

Please pray for our Church

Our church urgently needs your prayers. In this brief paper, we will present a few of the reasons why.

Gradually, step by step, compromises are being made in various areas of our denomination. And the North American Division is leading the way.

Only by a most earnest pleading with God for help—and personal, active effort on the part of each of us—can this situation be turned around. Yes, there will be those who will say we should sit back and do nothing, and let God solve the problems. But throughout Bible history, whenever creeping apostasy has entered among the people of God, it was only solved when they actively prayed and diligently sought to correct the problem.

We dare not wait longer! Unfortunately, there is a liberal element in our church which is not sitting quietly, but is hard at work. Each year the modernists are making significant progress

in their efforts to take from us our historic beliefs and standards.

Please understand that those of us sharing this information with you are not mere alarmists; we are concerned Seventh-day Adventists who fear for the future of our church if the present trend continues. This is no time to sit idly by. We must urge that a full return be made to our beliefs and standards,—and that those who prefer modernist positions be removed from office.

Here, briefly, are a few of the many reasons for our concern:

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN OUR SCHOOLS

ADVANCED TRAINING FOR OUR MINISTERS—

The groundwork was laid when the General Conference, against the sound advice of many leaders, voted in 1957 that our ministerial students should

HERE IS HOW LIBERALS PLAN TO WIN ON WOMEN'S ORDINATION AT TORONTO

As we all know, a key objective of Adventist liberals in North America is full ministerial ordination for women in the church. By a vote of 1,173 to 377, the delegates from the world field assembled at the 1990 Indianapolis Session and rejected the call to ordain women as pastors.

When Adventist modernists failed to obtain their goal at that Session, they set to work, devising ways to win at the 1995 Utrecht Session. But once again they failed. By a vote of 1,481 to 673, the Utrecht delegates refused a special North American Division request, to ordain women in its own territory.

That taught our liberals that there are too many overseas historic Adventists—faithful believers in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy—who will continue re-

fusing to let the modernists have what they want. So **the special liberal strategy for the 2000 Toronto Session will be to obtain delegate approval of a request which will accomplish the same purpose: to enable the North American Division to grant full ordination and credentials to women ministers.**

The 1999 Annual Council approved a change in the format of the *Church Manual*. But it will have to be approved by the Toronto delegates.

According to the plan, there will henceforth be two sections to the *Manual*. The front part will contain “core matters that should apply universally to the worldwide church.” The back part, called “Notes,” “will be more operational or optional.” **“It is proposed that the Notes section can be changed by the Annual Coun-**

cil while changes to the main section will still have to be made by the General Conference Session.”

The rather obvious objective is to be able to place liberal and feminist items in the back, items which conservative Session delegates would never permit if they could vote on these matters.

The liberals will thereafter be able to refer to the back sections of the *Church Manual*, to defend their practices.

But there is more: Because of a Session ruling five years ago, the North American Division is now able to pack three out of every five Annual Councils with its own voting liberals. So, if Toronto approves this two-part *Church Manual*, the NAD will, at most future Annual Councils, be able to dictate what it wants in the back part of the *Manual*.

receive additional post-college training at the Seminary, before taking up pastoral duties. **But this required advanced studies at the Seminary, in Andrews University, and gave the Seminary a powerful influence over the minds of all future ministers. Unfortunately, by the late 1970s it was primarily staffed by liberal professors.**

DOCTORAL DEGREES—Until the end of the 1950s, those instructing our future ministers—the Bible teachers in our colleges—were selected from among the most spiritual and successful of our pastors and evangelists, with years of experience out in the field.

But, by the early 1960s, men were being hired as college and university religion teachers, almost solely because they had obtained doctoral degrees in secular, Protestant, or Catholic universities. Upon graduation, they began teaching the religious concepts they had been taught to the young people in our colleges and universities. By the 1970s, the impact of this was leavening our schools.

THE 1980 COTTRELL POLL—In preparation for the August 1980 Glacier View meetings (held to investigate the liberal teachings of Desmond Ford), Elder F. D. Nichol (editor of the *Adventist Review*) asked an associate editor, Raymond Cottrell, to poll our college and university Bible teachers throughout the world field as to what they believed about several key teachings.

This spring 1980 questionnaire asked pointed questions about their positions on doctrines which were disputed by Ford (himself a doctoral graduate, trained under F. F. Bruce at Manchester University).

The replies indicated that a majority of those religion teachers did not believe a number of our basic beliefs. Here are three examples:

- At least 6 out of 10 of our college Bible teachers did not believe that the antitypical Day of Atonement began in 1844. They thought it began in A.D. 31. That is what they had been taught at outside universities.

- One-third no longer believed in the basis of our prophetic interpretation, the day-year interpretation of Bible prophecies. Unfortunately, they had been taught something else in the outside universities where they received their doctoral degrees.

- Only one in twenty of our college and university Bible teachers believed that the cleansing of the sanctuary, predicted in Daniel 8:14, is the Day of Atonement cleansing.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM—**Since so many of our Bible teachers did not believe fundamental Adventism, the question arose as to what should be done about the matter. Rather than meeting**

the crisis head-on, the decision was made that appeasement, rather than confrontation, was the best way to maintain peace in the church.

By the early 1980s, teachers were no longer being removed from any department of our colleges and universities, unless they openly taught extreme doctrinal errors.

But our liberal religion teachers continued to express anxiety, that they might be fired. In the summer of 1981, I reported on their private Atlanta meeting, at which they openly expressed their fears.

In order to provide them with peace of heart, **at the 1984 Annual Council church leaders from around the world were told that, in order to assure tranquillity in our colleges and universities, it was necessary to adopt a proposed statement on “Theological Freedom and Accountability.”** Here was the first paragraph of this two-part statement:

“Recommended to accept two documents: A. Statement on Theological Freedom and Accountability, and B. Academic Freedom in Seventh-day Adventist Institutions of Higher Learning.”—*Statement on Theological Freedom and Accountability, General Conference Policy File Number 127-84GN, printed in the 1984 Annual Council Actions, p. 279.*

This two-part document was voted into action by the 1984 Annual Council.

That which was termed “Document A” in this two-part statement said that salaried church workers, in general, were not to teach non-Adventist doctrinal views. Those who did would be investigated by a “Review Committee.”

But it was “Document B” which provided for the ruination of our college and university religion departments! For Document B applied, not to regular church workers, but only to our college and university religion teachers.

Document B stipulated that those teachers could discuss, teach, and preach modernism on our college and university campuses—all under the name of so-called “academic freedom”! They could do so, without being disciplined or fired, unless they are so blatant in their instruction, so an excessive number of complaints occurred.

If the unlikely possibility of a hearing developed, the offending teacher would only have to meet with a closed-door committee. Because Document B provided no requirements as to who would be on that committee,—it would be college and university administrators who would be in charge! The hearing committee could be composed entirely of fellow new theology teachers and administrators.

From that time, down to the present, there has been a continual lowering of doctrinal purity on the campuses of our schools.

This compromised religious instruction has not only affected our ministerial students—the future pastors and leaders of our denomination,—but also all other students, since everyone enrolled at one of our colleges is required to take basic religion courses.

CONSENSUS STATEMENTS

For a number of years there has been a trend to prepare consensus documents which tend to compromise our doctrinal beliefs. Instead of basing our teachings on the divinely inspired writings, the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy—as we did in early decades,—by the late 1940s, we began producing documents which were the result of “consensus”—the majority opinion of a committee.

The revisionary changes in the 1946 edition of *Bible Readings for the Home* was one such change.

Another was the publication of the book, *Questions on Doctrine*, in 1957; this was a result of several years consultation with Evangelicals (the notorious Martin-Barnhouse Evangelical Conferences, from 1954 to 1956) who requested doctrinal revisions on our part.

Yet another was the decision of the Palmdale Conference in the mid-1970s—that we are saved solely by justification by faith, apart from any on-going changes in our behavior.

The crisis over what to do with Desmond Ford, in the summer of 1980, only accelerated the trend. The August 1980 Glacier View meetings (which consisted of both a doctrinal “Ford Hearing,” along with a theological conference the following week) made additional sessions. The Consultation II sessions, held in the summer 1981, provided further assurance that church administrators were determined to tolerate liberal positions.

LOWERED STANDARDS

By the mid-1980s, the teaching that behavior had nothing to do with ultimate salvation was frequently being taught in our camp meetings and local churches by this new breed of ministers. A consequent lowering of standards was inevitable. In personal attire, adornment, music, diet, entertainment, and Sabbathkeeping, the effects were being seen.

For some strange reason, so many of our leaders considered it safer to appease the liberals than listen to the protests of the faithful. And the downward trend continued. Oh, my people! We need prayer and lots of it!

CELEBRATION CHURCH SERVICES

Instead of producing peace and harmony,

these compromises caused greater friction in the local churches. New theology pastors taught that everyone was automatically saved as soon as they mouthed the name of Jesus. But, in most cases, the protests of faithful church members received not a friendly ear, but the wrath of the pastor. Unfortunately, since conference leaders rarely interfered, faithful members were gradually edged out. They were repeatedly told that they were not welcome. Stripped of their church offices, they were told to be quiet or get out.

The gradual reduction in tithes and offerings, as the most faithful of the members were crowded out, caused leadership to rethink the situation. Something needed to be done. **But, instead of turning the ship around, they decided that the best solution was to devise ways to more quickly bring in more people from the world, even though they had received little instruction about our beliefs and standards.**

In the mid-1980s, David Snyder (who prior to becoming an Adventist minister had been trained as a theatrical performer) began investigating Pentecostal churches and large, showy Protestant congregations in the Northwest. **From 1982 to 1989, Snyder took his Milwaukie Church (on the south side of Portland, Oregon) from 135 members to over 1,000. Most of the increase came from the large number of Fordite followers who had left the denomination in the early 1980s. They liked the band music, syncopation, movements of the women soloists, and the theatrics at his church, as well as his Fordite salvation-in-sin teachings.**

By the late summer of 1989, the General Conference decided that Snyder held the solution to the problem. **They sent word down to union and conference offices, to send pastors to Snyder's church for training in the Pentecostal theatrics of his “Celebration church.”** By December, the training program was in full swing. Pastors from conferences all across the U.S. were being sent, at church expense, for 1-3 weeks training.

By February 1990, a number of local churches had made the changeover to the Celebration-style of band music, gyrations by soloists as they sang, hand waving, funny stories, vaudeville skits, and all the rest. Here is a sample of what was happening:

“Then a telephone call came in from New York State. The faithful believer on the line almost wept as he told of conditions at an upstate New York Adventist church, where the pastor has brought in a set of drums and the church has split over it. The caller also told about a second New York Adventist church, where they have hand-clapping and the pastor publicly calls himself a ‘Pentecostal Adventist.’ ”—*This is the Celebration Church, Part 1* (1990).

On Sabbath mornings, worship and the study of God's Word was out, and dazzling entertainment was in. The very word, "Celebration," stood for salvation assured and finished—forever—for each of the celebrants. A far cry from historic Adventism, but designed to bring in lots of people from the world.

Our leaders discovered that it failed to do so. On the one hand, the Protestants and Pentecostals could outdo us in entertainment; on the other, there were so many conflicts in our local churches,—that still more faithful members were leaving the church.

Then conflict began breaking out among the liberals in many of the Celebration churches. Because of his actions, Snyder was kicked out by his own board of elders and the Milwaukie Church went to pieces. Hardly anything remains of it today. This same thing occurred in several other Celebration churches. (Snyder immediately joined a Sundaykeeping church as associate pastor.)

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, we reported extensively on these activities. Then, in the mid-1990s, a new program, called "church planting," was announced by North American Division leaders. It had been discovered that it was hard to switch older church members over to Celebrationism; so the new program was geared to starting new churches which would be entertainment-based. **People could be brought in, from the world, to "celebrate" that they have already been saved and no longer need obey the law of God. Frequently marked by wild band music and semi-rock music, these gatherings are not representative of historic Adventism.** These "planted churches" are a special project of the North American Division. **Our pastors are being sent for training to Willow Creek, one of the largest Protestant entertainment-type churches in America.** *Adventist Review* proudly stated that "Adventists make up one of the largest groups at Willow Creek's half-dozen annual seminars—including church leadership conferences in May and October" (*Adventist Review*, December 18, 1997).

TAKING ADVENTIST BELIEVERS TO COURT

Some of the developments in this downward spiral have been amazing. Faithful church members who spoke up were denounced as "troublemakers" by liberal pastors who are embarrassed by their presence. This led to the start-up of a number of tiny home churches. Little groups were wor-

shipping quietly, happy that they could continue to maintain the standards and beliefs of their forefathers and train their children in historic Adventism.

Yet, for some reason, this rankled some influential leaders. Why were these people being permitted to worship God as Seventh-day Adventist believers? Even though this was free America, it seemed that something needed to be done about the matter.

The story of the trademark lawsuits is a lengthy one, and two booklets on the subject may be obtained which will provide you with the background of this (*Story of the Trademark Lawsuits* and *The Florida Trademark Lawsuit* booklet. Send \$18 and we will send you both. If you live outside the U.S., add \$5.00 for postage).

The name, "Seventh-day Adventist," was trademarked by the General Conference on November 10, 1981. Five years later, their outside attorney, Vincent Ramik (who the *Review* on October 15, 1981, said was a lifelong Roman Catholic), began threatening small groups if they did not stop their quiet worship as Seventh-day Adventists. He began filing expensive suits against those which were slow to obey.

One of these suits, against a small group of nine believers in Kona, Hawaii, dragged on for years and cost the General Conference over \$5 million in legal fees and court costs. Yet the little group only had a small sign by the door of their poorly attended meeting room.

These suits have continued on down to the present time, and cost the General Conference millions of dollars. On April 10, 1989, Robert Nixon, an in-house General Conference attorney, in replying to a query, stated that the treasurer's office informed him that all trademark lawsuit expenses are paid from the tithe.

At the March 2000 Miami court trial, attorneys for the General Conference banked their case on the 1990 Oregon Smith case! **The 1990 Smith decision by the U.S. Supreme Court was notorious! This was the Oregon Indian case which declared that the religious beliefs of individuals and groups had to yield to governmental laws, when they required actions contrary to those religious beliefs!—Yet the General Conference used that case to support its position that the religious beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists and their churches must yield to governmental laws and court decisions,—which would force them to act contrary to their religious practices!**

Thus you can see why we need to pray for our church—and begin working to bring it back to our historic Bible-Spirit of Prophecy beliefs and practices.