



# "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*

## AGE OF THE CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES OF THE EARTH In the Light of Special Revelation

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To the Seventh-day Adventist, information on the age of the earth comes from two sources: (1) Special revelation, consisting of the Bible and the inspired writings of Ellen G. White, known as the Spirit of Prophecy, and (2) the natural world. Which of these sources of truth shall supercede is made clear in the following statements:

He who has a knowledge of God and His word through personal experience has a settled faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures. He has proved that God's word is truth, and he knows that truth can never contradict itself. He does not test the Bible by men's ideas of science; he brings these ideas to the test of the unerring standard. He knows that in true science there can be nothing contrary to the teaching of the word; since both have the same Author, a correct understanding of both will prove them to be in harmony. Whatever in so-called scientific teaching contradicts the testimony of God's word is mere human guesswork. (Ministry of Healing, p. 462)

The deepest students of science are constrained to recognize in nature the working of Infinite power. But to man's unaided reason, nature's teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation can it be read aright. (Education, p. 134)

It must be borne in mind that natural revelation may not be synonymous with our

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\*I first became acquainted with Dr. Marsh when, as a student at Union College, I took Biology under him to satisfy the science requirement toward a B. A. degree with a major in Religion. Dorothea Miller, now Mrs Grotheer, was a student assistant in the Biology Department headed by Dr. Marsh. Later - much later - when completing my M. A. degree at Andrews University, I elected to take a class - Science and Religion - taught by Dr. Marsh. It was from this class that I obtained a paper written by him at the time - July 17, 1964 - which forms a part of this combined presentation on the above subject. The other part of the combined condensation is a paper written ten years later on the same subject dated March 20, 1974, also by Dr. Marsh.

interpretation of natural revelation. Because of this basic deficiency on man's part, clear assertions of special revelation must ever supercede natural revelation. It is only in the light of special revelation that we can interpret aright the world about us.

Suppose that on Day Six of Creation Week, after man had been created, God told Adam that nothing in the landscape was older than about three days. ("Adam had learned from the Creator, the history of creation." PP, p. 83) Suppose Adam had had the point of view of the majority of modern scientists, and believed that only open-minded study of nature would reveal natural truth. (As used by worldly scientists, open-minded study must, for example, refuse all Biblical assertions until their truth can be proved in a laboratory.) Assume Adam replied to the Creator, "Lord, if it is alright with you, in view of the wonderful physical senses and this marvelous mind you have given me, I would like to check these natural phenomena and discover if you are correct in asserting that no object in the landscape is more than three days old!"

Assume that Adam began an open-minded study (as defined by worldly scientists) and observed that he was a mature male of marriageable age (25 years old); that mature fruit-bearing trees were all about him (at least five years old) that giant mature whales were playing in the waters (animals at least scores of years old); that giant trees crown the heights (trees at least 100 years old, possibly possessing what appeared as "annual rings"); that the low, rounded hills and spreading plains of the landscape evidenced at least millions of years of erosion; and that some of the inorganic radioactive clocks apparently had ticked off at least 600 million years. If Adam had had the point of view of our modern worldly scientists, he would have returned to the Creator and said, "Lord, I'm sorry to have to say this, but this landscape is a lot older than you think!" -- and he would have had the most carefully obtained, accurately checked, and valid laboratory proof to support his opinion.

Ridiculous! we say. But that is exactly what is happening when a scientist insists that the results of open-minded study of all natural phenomena must take precedence over all Biblical statements about natural things. However, the Bible-believer must constantly bear in mind that our earth was created and formed in an unnatural way with the appearance of age. Then a millenium and half later the surface of the earth was destroyed, by water and/or mechanical shocks, in some places to a depth of at least 400 miles, and then relaid in an unnatural (miraculous?) way. We live on an earth surface which was unnaturally created in the beginning, and then unnaturally destroyed and unnaturally relaid the year of Noah's flood. How can we possibly assume that we can discover the age of the strata of the earth's crust, let alone the earth itself, by natural methods? Seventh-day Adventism is a revealed religion built on faith in a literal Bible and in its texts as illuminated by the Spirit of Prophecy. By faith we are Seventh-day Adventists.

It is sometimes asserted, tragically even by Seventh-day Adventists, that the origins described in Genesis are merely a myth designed to teach that God created. According to this position, the details found in Genesis chapters one and two are not to be used as a basis for any Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of science. But what was Christ's attitude with regard to the details of Genesis? Note the Scripture:

Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they two shall become one flesh?" (Matt. 19:4-5 NASB)

Here we see that Christ accepted a literal Genesis regarding the origin of man. Three texts from the first two chapters of Genesis are alluded to in this statement by Christ. They are:

Genesis 1:1 - "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Genesis 1:27 - "Male and female created He them"

Genesis 2:24 - "Therefore shall man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: for they two shall be one flesh."

Because Christ accepted the details of Genesis, dare Christians do less? It is important to remember that all the Bible writers who refer to origins accept the details of Genesis as simple history. Seventh-day Adventists, as a body, have, never to this date, taken a position on the age of the earth's raw materials. There is some difference in views held on this question. However, this does not mean that God has not given us light which may be brought to bear on this point.

It is of significance that no clear suggestion is made in special revelation to the effect that any portion of our earth was in existence before Day One of Creation Week. Contrariwise, it would seem permissible to hold that Exodus 20:11 declares not only that all in the heaven (our solar system), the earth, and the sea came into being "in six days," but also the inorganic substances themselves. When Genesis 1:1 and Matthew 19:4 are compared, the expression "in the beginning" refers to a single great event in the history of our world and its inhabitants. A summary statement covering the work of the six days - Genesis 2:4 - states:- "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created."

Because of the much detailed light that God has vouchsafed Adventists through the writings of Ellen G. White on the subject of creation (a most timely addition of information because of the great importance that the age of the materials has assumed in our day), it would seem that Adventists need not to be in doubt over the age of our earth's chemical substances. As it is true in the Bible so also in the Spirit of Prophecy, there is an impressive absence of any assertion that can be taken to indicate the pre-existence of our earth's raw materials before Day One. This should carry much weight with the careful Adventist student, especially in view of the fact that the Spirit of Prophecy statements were written after Darwin began his work, and these statements dealt specifically with conclusions reached regarding the age of the earth in the light of natural revelation and special revelation.

The following references are among the most helpful in determining the age of the earth's materials as presented in special revelation:

By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear. Heb. 11:3 RSV

The theory that God did not create matter when He brought the world into existence, is without foundation. In the formation of our world, God was not indebted to pre-existing matter." (8T:258)

The idea that many stumble over, that God did not create matter when He brought the world into existence, limits the power of the Holy One of Israel. (Signs of the Times, March 13, 1884)

Infidel geologists claim that the world is very much older than the Bible record makes it. . . The world is now only about six thousand years old. (Spiritual Gifts, Vol 3, pp. 91-92)(1864)

It is worthy of note that the above three references from the Spirit of Prophecy occur in discussions where the relation of science and religion is the central theme under consideration.

In regard to these three quotations from the pen of Ellen G. White, good exegesis will not permit an interpretation which asserts in Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 8, p. 258 and the Signs of the Times, March 13, 1884, "world" refers to the chemical substances of our earth but in Spiritual Gifts, Vol 3, p. 92, it refers merely to its surface details. In Hebrews 11:3, we learn that when our "world" was created by the word of God, its substance was brought into existence from nothing. The Ellen G. White statements reaffirm this fact, and then her inspired pen adds the basically important knowledge for our day that this great event when our world was formed occurred only about 6,000 years ago.

To the above statements, these might be added: "When the foundations of the earth were laid. . . then was laid the foundation of the Sabbath." (Great Controversy, p. 455) "The Sabbath institution, which originated in Eden, is as old as the world itself." (Patriarchs & Prophets, p. 336) From these declarations and assertions of special revelation, and the absence of anything to the contrary, one who believes that special revelation supercedes natural revelation is thus able to conclude that nothing about our earth/world is older than Creation Week.

Not only does special revelation make clear that both the earth with its foundations, and man were created in the same great event at the beginning, but Bible chronology tells us this event occurred some 6,000 years ago. However, destructive higher criticism, with its subtle process of rationalization of every assertion of the Bible, teaches that because in certain Biblical genealogies and because of Luke's naming of a patriarch not mentioned in the Old Testament in the post-Flood period (Cainan, Luke 3:36), Bible chronology is completely untrustworthy; and resultantly, the Word of God gives no idea at all in regard to the duration of time since Creation Week. This widely accepted doctrine, even broadly accepted among evangelical Christians, was a major victory for the god of deceit.

The Seventh-day Adventist who has any problem in facing this teaching of higher criticism should go to the new Comprehensive Index of the Writings of Ellen G. White, and study carefully the hundreds of references under "Chronology." It will be found that God through His chosen messenger has revealed most clearly to us that the over-all Bible chronology is true. The first Adam live four milleniums before the second Adam. "Christ overcame in the sinner's behalf, four

thousand years after Adam turned his back upon the light of his home." (SM, bk, i, p. 267) Fifty-three references in this list, exclusive of the prophetic 2300, and 1260 year periods, deal with Bible chronology periods of 1,000 to 6,000 years. Every Adventist who is concerned about historical time should meditate prayerfully on the fact that in hundreds of references, the messenger of the Lord accepts Bible chronology. Thus because of the clear teaching of the Bible and of the Spirit of Prophecy on this point, it is the historic position of the Seventh-day Adventists that only about 6,000 years have passed since Creation Week.

What one believes about Creation, effects how one regards the Sabbath. Why are we to keep the Sabbath day holy? According to the Fourth Commandment, we are to keep it holy "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is." (Ex. 20:11) Thus the first reason for observance of the Sabbath is to remind us of what God created and made in the six days of Creation Week. Among those facts were the laying of the foundations of the earth. "The great Jehovah has laid the foundations of the earth. . . in six days. . ." (PP, p. 47) Assume for a moment that the raw materials of our earth were created before Creation Week. This would mean that their origin would not be memorialized by the Sabbath. If such were the case, to take an example, to the mineralogist the significance of the Sabbath would be minor. His area of chief concern came into being before those things whose origin the Sabbath would commemorate. To the mineralogist who believed the raw materials were formed before Creation Week, the Creator's work of the six days would be merely a secondary task of landscaping and outfitting with materials which were already on hand before Creation Week.

How appreciative we should be that God gave us the inspired commentary, for example, Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 47, which makes clear that not only was the surface of the earth prepared but all the remainder of the earth to its very foundation came into existence during the six days of Creation Week, and thereby the earth's raw materials are included with those works whose creation is memorialized in the observance of the Sabbath day. It behoves us to hold to that point of view of origins which lends the greatest significance to the Sabbath.

To subscribe to a point of view that at least the raw materials were here before Day One makes it difficult to close the door to evolution. But when Adventists accept the assertions of the Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy which have a bearing on the age of our earth's materials and duration since Creation Week, they have a strong case against uniformitarianism and organic evolution. The fact of nothing about our earth being older than about 6,000 years, provides no stage upon which extended natural processes can act. Is it not clear that God, through His messengers, has supplied us with the very information we need to enable us to see and speak clearly and act positively in this time of confusion?

*"THE GREAT JEHOVAH HAD LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARTH; HE HAD DRESSED THE WHOLE WORLD IN THE GARB OF BEAUTY, AND HAD FILLED IT WITH THINGS USEFUL TO MAN; HE HAD CREATED ALL THE WONDERS OF THE LAND AND OF THE SEA. IN SIX DAYS THE GREAT WORK OF CREATION HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED." (PP. 47)*

# The Shaking Up of Adventism?

SDA biblical scholars challenge the traditionalists.

Desmond Ford is at once a product and a catalyst of recent developments that are plunging the Seventh-day Adventist Church into a serious crisis of identity and authority.

When controversy erupted following a talk he gave in late October at a lay-sponsored forum on the campus of 2,100-student Pacific Union College in northern California, Ford—a well known SDA theologian and visiting professor from Australia—was summoned to SDA headquarters in suburban Washington, D.C., to explain his views. He had taken issue at the forum with an SDA teaching known as "the investigative judgment," a belief that Christ entered the "sanctuary" of Daniel 8:14 (or "most holy place" of Hebrews 9) in heaven in 1844 to begin judging believers, a work that will continue until his Second Coming. The issue is important because it is a vital aspect of the church's historical foundations. Christ did not return in 1844, as Adventist pioneers had predicted in their study of prophecy, and the investigative judgment teaching was part of the attempt to explain that in 1844 important prophecy had indeed been fulfilled.

Ford declared at the forum that Christ has been king and priest ever since his ascension and that he always knows his sheep. What happened in 1844, Ford indicated, was not a shift in heavenly geography but the raising up of a people (Adventists) who would recover the spirit of the Reformation, proclaiming "the law in its fulness and the gospel in its fulness so that all men might be judged by their response to that proclamation." The theologian linked his dismissal of the investigative judgment to the doctrine of justification by faith, another issue troubling the church.

SDA officials gave Ford, 50, a six-month leave of absence with pay from Pacific Union and instructed him to prepare a paper clarifying and documenting his viewpoints. A committee of administrators and scholars was appointed to supervise and evaluate his work, expected to be completed by this summer.

Ford, who earned a doctorate in England under renowned evangelical scholar F. F. Bruce, arrived in Takoma Park, Maryland, last month and im-

mediately began his task, working out of a basement office in the church archives.

Officials emphasize that the church follows a long-time practice of granting its members the right to be heard on any issue affecting the church's teachings. "The church has a history of being gentle with its creative people," commented SDA education executive Richard Hamill, the official directly responsible for supervising Ford. Hamill observed that the church has allowed for theological change in its development, but to preserve unity, he suggested, change must be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

Under pressure from Australian administrators, the SDA publishing house at the last minute "deferred indefinitely" publication of a Sabbath school quarterly Ford had written. "The material was correct theologically; it was simply felt that the author's name was too controversial at this time," commented SDA publications official Howard Rampton, himself an Australian. (Quarterlies are published in 100 languages for use among the 192 countries where the church has work; the translation process was held up while SDA editors hurriedly prepared a replacement manuscript.)

The outcome of Ford's case is unpredictable, say observers. Privately, a number of SDA biblical scholars who express reservations about Ford's outspokenness, nevertheless generally agree with him on key doctrinal positions, and a large number of laymen and young clergy back him fully. Even some of Ford's detractors would oppose restraint on academic freedom, the observers say. To disfellowship Ford, moreover, would invite widespread campus unrest and even schisms, they point out, but to do nothing would invite further clamor from traditionalists. One suggested solution: an appeal to Ford to tone down his public pronouncements for the sake of unity.

It may not be that simple. In dozens of interviews with theologians, seminarians, clergy, administrators, and lay leaders, a common theme emerged: the church must get the issues out into the open and deal with them responsibly. One seminary professor, however, cautioned that such a course might result in a setback for theological reform. The church, he indi-

cated, has come a long way already on issues such as justification by faith because progress has been gradual and quiet. (Church leaders point out that Adventists have always believed in justification by faith, but many of these same leaders also point out that many Adventists in actual practice have confused justification with sanctification and believe that their salvation rests on perfectionism and good works. Over the past decade or so, a number of biblical scholars and younger clergy have emphasized the finished work of Christ on the cross, and the response in the churches has taken on revival characteristics.) Some traditionalists, however, appear ready to fight. One of Ford's opponents, a California educator, said it is his understanding that the investigative judgment teaching is one



Richard Hamill, supervising the inquiry.

of the hallmark SDA doctrines that can never be discarded.

There is also ferment over the issues of authority and ecclesiology. A committee of scholars and administrators was dispatched to Long Beach, California, late last month to study the criticisms of an SDA pastor regarding the writings of Ellen G. White, the SDA pioneer whose visions and teachings are considered authoritative by most Adventists and accepted as divinely inspired by many. Pastor Walter Rea, 56, of the 450-member Long Beach SDA church, claims he has hundreds of pages of documentation showing that Mrs. White borrowed liberally—virtually word for word, in some cases—from other writers. "She got her knowledge in the same way anyone else gets theirs," he

commented. Adventists must look to the Bible for their authority, he indicated.

In an explanatory letter to the committee members, SDA General Conference president Neal Wilson noted that Mrs. White really acknowledged using other sources. She used biographical, historical, spiritual, and scientific material from other authors, he said. The church has never emphasized this fact, but neither has it tried to cover it up, he noted.

In interviews, theologians said that scholars for many years have known of Mrs. White's "literary dependencies" but have never made a public issue of it. She always exhorted members to look to the Bible for authority, not to her, they said. Early in SDA history, though, many of the church's members placed Mrs. White's teaching on a level equal with Scripture, and they tended to require the Bible to square with her views, a practice that persists among some Adventists today.

(3) "The primary issue in the church today is this: Are we prepared to test Mrs. White by the Scriptures?" asserted one of Adventism's most respected theologians, who asked to remain anonymous (as did many other interviewees). "We can't give Ellen White veto power over the meaning of Scripture," he declared.

On the issue of ecclesiology, many members grouse about what they feel is excessive vertical orientation of the church's structures. In this view, Takoma Park is the Vatican, and administration



Desmond Ford, documenting his views.

officials are the Italian Curia. Many of the officials would shrug off the description and plead that they are simply trying to do their job. Yet fear of headquarters persists among clergy and teachers, and some lay leaders complain that officials are unresponsive to their concerns. Agendas at national conventions of the church are tightly controlled by administrators. To help sort things out, Wilson has called a meeting of scholars and administrators in August in Colorado to discuss how decision-making processes of the church can be opened to greater participation.

(4)

Despite the tensions and transition pains, the Adventists enjoy a measure of sound health. Growth has been fairly rapid, especially overseas: Of 3.2 million members, 566,000 are in North America

(in 3,850 congregations). Antismoking, dietary, and medical programs have earned the church good will and new members. Effects are still being felt from a spiritual awakening among the church's young people in the early 1970s.

In the last two decades the church has moved closer to the evangelical mainstream. Adventists believe in the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the sinless life and atoning sacrifice of Christ, his bodily resurrection and ascension, salvation through grace by faith, sanctification by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the imminent return of Christ.

Seventh-day Adventism's roots go back to the early 1800s, when a period of excited speculation about the Second Advent (Coming) of Christ swept through many churches. Some prophecy students, mulling over figures in Daniel 8 and 9, began setting dates. Among the date setters was William Miller, a New York farmer-turned-Baptist preacher, who began making public appearances in the 1830s. His followers, who numbered 200,000 at the peak of his ministry, became known as Millerites or Adventists, only a fraction of whom later became Seventh-day Adventists. They came from many denominational backgrounds.

Miller predicted several dates in 1843 and 1844 when Christ would return, then finally settled on October 22, 1844. Many of his followers gave up their jobs, sounded a "midnight cry" of repentance to the world, and came together to await Christ's return in an atmosphere of worship. When the date passed and Christ did not return—the "Great Disappointment" in Adventist literature—the movement all but collapsed. Thousands of the disheartened and disillusioned Millerites returned to their churches, where in many cases they were ridiculed and disciplined.

Those who remained were bitter and divided. They lashed out at the churches and at each other. Some—including John and Ellen G. White—taught that Christ had shut the door to salvation, a view that impeded Adventist evangelism for years. A number of explanations for the Great Disappointment were offered. These are explored by SDA theologian P. Gerard Damsteegt in his *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Eerdmans), the best and most thoroughly documented book on early SDA history. Ex-Methodist Hiram Edson and Ellen G. Harmon, the future Mrs. White, said they had visions showing that Christ had not come out of the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary after all but had come out of the first compartment of the sanctuary and entered into the second, or most holy, to receive kingdom, dominion, and glory. Further refinements were added to this understanding of Christ's sanctuary ministry, including the investigative judgment aspect wherein Christ is determining who is saved and who is not, largely on the basis of works.

Associations with Seventh Day Baptists led to the adoption of a Sabbath doctrine. Mrs. White, a prolific writer, was seen as having the "Spirit of Prophecy" by which she received revelations from God. A group of Adventists set up a headquarters in 1855 in Battle Creek, Michigan, home of vegetarian Adventist W. K. Kellogg, inventor of corn flakes. Under the leadership of Ellen White's husband James, an editor, the SDA was formally organized in 1863. Following a spat between Kellogg and other SDA leaders, offices were moved in 1903 to Takoma Park. Mrs. White died in 1915.

The keystone doctrine of the Protestant Reformers—justification by faith (God's declaration that a believer through faith is righteous in Christ)—apparently received little attention from the SDA pioneers. Mrs. White later stated that she and her husband had stood alone for 45 years in teaching the doctrine. Moreover, the predominant view of justification embraced by early Adventists was akin to the Catholic one hammered out at the Council of Trent: Christ died for the sins of the past, but if the believer is to survive judgment, he must provide evidence of his righteousness through obedience and good works with the aid of the Holy Spirit. This confusion of justification with sanctification, linked as it was to a pre-Advent judgment, led many Adventists into perfectionism.

The Adventists came to the brink of a theological revival in 1888, according to SDA watcher Geoffrey J. Paxton, an Anglican who is president of the Queensland Bible Institute in Brisbane, Australia. In *The Shaking of Adventism* (Baker, 1977), an attempt to trace the development of the doctrine of justification among Adventists, Paxton notes that two SDA ministers preached righteousness by faith at the church's 1888 general conference in Minneapolis. Even though Mrs. White supported their views, the conference was divided. Periodic meetings have been called over the years since then to analyze what happened in 1888, and to see if some agreement could be reached on the meaning of the gospel of righteousness by faith. Desmond Ford has been a central figure at some of these meetings, pleading for the church to repent and to embrace Christ's finished work on the cross. It is this call, amplified by Ford and others, that leads Paxton to conclude that Seventh-day Adventism is being shaken right down to its foundation.

SDA officials consider Paxton a troublemaker, and they have tried to ban him from speaking at SDA gatherings.

SDA officials are quick to emphasize that the church has always taught righteousness by faith. The full impact of the message, however, somehow seems to get bottled up.

The official SDA youth publication not long ago complained that Seventh-day Adventism's greatest problem is related

to "the consequences of years and years of unceasing perfectionism that has infiltrated every sphere of our denominational existence, be it church, Sabbath school, or home." The result, said the paper, is "a generation of spiritually exhausted and frustrated people" who end up either pretending everything is okay or dropping out of the faith "because they know they will never reach the perfect standards of the church."

Ford isn't the only Australian who has gotten into trouble with traditionalists in the church over the justification issue. Robert D. Brinsmead, graduate of an SDA college in Australia and one of the most vigorous voices for theological reform among Adventists, is another. While Brinsmead was lecturing in the United States in the early 1960s, a denominational executive and a tiny Australian church disfellowshipped him from the denomination. Although he now refers to himself as an independent evangelical, he has remained in touch with Adventists around the world and is frequently called on to speak at unofficial gatherings. One of his weekend series is entitled "1844 Reexamined." In it, he challenges the validity of virtually the entire SDA historical foundation, including the matters pertaining to the investigative judgment.

For some reason, Ford has been under heavy pressure from unnamed officials to condemn Brinsmead and his teachings publicly. Ford, however, agrees with Brinsmead on many positions and has declined to rebuke him. Says Ford about his own position: "I am not attacking any basic doctrine of the church, but I am suggesting that the traditional mode of teaching the judgment can be made more exegetically sound and more vital in its impact on the spiritual lives of our people."

EDWARD E. PLOWMAN

### C R U S A D E R

Can you hope to even check  
the leak  
In this great wall?

The water is so cold, the night  
so bleak  
The hand so small!

Edith Cherrington

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## COMMENTS

On the three previous pages of the Thought Paper, we have reproduced the article - "The Shaking Up of Adventism" - which appeared in the February 8, 1980, issue of Christianity Today. The matters contained in this well-written article fall into two categories: personal statements by named and unnamed persons; and basic theological issues, namely, the fundamental doctrine of the sanctuary as understood in historic Seventh-day Adventism, and the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy. (In our comments on these two areas, we shall use numbers to designate the particular statements to which we shall refer in the article, and underline these statements so that the reader can refer back and forth more readily.

The statements attributed to church "officials" and given by Dr. Richard Hamill need to be carefully considered.(1) These statements are simply prevarications. Are these men seeking to rewrite our past history as it relates to the dealing of the hierarchy with the truly "creative" theologian - the late Elder M. L. Andreasen? Let them name one single person who has taken issue with the hierarchy in the past fifty years either in the area of theology or ecclesiology who has received the "gentle" touch described by Hamill. But looking at this from another viewpoint - Are the laity being told that Dr. Ford is going to be "white-washed" and sent forth as a saint to the church to proclaim his heresies once again? Is Hamill so blind as to equate "creative" thinking with heresy? The Statement of the President of Pacific Union College in behalf of the Board of Trustees indicated that Dr. Ford had taken "issue with basic theological positions held by the Seventh-day Adventist Church." (See p. 7 of February issue of "Watchman, What of the Night?") It has been documented from Australia, and in the December, 1979, issue of this paper that Ford is teaching other dangerous errors. The article in Christianity Today suggests that Ford will not be disfellowshipped for fear of a schism in the Church. (2) Yet the Church Manual declares plainly:

Among the grievous sins for which members shall be subject to church discipline are the following:  
1. Denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the cardinal doctrines of the church or teaching doctrines contrary to the same.  
(Church Manual, p. 234, 1967 edition)

Are we now being told that the delay in dealing with Ford till after the General Conference Session means that the change in our Fundamental Beliefs is to be such that Ford can be declared to be in harmony with the Church's teaching instead of teaching heresy as is now the case?

It will be observed that many who were interviewed prior to the publication of this article wished to remain - "anonymous." (3) Really, what is the difference between writing an "anonymous" letter, and going into print such as in this article without one's name attached to what one said? Why the cowardice? If what one is saying is truth, why hide behind anonymity? If these are the kind of theologians who are teaching the coming ministry of the church - woe be to the laity to whom such will minister!

Also the article indicates that interim president, Neal C. Wilson, is calling for a meeting in August in Colorado to discuss "how decision-making processes of the church can be opened to greater participation." (4) This is a bit late. The General Conference Session will be in April. Apparently with Wilson issuing the

the call, he feels that he has the election of himself as "first minister" of the Church "in the bag." If Wilson really wanted to make changes so that there was not an "image to the beast" at Takoma Park, with its "curia on the Sligo," and a reigning "first minister," all he would have to do in his opening remarks to the Session in Dallas is to recommend that the 1901 Constitution be resurrected and that the ecclesiological reforms began then be continued and enlarged. To do so would require a crucifixion of "self" - a crucifixion most difficult for one "running" for high office. However, when the law of the "New Kingdom" as stated by Christ in Matt. 20:25-28 becomes the basis of all of the chatter about righteousness by faith, then Adventists will no longer be in a "shakey" position.

The two items under "basic theological issues, namely, the fundamental doctrine of the Sanctuary as understood in historic Seventh-day Adventism, and the authority of the Spirit of Prophecy" (5) will be discussed in forthcoming thought papers.

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VLADIMIR ANDREEOVICH SHELKOV  
1896 - 1980

On January 27, Elder V. A. Shelkov, Leader of the True and Free Seventh-day Adventists died in a Soviet Labor Detention Center. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14:13)

A DIALOGUE

Jesus: "Depart from Me, ye cursed. . . for I was. . . sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not."

Pierson: "Lord, when saw I Thee. . . sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee?"

Jesus: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these My brethren, Vladimir Shelkov, ye did it not unto Me."

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