

*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

A 28th Statement -

A "Fig Leaf" to Divert Attention from the Nakedness the "Classic" Revealed?

Editor's Preface

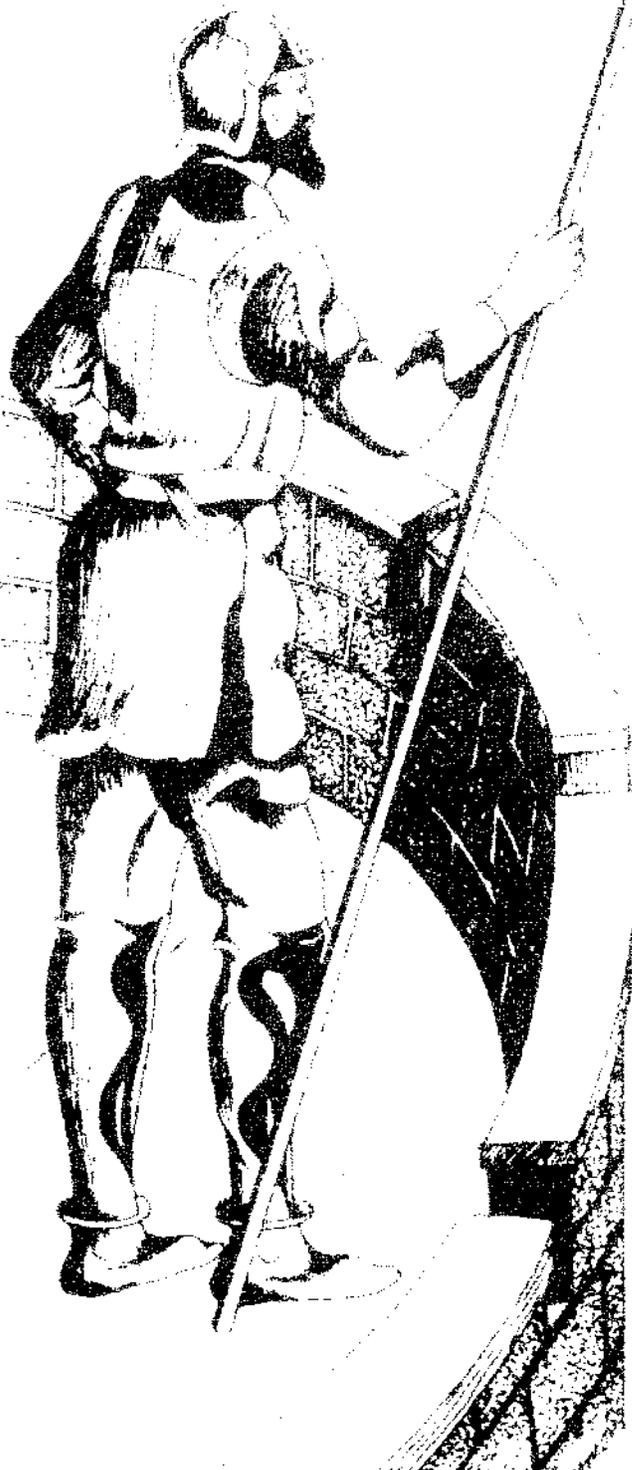
The 2004 Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee was presented with a proposal for a new Fundamental Belief. The committee voted "to submit to the world church for discussion the document entitled "The Fundamental Beliefs and 'Growing in Christ': Proposal for a new Fundamental Belief." with the understanding that it will be brought back to the 2004 Annual Council for final discussion before it is presented to the 2005 General Conference Session. (*Adventist Review*, June, 2004, p. 40) The document in full is found on pp 40-44 of the same *Review*. Comment on this document will be the basis for this issue of *WMN*. Citations will give the page numbering as found in the proposal presented to the Spring meeting.

Two questions of paramount importance were raised in the document itself. Based on what is perceived as an "obvious need driven by mission," the first question asked is "Do the Fundamental Beliefs as currently formulated already address this need, so that we do not need a new article?" Then the authors of the Document raise a second more important question - "Is the Holy Spirit leading His people to revisit the Fundamental Beliefs formulated in Dallas, 1980?"

The reprinting of the book, *Questions on Doctrine* with annotations and what they revealed, as well as what they did not discuss, which were open to challenge in the 1957 edition demand a clarification. Such a return to the 1980 Statement was ruled out by the General Conference president according to *ANN*. Where does that leave the Church?

*The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
be hour and the end!*

Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)



An Addition Proposed To the 1980 "Statement of Beliefs"

According to the Adventist News Network (ANN) of April 15, 2004, the Spring Council voted "unanimously" to present a draft of a new Statement of Belief to the Annual Council in October, and if approved, it would be presented to the 2005 World session in St. Louis, Missouri.

A study paper prepared by Michael L. Ryan, a general vice president and director of the Church's Global Mission initiative; and W. G. Johnsson, Editor of the *Adventist Review*; and Manuel Rodriguez, Director of the Biblical Research Institute, was presented to the Church leaders at the Spring gathering. This Study paper – "The Fundamental Beliefs and 'Growing in Christ:' Proposal for a new Fundamental Belief" – will be the basis of this issue of WWN.

In introducing this study document, Elder Jan Paulsen, president of the General Conference, emphasized that the proposed addition was "just that" and not a "revision" of the existing 27 Beliefs, for "if you do" he said, "there is virtually no end to what (would) happen."

The ANN release stated:

One purpose of the new statement is to address questions from those coming into the Adventist Christian faith from animist, spiritualist and other backgrounds in world religions. Another is to present concepts many believe are essential in a fulfilling Christian life including prayer, Bible study and service.

Rodriguez, director of the Biblical Research Institute, and a member of the three-man panel who worked on the proposed "additional statement," noted - "This new statement will sharpen the Adventist understanding of the nature of a constant growth in Christ. This is indispensable at a time when some members are more interested in theological discussion than in the spiritual impact of those doctrines in their daily lives."

It may well be that this comment by Dr. Rodriguez suggests the real reason for the introduction of the new proposed Statement at this time. The republication of *Questions on Doctrine* as an Adventist "Classic" with the annotations made by Knight re-opens the doctrinal controversy which engulfed the Church following the 1957 publication of the same book. Knight plainly admits that the "publication of *Questions on Doctrine* did more than any other single event in Adventist history to create what appear to be permanently warring factions within the denomination" (p. v., Annotated edition). Will its republication, as it was done, bring a "truce" or fuel the hostilities? Will a legislated new "statement of belief" produce peace? Can there be spiritual growth without "sound doctrine"? Can "mission" be accomplished without "the righteousness of Christ, which is pure, unadulterated truth" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 65)? It would appear that "doctrine" and its purpose needs to be reviewed, then we can approach the enunciation of doctrine so as to reflect the truth.

Doctrine – Truth as it is in Jesus

The word, "doctrine" is found 49x in the New Testament (KJV), being used to so translate three Greek words: 1) διδασκαλία (*didaskalia*) 19x; 2) διδαχη (*didache*) 29x; and 3) λογος (*logos*) 1x. The single translation of *logos* as doctrine is found in Hebrews 6:1 – "the doctrine of Christ" and is associated in context with *didache* in Hebrews 6:2 – "doctrines" of baptism, etc." – that which is being taught. Basically, "doctrine" is a teaching.

The first of the Greek words above – *didaskalia* – is used by Paul 17 of the 19x it occurs in the New Testament, and 15 of the 17x are found in the pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus. There he sets before his two protégés "sound doctrine" as a part of the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" (I Tim. 1:10-11) admonishing Titus to "speak the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). He commands Timothy: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Tim. 4:16). Here are the two elements involved in this

present issue confronting the Church leadership. There is a need to "take heed" to one's own spiritual life, - to prayer, to Bible study, and meditation on the Word of God in communion with the Holy Spirit. This the proposed Statement of Belief addresses. But there is the second element, doctrine, which was ruled out by the president of the General Conference limiting the discussion solely to the proposed Statement.

Why shouldn't the whole matter of doctrine be addressed? Whether or not one likes the direction the Annotated edition of *Questions on Doctrine* has taken, there is clearly the documented admission that the Adventist conferees lied to the Evangelicals, stating that the Church did not teach certain doctrines as alleged by the Evangelicals. Further, these falsifications were published under the imprimatur of the officers of the Church in the 1957 edition of *Questions on Doctrine*. Then when these compromises with the Evangelicals as well as positions arising from other ecumenical dialogues (See *So Much in Common*) were reflected in the 1980 Statements of Belief voted at Dallas either by omission or added statements, the leadership of the Church assured the Evangelicals that they still stood behind the positions taken in the 1957 edition of *Questions on Doctrine*.

This brings us face to face with the question as to what do we really believe? Were the founders of the Movement teachers of heresy? Have we faithfully followed the counsel that we should walk in the advancing light of truth? Have we sought honestly to advance "the sacred truth" committed to our trust to "a higher scale" than when first received?

The fact is self evident that the Community of Adventism, (and this includes the regular as well as the independent "voices") is in a state of doctrinal confusion. This problem will not be solved by merely voting a new article of belief recommending "growing up" in Christ, however worthy such an objective is.

The document presented to the Spring Council listed the various Statements of Belief held by the Church from the first in 1854 to the present

suggesting that they show "growth in understanding and formulation" (p. 4: line 38). Is this a true deduction? The list given with their "annotations" and documentation need to be considered.

Statements of Belief – 1854 – 1980

The Proposal listed nine statements culminating in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted at Dallas, Texas, in 1980. We shall consider some of them in greater detail than is given in the listing.

The earliest list of doctrines appeared in the masthead of the *Sabbath Review and Advent Herald* in five successive issues, August 15-December 19, 1954. (p. 5).

The masthead reads:

"Leading Doctrines Taught by the Review.

"The Bible, and the Bible alone, the rule of faith and duty.

"The Law of God, as taught in the Old and New Testament, unchangeable.

"The personal Advent of Christ and the resurrection of the Just before the Millenium.

"The earth restored to its Eden perfection and glory, the final inheritance of the Saints.

"Immortality alone through Christ, to be given to the Saints at the resurrection."

Noting the first of the five doctrines – "the Bible alone" as "the rule of faith and duty" -- let us ask ourselves candidly, Is this what the 1980 Statement teaches? There can be no question as to the force of the word "alone." It is used twice in the masthead in both the first and last statements. "Alone through Christ" in the last statement is clearly declaring, "no other source" than Jesus Christ. In the first statement, "the Bible alone" means simply there is no source of faith and duty other than the Bible. Now let us honestly consider #17 in the 1980 Statement. It reads that the writings of Ellen G. White "are a continuing and authoritative source of truth.

This position is further confirmed by the omission of the word, "only" in Statement #1, on "The Holy Scriptures." The word "only" is found in every previous statement of beliefs from 1872 to 1980, save one, declaring "the Holy Scriptures" to be "the *only* unerring rule of faith and practice" (emphasis supplied). The sole exception is the statement found in the "Official Directory" of the local Battle Creek Church in 1894.

The Committee of three, who drew up the Proposal, listed #17 of the Dallas Statement—"The Gift of Prophecy" - among the "completely new articles" that were added in "the major revisions of the Fundamental Beliefs" voted at Dallas in 1980. Yet they wrote without blinking - "In considering the new articles added in 1980, not one represented a new departure in doctrine" (p. 6). This is simply not true. Have these men not learned from the 1955-56 experience with the Evangelicals that lying is not appropriate but is rather contrary to "sound doctrine"? Or has lying become a part of the warp and woof of the Adventist hierarchy from administration on down through the Biblical Institute to the official church paper?

Our Church Fathers were very specific about the principle of "the Bible alone" as "the rule of faith and duty" in relationship to "spiritual gifts" when considering the writings of Ellen G. White. In the *Review and Herald*, October 16, 1855, James White, the editor, wrote:

"There is a class of persons who are determined to have it that the *Review* and its conductors make the views of Mrs. White a Test of doctrine and Christian fellowship. ...

"What has the *Review* to do with Mrs. W's views? The sentiments published in its columns are all drawn from the Scriptures. No writer of the *Review* has ever referred to them as authority on any point. The *Review* for five years has not published one of them. Its motto has been, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, the only rule of faith and duty." ...

"Again, How has the Editor of the *Review* regarded Visions, and the gifts of the Gospel Church for more than eight years past? His uniform statements in print on the subject will

satisfactorily answer this question. The following is from a tract he published in 1847:

"The Bible is a perfect and complete revelation. It is our only rule of faith and practice. But this is no reason why God may not show the past, present, and future fulfilment of his word, in these last days, by dreams and visions, according to Peter's testimony. True visions are given to lead us to God, and to his written word; but those that are given for a new rule of faith and practice separate from the Bible, cannot be from God, and should be rejected."

Again, four years since, he wrote on the Gifts of the Gospel Church, republished in the *Review* for Oct. 3d, 1854, from which is taken the following:

"Every Christian is therefore duty bound to take the Bible as the perfect rule of faith and duty. He should pray fervently to be aided by the Holy Spirit in searching the Scriptures for the whole truth, and for his whole duty. He is not at liberty to turn from them to learn his duty through any of the gifts. We say that the very moment he does, he places the gifts in a wrong place, and takes an extremely dangerous position."

This article was a part of the material published by the Ellen G. White Estate in 1961 on the *Witness of the Pioneers concerning the Spirit of Prophecy* and placed in a hard back cover. It was used as one of the text books by Arthur L. White for the class he taught at Andrews University on the subject. Those who formulated the new Statement #17 for the 1980 Dallas Statement of Beliefs were without excuse as to what the historic position was on "The Gift of Prophecy." Likewise, the three who formulated the "Proposal" which was presented to the Spring Council are without excuse for writing of the new articles added in 1980 - "not one represented a new departure in doctrine." It just isn't the truth. They lied. Wilfully? - that is not ours to judge. In ignorance? If so, they should not have been chosen to write the "Proposal." All of this adds weight to the assumption that more than just "Mission" [Ryan, AAN] motivated the suggested new statement of belief.

The 1946 General Conference session voted that "no revision of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs as it now appears in the *Manual* shall be

made at any time except at a General Conference session" (1946 *GC Bulletin* #8, p. 197). Then in 1950, the session added two sentences to the 1931 Statement #19. These read:

That the gift of the Spirit of prophecy is one of the identifying marks of the remnant church (Texts given). The church recognizes that this gift was manifest in the ministry of Ellen G. White (1950 *GC Bulletin*, p. 230).

This is the first time that Ellen G. White's name appeared in a Statement of Belief. It appeared again in the 1980 Statement. Does this indicate a changed thinking in regard to Ellen G. White, which was reflected in the pronouncement that her writings are "a continuing and authoritative source of truth"?

Prior to the General Conference action limiting any change in the Statement of Beliefs except at a General session, the 1941 Annual Council approved a uniform "Baptismal Vow" which was prefaced by a Statement of Beliefs. The Proposal prepared by Ryan, Rodriguez and Johnsson stated that these beliefs were "based on the 1931 statement prepared by F. M. Wilcox on behalf of a committee of four which in turn had been authorized by the General Conference Committee." This is open to question.

There is a distinct connection between the 1941 statement of beliefs and the baptismal vow. The baptismal candidate was to affirm among other affirmations that --

Knowing and understanding the fundamental Bible principles as taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is it your purpose, by God's grace, to order your life in harmony with these principles?

There are some distinct differences between these 1941 statements and the 1931 Statement drawn up by Wilcox. The 1931 Statement was the first statement to use the word "Trinity" in describing the Godhead. Statement #2 reads - "That the Godhead, or Trinity, consists... etc." The Baptismal delineation of doctrines to be affirmed by candidates eliminated the word, "Trinity," and presented a Tri-Theistic concept. Further, while the 1931 Wilcox statement defined the doctrine of the Incarnation - "He [Christ] took upon Himself the nature of the

human family, lived on earth as a man" - the Baptismal affirmation was silent. Does this reflect a changing view on the Incarnation in the fourth decade of the 20th Century which by its close permitted the revision of *Bible Readings* in 1949?

In the Proposal submitted by the Committee of Three - Ryan, Johnsson, and Rodriguez - two questions were asked. Prefacing these two questions was a paragraph that requires comment. It reads:

Any new article will not introduce new theology. As in the formulation of the Fundamental Beliefs voted in 1980 the new material will be merely an articulation of what we already believe as Seventh-day Adventists. Any addition to the Fundamental Beliefs will require widespread input, with dissemination well in advance of the 2005 General Conference Session. The whole church must "own" the Fundamental Beliefs (p. 7).

Let us break this paragraph down sentence by sentence: "Any new article of belief will not introduce new theology." Is there no such thing as "new light"? What does the counsel - "The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light" (*R&H*, March 25, 1890) - mean? What does the "duty" of developing the light of present truth on a higher scale that it has hitherto been done require? Perhaps not a "new" article, but surely nothing less than a "revised" article!

The second sentence that the 1980 Statement was merely an articulation of what was already believed by Seventh-day Adventists is simply not true, unless it is confessing that the Church had already departed from what it once did believe. To the documentation given above on how the Spirit of Prophecy was viewed in the 1980 Statement compared with the original position prior to 1915 could be added similar documentation on the doctrine of the Godhead. The last two sentences are correct, the last one is fundamental.

Then the question is asked - "Given the obvious need driven by mission, the question now becomes: Do the Fundamental Beliefs as

currently formulated already address this need, so that we do not need a new article?" The next two pages of the Proposal are devoted to showing where in the Dallas Statement similar concepts are already expressed which make the proposed new Statement merely a summary or amplification of what was already voted in 1980.

The second question is of utmost consequence. After asking the first, the second reads:

Back of that question is a more important one: Is the Holy Spirit leading His people today to revisit the Fundamental Beliefs formulated in Dallas, 1980?

With the republication of *Questions on Doctrine* with the annotations by Knight, the answer is a resounding, YES! With admission of lying to the Evangelicals on the doctrine of the Incarnation, we need to state the truth clearly in regard to "the most marvelous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven – the incarnation of the Son of God" (Ms. 76, 1903). We need to state clearly as to whether the Melvill position is really "the orthodox position" or not. Further, the doctrine of the Atonement, which goes to the very heart of Adventism, needs to be very plainly stated and defined and not left in confusion.

The report from the Adventist News Network indicates that the present Church administration is not willing to face up to the question. Instead, there is placed the "fig-leaf" statement to cover the nakedness revealed in the release of the Adventist "Classic." There is no substitute for truth, pure and unadulterated.

The uniform "Baptismal Vow" voted by the 1941 Annual Council first appeared in the 1942 *Church Manual*, pp. 86-87. This was prefaced by a summary of 27 Fundamental Beliefs (pp. 81-86), which with the Vow was placed in a Certificate of Baptism to be filled out and given to each candidate being baptized. Specific instruction was given to any evangelist and/or minister in regard to his duty in the preparation of the candidate for baptism. It read:

A minister should not present any candidate for baptism and church membership until he can thoroughly satisfy the church by a public examination of the candidate that he has been well instructed and is ready for such a step. His work is not completed until he has so thoroughly instructed all candidates that they are familiar with all points of the faith, and are prepared to assume the responsibility of church membership (p. 80).

This 1942 *Church Manual* has special meaning to me, for that was the year that I entered the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Texico Conference and became a part of an evangelistic endeavour at Fields, New Mexico. My problem is that the 27 Fundamental Beliefs which prefaced the "Baptismal Vow" in 1942 and the 27 Fundamental Statements voted at Dallas, Texas, in 1980 do not say the same thing. Not only do they not say the same thing, but the 1980 Statement says things which the 1942 Statement does not say. To illustrate, let us contrast what each says in regard to the High Priestly Ministry of Christ. The 1942 statement reads:

8. Upon His ascension, Christ began His ministry as High Priest in the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, which sanctuary is the antitype of the earthly tabernacle of the former dispensation. As in the type, a work of investigative judgment began as Christ entered the second phase of His ministry, in the most holy place, foreshadowed in the earthly service by the Day of Atonement. This work of the investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary began in 1844, at the close of the 2300 years, and will end with the close of probation (p. 82).

The much wordier 1980 Statement reflects the concepts of the Atonement as stated in *Questions on Doctrine* (pp. 349-355, 381, 390). It reads:

There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is a part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelli-

gences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent (1981 *Church Manual, revised*, pp. 43, 44).

(Of interest, in this revised 1981 edition, there is also contained as an Appendix "the Outline of Doctrinal Beliefs" as found in the 1942 edition with the notation - "This summary of doctrinal beliefs is especially prepared for the instruction of candidates for baptism (See page 60)."

Turning to page 60, this paragraph is found:

Prospective members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, before baptism or acceptance on profession of faith, should be carefully instructed from the Scriptures in the fundamental beliefs of the church as presented in chapter 2 (pp. 31-46) of this *Manual* [The 1980 Dallas Statement]. In order to assist evangelists, pastors, and others in giving such instruction and making it Scripture-based and practical, a specially prepared outline appears as an appendix on pages 288-294 of this *Manual* [The 1941 Annual Council Statement].

Can there be any question that there needs to be a revisiting of "the Fundamental Beliefs formulated in Dallas, 1980," if for no other reason than to clarify the confusion as to which 27 Statements are to be the norm. [In the Appendix to the 1981 *Manual*, the 1941 Annual Council Statement number 28 rather than 27 as given in the 1942 *Manual*. There has been added a #15, a statement on Marriage and Family]. Confusion reigns supreme, and cannot be rectified without a full re-visitation to Dallas, 1980. Either the 1941 Annual Council statement needs to be set aside, or the 1980 Dallas statement be revised and corrected.

If the 1941 Annual Council Statement is made void, then did I present "cunningly devised fables" when I presented the sanctuary truth as stated in my evangelistic campaigns? Were the dedicated Bible teachers at Union College at the time, 1938-42, teaching heresy? It is doubtful that the current Bible faculty are teaching the

1941 position. Did the retired credentialed Bible Worker who gave my mother and me 22 Bible studies that introduced us to Adventism teach us error? These are not hypothetical questions, but questions of life and death issues. The republication of *Questions on Doctrine* revisits the 1955-56 SDA Evangelical Conferences. A new Statement of Belief cannot divert the attention from the real issue. Was the Church in Council right or wrong in 1941? Was the leadership of the Church in 1957 right or wrong? Where does it stand today? Is it going to use a "fig leaf" or put on the robe of Christ's righteousness which is pure unadulterated truth?

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The Word of God - the truth - is the channel through which the Lord manifests His Spirit and power.

Acts of the Apostles, p. 520

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“Sit thou at my right hand”

Dominating page 5 of the June 9th issue of *L'osservatore Romano* is a picture of Pope John Paul II seated in the Vatican's Clementine Hall with President George W. Bush at his right hand.

In his address to the President, the Pope lauded the “20 years in which the Holy See and the United States have enjoyed formal diplomatic relations established in 1984 under President Reagan.” He said that “these relations have promoted mutual understanding on great issues of common interest and practical cooperation in different areas.” Then he outlined the foreign policy he wanted the President to pursue.

The president also addressed the pope calling him “a hero of our time.” He stated:

A devoted servant of God, His holiness Pope John Paul II has championed the cause of the poor, the weak, the hungry and the outcast. He has defended the unique dignity of every life, and the goodness of all life. Through his faith and moral conviction, he has given courage to others to “not to be afraid” in overcoming injustice and oppression. His principled stand for peace and freedom has inspired millions and helped topple communism and tyranny.

The United States honors this son of Poland who became Bishop of Rome, and hero of our time.

Bush presented the Pope with the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his “continuous efforts in sustaining peace and justice throughout the world.” To this the Pope replied:

I am grateful, Mr. President, for this thoughtful gesture. May the desire for freedom, peace and a more humane world symbolized by this medal inspire men and women of good will in every time and place.

God bless America!