

MORE THAN A PROPHET ... by Graeme Bradford

Chapter Twenty One

Evangelicals and Adventists meet

With changes taking place in both Evangelical Protestantism and Seventh-day Adventism it is not surprising that when a meeting between both groups took place in the mid-1950s many were surprised, from both sides, at the amount of agreement to be found. These meetings took place commencing in the North American spring of 1955 and continued until the summer of 1956. Those present were: T. E. Unruh, Conference President of East Pennsylvania who made the initial contact; D. G. Barnhouse; a Presbyterian pastor and editor of an evangelical magazine called *Eternity*, and W. R. Martin; a Southern Baptist research writer on American cults and member of the editorial staff of *Eternity*.

Martin was in the process of writing a book about Adventists and had a desire to be accurate and fair in what he published; LeRoy E. Froom, author and former director of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Ministerial Association and editor of *Ministry* for 22 years, Walter E. Read, Seventh-day Adventist General Conference field secretary and chairman of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Biblical Research Committee; and Roy A. Anderson, an experienced evangelist and the director of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association, and editor of *Ministry* magazine.

After the conference, Barnhouse wrote in *Eternity*: "In the past two years several evangelical leaders have come to a new attitude towards the Seventh-day Adventist church. The change is a remarkable one since it consists in moving the Seventh-day Adventists, in our opinion, out of the list of anti-christian and non Christian cults into the group of those who are brethren in Christ; although they must still be classified, in our opinion, as holding two or three very unorthodox and in one case peculiar doctrines."³⁵¹ It was obvious that until this time their information about Adventists had come from those who had left the church, such as D. M. Canright, E. S. Ballenger, L. R. Conradi and E. B. Jones.

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Martin and Barnhouse presented forty-eight questions to the Seventh-day Adventist leaders at the conference. In the answers that they were giving Martin and Barnhouse could see that they were upholding: The gospel and not legalism; salvation only through Christ, and not by observing the Sabbath; the Seventh-day Adventist stand on assurance before God was solely on a basis of Christ's imputed righteousness; sinless perfection is not possible this side of heaven; and the sinless nature of Christ and His full deity.

Keld J. Reynolds notes: "These 1955-56 dialogues were of considerable historical importance, because they forced the Adventists to sort out their beliefs: a first basic category that they shared with conservative Christians of all ages, a second category in which Adventists shared with some Christian bodies but not with others, and a third category representing Seventh-day Adventists alone and justifying their separate denominational existence. The dialogues drew from the participating Evangelicals an unreserved acknowledgement that Adventists who believed as those with whom they had talked were

indeed Christians." [352](#)

While noting some areas of agreement and disagreement Barnhouse records that in regard to the role and function of Ellen White, "The Adventist leadership proclaims that the writings of Ellen G White, the great counsellor of the Adventist movement, are not on parity with the Scripture. While the Adventist church claims to have received great blessing from the ministry of Mrs White, they admit her writings are not infallible, but in all fairness do revere her writings as special counsels from God to their movement." [353](#)

Martin and Barnhouse noted that there were some Adventist books still being sold in Seventh-day Adventist book shops that were saying some things different to what they were being told. Froom, Anderson, and Read replied that this was because the church does give some measure of freedom of expression and that what they had shared was held by all except a "lunatic fringe". This was a serious misrepresentation, although the answers given were generally held by Seventh-day Adventists. [354](#) Yet there were a significant number of Seventh-day Adventists who did not hold to the positions that were presented. Both the Evangelicals and the Adventists involved in the discussions were aware that what they were doing was destined to cause controversy within their own ranks.

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The Influence Of M. L. Andreasen

Adventist history shows that, for the most part, theological divisions and conflicts have arisen over the misuse of and misunderstanding of Ellen White's writings. These conflicts show an unbiblical understanding and abuse of her prophetic role. The church has paid a heavy price over the wrangling and multiplying of quotations to prove a point instead of settling the issues from the Bible. The church is still divided and the theology mapped out by M. L. Andreasen is a good example of the improper use of her writings.

Andreasen was undoubtedly a pre-eminent Bible scholar and a devout follower of the writings of Ellen White during the 1930s and 1940s. As an author of some 15 books, he had a profound effect on the thinking of many Seventh-day Adventist ministers during this period and into the 1950s and 1960s. Although he had a deep conviction that Seventh-day Adventists were to be truly Protestant in their approach to developing theology from the Bible only, his writings show no evidence that he had correctly understood inspiration from the Bible or Ellen White's writings. [355](#)

Andreasen developed a final-generation theology based, to a large degree, upon a statement found in *Christ Object Lessons*. [356](#) His "harvest theology," developed in the 1930s, emphasising four main points:

1. The cleansing of the soul temple is an experience available in the antitypical Day of Atonement since 1844.
2. Ellen White indicates in her book *The Great Controversy*, in p. 614, how the final generation is to go through the "Time of Trouble" without an intercessor.
3. Ellen White states in *Christ Object Lessons*, p. 69, that Christ will not come until His character is fully reflected in His people.
4. Revelation 14:12 shows how at the end there will be a final demonstration to the universe of a people who will keep the commandments of God. [357](#) In *The Sanctuary Service* he develops this theme further as he shows the process of how he believes the final generation

of Christians may become victorious over each sin in turn until they are ready for translation.^{[358](#)}

Regarding the nature of Christ—whether He had a nature like Adam before or after the fall—Andreasen made no comment in his publications

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during the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s. Possibly this is because the sinful nature of Christ—being like Adam after the fall and thus being like us today, in a poor sinful state—was an assumed tenet and thus was not an issue. It was not to become a contentious issue until the late 1950s with the printing of the book *Questions on Doctrine*.^{[359](#)}

In his volume *The Book of Hebrews* Andreasen divides the atonement up into three phases: The perfect life lived on earth by Jesus; Gethsemane and Calvary where Jesus became our sin bearer; and the final demonstration when other saints show that they can achieve what Jesus achieved with the same help. He claimed that this final phase of the atonement was in the act of being carried on now in the Sanctuary above and that it was up to each Christian to cleanse their own soul temple so that Jesus could come.^{[360](#)}

His line of reasoning had many weaknesses, for example: It held an inadequate and non-biblical view of the nature of sin. He read too much into some Ellen White statements while ignoring the context and other statements that say something different. And he ignored the fact that the Bible has little to say on the subject while giving too much pre-eminence to Ellen White.

One cannot help but wonder whether Andreasen would have gone the same route in his eschatology if he had been aware of the 1919 Bible Conference discussion about the role and function of Ellen White. During the years of his greatest influence, little was being said in Seventh-day Adventism which reflected the ideas expressed at the 1919 Bible Conference.

Many of the ideas of Andreasen were later taken to their logical conclusion by an Australian, Robert Brinsmead, who caused havoc and division in the church during the 1960s. The battles were largely fought with both sides lining up statements and counter statements from Ellen White. Both sides assumed you could do your theology through her writings and that she would always be found to be consistent in her theological expressions. Now the evidence is that she was not always consistent and that she did, along with the rest of us, make significant theological advancement during her lifetime. Failure to understand this means you can, at times, use the older Ellen White statements against the younger Ellen White. Trying to use her writings to do theology then becomes a wilderness of quotes and counter-quotes and shows a lack of understanding regarding the biblical purpose of the gift.

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The frustrating fact was that both sides found powerful quotes to confront the opposition. Theology became a matter of trying to match Ellen White quote with Ellen White counter quote. However, those who were most successful in countering Brinsmead did so by asking him to prove his positions from the Bible alone.^{[361](#)} This, we have seen, is the only safe way to do theology and is in harmony with her counsel for us.

Little was understood about how indebted she was to others in the thoughts and words she used to express her ideas. Later the White Estate released a document showing that she had used a significant amount of material from Henry Melville. He was her favorite preacher. She had a well-marked book of his sermons from which she drew ideas and expressions. In the

document an effort is made to explain what Henry Melville meant by such expressions as "fallen human nature." This was seen as a way of trying to understand what Ellen White meant by the term.³⁶² Once this front was opened up, Adventist theology became a complicated mix of not only trying to understand the mind of Ellen White, but also of those she used as sources.

Andreason first became concerned about the dialogue between Adventists and Evangelicals with the printing of the answers in the book *Questions on Doctrine*. Published by the Ministerial Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, this was the official recording of the answers given to the questions. Andreason had not been invited to join the consulting group, or even given a copy of the draft of the intended book as were some 250 scholars and administrators. There were some reasons for this: He was 83 years of age and well into retirement. He had recently written a Sabbath school lesson study guide on the book of Isaiah, which had not been published. He was upset and demanded compensation for his efforts. This was granted and he was paid \$3000. However, it left some hard feelings between him and some of the church leaders. And, it was possibly perceived that he would not have agreed to the answers. He was not theologically in harmony with the rest of the consulting group and so was put on the sideline. He could have been one of those described as being on the lunatic fringe.

Bypassing Andreason proved to be a great mistake. When he read *Questions on Doctrines*, he printed a series of tracts entitled "Letters

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to the Churches" in which he claimed that the leaders of the church, in order to please the Evangelicals, had sold the church out. The two main theological areas of his concern were: First, the nature of Christ. He claimed church leaders had departed from the historic position where Christ is like ourselves—one who had a sinful, moral nature. Second, the atonement. *Questions on Doctrine* said it took place at the cross and Christ thereafter applied for us the benefits in the heavenly sanctuary. maintained that the atonement was a process still going on in the heavenly sanctuary and it depended upon a final generation to bring it to completion.

Andreason stated, "The Spirit of Prophecy makes it clear that Christ was not exempt from the temptations and passions that afflict men. *Whoever accepts the new theology must reject The Testimonies. There is no other choice*" [emphasis added].³⁶³ He argued that the: Seventh-day Adventist church had a body of doctrine which could not be altered because it had been authenticated by the writings of Ellen White. Part of this body of doctrine teaches that Christ came to earth to be just like us with sinful passions. Furthermore as He overcame them, so can His followers, and there must be a final demonstration of this victorious living before Jesus can return. He added that there will be an apostasy from the truth in the last days, as Ellen White foretold, and his church's swing towards Evangelicalism was that apostasy. These apostates, he continued, would downgrade the sanctuary and Ellen White and must be removed from the church.

Changing of doctrinal positions

From the discussions, then, had the Seventh-day Adventist church changed its teachings in these areas? Martin and Barnhouse said yes. Some evangelicals who were angry with them said, No this church still teaches legalism and is a cult. R. R. Figuhr, president of the General Conference said, No, the church has still maintained its distinctive theology and has not compromised. Andreason said, Yes, the church has changed and this is apostasy.

The truth was that the church had changed some of its teachings, but these changes had been

developing over a longer time period than many realised. Martin and Barnhouse had been relying on old sources going back to D. N. Canright who accused Seventh-day Adventists of

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legalism. There was some truth to that allegation then. However, since 1888, with the help of Ellen White, the church had developed a more Christ-centered theology. Other evangelical Christians, not aware of this, had continued to rely on Canright. The church had changed from its ideas on the nature of Christ, sinless perfectionism and the atonement due largely to the teachings of Heppenstall. A true understanding of Seventh-day Adventism allowed for this growth in understanding which has been going on throughout its history.³⁶⁴

Although Froom, Anderson and Read were anxious to impress the evangelicals it was not with the idea of watering down the faith, but rather that they might open the door to bring the Seventh-day Adventist message to the evangelical world.³⁶⁵ Unfortunately, Barnhouse and Martin, it would seem, belonged to those evangelicals who had a fundamentalist approach to inspiration and this clouded their appreciation of Ellen White.³⁶⁶

Once again, in theological debates, the role of Ellen White would come to the fore. There was a vast difference between the answers as given in *Questions on Doctrine* about her role and function in contrast to what Andreasen fought to defend. Froom, Anderson, Reid and Heppenstall were much closer to the position taken by Daniells and Prescott at the 1919 Bible Conference. On the other hand, Andreasen, held a view closer to that of Washburn and Holmes in their tracts against Daniells and Prescott. There has been and continues to be within Seventh-day Adventism two distinctly different approaches in understanding theology and Ellen White. The Evangelical line comes through 1919 Bible Conference presenters like Daniells and Prescott who overlap with, and continue on through, Froom.

Froom feels convicted that Daniells, after his defeat in 1922, placed his mantle on him as the one who would restore Evangelicalism. In the introduction to his book *Movement of Destiny* he states: "Back in the spring of 1930 Arthur G Daniells, for more than twenty years president of the General Conference, told me he believed that, at a later time I should undertake a thorough survey of the entire plan of redemption—its principles, provisions, and divine Personalities—as they unfolded to our view as a Movement. . . . Elder Daniels recognised the serious problems involved, and sensed almost prophetically certain difficulties that would confront [sic]. He knew that time would be required for certain theological wounds to heal, and for attitudes to modify on the part of

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some. Possibly it would be necessary to wait until certain individuals had dropped out of action before the needed portrayal could wisely be brought forth. He likewise envisioned the vast toil and time involved. He pressed me to lay long-range plans to that end, and never to give up. Such was his solemn charge in 1930."³⁶⁷

In context, Froom is talking of the righteousness by faith issues commencing in the late 19th century within Seventh-day Adventism. However, that he should also absorb from Daniells, a man he admired, a true concept of how Ellen White's inspiration worked, should also be reasonably expected. In fact, he seems to show evidence of this in his book when he labours the tenet that the Bible is our only rule of faith and practice and that we must not let Ellen White come to the fore, ahead of the Bible.³⁶⁸

When I was in the General Conference archives (March, 1993) researching this topic the assistant archivist, Bert Haloviak, went to some cartons of papers that had belonged to Froom

(they had been placed there many years ago by his son Frenton) and found additional notes on the 1919 Bible Conference that had been overlooked. They appear to be notes taken by some unknown scribe of Daniells' talk at the conference. Haloviak feels they were taken by Prescott and later typed by a secretary. It is as if the typist does not always understand the words and, at times, there are blank spaces. It is possible to take the Bible Conference minutes and place them by the side of these notes and see they do follow the same address. The title at the top is "Use of Spirit of Prophecy." What it does show is an overlapping from Daniells to Froom regarding knowledge of how Ellen White's writings were to be used. Although the 1919 minutes were lost, or suppressed, Froom was aware of what was said. This is reflected in his book *Movement of Destiny* and to some extent and in the book *Questions on Doctrine*, to which he contributed. It would be difficult to believe that Daniells had not taken him aside on occasions and explained to him of how he, along with others, had associated with Ellen White in preparing her books for publication. Most likely he and many others struggled with how this knowledge should be shared, given the mood of the church and the high expectancy placed upon her writings by so many sincere Christians.

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It seems that every time a theological controversy erupts in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the basic issue of the use of Ellen White's writings comes to the fore. Until this is settled there can be no progress toward unity. The issues raised in the objections against *Questions on Doctrine* still remain. However, in the 1970s some momentous events occurred to help provide some solutions.

Eventually Martin became painfully aware that there were serious divisions within Seventh-day Adventism between Fundamentalists and Evangelicals. In retrospect he wrote, "After I started doing the research, I saw definite division in Adventist theology. There were the people who really were believers and held to the foundations of the Gospel. Then there were those who were downright legalists—worshippers of Ellen G White—who had exalted her beyond the role that she ever claimed for herself, and, in effect were the loud voice that the evangelical world was always hearing." [369](#)

No one should be surprised that Seventh-day Adventism should have two wings: Evangelicals and Fundamentalists, for almost all Christian churches face this situation to varying degrees. However, in the case of Seventh-day Adventism, throughout the history of the church this division has been partly over the function and authority of the writings of Ellen White. There has consistently been a group that has a more enlightened understanding of her role but they have not felt free to share what they know with the larger body of believers. This has always put them at a disadvantage because they do not want to be accused of doubting the inspiration of Ellen White. For this reason, many in the church were content to allow things to drift on up until the 1970s. Then events forced the hands of the leaders to confront again issues addressed at the 1919 Bible Conference.

[351](#) D. G. Barnhouse, "Are Seventh-day Adventist Christians?" *Eternity Magazine*, September, 1956, p. 6. [[back](#)]

[352](#) Gary Land, *Adventism in America*, p. 186. [[back](#)]

[353](#) Barnhouse, *Eternity*, September, 1956, p. 7. [[back](#)]

[354](#) A draft copy of the 55 questions was sent to 250 leaders in North America and around the world. "A committee of fourteen with Rueben R. Fighur, President of the General conference, as chairman supervised the distribution of these documents and an evaluation of

the replies, which demonstrated a substantial consensus." Raymond F. Cottrell, unpublished manuscript. "Questions On Doctrine: A Historical-Critical Evaluation", p. 9. [[back](#)]

355 M. L. Andreason, in his book *A Faith To Live By*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1943), talks affirmingly of his visit with EGW and how he was able to spend many days reading the original manuscripts yet nowhere does he show evidence of his knowledge of her borrowings or how her book keepers helped her. For example he says; "She wrote nothing that was cheap or questionable, but only the purest of wheat, thoroughly winnowed. Mature counsel, earnest exhortation, pure morality, sound theology, correct and authoritative information, are all imparted in correct and beautiful English. Viewed purely as literary productions apart from any divine or spiritual gift, Mrs White's writings deserve and are given a place among the best religious literature." p. 268.

In fact knowing what we now know of the way her writings were put together by way of borrowing from others and the part played by Marion Davis and others in producing the final product it sounds a little ironic to read what he said in a chapel talk at Loma Linda 30/11/1948. (To be found in the MLA file in the Andrews University Heritage room. After reading *Desire of Ages*, he declared "I found there a beauty of expression that caught my attention, and I said to myself, `I do not see how Sister White could ever have written that; she was a woman of but little education, and hence would be unable to produce such a work. I said to myself again and again `she never wrote that!'" [[back](#)]

356 Ellen White. *Christ Object Lessons*. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub. Assn, 1941). On p. 69, she states "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." Standing as it does alone as I have quoted it this statement can give the impression as though Christ is waiting for a sinless generation to be produced before He can come again to gather up His people. However a reading of the context shows that sinless perfection is not the subject being discussed rather the producing in the life the "fruits of the Spirit". [[back](#)]

357 These four points are taken from my [MA Andrews University] class notes made in a lecture given by Dr. George Knight, January, 1991. [[back](#)]

358 M. L. Andreason, in his book *The Sanctuary Service*. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), p. 302 states, "Many a man who has been a slave to the tobacco habit has gained the victory over the habit. . . . On that point he is sanctified. As he has been victorious over one besetment, so he is to become victorious over every sin. When the work is completed, when he has gained the victory over pride, ambition, love of the world—over all evil—he is ready for translation. . . ."

"Thus it shall be with the last generation of men living on the earth. Through them God's final demonstration of what he can do with humanity will be given. He will take the weakest of the weak, those bearing the sins of their forefathers, and in them show the power of God. They will be subjected to every temptation, but will not yield. They will demonstrate that it is possible to live without sin. . . ."

This teaching seems to have its roots in Adventism from the 1890s when A. T. Jones along with Anna Rice (claiming to be a prophetess) spoke of the final generation theology. In the years 1899 and 1900 MLA was a student of A. T. Jones at Battle Creek according to his autobiographical manuscript quoted in *Without Fear or Favour* by Virginia Steinweg, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald 1979), 29, Andreason states his regard towards Jones: "I immediately fastened myself to him. While not impressed with Uriah Smith who was one who "knew all things, and that others knew very little if anything." [[back](#)]

359 Further evidence on this is found that Ralph Larson in his book *The Word Was Made Flesh: One Hundred Years of Adventist Christology 1852-1952*. (Cherry Valley, CA: Cherrystone Press, 1986), has listed all the statements he can find on SDA comments regarding the subject but apparently cannot find any from Andreason as there are none listed. [[back](#)]

360 From M. L. Andreason, in his book *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), pp 59-60. I have paraphrased the thoughts. [[back](#)]

361 Pastor Frank Basham was one such pastor who did this successfully and advised the writer (as a young pastor) that this was the only way to meet Brinsmead's followers. [[back](#)]

362 *Henry Melvill and Ellen G. White: A Study in Literary and Theological Relationships*. Assembled by Ron Graybill, Warren Johns, and Tim Poirier. Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, DC. May, 1982. See also, *Sources Clarify Ellen White's Christology* by Tim Poirier, *Ministry*, December, 1989, pp. 7-9. [[back](#)]

Should there be brackets in the above footnote?

363 M. L. Andreason, *Letters to the Churches*, Series A. No 1. p. 16. [[back](#)]

364 Robert Johnston describes the progress made in Adventism with the following words. "So the young faith continually advanced, not only in understanding. It changed its ideas about organisation and ministry, deepened its understanding of the third angel's message of Revelation 14, and revised its interpretation of Christ and the Trinity, reclaimed the truth of salvation by grace through faith, and found much else to learn or unlearn. But while it corrected, amplified, and reclaimed, it never lost touch with its roots, 'the waymarks'. . . . Without repudiating the past leading of the Lord, it seeks ever to understand better what that leading was. It is always open to learn—to seek for truth as for hid treasure." "A Search for Truth", *Adventist Review*, Friendship edition, undated. See also Graeme S. Bradford, "Advancing in the Light," *Record*, March 5, 1994, pp. 6-7 [[back](#)]

365 Interview with Mrs. R. A. Anderson March 1993 at Loma Linda. She expressed the idea that her husband intended that QOD would become a missionary tool. She also said that later on MLA apologised to R.A.A. for the trouble he had caused him. [[back](#)]

366 Evidence for this statement comes from the fact that in his book (which he writes later on) he dwells heavily upon the fact that she borrows so much from other authors and dwells also upon her errors. He shows no evidence for having a view of the inspiration of prophets in harmony with what we find in the Scriptures themselves. The reader is invited to compare the evidence from Scripture with how Martin writes in his book *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960), chapter 4 "Ellen White and the Spirit Of Prophecy." [[back](#)]

367 LeRoy E. Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, (Washington., DC: Review and Herald., 1971), pp.17-18. [[back](#)]

368 *Ibid.*, chapter 5, "The Bible: Sole Rule of Faith and Practice". [[back](#)]

369 Douglas Hackelman, "Interview with Walter Martin, *Adventist Currents*, July 1983, p. 17. [[back](#)]