

Responses from Readers

On Adventist Publishing

To the Editors: I understand that publishing department criticism and suggestions for improvements or changes (Vol. 8, No. 4) are mainly related to the U.S.A. situation, three publishing houses serving one publishing market. We do hope that some efficient solution will be found affecting the English-reading population outside the U.S.A. as well.

There are two remarks I would like to make which I feel have failed to be mentioned in this issue of SPECTRUM. As Adventists, we believe in the blueprint given in Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, but none of the writers have given any positive statements regarding how matters should be arranged to match the blueprint, either changing without hurting the blueprint and stating this with actual quotations, or returning to the blueprint if a departure from it has taken place. This, in my opinion, would be very beneficial.

If we suggest a change we must make sure we are not changing contrary to God's inspired counsel for the proclamation of the Advent Message through the means of the press. If we feel that times have changed and previously given counsel is not relevant anymore, such an opinion must be supported by an in-depth study of that previous counsel to see whether it was timely counsel or was to last until the end of probation. If some of your writers would take the time to make such an in-depth study this would be very helpful.

My next remark is against a very unfortu-

nate statement on page 9 of said issue of SPECTRUM. First of all, the latest report, April 1978, covering the year's totals for 1977 issued by the General Conference Publishing Department, state that the world field reported 14,661 full-time and part-time literature evangelists, who for that year 1977 were responsible for at least 16,639 baptisms. Almost each division, including North America, showed an increase in the number of literature evangelists.

I think the writer could have quoted the latest figure for literature evangelists and not a previous figure of 6,000. If that figure of 6,000 represents only full-time literature evangelists, then the latest figure is still better, which is 9,040, or about a 30 percent increase.

To state in the same column of page 9 that our distribution methods through literature evangelists is outdated, at least in some environments, is very, very unfortunate, to put it kindly. From a highly intellectual journal with an Adventist background, I would have expected something better. This statement is fully contrary to Spirit of Prophecy writing regarding this matter.

Literature evangelism will never be outdated. If in some environments the activities are not what they should be, this is because of complacency among our believers lacking the missionary and right soul-winning spirit, which not only has an adverse effect upon the publishing department in some areas of the world field, but upon other departments as well. I realise we have problems, but not to the extent that we can say the method is outdated.

I trust that you will accept this letter in the

spirit in which it is written, love for the cause of God, and great confidence in the publishing programme of the Adventist Church, in spite of the fact that I still believe we have room for improvement and expansion. In my mind the statement stands firm, "that in large degree through our publishing houses the work will be accomplished of that other angel" (*Testimonies*, Vol. 7, p. 140).

More, much more should be done to make sure that this statement meets its full fulfillment and not in the least through the faithful missionary endeavour of our literature evangelists around the world.

J. T. Knopper
Publishing Director
Australasian Division

To the Editors: A copy of Pastor J. T. Knoppers' letter, dated May 10, 1978, has reached my desk. In this letter, he refers to Vol. 8, No. 4, of SPECTRUM. Some time ago, I read the material referred to here and must confess that I was also surprised at the lack of facts relating to the General Conference Publishing Department and its program. It reminded me a bit of someone's making a trip through a foreign country, first time abroad, and then writing a book on the problems of that country.

My hope would be that in the future any time there is a desire to write on the publishing interests of the church, that this office be contacted for the latest figures and facts. This, in my opinion, would strengthen the voice of SPECTRUM rather than weaken it.

Bruce M. Wickwire
Director, Publishing Department
General Conference

On Homosexuals

To the editors: The article, "The Christian, Homosexuals and the Law" (Vol. 9, No. 2), by Jack W. Provonsha, follows an interesting progression from an exceptionally tolerant explanation of homosexuality to an implicit endorsement of California's up-

coming anti-homosexual teachers initiative. From "the Christian knows, if he is informed, that a homosexual may not have chosen to be a homosexual," the logic proceeds to "if they . . . promote a lifestyle that undermines society's valued institutions (in this case, the family), society has not only the right but also the duty to restrain them — for example, to deny them access to youth role-modeling positions." However, if the informed Christian holds the view that certain people will be homosexual whether or not they want to be, then he should encourage access of homosexuals to role-modeling positions.

Provonsha fails to identify exactly what aspect of homosexuality he sees a threat to the institution of the family. The only inherent difference in such unions is the impossibility of progeny. If this is the point that makes them dangerous, are singles or members of couples who cannot or choose not to have children also to be denied access to role-modeling positions?

Because Provonsha fails to be specific, I will choose a point often held against homosexuals. On the average, they are likelier not to form marriage-type unions as often as heterosexuals, but there is no proof that this tendency is inherent and not sociologically determined. America does not legally recognize homosexual marriages. Society's general non-acceptance leads to a lack of support from the families of homosexuals for committed relationships. Discrimination against homosexuals in jobs and housing, in fact, encourages a lifestyle of covert sexual activity rather than of stable commitments.

If we are to accept the premise that some are born homosexuals, what is really the threat to a society built on families? Is it openness and acceptance of homosexuality and encouragement of stable couples that would give young homosexuals good examples to pattern their own lives after? Or is it silence and an absence of role models that would leave young homosexuals the confusing options of disastrous homosexual-heterosexual marriages or the vicious cycle of society-threatening promiscuity?

The rising amount of marriages in gay churches and the great numbers of gays that

form committed relationships despite total lack of support from families, religions, government and society in general should indicate that it is the bigotry and not the homosexual struggle for validity that is the threat to society. One can't both allow the legitimacy of homosexuality and deny it a voice to help it find a place in society that would strengthen and not threaten the structure.

Nancy Mann
San Francisco

On Pacific Press Case

To the Editors: Since publication of the last issue of SPECTRUM, the *U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Pacific Press* case has proceeded to trial. The agreement described by Robert Nixon on page 5 of SPECTRUM (Vol. 9, No. 2) was never signed.

Although the parties agreed orally to the terms of the settlement, an insurmountable problem arose over putting those terms in writing in a mutually binding legal agreement. The Press also declined to settle the monies withheld from all women employees between 1970 and 1973, and so the Government has now filed a complaint alleging discrimination practiced by Pacific Press in wage and benefit payments to all employees, based on gender.

The basic facts and figures concerning wage and benefit discrimination against women employees are admitted by Pacific Press to July 1, 1973, and stipulated to by both the Press and the Government. The issue before the court is whether the Press must comply with laws against such discrimination.

The Press continues to insist it is not under the law. As part of its defense, counsel for Press reintroduced unchanged the "first minister," "spiritual leader" and "hierarchical tribunal" affidavits of R. H. Pierson and N. C. Wilson. Their brief again argues broadly that "the attempt by government to regulate the conduct of Pacific Press is unconstitutional." (Pacific Press Opening

Post-Trial Memorandum, June 2, 1978, page 13.)

To this the government replied, "The [First] Amendment . . . hardly vests any religiously-affiliated institution with an unreviewable [constitutional] right to determine the legality of its own employment practices or to sit as a judge on its own conduct — matters clearly affecting another's rights No case has extended First Amendment protection to conduct which injured the rights of others." (EEOC Post-Trial Reply Brief, June 16, 1978, page 5.)

Concluding arguments will be heard by the Federal District Court in San Francisco on June 29, 1978.

Lorna Tobler
Sunnyvale, California

On Adventist Creed

To the Editors: I have greatly enjoyed reading the series of articles appearing under the topic "An Adventist Creed?" (Vol. 8, No. 4). I was particularly impressed with the article by William Wright, which presented the argument *against* creeds most persuasively from a historic standpoint. I find, however, the historical argument, impressive as it is, less than convincing.

Leaving out W. J. Hackett's original article in the May 26, 1977 *Review and Herald* which gave rise to the whole controversy, I would like to point out for your consideration a few aspects of the problem which I feel the expressed opposing views failed to take into account.

1) Just because churches that adopted "creeds" later used them to set up inquisitions and quash dissent, it does not follow that a causality is thereby established between their behavior and the "creeds." Other factors about those church bodies might be responsible — either with or to the exclusion of the "creeds." Some church bodies did (and unfortunately some still do) use the Bible in the same way. There is, therefore, little comfort in the retreat to the position that "the Bible is our only creed," as if that automatically served to protect us from intolerance and bigotry.

2) While I agree that “a doctrinal or position statement” and a “creed” may differ only in name, there is no question but that the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a body holds a number of characteristic beliefs, or doctrines, naturally on Bible grounds, to the exclusion of, or even in contradiction to, those of other religious bodies also claiming Biblical authority.

3) If it is all right for me as a Seventh-day Adventist talking to another Christian, say a Baptist or a Catholic, to call attention to those characteristic doctrines which set me apart from him/her and are shared collectively by the brethren in my church, why does it become suddenly wrong to call the attention of a fellow SDA to the same set of views when he/she appears to be deviating (pardon the word) to a position more in keeping with that of, say, a Baptist or a Catholic?

4) Whether or not anyone wishes to argue that we have no right to declare any basic Adventist beliefs as “nonnegotiable,” one has to admit that if we ever “negotiate” some of those beliefs we will no longer be the same — save perhaps in name. The question is thus not whether one has the right to hold individual beliefs that may differ from those of the brethren within the church, but to what extent one may differ and still remain an SDA. There, is, therefore, a range of variation beyond which identity within a class may be lost.

I am, of course, aware that there are many areas about which neither the Bible nor the Spirit of Prophecy seem to shed enough light — at least in the context of our present spiritual experience and, perhaps, ability to understand. I have been around long enough to have heard and read statements made from the pulpit and printed in official periodicals which I am sure the authors must have wished they had never uttered publicly — in light of subsequent events. I also know enough about human nature not to hold any illusions concerning our ability to repress forever our tendency to engage in speculations. But the day some of those speculations start being taught as more than speculations (or I should say become established) in our institutions of learning in the name of academic freedom — in lieu of our traditional views and without the benefit of proof or further prophetic light — we might as well disband and send our children to public schools.

The real issue then seems to be not whether we should adopt a “creed” or “statement of beliefs” considered basic to the retention of our identity as Seventh-day Adventists, but how we arrive at such a statement and what use we shall make of it. We can go the way of Babylon with or without a “creed,” and we can even do so while clinging to our Bibles.

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