

Dennis Update: April 1999

W
M
8
7
7

SECTION ONE

By the time you read this, David Dennis will have appealed his case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

It is an interesting fact that two of the three defendants in the suit (that is, two of the men who led out in accusing Dennis of wrongdoing) were later found to be involved in a spectacular collision with the papacy, the details of which were only partly revealed before the case was closed and sealed by the settlement agreement. Those two men are Robert Folkenberg and Walter Carson.

SECTION TWO

In the latest issue of his newsletter, Russell Standish has reported that there is evidence that David Dennis has, indeed, been involved in adulterous relations.

Is that report true? I would not know. None of the evidence has ever been presented to me for personal examination. In view of the efforts of certain church leaders for several years to destroy the man, it is difficult to believe the report, even though it comes from such a fine man as Russell Standish and was previously reviewed by a group of equally capable men and women.

Let me make this very clear:

1 - I have been reporting on the David Dennis lawsuit against certain church leaders. In view of the fact that I do not know what the allegations against him are, and have not seen or heard what are reported to be documents and tapes, I am not going to make a decision at this time regarding the current allegations against him.

2 - I will report on Dennis' appeal of the case to the Supreme Court. I believe you would want to know of those developments, and I will give them to you.

3 - I have consistently reported on the Dennis lawsuit because of issues Dennis raised about problems and improper activities within organizational structures. My concern has not been the exoneration of the charges against Dennis. Read back through my earlier reports on this, and you will find this to be true.

Surely, this is a time for prayer! We are so near the end of time, and it behooves each one of us to be on guard every moment!

A reprint of the two brief articles published by Russell Standish will be found on the next page.

Since our friend, Russell Standish, has presented one side of the matter, it seems right to contact David Dennis to obtain his position.

Standish has a newsletter and a wide circulation; Dennis has no newsletter, and it seems proper to let him speak as well. This is what David Dennis told me over the phone.

It was stated that Dennis has refused to discuss the matter in a meeting with certain independent ministry leaders. In reply, Dennis said, first, that before he was even invited to that meeting, certain individuals who were to be at that meeting had already been spreading stories about him in Europe and America, which he felt were seriously twisted. In view of this fact, he felt he did not dare sit down and meet with them at this time for this reason.

Second, Dennis says he is in the middle of a lawsuit, and it would not be best for him to take part in a group discussion until the suit is settled. He declared that, if these former friends had already spread stories about him, it would not be wise for him to meet with them—lest they twist what he there said, keeping in mind that Dennis is in the midst of a lawsuit. When his suit is settled, he will be willing to meet with those men.

That would be understandable. This does not exonerate him, yet it provides a reasonable explanation for why he would not meet with those individuals.

All this does not mean he is right. He may be very much in the wrong. Yet I believe his position ought to be stated along with that of others.

If you were in his shoes, you would want it so.

Then David Dennis mentioned this point, which I thought was interesting:

Dennis has told those individuals that, if they think they have evidence which shows he did wrong,—then they should present it in the court case. According to Dennis, the evidence they have consists of allegations which certain General Con-

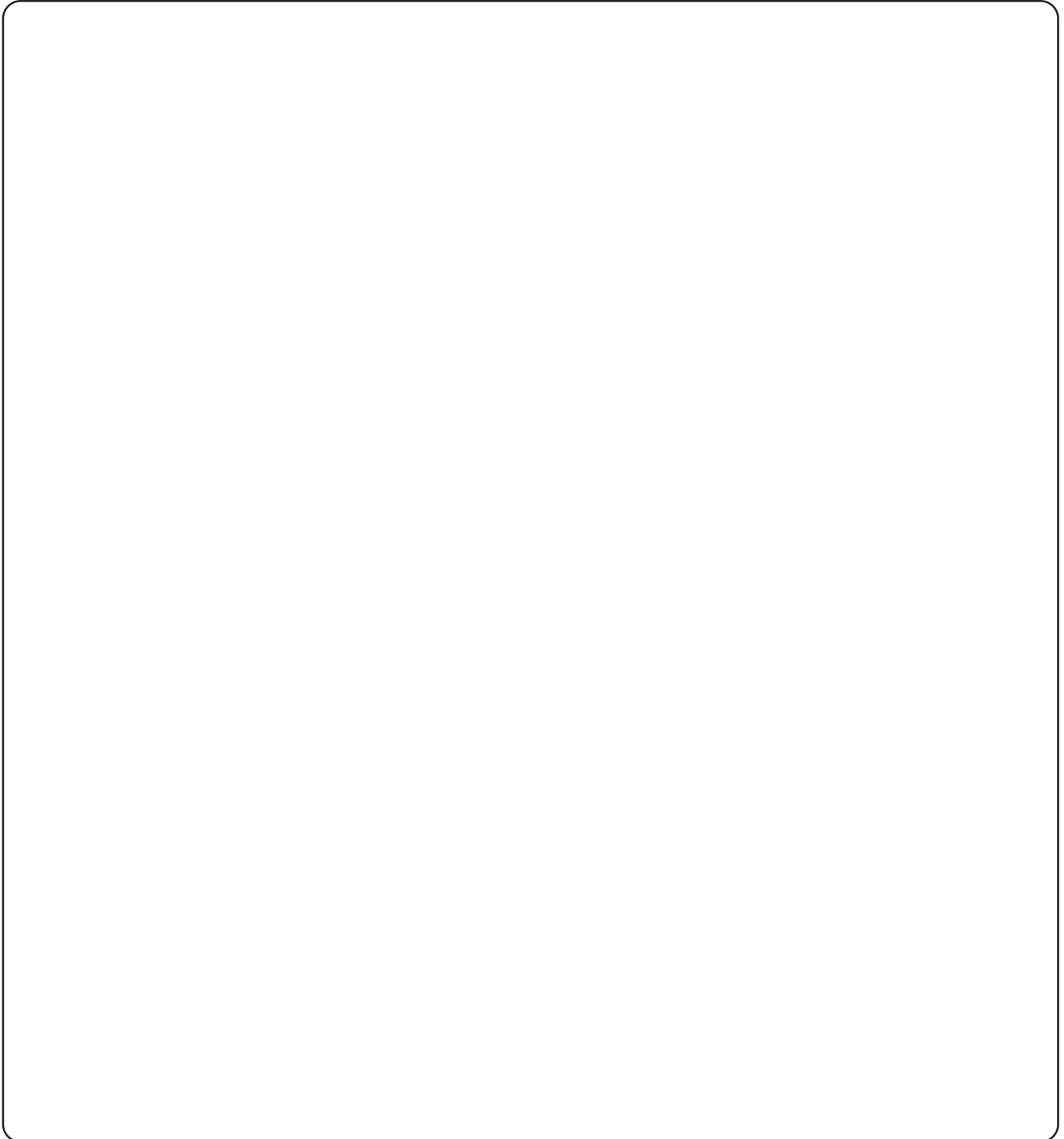
ference officials have used against him.

For several years now, those church leaders have claimed that the evidence proves that Dennis is a bad man;—*yet, month after month, they have refused to let the evidence be presented in a court of law!* Why have they stalled for years? Dennis asks. He answers by saying it is not valid evidence.

Repeatedly, he has tried to bring the matter into a full court hearing; and repeatedly the General Conference has used one delaying tactic after another,

so they would not have to present the evidence in court.

He then mentioned that someone told him over the phone that there was proof that he was in the wrong. Dennis asked the caller what the evidence was. The response was that he, Dennis, had sent a Valentine card to someone. Dennis replied, "Did I sign it?" "No," was the response. "Well, then, how can you call that evidence?" The person said, "Well, I thought it might be your handwriting."



“Well it wasn’t mine.”

At this juncture in our conversation, David Dennis categorically and unequivocally declared that he has had no illicit relationships since birth; that he has had only one wife, and that he will stand behind that statement.

I then mentioned to him that others have newsletters, but he has none. If such a report was made about a person, I would think he should have the right to defend himself. So I asked if it would be all right for anyone to call and speak with him. Without hesitation, he said he surely would be happy to speak to anyone on an individual basis, who wished to phone him.

So here is the home phone number of David Dennis: **301-384-0134**. He is most likely to be there in the evenings. He says he is willing to speak with anyone. He maintains that, because of the lawsuit, he speak about the matter in private conversations with individuals, but not in open meetings.

Where do we go from here?

1 - Regarding the lawsuit, David Dennis is appealing it to the Supreme Court. We will continue to report on developments.

2 - Regarding the allegations, I would like it definitely known that, not having seen the evidence, I am not, at this time, going to take sides in this matter. If David Dennis is in the right, I pray he will be vindicated. If he is not, then the facts will come out.

3 - As stated above, since the other position was expressed in the Standish newsletter, it seems fair to share with you the Dennis position. If you wish further details, you are free to contact any or all parties in this controversy. You very likely have other phone numbers; I have given you Dennis’ number.

If you wish to do so, you can now try to figure out the matter for yourself.

4 - Nothing in this report should be construed to indicate that I am opposed to any of the individuals who attended the meeting mentioned in the Standish article.

5 - We should seek to avoid splits over this. The work of God at this time is too great for that. If there is wrongdoing, it should be exposed. We fully agree on that. If there is no wrongdoing, I pray that David Dennis will be totally exonerated.

I have personally found David Dennis to be a man of integrity, so this present situation is difficult for me.

A crucial issue would be whether the 27 per-

sonally examined all the evidence, prior to rendering that decision,—or did they merely take a vote after having only heard a lengthy summary statement of the matter by one or two present at the meeting? This would be a significant factor. It is not directly stated that each of the 27 personally examined each document, but perhaps that occurred. We are told this:

“Evidence confirming these charges was presented at the meeting . . . The evidence was carefully evaluated and considered indisputable.”

If I seem to be exhaustive in my consideration of this matter, there is sufficient reason. The future reputation of one who has stood among us as a warrior for truth and rightdoing is at stake.

Let us pray that decisions were not haphazardly made.

A flagrant source of the deeper tragedies of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination on all levels, and the cause of many of its greatest errors and losses, have occurred when the members of a committee or general gathering have voted approval of a matter—solely because one or two prominent men recommended it.

However, whether or not we may be fully satisfied with the report, the matter may already have been settled.

That gathering was probably as close to a “general conference” of independent ministry brethren as we shall have for some time.

We are told that this representative group of 27 “carefully evaluated” all the written and auditory documentation. If that is so, then it is highly significant that none of the 27 objected the concluding statement which was drawn up, and all but five are said to have voted its approval.

Since, in the course of normal church business, a large, representative group makes decisions for the entire company, the February decision made by the 27 will probably represent the final decision in the matter.

Only the bringing forth of striking evidence to the contrary is likely to produce a reversal of that decision.

David Dennis maintains that he is innocent and that, either in the courtroom or by presentations afterward, he will more effectively establish it. I would hope so.

The fact cannot be denied that, ever since November 1976, Dennis has been a major whistleblower in the General Conference, and from about the mid-1980s until his discharge by Folkenberg in

December 1994, he was the only remaining one.

David Dennis was known and respected by church workers throughout the world field as Mr. Integrity. If (if) clear evidence of a moral lapse has come to light, then this is a great tragedy.

Two questions might be asked: What was this special meeting, and why was I not invited to it?

The meeting of 27 representatives from the independent ministries, which discussed David Dennis, was the fourth in a series of what are termed "Unity Meetings."

When the first was held in Florida in January 1998, I mentioned to a very knowledgeable friend that I was not invited. He laughed and said that the meeting was held in an attempt to bring together independent ministry leaders who were speaking bad about one another. "You were not speaking bad about any of them, so you weren't invited," he said.

A problem needed resolving. As the brethren traveled around and held meetings, negative comments had been passed around about other independent ministers and groups. That first Unity Meeting was convened in the hope that everyone would bury the hatchet in the ground instead of in one another.

That initial gathering proved so extremely successful that, before it was concluded, a vote was taken to hold another in a few months.

The second was held in April in Colorado—and once again, the fragile unity held solid, and became stronger.

Delighted, a third meeting was called for, and once again a surprising number of independent ministry leaders flew in for yet another meeting; this one was in Washington State in August. That totaled three meetings in eight months, which represented quite a bit of time out for unity meetings. But it was thought to be worth what must have been a great deal of expense.

The fourth Unity Meeting was held at Hartland in February 1999. Commenting on it, Russell Standish said:

"The Holy Spirit was truly present during the self-supporting Unity Meeting. The spirit of unity and cooperation was evident in our deliberations. I know God's people in the South Pacific will heave a sigh of relief that the unity process, under God's blessing, is progressing."

First, the spirit of unity is continuing to hold. Second, he says the brethren in the South Pacific (where Russell works) are very thankful that the backbiting among independent workers had ceased.

The next Unity Meeting is slated for May and will be held in Florida.

Another question is why I did not attend this Virginia Unity Meeting.

First, I am not disunited with any of those attending brethren. They know that, and so do not consider it necessary to invite me. If they will adhere to Bible and Spirit of Prophecy principles, I have nothing negative to say. *Let us all keep in mind that the enemy is not those who are standing true to God's Word.*

Second, it is well-known that I do not do well traveling to far places, and that would be an additional reason why I am not invited to special meetings.

God has me where He wants me, doing a work He has given me to do. I no longer travel around; I no longer take vacations. I just keep working on and on. But I take a little time before each meal to lay down and rest, so I remain in fine health.

I am here to provide you with the information you need to know, which you can obtain nowhere else—and to provide you and the independent ministries with the lowest-cost missionary books possible. It is true that the independent ministers could travel and preach to the faithful without such books; but, to whatever degree they share the final message with the lost, they need such lowest-cost books as *Great Controversy*—and, as God guides, coming next: *Desire of Ages*, *Ministry of Healing*, and *Shelter in the Storm*.

Not all ministers can do the same job. I work here while others travel about. If I had great physical stamina, I would hold nonstop public evangelistic efforts. (In addition to pastoring, I have held evangelistic meetings in the past.) But my Father has given me a different assignment: to preach on paper,—and I am content to work 50 hours a week at it, month in and month out.

Pardon me for speaking about myself, but it seems best that I explain why I am not in attendance at these ongoing, high-level meetings. As your pastor, I believe you would want this information, so I have shared it with you.

—Vance Ferrell