



*"Watchman,
what of the night?"*

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

REPRESENTATIVES OF SABBATH KEEPING GROUPS MEET

"Unite Now in Christ Only" -

Objective

Early this summer a letter was received at the Foundation office announcing a conference of various Sabbath-keeping groups for the purpose of exploring avenues whereby their witness to the Sabbath might be in unity. The sponsoring organization - UNICO - Unite Now in Christ Only - is headed by a former Seventh-day Adventist minister, Elder M. L. Bartholomew, who calls himself "Brother Bart." Invitations were extended to all Sabbath-keeping churches to send representatives. On the recommendation of the leader of one of the associations, I received a personal invitation, and was urged to attend.

Consideration was given to this request, and inasmuch as the counsel reads - "To those who reverence His holy day, the Sabbath is a sign that God recognizes them as His chosen people." (6T:350) - I decided to attend as an observer. It was clear that here was an ecumenical thrust among Sabbath keepers to join together toward a common goal with the basis in Christ according to the name of the organization. The meeting was held at Camp Soaring Hawk near Purdy, Missouri, August 27 - 31.

Representatives came from the various segments of the Church God (7th Day); a min-

ister who had been put out of the Radio Church of God served as Secretary of the Conference. A minister from one of the Assemblies of Yahvah was present. The SDA Reform Movement was represented by Elder John Baer and his son-in-law, Dr. R. Kramer. The leader of the Davidian SDA Church, Elder M. J. Bingham, and a number of its members from Bashan Hill attended the Sabbath services and the Sunday discussion periods. A group from Waco, Texas, headed by its Bishop, Lois Roden, was also in attendance. An invitation had also been sent to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but none appeared. A personal invitation was given to Elder George Vandeman to come because of his friendship with Brother Bart over the years. Various Black groups came from as far away as Toronto, Ontario; also a pastor from a large assembly in Nashville, Tennessee.

A very democratic process was used to select the speakers for the Sabbath, and to structure the Agenda. All were urged to be at the Camp site by 9:30 Friday morning for the organizational meeting. At this meeting the speakers for the Sabbath services were selected by recommendation and vote of those present. The formal opening of this ecumenical conference began with the Friday evening service conducted by the Secretary of the Conference. Two services were held on Sabbath morning, one at 9:30, and the second one at 11 a.m. The message at the latter service was given

by Elder Paul Wilds of the Pilgrim Acres Assembly of Yahvah. It was a practical message on the Christian home, and a ringing denunciation of sexual deviations which mark this final age like the days of Lot in Sodom. Apart from his transliteration of the Hebrew name for Lord, and Jesus, one would think that he was hearing an old-line Seventh-day Adventist sermon of yesteryears. The evening service by Elder Ross from Nashville carried many homely and down-to-earth comments on the proper mode of dress and conduct for the Christian, both men and women. However, there was a wide contrast between what was said from the pulpit on dress, and the dress of many present; besides the wide contrast of dress by the various groups present. On Sabbath, the women from the Toronto-based Black group wore white including either hats or turban-like head coverings. Others wore a thin lace veil on their heads - and this was at all services as well as the Sabbath - and were otherwise modestly attired, but not extreme. Another segment came to the Sabbath services in form-fitting slacks, and tight sweaters. Jewelry was also much in evidence.

The actual observance of the Sabbath - except for a few deviations which the leadership of UNICO did not approve - was in keeping with the highest standards for the observance of God's Holy Day. Food was prepared on Friday, and was composed mostly of salads. However, following the last meeting on Saturday night - and this was past 9:30 p.m. - a large spread of hamburgers on buns, French fries, and other vegetables, was set out in the dining room. I was in the dining hall visiting with various folk, and was surprised at the number who ate heartily at such a late hour including the representatives of the SDA Reform Movement. Again the contrast between what is and was said in the pulpit, and the actual practice remains vividly distinct.

On Sabbath afternoon an ordination was conducted for two young men. Brother Bart urged all ministers present to take part in the laying on of hands so that the ordination would be across denominational lines. (I sat this one out.) A baptism followed conducted by a father-son team. (The son was one of the ones who had been ordained, and two of the candidates for

the baptism had been studied with by family members of this team.) The invocation pronounced over the candidates was a bit different from the formula, one is used to hearing at Seventh-day Adventist services - the baptism being done in the name of Jesus. Returning to the assembly hall there was a laying-on-of-hands for the reception of the Holy Spirit. This was quite a scene inasmuch as the ones who had just been baptized appeared up in front dressed in either short shorts, or form fitting slacks. (Upon inquiry, I found that the wearing of shorts was an error in instruction, and the couple had not been fully informed as to the dress code, thus their wardrobe was lacking in Sabbath attire. It should be said in support of this, that the folk who had studied with them were themselves modestly clothed for the Sabbath services.)

The music was definitely slanted to what is termed "Pentecostal" in nature, not in the songs selected, but in what accompanied them - hand raising, shouting of "glory," "alleluia," and/or "praise the Lord." Some of these exclamations were in keeping with the way one would say, "Amen." Also on occasion there was feet stomping and hand clapping to the music. During the song service prior to the 9:30 Sabbath morning service, the group from Toronto started shouting and swaying with their hands raised. I thought for a while that we were in for a tongues demonstration. I prayed earnestly. Soon the emotion subsided, and a calm returned to the assembly. All of this emotional response was encouraged by the song leader himself. It appeared as a purposeful effort to generate the Spirit.

The same democratic process by which the speakers were selected for the Sabbath services was also used in selecting topics for the discussion sessions. A procedure was suggested and adopted which allowed for the largest amount of input from all present. The speaker who presented a designated topic was given thirty minutes. All present were then divided into groups for discussion with a secretary taking notes to formulate a summary for presentation and discussion by the reassembled body. An hour of discussion on the topic based on the summaries followed. Thus each topic was given extensive evaluation.

The first topic was - "Why Have Unity?" It was presented by Elder John Baer of the SDA Reform Movement. He built his presentation around the concept of Rev. 12:1-3, indicating that it is the devil who has introduced disunity. Then noting John 17:21-23, he called attention to what the unity for which Christ prayed would accomplish. He confessed that he in the Reform Movement had a very "narrow vision" in the past, but that he with others needed to have their vision "widened" so that unity might be realized. He told the conference that his concepts and those of the leadership of the conference were "not very far apart." This was indeed a new concept on the part of the SDA Reform Movement. In the discussion which followed in the group which I chaired, and which was taken to the floor, it was pointed out that Jesus asked in Luke 12:49-51 - "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth?" "I tell you, Nay, but rather division," was His answer. This needs to be put into the "computer" in any consideration of unity. Is unity merely a profession of love for one another, or must it include truth?

In the Sunday afternoon session, the topic - "The Scriptural Basis of Unity" - was presented by Elder M. J. Bingham. He pointedly asked the question of Scripture: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3) It was over this basic difference of approach to unity which divided the thinking of the conference. One group believed in brotherly love in the Holy Spirit would accomplish the objective, thus playing down the theological differences, while a second group believed that truth, pure and unadulterated, based in the Word of God only, must form the basis of all genuine unity.

It had been announced for the Sunday night service there would be a healing line to be followed by prophetic revelations which Brother Bart through the Spirit would bring to those present. (It was at this point, I decided to take my departure. Following the afternoon presentation, I left for home.) It became very apparent to me that while the gift of prophecy manifest in the ministry of Ellen G. White was totally rejected by fully half of the groups represented, and distorted by others; these in turn claimed to have that gift themselves. Gifts as outlined in Eph.

11-15 do not divide, but rather bring "the unity of the faith" - not diversity of the faith!

From dialogue and conversation, it was evident that the beliefs of the groups present were so diverse there was little hope to bridge the gap if truth were to be the basis of unity. On the part of most, there was a complete denial of the prophecy of Daniel 8:14 in connection with Gabriel's explanation in Daniel 9. "Remember ye the Law of Moses my servant," (Mal. 4:4) was emphasized strongly, but the type concept was confused if not completely ignored by some. Few had any desire to study in depth the connection between Daniel 8 & 9, preferring to denigrate linguistic tools by which truth may be more clearly perceived. Others who did accept the sanctuary teaching of the Bible, had so added their own aberrations to it, that it repelled thinking men and women. On top of this was the introduction of the pagan triad concept of a female goddess in the trinity by seeking to set forth the Holy Spirit as a female in the Godhead.

A table was provided upon which all who wished could place their literature representing their various beliefs and concepts. I took time to look over the table and gathered some of the items for reference and documentation. But this table of confused voices of the pen and press did remind me of other tables I had seen set up in various meetings I had attended over the past few years. I thought - How subtle has been the devil's philosophy, "Let us have unity in diversity." We have become confused in our thinking. We have come to believe that any exercise of authority to protect the sheep of His pasture is an exercise in hierarchical control, and an infringement upon the individuality of those propagating error. It is true that we each do possess a distinct individuality, and thus all have a different depth of perception, and utilize different modes of expression. But whether differing in mode of expression, or depth of perception, we should all speak the same things, as the Spirit is not divided, nor the Truth relative. Truth having its origin in God is as absolute as He is. It is the one who abode not in the truth who brought disunity. Unity can, therefore, be achieved only by returning to the Truth.

If we find that truth through the Spirit of truth, then we can walk together in unity. To permit the dissemination of confusion is not charity, but serves well the purposes of the archdeceiver who would have us believe that we can unify in fellowship but have diversity in doctrine and teaching.

During the few days I was at the Conference, I was able to become well acquainted with Brother Bart. We shared the same room in the Lodge where the meetings were being held. Brother Bart is a likeable, jolly, good-natured person. He is friendly, approachable, disarming, and yet well versed in the position he now maintains. He had labored in various conferences of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Southern, Southwestern, and Columbia Unions. When Elder John Ford, one of the church's greatest evangelists was removed from the ministry for personal reasons, Elder Bartholomew was asked to go to Philadelphia to work against Ford. He was at that time holding a large evangelistic series on his own. The end result was that Brother Bart ended up by becoming Ford's singing evangelist. He was with him for about two years, and then found his way into various segments of the Church of God, 7th Day. Just prior to his setting up UNICO, Elder Bartholomew was Chairman of the Apostolic Council of the Church of God headquartered in Salem, West Virginia.

In conversations with Brother Bart, I asked him about the beginnings of UNICO. He told me that in 1971, as he was walking down the street, a cloud came over him on a clear day, and a voice said to him that he should work toward getting all the Sabbath-keeping groups together into unity outside of denominational boundaries. From that day to now, this has been the driving force in his ministry. On Saturday night, after we had retired, we talked across the room, and I expressed my concern as to the Pentecostal overtones of the meetings that day. He told me that he was not Pentecostal but of that group who were "Spirit-filled." A fine line is drawn here. He defined Pentecostalism as the belief which required speaking in tongues as the evidence of the gift of the Spirit. One, however, who was "Spirit-filled" may exercise varied gifts, not necessarily speaking in tongues. Brother

Bart claims the gift of prophecy, and told me that at no time had any of his messages proven false in regard to the individuals to whom he delivered them. Further he confesses to having spoken in tongues. He cited to me one of his experiences. He gave a testimony of a linguist to whom he related what he has said in the Spirit, and the interpretation given him. The linguist said that he praised God in an African dialect, and that the interpretation was accurate. Let me assure you that there was an uncanny "spirit" in that lodge room as we were talking. I again prayed most earnestly to be kept by the power of God. I made a request from God, and made Him a promise. He answered my request, and I kept my promise!

Herein is a new force, which we have not before confronted. In dealing with Sunday-keepers, we have not had difficulty, because we could say simply, because they did not keep the commandments of God, the manifestations of the "spirit" which they exhibited in tongues and prophesyings were not of God, but of the devil. We could cite Scripture that the Holy Spirit is given by God to those only "that obey Him." (Acts 5:32) But here is an ecumenical Sabbath-keeping movement which not only professes to have the gift of prophecy, but whose leader has spoken in tongues, claiming to have had a genuine experience in both. He is lovable, and teaches a loving fellowship as the basis of unity. How shall we relate to all of this?

While it is true that Elder Baer pointed out in his conference presentation that the devil is the source of disunity, he failed to perceive, or to present the truly "wider" revelation of prophecy which indicates that in the last hours these same spirits of devils will seek to gather all - kings and people alike - into a united fellowship. (Rev. 16:13-14) It is terrifying in its contemplation. We have failed to note that God in giving this prophecy changed the symbolic representation of Satan from a dragon-serpent to the symbol of "frogs." Now a frog catches its food by its tongue, and makes all kinds of varied sounds at the time of the mating season as they all get together. How apt is this prophetic imagery of the tongues movement, which has become since 1967 a great unifying factor in the divergent religious world. Now it is becoming

associated with a Sabbath-keeping ecumenical thrust. Truly as stated by Peter - "We have a word of prophecy made sure: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a squalid place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." (II Peter 1:19 ARV margin)

There is another divine revelation through Paul - though severe - which needs to be carefully considered. Paul clearly states that when we receive not "the love of the truth" that we might be saved, then God permits strong delusion to come upon us that we believe a lie. (II Thess. 2:10-11) Herein is again the issue of truth - absolute, unchangeable as its Source - which if we reject and turn from, we are left to the deceptions of the enemy who abode not in the truth. Further, we need to recognize that in these last times Satan is to be transformed into an angel of light and his ministers, "as ministers of righteousness." (II Cor. 11:13-15)

This brings us face to face with some unpleasant evaluations of our own. Written prior to 1900, the testimony cited on page one of this thought paper - 6T:350 - indicated that reverence for the true Sabbath is the sign by which God recognizes "His chosen people." We must frankly ask ourselves the question - "Does this hold true in this hour?" - and face up to the implications such an evaluation suggests. We failed our "Kadesh-barnea," and have been wandering in the wilderness all these many years. There has been for us as well as it was for ancient Israel an "altering of the divine purpose." (See Numbers 14:34 margin) With this altering has come some different priorities. I told this conference of Sabbath keepers on Sabbath morning that if all would take the research of Crosier, Hahn, and Edson and build on this foundation, then all could arrive at unity of both fellowship and doctrine under the Spirit of truth.

It is my firm conviction that the one truth which will mark the people of God as His chosen people in this late hour of human history is the truth portrayed in the types and shadows of the Sanctuary while Israel was assembled before the Mount of the Law - Sinai. (Is not the way of God in the sanctuary? Ps. 77:13) From that mount has flowed all basic truth - grace and law - in perfect balance and harmony. Moses

declared - "The Lord came from Sinai. . . from His right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea He loved the people." (Deut 33:2-3) Herein will be found that love which will unite God's people, and which will be seen in their conduct one for another - love for God that will not compromise His truth, and love for another that will not allow them to countenance error in their brother. Rather, "speaking the truth in love, we [will] grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." This is the unity in Christ which we must now have.

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HISTORY -

WITH A CONTINUING BLESSING

The first campmeeting of the Adventist Laymen's Annual Fellowship is now past history, but there lingers an ever present blessing as the truths presented and the fellowship enjoyed are recalled. One sister came to me at the close of the last service and said - "When I came, I told my son that if this campmeeting was anything like last year [Silver Lake East-11], I was going to go home. But you see, I have stayed clear through the last meeting." In a telephone call this past week, another person told me - "If all come next year who say they will from what we have told them about this year's campmeeting, you will have to find more sleeping accommodations." We hope we will have to crowd the facilities. Arrangements have already been finalized to use the same campgrounds and the same week in August as this year. We will pray for the same beautiful mountain weather that we had this year.

This meeting was prefaced by fasting and prayer. God did answer our petitions. As the meetings were drawing to a close, I approached several and asked if they would write out and send to me after they returned home a testimony of the blessings received. Some didn't wait but wrote out their convictions right then and there. From these and those sent in by mail, we wish to share a few with our readers:

"What a spiritual - plus physical and mental - blessing we received from the fellow-

ship in Arkansas. We're thankful we were able to take advantage of the opportunity and to be refreshed from God's book in His great outdoors. It was good to meet with others from so many different places, and share in common our faith, our love for the truth, and the special burden we have about the time in which we live." (Nebraska)

"Our hearts burned within us as we listened to the truths as they were preached from the Bible. The spirit and fellowship seemed to be a foretaste of heaven. Everyone was so courteous. In the services, even the littlest ones were well-behaved.

"We received more blessings in a few days as we listened to the truths of Bible prophecy about the nearness of the end, than we have in many years in the regular church's services. (Indiana)

"We arrived home safe from Campmeeting. Really enjoyed the meetings. There was a good spirit the whole time. I feel every one received a blessing. The camp was ideal - out in God's nature among the pines." (Arkansas)

"It was such a blessing to be there, and if time lingers, I pray we all may be there next year. I think this campmeeting was the best in the East yet. I thought the one in Illinois was good but to me this was much better." (Pennsylvania)

"I sure did enjoy the meetings this year, and I really got a blessing out of the sermons. It does us all good to come together and hear some good old fashioned preaching without a lot of stories that we don't know if they are true or not." (Arkansas)

"It was a wonderful week at Pinecrest. We received an abundance of spiritual and physical food. We especially cherish the fine friendships made." (Missouri)

"Worshiping among the pines at the Fellowship was an inspiring experience. There was an abundance of enthusiastic singing entered into by the entire congregation. The prayers were fervent; the studies on last day events, based on careful study of the Bible, plus present conditions in the world and in the church, thoroughly documented, increased our realization of the nearness of Jesus' return. (Oklahoma)

"Just a word to tell you how much the Camp-

meeting was appreciated this year. It was a feeling of an old-time campmeeting where Bible study was most important and Christian fellowship was abundant. Seeing old friends and meeting new ones was very pleasant. And the lack of condemnation and bitterness to anyone was very apparent as was the central theme of striving to learn Bible truth concerning last day events. We look forward to next year's campmeeting and hope the same spirit prevails." (Virginia)

"The campmeeting held at Pinecrest was a unique experience for us. In our imagination it was a throwback to what we think an early pioneer campmeeting would have been like. The high spiritual and moral level of the meetings and people were refreshing. We hope you are arranging for another gathering next year, because we are, God willing, planning to be there." (Ohio)

From a letter which came this morning - "I learned once again to appreciate children." Their "sweet spirit" - no "crying, whinning, and carrying on" to get their own way, plus their "sitting quietly in the meetings" made me "realize that there are still God-fearing parents who are training their little ones for the Kingdom of God."

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CHANGES IN PROCEDURE - We have placed all sales - tapes and publications - under the Adventist Laymen's Foundation of Arkansas, and all other activities of service remain with the Mississippi Foundation. We are requesting all checks or money orders in payment of tapes and publications be made payable to the Arkansas Foundation. Gifts (tithe and/or offering) should be made out to the Mississippi Foundation. We will appreciate your cooperation in this. (You can still make the checks payable to - Adventist Laymen's Foundation - and we will direct it to the right account - just, please, do not mingle gifts and orders. Thank you.)

PLEASE AGAIN - When placing any order, use an "Order Form." We will be most happy to supply all you need upon request.

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