

COMMENTARY

"CONTEMPORARY" ADVENTISM

EDITORIAL

The fallout from the confrontation at Indianapolis between the dissidents and the church hierarchy over private publications of the Writings of Ellen G. White, or parts of them, continues. In the September issue of WWN (XXIII-9(90)), we called attention to the comments of a headline hunting dissident and the off-the-cuff outburst of the Communications Director of the General Conference, both of whom spoke without knowledge of the tract in question - "United States in Prophecy." In the article - "'Quiet Diplomacy'" - we quoted from the Arkansas Catholic that the Church requested the Vatican to send "an official observer to the conference." (The article as it appeared in the official organ of the Diocese of Little Rock is reproduced on p. 6 of this issue of Commentary.) The 1990 GC Bulletin had noted in the introduction of T. J. Murphy to the delegates that he was present representing "the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity." (#7, p. 8)

Now another article has appeared in the same Diocesan paper (Sept. 9, 1990). I have the article before me as I write through the courtesy of the same brother who supplied the previous one. This one is captioned - "Anti-Catholic books distributed at Little Rock intersection." However, this was "a 662-page reprint of The Great Controversy, a book originally published in 1888 by Seventh-day Adventist 'founder and prophet' Ellen G. White," according to the article. The book is renamed, America in Prophecy, and published in Jemison, Alabama, by Inspiration Books East. The article refers to Charles Wheeling as "Charles Wheeler" and evidently the writer tried to contact him for comment, but indicated, he "could not be located."

Contact was made with Elder Kenneth Wood of the E. G. White Estate. He, too, affirmed that he had tried repeatedly to communicate with Wheeling but he "has refused to return correspondence." This is evidently par for the course since I, too, have had a similar experience. One wonders, of what is he afraid? One dealing uprightly in truth should have no fears.

But what is amazing is what the Arkansas Catholic quoted Wood as saying. He used the same language as Ms. Burton, calling "the unauthorized condensations of White's book, 'absolute trash.'" Before further comment on

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It surprises me at times when I reread previously studied material what "trees" I see when before, I had only observed the "forest" as a whole. In 1977, T. E. Unruh discussed the SDA-Evangelical Conferences which he had chaired some 20 years earlier. This report was published in Adventist Heritage, Vol. 4, #2. What caught my eye as I reread this report a few weeks ago was his comment on the answers which had been prepared by the Adventist conferees in response to the questions asked by the late Walter Martin. It stated:

The document by this time [as the formal conferences ended] had grown to some sixty questions and answers, and was beginning to be thought of as having book possibilities - a definitive statement of contemporary Adventist theology, in convenient reference book form. (p. 41, emphasis supplied)

To this end a committee was appointed by the then president of the General Conference, R. R. Figuhr, to be chaired by himself. The committee was composed of the chief officers of the General Conference - A. V. Olson, W. B. Ochs, L. K. Dickson, H. L. Rudy, J. I. Robison, W. R. Beach, and C. L. Torrey - the Editor of the Review & Herald, F. D. Nichol; and the Adventist conferees - T. E. Unruh, R. Allen Anderson, L. E. Froom, and W. E. Read.

The perception which caught my eye, as emphasized above, was that this book was to be considered "a definitive statement of contemporary Adventist theology." In Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, "contemporary" is defined as "coming into being during the same period of time." But the laity of the Church were not told this until 20 years after this "new theology" was created by the Adventist conferees and approved by the officers of the General Conference. When the book was published, the readers were told:

The replies [to Martin's questions] were prepared by a group of recognized leaders, in close counsel with Bible teachers, editors, and administrators. The goal was to set forth our basic beliefs in terminology currently used in theological circles. This was not to be a new statement of faith, but rather an answer to specific questions concerning our faith. It was natural that these answers would come within the framework of the official statement of Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists which appears in the Church Manual. In view of this fact, these answers represent the position of our denomination in the area of church doctrine and prophetic interpretation. ...

No statement of Seventh-day Adventist belief can be considered official unless it is adopted by the General Conference in quadrennial session, when accredited delegates from the whole world field are present. The

statement of Fundamental Beliefs as mentioned above is our only official statement. The answers in this volume are an expansion of doctrinal positions contained in that official statement of Fundamental Beliefs. Hence this volume can be viewed as truly representative of the faith and beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (Questions on Doctrine, pp. 8, 9, emphasis theirs)

The "Statement of Beliefs" referred to in the above quotation is the statement formulated in 1931, and confirmed by the General Conference in session in 1946 with slight "cosmetic" modification. It is interesting to note that Figuhr resisted to the end of his administration any suggestion that the Statement of Beliefs be altered to reflect the "contemporary" theology of the book - Questions on Doctrine. In fact, the 1931 Statement was actually reproduced in the book, prior to any questions, asked by the Evangelicals, being answered. (See pp. 11-18)

A comparison between two statements, and the concepts of the book in two critical areas are of interest. The Statement on Jesus Christ in the 1931 Statement reads:

That Jesus Christ is very God, being of the same nature and essence as the Eternal Father. While retaining His divine nature He took upon Himself the nature of the human family, lived on earth as a man, exemplified in His life as our example the principles of righteousness, attested His relationship to God by many mighty miracles, died for our sins on the cross, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the Father, where He ever lives to make intercession for us. (Emphasis supplied)

The book on the above underscored clause reads:

Although born in the flesh, He was nevertheless God, and was exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam ("the human family"). (Questions on Doctrine, p. 383)

The 1931 Statement does not contain the word, "atonement" in a theological sense, but is found once in designating the 10th day of the 7th month in referring to the services of the earthly sanctuary. That statement reads:

That the true sanctuary, of which the tabernacle on earth was a type, is the temple of God in heaven, of which Paul speaks in Hebrews 8 and onward, and of which the Lord Jesus, as our great high priest, is minister; that the priestly work of our Lord is the antitype of the work of the Jewish priests of the former dispensation; that this heavenly sanctuary is the one to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14, its cleansing being, as in the type, a work of judgment, beginning with the entrance of Christ as the high priest upon the judgment phase of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, foreshadowed in the earthly service of cleansing the sanctuary on the day of atonement. This work of judgment in the heavenly sanctuary began in 1844. Its completion will close human probation.

The book - Questions on Doctrine - teaches - "Adventists do not hold any theory of a dual atonement. 'Christ has redeemed us' 'once for all.'" (p. 390)

The Barnhouse Evaluation

In the same year that the SDA-Evangelical Conferences were concluded, Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, who had hosted one of the conferences in his own home, published in Eternity magazine, of which he was editor, an article asking and answering the question - "Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?" In this article, he reviewed the experience of Hiram Edson on the

morning following the Great Disappointment. Noting that while Edson and another man were walking through a cornfield, Edson was convicted that Christ entered the Most Holy Place to complete His work of priestly ministration rather than coming to cleanse the earth. Of this experience, Barnhouse wrote:

It is to my mind, therefore, nothing more than a human, face-saving idea! It should also be realized that some uninformed Seventh-day Adventists took this idea and carried it to fantastic literalistic extremes. Mr. Martin and I heard the Adventist leaders say, flatly, that they repudiate all such extremes. This they have said in no uncertain terms. Further, they do not believe, as some of their earlier teachers taught, that Jesus' atoning work was not completed on Calvary but instead that He was still carrying on a second ministering work since 1844. This idea is also totally repudiated. They believe that since His ascension Christ has been ministering the benefits of the atonement which He completed on Calvary. (Eternity, Sept., 1956, p. 44)

When Elder M. L. Andreasen read this article, his reaction was dismayed unbelief. In his Letters to the Churches, he reviews his reaction, referring to the article as the Eternity Extra. [If you haven't read these Letters for a long time, it would profit you to reread them once again.] He wrote:

When I first read in the Extra that our leaders had repudiated the doctrine of Christ's atoning work in the sanctuary since 1844, and had substituted for this "the application of the benefits of the sacrificial atonement He made on the cross," I could not believe it, and did not believe it. When I was told that even if I read in "the writings of Ellen G. White, that Christ is making atonement now," I am not to believe it, I wondered, "What are we coming to?" The atonement was made 1800 years ago, our leaders say. Sr. White says the atonement is going on now. Questions on Doctrine says it was made 1800 years ago. The Ministry says the atonement on the cross was final. Whom or what am I to believe? To me, to repudiate Christ's ministry in the second apartment, now, is to repudiate Adventism. That is one of the foundation pillars of Adventism. If we reject the atonement in the sanctuary now, we may as well repudiate all Adventism. ...

At this juncture it occurred to me that perhaps the Eternity men had regretted what they had written and had retracted, or would retract, all they had written. So I wrote to Eternity, asking if they still published the Extra. They answered that they did. The article being copyrighted, I then asked for permission to quote them. I received this answer: "We are glad to give you permission to quote from the article, 'Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?' and would appreciate you giving credit to Eternity when you do this." This letter was dated Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 2, 1958, and signed by the editor.

This was twenty months after the article had first appeared in Eternity. If at any time during those twenty months our leaders had protested, if they had made a demurrer, in honesty the editor would have warned me not to use the material, and not to quote these statements. But the editor did no such thing. He was glad and willing for me to use the material, willing to stand by what the Extra had published, willing for me to quote them. It is fully five years since the discussions began, and three years since the Extra was published. For this long time I have been waiting for our men to deny the charges, and rebuke the evangelicals for publishing such defamation of our entire leadership. But I have heard no protest. (Letter #4, pp. 5-6)

Why no protest? Why could Elder Andreasen obtain no satisfactory answers? Twenty years later, after Andreasen is dead, Unruh tells why the "brethren" did not protest the article in Eternity. He wrote:

In August 1956 (one month prior to publication of the article), Russell Hitt, the managing editor of Eternity, came to Washington to go over with us the long-awaited Barnhouse article repudiating his former position on Adventism. Supporting articles by Martin, to follow in Eternity, were also gone over. We were given permission to quote or otherwise refer to these articles. (Unruh, op. cit., p. 42)

Simply stated, Barnhouse did quote the Adventist leaders correctly. They did sell the Church down the river, and betrayed the sacred trust committed to God's chosen people of earth's last hour. There is a Biblical parallel to this deception of the laity by the hierarchy. The Jewish Church leadership had given over the very Truth of God into the hands of the Romans. God intervened and resurrected the Prince of life. Note the planned deception of those church leaders:

Some of the watch [at Jesus' tomb] came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him while we slept. And if it come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. (Matt. 28:11-15)

From "Contemporary" to "Modern"

The changing picture now takes on another hue and "contemporary" Adventism emerges into "modern" Adventism with a de-emphasis. As noted in the "Introduction" to Questions on Doctrine, the book not only answered questions on theology, but also discussed "prophetic interpretation." (See p. 1, par. 5) In this latter area, the book maintained the old fundamental Adventist teaching regarding the Papacy. It unequivocally declared that papal Rome "trampled and desecrated the provisions of God's sanctuary in heaven, by taking away knowledge of, and dependence upon Christ's "daily," or continual, ministry as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. ... And it has imposed the authority of the visible pope in place of Christ, who guides and directs His church by His own designated vicegerent or representative, the Holy Spirit." (pp. 257, 258)

The little horn of Daniel is clearly identified as a prophetic symbol of the Papacy (p. 334), and the "exceeding great" horn of Daniel 8 is set forth as embracing both pagan and papal Rome. (p. 337) An excellent Scriptural defense is made against the identification of the horn of Daniel 8 as Antiochus Epiphanes. Over all, the prophetic interpretations involving sections of the book of Daniel that are discussed in the book - Questions on Doctrine - reflect sound and fundamental Adventist teaching. But today resulting from the confrontation between Adventist dissidents and spokesmen for the Church at the General Conference session in Indianapolis, a new position has been staked out. Summarizing the statements of the Church's news director, Herbert Ford, The Indianapolis Star reported that "though Adventist officials concede the history of the

denomination has an anti-Catholic bent, they said the modern church is trying to move away from that stance." (July 14, 1990, Sec. B, p. 1) How has this happened? To answer this question is the main thrust of this issue of the Commentary.

There are two streams in our recent history which are meeting today in one great river, and both streams started from the same source - Vatican II Council of the Roman Catholic Church. One could be called the Maxwell Creek and the other dubbed the Beach Creek.

Elder Arthur S. Maxwell, then editor of the Signs, attended Vatican II as a member of the press corps. His reaction upon his return was taped and transcribed from a report he gave at Loma Linda, called "The Outstretched Hand." (Present Truth, 1968, #3) He was impressed by the Pope's opening speech at the final session - "It was a beautiful speech" - so much so that he suggested it could be given at a General Conference session, indicating "it might be better than some we've had." He asked - "Do you know what his subject was?" - and answered, "Love." He then quoted a paragraph and commented:

You know, the whole thing was a picture of the church loving humanity. Now, we've got to adapt our thinking a bit. There was no condemnation here of Protestants, no suggestion of a persecution of anybody, but love, unfeigned love for everybody - the separated brethren and people who don't belong and all people of all faiths and religions. Very, very wonderful change and a very, very significant change. (p. 4)

At the close of the report, Maxwell summarized:

I do feel this very sincerely that we, as a people, must rethink our approach to these dear people. We must rethink our approach to our Roman Catholic friends. How can we reject an outstretched hand and be Christians? How can we say that they belong to antichrist when they reveal so many beautiful Christian attitudes? Does this shock you very much? I hope it does! I just hope that it shocks you, because we need to be shocked into a new, more friendly, more loving attitude towards these dear people. (p. 13)

Then he made a suggestion:

Now, there's one other thing. These things are going to make us think, they really are - this new situation. I think that a lot of our preachers are going to have to throw away a lot of old sermons. You and me - a lot of old sermons. I scrapped a lot of them already. You know what I think is going to happen? We cannot go on preaching about these dear people like we did thirty, forty, fifty years ago. We simply can't do it. The facts are all against us. How can we go and talk about them persecuting, burning the Bible when they're not doing anything of the sort? We've just got to get some new sermons, haven't we? Sure have! (p. 14)

This suggestion, his son has taken seriously. In the book - God Cares, Vol. I, Dr. Mervyn Maxwell, tones down the prophetic implications of the "little horn" of Daniel 7. Prefacing his identification of the "little horn," Maxwell sets forth what he calls four principles," and then summarizes as follows:

With these four principles in mind - (1) that there is more than one antichrist, and we are here trying to identify not "the" antichrist but only the little horn; (2) that in Daniel 7 God purposely presented a one-sided picture of Rome as a terrible beast in order to emphasize His displeasure at persecution; (3) that the New Testament, like the Old, foretold persecution for

the church; and (4) that the New Testament also foretold serious apostasy within the church - we are ready to proceed with the eight identifying marks of the little horn. [These are given with verifying verses from Daniel 7. Then his comments continue.]

Only one entity fits all eight of these identifying marks - the Christian church which arose to religious-political prominence as the Roman Empire declined and which enjoyed a special influence over the minds of men between the sixth and the eighteenth centuries.

To call this Christian church the "Roman Catholic" Church can be misleading if Protestants assume that the Roman Catholic Church of, say, the sixth century was one big denomination among others, as it is today. Actually the Roman Catholic Church was virtually the Christian church in Western Europe for about a thousand years. Because of this early universality, both Protestant and Catholics may regard it as the embodiment of "our" Christian heritage, for better or for worse. (pp. 126-127; emphasis his)

It should be noted that Maxwell, Emeritus Professor of Church History at Andrews University, is moving through various circles of Adventism with his "accommodation philosophy." In 1988 during the 1888 Centennial Celebration, he was on the West Coast speaking at the John W. Osborn Lectureship Series, which was distinctly a "liberal" conclave. Maxwell was a key organizer of the Andrews University celebration which included Elder R. J. Wieland in the program - the only celebration to do so. Then at the pre-General Conference meeting of the Adventist Theological Society - which proclaims itself as the conservative voice in Adventist theology, Maxwell was among the speakers. So that you might understand the contrast between the West Coast meeting and the ATS meeting in Indianapolis, Dr. William G. Johnsson, Editor of the Adventist Review spoke at the West Coast meeting, but did not even attend the ATS meeting. Keep in mind also that it was Mervyn Maxwell who lauded Wieland and Short's compromised revised edition of 1888 Re-Examined in a Book Review appearing in the 1888 Centennial issue of the Ministry. (Feb. 1988, p. 63)

The second stream is much more devious, and the final flow of that branch has not as yet been fully felt. Its "headwaters" are revealed in So Much in Common. Dr. B. B. Beach, who co-authored the book telling of the contacts between Seventh-day Adventists and the World Council of Churches, begins the recital by stating: "Strange as it may seem, these yearly Consultations are an indirect by-product of Vatican II" (p. 98) These Conversations began in an informal manner in 1965 - keep this date in mind - with Beach and the WCC member, presumably, Dr. Lukas Vischer, the other co-author of the book, So Much in Common, each selecting conferees. The Adventist participants were chosen by Beach from the three European Divisions of the Church. The 1965 Conversations started with a broad overview, but focused on the "beliefs and aims of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." (p. 99) The next year, the executive committees of the three Adventist European Divisions authorized and financed the expenses of each of their respective conferees. Each meeting was held part time at the WCC headquarters in Geneva, and the rest of the time at the nearby Seminaire Adventiste at Collonges, just across the border in France.

By 1967 - another key date - progress was sufficiently evident, that in the first Quarter's

issue of Ecumenical Review, the official journal of the WCC, an article on Seventh-day Adventists appeared. This article contained 49 footnotes, 28 of which were from Questions on Doctrine. (See So Much in Common, pp. 57-68) Responding to this article, an Associate Editor of the Review & Herald suggested, that while the Adventist Church could not become an official member of the WCC, they would be willing, if invited, to be a part of the Faith and Order Commission. Within weeks, the Central Committee of the WCC appointed a Seventh-day Adventist theologian to the Commission. The first Adventist appointee was Dr. Earle Hilgert of Andrews University who has been followed by Dr. Raoul Dederen, also from Andrews, who is still serving.

Another result of these Conversations with the WCC has been participation in the meetings of the Secretaries of the World Confessional Families - churches who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Beach who has represented the Church at these meetings became Secretary of the secretaries. It was in this capacity, that he presented "a gold-covered symbol of the Seventh-day Adventist Church" into the hands of Pope Paul VI on May 18, 1977. (Review, August 11, 1977, p. 23) The trip to Rome, and the giving of the medallion was authorized by the executive committee of the Northern Europe-West Africa Division.

Two years prior to this, the first major revelation of the Church's changing attitude toward Catholicism came in a Brief submitted by the Church in the EEOC v. PPPA legal suit in Federal Court in California. A Reply Brief dated March 3, 1975, in a footnote, stated:

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 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. (Emphasis supplied)

Leaving the Church's "modern" position on Catholicism, we return to the "union" with Rome via the WCC. We need to carefully consider the significance of the appointment of an Adventist theologian to the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. The same year - 1967 - that an Adventist was appointed, the Central Committee of the WCC also appointed a Catholic theologian, and instituted a "Joint Working Group" between themselves and the Roman Catholic Church. The WCC, "a fellowship of churches," is striving to realize the goal of visible Church unity. Now note, what arm of the WCC is especially involved:

"To assist the churches towards this goal, the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council provides theological support for the efforts the churches are making towards unity. Indeed the Commission has been charged by the Council members to keep always before them their accepted obligation to work towards manifesting more visibly God's gift of Church unity. So it is that the stated aim of the Commission is 'to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of the visible unity in one faith and

one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe.' (By-Laws)" (BEM, Faith and Order Paper No. 111, pp. vii-viii; emphasis supplied)

At this point a word of caution must be stated. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not a member of the World Council of Churches, but it is in such close working relationship with the WCC that it is difficult to discern that it is not a member. The WCC publication, Directory of Christian Council, closes with a section, "Ecumenical Relationships." This reads in part:

In addition to the relationships with regional and national councils of churches mentioned above, the WCC is in working relationship with many Christian World Communions, including the ... General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, ... (p. 244)

One has only to read the Indianapolis General Conference session Bulletin to note the warm relationship existing between the Church and the WCC. Joan Campbell, director of the US office of the WCC, in addressing the delegates stated:

I bring you the warmest greetings from the World Council of Churches and from the member churches around the world. You are a beautiful group of people, young and old, many colors, many cultures, and yes, many languages. Your church is one of the few in which the mix of people is truly remarkable. When I was at your worship service yesterday, it seemed as though it was my own time of worship, as well as yours. And it said to me that there are many things that we hold in common - that there is, in fact, one Lord, one God and Father of us all. So as fellow Christians, like those Pentecost people in the earliest days, we look at one another and say that we hold all things in common. (Adventist Review, July 10, 1990, p. 6)

The 27 Fundamental Statements

Into this stream enters the beginnings of the 27 Fundamental Statements of Belief which were finally voted at the 1980 GC Session in Dallas, Texas. In a letter to the editors of Spectrum, (Vol. 11, #3, pp. 60-61), Bernard E. Seton, now retired, tells how that in 1965 - the date noted above - he wrote from Berne, Switzerland, to the General Conference expressing his convictions that the 1931 Statement of Beliefs "needed revision both from a theological and literary point of view." The administration of the General Conference still under Figuhr replied that no such need was perceived by them.

In 1965, both Seton and Beach were the Sabbath School secretaries of their respective divisions. It was the year that the informal talks with the WCC began in which the "beliefs" of the Church were a major part of the discussions. While all attempts, so far, have been evaded to obtain the identity of the Adventist conferees at the first informal meeting and the subsequent conversations involving the WCC and the Seventh-day Adventists, the circumstantial evidence suggests that Seton was one of those conferees. The simple comparison which we made at the beginning of this article contrasting the 1931 Statement with the book, Questions on Doctrine in two major areas is enough to envision what the SDA conferees faced in the first meeting when the WCC theologians scrutinized the statement and were shown the book - Questions on Doctrine - from which they finally quoted in writing up the Adventists in their Ecumenical Review.

Now a word about Seton, whose real name is Sparrow, not Seton. Why he changed his name is not known, and he is not related to the Sparrows who have served the Church in South Africa, at least to the knowledge of one member of the family, unless in the distant past. In 1966, Seton became Secretary of the Northern European Division and also carried the Secretariat of Public Relations. In 1969, he was president of the British Union, and Beach had assumed the responsibility of Public Affairs for the Division along with his duties. In 1970, at the General Conference, he was made an Associate Secretary, and found one of his tasks to be Secretary of the Church Manual Committee. During the next five years, he was able to effect revisions in the Church Manual. Being returned to the same office and same responsibility at the 1975 GC Session, he began work toward the revision of the Statement of Beliefs. This was realized at the 1980 session, at which session, Seton retired - his task completed!

Behind the 27 Statements of Belief, there is much that does not meet the eye. The original statement which was voted by the 1979 Annual Council for recommendation to the 1980 session was formulated by the theologians of Andrews University. An ad hoc committee appointed to effect a revision of the 1931 Statement had by mid-1979 completed a limited revision. At this point, Seton suggested that the committee should get input from the theologians at Andrews. The men at Andrews ran with the "ball" producing an entirely new formulation. When this statement voted by the Annual Council hit the field, reaction set in. The Statement, as formulated, contained sprinkling of what could be perceived as Roman Catholic terminology and theology. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were declared to be "sacraments." The ordinance of humility - feet washing - would be considered "a means to seek renewed cleansing." One of the services performed by the church's clergy would be "the ministry of intercession." (Adventist Review, Feb. 21, 1980, pp. 8-10) Instead of letting history take its course, two well-meaning ministers on the periphery of the Adventist Community, with more zeal than knowledge, launched a crusade against the Statement as voted by the 1979 Annual Council. This confused the issue and caused the statement as voted at Dallas to become vague in crucial areas, rather than clear-cut as to the drift the Church was taking.

There was one area that wasn't touched because these zealots had no knowledge of what was involved. Having the documentation, I believed it wise to keep silent so that the results could be clearly recognized. The Constitution of the WCC, Article I "Basis" reads:

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (So Much in Common, p. 40)

The 1980 Statement of Beliefs reads:

- 11 The Church - The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
- 2 - The Trinity - There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons.

Adventists spread anti-Catholic tracts

Indianapolis (CNS) - A Seventh-day Adventist faction from Tennessee mailed an unknown number of anti-Catholic booklets the week of July 8 to homes in Indianapolis, where 2,000 gathered for the denomination's 55th world convention July 6-14.

Shirley Burton, a spokesperson for the denomination, told the Indianapolis Star daily newspaper the tract was "trash." The pamphlet, "United States in Prophecy," calls Catholicism a pagan religion and refers to the pope as a beast.

Some Adventists attending the convention demanded a retraction of Burton's remark and claimed that anti-Catholicism is a crucial part of traditional Adventist doctrine.

John F. Fink, editor of the Criterion, Indianapolis archdiocesan newspaper, "The Seventh-day Adventists have a history of anti-Catholicism, like many other Protestant religions in the U.S. during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The pamphlet calls Catholicism a pagan religion and refers to the pope as a beast.

However, the main body of the Church has moved away from an anti-Catholic position. The new position of co-operation with the Catholic Church was exemplified by the invitation from the Seventh-day Adventists to the Vatican to send an official observer to the conference.

Rev. Thomas J. Murphy, director of the Indianapolis archdiocesan office of ecumenism, acted as the Vatican observer. He addressed the conference July 10.

The tract, distributed by the Adventist Layworkers Affiliate of Tennessee and printed by Coming Events of Portland, TN, also characterized those who celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday as "disobedient to God's Holy Law."

Seventh-day Adventists consider binding the Hebrew Testament prescriptions of Saturday as the Sabbath, as well as Hebrew Testament law on tithing and diet.

Neither the tract's distributor nor its publisher was represented at the conference. Herbert Ford, news director for the denomination, told the Indianapolis Star that Adventists who want to cling to the church's historic anti-Catholic beliefs represent only about 1,000 of the church's 750,000 North American members.

Other Adventists contend those numbers are larger than the church is willing to admit, claiming that hundreds came to Indianapolis to meet in hotel rooms across the city.

Fred Allaback, an independent evangelist from Mount Vernon, OH, said that "Prophecy in the United States" is a condensation of "The Greater Controversy," written by 19th-century Seventh-day Adventist founder and prophet Ellen G. White.

White's book, Allaback said, warned against the evils of the papacy and feared that Catholicism would become the official religion of the U.S.

Ford said that "there is a little fear" among Adventists who live in nations where Catholicism is strong.

"It is the rejection of Bible truth which makes men approach to infidelity. It is a backsliding church that lessens the distance between itself and the Papacy."

Ellen G. White, Signs, February 19, 1894

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Wood's alleged outburst, I will write to him for verification as to whether the Diocesan paper quoted him correctly. I hope that since he was a bit disturbed that Wheeling did not reply to his correspondence, he will not follow Wheeling's example in answering my inquiry.

There is much more at stake for Adventists than merely this exchange with the Catholics. The most recent article in the Arkansas Catholic would indicate that the edition of Great Controversy which Wheeling is printing for distribution is the 1888 edition. The 1888 edition when compared to the 1884 edition has 186 added pages, and 38 omitted pages. Keep in mind there were no visions on the subject given between 1884 and 1888. Also there is a manuscript - Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: The Evidence from an Unpublished Manuscript on John Huss - which has been

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"Contemporary" Adventism - from p. 5, col. 2

These doctrinal formulations had never appeared in any previous statement of beliefs published by the Church in either the Church Manual or Yearbook.

At the 1990 Indianapolis session, the Church took another step and brought the Baptismal Vow into conformity on the doctrine of the Trinity. The prior Baptismal Vow had asked the question - "Do you believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit?" (Church Manual, 1981 edition, p. 61) Now this same question reads - "Do you believe in the one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons?" (Adventist Review, July 17, 1990, p. 15) All other changes in the Vow were merely "cosmetic."

This concept in the 1980 Statement of Beliefs and now the first commitment of the Baptismal Vow goes beyond the Constitution of the WCC to the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. A book used as a text - Early Christian Doctrines - after discussing the problems faced by the apostolic church of integrating Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit into the Jewish concept of "One God" stated:

The Church had to wait for more than three hundred years for a final synthesis, for not until the council of Constantinople (381) was the formula of one God existing in three co-equal Persons formally ratified. (pp. 87-88)

What is the significance of this? In 1888 the WCC celebrated its 40th anniversary. Already in 1982, the Faith and Order Commission's study on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) had focused attention on sacramental questions which prevent visible unity. Now as the WCC begins another decade, the focus is shifting to doctrinal unity. The report reads:

If BEM can be described as a search for a new way to approach sacramental questions that divide churches, so as to promote unity, a second Faith and Order study is seeking to discover whether Christians today can confess their faith together ecumenically.

This study, "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today," will not write a new ecumenical confession of faith. Rather, it asks whether churches today can "witness to, confess, live out and celebrate in common... the same apostolic faith that was expressed in Holy Scriptures and summarized in the creeds of the early church."

For the study, the Faith and Order Commission has chosen the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of A.D. 381 - already officially recognized by many churches - as a summary of the apostolic faith. (One World, #132, p. 15)

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, due to the actions of the 1980 and 1990 General Conference sessions has already completed their confession of the Church Council of A.D. 381, which is to be used for a worldwide confession of faith and unity. We need to keep in mind that it is on the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC that Adventism and Catholicism meet. The Faith and Order Paper #111, BEM, considered particularly noteworthy "the fact that the Commission also includes among its full members theologians of the Roman Catholic and other churches which do not belong to the World Council of Churches itself." (p. ix) This includes the Adventist, and was so listed on the back cover of the published paper.

How shall we relate to all of this?

Paul told the elders of Ephesus -

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves. (Acts 20:29-30)

Ellen G. White wrote on December 4, 1905 -

One thing it is certain is soon to be realized, - the great apostasy, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, and will continue to do so until the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. We are to hold fast the first principles of our denominated faith, and go forward from strength to increased faith. (Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 7, pp. 56-57)

How apropos the words of Paul to Timothy -

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust." (I Tim. 6:20)

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou has heard from me, in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us." (II Tim. 1:13-14)

Editorial - from p. 6

held up because the White Estate will not release certain documents. This document casts much added light on the 1888 edition. Wood might better serve the cause of truth by authorizing the release of the essential documents to allow for its publication. All of this present surge to distribute The Great Controversy, to print condensations of it, and to run advertisements in Time magazine about it, might be better laid to rest until all the facts are in. And if one still has the urge to distribute from a "crate-like box," he had better ask himself which edition he is distributing.

Then there are other equally as important questions which could be asked, - and which we will perhaps address in another editorial, or in the regular monthly feature - "Let's Talk It Over."

"Popery is just what prophecy declared that she would be, the apostasy of the latter times... Shall this power, whose record for a thousand years is written in the blood of the saints, be now acknowledged as a part of the church of Christ?"

The Great Controversy, 1884 edition, p. 388

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