



*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

GC SESSION - "A WATERSHED" PROBLEMS WITHIN AND ON EDGES

Comments and Observations

On June 27, the opening day of the Fifty-fourth General Conference Session of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Elder Neal C. Wilson issued a series of public statements on secular issues after consultation with the 16 world vice presidents of the Church. (Bulletin, #2, p. 2-3) These statements included pronouncements on Peace, Racism, Home and Family, and Drugs. Each statement was noted as based upon one of "the church's Bible-based Fundamental Belief[s]" in that particular area. This phraseology is interesting in the light of the emphasis given to the 27 Statements of Belief on The John Ankerberg Show by the editor of the Adventist Review. Further with the numerous letters circulated prior to the Session calling for revision of the 27 Statements to bring them into line with the Bible, this phraseology says something of Wilson's thinking, and the thinking of the "princes" of the Church: - they are all "Bible-based" and need no revision, only editorial rewording as was done on one Statement! This is open to serious question and challenge.

While basically, the public Statements addressed forthrightly present-day issues in the secular world, it failed to come face to face with the crucial issue involving

Seventh-day Adventists in various parts of the world. While it decried apartheid, it did not mention the denial of basic human rights in Communist countries, nor the murder and cruel imprisonment of true Adventists in those lands. In fact the attitude toward the delegation from the USSR manifest at the Session should cause grave concern to the laity of the Church here in America and every other free country. When the Russian delegation appeared on the platform for a report from their field, the Bulletin stated "much applause greeted" them. (#7, p. 2) The writer for "The Day in Review" commented:

I feel a chill shiver up and down my spine as the Russian delegation of seven headed by M. P. Kulakov marches on stage. A Russian lady with a charming smile carries the red flag of the Soviet Union, emblazoned with a hammer and sickle.

The audience breaks out into spontaneous applause. (Ibid)

This red flag drips with the blood of the True and Free Seventh-day Adventists as well as others, and yet the delegates and visitors spontaneously break forth into applause. Unbelievable! This should tell the laity in the field where the organization is drifting, supported by those who came as delegates to this world Session.

Not only this, but a special status was accorded to this USSR delegation. At the opening Session, Elder Alf Lohne, a vice president of the General Conference offered a motion to have two representatives seated on the nominating committee. It was voted.

All of this raises a question. Will the "princes" of the Church ever issue a statement condemning persecution and the denial of basic human rights in the USSR and its satellites? If the reports as found in the Bulletins of this session are any indication, the answer is a resounding - NO! On the front cover of Bulletin #9 are pictured the "princes" of the Church as elected by the session. In the bottom picture standing with the Division Presidents is Kulakov, who headed the USSR delegation. He was not elected by the session, but derives his power solely from the atheistic Communist government of the USSR. If these "princes" in consultation with the "Pontiff" should decide to issue a condemnation of the USSR for its violation of human rights and the murder of Seventh-day Adventists - and they should - will Kulakov have a voice?

During the session, an attempt was made to approve a statement coming from the Annual Council on proper Sabbath observance. What did Kulakov say?

It is very important to encourage our members everywhere to use God's gift, the Sabbath, and to keep this commandment. This document in the form in which it is presented makes me very uncomfortable because in the particular area in which I live and work it may create many problems. (Bulletin #8, p. 28)

To this Wilson responded -

Brother Kulakov and our world leaders were present at the 1984 Annual Council when it was endorsed. We have been very sensitive to some of the matters our brother has stated, and considerable softening was done in response to suggestions. Again, I appeal that no action be taken here today. The document from the Annual Council is in the hands of the delegates as counsel, and that is sufficient. (Ibid.)

Notice Wilson's comment - "considerable softening was done in response to suggestions" of what was presented at the Annual Council, but this still was not enough for Kulakov. Would a Statement on Human Rights - forthrightly written - be any more acceptable than was the one on proper Sabbath keeping?

It was over this issue that a confrontation took place between the hierarchy of the Church and some of the members of the Adventist Community on the periphery. The Times-Picayune, on July 1, 1985, quoted

Kulakov as stating:

Some people here in the West, I see, have a misunderstanding about religion in the USSR. Some people think people (there) are not free to practice religion openly. It is not so.

As a result of this lie, a group headed by Adventist doctor, Deone Hanson, passed out a hurriedly printed flyer denouncing Kulakov as "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing," and warning the delegates to "Beware." These flyers were distributed on the bridge-ramp between the Superdome and the Hyatt Regency Hotel. [A colored picture of this ramp can be seen in Bulletin #4, p. 17] However, the group was arrested, placed in handcuffs, and lodged in a New Orleans jail. One of those arrested was Patrick Jones from Ohio. Here is his story:

A group of concerned Seventh-day Adventists, whom God had providentially brought together at New Orleans for the GC convention, began to distribute leaflets, hold banners, and publically call for repentance. This was an effort to: 1) educate the average SDA lay person who perishes for lack of knowledge concerning his own condition and that of the church; 2) raise a voice of entreaty for the release of imprisoned Adventists in communist countries; and 3) counter the work of disguised evil in the church. All week long we kept on the public sidewalk in front of the Superdome. Our presence there was heatedly challenged several times by the church administration.

On Thursday night, July 4, we moved our work to the large ramp which led from the luxurious Hyatt Regency Hotel (where the SDA elite were staying), over a public road, and into the Superdome. Previously, security personnel had informed us that somewhere in the middle of this specious, open-air ramp there was a public area where we could distribute pamphlets, etc. On this ramp we began to meet many interested people whom we had not met at the front of the Superdome. But soon the SDA administration called the security personnel who hand-cuffed and arrested us. As Independence Day drew to a close, we were led off to the New Orleans' jail.

We were arrested for "criminal trespassing," for passing our tracts on property rented by our church. We were arrested for ministering to our brethren. Our activity was repugnant only to those who do not want to hear that all is not well with the "world family". Instead of relating to us in the arena of public dialogue, the church related to us through measures of police force. The church that does not have the power of the gospel, seeks the power of the

state. Is the SDA church part of the image of the beast?

During the GC convention, the head of the Russian delegation, Mikhail Kulakov, was quoted publically in the New Orleans' newspaper that there was perfect freedom to practice religion openly in Russia! The GC made no objection to this statement. Their silence can only be taken to mean that in their eyes those Adventists who are suffering in Siberian labor camps must be common criminals. Indeed, Christ says to the GC, "I was in those prisons, but ye visited me not." (Article under a cover letter dated, July 29, 1985)

The latest issue of Spectrum (Vol 16, No. 2, pp. 39-41) carries an article written by Oxana Antic, European correspondent for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Written in the latter part of 1984, it verifies the continued persecution of the true Adventists in Russia quoting Russian government sources. Yet the hierarchy of the Church pass this travesty by and deal with the USSR appointed leadership of a recognized, supposedly Adventist Church.

Some questions need to be asked of Wilson. 1) From whom does Kulakov received his pay check? 2) To whom or what agency is the tithe of the members of the recognized Adventist church sent? 3) Does the General Conference receive a percentage of the tithe of the recognized church in Russia for its world-wide work?

PROBLEMS WITHIN

The first Bulletin carried an article by a newly elected member of the Communications Department captioned - "We're a Great Family." The last Bulletin carried an editorial analysis by the editor of the Adventist Review, but titled "New Orleans: A Watershed in Adventism." The editor's choice of the word - watershed - is most interesting. It means - "A crucial dividing point or line." Stating this crucial dividing point with clarity, Johnson wrote:

In retrospect, the winds of change were blowing from the very first business sessions. For days consideration of the first major item of the agenda, the Role and Function of Denominational Organizations, proceeded at a laborious pace as delegates spoke to point after point. By Tuesday morning, July 2, the winds became a gale. The Nominating Committee's recommendations for general vice presidents of the General Conference were challenged from the floor and adopted

only after nearly two hours of lively, at times fractious, debate. At issue was not the individuals proposed but the heavily North American composition of the slate.

By now it was evident: The fifty-fourth session would not be "business as usual." (Bulletin #10, p. 8)

Before commenting, a word needs to be written so that the readers might better understand the composition of the 10 GC Bulletins, which supposedly give a full report of all said and done. When a copy of the first issue of the Bulletin was presented to Elder Neal C. Wilson, the editor stated - "These bulletins are the official record of the session and contain both the actions and proceedings." (Bulletin #2, p. 19) However, one looks in vain to find recorded the "nearly two hours of lively, at times fractious, debate." There are other omissions as well. Instead of a full and forthright presentation of the "proceedings" as promised, it is a semi-propaganda release of what the leadership want the laity in the field to perceive.

Because of the deletions one has to try to piece things together to obtain a full and true picture in full context. However, the editorial helped greatly so as to give the background of Neal C. Wilson's statement which has and which will continue to produce reaction in the same, if not greater proportion, as Kulakov's lie about religious liberty in the USSR.

On Tuesday morning, July 2, when "the winds became a gale," Wilson entered the fray. He assured the African delegations that they did have representation at the General Conference level. Two of the African Divisions would be headed by native Blacks. A new structural relationship defining the levels of Church administration was adopted at the New Orleans session. Speaking of the Divisions, Elder F. W. Wernick, retiring vice president of the General Conference stated - "They are the General Conference in their area." (Bulletin, #8, p. 6, emphasis his)

July 1, had been a heady day for Wilson. Ribbon cutting, riding in the Parade with the Adventist world following in his trail makes for a strong potion. One can be as drunk with power as well as with strong drink. Both effect the reasoning powers of the mind.

With this background, Wilson's comments take on deep significance. Here is what he said:

There are more vice presidents of the General Conference who represent other parts of the world than North America. If you compare vice presidents to "cardinals," we already have a "cardinal" from Africa, and before this session ends, I predict we will have two African "cardinals" among our 15 vice presidents (ten division presidents and five headquarters vice presidents.) ...

Five years ago there were eight general vice presidents in Washington. For five years there have been six. We are recommending at this meeting that only five be elected, plus, of course, the ten who are vice presidents by virtue of division presidencies. Brother Diaz could have made a far greater argument because there is no "cardinal" from all the countries of the Far East, while there will probably be two "cardinals" from Africa. (Bulletin #5, p. 11)

This analogy is hardly a "Freudian slip," but reveals the thinking of Wilson whose tongue was loosed by the intoxicating wine of power. It was with these "princes" of the Church that Wilson consulted prior to the release of the Statements on secular issues. But a deeper significance is involved. If the vice presidents can be compared to "cardinals," what then is Wilson? - Pope Neal I! (PAPA NEALUS I)

It must be remembered that Elder R. H. Pierson in a sworn affidavit in the civil suit - EEOC vs PPPA - designated himself as the Church's "first minister." (See Legal Briefs, p. 31) Wilson is Pierson's successor, who in the same case as President of the North American Division, referred to himself as "the spiritual leader of approximately one-half million Seventh-day Adventists in North America." (Ibid., pp. 21-22)

The nauseating adulation shown to Wilson during the session - even in the teaching of the Sabbath School lesson by the Holbrooks on the first Sabbath - climaxed in the parade on July 1, from the Superdome to Jackson Square. Wilson and his wife rode in an open limousine driven by a bow-tied Black chauffeur. (Bulletin, #6, p. 16) The reporter for the day indicated - "Many Seventh-day Adventist leaders rode in open convertibles. ... Several North American Division leaders rode a vintage fire truck, to their great delight." (Bulletin, #4, p. 18) From the

reports and pictures the parade was a blending of the festive spirit of the Mardi Gras with a papal display of hierarchical ranks - a real contrast to Him who walked the dusty roads of Palestine, and Who in his one "parade" wept over Jerusalem.

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[Additional Comments and Observations will be given in November issue of WWN.]

From p. 6 - Wurmbrand's Reply

I am sure you would have neither the courtesy or courage to publish this.

Yours in Christ,

(Signed)

Richard Wurmbrand

Go back over this letter, and note the underscored sentences once again. (Some underscoring is for names of books.) It is nothing less than discourtesy to publish what they did publish and how it was emasculated.

Take note again of what was not published and compare the facts presented with the conduct and actions at the New Orleans session in regard to the USSR delegation and what was done by the leadership to those who dared protest. Perhaps Pastor Wurmbrand's counsel needs to be heeded in regard to the tithe. What do you think?

I could say with Wurmbrand, "I am depressed." Why? Because in the light of the facts, there are still those who believe that the organization can be turned around, and that the "ship" captained by deceivers of the laity is going through.

It is time for the 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal to take a stand.

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To know how to say what other people only think, is what makes men poets and sages; but to dare to say what others only dare to think, makes men martyrs or reformers.

Elizabeth Rundle Charles: Chronicles of the Schonberg-Cotta Family, XIV

WURMBRAND'S REPLY

In the September (1984) issue of Ministry, Editor J. Robert Spangler gave a glowing account of religious freedom in the USSR which echoed the same lie which Kulakov told the New Orleans' press during the recent GC Session. On November 5, 1984, Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand who knows by experience the religious persecution in Communist dominated countries wrote a letter to Ministry. His letter was noted in the March (1985) issue (pp. 2, 8). While stating it to be a lengthy letter, it was abridged without indication of deletions.

We herewith reproduce in full the letter underscoring the part quoted in Ministry:

To the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
The magazine, Ministry

Dear Brethren:

Your article about depression was highly appreciated.
[Another article in the same September issue]

I am a Jewish Christian pastor who has been persecuted since childhood for being a Jew. Almost our entire family perished in the Holocaust. After I became a Christian and a pastor, I was in Nazi prisons, and then in Communist jails for 14 years.

Now in America, I lead a Mission which helps the Christians persecuted in Communist countries. Every day I read reports about Christians who are imprisoned, tortured, and killed there. This does not depress me. What weighs upon me is the unloving attitude of American Christians toward their persecuted brethren.

Your magazine is an example of this. In your article about Russia, you find 'similarity between Marx and God's promises.'

How can one be a Christian teacher if he does not distinguish between what one says and what one does? I send you my book, Was Karl Marx a Satanist, with plenty of quotations from Marx. He says verbatimly that he wishes to ruin the world. To succeed in this and to catch naives, they speak about beautiful plans for the world.

Are you not aware that the language of criminal seduction and that of love are the same? If I wish a girl for one night, to throw her away afterwards like a dirty rag, I will tell her, "I love you." I will say the same if I wish a girl for honest marriage.

Before finding "similarity between Marxism and God's

promises," you should have studied Marx and Lenin. The latter wrote in a letter to Gorki: "Thousands of natural catastrophies and epidemics are preferable to God." Thus, cancer is preferable to faith.

This is the major difference between us and Marxists: love toward God and hatred toward Him.

When you write about the parallel between Marxism and Christianity in morality, standards and values, again you show a complete ignorance of Marxism. They glorify violence, murder, lying. My book, The Answer to Moscow's Bible, which I enclose, too, will show that we are at opposite poles.

It is true they have no pornography in Russia. They wish their people strong, but they support pornography in the whole world to weaken their enemy. In this regard read the book of their Minister of Police, Lavrentii Beria's Psychopolitics. Is this more moral?

I wonder if you know Russian. If not, as I assume, how many of their novels and poetry have you read? What radio of theirs have you heard, to give such a preposterous appreciation of what you do not know? You wrote, "Their standards relative to literature and art resemble what most Western Christian churches attempt to teach." Their books and radio programs are satiated with God-hatred.

What does the Constitution of the USSR count? Do the authorities give the rights they promise? In what world do you live that you do not know their words to be vain promises? I sent to Brother Hegsted of your department of Religious Liberty a bunch of material about Adventists in prison for their faith in Russia. [What did Hegsted do about this material?] Where was the liberty for the Adventist preacher, Shelkov, who died in jail after 24 years of detention? The same for many others of the underground and of the official Adventist church.

It is simply a lie that the Adventist church lost its organization prior to World War II because of internal problems, as you assert. Did you not read the Guglag Archipelago? It is not permissible to write about Adventism without having read Ellen White. It is not permissible to write about Russia without having read Solzhenitsyn. Don't you know that Stalin killed millions of Orthodox, Protestants, Adventists, Jews, and that he destroyed church buildings? Where are the buildings the Adventist churches owned before? The Adventist church in Moscow must gather now with the Baptists in a building which belonged formerly to the Reformed church. Its pastor and all the congregation simply disappeared under Stalin's terror.

You praise the Russian Adventist leader, Kulakov, for urging cooperation with the government authorities. These are Marxists. Marx wrote in The

Communist Manifesto that his aim was to abolish all religion and morals. How can Christians cooperate with them? It was not the endeavors of Kulakov which sparked the reunification of your church. It was the fact that the KGB put in jail every Adventist who dared to say, "We do not collaborate with God-hating Communists." On what side would Ellen White, the author of The Great Controversy, have been? It is a shame that your General Conference supports the Russian Adventist preachers who have been stooges of Communists. The founder of Adventism, Ellen White, sided with Christians who worked underground against Papacy.

Why had the audience no place in the church in Kiev? Such things are solved simply. Why do they not have a second church? It is because the churches in Kiev exist not to accomodate believers, but to fool foreigners. The believers profit of this.

How could you write about Russia and not mention even one martyr? The Christians Hmara and Burda were savagely killed. They had their eyes gouged out and their tongues torn. The Christian Hailo and hundreds of others are in psychiatric asylums for their faith. Nikolai Moiseev is in such an asylum since 16 years. Michael Ershov and Basil Shipilov are in jail since 40 years. I suffer of depression. You and those like you are its cause. Nothing can help me except your conversion and return to Christ.

If you would have gone on a fact-finding tour of Israel 2,000 years ago, you would have praised the full liberty in the temple with 12,000 priests and Levites, and the fact that all over the country many synagogues functioned without interference. As about a Carpenter crucified because He was the only one who represented the true faith, why lose our time on martyrs of today? We better spread Ellen White's books about the martyrs of old. It makes interesting reading and obliges to nothing.

The story of betrayal of Adventists by its leaders is old. I remember the German Adventist leadership shouting, "Heil Hitler!" The General Conference collaborated with them, while true Adventists filled jails under Hitler and some of them were beheaded.

I attended an Adventist congress in Rumania in which the dictator king, Charles II, was praised. Many Adventists were in jail at that time. The Adventist leadership of Rumania today also praises the Communist government. I was at the same time in jail with many Adventists, official and underground, beaten to the blood because they refused to work on Saturdays. In jail they almost ate nothing, fearing there might be some pork in the food. In times when they got one slice of bread a day, they gave tithe. They renounced to this bit of bread in favor of somebody who was older, sick, or weaker.

At the burial of Tachici, the former Adventist general secretary of Rumania, a delegate of the Communist party spoke, disclosing only then that Tachici had been a member of this Party secretly, many years before its coming to power. They also carried cushions with the medals he had obtained from the God-hating Communist government. The Adventist leaders of Russia are of the same kind.

When I was in South Africa, I heard that Communists jailed there were tortured. I am against Communism, but Communists are human beings and should be well treated. I knocked at the gate of their jail and asked to see them in the absence of any guards. I was permitted without difficulty. They themselves denied the story of tortures. In every civilized country, pastors have access to prisons. Why did you not ask for the permission to visit the imprisoned Adventists? Wherever you are, you are meant to seek Jesus. Jesus has given His address in Russia: "I was in jail and you visited me not". Did you even try? A refusal of the authorities would also have been illuminating.

Ellen White prophesied there will be a great persecution of Sabbath keepers in USA. Suppose this will happen, will you be on the side of the Adventists loyal to the faith, who will worship underground, or will you collaborate with the persecutors as your kin does in Russia?

If I were an Adventist, I would leave the church if you do not get disciplined for the grave sin of having written this article. The board of your General Conference would have to be dismissed, too, for siding with the Communist stooges in Adventism. I would also retain my tithes until assured you refunded this holy money which has been misused for such travels and pro-Communist propaganda. [What about the travels of Lohne, Pierson, and Wilson to Russia with their reports?]

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