

"Watchman, what of the night?"

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

Eze. 7:6 (Moffan)

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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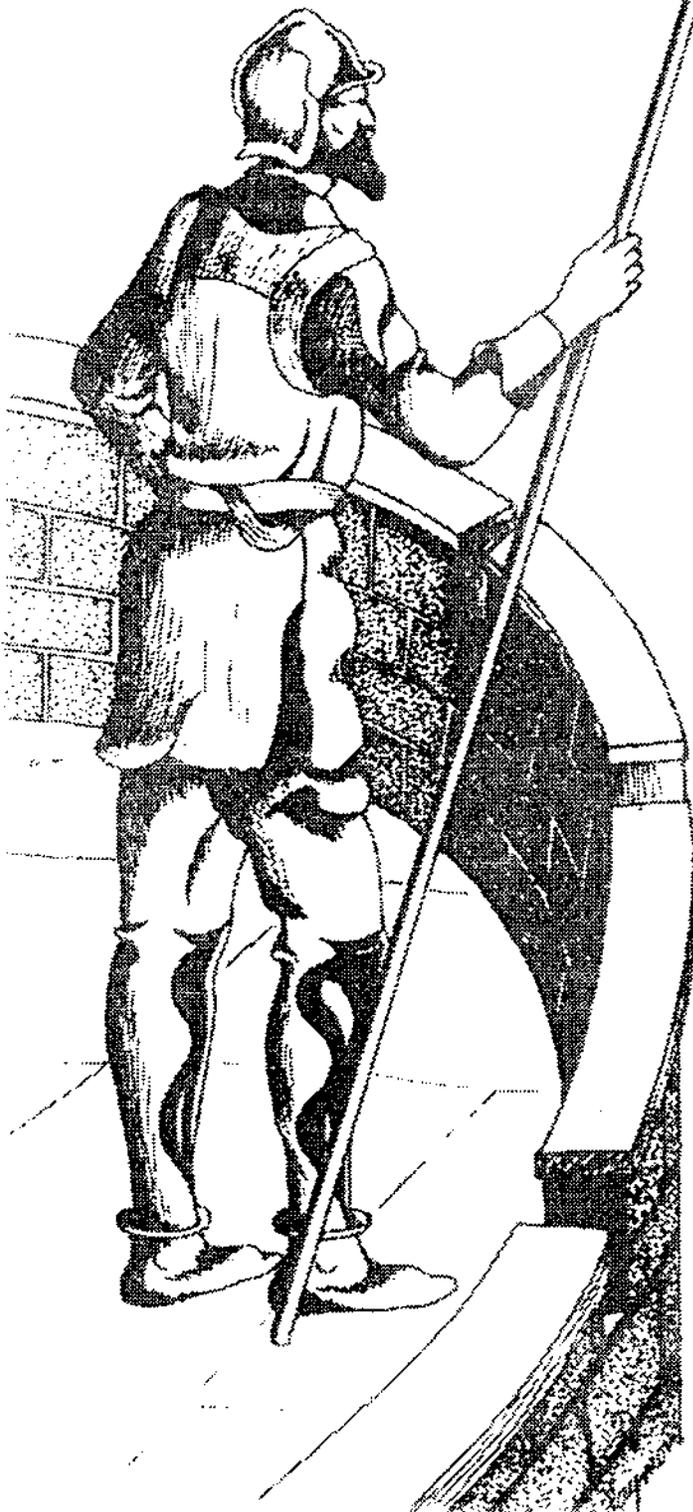
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Editor's Preface

Since publishing a Special Issue in October on the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches, numerous news releases have added to the information available as well as insightful comments. Because of this additional information, we included this subject in the category of "Unfinished Business" even though we had reported on it at length. Then there is still more that we could have included had space permitted. Pope John Paul II in his Sunday Angelus address made reference to the signing that day in Augsburg, Germany. As the news releases continued to come, we did add a "Postscript" to this issue noting in particular the fact that the largest single Lutheran Church, the Missouri Synod did not sign the Declaration and what they said about the document. This Lutheran Church is not a part of the Lutheran World Federation with which Rome was in dialogue over justification.

The Doctrine of Justification, as well as the other topics we have noted under "Unfinished Business," will constitute the outline of subjects which we plan to review for our readers during the year 2000. We are also sure that with the Pope declaring this year a Jubilee Year, there will be many activities and events which will need to be included in each issue of WVN as space permits.

During this past year we graciously received from a reader of WVN two cassette tapes which recorded Alma E. McKibbin's recall of her memories of Ellen G. White. In the course of the interview, this pioneer Adventist educator and textbook writer, made an observation stating, "There was a famous normal school in the State of Kansas that had inscribed on the front of the building - "Review, and then Review again, and Review all that you've Reviewed." Her comment to this was - "It is a law of the human mind that we need review. We need drill; we need truth to be repeated." This will be our objective for the year 2000. We will review basics which elucidate the plan of salvation, such as the sanctuary teaching, with special emphasis on the final atonement.



Unfinished Business

There were several items which we had hoped to discuss in the columns of WVN during the past year but which lack of space prevented. Some of these items are further developments of topics which we did discuss. We will attempt in this issue to note many of them, perhaps all of the major ones.

A History of a Movement

Long time Editor of Publications for the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, Alfons Balbach, accepted a responsibility several years ago to begin gathering data for a history of the Movement. This monumental task was completed last year and published as a 664 page tome - The History of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. The historical data, names and places, will have to pass the scrutiny of those who have been directly involved in its activities from its inception in 1925.

Knowing Elder Balbach, and having visited with him on several occasions, I was deeply interested in what he wrote about certain details of their history. These I read carefully, and scanned the remainder of the book. I have written to him about certain items which are open to serious question, and which to date (11/25/99), I have received no reply.

The major premise upon which this history is based is stated in its first paragraph which reads:

As the great reformation carried on by Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and others in the sixteenth century actually had its beginning several centuries earlier, so the prophesied Reform Movement among Seventh Day Adventists, in existence today, had its embryonic beginning in 1888, when the Lord sent a special message to His people. (p. 1)

This is a pure assumption without documentation. It is doubtful that a single minister or layperson who assembled at Gotha, Germany, in 1925 to organize the Reform Movement was knowledgeable about 1888, or had even heard of it. The first attempt to analyze the experience of 1888 was in 1926 with the release of a commissioned book by A. G. Daniels - Christ Our Righteousness.

It is true that Ellen G. White called for reform to take place within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in connection with the 1888 experience. She wrote:

I was confirmed in all that I had stated in Minneapolis, that a reformation must go through the churches. Reforms must be made, for spiritual weakness and blindness were upon the people who had been blessed with great light and precious opportunities and privileges. (1888 Materials, Vol. 1, p. 356)

The issue which was on the minds of those who assembled in Gotha, Germany, in 1925 was not the 1888 Message of Righteousness by Faith, but rather the stand which had been taken in regard to military duty, and Sabbath observance in time of war by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Europe. Balbach in his history of the Reform Movement documents well that factor in the fifth chapter - "1914-1918 - The Great Crisis." There is no question from the facts which cannot be disputed that the brethren who assembled at Gotha, Germany, had a justifiable complaint. But to seek to interpret that complaint in terms of 1888 and the issue of righteousness by faith is an attempt to rewrite history and clothe the Reform Movement in garments into which are woven many threads of human reasoning.

It is the claim of the Reform Movement that they are the successor Movement to the Advent Movement which rose out of the 1844 experience. That movement, when organized as the Seventh-day Adventist Church, held to certain specific articles of faith which were stated in a 1872 Statement of Beliefs. However, the Principles of Faith which the Reform Movement adopted at Gotha, Germany, in 1925 do not reflect the 1872 Statement. In my conversations with Elder Balbach, I presented this paradox to him. He assured me that a committee would have to take care of that problem. In referring everything to a committee, they do in this aspect reflect the "mother" church. Evidently they have perfected the committee concept of church governance to such an extent that one brother who had been a second generation minister in the Reform Movement had a card printed which read - "GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE DID NOT SEND A COMMITTEE."

In his *History of the Reform Movement*, Balbach addresses this paradox to which I had called his attention. He writes:

Our delegates in 1925 did not have the Fundamental Principles of SDA's published in 1872, but they had the book Bible Readings for the Home Circle, which was based on that publication of 1872. They did not believe in establishing a creed but, for the sake of ensuring uniformity in teaching and practice, they deemed it necessary to adopt a set of principles based on the materials available to them from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They did their best, according to their understanding. This is how our humble booklet Principles of Faith came into existence. (p. 85)

There are two points of interest here: 1) The very purpose of their book - to ensure "uniformity" - is the very opposite of the 1872 Statement's preface. The preface read -

We do not put this forth as having any authority with our people, nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them.

To set forth a statement of beliefs with the avowed purpose of "ensuring uniformity in teaching and practice" as claimed for their *Principles of Faith* is to formulate a creed. Thus the explanation given by Elder Balbach only compounds the paradox.

2) If the *Principles of Faith* were based on Bible Readings, then why is it at variance with the teachings of that book? There are teachings in the Reform Statement which are contradictory to, and some which cannot be found in Bible Readings. In fact a source which I checked stated unequivocally that those in attendance at Gotha did not have the book as alleged by Balbach.

The problem could be settled quickly. Since they do have access now to both the 1872 Statements and 1915 edition of Bible Readings, why do they not revise their *Principles of Faith* so as to harmonize. But this places them in a very difficult situation, or so they assume. The Movement which began in Gotha is now split into two groups. If either one alters so much as the dot of an "i" or the crossing of a "t", the other would charge heresy and apostasy.

So the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement abides in tradition and error, yet believing themselves to be the "other angel" of Revelation 18.

The Signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

In the second special issue of WWN for 1999, we discussed what was then to be the forthcoming signing in Augsburg, Germany, on October 31 of the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification." It did occur. As Cardinal Edward Cassidy signed the document on behalf of more than a billion Roman Catholics, he declared - "In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life."

"The agreement is significant beyond the dispute over the doctrine that it supposedly resolved. It has deep implications for future relations among Catholics and Protestants." Many theologians and church leaders, both Lutheran and Roman Catholic, "said this accord gives added promise to the ideal their denominations champion of full communion, or merger, between the churches. ... Now, as the Augsburg accord suggests, the value of separate denominations is under question." (Washington Post Nov. 1, 1999, p. A01).

H. George Anderson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, one of the signers and negotiators of the accord declared, "This is a critical breakthrough: It's the first major step toward reconciliation between the two churches since the Reformation. Now we understand we have creeds in common, and that removes the taint of heresy from both sides." (ibid.)

"This document appears to be saying that the doctrine that Luther thought was central to the Reformation, and which led him to undertake it, is not one on which there are serious enough differences between Catholics and Lutherans to justify the division of the church" was the opinion of Joseph Komonchak, professor of theology at the Catholic University in Washington, DC. According to the press release, "the agreement declares, in effect, that it was all a misunderstanding." (ibid.)

The Lutheran and Catholic negotiators have been involved in 30 years of discussion in formulating this joint declaration concerning the doctrine of justification. While "the Lutherans have believed that faith alone, an acceptance of God renewed every day, ensures eternal salvation," and while "the Catholic Church has long taught that salvation comes from the sum total of faith and good works," it is perceived that in the signing of the accord, "there are no winners and losers." Augsburg Bishop Viktor Josef Dammertz observed, "We are Christians of different backgrounds but we are all on the same path seeking the truth of God."

The signing service itself sought to emphasize that the participants were on "the same path." It began with "a penitential service in the Augsburg Roman Catholic cathedral." There Pastor Ernst Offner, regional dean of Augsburg and Schwaben presented one of the welcoming addresses before the walk to the Church of St. Anne where the signing took place. Speaking on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, he explained:

We shall now get started on the road literally. In this worship service we want to walk from one church to the other. ... We deliberately walk in the street, publicly, because we are convinced that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the message of justification of the sinner, is relevant and seeks to become public. We believe this together. We do this together. (Origins, Vol. 29, #22, p. 341)

In his remarks, Pastor Offner declared that the worship service in the Cathedral "makes clear that the road continues. The will of Jesus is 'that they all be one.' The signing ceremony is not an end point but a colon." He indicated that "Eucharistic sharing remains our goal; first of all the mutual invitation to the Lord's table and the mutual recognition to this being (the one) church of Jesus Christ." All this deepens our faith which, as we officially confirm today, is common in its central elements." He recalled the question asked by Pope John Paul II in a visit to Augsburg in 1987, in that same cathedral - "Why should we have separate paths in those areas where we can already walk together?" (ibid., p. 343)

Not alone in Augsburg, Germany, was there "unity meetings" between Lutherans and Roman Catho-

lics, but in cities of the United States and Canada joint services were conducted. In Baltimore, Maryland, Cardinal William Keeler commented - "Today marks a historic landmark. In addition to agreeing on a key teaching of our faith given us in Jesus Christ, our two churches have modelled a style of joint study in which there are no winners or losers, no compromises, (but rather) mutual enrichment." He, with Bishop George Paul Mocko of the Maryland-Delaware Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran, nailed copies of the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" to the doors of their respective churches in Baltimore and held a brief prayer service at each church.

In New England, the eleven Roman bishops headed by Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston signed a pastoral letter with Bishop Robert Isaksen of the New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Its final paragraph reads:

As we rejoice together in what takes place in Augsburg, we are mindful that much theological work has yet to be accomplished as we proceed toward the goal of full unity for which our Lord fervently prayed. Indeed, we all need to be attentive that our dialogue with other Christians continue undiminished until this objective is achieved. Pray with us that we may all be open to the work of the Spirit, who often moves among us more quickly than we plan. (ibid., p. 349)

While this euphoria was evidenced on the ecclesiastical level, a well known Jesuit theologian looked at the joint declaration from an analytical perspective. In a lecture given at Fordham University in October, Avery Dulles, notes the declaration as "Two Languages of Salvation." This cannot be, and thus his analysis demands a critical review. He succinctly stated the heart of the issue involved in the first paragraph of an essay adapted from the lecture. It reads:

One of the central themes of the New Testament, if not the central theme, is the way to obtain salvation. To be on the right road is, in New Testament terminology, to be justified. The corollary is that unless we are justified we are unrighteous and are on the road to perdition. In other words, justification, as a right relationship with God, is a matter of eternal life or death. If it is not important, nothing is. (First Things, Dec. 1999, p. 25)

Stating that "according to Christian faith, justification is a gift of God, who grants it through His Son and Holy Spirit;" however, Dulles affirms that "fifteen hundred years of intense reflection have left us with a number of questions." He then lists four questions:

1) "Is justification the action of God alone, or do we who receive it cooperate by our response to God's offer of grace?" 2) "Does God, when He justifies us, simply impute to us the merits of Christ, or does He transform us and make us intrinsically righteous?" 3) "Do we receive justification by faith alone, or only by a faith enlivened by love and fruitful in good works?" 4) "Is the reward of heavenly life a free gift of God to believers, or do they merit it by their faithfulness and good works?" (ibid.)

Dulles then proceeded to place the whole issue in the historical setting of the past and present at Augsburg, Germany. He declared that Luther "came up with answers to all these questions based primarily on his study of Paul." At the Diet at Augsburg in 1530, the Emperor Charles V ordered the Lutherans to explain their position. This resulted in the Augsburg Confession prepared by Melancthon and approved by Luther. However, a group of Roman theologians responded to the Confession and faulted it, "especially for its teaching on merit." The schism in Western Christianity was finalized. On October 31, 1999, in the same German city by the signing of the "Joint Declaration," the chasm has been supposedly bridged; there are "two languages of salvation." Indeed, there are two languages which claim to be; one the Pauline gospel, and the other the Tridentine doctrine of Rome.

Dulles fingered the key factor in this controversy which has plagued the Christian Church from its first Council to the present. It is at the core of the issue which convulsed the Adventist Church in 1888, and is still in evidence today. That factor is to be found in the single word - "merit." How do I "merit" salvation? Who generates or generated the "merit"?

This past Fall, we received copies of two publications with Week of Prayer readings in each. Both, one published under the claim of "Historic Adventism," and the other by the Reform Movement, echoed the Tridentine doctrine of Rome. We are nearing the end of all things, and this issue needs to be settled, for as Dulles pointed out, it "is a matter

of eternal life or death." It must take high priority for the year 2000. In Adventist terminology, it involves the final atonement, and the final atonement can only be correctly understood in the light of the sanctuary truth.

The Doctrine of God

In April of last year the Adventist Review published an article by Dr. Jerry A. Moon, of the Church History Department of the Theological Seminary at Andrews University. It asked a question as to whether the change in the concept of the Doctrine of God from early semi-Arianism to the adoption of the Nicene Creed in the 1980 Statement of Beliefs was "Heresy or Hopeful Sign?" While "the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18), to accept a concept of God which was formulated by the same apostasy which fostered Sunday in the place of the Sabbath does raise the question of the possibility of heresy.

First a word about the author. Jerry Moon received his doctorate from Andrews University. His dissertation was written under a committee chaired by Dr. George R. Knight with whom he is now associated in teaching. The dissertation was on W. C. White and Ellen G. White which investigated "The Relationship Between the Prophet and Her Son." In reading this dissertation it came through to me as a "whitewash" of "Willie." Thus Moon is now standing in line with the Church apologists writing slanted books which was begun by Froom, in his Movement of Destiny, and followed by Knight in his From 1888 to Apostasy. His article in the Review is no exception.

In this article, Moon seeks to separate the early teachings of Ellen G. White from the position held by other fellow associates. He wrote:

Adventist pioneers who questioned the doctrine of the Trinity included the most influential writers among them, with one major exception - Ellen White. Whatever may have been Ellen White's original beliefs, she never expressed anti-Trinitarian views in her writings, ... (April 22, 1999, p. 10)

In one of her earliest publications - Spiritual Gifts,

Vol 1, p. 17, one can read:

The Lord has shown me that Satan was once an honored angel in heaven, next to Jesus Christ.

This poses some questions for Dr. Moon. Did Ellen White teach a "trinity" which included Satan? Or was the order of the Trinity - The Father, Holy Spirit, and Son, an order not found in the New Testament, or ever used in any formulation of the Creeds of Christendom? The New Testament does have an order at variance from the usual formulation. Paul put the order - the Lord Jesus Christ, God, and Holy Spirit. (II Cor. 13:14)

In his article, Dr. Moon relies heavily on the statement found in *The Desire of Ages* which described the life possessed by the Word - "In Christ is life, original, unborrowed, underived." (p. 530) He invokes the experience of M. L. Andreasen who first questioned whether Ellen White had actually written this, but was finally led to write - "As I checked up, I found that they were Sister White's own expressions." This book, Moon concludes, "created a paradigm shift that couldn't be reversed."

When certain positions are taken, then other questions are raised, such as the death of Jesus on Calvary. This must be sorted out to the extent allowed by divine revelation, and where the curtain is drawn, we must be content to wait further revelation in the life to come.

As was to be expected, the present advocates of the anti-Trinitarian position responded through their "official" publication. *Old Paths* (July, 1999). Fourteen of the sixteen-page publication are devoted to the reply. The basic question raised in this response by their "apologist," Lynnford Beachy, is - Did Ellen White write all that has been published under her name as a "messenger of the Lord"? This is no mean question, but rather strikes at the very authority underlying her publications. Honesty demands that we forthrightly face up to this charge. Ultimately, we will have to come to the final court of appeal - the Bible - and determine just what is revealed there concerning God.

Two questions will need to be answered: 1) Was the Deity of Christ, eternal, or was it derived? and 2) the Holy Spirit, a Person, or an influence?

Postscript

As we were concluding the above section of this issue, we received the current release of the *Ecumenical News International (ENI) Bulletin*. Its final pages were devoted to the "Joint Declaration on Justification." Interestingly, this ecumenical news bulletin published by the World Council of Churches is not only sponsored by the Council, but also by the Lutheran World Federation as well as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Conference of European churches.

Two marked paragraphs devoted to the Joint Declaration read:

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS), based in the United States and the world's biggest Lutheran Church, though not a member of the LWF, has rejected the joint declaration as "an out-and-out concession by the Lutherans" to the Roman Catholic Church. A statement issued by the office of Dr. A. L. Barry, president of LCMS, described the joint declaration as a "surrender of the most important truth taught in God's Word. It represents a clear, stunning departure from the Reformation and thus contrary to what it means to be a Lutheran Christian."

According to the LCMS statement, the joint declaration is "an ambiguous statement whose careful wording makes possible for the Pope's representatives to sign it without changing, retracting or correcting anything that has been taught by the Roman Catholic Church since the time of the Council of Trent in the 16th century. ... (It) does not represent a change in the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. It does nothing to repudiate the doctrinal formulations put forth by the Council of Trent." (*Bulletin-99-0426*, pp. 34-35)

This Bulletin also reports on a news conference held by Cardinal Edward Cassidy in Augsburg prior to the signing of the Joint Declaration. He was asked by a reporter if there was anything in the official common statement contrary to the Council of Trent? He responded - "Absolutely not, otherwise how could we sign it? We cannot do something contrary to an ecumenical council. There's nothing there that the Council of Trent condemns" Cassidy indicated that the conferees had looked at today's

Catholic and Lutheran teachings and had found nothing in contemporary teaching that was contrary to the "two traditional strands" of the Council of Trent and the Lutheran confessions. (ibid., p. 36)

Let's Talk It Over

The "Unfinished Business" give us the agenda for this new year's topics and analysis. There can be no question but that "Justification" must be placed at the top of the list of such studies, for as the Jesuit professor rightly observed, "If it is not important, nothing is." Further, the subject of justification, its meaning and significance, has been a source of controversy within Adventism since 1888, and there are no signs that it has been settled. As both the Jesuit theologian suggested and Cassidy declared at Augsburg, there are "two traditional strands" on Justification, that stated by the Council of Trent (the Tridentine), and that which Martin Luther sought to revive from the Pauline Epistles. One or the other of these two antithetical positions are to be found in the teachings of "voices" on the periphery of Adventism today. Simplified, it is the difference between two questions: 1) Are we saved by faith alone? or 2) Are we saved by faith plus works? In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote - "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:28). At the first Christian Council in Jerusalem there were those in attendance who held "that it was needful to circumcise them (Gentiles), and to command them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). In the final decision of the Council, the full implication of this question was left unresolved. The two concepts of how men are saved continued.

Centuries later, Luther revived the Pauline position, and the Reformation followed. The Council of Trent responded and resolved the question for the Roman Catholic. The Council decreed - "If anyone saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified: let him be anathema." (Canon XII on Justification)

Another issue discussed in "Unfinished Business" was the Doctrine of God. It, too, involves basic concepts. Who really was Jesus Christ? Is the Father-Son relationship limited to the Incarnation alone? If not, how do we relate this perception to the pre-incarnate Godhead? Dare we omit considering this relationship and

the post Calvary experience? But then a larger question was interjected. In replying to the article in the Adventist Review, Beachy, for Smyrna Gospel Ministries, raised the question as to who wrote The Desire of Ages so as to avoid the impact of what was written concerning the pre-incarnate and incarnate Christ. Is he thus advocating a "cafeteria" hermeneutic in the study of the Writings?

The newly written history of the Adventist Reform Movement, making the assumptions that it does, needs to be clarified. On the official letterhead of the Church is found this assertion - "Founded Upon the Advent Message of 1844." The history tome declares that its embryonic beginning was in the 1888 message. Yet their statement of beliefs formulated in Gotha, Germany, in 1925, is divergent from the early position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which developed from the Millerite Movement of 1844, as well as the Message brought by Jones and Waggoner in 1888. Where then does this leave the Reform Movement? Simply a peripheral movement that began in 1925.

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May I suggest thoughtful meditation of these words of Jesus as the year 2000 progresses:

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh. ... Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." (Mark 13:35-36)

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. ... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Matt. 24:42, 44)

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"Watchman, What of the Night?" is published monthly by the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Mississippi, Inc., P. O. Box 69, Ozone, AR 72854, USA.

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