

"Watchman, what of the night?"

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

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



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Editor's Preface

According to the late Walter Martin, Seventh-day Adventism is a "puzzle." It has become a puzzle to itself. When it loses its self-identity, it loses its sense of direction, and confusion results. The president of the General Conference believes there ought to be only one kind of Adventist. He is right, but what kind? In the first article we discuss Folkenberg's perceptions, then we consider what a thoughtful laymen has concluded. Each one who considers himself a Seventh-day Adventist must decide what kind he is. The confusion within the community of Adventism is not merely whether you are a member of the regular Church, or a participant in some "independent" ministry, the real confusion is over who you really are. Then follows the basic question - By what criterion does one make this determination? Until the right criterion is used and followed, God will not find the people for whom He is looking.

Along with identity is mission. If we really believe that to Seventh-day Adventism has been committed the trust of proclaiming the Third Angel's Message, then do we not identify who the "beast" is, so that the inhabitants of the earth can make the right choice in the matter of worship? Should not then our evangelistic thrust be to identify and warn? But what is happening? Take note of the article on "John Paul's Global Vision."

In, "Let's Talk It Over," we bring together a series of events involving various segments of the regular Church which have a common denominator. The bottom line is the Bible, and how we relate to the Word of God.

What day is Easter? Should that concern us? See p. 7.

An Evangelical Adventist?

In the North American edition of the *Adventist Review* for April, 1997, the center spread was devoted to an article by the General Conference President, Robert S. Folkenberg. It was given the title, "Will the Real Evangelical Adventist Please Stand Up." Whether Folkenberg chose the title, or whether it was an editorial choice, the article closed with the summation, "That's the essence of true 'evangelical Adventism.' It's the only kind there ought to be." (p. 19)

Apart from the "Trade Mark" controversy over the use of the name, Seventh-day Adventist, with its legal ramifications, the article raises the question as to the true designation of an inheritor of the faith growing out of the 1844 Movement. The fact is that there was no such thing as an "Evangelical Adventist" prior to the 1955-56 conferences between Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders and the evangelicals, Barnhouse and Martin, which compromised basic doctrines of the Church. The fact also remains that since those infamous dialogues, there has been continuous doctrinal turmoil in the Church resulting in multiple schisms. Beyond this, is also the fact that many of the schismatics, dissidents, or whatever name describes their action in relationship to the "mother" church, have chosen to refer to themselves as "historic" Adventists.

If the facts noted in the above paragraph are not confusing enough, the title given to Folkenberg's article notes the designation as "Evangelical Adventist," while Folkenberg writes - "evangelical Adventists" - as the designation used by those who see a tension between the gospel and Adventism. (p. 17) There is a difference, but the difference is hard to define. There is no Evangelical Church organization as there is a Seventh-day Adventist Church. For example, Barnhouse was a Presbyterian pastor, while Martin was an ordained Baptist minister, yet both were "evangelicals," and in association with "evangelicals" of other church affiliations. Evangelicals profess to be teaching the "true gospel" and set certain concepts as basic, apart from which one is considered a cultist. The bottom line is that the term, "evangelical," involves doctrinal concepts. This brings us back to "square one," to the point where the major doctrinal changes resulting from the SDA-Evangelical Conferences fractured the community of Adventism.

The doctrinal compromises with the "Evangelicals" were published in the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* [QonD]. Two primary teachings were involved: the Incarnation and the Atonement. On these two points, the new position, as stated in the book, read:

Although born in the flesh, He {Jesus} was nevertheless God, and was exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam. (p. 383)

Adventists do not hold any theory of a dual atonement. "Christ has redeemed us" ... "once for all." (p. 390)

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. (p. 381; emphasis theirs)

A comment is in order before continuing the historical record. In regard to the new position on the Incarnation as stated in *QonD*, p. 383, the word, "exempt," has theological connotations. This term is used in defining the Roman Catholic Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Referring to Mary, this dogma is explained - "She alone was exempt from the original taint [of sin]." (See James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, p. 171, 88th ed.) In other words, Mary was free from "the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam." The "new theology" in Adventism presupposes a similar divine intervention in the birth of Jesus as the Roman Catholic Church presupposes for Mary. There is only a "generation gap" in the new Adventist theology.

As for "the theory of a dual atonement," the typical service of the sanctuary taught two atonements; one at the Altar of the Court (Lev. 4:35), and the second on the Day of Atonement (16:30). The "new" evangelical theology simply denies the second or final atonement, and teaches that all was finished on the cross. While Folkenberg gives lip-service to the sanctuary in his call for the true evangelical Adventist to stand up, he limits the final atonement to a mere repeat of the atonement of forgiveness. He calls this "a pure gospel message" and not "new theology teaching."

The alterations in Adventist theological teaching resultant from the compromises with the Evangelicals have never been repudiated. The 1980 Statement of Beliefs voted at Dallas, Texas, incorporated the major compromises as noted above with an added alteration as a "sop" to the Adventist "religious right." This added position had never appeared in any previous Statement of Beliefs.

Following the Dallas Session, events within Adventism were carefully watched by Walter Martin. Prior to his final and expanded edition on *Cults*, he made contact with the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists "calling for the Conference's public and official statement reaffirming or denying the authority of the Adventist publication, *Questions on Doctrine*. The reply came from Dr. W. Richard Leshar, then a vice-president of the General Conference, later to become president of Andrews University. Leshar wrote:

You ask if Seventh-day Adventists still stand behind the answers given to your questions in Questions on Doctrine as they did in 1957. The answer is yes. (Kingdom of the Cults, p. 410)

What is interesting about this 1885 edition of Martin's book, is that he discusses Adventism in the "Appendix Section" under the caption - "The Puzzle of Seventh-day Adventism." In the

paragraphs leading to the revelation of his letter to the General Conference and the answer he received are some interesting observations on the "turbulence" within Adventism which he alleges "is more extensive than any turmoil in the organization's history."

How Lesher worded his reply is also of interest. He did not say, that the Church "still stands behind the answers to your questions," period; but rather the answers "to your questions" in the published volume, *Questions on Doctrine*. Unknown to most, is the fact that the original answers given to Martin were revised and altered to be more acceptable to the rank and file in Adventism before being published in book form. In other words, *Questions on Doctrine* was a revised edition as it first appeared as a publication. This fact was not revealed, and therefore, the book was a deception perpetrated upon the Church from its very first release. Folkenberg would do well to release all the missing pieces in the "puzzle" of Adventism, then the community of Adventism could decide if "evangelical Adventism" is "the only kind there ought to be."

Folkenberg considers himself to be "a true evangelical Adventist" and asks, "What does an evangelical Adventist believe?" (p. 17) He then lists three tenets of faith:

- 1) "That God so loved the world that He gave Jesus Christ as a sacrifice to atone for my sins."
- 2) "That by faith in Him and what He has accomplished for me and what He is doing in me, I am accepted in Christ right now, deemed perfect, holy, and righteous in the sight of God."
- 3) "That when the Father looks down upon Robert Folkenberg, a sinner, He sees the perfection and holiness of Jesus Christ instead - not because I am worthy, not because I deserve it, but only because God loved me and gave Himself for me so that though I deserve eternal death, I can have eternal life in Him, even now." (*ibid.*)

Primarily, this is justification by faith. He then concludes, "This is the essence of the gospel, and it is the essence of Adventism." Two questions arise: What does Folkenberg mean by "right now," "even now"? Though not stated, it carries overtones of "once saved, always saved." Yet, by faith, I can be accepted in the beloved and stand before God as if I had never sinned. This is indeed a "now" time experience but must be renewed daily. The second question that needs to be asked is: Is this all there is to the essence of Adventism? Before discussing this question, we need to note at this point two relating factors in the ongoing conflict of righteousness by faith as it relates to the 1888 Message.

In this confession of faith for an "evangelical Adventist," Folkenberg emphasizes the "in-Christ" motif in connection with the "right now" experience. There has been an *ad hoc* committee set up by the General Conference known as the Primacy of the Gospel Committee to study into the "in Christ" motif and other related issues that are recognized to be a part of the "righteousness by faith" issue. This committee is composed of

various Adventist theologians as well as representatives from the 1888 Study Committee. A report of a meeting of this *ad hoc* committee on October 16, 1996 was summarized in the *1888 Message Newsletter* [Jan-Feb., 1997, pp. 9-10.] This all day October meeting was devoted to hearing five presentations by the 1888 Study Committee on the "in Christ idea." Does this mean that Folkenberg has embraced the 1888 Message Study Committee's position? Further is Folkenberg trying to say that the 1888 Message, if acknowledged, would make Seventh-day Adventists "evangelical Adventists"?

Another interesting facet to this whole picture is that while the 1888 Message Study Committee is confessing that they do not hold "that Jones and Waggoner were infallible" (*ibid.*, p. 9), Folkenberg in his article takes direct issue with the position of E. J. Waggoner. Waggoner held that "justification" means to be "made worthy." (See *WWN-5(97)*, pp. 5-6) Folkenberg in the *Adventist Review* article writes - "Justification is, technically, not to be 'made worthy,' but to be 'accounted worthy.'" The question remains, how much more give and take will be evidenced so that Folkenberg's objective, that the only kind of Adventist there ought to be is an "evangelical Adventist," will be embraced by the 1888 Message Study Committee?

Now to the question, Is justification by faith the sole essence of the gospel? Folkenberg takes the position that the distinctive doctrines of the Church, such as the Sabbath are adjuncts to the Gospel. This is true with the exception of the sanctuary teaching which is the same gospel in type. The type and antitype dare not be separated. In this is the uniqueness of Adventism. M. L. Andreasen stated it forthrightly when he wrote:

Christians would do well to study more diligently the sanctuary and its services. They contain precious lessons for the devout student. Too many have failed to give study to Christ's high priestly ministry and His session at the right hand of God. They are not acquainted with Him as high Priest, though this work is the very essence of Christianity, the heart of the atonement. (The Sanctuary Service, p. 8)

What Christ has done for us, and because of this, my relationship to God through faith, is stated by Folkenberg, but what Christ will do for us in reality in the final atonement is ignored. Why? To do so would be to say that the position of evangelicalism which was embraced in *QonD* was wrong and its acceptance sent the Church into apostasy. But until we recognize the uniqueness that was once the hallmark of Adventism, we shall continue in apostasy. Perhaps Waggoner's perception of justification by faith was faulty technically, but did he mix his perceptions with the "second" justification of the final atonement when he that is declared holy is made holy?

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"The intercession of Christ in man's behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential to the plan of salvation as was His death upon the cross. By His death He began that work which after His resurrection He ascended to complete in heaven."

The Great Controversy, p. 489

Evangelical, Historical, or Biblical? Which?

In the previous article, we noted the call on the part of the President of the General Conference for the "real" Evangelical Adventist to stand up. He defined what he believed such an Adventist to be, and concluded - "It's the only kind there ought to be." However, a large segment in the Community of Adventism differ with this conclusion and have opted for the designation of "historic" Adventist. This is defined in various ways by those choosing that designation. Some define "historic" as holding to the teachings of the Church prior to the SDA-Evangelical Conferences of 1955-56. Others are introducing teachings which they claim to be truth because these teachings were held by certain pioneer Adventist ministers.

In recent weeks, we have been seeking to organize the Foundation library so that we could more readily access items which we wished to use. In so doing, we came across some tracts and booklets that we had forgotten we had. One such booklet, written by a laymen, discussed a controversial position held within Adventism. The topic is not the point of prime interest at the moment, it is this laymen's insightful analysis of why a certain position is presently advocated in regard to the topic. He wrote:

The strongest defence offered in support of this view, is that it was the view held by our forefathers. This is same argument offered by historical Lutherans, historical Methodists, and historical Catholics, as the reason why they, as well as many other mainline churches refuse to accept the increased light on such issues as the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the millennium, and a host of other plain and obvious Scripture truths, simply because they cannot accept the fact that their forefathers, in some areas were just plain wrong, not having Scriptural evidence for certain of their teachings.

Historical Lutherans will always be so, likewise historical Methodists, or historical Catholics. The instant any of these accept ANY new light in exchange for tradition or false doctrines regarding the Sabbath, the state of man in death, or the millennium, they will cease to follow the historical positions of their forefathers. Historical Adventism is not in all cases, Biblical Adventism. Historical Adventism holds to and defends the historical church position regardless of Scripture evidence to the contrary. Biblical Adventism holds to the Bible evidence for its belief and teachings regardless of historical views IF they are NOT Scripturally sound. I would much rather be a Biblical Adventist than an historical one. Just because a teaching is part of Adventist history, does not make it

Biblically correct. The belief that Christ would come in 1843-44, is historical Adventism, but we cannot continue in such a belief. ... Jesus taught true Biblical Judaism, but He was accused of speaking against Moses' law, and against what had become accepted as 'historical Judaism' which was far from Biblical Judaism. (Emphasis his)

This laymen then stated the purpose of his challenge to a traditional concept. He wrote:

Our purpose here is to *verify* the Biblical soundness of what we have been teaching, and not in any case to cling to a historical view *unless*, it can be firmly supported *from Scripture*, and not to accept any new teaching which we cannot prove to be Biblically sound. (Emphasis his)

If this layman's insight were to become the credo of every professing Adventist, what would result? The "evangelical" Adventist would be embarrassed to stand up because his compromised position would be seen for what it is in the light of Scripture, apostasy from the truth committed in sacred trust to Seventh-day Adventists. Such a determination to be a Biblical Adventist on the part of those professing "historic" Adventism would send shock waves through most of the "independent" ministries. These "many voices" who proclaim themselves "historic" hold to positions which they cannot sustain from the Bible, as well as refusing to walk in the advancing light of truth. The sad plight today is that the "regular" Church continues in apostasy, while the independent "voices" in the community of Adventism are lulling the concerned Adventist into a neo-Laodiceanism with a cry similar to that which echoed through the corridors of the Church in 1888 with its aftermath, "Stay by the old (historic) landmarks."

The layman who wrote the booklet, from which we have cited, also called attention to an interesting reference in the Writings. It reads:

When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no differences of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what.

I have been shown that many who profess to have a knowledge of present truth, know not what they believe. They do not understand the evidences of their faith. They have no appreciation of the work for the present time. When the time of trial shall come, there are men now preaching to others, who will find, upon examining the positions they hold, that there are many things for which they can give no satisfactory answer. Until thus tested, they knew not their great ignorance. (*Gospel Workers*, p. 298; 1915 ed.)

Sadly, today, the ignorance herein described is the hallmark of many of the "many voices" professing to be "historic" Adventist preachers. This is compounded by the fact that many are willingly ignorant. They need not be for multiplied opportunities are afforded them to know truth and the advancing light of that truth. If these "voices" were all that were involved, that would be one thing, but large segments of laymen who likewise are Scripturally illiterate are following these "voices." Would to God that all concerned Adventist laymen would adopt the credo of the layman we have quoted in this article, and from henceforth study and react as Biblical Adventists.

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"John Paul's Global Vision"

This is the title given to an article in the February, 1997, issue of the *Signs of the Times*. Pictured on the cover is a photo of John Paul II taken from the Catholic News Service. The author of the article is Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi of Andrews University. The article is not only informative as to the objectives of John Paul II, but it also raises some questions as to where Adventists now stand in regard to the Pope and Catholicism.

First, let us note some of Bacchiocchi's observations: He wrote:

A major goal of John Paul's pontificate has been to forge a united church, updated in its external forms but strongly traditional in its adherence to church discipline and teaching. One of the first steps he took to achieve this goal was to revive the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, formerly known as the Inquisition. (p. 16)

This revived Inquisition has already been at work within the Roman Church. Head by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, it has dealt with liberal theologians removing them from their teaching posts. Bacchiocchi observed that the Catholic revisionists and feminists here in the States who accuse the Pope of being out of touch with the Roman Church of America "are out of touch with the reality of the Church in Rome. They do not realize that John Paul is not running a democracy, but a hierarchy whose head is the pope and whose center is Rome." The question is then, how soon will the "inquisitional" forces of Rome move against the dissidents in their own ranks in America, and then how soon will it move against all who challenge its authority. For as noted in the article - "John Paul aims to make the pope the undisputed spiritual leader of mankind."

Certain facts of history are noted by Bacchiocchi. When in 1987, the Pope visited America, President Reagan travelled to Miami to welcome him. This was the first time that an incumbent president travelled to another city to welcome a

head of state to these shores. In welcoming him, Reagan declared him to be "the spiritual leader not only of Catholics but of all Americans." Further, the President urged the Pope to preach freely to the American people declaring, "As you exhort us, we will listen." Then an important change of history is noted:

Reagan could hardly have done this forty years ago, when conservative Protestants nourished a deep hostility toward the papacy. In 1951, President Truman had to abandon the plan to extend diplomatic recognition to the Vatican because of strong protests from Protestants. By the 1980s, however, Reagan was able to appoint an official ambassador to the Holy See without stirring significant Protestant reaction." (p. 18)

Why? Bacchiocchi sets forth what he terms three important factors for this change. However, the key factor is ignored. In 1980, the final act was put upon the prophecy Jesus gave in Luke 21:24. On June 29, 1967, the official reunification of Jerusalem took place, and the old city to which Jesus referred was once again under Jewish control. "On 22 July 1980, in a move which created instant international protest, the Knesset voted... to annex East Jerusalem. 'Jerusalem, complete and undivided, is the capital of Israel,' the Jerusalem Bill began." (*Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century*, p. 327) In this fulfilled prophecy, God gave notice that the probationary time of the nations was fulfilled. The final movements would begin, and "the spirits of devils" would begin their work to marshal the nations to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. The place to which they would be gathered was called in the Hebrew tongue, Har Magedon (*Har-Mo'ed* - Mount of the Congregation).^a Thus with God's mercy withdrawn from the nations, and spiritism taking over the White House, events were beginning to move to the final drama.

Bacchiocchi concludes his article by emphasizing that John Paul II is strongly Roman Catholic, and that doctrinally "the great truths" of the Reformation, "are still unacceptable to Catholicism." He is for an ecumenical unity but only if there be "no deviating from the true Catholic doctrine." This commitment to "traditional Catholic teaching" constitutes a challenge "to seek for saving truth in the Word of God, not in the broken cisterns of human traditions or of contemporary social values. That Word, the Bible, is the only source of the truth that can make us free and secure for eternity." (p. 27)

Why are we citing this article by Samuele Bacchiocchi in the *Signs of the Times*? There is a missing piece in the picture. Whether deleted by the editor, or not in the original manuscript submitted by Bacchiocchi, that part of the Word of God which can make us truly free is omitted. Nowhere in the article is found the prophetic fingering of the Papacy, "whose head is the pope" as "the little horn" of Daniel 7, "the man of sin" in Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians, or the "beast" of Revelation 13. Yet this is an evangelistic publication of the Seventh-day Adventist

Church, whose Consulting Editors are none other than Mark Finley and Lonnie Melashenko. "Red lights" should be flashing from all sides. It should be obvious that no longer is "the trumpet" being given a certain sound, but that the evangelistic "voices" in Adventism are either muting their testimony, or their training was sadly deficient in the fundamentals of prophecy. In the "Golden Years" of Adventist evangelism, one of the key subjects in any series of meetings was the topic, "The Anti-Christ, Who is He?" No holds were barred; it was given forthrightly from the Word. I know because I conducted many series of such meetings during those years.

* Note the use of Revelation 16:13-14 in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 561-562

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LET'S TALK IT OVER

In the previous issue of WWN, we observed in the "Editor's Preface" that while we were devoting our attention for the past six months to the all-important topic of "The Everlasting Gospel" many things were taking place in the regular church which needed comment. In that issue we cited one such incident. Several other items have been called to my attention by readers of the "thought paper," which also need comment, and these all have a common denominator. We shall list them one by one, and then note the common thread which runs through all the incidents cited.

A copy of the Bulletin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Kettering (Ohio) indicated that for Sabbath, September 14, 1996, "The Church at Study" leadership had scheduled as a special "feature" - Fr. Benedict O'Cinnsealigh, who was to speak on the topic, "The Similarities of Adventism and Catholicism."

Another bulletin outlining "A Spiritual Retreat for Women," to be held at the Adventist World Headquarters, March 1, 1997, and sponsored by the Potomac Conference indicated that this retreat was "featuring" Sheila Walsh as the Keynote Speaker. In a brief sketch on who Sheila Walsh is, the bulletin read - "Sheila is an internationally known recording artist, author, and television host. Former co-host with Pat Robertson of 'The 700 Club,' [she is now] host of her own show, 'Heart to Heart with Sheila Walsh.'"

The Visitor, official organ of the Columbia Union Conference, reported (March 1, 1997) the gathering of the workers of the union in a four day session in Ocean City, Maryland, January 5 -9. The report read in part: "The featured guest for the week was John Maxwell, one of the top thinkers and equipers in the area of leadership, church growth and personal development. A gifted communicator and frequent guest on the radio program Focus on the Family, Maxwell now conducts church leadership seminars across North America." (p. 6)

What is the common denominator in all of these events which were scheduled by leadership at various levels of the Church? One thing, and one thing only - Disbelief of the Word of God. Are we no longer a people of prophecy? Does the prophetic word of God mean nothing? Is a representative of "the man of sin," the ο ανωμος of II Thessalonians 2:8 to be a featured speaker for the Church at Study? Are there "similarities" between Christ and Satan, or pronounced distinctions? Are there to be "similarities" between the followers of Christ, and the followers of "the man of sin"? If there are, what does that say to us? Tragically there are. Even a Federal Judge, William T. Hart, of US District Court for the Eastern Division of the Northern District of Illinois, could observe that fact. In an opinion rendered October 29, 1986, the Judge declared - "Next to the Roman Catholic Church, the Adventist Church is the most centralized of all major christian (sic.) denominations in this country." This hierarchical resemblance was predicted by Dr. P. T. Magan at the 1903 General Conference Session when the Conference jettisoned the 1901 Constitution, and put in its place the recommended draft of the 1903 Session. (See the General Conference Bulletin, 1903, p. 150)

What about the "featured" speakers at these events? Do we no longer believe the Second Angel's message of Revelation 14? Is there any difference today in sending to spiritual Babylon for instruction, than in Elijah's day for the king of Israel to send to Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, for information? (II Kings 1:2-4) Is God's insight to be questioned when He warns that Babylon is motivated by spiritism? (Rev. 18:2) What does God mean when He declares that if they speak not according to the Law and the testimony concerning the Law, "there is no light in them"? (Isa. 8:20) The bottom line is simply that we are still following in the footsteps of our first parents. "It was distrust of God's goodness, disbelief of His word, and rejection of His authority, that made our first parents transgressors." To continue to follow a path of disbelief opens "the door to every species of falsehood and error." When truth is mingled with error, the mind becomes confused, and the mental and spiritual powers benumbed. (Education, p. 25) Babylon and the voices from Babylon represent that kind of confusion.

This, however, was not all there was to the report on the Columbian Union Ministerium. The theme song especially composed for the occasion was "The Lifting Song." Its composer wrote:

The song is designed to be naturally rhythmic; but an optional enhancement is the "stomp-clap," where the feet are brought down on beats one and three and the hands are clapped on two and four, done to great effect on wooden floors. Why rhythm? Rhythm is the great unifier, helping each to march to the beat of the same drummer, so to speak, testifying to the unity in the church. And the rhythm intensifies and concentrates energy, much like rocking a stuck car can get it out of a snowbank. (p. 7)

Will there be no unity when the victors of earth stand on the sea of glass? Will they "stomp-clap" when they sing "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3), to demonstrate that unity. The author of this theme song indicated his inspiration came when he awakened at 6 a.m., one day before it was to be ready for the Ministerium. Isn't it time for each to know for a surety from what source his "inspiration" of the early morning hour is coming - "a Voice, a whisper small" (I Kings 19:12 Heb.), or the voice of him who has perverted the gifts which were created in him (Eze. 28:13)?

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Which Day Is Easter?

The Christian world today - those who observe Easter - observe it on two different days. "This year most Protestants and Roman Catholics celebrate[d] Easter on 30 March, while most Orthodox, along with some Protestants and Catholics, [held] their Easter services a month later, 27 April. The different datings are the result of disagreement over reform of the calendar by Pope Gregory XIII 400 years ago." (*ENI Bulletin*, #07-0137) In the year 2001, both divisions will have the same date for Easter, 15 April, even though using their different methods of computation. There has been "strong pressure for the churches to reach an agreement on the Easter date by the end of the century."

Dr. Thomas Fitzgerald, a priest of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, as well as a theologian and senior World Council of Churches (WCC) official, called the division over Easter, "an internal scandal" and declared "we have to ask what sort of witness this division gives to the world at large. We're talking about the resurrection of Christ, a sign of our unity and reconciliation. There is no greater feast than Easter, and yet when you look at how we celebrate it, we do so in a divided way."

To seek a solution, a meeting was held in Aleppo, Syria on March 5-10, sponsored by the WCC, and the Middle East Council of Churches. The "representatives of the world's main Christian traditions" reached an agreement which the WCC described as "an ingenious proposal to set a common date for Easter." The controversy in the early church over the time to celebrate Easter was solved at the Council of Nicaea. The new agreement is based on the Nicaea formula because according to Dr. Fitzgerald, "the churches want to remain in harmony with Nicaea."

The organizations represented at the Aleppo meeting included "the Anglican Communion, Armenian Orthodox Church, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Evangelical Churches in the Middle East, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, Lutheran World Federation, Middle East Council of Churches, Old-Catholic Churches..., Patriarchate of Moscow, The Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting

Christian Unity, the Seventh-day Adventists, and the World Council of Churches." (*ibid*) What interest has the Seventh-day Adventist Church on which day Easter is celebrated? Who represented the Church? None other than the Adventist ecumenist, B. B. Beach. The *Adventist Review* (April 24, 1997, p. 21) carried a report of this Aleppo meeting. This managed news release did not tell its readers that this meeting was over which day to celebrate Easter. It presented Beach's visit as establishing "friendly relations with several Christian leaders in Syria." Beach is quoted as saying:

The Adventist Church should not only be recognized as an established Christian church in Syria, but should be able to contribute to the well-being of society through expertise in health care and development. Sometimes we are misunderstood, for example, in regard to our Sabbath-keeping, and then labeled for something that is foreign to our theology and practice." (p. 22)

Does Beach and the Church think that taking part in a decision on Easter will help the Christian world to better understand why Adventists keep the Sabbath. Is the Church now going to make the Adventist participation in Easter sunrise services an official part of their ecumenical outreach? As for managed and deceptive news coverage such as this release is, there should be a thorough "house cleaning" of the editorial staff of the *Adventist Review*.

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