

New, Yet Historic

By Gordon Hyde, Editor

Adventist Perspectives

The first General Meeting of the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) convened September 7-10, 1989, in Lincoln, Nebraska. By invitation of President Joel O. Tompkins, the Society met in the well-appointed headquarters building of the Mid-America Union Conference. Gracious accommodations, food service, and transportation were provided on the campus of nearby Union College.

These open sessions drew an international gathering of more than a hundred seminary and college theologians, college administrators, division and union presidents, active and retired General Conference officers, editors, and departmental directors, lawyers, physicians and dentists, doctoral candidates from the Seminary, active and retired pastors, Bible instructors, and business people.

On Thursday evening Elder Francis W. Wernick, former General Conference vice president, gave the keynote address. He reaffirmed the supreme authority of the Bible in the faith of the Seventh-day Adventist church—a faith that is not subordinated to human reason, science, history, philosophy, or any other source of human knowledge and wisdom.

Friday's program included presentations by four of the theologians present. Panel discussions followed each presentation. The morning was devoted to the biblical basis of our faith. Dr. Gerhard Hasel, of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University, traced the vicissitudes of the historical-critical method (higher criticism) in Seventh-day Adventist history, and Dr. Richard Davidson, also of the Seminary faculty, outlined his personal pilgrimage of faith into and out of the same critical approach to the Bible.

The Friday afternoon program dealt with another major topic of ATS emphasis, the atonement. Dr. Norman R. Gulley of Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists compared the many theories of atonement with

what the Bible says about it. Dr. Leslie Hardinge, retired but recently president of the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary (Far East), drew upon the rich blood symbolism of the atonement in the sanctuary services.

On Friday evening Elder J. Robert Spangler, editor of *Ministry* magazine, appealed earnestly for the speedy fulfillment of the mission assigned the Adventist church. His hearers responded with testimonies, prayers, and renewed consecration.

Sabbath School the next morning was superintended by Elder D. A. Delafield, president of Adventist Retired Workers. Elder R. G. Peck, president of the Rwanda Union Mission, presented a well-illustrated mission report. Dr. Gordon Hyde, editor of *Adventist Perspectives* at Southern College, led out in the lesson study. During the worship service the speaker, Elder Joel Tompkins, expressed his concerns regarding the responsibility of educational boards, administrators, and teachers for the parents and youth of the church and for trends that are undermining faith today.

Dr. C. Mervyn Maxwell, of the Seminary Church History faculty, discoursed in the afternoon upon the problem of identity within the Seventh-day Adventist church, stirring considerable appreciative discussion.

The agape supper that closed the Sabbath was chaired by Dr. Jack Blanco, chairman of the Religion Department at Southern College and president of ATS. Elder Cyril Miller, president of the Southwestern Union, then presented a telling analysis of trends that he has observed in the church.

The weekend closed with a Sunday morning business session. For the special benefit of overseas members and visitors, it was decided that the 1990 General Meeting would be coordinated with the General Conference Session in Indianapolis.

Many who attended the weekend in Lincoln commented on the spirit of united fellowship and spiritual concern that was fostered by the ministries of Dr. Raymond Holmes, director of Student Life at the Seminary, and by Dr. Derek Morris, religion teacher at Southern College. Singing, morning prayer seasons, and personal testimonies made the gathering a spiritual feast. As one college administrator said, "It was just like camp meeting."