

*"Watchman,  
what of the night?"*

"BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM!  
Come out to meet Him."

(Matt. 25:6 RSV)



# ENOCH OLIVERA KEYNOTES GENERAL SESSION OF ATS

Secret Business Meeting Follows Session - See p. 5

Preceding the Ministerial Council for the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church held in conjunction with the General Conference was the general session of the Adventist Theological Society (ATS). This meeting was conducted in the large Glendale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Indianapolis beginning on the evening of June 28 and closing with a business meeting on Sunday, July 1.

The keynote address was presented by Elder Enoch Olivera, vice president of the General Conference, who has indicated he is retiring as of this session of the General Conference. This message from Elder Olivera's deep personal convictions as to the direction the Church is taking in America and Australia was the outstanding presentation of the whole session of the Society. While his topic was listed as "The Crisis in Adventist Theology," he captioned his subject as "The Horse of Troy in the Church," citing the story of the downfall of Troy by their bringing the Trojan horse into the city itself. While he avoided specific names, he left no doubt that the "Trojan horse" within the Church were the liberals of various shades and hues, both theologians who are desiring a revision of the church's basic theological concepts, and certain vocal laity who are teaching prophetic futurism.

Elder Olivera asked the question, "Who are promoting liberalism?" He answered that these consisted of those who wish to shed the designation of the Church as a "cult," and move it into the mainstream of Evangelical Christianity. He indicated that the liberals were fostering the idea of pluralism within the Church indicating that there could be unity on the essentials between the conservatives and the liberals, but that freedom be allowed to each group on the non-essentials. Olivera asked - "Who decides which are essentials, and which are non-essentials?"

The retiring vice president was also deeply concerned about those who were substituting the Catholic interpretation of prophecy known as futurism for the Protestant and Adventist hermeneutic known as the historical method. He noted that secularism was engulfing the American section of the Church in the desire for prestige and academic achievement as the criteria of success. He pinpointed the beginning of these problems when Adventist students went to outside universities and seminaries for their advanced degrees. Returning to teach in Adventist graduate schools, they introduced the thinking to which they had succumbed.

Another speaker at the session, Dr. George Reid of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), kept stressing that the change in Adventism began in the 1950's. In this he was correct. Elder Olivera entered the ministry in 1945, if I have recalled correctly his personal history as he gave it. He came to the General Conference as a vice president directly from the presidency of the South American Division. He indicated that this new theological liberalism has not as yet penetrated the Church in South America, and he vowed in retiring to keep it from so doing down there. This also indicates that he does not have firsthand information or experience in what did take place in America in the 1950's. Thus, perhaps unwittingly, he is blaming the wrong people for what happened in the 1950's. It was not the liberals then who desired to be free from the "cult" designation, but rather those who then operated in the "mainstream" of Adventism. There is no question that Olivera is aware of certain facts connected with the 1950's because in discussing the sanctuary teaching, he quoted Barnhouse's perception of it as a "face-saving" device. Naturally, and rightly so, he rejected this charge.

The final devotion of the society's meetings was given by Elder F. W. Wernick. He spoke on truth, defining it as the reality, with error the opposite even though masquerading under a facade. If this concept would have been applied to what was presented at the Society's meeting, the little amount of wheat could have been quickly separated from the chaff, but sadly to most it was judged by the facade instead of the reality. But then the question will be proposed - "Who decides what was wheat and what was chaff?"

First, we must get our history straight and find out who are the present day inheritors of what took place in the 1950's. The first fact in getting our history straight is that those now designated as liberals did not receive official

recognition so as to effectively influence Adventism outside of their own circle until 1967. In the Fall of that year in connection with the Annual Council "the officers of the General Conference" voted "to approve the establishment of an organization known as the Association of Adventist Forums." (Spectrum, Winter 1969, p. 5) It is this organization which has fostered the liberalism within the Church - the very things now so abhorrent to the ATS. But who was president of the General Conference at that time? R. H. Pierson. Who was the vice president for the North American Division? Neal C. Wilson.

Then the date of the action - the Fall of 1967. Already in June of that year, the State of Israel had captured the old city of Jerusalem, beginning the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of Luke 21:24. There was no excuse for the ignorance of any of us regarding the meaning of that event. Both Pierson and Wilson are listed as being delegates at the 1952 Bible Conference where Arthur Maxwell highlighted Luke 21:24 as a major unfulfilled prophecy and its significance. (See Our Firm Foundation, Vol. II, pp. 230-231. Pierson was a delegate from the Southern Asian Division, and Wilson from the Middle Eastern Division. Vol. I, p. 39). Simply stated, the liberals have not "crashed the party" but were welcomed by a then "conservative" leadership into the party. Let us put the blame where it belongs. And if by 1967, it was perceived that the graduates from non-Adventist seminaries and universities were teaching concepts contrary to historic Adventist principles, then the action giving recognition to the AAF was a betrayal of stewardship in high office. And anyone who attended Andrews University in those years prior to 1967 can testify that heretical concepts were being advocated. This editor knows from personal experience and can so testify.

#### The "Cult" Issue

This issue began prior to 1967 in the middle of the 1950's in the SDA-Evangelical Conferences. Compromises were made with the Evangelicals, Barnhouse and Martin, with the objective of escaping the "cult" designation as perceived by both of these men. The results of these conferences could not have been stated more succinctly than T. E. Unruh did in his report of them - "It was a time when the gates between sheepfolds stood open." (The Adventist Heritage, Vol. 4, #2, 1977, p. 35; See manuscript, The Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences 1955-1956)

The number of "sheep" that have left the Adventist "fold" for the Evangelical far out number those coming into the Adventist "fold" from the Evangelical. The greatest tragedy of the open "gates" has been the "fodder" brought in to feed the Adventist "sheep."

Let us take a look as to whom the conferees for the Adventists were - Unruh chaired the conferences, and with him were R. Allan Anderson, W. E. Read, and L. E. Froom. In retrospect, none of these men could be termed liberals in the sense that this designation is now being used by the ATS. Further, a committee was appointed by R. R. Figuhr, then president of the General Conference, to oversee the publication of the answers given to the questions asked by Walter Martin "in convenient reference book form" as "a definitive statement of contemporary Adventist theology." (*ibid.*, p. 41; emphasis added) [Notice the use of the word, "contemporary." This meant the theology of Adventism as modified and compromised in the conferences.] Now observe who the members of the committee were - A. V. Olson, W. B. Ochs, L. K. Dickson, H. L. Rudy, A. L. Hamm, J. I. Robinson, W. R. Beach, C. L. Torrey, F. D. Nichol and the Adventist conferees named above. These men were for the most part the officers of the General Conference. Liberals? Absolutely not by the definition now being given by the ATS. But those men sponsoring and leading out in ATS are the inheritors of these men and hold to the end product of the conference, the book - Questions on Doctrine. These SDA-Evangelical Conferences and this book is what has led to what we see today in the American and Australian segments of the Adventist Church. True the liberals have given the whole process momentum, but the compromises of the mid 1950's "greased" the rails.

The men at the Society's meeting are aware of this fact and seek to minimize it. One speaker, as I recall, Dr. George Reid from the BRI told of a zealous but uninformed layperson writing to him that every page of Questions on Doctrine was loaded with heresy. He wrote back citing certain pages and asked this person to point out the error on the given pages. She did not reply. Now the moral of this experience should be obvious. Questions on Doctrine contains little heresy if any. This is simply not true! There is much excellent material in the book, but it also contains deadly error, contrary to historic Adventism, not "contemporary" Adventism which is being promoted by the ATS at the same time they are attacking the growing

inroads of liberalism.

What norm was offered for "conservative" Adventism? What was the standard suggested? The same 27 Statements of Fundamental Beliefs to which the liberal editor of the Adventist Review, William G. Johnsson, so pathetically appealed in his debate with the late Walter Martin on the John Ankerberg Show. In fact, one must confess his belief in these 27 Fundamentals before he can become a member of ATS. Here is where a major problem arises.

Let me illustrate: In Questions on Doctrine, under the heading, "Redemption Absolute by the Victory of Christ," the following doctrinal position is set forth:

When He [Jesus] ascended to heaven, He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." ... How glorious is the thought that the King, who occupies the throne, is also our representative at the court of heaven! This becomes even 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)

If the words of the English language mean anything at all, this is saying, there is no final atonement; it was all finished on the cross. The meaning of the final sentence is explained by the sentences preceding it. That there be no misunderstanding that this phraseology carries the concept of no final atonement, note another statement from the same book:

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

Let me repeat, lest there be any miscomprehension. The clause - "making application of the benefits of the sacrificial atonement He made on the cross" - is language which in the setting of the SDA-Evangelical Conferences denies the final atonement as taught in historical Adventism. This is the language appearing in the 27 Fundamental Statements of Belief, and which never had appeared in any previous Statement. In Statement #23 - "Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary" - one reads:

In it ["a sanctuary in heaven"] Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. (Emphasis supplied)

It might be argued that in 1980 when the 27 Fundamentals were formulated at the General Conference session in Dallas, this phraseology meant something different than as used in 1957 when the book, Questions on Doctrine, was first published. But in 1983, three years after the Dallas session, in response to a letter by Walter Martin to the General Conference, W. Richard Leshar on behalf of Elder Neal C. Wilson, replied that "Seventh-day Adventists still stand behind the answers" given therein "as they did in 1957." (The Kingdom of the Cults, p. 410)

The "new theology" - Ford's theology, Norman Gulley's theology - is merely the "chickens" come home to roost as a result of the compromises of the mid-1950's. Yet here comes this new-formed Adventist Theological Society, and while professing to be against the liberalism in the Church, is fostering the basic betrayal of the sacred trust committed to the Adventist Church in the sanctuary doctrine. Let it be remembered that the 27 Fundamentals are the pronouncement of "contemporary" Adventism, not historic Adventism.

Futurism

Let us consider next, Elder Olivera's justifiable concern for the adoption of the Roman Catholic futuristic method of interpreting prophecy which has manifest itself in many quarters of the Church both in America and Australia. At whose door does this lie?

When the Church's leadership through its "Briefs" in Federal Court stated emphatically that the concepts which the Church once held in regard to the Roman Catholic Church based on the Protestant understanding of Bible prophecy had "now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church was concerned," what can one expect? Is it not saying that our understanding of how to interpret Bible prophecy was faulty, therefore, a new interpretation is in order? Do not try to take the "beam" out of your brother's eye, till you get the "beam" out of your own eye. (I use the word "beam" for both "liberals" and the now self-proclaimed "conservatives" because in either case it is not a "mote.") And who were the men in the hierarchy who approved this "Brief" in the EEOC v. PPPA case? Again R. H. Pierson and Neal C. Wilson! (For full documentation, see Excerpts - Legal Documents,

published by the ALF of Mississippi, Inc.)

But the story does not end here. At the ATS meeting, speaking from the same podium as Elder Olivera was Dr. Mervyn Maxwell, author of God Cares, Vol. I. In this book, he teaches that Papal Rome is really "Christian" Rome, and "the embodiment of 'our' Christian heritage, for better or for worse." (p. 127) Must we mitigate the force of the prophecy of Daniel ?? The "little horn" is ever rooted in the iron toothed beast which represented Pagan Rome. Is our "heritage" from Paganism? God have mercy on us. Why should the ATS, or anyone else be concerned that some in Adventism are teaching "futurism" which clears the Roman Catholic Church of its pagan origin, and the "finger of God" in prophecy, until they set their own house in order. Would it not have been far better to have screened the speakers and chosen men who could have enlarged upon the concerns of Elder Olivera instead of men who are teaching some of the same things which have led to the problems in Adventist theology today?

Did not Jesus say:

What miserable frauds you are, you scribes and Pharisees! You build tombs for the prophets, and decorate monuments for good men of the past, and then say, "If we had lived in the times of our ancestors we should never have joined in the killing of the prophets." Yes, "your ancestors" - that shows you to be the sons indeed of those who murdered the prophets. Go ahead then, and finish off what your ancestors tried to do! You serpents, you viper's brood, how do you think you are going to avoid being condemned to the rubbish heap? (Matt. 23:29-33 Phillips)

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NOTE: The interest in the new tract - "Jerusalem in Bible Prophecy" - has necessitated a quantity price quote. These prices are for the order of the tract only, and to one address, postpaid, USA.

1 copy	\$ .50
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If anyone knows the correct address of a Mr. G. S. Ames will you please forward the same to us. Thank you.

# THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

In the Ministry (Dec., 1989) J. R. Spangler, then editor, wrote a report on the Adventist Theological Society (ATS). The response he received to this report, not an editorial, caused him to write an editorial (Ministry, June 1990) asking the question - "Too many theological societies?" There are two within the community of Adventism, the other being the Andrews Society for Religious Studies (ASRS). This latter organization developed out of the attendance of Adventist theologians at the meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature (AAR/SBL). It first was an informal gathering of Adventist teachers in attendance to get acquainted and to ascertain what their colleagues were doing. This, in turn, led to special sessions in which they would meet separately from the AAR/SBL. Finally in 1979, the Adventist scholars met together in a duly constituted meeting at New Orleans. Their statement of purpose, objectives and goals along with condition of membership is very simple compared with the restrictive and elaborate Constitution and Bylaws of the ATS.

The Constitution of ATS plainly stakes out the theological position they seek to represent within Adventism. They declare their society promotes study among Seventh-day Adventists "who hold to a centrist position." (Preamble A-2) It is interesting to note that Spangler in his editorial introduced his comments with reference to an article appearing in CT (Feb. 5, 1990) titled, "The Recent Truth About Seventh-day Adventism." From it he noted the three distinct theological categories in Adventism today - "evangelical, traditional, and liberal." ATS perceives itself as "traditional" but being in reality, "evangelical" combined with elements of the traditional. They perceive of ASRS as being liberal. Granting this evaluation, they then look upon all others, not in harmony with them in all details, as being the "right wing" in Adventism. The fact is, there are few scholars in this "wing" though many divergent "voices." This is tragically confusing! Spangler's suggestion after listing the divisions is very

apropos - "Fragmentation might be a better word." (Ministry, June 1990, p. 22)

In the "Statement of Mission/Purpose" of the ATS, they maintain that the organization is "supportive of spiritual revival and reformation within the Seventh-day Adventist Church." The question is, do their actions and proclamation support this objective, or are they a divisive element doing what they accuse others of doing? Spangler noted comments from letters he received as a result of his report on ATS. These need to be carefully considered. From this editor's attendance at the session of the ATS in Indianapolis, he must say they are a correct evaluation of the Society. Here are some of the quotes from Spangler's mail:

I am frightened by its divisive and secretive nature, and the potential it has to split Adventist theological ranks once and for all by forcing people to make unnatural choices. (emphasis, the writer's)

[ATS is] an insulated special-interest group. The entry gate is narrow, and it is hedged about with protective barriers to keep the unwanted out, and with authority to purge the unfaithful within.

[ATS is] harrowingly self-righteous. ...Its policy of invitation only for membership - how haughtily safe...its purpose - how seemingly honorable... yet its potential effect on the SDA ministry/church in North America - how horribly divisive and destructive. (*ibid.*)

From my observation and conduct of those in control - Blanco, Gulley, Hasel and the platform chairman for the Sabbath morning services - every charge in these letters to Spangler is absolute truth. On Sunday morning, a business meeting was scheduled to be preceded by a devotional by Elder Wernick. I came to the meeting. I was met at the door by Mrs. Gulley, and the following conversation ensued:

Mrs Gulley: "Are you a member of ATS?"

This editor: "No."

Mrs Gulley: "Do you want to be?"

This editor: "No."

Mrs Gulley: "You cannot attend this meeting."

This editor: "Not even as a observer, or from the press?"

Mrs Gulley: "No."

This editor: "You mean I cannot even hear the devotion?"

Mrs Gulley: "You can hear that; that is all."

During the presentation by Wernick, there was a scampering about by Blanco. Elder Loor was called out. Then when Wernick finished, it was explained that it was decided to hold the business meeting in the basement of the church, but no one had a key to the room. It was

## LET'S TALK IT OVER

Over the past two months, there were several items which came to this desk, that I set aside as items which needed comment. One was the new publication - Adventism Triumphant, the "Journal of the 1888 Message Study Committee." Its name is reminiscent of A. L. Hudson's first publication - The Church Triumphant. One could identify with Hudson's choice of the name. The church of the living God is to be "the pillar and ground of the truth." (I Tim. 3:15) Such a church will be triumphant. But the name chosen by the 1888 Message Study Committee is defiant of the revelation of God in salvation history. The word, "Adventism" is not defined, but can be assumed to mean, "Seventh-day Adventism." The only official version of such is designated as "contemporary" Adventism. So the question must be addressed - Can "contemporary" Adventism triumph any more than "contemporary" Judaism triumphed in New Testament times?

Then during this same period, the May-June Newsletter of the 1888 Committee came with a report of Snyman and Wieland's overseas ministry. A subheading proclaimed that around the world the members of the Adventist Church were "hungry for pure gospel." [Wieland also investigated an approach to Hinduism while in India] This concept that these men were preaching the "pure gospel" raises a question. Is there another being preached by the church in those overseas countries. If so, Paul said that those so doing should be accursed. (Gal 1:8) Evidently, the editor of the News Letter does not believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is preaching the "pure gospel" in Africa and Australia. Yet the report on Snyman indicated that he earnestly sought to channel the tithes and offerings into what in their judgment is less than "pure gospel." Such actions are in contradiction to the heading on the report and reveals either an unmitigated egotism, or pure confusion, or both!

It was of interest to note that Snyman's meeting in the Brisbane area was sponsored by Morris Harnell. If he is now sponsoring the "pure gospel", what has he been sponsoring in the past? How our foibles and lack of discernment must grieve the heart of God in this final hour of human history when He had hoped for so much and sees so little sanctified judgment.

There is much more that could be said about items coming across the desk, such as, the newspaper report of the person being jailed who

refused when requested to leave the Mount Vernon [Ohio] Seventh-day Adventist Church. Then there was a question asked in one "flyer" - "When was the last time you heard good ole, straight, Seventh-day Adventist preaching?" It is certain that one cannot hear such from one who yo-yo's in and out of the conference not knowing which end is up or down. The bottom line of the "flyer" was to get money. One can understand why the conference reacts as it often does. They, too, want money; and here are all of these competitors. If you were in their boots, you would react the same way. The sad part is that those who profess to be God's concerned people do not seek the Holy Spirit and ask, "Where do you want me to place the means entrusted to me?" Instead they fall for the "sale's pitch" coming from facades.

Perhaps, now I had better talk over a key concept, lest I run out of space. There has been much said and written lately about "progressive Adventism". At the three national conferences in 1989 of the Association of Adventist Forums (AAF), the topic was "Progressive Adventism: Oxymoron or Wave of the Future." (Spectrum, Vol. 20, #3, p. 1) ["Oxymoron" means "pointedly absurd" and could mean, "obviously a fool"] The "liberal" perception calls for a "pluralism" in order that Adventism might be the "wave of the future." The first president of AAF, when approved in 1967, has said:

Adventism needs more, not less pluralism and ferment. We need more vigorous and informed contributions from the conservatives. Conservative are our "institutional engineers"; they tend to provide a context for continuity and stability. But we need the liberal "artistic" elements to bring to Adventism an ever greater sensitivity to human needs, to issues of justice and mercy. We need an inclusive church that relishes a pluralism of viewpoint. (ibid., p. 5).

This organization (AAF) is calling for a "velvet revolution" in Adventism led by the laity, and are urging it to begin now. While the liberals are much more kindly disposed towards the conservatives, at least on paper, their concepts are anathema to the conservatives as represented by the ATS. The issue as seen by ATS is really a social gospel versus a theologically orientated gospel based on the Bible as interpreted by their interpretation of Ellen G. White. The ATS at their session mounted an attack on the designs of the liberals on two fronts.

The social gospel concept was attacked as "liberation theology" borrowed from the Catholic Church. As one reads the report in Spectrum,

of the 1989 conferences, it becomes evident that there is much borrowing from Catholicism even to the point of having a Catholic theologian address the conference held in Seattle. The second front was in the area of "progressive revelation," or as one speaker at the ATS meeting modified it - "progressive understanding."

It is obvious that as time moves forward - and now a full century separates us from the beginnings and primary development of Adventism - there must be some evaluation of where we are and what we stand for. The ATS perceives of this present hour as a "crisis in Adventist theology" (and such it is), while the AAF perceives it as a time to implement a social gospel of "working with the Lord to restore justice to His creation." The questions are asked by the liberals - "How can we make the everlasting gospel meaningful to society?" "How can we transform a suffering world?" Here the liberals are aiming at the very heart of Adventism. We believe in the need for the soon return of Jesus because there is no human force that can transform a suffering world. Only the destruction of the present system and the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven can accomplish this objective.

What has caused "conservative" Adventism to lose its vitality and effectiveness? The answer is simple and can be found in its failure to appropriate God's provision in "progressive revelation." There is "progressive revelation" as well as "progressive understanding." God spoke through Old Testament prophets giving fragmentary glimpses of truth, but in Jesus Christ, the fulness "of grace and truth," He revealed Himself to the extent that man can behold and live. (Heb. 1:1; John 1:14) Then God gave a revelation through Jesus Christ of things which "must" take place, and declared an anathema upon any who would add or subtract therefrom. (Rev. 1:1; 22:18-19) From this point on, "progressive revelation" has taken the form of "progressive understanding" as the scroll unrolls. Through the gifts of the Spirit, as He guides into all truth, this understanding was to be sharpened. But we have come to a period wherein our perceptions have been dulled and we have become unwilling to review our past understandings to see if in reality they square with the primary revelation of God. We compromised with the Evangelicals in the 1950's instead of carefully restudying our positions on the sanctuary and other vital concepts to see if indeed they were in line with the Bible. The "messenger to the remnant" revealed a duty we have not performed. She wrote:

The Lord has made His people the repository of sacred truth. Upon every individual who has had the light of present truth devolves the duty of developing that truth on a higher scale than it has hitherto been done. (March 30, 1897)

Notice it says, "that truth" - that which was and is designated "present truth" is the truth to be developed to a higher scale. It is not to be abandoned, or mitigated, but developed. Some of our cherished concepts may have to be given up, and rays of light not previously perceived substituted for our faulty perceptions. Even our spiritual forefathers had to clean up much of Millerism. This any theological society in Adventism worthy of the name should do. ATS has not so proved itself.

ATS - from page 5, col. 2

finally secured via Loor, the pastor, and the custodian was called. At the stairway entrance a table was set up, with only enough room for one person at a time to pass through. Gulley stood guard, checking each of the "sheep" as they entered. When Gulley left the table another guard was posted. "Despicable" is the only word to describe the fear-mentality of those who operate the society and their masonic rules for membership and entrance.

During the session, I asked Gulley to sit down and discuss his series of articles in the Adventist Review. This he refused to do, stating, "What I wrote, I believe." If the "centrist" position is Gulley's teaching, which is "new theology," then count me in the "right wing" as a progressive fundamental historic Adventist. We will have more to say about the ATS in future issues - both good and bad. It is a mixture, like the "tree of the garden," a theology of truth and error.

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