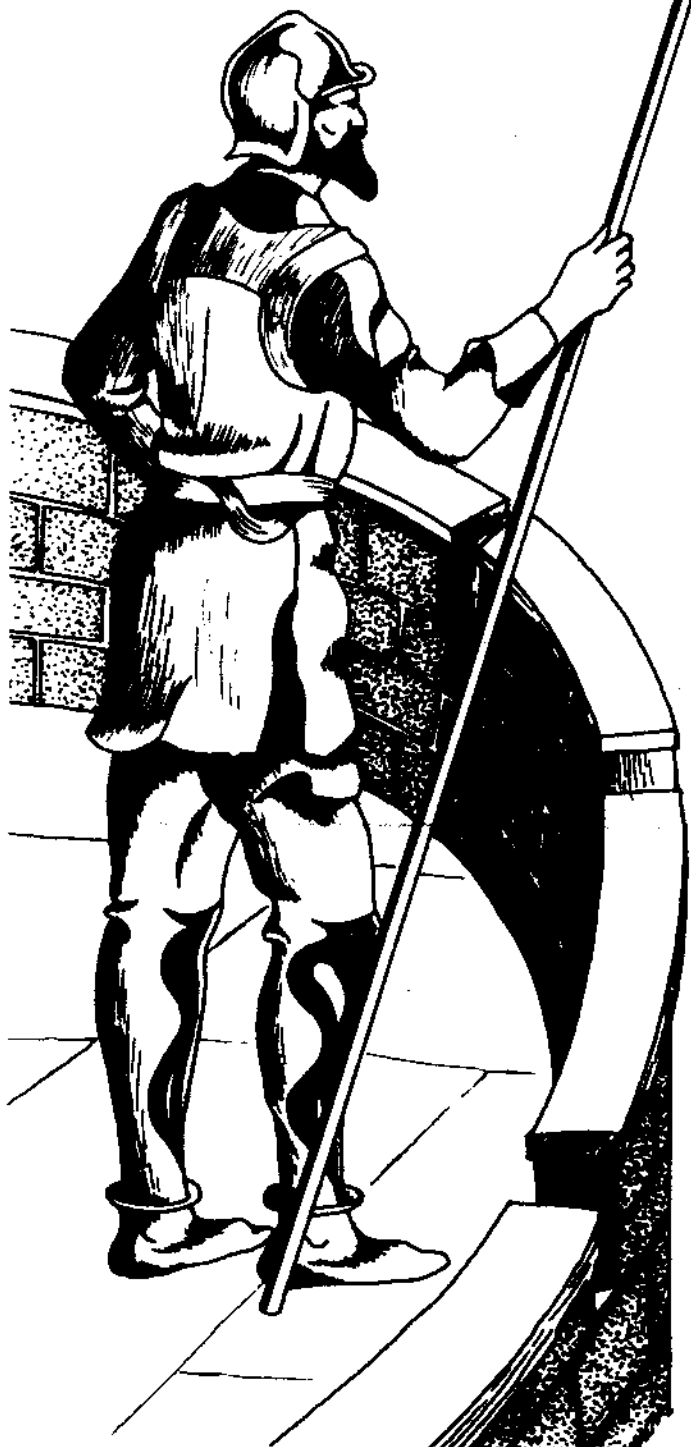


*"Watchman,  
what of the night?"*

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

(Matt 25:6 RSV)



## THE 1990 GC SESSION

### Blighted Hopes - for Wilson and the Church

The 1990 General Conference session was actually in three parts, though not officially so recognized. The pre-pre-session, the meeting of the Adventist Theological Society, was theological in content. As a church thinketh in its heart theologically so it is. While this society does not represent the theological thinking of all sections of the Church, it was nevertheless addressed by a vice president of the General Conference, and at its business meeting, a former vice president gave the devotional. Further, at this session, the president elected was a member of the Southern College Board, the College where the ATS originated. Add to this that the new president of the North American Division was chairman of the same board. We have discussed this part of the session in the previous issue of WWN.

The pre-session conducted by the Ministerial Department of the General Conference was devoted to the problems of the church pastor. (See p. 10, Bulletin #1) The main session, the business of the Church, with its reports, discussions, and voted actions, was politics as usual. Behind the facade of mission pageantry, and glowing reports from General Conference Department heads, and Division presidents, plus the propaganda of heralding the work of the Nominating Committee as the moving of the Holy Spirit, stands the stark fact that the question asked in the opening devotion of the session - "It didn't happen in 1901! Will it happen in 1990? - must be answered, "No, it did not!" (Bulletin #2, pp. 26-27) Tragically, in the assessment of this session in the months to come, the question as to "why" it did not happen will be avoided like poison, or it will be deceptively explained that it did happen.

So that there be no misunderstanding from what viewpoint I am discussing this 1990 session of the General Conference, know that I did not attend either the Ministerial Council, nor the session itself. I am writing from the picture portrayed in the Bulletins, the fine print of the business meetings, and the reports of the committees, especially the Nominating Committee. In so writing, I recognize there are limitations. The messages are not fully reported, but are abbreviated and condensed summaries. There was much editing done. For example, compare the size and material in the

General Conference Bulletins of the 1890s, and the ten issues of the Adventist Review which carried the 1990 report of the session. Even a casual comparison indicates the editing that was done. Note what the writer of "The Day in the Dome" for Friday, July 6, had to say about the devotional referred to on page 1 (Bulletin #2, p. 6, col. 2) and the content of that devotional as reported on pages 26 & 27 of the same Bulletin. This variation is minor and inconsequential, but does this hold true in all areas of editing? There is much left unsaid, and from what is written, one must take the liberty to read between the lines. Probably, one of the most frank, and best written reports of "The Day in the Dome" was written by Nina Martinez for Sabbath, July 7. (ibid., pp. 9-11)

In discussing this General Conference session, and the actions taken, I will interpret these in the light of my own observations and experiences of local conference sessions I attended as a teenager, and in my ministerial experience of sitting on the nominating committee of those sessions both seeing and hearing what took place. Things have not changed drastically, nor will they. The committees are much larger and the democratic process being used is lauded, but the behind-the-scenes maneuvering has changed little. However, I will seek to write from an objective viewpoint from the data supplied in the Adventist Review, and other reliable sources. I know from the experience in attending the New Orleans session that I can obtain just as clear a picture through the Bulletins, as being present and taking notes.

The title for this article on the session could as well have been captioned - "They Got Him!" - meaning Wilson, or "Blighted Hopes" - depending upon which aspect one wished to focus.

There is no question but that Wilson expected and intended to be re-elected president of the General Conference. He also knew there were segments of the world church who were opposed to him and his re-election. He was advised by at least four persons to announce his retirement at the session because they warned the opposition was so strong, he could not be re-elected. Two of these according to my informants were Kenneth Wood and Willis Hackett. From another reliable source, the last straw that sent Wilson into "limbo" was his double talk with the presidents of the Union Conferences in the North American Division. In a meeting with these men, he advised them to take the lead in the Nominating Committee (every one of them was on the committee), suggesting that one of their number become chairman. But when

Wilson chaired the organization of the Nominating Committee, he suggested that the Chairman be a North American Union president, but one with overseas experience which not one of them had. In casting about among their associates, they lighted upon Folkenberg who was one of them, a local conference president from the Carolinas with overseas union conference leadership experience.

Wilson felt comfortable with this choice as Folkenberg had worked closely with him in the "Global Mission" project preparation. However, the South and Central American Divisions were solidly opposed to him as reflected in the man first tapped for the General Conference leadership - Brown, president of the Inter-American Division, and in the final choice of one who had served "south of the border." Wilson no doubt counted strongly on Africa to come to his defense, but one leading delegate from Africa approached a North American Union president and asked if they wanted a change. The president replied in the affirmative, and was told to lead out, and they would follow.

The rejection of Wilson is not that he did not have his supporters on the Nominating Committee. He did. The Vice Chairman of the committee in reporting out the name of Folkenberg for president, prefaced his remarks with the fact that the first name placed in nomination was that of Wilson, and that many speeches were made "concerning the outstanding ministry and service Elder Wilson had given as leader of the General Conference and during his previous service as vice president for North America. Many spoke of the respect and love that exists in the world field for Elder Wilson and his ministry, and of the outstanding service he has given to the church." (Bulletin #3, pp. 11-12) It is highly probable that some of those most determined that Wilson be removed gave some of these eulogies. In simple language, it was politics as usual at this 1990 session.

Wilson adopted a strategy for re-election so out-of-character with his previous image that it was obvious as to the intent. Appearing in the Ministry and the Adventist Review were a series of articles on the need for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit if the Church were to accomplish the Global Mission planned for it. At the Adventist Theological Society meeting, I heard rumors - and they were just rumors - that these articles had been "ghost" written and/or researched by another person. Interestingly, the one named as doing this job, Dr. George Rice of the E. G. White Estate, was the one who gave the opening devotional

# "QUIET DIPLOMACY"

Over arching and of far more consequence than any action taken at the 1990 session of the General Conference, was the revelation of the behind-the-scenes activities of B. B. Beach. While the Nominating Committee replaced Wilson, B. B. Beach and his team of cohorts remain in place, as well as the head of the Communications Department of the Church.

This session has served to highlight a major shift in Adventist theology revealed during the EEOC v. PPPA case, better known as the Merikay Silver case. In a Brief submitted to the Court by the Church, a footnote read:

Although it is true that there was a period in the life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when the denomination took a distinctly anti-Roman Catholic viewpoint, and the term "hierarchy" was used in a perjorative sense to refer to the papal form of church governance, that attitude on the Church's part was nothing more than a manifestation of widespread anti-papery among conservative protestant denominations in the early part of this century and the latter part of the last, and which has now been consigned to the historical trash heap so far as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is concerned. (p. 41, Excerpts Legal Documents)

At this session, as well as at the New Orleans and Dallas sessions, B. B. Beach presented representatives from various Churches who were in attendance as "observers." In some instances, what these persons said were far more significant in interpreting what was taking place within the Church than what the leadership was revealing to the laity. For example, at the Dallas session, Bishop Robert Terwilliger of the Anglican Consultative Council told the delegates that in reading the 27 Statements of Fundamental Beliefs, he had "hoped to find some degree of disagreement." He then added:

I had the most awful disappointment. I found increasingly that we are together in our faith. Therefore, the unity that we share is not simply of good will and fellowship but unity in faith..." (AR, May 1, 1980, p. 16)

In Indianapolis, the same ecumenical process was carried forward. The first to appear was an archbishop of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. He was followed by others including the same representative from the WCC who had attended the New Orleans session. However, in addition,

at this session a fax was received from the General Secretary of the WCC, E. Castro, extending greetings. Joan Campbell, the WCC representative stated -

I bring you the warmest of greetings from the World Council of Churches and from all our member churches around the world. ... When I was at your worship service yesterday, it seemed as though it was my own time of worship, as well as yours. And it said to me that there are many things that we hold in common - that there is, in fact, one Lord, one God and Father of us all. So as fellow Christians, like those Pentecost people in the earliest days, we look as one another and we say that we hold all things in common." (Bulletin #4, p. 6)

(For those who want to know more of this "holding in common" between the SDA Church and the WCC, write for the book, So Much in Common, co-authored by B. B. Beach and the Secretary of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. \$4.00 postpaid)

This session forwarded more than all previous sessions, the ecumenical process. Beach presented T. J. Murphy, a Roman Catholic pastor in Indianapolis to the delegates as "an observer and official guest representing the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian Unity." Not only did he represent the Council promoting unity, but he stated - "I bring you personal greetings from the archbishop of Indianapolis, promising and assuring you that prayers are being offered within our community for the blessed success of this General Conference." Then he added - "It is a deep honor to be present as an observer of these momentous and Spirit-filled proceedings and deliberations. For it is the desire of the Saviour Himself that His disciples might be one so that the world may believe." Then he closed his remarks with a prayer from the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. (Bulletin #7, p. 8)

This is mind boggling. First consider the fact that the Roman Catholic hierarchy were saying prayers for the "blessed success" of the session. To whom were they praying? And if answered, who answered the prayers? What has happened that the Roman Catholic Church can pray for the Adventist Church in session, when this movement was originally raised up to give the Third Angel's Message - "If any man worship the beast and his image..."? This should send a message to every sincere and concerned member of the Church. But this is not all. The Roman Catholic observer sensed what he termed "Spirit-filled proceedings and deliberations." Through out the Bulletins, one

can find remarks about the guiding of the Spirit in the surprising outcome of the work of the Nominating Committee, and other actions taken. One must ask in all seriousness, what "spirit" filled the session's proceedings and deliberations that could be perceived by a Roman Catholic observer? The answer to this question should give every Adventist some second thoughts.

When I first read the report of Murphy's appearance and remarks, I wondered about the fact that he was representing the Pontifical Council. This meant that he was coming with the blessing and approbation of the Vatican itself. This past weekend, we met together in Annual Fellowship. Attending this meeting was a brother from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, who is employed by a firm operated by Catholics. The office secretary showed him a report in the Arkansas Catholic, published by the Diocese of Little Rock. This article was captioned - "Adventists spread anti-Catholic tracts." This coincides with reports in The Indianapolis Star telling of the circulation of the tract - "United States in Bible Prophecy." My first reaction to the report in the Bulletin of the session telling of Murphy's appearance was that this had been quickly arranged to counter the effect of the tract. However, the article in the Arkansas Catholic tells the real story of why the reaction on the part of the GC Communication Secretary was so shocking. John F. Fink, editor of the Criterion, the Indianapolis archdiocesan newspaper, stated:

The Seventh-day Adventists have a history of anti-Catholicism, like many other Protestant religions in the U.S. during the 18th and 19th centuries. However, the main body of the Church has moved away from an anti-Catholic position. The new position of co-operation with the Catholic Church was exemplified by the invitation from the Seventh-day Adventists to the Vatican to send an official observer to the conference. (July 29, 1990, p. 8; emphasis supplied)

Who sent this invitation? Who is known at the Vatican for giving the Adventist Church in symbol into the hands of the Pope? None other than B. B. Beach! (See Steps to Rome, p. 26) Do not forget that at Dallas, as well as a new Statement of Beliefs being formulated, the session created what is called the Church's "Department of State" - the Department of Public Affairs. Heading this is B. B. Beach! (See Liberty Sentinel, 1981 promotional issue, p. 7) Not only is the Department involved in religious liberty issues - that is the front for the laity to see - but according to the report, it is involved in "quiet diplomacy."

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The 1990 Session - From p. 2, col. 2

reflecting the same theme and thoughts. This raises some questions. Did Wilson believe that by emphasizing the need for the Spirit, those who were opposed to him would bury their opposition for the sake of unity which is prerequisite for the reception of the Spirit? Did Wilson forget that many of those opposed to him were political "animals" just like himself? Can a leopard change his spots? There was no evidence that during the weeks these articles were being written and published that Wilson made any attempts to right grievous wrongs inflicted on his fellow church members during his time in Washington. So with hopes blighted, Wilson reaped what he had sown during his time as head of the Church. However, if the readers of the Bulletins have noted carefully other aspects of the election process, they will have observed that Wilson was given a "sop." The re-elected Secretary of the General Conference felt so sorry for Wilson that he recommended, and the Nominating Committee accepted, the placing of Wilson's son, Ted N. C. Wilson, as one of the associate secretaries of the General Conference. This son has had only one term of service in the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, with very, very limited prior experience. This is a tragic decision, but one which warmed the former president's heart that a Wilson presence would still be in the General Conference.

#### Wilson's Successor

The second Bulletin carrying a picture of Elder R. S. Folkenberg, also carried two lead articles giving a "profile" of the man. Certain firsts and comparisons are noted by the editor of the Adventist Review. He is the youngest man to take office since A. G. Daniells. He is also the first General Conference president to come directly from the local conference level. There are some other firsts. He is the first chairman of the Nominating Committee to become president at the same session. One staff writer cited this as a coincidence (?). (Bulletin #2, p. 2) It is also interesting to note that since the 1922 session when the General Conference ended the "reign" of Daniells, Folkenberg is the first conference president to ever chair the nominating committee who has not had experience as a Union President in North America. Back in 1941, F. H. Robbins who was then president of the East Pennsylvania Conference chaired the Nominating Committee, but he had been president of the Columbia Union from 1918-1932, and was in that very year to return

To page 6, col. 2

# NEW BAPTISMAL VOWS

In 1980 at the Dallas session, along with the formulation of the 27 Fundamental Statements of Belief, the session voted a Baptismal Vow which all candidates for entrance into the Church whether by baptism or profession of faith were required to affirm. Now at the 1990 session in Indianapolis, this has been altered. The two vows may be compared by noting the 1980 voted vow in the 1981 Church Manual, p. 61, and the new version in Bulletin #8, p. 15.

The major change in wording is to be found in #1. All of the other changes are merely cosmetic. Vow #1 in the 1980 version reads:

Do you believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit?

The changed question reads:

Do you believe there is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons?

Where did this new formulation originate? It is taken first from the 27 Fundamentals, #2, "The Trinity." Of its origin, J.N.D. Kelly, in his book, Early Christian Doctrines, tells us: (I obtained it at the LLU Book store)

The doctrine of one God, the Father and creator, formed the background and indisputable premiss of the Church's faith. Inherited from Judaism, it was her bulwark against pagan polytheism, Gnostic emanationism and Marcionite dualism. The problem for theology was to integrate with it, intellectually, the fresh data of the specifically Christian revelation. Reduced to their simplest, these were the convictions that God had made Himself known in the Person of Jesus, the Messiah, raising Him from the dead and offering salvation to men through Him, and that He had poured out His Holy Spirit upon the Church. Even at the New Testament stage ideas about Christ's pre-existence and creative role were beginning to take shape, and a profound, if often obscure, awareness of the activity of the Spirit in the Church was emerging. No steps had been taken so far, however, to work all these complex elements into a coherent whole. The Church had to wait for more than three hundred years for a final synthesis, for not until the council of Constantinople (381) [Keep this date in mind] was the formula of one God existing in three co-equal

Persons formally ratified. (pp. 87-88)

As a result of this voted action revising the Church Manual, those joining the Church will be expected to affirm their belief in a formulation of a Church Council three hundred years after Christ. This makes the candidate double talk for in Vow 5, he is asked to affirm that he believes in the Bible as "the only rule of faith and practice" - not a pronouncement of a Church Council. (See Great Controversy, p. 595)

But there is still more to this than merely semantics. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is represented on the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. The objective of this Commission, the same as the WCC itself, is "to proclaim the oneness of the church of Jesus Christ and to call churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe." (See So Much in Common, p. 40) In 1982, the Commission released a document - Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry - in view of seeking a new way to approach sacramental questions which divide churches.

Now a second Faith and Order study "is seeking to discover whether Christians can confess their faith together ecumenically."

This study, "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today", will not write a new ecumenical confession of faith. Rather, it will ask whether churches today can "witness to, confess, live out and celebrate in common ... the same apostolic faith that was expressed in Holy Scriptures and summarized in the creeds of the early church."

For the study, the Faith and Order Commission has chosen the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of A.D. 381 [Here is that date again] - already officially recognized by many churches - as a summary of the apostolic faith. (One World, Jan.-Feb. 1988, p. 15)

The Seventh-day Adventist Church will have no problem when a world church is realized. In the 27 Fundamental Statements of Belief, there is written the "Basis" as outlined in the Constitution of the WCC. (See Statements #2 & #11, in Church Manual, pp. 32, 36; and compare with WCC Constitution, So Much in Common, p. 40) Now we have placed in our Baptismal Vows, the confession of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed which the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC is using to achieve "visible unity in one faith."

## LET'S TALK IT OVER

We have seen enough pages written on the Hawaiian case to make a book. Perhaps Ferrell is getting ready to publish such a book now, who knows? There has been much hand wringing over the poor little orthodox(?) preacher who wanted to use the name, Seventh-day Adventist, and his "big" hierarchical brothers wouldn't let him. He was defended by one, Corbett, who volunteered his services to such a worthy cause. There the story rests and the Church remains painted black.

In some respects, the Church deserves the results of its actions. They should not have sued the Hawaiian Church, and if they thought they had to sue, there were better targets. The choice of the lawyer also became an issue. But whether a lawyer is one who was raised a Catholic and then became another faith later, or whether one is a professing Seventh-day Adventist, the measure of the lawyer is his integrity. In the past month, I received a letter from one I had never heard from before. Responding, I received a second letter in which the Hawaiian case was used as an illustration. The comment and information are very apropos. The person wrote:

Partial material can be very misleading. For example, you would never know from some of the protest materials I have read on the Hawaii church situation, that the federal judge gave the defendant three days to file a stay while they were on appeal so the pastor would not go to jail, and several times reminded defense counsel of that fact. A stay was never entered, as defense counsel wanted the warrant issued and the pastor arrested for the negative publicity it would create against our church. It was a good defense tactic and worked well. (Emphasis theirs)

Did you ever read about this tactic in Ferrell's material? If one lawyer is to be painted black, then isn't it a pot and kettle picture? It seems that in all of this battling of the Church, and there is much that needs to be exposed, simple Christian ethics and honesty is forgotten. Or could it be, it was never in the life in the first place?

While we are talking about the pot and the kettle, I have seen recently an exchange of letters, or perhaps it was just one letter between administrators in the North Pacific Union in regard to Ron Spear. It is not that

to that office in the Columbia Union merry-go-round. From 1922 through 1985, the Chairmen of the GC Nominating Committees have been North American Union presidents except in 1930 when F. M. Wilcox, Editor of the Review & Herald chaired the committee, and in 1985, when Dr. Richard Leshner, president of Andrews University, presided.

In selecting men for high office, the children of this generation are wiser than the children of the light. The one nominated to high office in the United States is closely scrutinized before being confirmed. Not so with the Church. The session elects a "dark horse" and declares that the Spirit of God was at work, and the laity and under-clergy re-echo this sentiment as they return to the members sitting in the pews back home. There is given in the counsels of the "messenger to the remnant" a criterion by which a man could be evaluated. It reads:

Honesty and policy will not work together in the same mind. In time, either policy will be expelled, and truth and honesty will reign supreme, or, if policy is cherished, honesty will be forgotten. They are never in agreement; they have nothing in common. One is the prophet of Baal, the other the true prophet of God. (5T:96)

The question is did the session elect a "prophet of God" or a "prophet of Baal"? From letters and telephone conversations coming from the Carolina area, there are things which need to be investigated. It is our plan to do so, and as documentation is available, we will reproduce it, and then you can make a determination, whether Foikenberg is a "policy" man, or a man of integrity.

There are other items of a "political" nature which could be noted from the 1990 session, but there are some overriding issues that came up which need to be considered. These we will discuss in the other articles.

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Ron Spear should not be called to an accounting, but the things for which they could charge him, they are guilty themselves. They were originally all in one pot, but Spear found it more lucrative to create his own kettle.

Then the other evening, I was visiting in a home, and they showed me a current publication which had come that week with an Idaho return address. As I perused the articles,

Quiet Diplomacy - From page 4, col. 1

The facts have now surfaced. What was to have been a triumph if the "quiet diplomacy" in having a representative at the Indianapolis session from the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian Unity, had a wrench thrown into the cogs - the tract - "United States in Prophecy." As far as I know the dissidents who prepared the tract which caused the uproar were totally unaware of what Beach's "quiet diplomacy" had planned. But the stir this tract made caught the Communication Department off-balance, and the further outburst on the part of Ms. Burton has given deeper insight into the thinking of the church's leadership.

When confronted with the consequences of the tract - "The United States in Prophecy" - Burton called the tract - "trash." (The Indianapolis Star, July 13, 1990, p. 16) Reports vary as to the substance of the tract, and since I do not have a copy, I cannot verify these reports. For your information one report in The Star, quoting a headline hungry dissident, said it was "merely a condensation of The Great Controversy." This past week-end, I was told that it was a combination of material from both The Great Controversy and Uriah Smith's Daniel and Revelation.

Whatever, the situation by this happening provides a way to find out the attitude of the new General Conference president as to where he stands. Write a letter in a courteous matter-of-fact way, citing the report in The Star and calling for the removal of Ms. Burton as head of the Communications Department. Keep your outrage at such an outburst on Ms. Burton's part under control. See what reply you will receive. If enough write, they will have to formulate a stock letter. As soon as I obtain a tract, I will join in writing also. We would appreciate a copy of whatever response you receive in answer to your letter. You might also wish to call for the resignation of B. B. Beach citing the report in the Arkansas Catholic. To have invited an observer from the Vatican to a session of the General Conference is unacceptable by any standard or reason. It was totally unjustified.

New Baptismal Vows - from page 5, col. 1

Add to this the presence of the observer which the Church invited the Vatican to send. Note that when he appeared before the delegates, they applauded. (Bulletin #7, p. 8) With all of what has and is taking place, is it any wonder that the Papal representative could sense a

"spirit" in the session's "proceedings and deliberations" to which he is attune? What more should be needed to arouse those still slumbering in Laodicea, and those blinded by the false hope that the Church can be turned around. Will they now accept an entrance vow based on the creeds of the Church which laid the basis for the "little horn" of the 1260 years?

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Let's Talk It Over, from page 6, col. 2

I noticed some historical data. There was only one possible source from which it was derived. But no documentation was given. An unknowing reader would assume that the author of the article had produced the data from his own research. Yet this person would be incensed if one questioned his Christian experience. Yet even Jesus Christ, who was the Spirit in the writers of the Old Testament, gave credit in calling attention to what the men had written under His inspiration. See I Peter 1:10-11; Matt. 15:7.

I, personally, have no objection to one copying material I produce. I recall that some of the men who worked under my guidance as assistants, when about to go out on their own, spending many hours copying my rather detailed evangelistic notes. I have even had the privilege of sitting in an evangelistic meeting listening to my notes being run through the mind of one who had done so. But when men take another man's material without permission and use that material to deceive or to make personal profit, I am outraged. Their religion is zero. Sadly, "many voices" on the periphery of Adventism are in that category.

WHG

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