

the truth about
the
adventist
reform
church

BY VANCE FERRELL



pilgrims Books

*PB-3005**The Truth about**The Adventist Reform Church**by Vance Ferrell**Published by Pilgrims Books**Beersheba Springs, TN 37305 USA**Printed in the United States of America**Cover and Text Copyright © 1998**by Pilgrims Books***FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW —**

THE ORIGIN of the Adventist Reform Church in 1914-1925 has been falsified. With the exception of some of the European leaders including (L.R. Conradi), Seventh-day Adventist denominational leaders DID NOT want their members to bear arms and DID NOT approve of disfellowshipping them for doing so.

THE GROWTH of the Adventist Reform Church has been a continual repetition of rivalries, power splits, and sheep stealing.

THE INTEGRITY of the Adventist Reform Church is, because of its leaders, fatally flawed—due to the morbid overcontrol of the members, the misuse of funds, the refusal to do those things the Spirit of Prophecy says to do, and the claim that they are the “Voice of God.”

THE DOCTRINES of the Adventist Reform Church, which set them apart as unique, contain clear-cut errors.

THE BRANCHES of the Adventist Reform Church are multitude; yet all of them, including the two main branches, continually squabble and oppose each other. They claim to be the sole “Voice of God” on earth; yet they have the same tactics, activities, overcontrol, teachings, and errors.

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preface

It is important that you understand that this historical and doctrinal analysis is about the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement, not its members. Those who have been urged to join this organization are fine people. Often they are scattered and lonely, while being told that they must not associate with non-Reform Advent believers.

Frequently they know little about the misuse of funds, political infighting, and mutual sheep stealing conducted by the leadership of the two main branches of the Reform. They generally know little about the power plays and heartbreak which have marked the history of the Reform as it split and resplit over the years.

It is indeed a tragedy that L.R. Conradi instigated his high-handed disfellowshipping of faith-

ful Seventh-day Adventists over seventy years ago—after the General Conference in Takoma Park told him not to,—and then when the Adventist leaders from Washington later apologized and sought to heal the wound, the leaders of the injured brethren refused to reunite.

Many precious souls out in the world have not been reached, because thousands among the people of God were turned aside from active evangelism to sheep stealing among themselves.

As you read these pages, please remember that the innocent members of the Reform are frequently extremely dedicated to Bible-Spirit of Prophecy principles. It is the Reform leadership, its teachings, and tactics which is the problem. The members are not; they are, for the most part, very kindly folk.

introduction

Learning that I was preparing this book, a friend walked in the door this week and told me his story.

“I was an Adventist medical missionary in Honduras. I preached in the churches, gave Bible studies, and did dental work. My work also included giving natural treatments.

“Down there, word of what is happening travels faster than up here in the States. And I was traveling a lot, working in the churches, raising up new ones.

“When a *Reformista* arrived, it always went the same way. He would preach “meat, meat, meat” to the members of the local Adventist church, meaning that they must stop eating meat. Then he would split the church and carry off perhaps half with him. He would take them down to the other side of town and they would build a grass hut or something like it, and start a *Reformista* church.

“Then he would go off and leave them. There they were impoverished, trying to do the best they could, and now they had no preacher on Sabbaths, nothing. For he had already gone to do more ‘soul-winning’ in the next town.

“Pretty soon the new *Reformista* church would fall to pieces, as the people would drift away. They had nothing to keep them together. Most of them would go out in the world; but few returned to the local Adventist church.

“That’s the way the Reform Church operates in the countryside of Central and much of South America. The Reform Church leaders have brought a lot of grief to the people of God.”

Officially known as the *Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement* or the *Adventist Reform Church*, this organization would appear to be the largest splinter offshoot of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

Yet, in reality, over the years it has undergone a remarkable number of split-offs within itself. The largest started in 1948 and climaxed in 1951, when the main body split right down the middle.

Many people refer to it by the name, *the German Reform Church*, because it largely began in Germany and many of its top leaders down through

the years have been of German extraction.

Its members call themselves “*reformers*,” and they refer to the General Conference-based denomination (the one headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland) as the “*apostate church*.” To avoid confusion, throughout this study, “*Adventist Church*” will refer to the large denomination; “*Reform Church*” will refer to either or both branches of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement. Both branches teach and practice essentially the same things. Two other terms which will be used, “*Adventists*” and “*Reformers*,” are self-explanatory.

The first section in this study details my own experiences with the Reform Church, an organization which I never united with. Most of the following sections were prepared by three former leaders in the Reform Church, all of which were highly placed in one or the other of its two main branches.

One of these two branches is the Nicolici branch. From 1951 onward, its world headquarters was in Sacramento, then in Los Angeles, then in New Jersey, and today in Virginia. It calls itself the *Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement*. Its quarterly publication is the “*Reformation Herald*.” Its pioneering leader was D. Nicolici.

The original of the two main branches, commonly referred to as the ‘*International Missionary Society*’ (IMS) branch, is headquartered in Speele, Germany (pronounced “*Speel-eh*”). Its U.S. branch was located in Sacramento for a time; but, while leaving behind a large congregation in Sacramento in the mid-1950s, it was moved to Colorado, where it is still located. Also calling itself the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement, it took the official name, *International Missionary Society of Seventh-day Adventists, Reformation Movement*. Two of its U.S. leaders were Oscar Kramer, and Arthur Doerschler.

Both of Oscar’s sons pled for reform, without effect; then they left the church, researched into its history, and prepared analyses. One is printed in this present book. The other (*The Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement*) was published in 1988 by the Biblical Research Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland.

is the adventist reform church different today?

In this book, we discuss the origins, history, activities, and teachings of the Reform Church. However, someone might say:

“Yes, the past may have been a problem. The origins were not as claimed; the history has indeed been sordid; the activities have been rife with overcontrol, mutual animosities, and sheep stealing; and the teachings were riddled with error;—yet everything is different today!

“*The Reform Church today*—that is, the branch I am in (not the other one)—is different than back then. It has none of those problems.”

I was told that a couple days ago by a prominent Advent believer who recently joined one of the two main branches of the Reform Church.

So I immediately contacted a former headquarters leader of the Reform Church, and asked him what the condition of the two branches of the Reform Church are right now—at the end of 1997. This is an individual who has maintained very close contact with both for nearly half a century.

I asked him, “*What about the erroneous teachings? Have they been corrected?*”

His reply: “The doctrines of the Reform Church have not changed one whit. The church still makes the same claims it did years ago.”

I asked him, “*Well, what about the hypermanagement tactics and the dwarfing effects they have on the members?*”

He answered, “The organizational overcontrol of church members is the same as it has always been. And the members are stagnant as a result. They do little more than attend meetings.”

“*Well, then,*” I inquired, “*what about the activities, the rivalries, mismanagement, and the sole focus on proselytization of Advent believ-*

ers which used to take place?”

“The methods are exactly what they were before. The sheep stealing, by each branch, from the other and from the Adventist denomination continues apace, with no efforts to bring non-Adventists to the truth.”

“*But what about the schools? Surely, they must have their own schools by now!*”

“We are nearly to the end of the century, and they still have not established their own schools! They have one school in Brazil; in the U.S., they have seminars for Bible workers,—and that is about it. No church schools, other than an occasional one. They still send their children to public schools. The leaders, who are always wealthier, sometimes send their children to Adventist schools, **all the while denouncing the Adventist Church as apostate and warning their members to have nothing to do with it.”

****Former IMS leader H. Kramer says he saw almost nothing of this.**

“*And what about the military?*”

“Throughout the world, the Reform Church is doing today just as it did in World War II in Europe: They officially declare that their men do not take part in war—are not drafted, do not carry arms, nor fight and kill. While, unofficially, the Reform ministers are taught to watch for their young men who are nearing draft age. Then they tell them not to be baptized until after they have served their time in the army. When they get out—if they come back to the church,—they are baptized. In other words, their young men serve in the military just as does everyone else in the country; except that the Reform Church does not baptize them until they come out.

“Both in their camp meetings and publications, the Reform Church presents itself as something it is not. This is unfortunate; for, entering it, Advent believers find it is far from what they expected.”

part one

my contacts with the reform church

In this chapter, the author discusses his own contacts with the movement, which neither he nor any members of his family ever joined.

Much of the remainder of the book will consist of articles by former Reform Church leaders.

In 1960, I moved with my family to Sacramento, California, in order to start a health, natural healing, and evangelistic work in that large metropolis.

While there, we held evangelistic meetings, conducted cooking schools, held medical missionary training classes, worked with people with physical needs, and I compiled the *Medical Missionary Manual* (the only Spirit of Prophecy compilation ever made of how to carry on the various facets of medical missionary work. It is currently available from us).

Because the Northern California Conference president did not like “independent” work of any kind, I was blacklisted among the nine area Adventist churches. That is unfortunate, but this happens at times.

(This was nothing new. The conference president had earlier blacklisted a prominent Sacramento Church member because she was gathering funds to place *Desire of Ages* in motels throughout the conference. Other missionary projects, such as a children’s cooking magazine and a local radio broadcast had also been crushed.)

Rather quickly we discovered that there were two nests of German Reformers in the Sacramento area. At the time, it was home to large groups of both main branches of the Adventist Reform Movement.

D. Nicolici (pronounced “*Nick-o-litch*”) was

head of one branch—which had its worldwide headquarters in Sacramento at that time. (Their headquarters is now in Virginia.) Throughout this entire study, we will refer to this group as the Nicolici branch.

Oscar Kramer was head of the North American Union of the other main branch—which had its headquarters in Sacramento about eight years earlier; so a large congregation was still in Sacramento when we were there. (Their North American Union headquarters is now in Colorado, and their world headquarters is in Speele, Germany.) Throughout this study, we will refer to this group as the IMS branch.

It was extremely providential that I moved my family to Sacramento. If I had moved to some other large city, I never would have learned about the inside workings of the Adventist Reform Church, nor made important contacts which in later years provided me with additional information about that splintered denomination.

The overall impression I received from my contacts with “reformers” was of a saddened people who had been cut off from Adventism. Many of them knew little of the real reason why the original split from the Adventist denomination took place, the inadequate doctrinal reasons for its existence, or the highly unethical procedures which have regularly taken place within its leadership.

Because my family was carrying on missionary work without having received church approval to do so, the “reformers” sought us out and made friends with us.

We were not exclusive; and so we became friends with many folk, both in the main church and among the reformers. A number of dedicated members of the main church befriended us in

our work, and a number of German Reform folk would like to have done so also, but they feared reprisals from their leaders if they had done so.

We never joined the Adventist Reform Movement; but, because of our lengthy two-year association with many of their members, we learned a lot.

In this present study, I will explain why I did not, and will not, join the Adventist Reform Movement.

The following comments apply to either or both branches of that denomination; although, for purposes of simplification, I will refer to it in the singular. Yet, in reality, there are two primary branches of the Reform Church (and dozens of smaller splinters).

(At this juncture, you might wonder why they both have the same name. The answer is simple enough: Following the large split over 45 years ago, both branches continued to call themselves by the same name—even though they are two separate, legal, bodies!)

Fortunately, I have three close friends who once were high up in the leadership ranks of the Reform Church—two in the Nicolici branch and one in the IMS branch. Having conversed with them at length over the years, I am prepared to add their discoveries about that body to my own, in the information I here provide you with.

- There are faithful Advent believers in the main body, as well as in the Adventist Reform Movement. But those in the main body are not afraid to stand for the right, when it comes to taking a position that leadership disapproves. Those in the Reform are much more fearful to do so.

There are several reasons for this, of which two are particularly significant:

1 - Theirs is a much more closely knit organization. The elders watch the people much more closely, lest they get out of line. In the years since then, we have at times lived near the Amish and old-order Mennonites—and found their structure and mind control reminds us of the Adventist Reform Movement.

2 - Also, like the Amish and Mennonites, the Reform Church is very concerned over certain rules and regulations. This lends a controlling atmosphere to the situation. Church members dare not get out of line. More on this in the next item.

- There is an over-emphasis on regulations,

and an under-emphasis on the weightier matters of God's Word.

The Reform women told my wife that they had regular headaches on the back of their heads. These occipital pains were caused by the large buns they had to wear. The Reform women do not dare cut their hair, lest they shame their family and be declared to be in apostasy.

They also told my wife that they could not get their work done with hair that hangs down to their waist, so they keep it rolled up into a knot on the back of their head. The result is the appearance of very short hair—and those headaches. They also said that the overly long hair, if not kept rolled up, tends to fall out.

Now, if some of the ladies wish to do this, that is fine; but it should not be mandatory. Paul's counsel about long hair was penned to the Corinthian believers who lived in a city whose "vestal virgins" were notorious throughout the Roman Empire as the temple whores, entertaining the worshipers who came from afar bringing their gifts to the Temple at Corinth.

Just south of the city was a mountain, the *Acrocorinthus*, about 1,800 feet high, rising steeply from the lowland. On its summit was the Temple of Aphrodite.

According to Strabo, there were about a thousand girls as temple prostitutes in the sanctuary of Aphrodite. These "vestal virgins" were easily identified by those who wanted to lay with them: They wore very short, close-cropped, hair as a sign of their trade.

All the other women in town wore medium-length hair, as women normally did (to the shoulders or below).

The excessively long-hair problem caused considerable difficulty among the Reform women; but, as we will learn later in this study, it was cited by leaders as a prominent point of doctrine, in which the Reform Church differed from other "impure" religious bodies.

- I said there was an under-emphasis on the weightier matters of God's Word. We have been told that, when possible, we should organize our own church schools. Yet the Reform Church does not bother to do this. They may have large city churches, yet will only rarely build, fund, or maintain their own church schools. They send their children to the public schools. In this way, more money flows to the hierarchy. Only rarely do they maintain a church school for their own children.

That may sound like a harsh criticism, but I consistently noted that the pattern was to not spend money on valid Spirit of Prophecy-endorsed projects, because it siphoned funds from the treasury which was in the hands of leadership.

- Another money-saving device is their evangelistic work. About 1985, I received a phone call from a friend in southern California. Since retired, he was at that time pastoring one of the main-church congregations in the Southern California Conference.

He said he had recently been conducting an evangelistic series and noticed that, following each evening service, a man was hanging around in the back trying to talk to the Bible study interests.

Checking on this, he discovered the man was a salaried Reform Church minister.

So he walked up to him and asked, “We spend thousands of dollars to hold evangelistic meetings to bring people into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Why don’t you people do it too? Is this sporting, coming around, trying to steal our interests?”

But that is the way they work. Too stingy to hold their own evangelistic efforts or go from door to door looking for Bible study interests, they raid main-church evangelistic efforts. When they are not doing that, they are calling on Adventist Church members or stealing sheep from the other Reform branch.

Reform leaders tend to live in a different world. They are not concerned about bringing the Three Angels’ Message or the Spirit of Prophecy writings to the world. The conversion of non-Adventists is not a matter of concern.

The responsibility for this unbalanced pattern lies at the door of the Reform leaders. Yet they spend their Sabbath mornings preaching to their members, that they are the only pure Seventh-day Adventists in the world—the only ones who will be saved. They tell them they are the Loud Cry Angel. (More on Reform Church doctrines later in this study.)

- While we were in Sacramento, we met a godly man and wife who traveled from place to place on the West Coast. He would sell juicers to support the family; and, on the side, he would give back adjustments, as well as teach and practice natural remedies and nutrition. He was a one-man medical missionary, evangelistic, team!

Yet he found that local Adventist pastors were often negative about his work. Discouraged, he joined the Reform Movement.

Shortly afterward, he and his wife stopped by to convert us. We were just as friendly as ever, for we knew the whole-hearted sincerity of him and his wife. A few months later, he returned and said, “I was in it just long enough to learn what it was like, and then I got out of it.”

I said, “I knew you would.”

“And throughout the whole experience,” he added, “you were the only two who remained our friends before, during, and after our time in the Reform.”

Then he told me his story, and it was confirmed later by another friend who had held a high position in Reform Church leadership before he also quit.

The pattern goes like this: The Reform Church recruiter will tell you that the organization obeys all the Spirit of Prophecy. Yet, in reality, they do no more than they have to. As for health reform instruction and medical missionary work, they only do it when some eager-beaver convert from the main church comes in. Then, with the passing of months, as nothing gets done and everything falls apart, the new convert gradually realizes how things operate in the church. They may lapse into passivity, but more frequently leave. It is an intriguing fact that it is the new converts which are most likely to leave. This is because they can more clearly see the difference between the hollow pretensions of the Reform leaders and the freedom to think and obey God’s Word outside the Reform.

- In sharp contrast, I have worked with faithful Adventists in the main church or those ejected from it who have freedom to think, to plan, and to do. They read God’s Word and obey it, without waiting for church leaders to grant approval.

Do not place yourself where you cannot obey God’s Word, without first having to get some man’s permission to do so!

- Talking at length with active and former Adventist Reform Church members in Sacramento over a two-year period, I came to the conclusion that there is far more politics and mind control in the Reform Church than there has ever been in the main church.

And do not imagine I am prejudiced, in favor of the main SDA church. Anyone reading my tracts knows I am not a policy man and certainly not a

conference yes man.

- People who join the Reform Church have a way of disappearing. They tend to no longer order missionary books. They do not visit from house to house. They do not attend unapproved (non-Reform) independent meetings. They are advised to stay away from their former Advent friends. Everything is polluted, defiled, untouchable, unless Reform leadership approves of it.

This rule is imposed because leadership fears that they may lose their members if they learn of the unshackled freedom to study and obey which other Advent believers have. It is pleasant not to have a little pope keeping tabs on you all the time.

I agree that some souls need the Reform Church. They have the type of personalities that need someone to manage them. I do not. I prefer to go directly to God through Jesus Christ. I do not need an intercessory priest to interpret the Word of God and to what extent I am to obey it.

- What about the Adventist Reform members themselves? They are fine people, fine people. It is unfortunate that they are locked into such a narrowed religious system that they cannot carry on missionary work as freely as they earlier were able to do.

- While we were living in Sacramento, we met Anna. That is not her real name, for we wish to protect her. Through the grapevine of the independents in the area, who carried on health and healing work without the approval of the conference health department, she heard about our work and attended our natural remedies training meetings.

Since Anna was so utterly lonely, she frequently came to our home on Sabbath afternoons. At that time, she had one child (a boy about 10 years old) and we had one child (a girl about a year old). The five of us would sing together and read mission stories.

Then Anna told us her story, and we learned why she was so lonely. In later years, we spoke with former Reform Church members and leaders who told us her story was typical of the methods used.

Anna deeply loved the Adventist message and practiced it, but felt cut off from the denomination that had brought it to her.

Years earlier, she had become a Seventh-day Adventist and was very happy in her faith. A quiet

soul, she faithfully attended church. But problems developed in the home and her husband left for another woman. We never asked for details.

Then a representative of the Reform Church called on her and explained that the Adventist Church was an apostate organization and that the only true church in the world was the one he belonged to. He did not mention that there were twin branches of the Reform Church, both with essentially the same beliefs and errors.

Anna was then read the "*separation texts*." A former Reform Church leader later told me that it was regularly done: When the recruits came in, they were read passages in the Spirit of Prophecy about the urgency of *separating from evil and error*.

Later, when they found out what they had gotten themselves into, they were read the "*unity and church texts*"; passages from the Spirit of Prophecy which indicated that *they must stay by the church!*

Attending their meetings, Anna was eventually induced to join their organization. But then a devilish technique was used to cut her off from her former brethren: She was told that she must write a strong letter denouncing the Adventist denomination, demanding that they drop her from membership, and then mail it to her former congregation. Before it was mailed, of course, Reform leaders needed to look it over. They added a few barbs to make the separation more pointed and decisive.

And I was later told, by a former Reform leader, that this was exactly their primary objective—to cut off, as far as possible, the likelihood that the new convert might ever withdraw from the Reform and return to the Adventist Church. Blacken their reputation with the church! It also helped engender more strife, hard feelings, and sadness in many hearts.

Devilish? Yes, and it worked. Anna was later too humiliated to feel she could ever return to the Adventist denomination.

Feeling that she had totally burned her bridges back to Adventism, as intended, Anna felt more subservient to the Reform leaders.

Anna was extremely easy to get along with; and her cutting, slashing, letter to her former congregation was totally out of character for her. Her gentle manner was such that she should have had little trouble in her new home.

But the oppressive regulations, discoveries

about church politics, rejection of needed reforms, and avoidance of Spirit of Prophecy principles gradually awakened her to what she had gotten herself into.

Please understand that, because she was attending the headquarters' church, all this became apparent to her much more quickly than it would have to an isolated Reform Church family living in a rural area, whose contacts with leadership were less frequent, except when an itinerant Reform minister stopped by to collect their tithes and offerings.

For the same reason—because we were living in the Sacramento area which was at that time home to two large Reform branch memberships—we learned in two years of mixing with their members (plus later conversations with former Reform leaders) far more than a Reform Church member in a distant area might learn in a decade.

Reform Church leaders are determined that everyone remain in line and in subservience, or out they go. This is partly due to the German origin of the movement.

By nature, Germans make excellent leaders/followers. That is why they command such brilliant armies. Church members are also carefully marshaled like soldiers in the ranks. No one must get out of line. Perhaps that is partly why my later contacts with Amish and old-order Mennonites reminds me so much of them; they all tend to have Gothic origins.

In the case of Anna, she had gone across the line from one large Reform Church congregation to the other. She tried them both out, and finding the principles and policies the same in both, finally left.

That was not easy, for Anna had nowhere to go. Church conditions must have been pretty bad, if she had to leave all she had and go out to nothing at all! Aside from her son, she had utter loneliness.

But, before she left, she was read the “unity and church texts” about how we must stay with the church. Years earlier, Reform workers told her *she must separate from the church* or be lost, and now they were telling her *if she separated from the church*, she would be irretrievably lost. So it goes.

Then she met us, and told us her story. You can know that her life was very saddened when we later left the area to start *Great Controversy* broadcasts in the midwest, which were later

beamed into several states including southern California.

But Anna did not return to the Adventist Church. Reform leaders had done their work well. They had helped her write such a terrible letter of denunciation, that she felt she could never return. When we left in May 1962, she was alone in a city of nine Adventist churches and two Reform churches.

- A variant method is used when the person brought into the church is from Adventism and somewhat prominent.

Although such instances occur more rarely, Reform Church leaders see in each one an opportunity to gain additional converts. Instead of an angry letter, a positive one which actually gives little information about the Reform Church is sent out, over the signature of the proselyte. Instead of factual information about the Reform Church (because there really is not much good news to tell), it is stuffed with sentences and brief paragraphs from the Spirit of Prophecy, sometimes totally out of context, interspersed with comments on how glorious it is to have united with a pure church body.

Reform Church leaders are quite willing to carry out these tactics in order to achieve their objectives, even though such letters may produce such friction as to break up homes and cause divorces. Church lists may be stolen, but the end is said to justify the means. “We are a purified church, that is why it is safe to take that mailing list and give it to us.”

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess . . . Ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity . . . Ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous . . .

“Ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers . . . For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte.”—*Matthew 23:25, 28, 29, 14, 15.*

- Then there is the deceit. While we were in Sacramento, Robert Brinsmead came through on his first tour of America. (I have earlier published studies on Brinsmead’s pre- and post-1971 errors.) When he arrived in the Loma Linda area, he was invited by the Mentone Reform Church to speak.

In the 1940s, Brinsmead’s parents had stud-

ied their way into the Reform Church, and then studied their way out of it. They were highly intelligent and uncovered a number of its doctrinal and procedural errors.

With such a background, young Brinsmead spoke to this southern California Reform Church—and took the whole church out, every one of them!

He showed them the errors in the system and truths in the Spirit of Prophecy which it had rejected.

The pastor of that Mentone Church had earlier been a Reform leader, high up in the organization in Sacramento; and he returned for a time to that city, where we met him. (Since he was out of work, I hired him for a time to type the mimeograph stencils for my book, *Medical Missionary Manual*, which we now have back in print.)

He told us a number of deceitful practices about Reform Church leaders and their methods. Here is one of them:

Several years earlier, leaders of the Reform Church in Sacramento laid careful plans, and then waited. Then, just a few weeks before Ingathering started, they went to Woodland and portions of Sacramento—and ingathered a large area in the name of the “Seventh-day Adventist Church.”

How is that for deceit? When the local churches in the Northern California Conference arrived soon after, the territory had already been covered and the money—thousands and thousands of dollars—had been collected.

This former Reform leader told me how the leaders laughed over this afterward. They had really pulled a fast one.

- Then there is the story of how the Adventist Reform Movement got its start in America. A former Reform Church leader told me this:

C.A. Anderson lived in Washington State. Dissatisfied with the Adventist Church, he began writing and sending out newsletters in the 1940s. Eventually he amassed a sizeable number of names.

D. Nicolici, a Reform Church leader (and the D. Nicolici who later became the leader of one of the two headquarters), made contact with him by mail and expressed great friendship in correspondence that continued for several months.

Accompanied by his wife Nicolici departed Germany and, arriving in America, went directly to Anderson’s home in the Northwest. Since Anderson had some extra time on his hands, the two would pleasantly visit during a part of the day. Then

the two couples would retire for the night; Anderson and his wife in their bedroom downstairs, and Nicolici and his wife in an upstairs guest room.

Several hours later, Nicolici and his wife would quietly arise, go into Anderson’s office just down the hall, and very quietly copy his mailing list. Their nightly work was stealing names.

This continued for a portion of several nights, until the entire list had been copied.

Then they parted good friends (I was told that C.A. Anderson apparently never discovered the ruse), and Nicolici began “evangelizing America” Reform Church style—which amounts to proselytizing Seventh-day Adventist members.

In the mid-1980s, upon learning that a family friend of ours was C.A. Anderson’s daughter, now living in the central states, I told her the story. She replied that, yes, Nicolici and his wife had been there for a couple weeks and they had wondered about this after they left. Her father had sensed that something was wrong, but did not know what it was.

- On one occasion, we were invited to a wedding at Nicolici church headquarters in Oak Park, a suburb of Sacramento. The bride-to-be had invited us. Following the service, the church members gathered into a large backyard, behind the headquarters. The happiness one would expect at such a gathering seemed missing. Everyone was very careful and spoke in hushed tones.

There was a reason: Overlooking the group were the three top headquarters leaders of that branch of the Reform. I will never, never, forget their appearance. At the time, Kruschew was premier of Russia and regularly uttering dark threats about how the Soviet Union was going to “bury” America.

Yet these three high spiritual leaders of the church looked exactly like him! The appearance, the faces, the scowl lines, the stony expressions—all were the same! To this day I cannot forget it.

If this is the Adventist Reform Movement, I want no part of it. No wonder the guests at the wedding hardly dared speak. The three leaders were standing there as wardens, impassively staring at them.

- “Out of the cities” is the message to those who would come up to the high standards in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. Yet the Reform leaders always locate their headquarters in the cities. That is where they prefer to live.

- As we neared the time when we were to

depart for the midwest, we looked in the classified ads for a better used car to take us where we needed to go.

One ad was for a Ford. The man said he would be waiting for us. (Why we drove to his home, I still do not know. All I needed to do was ask the price over the phone, and we never would have gone.)

Arriving there, we found ourselves in an exclusive district. By current building costs now, it was a \$250,000 home. The “Ford” turned out to be such in name only. It was top of the line with every possible extra, yet carrying the “Ford” label (instead of Lincoln) only because certain buyers might want to hide the wealth of their vehicles.

The automobile was only a couple years old; yet the man wanted to privately sell it, so he could purchase a new replacement. Obviously, we had erred in checking on this ad.

Before leaving, we offered him some missionary literature—and he told us he was the son of one of the ancillary leaders of the Adventist Reform Church. He was quite friendly; and, in view of the home and the motor car, he was used to wealth.

Yet there were no church schools for the children, no evangelistic efforts, no medical missionary/health work, no welfare work, no door-to-door visitation in his church. Just control of the people.

- One of the two former Nicolici branch headquarters leaders, whom I later conversed with at length, told me that D. Nicolici would keep his eye on anyone who was writing a book. Then, when it was ready for typesetting, he would tell the author that the book would carry more weight if it bore “D. Nicolici” as the author. I was shown several such books, some of them in the health field; and I was told the names of some of the real authors.

- As a sop to the most dedicated of the followers, the leaders had earlier purchased some land in the barren hills above Sacramento, and announced that anyone who wished could move there. But they would have to provide their own trailers and other facilities.

One afternoon, while driving up the Jackson Road into the back country, we saw the “*Moriah Heights*” sign; and knowing that was the place, we turned in to see what was there. It was pitiful. While the leaders basked in their wealthy homes in the city, the most faithful of the faithful were living in squallor in the hills. There were no added facilities of any kind, other than a few outbuildings and a poorly con-

structed barn-like structure, used as a meeting house and church.

- Church leaders will probably deny much of what I am telling you. In the mid-1980s, I mentioned Anna in a statement about the Reform Church. I was told by a friend that, in response, church leaders mailed out a letter saying that no such person had ever existed, and that I was lying. Well, that tells me still more about those church leaders.

We knew her as a close friend for the better part of two years, prayed with her, and shared in her sufferings. Do not think that she was quick to talk about the treatment she had suffered at the hands of the Reform leaders. But she did talk, and the details were graphic.

The leaders also said that other facts which I gave were untrue, such as the Ingathering theft. They are welcome to do so, but one of the three branch leaders who instigated and carried out the theft personally told me the story. I verified it with another person who had earlier been highly placed in the Reform Church.

You may be told that these are all lies. But we were there.

- Someone may say, “Well, you were at church headquarters.” What about the Adventist headquarters? At other times in my life (totaling two and a half years), I lived in Takoma Park, Maryland. That was the other church headquarters. At no time did I see there the intensity of people control, great profession amid secret wealth, and stony-faced leadership hypocrisy that I saw in the Reform Church in Sacramento.

- In the mid-1980s, while conversing with a former Reform leader, I asked him what the leaders did with all the tithes and offerings that poured in. They did not support mission stations. He told me that the primary church expenditure was traveling around the countryside in order to maintain control over the church members. Holding regional meetings was part of this pattern. Aside from that, he said, the funds could be skimmed off the top and quietly allocated to church leaders.

- The key to the control of Rome over the soul is the teaching that there is no salvation outside the church. You are either in the church or you are lost! That is the error of Rome. It is a worship of man. The Reform Church leaders are able to use this teaching to enforce a high degree

of mind control over the members.

This Romish doctrine keeps the members frightened. They must please the leaders in their choice of reading matter, activities, and other pursuits, or be castaways from God.

Prior to about 1950, there was essentially a single Adventist Reform Church. Following internecine rivalries reaching back into the late 1930s, major power grabs caused the whole denomination to split right down the middle.

Yet, in spite of the fact that both branches teach and practice the same things, so great is the control of church leaders, that the members are told they must not subscribe to papers published by the other of the two split-offs!

In strong contrast with all this, let us state the truth found repeatedly in the Word of God: *Outside of Christ there is no salvation! If you are in submission to Christ and His Word, you are safe. We are not saved by church connection. We are saved by Jesus Christ.*

If we are able to fellowship with others in church relationship, that is good, very good. Yet it is Christ that saves us, not the church nor connection with the church.

Church books will not be saved, only the followers of Christ will taken to heaven.

Now I believe you can better understand why I have not and will not join the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement.

part two

statement By a former reform church leader

The following statement was prepared by a former Reform Church leader who has kept in close contact with both branches of the Reform Church down through the years—to the present time. He served as a pastor and Sacramento headquarters leader for over a decade and has been closely associated with its members for over fifty-five years. He says the inner corruption has only deepened in recent years.

Here is his statement:

The Reform Church is more pharisaical than the Adventist Church. They stress works—dress, length of hair, diet—and they do it to the extreme. They are also very rigid in their theology. Examples of this would be their interpretation of Daniel 11, the 144,000, etc. If you disagree with their views, you are classed as a heretic—and out you go. They will hold a church meeting and have you disfellowshipped. Both in lifestyle and in theology they are very rigid.

In regard to their church organization, they are remarkable for their excessive overcontrol of their members. People move from the Adventist Church to the Reform Church, thinking they are entering the earlier purity of Adventism. But, in reality, they have entered something that, because of the intense people control, is further from it. At the heart of all this, is the problem of the lack of leniency, the excessive intolerance and the continual hair-splitting they engage in. On one of the many occasions in which I spoke with their leaders, they personally admitted to me that they were more extreme than the Adventists.

They claim that they are following the Spirit of Prophecy more closely than the Adventist de-

nomination does. —But if this were true, then why do they not have church schools? Ellen White has written so much on the importance of having our own church schools. Why do they not have even one sanitarium or hospital? Why do they not have even one health retreat, one health restaurant, or one treatment room? Medical missionary evangelism was rated high in the Spirit of Prophecy as an important missionary work of our people to the world. Yet the Reform Church is doing a poorer job of following the Spirit of Prophecy than the Adventist Church does.

They lose most of their young people. I know; for I have observed them for years and am well acquainted with many in the Reform Church and many who have left it. They lose their young people because they send them to public schools, as Ellen White said not to do. (In a few instances, they send them to Adventist Church schools; but, only rarely will you find them starting their own church schools.)

If Adventists are apostate, then why do the leaders of the Reform Church send their own children to be taught in the Adventist school system? This is hypocrisy. The Reform Church has no future to offer its young people but that of sheep stealing. This is because absolutely no missionary work of any kind is to be found within it. The young people might as well leave it; for it is only an empty shell feeding on itself, judging hair length, how much tithes you give, and whether you have been attending all the meetings.

At one time they had a health work, but it all died off. And the leaders resist any effort to get it started again. Every so often someone new will be lured into their church by the offer of letting him 'take over the medical missionary program

of the church' in that particular area. But soon it all comes to nothing.

With the rigid control by the leaders and the works program by the members, I don't see how they keep in business. There are people there in the church who have been there for years and don't know anything better. But the new people in do not last. They go in and come out like a revolving door. The stifling rigidity, the heavy-handed control, is like a hammer on their minds. They just never stay very long.

They won't follow the Spirit of Prophecy in training their young people. The truth is that they have tried church schools of their own; but, because of their very rigid intolerance, they can't get along with each other and the school closes down. This has happened over and over again. Now they don't even try anymore. They just send them to the public schools where they will learn evolution and humanism and discover the local

trade in hard drugs.

In regard to their teaching on the 144,000, it is this: Their position is that the entire number of people that will be saved after 1844 will be 144,000 literal people, no more and no less. And they preach that when this number is reached, Christ will return the second time. All that matters is achieving that number. Yet such a teaching is foreign both to the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. It cannot be found in either. [More on this later in this study.]

Living to themselves, warning no one out in the world, waiting for the coming of Christ while doing little or nothing. —This is not what I want for myself, my wife, or my children.

That concludes a statement by a former headquarters Reform leader. At this juncture, let us turn our attention to the history of the Adventist Reform Church.

part three

introduction to reform church history

The branches of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Church call themselves the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement. We will now present two historical surveys of this movement, each written by a former headquarters leader.

At the time that we were living in Sacramento, unknown to us, two high-placed leaders of the Reform Church branches were beginning to question the validity of their church. Frankly, they knew too much. Through contacts, in later years, I learned that each of them had something to tell.

So, in the mid-1980s, I conversed at length with each of them. Both had left the Reform Church while remaining sincere Advent believers. It was obvious that each had chosen the difficult path of carefully investigating and then standing by his convictions and leaving the church. Each could have chosen to enter into the corruption, and thereafter assured themselves of high-paid positions for the remainder of their lives.* [Some reform leaders are not highly paid]

One was highly placed in the Nicolici branch. The other, the son of the top leader, at that time, had been a local church elder in the IMS branch.

Each is now going to tell you his story. Keep in mind that these branches are, by far, the two largest segments of the Reform Church.

You will note below that there are no essential differences between these two large segments in either doctrine or practice. Both call their top men the “General Conference” and declare that they and their “General Conference Sessions” are the only “Voice of God” in the world! Not to obey them (the particular “Voice of God” segment

you are a member of) is to be lost. This calls to mind the schism of the Roman Church in the Dark Ages, when there were two popes, each with his counselors who denounced the other as antichrist (*Great Controversy*, 86-87, 103-104).

There is something remarkably foolish about the efforts of men to make themselves appear infallible.

Both branches call themselves the “*Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement*,” and each instructs its members that only in their splinter group can the members be saved.

Unofficially, the IMS group call themselves the “Reformed Church,” while the Nicolici group call themselves the “Reform Church.” In this present study, when we speak of “Reform Church,” we refer to each and both of them.

It should be understood that leaders change; Nicolici is no longer the head of the Nicolici branch and Kramer was, at that time, only the North American head of what we here refer to as the “IMS group.”

In the following historical reviews, the “*original split*” refers to the 1914-1925 split by which many believers in Europe left the Adventist denomination and formed a separate church. By the “*big split*” is meant the 1948-1951 split which resulted in a cleft right down the middle of the Reform Church.

The next two chapters consist of two analyses. Remember that each of these two men could have had lifetime, good paying, soft jobs—if they had been willing to be party to the corruption in their own branch.

part four

the reform church as viewed by a former leader in the nicolici branch

The first historical overview is presented by a very high-placed leader in the Nicolici branch in the 1960s. The worldwide headquarters of that branch was, at that time, in Oak Park, Sacramento. Today it is in Virginia.

The Reform Church is often referred to as the “German Reform” or “German Reform Church.” But this is not accurate. Historically, it started in several different European countries all at the same time, though the initial impact was especially felt in Germany.

EARLY HISTORY

In 1914 the split off from the Seventh-day Adventist Church actually began with the outbreak of the First World War in Europe. Later its organization was completed at a 1925 meeting in Gotha, Germany. At that time it finalized on organizational details for a separate church, separate officers, separate General Conference, etc. Aside from many little splinter groups which broke away from it in various countries, most of it remained one large organization until the big split began in 1948.

At that time it was voted to move the world headquarters from Europe to Sacramento, California. This was then done, in spite of heavy protests from many European believers. One important German leader refused to recognize Sacramento as the new headquarters, and so he re-established offices in Speele, Germany. Another faction recognized Sacramento as the worldwide

center.

In 1951, D. Nicolici was voted Secretary of the General Conference. Nicolici was originally from Romania, and was one of the very first Adventists in that country.

At this 1951 General Conference Session, the main body of the Reform Church split in two. The two leaders after the split were D. Nicolici and Carlos Kozel. Immediately, up and down the line, splits occurred in various countries as the believers decided whether they would follow IMS or Nicolici. For example, in Canada after 1951, the Reform Church split all across the land. In the United States, the people were divided over the issue; some went with IMS and others with Nicolici.

At first, both headquarters were in Sacramento, California. But, shortly afterward, IMS headquarters moved to Colorado, leaving behind a large IMS congregation in Sacramento. It was not till many years later—in the early 1970s—that the Nicolici group moved out of Sacramento.

(Oscar Kramer had been a European convert to Adventism through a Literature Evangelist. Later he emigrated to the United States and began missionary work here, recruiting Adventists for the Reform Church. Later still, he was ordained and eventually became a high-placed leader in the work.)

OBJECTIVES, AUTHORITY, ACTIVITY

Following the big split, the pattern of Reform Church activity went something like this: Each General Conference would send out delegates

to steal members from the other major Reform Church. Part of this intense antagonism arose from the flurry of lawsuits and court cases that occurred in various nations of the world.

As soon as the 1951 split took place, both sides immediately tried, through court lawsuits, to obtain the church buildings and property in every country in which they located. Down through the years the two branches have continued to be very argumentative and antagonistic toward one another. This is to be seen both in their sermons and in written publications. They continually take snipes at one another. No love is lost, for they have none for one another.

And each group claims, for itself, to be the “Voice of God.” Something of an infallibility complex. Every *little* committee meeting of the top leaders is a “Voice of God” decision, which the faithful must strictly obey. And, of course, the other branch is considered to be the voice of the devil.

Based on these seemingly infallible pronouncements, each branch sends out agents throughout the world field to convert members over from each other. This is the primary way their tithes are spent—supporting the leaders, stealing sheep from one another, and paying leaders to travel around keeping everything running—in a control far worse than anything existing in the Adventist Church.

Year after year, the predominate “missionary project” was moving members back and forth from one branch to the other. When not occupied with that, they have concerned themselves with taking members from the Adventist Church.

As I worked up in the ranks, I was repeatedly puzzled as to why the Reform Church, in its various segments, was patterned so closely to the Adventist political system.

We called ourselves a “purified” church that was the “only true remnant,” yet we would clash in committees, and our nominating committee sessions were terrible to behold. So much hatred was manifested.

From what I understand (and I have learned a lot in the years since), there is nothing in Adventism to compare with the fights that we carried on in our top-brass Reform Church nominating committee sessions.

The General Conference leadership of each branch—composed of relatively few men—is considered to be the highest authority in the Church. By its own decision, it has empowered itself to sit

on any committee or board of any conference or church anywhere in the world—and it very often does.

They tell us that no correct or wise decisions can be made without their being present at each important meeting, big or little.

Because the General Conference officers are the “Voice of God,” their authority and power throughout the world field is awesome.

One interesting occurrence took place a few years back. The small group, called “the General Conference,” decided to substantially increase their personal income. So they voted to transfer all of the California congregations to direct General Conference control. This would bring large amounts of money directly to them.

But, after the vote was taken—and the transfer had been made—the members in a special meeting outvoted their “Voice of God” leadership and transferred the property back to the people.

The difficulties, financial costs, and intense wrangling that took place in transferring all this property over to the General Conference—and then back again—was fantastic. It surely was agonizing, I know. It was a battle all the way through. This clearly was not God’s way of “finishing the work.”

One group of Reformers were living at *Moriah Heights*. This is a rural property southeast of Sacramento. The folk there were not living in the city as were the General Conference leaders and so many of the members, so they urged the leaders for needed Spirit of Prophecy reforms.

But these pleas were always resisted and ignored. Finally, to squash them and stop this source of continual embarrassment, the General Conference transferred in a number of Brazilian Reform Church members into America and relocated them to the *Moriah Heights* property. The objective was a General Conference takeover, and it worked. The appeals for reform were effectively squelched.

NO REAL DIFFERENCE

It is important that you understand the way the Reform Church started is not how it is today. At first, during, and immediately following World War I, it was very spiritual. But this initial experience soured when leadership control began. The members will tell you, themselves, that what they were when they started, they are not today.

There is a lot of talk about the Reform Church being different—and a lot better—than the Adventist

Church. But, after you have been in the Reform Church awhile, you discover this is not so.

Marriage, divorce, and remarriage—the same problems exist in both the Adventist and Reform Churches. Dress standards and military service—again, the same problems. Sabbath work problems and tithing—again, the same.

And Education! Even worse in the Reform Church! There is no system of education whatsoever anywhere in the Reform Church! Ninety-nine percent of the children of both Reform Churches go to public schools. The irony is that, in Sacramento, some of the leaders send their children to Adventist schools instead of to regular public schools,—and then, in the pulpits, they regularly denounce Adventism!

They have done nothing in the important field of religious liberty. And in Health Reform and True Medical Missionary Work, without drugs or surgery, they have much big talk, but they have done nothing.

The only time something gets started in this area is when a newcomer arrives with great ideas. They promise to let him lead out; but, no matter how creative or skilled he may be, soon it all peters out because of leadership apathy. This kind of thing has gone on for years.

As I said before, the primary objective is to steal sheep—from the other Reform branch or from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is only because of their rivalries and sheep stealing from one another that they let the Adventist Church alone as much as they do.

They are a plague in sheep's clothing when they come knocking at your door. The solution is becoming like Christ, putting away the politics, and giving the Third Angel's Message to the world. But the leaders do not want that.

People become dissatisfied with Adventist lukewarmness, and so they leave it at the urging of the Reform Church agents. But then they enter the Reform Church—and find that it duplicates the Adventist Laodicean condition.

Both the Reform and the Adventist Church members need to be taught right living, how to get ready for heaven, and how to share the Final Message given us in the Bible and Spirit of prophecy with all the world.

We need to give the True Message—and let separation come if it will. But we should not preach separation as the message! Preach the message, not separation!

OTHER DOCTRINAL ASPECTS

The original concept of the founders of the Reform Church was that, by calling people out from Adventism into a new church, they would bring in the Loud Cry. And they called themselves the “Loud Cry Angel” of Revelation 18. Maybe God could have done something if they had not tried to start a separate church, but had remained independent ministries.

From 1914 to 1925, they had a higher spiritual level. They had undergone many sufferings and loved God and one another. From 1925 to the present time, there has been nothing but a series of power struggles, and it has brought lowered spirituality. When you ask them about all this, the power struggles and the lowered spirituality, they reply, “God is purging out the Laodiceans.” But when you ask them about the Laodicean Church of Revelation 3, they will tell you that the term applies to Adventism and not to them.

They are constantly trying to figure out neat little explanations of Revelation 18, whose angel they claim to be. It is quite obvious that they are not the Loud Cry, and have never been the Loud Cry; so they devise little stages. “We are in the swelling stage; soon it will swell to a Loud Cry,” they will tell perplexed members. To this we reply, “I know you're swelling, but which way?”

The truth is that when the Revelation 18 Angel comes, he will lighten all the earth with his glory. The Reform Church surely is not doing this in any way. You can talk to the individual members and they will laugh and tell you, “We're not Revelation 18!”

I have told them that, if the Reform Church is already purified of Laodiceanism and worldliness, there is no reason for the Investigative Judgment! According to their published literature, their people and organization are already as pure as the driven snow.

One of the excuses given for the 1951 split was that a leader in the church had a wife, in the Western Zone of Germany, and another in the Eastern Zone. Therefore it was necessary to split the whole church. But why should it be necessary to split an entire church organization over one man and his wives? There are better ways to solve problems than that. The truth is that there had already been wrangling for several years before then, and the two sides came to the meeting prepared for a fight to the finish. It was a power struggle between leaders, not an earlier

adultery, which produced the split.

People become frustrated with the problems in the Adventist Church and think that, if they move to the Reform Church, they will solve their problem. —But, when they get there, they find that they now have leaders who do all their thinking for them. Soon they find they are in a worse mess than when they started.

An excellent example of the hypocrisy in the Reform Church, and how it is no better than the Adventist Church, is the manner in which they both face their educational problem in Europe:

Over there, the children have to go to school on Saturday or they can never obtain a full education for high-paid employment.

The Adventist Church says to its members: “Go ahead and attend school. We’ll baptize you; and, while we are looking the other way, you just keep breaking the Sabbath and attending school.”

The Reform Church is more righteous. They tell their youth: “Go to school and break the Sabbath. When you have finished your education, come back and we’ll baptize you.”

Another remarkable parallel is to be found in European military service. The Adventist Church lets its youth go into the military and bear arms. —*And so does the Reform Church! They have been doing it for decades!* The Reform Church leaders and pastors “unofficially” counsel their youth: “Go ahead and do it. If you don’t, they’ll imprison you and they may shoot you. Then, after you get back out of the military, come see us and we’ll baptize you.” —*And yet this is the very issue—the very reason for the separation of the Reform Church from the Adventist denomination in the first place!* This is why the Reform Church calls itself the “Loud Cry Angel”—because it has nothing to do with “bearing arms.”

But the fact is that, whether you are baptized or not, you ought to obey God’s Law and abide by Bible principles. The Reform Church is teaching the young to disobey God! Whether at school or in the military, it says to them, “Go ahead and disobey Him; later on we’ll forgive you.”

The Reform Church started in Europe because Conradi, in Germany [L.R. Conradi (1856-1939), president of the European Division at the time], had his men disfellowship faithful Adventists, in fifteen European countries, because they would not go into the army and bear arms. After the First World War, the [Takoma Park] General Conference apologized and even Conradi agreed that he had done wrong. But the

leaders of the new breakaway group—the disfellowshipped members—would not come back. Instead, they formed the Reform Church in 1925.

And now it has grown to the point that the leaders of the Reform Church feel they are the “Voice of God” and can do no wrong. When they tell me they are the “Voice of God,” I reply, “Which ‘Voice’ ” is a person supposed to listen to? —the Nicolici group or the IMS group?

Each one hates and castigates the other. Therefore since both claim to be the “Voice of God,” one has to be of the devil. Maybe they are both of the devil. Which mortals do you know that are infallible? The pope pretends he must make all your important decisions for you.

According to the Spirit of Prophecy, no small group of men are the “Voice of God.” [Near the close of this present study, we will discuss this error in more detail.]

A few men control everything. For example, one man in the Nicolici group has the following offices: *Chairman*, Sacramento Church; *Minister*, Sacramento Church; *Chairman*, Church board, Sacramento Church; *Minister*, Field Conference; *President*, Field Conference; *Chairman*, Field Conference Executive Committee; *Chairman*, Field Council; *Vice President*, General Conference; *President*, Field Council; *Member*, General Conference Council.

I was told, “If you don’t feel I am doing right, you can appeal, you know.” “Appeal!” I answer, “Appeal to what?”

Nearly everything I told you, so far, pretty much applies to both the Nicolici and the IMS groups. *Here are a few additional facts which apply only to the Nicolici group:*

Devai was President of the General Conference for over twelve years. He is Brazilian. The present Secretary of the General Conference is also Brazilian. The reason for this is that, when the Nicolici group spread into other countries, it did the best in South America—especially Brazil.

The largest block of delegates to the Nicolici group General Conference Sessions come from Brazil. Since they are nearly half of the entire delegation in attendance, they can do pretty much as they wish. Because they so vote it, almost every Session is held in Brazil. Brazilians are fine people, yet it is to be noted that the balance of power in the Nicolici group is now in their hands.

Another interesting point is the location of the headquarters. Although the General Conference was moved to Sacramento (following that vote in 1948), later the leadership decided to move it to Los Angeles so they could enjoy the climate there. This decision was so strongly opposed by the constituency that it was later voted to move their headquarters to New Jersey (now in Virginia).

But church leaders, since they are part of the “Voice of God,” can live like princes—regardless of where the headquarters is transferred to. The President is a German and says he wants to live in Germany, so he does. The Secretary refused to move from sunny California back to New Jersey, so he is now in Sacramento.

This is where the tithes and offerings of the members go: to pay for all those jet flights. This is why they cannot afford to operate schools, and why they are so anxious to close down every missionary project that the laymen try to start. The leaders feel they must keep flying around, micromanaging every little board meeting, lest a new splinter group rise up.

The same problem exists with the IMS group. From what I understand, the IMS group is even

more stringent in their efforts to keep control over their laity. Of the two, the IMS group is the stronger in South America, also.

New members coming into either group generally have no idea that there is more than one “Adventist Reform Church.” They don’t know it is split into two, and in some countries into still more.

That concludes the first historical survey. The one who wrote it (like the one who wrote the next article), if he had chosen the path of accommodation with intrigue, self-aggrandizement, and misuse of funds, could have been a member of the small committee “Voice of God,” to instruct thousands of people how they are to live.

The above individual never reunited with either the Reform Church nor the Adventist Church. He remained independent and very happy.

The individual who wrote the next chapter, followed a different path: He tried out the Adventist Church, and found it was different than what he had been taught all his life.

part five

the reform church
as viewed by
a former leader
in the kramer branch

The second historical overview is presented by the son of the leader of the North American headquarters of the IMS branch in the 1960s. His separation was accompanied by scholarly research which unearthed falsehoods in key teachings of the Reform Church. The IMS branch was then, as now, headquartered in Speele, Germany, with its North American headquarters in Sacramento until about 1952, when it was moved to Colorado.

Why did I leave the Reform Church? I left because I did a lot of studying and because the Reform Church is not doing the Gospel Commission; instead, it's doing things which are counterproductive to it.

I was born and raised in the Reform Church, and was frequently told that the work on earth would be finished by the outpouring of the Latter Rain. But I have now decided neither the Early nor the Latter Rain can be received by the Reform Church as long as it continues doing the things it is doing.

RECONCILIATION MEETINGS

In 1972, I proposed that the IMS and Nicolici groups meet together for a series of meetings, for the express purpose of reuniting them into one harmonious church body. I saw this as the only hope for the Reform Church. Without such a peaceful settlement of its various conflicts, strife, name-calling, and sheep stealing, the blessing and power of God could never rest upon the Reform Movement. I envisioned gatherings in which, in meekness and humility of spirit, we

would sit down and sing, pray, and study together.

Since I was living in Sacramento, it was not difficult to bring this burden before the General Conference of both main branches. I also spoke with many members in both of them and urged the importance of this reunification.

Some of the people were very willing to have such meetings. Others disliked the other branch too much. A large number were fearful of doing anything not approved by their leaders, lest they bring trouble upon themselves. Eventually the meetings were held, and continued for five months. All this took place in 1972.

But the leaders on both sides refused to have a part. And the animosity and opposition was so strong that the meetings could not be held in the churches of either branch. We held them in the Rancho Cordova Presbyterian Church on Sabbath afternoons. For five glorious months we sang and prayed and studied together. The happiness in our hearts was sweet.

But, all the while, the Reform leaders on both sides were deeply frightened about our intentions and a possible loss of prestige and position to themselves if unity were to occur.

It was not our purpose to bolt the two branches and start a third one. But, with the intense opposition by the leaders, our fellowship meetings were doomed to failure. Recognizing this, we finally brought them to a close. Friction and strife was being stirred up back in our home churches, and we had to encounter it during our regular worship services. Word was spreading that we were becoming "apostates."

Our leaders clearly preferred to be top men of small church bodies rather than to see their people united into a single church.

I BEGAN RESEARCHING THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

At about this time, I took the *Reformation Study Course*, a Kramer group publication, and began comparing it with the Testimonies. I was surprised to find that quotations from the Spirit of Prophecy, included in this study course, were distorted. Sentences and phrases would be taken out of context and twisted, so that a meaning would be applied to them that did not exist in the original. They would tell you that Sister White said this, and then quote something. But she had not really said this. They were interpreting things incorrectly.

In 1972, I was a delegate to the American Reform Church Conference [the Kramer group equivalent of the North American Division in the Seventh-day Adventist Church]. At that time, I urged that the *Reformation Study Course* be cleaned up. I explained to the delegates that garbled quotations were to be found within it. A few phrases and excerpts would be used in an attempt to prove what was not taught by the Spirit of Prophecy.

I prayed and worked toward unity on both sides in this matter. But ultimately the whole idea was rejected. Those leading out said that it was not important—and didn't need to even be discussed on the floor by the delegates, or even be voted on.

After this, I spoke personally with our General Conference president, and told him that as a people we needed to work together—the Kramer group with the Nicolici group—and unite into one, for the sake of Christ and His truth. Unless we did this, we can not begin to give God's final message to all the world. We surely are not doing it now. "It is better if we work together instead of fighting," I told him.

I BEGAN ATTENDING THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

After further prayer, one Sabbath morning I attended, with my family, one of the many Seventh-day Adventist churches in Sacramento. This was the first time in my life that I had ever been inside one of them. We went to the Central Church.

I had always been told that Adventists didn't believe in the Spirit of Prophecy. But I found that morning that those writings were liberally quoted from. I had always been told that Adventists didn't believe in vegetarianism, but I discovered that the Central Church was in the midst of vegetarian cooking school classes. I had been misinformed on these matters; perhaps I had been misinformed on still others.

So I visited another and still another Adventist church in the area. At the Carmichael Church, my wife and I almost stumbled. We found that some there were wearing jewelry. We almost stopped attending Adventist churches entirely. But we went back and discovered that the ones with the jewelry were non-Adventist visitors. They were seeking after truth and did not yet know our principles.

All these discoveries were entirely new to me. Throughout a lifetime in the Reform Church, we did not have *non-Adventist* visitors, only Reformers and proselytes from Adventism.

We continued attending the Adventist Church.

HISTORICAL RESEARCH INTENSIFIED

I now began even more intensive research into these matters. I went to the draft board and to the State Department of Public Aid. I went to various state and government agencies. I read entire historical works on early Adventist history. I researched into U.S. and world news back in the early part of the twentieth century and the background of the Seventh-day Adventist belief and practice in a number of lines. I discovered that the Reform Church had not told me the truth.

Here are some of the things I learned:

THE CIVIL WAR

When the Reform Church first began in 1914, it said that because of *1 Testimonies 361*, and thereabouts, we could only be conscientious objectors in time of war. This position was taken because Ellen White said, on page 361, that we couldn't take part in this war; we could only be conscientious objectors (today known as the 1-0 classification) and not noncombatant medical personnel (1-A-0 classification).

But I discovered that this historical background greatly helped to explain the true situation:

During the Civil War, the United States Gov-

ernment provided three options: (1) Payment of a \$300 fee (“*commutation fee*”) to the government in place of being individually drafted into the Union army. (2) Noncombatancy work in hospitals. (3) Caring for the freedmen (the slaves that had already been freed).

In July of 1864, the Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists wrote an official letter to the United States Government, in which they said, “*We have paid the commutation fee.*” —Based on this letter, the Reform Church leaders assumed that, in Ellen White’s time, the Adventist Church was saying that it would *only* pay the commutation fee, and would have no part in the other two options.

But I discovered these facts: War broke out in 1862. When it did, the Adventist Church was faced with a real problem. There was no commutation fee at that time. (The possibility was not made available until the following year.) What should we do?

Some Adventists thought we should fight in that war, to free the slaves. (And, of course, we all felt then, as now, that they should be freed.) Others felt that we could not participate because of the Ten Commandments. It should be understood that, when war broke out, there was no provision for noncombatants.

If you will look through the old *Reviews*, of July to December, 1862, you will find very strong statements by the brethren that favored different views. Then, in *January, 1863*, Ellen White had a vision in which she was told that we were not to be combatants. This vision is found in the well-known *1 Testimonies Civil War* passage [*1 Testimonies, 355-368*]. She said that *we should pray* that the Lord will send relief in some other way.

Then, in *March 1863*, a bill was passed by Congress that permitted the commutation fee. This was a with-or-without religious preference fee. It did not matter what church you belonged to, and anyone could help you pay it.

But the public did not like that enactment. They called it “the rich man’s bill.” In the summer of 1863, there was rioting in New York City against that provision. Finally, the government sent the army in, and over a thousand rioters were killed before it was over with.

Then, in *March 1864*, a new law was enacted which superseded the earlier one.

This one provided that anyone *who was a*

member of a church recognized by the United States Government as holding official provisions against combatancy could avoid being drafted into combatant service by one of three options: (1) Becoming a medic in a hospital. (2) Joining the army as a noncombatant to guard the freed slaves. (3) Paying a \$300 exemption fee, which would be used for the benefit of sick and wounded soldiers.

By this new law the commutation fee was replaced by an exemption fee,—and the three options were now only available to members of churches recognized by the government as officially being noncombatant.

Thus, in July 1864, the Executive Committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church sent the official communication to the Government, that it *HAD been paying the fee*.

The Reform leaders assumed that they meant that the Adventist Church was saying that it *only* wanted the fee option. —But if you read the entire letter, you will find that, in it, the Church was asking the Government for *permission to be recognized as a noncombatant church*. In order to provide historical background to this request, they said, “We have been paying the commutation fee.” That is, we have been noncombatant in our views all along; now please accept this as our official position and recognize us as such.

On *September 13, 1864*, the United States Government, in a letter to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, officially granted this. They officially recognized the Adventist Church as a noncombatant church. Hereafter, the Adventist Church could avail itself of this right. From then on, throughout the remainder of the war, its men could take advantage of any of the three options. And back in those days, raising \$300 per man was a very difficult task for our people. There is no record anywhere that we did not take advantage of all three options.

J.N. Andrews was then assigned the task of making sure that our men received the governmental rights granted to them.

There is an interesting sidelight to this matter. The Reform Church teaches that, if one of its young men goes into military service—either by his own choice or not—the church should disfellowship him.

But in *2 Selected Messages, 335* [written September 2, 1886], we are told that in her time, young Adventist men were being drafted, and we

were not to disfellowship them on this account. Instead we were to pray for them.

THE 1914-1917 CRISIS

In my research I learned still more: Going through historical archives all over the West Coast, I learned that *the Adventist General Conference never did endorse the wrong position during the First World War!*

This wrong position, urged by L.R. Conradi, was that our young men should go into the army and bear arms. Because of L.R. Conradi's influence, it was upheld during World War I by the German Adventist leadership. He even disfellowshipped faithful Adventist young men who refused to be inducted and bear arms.

However, many of our leaders in Europe opposed this wrong position. This included Elder Raft, president of the Scandinavian Union; Elder Campbell, president of the British Union; and Elder Tieche, president of the Latin Union. (The disfellowshippings primarily took place in Germany and Eastern European countries because of Conradi's executive decisions.)

Conradi was president of the European Division, at that time, and a dictator. He issued this wrong position on his own, and rammed it through. Conradi did it without consulting the other members of the Division Committee.

[L.R. Conradi had been a hard worker, ear-

nest evangelist, and a strong organizer. But, when he attained a position of leadership, he expressed disapproval of the Spirit of Prophecy and General Conference leadership. He became a dictator to the workers beneath him, and refused to accept guidance from church leaders in America. In later years, he left the church entirely.]

The crisis really hit in 1915; for, in that year, Conradi attended the Fall Council (which was held in Loma Linda). At that conference he tried to convince our worldwide leaders that his decision (that Adventist members who refused to enter the army and bear arms should be disfellowshipped) was the correct one. But church leaders decidedly opposed him. No one stood with him. His suggestion was rejected by the Fall Council and also by the 1918 General Conference Session.

But Conradi, with his rule or ruin spirit, returned to Division headquarters in Germany and published in the official Division paper that the Fall Council and General Conference *had supported* his position!

This false claim immediately aroused the sincere Adventist believers in those countries where they had met with severe reprisals from their governments for not bearing arms. Many of them concluded that, surely, the Adventist Church must be Babylon.

L.R. CONRADI

Louis Richard Conradi was a remarkable man. With a powerful brain and seemingly inexhaustible energy, he only needed four hours of rest in every twenty-four.

Born in Karlsruhe, Germany, March 10, 1856, he attended a Catholic school, and then journeyed to America. Becoming an Adventist in 1878, he attended Battle Creek College, completing a four-year course in 18 months while supporting himself as a typesetter.

In 1882 he was ordained to the ministry, married, and four years later was sent to Europe as a missionary. Traveling throughout Germany and Western Russia, he was imprisoned for 40 days. Released, he continued preaching in Russia and Holland.

In 1889, Conradi established the Hamburg mission, church, and printing house. By 1891,

he was head of Adventist work in Germany and Russia. He worked throughout eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Egypt. He preached to 63 different language groups.

In 1915, Conradi decided that Adventist men should fight in the war or be disfellowshipped. At the 1915 Fall Council, his idea was totally rejected by all in attendance. But he went back to Germany and said they had okayed it. This caused a great outcry among the members. The General Conference dissolved his newly formed European Division in 1918. A.G. Daniels and other leaders deeply apologized in 1920, but Reform leaders rejected their appeals. They were determined to lead an organization.

Conradi was removed from office in 1922. In 1932, disgruntled, he turned in his credentials, joined the Seventh Day Baptists as a minister, and died in 1939.

A paper was printed with this message in 1917, and called on believers to leave the Adventist Church and unite with the group which had released the publication.

The theory was that, if all the faithful and true Adventists would separate from Adventist Babylon and unite with them, the Latter Rain would fall on this “purified church” and Christ would return to earth for His people.

THE FRIEDENSAU CONFERENCE

Finally the Great War mercifully ended. Many Adventists had suffered because they would not bear arms. Many were beaten and jailed; some were killed. It was obvious that Conradi’s published position had not helped the matter. Men taken into the army had violated the Sabbath and killed their fellow men. Two of the Ten Commandments had thus been broken. And Conradi not only said this was good to do, but—worse—that those men who did not break the commandments should be disfellowshipped.

In reaction, thousands of Adventists all over Europe began uniting in opposition to the denomination.

In 1920, at Friedensau [*Free-din-saw*], Germany, a conference was held that was to prove as fateful as Jereboam’s meeting with Rehoboam [*1 Kings 12*]. Elder A.G. Daniels, president of the General Conference, came with 16 other delegates to this gathering, for the express purpose of resolving differences. The Reform group also brought 16 delegates to the meeting.

I had always been told by Reform leaders and in their literature that, at this meeting, the General Conference refused to budge an inch from its “bear arms or be disfellowshipped” position. But the truth is that the General Conference never held that position to begin with. And neither did the Fall Council, nor several European unions. The whole idea was Conradi’s. In addition, at this gathering, the very Adventist officers who had led out in doing wrong—Conradi, Shubert, and Drinhouse—admitted that they had been in the wrong.

At this juncture, the General Conference, under Daniel’s leadership, pled for forgiveness and asked the persecuted brethren to return to the church.

What would you have done if you had been there? You would have seen the truth of what had happened and reunited with the Adventist

Church.

Unfortunately, only Reform leaders who were in attendance determined to carry thousands with them into an offshoot.

The Reform leaders would not consider it. The beginnings of what would become a denomination were already in operation, and these men had tasted the power of leadership and liked it.

The Reform Church says its mission is to bring people together. But I spent a lifetime in that church and found that it exists only to divide people—people in the Reform and people in Adventism.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE REFORM CHURCH

In 1915 the Reform Church was initially organized. In 1918 the first split-off from the Reform Church took place. Those responsible for it called themselves “the third part,” as mentioned somewhere in Ezekiel [Ezekiel 5:2, 12; supposedly predicting 1 - the Adventist Church, 2 - the Reform Church, 3 - the third part].

Two early prominent leaders in the Reform Church were Edmund Doerschler and Henry Spanknodel. Doerschler left the Reform Church in 1923 and formed his own splinter group in Holland that year, under the name, *Dutch Reformed Church*.

Spanknodel caused much strife and division within the Reform Church and then left—and united with the German Nazi Party. Later he immigrated to America and became a leader of the Nazi Party in America.

By 1937, the Reform Church had been divided into 25 splinter groups in Europe alone. Most of these were small. Probably no one in the world knows how many splinter groups it has been divided into by the present time!

Yet few converts to the Reform Church ever learn of this. They think that the “*Reform Church*” is one church, and that there is only one “*Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement*” all over the world.

THE 1934 RIFT

Beginning in 1925 at the Gotha, Germany, meeting when the organization was finalized, Otto Welt was elected as first president of the Reform Church.

At the 1934 General Conference Session, Elder Welt was replaced by Elder Maas. But there was much opposition to this action. Welt had

been newly elected the General Conference treasurer and Maas its president; yet the two were strongly opposed to one another.

Elder Welt's son and son-in-law openly urged their father to oppose Elder Maas. All three accused Maas of adultery. But the General Conference Executive Committee rejected the idea as being based on "insufficient evidence." However, later before his death, Maas confessed that the charge was true.

The whole affair probably would have split the Reform Church right then; but, just at that time, in Europe, the Second World War was boiling into action. It soon broke out in warfare all across the continent. The split was postponed while people nursed their grudges.

THE 1948 SPLIT

It was not until 1948 that, following the War, the first General Conference Session was held. Meeting in Holland, trouble quickly developed.

The General Conference leaders wanted to transfer their headquarters to the United States. But the leaders of the American Union, already having trouble with the General Conference leaders, did not want them to move to the U.S.

D. Nicolici did not come to America until after the 1948 Session.

Now there happened to be a strong personal rivalry between D. Nicolici and Arthur Doerschler, the General Conference president (brother of Edmund Doerschler who had earlier pulled away and formed the Dutch Reformed Church).

So when it was learned that the American Union had sent no delegates to the 1948 Session, the European leaders interpreted this as rebellion.

So it was voted to send D. Nicolici to America, to straighten out the whole problem. Arriving here, he fought against the American leaders in their rebellion and on his own authority, disfellowshipped them. This was the origin of the full-scale split—that ran right down the middle of the Reform Church all over the world field. It was not the leadership adultery which was the cause (as later said). It was the intense leadership rivalries and desperation to grasp for more power.

Here is how it happened:

THE 1951 COMPLETION OF THE SPLIT

Following the 1948 Session, the effects of the growing split were disturbing many members. A number gave up on the whole mess and went back into the Adventist Church. Between 1948 and 1951, the worldwide membership of the Reform Church decreased from 12,200 to 10,762. Because 6,200 were behind the newly erected Iron Curtain, this left only 4,562 reform members in the West.

As of the beginning of 1951, the two large segments of the Reform Church were the American Union, under the leadership of Oscar Kramer, and the General Conference in Europe. (This, of course, in addition to the dozens of small splinter groups scattered in various places throughout the world.)

The 1951 Session was held in Holland. At this crucial Session, the fight was between D. Nicolici (a German) and Carlos Kozel (a Brazilian) for the presidency of the General Conference.

The General Conference delegates had not approved proxy voting, but Nicolici slipped it into the new charter without the other leader's knowledge. This procedure permitted a delegate to come with proxy votes from others who could not attend. This procedure avoided the cost of sending so many delegates, but meant that votes were cast for delegates not present and not understanding the issues. They were giving their vote to another to think and vote for them.

Kozel came to the Session with 14 delegates, who were pledged to him. Nicolici came with 11 regular delegates. But, in addition, Nicolici also brought with him proxies for 26 delegates, not attending, who were living in Communist countries. Without the proxies, Kozel would win; with them, Nicolici would win.

Kozel said the proxies did not count, but Nicolici said the earlier ruling could not now be changed; indeed, if the missing delegates had known their votes might have been excluded, some might have attended. So went the discussion.

A majority of the delegates voted to set aside the proxy votes and not count them. So when Kozel was elected, Nicolici immediately left the Session with his men and set to work to start his own worldwide Reform Church. Thus the split, initi-

ated in 1948, came to full fruition in 1951.

Attempting to counter this, Kozel's group appealed to the leadership of the American Union to reunite with it. Oscar Kramer, head of the American Union (headquartered in Sacramento), said they would do this if Kozel would resign from the presidency. Kozel stepped down and Stark took his place, and the American Union and European General Conference were reunited.

(As a sidelight, Elder Stark, president from 1939 to 1948 and again for a short time after 1951, later left the Reform Church and returned to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.)

So, following this latest reshuffling, it was D. Nicolici, on one side, and Oscar Kramer and the European General Conference on the other side.

But do not think this left Nicolici with a smaller segment. Although both sides immediately sent out agents ("missionary workers") throughout the world field to recruit Reformers from the other side, Nicolici's recruiters were the most successful. In addition, through civil court lawsuits in nations all over the world, he obtained custody of many local church properties.

At the same time, of course, the European General Conference [which we will here refer to as the "Kramer group"] was busily doing the same thing. The lawsuits continued on for years, draining funds and increasing the animosities and turmoil. The rancor and squabbling continues today.

THE 1967 BRAZIL MEETING

In 1967, an important Session of the Nicolici faction took place in Brazil. Gutknecht, president of the European General Conference, was invited to be present. It was agreed that both groups had the same beliefs and practices, but unity was impossible. To do so would mean that some leaders would have to step down, and no one wanted that to happen.

CONCLUSION

Down to the present day, this massive split in the Reform Church still exists, with all the animosity, strife, and feuding that came with it. More time is spent on opposing and stealing members from one another than for any other purpose.

Most of the money—including the tithe—is spent on three things: (1) Travel expenses to keep control over the local churches and unions, so that further splits won't occur. (2) Sending out "missionaries" to proselyte opposing Reform Church segments and Adventist members.

The whole business is a package all wrapped up in itself. And God stamps "selfishness" on the wrapper, for that is what it is all about.

Many of the local Reform Church members, living by themselves in quiet rural areas, only receive Reform Church *Sabbath School Quarterlies* and other papers by mail, plus occasional visits from "field representatives" to pray with them, speak kind words, and collect their tithes and offerings. These good folk learn but little of the true facts about what the leaders are doing and how the money is spent.

The twisting of the *Testimonies*, by the leaders, in order to support their existence is notorious.

One example is their attempt to prove that the Reform Church had a prophetic place in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy. But such proof is nonexistent. Often quoted is *Testimonies to Ministers*, pages 514 and 515. They take this passage and quote bits of it—and then quote the bits backward—in an attempt to prove that the Reform Church is the final, last-day, church.

Another example is a sentence on page 251 of Volume 8 of the *Testimonies*: "The time has come for a thorough reformation to take place."

They claim that the sentence proves that they have a reason for existence. Yet they omit the remainder of the paragraph which tells that, when that time comes, it will be characterized by prayer, unity, cessation of church strife, a warm pleading for forgiveness, a thorough drawing together, and working together. Read the passage; it speaks about exactly the opposite of the confusion, mutual arguing, and belligerence to be found within the Reform Church. The passage also speaks about personal heart reformation, not the starting of a new church organization.

Two ever-present issues are (1) the political concern for position, authority, and power, and (2) the decades-old misunderstanding, taught by the church leaders, that the Adventist Church upholds the belief that the Ten Commandments do not apply in a time of war.

I had to research both issues very thoroughly before I came to my present conclusions. My research and conclusions I have presented in what I have here set before you.

That concludes the second historical analysis of the history of the Reform Church. It was written by the son of Oscar Kramer.

Let us now turn our attention to the special doctrines of the Reform Church. These are the ones which they emphasize:

part six

the special teachings of the reform church

Throughout this study, we have learned that there are definite problems in the politics, warfare, petty regulations, and mind control over the church members.

But what about the teachings? In view of all the problems which confront one who decides to join the Reform Church, what distinctive doctrinal gain is there in uniting with them?

In the mid-1980s, I spoke by phone with a very knowledgeable woman whose husband, about two decades earlier, had been the Field Secretary of the General Conference in one of the two branches of the Reform Church.

I asked her this question:

“Your husband was a leader in the Reform Church for a number of years, and you worked by his side. What were the distinctive doctrines of the Reform Church? What were the cardinal beliefs that they specially made a point of in their church sermons?”

Her reply was startling.

“Anti-war; vegetarianism; a literal 144,000; they alone are the remnant; long hair—women aren’t to cut it; the Laodicean church will be spewed out; they are the Revelation 18 Angel. And that’s about it. I can recall little else that was particularly an issue. I had faithfully attended their least important and most important gatherings for years, and knew Reformers all over the U.S. and Canada, and some overseas as well.”

—Well, there it is. The unique doctrinal concerns of the Reform Church amount to a teacup in a teacup. Yet the Reform leaders keep hammering on them.

These are the special teachings which, in their eyes, makes them the special people of God.

The following statement was prepared, at my request, by a friend who, for many years, was a high-placed headquarters leader in the Reform Church.

THE 144,000

This is a crucial topic of great importance to Reform Church leaders. Let us carefully consider it:

First, the Spirit of Prophecy distinctly teaches that we should not make a great issue of the matter. As you study into the matter, keep in mind that *1 Selected Messages, 174-175*, and *Life Sketches, 110-111*, are clear that we should not make the nature and number of the 144,000 a key teaching, as the Reform leaders do.

Second, Reform leaders maintain that it is a literal number and includes everyone who has died in the Third Angel’s Message since 1844. But the Spirit of Prophecy does not teach that the 144,000 will include all the faithful who died since 1844.

Third, is the 144,000 a literal or symbolic number? The passage in *Early Writings, 15*, indicates that it may be literal. Let each study all the quotations and decide in his own mind (*2 Index 1917*). Whether or not it is a literal number has no bearing in determining whether one should join the Reform Church.

Fourth, we are given a definitive statement on exactly who is included in that group in *Great Controversy, 648:3-649:0*. That statement reveals that it will include those who live through the Final Crisis and beyond the close of human

probation. Therefore it cannot include all those who died since 1844.

THE SEALING

The Reform Church's view on the sealing is related to their concept of the 144,000. As noted above, they teach that everyone saved under the Third Angel's Message from 1844 onward, all the way down to those raised in the Special Resurrection just before Jesus returns—are included in the literal 144,000 and are the ones who receive the final Seal.

First, this concept is contrary to *Great Controversy*, 648:3-649:0, which teaches that the 144,000 will only include those who have gone through the Final Crisis, close of probation, and Jacob's Trouble.

Second, The Bible reveals that it is the 144,000 who will receive the Seal of the Living God (Rev. 7:1-4; compare 14:1-5). The Spirit of Prophecy explains that those who are sealed must undergo the test of the National Sunday Law.

"The Lord has shown me clearly that the image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided . . . [Rev. 13:11-17, quoted] . . . This is the test that the people of God must have before they are sealed."—*Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, 976 (compare *5 Testimonies*, 216).

[For much more on the sealing time, see our in-depth 62-page Spirit of Prophecy compilation, *The Seal and the Mark* (\$3.95, plus postage), which repeatedly shows that the Seal and the Mark of the Beast begin to be applied at the same time—as soon as the National Sunday Law is enacted.]

THE GREAT PREDICTED REFORMATION

There are several passages in the Spirit of Prophecy which predict a great reformation among us at some future time. The Reform Church leaders teach that they and their organization are this predicted reformation. However, when we read the Inspired descriptions and compare them with the Reform Church, we find that the two do not match.

But we do see a remarkable match when we compare the descriptions of the coming reformation with her descriptions of the Final Cri-

sis—when the National Sunday Law occurs and the Latter Rain falls on those willing to stand for God's Law in spite of imprisonment and death threats, and they go out and proclaim the truth with a Loud Cry.

Here are a couple sample passages:

"We are living in a special period of this earth's history. A great work must be done in a very short time . . . In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God's people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the Word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lighted with the heavenly influence. Great blessings were received by the true and humble people of God. I heard voices of thanksgiving and praise, and there seemed to be a reformation such as we witnessed in 1844 . . .

"The judgments of God are in the earth, and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we must give the message of warning that He has entrusted to us. We must give this message quickly, line upon line, precept upon precept. Men will soon be forced to great decisions, and it is our duty to see that they are given an opportunity to understand the truth, that they may take their stand intelligently on the right side. The Lord calls upon His people to labor—labor earnestly and wisely—while probation lingers."—*9 Testimonies*, 125-127.

"Notwithstanding the widespread declension of faith and piety, there are true followers of Christ in these churches. Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth, there will be, among the people of the Lord, such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children. At that time many will separate themselves from those churches in which the love of this world has supplanted love for God and His Word . . . The enemy of souls desires to hinder this work; and before the time for such a movement shall come, he will endeavor to prevent it, by introducing a counterfeit. In those churches which

he can bring under his deceptive power, he will make it appear that God's special blessing is poured out; there he will manifest what is thought to be great religious interest. Multitudes will exult that God is working marvelously for them, when the work is that of another spirit. Under a religious guise, Satan will seek to extend his influence over the Christian world."—*Great Controversy*, 464 [also read *8 Testimonies*, 250-251].

[For an in-depth analysis of this false revival, which will occur just before the true one does, see our 28-page Spirit of Prophecy Compilation, *Counterfeit Revival and the Threefold Union* (\$3.95, plus postage).]

If the Reform Church is here to solve the Adventist problem, as they claim, why are they, the Reformers, now also in the Laodicean condition? Ask the members, and they will freely admit that they are.

NO REMARRIAGE POSSIBLE

One rather remarkable error of the Reform Church concerns divorce and remarriage. Their leaders teach that there are absolutely no Biblical grounds for remarriage for anyone who has been divorced—for any reason.

First, this is in direct violation of the counsel given in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9:

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife [for any reason], let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery. And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."—*Matthew 5:31-32*.

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."—*Matthew 19:9*.

To defend their position, Reform Church leaders teach that the phrase, "saving for the cause of fornication," in Matthew 5:32 is not in the original Greek, but was added by later translators. *But consider this:*

Second, here is more information on these two Bible passages:

1 - Even if the phrase in Matthew 5:32 were omitted from the original Greek manuscripts, it is still in Matthew 19:9.

2 - Checking the Greek texts on Matthew

5:32, I find this:

(1) "Whosoever shall put away" has a variant in certain lesser manuscripts: "each one who dismisses," or something similar.

(2) "To commit adultery" has a similar grammatical variation in some manuscripts, with no change in the thought.

(3) "And the one which marries the dismissed [woman]," has "which shall marry" etc., for a variant.

(4) The phrase, "saving for the cause of fornication," has NO variations whatsoever. Yet that is the phrase said by Reform leaders to not be in the Greek. In the original it reads: "*parektos logou porneias*," which means "except for a matter [word, evidence] of fornication."

3 - A similar study of the Greek of Matthew 19:9 yields similar results:

(1) "Except it be for fornication" ("*me epi porneia*") has a variant in some manuscripts: "*parektos logou parneias*," which is the identical phrase used in Matthew 5:32.

Third, the Spirit of Prophecy clearly disagrees with the Reform Church's position on this matter:

"A woman may be legally divorced from her husband by the laws of the land and yet not be divorced in the sight of God and according to the higher law. There is only one sin, *which is adultery*, which can place the husband or wife in a position where they can be free from the marriage vow in the sight of God. Although the laws of the land may grant a divorce, yet they are husband and wife still in the Bible light, according to the laws of God."—*Letter 4a*, 1863 [*Adventist Home*, 344; italics ours].

"J did not put his wife away. She left him, and put him away, and married another man. I see nothing in the Scripture that forbids him to marry again in the Lord. He has a right to the affections of a woman . . . I cannot see that this new union should be disturbed. It is a serious matter to part a man and his wife. There is no Scriptural ground upon which to take such a step in this case . . . It was not until K had married another man that J married again."—*Letter 50*, 1895 [*2 Selected Messages*, 340].

Why would the Reform Church teach this false doctrine? It would appear that the leaders are trying to make regular Adventists more sinful than they are, because they permit an individual whose spouse has committed adultery to remarry—and this is supposed to be wicked.

EXCESSIVELY LONG HAIR

The Reform Church leaders command—demand—that women church members wear very long hair. The implication is that it should not be cut at all.

First, there is nothing in the Spirit of Prophecy about wearing long hair. 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 recommends that the hair of women should be longer than the hair of men. That is all we are told. How long is that? We are not told.

Second, we are nowhere told in Scripture that the hair of women should never be cut or trimmed. This position is unsupported by God's Word. Must it keep growing forever? (In the privacy of their own homes, their women secretly clip it at about waist length, so it will not get longer.)

In view of all the major issues in life, in the Bible, and in the Spirit of Prophecy, here we have a church which harps on hair length.

NATURE OF THE SHAKING AND SIFTING

The leaders of the Reform Church declare that God called their movement into existence for the purpose of giving the Laodicean Message (Rev. 3:14-22) to the Adventist Church. In support of this concept, they quote the following passage:

"I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this testimony. They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God's people."—*Early Writings*, 270.

It is claimed that this proves that those who accept the message to the Laodiceans will come out from Adventism and will unite with the Reform Church.

First, the *Early Writings* passage does not say that. Reading the entire brief chapter (*EW 269-273*) provides a much clearer view of the matter.

Second, the shaking results from a renewed heart obedience to God,—and it results in the Latter Rain. The shaking among God's people does not result in the Reform Church that broke away in 1914; it results in the Latter Rain and

the Loud Cry (*EW 271, bottom*).

[See our in-depth 32-page Spirit of Prophecy compilation, *The Shaking and Sifting* (\$3.95, plus postage) for much more on this.]

Third, it can be questioned whether the Reform Church leaders have ever known what the "straight testimony" really is, or, for that matter, the Laodicean Message. Their position is that both simply teach: "Separate from Adventism and join with us."

"You will take passages in the *Testimonies* that speak of the close of probation, of a shaking among God's people, and you will talk of a coming out from this people of a purer, holier people that will arise. Now all this pleases the enemy."—*Letter 15a, 1890 [1 Selected Messages, 179]*.

What we need to do is emphasize submission to Christ, purity of heart and life, and obedience to His Written Word. If that is done, God's people will know what to do regarding other matters, such as church relationship.

Fourth, a purification is indeed coming for the Advent people of God, but it will come in connection with the National Sunday Law crisis:

"The days of purification of the church are hastening on apace. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place we shall be better able to measure the strength of Israel. The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor [of the chaff].

"The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing."—*5 Testimonies, 80*.

"Those who have proved themselves unfaithful will not be entrusted with the flock. In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged. They are self-sufficient, independent of God, and He cannot use them. The Lord has faithful servants, who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view . . . The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The Mark of the Beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened im-

prisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men.

“In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church. True godliness will be clearly distinguished from the appearance and tinsel of it. Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat . . . Those who have been timid and self-distrustful will declare themselves openly for Christ and His truth. The most weak and hesitating in the church will be as David—willing to do and dare. The deeper the night for God’s people, the more brilliant the stars. Satan will sorely harass the faithful; but, in the name of Jesus, they will come off more than conquerors. Then will the church of Christ appear ‘fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.’”—5 *Testimonies*, 80-82.

Thus we see that the shaking, or separation within the church, will take place at the time that the crisis of the Mark of the Beast occurs. And this takes place at the time that the Sunday Law is enacted and urged upon all men (see 7BC 976; compare GC 449, 604-605, and Ev 234).

Even though a majority of God’s people refuse to obey Him when faced with threatened imprisonment and death (GC 608; 5T 80-81, 136, 463), yet there will be a final remnant that will stand true to God in this Final Crisis. They will be empowered by God, will take orders directly from Him (TM 300), and will give the Revelation 14 message—at that time, having swelled to a Loud Cry, to all the world. Probation will close and the end will come.

THE VOICE OF GOD

It is the teaching of the Reform Church that the “Voice of God” is heard in the actions of their General Conference Sessions, as well as in the decisions of their General Conference Committee leaders in small committee meetings.

This doctrine is based on a quotation in 9 *Testimonies*, 260-261, that the General Conference in Session could at times possibly be respected as the Voice of God.

The Silver Spring, Maryland, church leadership has a similar misconception. Let me explain:

That particular quotation was speaking

about the large Session in which duly appointed (not elected) men are gathered together from the entire church throughout the world field. In this passage, we are specifically told that a few men are not to be regarded as the Voice of God, nor that even the General Conference officers could be regarded as such since they are elected, not appointed. It is only the delegates from the world field, in attendance at the General Conference Session, which should receive the highest level of respect.

Unfortunately, when a clique of key leaders controls a Session—because nearly all the other delegates are their employees (!)—one cannot expect the result to be the Voice of God. Yet that is what our own Sessions have become (see *Captive Sessions [WM-114-116]*). One of our typical General Conference Sessions, with about 2,000 delegates in attendance, will have no more than 7-9 percent laymen. All the others are church employees on various levels. Since the delegates are required to sit in certain blocks on the main floor of the assembly, if anyone votes out of line, it can easily be noted.

It is also a mistake to suppose that the officers working in the General Conference or the General Conference Committee (which meet in the Spring and Annual Councils) constitutes the Voice of God. First, neither one is a full General Conference Session. Second, they are entirely composed of top leaders and their hired underlings.

“At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God’s work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the Voice of God. But this is not saying that the decisions of a General Conference [Session], composed of an assembly of duly appointed, representative men from all parts of the field should not be respected.”—9 *Testimonies*, 260-261.

If you will carefully read 9T 260-261, you will find that nowhere in that passage are any human group of men ever called the “Voice of God.” A large gathering of God’s people should be respected, but it is not infallible.

We are told that man’s will and voice is not to be regarded as the Voice of God (CT 528; FE 308) because he is so erring. The truth is that the men represented at a General Conference

Session must be so closely connected to God that they are worthy of speaking on His behalf. And it cannot always be said that such is the case.

The following quotation is taken from a manuscript which is speaking about an entire General Conference Session, not merely a small committee of leaders. It is obvious that a General Conference Session is not necessarily the Voice of God.

“The People Have Lost Confidence—It [the April 1901 General Conference in Session] is working upon wrong principles that have brought the cause of God into its present embarrassment. The people have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work. Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the Voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I thought it was almost blasphemy. The voice of the Conference [speaking of the General Conference in Session] ought to be the Voice of God, but it is not, because some in connection with it are not men of faith and prayer; they are not men of elevated principle. There is not a seeking of God with the whole heart; there is not a realization of the terrible responsibility that rests upon those in this institution to mold and fashion minds after the divine similitude.”—Manuscript 37, 1901, 8 [Manuscript Release, No. 365].

We listen to the Voice of God when we study the Scriptures (*Ed 127*), and the Scriptures should be studied as the Voice of God to the soul (*FE 444*). The Voice of God that spoke to Christ speaks to every believing soul (*DA 113*), and it warns men to separate themselves from the prevailing iniquity (*PP 166-167*). When in silence we submit ourselves to Him, His voice is heard more distinctly (*FE 441; MH 58*). His voice comes through the *Testimonies* (*1SM 41*). The Decalogue is an echo of it (*Ev 598*), and the voice of conscience is the Voice of God (*5T 120*). We must learn to distinguish it from other voices (*5T 69; 2SM 16*). Impulse is not the Voice of God (*GC 191*). Man’s will and voice are not to be interpreted as the Voice of God (*CT 528; FE 308*). A few men are not to be regarded as the voice of the General Conference [Session] nor as the Voice of God (*9T 260-261*). The idea that a given Session must be the Voice of God is blasphemy (*Manuscript 37, 1901, quoted above*).

THE REVELATION 18 ANGEL

The Reform Church teaches that it is the an-

gel of Revelation 18:1-3; and that verse 4, speaking about the Loud Cry, is yet future. Thus they split verses 1-3 from verse 4.

“Resolved. 1. That we reaffirm our position on this important point—that Revelation 18:1-3 has a definite application to the work of revival and reformation going forward among God’s people at the present time. 2. That the ‘Loud Cry’ is yet future.”—*Statement of Belief, published in the General Conference issue of the Reformation Herald, April-May, 1960.*

It is quite common for Adventist splinter groups to call themselves the Revelation 18 angel. Such statements are made in an effort to vindicate their organizational existence as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. But the truth is that the Spirit of Prophecy descriptions of the work of the Revelation 18 angel disproves these various claims, and clearly reveals the true mission and work of this angel.

The Reform Church leaders declare that their organization has been the Revelation 18 Angel since 1921.

Yet, if the Reform Church is the Revelation 18 Angel as claimed, how could it have split in 1951?

Here are some facts to keep in mind:

Great Controversy, 389-390, reveals that the work of this angel is yet future. It will take place in the Final Crisis as the National Sunday Law is enacted and enforced. Read *Great Controversy, 603-607*, and onward.

“Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he ascended, the earth was lightened with his glory . . . The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel’s message as it swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet. I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel’s message.”—*Early Writings, 277.*

“The last great conflict is before us; but help is to come to all who love God and obey His law, and the earth, the whole earth, is to be lighted with the glory of God. ‘Another angel’ is to come down from heaven. This angel represents the giving of the loud cry, which is to come from those who are preparing to cry mightily, with a strong

voice, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.' ”—*Review, April 19, 1906.*

“The latter rain is to fall upon the people of God. A mighty angel is to come down from heaven, and the whole earth is to be lighted with His glory. Are we ready to take part in the glorious work of the third angel? Are our vessels ready to receive the heavenly dew? Have we defilement and sin in the heart? If so, let us cleanse the soul temple, and prepare for the showers of the latter rain.”—*Review, April 21, 1891.*

[For many, many, more quotations on the third and fourth angels, their messages, and when they do their work, see our 45-page booklet, *The Loud Cry* (\$3.95, plus postage), in our 18-part *End Time Series*, the most complete classified collection of Spirit of Prophecy statements on last-day events ever compiled.]

Thus we can see, from the above and other Spirit of Prophecy statements, that (1) the message and work of the Revelation 18 Angel is yet future. (2) The latter rain/loud cry experience that he will bring is yet future. (3) The message of this angel is one message, and it is wrong to try to split it up as the Reform leaders do. (4) When this angel descends to the earth, he will lighten the whole earth with his glory. (5) The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in a latter rain, cannot be separated from the descent of this angel, and the latter rain is yet future. (6) We are told that this angel does not come down to strengthen the wait-

ing people of God until all nations have drunk of the wine of Babylon. That is a future event also. Read *Great Controversy*, 389-390, for more on this.

NON-DOCTRINAL ISSUES

Other matters could be mentioned, such as the Reform leaders' position on Gospel order, church organization, unity, and submission. These are heralded by the leaders as of the highest importance. But it all boils down to mind control.

“*Gospel order*” means that no new ideas are to be considered without first having submitted them to the leaders.

“*Church organization*” means that a very few men run the entire operation. With the exception of local church finances, they have almost total say over how the money in the church is spent.

The “*missionary work of the church*” often equates with unnecessary property purchases and expensive trips, to maintain leadership control over the local fields.

“*Unity and submission*” means that those who do not submit to the errors and policies of the leaders are disfellowshipped.

You may have friends who are thinking of joining the Reform. They need this information. Share it with them. Help them avoid a detour which they may later regret.