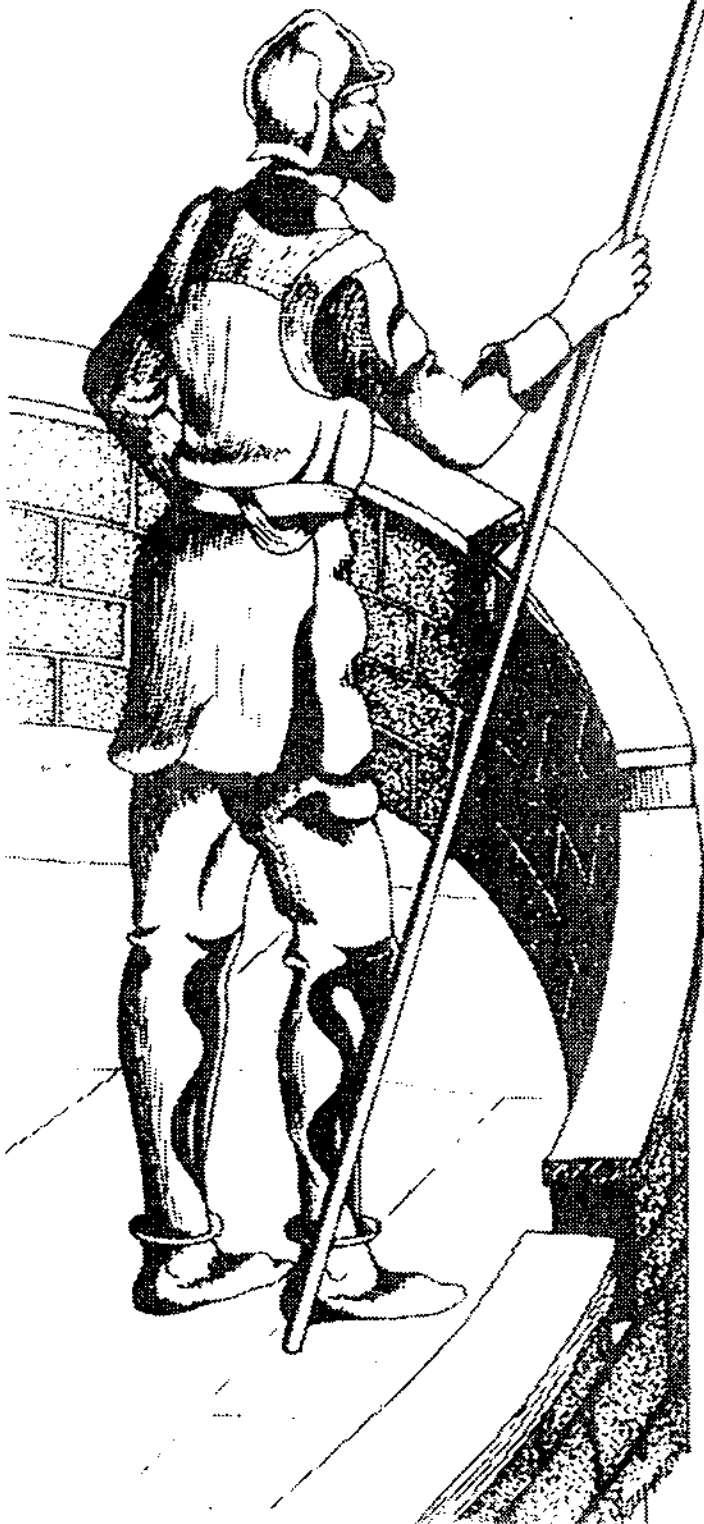


# "Watchman, what of the night?"

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

Ez. 7:6 (Moffat)



## A Search for Identity

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### Editor's Preface

This issue begins with a second article critiquing the book by Dr. George Knight, *A Search for Identity*. This concludes our observations on the first chapter, "The Dynamic Nature of 'Present Truth.'" Inasmuch as Knight's second illustration seeking to support this dynamic, also centered in the doctrine of God as formulated in the Statement of Beliefs voted at Dallas in 1980, we, too, have focused on this doctrine from the perspective of his illustration. We are aware of the controversy involving certain dissident voices on the doctrine of God, but we also know that the Nicene Creed which is the center of the controversy, is the foundation upon which, by their own admission, the Roman Church has built its doctrinal structure. This fact dare not be overlooked in any analysis of the doctrine of God. However, an anti-Trinitarian posture does not spell truth either. One can believe in a "Heavenly Trio" and not believe in Trinitarianism as formulated in the Nicene Creed.

In the January issue of WVN, we passed by certain concepts outside the Gospel of John. In this issue we have sought to clarify at what point the curtain on the mystery of God is drawn, and stop there. A clarification arising from Special Issue #2 last year in regard to the Perez case is also amplified.

The concluding article on the publication of the book, *Confessions of a Nomad*, forms a part of this issue. While it is evident that all the facts have not surfaced as to why the Ministerial Association copyrighted this book by the Selfs, it is also certain that no amount of prodding will cause the Secretary of the Association to give a full disclosure of its publication. So we leave it as it now is - a partial revelation.

# A Search for Identity

- 2 -

The second point which Dr. George R. Knight cited as a doctrine over which the founders of Adventism could not join the Church today is an aspect of the Trinitarian belief stated in the 27 Fundamentals which places Jesus as "both eternal and truly God" (p. 17).

Before discussing this point, a question needs to be answered. Why is the doctrine of God of such vital importance? There are two important reasons, and these dare not be overlooked:

1) The doctrine of the Trinity as expressed in the Nicene Creed is the basis upon which the whole structure of Papal theology is based. We have noted this fact in previous issues of WWN, but will reiterate it again. Observe:

The mystery of the Trinity is the central doctrine of the Catholic Faith. Upon it are based all the other teachings of the Church. (*Handbook for Today's Catholic*, p. 11)

The significance of this factor cannot be overemphasized. You cannot set a square building on a circular foundation. To accommodate, the superstructure must be altered so as to fit the foundation. To accept the Nicene Creed meant the alteration of the superstructure of Adventism as was done in the 27 Fundamental Statement of Beliefs at Dallas, Texas in 1980.

If the Nicene Creed is the correct formulation about God, then Papal theology is planted squarely upon a platform of truth. As truth cannot beget error, it would follow that the "other teachings" of Romanism are likewise positions of truth. Further, the converse of the dictum that two cannot walk together unless they be agreed (Amos 3:3) would follow. Be in agreement with the Nicene Creed, and you walk together. This is exactly the approach being pursued by the Faith and Order Commission of WCC in its drive toward visible church unity. The Moderator of the Apostolic Faith Steering Group is none other than a Roman priest, Jean-Marie Tillard. [See *Confessing the One Faith*, An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)].

2) As we noted in the previous issue of WWN, the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* stated plainly:

The doctrine of the trinitarian being of God is the necessary pre-supposition for the proper understanding of the Incarnation and of the cross. (p. 127; emphasis supplied)

It would follow, therefore, that the founders of Adventism, not having the correct understanding of the doctrine of God, did not have a correct position on the Incarnation nor the Cross. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that it be determined whether the change in the doctrinal position of the Church on the doctrine of God as expressed in the 27 Fundamentals is truly an illustration of the "dynamic nature of 'present truth'" as Knight seeks to affirm, or a retrogression into apostasy. Further, it must also be determined whether the current revival of anti-Trinitarianism, as expressed by early Adventist preachers, writers, and editors is indeed truth, or does the concept of the "dynamic nature of 'present truth'" need to be accepted and applied correctly at this point. This second citation by Knight from the 27 Fundamentals - that Jesus in His pre-existence was "both eternal and truly God" - is a good point from which to discuss this question.

## The Pre-Existent Word

The actual Statement on "God the Son" (#4) reads "that God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ." Nowhere in the Bible do I find the expression, "the eternal Son." I do find, however, that the expression, "Word of life," is applied to Him who "was from the beginning" (I John 1:1). In explaining this significance, John declares that this "life" was the "the Eternal Life, who was (ην - ever was) with the Father" (v. 2). This accords with the preface to his Gospel. The Word was not only God, but He "was (ην) in the beginning with God" (John 1:2). These verses exclude the "eternal Son" concept; but they do sustain the concept of a self-existent and an ever-existent One - the I AM (John 8:58) - with God from the beginning.

The ministers and editors of early Adventism revealed in their thinking the "dynamic nature of truth" when discussing the doctrine of God. For example, Uriah Smith, long time editor of the *Review & Herald* wrote in his first edition of *Thoughts on Revelation*, that the pre-existent Christ was "the first created being" (1867, p. 59). By 1898, he wrote in his book, *Looking Unto Jesus* that such a position was "degrading" to Christ (p. 12); and while "God alone is without beginning," that "at the earliest epoch when a beginning could be, - a period so remote that to finite minds it is

essentially eternity, - appeared the Word" (p. 10). In this instance it is interesting to observe, that Smith's choice of designation, was not "the eternal Son," as was done in the 27 Statements of Belief, but rather the designation in the Gospel of John - "the Word." Currently, those today in the Community of Adventism advocating a new anti-Trinitarianism wish to emphasize the "Son" aspect and by its use negate the eternity of the Word. This is a fatal error.

Actually, the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed in the full text reads:

I believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds [God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one Substance [essence] with the Father. (*Creeeds of Christendom*, Vol. II, p. 58)

Specifically denying that Christ was a created being - "begotten, not made" - the Creed nevertheless suggests a beginning for Christ - "begotten" - while maintaining that He was "very God of very God."

In the WCC Faith and Order Commission study document noted on page 2 above, the phrase "begotten of the Father before all worlds" is altered to read, "eternally begotten of the Father" (p. 44, par. 92). In the "explication" (detailed explanation) of this concept, the document reads that "since the Father is eternal, the beginning of the Son did not occur at some particular time, but is itself eternal" (p. 50, par. 115). Thus to arrive at the same concept in 1980 and use the non-Biblical expression, "the eternal Son," in the Fundamental Statement of Beliefs is not evidence of "the dynamic nature" of truth.

It could be claimed, however, that since the Statement of Beliefs was formulated in 1980, a decade prior to the Faith and Order Commission's release of a document to achieve visible church unity by the adoption of the Nicene Creed, the Adventist Church, by the adoption of that Creed in its formulation of the doctrine of God, was merely walking in the light of advancing truth. But it must be remembered that the Church has had a sitting theologian on the Faith and Order Commission since 1967. Further, the objective of achieving visible church unity was mandated in the revised Constitution of the WCC in 1972 (*So Much in Common*, pp. 40, 41). To achieve this objective, the Council "charged" the Faith and Order Commission to keep ever before them "their accepted obligation." This was stated in their By-Laws which reads - "To proclaim the oneness of the Church of Christ and to

call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe" (Faith and Order Paper #111, p. viii, 1982).

It is not without significance that the Faith and Order Commission could state in 1888 that the Creed is "already officially recognized by many churches" when it launched its study, "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today," and chose the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of A.D. 381 as a summary of that apostolic faith. (*One World*, 1988, p. 15) The Adventist Church was one of those "many churches" having come into line in 1980, after an Adventist theologian was placed on the Commission in 1967.

A critical challenge does, however, face us. The pioneer ministers and writers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were definitely anti-Trinitarian. Of this there is no question. However, from 1867 to 1898, Uriah Smith was able to progress in his understanding of the doctrine of God without adopting the Nicene Creed. Why cannot there be a continual progression of truth on this subject without adopting the basis of Roman Catholic theology? Our understanding of the truth about the pre-existent Word does not need to stop with the advancement made by the close of the nineteenth century on the part of either E. J. Waggoner or Uriah Smith. Neither do we need to promote a position once held that does not conform to the Word of God as is being done by the neo-anti-Trinitarians in the Community of Adventism. The Holy Spirit is still the Spirit of truth to guide into all truth, and the path of the just is still a "shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

While there will be aspects of God that we will not know until we "shall see His face" (Rev. 22:4), we can move forward to the "curtain" drawn over the mystery of His Being, and the "how" of the mysterious revelation made in Christ Jesus as we await that coming day. We need not retrogress into the dim light of past comprehensions by those who at that time realized that the Nicene Creed was not the answer. We need to accept that insight and seek to comprehend as far as mortals can, the truth as it is in Jesus, thus building our doctrinal understanding upon Him who is the way, the truth and the life. This then would be a living experience in the dynamic nature of "Present Truth."

## The Fall Back Defence

While writing this issue, I received a letter from an ardent devotee of the neo-antiTrinitarianism espoused today in the Community of Adventism. He cited an historical recall on the part of Ellen G. White "that ALL the principle points of our faith were made clear to their minds, in harmony with the Word of God during the early Bible Conferences 1844-1848." (The emphasis is his, and he circled the word, "ALL") The assumption drawn was that this one sentence negated the principle of the dynamic nature of present truth. To make such an assumption requires taking this sentence out of context, and results in making Ellen G. White contradict what she wrote a decade or more earlier. Let us note some of the facts of history connected with this sentence:

1) These conferences did not begin until 1848, and were sometimes called "1848 Conferences," but were primarily known as "Sabbath Conferences," continuing into 1850. While "principle points" of faith were discussed and studied, those points did not include the doctrine of God. (See, *SDA Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, pp. 507-508) One has only to check the "Lectures on Principle Doctrines" given at Biblical Institutes in 1877, to verify what was so considered. The "principle points" of faith were summarized in the "landmarks" statement written as a result of the contention during the 1888 General Conference Session. (Ms. 13, 1889; *CtoW&E*, pp. 30-31)

2) The sentence quoted from *SM*, bk.i, p. 207 was originally found in Series B, #2, p. 57, written about 1905 at the time of the Kellogg controversy. If a valid statement negating the dynamic nature of truth, then what Ellen White wrote more than a decade earlier is error. In 1890 she had written - "The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light" (*R&H*, March 25, 1890).

3) There is no question that the controversy involving Kellogg did include the doctrine of God, as he was teaching in his book, *The Living Temple*, "spiritualistic theories regarding the personality of God" which if "followed to their logical conclusion [would] sweep away the whole Christian economy" (Series B, #2, pp. 53-54). In the exchange of correspondence between Kellogg and the leadership in the General Conference there is evidence that the doctrine of the Trinity was involved. By this, it could be inferred that the sentence, quoted by the brother in his letter to me, supported the revival of anti-Trinitarianism, as the bonified

original position in Adventism. However, during this Kellogg controversy, a clear statement came from Ellen G. White declaring that "there are three living persons of the heavenly trio" (Series B, #7, p. 62). This excludes anti-Trinitarianism, but does not give credence to the Nicene Creed.

Indeed as it was stated at that time, it is still true today: "The track of truth lies close beside the track of error, and both tracks may seem to be one to minds which are not worked by the Holy Spirit, and which, therefore, are not quick to discern the difference between truth and error" (Series B. #2, p. 52).

### In What Way Is the Eternal Word, the Son?

John chose the Greek word, *monogenes* (μονογενής) to describe the eternal Word made flesh when he wrote "the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14). Arius, in affirming that Christ was "begotten of God before all ages," used the Greek word, *gegennemenon* (from γενναω), the correct word for "begotten." (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 902) The Old Latin version before the Vulgate translated *monogenes* correctly as "only" in the sense of unique. The Word was the only One from (παρα not εκ) the Father "full of grace and truth." Paul could write at the beginning of the Hebrew treatise, "God...hath in these last days spoken unto us by a Son" (no article in the Greek text) and defined that Sonship by quoting from Psalms 2:7 - "I will declare the *decree*: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (emphasis supplied).

The Book of Hebrews enlarges further on the fact of a Son, and makes it clear that this decree was concerning an existent Being. First, the divine objective of the Sonship motif is stated. There are to be many "sons" brought "unto glory." A "Son" as "the captain of their salvation" accomplished it (2:10). Those that would "receive Him" - the Word made flesh - would likewise be privileged to be "sons of God" (John 1:12). Secondly, in accomplishing that salvation, the Captain would become High Priest after the Order of Melchizedec. In Hebrews, the decree of Psalms 2:7, and the oath of Psalms 110:4 are placed side by side - both said to an existent Being. as He was, the Word; and as He became, Jesus (Heb. 5:5-6; 7:21-22).

To restrict Psalms 2:7, denying the force of the expression, "the decree;" or to seek to explain it away ignores the fact that "the begotten" aspect is applied

by Paul to the resurrected Lord as well as to the incarnation (Acts 13:33). The designation of "Son of God" is equally a Messianic title as is "The Son of man." The "Captain" of our salvation is the God-man, "who was manifest in the flesh" (I Tim. 3:16, NKJV, margin) - the Eternal Logos.

### In Summary

To cite two questionable concepts of the Doctrine of God - the Trinity, and "the Eternal Sonship" - as illustrations of the dynamic nature of "present truth," and to conclude that the present position of the Church, by writing these concepts into the 27 Fundamentals of Belief, is reflecting that dynamic at work, is deceptive, and cannot be sustained Biblically. It stands rather as evidence of the apostasy which has engulfed the Church and the failure to give proper study to the concepts. However apostate as these concepts may be, it does not justify a rejection of the dynamic, or a continuation in an anti-Trinitarian position equally as questionable. Proverbs 4:18 must prevail.

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## Confessions of a Nomad - 4

In a letter dated August 31, 2000, Cress, the Secretary of the Ministerial Department of the General Conference wrote to Eugene Lincoln, Editor Emeritus, of *The Sabbath Sentinel*, "I am also requesting that you request the individual who quoted selectively from the book (*Confessions of a Nomad*) to contact the Ministerial Association rather than spread erroneous suppositions." This I did immediately upon receipt of a copy of the letter Cress wrote to Lincoln. That was September 10, and not until November 22, did Cress reply. He claimed that an extended overseas itinerary prevented him from responding sooner.

However, in the letter he placed the same restriction as in previous letters to Brother Lincoln: no quotes unless the whole letter is printed. We are left with but one choice. We will print our answer dated November 28, 2000, and let the reader deduct what Cress wrote in his letter. To his claim to be very plain spoken, we responded:

There is no trouble when one is plain spoken; it is when one is not plain acting that the trouble begins. One can claim to be preaching the Three Angels' Messages, including the Second, and his actions indicate that he does not know what they are all about. Christ endeavored to reach members of the Sanhedrin

with truth, but He did not invite them to conduct seminars for His disciples, nor recommend their writings.

The facts are that one does not have to obtain a copyright to merely do a book reprint. We have exclusive rights from the WCC to reprint *So Much in Common*, and have not felt any need to copyright the book. We merely stated that it was reprinted by the permission of the WWC. You have indicated that you provide a service to Dr. Self in reprinting his books. A one time reprint is hardly a continuing service, unless printed in volume, or his need is minimal. ...

It is indeed a sad hour when, for whatever reason human logic dictates, a publication copyrighted by an arm of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists advocates Sunday as the day of worship, be it a devotional book or otherwise. You are to be commended for withdrawing it from circulation by your association. I hope it so remains. The fact, however, also remains that you did publish it, and have expressed no regrets for doing so, but have tried to justify the reprinting.

Apart from a summary in WWN, I will leave the matter for a Higher Court to render the final verdict.

In a further note from Brother Lincoln since the above letter was written, he indicated that Cress had called him by telephone concerning their exchange of letters, and had admitted "that he probably would have handled it differently had he thought about the controversy it would cause." This is very revealing - no regrets expressed about the teachings in the book - but simply the consequences because it was discovered and revealed. If a judgment had been made based on truth, there would have been no publishing of the book, and thus no adverse consequences to fear. It was purely a policy decision. See 5T, p. 96, par. 3.

(Concluded)

## The Perez Issue Revisited

The Special Issue #2 of WWN for 2000, evoked comment from the field. The overall comment indicated that I did not set forth the factors involved in the Perez case with the clarity that such a discussion demanded. To a friend on the West Coast who wrote, I detailed a reply. The reply I sent to this brother is herewith produced, so that there should be no misunderstandings on the part of any.

It is true as suggested, by your reservation on methods of witness, that we must work in our own armor. God respects individuality. However, in this instance, there are three factors covered by counsel.

- 1) In regard to the name used for church identification.
- 2) The use of the Writings in support of the truths of God's Word.
- 3) The caution against "jump starting" a time of trouble.

To take #1 of these three and ignore the other two is not consistent. I personally talked to Perez about #2, and he shrugged his shoulders, declined an answer, and handed me a copy of the advertisement in English and Spanish. (Now our current file copy)

Problem #1 - If I refuse to take the name, Seventh-day Adventist, off my church sign when the Church officially makes request, and they take me to court, but when the Court so demands, I yield and do so, what is this saying? Is this the example found in the book of Daniel?

Is the name that important today? It does stand for two cardinal teachings. But what does it represent today? A church in apostasy. Go to the book of Acts. Was not the name "Israel" chosen by God? It stood for something. Did the early Church adopt this name and fight with the [Jewish] hierarchy over it? No, they called themselves, "Followers of the Way." They let God designate them as the new Israel of God.

Today God knows who are genuine Seventh-day Adventists. Let Him write them down in His clerk's record book (Heb. 12:23) - the Book of the Lamb. Let us be simply followers of that Lamb - the Way, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6).

If further questions need answering, please write, and I will seek to clarify my position on the other two issues covered by counsel.

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## A Further Clarification of Another Point

In the January issue of WWN, we commented as we closed the discussion of the Godhead in the Gospel of John - "There are other texts that could be cited which raise perplexing questions: but here we must rest the matter" (p. 5, col. 1). In contemplating the deductions drawn on John 7:39, I doubt that the thoughtful readers will be satisfied with leaving the concept of the Holy Spirit as indicated, rest at that point. In the gospel of Matthew (1:20), and in the Gospel of Luke (1:35), the Holy Spirit is stated as being involved in the birth of Jesus. John himself records the coming of the Spirit "like a dove" at the time of Jesus' baptism (1:33). How do we relate these

verses in the light of John's comment in 7:39?

Paul adds this factor in his explanation of the condescension of Christ. He writes that He who was in "the form of God" emptied Himself (ΕΚΕΝΩΘΕΝ - emphatic, "himself He emptied") and took the "slave form of man." If this is placed together with the revelations in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, the conclusion is inescapable that the pre-existent Word was the Holy Spirit. A careful comparison between concepts in the Old Testament with parallel concepts in the New substantiates this conclusion. Observe two such parallels:

1) Gen. 1:2 - "The Spirit of God moved (Heb. "brooded") upon the face of the waters."

Eph. 3:9 - "God who created all things by Jesus Christ."  
John 1:3 - "All things were made by Him."

2) II Peter 1:21 - "In old time... holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

I Peter 1:10-11 - "The prophets...searched...what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify."

Daniel 10:21 - "The scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince."

This Biblical comparison still leaves intact, the prologue of the Gospel of John that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." But it does leave mysterious - "The Word came to be flesh" (1:14, Gr.). Here the curtain is drawn, and here we must let it remain closed. One thing is revealed. The same ever-existent, pre-existent divine Identity tabernacled in flesh, yet He was the embodiment of grace and truth, our hope and our salvation; the God-man, yet the great I AM.

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## "The Gay Priest Problem"

This was the title of an essay appearing in *The Catholic World Report* (Nov. 2000, pp. 52-58), written by Fr. Paul Shaughnessy, Marine and Navy chaplain serving at the time of writing at Pearl Harbor. He wrote:

When more of your priests die by sodomy than by martyrdom, you know you've got a problem; when the man

you bring in for the fix comes down with AIDS, you know that you've got a crisis; and when the Pope first gets the facts thanks to *60 Minutes*, you know you're corrupt. (p. 57).

He cites a book, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, by Fr. Donald B. Cozzens, who asked "if the priesthood is on its way to becoming a "gay profession"? Shaughnessy also noted a report in the *Kansas City Star* which stated that "the death rate of priests from AIDS is at least four times that of the general population."

"From almost all sides in the Catholic Church is now heard the complaint 'Why doesn't somebody do something?'" Then the author gives an illustration as to why nothing has or is being done. A rumor was circulated in Africa that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was "about to issue a letter prohibiting the acceptance of gay seminarians." To this, South Africa's Bishop Reginald Cawcutt sent a message to his fellow gay clergy that if such a letter is issued, "MY intention would be simply to ask the question what he intends doing with those priests, bishops (possibly 'like me') and cardinals... who are gay." Then Cawcutt concluded - "Be assured dear reverend gentlemen, I shall let you know the day any such outrageous letter reaches the desks of the ordinaries of the world" (p. 53).

Turning to why the action necessary to solve the gay problem in America will not be taken, the author stated, It "is that the episcopacy in the United States is corrupt, and the same is true of the majority of religious orders." But then he gives a very interesting twist to what "being corrupt" means. "It is important to stress," he wrote, "that this is a sociological claim, not a moral one." He defined "as corrupt, in a sociological sense, any institution that has lost the capacity to mend itself on its own initiative and by its own resources, an institution that is unable to uncover and expel its own miscreants" (pp. 56-57). He is trying to separate the Roman Church from what is going on in the Church. He seeks to exclude the Pope from what is taking place in the Episcopate under the Pope. In the Bible, God doesn't so judge. He places as one, the "mystery of iniquity" that "they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:7-12).

How does the chaplain perceive the Church? "The Catholic Church, being Christ's bride without spot or wrinkle, is indefectible. She is holy because Christ is holy; she is perfect because Christ is perfect. She cannot teach error" (p. 57). But the question was raised, how can Catholics show respect and obedience to their bishops if they believe the episcopacy is corrupt? To this the chaplain replied - "The answer is that a Catholic does not respect his bishop or at-

tend to his teaching on the ground that the bishop is holy, but because the bishop, to the extent that he teaches in union with St. Peter, is supernaturally protected against teaching error - and this holds true whether or not the bishop is a villain and whether or not his compatriots are institutionally corrupt" (*ibid*).

While the extreme positions as voiced by this Roman chaplain are not taken by various dissidents in the Adventist church, basically what difference is there in general perception between the concept that "the Church is going through" and the Catholic position that the Roman Church is "indefectible"? The same distinction is made in Adventist thinking between the Church, and the apostasy in the Church. #

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"Then shall that Wicked (ὁ ἀνομος) be revealed" (II Thess 2:8). Thayer defines *ho anomos* - as "he in whom all iniquity has fixed its abode" (p. 48).

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Note: Some have been puzzled over the two addresses for the Foundation. The "P. O. Box 69, Ozone" address is primarily for first class mail, correspondence, etc. This box mail is picked up daily, and answered as quickly as possible. The "P. O. Box 789, Lamar" address is used primarily for our bulk mailing of the "thought paper," WWN. The mail there is picked up only two or three times a week. While the mail goes up and down the mountain only once a day, the mail in and out of Lamar is likewise but once a day.

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