



"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

COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE

In the Adventist Review (January 17, 1980, pp. 8-11), two "Study Documents" were reproduced with the invitation for the laity of the Church to submit their reaction to these statements. This response was to be directed to Elder W. Duncan Eva, a vice-president of the General Conference, who was placed in charge of the project by the hierarchy. It was suggested that these two documents needed to be released together so that the one on "Creation and Re-Creation" could be better understood. The first document - "Revelation and Inspiration of the Bible" - stated well the basis of "thought" inspiration in contrast to "verbal" inspiration. However, one began to wonder why was this essential to a position statement on Creation. Could the hierarchy be seeking to tell the laity that Moses expressed "the thought" that God did create, but that we can interpret his words so as to allow the liberal intelligentsia in the Church their understanding about the age of the material substance of the planet, Earth. A very reliable source has stated to this writer that the director, Dr. Robert H. Brown, of the General Conference sponsored Geoscience Research Institute wants at least four to five millions years between the creation of the material elements of the earth, and the first day of Creation Week. The Study Document on "Creation and Re-Creation" is so worded to allow for just this. It reads:

The Bible statement that "the earth was without form and void" when God brought it into existence leads us to believe that God created all living things on earth and their supporting environment during the six literal consecutive days of Creation. (p. 11)

The inquiring mind - or from the viewpoint of the Editor of the Adventist Review, a mind that sees something "sinister" in what appears to be "totally innocent" - will ask "why" are these doctrinal statements being released at this time? One possible answer has been supplied by Dr. B. B. Beach, Secretary of the Northern Europe-West Africa Division of the Church. He stated in a talk before a meeting of the Association of Adventist Forums in Ohio, October 6, 1979 that at the coming General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, in his judgment, there would take place "the most extensive revision of the Church Manual" that has been seen during the eight sessions he has attended in his life time. One of these revisions will concern the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Church. Here are his words:

I notice that there is a whole new section, especially dealing with

the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that are being put into the Manual that will be coming up for discussion at the coming Session [1980]. And this is rather significant. Things like a certain paragraph on the Holy Spirit, which is completely new; a paragraph on the Trinity; a paragraph on the Angels, I notice; a paragraph on the Creation and the Fall of man; a paragraph on the Church; a Paragraph on the Lord's Supper; a paragraph on Christian Marriage; a paragraph on the Christian Home and Education. These are all complete new sections, and other sections are being amended by changing a word here and there, mostly improving the language. (From a taped transcription)

In view of this, one must ask - Are these Doctrinal Statements to be used as a basis for the summary statements which are to appear in the revision and enlargement of the Statement of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? And this raises some other questions stemming from our past history. One must keep in mind that the book - Questions on Doctrine - "was designed to begin with the 'Statement of Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church'" and was "an amplified statement" of those beliefs. (Adventist Heritage, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 44) In the "Introduction" of the book itself, it was stated that "the answers in this volume are an expansion of doctrinal positions contained in that official statement of Fundamental Beliefs." (Q on D, p. 9) Will the "revisions" of the Manual contain the heretical expansions and amplifications as found in Questions on Doctrine along with the other changes? At this point, none but the hierarchy know how far the intended revisions of the Manual will be pushed, but coming events do cast their shadows before!

The issue over Creation is not new - though contrary to the historic position of the Church. In one of the first issues of the thought paper - "Watchman, What of the Night?" - in fact, the fourth issue, April, 1968, we dealt with this problem which had been introduced in an editorial of the Review in 1967, and in the Sabbath School Quarterly for the Juniors in 1968. Since that thought paper is as apropos today as when first written, we reproduce it in full. And interestingly it was entitled - "The Thin Edge of the Wedge." Now the whole "wedge" is being seen!

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THE THIN EDGE OF THE WEDGE

Each Sabbath for about six months, I have been teaching a class composed of Juniors and Earliteens. (Their lesson topics coincide.) The Sabbath School lessons for the first quarter of this year (1968) covered the over-all topic - "Creation and Redemption." Each lesson in the Junior Quarterly is divided into daily assignments. The first lesson was very disturbing. The headings on the daily assignments for the first lesson were as follows:¹

- Lesson for Sunday - *The Earth Is Created*
- Lesson for Monday - *Creator of Heaven and Heavenly Beings*
- Lesson for Tuesday - *God's Plan Criticized [Rebellion of Lucifer]*
- Lesson for Wednesday - *Satan Introduces Sin into the Earth*
- Lesson for Thursday - *Creation Continues*

It is not difficult to note the suggestion that this outline of study contains. God created the elementary mass, and then, the rebellion of Lucifer erupted in heaven. Defeated, Satan was assigned to this earth, and then God continued His creative plans. If this were true, this would leave a great deal of time between the creation of the basic elements of the earth, and the creation of man on the sixth day. We are told concerning the rebellion in heaven led by Lucifer, that God "bore long"² with this angelic leader. The amount of time is not specified, but "long" from God's viewpoint is far greater than from the viewpoint of man.

The lesson for the second Sabbath was even more specific on this point. The first question read: "What was the earth like *before* Creation?"³ Genesis 1:2, first half, was given as the answer - "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." [Compare with Study Document on Creation and Re-Creation, paragraph quoted on p. 1 of this thought paper. Same verse used.] Two questions in the Friday review section emphasized the same thought. The condition of the earth "*before* Creation" was stated to be without "form" and wrapped with darkness like a "swaddling band."⁴

Now it is true that the concept was specifically taught in these lessons that God created this mass - the basic elements of the earth, And it was God Who came back and formed the surface features of the earth. The amount of time separating the creation of the mass, and the creation of light on the first day was not given. It was intimated by suggestion through the arrangement of the lesson material.

Why become disturbed over this seemingly little point? It is the thin edge of the wedge. If the idea be true that much time elapsed between the elementary creation and the formation of the earth's surface features, unless God created the "primordial substance" absolutely resistant to all forces, then these elements were acted upon by time and space. Would any changes occur in such a period of time? Is it possible that certain things that man can observe geologically, which cannot be explained by human reason, could be adjusted into such a period of time? Is this then becoming our "out" to accommodate ourselves to evolutionary processes?

The sad part of this picture is that while the parents were studying in the adult lesson the power of God in the spread of the Gospel in Apostolic times, their children were being exposed to a teaching which opens the door to "evolutionary" processes, and modifies the power of God.

Parents who are consistent readers of the Review & Herald will not be unduly surprised, for a series of articles were written in 1967 advocating this basic theory.⁵ The very first paragraph of the editorials states clearly the problem to be discussed. Note this paragraph:

One area of current concern, study, and discussion in the church is the seeming conflict between certain observed phenomena in the natural world that appears to indicate a very great age for the surface features of the earth and the living things upon it, and statements in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy which limit these phenomena to a relatively few thousand years. One aspect of the problem has to

do with whether the basic substance of the earth as a planet was created on day one of Creation week or immediately prior thereto, or whether our planet existed in a chaotic state before - possibly long before - that momentous first day. Do the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy have an inspired answer to this problem?⁶

The associate editor's conclusions could be summarized briefly as follows: The definition for "earth," "heaven(s)," and "create" as used in Genesis 1:1 would indicate that the surface features of this globe were all that was indicated as far as the Bible is concerned. As to the time of the creation of the elementary substance of our planet, his conclusion was, "The Bible. . . does not answer this question."⁷ When considering the Spirit of Prophecy statements, the editor drew the same conclusion in these words:

In their Biblical context these statements are not concerned with the origination of the primordial substance of this planet, but with the creative acts specified by the inspired writer of Genesis 1 - the rearrangement of its surface elements into a suitable abode for man and the origination of living things by infusing the element of life into selected aggregations of matter.⁸

Now what does the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy state on this question? First, let us consider the Bible. The fourth commandment from the lips of the Creator Himself reads:

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea [the primary elements], and all that in them is [the surface features and living forms], and rested the seventh day.⁹

If this were all that we had from Inspiration, I would not need to take a great leap of faith to understand that all - primordial substance and living forms in a suitable abode - was the work of God in six literal days.

In considering the light which the Spirit of Prophecy sheds on this topic let us first note the question asked in the editorial concerning what Sr. White had written. After discussing the possible meaning of the words, "earth," and "world" as found in several references quoted, the editor asks: "Can we know which meaning of 'earth' and 'world' was intended?" The writer then concluded: "She uses the words, 'earth' and 'creation' in the same sense in which the Bible writer uses them - of shaping of land, sea, and sky and their myriad forms of life during the six days of Creation week."¹⁰

Is there a clear-cut statement in the Spirit of Prophecy as to the meaning of "world" as differentiated from "earth"? And in the same connection is there a time specified as to how long ago this "world" was created? Also is the Spirit of Prophecy use of the term, "world," compared with the geological time-concept of how old the "world" is? Note the following in full context:

Infidel geologists claim that the world is very much older than the Bible record makes it. They reject the Bible record, because of those things which are to them evidences from the earth itself, that the

world has existed tens of thousands of years. And many who profess to believe the Bible record are at a loss to account for wonderful things which are found in the earth, with the view that creation week was only seven literal days, and that the world is now only about six thousand years old.¹¹

From this quotation it is important to note that the same "world" which infidel geologists claim is much older than the Bible record indicates, is the very same "world" which the Spirit of Prophecy declares to be "only about six thousand years old."

In 1864 when this statement was written, the professed Christian world was explaining these unexplainable wonders found in the earth as occurring through successive ages, making each day of creation a vast, indefinite period of time. Such a belief was declared by the Spirit of God to be "the worse kind of infidelity."¹² Are we then, merely tempering the kind of infidelity we espouse? While we admit the six days to be literal, we have supposedly devised a way to involve long periods of time intervening between creation of the elements, and the first day of Creation week. Is this not also, "disguised infidelity"?

How appropriate are the words of inspiration:

*The Holy Ghost is the author of the Scriptures and of the Spirit of Prophecy. These are not to be twisted and turned to mean what man may want them to mean.*¹³

¹Junior Sabbath School Lesson Quarterly, First Quarter, 1968

²Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 39

³Junior Quarterly, op. cit., p. 6

⁴ibid., p. 8

⁵Raymond F. Cottrell, "'In the Beginning. . .'" Review & Herald, June 29, July 6, 13, 1967

⁶ibid., June 29, p. 12

⁷ibid., July 13, p. 13

⁸ibid.

⁹Exodus 20:11

¹⁰Cottrell, op. cit.

¹¹Ellen G. White, Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 3, pp. 91-92

¹²ibid., p. 92

¹³Ellen G. White, Letter 92, 1900

WE NEED TO GUARD CONTINUALLY AGAINST THE SOPHISTRY IN REGARD TO GEOLOGY AND OTHER BRANCHES OF SCIENCE FALSELY SO-CALLED, WHICH HAVE NOT ONE SEMBLANCE OF TRUTH. THE THEORIES OF GREAT MEN NEED TO BE CAREFULLY SIFTED OF THE SLIGHTEST TRACE OF INFIDEL SUGGESTIONS. ONE TINY SEED SOWN BY TEACHERS IN OUR SCHOOLS, IF RECEIVED BY THE STUDENTS, WILL RAISE A HARVEST OF UNBELIEF. THE LORD HAS GIVEN ALL THE BRILLINACY OF INTELLECT THAT MAN POSSESSES, AND IT SHOULD BE DEVOTED TO HIS SERVICE.

Review & Herald, March 1, 1898

A Report on an Inquiry

At the time of the visit of Pope John Paul II to the United States, I received an anonymous, typewritten letter from Takoma Park, Maryland, telling me that Elder Neal C. Wilson, interim president of the General Conference, had received an invitation from the White House to attend the reception to be given there in the Pope's honor. The author of the letter indicated that at the time of the writing, he/she did not know what Elder Wilson's reaction would be - whether he would attend or not. While on the West Coast shortly thereafter, I mentioned to various groups with whom I met, this letter, and told them that as soon as I could verify how Elder Wilson responded to the invitation, I would let them know. Since this is of general interest, we reproduce the response from the White House to our inquiry.

President of the General Conference

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 8, 1980

Dear Elder Groetheer,

Your letter inquiring about the attendance of Elder Neal C. Wilson at the White House reception for Pope John Paul II.

According to our records, Elder Wilson did not attend this event.

Sincerely,



Gretchen Poston
Social Secretary to
the White House

Elder William H. Groetheer
Adventist Laymen's Foundation
P.O. Box 178
Lamar, Arkansas 72846

SHELKOV UPDATE

In the October, 1979, issue of "Watchman, What of the Night?" - we reported on "Seventh-day Adventists in Russia." In this report, we called attention to the fact that "on March 14, 1978, Elder Vladimir Shelkov, presiding elder of the Church of the True and Free Seventh-day Adventists, was arrested in Tashkent, a Soviet city in Central Asia." A year later, he was tried in Tashkent, and at 83 years of age was "sentenced to five years of strict regime in a corrective labor colony." This man has spent 23 years of his life in Soviet prisons, having been released the last time in 1969. He went into hiding, and remained there until his arrest once again in March, 1978. In this report, we also noted that the visit of Elder Alf Lohne, Vice President of the General Conference, to prepare the way for Elder Pierson's state visit to Russia, preceded the arrest of Elder Shelkov. According to Elder Lohne's own report of his trip to Russia, he visited the very area where Elder Shelkov was arrested because "many believers" lived there. (Review, July 14, 1977) But Elder Pierson on his state visit to Russia did not go near to this area, even though a large number of Adventists resided there. Further more he did not visit this elderly minister in prison, nor speak to the authorities regarding his arrest and imprisonment. Now more information has come to light.

Alexander Ginsburg, one of four Russian dissidents exchanged in early 1979, spoke in the Hole Memorial Auditorium on the LaSierra campus of LLU, November 13, 1979. His remarks and other data given at the time have been reported in the Winter, 1979, issue of La Sierra Today. He spoke from firsthand observation, as he was with Elder Shelkov in prison, and has read eight books by Ellen G. White, translated by Elder Shelkov into Russian. Here is Ginsburg's own evaluation of this man of God, whom Pierson ignored, and refused to intercede for when in Russia:

I met Shelkov during my second sentence in a Soviet concentration camp. And I would say Shelkov played the decisive role in my own moral training as a human being. Now I have been a Russian Orthodox since I was 13, and I don't think I'll ever become an Adventist, but to this day I remain very much under the influence of this miracle.

I myself spent nine years in prison, and I can tell you it is possible to spend 10 years in those camps and not be totally crushed by the experience. But it is extremely difficult if one spends 25 years to even retain one's physical strength. But to spend 25 years, and retain one's intellectual power and one's personality as a human being is truly a miracle. And this miracle has had its influence not only on those of us in the camp who knew him, but also on those who have heard of him.

It is precisely due to the influence of people like Shelkov that our society which has been perverted into a society of atheists will one day return to be a society of believers. (p.3)

The hierarchy and the Adventist Review talk about and play up the work of the Church in Russia. See the picture in the Adventist Review, November 8, 1979, where Elder Alf Lohne is introducing Kulakov to the Annual Council. Could Kulakov and his partner be connected with the dreaded KGB? Vins, another exchangee

has charged that the officially recognized All Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists "is linked in the closest possible way with the authorities and the KGB," the Soviet secret police. (RNS, June 8, 1979, p.16) Notice now what Ginsburg has to say about Kulakov - "He states that there are 30,000 Adventists in the U.S.S.R. To some extent he is correct, because the church which he represents, does consist of about 30,000 people. He leads that part of the church which accepts the Soviet legislation which discriminates against all churches including the Adventist one." (*ibid.*) Elsewhere in the La Sierra Today report it is explained that "the Soviet legislation" means work and attendance at school on the Sabbath.

Why didn't the hierarchy in Washington during the Annual Council tell about the "miracle" of Adventism in Russia instead of parading these possible KGB agents before the Council? You haven't read in the Adventist Review anything about the message Ginsburg gave in the Hole Memorial Auditorium, have you? Perhaps the editor is still trying to figure out why Ginsburg sees something "sinister" in the recognized Adventist church in Russia when everything is so "innocent and meaningless." But here is Ginsburg's report:

But the church of those who call themselves "True and Free Adventists" is four times greater and they do not accept the Soviet legislation. . .

But if we want to talk about such a thing as a miracle in the modern world, one has to talk about that part of the Adventist church that has not accommodated itself to the Soviet power. Otherwise there is no way for you to understand how that church has survived.

Imagine a person who has spent 23 years of his life in Soviet prisons, prisons which even fascist Germany could not devise for itself. He was finally released at age 69. In the first year after his release authorities began to search for him to re-arrest him. But he hid in the underground. And spending 13 years in the underground he succeeded in writing more than 80 works of theology. He translated into Russian eight books of Ellen G. White, and wrote a series of 10 books, each 300 pages long, on the just struggle against state atheism. All of these works he published on his own underground press, and organized their distribution. All in thirteen years. When he was 83, he was arrested again, and condemned to five more years in Soviet concentration camps. I speak of Vladimir Shelkov, the present head of the True and Free Adventist Church in the Soviet Union. (*ibid.*)

[Circumstantial evidence implicates a member of the Washington hierarchy as being either directly or indirectly involved in the arrest of this 83 year - old voice of free and true Adventism in the Soviet Union.]

Why doesn't Elder Neal C. Wilson, interim president of the General Conference seek Shelkov's release from prison, and have him come and address the General Session in Dallas, this year? Let the church see a modern miracle of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ instead of possible KGB agents. Elder Shelkov represents 120,000 Adventists compared to the 30,000 for whom Kolakov speaks.

Not only has the True and Free Seventh-day Adventists been termed a "miracle"

by an "outsider" looking in, but the cause of the "schism" within the Russian Seventh-day Adventist Church has now been told. Here is the story:

The actual schism in the Russian church didn't take place until the meeting of the Fifth All-Union Congress of Seventh-day Adventists in 1924. The leaders of the main Russian Adventist church felt that in order to bring others to salvation, Adventists must learn to integrate themselves into Soviet society. They issued a statement expressing their full support of the new government:

"We are convinced that God, in His providence, has disposed the heart of our unforgettable V. I. Lenin and his closest associates and given them wisdom in the capable organization of the only progressive and up-to-date apparatus of government in the world. We delegates of the Fifth All-Union Congress of Seventh-day Adventists express to the government of the USSR. . . our gratitude and sincere support for all the freedoms it has won."

[Comment: The segment of the church which made obeisance to atheistic and godless communism is the church group which the hierarchy in Washington is backing. This is the church which Pierson in his state visit to Russia encouraged and sought to unite its factions. This is the church which sends its representatives to our Annual Councils, and General Sessions, and which bows to "Soviet legislation" in regard to work and school attendance on the Sabbath. Let it not be forgotten, however, disagreeable it may be, that as long as one supports the hierarchy with their means, they are in the act seconding the church in Russia that did obeisance to atheism.]

A separate group, led by G. Ostvald, took a position diametrically opposed to that of the organized church. They refused to accept what they called enforced state atheism, refused to register their congregations as required by Soviet law, and consequently exist to this day illegally. . . .

Vladimir Shelkov, their present leader, was a Bible worker for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1923, a year before the schism. He followed Ostvald out of the church and, in so doing, took up a life of continual conflict with state authorities. In 1927 he was ordained as a minister. By 1936 he had been elected deputy chairman of the Faithful and Free Seventh-day Adventists, and in 1949 he became their chairman.

Shelkov has been in and out of prison almost constantly since 1931. Yet in spite of all the years spent in prisons or labor camps, he has managed to produce an impressive amount of literature. A prolific writer, his works include a history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a book on Soviet law, a four-volume work on the beliefs and structure of the Free and Faithful Seventh-day Adventists, and eight volumes entitled The Lawful Struggle for Freedom of Conscience Against the Dictatorship of State Atheism. In that, probably his most important work, Shelkov puts forward his philosophy that Christians

have not only the moral right, but the duty to oppose state enforced atheism. Government, he states, should be wholly secular, fulfilling the function of governing the people without attempting to influence their religious beliefs, without coercing the free human conscience. (p. 2)

We were of the opinion that Liberty stood for the same freedom of the human conscience, but Elder Hegstad in a release to Religious New Service (March 30, 1979, p. 21) stated that "Adventists do not usually become involved with Political activism to the extent that Shelkov has." Is this the line that will be taken by the hierarchy when liberty of conscience is restricted in our own land?

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We Have Some Needs:

- 1) Either on loan for a specified period of time, or to purchase the following books:

Life of Christ, Wm. Hanna
Life of our Lord, S.J. Andrew
Walks and Homes of Jesus, Daniel March

- 2) The following issues of Eternity:

September, October, & November, 1956

- 3) We are looking for an Elementary Church school teacher for the 1980-81 school year.

If you can respond on any of the above needs, please write to the Adventist Laymen's Foundation, P. O. Box 178, Lamar, AR 72846.

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AGAIN AVAILABLE

Individuality in Religion by A. T. Jones. You may write directly to the Foundation. The price - \$2.50, plus 50¢ for postage.

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The next thought paper will bring an article by a Seventh-day Adventist scientist on the age of the chemical materials of the earth, which will supplement the material found in the first article of this issue.

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