

The First Decade

The Establishment of The Adventist Forum

by Richard C. Osborn

. . . a place where Adventists interested in ideas, both theoretical and practical, can talk to one another in chapter meetings, regional conferences, pages of SPECTRUM.

. . . an important last link connecting many individuals to the church and a halfway house for Adventists going through withdrawal.

. . . saved numerous intellectuals for the church whose mission sorely needs their expertise and commitment.

Richard Osborn, recently appointed principal of Takoma Academy, is a graduate of Columbia Union College and is completing his master's degree in history at the University of Maryland.

. . . the greatest accomplishment of the AAF has been the publication of nine volumes of SPECTRUM, providing an outlet for the most creative thought within Adventism. . . I am sure that future denominational historians will view the appearance of SPECTRUM as a major step toward the intellectual maturation of the church, when for the first time since the nineteenth century thoughtful Adventists could critically examine their church's ideology and institutions.

. . . a group of intellectuals who seek to tear down the pillars of the faith.

. . . the only independent lay organization of the church with official approval of the General Conference.

Ten years of existence for the Association of Adventist Forums bring different assessments from members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Few probably expected this independent volunteer organization to last so long since its founding in 1968. Not only has it lasted, but it has grown to its highest membership level of over 3,400 members. As with any organization, growth, change, conflict and consensus characterize its first decade.

As religious movements mature, they face the increasing challenge of maintaining enthusiasm for membership and participation in the church among later generations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church faced this problem during the late 1960s as significant numbers of church members began attending non-Adventist graduate schools and as the level of academic training increased throughout the church. As these individuals sharpened critical thinking in their academic areas, they naturally began to study what meant most to them — their church's beliefs and practices. The mood of the United States during the 1960s also helped create a climate of inquiry as the country debated ecology, civil rights, Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs and the Vietnam War.

With this background, Adventist graduate students, professionals and academicians began meeting for fellowship and discussion. Many felt that their local churches, which in

“Many of these second, third and fourth generation Adventists began leaving the church because their questions and needs were not being addressed — indeed, they were held in suspicion.”

some cases ostracized them, did not understand their needs, nor did they feel that the world church, which held the power over future employment, encouraged the discus-

sion of major issues by laymen. As one graduate student wrote retrospectively,

Many pastoral sermons and many denominational journal articles seemed unreasoned if not unreasonable, shallow if not irrelevant, and illogical if not downright anti-intellectual.

Many of these second, third and fourth generation Adventists began leaving the church because their questions and needs were not being addressed — indeed, they were held in suspicion. So many were leaving that some who still desired to remain Adventists saw a need for forming groups to maintain ties to a church they had been reared in. Many of them thought they might be able to grow within the church and ultimately serve it if someone could help them through this critical transition in their maturation process.

In major educational centers such as Cambridge, Massachusetts, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the San Francisco Bay Area, California, groups of concerned Adventists began informal discussion groups. Although some remained very informal with home meetings, the Cambridge group experienced rapid growth. The Cambridge group had started in 1963 under Roy Branson's direction with a few people meeting socially on Sabbath afternoons as a book discussion group, which included such individuals as Joe and Adrienne Battistone, Bruce Wilcox and Vinson Bushnell. In 1964, Alvin and Verla Kwiram joined the group when he took a position in Harvard's chemistry department. In 1966, as a result of Verla Kwiram's initiative, the group's mailing list had reached 150 and resulted in a constitution and membership dues. Throughout this period, the Cambridge and Ann Arbor groups began to talk of communicating with like groups in other parts of the United States, and of possibly tying them together in one organization with a newsletter or journal. Vinson Bushnell, a Harvard graduate student in music, even worked on a constitution.

Although many individuals promoted an Adventist graduate professional association, two individuals can be singled out as major motivators — one a fourth-generation Ad-

ventist attending graduate school, Roy Branson, the other one of the church's most respected administrators, Reinhold R. Bietz, president of the Pacific Union Conference. Branson typified many of those graduate students with questions, who wanted to remain in the church. His grandfather, W. H. Branson, served as General Conference president between 1950 and 1954, and his father, Ernest Branson, served as a conference president and had been a missionary in the Middle

“Wilson became the key church contact and liaison for the association’s beginning and throughout its first decade. In fact, without Wilson’s support there would have been no association.”

East where his son Roy had grown up. In the 1960s, Branson attended Harvard University, pursuing a doctorate in Christian ethics. As early as 1959, while still an undergraduate at Atlantic Union College, Branson had proposed a magazine containing scholarly articles written by Adventist professors in Adventist and non-Adventist colleges, professionally trained self-employed Adventists and college undergraduates. Ironically, graduate students were not even mentioned. After being a key leader in the Cambridge discussions about a national organization, Branson left in 1967 for travel in California, having been “commissioned — unofficially, of course — to spy out the land” to see what prospects existed for a new journal.

Reinhold R. Bietz’s two sons, one of whom had just finished medical school, the other a seminarian at Andrews University, helped make their father aware of the concerns of later generation Adventists. In addition, Bietz served as president of a large, sophisticated union where two local churches already published magazines — Claremont’s *Dialogue* and Burbank’s *Perspec-*

tive. Because of the controversial reputation of these publications, many Adventist employees felt uneasy writing for them, some for philosophical reasons and others because of the possible impact on their jobs. At a Southern California Conference constituency meeting in March 1967, attended by Bietz, one of *Perspective*’s editors attempted to get a resolution passed commending his journal and *Dialogue*. Bietz spoke against the resolution, but at the same time mentioned that the denomination needed a journal for college students. Branson was attending the meeting and spoke with Bietz about possible problems if the denomination published an official publication which could limit the openness of the proposed journal.

A few days later, Bietz, still considering such a journal, by chance met with a group of single adults attending a weekend retreat at Camp Cedar Falls, California. This group, including Roy Branson and Tom Walters, was also discussing the need for a new journal. Bietz suggested that an organization tying the various graduate student groups together might publish it. In this way, the church would not be publishing the journal, but an association approved by the church would be performing the job and thus have more credibility.

During April 1967, Branson and Walters drafted a written proposal for a Society of Adventist Scholars or an Association of Adventist Graduate Students and a journal. This proposal was circulated to existing discussion groups. According to the proposal, full membership in the society would be limited to those who had completed at least one year of graduate study or were current graduate students. Associate membership would be granted to undergraduate students. For the proposed board of the organization, each chapter would elect one representative. This group, in turn, would select three representatives from Adventist educational institutions who were viewed as “natural soulmates of the graduate students.” Two would be selected from denominational administration. The latter were viewed by some as the “price for denominational approval.”

The journal proposal viewed the limited editorial and financial base of *Perspective* and

Dialogue as well as their tone of “anger” and “disillusionment” as a problem. In contrast, the new journal would “be a place where individuals with academic background could come and reason together, inviting all who would, to join.” The new journal would, because of its public approval by the church, be able to publish articles by church employees from all over the world. Experts in one discipline would write so that others could understand their discipline’s contribution to Adventism. Already Branson began suggesting Molleurus Couperus, head of the dermatology department at Loma Linda’s School of Medicine, as editor for the journal.

Branson and Walters now presented the written proposal for an association and journal to Bietz, who expressed approval and promised to promote the plan with Robert Pierson, General Conference president, Neal Wilson, North American Division president, and other church leaders. Meanwhile, the proposal was sent to church leaders and discussion groups around the United States, and a lobbying effort began. In a letter to Pierson, Branson stressed that the proposal would “be a means of building up the church. If it didn’t, I wouldn’t waste my time on it.” Letters of support came back from church administrator W. J. Hackett, educators T. S. Geraty, Winton Beaven, R. E. Cleveland and Joseph Barnes, pastor M. Jerry Davis and editor Arthur S. Maxwell. In the late spring, Branson and Kwiram also met on separate occasions with Wilson, who expressed happiness that something was being done for Adventists who had taken graduate work.

During May 1967, Bietz and Wilson led out in a discussion of the proposal in Washington, D.C., where Bietz felt most of the leaders displayed “very good interest.” Next, the ideas were taken to a group of college presidents, academic deans and board chairmen, which resulted in the establishment by the General Conference of a 23-member Committee on SDA Graduate Students in Non-SDA Schools chaired by Wilson.

From this stage on, Wilson became the key church contact and liaison for the associa-

tion’s beginning and throughout its first decade. In fact, without Wilson’s support there would have been no association. In Wilson’s initial letter to the committee, he wrote of a total Adventist graduate student population of between five and six hundred students, some motivated in a wrong direction, but comprised largely of a group who wanted to stay close to the church and desired a closer liaison. He mentioned three areas of possible development. First would be a “Forum” which could “be an outlet for exchange, thoughts and ideas” coordinated by an association with a governing board consisting of graduate students and “an almost equal number of denominational leaders.” Second would be “a Journal or some form of expression for these young people. They want a level where they can discuss differing opinions.” And third would be the development of a chaplaincy program for non-Adventist campuses. This committee met in early autumn and unanimously approved the idea of an association and left details to a small committee to meet with graduate student representatives.

Meanwhile, feedback from graduate students and others indicated a fear of denominational control of both the board and the journal, whereas others felt such an arrangement represented a reasonable compromise. As word began to filter to the discussion groups during the summer of 1967 about the initial success of proposals for a graduate student organization, the feeling grew that an announcement in the *Review and Herald*, official publication of the church, represented a key ingredient to the association’s success. Such an announcement would represent official recognition and allay the fears of many who might contribute money or join.

By midsummer, Ronald Numbers, a graduate student at Berkeley, urged that a journal editor be chosen soon while “enthusiasm is still high — and while some of us are still graduate students.” Many of those pushing hardest for a graduate student association were either finished or nearly through their degree programs. In fact, several of these individuals never viewed what they were attempting to organize as a graduate

student organization. They wanted a broad, lay-based organization which addressed issues of concern for Adventist graduate students, professionals and academically oriented individuals. In order to have a focused constituency in their General Conference approach, they concentrated on graduate students. Numbers' comment looked ahead to a later problem of keeping new graduate students enthusiastic for an association.

Plans progressed rapidly, and on October 6, 1967, the General Conference convened a Committee on National Association of Graduate Students with the church paying for the travel expenses of three discussion group representatives out of the seven who came to Washington, D.C. The committee was chaired by Charles Hirsch, director of the General Conference department of education. Other church representatives included Walton J. Brown and W. A. Howe of the education department, R. R. Frame and D. W. Hunter of the secretariat, J. C. Kozel of treasury, Neal Wilson and *Review* editor, Kenneth H. Wood. Representatives of the discussion groups included Roy Branson, David Claridge, doctoral candidate in physics from Stanford, J. L. Gilliland, a medical doctor in residency from Seattle, Washington, Alvin Kwiram, Ronald Numbers, doctoral candidate in the history of science from Berkeley, Charles "Tom" Smith, doctoral candidate in higher educational administration at Michigan, and Tom Walters. By this time, only Claridge, Numbers and Smith were still graduate students.

The discussion group representatives met the day before the meeting to hammer out their proposals. Kwiram served as the group's spokesman since he was an articulate advocate of an association, was not denominationally employed, and had no plans to be. At the actual Friday morning committee, the members worked on a consensus basis with no official votes. The committee decided on the following five objectives for the association:

- 1) to provide an organization which will facilitate fellowship between graduate students in different geographical areas of the country;

- 2) to stimulate evangelistic contact through cultural interaction with non-Seventh-day Adventist scholars;
- 3) to serve as a point of contact between graduate students and the Seventh-day Adventist organization, and to encourage and facilitate the service of these students to the church;
- 4) to encourage pastoral guidance from Seventh-day Adventist students on non-Seventh-day Adventist campuses;
- 5) to maintain an organ of communication wherein Seventh-day Adventist scholars may exchange academic information, thoughts, and opinions.

“The group felt that a journal could provide a kind of ‘loyal opposition’ in which sophisticated informed analysis and evaluation could be provided the church through constructive study reports and articles”

In two significant categories, the group expanded the purposes beyond serving just graduate students, which had been the focus of the committee. The second objective saw an evangelistic purpose of meeting with “non-Seventh-day Adventist scholars,” and, more significantly, the “organ of communication” did not mention graduate students but “scholars.”

The committee also developed a plan of organization which later became the basis for the association constitution. It consisted of the graduate student or holder of more than a bachelor's degree requirement for regular membership as developed in the original proposal; and an 18-member national board to include eight representatives from eight regions made up of the North American Division union territories, four at-large representatives, an executive secretary, at least five General Conference representatives (or not more than one-third of the board) to be chosen by the General Conference, and a nonvot-

ing journal editor. The president and president-elect were to be chosen from the board.

The proposed journal proved to be the most controversial aspect of the committee's work. Agreement came easily on the purpose of the journal basically following the original proposal. However, Wilson insisted that each article be read and approved by one of the General Conference representatives, thus giving the denomination veto power. He noted that the church had never recognized such an organization where it did not have such controls. The graduate student representatives could not agree to this condition. Kwiram, for one, wanted an independent organization established on the basis of mutual respect and admiration. The group felt that a journal could provide a kind of "loyal opposition" in which sophisticated, informed analysis and evaluation could be provided the church through constructive study reports and articles in a journal. At one point, someone suggested that the journal be completely on its own, but the lay people wanted a church relationship. Over the noon hour, Branson met with Wilson in his office to see if any accommodation could be achieved. Although Wilson pressed his points vigorously, he was not ready to break off negotiations. During the afternoon session, the church's representatives agreed that their tie to the journal would be through five out of 20 editorial consultants. These five would be selected by the association board from a list of 12 names to be submitted by the North American Division Committee on Administration (NADCA). Other editorial consultants would include five graduate students, five SDA faculty members and five from other categories. The minutes of the meeting specifically noted that the editorial consultants "are not to have veto power over material, a right reserved to the editor, who in turn is responsible to the National Board for his activities."

The committee then developed a procedural plan which called for the "chapters" to refine further the plan, purpose, structure,

editorial guidelines, board membership and constitution of the proposed association. The General Conference department of education was to submit these written proposals to the North American Division president who, in turn, would place the plan on the agenda of Autumn Council. If approved at this meeting, NADCA would name its representatives to the board and submit 12 names for editorial consultants.

Part of the plan called for the association proponents to elect two officers then in case Autumn Council approved the plan. Chosen by the graduate student representatives as first association president was Alvin Kwiram, a lecturer in chemistry at Harvard University; as executive secretary, Roy Branson, then a teacher at the Andrews University Theological Seminary; and as journal editor, Mollerus Couperus.

Four days after the meeting, Kwiram, on behalf of the newly forming association, wrote Wilson in regard to reservations about some of the committee's decisions. First, he expressed questions about so large a number of official church representatives on the association board. As originally conceived by the students, church representatives were to consist of one-fifth of the board rather than over one-fourth as agreed upon at the committee. Kwiram termed this shift "significant and somewhat unanticipated"; however, he did not

feel any of us object strongly. The question that was raised was whether it was really wise for the formal organization to involve itself so explicitly in the Association and not whether that would mean complete control. So although this is a considerable shift in emphasis, it is not inimical to our purpose. . .

Second, Kwiram urged the General Conference not to seek official representatives among the editorial consultants of the journal. He warned that the new journal would not be the "equivalent to the *Review* merely rewritten in the language of the intellectual. There will be times where articles of a controversial nature will appear and times when questions will be asked that will not have simple answers." He cautioned that the church would be in a "more secure position"

without a direct involvement, and warned that if Autumn Council felt a need for greater control than originally agreed upon, "I fear that we will have to sadly conclude our quest, and progress in these matters will await another generation." To highlight the point further, he also advised Wilson that no financial support from the church for the journal, although originally discussed, would be requested.

If Kwiram's proposal were followed, the association would truly be independent. Furthermore, the journal would not have any official or financial ties which would limit its publication policies. Also significant in Kwiram's letter was a continuing shift in emphasis from graduate students to "scholars." This also marked an important emphasis as the original "founding fathers" maintained a concern for not only graduate students, but also for Adventist scholars or individuals with an intellectual orientation. Some of the graduate students, including Numbers, insisted on a prescribed number of graduate students on the board. However, this emphasis begun at the October meeting prevailed throughout the first decade of the association until by the end of the period only tacit concern was paid to the graduate student.

On October 25, the Autumn Council through a session of NADCA approved the plans of the committee for an association of graduate students with a local and regional organization and a magazine to serve as a forum for the students. The church leaders no longer demanded official representatives on either the association board or journal. Rather, they agreed to serve in an advisory capacity at the invitation of the association.

The "founding fathers" were delighted at the outcome, and by a telephone vote decided to ask Neal Wilson, Charles Hirsch and Wilber Alexander to serve as the first official church guests. Meanwhile, the first board meeting was scheduled for December in Loma Linda, California.

At the first board meeting, the direction of the association began to take shape. SPECTRUM became the name of the journal,

membership dues were established and international participation was discussed. The association continued to broaden its concerns beyond graduate students. The board did send a proposal for specialized student evangelism to NADCA and voted to select five graduate students as consulting editors; but other decisions reflected a broader constituency.

The Constitution as approved at the meeting stated the association's objectives as:

. . . to encourage thoughtful persons of Seventh-day Adventist orientation to examine and discuss freely ideas and issues relevant to the Church in all its aspects and to its members as Christians in society.

The objectives of SPECTRUM were

. . . to be instrumental in the exchange of the ideas of Adventist scholars among themselves and their communication to the Adventist Church as a whole and in addition give the outside world an opportunity to see what Adventists are thinking and doing.

This broad orientation of "scholars" and "thoughtful persons of Seventh-day Adventist orientation" defined the association's future as it would actually develop.

A name for the association remained the major unfinished business. The board tentatively approved the name, "The Adventist Forum," tentatively because of the need for further consultation with church leaders who objected to the word "Adventist" appearing so early in the title lest people think the association was being given official status. New names suggested included "*Forum: An Association of Academic and Professional Adventists*," "FORE (Forum of Responsible Exploration): A Forum of Adventists dedicated to responsible exploration of truth," and "Associated Adventist Forums." Finally, both the association and church leadership compromised on "Association of Adventist Forums" (hereafter referred to as AAF).

During 1968, the hard work of building membership and developing a journal proceeded. The *Review* on January 11 printed the all-important NADCA action approving the association. However, without a tangible product to sell, membership grew slowly. Initially, some AAF leaders thought optimis-

tically that as many as 5,000 might join, but only 600 members joined by November. Andrews University provided AAF valuable help by giving Executive Secretary Branson a phone budget and the right to use his Andrews University secretary part time on AAF business.

SPECTRUM Editor Couperus spent 1968 soliciting articles for the journal. He had es-

“If Kwiram’s proposal were followed, the association would truly be independent. Furthermore, the journal would not have any official or financial ties which would limit its publication policies.”

tablished as a condition for taking the job that he be allowed time to collect enough manuscripts for four issues before beginning publication. Loma Linda University also gave help by providing free office space for SPECTRUM.

Meanwhile, local chapters grew in New England, New York, Washington, D.C., Ann Arbor, Andrews University, Walla Walla College, Seattle, Berkeley and Stanford University. Popular topics during these years included the church’s relationship to civil rights, inner city ministry, politics, war and the arts. In some areas such as the Southern New England Conference, a part-time chaplain, Charles Teel, Jr., graduate student at Boston and Harvard University, was provided to minister to graduate students with the support of conference president, Lowell Bock. The association’s relations with the General Conference remained cordial, but as Branson pointed out in a newsletter to AAF members, “the journal hasn’t appeared yet.”

SPECTRUM first appeared in March 1969, representing the organization’s first tangible product and its most successful accomplishment of the first decade. Couperus proved to be an excellent choice for editor. Early in his career, he had studied theology in

the United States and served as a missionary in Indonesia. Even after training as a medical doctor with a specialty in dermatology, he retained a lifelong interest in theology with special emphasis on the relationship between science and religion. During the 1950s, he edited a journal devoted to the defense of creationism. Because of his independent financial status and friendship with affluent individuals, he also aided the journal’s financial undergirding. Couperus solicited articles and made the crucial decisions about balance of topics and articles that would appear in each issue. Fritz Guy, then a religion teacher at Loma Linda University’s La Sierra campus, did a great deal of editorial rewriting. Major credit for the appearance and accuracy of the journal goes to Ada Turner, the well-trained and tireless executive editor. She was largely responsible for the journal’s design, and followed the “old school” of editing copy — checking every footnote. This Loma Linda-based group produced six volumes of SPECTRUM, each volume consisting of four issues with each issue averaging 80 pages.

The first two issues of SPECTRUM contained the blend of articles typical throughout the Couperus years of scholarly articles focused on theology, science and church history; art, poetry, book reviews; and suggestions for changes in church institutions and policies. As an example, Charles Hirsch wrote of the need to coordinate Adventist higher education; Alonzo Baker studied federal aid to education; Richard Ritland analyzed the fossil record found in rocks; Jack Provonsha focused on the term “ethics” as used by Christians; and a series of writers argued various positions Christians could have toward war. These articles were not merely ideas, because in two cases they helped bring about changes. Hirsch’s proposal, first published for a broader lay audience in SPECTRUM and discussed at AAF chapter meetings, eventually helped the General Conference establish the Board of Higher Education. Kwiram became a member of this board as a result of requests by AAF to have representatives on the board.

The church agreed also for the first time to help Adventists registering for the draft in the United States obtain a conscientious objector status, whereas before they had usually supported only the noncombatant position. Other issues presented for the first time to a lay audience included proposals for black unions and Gottfried Oosterwal's specific proposals for changes in the way Adventists approached missions. By 1969, General Conference President Robert Pierson at an Andrews University Faculty-Board Retreat pointed to SPECTRUM as proof the church did have channels of communication for divergent views.

The publication of SPECTRUM also brought tension to AAF. Couperus and his volunteer staff did not always publish SPECTRUM as regularly as some felt they should. At one point, some AAF leaders actually contemplated finding another editor, but fortunately stayed with Couperus. The editorial staff's meticulousness and care did cause production delays, but no one could question the quality of their work. AAF members finally had a product to display and be proud of. In addition, church members and leaders began discussing articles from SPECTRUM, and an outlet existed for Adventist scholars in which they could openly express convictions in areas of their expertise for a broader church audience.

The difficulty of maintaining a regular production schedule of four issues a year plagued AAF during its entire first decade. When becoming an AAF member, an individual received four issues of SPECTRUM. In the beginning, it posed problems for fundraising, membership drives and renewal efforts when the journal was published on an irregular schedule. Because membership increased so slowly, even after SPECTRUM's first year, AAF leaders named the lack of regularity as the major problem. By the end of 1969 membership reached 1,063, but by 1972 membership had grown only slightly to 1,330, whereas 2,500 was viewed as the break-even point. Low membership also affected the unit cost of printing the journal. In addition, a larger number of copies of each issue than the actual number of subscribers was printed in order to meet the anticipated

growth in membership and future demand for back issues. After the first two issues were printed, no money remained for the second two issues. Extensive fundraising efforts during 1969 resulted in more money's coming from gifts (\$13,616) than memberships (\$10,981). In spite of these efforts, by the end of 1969 AAF's deficit reached \$5,000. The problem of paying for future issues from current subscriptions continued until the end of the first decade when a more regular financial plan was established and when membership reached the break-even point for meeting expenses.

The first few issues did not raise nearly the level of controversy the last issue of volume two did. For the first time, SPECTRUM tackled questions about Ellen White in what

“One of AAF's biggest failures during its first decade was convincing church leaders that SPECTRUM was not out to destroy the basic tenets of the church.”

became one of its most controversial issues. Roy Branson and Herold Weiss called for broad-ranged interdisciplinary study of Ellen White in order to present her as “a more believable person.” F. E. J. Harder reviewed some of her concepts of revelation and Richard Lewis questioned using the term “Spirit of Prophecy.” However, William S. Peterson's textual and historical analysis of Ellen White's chapter in *The Great Controversy* on the French Revolution stirred the most passion. Peterson, an English teacher at Andrews University, asserted that Ellen White used biased anti-Catholic historians in constructing her views of the French Revolution. He further charged that she accepted proven errors in the writings of these authors, in spite of her claim that visions formed the basis of her views.

Publication of Peterson's article represented the first time such assertions had been published in a journal with Adventist ties. Many church leaders failed to understand that Couperus and his editors did not publish the article because they agreed with Peterson, but because of the stated editorial position of SPECTRUM printed at the beginning of each issue:

SPECTRUM is a journal established to encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint, to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject, to evaluate the merits of diverse views, and to foster Christian intellectual and cultural growth. Although effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and discriminating judgment, the statements of fact are the responsibility of contributors, and the views that the individual authors express are not necessarily those of the editorial staff as a whole or as individuals.

In this context, future issues contained two vigorous attacks on Peterson's article by W. Paul Bradley, chairman of the Ellen G. White Estate Board, and John W. Wood, Jr., an Andrews University seminarian. Peterson also presented responses to these articles and further research.

Throughout the history of SPECTRUM, the editors faced the charge that they agreed with what they published, especially articles critical of church doctrines. Yet, if one follows the history of an article's development, an effort to balance is made, either through several articles from differing viewpoints or in letters from readers.

As an illustration of this misunderstanding, R. R. Bietz in June 1971, felt that after SPECTRUM's first issue, it had

. . . gone a bit astray in my opinion. I cannot endorse at all some of the recent articles which have appeared. I was under the impression that when SPECTRUM started it had as its objective the strengthening of the unity of the church. I believe it is veering away from that purpose.

Couperus responded by expressing regret over those feelings, but argued that

. . . the editorial staff has put forth every effort to carry out its objective to foster the growth of our church through the sympathetic discussion of those issues that are a subject of discussion within our church. The fact that one does not agree with every author or participant in a discussion is of course part of the process of dialogue, so that by a responsible discussion of the various aspects of a problem the issues may be clarified and this in turn be of help in the growth of our church.

One of AAF's biggest failures during its first decade was convincing church leaders that SPECTRUM was not out to destroy the basic tenets of the church. The greatest strains between church leadership and AAF always came after controversial articles in SPECTRUM, especially articles on Ellen White. Yet, many Adventists were leaving the church over their questions about the church's prophetess. Graduate students questioned traditional beliefs because of their studies in specialized subjects. Some AAF leaders felt that the open discussion of this topic enabled educated Adventists to look more honestly at the role of a prophet and still remain loyal Adventists.

The publication of the finest thought in Adventism represents one of SPECTRUM's greatest accomplishments. The first ten volumes presented 270 articles, 45 poems, 74 book reviews, 92 letters and 37 pieces of art or photographs and one short story. The authors ranged from church leaders to graduate students, college professors to pastors, and concerned laymen to non-Adventist theologians.

In addition to the introduction of SPECTRUM, 1969 represented a year of growth for AAF as the number of local chapters increased and regional retreats became popular. However, two problems which persisted in AAF throughout the first decade arose in 1969. As SPECTRUM came increasingly to demand major attention by the AAF Board, the role of graduate and undergraduate students was debated. The journal obviously focused on a wide audience, publishing only a few articles by graduate students. On the other hand, SPECTRUM presented articles of concern to graduate students by focusing

on educational issues. In the early years, most AAF leaders did not question the elitist requirements for membership. In fact, Numbers argued that undergraduate students should not be allowed to vote in national AAF elections, "though the threat of an undergraduate takeover is remote." Early AAF leaders had decided to focus on scholars and those engaged in advanced studies, and thus wanted a membership able to deal with difficult issues in a dispassionate, scholarly manner.

Questions about AAF's purpose presented another major problem. Even before publication of the first SPECTRUM, word came to Tom Walters, AAF's president-elect, that John Hancock, then associate Missionary Volunteer secretary of the General Conference, expressed doubt about AAF's objectives and methods. In reply to Walters' inquiry, Hancock denied saying this, but admitted that AAF was "a very controversial organization in the minds of many" due to the interpretation of certain published articles and viewpoints held to be "subversive" by some church members. Hancock encouraged Walters to keep AAF constructive, and felt certain issues should be discussed only in private or in church committees. He placed the debate in AAF chapters over the draft as one of these areas which should definitely not be published lest it cause "division" among young people. Amazingly, Hancock's letter came even before the first SPECTRUM appeared.

During the first decade, the "founding fathers" and others closely associated with AAF's beginning passed the presidency among each other. During the two-year term beginning in 1970-71, Walters became president, Branson served as president-elect, and Numbers took the executive secretary job. Not a single executive officer at the national level was a full-time graduate student during the first decade. Occasionally, graduate students would serve as regional or local chapter officers, or as contributing editors of SPECTRUM, but the thrust throughout the first decade was to involve the broader concerns of Adventist laymen.

In line with a broader lay concern, the *Review and Herald* published an article in 1970 by Branson on AAF subtitled "another bul-

wark against indifference and apostasy." The article outlined the history of AAF, stressed its base with Adventist graduate students, professionals and teachers, but also emphasized that AAF's "primary goal is to continue producing a journal that will encourage communication among the highly educated within the church." In addition, at the 1970 General Conference Session in Atlantic City, New Jersey, AAF maintained a strong lay presence with a table located at the General Conference department of education booth and a hospitality suite in a local hotel. Ernest Plata, cancer researcher at the National Institutes of Health, coordinated AAF's participation. At the request of Neal Wilson, copies of SPECTRUM were distributed to North American Division delegates.

Roy Branson's 1971-72 presidency can be described as the years of projects. Most AAF leaders had felt a need for innovative projects from the beginning, but believed SPECTRUM should be the only focus until the organization stabilized. During these years, Ron Numbers, vice president, and Dolores Clark, the "unsung hero of the whole AAF story," according to Numbers, brought high efficiency to the officer group. However, once AAF began developing projects, tensions developed between the activists, who frequently were idealistic but had problems organizing projects, and the pragmatists, who wanted to stay with what was working already.

Projects initiated during Branson's presidency included Project Potential, a summer inner-city tutoring and recreation program conducted by Leslie Pitton, Jr., in Orlando, Florida, using Forest Lake Academy students with money raised largely by Vern Carner. Another project was reproducing SPECTRUM articles for use by teachers in Adventist college classes. Not all the suggested projects were successful, however. An effort by Charles Teel, Jr., to get cooperation from the Sabbath School department for a supplement to the *Sabbath School Quarterly* with essays geared to the college and university student population failed when the department did not support the idea. The possibility of AAF's

publishing books never reached fruition. Other projects discussed at the idea stage in AAF's earlier years included an anthropological mission field school in South America, microfilming Ellen White's library, a one-volume history of Seventh-day Adventists, opinion polls, a psychological study of apos-

“Tensions developed between the activists, who frequently were idealistic but had problems organizing projects, and the pragmatists, who wanted to stay with what was working already.”

tasy among young Adventists, a film workshop, conferences on such topics as labor relations and medical institutions, and sponsored lectureships. Many of these projects never were launched due to a lack of financing. The magnitude of the projects meant that volunteers simply could not find the time to complete them in the midst of already busy careers. Toward the end of AAF'S first decade, money and personnel were devoted to developing other projects such as a further development of experimental secular campus ministries, a study of the Adventist family and an Adventist merit program for Adventist high school seniors.

One successful project initiated during Branson's presidency was the publication of *Forum* in 1972. Initially edited by Eric Anderson and later by Viveca Black, *Forum* presented general church news as well as reports on local AAF chapter happenings. Anderson's background as editor of Andrews University's *Student Movement* carried over to *Forum*, and also brought problems to Lawrence Geraty, AAF's new president in 1972-73. Geraty, an archaeologist on the Andrews University Seminary staff, and Vice President Charles Teel, Jr., a teacher at Loma Linda University's La Sierra campus, were the first “non-founding father” individuals to hold the top

positions of AAF, although both had been involved in AAF's establishment at the local level. When an article in the first *Forum* incorrectly gave credit to a local chapter of AAF for a conference president's not being reelected at a conference constituency meeting, Geraty had the issue reprinted. When he insisted that *Forum* reporters writing a story on the developing lawsuit involving Merikay Silver and Pacific Press Publishing Association contact church leaders to learn their perspective, some church leaders put intense pressure on Geraty not to publish any story. Although he was threatened with the loss of his job if he allowed the story's publication, Geraty insisted that the story be published. The story was published, and he resigned from AAF's presidency in April 1973. This led him to urge the election of an individual as president who was financially independent of the church, because “only then will he be able to act as a free moral agent in the best interests of both the Church and AAF.”

The AAF Board, through phone calls and letters, selected Ernest Plata, a Washington, D.C.,-based layman with long-time AAF ties and broad experience in church affairs and innovative outreach programs, as the new president. His orientation led to a period of reassessment of AAF's direction. Six months after Plata's election, an executive committee meeting in California evaluated AAF's successes and failures. The successes at this midpoint in the decade included the publication of *SPECTRUM*, heightened visibility for the student, professional and academic community, successful projects and policy changes on the local level (such as the adoption by the Southern New England Conference of an AAF-sponsored resolution on race relations, later adopted also by the General Conference). The committee also thought AAF had influenced the General Conference decision to replace the *Youth's Instructor*, to approve a graduate student chaplaincy program, and to take a new position on the draft. In the opinion of this group, AAF had failed in four respects. These criticisms, interestingly, give an indication of the direction Plata's presidency would go:

- 1) AAF had grown old and paunchy with its leadership;

- 2) AAF leadership had sought to hold on to power rather than to share same with the now emerging post-B. A. crowd;
- 3) AAF had tended toward navel gazing and talking to members only rather than communicating with the church at large;
- 4) AAF had not communicated extensively with the General Conference since the initial formulation of the Association.

In line with these failures, Plata undertook to engage new blood into active leadership positions and attempted to define AAF as *the* lay organization of the church.

Communication posed the biggest problem during the Plata years. As an already overinvolved layman, he simply did not have enough hours in the day or adequate staffing to handle all his responsibilities. An additional problem was that most of AAF's executive officers lived in California, which made communication difficult. Consequently, AAF began to flounder, and aggressive Vice President Teel became so frustrated that he resigned. Richard Osborn, a Washington-based elementary schoolteacher, became the new vice president so that a local committee could support Plata.

Plata reached out and involved many new names in AAF activities — people such as Glenn Bidwell, a recent Atlantic Union College graduate, Harvey Bidwell, a Boston physician, Joe Mesar, a recent Atlantic Union College graduate, and Tom Dybdahl, a recent graduate of the Columbia School of Journalism. Glenn Bidwell even traveled around the country supported by his brother to create active support for AAF.

All of these activities led to the first national meeting of AAF at Takoma Park, Maryland, in April 1974, with over 60 delegates in attendance from such places as Florida, California, Washington and Michigan. Topics discussed included organization, evangelism, expanding AAF's constituency, SPECTRUM and long-range goals. The meeting turned into the most activist in AAF's history, with resolutions passed in favor of migrant farm workers, plans laid for broader international participation and for-

mation of a Speaker's Bureau for local chapters. A vice presidential structure with vice presidents for academic affairs, development, finance, international affairs and outreach replaced the national representatives.

Of even more significance than these actions was the adoption of a resolution stating,

The Forum shall be a spokesperson for thoughtful, concerned and active laypeople of the Church; consequently, the Forum shall establish mechanisms so that its decisions, issues and directions are set by, and appropriately communicated to, the membership of Forum and its pertinent organizations.

In line with this activist position statement, two new publications in addition to SPEC-

“So many projects were being talked about that basic considerations such as membership renewals began to lag due to a lack of notices’ being sent out.”

TRUM were approved. A *Forum Monthly* newspaper was to be created to include broader news coverage of church news, more popularly oriented articles than the scholarly approach of SPECTRUM and editorials with positions on important issues. This newspaper was to be edited by Tom Dybdahl, a minister in Boston with graduate training in journalism, who was to receive a full-time salary from AAF for his work. The other publication, edited by Monte Sahlin, was to be a technical assistance journal for witness and ministry paid for by advertising. Since Couperus had earlier announced his intentions to resign as SPECTRUM editor in January 1975 after publication of volume six, a search began for a new editor.

At the national meeting, these plans were approved readily, although Plata had a tough time being reelected. Objections were raised to the lack of communication during earlier

months, but a more serious split developed between those who wanted AAF to become a lay lobby for Adventists and those who saw AAF functioning as previously with a primary focus on Adventists with scholarly and intellectual leanings. Essentially, the battle occurred between the “founding fathers” element and the newer individuals being involved by Plata who viewed the time as ripe for broadening the narrow base of AAF.

Plata worked hard raising money for *Forum Monthly* and its editor’s salary, and significant contributions came in. However, so many projects were being talked about that basic considerations such as membership renewals began to lag due to a lack of notices’s being sent out. The proposed six-month budget for the last half of 1974 came to \$10,000 and the anticipated budget for 1975 amounted to \$66,500 — up from an annual budget in previous years of approximately \$13,000.

The search committee for a new SPECTRUM editor had a difficult time finding someone to replace Couperus. Finally, it recommended that instead of a single editor, a Board of Editors be appointed in order to insulate and protect SPECTRUM from attacks being placed on a single editor. The search committee recommended Bruce Branson, a surgeon at Loma Linda University, as chairman of the Board of Editors, with Roy Branson and Charles Scriven, former associate editor of *Insight*, set to act as the editorial board members responsible for editing SPECTRUM. In order for an article to be published, two of these three board members had to approve. When Bruce Branson declined the appointment, Alvin Kwiram, AAF’s first president, accepted the chairmanship.

Living in the Washington area, Branson met regularly with the Executive Committee and questioned the AAF’s decision to begin new publications rather than to place priority on SPECTRUM. In the midst of uncertainty and increased job responsibilities, Plata resigned in January 1975.

At the March 1975 board meeting, the split became even more apparent with one group’s arguing AAF should focus on stabilizing the production of SPECTRUM, and

another group’s viewing *Forum Monthly* as the only way for AAF to involve more laypeople. It became apparent that over \$30,000 would have to be raised from contributions alone in order for *Forum Monthly* to succeed. In this context and after a walkout by one side, the board renewed its commitment to eventually publish *Forum Monthly* when economically feasible, and agreed to publish a quarterly instead with volunteer help.

Glenn Coe’s election as president and Leslie Pitton, Jr.’s, as vice president represented the most significant actions of the board. Coe, an attorney with the Connecticut judicial department and founder of the Washington, D.C., Chapter of AAF, became the compromise candidate. His ties to both sides enabled AAF to weather this dispute, although in essence AAF focused on the audience already cultivated over earlier years. Staff continued to be built up in the Washington, D.C., area, which represented a shift from Loma Linda.

The Coe years were filled with steady growth and accomplishment. Coe worked hard on fund-raising efforts, new projects, membership growth and regular communications. He was aided in particular by several individuals who gave hours of volunteer time. Viveca Black, executive secretary, published *Forum* and communicated with members regularly, which brought chapters to an all-time high and improved morale in the organization. Strong local chapters represent one of AAF’s major contributions to Adventism. As a place for not only discussions, but also fellowship, many Adventists maintained their ties to their church and made positive contributions. Vice President Leslie Pitton, Jr., chaired an effective Promotions Committee which aided membership growth. Ronald Cople developed a systematic plan of membership renewals by computerizing the membership list and actually typing in much of the computer input. He and his wife, Pat, spent hours mailing renewal and promotion notices to thousands of people. This work, along with the new look of SPECTRUM, resulted in AAF’s membership’s rising from a low of 360 to a high of nearly 3,000 member-

ships within two years. Another key factor was the effort of Ray Damazo, a businessman and dentist in Seattle, Washington, along with Kwiram, who now resided in Seattle, and Katie Jo Johnson, who helped AAF establish a more professional and regular approach for seeking new members by instituting a successful promotion campaign based on alumni mailing lists of Adventist colleges. Toward the end of the decade, more new blood came as Lyndrey Niles and Claire Hosten served as officers.

SPECTRUM's two editors, Branson and Scriven, aided AAF's visibility by publishing a vibrant journal. Scriven provided a new colorful design for the journal, and Branson suggested including a cluster of articles on a particular theme in each issue. Among the themes covered were Church and Politics, Women, The Church and the Arts, and Adventist Eschatology. Their first issue focused on the General Conference Session held in Vienna, Austria, in 1975. The issue included interviews with leading church officials, an article on how a General Conference election

“Some church leaders felt so strongly about the Brodie review that they threatened to condemn AAF and even spoke of not allowing denominational employees to be listed on the masthead of SPECTRUM”

works, and an analysis of how the Adventist organizational structure developed. Some of these articles were reprinted in a special *Forum* newspaper intended for General Conference delegates. Couperus spent several days coordinating AAF's presence in Vienna. He was unable to get *Forum* distributed due to resistance by Robert Pierson, but a table was set up by the Adventist university booths from which hundreds of contacts were made with delegates and European members. The *Christianity Today* reporter became so interested in AAF in his report of the session that he quoted only from AAF publications.

As during the Couperus editorship, articles devoted to Ellen White represented the most controversial issue published. It contained reviews of Ronald Numbers' book, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*. Although reviews were published by strong critics of Numbers such as the Ellen G. White Estate, Fritz Guy and Richard Schwarz, church leaders focused on well-known historian Fawn Brodie's comments in which she made some postulations about Ellen White's mental health instead of reviewing the book. Church leaders felt SPECTRUM published this review because they agreed with its content.

Even within the editorial board, controversy existed over the Brodie review. Kwiram had agreed to be chairman of the editorial board only if he could have veto power over proposed articles for SPECTRUM, although because of his long-established relationship with Branson and Scriven, he did not anticipate ever having to exercise it. Among seven members of the editorial board, five favored publication of the Brodie review. However, Couperus, the former editor, and Kwiram, board chairman, did not want the review printed because they felt it was in poor taste, did not review the book and might damage AAF. Branson and Scriven felt the review should be published since Brodie was a recognized scholar whom the editors had asked to write the review, and since they felt some of the issues she raised were significant, although they did not agree with her position. At that point, Kwiram did not veto the article, because he had pledged to himself that he would never do such a thing.

Some church leaders felt so strongly about the Brodie review that they threatened to condemn AAF and even spoke of not allowing denominational employees to continue to be listed on the masthead of SPECTRUM or publish articles in the journal. This led to an emergency, late-night meeting in Philadelphia between AAF leaders and church officials in March 1977. This meeting brought into focus the constant problem existing between AAF and the denomination of maintaining a

loyal yet independent organization within the church. The AAF leaders, most of whom were either church employees or active laymen in their local churches, attempted to allay the fears while at the same time maintaining the need for independent thought within the church. Due to the strong efforts of Neal Wilson, Robert Reynolds and others, the General Conference did not take any actions against AAF and, in turn, AAF began working more actively on projects such as secular campus ministries and a study of the Adventist family, which would directly aid the church's mission.

As a result of Branson's and Scriven's decision to publish the review with Coe's support, Kwiram resigned instead of vetoing. The dispute was over the concept of an editorial board with Coe acting as middleman. Kwiram felt the chairman should serve as a "check and balance" over editorial decisions, whereas Branson and Scriven felt that the editors, who spent many hours editing the journal, should have the final say over what was published, with the AAF Board serving as the "check" through its power to appoint the editors. Kwiram later recalled that this personal confrontation had been "sad, but the severance from SPECTRUM was equally sad. I did so with reluctance but with firmness. It was a matter of conviction." In spite of his resignation, he continued to work actively for AAF by preparing a major report on how to reach intellectuals and, along with his wife, Verla, by making significant financial contributions to AAF. Meanwhile, at the April AAF board meeting, the board agreed to return to the structure of a single editor (or co-editors) with an editorial board as during the Couperus years.

Several issues of SPECTRUM have had an impact beyond the journal's regular subscribers. Pastors in some of the major Adventist pulpits in North America have urged their members to read articles in issues devoted to "Adventist Eschatology Today," "The Church and Politics" and "Festival of the Sabbath." The entire issue devoted to the meaning of the Sabbath had to be reprinted, since over 3,000 copies beyond the regular distribution were ordered by Adventist schools, camp meetings and churches. Jewish

rabbis have even ordered copies in response to a notice about the issue in the house organ of conservative Judaism in the United States. Subsequent issues that have resulted in sizable orders from nonsubscribers are "The Shaking of Adventism?" "The 1919 Bible Conference" and "Adventism in America," indicating that righteousness by faith, Adventist history and the role of Ellen White are topics about which Adventist care deeply.

With the necessity of Chuck Scriven's relinquishing his co-editorship in order to complete his doctoral studies at Berkeley, Richard Emmerson, who holds his Stanford doctorate in medieval studies and is associate professor of English at Walla Walla College, became executive editor of SPECTRUM in 1977. Starting with the Sabbath issue, he volunteered time from a burgeoning scholarly career to be involved in every aspect of editing the journal. His assumption of Scriven's special responsibilities to organize copy for publication has made possible a continuity of editing important for the flourishing of a journal. In the future, Branson and Emmerson plan to continue formal essays exploring topics of substance, but also informal essays, short stories and succinct reports and analyses of current developments within the organized life of the church.

In addition to the *Forum*, the association's newsletter, AAF has recently sponsored a newsletter by and about women, called *Adventist Woman*. Under the leadership of Viveca Black, who suggested the idea to AAF, the first eight-page issue appeared in February 1980.

The financial position of AAF also improved considerably during the Coe years. Larger sums of money spent on promotion came from donations of interested members such as Bruce Branson. Frequently, these members also gave money to send specific issues to thought leaders. The largest donation came from the estate of William and Pearl Abildgaard, parents of Doss Couperus, whose \$25,000 bequest was placed in long-term certificates of deposit with interest used for special projects. In 1979, the AAF established an advisory board of supporters of

SPECTRUM with Dr. Ray Damazo, a dentist and businessman in Seattle, Washington, as chairman. Members of the board have committed themselves to contribute a minimum of \$500 a year for three years in order to expand the circulation of the journal and secure its continuity. They will receive reports about SPECTRUM plans and be invited to meet once a year to share their views with the editors of SPECTRUM and the elected leaders of AAF.

The first decade of AAF has now ended. Beginning as the idea of several dedicated laymen, AAF has lasted longer than many would have predicted. It has had its share of problems, from internal tensions to external confrontations with church leaders. However, it has performed a vital service to Seventh-day Adventism as best expressed in the February 1977 Forum:

Along with their fellow Protestants, Adventists believe in a church whose authority is God, whose will is revealed in the Bible, which is available to all members. The church is not just the clergy, but *all* the members. The Association of Adventist Forums is committed to what is implicit in

this concept of the priesthood of all believers — a democratic church. The only way democracy can function is by constant and full communication among members of the community.

AAF's base of leadership and membership may be small, as many volunteer organizations are, but AAF has made the mission of many church members easier to attain and, in turn, has aided the church's mission by creating a more open environment. For this one contribution above all others, church members can be grateful for the vision of a few laymen in 1967.

This history is based upon extensive administrative files located in the Association of Adventist Forums office in Takoma Park, Maryland, interviews and correspondence from Roy Branson, David Claridge, Molleurus Couperus, Lawrence Geraty, Alvin Kwiram, Joe Mesar, Ronald Numbers and Ernest Plata. Janet Minesinger provided valuable editorial help. In addition, since 1971 the author has been involved in AAF affairs as a local chapter officer, as well as national officerships as a regional representative, vice president, executive secretary and treasurer. Because of his close involvement during these years, the account may show some bias in certain areas — something every historian attempts to avoid but usually fails to do.

Dominant Themes in Adventist Theology

by Richard Rice

The word "theology" refers both to religious beliefs and to the task of reflecting on these beliefs. Since the first issue of SPECTRUM appeared in the late sixties, a lot has happened in Adventist theology in both senses of the term.

Richard Rice, who teaches theology at Loma Linda University's La Sierra Campus, is a graduate of the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary and the University of Chicago.

As we look over the recent developments in SDA theology, we notice that different segments of the church's membership have somewhat different theological concerns. The primary concern of the world leadership during this time, as represented by Robert H. Pierson, has certainly been eschatology, with its emphasis on finishing the work and preparing a people to meet the Lord. Other theological matters are clearly subordinate to this. Concern for church unity thus arises from the desire to create an efficient