



"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

NEW FUNDAMENTAL STATEMENT OF BELIEFS PREPARES THE WAY FOR JOINING WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

At the Fifteenth and final meeting of the Fifty-third General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, on April 25, the delegates voted "overwhelmingly" but not unanimously to accept a Statement of Beliefs which contained phrases and clauses which have never appeared in any previously formulated statement of doctrines. Certain phraseology and concepts are copied directly from the Constitution of the World Council of Churches, and prepares the way for the hierarchy to move in that direction when they feel it advantageous to do so.

Article #2 - The Trinity - from the new Statement of Beliefs reads:

There is one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. (General Conference Bulletin #9, p. 23)

Article #11 - The Church - reads:

The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. (Ibid., p. 25)

The Constitution of the World Council of Churches requires that only those churches which express such doctrinal concepts "shall be eligible for membership" in that body. Here are the first two articles from the Constitution:

A. The Constitution

I. Basis

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

II. Membership

Those churches shall be eligible for membership in the World Council of Churches which express their agreement with the Basis upon which this Council is founded and satisfy such criteria as the Assembly or the Central Committee may prescribe. (So Much in Common, p. 33)

When Article #2 was presented at the Seventh business meeting, there was discussion over its phraseology. Elder H. J. Harris, president of the Oregon Conference, wished it amended, but both Dr. Richard Hammill and Dr. W. R. Leshar spoke in support of its retention as written. These two men served as "floor leaders" in getting the Statement thru the Session, and were on the editing committee with Hammill as its chairman. In fact, Dr. Leshar, who heads the General Conference Biblical Research Committee commented - "It is much more in harmony with the mystery of God to simply say there is one God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." (See GC Bulletin, #5, pp. 11, 14)

Throughout the discussion of the Statement of Beliefs, the stock answer to many of the objections was to use the words of Dr. Hammill - "When we framed this statement we tried to use Biblical phrases as much as we could." (Ibid., p. 11) But where in the authentic text of the Bible can one find the expression as copied from the Constitution of the World Council of Churches in regard to God? One might point to I John 5:7, but this text can be found "in no Greek manuscript earlier than the 15th and 16th centuries." (SDA Bible Commentary, Vol. 7, p. 675) It is a gloss which crept into the Scriptures to support the doctrine of the Trinity - a term found in neither the Bible nor the Spirit of Prophecy.

The "evolution" of the second statement defining the Church is also very interesting. In the Statement of Beliefs as voted by the 1979 Annual Council to be recommended to the General Conference in session, it read - "That the Church is the company of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour." (p. 9, Adventist Review, Feb. 21, 1980) However, this statement was never presented to the General Conference session. A completely new statement was prepared just prior to the session and presented to the delegates. In this second statement, the article on the Church was re-written to read - "The Church is the community of Christian believers who confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and claim Him as their Saviour and Lord." (GC Bulletin, #6, p. 25) In this the distinct wording of the WCC Constitution is lost. However, in the discussion of this particular article, Dr. Lawrence Geraty of Andrews University commented that the Statement of Beliefs that had appeared in the Adventist Review (Feb. 21, 1980) contained "cohesion and balance." (GC Bulletin #6, p. 23) Elder Neal C. Wilson asked that the committee take a look at re-editing the revised article, and when it did come for the final vote, it contained the wording of the WCC Constitution. We need to keep in mind that the original Statement of Beliefs as voted by the 1979 Annual Council was formulated by a Committee which was "assisted by a group of scholars at the SDA Theological Seminary," (Review, Feb. 21, 1980, p. 8) and one of those scholars is Dr. R. F. Dederen, who serves on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches.

The consternation which resulted in the change of Statements of Belief from the one voted and recommended by the Annual Council, and the one that the committee presented to the delegates was expressed by a delegate from the Netherlands who said - "In the Netherlands we studied and discussed those fundamental beliefs many hours. Is this the same text we received there? It is very difficult for me to understand what is going on now because there appears to be many differences. I don't recognize the contents and contexts of certain theological terms in this manuscript." (GC Bulletin, #8, p. 15)

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON NEW STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

In presenting the Statement of Beliefs which had not been sent to the field for study and evaluation as had the original Statement voted by the 1979 Annual Council, Neal C. Wilson, president of the General Conference, derided the idea that an attempt was being made to "destroy completely the foundations of the church and set the church on a course that would be un-Biblical, contrary to the tradition of the past and to historical Adventism." (GC Bulletin, #5, p. 8) To "destroy completely" would be too obvious, and so he could say - "My fellow delegates, there is nothing that is further from the truth." But what was the hierarchy attempting to do? In the same preliminary statement, Wilson further explains:

I fully recognize, and am very willing to admit, that we do need to use extreme care, including a wholesome variety of minds with training and background, to provide input on this kind of statement. However, I do not think anyone should become frightened when the wording of such a document is studied. Perhaps I should go one step further and say that the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have a creed as such. Nothing is set in concrete in terms of human words. The time never comes when any human document cannot be improved upon. We feel that every 20, 30, or 50 years it is a very good thing for us to be sure we are using the right terminology and approach. Schools of theological thought are constantly changing [but not the truth - WHG]. Certain terms mean today what they did not mean 50 years ago. There are certain presuppositions that people develop, and certain terminology is used to describe the presuppositions. It is extremely important that we should understand what we believe and that we should express it simply, clearly, and in the most concise way possible. We should not only state our beliefs but be certain that those who read them do not misunderstand and that they are unable to read three or four meanings into the same sentences or words. (Ibid., p. 9)

One can but conclude from these comments that the objective of the hierarchy was to prepare and present a statement which could be clearly understood as to what is believed, or is to be believed by the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, whether read by a member or by one who is not a member. A careful reading of previous Statements of Belief (See "Watchman, What of the Night?" June, 1980) leaves little doubt as to what was believed "with entire unanimity" by the Church prior to 1930. And it was expressed in simple, clear, and concise language. Why then a need to change or modify such positions? Let us for comparison take one statement from the previous formulations, and compare it with a parallel statement as was voted in Dallas, Texas, and see if "clarity" and "preciseness" of language was achieved. Here are the two statements:

#1 - Jesus Christ "ascended on high to be our only mediator in the sanctuary in heaven, where through the merits of His shed blood, He secures the pardon and forgiveness of the sins of all who persistently come to Him."

#2 - "In it ["a sanctuary in heaven"] Christ ministers in our behalf,

making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross."

It is obvious that these two statements are not saying the same thing. But what is #2 saying? The #1 statement is to be found in Smith's outline of Beliefs as given in the 1912 Review (August 22, p. 4, Article 2), while the #2 statement above is from Article #23 of the newly voted Statement of Beliefs (GC Bulletin #9, p. 27). The Smith statement reflects the belief of the Church which was held with "entire unanimity throughout the body" from 1844 to well into the 1920's. It is clearly stated that Jesus Christ after shedding His blood ascended to the sanctuary in heaven "where" through its merits He "secures" pardon and forgiveness of sins. But what is the #2 statement saying? Christ is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary making available "benefits." But were these "benefits" obtained because He made atonement in the heavenly sanctuary with His blood, or were they obtained when the offering was made at the Cross? It is simply not clear, and must be understood in the light of what has been previously published as an authentic amplification of our beliefs. This previously published explanation says:

When, therefore, one hears an Adventist say, or reads in Adventist literature - even in the writings of Ellen G. White - that Christ is making atonement now, it should be understood that we mean simply that Christ is now making application of the benefits of the sacrificial atonement He made on the cross; that He is making it efficacious for us individually, according to our needs and requests. (Questions on Doctrine, pp. 354-355, emphasis theirs)

How glorious is the thought that the King, who occupies the throne, is also our representative at the court of heaven! This becomes all the more meaningful when we realize that Jesus our surety entered "the holy places," and appeared in the presence of God for us. But it was not with the hope of obtaining something for us at that time, or at some future time. No! He had already obtained it for us on the cross. And now as our High Priest He ministers the virtues of His atoning sacrifice to us. (Ibid., p. 381, Emphasis theirs)

Elder Neal C. Wilson would have been more accurate had he said that the Statement of Beliefs which was being presented was not an attempt to change the concepts already in print in the book - Questions on Doctrine. It would have really been more honest.

Article #23 came in for some pointed discussion at the Dallas session. The substance of the article, as presented and voted, followed the 1931 Statement which removed the concept that when Christ ascended on high, He began His ministry in the first apartment of the sanctuary; and that in 1844, He entered into the second apartment for the final work of atonement. In place of the concept as given in the earthly type, the work of Christ was defined as "phases." A layman - C. H. Carey - arose during the discussion on this article and stated:

I am a layman, a church elder of some 40 years. I would like to say that my belief today regarding the Spirit of Prophecy and its relationship to the Word of God is the same as when I became a member. I

believe in the historical and fundamental place of the Spirit of Prophecy in the church, both past and present. I do not believe we should weaken this belief because it is controversial. I suggest the following for sentence four: "At the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, in 1844, He entered into the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, and began the second and last phase of His ministry." (GC Bulletin, #8, p. 15)

However, the concept as stated by Kenneth Vaz prevailed. He said:

I refer to the fourth sentence, ["At the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, in 1844, He entered the second and last phase of His ministry; He began a final work of judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, a work typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the day of atonement."] which presents a point regarding the sanctuary that is currently causing a great deal of controversy. I am happy with this terminology, for it eradicates the matter of geographic location of Christ by not using the word place, which is really the center of the controversy. (Ibid.)

Another comparison which needs to be considered as to whether the historic position of the Church was changed or not is to compare what was said in both the White and Smith statements with the 1931 Statement and the voted 1980 Statement in regard to the incarnation of Christ. The White and Smith formulations read:

There is one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, the one by whom He created all things, and by whom they do consist; that He took on Him the nature of the seed of Abraham for the redemption of the fallen race; . . . (See "Watchman, What of the Night?" June, 1980, p. 3, Article 2)

There is no question here as to meaning. The Church believed with "entire unanimity" that Christ when He became man took upon Himself the fallen nature of Adam - coming through the seed of Abraham. Now if the committee appointed by Wilson felt the text in Hebrew 2:16 was open to textual criticism, and desiring to use the phraseology of Scripture, they needed only to use Romans 1:3 - "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." But what was voted?

Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. (GC Bulletin #9, p. 23)

Though technically correct, the question is left open - Did Jesus take the nature of Adam before the Fall, or the nature of Adam after the Fall? - Adam was truly man both prior to and following the Fall. Thus the historic position of Adventism is glossed over, and Wilson's explanatory statement that no attempt was considered to alter our historic faith creates a credibility gap as to his own theological posture. However, it must be remembered that Neal C. Wilson placed his "nihil obstat" on the book, Movement of Destiny, which clearly taught that

Christ took the nature of Adam prior to the Fall. (See Movement of Destiny, pp. 15-16, 497.)

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UPCOMING BUSINESS

Now that the 1980 General Conference is history, the hierarchy must return to Washington and face some unfinished business - what to do about Dr. Desmond Ford? A layman - Richard A. Waterman of Bath, Maine - has written an open letter to the hierarchy and "interested laymen within the Adventist Movement." From this letter, we quote - a very accurate analysis of the basic problem involved:

The current "theology crisis" within the church today concerning Desmond Ford's bold stand in the matter of the heavenly sanctuary, which conflicts with the writings of Ellen G. White, has prompted me to write and share with you a few of my observations regarding this matter.

From the outset, I want to say that I am in total disagreement with the theology Desmond Ford has been presenting, specifically regarding the sanctuary, . . .

It is my observation that if Desmond Ford were to pack his theology books and board a 747 for Australia today, the theological crisis would not cease because the same position has been taught in a disguised manner in this church since in the 1950's, shortly after the Barnhouse-Martin debates. Desmond Ford is not the instigator of the current crisis, just merely one of many perpetrators of the coveted evangelical teachings, examples of which are to be found in the book, Questions on Doctrine.

It is also my honest belief that if Ford had not stated so forthrightly his position regarding the sanctuary and the 2300-year prophecy, he would still be teaching in our college today. However, since he boldly disagreed with the writings of Sister White, pertaining to Christ entering the Most Holy Place in 1844, and asserting instead, that Christ entered the Most Holy Place at His ascension, he left the leaders with no other choice but to deal directly with this situation and come face to face with the real issue undermining our movement, which is an incorrect understanding of the nature of Christ.

Let me explain. Reformationists hold to the view that Christ inherited a sinless nature, and if so, He is not my Example, but merely my Substitute. So, therefore, the forensic concept of justification is all that is included in the doctrine, or experience, of righteousness by faith. So, do you see that if only the forensic concept, or experience, is all that is needed, then why do we need a continuing atonement in heaven? We don't need it. If the atonement was full and complete on the cross, there is no need of a continuing atonement if Christ is

merely my Substitute. Ford is just expressing more openly what others, including Edward Heppenstall, are now teaching. Now while Heppenstall and others may not have come out and said that they do not believe in a continuing atonement, that Christ did, indeed, enter into the Most Holy Place in 1844, their teaching is still a deception because there is no need of a continuing atonement if Christ is presented as my Substitute only. One position makes void the other. But, on the other hand, if Christ is my Example in all things, then we do need a continuing atonement, for if Christ inherited a sinful nature from His mother, and not a sinless nature, then He has proven to the whole world and universe that a sinless character can be developed in sinful flesh.

If that be the case, then there is a need for a continuing atonement because we are told "when the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced. . ." It does not say - "when the character of Christ shall be accepted," but when it is "perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." So the reproduction of His character is what is now taking place while Christ is in the Most Holy Place, and "sanctification is the work of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," according to Ellen G. White, not the work of man. The idea that justification is the root and sanctification is the fruit is Reformation theology, not Ellen G. White's theology. When we say that justification is the root and sanctification is the fruit, what we are really saying is that the first part of the work is the work of Christ, but the second part is the work of man. Out of a heart full of love for what Jesus did, I will want to do good works. Sister White never said it was the work of man. Sure, we will cooperate. We will always have a free will, but, as I submit to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they will do the work. The new covenant relationship is entered into. This is the subjective element of salvation. It is the historic position of this church that righteousness by faith includes both the objective and subjective phases, but let us remember always that in both aspects the autonomy of the human will is constant. I would caution that it is possible to go to extremes with either phase and enter into subjectivism or objectivism. Both are wrong.

So, brothers and sisters, and those in positions of leadership, I earnestly plead that you will come to grips with the real issue in the great controversy, and let us not make Desmond Ford the scapegoat. The problems existed before he ever came on the scene, and the problem will exist after he leaves.

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"Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices. The God of heaven draws a sharp contrast between pure, elevating, ennobling truth and false, misleading doctrines. He calls sin and impenitence by the right name. He does not gloss over wrong doing with a coat of untempered mortar. I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, scriptural basis." Ms. 10, 1905 (SM, bk i, p. 175)

SOURCE DOCUMENTS NOW AVAILABLE

In the preceding article - an open letter from a layman - it was pointed out the present theological crisis in the Church would not cease by merely making Dr. Desmond Ford a scapegoat "because the same position has been taught in a disguised manner in this church since in the 1950's." This alluding to the 1950's has reference to the conferences which took place between the Evangelical leaders - Donald Grey Barnhouse and Walter R. Martin - and certain leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the years, 1955-1956. Today many of our church members do not know what actually took place at these conferences. The book resultant from this dialogue - Questions on Doctrine - published by the Church is no longer available through Adventist Book Centers. Furthermore, this book does not give the original answers in critical areas of theology as given to Barnhouse and Martin in response to their questions; it is a revision which sought to disguise the depth of the denial of our historic faith which our church leaders made to these men.

Immediately following the conferences, in Eternity, a magazine edited by Barnhouse, both he and Martin wrote articles which gave their evaluation of these meetings, and what was said to them by "responsible" leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These assertions have never been denied by the Adventist conferees. For twenty years, no authentic report came from an Adventist writer as to what took place, until in 1977 Elder T. E. Unruh who chaired the conferences wrote a summary in Adventist Heritage. Not until then, did anyone know from an official source who actually authored the book - Questions on Doctrine, nor the extent to which it had been approved by the hierarchy of the Church. A committee appointed by the then president of the General Conference, R. R. Figuhr, to prepare the way for its publication, reads like a Who's Who of the executive officers of the Church.

To the present time, all that has been available to tell the inquiring laymen and concerned minister what took place in those fateful conferences where our historic faith was surrendered has been Letters to the Churches by the late Elder M. L. Andreasen. (This publication is still available through the Adventist Laymen's Foundation. A new edition has just been printed, and is available for \$2.00/book.) However, it was felt that along with this new edition, all source documents presently obtainable should be made available for study and analysis by every concerned layman who wishes to know what took place at the 1955-1956 Conferences. We have, therefore, made a facsimile reproduction of all the articles appearing in Eternity - five in all - and the report given in the Adventist Heritage, and put them together in a brochure, monograph, or whatever one wants to call it. This is now available through the Adventist Laymen's Foundation for \$2.00. (Until we send out our new Order Form, late this summer, we will pay the postage on this facsimile reproduction of these articles. We also plan to make an extra special offer of this material at the two campmeetings this summer - Silver Lake III, and Silver Lake East.)

The fact that the Statement of Beliefs voted at the 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, continues to reflect the same deviations of the historic teachings of the Church in the area of the Incarnation and Atonement makes it all the more necessary that we understand what did take place during these Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956.

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OBSERVERS AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION

Besides the regular delegates, various Protestant churches sent observers to the General Conference Session in Dallas. These observers were introduced at various business meetings of the Conference by Dr. B. B. Beach, and they in turn spoke a few words to the delegates in session. The first such observer, Dr. Russell Dilday from the Baptist World Alliance, was introduced at the Fifth Business Meeting, April 20. (GC Bulletin, #4, p. 21) He was followed the next day by Dr. Paul Opsahl representing the Lutheran World Federation. (GC Bulletin, #5, p. 8) Then on April 24, the two observers from the Seventh-day Baptist Church were introduced, one being the president of the organization. (GC Bulletin, #8, p. 20) However, it was the Fourteenth Business Meeting, that the Anglican observer was introduced. He had read intently the Statement of Beliefs, and listened to the discussion in regard to them. Who he was, and what he said, should awaken even the "snoring" Laodicean. Dr. Robert Terwiliger was the representative of the Anglican Consultative Council for the world. It must be remembered that the Executive Secretary of this Council was interviewed along with Dr. B. B. Beach by Vatican Radio at the time of the presentation of the Gold Medalion to Pope Paul VI by Beach as a symbol of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Also it must be kept in mind that the Anglican communion serves as a "bridge" between Protestantism and Catholicism. Terwiliger told the delegates:

I know that you believe that the world has a destiny and that destiny is God's - God's will, God's act. As I have read the beliefs set before you for revision, I hoped to find some degree of disagreement. I had the most awful disappointment. I found increasingly that we are together in our faith. Therefore, the unity that we share is not simply a unity of good will and fellowship but unity in faith increasingly, a unity in Christ." (GC Bulletin, #9, p. 16)

Elder Neal C. Wilson in opening the discussion of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs had noted:

There are a great many individuals, for instance, who write to the General Conference Ministerial Association requesting a simple statement of our fundamental beliefs. We would like to feel that when such a statement is sent to those who are theologically educated or who are proficient in stating Biblical truth simply, they will understand not what they see but rather what we see and what we believe. (GC Bulletin, #5, p. 19, Emphasis his)

Terwiliger was looking for something with which he could disagree, but he did not find it. But what did he see that we believed - "I found increasingly that we are together in our faith" - in other words not that he is becoming a Seventh-day Adventist, but that we are becoming further and further removed from those distinctive truths that formed the basis of the Advent Movement. Sacred trust has been betrayed.

What the servant of the Lord wrote in the time of the Alpha apostasy is just as apropos now in the period of the Omega. Read it in Special Testimonies, Series B, No. 2, pp. 51-59 - "The Foundation of Our Faith."

B. B. BEACH - UPWARD MOBILITY

Dr. B. B. Beach, who has served as Secretary of the Northern-Europe-West Africa Division, was voted to head the General Conference Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty at the recent Session in Dallas, Texas. His previous work for the Church apart from his Division duties included the following:

- 1) Representing the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the annual meetings of the Secretaries of the World Confessional Families. He served as Secretary of this ecumenical group the past several years. One of its objectives was to "work together more with the World Council of Churches in understanding the ecumenical role that all of us have." (RNS, May 19, 1977)
- 2) Presenting to Pope Paul VI a gold medallion on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Of this presentation, Dr. Beach noted that this "marked the first time in history that the Seventh-day Adventist Church, through an official representative, had met with a Roman Pontiff." (Ibid.)
- 3) Co-edited with Dr. Lukas Vischer of the Faith and Order Secretariat of the WCC the book - So Much in Common - which contains "documents of interest in the conversations between the WCC and the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

However, according to RNS (April 29, 1980), Dr. B. B. Beach "at the church's 53rd World Congress" made the following observations: "I think that we can establish an ecumenical law. The more a church is declining in membership, the more it tends to be ecumenical. And I think we can establish another law saying that the more ecumenical a church becomes, the more it tends to become stationary in its evangelistic advance. It tends to concentrate on socio-political issues. But the real question in ecumenism is not numerical growth. Rather, it is whether we can be in favor of unity at any price. We cannot dilute our message or compromise our convictions by any form of structural hamstringing" such as the WCC.

Nowhere in the General Index to the General Conference Bulletins (#10, p. 32) can these observations of Dr. Beach as reported by RNS be located. How can one relate all of this double-talk with truth? If the WCC is as Beach now says it is - and he ought to know - why copy from its Constitution into our Fundamental Beliefs? Or, is this report by Beach, the price demanded for upward mobility - to clean up one's image as he takes over the Public Affairs Department of the Church?

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SILVER LAKE III - August 6-10 at Silver Lake, CA. For details call either (702) 883-5793, or 882-0680.

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"Does God Destroy?" - a tract recently prepared by Klacena M. Ferguson. She answers Mike Clute, and a "friend's statement that God cannot destroy, He would be breaking the Ten Commandments." Write to her at Rt. #1, Box 235S, Oroville, CA 95956. Ten for a Dollar, plus postage.

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