

"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)



THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION CALLS
TO FORMER MEMBERS:

"COME HOME"

COME HOME TO WHAT?

TRUTH? ERROR? LIBERALISM?

Near the end of October, last year, both my wife and I received a form letter from the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Written by Elder H. M. S. Richards, Jr., it told us that Sabbath, November 20, was being designated as "Homecoming." The letter stated that "months of planning and prayers" had gone into organizing this special day. (See Letter on page 2, col. 1) No doubt many others also received this letter because Richards frankly admitted "that Jesus' church is fragmented -- people are missing. Empty seats have taken the place of vibrant, loving Christians!"

Richards indicated that this was "probably one of the most difficult letters" he had ever been asked to write. He explained why. He wanted to communicate "just how deeply you're missed from active fellowship with your local group of believers." I do not question Richards' sincerity nor motive, but ironically with all the vaunted preparation which supposedly went into the planning for this day, not a single call was made by either the local pastor, or a member of two near-by local churches telling us of this "Homecoming," or conveying this supposedly deep love for what the church has assumed to be a lost soul. The whole tenor was farcical.

I remember distinctly when working with Elder Fordyce Detamore in evangelism, that his visitation schedule during the weeks prior to the presentation of the Sabbath question were devoted to people who were at one time committed members of the Church. I, too, followed this practice when Conference evangelist during a number of years of my ministry. There remain vivid memories from these visits. One such experience comes to mind now. A sister who had served as a matron in an Academy had married a non-believer. Her children, except for one child, were grown, and all were out of the Truth. Her husband was bitterly opposed to the Message. The day we found this sister during an evangelistic campaign in the hills of old

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H. M. S. RICHARDS' LETTER

October 25, 1993

Dear Mr. Grotheer:

Do you remember the time you asked a bank manager for a loan you really needed, or went for a "dream job" interview, or went on a first date with the person you knew was **the one** for you, the person you eventually felt you couldn't live without?

In situations like these, words are critical. They suddenly take on a new importance and value, don't they? I remember when I met my wife, Mary. No matter how hard I tried, my words came out tongue-tied. And I've even thought that beating around the bush would somehow change the outcome of a particular decision--like talking about the weather for a half-hour before asking for the loan.

That's how I feel right now, because this is probably one of the most difficult letters I've ever had to write. I know it's among the most important. Why? Because a great deal hinges on my ability to talk to you through this page of type. Perhaps because so much depends on communicating just how deeply you're missed from active fellowship with your local group of believers, that I don't know where to begin ...

You see, people are praying this letter will bring you to a point where you'll consider returning home. People who, like myself, know that Jesus' church is fragmented--people are missing. Empty seats have taken the place of vibrant, loving Christians!

We need you to come back home on November 20. Months of planning and prayers have gone into organizing this special **Homecoming**. We're anticipating November 20 as a day of new beginnings.

Time has long since passed when healing among our fellowship should have started, and oneness take the place of fragmentation. Church leaders nationwide have listened carefully to the issues that have led to so many of our committed members becoming discouraged. Christians like you who are searching earnestly for a worship experience that not only nourishes them spiritually, but also meets the need God placed in each of us for a sense of belonging.

I feel the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit working more than ever before in our church.

Listen to this powerful statement from Good News for the End Times, "Christians at the end of time will be known as the fellowship of the loved. And they'll be known as the fellowship that loves, too, because the two are inseparable." That describes God's ideal for our church, how He wants us to relate to each other.

We'd love to see you on November 20. But please understand you'll attend a "church-in-the-making," a church that hasn't yet reached God's ideal. It is still your home, though. Please mark this special day on your calender.

Yours sincerely,



OUR RESPONSE

November 3, 1993

Elder H. M. S. Richards, Jr.
North American Division of SDA
Silver Spring, MD 20904

Dear Elder Richards:

This week my wife and I received your letter which you prepared in response to the request of the North American Division to write to those whom the division consider as "backsliders." I will not question the sincerity of the attempt, nor the motive which may have prompted it.

We gave the prime time of our lives to the ministry of the Church - twenty-three years, as district pastor, city pastor, conference evangelist, and finally the last head of the Bible and History Department of old Madison College before its demise. We lived through the terrible compromise which the leadership of the Church made with the Evangelicals. We felt the wrath of T. E. Unruh because we dared to stand up and call heresy for just what it was - the betrayal of the sacred trust God gave to His people. In the end we took a leave of absence in good and regular standing because we felt that we should be free from any encumbrance so as to be able to speak out on issues confronting the Church. Twenty-six years have passed and we have not regretted the step then taken. We have seen satisfying years of continued service in the cause of truth. By God's grace, He has granted health

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North Georgia, she had laid all of her plans to commit suicide in the evening. Instead she came to the meeting that night. The result, she came "home" and her daughter and husband followed her.

Granted, today we have a different church than the Church of the late 1940s. Herein lies the problem. Until we are willing to frankly address the problem, one on one, or in a truly open study conference, all such planning as supposedly went into the November 20, "Homecoming," will remain farcical. Further, it appears from the "requests" appearing in Ministry that the Ministerial Department of the North American Division is planning an outreach to all former ministers of the Church. But this, too, will end in a farce unless the basic issues are addressed. The courage and forthrightness to come to grips with these issues does not seem to be a hallmark of the present leadership of the Church, either in its North American Division officer's corps, or ministerial department.

Elder Richards' frank admission that the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is fragmented needs to be carefully weighed and addressed. What he says about the North American Division, could apply as well to the South Pacific and with varying emphases to the other divisions of the World Field.

When one's own Christian experience becomes fragmented and he wonders which way to turn so as to restore his shattered relationship with the Lord, a word of counsel indicates that he return to the place where he last saw the light. Abraham after his disastrous trip into Egypt returned to "where his tent had been at the beginning... unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first." (Gen. 13:3-4)

Another factor is how thorough is the work we do when we return to the place of the altar. Again Abraham comes into the equation. He did not return Hagar to Egypt, but later he had to send her away after resultant problems arose, problems which are still with us. So how far back do we go? What do we do in bringing the present into line with the last point of light?

In 1903, the servant of the Lord plainly wrote that at **that** time the Church was being leavened with its own backsliding. Her exact words were - "Unless the church, which is **now** being leavened with her own backsliding, shall repent and be converted, she will eat the fruit of her own doing, until she shall abhor herself." (8T:250) Where is the repentance? Where is the

the abhorrence? Has she passed the point of no return? This last question introduces a very real possibility. In this same testimony was the warning that "in the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be weighed." (p. 247) Down the stream of time from 1903, when the leavening began, at some point, God would render a fatal decision from the Heavenly Sanctuary if certain criteria had not been met. Such a decision would place the Church at a point of no return, even if, as Esau, she "sought it carefully with tears." (Heb. 12:17) Over the answer to this possibility a great part of the present fragmentation has come. It must be addressed not through "church bashing," but by a plain revelation from the Word of God. What God said through Amos, He still adheres to today. "Surely the Lord God will do **nothing**, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7) We can know through the revelation of His Word, whether this weighing "in the balances of the sanctuary" has been done, and the decision rendered.

There is no historical evidence that a repentance occurred between 1903 and 1950, the year when a call for "denominational repentance" was made to the officers of the General Conference. While the call in 1950 did not address the "backsliding" of 1903, and those making the call have not done so to this day, other factors have now entered the picture which have intensified the "backsliding."

In 1903, the membership of the Church stood at 67,150. By 1950, the adherents numbered 716,538. In 1990, the church books record 6,183,585 members. In 1950, when Elder W. H. Branson assumed the office of president of the General Conference, he called for doubling the church's membership in four years. However, by 1958, two sessions later, the membership stood only at 1,102,910. During this last period, 1954-1958, came the SDA-Evangelical Conferences in 1955-1956. Those conferences were highly contributive to Church growth statistically. From one million prior to the conferences the membership grew to over six million in thirty years. It had taken one hundred years to show a growth of one million members. If numbers were the name of the game, compromise with truth was the sure means to win!

What did the SDA-Evangelical conferences do to the truth committed in sacred trust to the Seventh-day Adventist Church? That is the question that needs to be addressed. In 1980, the General Conference, convened in Dallas, Texas, gave official recognition to the

compromises of these conferences with the Evangelicals by adopting a new Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. Following this General Conference session, the fragmentation of the Church accelerated to the present crisis in Adventism. The end is not yet in sight. The fragments are further fragmenting. Basic questions remain unanswered and issues remain unaddressed.

The tragedy of tragedies is that in this picture, there are a few, sadly only a few, who are climbing the high way, while others are groping on the low, and in between on the misty flats the rest, the majority, are drifting to and fro, enamored with videos, unmindful that they have merely exchanged one Laodiceanism for another.

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LET'S TALK IT OVER

In retrospect, as I look back over 1993, what lessons have I learned as editor. One lesson has been pointedly etched on my mind as a result of two incidents involving data which I had assumed to be accurate. In the October issue of WWN (p. 7), I noted an "Architect's drawing of the future home of the pope in Jerusalem." The article quoted was from the Prophetic Observer (July, 1993), a publication of the Southwest Radio Church, and had been sent to me in good faith by a friend. It was even documented, "Jerusalem Post, (April 3, 1993)" I presumed it to be correct; however, I sent for The Jerusalem Post. When it arrived, I discovered on the centerspread a colored photo of the Drawing. It was a part of a "Feature" article in the April 3, edition. The article was captioned - "Jerusalem of Dreams" - with a subtitle reading - "A new exhibit features visions of Jerusalem that never came to be." In describing the Architect's drawing the article read:

"Almost as ambitious was a proposal in 1912 for shifting the papal residence from Rome to Jerusalem... The proposed new residence, conceived in Vienna by a student of the noted architect Otto Wagner, included a papal church whose dome was more than twice the diameter of the Dome of the Rock" (pp. 12B-C)

The Prophetic Observer had pulled the picture out of context to make a point. I had noticed that the article also alluded to a "secret rapture" of the Church. This should have alerted me. It didn't, but it has now taught me a

lesson. Those who teach error will not refrain from stooping to falsify facts to sustain a position they wish to document. Dishonesty in regard to truth leads to dishonesty in regard to documentation.

A second reinforcement of this fact came in regard to Dr. Desmond Ford's evaluation of Elder Kai Arasola's dissertation, The End of Historicism. After reading Ford's article, "J'Accuse" which had been sent to me, I made some comments during our annual Fellowship, and they are no doubt on tape or video. When I obtained a copy of the book, and read what Dr. Arasola actually wrote, I then realized that Ford will bend documentation to sustain his false teachings. The greatest want of the world is still men who in their inmost souls are true and honest. The greatest need of the world is the righteousness of Christ which is "pure and unadulterated truth." God's concerned people are famishing for this "bread of heaven" because they are being fed so much straw which is packaged as truth.

So what is my resolution? Only publish as fact that which I can personally document as being correct and in context. Will this resolution be difficult to keep? Perhaps so, but these experiences of 1993 have etched themselves into my mind and consciousness.

In reference to the article in the Prophetic Observer, it is not that there is no factual data today in regard to the papal designs on Jerusalem. There is. In The Catholic World Report (November 1993) a news article on Israel (pp: 26-28) describes the slow progress in the full diplomatic recognition of Israel by the Vatican. It lists as the key to the solution - Jerusalem. "Rome has never hidden the fact that diplomatic relations hinge on the status of Jerusalem," wrote Jean-Marie Guenois, director of the Rome news agency I Media. Guenois quotes John Paul's vision for the city: "Jerusalem, the sacred capital, belongs by moral right to the faithful of the three great monotheistic religions." "Today the Holy See hopes to obtain an international guarantee regarding the rights of the city," wrote the news director. When this occurs, who knows what will happen in detail. We do know that Daniel 11:45 will be fulfilled, followed by Daniel 12:1. Who knows how soon the final events will be accelerated? The question is are we ready and do we cherish the truth as it is in Jesus?

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Osborne Rewrites History

Misapplies Prophecy

"Are You Ready for the Time of Trouble?" This is the question John Osborne asks in the October issue of Historic Adventist Landmarks (pp. 16-19). It appears from the contents that he is confused on which time of trouble he is writing about. He quotes Matthew 24:21-22 which reads: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of this world, no, nor ever shall be, and except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

Commenting he writes - "This means that it will be worse than any persecution that has ever come upon this earth. Are we really ready for this?" We see that he is applying this "tribulation" to the end time persecution of God's people. However, Jesus says, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give her light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken." (Matt. 24:29) If Osborne had just read these words of Jesus, he would have seen that the time of trouble described was the 1260-year period of papal persecution from 538 to 1798. This would have been in keeping with historic Adventism.

The Bible speaks of two times of trouble so severe that there will not be another like it. The 1260-year persecution was also prophesied in Revelation: "And it was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue and nation." (13:7 NKJV) Up to this time God had never given His faithful people up to be overcome by persecutors on such a scale as this. This is the one thing which makes this time of trouble different from any preceding it or to follow it.

Daniel also speaks of a time of trouble such as never was: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book." (12:1 NKJV) The word "nation" is the Hebrew, gohy, which is also translated, "heathen" or "Gentiles." It is the people of earth who are involved in this time of

trouble. While God's people are not free from suffering, they will be delivered.

The time of trouble involving God's people at this time is called "the time of Jacob's trouble." Osborne, commenting on this writes:

"We hear about the time of trouble, and then we hear about a special part of this time of trouble known as Jacob's time of trouble. During Jacob's night of wrestling, through the entire time he was struggling, he feared that his sin had not been forgiven. Though he had confessed and repented, he feared that he had not obtained forgiveness. During this time of trouble, God's people realize that there is no more forgiveness for sins. There is an awful realization that they are either saved, or lost, and that the plan of salvation is over. They will also be concerned as to whether they failed to do anything during the time of salvation." (pp. 18-19)

The time of Jacob's trouble is mentioned once in the Bible - Jeremiah 30. The entire chapter speaks of the restoration of Israel and Judah to their land. Verse 7 reads: "Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it."

In Genesis 32, we read that when Jacob heard that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 armed men, he was afraid. His prayer was:

"O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you.' I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which you have shown your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children. For you said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'" (9-12)

Jacob reminded God of His promises to him. He relied in faith on God to deliver him. After he did what he could to assure the safety of his family, he spent the night alone. The only thing the Scripture says of this night is - "Then Jacob was left alone, and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, 'Let me go for the day breaks.'

But he said, 'I will not let You go unless You bless me.' So He said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Jacob.' And He said, 'Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.'" (24-28, NKJV)

This is what is involved in the time of Jacob's trouble. Jacob knew God's promises. He had faith that God would do what He said. He had confessed his sin, and obtained forgiveness. He was doing what God told him to do, which was to return to his old home. It seemed that he was about to fall a victim to his brother's anger. His brother's anger was not unjustified. Jacob had defrauded him, but Jacob was not the same man he had been. He had been changed by the power of God. God would protect him. He knew this, but his faith had not yet been perfected. He had done everything he knew how to do to protect his family and his goods, but he had done this because he was afraid. Fear drove him to try to protect himself and his things. This fear and his reliance on his works to deliver himself had to be surrendered to God. This was accomplished during the night of hand to hand combat with God. When he realized Whom he was fighting, he totally yielded and cast himself on God's mercies.

This will be the experience that all of God's people who are alive on the earth when probation closes will go through. Satan will be allowed to tempt them severely. Every wrong act and word will come to their memories. All they can do is to say, "You are right, Satan. There is nothing good in me. I see it clearly now, but Jesus gave Himself for me. I have confessed and forsaken every sin. He has accepted me, and I am now His." Thus clinging by faith to God's promises, His people will be victorious. "It is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it."

In this article, Osborne also attempted to rewrite history. He wrote:

"Do you realize that in A.D. 69, when Cestius had surrounded Jerusalem, problems were encountered in the homeland and the Romans suddenly withdrew? This was a sign that had been given by Jesus nearly forty years earlier. The Christians, following Jesus' instructions, fled the city and not one was lost. The following year, Titus, another Roman general, again surrounded the city." (p. 18, col. 1)

The facts are, Cestius began his siege in late A.D. 66. After his withdrawal and defeat by Jewish insurgents in what became almost a rout,

it was 3½ years before the city was again attacked and destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70. We could perhaps say that A.D. 69 was a typographical error if it were not for the statement that Titus came the following year.

These are the most glaring examples from this article of very careless and slipshod Biblical interpretation and historical documentation.

Another very serious short-coming is the lack of Scripture as authority. In this entire article, there are only four references to Scripture. Of these four, two are included in quotations from Ellen G. White, and one is misinterpreted. There are 17 quotations from the Writings. This seems strange coming from one who professes to be a "historic Adventist" inasmuch as Ellen White, truly a pioneer historic Adventist wrote: "But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrine and the basis of all reforms." (GC, p. 595)

A publication that calls itself Historic Adventist Landmarks should do more careful editing of the articles published. One wonders, are the editors of this magazine aware of what constitutes truth? Do they read the articles submitted for publication? Or, are they in this instance afraid to ignite Osborne's temper by pointing out obvious serious errors in his work?

In the same issue, the editor-in-chief, John Grosboll writes:

"Departure from Bible truth must also be repented of, confessed, and forsaken... Whenever anyone becomes involved in error, when it is pointed out, he must go to the Lord, repent, confess and forsake it. If others have been hurt by their teaching, they need to go to them and confess and tell them they have forsaken their erroneous belief. If the offending person does not confess it, he must be separated from God's professed people." (p. 8)

Well said!

This definitely points up the fact that everything one reads in today's publications, or hears from the pulpit must be carefully checked to see if it squares with the Word of God. It also shows the necessity of personal Bible study coupled with prayer for the Holy Spirit's interpretation. We want, we need, truth "pure and unadulterated." (TM, p. 65)

Our Response - From page 2, col. 2

and strength to continue to cry out against the apostasy that has enveloped the Church. As long as He gives us breath, we shall continue to do so.

In these years, we have seen the Church make official the compromises made with the Evangelicals. We have seen written into the Church's Statements of Belief, the very wording of the Constitution of the World Council of Churches. We have seen the Church move from a single position in regard to the Incarnation of Jesus to a multiple position with each one free to believe what he wishes within the range, even including the teaching of an Anglican divine. Then you ask that we return to this situation without any changes being made on the Church's part. Is not this being a bit presumptive?

The Church is to be the pillar and ground of the truth. I Tim. 3:15. When this witness becomes once again the hallmark of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we shall be happy to consider your invitation.

Sincerely yours for both of us,

Wm. H. Grotheer, Editor

OF INTEREST

[An advertisement appearing in The Catholic World Report (p. 37) for the New Oxford Review. In large bold type the ad was headed: "Loyal Catholics: Don't Be Distressed"]

After Vatican II the number of converts to Catholicism slowed to a trickle. But now that the papacy has regained its bearings and confidence, the Church has attracted a new wave of converts, including highly literate people like Malcolm Muggeridge, Richard John Neuhaus [Editor-in-chief of First Things], and Lewis Lehrman.

What infuriates the neo-Modernists in the [RC] Church is that the new converts are being drawn by the Magisterium, the papacy, the Catholicism of the ages - all those things the dissenters want to dilute or dismember.

If you're distressed, consider: The dissenters are even more distressed! They know that orthodox

Catholicism is back with new life and vigor, that the tide is turning. But do you know?

The forum for the new generation of converts is the New Oxford Review, a monthly magazine which takes its name from the 19th-century Oxford Movement in England, and its inspiration from John Henry [Cardinal] Newman ...

According to Boston's Cardinal Law, "What is fascinating about the New Oxford Review is that it is a sign of contradiction." At a time when decadent Western culture has invaded the IRL Church, and well-publicized quisling Catholics are openly defiant of Church teaching, here is a counter-tendency celebrating the fullness of the Truth. Yes, as Newsweek says, we're "cheeky." What's more, we're "influential," to quote the Los Angeles Times.

But don't get us wrong: We're not just for converts. We're not out to repeal Vatican II. We welcome Protestant writers, solid "mere Christians" of the C. S. Lewis variety. We don't equate Catholicism with Americanism or Western Civilization. We're for Catholics with catholic tastes and inquiring minds.

Observation: The Papacy is on the move again!

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"These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates."

Zechariah 8:16

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