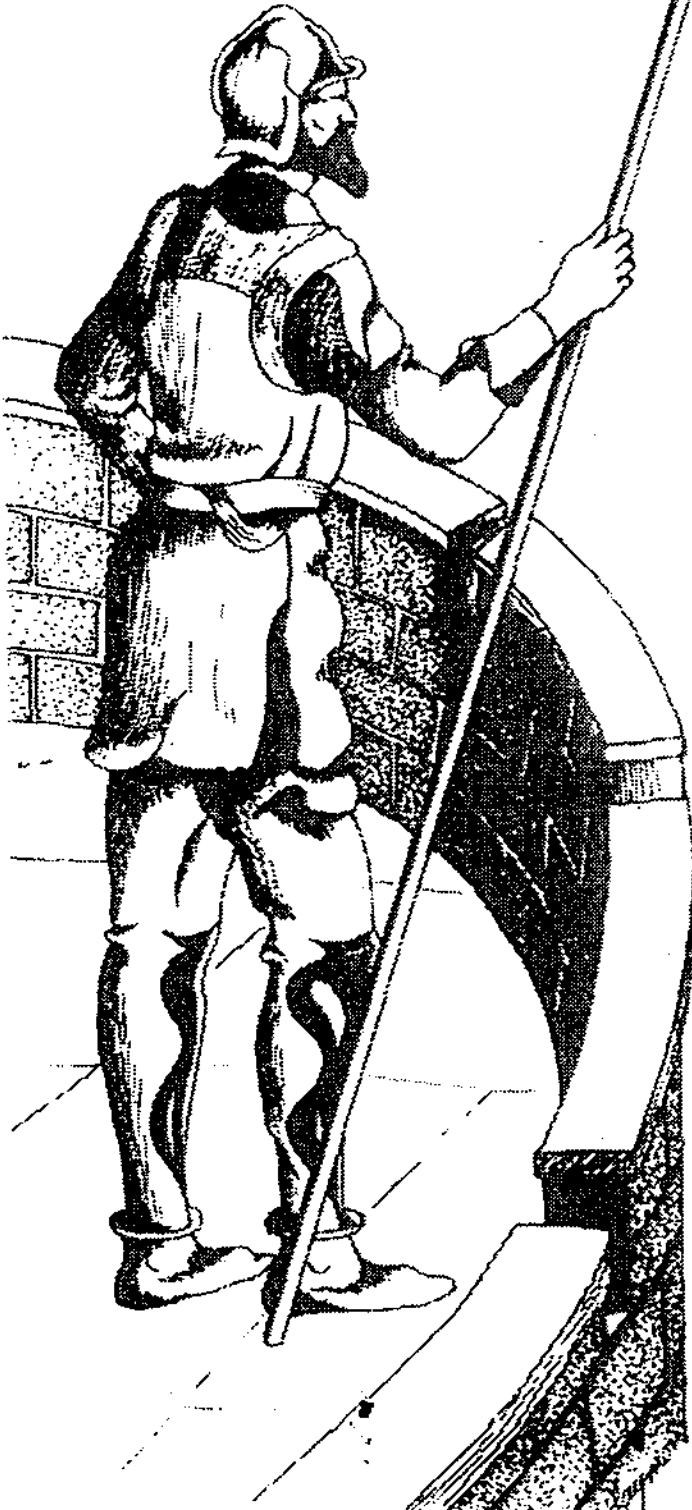


# "Watchman, what of the night?"

"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,  
the hour and the end!"

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



## LAW and GRACE

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HAVE THEY EMBRACED A "NEW THEOLOGY"?

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### Editor's Preface

This past Sabbath (May 27; this is being written on Memorial Day), we used as the basis for our Sabbath School Lesson, II Corinthians 3. The first question asked was, "What is 'the ministration of death?'" By noting the descriptive-words, "tables of stone" and "a veil" used by Moses to cover his face, it was evident that Paul was using Exodus 34 as the basis for chapter 3; and the only answer was the Law of Ten Commandments. This evoked concerned reaction, for Paul stated that it was to be "done away" (v. 11). Later Paul would write to the Romans, clearly referring to the Ten Commandments, "the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death" (7:10). Our tradition too often gets in our way. In the same chapter of his letter to the Corinthians is the setting forth of "the ministration of the Spirit" which was to be more glorious. While the Law is declared to be "the way of truth" (Ps. 119:30), is not the Spirit, "the Spirit of truth" to "guide...into all truth"? (John 16:13). While the Law is the "letter," grace is the enabling. What are you under? Law? or Grace?

For some time now the term "historic" Adventist has been promoted, along with the idea of "home" churches. The latter is not difficult to understand as there is Biblical reference for this mode of worship. The second article seeks to go to the root of what is meant by "historic" Adventists, which is foggy even in the minds of many who so describe themselves.

For those who might wish a position paper on "Spiritual Gifts," you may obtain a copy of one worked out in study conferences by sending a self-addressed stamped #10 envelope to the Foundation. Mark the request - "Position Paper". P. O. Box 69, Ozone, AR 72854.

The Review Continues:

## Law and Grace

"Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the Law but under grace." (Rom. 6:14)

The obvious meaning of what Paul wrote here in the book of Romans is that to be under law (no article in the Greek text) is to be under the dominion of sin, and that to be under grace is to be free from the dominion of sin. To the Church at Corinth, he had written that "the strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor. 15:56). Yet twice in the context of this verse in Romans, he asked, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (6:1); and "shall we sin, because we are not under law (again no article in Greek text), but under grace?" (6:15). To both questions, he replied, "God forbid."

Law has a specific purpose: "For by law (no article) is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). It cannot save us, but grace does. "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). Faith is involved both with grace and with sin and thus with law. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). In the classical Biblical definition of sin as "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), there is a single word which is too frequently overlooked, and that word is "also." Observe the whole verse:

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

In the commission of sin, there is something which precedes the act. Simply stated, it is the failure to exercise faith. This can be illustrated in the experience of Eve, Adam's response, and all that has followed in human history.

In the very heart of the garden, the home of our first parents, were placed two trees, designated as "the tree of life" and "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:9). Of this latter tree, man was forbidden to eat (2:16-17). It was not a part of the Ten Commandments, because that code had not been codified at that time. (This we shall discuss further on) The issue revolved around one thing and one thing only - faith, belief in God's word. This failure to exercise faith led to the act of transgression,

which in turn was followed by the reign of sin and death. For "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). It was God's word that our first parents rejected, but it was the same God whose word provided grace through "the redemption in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24-26).

God is the author of both law and grace, and that is why they cannot be separated but are linked in the exercise of faith. Without faith, I sin; without faith, I cannot please God; without faith, I cannot have victory. Without faith, I live under law; but by faith, I live under grace. "Do we then make void the law through faith?" Paul asks; and responds: "God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31).

Faith accepts the Word of God in law and/or commandment. But in the experiences of life, we soon recognize "another law in (our) members, warring against the law of (our) mind, and bringing (us) into captivity to the law of sin which is in (our) members" (Rom. 7:23). Overwhelmed by the power of the law of sin, we by faith reach out to accept the justification freely given "by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). And he who is justified must continue to live by faith (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17), so that the dominion of sin strengthened by the law shall not reign over him.

We need to consider the use of the term, law, in the New Testament and the continuing provision of grace. First ---

### The Use of "Law" (νομος) in the NT

The Hebrew Old Testament was divided into three sections - the Torah (*torah*), the Prophets (*nebi'im*), and the Writings (*kethavim*). The Torah consisted of the five books of Moses, and was called the Law. This needs to be kept in mind when considering the use of *νομος* in the New Testament. Jesus even used the term, "law" to cover the entire Old Testament. He asked the Jews, "Is it not written in your law (*νομος*), I said, Ye are gods?" and quoted from Psalms 82:6, the first book of the third section of the Hebrew canon. Then Luke in recording the conversation which Jesus had with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus wrote that Jesus, "beginning at Moses (Torah) and all the

prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures (γραφαις - writings) the things concerning Himself" (24:27). In a report of what Jesus said to the disciples when He appeared to them, where they had assembled after the resurrection, Luke records Jesus as saying, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses (Torah), and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me" (24:44). The conclusion is obvious that the term, "law" can not be used to mean exclusively, "the Ten Commandments," nor can the phrase, "law of Moses" be limited to the ceremonial code in Exodus and Leviticus. It is used in the New Testament to mean the first section of the Hebrew Scriptures - the Torah.

Paul's use of the term, "law," is even broader in its scope than is found in the Gospels. While he uses the term in conjunction with "prophets" - "the law and the prophets" - to refer to the Old Testament (Rom. 3:21); he also uses the single expression - "law" to designate the entire Old Testament (I Cor. 14:21). He definitely uses "law" to refer to the Ten Commandments. He wrote, "I had not known sin, but by the law," and then quotes one of the Ten (Rom. 7:7).

However, in this Epistle to the Romans is to be found Paul's broader application of the term, "law." He perceives of "another law in (his) members, warring against the law of (his) mind" (7:23). He designates this law as "the law of sin" in distinct contrast to "the law of God" (v. 25). He then points to another law, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" which frees him "from the law of sin and death" (8:2). In his previous epistle to the Galatians, he had written:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: for these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal. 5:17).

Then he added - "But if ye are led of the Spirit, ye are not under law" (v. 19; no article). Paul here presents a higher jurisdiction for the Christian than the letter of the Law, and thus he could write in his letter to the Romans:

We are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:6).

This brings us to the critical point: for what purpose does the law serve? In the letter to the Galatians, Paul had asked - "Wherefore serveth the law?" - and answered - "It was added because of transgressions" (3:19). He also in this same context set the time when it was added - "four hundred and thirty years after" the promise made to Abraham (3:16-17), or at Mt. Sinai.

It is this Pauline concept, that Adventism has had difficulty accepting. To avoid the inevitable conclusion which Paul drew, we have said that the "law" in Galatians is the ceremonial law. This was echoed in the debate which marked the 1888 General Conference Session over righteousness by faith. Paul was just as specific on this point in Romans as he was to the Galatians. He wrote, "Until the law, sin was in the world" (5:13), and he noted the time of the law as the time of Moses (v. 14). This demands that we take a very careful look at the inception of sin, and the record of sin that followed.

The test given in Eden was verily as much a law as the Ten Commandments proclaimed from Mt. Sinai. God told Adam - "thou shalt not eat of it" - the tree which came to be designated as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). There is no such law in the Ten. Yet the principle of that Edenic Law is stated in the Ten Commandments - "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3). There is no record of any other "Thou-shalt-not" commandments given to our first Parents. They could not have understood the meanings of stealing, murder, or adultery; neither lying nor covetousness. All of this was foreign to Eden; there was no need for such prohibitions.

With the coming of sin, the scene abruptly changes. There is the first murder. With this murder, God confronted Cain in judgment (Gen. 4:9-15). But what was its cause? Cain was "very wroth" (4:5); he hated his brother. Well could Paul write - "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Gal. 5:14). But how could man hidden from the face of God (Gen. 4:14) know love? He couldn't, hence the protecting wall of law - "thou shalt not" and in so doing, the letter of the law would be kept. "Before (righteousness by) faith came, they were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (Gal. 3:23). But now Jesus has come, and

we have become "the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ" (v. 26). In Him was revealed the love that man needs to be freed from the law of sin and death. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). This constraining love of Christ frees us from the law of sin and death, so that we are no longer under the law but under grace. At Mt. Sinai, the negatives against sin were codified; at Mt. Calvary was manifest the love to which all law and the prophets pointed (Matt. 22:40).

Paul also had something else to say about the Law. In his first letter to Timothy (1:5-11), he wrote:

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

As Paul is nearing the end of his ministry, and soon to seal his life's testimony with his own blood, he summarized his convictions in regard to the law and the gospel. The law is good if a man use it lawfully, but that law was not made for a righteous man, but for those who are walking contrary to the gospel.

### Justified by Faith

The very heart of the gospel proclaimed by Paul was that a man was "justified freely by (God's) grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). Therefore he could conclude "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:28). Being declared righteous - justified - a man is no longer under the law of works, but under the "law of faith" (3:27). He no longer concentrates on the negatives, but on "the purpose of the commandment" which "is love" ( $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ ) (I Tim. 1:5 NKJV). Being no longer under the constraints of the law, there is a higher constraint - "the love of Christ" constrains him (I Cor. 5:14). From a selfish

motivation to keep the law to be saved, he beholds a selflessness in the death of the Lamb of God which causes him "to love not (his) life unto the death" (Rev. 12:11).

This "treasure" of the *agape* love of Christ, the "righteous man" still carries in an "earthen" vessel. And this for a purpose, that he might ever recognize that "the excellency of the power may be of God and not of" himself (II Cor. 4:7). The failures and missteps along the way does not drive him to penitential "works" but to deep repentance at the throne of the divine Advocate (Heb. 4:16; I John 2:1). There he finds the renewed experience of that leper who came to Jesus in faith saying - "If thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He, too, will hear that voice, "I will ; be thou clean" (Mark 1:40-41). He finds that the excellency of the power of deliverance is of God.

The grace of God is not a one time gift, but a continual endowment. Again in one of his final pastoral letters, Paul tells Titus that "the grace of God that brings salvation" (2:11, NKJV) ("For by grace you have been saved through faith . . . it is the gift of God" Eph. 2:8 NKJV) is only the beginning of the outpouring of that grace. There is a teaching ministry which follows -

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world; looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave Himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (2:12-14)

Not only is the Lamb "as it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6) pleading His merits that we might be accounted righteous and thus freed from the curse of the law, but there is sent the Spirit of truth to "redeem us from all iniquity" - from the very bondage of sin itself. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Not only constrained by the love of Christ "who gave Himself for us," but we will bear "about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (II Cor. 4:10).

# "Historics"

(Written May 28, 2000)

During the third week in May, a group of "Independent" Seventh-day Adventists representing "home churches" from California to Maine gathered at the Pinecrest Campsite of the Christian and Missionary Alliance just south of Salus, Arkansas. We had used these same facilities a decade ago for Silver Lake East. Much improved, they provided a very desirable setting for a campmeeting. Living but six miles south of the camp site, a brother from St Lucia and I attended several of the meetings.

From the very first sentence spoken by the song leader and throughout the meetings, the emphasis was on the fact that those sponsoring and attending the Campmeeting were "historic" Adventists. That is good, but what is an "historic" Adventist? It had been my impression that the definition had been determined by the only theologian among them, Dr. Ralph Larson. He had written in "An Open Letter to the Church" published by Steps to Life:

My theology is precisely and specifically the theology set forth in the book Seventh-day Adventists Believe. If I am divisive, that book is also divisive. (p. 3)

The first problem to arise from this theological confession published by Steps to Life, is that the book, Seventh-day Adventists Believe is a confession of faith based on the Statement of Beliefs voted at the 1980 Dallas General Conference Session. It was this statement of beliefs which confirmed what is called the "new" theology. Further, prior to this signed letter, I had perceived, in error, that Dr. Larson drew the line between where the Church stood prior to the 1955-1956 conferences with the Evangelicals, and the resultant changes coming out of the conferences in the book, Questions on Doctrine. Here again, another problem arises. T. E. Unruh, in his report on these conferences which he chaired, wrote:

The Evangelical conferees were satisfied that we were presenting contemporary Adventist doctrines, because we were supported by the 1931 statement of fundamental beliefs. (See article by T. E. Unruh in Foundation Ms, The Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956)

By "contemporary Adventist doctrines" is meant teachings in contradistinction to positions affirmed in the Statements of Belief from 1872 to 1914. So then we are left with a possible definition of "historic" Adventism as a faith founded on pioneer positions stated from 1872 to 1931. From visiting with some in attendance at the Campmeeting, this is the concept which they held.

However, this is not the end of the problem raised by the use of the designation, "historic" Adventists. In 1890, the "messenger" of the Lord warned - "The truth is an advancing truth, we *must* walk in the increasing light" (R&H, March 25; emphasis supplied). Thus the static concept which the term "historic" represents fails to convey the real meaning of what being an Adventist should be - one "walk(ing) in the light" of "advancing truth." The solemn covenant made by the Puritans when first constrained to separate from the English Church was that as the Lord's free people, they would "walk together in all His ways made known or to be made known to them." The same "messenger" commented - "Here was the true spirit of reform, the vital principle of Protestantism" (GC, p. 291).

This "vital principle of Protestantism" requires another step. In other conversations with attendees and some speakers, I perceived that what is really meant by the designation of "historic" Adventist, is that the term is applied to those who take what Ellen G. White says on any Biblical text and life-style as the final authority. Thus her writings are used as an Adventist *magesterium*, or a third canon of Scripture by the "historic" Adventist. This, even in the light of the fact that she wrote:

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)

And again in comment on the Reformation:

The experience of these noble Reformers contains a lesson for all succeeding ages. Satan's manner of working against God has not changed; he is still as much opposed to the Scriptures being made the guide of life as in the sixteenth century. In our time there is a wide departure from their doctrines and precepts, and there is a need of a return to the great Protestant principle, - the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty. (*ibid.*, pp. 204-205)

It was interesting to observe the round table

(question and answer) period at the campmeeting. One sincere young man sat at the end of the benches placed on the rostrum, with his computer loaded with the CD Rom on the Writings. For every question asked he sought to find an E. G. White directive. In a pleasant contrast to this emphasis was the only sermon that I heard Dr. John Grosboll present. He went into the pulpit with his Bible only and gave a sermon based strictly on Biblical exegesis. While one might question an exegetical point or two, it was a Biblically based presentation.

Combined with this perception of what an "historic" Adventist is, there was linked in some minds of those whom I questioned, the idea that we should hold to the teachings of the pioneers. This, they really would have had some trouble with, had the doctrine of God as taught by our pioneers been discussed with them, for the first speaker was definitely Trinitarian and made it plain to his listeners that he was. The problem is twofold. Many "historic" Adventists do not know what was taught in the days of our pioneers, neither are they willing to recognize in their present study, the advancing light of truth. Probably a better term would be to call themselves, "static" Adventists.

Let us recognize that our pioneers laid the foundation of our faith by the example of careful and thorough study of the Bible. While all their concepts were not free from error, they nevertheless based the true light which they did perceive on a solid foundation and declared what that foundation was.

In the 1872 Statement of Beliefs, the first statement formulated, after a confession in regard to God and Jesus Christ, read:

The Holy Scriptures, of the Old and New Testament, were given by inspiration of God, contain a full revelation of His will to man, and are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

This statement remained unaltered in every statement of beliefs appearing in an official publication of the church. It was to appear last in this form in the 1914 Year Book. No official statement was again printed till the 1931 Year Book. In that year, the first statement of the Statements of Belief read:

The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were

given by the inspiration of God, contain an all-sufficient revelation of His will to men, and are the only unerring rule of faith and practice.

Certain words used in these two statements should be carefully considered. Note "an all-sufficient revelation" and "a full revelation;" also "the only infallible rule" and "the only unerring rule." If language has any meaning to express thought and concepts, these words are saying that apart from the Bible - the Old and New Testaments - there is no other all-sufficient and full revelation of the will of God for men, neither is there any other infallible and unerring rule of faith and practice. This is where the Seventh-day Adventist Church stood from 1872 until 1980. This stand does not leave room for a "third canon" of Scripture, nor does it permit an equality of a "lesser light" with a "greater light."

During the same period of time - 1872 - 1914 - the Statements of Belief read in regard to Spiritual Gifts:

The Spirit of God was promised to manifest itself in the church through certain gifts, enumerated especially in I Cor. 12 and Eph. 4; that these gifts are not designed to supersede, or to take the place of, the Bible, which is sufficient to make us wise unto salvation, any more than the Bible can take the place of the Holy Spirit; that in specifying the various channels of its operation, that the Spirit has simply made provision for its own existence and presence with the people of God to the end of time, to lead to an understanding of that word which it had inspired, to convince of sin, and work a transformation in the heart and life; and that those who deny to the Spirit its place and operation, do plainly deny that part of the Bible which assigns to it this work and position.

The 1931 Statement was more concise. It stated simply:

God has placed in His church the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as enumerated in I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4. That these gifts operate in harmony with the divine principles of the Bible, and are given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12).

By 1950 changes from the positions held in the past began to appear in the published works of the Church, such as the alteration in Bible Readings for the Home Circle regarding the doctrine of the Incarnation. Whether as a defensive attempt to retard such changes, or for some other motivation,

the General Conference Session of 1950, added two sentences to the 1931 Statement on "Spiritual Gifts" noted above. They read:

That the gift of the Spirit of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church. They recognize that this gift was manifest in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White.

This act has far reaching implications whether intended to do so or not. For the first time in a statement of beliefs which concern, God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and doctrines of the Infallible Word of God, there was placed the name of a human being. Add to this the doctrinal upheaval that transpired following 1950 - the SDA-Evangelical Conferences, the SDA-WCC Conferences (See So Much In Common), and the Desmond Ford frontal attack on basic Adventism, and you have a basis for understanding the new formulation which occurred at the 1980 General Conference Session.

This doctrinal formulation at the Dallas Session confirmed the Nicene Creed, the doctrinal basis to become a member of the WCC if such a step is contemplated. Other doctrinal concepts were altered, such as the Incarnation and the Atonement. But while such "new theology" was being affirmed, a "new theology" was also formulated in regard to the Writings of Ellen G. White. It read:

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifest in the ministry of Ellen G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing source of truth which provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Emphasis supplied)

The last sentence is ambiguous. Is it saying that the Writings establish the authority of the Bible, or that they are confessing the primacy of the Scriptures? The emphasized words place the Church as no longer holding the "all-sufficient" Bible, as the "only infallible" source of truth. And as it would then be necessary, the 1980 Statement omits from the first statement on "The Holy Scriptures" the word, "only"; and in listing the purposes of the Bible it does not state that it is the "all sufficient" and a "full revelation of the will of God" as did the previous Statements from 1872-1931.

This places the current "historic" Adventist in a very

difficult position. By holding the Writings to be the defining factor as to whether one is "historic" or not, means the acceptance of one phase of the "new theology" of the 1980 Statement. Further it is rejecting the true historic position of the Church on the Bible from 1872 to 1980 as well as the rejection of the fundamental principle which was the hallmark of Protestantism.

There is no question but that one could cite the writing of various pioneers of the Church to support the "new theology" of the 1980 Statement in regard to the Writings of Ellen G. White. But the beliefs and convictions of individuals do not determine the position of the Church, nor even what the Bible really teaches on a given doctrine. This has been aptly illustrated in the present agitation by the current anti-Trinitarians. They quote the positions of men, not the Statement of Beliefs of the body. The Church founded on the Word of God bases its teaching on that Word, and when it takes a stand contrary to that Word, it becomes apostate, no matter how many personal convictions can be quoted. Let us be Bible Adventists, and "Followers of the Way" even as the early Apostolic Church. Let us return to a primitive faith and godliness.

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Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

Heb. 10:19-22

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