

QUESTIONS ON DOCTRINE AND
M. L. ANDREASEN: THE
BEHIND-THE-SCENES
INTERACTIONS

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Perhaps no other book has aroused so much controversy in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as the 1957 publication of *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*.¹ The book was published as both a direct result of and a representative response to the Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956, involving Walter Martin and Donald Grey Barnhouse² on the evangelical side and a number of General Conference leaders on the Adventist side. *Questions on Doctrine* was to be the apology par excellence of Adventism.

However, when the book came out, it created a great uproar within and without the church. Evangelical Protestants found themselves divided on the issue of the acceptability of Seventh-day Adventists as Christians. Adventists, on the other hand, saw within their ranks an even greater division. Although the book received a de facto imprimatur from the General Conference, it generated a passionate dissent concerning the book's treatment of Christ's human nature and the atonement. Single-handedly spearheading this protest was M. L. Andreasen, a retired theologian. Determined to have *Questions on Doctrine* censured and withdrawn, Andreasen campaigned against it, denounced it as "the most subtle and dangerous error"³ and "a most dangerous heresy."⁴

In this paper, which comes from Chapter 4 of my Andrews University doctoral dissertation, "Reactions to Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences and *Questions on Doctrine*, 1955-1971,"⁵ I provide a narrative analysis of the public and private interactions between Andreasen and Adventist church leaders.

¹*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1957).

²Walter Martin was on assignment from the *Eternity* magazine as its consulting editor, and Donald Grey Barnhouse was the publisher of *Eternity*. *Eternity* was one of the most widely read periodicals at the time among fundamentalist/evangelical Protestants.

³M. L. Andreasen, "A Review and a Protest," 15 October 1957, Collection 152, box 28, folder 8, Roy Allan Anderson Collection, Andrews University Library.

⁴M. L. Andreasen, "A Most Dangerous Heresy," September 1960, Collection 152, box 28, folder 8, Roy Allan Anderson Collection, Andrews University Library.

⁵Juhyeok Nam, "Reactions to Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences and *Questions on Doctrine*, 1955-1971" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 2005).

Andreasen Enters the Discussion

Andreasen's entry into the conversations over the Adventist-evangelical dialogues and *Questions on Doctrine* came quite late in the process because he was not one of the 250 Adventist workers⁶ selected to give prepublication review of *Questions on Doctrine*. It was when Andreasen first read Barnhouse's September 1956 *Eternity* article,⁷ in which he declared Adventism evangelical, that the 80-year-old retired theologian became immediately troubled by what he encountered. His concerns centered on Barnhouse's claims that not only were Adventists denying doctrinal positions attributed to them previously, but also were said to be in the course of changing some of their teachings such as the doctrine of the investigative judgment.⁸ Andreasen was further disturbed by Barnhouse's declaration that those who opposed the "new position" taken by Adventist leaders belonged to the "lunatic fringe," and "wild-eyed irresponsibles."⁹

What actually prompted Andreasen to voice his concerns, however, was LeRoy Edwin Froom's February 1957 article in *Ministry* entitled "The Priestly Application of the Atoning Act."¹⁰ In this article, Froom stated that Christ's death provided "a complete, perfect, and final atonement for man's sin" and "a completed act of atonement."¹¹ Upon reading this article Andreasen immediately wrote a five-page response dated February 15, 1957, entitled "The Atonement," in which he criticized Froom for harboring an "*appalling theology*" and masquerading it as Adventist doctrine. Andreasen's central concern was that Froom had put the cross event and the post-1844 heavenly event "in juxtaposition and on the same basis" which resulted in a "*shallow and confused*" understanding of the atonement. In concluding the diatribe against Froom's article, Andreasen expressed the deep apprehension that he felt toward the Adventist-evangelical conferences, the articles by Barnhouse and Martin, and the planned publication of *Questions on Doctrine*: "Adventists will not permit any man or group of men to make a 'creed' for them, and tell them what to believe. Too much is at stake. The present procedure is likely to bring results unlooked for. To some it looks like the Omega¹² so long foretold. Some of our brethren, in order to be considered orthodox, have compromised our

⁶R. R. Figuhr, "Questions on Doctrine," *Ministry*, January 1958, 29.

⁷Donald Grey Barnhouse, "Are Seventh-day Adventists Christian?" *Eternity*, September 1956, 6.

⁸Virginia Steinweg, *Without Fear or Favor: The Life of M. L. Andreasen* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1979), 166-170.

⁹Barnhouse, 6.

¹⁰LeRoy Edwin Froom, "The Priestly Application of the Atoning Act," *Ministry*, February 1957, 9-12, 44.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 9, 10, 44.

¹²The "Omega" is a reference to Ellen White's prediction about the end-time apostasy to appear in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. See Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:197.

position.¹³ If the forthcoming book is to contain what Froom claimed to be the Adventist view of the atonement, Andraesen threatened in his April 2 letter to Froom, “I shall feel compelled to protest with pen and voice to the limit of my ability.” “And remember,” he intoned, “there are yet seven thousand in Israel that have not bowed their knees to Baal, nor gone with the ark to Ekron, nor seeking counsel or advice there.”¹⁴

*The Beginning of Andraesen’s
Public Campaign*

So began Andraesen’s campaign to invalidate the view of atonement presented in Froom’s February 27 *Ministry* article, to prevent the publication of *Questions on Doctrine*, and—after the release of the book—to protest what he viewed to be apostasy and heresy proclaimed in it. On October 15, just as *Questions on Doctrine* was rolling off the press, Andraesen issued a document entitled “A Review and a Protest.”¹⁵ “If the sacrifice on the cross is complete, perfect, final,” he wrote, “our doctrine of the sanctuary, of the investigative judgment, of the 2300 days, all will fall to the ground and also Sister White’s leadership. This is the most subtle and dangerous error that I know of.”¹⁶

Having now committed himself to a protest campaign, Andraesen began issuing a series of manuscripts entitled “The Atonement,” following the title of his first manuscript of February 15 and numbered retroactively to that document. Between November 4, 1957, and March 13, 1958, he fired off seven more papers, striking each time at the section on the atonement in *Questions on Doctrine*. During this time, the only concern he had with the book was with “the section on the Atonement,” which he deemed “utterly unacceptable.” As for the rest of the book, he actually commended it as containing “so many good things . . . that may be of real help to many.”¹⁷

During the same period, as the epistolary joust between Andraesen and General Conference president R. R. Figuhr continued, Figuhr responded to Andraesen by refuting his attack on *Questions on Doctrine*. He denied that the book made Christ’s heavenly sanctuary ministry unnecessary, but simply emphasized “the atoning sacrifice of Christ” in its rightful place in the process of atonement.¹⁸ He pointed out that even Andraesen himself agreed in his *Book of Hebrews* that Christ “‘accomplished’” and “‘finished His work as victim

¹³M. L. Andraesen, “The Atonement,” 15 February 1957, Ellen G. White Document File 961-b-1, Andrews University Library, emphases original.

¹⁴M. L. Andraesen to L. E. Froom, 2 April 1957, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773.06d, Loma Linda University Library.

¹⁵Andraesen, “A Review and a Protest.”

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷M. L. Andraesen, “The Atonement, [III],” 4 November 1957, Document File 961-b-1, Ellen G. White Estate.

¹⁸R. R. Figuhr to M. L. Andraesen, 11 November 1957, Document File 961, Ellen G. White Estate.

and sacrifice.”¹⁹ In reply, Andreasen retorted that Figuhr had not adequately understood the doctrine of the atonement, which “is a most profound and delicate subject, one that is not comprehended in a moment or a year.” Hinting strongly that he should have been consulted in the composition of the section on the atonement, he reminded Figuhr that “it takes years and years of concentrated study, which your advisers have not given to it.”²⁰

*General Conference Leadership
Admonishes Andreasen*

Andreasen’s letter and continued agitation led the General Conference officers to issue a formal letter of admonishment and a demand to cease his activities. In communicating this decision, Figuhr chided Andreasen for inciting confusion in the church. It was Andreasen who was creating “Omegas,” not the General Conference, Figuhr wrote—“Omegas of confusion, misunderstanding and destructiveness that undermine the church of God.”²¹ In another letter, dated December 16, 1957, Figuhr stepped up pressure on Andreasen to cease his campaign by implying that his sustentation might be affected: “You are doing yourself great harm and bringing confusion and perplexity to the cause. You should not now be tearing down what, through the years, you have helped to build up. To see a retired worker, supported by sustentation of his church, actively opposing that church and breaking down confidence in its leadership, cannot but make one feel very sad.”²²

Though Figuhr did not make a direct connection between Andreasen’s activities and continuation of his sustentation, the threat implicit in this letter provoked a sharp response by the elderly theologian. “Your ukase that my continued activities will undoubtedly bring up my relationship to the church of course means that my credentials and sustentation will or may be revoked,” he shot back. “This is a good and forceful argument; but in the United States of America it is a cheap and silly one. It may be effective in cowering inferiors, time servers, slaves, but not men. And of course it is a psychological mistake. Denominationally it is illegal.” Then in the seething tone of a deeply hurt and anguished soul, he wrote:

I am a man of peace. I can be reasoned with. But no man can threaten me and expect to avoid the consequences. So I hope you will not renege on your threat, but will carry through. . . . You have threatened me. . . . You have disqualified yourselves by judging without a hearing; the next higher authority is the people. You are upholding the Ministry [*sic*] which is destroying confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy, watering down the

¹⁹M. L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews*, 53, cited in R. R. Figuhr to M. L. Andreasen, 11 November 1957, Document File 961, Ellen G. White Estate.

²⁰M. L. Andreasen to R. R. Figuhr, 3 December 1957, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773.06d, Loma Linda University Library.

²¹R. R. Figuhr to M. L. Andreasen, 16 December 1957, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773.06d, Loma Linda University Library.

²²R. R. Figuhr to M. L. Andreasen, 19 December, 1957, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773.06d, Loma Linda University Library.

Testimonies, telling plain untruths, etc. On this there can be no compromise. You say the matter is settled, you have closed the door. The matter is not settled and never can be with a threat.²³

Then, in a tone filled with intrigue and suspicion, he warned whoever else might be reading the letter:

The observant reader will not have failed to see that the threat is aimed at him [the reader] as much as at me. In fact I am a minor consideration. The real aim is to intimidate others from following my example. Washington is threatening the whole working force of the denomination and using me as an example of what will happen if others should wish to protest.

Finally, Andreasen's letter of protest turned to one of incitation for open rebellion against the church: "So this is a warning from me to make sure where you stand if you join in the protest. It may cost you much. Our leaders—some of them—have become our masters, and are ready to bear down on any that objects."²⁴

*Window of Reconciliation
Opens and Closes*

As the new year of 1958 dawned, Adventists leaders across North America were abuzz in reaction to the sharp, rancorous pitch of Andreasen's most recent letter, with some suggesting that the elderly theologian might be suffering from "a mental ailment."²⁵ In early February 1958, however, a potential for breakthrough in the controversy opened up when Andreasen agreed to a meeting at the church's headquarters in Washington, D.C. A far more subdued Andreasen wrote Figuhr: "I am ready to come in good faith" with one condition, that "the hearing be public, OR that a stenographer be present and that [I] be given a copy of the minutes."²⁶

The General Conference officers responded quickly to Andreasen's letter and voted on February 10 to invite him at the church's expense to the denominational headquarters for a meeting with a specially appointed committee of twelve—all senior church leaders, including Figuhr. In coming to this decision, the officers determined that the meeting was not to be a public hearing, but they stipulated that all the statements would "be taken down on tape and recorded, both for the committee and Elder Andreasen."²⁷

²³M. L. Andreasen to Officers of the General Conference and Other Men in Responsible Positions, 29 December, 1957, Collection 152, box 28, folder 8, Roy Allan Anderson Collection, Andrews University Library.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵F. W. Schnepfer to R. R. Figuhr, 7 January 1958, Record Group 58, box 11358-11359, General Conference Archives, Silver Springs, Maryland.

²⁶M. L. Andreasen to R. R. Figuhr, 5 February 1958, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

²⁷Minutes of the General Conference Officers' Meeting, 10 February 1958, General Conference Archives.

Figuhr communicated this news to Andreasen on the same day and suggested February 25 as the date for the meeting.

With this latest exchange of letters, hope for a peaceful resolution to the conflict seemed suddenly within reach, but what transpired thereafter over the course of the following three months to derail this plan remains a rather perplexing chapter in Adventist history. Andreasen was willing to come for the proposed February 25 meeting in Washington, except that his wife fell suddenly ill and was hospitalized. Hence, he requested that the meeting be postponed for “four or five weeks.”²⁸

In the intervening time, however, a major misunderstanding over how the meeting would be recorded led to the cancellation of the postponed meeting. Though the General Conference officers had voted that the meeting “be taken down on tape and recorded, both for the committee and Elder Andreasen,”²⁹ Figuhr had only stated in his February 10 letter that a tape recording would be made, but not whether Andreasen would be given a copy of the minutes. So, on February 21, Andreasen sought a clear answer to this question. “[A copy of the minutes] is necessary,” he wrote, “for in any discussion of what is said or not said, it will be my word against that of twelve.” “I must have a copy of the minutes,” he insisted. “This is the condition upon which I come.”³⁰ However, Figuhr, as seen in his subsequent letters, misunderstood Andreasen’s demand as wanting a copy of the audiotape recording, not just a written transcript of the meeting. Ultimately, this misunderstanding led to Andreasen breaking off the agreement to meet. Because each side was deeply distrustful of the other, the seemingly less consequential “technicality” over how the record of their meeting would be taken and made available derailed a meeting that potentially might have saved the controversy from spinning out of control to the degree that it did over the following years and decades.

Thus from April 1958 and on, the relationship between Andreasen and the General Conference continued to deteriorate until the very end of the senior theologian’s life. On May 1, Andreasen fired off a letter to Figuhr accusing him of prevarication and requested formally a public hearing on the Adventist-evangelical conferences, activities of those involved with the conferences, and the content of *Questions on Doctrine*. Beginning with this letter, Andreasen, for the first time, broadened his focus beyond the issue of the atonement. He continued in his open letters of May 15 and June 4, charging *Questions on Doctrine* with removing or changing a number of the “pillars” of Adventist theology such as the teachings on the mark of the beast, the human nature of Christ, the investigative judgment, and Ellen White.³¹

²⁸M. L. Andreasen to R. R. Figuhr, 12 February 1958, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

²⁹Minutes of the General Conference Officers’ Meeting, 10 February 1958, General Conference Archives.

³⁰M. L. Andreasen to R. R. Figuhr, 21 February 1958, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

³¹M. L. Andreasen, “Review, I,” 15 May 1958, Collection 152, box 28, folder 8, Roy Allan Anderson Collection, Andrews University Library; idem, “Memorial,” 4 June 1958, Document

In spite of the resumption of open letters and the harsh rhetoric contained in each, one final, albeit perfunctory, overture was made by the General Conference to explore the possibility of a reconciliation meeting. Between May 13 and July 24, seven letters were exchanged between the General Conference officers and Andreasen. In response to Andreasen's demand for a public hearing, Figuhr offered a hearing at the General Conference Committee.³² Andreasen scoffed at the notion that appearing before this committee—a large but closed group—could constitute a public hearing and insisted the meeting be completely open to the public—just as Martin Luther's trial in Worms was made public.³³

Andreasen Releases Letters to the Churches

In February 1959, Andreasen continued his onslaught by initiating a new series of missives called *Letters to the Churches*, with the help of a printer in Oregon named A. L. Hudson. Even before joining with Andreasen, Hudson began protesting independently against “the head-long retreat” that the book was taking toward apostasy in the area of Christ's human nature—predating Andreasen's criticisms by half a year.³⁴

Along with the nine-part series entitled “The Atonement,” the six-part *Letters to the Churches* became Andreasen's lasting theological legacy from this era. The six documents released at various times throughout 1959 contained not only Andreasen's key criticisms of *Questions on Doctrine*, but also accounts of his struggle against the book and the church during this time period. *Letters to the Churches* contained Andreasen's treatises on Christ's human nature, Ellen White, and the atonement and narratives of his recent challenges against the General Conference in which he raised questions about the doctrinal integrity and moral authority of the leaders.³⁵ Except for the sections on Christ's human nature, the content of the letters was not new. Most sections of the letters were condensed and polished versions of the “Atonement” series.

Andreasen's key concern regarding the human nature of Christ was that the new book presented Christ's incarnation as a man who was radically different from all other human beings, contrary to what he believed to be the orthodox Adventist position. Andreasen believed that Christ was born in the flesh with exactly the same set of tendencies to sin as all other human

File 961a, Ellen G. White Estate.

³²R. R. Figuhr to M. L. Andreasen, 13 May 1958, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

³³M. L. Andreasen to R. R. Figuhr, 19 May 1958, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773.06f, Loma Linda University Library.

³⁴A. L. Hudson to R. R. Figuhr, R. A. Anderson, and F. D. Nichol, 29 December 1957, cited in J. I. Robison to A. L. Hudson, 6 January 1958, Record Group 58, box 11358-11359, General Conference Archives.

³⁵M. L. Andreasen, *Letters to the Churches*. The six letters were titled: “The Incarnation: Was Christ Exempt?”; “Attempted Tampering”; “Downgrading Mrs. White”; “A Resumé”; “Why Not a Hearing? Inherited Passions”; and “The Atonement.”

beings. Christ's victory over sin in spite of his innate sinful tendencies was the cornerstone on which Andreasen had built his doctrine of the final atonement and the last generation. The last generation on earth would consist of a group of God's people who would demonstrate to the universe that it is possible to keep the law of God and live a sinless life.³⁶

When Andreasen read the statement on p. 383 of *Questions on Doctrine* that indicated that Christ was "exempt from the inherited passions and pollutions that corrupt the natural descendant of Adam,"³⁷ he interpreted the word "passions" as the sum total of "man's emotions." Working with this definition, Andreasen argued that to exempt a person from passions would be to take away "all temptations that incite men to action," which "results in a creature less than a man, a kind of no-man, a shadow man, a non-entity." Thus, Andreasen contended, to state that Christ was exempt from the passions of humankind would be to rob Christ of his true and complete humanity—and Andreasen's last generation teaching of its theological basis.³⁸ The notion "that God exempted Christ from the passions that corrupt men" was for Andreasen "the acme of all heresy," brought in through the Adventist-evangelical conferences.³⁹

Church Leadership Responds to Letters

The General Conference administration responded immediately in February 1959 through a statement to union and local conference presidents in North America. In reference to Andreasen and *Letters to the Churches*, Figuhr wrote, "his evident purpose is to stir up trouble." As such, Figuhr did not encourage "creating a great issue over the matter," as Andreasen "would welcome it." His continuing position on this matter was that Andreasen would soon blow off all steam and simmer down. At the same time, Figuhr attached Edward Heppenstall's March 3, 1959, letter to Andreasen to help administrators answer potential questions arising from Andreasen's attacks.⁴⁰

At the same time, efforts were continually being made on a personal level to dissuade Andreasen from prolonging the controversy. On one occasion, R. R. Bietz, president of the Southern California Conference, asked Figuhr if Andreasen could be encouraged to "prepare a manuscript on the Atonement without any reference to any controversy" to "keep him busy" and "keep his mind off other things," such as continuing to challenge church leaders.⁴¹ Figuhr

³⁶See M. L. Andreasen, *The Book of Hebrews* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1948), 58-60; idem, *The Sanctuary Service* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1937, 1947), 299-321.

³⁷*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, 383.

³⁸Andreasen, *Letters to the Churches*, 5, 6.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 8-14, 94.

⁴⁰R. R. Figuhr to North American Division Union and Local Conference Presidents, 30 March 1959, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773.06g, Loma Linda University Library.

⁴¹R. R. Bietz to R. R. Figuhr, 24 March 1959, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773.06g, Loma Linda University Library. See also R. R. Bietz to M. L. Andreasen, 3 November 1960, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

was happy to follow this course of action.⁴² This manuscript, if Andreasen would manage to make it acceptable to the leaders, would be published by a denominational publishing house and both sides would be able to save face. Andreasen would be able to state his beliefs and have them published by the church, while the leaders would not need to change anything in *Questions on Doctrine*. Bietz worked hard to convince Andreasen that “this might be a tremendous contribution that he could make to the denomination,”⁴³ but Andreasen was nonresponsive to the suggestion.

By June 1960, all hope of reconciliation was extinguished and the dialogues came to an insurmountable impasse. Andreasen felt the leaders of the church were united in compromise and apostasy—unwilling to listen to his voice of reason and truth. The leaders felt that all public and private overtures toward Andreasen had been exhausted and that the church was in need of a strong theological response to his charges. It fell upon A. V. Olson to provide such a response—a comprehensive theological critique of Andreasen’s writings. Olson’s document, titled “An Examination of M. L. Andreasen’s Objections to the Book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*,”⁴⁴ was the most complete defense of the church leaders’ position that appeared during this period, providing rebuttals to eight major objections submitted by Andreasen from 1957 through 1960.⁴⁵ In each of his refutations against Andreasen, Olson sought to demonstrate that Andreasen was self-contradictory and out of harmony with the inspired writings that he purported to defend.

*The Final Interactions, the Official Censure,
and Personal Reconciliation*

The interactions that took place between Andreasen and the church leaders in the final year of the retired theologian’s life were as tumultuous as those that took place in the preceding four years. In his rejoinder to Olson, titled “A Most Dangerous Heresy,” Andreasen reiterated his grievances against *Questions on Doctrine*. In a departure from his observation three years earlier that “only the section on the Atonement . . . is unacceptable and must be

⁴²R. R. Figuhr to R. R. Bietz, 27 March 1959, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773.06g, Loma Linda University Library.

⁴³R. R. Bietz to R. R. Figuhr, 24 March 1959, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773.06g, Loma Linda University Library.

⁴⁴A. V. Olson, “An Examination of M. L. Andreasen’s Objections to the Book *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*,” 28 June 1960, Collection 152, box 28, folder 8, Roy Allan Anderson Collection, Andrews University Library. After the initial printing on June 28, 1960, this document with some revisions was reprinted on September 6, 1960 to be distributed among church administrators throughout North America.

⁴⁵Some time in late 1959 or 1960, Frank Chaney, a retired missionary and educator, released a six-part series of open letters titled “The Atonement,” in which he sought to fend off the charges that Andreasen had made in his *Letters*. Despite its extended treatment of the subject, this series was basically a resumé of the arguments that had been proffered by defenders of the book over the previous two years. See Frank L. Chaney, “Letters, No. 1-6,” [1959?], Document File 961-b, Andrews University Library.

recalled,⁴⁶ he now claimed that it was the book's stance on the human nature of Christ that was the most reprehensible.

Upon completion of this paper, Andreasen sent it to Figuhr in October 1960 along with a letter that would lead to the removal of his ministerial credentials. In that letter, Andreasen demanded "an open, public trial, before an impartial jury and a competent judge" in which he—acting as the prosecutor—would proceed to "place an impeachment against [Figuhr] and others."⁴⁷ This letter, sent just before the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee, convinced Figuhr that Andreasen had indeed gone too far and that the church had been patient enough. Figuhr resolved now to "at least suspend the credentials" that Andreasen held. Figuhr's desire to suspend Andreasen's credentials at the Autumn Council was held back, however, due to opposition from the North American union conferences who felt that they "should be more longsuffering."⁴⁸

But when the General Conference Committee met the following year for its Spring Council, the leaders were ready to vote to suspend Andreasen's credentials. Andreasen had not let up on his attacks against the church and its leadership, circulating at least three more open letters throughout North America, accusing church leaders of neglecting the doctrinal pillars, colluding with evangelicals toward apostasy,⁴⁹ crushing and demonizing dissent,⁵⁰ and publishing and promoting heretical, apostate teachings throughout the church.⁵¹ On April 5, 1961, the Spring Council voted to "suspend the credentials of M. L. Andreasen until such time as he can manifest a better spirit of unity and harmony."⁵²

The final ten months of Andreasen's life—between the suspension of his ministry credentials and his death on February 19, 1962—continued to be eventful. As soon as he was informed of the suspension, Andreasen visited Bietz, who had recently been elected as the president of the Pacific Union Conference. Without indicating exactly what he wanted from the church,

⁴⁶Andreasen, "The Atonement, [III]."

⁴⁷M. L. Andreasen to R. R. Figuhr, 8 October 1960, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

⁴⁸R. R. Figuhr to T. E. Unruh, 23 January 1961, Record Group 11, box 3215, General Conference Archives. See also R. R. Figuhr to R. A. Anderson, 25 January 1961, Collection 152, box 2, folder 16, Roy Allan Anderson Collection, Andrews University Library.

⁴⁹M. L. Andreasen, "The Sabbath School," [October] 1960, Document File 961-e, Ellen G. White Estate.

⁵⁰M. L. Andreasen, "*Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine, Then Truth about Seventh-day Adventists* [sic] (Martin)," October 1960, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

⁵¹M. L. Andreasen, "The Apostacy [sic]," [1960], Document File 961, Ellen G. White Estate.

⁵²R. R. Figuhr to George J. Appel, 10 April 1961, Record Group 11, box 3208, General Conference Archives. The full text of the resolution to suspend Andreasen's credentials can be found in Minutes of the General Conference Committee, 6 April 1961, General Conference Archives.

Andreasen talked to Bietz about his plan to release “damaging material to the public press” and to “enlarge his activities.”⁵³ This proved to be an unfulfilled threat, but Andreasen continued the same course of periodically distributing open letters, though now the protestation of his suspension took center stage. In these letters, Andreasen pointed out what he viewed to be illegal about the General Conference Committee’s decision to suspend him. At the end of one letter, he wrote a note to Figuhr telling him to beware. “I never give up,” he wrote.⁵⁴

As stubborn and belligerent as he appeared to be at times, Andreasen did not allow his suspension to sever his ongoing, albeit tumultuous, dialogue with Bietz, Figuhr, and other church leaders. In May 1961, another face-to-face meeting took place between Figuhr, Andreasen, and Bietz in southern California during which they were able to converse “in a friendly fashion.” During this conversation, Andreasen indicated that he had stopped sending out letters and wished that his credentials would be restored. In light of this unexpected positive development, Andreasen and Figuhr agreed to draft separate promissory statements that would be agreeable to the other side. The statement drafted by Figuhr spelled out the process of restoring Andreasen’s credentials. It stated that the credentials would be returned to Andreasen *after* he ceases to circulate documents and forbids others from distributing them.⁵⁵ At this point, had Andreasen given even a nominal assent to this statement, his credentials would most likely have been restored in a short time. But he began insisting that the church return his credentials back to him *before* he ceased activities related to criticizing the church.⁵⁶

Disappointed yet again by the church leaders, Andreasen composed a document titled “A Protest against the Secret Trial of M. L. Andreasen” on July 2, 1961. In this document, Andreasen narrated once again how he came to protest *Questions on Doctrine* and charged that the process that the church leaders took to suspend his credentials lacked “fundamental justice.” As he concluded, however, he indicated that the document would not be sent out and directed his attention solely upon Figuhr, calling on him to repent of the wrongs he had committed toward Andreasen and the church. At that point, he had rather pungent words for Figuhr: “I have it in my power to ruin you *completely* [*sic*]. I have no intention to do that, if you turn and make amend [*sic*]. But I am of a mind to go all the way unless you undo the evil you have done.”⁵⁷

⁵³R. R. Bietz to R. R. Figuhr, 3 May 1961, Record Group 11, box 3209, General Conference Archives.

⁵⁴M. L. Andreasen, “A Conversation,” 3 May 1961, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773, Loma Linda University Library.

⁵⁵R. R. Figuhr to M. L. Andreasen, 31 May 1961, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

⁵⁶R. R. Bietz to R. R. Figuhr, 29 June 1961, Record Group 11, box 3209, General Conference Archives. See also R. R. Figuhr to R. R. Bietz, 12 July 1961, Record Group 11, box 3209, General Conference Archives.

⁵⁷M. L. Andreasen, “A Protest against the Secret Trial of M. L. Andreasen,” 4 July 1961,

In his response, Figuhr simply urged the elder theologian to follow through with the plan that they verbally agreed upon in May: "I cherish the hope, Brother Andreasen, that we can arrive at a friendly understanding and move forward in an atmosphere of confidence." He then indicated that the officers were quite willing to revoke the suspension of credentials if Andreasen would only agree to cessation of activities that they felt were disruptive and divisive.⁵⁸

But on August 2, Andreasen penned another letter which basically served as the rejection notice to Figuhr's plea for reconciliation. Andreasen took the Adventist *Church Manual's* procedure for disfellowshipping members as the norm for all disciplinary actions in the church and strongly criticized the manner in which he was suspended. He demanded a new trial in which he could present evidence and witnesses and defend his position.⁵⁹ But in his response, Figuhr pointed out that Andreasen had made a bad comparison as the basis for his reasoning: "There is a wide difference between the disfellowshipping of a church member and temporarily suspending the credentials of a worker." Furthermore, Figuhr insisted that the primary concern for the General Conference officers was how Andreasen propagated his ideas rather than what he was teaching: "The brethren do not ask that you necessarily retract what you have said, although they are not in agreement with your statements, but they simply want the assurance that, since you have already ceased circulating your material, you do not propose to continue it."⁶⁰

When Andreasen continued in his defiance and resumed distribution of more open letters, the General Conference Committee voted to further censure him by removing his name from the list of retired workers in the 1962 *Yearbook*. The committee, however, voted not to withhold sustentation from Andreasen in consideration of his age and health.⁶¹

While this latest decision was being made at the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee, Andreasen was on the verge of making another attempt at reconciliation with the church, which raised the hopes of the leaders once again. In a remarkable show of capitulation, he wrote:

I do not wish to argue this matter now. . . . There is a point beyond which protest against what the leaders have done fail [*sic*] to do any good. I think that point has been reached now. . . . I think I have protested enough, perhaps too much, and that I can safely let God do His work without my help.

Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773, Loma Linda University Library.

⁵⁸R. R. Figuhr to M. L. Andreasen, 25 July 1961, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

⁵⁹M. L. Andreasen, "Letter 1," 2 August [1961], Record Group 11, box 3208, General Conference Archives.

⁶⁰R. R. Figuhr to M. L. Andreasen, 4 August 1961, Record Group 11, box 3208, General Conference Archives.

⁶¹Minutes of the General Conference Committee, 2 November 1961, General Conference Archives. This decision was communicated to Andreasen in a letter by Beach: W. R. Beach to M. L. Andreasen, 3 November 1961, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

Then, “as a basis for negotiations” and “discussion,” Andraesen suggested that in the future he would communicate with three or more officers of the church, if he felt he had warnings or messages from God. “I feel . . . that I have spoken to the church,” he remarked, “and hence suggest that if I have any further word, I confine myself to some of the chief officers.”⁶²

The receipt of this letter elated Figuhr as he wrote back: “I believe, Brother Andraesen, we are on the way to a better understanding and relationships [sic], now that you have come to the conclusion to confine your writing to some three or four individuals of the General Conference.”⁶³ But back from Andraesen came a completely unexpected reply. In what became his last letter to Figuhr, Andraesen charged that the General Conference president had “completely misread” him and had attributed to him ideas that were not present in his letter. Apparently, while Figuhr had interpreted Andraesen to be proposing unilateral cessation of activities, Andraesen had meant the letter to be merely suggestive—“a *basis of discussion*” and “*negotiation*.” For Andraesen, this misunderstanding was another evidence of Figuhr’s imperial attitude toward him. “You have decided not to discuss, not to negotiate,” he wrote to Figuhr. Hence, he told Figuhr, “I accept your decision that you will not discuss nor negotiate.” Finally, he stated emphatically, “I WILL BE HEARD.”⁶⁴

Indeed, Andraesen was determined to be heard, but his voice was being continually weakened by the deterioration of his health. He did manage to get at least two more documents out, but by early February, faced with a dramatic decline of his health, he sought to find peace and reconciliation with his church and asked for a visit by Figuhr. On February 16, Figuhr and Bietz visited Andraesen, who was hospitalized at Glendale Sanitarium and Hospital. During this meeting the three men discussed frankly the issues of Andraesen’s activities of the previous five years, his suspended credentials and removal from the *Yearbook*, and financial arrangements for his wife after his death. Andraesen assured the visiting leaders that he did not desire to “engage in any activity which would harm the church” and showed regret over any “doubt and confusion” that his recent writings might have created. He further expressed his desire that his letters and pamphlets not be duplicated for distribution—a message directed especially to “offshoots” of Adventism.⁶⁵ Through this conversation, the three men were reconciled. This meeting was especially important for Andraesen because even as he was so deeply agitated by *Questions on Doctrine* and the General Conference, he wanted to be reconciled to his church. His widow, Gladys, stated that Andraesen had

⁶²M. L. Andraesen to R. R. Figuhr, 30 October 1961, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

⁶³R. R. Figuhr to M. L. Andraesen, 16 November 1961, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

⁶⁴M. L. Andraesen to R. R. Figuhr, 4 December 1961, box 11355-11357, General Conference Archives.

⁶⁵Minutes of the General Conference Officers’ Meeting, 26 February 1962, General Conference Archives.

“spent many nights sobbing his heart out” regarding being so estranged from the church. But after this meeting, she reported, he was able to die a “happy” man.⁶⁶ Three days after his meeting with Figuhr and Bietz, on February 19, Andreassen died at the age of 85.⁶⁷

On March 1, 1962, the General Conference Committee voted to revoke its former action to suspend Andreassen’s credentials. It also voted to put his name back on the list of the retired workers in the *Yearbook*.⁶⁸ In addition, the church entered into a financial arrangement with Gladys Andreassen in which she would receive some denominational service credit for the time she accompanied her husband in his speaking ministry. Also, she would receive a generous amount for Andreassen’s funeral expenses and the sale of his entire library to the General Conference.⁶⁹ Thus ended Andreassen’s five-year struggle against *Questions on Doctrine* and the General Conference.

Summary

When *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine* was published, Adventist leaders showed a united front in their support of the book and displayed their confidence in it as a volume that was representative of Adventist beliefs. There was one figure, however, who sullied that unity. As a retiree living in southern California, Andreassen had not been involved with either the dialogues with the evangelicals or the preparation of the *Questions on Doctrine* manuscript. But he became disturbed by Donald Grey Barnhouse’s disparaging of Adventists who held beliefs such as his in the September 1956 issue of *Eternity* as a “lunatic fringe.” Andreassen’s suspicion that something was awry in the General Conference was exacerbated in Froom’s article on the atonement in the February 1957 issue of *Ministry*. He understood Froom to be adopting the evangelical view that Christ’s death on the cross constituted the “final atonement.” For Andreassen, this was a contemptible compromise of the Adventist doctrine of the sanctuary, especially the investigative-judgment concept.

For the next five years, until his death in February 1962, Andreassen’s modus operandi was one of suspicion toward church leaders and *Questions on Doctrine*. Though initially his only concern with *Questions on Doctrine* was its presentation on the doctrine of the atonement, his objections grew to other parts, especially the book’s position on the human nature of Christ. Throughout these five years, Andreassen was a man on a mission—to correct the theologically errant course that the church was on and to limit and turn

⁶⁶Gladys Andreassen to R. R. Figuhr, 27 February 1962, Seventh-day Adventist Document File 3773, Loma Linda University Library.

⁶⁷*Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. “Andreassen, Milian Lauritz (1876-1962).”

⁶⁸Minutes of the General Conference Committee, 1 March 1962, General Conference Archives. See also Minutes of the General Conference Officers’ Meeting, 26 February 1962, General Conference Archives.

⁶⁹See Minutes of the General Conference Officers’ Meeting, 4 April 1962, 9 April 1962, 12 April 1962, 4 June 1962, 13 June 1962, General Conference Archives.

back the impact of *Questions on Doctrine*. Particularly during the four and a half years between the publication of the book and his death, he took his mission to the general church membership by propagating two major series of letters—first, the “Atonement” series, then the *Letters to the Churches* series—in which he called for revision or withdrawal of *Questions on Doctrine* and a cleansing of the apostate elements in the church’s hierarchy.

The cornerstone of Andreasen’s theology was his last-generation theology, which taught that there will arise a generation of God’s people in the end-time who will overcome sin completely and demonstrate to the universe that it is possible to live a sinless life by God’s grace. This theology served as the background for Andreasen’s insistence on reserving the wording of “the final atonement” to the investigative-judgment era—a special time in the history of redemption when the final blotting-out of sin was to take place and the last generation would arise. This theology required also that Christ’s human nature be the fallen nature shared by human beings born after Adam’s sin so that he could serve as the model for the last generation. Although born with sinful natures, they would experience the same victory over sin that Jesus did. Due to the importance of the final atonement and postlapsarianism to his signature theology of the last generation, Andreasen fought forcefully against the prelapsarianism of *Questions on Doctrine* and its presentation of the cross as the completion of the atonement. If Christ’s human nature was in any way different from that of an ordinary human being and if the cross finished the work of atonement, Andreasen’s last-generation theology would become superfluous and irrelevant. He believed that his theological legacy, as well as what he saw as the theological heritage of the Adventist pioneers that he sought to protect throughout his career, would crumble. Thus, for Andreasen, his reaction to *Questions on Doctrine* went beyond doctrinal discussions; it was a monumental struggle for the survival of the Adventist movement.

Figuhr, Froom, and many other church leaders did not share Andreasen’s enthusiasm for his last-generation theology. These leaders approached Andreasen and his agitation less as a theological question and more as an ecclesiastical or administrative issue. Initially, theology was debated and ideas were rebutted and defended; but the focus gradually shifted to *how* and *with what attitude* Andreasen was presenting his case, rather than *what* he was arguing for. That brought the elderly theologian great consternation. Figuhr and other leaders did seek to alleviate Andreasen’s fears by assuring him that there was no conspiracy at work to change theology and reminding him that he himself had in the past made some of the very statements he was attacking now. However, Andreasen would not relent and became increasingly difficult to reasonably communicate with, which ultimately led to the suspension of his ministerial credentials.

The struggle over many of the issues raised in Andreasen’s criticisms of *Questions on Doctrine*, as well as in his books of the 1930s and 1940s, has continued well beyond his death. His final five years made him a pitied figure who lost the high respect he commanded from his active years as a professor and administrator. Many in 1962 viewed those last few years as a period in

which Andreasen ruined his own good name by championing what they considered to be a lost cause. However, the theological developments of the past five decades have shown that it is because of—not in spite of—the last five years of Andreasen's life that Adventists have come to be so significantly impacted by his teachings. Whatever one might think of Andreasen, his writings and theology—whether appealing or not—continue to impact the faith and beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists worldwide.