

*"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)



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EDITOR'S PREFACE

We had announced in the Special Issue of WWN 95(2), p. 7, that there would be no January 1996 issue of the Thought Paper; and that in its place we would substitute the booklet, The SIGN of the End of Time. However, information and documentation coming to this desk makes imperative that we publish a January issue of WWN. This does not mean that we will cancel the mailing of the booklet; we are sending it out as scheduled.

What makes the report of the Convocation on the campus of Union College so painful is the fact that Union College is my alma mater. During three of the four years that I pursued my under graduate studies, I was was Reader in the Department of Religion working for both Dr. I. F. Blue and Elder J. W. Rowland. These men not only had seen service in the Mission Field, but were solid conservative Bible teachers who believed and taught the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation according to the hermeneutics of historic Protestantism. They knew what the prophecies had to say about the Papacy, and what history records of the 1260 years of its medieval supremacy.

The fact that the convocation held on the campus of Union College was "the first time anywhere this kind of a thing had been done" makes it even more painful. However, the change in thinking which would permit this kind of convocation to take place did not occur overnight, nor is such thinking restricted only to the leadership of the college. It is a church-wide trend indicating that the Church has joined the trek towards Rome.

Those who claim Pacific Union College as their alma mater will be equally startled by a first on that campus. As far as anyone can remember a "non-Adventist" conducted for the first time the Fall Week of Prayer for the student body. That "non-Adventist" was a Roman Catholic ex-priest, and a recovering alcoholic. We shall make further comment in another issue of WWN.

RC CARDINAL IN SDA PULPIT

The Lincoln Journal Star of Saturday, October 21, 1995, carried the announcement of a three day Convocation to be held on the campus of Union College sponsored by Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska. This is the first in a three-year series of annual convocations planned by the Interchurch Ministries. The focus of this first conference was on Baptism to be followed by communion and ministry the next two years. The Executive Secretary of the Interchurch Ministries stated that "together with baptism, they represent the three ecumenical issues facing efforts at church cooperation and unity worldwide."

Actually, these three topics were the basis of the Lima Text drawn up by the Faith and Order Commission in 1982, and published by the WCC as Faith and Order Paper #111. It needs to be kept in mind that this text was hailed as a break-through in ecumenical relations. In the preface to the document, one reads:

"Those who know how widely the churches have differed in doctrine and practice on baptism, eucharist and ministry, will appreciate the importance of the large measure of agreement registered here. Virtually all the confessional traditions are included in the Commission's membership. That theologians of such widely different traditions should be able to speak so harmoniously about baptism, eucharist and ministry is unprecedented in the modern ecumenical movement. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Commission also includes among its full members theologians of the Roman Catholic and other churches which do not belong to the World Council of Churches itself." (p. ix)

In the Appendix of this Text are listed three publications by the WCC to assist churches in the implementation of this ecumenical unity. Two of them are written by a Catholic priest, Max Thurian. One carries a very interesting title - Baptism and Eucharist: Ecumenical Convergence in Celebration - inasmuch as this convocation was devoted to the subject of Baptism.

The Executive Secretary perceived of this convocation as an opportunity for people "to come together and celebrate together, worship together, talk together, enjoy together." It was called a "Roots and Branches Convocation." The first worship service featured as its speaker,

William Cardinal Keeler, archbishop of Baltimore, and president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. His subject was "Baptism and the Community." The service was conducted in the College View Seventh-day Adventist Church.

One is left to wonder if the Interchurch Ministries had "the root" speak first, and the "branches" were to fall into line. Does the responsible leadership of Union College perceive of itself as a "branch" of Romanism? This question is not asked merely in a rhetorical sense. It is asked seriously for two reasons: 1) They had to know, when they granted the use of the College facilities to the Ministries, the purpose of the Convocation and what its theme was to be; and 2) because C. Mervyn Maxwell of Andrews University in his commentary on Daniel wrote:

"The Roman Catholic Church was virtually the Christian church in Western Europe for about a thousand years. Because of this early universality, both Protestants and Catholics may regard it as the embodiment of 'our' Christian heritage, for better or for worse." (God Cares - I, p. 127; emphasis his)

Let this concept - that the Roman Catholic Church is "the embodiment of our Christian heritage - be taught to several generations of graduate students who then take places of responsibility in the various areas of the Church's ministry, and what attitudes will be projected and what decisions will be made? Add to this the fact that the new president of the Mid-America Union Conference has a track record of seeking union and fellowship with Rome in Health Services, first as president in Hawaii, and then in Colorado. As chairman of the Union College Board, he would not oppose what the College administration did in working with the Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.

Some History

This coziness with Rome did not develop in a day. One of the first evidences was the reaction of the Editor of the Signs, Arthur S. Maxwell, upon his return from Vatican II. In a sermon given at the University Church in Loma Linda, Maxwell, father of C. Mervyn noted above, suggested - "We must rethink our approach to our Roman Catholic friends." Having cited the Pope's opening speech of the Council as a picture of the church loving humanity, with "unfeigned love for everybody - the separated brethren and people who don't belong and all people of all faiths and religions," he asked, "How

can we reject an outstretched hand and be Christians?" He suggested that the sermons preached in the past revealing the atrocities of Rome and its blasphemous doctrines must now be scrapped. (Present Truth, 1968, No. 2) This concept is reflected by son, Mervyn, in his comments on Daniel 7, where he claims that God purposefully presented a one-sided picture of Rome as a terrible beast" thus charging God with deliberate distortion in giving the Scripture of truth. (op. cit.; see also Daniel 10:21)

In less than a decade, this suggested change by Arthur Maxwell was made a matter of Federal Court record in the case of EEOC v. PPPA. In a footnote to a Reply Brief, the Church stated:

"Although it is true that there was a period in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when the denomination took a distinctly anti-Roman Catholic viewpoint, and the term 'hierarchy' was used in a perjorative sense to refer to the papal form of church governance, that attitude on the Church's part was nothing more than a manifestation of widespread anti-pope among conservative protestant denominations in the early part of this century and the latter part of the last, and which has now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned." (Excerpts Legal Briefs, p. 41*)

Another outgrowth of the contacts made by Adventist observers while in attendance at Vatican II, was a dialogue with representatives of the WCC. This led to the ultimate placement of a Seventh-day Adventist theologian on the Faith and Order Commission, and Dr. B. B. Beach becoming secretary of the Secretaries of the World Confessional Families. In this capacity, on a trip to Rome, he placed in the hands of Pope Paul VI, a gold medallion as a symbol of the Church. (R&H, August 11, 1977, p. 23) This symbolic act is not without significance.

At the General Conference Session held in 1990 at Indianapolis, Indiana, T. J. Murphy, pastor of the capital Saint Joan of Arc Roman Catholic Church, attended as an observer and official guest representing the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. He brought greetings from the Roman Church, and closed his remarks with a prayer from the Catholic liturgy. (1990 GC Bulletin, No. 7, p. 8)

Baptism

The first of the three planned annual convocations of the Interchurch Ministries of

Nebraska dealt with the subject of Baptism. In Catholicism it is "the most necessary Sacrament because without Baptism no one can be saved, [and] because without Baptism no other Sacrament can be received." (Catechism for the Parochial Schools of the United States, p. 67) This Catechism teaches that "Baptism is administered by pouring water on the head of the person to be baptized," indicating that the amount of water should be "enough to touch and flow from the skin."

The new Catechism of the Catholic Church which John Paul II asserts to be "a sure norm for teaching the faith," declares that "Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life." It even defines the term baptism to mean "to 'plunge' or 'immerse;' the 'plunge' into the water symbolizes the catechumen's burial into Christ's death, from which he rises up by resurrection with him, as 'a new creature.'" (p. 342) In the summary of the section, it is stated - "The essential rite of Baptism consists in immersion of the candidate in water or pouring water on his head." (p. 357)

This apparently new aspect of Roman Catholic baptism was contrary to what I had perceived their rite to be - sprinkling. So I called the local priest, and he confirmed that immersion is now practiced in the Catholic Church, and that some new churches under construction will have a baptistry as any Adventist or Baptist church would have. He indicated that he administered the rite by pouring, and that he personally was unaware of sprinkling ever having been used. However, the New Baltimore Catechism (1949, rev. ed.) declared plainly that "the sacrament of Baptism may be validly administered: first, by immersion; second, by pouring; third, by sprinkling." (Emphasis theirs) Then a comment was added - "According to Church law, however, it is not now licit to confer Baptism by the method of sprinkling." (p. 187)

Since now the Roman Catholic Church is moving toward baptism by immersion, the real issue ceases to focus on how the rite is administered to the meaning of the rite itself. Is baptism a sacrament of regeneration, or a testimony to regeneration?

In Catholic teaching, Baptism is a means of grace. In their new Catechism it is stated:- "Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship." It is referred to as "a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins.

birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit." (p. 357) What baptism as a Sacrament is perceived to accomplish for and in the one baptized can be perceived when one realizes that infant baptism is urged without any "belief" on the baby's part. The new Catechism reads:

"The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth." (p. 350)

On the other hand the Protestant position is that

baptism is a public testimony of an experience already realized between the individual and the Holy Spirit by repentance of sins and acceptance by faith of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Rom. 3:24)

How then can there be any fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness, or communion between light and darkness? (II Cor. 6:14)

‡

*Excerpts Legal Briefs is again available, as is also Steps to Rome from the Adventist Laymen's Foundation at \$2.00 each plus \$3.00 postage.

Baptism is focus of convocation at Union College

Lincoln Journal Star
Saturday, October 21, 1995 **3C**

Convocation will focus on baptism

Baptism will be the theme at the Roots and Branches Convocation, Thursday through Sunday at Union College, sponsored by Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.

Speakers include William Cardinal Keeler, archbishop of Baltimore and president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops; the Rev. Michael Kinnamon, dean of Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky; the Rev. Gayle Felton of Duke University Divinity School; and Brigalia Bam, general secretary of the South Africa Council of Churches.

The event is the first in a three-year series of annual convocations for laypersons and clergy, said Daniel Davis, executive secretary of Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska.

More than 200 people from across Nebraska and around the country are expected to attend. Convocations in 1996 and 1997 will focus on communion and ministry. Together with baptism, they represent the three key ecumenical issues facing efforts at church cooperation and unity worldwide, Davis said.

The convocation is an opportunity for people "to come together and celebrate together, worship together, talk together, enjoy together," he said. "So far as we know, this is the first time anywhere this kind of thing has been done."

Cost of the entire convocation is \$95, but people wishing to attend only a portion of the conference could negotiate a lower fee, Davis said.

Edward Cardinal Cassidy, president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, was scheduled to attend but at the last minute was sent by the pope to Rumania. Monsignor John Radano, a staff member of the Pontifical Council, will attend as his representative.

A worship service at 7 p.m. at College View Seventh-day Adventist Church, 4015 S. 49th St., with Keeler speaking on "Baptism and the Community," is open to the public. An offering will be taken.

Music at that event and a concert Friday evening will be provided by Bread for the Journey, a Lutheran touring company from Minneapolis. A special concert by the Plymouth Brass will be held at 8 p.m. Saturday at First-Plymouth Congregational Church, 2000 D St. Admission to the concert is \$7.50 in advance, \$9 at the door.

For information, convocation registration or concert tickets, contact the Interchurch Ministries office by calling 476-3391. The deadline for convocation registration is Tuesday,

ARE ADVENTISTS Still People of THE Book?

This question was asked in Spectrum (Vol. 25, #1) in a report of one of the scheduled events at the General Conference Session in Utrecht, the Netherlands. In advance of the 1995 Session, six "breakout discussion papers" had been prepared and distributed to the delegates. Two of these dealt specifically with the Bible, one on "The Authority of Scripture," and the other on "The Use of Scripture in the Life of the SDA Church."

From the many thousands in attendance, "the authority of Scripture document drew no more than a couple hundred individuals in the main meeting hall of the session. The music hall across the street was virtually empty, with audience members ready to discuss the use of Scripture outnumbering the six panel members by no more than five or six to one." (p. 25)

The author of the report, Dr. Douglas Clark, dean of the School of Theology at Walla Walla College, closed his write-up with "A Personal Analysis." He concluded:

"First it is clear that the serious tone and protective stance adopted by the authors of the documents [read] reveal deep concerns about Bible study in the life of the church. Honestly laying claim to the appellation 'People of the Book' is much more difficult today for Seventh-day Adventists than in the past...

"Finally, it is also clear, from the extremely low attendance levels at these sessions, that either the church and its members already believe they know what they need to know about the Bible (its authority, inspiration, interpretation, and application), or they don't much care anymore. Neither option is very encouraging." (p. 29)

Before discussing the reasons why the lack of interest in discussion of papers on the Bible, it might be well to note what was said in at least the first paper on "The Authority of Scripture." It had been prepared by Dr. Raoul Dederen, former dean of the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University. (Not having Dr. Dederen's paper from which to quote, I must rely on Clark's report of what was read) In the second section of Dederen's document, "fears regarding threats to the Bible as the 'infallible revelation of God's will' were expressed. "All too often,

the document asserted, human reason, tradition, or experience have replaced Scripture as the norm for Adventist belief and practice." (p. 30, emphasis his)

One can only say "Amen" to this evaluation. Dederen is "right on" in this assessment.

"The 'pernicious claims of science' to supercede Biblical truth came under strong critique in the document's third section. Historicity and factuality in the Genesis accounts of Creation take center stage and stand in judgment of errant scientific theories and of those church members anxious "to placate the scientists.' While not dismissing science entirely, the document clearly subsumed science beneath the factual claims of the Bible." (ibid.)

Again, one can say, "Amen"!

"Threats springing from an overemphasis on the cultural conditioning of Biblical texts have further undermined Biblical authority, according to the next section of the document. Decrying the devastating effects resulting from this relativising trend, the paper laid claim to 'a continuous history of an unbroken connection' that binds the Biblical past to the modern reader in such a way to supercede all cultures." This is true because it is one Holy Spirit which has spoken in the Word. (One could wish that Dr. Dederen had applied this principle in his presentation on the ordination of women)

The final and longest section of the document emphasized "the need for church discipline in the face of failure to submit to Biblical authority and norms." This section evidently evoked the most discussion and criticism from the floor. I will reserve comment on this section until I can read the document itself on this recommendation.

The document which addressed the use of the Bible in the life of the Church was anonymously written having been requested by the Administrative Council of the General Conference. "The council had asked an unidentified individual to write the initial draft, which took on numerous changes as it snaked its way through a series of committees and readers." (p. 27) One panel member recommended changes in the paper, suggesting a future life for the document. Comment then needs to be reserved until the final draft is released, if and when such should occur.

We turn now to the reasons why so little interest was manifest in these documents at the

General Conference Session of the Church. No doubt both reasons suggested by Dr. Clark are valid. The Laodicean stance marks the Church - increased with goods and in need of nothing. (Rev. 3:17) This leads to a superficial, don't care attitude.

There was a time when the laymen of the Church knew as much Bible as the average clergyman of many of the larger denominations. That is no more, and the reason is simply that we are no longer a people of the Book. Higher education in which the graduate is subjected to a liberal modernistic interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures has left its mark. The historical account found in Genesis chapters one to eleven is called into question. The God whose power permits Him to speak and it is done is diminished to a god who had to work through thousands of years of time with forces of nature to accomplish his objectives. Yet these who so believe still call themselves Seventh-day Adventists, and are in high places of influence in the regular Church.

Today the Community of Adventism is fractured, and the groups who refer to themselves as "historic" Adventists contribute to this demise of the Bible as the sole authority in doctrine and practice. Unable to defend themselves against Ford's attack on the Sanctuary truth from the Bible, they quote Ellen G. White. Unable to comprehend the doctrinal teaching of righteousness by faith, they suggest that some of Paul's writings should be ignored. In doing so, these false "voices" have led the people who have listened to them to do as they have done, put the Writings above the Bible. If confronted with this charge, there would deny it, but they still speak and write as if "the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy" combined are sacred Scriptures.

Visiting a few Sabbaths ago with a couple, the conversation turned to some meetings of "independents" the brother had attended in Northwest Arkansas. He was disturbed by the emphasis of the Writings over and above the Bible by the speakers. In the course of the day, he visited with a devout little old lady and brought up his concern that folk in attendance seem to hold the Writings above the Bible. She looked up into his face, and said in all sincerity, "I do." Does this not tell us why in the so-called "historic" Adventist sector of the Community of Adventism, the people so influenced are no longer the people of the Book. And their so-called leaders set the example!

These men who are setting themselves forth as

"voices" of so-called "historic" Adventism well know that Ellen G. White wrote - "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." (The Great Controversy, p. 595; emphasis supplied) However, instead of preparing such a people for whom God is looking, they are deceiving devout concerned souls into accepting a substitute basis for all doctrines and reforms because they themselves cannot defend the positions they are maintaining, as "historic" Adventists, from the Bible only.

There is no question that the Bible teaches the doctrine of Spiritual Gifts one of which is the gift of prophecy. However, there are other gifts indited by the same Holy Spirit - apostles, evangelists, and pastor-teachers. The gift of prophecy is placed in the league with these, not on a parity with the Bible by which all gifts are to be tested. The pioneers of Adventism understood this well, and wrote emphatically -

"Every Christian is duty bound to take the Bible as the perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and **takes an extremely dangerous position**. The Word should be in front, and the eye of the church should be placed upon it, as the rule to walk by, and the fountain of wisdom, from which to learn duty in 'all good works.'" (Editorial, R&H, April 21, 1851; emphasis supplied)

So long as these "voices" in "independent" Adventism continue by preaching and teaching to lead sincere and concerned Adventists into this "extremely dangerous position" just so long will this segment in the Community of Adventism cease to be "people of the Book." So long as the regular Church refuses to exercise its authority to discipline those out of harmony with its teachings, just so long will there continue in the church, those professed Adventists who deny the Biblical account of origins. Such are not people of the Book!

We have reached a sad day in Adventism. There is denial of the Word of God on one hand which goes undisciplined, and there is a substitution for the Word on the other hand which has engendered confusion through multiple interpretations and misapplications of the Writings.

LET'S TALK IT OVER

In the compilation Fundamentals of Christian Education, pp. 129-137, is reprinted an article from the Review & Herald, August 21, 1888 which was captioned - "The Book of Books. One paragraph reads:

"The Bible is not exalted to its place, and yet of what infinite importance it is to the souls of men. In searching its pages, we move through scenes majestic and eternal. We behold Jesus, the Son of God, coming to our world, and engaging in the mysterious conflict that discomfited the powers of darkness. O how wonderful, how almost incredible it is, that the infinite God would consent to the humiliation of His own dear Son! Let every student of the Scriptures contemplate this great fact, and he will not come forth from such a contemplation without being elevated, purified, and enobled." (p. 131)

I could write on every page of every issue of WVN, and preach in every sermon that I give that the Bible is not being exalted in Adventism at the present time to its proper place, and quote this statement. What good would such an exercise be if I did not demonstrate that I believe that this is what should be done, and do it. By preaching sermons based in the Word of God, and writing articles drawn from contemplation of the Word is indeed placing the Word in its rightful place.

I could tell people that in the Word they would find "scenes majestic and eternal." This is true, but how much better to read from the Word itself those majestic and eternal scenes. The "mysterious conflict" that broke the powers of darkness, the humiliation of Jesus in order to accomplish it, is more than mere summary sentences. We need to hear Isaiah tell about the Lamb that was led to the slaughter. We need to grasp what it means that His soul was made an offering for sin (Isa. 53:7, 10), that He was made to be sin for us who knew no sin (II Cor. 5:21). We need to meditate on the depth of what it means that Christ "emptied Himself" and accepted the slave form of man. (Phil. 2:7 Gr.) Then instead of merely "preaching" what Ellen White wrote, we will proclaim the Bible, and in so doing feed the souls of the famished flock of God.

Well did Ellen White tell a group of ministers

gathered in the old Battle Creek College library on April 1, at the time of the 1901 General Conference Session:

"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 - O you will have precious matter; you won't be going over and over the same ground, and you will see a world saved. You will see souls for whom Christ died [saved]. And I ask you to put on the armor, every piece of it, and be sure that your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel." (Spalding & Magan Collection, p. 174)

If this scene from 1901 could be replayed in 1996, the group would be the "voices" of so-called "historic" Adventism, Ellen White would say the same thing to them.

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THINK AHEAD

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Editor Elder Wm. H. Grotheer

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Our 800 Number is 800-4-LAYMEN (800-452-9636)
FAX - 501-292-3745
