, the memory, the knowledge, and the beliefs of an artist work to join in a life lived fully and a craft developed well.

To live by fiction, to discover truth through the imagination and hope of an artist, is an approach to knowledge seldom taken by conservative Christians. They may try to discover truth by reading theology, science, or philosophy. When such works are poorly written, they may oversimplify, and so can be exciting and falsely lucid; but good writing does not swerve from subtlety. It takes on the messy details — in short, the things good novelists are noted for. Morris's best work fills this role. He takes on the themes of place and of changes over time. Adventists, like many Americans, claim a divine role in place and time. Many of us accepted powerful, mythic visions long before we were able to analyze them. And when we attempt to recall our pasts, we often see our country, our churches, and our homes as mythic places, full of wonder that we cannot now, with our analytical ways, conjure up for our present. Unless our pasts were full of dullness or something as unremarkable as years of television, authors like Wright Morris can help us to remember, to get close to the bases of our lives, and to wonder again.

There is an arresting speculation in the first chapter of *Will's Boy*. After Wright Morris's mother died, her family wished to take her infant to raise in their Adventist family. Will Morris would not consent to it. His son was "all he had left of Grace," and "that decision would be crucial to the child who played no part in it. Much of life would be spent in an effort to recover the losses I never knew, realized or felt, the past that shaped yet continued to elude me. Had Grace Osborn lived, my compass would have been set on a different course, and my sails full of more than the winds of fiction. Am I to register that as a child's loss or a man's gain?"

Had his mother lived, or had Morris grown up in her Adventist family, it is unlikely he would have had the disposition or encouragement to create his perceptive fictions. Whatever he might have been, what he became is a masterful writer who can entertain and benefit anyone and show to the Adventist reader a telling view of the church's peculiar tradition and the worth of one Adventist family's unconditional love. □

Where treasure is concluded

One of thirteen consultants from the Walla Walla Valley was former Walla Walla College vice president Donald Lake. Lake was also secretary-treasurer for the Association of Financial Consultants, Inc. (AFCI). According to a story by Michael Lancaster and Sarah Jenkins in the *Walla Walla Union Bulletin*, Nevada deputy attorney general Greg Damm said that AFCI was "used as a tool for finding representatives to solicit investors for Republic Overseas [Bank]." And Damm added that AFCI membership was an absolute requirement for consultancy. Elmas handouts in *Currents*' possession corroborate his contention. Lake himself, according to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (21 June 1985), was responsible for persuading investors to deposit

1985 at the MGM Grand in Reno. There he lambasted the regulatory agencies that were scrutinizing his operation: "The stupid thugs (investigators) don't know their . . . from a hole in the ground." "Don (Smith) and I know where all the money is, where the sources of income are. . . . They (state regulators) wanted to know where all the money went. It went for interest payments."

But that was part of the problem. Investigators showed that earlier investors' "interest" was paid from later investors' deposits — the very practice that causes investigators to label it a Ponzi pyramid scam. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has also charged that "the defendants used funds received from investors . . . to pay commissions to sales agents, and failed to disclose to investors such use of their funds."

The SEC, the FBI, the IRS, and appropriate regulatory agencies from seven states are attempting to sort out the investment tangle.

hundreds of thousands of dollars in the scheme. In the same story, Lake is quoted as saying that half the depositors were Adventists.

Another Adventist consultant (also vice president of AFCI), Mountain View-area businessman Gordon DeLeon (PUC '51), persuaded some very well-known Adventists to invest more than they could afford to lose.

But who is James Attarian, the mastermind behind what one paper headlined as a "Spiderweb of Fraud"? A printed handout captioned "Who is Elmas Trading Corporation?" contained a brief biography. Attarian was born in Connecticut, moved to California at age ten, and graduated from Pacific Union College (probably in the late 1930s) with majors in theology and education. He took postgraduate courses in electrical engineering and psychology. After a seven-year stint as a teacher, he spent the rest of his preretirement life working for aerospace firms in the San Jose area.

One consultant described Attarian as "seventy years old, 5'2" to 5'4", white-haired, stocky, tan, fit, of Armenian descent, and continually condescending to women. If, at a consultants' meeting, a woman asked a question, the typical Attarian response was 'Yes? Sweetie? Oh, I think we covered that earlier. See me later.'" Attarian quoted Scripture a lot, the consultant said, and always insisted that God was the Chairman of the Board. This seemed to play well with many of the religiously oriented consultants.

A seven-page, single-spaced deposition (23 May 1985) given by Mary C. Short, deputy administrator of the Nevada Department of Commerce, indicates that Attarian has not cooperated with Nevada state investigative authorities.

According to a story filed by Martin Zook in the *Reno Gazette-Journal* (31 May 1985), Attarian spoke to a group of his investors in April

Attarian, Smith, and their associates have also been charged by the SEC with numerous counts of fraud: misleading investors, selling unregistered securities, falsely appropriating funds, and making false claims, including the false guarantee of profit.

In addition, the SEC, the FBI, the IRS, and appropriate regulatory agencies from seven states are attempting to sort out the investment tangle.

As things now stand, Richard G. Schaffer has been appointed by the Reno, Nevada, U.S. District Court as Permanent Receiver for the Elmas Trading Corporation and Republic Overseas Bank, Ltd. Mr. Schaffer hopes to recover for investors at least thirty cents on the dollar. He is also suing each of the 450 consultants for the return of any finder's fees they may have earned.

If half the Elmas investors, as is believed, were Adventists; and if they had invested their \$35 million in traditional money market accounts (say averaging 8 percent interest); and if half of them ordinarily paid a tithe of their annual increase, it may be supposed that the Seventh-day Adventist church has lost approximately \$280,000 tithe annually — not to mention offerings.

Many onlookers have wondered how people who believe in the imminent return of Christ can be so mesmerized by the promise of big bucks that they lose their judgment. (Many SDA investors are incensed with the courts for closing down the unlicensed operation.)

One simple rule of thumb for prudent investors is to assume that the greater the interest, the greater the risk.

Another rule of thumb for prudent Christians is to assume that "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." □

Reformer), it did not lose its inspiration, just because it had been placed there by an uninspired editor.

This White Estate qualifier proves, of course, that the issue never really was where the material appeared nor that Ellen White was wearing the hat of an editor or columnist when she placed her writings in the *Health Reformer*. The real difficulty was that the White Estate secretary and the prophet's grandson did not believe some of what she had written, and preferred the testimony of science and their senses to the testimonies of Ellen G. White.

It is interesting to see where some of the uninspired columnist's material later appeared. An example from the *Desire of Ages*:

Health Reformer, volume 12
no. 8, 1877, p. 235

Jesus knows the burdens of every mother's heart That Saviour, who, when upon earth, had a mother that struggled with poverty and privation ... sympathizes with every Christian mother in her labors That Saviour who went a long journey for the purpose of relieving the anxious heart of a Canaanite woman ... will do much for the afflicted mother of to-day

He who gave back to the widow her only son, as he was being carried to the burial, is touched to-day by the woe of the bereaved mother.

The first article from the *Health Reformer* resembles a sermonette on love and duty to children, while the same material adjusted to *Desire of Ages* comes across as written by "one who was there."

These are not isolated examples. *Child Guidance* and other volumes of the *Testimonies* are smattered with bits and pieces from articles written by James White's commissioned columnist. Even portions of *Patriarchs and Prophets* are from the pen of uninspiration:

Good Health, volume 15, no. 3
1880, pp. 197, 198

But though separated from him, he is not forgotten. He is the subject of her prayers, and every year she makes him a little coat; and when she comes with her husband to the yearly sacrifice, she presents it to him as a token of her love. With every stitch of that coat she had breathed a prayer that her son might be pure, noble, and true. And she had the privilege of seeing him grow up in youth in favor with God and man, . . .

No matter how sincere the 1982 Prophetic Guidance Workshop attendees' resolve to inform church members of some of the problems of Ellen White and her past, the contrast between Ellen the uninspired editor and Ellen the inspired prophet has not reached the laity. The workshop is on tape, but few individuals know about the tapes or the problems they address. Even Arthur White argued that it would be unwise to repeat the failure of the 1919 Bible Conference participants to share the record of their eye-opening deliberations.

As of December 1983 the White Estate secretary was maintaining his belief "that the *Health Reformer* articles were basically written by a columnist Ellen White. I do not believe that she had on her mantle of prophet when she was preparing these materials month by month for the *Health Reformer*."¹⁵

Three years have passed since the workshop, and still no church-sponsored periodical has reported these interesting developments to the membership. What harm would come to the church if its members were told that Ellen White was not always wearing the prophetic mantle when she wrote? Myth should now give way to fact.

Desires of Ages
p. 512

Jesus knows the burden of every mother's heart. He who had a mother that struggled with poverty and privation sympathizes with every mother in her labors. He who made a long journey in order to relieve the anxious heart of a Canaanite woman will do as much for the mothers of today. He who gave back to the widow of Nain her only son, and who in His agony upon the cross remembered His own mother, is touched today by the mother's sorrow. In every grief and every need He will give comfort and help.

Patriarchs and Prophets
p. 572

When separated from her child, the faithful mother's solicitude did not cease. Every day he was the subject of her prayers. Every year she made, with her own hands, a robe of service for him; and as she went up with her husband to worship at Shiloh, she gave the child this reminder of her love. Every fiber of the little garment had been woven with a prayer that he might be pure, noble, and true . . . that he might honor God and bless his fellow men.

1. C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdsman Publishing Co., 1970).
2. Jonathan Butler, "The World of E.G. White and the End of the World," *Spectrum* 10, no. 2:2.
3. Donald Casebolt, "Ellen White, the Waldenses, and Historical Interpretation," *Spectrum* 11, no. 3:37.
4. Donald R. McAdams, "Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: The Evidence from an Unpublished Manuscript on John Huss," Berrien Springs, Michigan, March 25, 1974.
5. Walter Rea, *The White Lie* (Turlock, California: M & R Publications, 1982).
6. Prophetic Guidance Workshop, held April 1982. This meeting was recorded and is available on seventeen tapes from The White Estate in Washington, D.C.
7. *Ibid.*, tape no. 10, side A, Robert Olson.
8. Mrs. White's Department, *Health Reformer* 6 (October 1871), no. 4: 121.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.
10. *Ibid.*, 6 (November 1871), 5:156.
11. Prophetic Guidance Workshop, tape no. 10, side A.
12. Ellen G. White Manuscript release #761.
13. Ellen G. White, *Health Reformer* 3 (August 1868), no. 2:21-23 (cf. *Ellen G. White Review and Herald Articles* 31 [April 14, 1868], no. 18); *Health Reformer* 3 (September 1868), no. 3:41, 42 (cf. *Ellen G. White Review and Herald Articles* 31 [April 14, 1868], no. 18); *Health Reformer* 6 (July 1871), no. 1:24, 25 (cf. *Ellen G. White Review and Herald Articles* 38 [July 1871], no. 6:108); *Health Reformer* 6 (October 1871), no. 4: 154, 155 (cf. *Ellen G. White Review and Herald Articles* 38 [October 1871], no. 20:110, 111); *Health Reformer* 7 (January 1872), no. 1:64, and (March 1872), no. 3:92, 93 (cf. *Ellen G. White Review and Herald Articles* 39 [January 1872], no. 3:113, 114).
14. Foreword, *Ellen G. White Present Truth and Review and Herald Articles* 1:3.
15. Robert Olson letter, December 30, 1983.

Betrayal Response concluded

None of us could enjoy the lives we now lead were it not for the parade of courageous, self-sacrificing women who have widened and smoothed the path before us. So as I share these words of thanks from across the country, I dedicate them to all who have and are still working to make our world better.

A woman from California:

You have my deep appreciation for your contributions to alleviate the problem [of sex discrimination in denominational employment]. Your sacrifice means a great deal to me. Since I have benefited from many valiant women's courage, I take this opportunity once more to thank a courageous lady!

A man from Idaho:

Thanks for writing *Betrayal*. Thanks for paying the high price of defending what is true and right.

A woman from Michigan:

Your contributions to the SDA denomination in forcing honesty and fairness in one area were worth more than long years of committed service in the editorial department. Thanks for seeing the case through.

A student:

I just determinately wrote my name inside *Betrayal*. Thank you for the strength and strange sense of belonging that it has given me. I'm in my last year of medical school, and so every day am faced with a system I still love/hate. Experiences like your book help me keep in view the [importance of] intellectual honesty.

A teacher from California:

Thank you for taking your stand for the right, and being willing to go through this ordeal in order to help all the women working for the denomination.

A man from Oregon:

What an incredible book *Betrayal* is! I marvel at your persistence and at your ability to withstand the incredible pressures which were brought against you. You have won my special award. It's called the SDA award and stands for Survivors of Denominational Action.

Betrayal is a deeply personal book . . . but it is also a universal story. It is the story of each person who refuses to be abused. And I hope it is also a promise — a promise that things can change and improve. And they will, with a little help from us and our friends.

The struggle is never easy; but the liberating, invigorating, growth-inducing results can be achieved in no other way.

"Never accept what can be gained by giving in," Dag Hammarskjöld once wrote. "You will be living off stolen goods, and your muscles will atrophy." □

scribe the government persecution over the last forty years; instead, it presented this period as the best of times for Adventists in Romania. In Cimpoeru's view, the purpose of Popa and his delegation was to make propaganda for the Romanian government, to establish Popa as the titular leader of Romanian congregations in the West, and to explore opportunities to infiltrate these congregations, possibly with former pastors from Romania who had "retired" and been allowed to emigrate. Cimpoeru believed that General Conference nominating committees should be very reticent to promote leaders from Communist countries to divisional or General Conference responsibility, because such people could provide information channels for Communist governments and skew decision-making to favor Communist nations.

Cimpoeru scorned the idea, often expressed by Western Adventists, that the Adventist church in the West should not publicize Communist persecutions of Adventist believers because such activities would make trouble for the church in Communist countries. This idea was "totally false." He maintained that such pressure gets people out of jail and facilitates emigration, because Communist countries need good relations with Western countries to obtain loans and other trade concessions. He asked, "How can it make trouble to say that people are in prison for Sabbath? If the government doesn't want a bad image, it won't do such things; and if it doesn't do them, no one will talk about them." Cimpoeru also believed that Western Adventists need to become much better informed about the nature of Marxism-Leninism and the threat it poses to Christianity.

Cimpoeru also attacked the idea that Adventists are better off under Communist governments than they are under the official state churches that often preceded them. Although he could not say which regime was worse, he declared, "To say that domination by the state church was bad and the present times are good is a lie." He pointed out that every regime has its own problems. The state churches, including the Romanian Orthodox church, often made matters difficult for the small Protestant minority; but people were free to talk about God, the idea of God was not in danger, and the state was committed to strengthening at least one version of Christianity. Now all religious believers were persecuted, and the Communist regimes were committed to rooting out the very idea of God.

Cimpoeru's remarks were well received. Although he was scheduled to speak for a short time, his comments and answers to questions went on for almost an hour.

Without any doubt, the AAF lunches were among the most lively and informative events at the 1985 Session; and they drew attention to several important concerns that the Session itself studiously ignored. The AAF in general and Roy Branson and his wife, Viveca Black, in particular deserve credit for overcoming great difficulties in presenting these programs. □

the part of some evangelist. But serious Adventist scholars, while willing to support church doctrines and perspectives by refraining from criticizing them in public and even by half-heartedly signing compromise statements, by and large find it impossible to supply indiscriminately all the propagandistic affirmations called for. The result is, inevitably, a perpetually strained relationship with administrators. In spite of attempts at closer cooperation, the developments over the last five years seem to have brought both parties to a deeper appreciation for the yawning gulf that separates them. Neal Wilson's 1984 Fall Council attack on the Association of Adventist Forums for the organization's commitment to the canon of scholarly methodology appears to be a clear-cut warning to all Adventist scholars that pressure will be brought to bear on them if they do not abandon their dedication to objectivity and cease their apologetic stonewalling.

Adventism, in a sense, was born in a barn; and the movement that emerged from it, on its own view, has never quite lost the barnyard odor. Adventism has always suffered from a collective inferiority complex. In the period before the emergence of recognized Adventist scholarship, it was hidden behind an arrogant rejection of virtually all scholarship as demon-inspired pseudo-science. But no feeling of inferiority is assuaged by putting down those you measure yourself by, and eventually the church began to compete in the academic field by producing and hiring scholars. In the ensuing fifty years or so, Adventist scholars have contributed little to the advancement of Adventist doctrine; but their very presence has had a tremendous psychological impact on the church. And whether these scholars privately have had full faith in the message or not, they have been perceived to have, thereby contributing in no small degree to the confidence in which Seventh-day Adventists held their doctrine — until recently. But now that the ideological storms threaten to blow the scholars' cover, church leaders find themselves in a terrible bind. They greatly sense their need of the prestige generated by indigenous scholarship and would not even contemplate doing away with accreditation and its attendant benefits. But the price they have to pay is a constant fear that the scholars are just so many cuckoo's eggs in the Seventh-day Adventist nest, bursting with destructive life, ready to crawl out at the opportune moment and instigate, to mix metaphors, a doctrinal St. Valentine's Day massacre.

The scholars also face a dilemma. They are Adventists, and with relatively few exceptions they want to remain Adventists in church employ. But to preserve this precarious state of affairs they have to live with Big Brother peering over their shoulders, breathing heavily into their ears, and every now and then letting them feel the tug of the creedal leash.

On both sides of the great divide people are counting the cost of compromise. Whether the figures will sum, to use a journalistic platitude, remains to be seen. □

Dear Doctor Babb:

Doug Hackleman was kind enough to send me a copy of your letter regarding my paper, "The Significance of Ellen White's Head Injury." I appreciated your remarks about my paper — particularly regarding the complexity of Ellen's symptomatology — and your comparison of this with the experiences of some visionaries and geniuses; for example Dostoevsky.

I have been greatly interested for many years in the life and writings of Fyodor Dostoevsky. As you well know, it is especially in his book, *The Idiot*, that so much of his own symptomatology is evident. Many authors have labored with Dostoevsky's complex life and illness, especially Gastaut, as you know. In his latest paper on Dostoevsky, Gastaut puts Van Gogh, Flaubert, and Dostoevsky in one group — all suffering from limbic epilepsy (involving the temporal lobe), with a generalization at the end (Henri Gastaut, "New Comments on the Epilepsy of Fyodor Dostoevsky," *Epilepsia* 25(4):408-11, 1984).

The religious influence of Dostoevsky on Karl Barth, for instance, was pointed out by Erich Bryner, "Die Bedeutung Dostojewskis für die dialektischen Theologie," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 38:147-167, 1982.

Thanks again for taking the time to critique my paper on Ellen White. I am sure that there will be considerable discussion after it is published.

Sincerely,

Molleurus Couperus, M.D.

Dear Editor:

Fernand Fisel expresses puzzlement and wonder (*Currents*, June 1985) over my denial that O. R. L. Crosier taught the shut-door doctrine in his *Day Star Extra* article. My motivation is historical accuracy and is, as far as I know, devoid of any apologetic zeal. I had no intention of denying that Ellen White taught a form of the shut-door view. I was unaware that I had in any way endorsed Crosier's curious exegesis of Hebrews. Perhaps the problem is that *Currents* is not yet a vehicle for objective, nonhostile research. I still maintain my stubborn opinion that Crosier's *Day Star Extra* article does not teach the shut-door view. Let me respond to Fisel's case for the contrary.

1. To argue that the *Day Star Extra* of 1846 taught the shut-door position because it overlooked a detail recorded in 1923 is historically dubious in the extreme.

2. Fisel correctly notes that Crosier identified the "mystery of God" with the gospel, about which Crosier says: "the mystery is finished, not in a *point*, but in a *period*, and while

the mystery is finishing, the 7th angel is beginning to sound"; "and the Gos. Dis. reaches to the resurrection" (p. 44, col. 1). The gospel does not therefore finish in a point, ie. A. D. 1844.

3. Fisel argues that Crosier taught that "the Gospel Dispensation may continue until the Advent, but the 'mystery of God' is finished" [ie. in A. D. 1844] (*Currents*, June, p. 38). However, Crosier did not make any such distinction between the Gospel Dispensation and the 'mystery of God.' For him they were the same thing. "These texts [Eph. 6:19; Col. 1:27; Eph. 2:4-6] show," according to Crosier, "that the mystery of God or Christ is the Gos. Dis." (p. 44, col. 1). Thus the gospel = the mystery of God = the Gospel Dispensation; and in Crosier's scheme it continues to the resurrection.

4. Crosier does not teach the shut-door view when he says that the Day of Atonement, which he began antitypically in A. D. 1844, was not an atonement for the forgiveness of sins. To prove that Crosier taught the shut-door position in the *Extra*, one must demonstrate that Crosier terminated the "Daily" — the atonement for forgiveness, the Gospel Dispensation — in A. D. 1844. But this is the very point that his article is at pains to deny.

5. It is interesting to note, too, that Fisel draws his evidence for the presence of the shut-door doctrine in the *Extra* from a section of the article that the Sabbatarian Adventists did not include in their republication of the article. If they were attracted to the *Extra* because it supported their shut-door views, then the omission is inexplicable. Unless they like me could not see what Fisel can see.

It may well be that the trauma of the disappointment left Crosier personally unconcerned to preach forgiveness to the world. However, his *Day Star Extra* statement provides no theological defense for his practice.

With every good wish,

Sincerely,

Dr. Norman H. Young

Dear Doug,

In recent issues of *Currents* I have read with interest the scholarly exchange of opinions relative to whether or not the doctrine of the shut door is to be found in O.R.L. Crosier's foundational (for Seventh-day Adventists) treatise on the sanctuary, titled "The Law of Moses," as it appeared in the 7 February 1846 issue of *The Day-Star Extra*.

It seems to me that the scholars (Norman Young, Wes Ringer, Fernand Fisel) are examining the wrong document. Rather than debating, in 1985, what we might think the vision-endorsed article contained relative to the shut-door theory, it would be more fruitful, in my opinion, to ask the question: *Did Ellen White at that time believe that Crosier's article*

advocated the shut door? To find the answer to this query one needs only to read in its entirety Ellen White's open letter to Eli Curtis (in which she endorses Crosier's article), as it was published in *A Word to the Little Flock* (May 1847), pp. 11 and 12.

Her letter to Curtis was a clear response to his open communication to her (which had been published three months earlier). By stating at the outset that she did "fully agree with you [Curtis] on some points, but on others we widely differ," the thesis was laid down. In the first half of the letter it was wisely decided to elaborate on the points upon which they were in agreement. The last half is devoted to their two points of disagreement, both of which have to do with the validity of the shut-door doctrine. At that time, Curtis, along with the vast majority of Adventists, had over two years earlier abandoned any belief that the door of probation was shut against anyone in October 1844. Not so with Ellen White and associates.

On the first point of disagreement she writes to Curtis:

You think, that those who worship before the saints' feet (Rev 3:9), will at last be saved. Here I must differ with you; for God shew me that this class were professed Adventists, who had fallen away, and . . . they will know that they are forever lost; and overwhelmed with anguish of spirit, they will bow at the saint's feet.

Here she had in mind her very first vision (December 1844), which portrayed the Advent people traveling to the Holy City along "a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world." Since the path carried pre-October 1844, second advent believers *only* ("professed Adventists"), it was from this class of people that some "fell off the path down into the dark and wicked world below"; and "it was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected." . . . "Then it was that the synagogue of Satan [the organized, 'nominal' churches] knew that God had loved us who could wash one another's feet, and salute the holy brethren with a holy kiss, and they worshipped at our feet" (*A Word to the Little Flock*, pp. 14-15).

On their second point of disagreement over the shut door, she says:

You also think, that Michael stood up, and the time of trouble commenced, in the spring of 1844.

The Lord has shown me in vision that Jesus rose up, and shut the door, and entered the Holy of Holies, at the seventh month, 1844; but Michael's standing up (Dan 12:1) to deliver his people, is in the future.

This, will not take place, until Jesus has finished his priestly office in the Heavenly Sanctuary, and lays off his priestly attire, and puts on his most kingly robes, and crown, to ride forth on the cloudy chariot, to "thresh the

heathen in anger," and deliver his people.

Then Jesus will have the sharp sickle in his hand (Rev 14:14), and then the saints will cry day and night to Jesus on the cloud, to thrust in his sharp sickle and reap.

This, will be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer 30:5-8), out of which, the saints will be delivered by the voice of God.

Here, on the second point of disagreement over the shut door, Mrs. White used as her authority a synthesis of her first three shut-door visions, which had been published in *The Day-Star* prior to James White and H.S. Gurney publishing them on a broadside, titled "*To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad*," and dated 6 April 1846. The third and last vision on the broadside, which was given in October 1845 at Carver, Massachusetts, ends with the words, "the synagogue of Satan worshipped at the saints' feet."

Now, all that remains of Ellen White's open letter to Eli Curtis is the concluding statement, summing up the foregoing and adding the clinching argument in support of the validity of the shut-door doctrine. This is set forth in the form of her vision-derived endorsement of Crosier's sanctuary theory:

I believe the Sanctuary, to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days, is the New Jerusalem Temple, of which Christ is a minister. The Lord shew 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. I feel fully authorized by the Lord, to recommend that *Extra*, to every saint.

It is clear that her concluding recommendation of Crosier's article is inseparably connected to her preceding arguments in favor of the shut door and her belief that his foundational treatise advocated the doctrine.

There is more that could be said, i.e., that James White, Otis Nichols (her most consistent benefactor), and Joseph Bates (promoter of her visions and mentor at the time) had all *previously* written and been published, advancing the identical arguments in favor of the shut door. Also, Nichols and Bates had previously written *their* endorsement of Crosier's *Day-Star Extra* article on the sanctuary. Furthermore, the readers of her letters to Curtis (in *A Word to the Little Flock*) were no doubt familiar with the widely distributed *Day-Star Extra* article, as well as her first three shut-door visions which had been previously published in two separate publications.

In conclusion, there can be no question but that her close associates and her readers understood that by endorsing (by vision) Crosier's view of the sanctuary, she was advocating the shut-door doctrine.

Sincerely,

J.B. Goodner

Dear Editor,

Readers of *Adventist Currents* may be interested in a statement recently made by General Conference president Neal C. Wilson. In a question-and-answer session at Bakersfield, California, Elder Wilson had the following exchange, as reported in the *Pacific Union Recorder* (February 17, 1985, p. 4):

Q.: Do we still believe the way we used to believe about the beast and its image? What is the view today?

WILSON: Our position is not changed. But our work is not to denounce the Roman Catholic Church. We speak the truth and let the truth do the cutting. We have not consigned anything to the "trash heap," as one publication has charged. I regret that statements get into print that do not give an accurate picture.

Elder Wilson did not identify the "one publication," but it may have been *Currents*. In its February 1984 issue (p. 6), *Currents* referred to an "aversion to Catholicism that church leaders, through affidavit in the Merikay Silver case, swore had 'now been consigned to the historical trash heap as far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned.'" Was this report in *Currents* inaccurate?

In their "Reply Brief for Defendants in Support of Their Motion for Summary Judgment," filed on March 3, 1975, in one of three cases brought by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) against Pacific Press Publishing Association (Federal District Court for the Northern District of California, case CV-74-2025 CBR), attorneys for Pacific Press and the General Conference (who included Boardman Noland, the Adventist general counsel for the General Conference at the time) claimed (p. 4, note 2, lines 24-29):

Although it is true that there was a period in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when the denomination took a distinctly anti-Roman Catholic viewpoint, and the term "hierarchy" was used in a pejorative sense to refer to the papal form of church governance, that attitude on the Church's part was nothing more than a manifestation of widespread anti-papery among conservative protestant [sic] denominations in the early part of this century and the latter part of the last, and which has now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned.

The same brief also claimed (p. 30) that "the Seventh-day Adventist Church had an aversion to Roman Catholicism" only for "a period in its history." It is not now, however, "good Seventh-day Adventism to express . . . an aversion to Roman Catholicism as such."

With such statements (never officially disavowed) having been made as the official public teaching of Seventh-day Adventism by the church's Adventist and non-Adventist counsel, it is easy to see how the Bakersfield questioner might have thought that traditional

Adventist teachings about "the beast and his image" might have been altered.

The difficulty lies in two areas: the unscrupulousness of the General Conference and its attorneys in the Pacific Press cases, and the difficulty the Adventist church now has with Catholicism.

In the Press cases, attorneys for the Press and the General Conference repeatedly misrepresented the nature of Adventist church structure and teachings for tactical benefit. The statements about Roman Catholics were made because these attorneys are using the idea that Adventist church structure is legally identical with Catholic structure, which made it seem contradictory for Adventism to abominate Catholicism. In addition, the judge to whom this brief was addressed was a high-church Episcopalian; and church attorneys thought that denying dogmatic Adventist anti-Catholicism would make the judge more favorable to their views. That traditional Adventism is necessarily anti-Catholic did not stand in their way; after all, it was unlikely that the judge would find out they were fibbing.

Church leaders, especially Elder Wilson, are responsible for these positions and the conduct of their attorneys, despite their discreditable efforts to weasel out of this responsibility. For one thing, they were legally bound by the statements. For another, an attorney is not self-hiring and self-governing; an attorney who conducts a case in a way of which the client disapproves can and should be replaced. It was and is the duty of church leaders to insure that public statements made in the church's name are accurate. They were not elected to misrepresent the church or to permit lies to be told in its name -- not even for seeming tactical gains.

Finally, the same brief just quoted tried to tie Merikay Silver and Lorna Tobler closely to assertedly heretical statements made by their attorney, with a view to using such ideas against them in church disciplinary procedures. The statement about this latter point made by Ron Walden (*Spectrum* 9 [March 1978], p. 22, n. 7) was correct, although it overestimated the honor of church leaders: "I am sure the Adventist leadership will stand by the ideas in their legal documents, even if they do regret some of the phrasing. After all, they have insisted on the same from Lorna Tobler and Merikay Silver." Walden then made in detail the point just stated.

The greater problem is the way Adventism relates to Catholicism now. Elder Wilson is the Adventist official with the greatest single responsibility for the Press cases, in which doctrinal anti-Catholicism was denied. He is also one of the key figures in the campaign to make the writings of Ellen G. White "authoritative" for Adventists. Now hatred for Catholicism (as distinguished from hatred for individual Catholics) is a major part of Ellen White's apocalyptic and her theology of history. Detestation of the Roman Catholic system pervaded her writing

from the beginning (*Early Writings*, p. 214) through the middle (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 451) to the end (*Great Controversy*, pp. 382, 588). Her apocalyptic, in turn, is a major part of Adventism's historical, doctrinal, and behavioral foundation.

Yet anti-Catholicism among American Adventists is definitely waning. As Jonathan Butler suggested ("The World of E. G. White and the End of the World," *Spectrum* 10 February 1979), pp. 2-13), Ellen White's apocalyptic seems disconnected from present-day realities, which inevitably loosens its hold on Adventists' minds. Many Adventists have also found it socially uncomfortable to spout anti-Catholic views. For these and other reasons, Adventists are not *in practice* as opposed to Catholicism as they once were. Thanks to Elder Wilson and his assistants, however, they are committed *in theory* to Ellen White's prevalently anti-Catholic worldview.

The central tragedy of present Adventism is that so many Adventists are (or would like to be) better than Adventism's formal precepts allow; for example, Adventists do not wish to be or be perceived as rabidly anti-Catholic. Elder Wilson himself is caught in this trap. When he was asked about the discrepancy between the legal statements cited above and Ellen White's anti-Catholic views, he responded: "We do not believe that the work of Seventh-day Adventists is to fight Roman Catholics or to denounce Roman Catholicism, per se, as being the tool of the devil." The work of Adventists, Elder Wilson claimed, was to "give a loving witness," to "preach a positive Gospel based in Jesus Christ and His saving power." And he denounced "those who have taken great delight in using prophecy to really lash out and to club the Roman Catholic Church and other church bodies" as people who brought "reproach on the name of our Lord." (For his full comment, see "Neal Wilson Talks About the Lawsuits," *Spectrum* 9 [March 1978], p. 35.) Elder Wilson no doubt meant these statements; but they are irreconcilable with the pervasive, essential, inescapable anti-Catholicism in Ellen White's views -- which he and others have made normative for Adventists.

The church's briefs told the truth about the way North American Adventists behave or would like to behave; they lied about the teaching on Catholicism to which *Adventism*, as proclaimed and enforced by Elder Wilson and other church leaders, is committed. This state of affairs shows the terrible problems into which making Ellen White "authoritative" necessarily leads. For those difficulties *Currents*, to say the least, is not responsible; nor did *Currents* misrepresent the church's statements in the Press case. Elder Wilson gave *Currents* a very bum rap.

Sincerely,

George Colvin

The Cost of Scholarship

ALTERNATING CURRENTS

by Aage Rendalen

The persistent silence of Adventist theologians during the last five years seems on first consideration rather puzzling. One would have thought that they, being both Adventists and trained theologians, would have been ideal guides for Adventists in these days of doctrinal and organizational turmoil. Instead they have, with very few exceptions, nearly disappeared from sight; and so little have they been missed that few seem to have even noticed their absence. To top it off, with apparently great approval from high and low in the church, a new breed of highly motivated lay theologians, most of them with ties to the ministry, have moved in to fill the position as defenders of the Adventist faith, specializing in the very issues on which one would have expected authentic theologians to provide the expertise. Puzzling? Not really. Not when you appreciate what an anomaly a real theologian is within an organization like the Adventist church.

Reasons for the silence of the Adventist theologians are several, but they may conveniently be listed under two headings: professional integrity and career. Adventist theologians know that they cannot rake the Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal chestnuts out of the fire and still remain true to their profession. They also know that if they were to give these sensitive issues a professional handling, their heads would invariably roll. It is not a case of incompetence or simple lock-jaw.

Of all denominational employees, none are more dispensable than the theologians. If it were not for the prestige attached to actually having theologians and fully accredited ministerial training programs, the denomination would have little or no use for them at all. After all, you do not need a theologian to confirm the correctness of doctrines and perspectives that God himself has affirmed through Ellen White. Fifty years after the 1919 Bible Conference, its stenographic transcripts relating to Ellen White's inspiration were published by *Spectrum* (May 1979). Some have attempted to win acceptance for the view there expressed by then-General Conference president A. G. Daniells that Ellen White's writings should not be considered an inspired Bible commentary. Although taken for granted by most serious Adventist theologians, this view has not met with much acceptance. It still seems to be totally inadmissible for an Adventist theologian to arrive at any other conclusions on doctrinal or exegetical issues than those allegedly provided by God himself through Ellen White. As a result, Adventist theologians have always tended to deal with areas that Ellen White either has spoken little or nothing about or areas in which she has

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expressed herself ambiguously or inconsistently. Open-ended theological research is not a possibility for an *Adventist* theologian. He is, in many ways, in the same position as a medical researcher working for the tobacco industry. Whether he likes it or not, he is a hired gun. His job is to enhance the credibility of his paymasters by substantiating their conclusions and warding off attacks from colleagues on the outside. Viewed from this perspective, the silence of the Adventist theologians is rather commendable.

Ever since formally trained theologians appeared on the Adventist scene some fifty years ago, they have had to deal with the problem of false expectations on the part of church members and church leaders. Adventists, by and large, have been so absolutely convinced about the correctness of their theological positions that they have taken for granted, and many still do, that Adventist theologians, who knew the Message even better than they did, shared their deeply held convictions. Adventists zealous for their faith have often expected the theologians to be their *alter ego*, a mirror image of the true-blue Adventist, only with greatly superior powers. In conflict situations they have been expected to be on hand to sally forth like a David with a sling full of lethal Adventist arguments to lobotomize every troublesome intellectual Goliath.

What people fail to realize is that the training which qualified them to the title of theologian disqualified them from fulfilling these expectations. Adventists tend to suffer from the illusion that higher theological training will more than

them are congenial. To be able to live with this state of affairs, however much one might personally dislike it, is an important part of scholarly maturity. This academic virtue, however, is little appreciated within the Adventist church; and a lot of pain and heartache awaits the one who naively underestimates the suspicion and outright hostility with which all serious academic endeavors are likely to be met, especially if they touch on sensitive areas of church doctrine.

The Seventh-day Adventist church could have saved itself and its theologians much heartache if it had done away with accreditation and higher education, and instead gone the route of the more credible self-supporting schools. As it is today, to meet the requirements of the accredited Seventh-day Adventist educational system, able individuals are sent to obtain advanced degrees; but when they have obtained them, they are not allowed to affirm any insights that vary from the official creed. In some respects it is comparable to sending a member of the Flat Earth Society to the Copernican Institute of Astronomy without allowing him to alter his perspective on the universe.

The majority of Adventist administrators are concerned with organizational growth and stability, not knowledge. To them "truth" is that which benefits the Adventist church, "heresy" that which harms it. And when benefit is defined according to their particular administrative criteria, it goes without saying that they will not appreciate any scholarly activity that causes trauma and turmoil. What the administrators want is not scholarly reservation, but a ringing and triumphant affirmation of faith in the established truths of the church. Says John

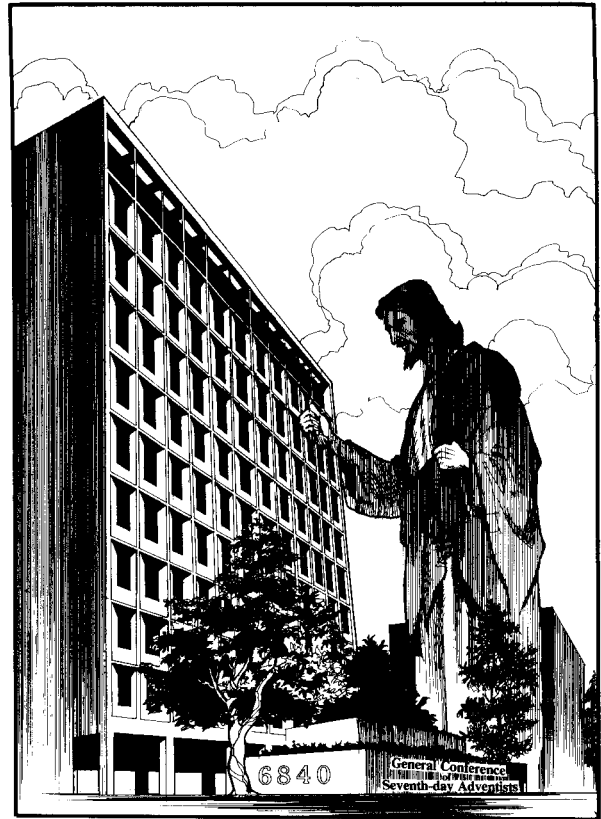
In many ways, [Adventist theologians are] in the same position as a medical researcher working for the tobacco industry.

Kenneth Galbraith:

A supreme certainty in the individual's own belief and assertion is of prime importance for winning belief and submission in others, and this personal trait is not necessarily related to intelligence. It can, indeed, be the reverse . . . Power accrues not to the individual who knows; it goes to one who, often out of obtuseness, believes that he knows and who can persuade others to that belief (The Anatomy of Power [London: Corgi Books, 1985], pp. 53-54).

Over the last decade church leaders have repeatedly appealed to the Adventist academic community to "give the trumpet a certain sound," pulpitering stories about people whose decision for Adventism was made on the basis of a resounding assertion of Adventist claims on

(concluded on page 40)



adventist currents
