

“Watchman, what of the night?”

*“The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!”* *Ezekiel 7:6 (Moffatt)*

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Editor’s Preface

After an absence of more than six years, **“Watchman, what of the night?”** (WWN) is back in publication. Much has happened in the intervening years. Elder William H. Grotheer, Executive Secretary of the Adventist Laymen’s Foundation of Mississippi/Arkansas (“the Foundation [’s]”), and editor of WWN, was incapacitated by a terminal illness in late 2007. Subsequently, Elder Grotheer passed away on May 2, 2009. From the time of his debilitating condition, the work at the Foundation fell into disarray. Eventually, the managerial and legal problems became insurmountable. Two of the Foundation’s Board members, and an associate, deemed it necessary to organize a successor Foundation, Adventist Laymen’s Foundation Publications, Inc. (ALFP), for the purpose of applying for the distribution of the Foundation’s assets, and to continue carrying forward the work begun by Elder Grotheer. Months before the court hearing, I was invited and became a member of ALFP’s Board of Directors as Chairman and Executive Secretary, and appointed Editor of WWN. In 2011, ALFP was legally judged as the Foundation’s successor and awarded its assets. About a year later, it was decided to move the entire operation from Arkansas to Iowa. ALFP, by a Board resolution, was merged into the Adventist Laymen’s Foundation of Iowa, Inc. - which is now the only surviving entity and legal successor of the Foundation.

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My name is Gary L. Patrick. I was associated and worked closely with Elder Grotheer throughout most of the 1990's. During that time, we worked on a number of projects together, which included traveling to Australia on an itinerary tour and collaborating in presentations conducted in meetings held in Ozone, Arkansas and Nora Springs, Iowa. We were both committed to the Seventh-day Adventist Movement and the advancement of the progressive, present truths bequeathed to it by the Lord. The Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc. deeply respects the work pioneered by Elder Grotheer and is organized for the continuance and promotion of the biblical truths proclaimed by the Foundation. ❖

“WHAT AND WHY?” - REVISITED

The last issue of “Watchman, what of the night?” was published back in December 2006. For 39 years, Elder William H. Grotheer published WWN in the form of a thought paper which informed, counseled, encouraged, warned, and taught, predominantly concerned members of the Seventh-day Adventist community. In the first issue, published in January 1968, he expressed the primary reasons - both "What and Why" - for the thought paper.

There had been in the proceeding decade a "drift within our church...articles appearing in the Ministry magazine which indicated a change in doctrine in the areas of the incarnation and the atonement." The

changes were originating from various leading men within the denominational leadership. Concerned, he wrote to a General Conference vice-president asking for information on what was taking place. He was instructed to obtain and read a new book, Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine, with the assurance that it "would clarify the situation." Upon reading, however, he stated that "its teachings only increased [his] apprehension." This led him into a further in depth study of both doctrine and denominational history - which deepened his concern "as to how the drift in our church might be arrested." Ultimately, as he pondered the question on how to inform the Adventist laity, students, pastoral helpers and others of the changes, he "decided to write...a monthly Thought Paper, on some aspect of our church's condition and need." ¹

The choice of a thought paper by Elder Grotheer as a vehicle to express his deep concerns is an interesting one. Such a paper is written in a way as to awaken and stimulate in-depth thinking on specific topics - usually by presenting the author's intellectual views and principles in an organized and systematic arrangement. Put plainly, the primary purpose is to get the reader to *think* for themselves. Intellectual laziness is the decision not to use the higher powers of the mind. This can manifest itself in various ways; most of which stem from two basic (and at times closely related) approaches: the surrender of thought to another party and the surrender of rational thought in favor of emotional rea-

soning.

First, there is the form which simply surrenders one's thinking over to someone else. When we allow others to do our thinking for us, we become nothing more than extensions of their ideas, following a conviction that is not our own. Therefore, we become susceptible to manipulation, not only by the influence that those ideas have over our own decisions and actions, but also the effect they may have over others as a result of our influence on them. When we 'parrot' other people's thoughts, we can become an effective tool in communicating to others those same thoughts. This influence on others can often lead to the perpetuation of an idea that neither the sender nor the receiver knows is rooted in truth. This may result in consequences that are unintended and even disastrous. The only hope in this case is if the original idea was, in fact, truth; if not, then ignorance and deceit run the risk of being communicated and adopted. In either case, parroting is still dangerous because in all probability what we stand for and promote are not our actual thoughts. Without thinking it through for ourselves, our blindly accepted convictions will have merely a shallow, surface depth to them when challenged and tested. The most profound effect this will have on us as Christians will be in our personal relationship with God. Allowing others to inform us about God and to accept with little, if any critical thought of our own, information on who, what, where, why, when, and how concerning the Truth of God, makes us highly susceptible to error and

deception. Particularly in our search and study of the Bible, the Word of God and final source revealing that Truth, we need to exercise our own thinking.

It is not necessarily wrong to be open to what others share with us about God. But, like the noble Bereans we need to "[search] the scriptures daily, whether [these] things [are] so" (Acts 17:11). Like the young evangelist Timothy, whom the Apostle Paul admonished, so should we, "Study to shew *thyself* approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15, emphasis added). And, at various times during the course of his public ministry, Jesus asked his audience what they thought in regard to the issue under consideration (see for instance, Matthew 18:12; 21:28; 22:42; Luke 10:25-26, 36; etc.). Surely this was meant to call into question and even challenge the prevailing customs, traditions, and ideas of the day by stimulating independent thinking ("what think ye?" - "how readest thou?"). The Writings of Ellen G. White also warn us of the hazards inherent in blind acceptance of other peoples' ideas; especially as it relates to our understanding of God's Word:

"We should not take the testimony of any man as to what the Scriptures teach, but should study the words of God for ourselves. If we allow others to do our thinking, we shall have crippled energies and contracted abilities...There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scrip-

tures." (SC, pgs. 89-90).²

"Allow no one to be brains for you, allow no one to do your thinking, your investigating, and your praying. This is the instruction we need to take to heart today...Why should you expect to understand the treasures of the word of God without diligently searching the Scriptures?" (FE, pg. 307).³

"We must study the truth for ourselves. No man should be relied upon to think for us. No matter who he is, or in what position he may be placed, we are not to look upon any man as a criterion for us. We are to counsel together, and to be subject one to another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us, in order to learn what is truth. Each one of us must look to God for divine enlightenment." (TM, pgs. 109-110).⁴

The other primary form of not thinking for ourselves is perhaps even more insidious because it genuinely *appears* that we are doing our own thinking. This other form is when we rashly allow our emotions and feelings to do our thinking for us. Over the last few decades, this has been a more pointed concern than in previous times. Sociologists have commonly agreed that we are living in a postmodern era. The core principle of postmodernism is the concept of extreme relativism which states there is no absolute reality or truth. We each create our own reality, each is valid and none are either right or wrong. The higher powers of intellect are downplayed

(if not completely cast aside) and replaced by emotions, feelings, reflection, intuition, myth, magic, and mystical experiences; all of which are now central in how we relate to the world around us. This phenomenon of extreme relativism has a widespread, beguiling, persuasion. Everywhere, our senses are increasingly being bombarded with images, sounds, odors, flavors, and caresses that are meant to coax us into specific action by exploiting our sensibilities. Thus, the decisions we come to and the conclusions we draw are prone to be acted upon hastily, rashly, impulsively, and even recklessly. Again, acting without thinking can easily lead us into falsehood and deception. When rational thought, logic, sound reasoning, and objectivity are laid aside to blindly embrace the impulses of our unbridled emotions, they will be more apt to take control of us. Ignorance, irrationality, subjectivity and indiscretion are sure to result. There will be a tendency to easily and quickly move between the gamut of extreme positions; from the active on the one end (complete passion) to the passive on the other end (complete complacency). In turn, our convictions will prove to be as fickle and fleeting as the emotions and feelings they were built upon. This, too, will have its most telling effect in our personal relationship with God. What we objectively know about God will be subjugated to what we subjectively feel about Him. In other words, our relationship with God will be based generally on our own personal experiences and perceptions of Him, rather than an intelligent receiving and understanding of the revelations revealed about Him in both Scripture

and creation.

The Bible records a number of incidents which show how dangerous and potentially disastrous the consequences can be when we allow our emotions and feelings to do our thinking for us. In the time of Daniel, King Darius was manipulated by the flattery of some of his principal officers to hastily enact a law which was really designed to destroy Daniel. By appealing to the King's pride and vanity, and unbeknownst to him when he signed it, these unscrupulous men might have well succeeded in their murderous plot had not the God of Heaven intervened in Daniel's behalf. (see Daniel 6:1-28). Similarly, in the time of Queen Esther, King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) was duped by the pretended zeal of his chief officer, Haman, to sign into law a death decree against all the Jews in his realm. Feigning to be acting in behalf of his honor and wellbeing, Haman played upon the King's ego and outrage in an attempt to accomplish his own plan of vengeance against Mordecai, a man he despised (see Esther 3:1-15). And in the days of Christ's first advent, King Herod Antipas was enticed by the seduction of Herodias and her daughter. Acting upon his intemperance and vanity, the daughter performed a dance at a public banquet honoring the King's birthday, thereupon luring the King into proclaiming an oath promising her anything, even up to half of his kingdom. Upon the advice of her scheming mother, who hated John the Baptist and was bent on obtaining his death, the girl requested and secured the execution of John, much to the King's con-

sternation and anguish (see Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:16-29). The Writings also warn and counsel us concerning this matter:

"One mistake leads to another. Our brethren must learn to move intelligently and not from impulse. Feeling must not be the criterion." (5T, pg. 298).⁵

"The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transforms man into the image of God. It gives to man the mastery of himself, bringing every impulse and passion of the lower nature under the control of the higher powers of the mind." (COL, pg. 114).⁶

"There are some in the church who need to cling to the pillars of our faith, to settle down and find rock bottom, instead of drifting on the surface of excitement and moving from impulse...They are tossed about here and there by the changing winds of doctrine, and are often confused and thrown into uncertainty because they move entirely by feeling. They are sensational Christians, ever hungering for something new and diverse; strange doctrines confuse their faith, and they are worthless to the cause of truth." (4T, pgs. 74-75).⁷

"Whosoever shall give way to his natural feelings and impulses makes himself weak and untrustworthy, for he is a channel through which Satan can communicate to taint and corrupt many souls, and these unholy fits that control the person unnerve him, and shame and

confusion are the sure result." (FE, pg. 264).³

Surely, 47 years ago, Elder Grotheer understood the need not just to inform his readers about the disturbing events that were taking place within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but also get them to think for themselves concerning those events. It was his original hope to make them "aware of these important matters and contribute their influence intelligently to a positive program of revival and reformation."¹ And while "Watchman, what of the night?" did not serve as a thought paper exclusively (it did branch out into other areas), the core purpose continued to be that of stimulating thinking for oneself. The Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, Inc., in its republishing of "Watchman, what of the night?" anew, is committed to the continuance of this fine and admirable effort. If Elder Grotheer perceived a need to motivate the Adventist Movement to do their own thinking many years ago when he began this publication, how much greater is the need today? ❖

GLP

1. William H. Grotheer, "*Watchman, what of the night?*" (Florence, MS: Jan. 1968), 1-2.
2. Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association), 89-90.
3. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), 307; 264.
4. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press

Publishing Association, 1962), 109-110.

5. White, *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5* (Mountain View CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 298.

6. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), 114.

7. White, *Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 74-75.

* All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

IN MEMORY OF ELDER WILLIAM HENRY GROTHEER

October 14, 1920 to May 2, 2009

The first time I came into contact with Elder Grotheer was in late February of 1991. He sent me by mail a pamphlet, Jerusalem in Bible Prophecy, along with a personal letter. The letter stated he had received information which connected my name with an independent congregation of Seventh-day Adventists in Nora Springs, Iowa and asked whether I could supply him with any additional information about this church. The pamphlet and letter were so interesting, I quickly wrote him back. This led to an ongoing telephone dialog between us and eventually a trip to Iowa by Elder Grotheer to conduct a series of meetings on July 19 - 20, 1991 at the Nora Springs church. Elder Grotheer's presentations convinced us that his understanding of the overall view of true Seventh-day Adventism was more knowledgeable, progressive, broader, and biblically based than our own or any other Adventists that we

had come into contact with.

In the years that ensued, my understanding of our (S.D.A.) history, movement, and message deepened greatly as a result of my association with him. He was a relentless, untiring pursuer of biblical truth. While firmly upholding as Scripturally sound, both the "foundation" and the "pillars" upon which our faith had been laid, he nonetheless understood the fact that "Present Truth" needed to be continually advanced forward as the Light from God's Word and ongoing history revealed more clearly the progressive unfolding of that Truth (see Proverbs 4:18). Recognizing it was our duty to do so, he upheld the basic, time-tested hermeneutics (principles of interpretation) used by our 'pioneers': the contextual study method which affirmed the validity of the proof text method if used properly therein; the Historicist method for the study of apocalyptic prophecy; the Protestant method of "sola-scriptura" (by scripture alone); the validity of the typological method; and the method of using the Bible to interpret itself. He deplored and had little tolerance for 'sloppy scholarship', eisegesis (the reading into the biblical text of anything other than its original meaning), and the growing misuse of the Ellen G. White Writings. He had a true evangelistic heart and was an excellent lecturer / teacher while at the same time being open himself to the ideas of others. He avoided pontification; knowing that when you allow a person to search the Truth on their own, they become truly grounded in it. Whatever his critics may have thought about him, his search for

Truth was always - in accordance with his convictions - fair, honest, open, and upright.

Elder Grotheer was a man mightily used by God to re-establish and move onward our spiritual heritage in the face of ever increasing heresy, apostasy, and confusion. He has left a rich legacy of theological writings and sermons which will be a blessing to many until the end of time. ❖

GLP

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Editor's note: In response to our re-subscription letter, many former readers of WWN inquired into why they had not received the thought paper for over six years. Some were in confusion concerning what had happened to Elder Grotheer during that time. They had lost touch with him, and asked me if I knew what had transpired with the Foundation, the publishing of WWN, and Elder Grotheer personally.

Since I was not involved in, and had little knowledge of the events taking place at the time, I did not feel qualified to answer these requests - seeing that the information coming from me would be second hand. Therefore, I asked one of the directors of ALF of Iowa, who was also a member of the Arkansas board (and had first hand knowledge of the entire situation), to write a report detailing the facts of these last years. He agreed and has done so, and it is included as an insert to this first issue of the republished WWN.

THE INCAPACITATION AND DEATH OF WILLIAM H. GROTHEER

And the Resultant Struggle to Save Adventist Laymen's Foundation

From the perspective of a Board Member who was deeply involved in the struggle

This report is written in response to inquiries about how Elder Grotheer's terminal illness developed, and the history of Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi-Arkansas after his incapacitation. It is an overview of developments from the end of 2006 until the dissolution of the Mississippi Corporation in 2009.

I begin this report with an observation which is of general knowledge: that sometimes a person may be sincere in his/her beliefs and actions; but also very mistaken, and this can lead to unanticipated negative consequences. This is central to an understanding of what transpired in the closing period of Elder Grotheer's life, and the history of the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi-Arkansas Corporations. Much mischief was done by two individuals, one of them apparently motivated by sincere but mistaken beliefs, the other by naked malice and greed. The one was a member of the Mississippi Corporation's Board ("the Board Member,") the other Elder Grotheer's nearest next-of-kin, and an avowed enemy of the mission and work of Adventist Laymen's Foundation ("the Family Member.") I think it best not to name these individuals.

Until the end of 2006, there was little hint, except perhaps to those who were present on the Adventist Laymen's Foundation campus, of a serious decline in Elder Grotheer's mental faculties. However, towards the end of 2006, he published a second December edition of *Watchman, What of the Night?* in the mistaken belief that he had not already done so. Throughout 2007 he was not prepared to authorize the disclosure of specific information about the state of his health. He frequently stated his intention to send out a letter to the readers of *Watchman, What of the Night?* explaining his increasing disability on his own terms. This did not happen before he was hospitalized after a fall in the last week of December, 2007. After that there was such a rapid deterioration in his condition that he was never able to carry out his intention. I personally had repeatedly urged him during the year to execute Powers of Attorney granting a trusted individual the right and responsibility of caring for his assets and overall well-being, and to make health care decisions for him in the event of his incapacitation. His response was always noncommittal.

During 2007, some of us observed a progressive decline in the giant intellect of this decades-long preacher and teacher of Present Truth. The observations were made by those who were living on the Foundation Campus, and by others of us who talked to him on the telephone. Those who could observe him in person were also aware of physical changes in the way he walked and maintained his balance.

In due course a physician diagnosed Elder Grotheer to be in an advanced stage of "progressive decline in cognitive function due to damage or disease in the brain beyond what might be expected from normal aging." Although the diagnosis did not specify the underlying disease beyond stating that he was in an advanced stage of dementia, general knowledge and experience suggest that it was either Alzheimer's or Parkinson's; and more likely Parkinson's, because of the associated shuffling gait and frequent falls to which he was subject during 2007.

It was the fall at the end of 2007 which signaled the final physical and mental collapse of Elder Grotheer. It was at this point that matters took a dramatic turn for the worse not only in his personal circumstances, but also in the management of the Foundation. Friends living on the Foundation Campus telephoned me about his need of urgent medical attention. He had appointed the Board Member to be the Successor Trustee of his Family Trust in the event of his incapacitation. I therefore informed him of the crisis. At this juncture he made two fatal mistakes. He called in the Family Member, which may have been unavoidable since no-one else was authorized to receive information about his medical history; however, he also allowed her to have immediate access to all of the Foundation's management books, including the financial records. This license to meddle was allowed in spite of the fact that her enmity towards the Foundation and its mission were well known. He also asserted the exclusive right to be in charge of the Foundation's business, thus becoming primarily responsible for the adverse chain of events in the affairs of the Foundation which followed. Most significantly he made himself responsible for the persistent meddling of the Family Member with the Foundation records and assets, which continued to the very last at a Court hearing to determine the title to assets and how they were to be distributed.

The Board Member's assertion of the exclusive right to be in charge of the Foundation's business led to an application by the Foundation's Bankers to an Arkansas County Circuit Court for a determination of who, among the Directors whose identity was known to the Bank's officers, was in charge of the Corporation's Bank accounts, who had authority over them, and who was entitled to withdraw funds. Given his actions from the end of 2007 which betrayed bad judgment, and his known lukewarm support for certain fundamentals of Adventist Laymen's Foundation theology, there was no way that control of the Corporation could be ceded to him. Elder Grotheer was tolerant of some dissent in doctrine and prophetic interpretation which was not dangerous as long as he was alive and competent to assert the Foundation's theology, but which was not conducive to mission harmony on the Foundation's Board in the absence of his leadership. A deadlock ensued on the Corporation's Board which led inevitably to the dissolution of Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi-Arkansas.

By the time of the last Court hearing, the Board Member had been compelled by the Court to resolve a conflict of interest by choosing between acting as Trustee of the Grotheer Estate and being on the Board of the Corporation. He chose to continue to act as Trustee. At the final Court hearing on October 14, 2011, the Family Member testified that known Foundation assets found in buildings on the Grotheer Estate property belonged to the Estate. Notably, she had already donated the Foundation library books to Andrews University Library. The Court ratified this action in spite of testimony on behalf of the Foundation that the books definitely belonged to the Corporation. Assets not awarded to the Grotheer Estate were distributed to Adventist Laymen's Foundation Publications, Inc., an entity incorporated by two members of the Board of the dissolved Foundation, and an associate, to qualify for that purpose as a religious non-profit corporation.

Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa was incorporated on June 15, 2012, to be the surviving Corporation upon merger with Adventist Laymen's Foundation Publications on October 31, 2012, and to resume and carry on the religious work of the Foundation. Gary Patrick and Dennis Tevis were appointed by the Board of Directors as the Executive Officers of Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Iowa, and are eminently qualified as laymen to preserve and continue the work of Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi-Arkansas. ❖