

*"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 (Moffatt)

A SYMPOSIUM REPORT

Editor's Note - The following report was written by Pastor Richard Sutton of the independent congregation of Seventh-day Adventists meeting in Nora Springs, Iowa. In this report, he explains why the symposium was called, who was invited to come and take part, also noting their reaction to the invitation. This report should cause every sincere and concerned Seventh-day Adventist to pause and consider where he is placing his emphasis in these last final days of human history.

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Originally, the plan of sponsoring a symposium began to take shape last September. Some of the members of the Nora Springs, Iowa, congregation had informally expressed a desire to contact a number of prominent independent and/or self supporting ministries with the view of bringing them together at one place to discuss important issues within the Adventist Community.

For some time, we had been receiving literature, audio and video tapes from the following:

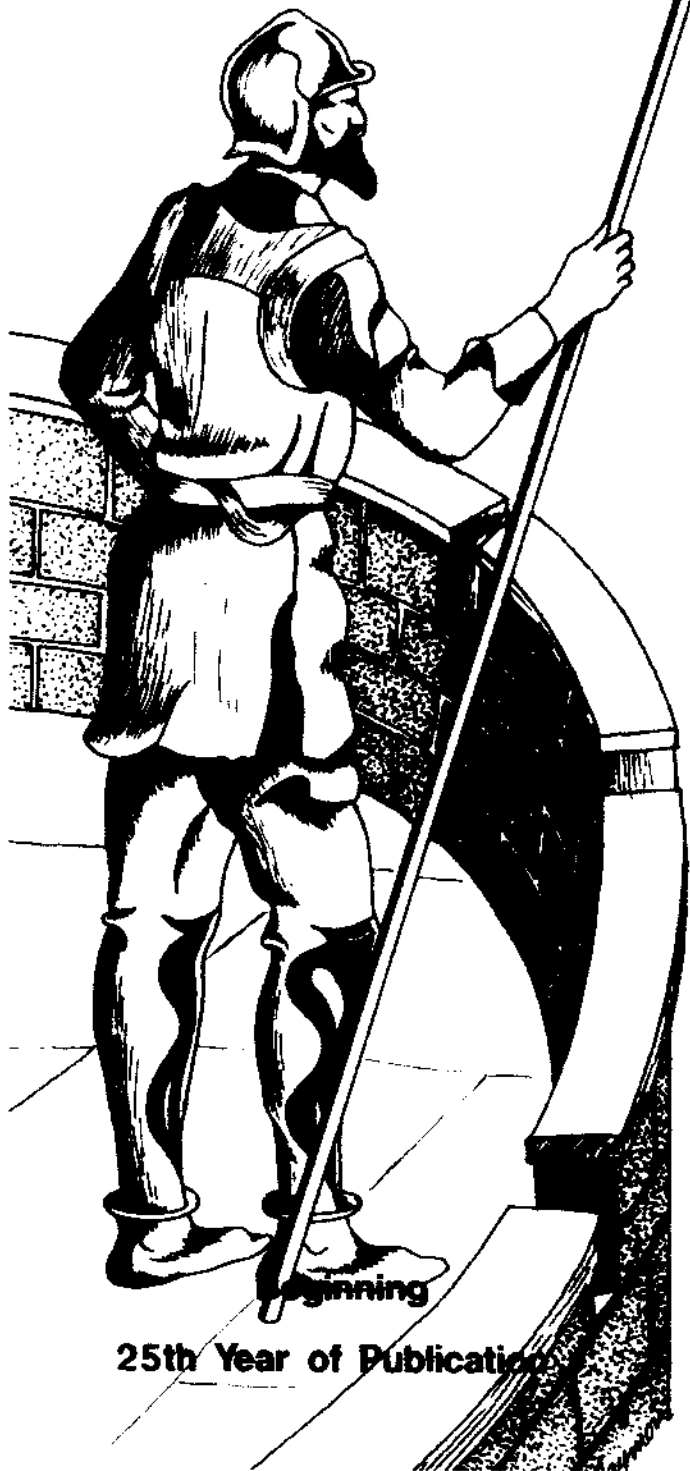
Elder Wm. H. Grotheer
Pastor John Osborne
John Grosboll
Hartland Institute
David Mould

Pastor John Marcussen
Terry Ross
Hope International
Bill Springfellow
Bob Trefz

In addition, some of us have listened and spoken in person to quite a few of the brethren associated with these ministries. In fact, we had sponsored, or helped to sponsor some of the meetings we had attended.

It had become increasingly clear that our congregation was not the only group of Seventh-day Adventists deeply concerned by the deepening apostasy within the corporate denominational Church. We had associated with brethren from other parts of Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin at these meetings who represented themselves to be likewise saddened and perplexed over the crisis among our people.

It also became apparent to us that not all of these ministries were speaking with the same voice. The trumpet was being given an uncertain sound. All recognized problems; all recognized that something was amiss; but there was confusion as to what should be done about it. Therefore, we at Nora Springs were strongly convinced that the issues of "the status of



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God's people at this time" were not being presented in their true light. So trying to be a part of the solution, rather than just an addition to the problem, we invited the ten ministries (or their representatives) to our church in Nora Springs to discuss the following vital topics:

1. History of Apostasy in the SDA Church - past and present
2. The Final Atonement
3. Sunday Laws
4. Use of the Spirit of Prophecy
5. Jesus' End-time Prophecy
6. Conclusion: "Common Message" to proclaim

The date for the Symposium was set for November 9, 1991. The invitations were mailed out on October 4, with an R.S.V.P. for October 21, 1991, and a corresponding general invitation was sent to concerned Seventh-day Adventists in the area. Two of the invited speakers replied in writing before the October 21 deadline - Elder Grotheer representing the Adventist Laymen's Foundation, and David Mould who turned down the invitation with no explanation.

Terry Ross replied by telephone before October 21 representing himself and John Osborne. Terry informed me that he didn't go anywhere unless money was sent to cover his expenses stating that anyone who wanted to hear his message would willingly pay for the privilege.

Meanwhile at a meeting in Le Center, Minnesota, members of our congregation had the opportunity to personally invite Bob Trefz on October 12. He also declined stating he had a "thought paper" to get ready and place in the mails. There was NO REPLY from the others before the deadline.

After October 21, we took it upon ourselves to contact the remaining ministries who had not replied. John Grosboll's secretary, answering the Steps to Life telephone, stated that John had a wedding to perform and would be unable to attend. An individual contacted at Concerned Publications informed us that Bill Stringfellow was in Florida.

Dr. Colin Standish finally responded by letter stating he was booked up until September, 1992, and would be unable to attend. However, at a mini-campmeeting held this past Fall in our area which we were asked to help arrange, Hal Mayer from Hartland was present. He at that time responded to an invitation for a meeting in Wisconsin with only three weeks notice. We did not specifically request Dr. Colin Standish's

presence, only that Hartland be represented.

Jan Marcussen's telephone wasn't answered and in his November newsletter, he wrote he would be at a "Campmeeting," November 7-9. (We have not heard from him yet, even though he had been a guest speaker at our church a few weeks prior to our sending out the invitation!)

Vernon Sparks of Hope International left a message on my telephone answering machine indicating that he would not be able to come. Approximately one week later, a letter was received stating - "I left a message on your answering machine that Hope International would not be represented at your upcoming seminar. Our Executive committee felt that your expectation of all getting together to formulate a 'common voice' is unrealistic. We believe that the Holy Spirit will lead isolated voices to speak with one voice without human vote being taken or legislation."

On November 4, we sent a second letter to professedly concerned Seventh-day Adventists in the area informing them that the "Symposium" was still on. It was held as scheduled, and a video was made of the presentations and the discussions.

Considering the absolute importance of the topics on the agenda for discussion and the times in which we are living, as a congregation, we were not only disappointed; and we cannot but question the sincerity of the independent ministries and the professedly concerned area Adventists who failed to attend.

The Holy Spirit was in charge of this meeting and the topics were well covered by Elder Grotheer representing the Adventist Laymen's Foundation, and Elder Tevis speaking for the Nora Springs Church. We appreciate the fact that Elder Grotheer sees the importance of these issues and we thank him for his participation.

Apparently "some have eyes to see, and see not; and ears to hear, but understand not."

Richard Sutton

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AN ANCIENT HEBREW PRAYER

From the conscience that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half truth, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O God of truth deliver us.

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OBSERVATIONS

Before any comments on the responses of those who were invited to take part in the Symposium that was held in the Independent Nora Springs Seventh-day Adventist Church, careful consideration needs to be given to the gravity of the topics selected by the Church for discussion. This dare not be ignored, nor should it have been ignored by those invited to take part. Rather, it should have been the prime factor in the decision of each one invited whether to attend, or not to attend.

APOSTASY

That there is apostasy in the Seventh-day Adventist Church is not questioned by a single individual or organization which was invited. The videos produced, the mini-campmeetings conducted, the articles written all say the same thing on this point. But the question that needs to be studied in regard to the apostasy in the Church is - Is the Church in apostasy, or is it merely that apostasy has taken place in the Church? One may say that this is a fine line, but it is this very line that Dr. Roger W. Coon drew in his pamphlet on Tithe which was distributed as an insert in the Adventist Review (Nov. 7, 1991). To the question, "Should I pay tithe to a church if I believe it is in apostasy?" - Coon wrote:

There is a fine line - but significant distinction - between "a church in apostasy" and "apostasy in the church." (p. 3)

Coon well knows that one does not pay tithe to a "church in apostasy." But if the condition of the Church is only that it has apostasy in it, then one does continue to support the Church, and does so from inside in cooperation with its leadership! Thus every "independent ministry" must decide which is the true situation. If the Church is in apostasy, and one is removed from the Church because of his conduct, or attacks on the Church, then he doesn't make arrangements for, nor accepts invitations to place, his name on a "safe" membership list in some church far removed from his operations. This is duplicity in its most despicable form.

This number one topic on the Symposium agenda struck at the very heart of the existence of each and every one of the "independent" ministries, and is the number one reason why each one invited should have cleared their schedules to be present. "Ducking out" by some excuse is contemptible when the eternity of

concerned Adventists is involved. Men whom assume leadership but who are unable to perceive the gravity of the very first topic are "blind guides" who continue to put out the eyesight of God's professed people.

FINAL ATONEMENT

This is present truth! It is based in the sanctuary truth committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. If one still believes that the atonement was not completed on the cross as the leading independent ministries profess to believe, and that Christ is now ministering as High Priest in the most holy place of the Heavenly Sanctuary, then in these final days of human history, what should be the center of our focus? Should it not be to understand the meaning of the type where the High Priest came to the Court with the mingled blood of the bullock and the Lord's goat to expiate "the uncleanness of the children of Israel"? (Lev. 16:19) Does not the type dictate that the attitude of God's professed people should be that of "soul affliction" at this present time, and if not, they will be "cut off" as if they themselves were apostates? (Lev. 23:29). Have we forgotten the counsel which states - "the class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God." (5T:211) The continual recitation of apostasy by which to keep a steady flow of tithes and offerings into the coffers to support an "ego" trip is not "mourning" over the sins of others; it is merely using the cry of apostasy to cover their "own spiritual declension."

Can we actually believe, no matter how it may titillate our ears, that a recitation of "New Age" roots, or a tirade on the Celebration type of service, or a review of the hypnotic methods being introduced to control people - and any number of sins of the "brethren" will bring a people to the place where there will be "soul affliction"? This failure to perceive the final atonement as the present truth for this time, and substituting for it a continuous recitation of the apostasy in the Church has produced a pharisaical Laodiceanism unmatched by the Church itself in its Laodicean state. The ones who are looking at the continuous flow of videos and attending "campmeetings" where the apostasy in the Church is the main menu are developing a smug complacency thanking God that they are not like their former brethren who are now attending a celebration type of service and being manipulated by mind controlling techniques. These concerned souls are for the most part unmindful that the same

psychological techniques that are being decried, are the same techniques being used on them by the very "voices" who are decrying their use. Consider the "electronic" letters being sent out, their exaggerations, manipulation of facts, and the fanciful projects proposed. Those practicing these deceptive techniques, for the most part, do not even know the first thing about the final atonement, and the meaning of "soul affliction." For one sure thing, "soul affliction" is not bragging about how many "deep pockets" one gets his hand into, nor the using of the "Celebration" theme to influence God's concerned people to send in tithes so that one can cause his and his wife's payroll checks to reach the \$50,000 per annum figure.

There is a place for the revelation of facts concerning the apostasy in the Church which has led to a Church in apostasy. But such a revelation must be dealt with from an historic perspective, instead of using the end results in a "leaf plucking" exhibit for an "ego" trip. Well did Paul write - "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God." (Heb. 5:12)

Another factor concerning the final atonement must be considered. Dr. Desmond Ford introduced a theology which completely sets aside the basic sanctuary truths which were committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Because of the compromises with the Evangelicals in 1955-56, the Church has succumbed to the inroads of Ford's theology. Why was this devastating heresy permitted to plague God's people? This question has been given little consideration. The Messenger of the Lord warned the Church that "God will arouse His people; if other means fail, heresies will come in among them, which will sift them, separating the chaff from the wheat." (5T:707) What brought about a condition that God permitted such a drastic introduction of heresy as is represented in Ford's teachings? This we are also told:

Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word... But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion. (*ibid.*, pp. 706-707)

If there ever was a time to discuss the final atonement, it is now, but it will take some deep searching of the Bible with prayer. Biblical answers will need to be provided to offset Ford's theology. Neither Spear nor Standish can stand up to Ford. They do not have Bible answers, and so respond only with cliches. They represent, a fossilized theology, as a firm foundation instead of heeding the counsel of God's Messenger to advance "the knowledge of truth." We need to keep in mind the counsel - "Upon every individual who has the light of present truth devolves the **duty of developing that truth** on a higher scale than it has hitherto been done." (Ms. 27, 1897) But neither Spear nor Standish have done this, and they excuse themselves from attending a Symposium to even discuss what studies should be initiated to advance such a vital subject as the final atonement. God's concerned people have fallen upon hard times with blind guides seeking to lead them.

SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Here is another key subject that dare not be ignored. While the questions raised do not impugn upon the fact that the gift of the Spirit of prophecy was manifest in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White as far as the various "independent" ministries are concerned, it does become a question for these "ministries" as to where they place this gift in relationship to the Bible. There is the extreme position taken by Spear and Standish which states - "The acceptance of the prophetic gift in the ministry of Sister White is essential not only to the preparation of God's people for the eternal kingdom, but also to the acceptance of the Scriptures as inspired." (Our Firm Foundation, April, 1989, p. 15) This definitely needs to be discussed in an open symposium for such a position is not only directly contradictory to what Ellen G. White wrote about "the perfecting of the man of God," but also breathes the very essence of Roman Catholic teaching in regard to the inspiration of the Bible, except it is stated in Adventist nomenclature.

In the 1884 Great Controversy (p. 413) is found a prophetic statement of God's intent and purpose for the final hours of human history. She wrote that while the world does not want "Bible truth," --

God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis

of all reforms.

"Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain 'Thus saith the Lord' in its support." (*ibid.*) Just because we acknowledge the presence of the prophetic gift in the ministry of Ellen G. White does not abrogate the primacy of the Scriptures. In fact, at another time when the Church was in crisis - 1901 - and Ellen White was being quoted to sustain this, and to sustain that, she herself spoke very plainly to the ministers on this very point. She said in no uncertain terms:

Lay Sister White right to one side: lay her to one side. Don't you never quote my words again as long as you live, until you can obey the Bible. When you take the Bible and make that your food, and your meat, and your drink, and make that the element of your character, when you can do that you will know better how to receive some counsel from God. But here is the Word, the precious Word, exalted before you today. And don't you give a rap any more that "Sister White said" -- "Sister White said this," and "Sister White said that," and "Sister White said the other thing." But say, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel," and then do just what the Lord God of Israel does, and what He says. (p. 167)

But don't you quote Sister White. I don't want you ever to quote Sister White until you get your vantage ground where you know where you are. Quote the Bible. Talk the Bible. It is full of meat, full of fatness. Carry it right out in your life, and you will know more Bible than you know now. You will have fresh matter; you won't be going over and over the same ground, and you will see a world saved. (p. 174, Verbatim report of remarks by Mrs. E. G. White, at a meeting held in Battle Creek College Library, April 1, at the General Conference of 1901; Spalding and Magan's Collection)

This is good counsel now, and needs to be practiced by those voices in the "independent" ministries" who are seeking to be leaders of God's concerned people. But this is not what is being done by more than 95% of those "voices." And the reason is simple - most of the "voices" do not know their Bibles, and cannot defend the positions they are advocating from the Bible. The Church at Nora Springs, Iowa, is to be commended for having placed this topic on the agenda for discussion at the Symposium. The tragedy is that those invited did not clear their schedules so as to be present when such a crucial topic was to be considered. This tragedy is compounded when

concerned Adventists let such ministries get away with less than a Bible-centered proclamation. If every concerned Adventist would say, give us the Bible, or no support, most of the "voices" would be silenced.

In advocating a return to the Bible, and from it, a plain "Thus saith the Lord," I am not suggesting the digging up of old "evangelistic sermons" which were given back in the "golden years" of Adventist evangelism and presenting them as "present truth." (Some are doing so in what Bible they are preaching; I have a whole notebook full of such outlines) Those old sermons did contain "timeless truths" and such truth needs to be kept before God's people in review. But where is the deep Bible study which marked the pioneers of this message, and must mark the search for understanding of Christ's final work in the Heavenly Sanctuary? A mere compilation of "quotes" from the Writings with a few personal connecting sentences between does not meet the criterion of the counsel of the Lord's Messenger to get fresh food from the Bible for His people.

JESUS' END TIME PROPHECY

Not too much needs to be said in regard to this prophecy of Jesus found in Luke 21. The Messenger of the Lord told us that Jesus in Luke 21 connected events which were to occur in the history of Jerusalem with the "scenes that were to take place in the history of this world just prior to the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (CtoW&E, pp. 23-24) The one event in the history of Jerusalem that Christ foretold which is not recorded in the other two synoptic gospels is in regard to "the times of the Gentiles," or nations - corporate bodies. The details of this prophecy with documentation is to be found in the published manuscript - The Hour and the End.

What needs to be realized is that when the Messianic prophecy concerning the coming "Prophet" was given to Moses, God also said that He would put words into the mouth of that Prophet, and that whosoever would "not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." (Deut 18:18-19) We can no more today disregard this prophecy of Jesus in Luke 21:24, than the early Christians could ignore the prophecy concerning the Roman armies to surround the city as they did in A.D. 66. But everyone of those invited to the symposium, and who did not come, are

LET'S TALK IT OVER

The ground covered in this issue leaves only one topic to talk over, and that is - Excuses. But why were there excuses? No one who really believes in fundamental Adventism can deny that the subjects chosen for discussion by the Church in Nora Springs, Iowa, were of the utmost importance and fraught with eternal consequences. In fact, they were so important, that each one invited to take part in the Symposium should have either cleared his schedule, or sent a knowledgeable representative to sit in for him. If one's position on anyone of the topics listed on the agenda could not bear the scrutiny of one's peers, then what justification does one have to present himself as a spokesman for truth? Genuine truth can bear investigation, and loses nothing in open discussion. The refusal to come or to be represented at this Symposium speaks in words loud and clear. Those refusing to come either do not have a clear perception of the subjects on the agenda, and thus do not wish to have their ignorance exposed; or they know their position is flawed, and are not willing to have those flaws revealed. In either case, they are playing the role of a hypocrite - professing to be trustworthy guides to concerned Seventh-day Adventists when they are not.

It is possible that in one or two cases of those invited that they did have commitments which prevented them from accepting the invitation; but they could have acknowledged the gravity of the topics on the agenda and expressed their desire to the leadership of the Nora Springs Church to take part in such a discussion and requested that another time be set up for such a discussion. But for the most part, the responses were just plain cop-outs.

There should have been no question about the brethren who arranged the Symposium. They are solidly grounded in the truth, and above all courteous Christians. I was their Sabbath guest speaker one time previous to the calling of the Symposium, as had been some of the others invited. It is true they ask questions both in open discussion and in private conversation. Some of the questions become very penetrating at times. But if I cannot give a forthright answer from the Word of God, then I should stay away if I do not wish to be exposed - and evidently that is what most of those invited did.

All of us have deadlines to meet. Each month, I have to ready the issues of WWN. I know it is

work when there is limited help, although good help. With this issue we begin our 25th year of continuous publication. We set as our deadline for mailing each issue the 15th of the preceding month. November 9, the date for the Symposium came right at the time the schedule intensifies. I had just returned the week before from a series of appointments in the East, and the correspondence had accumulated. But what justifiable explanation could I give the readers of WWN for absenting myself in view of the importance of the agenda topics?

The non-response most difficult to understand is the failure to reply in any way on the part of Jan Marcussen. He had been a guest speaker at Nora Springs a little over a month previous to the November date. He even made a video of some of the leaders of the Church answering his questions. He expressed great interest in their program as an alternative to the apostasy in the regular Church. If one's "hobby horse" leaves one destitute of the most elementary of Christian virtues - common courtesy - what genuine value is there in one's promotion of that "hobby horse"? Such a voice is only "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

The most questionable response came from Vernon Sparks of Hope International speaking for the "Executive committee." Some years back a friend gave me a card which we have placed above our Library door. It reads - "God so loved the world that He didn't send a committee." It is true that there is "safety" in "the multitude of counselors." (Prov. 11:14) But God also asks the question - "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2) This "Executive committee" concluded that to aim at a "common voice" was "unrealistic." Do not the Scriptures picture the Spirit and the bride speaking with one voice? (Rev. 22:17) Did Jesus pray in vain His prayer in John 17?

The real capsheaf of the committee action read - "We believe that the Holy Spirit will lead isolated voices to speak with one voice." Now Hope International promotes the belief in the primacy of the Writings rather than the primacy of the Scriptures. (See section on Spirit of Prophecy in "Observations," p. 4, col. 2) Accepting their premise momentarily, then we ask why are they taking a position contrary to the revelation given in the Writings? Hope International emphasizes the apostasy in the regular Church, and plays on it to justify their existence and the monetary soliciting. The Writings do confirm that "there will be a removing of the landmarks, and an attempt to

pull down the pillars of our faith." (R&H, Dec. 13, 1892) In other words, apostasy was foretold, and it has come to pass. But at the time of this apostasy, the same prophetic testimony reads - "Every conceivable power of evil will be set in operation, and minds will be confused by many voices crying, ...'This is the truth, I have a message from God, He has sent me with great light.'" In the hour of apostasy, who will be leading the many "isolated voices" to speak? The Holy Spirit, or the "power of evil"? Dare I attribute by "Executive committee" vote the working of the power of evil to the working of the Holy Spirit? And those who do so, are they safe guides? Then a final question: Is Hope International so insecure in their Biblical teaching, and their understanding of the Writings that they dared not send a representative to the Symposium? Isn't it time for God's concerned people to take note as to how shakey the so-called "firm foundation" really is? One's hope dare not be based on anything other than Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.

Even though the congregation at Nora Springs was disappointed in the response they received, they have performed a service for God beyond human estimate in opening before the eyes of those concerned people of God who wish to see, the sham of the profession of some of the "voices" on the periphery of Adventism today.

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Alistair Cooke in the Financial Times, London

I do not remember a time when Americans have complained more - in a tone close to despair - about the visible and seemingly unhealable wounds in American society. Crime rates are regularly beyond those of all but the worst previous years. Drugs are a pestilence afflicting all classes and every age. Public education in America has been setting easy and dithering standards. ...The feeling is epidemic that daily life, in every sort of community, is getting more squalid, expensive, and dangerous.

So what is the likely outcome? There appears to be three possibilities: the second American civil war, triggered by ethnic and regional uprisings; the arrival of a populist dictator (under the banner of liberty); an emergency return to the benevolent form of national socialism created by Franklin Roosevelt in the first New

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doing so. This should tell God's concerned people something!

A COMMON VOICE

This was not an unreasonable expectation to be placed on the agenda of the Symposium for discussion. There was no suggestion of coercion, or legislation in the letter of invitation sent to each of the invited "independent ministries." Is God divided? Does He speak out of both sides of His mouth? Does the Spirit of truth teach one thing to one man, and a different thing to another? Absolutely not! The multitude of "voices" on the periphery of Adventism today, each with his own personal message, indicates not the Spirit of the Lord, but rather the spirits of devils. Christ's High Priestly prayer was for unity of witness, not a divisive and deceptive witness. To seek to contribute to this prayer of Jesus Christ was the objective of the concerned Adventists at Nora Springs, Iowa. Now look at the list of those invited and note carefully who did not respond and their excuses. You have some answers if you have eyes to see and ears to hear.

‡

Cooke continued

Deal. At the obvious risk of being wrong three times (and I hope I shall be), these seem to me to be the real possibilities if the social dangers, deprivations and frustrations cannot be placated by the present political system and become too much for most Americans to bear.

Quoted in World Press Review, Dec. 1991, p. 41

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Elder Wm. H. Grotheer

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