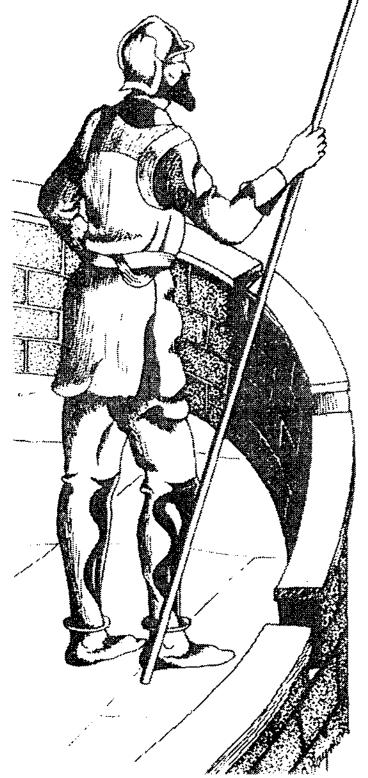
"Watchman, what of the night?"

"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you, the hour and the end!" Eze. 7:6 (Moffau)



THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

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Editor's Preface

The Second Millennium and the Twentieth Century are now past history, and with this year we begin the Third Millennium and the Twenty-first Century. For us at the Adventist Laymen's Foundation, we begin our 34th year of continuous publication of "Watchman, What of the Night?" If someone were to make a check of what we wrote in the first issues beginning with January 1968, through the first decade and compare it with what we have written in some of the issues of the past decade, there is no question but that different perspectives and some altering of concepts could be documented. We hope that this but reflects the fact that "the truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light." It is not that the truth is new, for truth is as eternal as its Author: but our perception of that truth becomes clearer as we let the Spirit of truth guide us. Our problem will ever be, that we misjudge truth, and thinking that we are walking in its increasing light, we are walking instead in the darkness of error.

This very factor is what we see involved in the book, A Search for Identity. The author, Dr. George R. Knight, believes that the doctrinal changes in Adventism over the past fifty years are the result of a progressive understanding of truth. This may be so in some areas of doctrinal understandings; but in other perceptions, it represents apostasy from the truth. How is the issue to be settled? There is only one standard. Jesus prayed, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Interrelated with this search for Identity, is the 1888 Message and its aftermath. A final report of the Primacy of the Gospel Committee once more puts the meaning of 1888 on "the front burner" as well as the issue of apostasy so long avoided by those advocating a restudy of the 1888 Message.

The Search for Identity

Last year the Review & Herald Publishing Association released the second book in the Adventist Heritage Series by Dr. George R. Knight, Professor of Church History at the Theological Seminary on the campus of Andrews University. The objective of this book, A Search for Identity, is to trace "The Development of Seventh-day Adventists Beliefs."

Those who designed the cover with its pictorial selections are to be highly commended. Dominating the front, is a picture of A. T. Jones which reflects the sincerity of his character. This is interesting in the light of the book which Dr. Knight wrote on Jones and which for some reason is not listed in the Heritage series, nor among his other publications. The missing book is, From 1888 to Apostasy, in which Knight sought to denigrate Jones. At the time of its release to coincide with the 100th Anniversary of the 1888 General Conference Session, we critiqued the book in a series of articles captioned, "Knight Descends on Jones." At that time he had an agenda, and twisted historical data to fit the agenda. It appears that in this current publication, there is also an agenda, with "concepts" the basis for manipulation. This we intend to pursue in this series of articles as we critique, A Search for Identity.

The first paragraph of Chapter 1 reads:

Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to agree to the denomination's "27 Fundamental Beliefs." (p. 17)

Is this statement, true? Yes. It would be completely accurate if it had read - "None of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism...." The "27 Fundamentals" refer to the Statement of Beliefs voted at the General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, in 1980. This mind catching assumption is saying several possible things:

- 1) If the 27 Fundamentals constitute truth, the "founders" did not have the truth.
- 2) On the other had if the founders did have the truth, then the 27 Fundamentals contain error.
- 3) The 27 Fundamentals express advanced concepts of truths which the pioneers in their time did not perceive.

It is this third possibility that Dr. Knight wishes to establish. His first chapter's caption is "The Dynamic Nature of 'Present Truth.'" With this concept he is on solid ground. "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18). "The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light." (Review & Herald, March 25, 1890) But there is another possibility in an assumed advancement of the perception of truth. It may not be an advancement in truth, but rather a deviation into error, and thus apostasy from the truth. This possibility needs to be kept in mind as one reads this book. Thus the data presented by Dr. Knight could be, in certain areas, not the development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs, but rather the record of the apostasy from the truth. This has been the hallmark of the last four decades. Thus the "search for identity" can be a double-edged sword cutting both ways.

After writing his startling assumption, Knight gives three specific illustrations contrasting where early Adventists ministers stood in contrast to the concepts stated in the "27 Fundamentals." All three statements from the "Fundamentals," - 2, 4, and 5 - concern the Trinity or Members of the Godhead. Let us first note the contrast between the stated position of the Church from 1872 through 1914, and the Belief as adopted in 1980.

The first and second statements of belief in 1872 read:

There is one God, a personal, spiritual being, the creator of all things, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal, infinite in wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and mercy; unchangeable, and everywhere present by his representative, the Holy Spirit.

There is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom he created all things, and by whom they do consist.

The 1980 statement reads:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation.

There can be no question but the first statement reflected a "Heavenly Trio" concept, but did not express the Nicene Creed as does the 1980 statement. It is this Nicene Creed formulation that the pioneers, cited by Knight, perceived as "unscriptual," "an absurdity,"

and "a fruit of the great apostasy." (p.17) This distinction, involving the two concepts, needs to be kept in mind.

Two facts of significance are involved:

- 1) What some of the early ministers of the Church believed about God was not made a part of the Statement of Beliefs.
- The adoption of the Nicene Creed at Dallas cannot be sustained as a progression in the understanding of truth.

Let us consider the first fact. Uriah Smith, long time editor of the Review & Herald, official organ of the Church, believed that Jesus was a created being. In his first edition of Thoughts on Revelation (1867), he called the pre-existent Christ, "the first created being." Yet in the 1872 Statement of Beliefs, which Knight says Smith wrote (p. 23), he did not interject his belief. Other sources indicate that more than Smith were involved in the 1872 Statement (The Living Witness, p. 1). The fact remains that this first statement was "a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them" (Preface to Statement). This data speaks clear and plain that there was no denial of the "Heavenly Trio" concept, but neither was there an acceptance of the Nicene Trinity doctrine, which was perceived as "a fruit of the great apostasy."

The second, an assumption, suggesting that the Dallas Statement represents a progression in the revelation of truth cannot be sustained in fact. The Nicene Trinitarian doctrine was adopted as a necessary presupposition for other changes in the beliefs of the Church. In the recently released Volume 12 of the "Commentary Reference Series - Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology - is to be found this assertion:

The doctrine of the trinitarian being of God is the necessary presupposition for the proper understanding of the Incarnation and of the cross. (p. 127)

What this is saying is quite simple. Change the doctrinal concept of God, and you then can change the doctrine of the Incarnation and the meaning of the cross. This is what was done at Dallas in 1980.

The author of the article on the "Doctrine of God" admits:

In the OT the triniarian nature of God is not expressly revealed

in the specificity and depth that are present in the NT record. From the vantage point gained from the NT revelation of God in Christ, it is possible to interpret the overlapping concepts of oneness and plurality as OT hints of the trinitarian doctrine of God. (p. 123)

Prior to drawing this conclusion, the author devotes two sections of his article on the "Doctrine of God," to the Biblical data which sets forth the duality of God in the Old Testament. (See pp. 122-123) None of the Scriptures cited hints at a trinitarian concept. He imposes this as a presupposition necessary for the understanding of the Incarnation and the cross.

If indeed as Knight would have us believe that the present Trinitarian stance in Adventism is the result of following "the dynamic nature of present truth," the assumptions admitted in the Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology do not sustain his conclusion. The question then is, how does an individual, or a organized body, keep pace with the dynamic nature of truth? The answer should be plain. What does the Biblical revelation teach? This means a review of all the basic data, giving priority to the most determinative evidence. Since this is discussing God, there must also be the recognition of the fact that at some point, the curtain will be drawn, and our search for understanding will need to await the day of final revelation when we will be privileged to sit at the feet of the Word who was made flesh (John 1:14); but who in His exaltation is "the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

Inasmuch as this concept of "The Dynamic Nature of 'Present Truth'" will form the basis of other doctrinal citations made by Knight, we shall pause to discuss the priority of the determinative evidence on the Doctrine of God. We have referenced it in previous issues of WWN, but will detail it in the article that follows.

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The Gospet of John

The Gospel of John is unique. It is the last of the gospels penned, and one of the last books of the New Testament canon written. Written near the close of the first century, it contains verbatim data from at least six decades prior to it writing. Consider just one section, chapters 14 through 17. None of the Synopic Gospels even refer to these words of Jesus, not even His prayer. Yet they are recorded as the exact words of Jesus. The means of recording and preserving the

spoken word today were not known in the first century. No human mind, while remembering the occasion of the words spoken, could recall decades later a verbatim recollection of the words said.

This brings us to a consideration of "inspiration." Two concepts dominate theological thinking, verbal inspiration and "thought" inspiration. Adventists have advocated the later. However, there are examples in the Scriptures, where the writer wrote down exactly what was said to him. For example, Daniel records the exact words of Gabriel sent to help him understand the vision he had seen of the ram and he-goat. (See Dan. 8:16-26; 9:24-27) The experience of John on the isle of Patmos was similar as he penned the book of Revelation. (See Rev. 14:6-13; 16:1; 18:1-8) It is obvious that the books of prophecy cannot be neatly packaged as being the result of "thought" inspiration. Neither can the gospel of John be so packaged. While John inserts thought inspired observations following the recording of certain events, the recording of the events themselves transcends the scope of "thought" inspiration. See the two incidents recorded in John 3, followed by John's comments. We suggest that the "angel" sent to John to signify the revelation given to Jesus Christ by God (Rev. 1:1), could also come to John to give him in verbatim detail the revelation which God spoke "in a Son" (Heb. 1:2, Gr.) when the Word was made flesh. In other words, the inspiration of the gospel of John, is far closer to divine dictation that is it to "thought inspiration." This conclusion, therefore, places the Gospel of John as the primary source for the formulation of the doctrine of God.

The prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18) is basically a statement about God as revealed in the Word for the redemption of man. The first two verses reveal the relationship between the Two involved in the Counsel of Peace (Zech. 6:13). It sets the place of the incarnate as He was, in the pre-incarnate state with God. He was God - και θεος ην 'ο λογος. He had ever been with God - ουτος ην εν αρχη προς τον θεος. But He changed; He came to be flesh - και 'ο λογος σαρξ εγενετο. This change and its affect on the Godhead is revealed in the prayer of Jesus in John 17. Very interestingly, this understanding is connected with "life eternal." Jesus prayed:

This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. (17:3)

One of the characteristics of God is His immutability. (James 1:17). The Logos had changed; He came to be flesh. This left the Theos as the only true God, but it

did not alter the place of the Logos in the Godhead. Knowing Him is as essential to "life eternai" as to know the Theos. The "counsel of peace" had not changed. One phase was about to be completed. Jesus could pray:

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world (κοσμος) was. (17:4-5)

God did answer that prayer. The resurrected Lord was "highly exalted" (Phil. 2:9), and "in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9, NKJV), the glory He had with Him as the pre-incarnate Logos.

It is in this setting that the Holy Spirit is placed in the gospel of John. On the last day of the feast of tabernacles at which Jesus was in attendance, He declared - "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38). John makes comment on this declaration of Jesus. He interjects:

(But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) {ver. 39}

This interjection of John demands careful consideration. Although the word, "given" (δεδομενον) was added by copyists into the text and followed by some of the church fathers in their quotes of the verse, it must be kept in mind that this addition was governed by the Nicene Creed, and is not found in the earliest manuscripts. The Greek text is simply - ουπω γαρ ην πνευμα, 'οτι Ιησους ουδεπω εδοξασθη - "for not yet was [the] Spirit, because Jesus not yet was glorified."

The close relationship of the Spirit to Jesus' glorification as well as to Jesus Himself, is further amplified in the verbatim upper room comments of Jesus. He promised:

I will pray the Father and He shall give unto you another Comforter (αλλον παρακλητον), that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. . . I will not leave you orphans: I will come unto you. (14:16-18, margin)

The force of the Greek, αλλος, indicates clearly a distinct Being, yet Jesus states - "I will come unto you." It is at this point that the Divine curtain is drawn, and the only other Scriptural revelation which amplifies this myste bus relationship is in the sybolism of the book of Revelation. There (5:6), Jesus is revealed in

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His resurrected state as "a Lamb as it had been slain" possessing "seven horns and seven eyes" which are declared to symbolize the fullness of the Spirit of God "sent forth into all the earth." There are other texts that could be cited which raise perplexing questions; but here we must rest the matter.

In the New Testament, there are three verses which indicate a "trinity" of Beings: a command, a salutation, and a benediction:

Matthew 28:19 - "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name ($\tau o \text{ ovo}\mu\alpha - \text{singular}$) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Here then a singular designation - God - could be given to Three distinct Beings. A singular designation is applied to the Duality of God in the Old Testament - Yahweh. (See Isa. 44:6; Commentary Reference Series, Vol. 12, p. 122-123, "The Dual Revelation of Yahweh."

I Peter 1:2 - "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: ..."

Il Corinthians 13:14 - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

These three verses adequately sustain the designation of "Heavenly Trio" for the Godhead; and while one may suggest the Trinity of the Nicene Creed, no other Biblical support can be found to sustain such a confusion.

One thing is certain, we cannot jump from the 1872 Statement of Beliefs which harmonizes in its first two Statements with the Scriptures just noted, to the 1980 Statement which embraces the Nicene Creed, calling it as Knight has done, an example of the dynamic nature of "Present Truth." Rather it is the insidious working of apostasy come to fruition.

"One thing it is certain is soon the 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." (Special Testimonies, Series B, #7, p. 56-57)

Gonfessions of a Nomad - 3

Since writing #2 of "Confessions of a Nomad" in the December issue of WWN, two things have happened:

- 1) The Ministerial Association has released in full the letter written to Eugene Lincoln, editor emeritus, of *The Sabbath Sentinel*, dated August 31, 2000, as well as a second letter dated September 18, 2000, copies of which the Association will send to anyone upon request. [The Association dating of the first letter is August 30 rather than 31 as on the original letter]
- 2) In response to a call, Mrs. Carolyn Self, a coauthor of the book, left a message on a telephone answering service. The questions to which she responded asked "Why did you have your books, Confessions of a Nomad, etc., published by the Pacific Press Publishing Association, a Seventh-day Adventist company? What is your relationship to them?" In her response, she stated:

We have no connections with the Seventh-day Adventists except that [my husband] has done some speaking for their national and state groups, and they asked us to re-publish the books, ... since they were out of publication, and we own the copyrights to them. And they're the only ones that wanted to copy them, wanted to print them, so that's the reason.

Several things surface: a) The request to publish the book, Confessions of a Nomad, as well as the Self's other publications, came from the Ministerial Association. b) They were "the only ones that wanted to copy them, wanted to print them." c) The Selfs apparently still believe they own the copyrights, while the books printed by the Pacific Press indicate that the Ministerial Association owns the copyrights. If there is a dual copyright, then it follows that there is a contractual relationship between the two parties. This has not been detailed, only hinted, in the letter from Cress to Lincoln dated August 31, 2000.

Now to the two letters written to Brother Eugene Lincoln by Elder James A. Cress, being released as "two statements" by the General Conference Ministerial Association: a) Elder Cress asked that Brother Lincoln request that the one supplying him with photocopies of selected pages from the book, *Confessions of a Nomad*, make direct contact with him. b) This we did. I wrote two letters to Elder Cress, dated September 10, and October 29, 2000, with a brief note between on October 3. The brief note was returned in November with a hand-written comment from Cress which

read, "Attached are two statements that we are sharing with those who made inquiry re: this book." b) There has been no response to the two letters even though Cress asked that the one supplying Lincoln with the photocopied pages from the book write direct to him. Cress is dodging the real issue and this leaves us with but one alternative, that is, to give a brief review of the salient points in our two letters to Cress.

With the first letter to Elder Cress, we enclosed a copy of the article which appeared in the November issue of WWN giving him opportunity to "comment on the same," if he wished to do so. We directed him to the propositions set forth by Brother Lincoln and asked, "Why avoid a direct answer to these?" (The four possibilities are given in the December WWN, p. 6, col.1) It would have been so simple to have checked #4, but he didn't! One can "mouth" words, and the heart be planning something else. We reminded Cress of the command of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount - "Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:37). He "wrote much, much more than the simple answer required." We then proceeded to review "the much more" that he did write:

- 1) You wrote, "While we did reprint the book..." My copy states you hold "copyright" to the book. Why this, if only to reprint it?
- 2) Then you add "the Ministerial Association did not edit this book in any way." Again my copy on the copyright page reads "Several short portions have been edited to conserve space." But the offensive portions were not touched. Why not? A transfer of copyright usually involves some contract commitments, even an agreement to reprint entails obligations. I know because we now print on an exclusive basis what the WCC formerly published, So Much in Common. Why not come clean with the involvements of your copyright purchase?
- 3) You indicate that you the Ministerial Association "provided a service" for Dr Self's seminar participants because "he has provided great service for pastors of all denominations, including Adventists, in his various seminars." Further on, in your letter you indicate that you provide "a service by reprinting his books that he was no longer able to obtain." ...
- 4) I am aware of Ellen White's comment on Pilgrim's Progress, and I believe also a book on Church History. Do you believe that her endorsement of these books really gives you justification to endorse this book by Dr. Self?
- 5) One final question: Do you believe that the 2nd Angel's Message is valid today?

In the second letter, I again reminded Elder Cress that he was the one who requested the communication from me, but has not replied. Then I wrote:

Further, Brother Lincoln placed before you certain specific propositions for you to check. This request you have not responded to although you suggested your letter of August 31, 2000 provided the answer. The number who have read your letter cannot concur. In my letter, I asked you a final all inclusive question - "Do you believe the 2nd Angel's Message is valid to-day? - and you have not answered.

Further in Mrs Self's statement, she said, "They (Ministerial Association) asked to republish the books." In other words you solicited the right to publish this material which seeks to negate the Sabbath. Your explanation is that you are doing this because of your PREACH project to "reach clergy of other faiths." Please tell me how a negation of the Sabbath can reach a non-Adventist clergyman with the truth about the Sabbath? Do you demonstrate how to prepare meat dishes at a vegetarian cooking class?

While it is true that verbally you affirm the perpetuity of the Biblical seventh day Sabbath, your actions in not editing the two chapters of *Confessions of Nomad*, which plainly promote Sunday as the day of worship speak louder than words.

The revelation of this book - Confessions of a Nomadas copyrighted by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference and printed by the Pacific Press for the PREACH project of the Association raises serious questions as to whether the project has an evangelistic outreach as its objective, or whether at the bottom of the project is the "public relations' (PR) motive. And when the General Conference Secretary of the Association cannot affirm his belief in the 2nd Angel's Message, something is seriously wrong.

The bottom line is simply, what should be the Adventist minister's relationship with the clergy of other faiths? Adventists believe that they are giving the "Elijah Message" for the final hour of human history, or do they no longer so believe? It is difficult to perceive Elijah as ever joining the ministerial alliance of Baal. This present trauma did not happen over night, but has been a growing tumor during the last five decades of the previous century. It can now be diagnosed as malignant.

"What communion hath light with darkness? ... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord ... and I will receive you." (II Corinthians 6:14,17)

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The Primacy of the Gospel Committee Report

In 1994, the Administrative Committee of the General Conference appointed a committee to give in depth study to "the biblical doctrine of righteousness by faith. The particular focus of the committee was to give attention to the special understanding of this doctrine that has been advanced over the past 50 years by Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short, joined now by additional persons of the 1888 Message Study Committee." Beginning with an initial meeting on May 24, 1995, the committee met 8 times, and concluded their assessment with a final meeting, February 8, 2000. A summary report has now been issued.

The final report was divided into four parts: 1) Areas of Ageement; 2) Areas of Disagreement; 3) Observations; and 4) An Appeal.

While there were 12 areas of Agreement and 12 areas of Disagreement, the latter was more pronounced. While certain areas of the Disagreements need careful consideration and review, the Observation made brings both Wieland and Short to their moment of truth. It reads:

The charges raised by the 1888 Study Committee against the leadership of the Church are very serious. If the Church is proclaiming a false gospel, it has no right to exist. A partial understanding of the gospel, as they claim the Church to have, is not a true understanding of the gospel. If they are the only ones who have a clear and complete understanding of the gospel, then everyone else is proclaiming a false gospel. They are implicitly accusing the Church, or at least, the leaders of the Church, of apostasy. We have found such accusations to be groundless as evidenced in the official statements of belief.

Therefore, we firmly believe that the 1888 Study Committee should discontinue its claims that the true message of righteousness by faith was rejected by the leaders of the Church, that they never genuinely accepted it, and that they have intentionally kept it away from the Church and the world.

This was followed by an appeal which carried a directive: It states:

We do not question the sincerity of the leaders of the 1888 Study Committee, but we do question the wisdom of the current course of action. If the committee chooses to continue its work outside the organized Church, we appeal to it to adopt the pattern of what is described as a supportive ministry. Such groups seek places to work where, in harmony with and under guidance of Church leadership in that field, they carry out a vivities that are

part of the planned program of that field. Almost always their efforts are designed to reach out to unbelievers, calling them to Christ and His righteousness, and enlisting them among His remnant people. Supportive ministries promote harmony in both doctrine and relationship with the Church. We desire this as the outcome of our prayer and study together.

A summary of this Observation and Appeal to the 1888 Message Study Committee can be briefly, but pointedly, stated - "Shape up or ship out." One member of the Primacy of the Gospel Committee was Dr. George R. Knight, and we sense in the Areas of Disagreement, echoes of his thinking. Inasmuch as we are devoting several issues of WWN to his latest book, A Search for Identity, we will also note certain positions taken in the Disagreements which reflect his thinking.

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Note: The following tracts will be available for 10 cents each, plus postage. You place your order and include the cost of the tracts ordered, and we will invoice you for the actual postage.

"The Seal of God" - 5T: 207-216 with notes "Jerusalem in Bible Prophecy" "The Anti-Christ - Who Is He?"

The booklet - "The SIGN of the End of Time" will be available for 15 cents/copy plus postage.

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Available - An on-campus, three bed room residence, for rent or lease. It is heated by a wood furnace. If interested contact the Foundation <u>by letter</u> for questions, and further details will be furnished.

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