

The Voice of H.M.S. Richards
Adventist Media Center at the Crossroads
Must Polygamists Divorce?

SPECTRUM

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RESHAPING THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

The Case for a North American Division
Current Opinion at the General Conference
Conference Mergers in Mid-America

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About This Issue

The future of the Adventist denomination depends on its vision, not its structure. We remain committed to publishing constructive glimpses of what Adventism might be. But structure does impair or improve lives, stifling originality and effectiveness or helping to achieve potential. This issue examines one possible innovation in denominational organization about which there are passionately held and conflicting views. Whatever your opinions, we think the authors of these essays will leave you better informed.

You will also learn from this issue facts you had never known before about H.M.S. Richards, probably the most widely admired man in Adventism. Also, Russell Staples, one of the denomination's best-informed

theologians and its pre-eminent authority on the anthropology of Africa, introduces you to perhaps the most poignant pastoral problem currently facing Adventists in Africa.

Three articles in this issue report on institutions. Particularly the article by Geri Fuller on the North American Division and Bonnie Dwyer on the Adventist Media Center, were based on interviews with scores of denominational officials. The authors may have wanted even more information than they obtained, or wished more individuals had spoken for attribution, but they report an impressive willingness of Adventist denominational leaders to discuss sensitive topics. The Adventist Media Center was especially candid.

—The Editors

The Case for an Independent North American Division

Raymond F. Cottrell

The time has come for a bona fide, truly independent North American Division, operating on democratic principles, and linked to a genuinely international General Conference. The General Conference should establish the same relationship to North America that it maintains with all other segments of the world church. The term North American Division is misleading; North America is not a true division. The present relationship of North America to the General Conference is unique—and objectionable. It affords the church in North America little voice in its own affairs, and thereby impedes fulfillment of the church's mission to the people of North America. It must be changed.

Under the special General Conference arrangement now existing for North America, the General Conference has focused its efforts on the world field and not allowed North America to explore its own ways of pursuing the church's mission in its part of the world. Full division status in the other world divisions is unquestionably an important factor contributing to the phenomenal growth of the church outside North America. In no small measure, the lack of

participation by the North American church in a genuine North American Division is responsible for its painfully slow growth—3.3 percent per year in North America, compared with a 5.8 percent average in the overseas divisions.¹

With all due respect for the laudable intentions of those who formulated, and those who perpetuate, the current relationship of the General Conference to North America, it has worked to the serious disadvantage of the North American church and hindered its mission to the people of North America.

One bar to an independent North American Division has been concern that North America might use its financial resources to pursue its own priorities and undermine the unity of the world church. But true unity around the world can be more real and enduring when the General Conference recognizes and respects the need and right of the church in different parts of the world—including North America—to do things differently. The world mission of the church should not be hindered by demanding worldwide uniformity. Rigid uniformity is self-defeating, whereas flexibility and adaptability enable a church to take maximum advantage of opportunities that vary from one part of the world to another. No part of the world, even North America, should be inhibited from adapting policies, methods,

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and procedures appropriate to its cultural milieu.

In this essay, I will first narrate how the division structure developed, then recount how a genuine North American Division equivalent to other divisions has not emerged, and, finally, set forth reasons why a truly independent North American Division must come into existence.

Development of Divisions

In order to understand how the North American Division is different in important respects from the ten independent world divisions, it is necessary to review the different structures divisions have had, which, in turn, requires briefly going back to the origins of the General Conference. This historical recounting will show that divisions today are less independent of the General Conference than they sometimes were. When we come to examine specifically what is called the North American Division, we will see that it does not even have the degree of self-government that has been conceded to the other divisions.

The first church administrative structure above that of the local congregation came into being when the congregations of Michigan united to form the Michigan Conference in 1861². At the time the General Conference was organized two years later, in 1863, the church had approximately 3,500 members, all in North America, and the General Conference Committee consisted of three members.³ As the Adventist message found its way to other continents—to Europe in 1874, to Australia and South America in 1885, to Africa in 1887, and to Asia in 1884⁴—these areas, also, were administered by the General Conference Committee from Battle Creek, Michigan.⁵ This pattern continued until the reorganization of the General Conference in 1901. By then there were 78,188 Seventh-day Adventists in 55 countries around the world,⁶ in 57 local conferences and 41 missions.⁷

The first significant step toward a division of General Conference administrative authority took place at the close of the 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis.⁸ Local conferences in the United States and Canada were grouped into four supervisory “districts” of the General Conference; the following year, the number was increased to six.⁹ In 1893, Australia and Europe became the seventh and eighth districts.¹⁰ The Australian “Union Conference,” organized in 1894,¹¹ later became the model for similar administrative entities in North America and elsewhere. In 1897, the General Conference established North America, Europe, and Australia as three supervisory “sections” of the General Conference, with a mission board to supervise the rest of the world field. The General Conference Committee was increased to 13 members.¹²

Major reorganization of the General Conference, however, took place in 1901.¹³ Rapid growth overseas had made it impossible for a small group of men in Battle Creek, with little direct knowledge of the circumstances and needs of the church outside of North America, to administer the work around the world. It was time for a division of responsibility and authority. For 13 years the church had been experimenting with various types of regional entities—“districts,” “sections,” “unions”—to administer as integral units of the world church the work in their respective areas.

The 1901 General Conference session chose, as a general policy, to form “unions” composed of several conferences each, with the unions directly responsible to the General Conference Committee. The General Conference in session assigned responsibility for the details of the work in each union to General Conference Committee members “located where the work is to be done.”¹⁴ The General Conference Committee was enlarged from 13 to 25 members, and vice-presidents were elected to supervise the work in Europe and North America. The structural reorganization, accomplished in 1901, played an important role in

the phenomenal growth of the church around the world over the next two or three decades.

At the 1912 Autumn Council, the European delegates proposed dividing the world church into division conferences. The plan was approved, and at a special council early in 1913, the Europeans were authorized to organize a "European Division Conference."¹⁵ At the General Conference session in May, the 12 North American union conference presidents requested, and were authorized, to meet and organize a "North American Division of the General Conference" as a "full official organization." With North America administering its own affairs, it was explained, the General Conference headquarters staff would be "free to give their attention to the great fields composing the world."¹⁶ Other divisions, recognized as such in 1913, were the Far Eastern and South American Divisions.¹⁷ The essential difference between the 1913 divisions and those of 1922 and today was that each 1913 division organized itself, elected its own officers, and was thus, in a sense, independent of the General Conference.

In part, because World War I made it impossible for the new European Division to function, and, in part, because some church leaders began to fear that the new divisions posed a potential threat to the unity of the church, the 1918 General Conference session abolished the division conferences as genuine administrative units, making the division officers, departmental staffs, and even their unions, directly responsible to the General Conference rather than to the respective division committees.¹⁸ The General Conference vice-presidents were still to have general supervision of the work in their respective divisions, and members of the General Conference Committee resident in each division territory were to constitute an

"executive board" (instead of an "executive committee") to transact business.

Reasons for abolishing the division structure, established only five years earlier, were set forth in the preamble to the recommendation presented by the *ad hoc* committee on organization, and in comments by the delegates. They are important to an understanding of the special General Conference-North American Division relationship that developed later. The preamble states:

In order that the unity of our work may be maintained: that economy of administration may best be preserved; that the largest possible amount of funds may be made available for the prosecution of our work in all parts of the field; that all believers everywhere may be constant contributors of their means to the regions beyond; that the General Conference may have direct control and management of its bases of supplies, both of men and of means; that we may meet, and as far as possible overcome the unfortunate international constitutions thrust upon large sections of our constituency by this world war, we would

Recommend, 1. That the organizations known as Division conferences be discontinued. . .¹⁹

When a further explanation of the reasons for abolishing the division administrative structure, established only five years earlier, was requested, I. H. Evans explained that the chief purpose was "to preserve the unity of the work" and to avoid the possibility that one of the divisions might "break away from the general body." The second "primary purpose" was that the General Conference might "have direct control" of North America as its primary source of funds and personnel for conducting the world mission of the church.²⁰ E. T. Russell cited the fear that "a strong man, with a strong personality," in one of the divisions might "convert people to himself" and that the General Conference would be "powerless" to do anything about

it—as the reason why the General Conference should take back the “elective power” from the divisions.²¹ When General Conference president A. G. Daniells put the recommendation to a standing vote at the 1918 General Conference, all but two of the delegates voted to discontinue the divisions as truly independent jurisdictions.²²

Although the divisions remained in name, the General Conference withdrew from them the right to elect their own officers and considerably reduced their administrative authority. In effect the power structure reverted to what it had been five years before, with the General Conference dealing directly with the unions.

“By 1922, the inadequacy of the 1918 arrangement had become evident. It overloaded the General Conference with administrative decisions that could be better made in the field.”

By 1922, the inadequacy of the 1918 arrangement had become evident. It overloaded the General Conference headquarters staff with administrative decisions that could be better made in the field. Accordingly, the 1922 General Conference session returned administrative jurisdiction to the divisions, but retained the 1918 principle that the General Conference would elect the division officers and departmental personnel, whose primary responsibility would thus be to the General Conference, rather than to their respective divisions.

As defined by the General Conference Bylaws adopted in 1922,²³ the General Conference conducts its worldwide work in “division sections,” with the union conferences and missions in each division responsible to the division executive committee. The word “division” identified the

“sections” as administrative units, with jurisdiction over their internal affairs, subject to General Conference policy. The word “sections”—used from 1897 to 1913 to express the idea that the areas so designated were supervisory segments of the General Conference and not independent entities—identified the divisions as integral units of the General Conference. The ambiguous term “division sections” implied sufficient authority for each division to function effectively within its own territory, but limited that authority and defined it as subject to that of the General Conference.

According to these by-laws, each vice-president of the General Conference for a particular division is to be at the same time “president” of his division.²⁴ A full complement of officers and departmental secretaries form the nucleus of its “executive committee,” which functions in effect as a subcommittee of the General Conference for that division.²⁵ Each vice-president/president is to be chairman of his division committee and administer the division under its jurisdiction.²⁶

The 1922 restructuring of the world divisions applied to all of them, except North America, for which the General Conference retained the relationship of 1918. With minor modifications, the 1922 General Conference-Division relationship remains in effect today, 60 years later.

Internationalization of the General Conference

By this time the Seventh-day Adventists had been a world church for many years. During 1922, the number of overseas members surpassed that in North America, and today constitutes 83 percent of the total, a ratio of more than four to one.²⁷ The Seventh-day Adventist concept of world mission and the church’s worldwide presence will eventually require full internationalization of both the General Conference and

the General Conference Committee, including its headquarters staff. This means the participation of non-North Americans, as well as Americans, in the decision-making processes and in the staffing of General Conference headquarters. This section considers the significance of this internationalization. A later section will deal with its effect on the church in North America.²⁸

The principal purpose of the fundamental reorganization of the Seventh-day Adventist church in 1901 was to decentralize, and thus, in a sense, internationalize, decision-making and administration. But international influence on church policy and administration first became impressively

evident at the 1975 General Conference session in Vienna. It was the first such convocation held outside of North America; German, as well as English, was recognized as an official language of the session; and more non-North Americans than before participated in policy-making, including the crucial deliberations of the nominating committee.

For the first time in the history of the church, the overseas divisions controlled the election of a General Conference president. The nominating committee reelected a man whose administrative experience, prior to his first becoming president in 1966, had been almost exclusively outside of North America. Also, for the first time, five of seven

A Short Primer on Adventist

The administrative structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is as follows: congregations in a local region form the constituency of a "conference," a group of local conferences form a "union conference," and a number of union conferences covering a large geographical area form a "division"; the divisions, now 11 in number, constitute the General Conference.

General Conference

Structurally speaking, the General Conference is the world church. It is through elected and appointed representatives meeting in plenary session that the world church determines what it wants to be and do. In these sessions, which occur every five years, the church also selects the members of its highest administrative body, the General Conference Executive Committee, generally referred to as the General Conference Committee, formulates policy, amends its constitution and bylaws, decides matters of church doctrine, and considers other business appropriate to its jurisdiction.

General Conference Committee

The General Conference Committee through its subcommittees and boards administers the affairs of the world church; the term of office for each member is from one plenary session of the General Conference to the next. At present, the General Conference Committee consists of: (1) a headquarters staff of 99 who conduct the routine business of the world church, (2) the 172 members of the 11 division administrative staffs (each of which, in effect, constitutes an executive subcommittee of the General Conference Committee for its designated part of the world), (3) 79 presidents of union conferences and missions, (4) 30 ranking administrators of specified church institutions and organizations, and (5) 46 miscellaneous members, such as laymen and past General Conference presidents. Since some persons may be found in several categories, the most accurate total number of members of the General Conference Committee is 380.

The union conference and mission presidents and the administrators of church institutions and organizations are elected by their respective constituencies. All other members of the General Conference Committee are elected at a plenary session of the General Conference. In common parlance, the General Conference Committee headquarters staff is usually referred to as "the General Conference," or simply "the GC," though, strictly speaking, the headquarters segment of the General Conference Committee is the administrative agent of the committee, and is not the General Conference.

general vice-presidents of the General Conference for the divisions were non-North Americans.²⁹ Several additional non-North American members were added to the General Conference headquarters staff.

Since the 1975 General Conference session, the proportion of non-North American members on the General Conference Committee continues to increase.³⁰ More than half of the 380 members of the General Conference Committee now reside overseas. The 1980 General Conference session implemented a recommendation "to more fully internationalize the activities of the church,"³¹ by making certain "that the internationalization of the General Conference [headquarters] staff be largely from

people who have moved up through the various channels of the work in the divisions, prior to being invited to serve on the General Conference staff" in Washington, D.C.

Such internationalization of personnel and administration is essential to the unity of the church around the world. At the same time, a measure of diversity is implicit in internationalization. True unity in the church around the world will consist in faithfulness to basic principles, while recognizing the necessity of diversity of administrative structure, methods of operation, and adaptations to different cultural environments.

Church Structure

The General Conference Committee convenes in a plenary session each October known as the Annual Council (formerly Autumn Council), giving special attention to the world budget for the following fiscal year; it meets also in an annual Spring Meeting. Available members of the committee meet every Thursday morning to transact routine business.

World Divisions

Each of the world divisions has an officer and departmental staff, elected at a plenary session of the General Conference, who are, by virtue of their election, also *ex officio* members of the General Conference Committee. The president, secretary, and treasurer, with their assistants, constitute the administrative staff of the division. The departmental staff consists of departmental directors, elected at a plenary session of the General Conference, and assistants appointed by the division committee. In their respective divisions (except in North America) they constitute the nucleus of the division "executive committee." That committee includes, in addition to division officers, presidents of unions within the division and other persons the division committee may appoint. If they conform to the General Conference Constitution, Bylaws, and *Working Policy*, actions taken by the division executive committee are final. Union conferences within the division are responsible to the division committee, according to the General Conference Constitution. Each person elected a vice-president of the General Conference for a particular division is, *ex officio*, its president. In this role, he is chairman of the division committee and has charge of the division under its direction.

North American Division

The North American Division officers and staff are elected at a plenary session of the General Conference: a vice-president of the General Conference who serves as the ranking North American Division administrator, a secretary and his Associate, a treasurer and his assistant, and three field secretaries. There are nine departmental directors and four associates. The full staff thus consists of nine officers and 13 departmental directors and associates assigned to North America, plus five appointees. Each staff member of the North American Division is concurrently a staff member of the General Conference in the same capacity, elected to the General Conference headquarters staff specifically to administer the North American Division for the General Conference.

North America's 'Special Relationship'

At the same 1922 General Conference session that established the present role and authority of the divisions, North America was given the different relationship with the General Conference that it still has; a relationship referred to variously in contemporary parlance as "unique," "peculiar," "special," or "historic."³² The essential feature of this unique relationship is the fact that the General Conference Committee administers the North American Division, whereas the other divisions administer their own affairs through their division executive committees.

The General Conference has given several reasons for withdrawing administrative jurisdiction from the divisions in 1918, and for retaining it over North America since 1922: (1) To effect "efficiency" and "economy" of administration, including capital investment and operating cost; (2) to foster maximum giving to the world mission of the church; (3) to give the General Conference "direct control and management of its bases of supplies, both of men and of means," (especially North America), for conducting its world mission; (4) to keep "the elective power [the election of division officers and staff] . . . in the hands of the General Conference." (5) to preserve the unity of the church around the world and to avoid the danger of schism.³³

It is important to note that none of the reasons the General Conference has given for initiating and continuing the special General Conference-North American Division relationship suggest any way in which the North American Division or the church in North America would benefit from the relationship. The stated advantages were all advantageous to General Conference.

The "special," or "unique" relationship between the General Conference and the North American Division is rooted in the fact that the church in North America gave

birth to the General Conference and nurtured it, and that North America is the homeland of the General Conference and the Advent movement. As explained in the *General Conference Working Policy*, this unique relationship is due to the fact that the division administration is centered at the world headquarters, and it is this that "makes advisable some modifications of the usual mode of division organization and operation."³⁴ Originally, the General Conference was designed to serve and administer the church in North America,³⁵ but when the General Conference fell heir to the concept of world mission, its primary function gradually became that of coordinating the fulfillment of this mission.

It is important to review the principal differences between the North American Division and other divisions. Except for his election as vice-president of the General Conference for North America (like the other division vice-presidents of the General Conference for their respective divisions), the vice-president for North America functions, in his relationship to the president of the General Conference and to the General Conference Committee, more like one of the general vice-presidents than a president of one of the divisions. The *General Conference Working Policy* provides that he "shall carry the chief responsibility of leadership in the administration of the work in the division, in counsel with the General Conference president."³⁶

Instead of working under the direction of a division executive committee, like the other vice-presidents of the General Conference for their respective divisions, he works under the direction of the General Conference Executive Committee, of which the General Conference president is chairman, and the North American vice-president is responsible to it and to him.³⁷ Instead of being designated president of the North American Division, like the other vice-

presidents in their respective divisions, he remains vice-president of the General Conference for North America.

Technically, the North American Division has no president: the General Conference Constitution provides for no such office, and no one is elected to that office. However, the administrative relationship of the vice-president for North America to the president of the General Conference is such as to make the latter, *de facto* and *ex officio*, also president of the North American Division—in which capacity the president of the General Conference does, as a matter of fact, function. The appropriate and justifiable internationalization of the General Conference means a person with minimal experience in North America could be elected president of the General Conference and automatically function as president of the North American Division.

The General Conference Committee serves as the executive committee for the North American Division, but it has established a permanent sub-committee known as the North American Division Committee on Administration (NADCA), to which it has delegated responsibility for the routine administration of the North American Division.³⁸ The *General Conference Working Policy* provides that “actions of this committee shall be considered final, subject to general limitations imposed by the General Conference Bylaws on division committees.”³⁹ NADCA membership is limited to persons who are already members of the General Conference Committee, by virtue of which fact they serve on NADCA *ex officio*.

The 21 General Conference headquarters personnel who are members of the North American Division administrative-departmental staff are, of course, members of NADCA, but every other member of the General Conference Committee, including the 238 members who reside overseas and administer their respective divisions, are *also* eligible to participate and vote when present, as are all of the union presidents as

well.⁴⁰ NADCA meets in plenary session only at a plenary session of the General Conference, at an Annual Council, or (possibly) at a Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee.⁴¹

“None of the reasons the General Conference gave for. . . continuing the special. . . relationship benefit the church in North America.”

Routinely, NADCA meets in the General Conference headquarters chapel immediately following the weekly Thursday morning meeting of the General Conference Committee. With the vice-president of the General Conference Committee for North America taking the chair, the General Conference Committee members remain and function *ex officio* as members of NADCA. Those present and voting are identical for both committees, and only headquarters members of the General Conference committee are usually present at these routine meetings. Since the North American union conference presidents are not present, actions taken at these meetings are adopted for North America solely by individuals elected by the General Conference, not by any of the jurisdictions within North America. Minutes of both the General Conference Committee and NADCA are circulated together to the same recipients.

The officers and departmental staff elected to serve a normal world division are, by virtue of election to their division posts, also *ex officio* members of the General Conference Committee by that election. However, the priorities are reversed in North America. The officers and staff of the North American Division are all elected to the General Conference, and also *ex officio* serve the North American Division.⁴² Too often, as presently constituted, NADCA is

the General Conference administering the affairs of the North American Division to meet General Conference requirements for serving the world field, not primarily to meet the needs of the church in North America. Finally, the North American Division has no headquarters of its own.⁴³ Structurally and functionally, North America is not a division in the sense that the other world divisions are. It is unique.

Progress Toward An Independent Division

Over the years since 1922, discussion of the anomalous status of the North American Division at the General Conference headquarters has always foundered over the specter of losing financial control of North America. Recently the General Conference formally explored the possibility of restoring North American Division to full division status, but again dismissed the idea. The 1978 Annual Council, anticipating the 1980 session of the General Conference, requested that the General Conference headquarters staff "thoroughly explore the advisability of restructuring the relationship between the North American Division and the General Conference, including the creation of a separate division organization structured along the same lines as the present world divisions."⁴⁴

In response, the General Conference presented the 1979 Annual Council with a report that cited four "disadvantages" of giving the North American full division status: (1) the "capital expenditure" required, (2) the "cost of operation," (3) "lessened efficiency," and (4) "reduced awareness of and reduced interest in the needs of both North America and the world divisions."⁴⁵ No advantages were mentioned. The report recommended the desirability of retaining the "unique relationship," but proposed giving the North American Division delegation at a General

Conference session the opportunity to recommend personnel who might be elected to the General Conference headquarters staff to serve the North American Division, rather than leave to the headquarters staff the assignment of such personnel from among persons already elected to the staff, as in the past.

The 1979 Annual Council report on the North American Division leaves the reader to guess about the thinking behind the purported disadvantages the General Conference saw in according North America full division status. By capital expenditure, it doubtless referred to a headquarters plant, which would require several million dollars. Any difference between the cost of operating the North American Division in its own headquarters or at the General Conference headquarters would be nominal: personnel and office space would be essentially the same. Of course a North American Division with the same status as other divisions would reduce the efficiency of the General Conference control of the North American Division, but it would significantly increase the efficiency by which a divisional administrative and departmental staff would take an interest in, and provide for, the needs of the church in North America.

"The General Conference continues its complete control. The North American Division is still a division in name only, not in fact."

Accepting the report, the 1979 Annual Council voted to retain the "peculiar and special" General Conference-North American Division relationship and authorized the North American Division caucus at the 1980 General Conference session to recommend eligible personnel for election to the General Conference headquarters staff

specifically to serve North America. Departmental personnel thus selected were to have a “line relationship” to the North American Division administration and a “staff relationship” to their respective General Conference departments.⁴⁶ In line with this recommendation, the 1980 General Conference provided a full complement of nine officers, including the vice-president of the General Conference for North America and 12 departmental directors and assistants.⁴⁷ Upon the reading of the full General Conference/North American Division staff thus elected, W. J. Hackett commented: “The North American Division is making progress”.⁴⁸ Actually the change in 1980 was procedural rather than substantive and was designed to preserve, rather than alter, the old, 1922 relationship between the General Conference and North America. Structurally, the General Conference continues its complete control. The North American Division is still a division only in name, not in fact.

Evaluation of the Special Relationship

Some of the factors originally cited to justify such direct control of the North American Division have proven illusory. General Conference control of North America was supposed to increase giving to missions.⁴⁹ In fact, while other elements are doubtless involved, under the special relationship the North American ratio of mission offerings to the tithe has steadily decreased from 67 percent in 1922 to 10 percent in 1980.⁵⁰ In contrast, six overseas divisions (with full division status) have increased their giving, proportionate to North America, by 57 percent, and several have become largely, if not altogether, self-sustaining.⁵¹

Increasing deterioration of confidence in the General Conference has led many members in North America, especially some

with more than average income, to channel their contributions, and in some instances their tithe, to projects of their own choice, rather than to those designated by the General Conference.⁵² Instead of increased giving, the special General Conference-North American Division relationship seems, if anything, to have diminished it.

It was also argued in 1918 and 1922 that direct General Conference control of the North American Division, by enabling the General Conference to deal directly with the union conferences of North America, would facilitate recruitment of personnel for overseas service.⁵³ However, the General Conference processes calls to overseas service through NADCA—rather than directly with the union conferences as then proposed—and there is no evidence that the process would be more difficult or otherwise impaired if NADCA were replaced by a bona fide North American Division executive committee, as in the other world divisions.⁵⁴ In 1922, most of the personnel recruited for mission service came from North America, whereas today other divisions (with bona fide division status and executive committees) provide an increasingly large number.⁵⁵ The noteworthy way in which these overseas divisions are contributing personnel for mission service, likewise, further discredits the notion that division status and structure inhibit recruitment for mission service.

Disunity was cited as the General Conference’s “primary reason” for resuming direct control of all divisions in 1918. The same reason was given in 1922 when the General Conference, while retaining administrative authority to the other divisions, retained direct control of North America.⁵⁶ But if this was not necessary with respect to the other divisions, why should it be with respect to North America?

Just as the other divisions have been permitted to develop their own approaches to missions, North America must be allowed to find its own ways to increase its rate of growth. It must develop its own ways to

communicate with the contemporary North American mind. People in North America do not think as they did 80 years ago. Therefore, evangelistic approaches addressed to the 11 percent of the population who are Bible-believing Protestants leave the other 89 percent of North Americans virtually untouched. True unity in the church will be advanced by North America discovering its own distinctive responses appropriate to its social, cultural, and religious environment.

“It is time for the church in North America to have its own. . . headquarters, president, executive committee, and budget.”

Nothing that has been said in this section about the special General Conference-North American Division relationship in any way depreciates the able ministry of the vice-president of the General Conference for North America and his staff, individually or collectively. They are able to be commended for yeoman service under difficult circumstances, sometimes beyond the call of duty. The problem is inherent in the system, not in those who administer it.

Full Division Status: A Concept Whose Time has Come

Deeply rooted in the social consciousness of the people of North America is the conviction that government should be “of the people, by the people, and for the people,”⁵⁷ that those who govern should do so with the consent and continuing approval of the governed.

Yet the church in North America has substantially less voice in the administration of its affairs as a division than any other world division, and no voice in the electoral

process or in the formulation of church policy above the local conference level. The General Conference administers the North American Division on an authoritarian, paternalistic basis. In the full import of the term, the structure and operation of the Seventh-day Adventist church government above the local conference level qualifies it as a hierarchy.⁵⁸

Knowledgeable North American Seventh-day Adventists believe that they have a legitimate concern in matters directly affecting them; a concern altogether consistent and compatible with loyalty to the church and its leaders. They believe that church members should have a meaningful voice in the election of church leaders and setting of policy at all levels, including that of the division. Otherwise affirmation of the rubric, “the priesthood of all believers,” takes on a hollow ring. This concern is especially strong among members with advanced education and/or professional or technical training, whose expertise in various areas could be of significant value to the church. Imperfect though all human structures and processes are, democracy, in its best expression, seems—to the modern Christian—to reflect the principles of the gospel more faithfully than that of any other available option. It is time for the church in North America to have its own division administration with its own headquarters, president, executive committee, and budget.

Further important adaptations to the needs of the North American church could also be considered: separation of administrative and judicial functions, institution of a system of checks and balances, and provision for initiative, referendum, and recall procedures.

Concurrently, the time has also come for the General Conference to become a truly international organization. By dissociating itself from any special relationship to North America, and with headquarters in a neutral country such as Switzerland, the General Conference would become a truly international organization. In many lands today,

Seventh-day Adventists are thought of, even by church members, as an American church: and, in some parts of the world, it certainly is not an advantage to be identified as an American.

Full division status for North America could facilitate other needed changes. For example, more serious study could be devoted to consideration of dispensing with the union conference administrative structure. Unions served a useful purpose at a time when communication and transportation were relatively primitive by today's standards, and when administrators with experience were relatively few. Today, the union conferences are an expensive luxury.

Some of their functions could be absorbed into the new North American Division and others into the local conferences which

would then operate directly under the North American Division. This would bring the local congregations and conferences of North America closer together in a more concerted and effective endeavor to fulfill their mission to the people of North America. Merging the union conference structure into an independent North American Division would provide the necessary capital for establishing and operating the division, and would release a very considerable budget for more effective and productive use.

A bona fide, independent North American Division, organized and operating according to democratic principles, and loyally linked to a truly international General Conference, is a concept whose time has come.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Comparing membership for all of the divisions at the close of 1980 with the close of 1979, based on statistics in the *Statistical Report-1980*, p. 20.

2. "Organization, Development of, in SDA Church," Sec. II.3, *SDA Encyclopedia*.

3. The General Conference Committee was enlarged to five members in 1883, to seven in 1886, and to 13 in 1897. *Ibid.*, Sec. II.4-5; III.1.5. Clarence Creager Crisler, *Organization* (Takoma Park: Review and Herald, 1938), pp. 103-110.

4. *SDA Encyclopedia* articles on the church in the respective geographical areas give these dates for the first acceptance of the Advent Message by indigenous residents of each area, and not necessarily the formal opening of work by the church.

5. Battle Creek became headquarters of the church when James and Ellen White moved there from Rochester, New York, in 1855, and remained the headquarters until the move to Washington, D.C., in 1903.

6. "SDA Church," *SDA Encyclopedia*.

7. *Statistical Report-1905*, p. 8.

8. "Organization," Sec. III.1, *SDA Encyclopedia*; Crisler, pp. 135-155. In 1882 the European conferences and missions formed what they called the European Conference, later the European Council of SDA Missions. There were other tentative steps prior to 1901.

9. "Organization," Sec. III.1.

10. "Organization," Sec. III.2. (or *Ibid.*, Sec. III.2.)

11. *Ibid.*, Sec. III.4.

12. *Ibid.*, Sec. III.5.

13. See Crisler, pp. 157-176; "Organization," Sec. IV.2.

14. A. G. Daniells, "A Statement of Facts Concerning Our Present Situation—No. 8," *Review and Herald*, March 29, 1906, pp. 6-7.

15. "Organization," Sec. V.1; *General Conference Bulletin*, May 27, 1913, p. 145.

16. Crisler, pp. 158 ff; *General Conference Bulletin*, May 27, 1913, p. 145.

17. Crisler, p. 184; *General Conference Bulletin*, May 27, 1913, p. 145.

18. *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1918, pp. 39-40.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. General Conference Constitution and By-laws, Article I; *General Conference Bulletin*, May 25, 1922, p. 245.

24. General Conference Constitution and By-laws, Article III.4; "SDA Church," *SDA Encyclopedia*.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *General Conference Bulletin*, May 25, 1922, p. 245.

27. See *Statistical Report-1922*, p. 10; *Statistical Report-1980*, p. 20.

28. See subdivision, Evaluation of the Special Relationship, this article.

29. *SDA Yearbook*, 1976, p. 15.

30. The 238 members of the ten overseas divisions and their 72 union conference and mission presidents, a total of 310, or 63 percent of the 490 members.

31. "Annual Council of the General Conference Committee, General Actions," October 10–18, 1978, p. 20; October 9–17, 1979, p. 18.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, 1979, p. 17; *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1918, p. 39.

34. *General Conference Working Policy*, rev. 1980, ss C 50.

35. "Organization," Sec. II.4.

36. *General Conference Working Policy*, rev. 1980, ss C 50 05.

37. *General Conference Constitution and By-laws*, Article III.3; *General Conference Bulletin*, May 25, 1922, p. 245.

38. "General Conference Executive Committee," *SDA Encyclopedia*.

39. *General Conference Working Policy*, rev. 1980, ss C 50 05.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*, ss C 50 45.

42. North American Division staff members at General Conference headquarters are elected to the General Conference headquarters staff and serve North America by virtue of that election; overseas division staff members are elected to serve their respective divisions and are members of the General Conference Committee by virtue of that fact. The North American union conference presidents are elected by their respective union constituencies to serve their unions; their service on the General Conference Committee and the North American Division Committee on Administration is *ex officio*. The fact that every member of NADCA serves *ex officio* in that capacity means that the North American has no one on its division committee who was specifically elected to represent the church in North America on the division level.

43. "North American Division," *SDA Encyclopedia*.

44. "1978 Annual Council," p. 20.

45. "1979 Annual Council," p. 17.

46. *Ibid.* p. 18.

47. *Adventist Review*, May 1, 1980, p. 23 (615).

48. *Ibid.*

49. *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1918, pp. 39–40.

50. Latest available figures, from *Statistical Report—1980*, p. 33.

51. *Statistical Report—1922*, pp. 2, 5, 33; *SDA Yearbook*, 1982, p. 4.

52. Firm figures are not yet available for the amount involved in the collapse of Donald Davenport's investment empire. One recent estimate gives a total of approximately \$55 million, of which \$35 million were church funds and \$20 million those of individual investors. The former were funds donated or in trust from members, and the latter, personal funds of members who trusted the judgement of church leaders who had invested their own or church funds with him, sometimes at a higher rate of interest than given church members generally.

53. *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1918, pp. 39–40.

54. North American Division Committee minutes on Administration are replete with such items.

55. Precise comparative figures are not available.

56. *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1918, pp. 39–40.

57. United States Constitution.

58. Hierarchy: "A form of government administered by an authoritarian group," "an authoritarian body of religious officials organized by rank and jurisdiction," esp., "control exercised by a priesthood." *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*. Literally, "having the character of priestly rule and authority."

An Independent North American Division: Current Opinion at the General Conference

by Geri Ann Fuller

This Fall, for the first time, North American delegates to the General Conference Annual Council will have their own separate session. They will meet in Washington, D.C., following the Annual Council in the Philippines. At the request of certain union presidents in North America, one item on the agenda of this North American Division Council will be the development of an independent North American Division.

Also, for the first time, the General Conference is planning to provide North American representatives within each General Conference department with their own 1983 operating budgets, separate from general departmental budgets. These and other events during recent months have suggested movement towards a genuine North American Division. Les Pitton, director of North American Youth Ministries and an associate director of the General Conference Department of Youth Ministry,

could say in August that "more has been accomplished towards a North American Division in the last six months than during the previous two years."

But many General Conference officials do not yet agree on whether such a North American Division would more fairly represent the membership in North American, or the world field; allocate human and financial resources more justly and effectively; and contribute to denominational strength and unity. Some think that North America should never have the same structural separation that the world divisions have. Others predict a true North American Division must—and will—be organized at the next General Conference session in New Orleans, in 1985. This ambivalence at the highest levels of the General Conference is reflected in the written response of Neal Wilson, president of the General Conference, to a question about his view of the likelihood that a separate North American Division will be formed. "No separation is taking place and there is no action authorizing anything like this. We're pulling together; we're one unit. We are trying to give greater latitude to the

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North American Division on an operational level. This is my position.”

How North American affairs could best be administered has been debated ever since the division concept was first introduced to the General Conference in 1912. (see elsewhere in this issue of SPECTRUM “The Case for an Independent North American Division,” by Ray Cottrell). But when J. G. Smoot, president of Andrews University, reporting the actions of the nominating committee, read off the names of the 21 men who would be elected by the 1980 General Conference session to serve as North American representatives in General Conference departments, many thought a significant step had been taken towards the possibility of a distinct North American Division. At the same 1980 session, the General Conference By-laws were amended, allowing North American representatives on the nominating committee to recommend the officers and departmental directors assigned to their division.

Each of the newly elected departmental representatives for North America was given staff responsibility within the General Conference department to which he was assigned, but also a direct line responsibility to the General Conference vice-president for North America. According to the General Conference document, “General Conference—North American Division Relationship”:

The North American Departmental representative should work closely with the General Conference departmental director, sharing freely with him all plans and programs. . . (he) should consider himself an integral part of the staff, attending all meetings, seeking to reflect the world view and manifesting an unsectioned interest in the general work. He will at the same time keep the staff informed as to plans and policies for North America and seek their counsel on the same. . . will work closely with the director and staff in responding to requests from the North American field.

In a General Conference organizational chart, the relationship of the departmental director to his department chairmen, is represented by a dotted line and his accountability to the General Conference vice-president for North America with a solid line. The same document also provided for the vice-president of the General Conference for North America calling and presiding at meetings of those representatives assigned to North America from among the General Conference treasury, secretariat and other departments. Every Wednesday, its 21-or-so members gather from 10:30 a.m. to Noon in the General Conference Central Building. Since the 1980 General Conference session, this group has increasingly established its identity as the North American Division staff. By now, most General Conference departments have accepted the North American Division staff as a reality, with the Education and Youth Departments regarding it most favorably, and the Communications, Public Affairs, and Sabbath School Departments remaining somewhat less than enthusiastic.

Tom Ashlock, the associate director of the General Conference Sabbath School Department assigned to North America, for one, thinks the North American Division staff is a reality and has already made a difference. “Meeting with other North American departmental people gives me a more holistic view of the work and makes me more useful to the individual, local churches, because we are not divided in our approach to them. Ashlock cites, as an example, the new *Cornerstone Connections* Sabbath School quarterly series for youth. The North American representatives of the Sabbath School, Youth, and Educational Departments cooperated in designing a complete program of creative posters, activity sheets, audio cassette tapes, and a teacher-leader packet to be distributed to local churches, in addition to a new contemporary Sabbath School quarterly for youth.

Other developments since the 1980 Gen-

eral Conference session, besides the emergence of a North American Division staff, have contributed to the sense that a North American Division may actually emerge. In February 1981, the General Conference Executive Committee, on the recommendation of Charles Bradford, vice-president for North America, approved the creation of a 48-member Faith, Action, Advance Committee, to meet as often as necessary to suggest new approaches for revival and evangelism in North America. The committee was also empowered to review and evaluate the performance of conferences and unions in implementing such programs. Because the committee has a broadly defined scope, and because its members include not only North American Division staff, but some union officers, pastors, and lay persons, it has increasingly served as a way for the North American Division officers and staff to influence key leaders regarding direction of the church in North America. In January 1982, for the first time ever, the North American Division staff met with North American union officers and departmental directors to exchange ideas on a coordinated approach to the North American church ministries, personal ministries, Sabbath School, youth, health and temperance programs.

However, no one should be misled. Increasing evidence for a distinct North American identity at the General Conference does not mean that a separate budget for North America is now voted by a North American Division. In fact, the North American staff at the General Conference only recently convinced the General Conference to give them the right to determine their own operating budgets in 1983, three years after their appointment at the Dallas General Conference session.

Comments by General Conference leaders about creating an independent North American Division, with its own budget,

revolve around a few central issues. The first is representation. As of 1980, only 17 percent of the denomination's membership lived in North America—600,000 members out of a world-wide membership of 3,500,000. Overseas divisions are increasingly insistent on General Conference leadership reflecting the shifting trends in denominational membership.

“As the General Conference leadership becomes increasingly internationalized, the church in North America will come to be dominated by General Conference officers, unfamiliar with North American problems.”

“There is a feeling that the world is not fully represented at the General Conference level,” according to Bekele Heye, a citizen of Ethiopia and the president of the Afro-Mideast Division. “The church has been making progress in recent years in developing national leadership, yet with close to 1,000,000 members in the African continent, it has no indigenous representation at the General Conference.” He thinks men from overseas should serve in all key areas. “North America has an obligation to make the Seventh-day Adventist movement succeed as a world movement and to train the world work force.” An officer of a European division noted that at Annual Councils, where General Conference budgets are voted, North American union and conference leaders have disproportionately large voting power because they can attend the annual councils that are almost always convened in the United States, whereas very few union presidents and no conference presidents from outside North America can afford to attend.

North American leaders acknowledge the

force of the representation argument, and believe that as the General Conference leadership becomes increasingly internationalized, reflecting trends in membership, the church in North America will come to be dominated by General Conference officers, unfamiliar with North American problems. Unless, of course, the direction of North America is separated from the General Conference through the establishment of a North American Division.

In addition to representation, money has been an issue fundamental to debates about a North American Division. With a division, North America could simultaneously stop worrying about losing influence at the General Conference and increase its freedom and ability to address North American problems. One General Conference officer in the Education Department, favoring a North American Division, gave as an example the possibility of more quickly addressing the urgent task of evaluating the number and location of Adventist colleges in North America.

A standard justification for maintaining disproportionate representation of North America at the General Conference has been the continued high percentage of General Conference income that comes from North America. More than 20 percent of the tithe collected in North America goes to the General Conference. In addition, North American members contribute to Ingathering, Investment, Sabbath School, and mission offerings, much of which goes to the world church. As a result, in 1982, \$103 million, or 67 percent of the General Conference budget, will have come from North America.

A General Conference officer in the Treasury Department, who is an American, but served overseas, expressed deep concern that if North America had its own division, and therefore the liberty to reduce its appropriations to the General Conference, areas of the world field heavily dependent on General Conference appropriations would suffer—places such as Africa and

Southern Asia. The officer of a European Division who objected to North American votes counting disproportionately at Annual Councils still did not want a separate North American Division, because of the possibility that North America would reduce its contributions to the world budget. He and others also cite the expenses of establishing a new bureaucracy as a potential drain from appropriations for overseas and North American projects.

Those who favor a North American Division attack the question of finances head on. They point out that while North America contributes 67 percent of the world budget, its programs and institutions in North America also absorb 53.3 percent of the General Conference budget. They stress that five of the ten world divisions are self-supporting, or nearly so, and that is without the one percent of their tithe that they send to the General Conference. The five divisions needing assistance include three in Africa and two in Asia.

Owen Troy of the Communications Department, raises a separate point concerning money. He thinks separating the North American Division would financially strengthen the world church. "I was overseas in Africa and the West Indies," he said. "I've seen the difference in the mission field when members understood that they were responsible for their own finances. When the first African black conference was formed from a mission, and members elected their own officers, the whole character of the field changed. Ghana had approximately 10,000 members when I was there in 1966. Now they've spawned two separate missions, with a combined membership of more than 8,000, and what's left of the conference has nearly 29,000 members. That's growth through African leadership when the missions themselves contributed."

As for the charge that a North American Division bureaucracy would increase costs,

several General Conference officials, including one vice-president, pointed out that the recent designation of an associate director of each department who is responsible for all activities having to do with North America has revealed that, in some General Conference departments, the North American representative was handling 70 percent of the work. The rest of the staff had to busy themselves with 30–40 percent of the remaining tasks. In other words, some General Conference departments are overstaffed. Presumably, creating a North American Division could save the expense of their salaries.

Furthermore, the discussion of a North American Division has led to a review of the role of the union conferences in North America. Both the Pacific and North Pacific Unions have officially created committees carefully examining whether such large staffs are needed at the union level. There is serious discussion that a North American Division might make it possible to reduce the number of unions, or even eliminate them completely. Annual savings in operating by elimination of the unions could easily run into millions of dollars (see article on Mid-American Union by Jiggs Gallagher, in this issue of SPECTRUM).

“There is serious discussion that a North American Division might make it possible to reduce the number of unions, or even eliminate them completely.”

Finally, apart from representation and finances, there are genuine differences at the General Conference concerning the effect on the unity and cohesion of the denomination as a whole if North America were a separate division. One director of a General Conference department emphasized that “North American involvement has made a contribution to the Adventist genius.” For

example, individuals from outside North America who come to the General Conference are able to receive vital training that they can take with them when they return to enhanced leadership positions in their homelands.

Others in Washington, including some from overseas, point out that, especially in departments preoccupied with North American affairs, directors and associate directors from overseas waste valuable time having to adjust to American culture, value systems, and methods of problem-solving. They think departmental directors would better serve the denomination by working in their home divisions, rather than accepting General Conference titles in departments spending 60–70 percent of their time on North American issues.

Is an independent North American Division likely to come into existence in the foreseeable future? It is very hard to predict. General Conference vice-presidents for North America have traditionally supported the formation of a more clearly defined North American Division. At least one person a few years ago declined the job of vice-president for North America because he could not receive assurances that its organizational structure would become more distinct from the General Conference.

But the present vice-president for North America, Charles Bradford, cautions that he would prefer to see the church move slowly towards any action on the North American Division. “We need to assess it and evaluate it and ask how it’s wearing—give it some fine-tuning and adjustments,” he says. “We’re just wobbly on our legs like a just-born colt. We can’t very well raise a big cry about more autonomy until we’ve done our best to succeed with the arrangement we’ve had since 1980. I would like what we’re already doing to be fully accepted and to have a consensus on the matter by all General Conference personnel.”

Interestingly, one indication that despite the caution of some, a North American Division may actually come into being, is the support for a genuinely independent division expressed by some leaders who have served much of their professional lives overseas. The North American Division staff includes former missionaries who are now fully committed to creation of a North American Division.

Even more intriguing are views of a vice-president of the General Conference, who until his election two years ago at the Dallas General Conference session, was the president of the large South American Division. Enoch Oliveira was born, raised, and served his entire ministry in South America. He shares the insistence of overseas leaders that the selection of General Conference officers should reflect the increased membership of Adventism outside North America. He agrees with those who want the world field to benefit from North American financial resources. He most emphatically sees North America as the historic and continuing source for organizational cohesion within a world-wide denomination. But he does not now see the creation of a North American Division as necessarily opposed to accomplishing those goals.

While leadership of the General Conference should reflect the diversity of the world membership, he thinks General Conference departments do not need to be large. "Each division has leaders with their own specialization, aware of the needs of their area. They don't need General Conference departments filled with specialists." Financially, the world fields, with some clear exceptions, are becoming less dependent on North American gifts. "Most divisions are not that concerned about the loss of support from the General Conference in the future," he says. Besides, Adventists in North America would continue to give to missions, whether or not they were in a North American Division, he believes.

At the same time that Oliveira sees no major organizational harms to the world

church from creation of a North American Division, he thinks there are very important reasons why substantial progress in North America is imperative for the well-being of the entire denomination. "North America functions as a center of influence for the world church which helps to maintain a cohesiveness in the church structure. The genius of the Adventist movement has been that unity in spite of cultural diversity." He notes that the Adventist church in North America has not grown at a rate anywhere near that in other parts of the world. He is convinced that "if the influence of North America continues to decrease, whether through lack of growth, or theological, or other problems which have beset it, the end result will be a lack of cohesiveness and unity for the whole world church." Therefore, he is willing to entertain organizational diversity in the form of a genuine North American Division, if that will bring substantive unity. "I don't know if separate division status for North America would be the solution, but something must be done to help North America grow more in harmony with its amazing potential."

Some cannot resist speculating about details of headquarters locations if a North American Division were actually to come into existence. Some conjecture that one result would be relocation of the General Conference headquarters outside of the United States. Switzerland has been mentioned as a politically neutral location which would also foster a more international image of the world church than does the United States. But Jean Zurcher, secretary of the Euro-African Division, points out that the positive contact the General Conference now enjoys with American political authorities could not exist in Europe. Although reduced travel costs might favor a central U.S. location such as Denver for a North American Division headquarters, many don't really expect either the General Conference or the North American Division to move farther from the Washington, D.C., area than perhaps nearby

Columbia, Maryland. Others point out that even if the North American Division were to be totally separated from the General Conference, there is no reason why both organizations couldn't continue to operate out of the same building, with the North

American Division perhaps occupying its own wing.

But such conjectures are premature. As of now, a consensus has not yet emerged that is strong enough to ensure the organization of a North American Division.

Merging Unions and Conferences: The Example of Mid-America

by Jiggs Gallagher

If a Seventh-day Adventist church administrator was seeking advice on conference mergers, he would have to look to the Midwest. In the last three years, two unions and eight of their local conferences have consolidated. The Northern Union (then the smallest, with 15,000 members), and the Central Union (then the eighth largest with 37,000 members), combined in May 1980 to form the new 55,000-member Mid-American Union, making it one of North America's middle-sized unions. At present, all the local conferences in the new union, except for two, have merged. As a result of these mergers, the church is saving nearly \$1 million annually. In addition, money was

injected into church accounts from the sale of the vacated five offices and two academies.

A decreasing tithe dollar and the increasingly apparent inefficient organizational structure prompted the consolidations. The national economic slowdown of the late 1970s inevitably decreased the flow of tithe dollars and led conference administrators in the Midwest to consider the advantages of merger. The Midwest, with its small population and large territories, could not disregard diminishing funds and glaring organizational inefficiencies. For example, two of the conferences involved in the mergers—Wyoming Conference with 2,020 members, and the South Dakota Conference, with 1,931 members—each had a constituency smaller than the members of the College View Church in Lincoln, Nebraska. It was obvious that maintaining a complete support staff for such small

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constituencies was bad administration. (Now the smallest conference in the Mid-America Union, Dakota Conference, has just over 5,000 members and the largest, Rocky Mountain Conference has 15,000 members.)

After years of informal discussion, the crucial actions to merge the two unions came rapidly. The executive committees of the two unions, meeting two days apart in 1980—the Central Union on May 26, 1980 and the Northern Union on May 28—voted to merge. Three weeks later, the constituencies of each of the unions—meeting separately, but only one day apart (the Northern Union on July 14 and the Central Union on July 15)—also voted in favor of a merger. This vote in 1980 by the two union constituencies was the crucial action creating the Mid-America Union Conference.

The constituencies also voted to establish a special, large merger committee. They also select their representatives to the committee. The merger committee was empowered to take whatever action was necessary to formulate a new constitution and by-laws for the new union, to select its officers, and to give study to consolidating conferences within the new union.

Just two days later, July 17, the merger committee, with 78 members, gathered for one day in Lincoln, Nebraska. All the members of both union committees were joined by twice as many laymen. Charles Bradford, vice-president of the General Conference for North America, presided. E.L. Marley, president of the Northern Union, announced his intention to retire. That cleared the way for Ellsworth Reile, president of the Central Union, to be elected the president of the new Mid-American Union. The rest of the officers of the union were then selected.

In addition, two subcommittees were formed. One produced a constitution and by-laws for the new union, and submitted them at its first constituency meeting. The other subcommittee, comprising all the conference presidents within the new union

and all the laymen on the merger committee, recommended which conferences should be merged. With one exception, the choices for consolidation, submitted to the merger committee before it adjourned, proved to be the mergers that subsequently took place. (Minnesota ended up remaining a separate conference.)

Finally, the merger committee designated itself the governing body for the merged union, until the constituency for the new union convened. For nine months the Mid-America Union had the largest union committee in the history of North America.

“The unwritten rule that emerged was that one of the merging conferences would get to keep its academy and the other the location of the new conference’s headquarters.”

April 12–16, 1981 the constituents of the new union formally met, adopted the new constitution and by-laws, and re-elected Reile as president. During the nine months from the convening of the merger committee to the first Mid-America Union constituency meeting, five officials had retired or received calls elsewhere and were not replaced (three officials had originally served in the Northern Union and two in the Central Union).

As soon as the merger committee had selected Reile as president of the combined union, he began implementing the merger of conferences. Within two weeks, the Iowa and Missouri constituencies had approved of a merger. The last merger of conferences—the Dakotas—took place only nine months later, in April, 1981. It happened to be the same month that the Mid-America Union constituents met to ratify the new union’s constitution.

Reile followed a similar pattern in all the

merger discussions. First, he visited each of the conference committees and received their approval, in principle, to merge. Then—in what Reile thinks is the key to the whole process—he held four to six open meetings (usually on consecutive days) in different parts of a conference. In addition to Reile, union treasurers and local conference officers (except for those rare conference officers who refused) made a one-hour presentation, explaining the structural and financial details of the proposed merger. Graphs and maps were handed out. After the presentation, the meeting was opened for questions and answers, and usually extended for another two hours. At the conclusion, a straw ballot was taken and the results announced. Except in South Dakota, the votes were overwhelmingly in favor of a merger. Votes in favor of merger varied from a low 50–60 percent to strong approval.

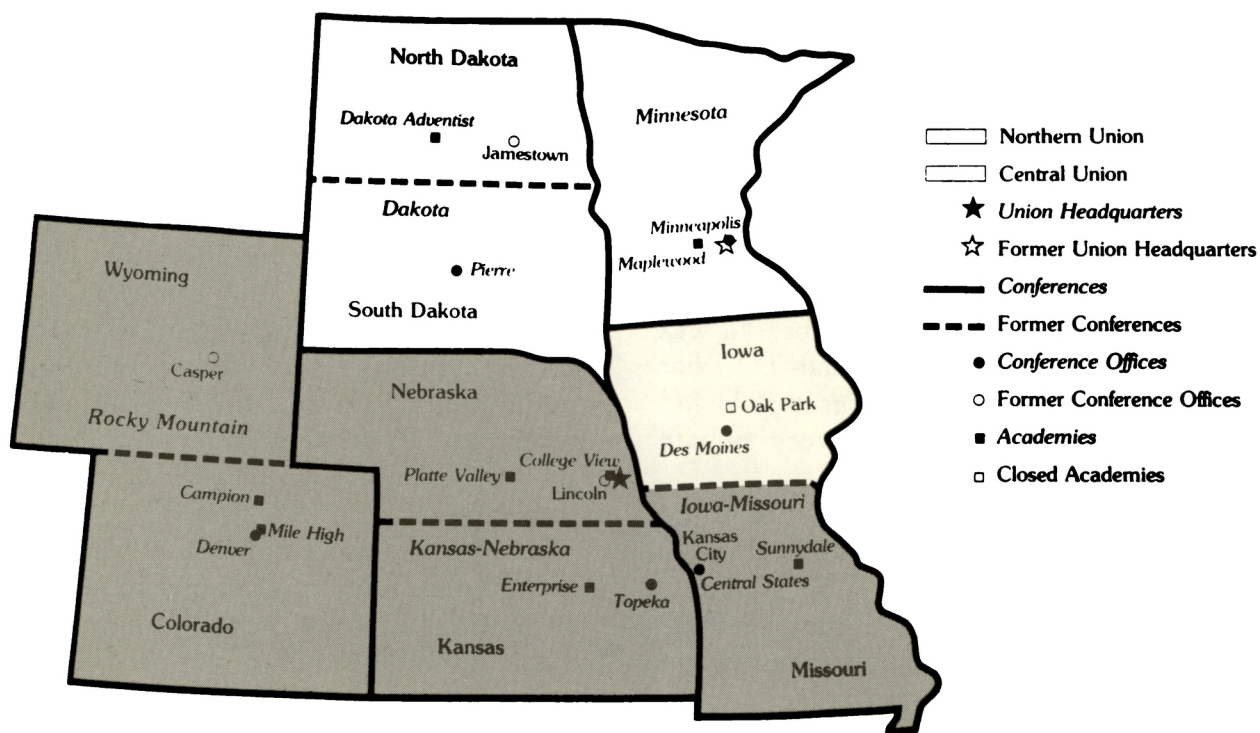
The next step was obtaining the conference committees' approval to convene the relevant conference constituencies. Each

constituency gathered separately and voted on the proposed merger. Finally, the constituency of the new conference met to approve a new constitution and bylaws, and to elect new officers. Sometimes, debates over names could not be settled at the initial meeting of the constituency.

Reile found that emotions rose highest during discussions over which academy would be saved and where the headquarters of the new conference would be located. The unwritten rule that emerged was that one of the merging conferences would get to keep its academy and the other the location of the new conference's headquarters.

The first negotiations involved the Iowa and Missouri Conferences, pitting healthy Sunnydale Academy in Missouri against the less-than-robust Oak Park Academy in Iowa. In the end, Iowa lost Oak Park Academy, but saved its conference office in Des Moines. Missouri sold its suburban conference office near Kansas City, but its Sunnydale Academy became the boarding academy for the new conference. Proceeds

Mid-America Union Conference



from the sales of properties went into conference operating funds. The Iowa Conference, in the old Northern Union Conference, and the Missouri Conference, in the old Central Union Conference, finally reorganized as the Iowa-Missouri Conference in late July 1980.

Kansas and Nebraska became the second set of local conferences to consolidate. Here the pieces at stake could not be easily rearranged or sacrificed. The Nebraska Conference operated Platte Valley Academy, a boarding school in Shelton, and College View Academy, a day school in Lincoln. Kansas had a boarding school, Enterprise Academy, situated in northern-central Kansas. Both of the conferences' boarding academies were sound financially; Nebraska's College View Academy enrollment for 1980-81 was less than 80, however.

Protracted negotiations left each of the academies in operation, though College View Academy continues to face severe economic difficulties. The office of the new conference was situated in the headquarters of the former Kansas Conference in Topeka. Joel Tompkins, Kansas Conference president, was elected president of the new conference, and Howard Voss, Nebraska Conference president, joined the new Mid-America Union as personal ministries director. Even the name of the new conference was vigorously debated. When the new conference officially came into existence in November 1980, it was the Kansas-Nebraska Conference. While the name favored the more southern state, it did have historical credibility; Kansas-Nebraska was the name of the congressional act that opened the region to settlement in 1854 and played a key role in the slavery debate prior to the Civil War.

Wyoming and Colorado got into the spirit, forming the Rocky Mountain Conference in February 1981. The disparity between the sparse Adventist membership in Wyoming and the larger membership in Colorado favored making Denver the

headquarters. In addition to Colorado retaining the location of the headquarters for the new conference, all three Colorado academies continue to operate: Mile High academy, a day school in Denver; Champion Academy, a boarding school near Loveland (which served the Wyoming constituency as well); and a ten-grade school in Grand Junction. Colorado also supplied its president William Hatch, for the presidency of the new conference. The Wyoming president, Ben Liebolt, became president of the North Dakota Conference, and later was elected president when the new Dakota Conference was formed.

Finally, the two Dakota conferences also combined. Because South Dakota had closed its academy some years earlier, both the North Dakota Conference and the South Dakota Conference had a natural concern in Dakota Adventist Academy's deteriorating financial situation. A common interest in the academy spurred the merger of the two small conferences into the Dakota Conference in April 1981. Since the academy was in North Dakota, the new conference's headquarters, according to the rules generally followed, were situated in Pierre, South Dakota.

Dakota Adventist Academy had had financial difficulties, extending back to the 1970's, that had rocked the church all the way to the General Conference. The school was an ambitious project; all buildings on the campus were linked with indoor walkways to provide protection against the harsh North Dakota winters. Ambition was overcome by reality, however, when the academy's multi-million dollar mortgage strained the resources of the North Dakota Conference. Subsequently, several North Dakota Conference administrators moved to other positions.

The Minnesota Conference and the Central States Regional Conference are the only entities in the new Mid-America Union's territory that have not participated in a merger during the last three years,

although there was some discussion of combining the Minnesota Conference with the Dakota Conference.

Reile points out that the new Mid-American Union has as few conferences—six—as did the old Central Union Conference. As a result of the local conference and union conference mergers, nine administrators have moved into the pastorate, and the present ratio of one administrator to 27 pastors is considerably lower than before the merger.

A total of 47 salaries were eliminated, either by retirement, or by attrition. The Mid-America Union Conference staff contains only one more member than the old Northern and Central Union staffs combined. These savings in salaries represent about 75 percent of the nearly \$1 million in projected annual savings (see boxed table for details). Because the Northern Union Conference had no college in its territory, there was, fortunately, no need for a difficult decision on closing a college.

(Merger negotiations between the Atlantic Union Conference and the Columbia Union Conference broke down in 1978 when neither organizations was willing to give up a college in its territory.)

In fact, according to Reile, “the greatest single beneficiary of the merger is Union College. The creation of the Mid-America Union Conference consolidated efforts to support a quality educational institution in the Midwest.”

Most observers have been impressed by the spirit of cooperation that marked the three-year period. Reile notes that Adventists who view the Midwest as conservative and resistant to change are mistaken. “I can’t imagine a smoother transition over potentially rough waters than we have experienced here,” he says. While Reile refuses to say whether the experience in Mid-America should be a model for other areas of North America, he says that, “Considering the financial realities of the 1980’s, there is no question that the church in our area is in a much better position to serve as a result of the mergers.”

Recurring Annual Savings through Mergers

(Based on operating expenses for the 1980-81 fiscal year. Income from Sale of Property not included)

Salaries

24 Departmental Salaries & Allowances		\$489,600	
23 Secretarial Salaries		276,000	
			\$765,600

Expenses

Utilities	@ \$12,000	60,000	
Rent	@ 7,500	37,500	
Maintenance/Janitor/Grounds	@ 5,500	<u>27,500</u>	
			125,000

Travel

24 Budgets - Per Year	@ \$ 7,200	\$172,800	
Less Travel Increases Due to Large Territory		<u>86,400</u>	
			<u>86,400</u>
Total Savings Per Year			\$977,000

Soul-Searching at the Adventist Media Center: A Multimillion Dollar Debate

By Bonnie Dwyer

Financial difficulties at the Voice of Prophecy dictate the firing of the King's Heralds Quartet. Programming and financial woes at Faith for Today elicit at least temporary calls for its closing. A costly idle studio nearly bankrupts Adventist Media Productions. News from the Adventist Media Center, encompassing these and other programs, has been dramatic. Over the last two years, total operating losses from the Adventist Media Center has come to \$5 million; losses in 1981 rose over those in 1980, to \$2,591,330.

The Media Center—established in 1971 when the General Conference brought into one organization institutions that for decades had been separate and independent—is going through more than an economic crisis. As the creative talents like H.M.S. Richards and William A. Fagal exercise less direction over the programs which their vision created, General Conference commissions and committees are increasingly defining the content and direction of Adventist mission in the media.

The special General Conference Media Center Study Commission, created this spring under the chairmanship of William Murrell, under-treasurer of the General Conference, reports first to the General Conference officers and then to the Media Center Board. One of its first requirements was that each program at the Media Center undergo a fundamental self-examination of its goals and purposes. The painful transition some of the best-known Adventist institutions in the United States find themselves undergoing raises such basic issues as the autonomy of Adventist institutions, centralization of denominational authority, and definitions of Adventist mission.

Some within the previously independent components think the key to the present financial troubles can be traced back a decade—to the creation of the Media Center. While the Voice of Prophecy, Faith for Today, It Is Written, and Breath of Life raise funds donated to their programs, none of these programs controls the rate of expenditures incurred by central administration, nor by the film production studio that stands idle much of the time. Decisions about not only expenditures, but programming, that were previously made by each component, are increasingly dependent on approval of the General Conference in Washington. The problem is that new

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studios, overarching administrative structures, and General Conference committees do not in themselves capture loyal listeners or generous viewers. Meanwhile, the bills mount.

And do they mount. In 1981, according to the unaudited financial statement of the Adventist Media Center, operating expenses for the center and all its components came to \$19.25 million. Program components' costs for public relations and development that maintain donations—rose higher than the \$2.25 million spent by the components on program production.

Most income for the Media Center comes from donations, solicited by the various programs. But appropriations have had to make up for the recent large deficits. The General Conference and other entities gave the Media Center about \$2.5 million in 1981, a 35-percent increase over 1980, and 13 percent of the media center's total income.

Voice of Prophecy

A story, accompanied by a smiling photograph in the June 14, 1982, *Pacific Union Recorder*, tried to put the best face on the firing of the quartet. It announced: "King's Heralds Begin Independent Ministry". Baritone Jack Veazey told the *Recorder*, on behalf of the Heralds Ministries, as the quartet now calls itself, that "the primary interest of our group is evangelism. We've wanted for years to experiment with a concert ministry which would, through word and song, bring people to faith in Jesus Christ. We've never explored our full potential in this area, but because of the recession, a way has unexpectedly opened up for us to implement new ways of bringing people to the cross."

The Voice of Prophecy shocked the Adventist community when it announced that the King's Heralds quartet and its accompanist would be dropped January 1982. At that time, the organization seemed unable to

balance its budget. It took a special committee, formed by the Media Center Board, to solve the crisis, when the Voice of Prophecy's 1981 deficit amounted to about \$245,000. Record breaking income in December had prevented it from being twice that much.

H.M.S. Richards, Jr., director of the Voice of Prophecy radio program, said he hoped the committee would come up with some money to bail the organization out, but he didn't really expect that to happen. Instead, the committee eliminated 34 salaries—over one quarter of the staff. Other expenses had been drastically reduced in-house.

According to Treasurer Lance Liebelt, some of the cuts eliminated entire departments: music, evangelistic association, and the record company. The Bible School budget was sliced by \$100,000. Of the dozens of courses previously produced at no charge, only three courses will now be offered free. The development office terminated their contract with a professional consultant which was costing \$3,000 a month. Another decision cut the number of direct-mail appeals during the year from 20 to 12. Liebelt acknowledges this change may be costly, because traditional direct mail philosophy maintains that a lot of mail makes a lot of money. But so far, the Voice of Prophecy has not suffered from this cutback. Donations in February, the month following the announcement of budgetary problems, totaled \$343,000—a 63-percent increase over 1981's February figure of \$201,000. "We're all paring expenses every way we can," Liebelt says. "March ended very well—we managed to make a \$6,000 profit."

The total 1982 Voice of Prophecy budget now stands at \$7.4 million, which is \$450,000 less than what was spent in 1981, but is still the largest of any of the center's components.

Liebelt wants to use any extra money on radio time. Currently, the Voice of Prophecy's budget splits into thirds: one-third pays for station time, one-third for salaries,

and one-third for the actual program production and ancillary departments such as the Bible School. With the cost of station time up 25-35 percent this year, reaching Liebelt's goal of one-half of the budget for station time will require more record-breaking months.

Fundraising also affects programming. "To generate income, you talk to people who agree with you," says John Robertson, the Voice of Prophecy researcher and producer. "Programming to nonreligious groups requires having funds from an outside source. We're not kidding ourselves about who listens to us. When we consider going to a new city now, we go in and say, 'What's the best Christian station?'—and put the program on that." He does not see the situation changing, either, even though the daily broadcast will feature a new format in 1983.

The new daily broadcast will continue to use religious music and will be aimed at religious people, but it will probably be given a new name. It will shift toward a magazine style, with more voices, including individuals recounting their real life experiences. Gone will be the short lecture. In its place will be a two-year series which will start in Genesis and end in Revelation. "We're taking the themes from the Bible books and discussing each one for a week of five programs. For instance, Lamentations provides the setting for looking at contemporary people, like the Polish, at odds with foreign authorities. For the week in Genesis, we talk about creativity. For those programs, we're using children to talk about personal creativity."

It took Robertson three months to develop the new program. First he studied the audience, figured out what he thought they wanted to hear and designed the format from there. He wrote a document on the listeners and his suggestion for programming, which was accepted by the in-house board. He is already busy writing and preparing the new two-year cycle.

Besides the new daily program, H.M.S.

Richards, Jr., has other innovations in mind, such as offering computer Bible games. He would also like to have about 50-55 businessmen help sponsor the present daily radio broadcast. There would be a short announcement telling what they do, so they could count it as advertising expense. Such an arrangement would help relieve the pressure to request money over the air. In the past, the Voice of Prophecy did not ask listeners for money until they requested material from the Bible School. Lately, they've been asking for financial support on the daily broadcast.

The Voice of Prophecy's track record for successfully generating and producing new ideas is good. Fordyce Detamore helped the organization launch its first Bible school in 1942. Expansion from a weekly to a daily broadcast came in 1971. In 1973, a series of 30- and 60-second spot announcements was released to radio stations for use in public service time. By 1980, the Voice of Prophecy estimated it had received donated radio time worth \$22.5 million for these "commercials" geared to the unchurched. Today, radio programs affiliated with the Voice of Prophecy broadcast in 50 languages.

Now that the Voice of Prophecy seems to be getting its financial house in order, suggestions for the organization from the General Conference Study Committee have focused on the need to test the new format thoroughly before airing it in 1983.

Faith for Today

In May of this year, the Media Center Board considered totally shutting down Faith for Today, because programming dilemmas were compounding economic problems. Last year, Faith for Today produced a 90-minute feature movie. Its 1982 budget projected spending \$750,000 for a children's television series and newspaper. Finally, in July, Director Dan Matthews made two pilots of a talk show format, which he hosted. On July 25, Matthews showed the

pilots to the General Conference officers in Washington, and reported that their reaction was decidedly positive. Evidently, discussion of closing Faith for Today has subsided.

“Faith for Today’s production budget. . . simply cannot sustain a weekly dramatic series in an industry where even 30-second commercials can cost \$100,000.”

When William and Virginia Fagal launched their live dramatic series in 1950, television technology was in its infancy. The program evolved along with the industry. Filming naturally replaced the live production. A hospital format became the basis for the dramatic settings. An award cabinet in the Faith for Today building lobby holds a collection of plaques and statues, won in film competitions when Faith for Today was producing the *Westbrook Hospital Series*. But the last episode cost approximately \$100,000 in 1979. So, although the old films still circulate, no new episodes are being produced. Faith for Today’s production budget, which has declined from \$1.2 million to \$685,000 within the last year, simply cannot sustain a weekly dramatic series in an industry where even 30-second commercials can cost \$100,000.

Faith for Today has received special General Conference consideration in the past, because of the expense dramatic productions incur. Offerings and church funds make up 41 percent of the budget, which in 1982 will be \$3.4 million.

In 1981, Faith for Today spent its production budget on *The Third Cry*, a 90-minute movie made for television featuring Richard Hatch, Laurie Walters and Mel Ferrer. According to writer Don Davenport, it tells a classic story of the resilience of the human spirit, by chronicling the life of a

family whose children are born with cystic fibrosis.

Recounting the life of the film would make another interesting story. Pre-production work started and stopped at least four times. There were major creative disagreements over the project. New characters were added to the story to please a potential syndicator, but several attempts to market the still uncompleted film have fallen through.

And problems extended past the production department. One anticipated benefit of the film was the possibility of soliciting foundation donations in conjunction with the cystic fibrosis organization. Faith for Today hoped to take in \$100,000 that way, but it never happened.

In a final attempt to salvage the project, another rewriting of the script has been done, this time by an outside consultant. An independent company has expressed interest in distributing the new production through a theatre chain. Obviously, such an arrangement would allow Faith for Today to recoup the money it invested in the project. But no contract has yet been signed.

After its venture with a feature-length film in 1981, Faith for Today announced in early 1982 that a children’s television program ranked as its first priority. Alternately called “Kid’s Court”, “Pathfinders”, “Our Turn”, “Earthwatch”, “Crusader Castle”, and “Hopscotch House”, ideas about the program circulated through the staff for several months. Adventure, animation, health—even science fiction—were discussed. “None of them rang enough bells, though,” Matthews said in March.

Two publications, *Body Wise* and *Project Orion* are already existing parts of Faith for Today’s ministry to children. They are published by Concerned Communications, an independent Adventist advertising agency. Faith for Today’s 1982 budget includes \$240,000 for *Body Wise*, a children’s newspaper on health. That compares with \$500,000 which has been set aside for 13 episodes of the children’s television pro-

gram. *Project Orion*, a series of space oriented Bible games produced several years ago, is the second publication mailed upon requests from viewers and donors.

"The constituency needs to understand we are going ahead with a children's printed ministry right now, but the television program has to be just right," says Director Matthews. "We have set a Fall deadline for production." Faith for Today has signed a nine-month contract with Sunrise Media Productions to develop two pilot programs and market them. It was agreed that Faith for Today's name would not appear on the program, which would be sold commercially. But Faith for Today would retain control over two advertising spots in the program, during which it can market special services for young people such as career counseling or other church projects. Matthews justifies reliance on commercial syndication as a way to gain access to a larger audience than can be reached through typical religious programming time. Additional funding will also be generated by selling the product this way.

Matthews admits that commercial marketing could bring the organization into conflicts, because it would mean Faith for Today would probably have to take its name off the program. Traditionally Adventists measure programming by the amount of denominational doctrine conveyed.

"We've even gone so far as to say, 'Let other people do the basic Christian message. We'll emphasize our unique beliefs,'" Matthew says. "I have some concerns about that. Jesus answered questions people were asking; He reached them where they were. He did not ask them to come to where He was. I'm willing to take the posture that we should make meaningful statements even if we don't get credit. There's an old saying, 'You can do an awful lot of good if you don't care who gets the credit.' I think about that a lot. I think the Holy Spirit could still magnify what we do, even if it didn't have our name on it."

Matthews is not worried about contract-

ing out the program content, because former Faith for Today employee Gary Haynes owns Sunrise Media Productions. And should the program not prove to be a commercial success, Haynes has an understanding with Matthews that Faith for Today will take him back on the staff.

While the Faith for Today staff struggled with their children's program, the General Conference Study Commission struggled with what to do with Faith for Today. Some members of the Commission felt the church did not need a dramatic program or a children's show, and they argued that the Gospel only commissioned Christ's followers to preach the Gospel. They felt a preaching television program totally met the church's needs. Others argued that since only religious people watch a preaching program, if the Gospel Commission was to extend to secular man, a variety of formats was needed.

During the Commission's stay in Thousand Oaks, the Media Center Board of Trustees met in May. The Commission decided to tell the Board about one of its recommendations, before taking the report to the General Conference. A motion was made to phase out Faith for Today.

In his speech defending his organization, Dan Matthews asked the Board whether they had considered the severance pay cost of such an action. He reminded them of the donation and offering dollars they would forfeit. He reiterated Faith's plans for the future. After some discussion the Board members voted to table the motion.

But rather than simply "sitting on the table" until the next meeting, the item went to Washington and was considered by the General Conference officers the following week. Matthews made a detour in his campmeeting travel schedule. For three days, he lobbied in Washington. Since he was not invited to the officers' meeting, he sent a message to the group recognizing

their right and responsibility to make decisions on all matters of church media outreach. His one request was that any decision be thoroughly explained in writing and that Faith for Today be provided with time to make a response.

“The Adventist grapevine quickly spread the story of Faith for Today’s tenuous position. In Thousand Oaks, calls began coming in from across the country.”

A reliable source says that, when the Study Commission reported to the General Conference officers, it suggested an alternative to closing Faith for Today: The General Conference could begin cutting back the church’s appropriations by 25 percent every six months, until Faith for Today was phased out in two years. According to this suggestion, the money which would have gone to Faith for Today would be put in a trust fund for new media projects, administered by the Center administration. As of August 1982, neither the option of termination nor a two-year phase-out had been adopted.

The Adventist grapevine quickly spread the story of Faith for Today’s tenuous position. In Thousand Oaks, calls began coming in from across the country asking if the organization was still functioning. A notice was quickly drafted for the *Adventist Review* stating that Faith for Today was still in operation, that the General Conference was studying the organization, and that a report would be made by the end of the year.

Despite the serious threat to his organization’s existence, Dan Matthews strolled into his Faith for Today office June 1, exuding confidence. “I’m glad that this whole thing’s happened,” Matthews said. “We’re now in the best possible position with the General Conference. Whereas

there were questions on the course Faith was taking, the Study Committee’s suggestions gave us the opportunity to discuss the matter.”

It also raised questions about totally focusing on a children’s program. Faith for Today decided it also needed something to reach the adult population. So, in July, Andrews University professor Roy Nadan helped Matthews develop a new program, “Day One.” Two pilots were quickly made of the talk show program, with a live studio audience asking questions of the guests. Dan Matthews acted as host. On July 25, Matthews showed the pilots of the new program to the General Conference officers and received a favorable response.

Matthews believes that the denomination will continue to support Faith for Today as a program pursuing its original objective of reaching out to secular man—this time with a variety program for young people and the interview show for adults.

Adventist Media Productions

“I don’t think the church can keep this operation running;” “Everything is video these days, and we have no video;” “I see very little option but to go to the leadership and ask what is to be done.” “What will the leadership learn that we do not already know?” “We owe it to them to take a look at us.”

“That’s what the discussion went like at the last Adventist Media Production Board meeting,” said V. Bailey Gillespie in February. A Loma Linda University professor of religion who serves on the Adventist Media Productions Board, Gillespie concluded, “We made a very creative decision. We decided not to declare bankruptcy and to suggest a revision in the accounting procedures.” Board members had before them a report that showed a loss of over \$150,000 for 1981, an improvement over the \$180,000 of 1980, but still a continuing disaster for the company.

Adventist Media Productions produces films, slide shows, commercials, and tapes for any of the church's organizations. General Conference departments will spend close to \$200,000 there this year. But Adventist Media Productions also holds responsibility for the Media Center's studio, and studio hasn't broken even since Faith for Today stopped production of the Westbrook Hospital series. Consequently, the board meeting seemed grim.

“‘The teleseminar could be a very cost effective evangelistic tool,’ Krogstad says. ‘About 7,000 people attended the 1981 production.’”

To solve the problem, the Media Center's administration formed a studio usage committee comprised of the television component managers and treasurers, some Adventists Media Productions staff, plus Media Center President Robert R. Frame and Robert L. Rawson, vice-president for finance.

At the first meeting, we decided to split the losses for the studio at the end of the year according to a formula based on General Conference appropriations,” says Jack Davis, Adventist Media Productions director of research and development. That should help the ending balance statement for the production component.

The suggestion is also often made that the Adventist Media Productions should rent the studio out for commercial use. “Discussion about renting the studio out to other production companies always bogs down over what regulations would need to be imposed. Would we be willing to have McDonald's or Coca Cola, Jordache or George Burns working here?” asks Davis.

“My suggestion for next year is to have the General Conference make a direct appropriation to the Adventist Media Pro-

ductions' production areas and to finance the purchase of needed video equipment (currently the Adventist Media Productions only owns 16 mm camera equipment). Then Adventist Media Productions could offer the production facilities to the components and other church organizations free, instead of renting them out. Users would only be charged for supplies. That would solve a lot of problems. After all, we're here to work for the church. When you start talking about commercialization, then our purpose for being here gets muddy.”

The Study Committee's recommendation to the General Conference is to put an immediate freeze on the purchase of equipment by Adventist Media Productions and to terminate it as a separate component. The committee suggested quality considerations be made paramount, so the center's administration should take over the operation.

It Is Written

The library-like set sprawls across the Media Center sound stage at odd angles to simulate rooms. There is a short staircase, a large globe, several windows overlooking the stage scrim, and a wingback chair in front of a bookcase. All stand idly waiting for George Vandeman, speaker for It Is Written, to wander through, lecturing on the Bible while the tape rolls. It Is Written produces 30-36 programs here each year, more than any of the other components.

After almost 25 years on television, Vandeman shows no sign of slowing down, in spite of the fact that he is now on sustenance. The General Conference Study Committee primarily praised It Is Written for success, particularly in the past five years.

Special weekend fundraising campaigns have helped to escalate income. Board member Shirley Burton calls Partnerships Unlimited the smartest thing Vandeman has ever done. It Is Written invites a select

group of people to a weekend retreat each Fall. Religious programs fill the Sabbath hours. Entertainment on Saturday night has included such celebrities as Lowell Thomas and Maria Von Trapp. Finally, *It Is Written* requests the financial support of the people. As a result the program's annual donations now double the amount generated by Faith for Today.

In 1982, *It Is Written* will operate on a budget of approximately \$5 million, with station time consuming 40 percent of that amount. "We're the most self-supporting of the components," says Manager Arnt E. Krogstad. "Our General Conference appropriation supplies about four percent of the budget and half of that goes to the Canadian *It Is Written* for their quota of programs which must be produced in Canada. So the General Conference funds only about two percent of the *It Is Written* budget. We don't have an annual offering, either. However, the local conferences do pick up 25 percent of the actual air time."

Dependence on the local conference is also heavy for the 20-30 all-day Bible seminar programs which *It Is Written* produces each year. In March 1981, *It Is Written* tried a teleseminar, originating from Los Angeles, beamed via satellite across the country. Given a broad base of support over which to spread the high cost of the satellite, the teleseminar could be a very cost effective evangelistic tool, Krogstad says. About 7,000 people attended the 1981 production.

A General Conference report estimates that 700 people were baptised from that series. It cost the church \$40 per attendee (the conferences picked up \$12.50 of that, *It Is Written* \$27.50), and the attendees paid \$25 each, so the total cost per person was approximately \$65. The cost to the church per baptism ran \$400.

Krogstad says *It Is Written* planned on larger numbers attending and had anticipated the total cost would be only \$40 per person. *It Is Written* would like to try the teleseminar again in 1983, when it would en-

deavor to attract 75,000 people. Following the same ratio of baptisms per attendees as 1981, the 1983 seminar would yeild 7,500 baptisms at a cost to the church of \$250 each.

"We stand ready to conduct another teleseminar if the church wants one," Krogstad says. "But we have to have the cooperation of the church."

"*It Is Written* is neither a complete ministry nor an electronic church," according to publicity materials prepared for conference administrators. "It is a seed-sowing, interest-generating agency working hand-in-hand with the local conference, the local pastor, and interested lay workers to discover and introduce to the church those who are seeking a closer walk with the Lord."

Breath of Life

It is Friday night in downtown Los Angeles. At the corner of Grand and Washington Avenues, people are gathering for two events. At the Olympic Auditorium they are lining up to see a wrestling match. Catercorner across the parking lot, they are starting to arrive for a *Breath of Life* evangelistic crusade where gracious lady ushers, snappy in their black and white capes and white gloves, greet people with "Happy Sabbath."

Backstage, Walter Arties, the manager and producer of *Breath of Life*, talks about the difficulty of doing evangelism in Los Angeles. "People are so secularly oriented," he says. "It's really different from our previous experiences in the West Indies and other places. But the commission hasn't changed. We still have to go to all the world. Nobody ever said the message would be popular, but it still has to be told. We have to do our work."

Part of Arties' work this evening includes trying to help the electrician with the heater for the baptismal tank standing behind the curtains on the auditorium's large stage. The right outlets just don't appear to be avail-

able. Meanwhile, pianist Shelton Kilby tells one of the baptismal candidates just what he needs to bring and where he should be for the ceremony the next day, the closing program in a month of nightly meetings.

At 7:30 p.m. a line of preachers passes the cross which stands at one end of the stage as the program begins. There is music, prayer, questions and answers, a dramatic reading and preaching—an old fashioned kind of presentation, punctuated with “Amens” from the audience.

C.D. Brooks, the speaker for the Breath of Life, carries the people through the sermon with questions. “Are you listening?” he says after explaining a passage of Scripture. “Can I hear amen to that?” His strong voice soars, then whispers; the emotion is there, but controlled, always controlled.

Arties hops between the electronic console at the edge of the stage and the sidelines, directing the electrician, answering questions, finally strolling onto the stage to sing. His mellow voice fills the auditorium, and the audience responds with applause.

“To make up the Media Center’s \$2.5 million. . . deficit for 1981, the Media Center’s administration has had to ask the General Conference for more money.”

The month-long Los Angeles crusade cost between \$30,000 and \$40,000, or \$333 per baptism. That cost does not include the manpower from the Southern California Conference, whose personnel handled advertising, personal visitations, and Bible studies. One conference official said the crusade was not the smoothest production. But there was over 120 baptisms. And the baptism record helps justify the television broadcast for the select black audience.

Today, Breath of Life prides itself on being a General Conference entity. The program operates on a budget of about \$500,000, and employ four persons fulltime.

Media Center literature claims 2,700 baptisms have resulted from the Breath of Life telecast since 1974, and several churches owe their beginning to the broadcast. Suggestions from the General Conference Study Commission include putting a “trailer,” featuring a local pastor on the end of each program, and trying to find public service time for the broadcast.

Media Center Administration

Robert R. Frame comes to the outer office of the president’s suite and officially welcomes his visitor to the Adventist Media Center. Inside, opposite his desk, 14 chairs line the walls, seemingly waiting for a committee meeting to begin. Those are bypassed as he points to the easy chairs in front of the huge corner windows, a pleasant place to talk about his responsibilities. He sees himself as an administrator, not a creative person. He leaves the creative business up to the staff, an attitude which generates respect from the staff, who generally praise his performance.

His goals for the center involve helping with church programs such as the 1,000 Days of Reaping currently being planned. “We took an action asking the General Conference how they want us to be involved,” he says.

“We’re an evangelistic organization. There is such a lot of trash available in the media today. We need to offset that material and introduce people to Christ through the use of electronic media.”

Frame’s comment points to two byproducts of media work which end up costing as much as programming. The evangelistic element has led the components into other activities such as Bible schools and evangelistic crusades. Organizationally, the center’s existence has added a new dimension to the old programs. There are some centralized services such as mailing, computers, printing, and accounting. But there is also a

new layer of management, because the center's components all still maintain their own boards, treasurers, managers, and public relations staffs. The Media Center administration, overarching all, has an annual budget of approximately \$300,000.

And which aspect of these organizations is the most important? Media programming? Evangelism? Institutional cohesiveness? Can the church meet its needs for an outreach program and meet the needs of secular man at the same time?

Harry Hartsock, president of the Voice of Prophecy Lay Advisory Committee, says, to fulfill the Gospel Commission, the church needs to consider what tools are at its disposal. "Radio and television are all part of it. What role can the Media Center play? Well, you're only as good as the talent you have. The Richards, the Fagals, the Vandemans have made an enormous contribution. It's the individuals that reach people—not the institutions. Anyone who thinks an institution can reach people is sadly mistaken." But what does the organization do when it loses star talents, such as the Fagals who retired this year? What effect do losses at one component have on the others? When the Voice of Prophecy

announced its budget crunch, gifts poured into the Voice of Prophecy, while *It Is Written* and *Faith for Today* recorded their lowest donation figures for the year.

Financial problems force long thoughts about financial priorities. To make up the Media Center's \$2.5 million total operating deficit for 1981, the Media Center's administration has had to ask the General Conference for more money. Looking to the future, the Media Center must cut back or eliminate programs, increase revenues from greater commercial use of the Media Center facilities, particularly the film studio, or ask the denomination for continued heavy appropriations. The decisions that must be made have to do with good management, but they extend to choices about how Adventism appropriately expresses itself in the media. Whether the General Conference's consolidation of programs into a single media center contributed to financial difficulties, the present economic realities and dependence of the Media Center on denominational appropriations means that, in the future, the General Conference will be even more directly involved in deciding what kind of Adventist programs appear on radio or television.

The Voice of H.M.S. Richards

by John Robertson

He has just returned from Oregon and is preparing for a trip to northern California the next weekend. His calendar is full of appointments for funerals, weddings, worship services, pastors' meetings, college assemblies, luncheons, a broadcaster's convention, and even a youth congress in Bermuda, demanding more than 100 public speaking appointments in 23 states and six foreign countries this year. In addition to this rigorous schedule, this 88-year old preacher prepares 52 sermons a year for an international weekly radio program.

Harold Marshall Sylvester Richards was born in 1894 to a family of preachers. His father was a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist and conference president. His English grandfather was converted to Christianity by Salvation Army founder General William Booth and later toured the United States as a circuit preacher and companion of John Wesley.¹

John Robertson, producer for the Voice of Prophecy, received a master of divinity degree from Andrews University and holds a doctor of ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary.

The Wesley connection is especially important to Richards, because John Wesley is his "favorite character outside the Bible." He believes Wesley's combination of education and humility serves as a model for his own life. "He knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, and Italian," says Richards, "and he always showed deference to others, even his opponents."

From his earliest moments, H.M.S. Richards knew what it meant to travel and preach. His parents put him in a pillow-lined box and took him on their evangelistic tours. From his baby box on the back row of the tents, he would point to the charts depicting the wild beasts of Daniel and Revelation and holler, "Moo! Cow!" More than once his mother had to banish him from the meeting.

As soon as he was old enough, Richards' parents left him with his grandparents, the Sylvesters. Since his parents were gone much of the time, his grandparents became a second set of parents. He quickly adapted a neighbor girl's names for his grandparents: Two Pops and Two Moms.

These substitute parents settled down in a rough cabin on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains about 30 miles from Loveland, Colorado. The only way to get to the cabin was by horse and wagon. Richards spent many summers at the cabin picking raspberries from sunup to sundown. Late in

the fall, he would help his grandparents bury the vines for the winter so that they wouldn't freeze. H.M.S. Richards' grandparents were a major influence in his development. Two Pops—Jasper Newton Sylvester—told stories of the gold rush days. Very much the frontiersman, he was an excellent shot with a rifle and also astonished the young Richards by pulling out his own infected teeth with a pair of pliers.

One of Richards' most treasured memories is the last night he spent with his Two Pops: "The night my grandfather died I was alone with him. He was a very strong man, and, in spite of everything I could do, he got out of bed, went over the the sideboard, and got his Bible. 'Now Harold,' he said, 'you're going to be a minister.' Turning to the second chapter of First Corinthians, he read the entire chapter to me, emphasizing the last part, 'for spiritual things are spiritually discerned.' Then he said, 'If you're going to be a minister, you've got to be a spiritual man. No man has the right to be a minister if he isn't spiritual.' Then he died in my arms."²

The influence of his grandmother was just as significant. During his early years, while his parents were out preaching for weeks at a time, she was his mother. A witty woman, full of grim humor, she continued to influence Richards even after he graduated from Campion Academy in 1914. Between the ages of 18 and 20, Richards held evangelistic meetings and saw no need to go to college. But Two Moms insisted, even selling her family home to help finance the venture. When Richards went to Washington Missionary College (now Columbia Union College), she went along and even continued as a live-in mother on his first preaching assignment in Ottawa, Canada. A few years later he married Mable Eastman.

Richards' mother shaped his life through her remarkably gentle, patient personality. "Her great influence in my life has been to shame me in my proneness to irritability. Her sweetness and loveliness are what I think Christ wants Christians to have. Her

love, her kindness and sweetness, and her interest in me have influenced me beyond measure."³

But the strongest early influence on H.M. S. Richards came from his own father, H.M.J. Richards, despite the frequent and extended absences. One of Richards' earliest memories is his father's offer to pay him a silver dollar if he could read the Bible through. The offer, made even before he had started school was taken up; Two Pops had taught him to read.

"Older students. . . taunted, 'Now preach us a sermon you Advent!' Richards did. He told them Christ was coming soon and that they would be sorry for behaving so badly."

Richards recalls seeing his father studying in the corner of a bedroom, surrounded by dry-goods boxes disguised as bookcases. As Richards got older, his father would discuss the art of preaching with him. He still remembers his father's words: "Now son, use three or four strong texts on your point. Drive these texts clear through your hearer's minds by your arguments and clinch them on the other side. Don't use all the texts you know. Save some in reserve to use in answering any questions which might come after you have finished your sermon. Also draw the attention of the audience more to what the Bible says than to what you say."⁴

His father also encouraged him to tell stories in the pulpit. "My father was the greatest storyteller I ever knew. He knew Aesop's Fables by heart and had many books of illustrations which he also committed to memory. In preaching he used few stories except Bible stories, but, in his contact with all kinds of people, he continually used stories to illustrate religious ideas."⁵

Many of Richards' values were tested early when he discovered that his family belonged to a small religious group that was often ridiculed. He still remembers hearing people yell insults and abuse outside the tent during his father's evangelistic meetings. At school, older students would laugh at his faith. One time they hoisted him up on a fence and taunted, "Now preach us a sermon, you Advent." Richards did. He told them Christ was coming soon and that they would be sorry for behaving so badly.

It might seem that a sensitive boy who experienced so much ridicule would withdraw and spend the rest of his life in retreat. But Richards credits a single incident with preventing that from happening. One day some older boys were tormenting him on his way home from school, and Richards was almost hit by one of the boys, who was swinging his books around at the end of a leather strap. Though Richards' parents had taught him never to fight back, for some reason, he took a swipe at the tormenter and knocked him down. The incident not only saved him from additional trouble at the hands of the boys, but it also gave Richards a new sense of confidence. Even though he belonged to an unpopular religion, he could stand up for himself.

As a young man, Richards was deeply moved by the lives of two people he respected greatly—Theodore Roosevelt and Ellen White. For understandable reasons, Roosevelt had been his boyhood hero. "He was my idol because he was a physical weakling in early life. But he became a strong man." If Teddy had made a success of his life, even though he was pushed around as a boy, then so could Harold. Roosevelt had made a deep impression on young Harold when he made a visit to Denver. The Rough Rider strode out of the Brown Palace Hotel dressed "like a President ought to dress," complete with silk hat and gloves.

Richards decided to be baptized during the summer before his thirteenth birthday. His father and an associate, L.A. Springer,

were holding tent meetings outside Loveland, Colorado, and Richards and his brother attended the meetings to help increase the attendance figures. One Saturday afternoon Springer held a meeting for all the young people and invited them to commit their lives to Jesus Christ. The meeting had all the trappings of an early Adventist evangelistic meeting—the smell of canvas and sawdust, the appeal to come forward, the song "That Gate Ajar for Me." Richards accepted the invitation and later was baptized in a lake near Loveland, the same lake in which he had learned to fish and swim. He remembers, "I could see Long's Peak, my favorite mountain. I remember promising the Lord that I would be faithful to Him as long as that mountain stood."⁶

Ellen White was partly responsible for Richards' decision to become a minister. In Boulder in 1909, on her way back from Washington, D.C., to St. Helena after attending her last General Conference session, Ellen White stopped at the Chatauqua campground for a preaching service. Young Harold was part of the "platform boys" crew, helping to set up chairs.

During White's sermon, Richards sat on the edge of the platform. "She was just a regular old grandmother when she preached," he recalls, "kind and clear-voiced. But when she prayed, the entire mood changed. People in the audience were weeping. It was during that prayer that I decided to be a minister, not a lawyer. I had been attracted to law because there were several attorneys in my heritage."⁷

Both Richards' characteristic sensitivity and his willingness to stand up for what he believed, showed up in his ministry. During one of his earliest evangelistic meetings, held at a dance hall on a lake near Pike's Peak, one of his potential converts committed suicide. Richards had a hard time forgiving himself for not being able to help her, brooding over it for months.

The fighting spirit was also evident. Richards was asked to conduct evangelistic meetings in Millerton, Pennsylvania, near

the New York line. The only building in town large enough for an audience was the Odd Fellows Hall. But the building was owned by the local mortician, who refused to rent the building, announcing his strong dislike of preachers. Richards went to visit the man one day, and discovered that the mortician was reading the sports section of the newspaper. A fight between Jess Willard and Jack Johnson was soon to take place. Richards commented on the upcoming bout, and the mortician instantly challenged him to a fight. If Richards won, he would get the hall for the meetings. If he lost, there would be no meetings.

“Richards, who learned some boxing. . . many years earlier, reluctantly agreed. After seven rounds, the mortician was unable to get up. Richards got the hall and baptized 26 people. . .”

Richards, who learned some boxing from an older student at Campion Academy many years earlier, reluctantly agreed. After seven rounds, the mortician was unable to get up. Richards got the hall and baptized 26 people at the conclusion of the meetings.

Another example of Richards' willingness to fight took place in Alhambra, California, in 1929. Richards again found opposition to his church; this time from a Protestant minister who was fond of publicly discrediting the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The minister even took out a full-page newspaper advertisement in which he condemned the Adventist "heresy," invited Richards to engage in an open debate, and promised to "expose" Richards at his next meeting. Richards, not preaching that night, went to hear himself ridiculed. The church was filled to capacity, so Richards took his place standing at the back with many others. He listened politely until

the preacher accused Richards of saying that there was a mistake in the Bible. Unable to let such a charge go unchallenged, Richards shouted from the back of the church, "That's a lie!" After a few moments of stunned silence, the meeting finished in great confusion. That was the last night he was bothered by the preacher during his stay in Alhambra.

It is worth noting that Richards himself sometimes resorted to theatrics. On occasion, he would bring a stack of his opponent's books into the pulpit with him, read from them one by one, and ceremoniously drop them on the floor. Then he would hold up his Bible and read an appropriate text. More than once he had a Hollywood stuntman dressed as an ape walk into his meetings. Richards would use this "missing link" to introduce his discussion of the flaws in the theory of evolution.

The early feeling that he was part of a minority has never left Richards. Prior to World War I, he was preaching about Armageddon when many Protestants were preaching peace. In the 1920's he was preaching conservative values when bobbed hair, flappers, alcohol, and the expanding movie industry dominated the rest of society. While many other members of the clergy were preaching about social ills—child labor and war—Richards made personal invitations to accept salvation in Jesus Christ.

For all the theatrics he used, it has always been important to H.M.S. Richards that his faith be reasoned. He remembers finding a box of books in his father's barn one day. The collection included Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason*, complete with his father's notes in the margin: "Beware" and "This is dangerous." He also found a copy of John Harvey Kellogg's *The Living Temple*, with similar denunciations in the margin.⁸ Richards was fascinated with the book, and decided that he must continue to read the

works of people who disagreed with him.

He honed his reading skills at the local public library on his way home from school every day. He avidly read *The New Republic*, the old *Literary Digest*, and H.L. Mencken's *American Mercury*. As a high school student, he was well acquainted with writers like Robert La Follette, Eugene V. Debs, and others of the "progressive era." He credits the Debating Society at Campion Academy, the only regular Saturday night social activity, with giving him the tools to reason through such works.

Richards is convinced that his wide reading has greatly strengthened his faith by forcing him to think through his beliefs. Perhaps this explains his commitment to his library on which he has spent thousands of hours and dollars. The 21' x 27' room is overwhelmed by more than 8,000 books (another 2,000 are in the house and garage). A small desk sits under a window in one corner of the room. A sign on the door in the opposite corner announces the room's function: "Necessarium."

"Richards had people paraphrase the Apostle Paul's words about the devil being the 'prince of the power of the air,' giving that as a reason why he should not preach over the radio."

His habit is to be in the library at five or six o'clock every morning and read for two or three hours before breakfast. Much of that time is spent with the Bible.

Richards has frequently stated his belief that reading the Bible from cover to cover is the best way to understand it. He follows his own advice. Every January, he reads the Bible straight through in about 75 hours "to get an airplane view." He reads nothing else until he finishes—no newspapers, magazines, or books of any kind. Then from

February through December, he reads the Bible through two or three more times. In addition, he reads the New Testament through every month.

Part of the reading before breakfast may include commentaries, especially the older ones by Adam Clarke, John Calvin, and Matthew Henry. He appreciates the scholarly, conservative, loyal attitude these men bring to the Bible. He also likes more recent theologians like F.F. Bruce, Helmut Thielicke, and C.S. Lewis. These men appeal to him because their books are clear and well-reasoned—characteristics that he thinks are also important in sermons: "My notes are built according to the way the mind works," he explains. "One thing is true; therefore, another is true. Just simple argument, very clear. People are persuaded by clear explanation. Clarity is supreme with me."

His reading still ranges into many areas. On one typical day, he read *Newsweek* and *U.S. News* completely through, finished a biography of Beethoven ("It was tough going; I'm not a musician"), studied a section of Matthew Henry's commentary, and read a new commentary of Jeremiah by Charles Swindoll. Six to eight hours of reading and browsing a day is not unusual.

He subscribes to more than 60 journals, and the list offers more clues to his wide-ranging interests. He reads several news journals from different political perspectives, including some published in Europe and the Middle East. He loves archeology (*Biblical Archaeologist*, *Archaeology*, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, *Bible and Spade*), and science (*Science News*, *Science and Scripture*). He keeps up with developments in the media, literature ("The *New York Times* Book Reviews are the best") and religion. He subscribes to nearly every Adventist church periodical published and gets several devotional and sermon-related journals as well.

Richards reserves afternoons for writing letters, and lighter reading. Biographies fill a significant portion of the library, although more than 90 percent of the library is

religious. He feels his collection is weak in reference works. "Also, I'd love to have a set of the great classics in English literature, just for the pleasure of reading them," he says. His habit of reading through large works may soon get him into Blackstone's four-volume set, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. Remember, if I wasn't a preacher, I'd be a lawyer," he says again. He wishes more preachers would read law. "It would help them think straight."

He feels rather well educated in the history of philosophy and is grateful for the knowledge. "I feel it's given me some perspective for many of the scientific arguments I read today," he says. Plato and Aristotle are not strangers to him. In fact, he believes Plato "was very near God" and "almost found him by searching."

None of his reading diminishes his faith. He has no doubts about his faith, or the doctrines of the Adventist church. "I was fully inoculated as a boy. I've never been plagued by doubts. I'm always reading with a view to strengthening my faith, not to weakening it."

His unwavering faith has also helped him over some rough spots in his ministry. One painful experience occurred when he was pulled by his conference superiors from an ongoing series of evangelistic meetings in Lodi, California, in the 1930s. The meetings were going well, but they weren't finished when he was suddenly sent to another town. "What men would never think of doing as individuals," he says, reflecting on the incident, "they'll sometimes do as committees." Richards believes in obeying authority, so he went. "I can put up with a lot, as long as I get to preach," he explains.

On another occasion, a California conference sold one of Richards' "tabernacles" for less than it was worth. Those tabernacles were built with 1" x 12" pine boards and seated more than 1,000 people. The floor was made of tarpaper over dirt, covered by sawdust and burlap. The conference sold

one of these buildings for \$1,000, after paying \$10,000 for it a few weeks earlier. The decision bewildered and angered Richards: "At least it could have become a church." Again, his loyalty to the church prevented him from reacting in a public way.

When he first decided to venture into radio broadcasting, he received strong opposition from many people in the church, including many officials. "When I was trying to start things, level-headed men said, 'You want to go on radio? They advertise liquor and tobacco on the radio. I don't think you're doing right.'" But to such "counsel of the brethren," Richards quickly responded, "If I had a chance to preach in Rome and the Pope was in the audience, I'd jump at it. I'd love to go to the Vatican and give a series of morning devotionals."

Richards even had people paraphrase the Apostle Paul's words about the devil being the "Prince of the Power of the Air," giving that as a reason why he should not preach over the radio. In fact, several conferences officially banned his radio broadcast in their territory. Most of the early opposition melted in the face of Richards' obvious success with the medium. However, the Voice of Prophecy has remained an independent organization within Adventism in certain respects. From the early beginnings of his radio ministry in the 1930s, Richards' salary has come entirely from contributions to his radio program. To this day, Richards and the entire Voice of Prophecy staff, including ordained ministers, are not paid with tithe money.

In his long ministry, Richards has faced some difficult situations and his response has always been the same. "More than once I've climbed a mountain at the back of my home and cried like Elijah." But then he continues quickly, "I've found one thing. The average leader of our people is a good man. He has to be a strong-headed man. It's been hard to see why some of them didn't see certain things. But I'm sure I don't see some things that I ought to see. There were some things

done to me that were unjust. And that's bound to happen. But we just learn to get along with it."

A more recent illustration of this attitude is found in the move of the Voice of Prophecy to Thousand Oaks, California, in May 1978. The staff left an adequate, debt-free, two-building complex in Glendale, California to move 45 miles away into more expensive buildings in a community where the cost of living was significantly higher. When asked to comment about the move, he decided to tell a story. "Lincoln was asked once to write an endorsement for a book a poor man was trying to sell. He agreed, and wrote the words, 'Whoever wants a book like this, well, this is just the kind of book they should have.'" Richards chuckled for a moment, then made his point with sadness, not anger. "I thought we were doing pretty well where we were. Now it costs more. We have burdens we didn't have before." Even so, Richards cooperated when the time came to move and now makes the 90-mile round-trip to the studio for recording sessions. Yet, Richards is sensitive to fault-finding. Early in the 1930s, a woman who claimed to be a prophet showed him a book critical of the church's leaders. He dismissed the book solely on the basis of its extreme criticism. "When you write a whole book just condemning people," he explained, "then that's the work of the devil."⁹

Richards' work has created problems for him, most noticeably, in his own family. His daughter Virginia says, "I saw his love for everyone manifested in ways that were sometimes a detriment to our family."¹¹ His wife has spent literally thousands of nights at home alone. His son, H.M.S. Richards, Jr., says, "My father never even changed a light bulb at home; my mother's the one who raised us."¹⁰ Much of the time, Richards' wife functioned as the sole parent in the family.

He'd leave his family at home for many weeks at a time. He once left them in

Glendale, while he preached in Lodi, California, for 100 consecutive nights. His longest crusade was held in Fresno, California, where he preached seven nights a week for nine months. For 50 years of summers, after his radio program began, Richards would tour the campmeeting circuit, often spending as much as six weeks away from home. Frequent trips to the Middle East and elsewhere took even more time away from the family.

Richards recognized the problem and tried to overcome it. His son Kenneth recalls several occasions when the family (including Dad) went camping together. He also remembers boxing lessons, long walks, and countless discussions. But the overall picture is of a less than fulltime father and husband. His son H.M.S. Richards, Jr., was born while Richards was preaching in Alhambra, California. His youngest son Jan was born while Richards was conducting meetings in Phoenix, Arizona, just as Richards himself was born when his father was off preaching.

As a preacher and an evangelist, Richards has advice for pastors and church leaders. "The best evangelism for this church is an evangelistically minded pastor with his church behind him. A few men can do evangelism full time, but not many."

The local pastor "should get on the radio as soon as he can" for two or three minutes a day to introduce himself and his church to the community. The program should be devotional in nature. Richards would like to see the Voice of Prophecy offer radio training to interested pastors. "I'd like to see a coordinated advance in this church like we've never had yet. Suppose we could take time on every radio and television station in a city that had time available. Then let's send our papers free to every person in the city willing to receive them for a year. Then people would know we're here. If we have a man who can draw a big crowd, then let's use him. But let's not waste money by spending \$50-60,000 to get 25 to 50 people."

The ideal, says Richards, would be for a local church to combine a heavy use of the media with a two-by-two approach at the doors of the community. "Let's be open about it," he insists. "Hello, I'm a Seventh-day Adventist. I'd like to tell you about my beliefs." This would be much better than "inviting people from all over the place" to a big meeting.

"Did Mrs. White borrow too much? It's so much bigger than that. . . We have too much in common to be arguing over some of these details."

When speaking about his concerns for the future of the church, Richards mentions three items. He wishes that less denominational construction was being financed: "It looks too much like we're planning to stay for the duration." Another concern is "sloppiness" in Adventist preaching. He's like to see more attention given to historical accuracy by preachers. "The references to history that we think support our prophetic understanding should be critically evaluated. Let's use the best sources for the linking of history with prophecy."

A third concern is the current Adventist discussion about righteousness by faith. He wonders why it has been forgotten that the church held a series of "righteousness by faith schools for preachers" in 1892. Richards' own father, from the Iowa Conference, attended the seminar at the Battle Creek Tabernacle. The teachers were Uriah Smith, W.W. Prescott, A.T. Jones, E.J. Waggoner, and Ellen White. They used no textbook but the Bible. Jones taught Romans and Waggoner taught Galatians. Richards remembers his father describing the meetings as deeply spiritual and scholarly. "They left knowing the books of Romans and Galatians like the backs of their hands," he observes.

Debates in the church do not particularly worry him. "All these discussions about Ellen White have not changed me a bit.

"Here's the trouble," he continues. "None of the questions about Mrs. White can be answered simply with a yes or no. You have to see the whole picture. Too many people see only one small corner of the question, like 'Did Mrs. White borrow too much?' It's so much bigger than that. What did she say? Why did she say it? That's what we ought to be discussing. We have too much in common to be arguing over some of these details."

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Several sources provided many of the names, dates, places, and events mentioned in this article: *Forward in Faith*, by Roy F. Cottrell (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1945); *The Miracle of the Microphone*, by Bill Oliphant (Southern Publishing Association, 1966); *The Story of the Voice of Prophecy*, and *The Voice of Prophecy*, (undated booklets published by the Voice of Prophecy); *H.M.S. Richards: Man Alive!* by Virginia Cason (Freedom House, 1974); "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Speaking of H.M.S. Richards in Connection with the 'Voice of Prophecy' Broadcast of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," a doctoral thesis by Wilber Alexander (Michigan State University, 1962); and *A Voice in the Air*, (Voice of Prophecy booklet, 1980) and *Hello America!* (Voice of Prophecy booklet, 1962), both by Robert E. Edwards.

2. Alexander, "Rhetorical Analysis of the Speaking of H.M.S. Richards in Connection with the

'Voice of Prophecy' Broadcast of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," p. 49.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

7. One of the attorneys related to Richards was John Forrest Curry, California Secretary of State from 1899 to 1911.

8. John Harvey Kellogg performed surgery on the mother, grandmother, and aunt of H.M.S. Richards, who remembers the doctor well. One of Kellogg's "operating nurses" was the mother of Mabel Richards.

9. Cason, *Man Alive!*, n.p.

10. H.M.S. Richards, Jr., has made this comment many times as an illustration of his father's devotion to his work.

Must Polygamists Divorce?

by Russell Staples

Polygamy is probably the most complex issue with which Adventism has had to deal in its missionary enterprise. Historically, the actions and judgments of the church have not always been consistent, or evenly tempered with love and justice. To study the requirements the church makes of converts who have already entered polygamous marriages, a General Conference committee met during the 1981 Annual Council. Hopefully, the deliberations will continue. There is obviously no easy solution, but it would seem to be possible to support the case for a limited accommodation of a less than ideal form of marriage within the church under certain circumstances.

The present policy has been followed for over 40 years. A man living in a state of polygamy who wishes to join the church is required to change his status by putting away all but one of his wives. Alternatively, the wives may be baptized, but not the husband. The policy assumes that in some times and places polygamy may be a *legal*

form of marriage, but is *never* compatible with Christianity. What is not well known is that the Adventist church has not always held to this position.

The Adventist church has always insisted that monogamy is the Christian form of marriage. But for 11 years (1930–1941) the official policy of the denomination, adopted at Autumn Council, allowed that “persons found living in a state of polygamy at the time the gospel light comes to them, and who have entered into plural marriage before knowing it to be a custom condemned by the Word of God, may upon recommendation of responsible field committees be admitted to baptism and the ordinances of the church, and may be recognized as probationary members.”¹ The principal limitation on such probationary members was that they could not hold church office.

Characteristics of Polygamy

The Adventist church is confronted with the fact that polygamy is a worldwide phenomenon and is not passing into oblivion. Indeed, over 70 percent of the societies in the world practice polygamy. Islamic law approves of polygamy, and it therefore continues to be practiced in many of the

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numerous Muslim countries of the world. African societies, more than those in any other part of the globe, accept polygamy as the ideal form of marriage.² Polygamy, then, remains a serious problem, not only for church leaders, but for the young women of these cultures, who have no power to prevent their own initially monogamous marriage from ending up in polygamy and who fear and resent that possibility.

The root motivation for polygamy is a passionate longing for children. In contemporary Western societies, the purpose of marriage has come to be primarily the fostering of a relationship of love and mutual support between a man and woman; but, in societies that approve of polygamy, the principal purpose of marriage is the procreation and socialization of children. Influential males are committed to having the largest number of descendants possible. In fact, every lineage, every family, every person feels compelled to procreate and produce heirs.

Traditionally, there have been other reasons for polygamy. One of the most obvious is the desire of parents to have offspring who will support them during their old age. Another reason, in societies where there is an excess of women over men, is to avoid the social anomaly of an unmarried woman. A third reason, in subsistence agricultural societies, is economic. Wives and children provide labor to make agricultural holdings productive.

Polygamy takes on many shapes and sizes. In some patrilineal societies with institutionalized systems of bridewealth, it is extremely stable. The marriage bond may not be regarded as terminated by death, and there may be no institutionalized means of divorce. On the other hand, in some matrilineal societies there is an inbuilt instability. Almost every marriage goes through a cycle of beginning and ending. These fundamental differences mean that missionaries working in different societies have had widely differing experiences dealing with polygamous converts.

In contemporary society polygamy is taking on new, repugnant forms. Although the transition from a subsistence, agricultural economy to a cash economy often deters many from polygamy, the wealthy and powerful have increased means to buy and support a number of wives. In the traditional household an additional wife was usually appreciated by the other wives because she helped not only with household maintenance, but with the heavy tasks of food production and preparation. However, in the city, styles of life and housing often lead to the first wife resenting the intrusion of a second wife and end in the first wife's walking out. Traditionally, some forms of polygamy functioned to stabilize marriage; but, among contemporary urban elites, polygamy is a major cause of marital breakdown.

Response of Missionaries

When Adventists entered the mission field, they were confronted with at least six possible ways for the church to deal with polygamous families desiring membership. The options fell into two main categories. Theologically and historically, the key question was whether the Christian church would separate members of polygamous families or keep them together:

- I. The family is separated.
 - A. The husband is required to retain the first wife.
 - B. The husband is allowed to choose one of the wives.
- II. The family is kept together.
 - A. None of the spouses may be baptized, but church attendance is encouraged.
 - B. All the spouses may be baptized, but not advanced to church office.
 - C. All the wives may be baptized, but not the husband.
 - D. Only the first wife may be baptized.

Most commonly in the early days, Adventist missionaries separated polygamous families, requiring that the husband choose one of his wives and divorce the others (Option I-B). In societies where polygamous marriages are inherently unstable, this policy seems to have worked reasonably well, except for differences of opinion as to which wife was to be retained (a difference that remains unsettled today). In societies in which polygamous marriages were extremely stable, missionaries encountered stubborn resistance to separation. In fact, in some societies which had no institutionalized form of divorce, the tribe simply refused to countenance the separation arranged by the missionaries. Missionaries, unnerved by implacable resistance and terribly torn by the horrendous social consequences that followed upon the rending apart of families—separation of mothers from their children and the consignment of a wife to a life of prostitution—were forced to the conclusion that, under some circumstances, it was best to keep the families together. Usually this meant baptizing all the wives and weeping with the husband who was barred from fully entering the life of the church and receiving the Lord's Supper (Option II-C). Some of the more enterprising Adventist missionaries simply baptized the entire family (Option II-B).

“Some considered a polygamous union as marriage and . . . regarded separation as divorce; others regarded polygamous marriage as a form of socially institutionalized adultery.”

Differences in Adventist practice reflected confusion within the nineteenth-century missionary movement, when for the first time in the history of Christianity, large numbers of converts came from already

polygamous families. Not only were the various mission boards confronted with different social contexts and forms of polygamy; they also interpreted polygamy differently. Some considered⁹ polygamous union as essentially marriage and consequently regarded separation as divorce; others regarded polygamous marriage as a form of socially institutionalized adultery. Neither did they all agree on the dictates of Scripture.

Teaching of Scripture

Recourse to Scripture did not easily settle the issues. True, it was generally agreed that the Genesis record (1:27; 2:21–24) of an original monogamy was to be regarded as indicative of the divine will. Also, Old Testament stories often distinguish between a principal and lesser wives, indicating that monogamy was recognized by the Hebrews as the ideal form of marriage. It is also possible to point out that the history of polygamy in the Old Testament is far from beautiful. It is a stark portrayal of envy and jealousy among wives, of love and hatred that is passed on from mothers to their children and perpetuated in rifts and bloodshed in the family, of husbands who are torn in their commitments, of fathers who fail to control the internecine strife in their own families, and of men who lose the will to discipline themselves and ultimately become the slaves of passion. The missionaries conceded that the pageant is occasionally relieved by vignettes of love and beauty, but could persuasively insist that the Old Testament record of polygamy, as a whole, reveals a dark story that is a powerful argument in favor of monogamy.

However, the Old Testament never expressly forbids polygamy. In fact, the striking description in Genesis of marriage states that “a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24, RSV) and is not, in itself, incompatible with polygamy.

Indeed, polygamy appears early in Old Testament history. The Old Testament supports the institution of the levirate,³ and no stigma is attached to leviratic marriage. Ruth, after all, is blessed in memory of Tamar, and both of them are listed in the genealogical table of Jesus (Matt. 1:3, 6). Polygamy is inevitable in any society in which the levirate is a binding obligation.

All denominations had to recognize that there is no direct statement in the New Testament either recognizing or prohibiting polygamy. The most obvious occasion for Jesus to say something about polygamy was in connection with the question regarding the woman who had seven husbands (six of them by the levirate) (Matt. 22: 23–33; Mark 12:18–27; Luke 20:27–28). But He did not make use of this occasion to protect marriage from the leviratic custom that was a major cause of polygamy.

However, Christian attitudes toward polygamy do not depend solely on explicit references to the practice in Scripture. Positions on polygamy reflect the churches' general views of marriage and divorce. The Catholic Church has traditionally justified its practice of separating polygamous families on the grounds that such unions are adulterous and not true marriages—in fact, the principle of absolute monogamy requires that they be separated. Protestants have been more inclined to regard polygamy as marriage—inferior and problematic, but nevertheless marriage—and the separation of such marriages as divorce. Each, of course, points to Scripture to justify its position.

Catholics cite Mark 10:11 to buttress their insistence on absolute monogamy. If a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, then logically the marriage of a man to an additional wife is likewise to be regarded as adultery. Certainly this passage indicates how much Christ raised the standards of the Christian marriage above the standards acceptable in Old Testament times, and it is imperative that the church maintain the standard of

marriage that may be extrapolated from this saying of Jesus. But this passage deals with the person who is already within the household of faith. It is not directly applicable to the essential missionary problem of how to deal with the man who has contracted a plural marriage prior to becoming a Christian. That this passage implies a very high standard of monogamy is clear, but it would seem to be insufficient of itself, given other Scriptural evidence and the lack of any specific interdict against polygamy, to establish the necessity of an absolutist monogamy.

Protestants in favor of a responsible and considered policy of admitting families who are converted to the church while in the state of polygamy, cite the “Pauline privilege” (I Cor. 7:12–20). Paul, after quoting the command of the Lord (7:10), invokes his apostolic authority to mitigate that rule and orders that marriage may be dissolved, not only on grounds of adultery, but also because the conversion of one of the partners may result in so much tension that the marriage cannot be endured. He advises the believing spouse to try to hold the marriage together; but if this fails, then the spouse “. . . is not under bondage in such cases: . . . God hath called us to peace” (7:15). Those missionaries opposed to an absolutist position also referred to Jesus' handling of the case of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:3–11). They believed that it was very significant that while the Jews held that adultery made divorce obligatory, Jesus' pronouncement “Neither do I condemn thee” (8:11) indicates that He believed adultery could be forgiven.

Debates among Adventists

We have already noted the differences in the way Adventist missionaries dealt with polygamists. Some insisted on the “putting away of all wives but one”; others tried to keep families together and were willing to baptize all the wives, but not the husband;

others, arguing that the Gospel had to deal with people in the state in which it found them, baptized entire polygamous families. These differences reflected the experience of the missionaries in dealing with different forms of polygamy, as well as differing interpretations of Scripture. The General Conference administration organized a "Missionary Round Table Conference" in 1913 in an attempt to achieve unanimity of interpretation and practice. Evidently the effort was not successful. In January 1926, the African Division printed an edition of its "Plans and general policies" that permitted converts to remain in polygamous marriages. Missionaries in parts of that division had encountered patrilineal peoples with stable forms of polygamy who strongly resisted the separation of families. The heart of the African Division policy reflects that practical reality:

. . . it is agreed that natives living in the state of polygamy at the time the gospel light comes to them, . . . may be admitted to baptism and the ordinances of the church, but can never hold office. . . .⁴

Later the same year, and quite likely as a response to the action of the African Division, the General Conference convened another "Missionary Round Table Conference." At the conference the various parties supported their views vigorously without reaching a consensus. But shortly thereafter, the General Conference in session resoundingly countermanded the policy adopted by the African Division. It was voted to recommend: "That in no case should a man living in polygamy be admitted into the fellowship of the church."⁵

A difficult marriage problem encountered in some of the countries of Latin America was brought to the attention of the same General Conference session. In the absence of divorce laws⁶, it was the prevailing practice for persons having contracted an unhappy marriage to simply leave their legal spouse and strike up a de facto, but illegal, "marriage." Many couples in

this circumstance who had lived together for years and raised a family had accepted the Adventist message and wished to become members of the church. The predicament of the church was that they could not be married, because (at least) one of the spouses was already married and could not obtain a divorce. Any kind of marriage service to regularize the union would create an illegal case of bigamy. The session ruled that worthy families in this circumstance could be admitted to church membership without the benefit of either divorce or remarriage.

Thus the session sanctioned liaisons that were not legal marriages, while at the same time denying membership to men who were legally married and living in faithfulness to their wives. Here, in striking juxtaposition within the same minutes, is a resounding triumph of grace over law, in the one case, and the withholding of grace, in the other.

Subsequent to the 1926 General Conference, the African Division appears to have appealed the case and was successful in getting a committee appointed to give study to "Polygamy among Primitive Tribes." This committee met and submitted a memorandum to the General Conference Committee, in effect, recommending a return to the African Division policies. In a dramatic reversal of the action taken by the General Conference in session four years earlier, the 1930 Fall Council adopted a policy that permitted the baptism of polygamous families under certain circumstances.⁷ There must have been many with earnest convictions and a sense of urgency about the matter for a Fall Council meeting to overrule a policy adopted at a General Conference session. It is of interest that W. H. Branson, who had been president of the African Division since its inception in 1920, had just been appointed a vice-president of the General Conference and was one of the chairmen of the 1930 Fall Council session.

Some of the divisions resisted the new policy; both the Northern and the Central European Divisions retained the more re-

strictive 1926 General Conference policy in their manuals and followed it in practice. Within a year of W. H. Branson's appointment as president of the mission section of the Central European Division in 1938, that division adopted the more liberal 1930 policy. However, the implementation of the policy in Tanganyika (a central European mission bordering on Kenya, a mission field under the jurisdiction of the Northern European Division) provoked a storm of protest from Northern Europe to the General Conference. This incident was probably one of the factors that set a train of events in motion that led to the demise of the 1930 policy.

“Here, in striking juxtaposition within the same minutes, is a resounding triumph of grace over law, in the one case, and the withholding of grace, in the other.”

A subcommittee of the Home and Foreign Officers was appointed to give further study to the polygamy problem and make suggestions that would lead to a united worldwide standard. In 1941 the General Conference in session adopted a policy which diametrically opposed the 1930 policy. It requires “that a man living in a state of polygamy . . . shall be required to change his status by putting away all his wives save one,”⁸ It did, however, permit the wives of a polygamist to become baptized church members under certain circumstances. In general it is this latter provision which has become the operating policy of the church for the last 41 years. The wives are baptized, but not the husband; and, not uncommonly, the provisions spelled out in the minutes governing the circumstances under which the wives may be baptized are overlooked. In what appears to be self-conscious sensitivity to both the dramatic

reversals in the dealings of the church with polygamy and the ineffectiveness of the church in maintaining a united standard, the minutes end with the strong admonition “. . . that the above policy supercedes all previous policies on polygamy.” This policy, without substantial modification, remains today the official standard of the church.

Principles To Consider

The practice of baptizing all the wives, but not the husband has, in effect, become a way of avoiding the real issue at stake. It bypasses the policy without providing a solution. This is not a satisfactory course of action, because it leaves the husband in a state of exclusion from the community of faith. Perhaps some persons in our individualistic Western societies could endure this painful isolation and retain their faith and commitment to the church, but this is almost an impossibility for persons in communal societies.

This is a good time to return to basic issues and consider the matter from the beginning. The first step requires that the church clearly spell out the four possible judgments that it could make regarding polygamy. These are arranged as follows in descending order of gravity: 1). Polygamy is an institutionalized form of adultery which is always and under all circumstances objectively sinful. 2). Polygamy is a legal but inferior form of marriage which is not compatible with Christianity under any circumstances. 3). Polygamy is a form of marriage which falls short of, and even opposes, the Christian ideal; but under rare and extenuating circumstances it can be temporarily accommodated within the church. 4). Polygamy is an acceptable form of marriage, and the most helpful attitude which can be assumed is that it is more suitable to some social situations than is monogamy.

The second step requires that the prin-

ciples with which the church makes its judgment of polygamy be equally clearly spelled out. It would seem that the following principles for guiding the practice of the Adventist church can be adequately defended. The first is a social/legal distinction which cannot be ignored; the second and third are biblical/theological principles: A). Socially approved polygamous marriages, contracted in good faith, should be recognized as legal marriages. The implication is that to “put away” a wife is a euphemism for divorce. B). Marriage is in principle monogamous, but not in an absolutist sense. C). Marriage is intrinsically a bond for life, but the principle of indissolubility cannot be maintained in an absolutist sense. The third step requires the application of these principles to the four possible judgments spelled out above.

The first judgment, once fairly commonly made by the churches, can no longer be sustained. The legality of traditional forms of polygamy is now generally recognized, and a legally recognized marriage may not be stigmatized as adultery.

The second view is based upon an absolutist view of monogamy which it does not seem possible to maintain on Scriptural evidence, as we have cursorily shown. While absolutist views have influenced mission thought and practice more than is generally recognized, both humanity and the Gospel are best served when a strict and compassionate, but not absolutist, position is taken regarding monogamy. Like the Sabbath, marriage was made for humankind and not humankind for marriage (cf. Mark 2:27).

One of the major difficulties with the absolutist position is that its implementation requires the church to insist upon divorce; and, as the churches discovered early on, it may not be legally and/or socially possible for a husband to divorce, on the grounds that he has become a Christian, perfectly honorable wives who wish to remain married to him. More than one society has ruled that the husband has incurred social and legal responsibilities from which he is not entitled

to withdraw on account of conversion. In addition, the social consequences of divorce may be so appalling that even Adventist missionaries have decided that, under some circumstances, the temporary accommodation of polygamy is a lesser evil than divorce.

But perhaps the immediate social difficulties and consequences are not as weighty as the consideration that it is the church that has taught many societies the possibility of divorce. Anthropologists ask whether the church, having once regularized the process of divorce, will be able to stop it when it has finished dealing with polygamy. To separate a polygamous family in the name of Christianity—when Jesus sternly condemned divorce and when, as we have noted, there is no explicit command against polygamy in the Scriptures—would seem to constitute an unbalanced emphasis on one aspect of the Christian understanding of marriage.

The third judgment—that polygamy, under rare and extenuating circumstances, can be temporarily accommodated within the church—is in harmony with the principles enumerated above. But the acceptance of this understanding does not immediately solve all problems. What it does do is to open the way for the church to face the legal, ethical, theological, and practical difficulties involved and make responsible decisions best suited to particular circumstances. This is the truest judgment that the church can make of polygamy.

The fourth view is a purely relativist stance which is unacceptable to those who accept that God has laid down certain norms and ideals for human life. Neither is it in harmony with principles B and C above.

The official position of the Adventist church, as defined in the 1941 policy, is theoretically the closest to judgment two above, except that it is not entirely clear, in terms of the policy, whether polygamy is regarded as marriage. The practice of baptizing all the wives, however, establishes the point practically, for if polygamy is not

marriage, then the wives would be living in adultery and would not be eligible for baptism.

The practice of baptizing all the wives moves the policy closer to the third viewpoint in practice than it is in theory. The argument invariably resorted to in justification of this practice is that each of the wives has only one husband. Where wives are victims of arranged marriages and have no choice in the matter, the logic of the case is sound. But the argument loses much of its force in the case of a woman who chooses to marry into an already polygamous union, for what is so different between the case of a man and that of a woman who of their own volition contract a polygamous marriage? The logic of this practice suggests that the church has come to accept, at least, one side of polygamous marriage as something it can live with.

Proposals for the Future

The situation the church now faces appears to be more complex than it has ever been. In many traditional societies the old social structures and institutions remain relatively unchanged, and so also the old problems in dealing with polygamous converts. But new and less attractive forms of polygamy have emerged among urban elites, and such marriages may call for different solutions. Another factor is that the Adventist churches overseas have solidified their traditions of dealing with polygamists over the years and are not likely to change easily—least of all will they be likely to accept decisions made by others for them. Yet a fourth significant factor must be taken into consideration: Many educated young people—especially women—have come to reject polygamy and the status of structured inferiority it assigns to wives. Adventist young people are generally progressive and would feel let down if the church were to endorse an anachronistic, polygamous past.

And yet something needs to be done for

those men and their families who accept the Gospel while living in a polygamous state and yearn for baptism and the blessings of church fellowship. It is appropriate for the church to maintain a staunch, but not absolutist position, regarding monogamy. This stance should not preclude the temporary accommodation of polygamy within the church under carefully defined circumstances.

“The logic of this practice suggests that the church has come to accept, at least, one side of the polygamous marriage as something it can live with.”

But if the church, in some places, embarks upon the practice of cautiously and responsibly admitting some polygamous families to membership, it will need to zealously safeguard its witness to monogamy. It certainly must maintain a rigorous standard of monogamy for those who are already Christians.

In taking a non-absolutist position, the church must also take upon itself serious responsibilities at two levels. The first relates to the church and its community. The overall attitude and social environment of the local church must be evaluated before the inclusion of a polygamous family. For instance, it may be more appropriate to baptize polygamous families in rural tribal conversions than among some city elites. And the church will need to decide whether the form of polygamy involved is adequately stable. The legal status of both polygamy and divorce may also have a bearing on the situation. At a different level, the church needs to know whether the relationship between the spouses is true and that they can be comfortably brought into the fellowship of the community of faith. And the church needs to take upon itself the responsibility of

guiding the family in the weighty decisions that it will need to make. The church should act, believing it is doing what is best under the circumstances.

Marriage, Jesus said, is "from the beginning" (Mark 10:6), and the divine ideal for marriage laid down at creation retains its unchanging validity. Jesus clearly taught that marriage, in principle, is a covenant for life. Divorce was easily permissible under the provisions of the Mosaic law; therefore, Jesus went behind Moses to the order of creation to establish the meaning and sanctity of the marriage relationship.

But marriage is also a human institution and, as such, has come to exist in many

forms. Just as the Jewish people departed widely from the quintessential form and beauty of God's original intention, so have many other societies. The form of marriage in the Palestine of Jesus' time was less than perfect. It did not preclude three unhappy possibilities—the levirate, easy divorce, and polygamy. Jesus sternly condemned its abuses, yet he accepted this order of things as marriage and at Cana of Galilee blessed the wedding with a miracle. So, also, the Adventist church in this age may have to temporarily cope with less than ideal forms of marriage, while steadfastly and compassionately pointing to a better way.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The 1930 Resolution on Polygamous Marriages in Heathen Lands, "Actions of the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee," Vol. XIV, Book 1, Fifty-Ninth Meeting, Nov. 3, 1930. The text is reproduced in appendix C.

2. In 75 percent of African societies more than 20 percent of families are polygamous. And for all sub-Saharan countries the mean number of wives per 100 married males is 150. (Remi Clignet, *Many Wives, Many Powers* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970], p. 17.)

3. From the Latin word *levir*, meaning brother-in-law. The marriage contract, sealed by the payment of bridewealth, is not regarded as terminated by the death of the husband. It is the duty of the brother of the deceased husband to marry his widow and to raise up children to the deceased.

4. "General Conference of Seventh-day Ad-

ventists (African Division): Plans and general policies adopted with reference to its work" (Kenilworth, Cape: Sentinel Publishing Company, January, 1926). The full text is reproduced in appendix A.

5. *General Conference Committee Minutes*, Vol. XIII, Book 1, 6th Meeting, June 13, 1926, p. 44. The text is reproduced in appendix B.

6. Roman Catholic canon law has never sanctioned divorce in the sense of a dissolution of the marriage bond. The problem, in Catholic thinking, regarding the marriage-divorce-remarriage cycle is with divorce, whereas in Protestant thinking it is in connection with remarriage.

7. The text is reproduced in appendix C.

8. "General Conference Policy, as voted June 4, 1941." The text is reproduced in appendix D.

APPENDIX A

The 1926 African Division Policy "General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (African Division): Plans and general policies adopted with reference to its work," pp. 8, 9.

POLYGAMY.

Whereas, the Message finds certain natives in Central and Southern Africa living in a state of polygamy, and tribal customs in many parts subject a cast-off wife to a lifelong shame and disgrace, even to the point of becoming common property, her children also becoming disgraced thereby, it is agreed that natives living in the state of polygamy at the time the gospel light comes to them, who have entered into plural marriages before

knowing it to be a custom condemned by the Word of God, be accepted as members of the Probationers' Class, after having spent sufficient time in the Hearers' Class to give evidence of conversion. These persons may be admitted to baptism and the ordinances of the church, but can never hold office or become active in church work, or become members in full membership, unless or until circumstances should change as to leave them with only one companion.

This action merely contemplates the recognition of a condition which cannot be changed without resulting in great injustice to innocent persons, and is not to be construed as endorsing polygamy in any way; and anyone entering into a plural marriage relation after receiving a knowledge of the Truth should be regarded as living in

adultery, and dealt with by the church accordingly. A man who has apostatized from the Truth, and who during the state of his apostasy, has taken a plurality of wives, may not be received again unless he puts away the wives taken during his apostasy. Before polygamous converts are baptized by anyone, counsel should be had with the superintendent of the field.

APPENDIX B

The 1926 Resolutions on Polygamy and Marriage Relationships *General Conference Committee Minutes*, Vol. XIII, Book 1, 6th Meeting, June 13, 1926

WE RECOMMEND, 1. That great care be used in the examination of peoples in heathen lands for entrance into the church, and as this examination relates to this practise, we would advise the following:

(a) That in no case should a man living in polygamy be admitted into the fellowship of the church.

(b) That preceding his entrance into the church a sufficient time of probation be given him to test out his sincerity in separating himself from this practice.

WE RECOMMEND, 2. That where parties are living together as husband and wife, that they be not baptized nor received into church fellowship until they have been legally married; however,—

Inasmuch as we find many parties whose matrimonial alliances became badly tangled before they accepted the truth, and as the laws of some of our countries are such that it is impossible for them to become legally married; and as some of these desire to obey the truth when it comes to them, to be baptized and unite with the church; and in many cases, after careful investigation, we cannot advise them to separate and thus break up their home and present relationship, for this would only make conditions worse, and knowing that the gospel truth does not come to people to make their conditions worse, but better, and that God receives a sinner where he is found and saves him when he repents and turns to Him: therefore,—

WE RECOMMEND, 3. That in countries where the laws are such as to make impossible legal marriage of certain persons whose matrimonial alliances have become badly tangled on account of these laws; and when such persons have given real evidence that they are truly converted and are in harmony with the truth and desire to unite with us, all such cases shall be presented to the conference or mission committee of the field in which they reside; and if, after careful investigation, this committee is clear in the case, then the parties may be recommended to church fellowship; with the understanding, however, that if the time ever comes when such persons can be legally married, they do so, and that until so married, they be not eligible to hold any office in the church which requires ordination.

APPENDIX C

The 1930 Resolution on Polygamous Marriages in Heathen Lands "Actions of the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee," Vol. XIV, Book 1, 59th Meeting, Nov. 3, 1930

RESOLVED, that in such sections, persons found living in a state of polygamy at the time the gospel light comes to them, and who have entered into plural marriage before knowing it to be a custom condemned by the Word of God, may upon recommendation of responsible field committees be admitted to baptism and the ordinances of the church, and may be recognized as probationary members. They shall not, however be admitted to full membership unless or until circumstances shall change so as to leave them with only one companion.

This action merely contemplates the recognition of a condition which in some places cannot be changed without resulting in great injustice to innocent persons and is not to be construed as endorsing polygamy in any way. Anyone entering into a plural marriage relation after receiving a knowledge of the truth should be regarded as living in adultery, and dealt with by the church accordingly. A man who has apostatized from the truth, and who during the time he is in apostasy, enters into plural marriage may not be received again into any church relationship until he puts away the wives taken during his apostasy and in every way brings forth fruits meet for repentance.

In countries where separation of families can be arranged without injustice being done to innocent parties only one wife should be retained, but we recognize the right of the man to choose the one to be retained.

APPENDIX D

General Conference Policy, as voted June 4, 1941

WE RECOMMEND, 1. That a man found living in a state of polygamy when the gospel reaches him, shall upon conversion be required to change his status by putting away all his wives save one, before he shall be considered eligible for baptism and church membership.

2. That men thus putting away their wives shall be expected to make proper provision for their future support, and that of their children, just as far as it is within their power to do so.

WE RECOMMEND, 3. That in all such cases the church co-operate with the former husband in making such provision for these wives and children as will provide for their care and protect them from disgrace and undue suffering.

4. That we recognize the right of a wife who has been put away by a polygamous husband to marry again.

5. That wives of a polygamist, who have entered into marriage in their heathen state, and who upon accepting Christianity are still not permitted to leave their husbands because of tribal custom, may upon approval of the local and union committees become baptized members of the church. However should a woman who is a member of the church enter into marriage as a secondary wife, she shall be disfellowshipped and shall not be readmitted to the church unless or until she separates from her polygamous husband.

6. That it is understood that the above policy supercedes all previous policies on polygamy.

Full Moon: Cloudy Night

The landscape changes at night.
Fixed points shift, quaver—disappear in shadow
To reemerge indistinctly to a sidelong glance
Not too long held.
Hands in front of faces blur.
Features (a hair, a freckle, a knuckle bent in some past pain)
Focus only as they come close.
So we wait for the horizon's moondog bubble to burst
And show us, the magician sky triumphantly turning a card,
The Full Moon.
That high clear clean white light comes, fades
Murked thick over; a white stone seen dimly through
Dark Water.
God's unkept promise, the universe's major disappointment.
Patterns visible are the roiling undersides of clouds.
They break to leave us staring, momentarily blinded,
At the white face and not the light it casts.
The shadows shift but remain expectant, dense.
Sit down, fear the shadows, await an unforgiving dawn.

Slivered Shards

This shapeless bag full of slivered shards,
I've spent months with, with pincers and a glass
Poring, eyes burning and tearing, trying
To find the seams where the pieces went apart.
A relic from some dead time,
It was used to carry wine or oil
To some painted god who looked bored.
A jug, then, and common,
Later, a 'Vase'—stuff of exhibits in sealed glass cases.
Now nothing.
I've kept the ancient bits,
(The pieces change each time I dump them out)
Numbering the numberless piece by piece,
Rearranging them as if to bring that world alive.
Here, on your bed, I'll leave it,
The brown sack carrying all I own of the past.
Some of the shards might work through the fabric
To chafe and scratch you as you sleep.
In the morning brush them away.
Hide the bag, perhaps when I'm not looking,
And when I, slightly panicked, return for it
I will only find you,
And wonder for a moment what it was that's gone.

by John Hamer

Evangelical Essentials And Adventist Distinctives

Robert D. Brinsmead. *Judged by the Gospel: A Review of Adventism*. 383 pp. Fallbrook, Calif.: Verdict Publications, 1980. \$6.95 (paper).

review by Richard Rice

Robert Brinsmead's latest book examines the various aspects of Adventist faith and life that he finds incompatible with the gospel. It proclaims the end of "traditional Adventism" on the ground that none of its unique doctrines has biblical support (pp. 310-311); and it calls for a "new evangelical Adventism" committed to the supremacy of the gospel, the authority of the Bible, and the priesthood of all believers (p. 316).

Brinsmead begins his critique by analyzing the uniquely Adventist doctrines of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment. He concludes that they reflect a misguided penchant for literalistic prophetic interpretation and do not have the support of careful, consistent biblical exegesis. Moreover, he maintains, they are basically contrary to the New Testament emphasis on the eschatological character of Christ's work.

Next, Brinsmead criticizes the status Adventism traditionally accords Ellen G. White. He describes the popular views of her inerrancy, her literary independence, and her uniqueness as "legends" that are no longer credible to thinking Christians. And he finds in the traditional view of her

authority a contradiction to the Protestant principle of *sola Scriptura* (pp. 119, 121).

Analyzing the Adventist ethic, Brinsmead sees its strength in a strong orientation to the Old Testament, with its belief that God is a God of law and righteousness (p. 236). Its weakness, however, is its failure to go beyond the ethic of the Old Testament to that of the New. Consequently, the ethic of Adventism is a guilt-producing ethic, preoccupied with fulfilling various "blueprints" for human behavior, rather than an ethic characterized by celebration and freedom arising from confidence in divine forgiveness.

In the fifth section of the book, Brinsmead observes that the traditional Adventist concept of the church bears striking resemblances to the Roman Catholic view; the two churches have a hierarchical and authoritarian structure, are committed to insitutions, and have an exaggerated sense of their own historical importance.

Despite these extensive criticisms, as the book's final section makes clear, Brinsmead's assessment of traditional Adventism is not one of unqualified condemnation. Rather, he sees it as analogous to the position of Judaism vis-a-vis Christianity. It has many commendable features, but, as a whole, it falls short of a full appreciation of the gospel. According to Brinsmead's favorite model, traditional Adventism exhibits all the identifying features of an apocalyptic sect (p. 346). These features call into question Adventism's (or the sect's) permanent viability, but not its temporary significance. For, at crucial moments in history, apocalypticism has given rise to religiously profound developments. Christianity sprang from the matrix of Jewish apocalypticism. And medieval apocalypticism preceded the Protestant Reformation. Similarly, Brinsmead asserts, the apocalyp-

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tic character of traditional Adventism may presage a dramatic evangelical development within Christianity as a whole (p. 357). But it can achieve this end only by moving beyond its traditional concerns to a full commitment to the gospel. As a whole, then, the book is a call to Seventh-day Adventists to turn from apocalyptic infancy to evangelical maturity (cf. p. 358).

Given its basic purpose, Brinsmead's discussion gives rise to two major questions. One concerns the object of his evaluation. Just what is the "Adventism" that he scrutinizes in this book? Is it the belief of the pioneers of 100 years ago, the outlook of the average church member today, the views of contemporary Adventist theologians, or some combination of these? One is not quite sure. But there is reason to believe that Adventism is far more complex than the "traditional Adventism" of which Brinsmead speaks. Indeed, many Adventists have found the gospel in the very doctrinal matrix that he roundly criticizes.

Besides a lack of clarity on this point, one also finds some glaring omissions in what is apparently intended as a general review of Adventism. One would expect that an analysis of Adventism in light of the gospel would take a hard look at what Adventists say about it. But Brinsmead virtually ignores the various attempts of Adventists to understand the doctrine of righteousness by faith, even when some of the most influential figures in the church in recent years have consistently emphasized its importance.¹

Brinsmead's analysis of Adventism also fails to do justice to the two essential doctrines on which the denomination's name is based—The Sabbath and the Second Coming. he may feel that the Sabbath is appropriately subsumed under "ethics," and the Second Coming under "the nineteenth century prophetic schema," but this fails to appreciate the positive impact of these doctrines on our understanding and experience of the gospel.²

One also has to wonder about the "new Adventism" Brinsmead envisions will re-

place the traditional version he rejects. One thing seems clear: the Adventism he advocates would be radically discontinuous with the past. There must be new doctrinal emphases, or a different, more congregational church structure will emerge. But it is doubtful that there would be anything that is specifically Adventist about it. Is Brinsmead, therefore, calling for a transformation of Adventism, or simply its demise?

This brings us to the most basic question arising from this work—the relation between evangelical essentials and Adventist distinctives. Brinsmead's strategy is to set these categories in opposition to each other and to eliminate the latter. He is surely right to notice a tension between the gospel and various points in Adventist thought and experience, and Adventist scholars are currently attending to many of the doctrinal questions he raises. But his solution to the problem is not the only one available.

The recent emphasis on evangelical essentials is a positive development within Adventism. It is important to seek an interrelation between "the gospel" and other aspects of Christian faith as Adventists conceive it. But this need not lead to a loss of such distinctive concerns as the Sabbath and the present work of Christ. There is no compelling reason to regard such beliefs as inherently inimical to true evangelicalism.

Ironically, Brinsmead's critique of Adventist distinctives comes precisely at a time when many evangelicals are seeking ways to enrich their understanding of Christianity. Several recent conferences and publications contain appeals by evangelicals for such things as a richer liturgy and more attention to the spiritual life.³ In this climate, we may find non-Adventist evangelicals newly receptive to the experiential significance of the Sabbath that we have come to appreciate more deeply. It would be tragic to lose sight of the unique resources of Adventism in the attempt to bring it into closer harmony with evangelical principles.

Brinsmead's thesis is that traditional Adventism can fulfill its promise only if it

ceases to be distinctly Adventist. The times do not call for a reductionistic evangelical Adventism, but an Adventism which neither discards Adventist distinctives in its com-

mitment to evangelical essentials, nor allows its distinctive concerns to obscure the essentials of the gospel.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Brinsmead may feel that Geoffrey J. Paston has adequately discussed this question in *The Shaking of Adventism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977). If so, it would be helpful to have him say so.

2. Brinsmead does deal with "sabbatarianism"

in a recent issue of his periodical, *Verdict*, Vol. 4, No. 4, June 1981.

3. Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978-79).

Management Principles For Churches

Wilfred M. Hillock. *Involved: An Introduction to Church Participation and Management*. 155 pp., bibl. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1977. \$7.95 (paper)

review by George W. Colvin

Occasionally, among the ordinarily sterilized products of Seventh-day Adventist church presses, one may find a work that somehow retains some vigor. Not surprisingly, such bits of leaven in the dough are the Adventist publications most likely to appeal to a wider audience than the Adventist church. *Involved: An Introduction to Church Participation and Management*, written by Wilfred M. Hillock for Southern Publishing Association's noted Anvil Series, is just such a yeasty work. Indeed, *Involved's* fermenting effect on thought has moved at least two local conferences to ban it from their Adventist Book Centers.

Instead of treating churches as theological enterprises, Hillock, a professor at the School of Health at Loma Linda University and a management scholar, regards churches

as human organizations which need management; for them, therefore, management principles are profoundly relevant. His review of a management literature is sufficiently thorough that *Involved* could be useful reading even for scholars of business.

Hillock opposes top-down management, exclusive decision-making, vague goals, coerciveness, pretended unity, group administration, pastoral dominance, and the making of policies into rules—in short, many of the characteristics of church operations. Hillock proposes to sweep away all of this rubbish—and shows it to be as un-Christlike as it is ineffective. In its place he calls for church management that encourages participation by the lay member. The full effect of this revolution cannot be briefly conveyed, but some comments from *Involved* suggest its extent: "Never should we base success in the church on conformance to the personal bent of a leader or inner group." (p. 21) "A member's interest in his church program has a direct proportion to his control of his destiny." (p. 27) "One of the fundamental principles we must learn is that conflict is essential, healthy, and useful." (p. 117)

Since most members can function effectively only on the local level, Hillock's elevation of the individual lay member to a paramount position leads inevitably to congregationalism (although Hillock does not directly avow it). Wherever his approach is actually applied, this element could produce challenging results—both for

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laity accustomed to letting administrators manage their church, and for church administrators accustomed to seigneurial prerogatives.

Though Hillock's own experience has been entirely within the Adventist church system, *Involved* has general application because its positions are based on universal human characteristics. Both for this breadth of view and for its liberating effect, even in theory alone, *Involved* is a noble work.

A More Comprehensive View of Salvation

Hans K. LaRondelle. *Christ Our Salvation: What God Does For Us and in Us*. 96 pp. Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1980. \$5.95 (paper)

review by Brad Brookins

For the past few years Seventh-day Adventists have been debating the meaning, method, and implications of the doctrine of salvation. In *Christ Our Salvation*, Hans LaRondelle makes a contribution to the dialogue by openly discussing the question while wisely avoiding polemics. The book is an ambitious attempt to discuss the topics of divine election, reconciliation, justification, sanctification, and glorification—and their relationships—all in 96 pages.

But the breadth of LaRondelle's approach, while it may appear overly ambitious for so few pages, is an expression

of the book's thesis; for from the author's perspective, salvation is inclusive of everything God has done, is doing, and will do to reclaim the human race. On the one hand, he gently chides those who limit salvation to the legal implications of Jesus's death, but on the other hand, he questions those who emphasize the "born again experience" at the expense of the objective aspect of God's redemptive work. LaRondelle advocates a more comprehensive approach that views salvation as "a faith experience that redeems our past, fills the present with joy, and looks forward with hope to the glorious future" (p. 6).

Christ Our Salvation was written, the author says, for two types of people: those who are unclear on the essentials of the gospel and those who desire guidelines for meditations on the gospel. Thus, the book is something of a hybrid and for that reason may prove frustrating to its readers. By freely using, but not carefully defining, theological terms such as "election" and "justification," LaRondelle may fail to clear up the misconceptions of readers who have not been exposed to the language of theology. In contrast to the difficulty such readers may have, those acquainted with the language probably will not find much in this book to challenge their thinking. One can only hope that such readers will agree with J.R. Spangler, *Ministry* editor, who generously notes in his forward that "some of the concepts may not be new, but it is vital to review them" (p. 3).

Although the book breaks little new ground, it does present the thinking of a respected teacher and theologian on a topic central to our faith as Christians and brings a refreshing balance to a discussion that has tended for too long to divide Seventh-day Adventists.

Brad Brookins, a pastor in northern Wisconsin, holds a master of divinity degree from Andrews University.

Responses

Spectrum Promotes Adventist Triumphalism

To the Editors: Man has always delighted in designing his own god. While SPECTRUM has sometimes asked embarrassing questions, its central thrust has been to promote and cater to Adventist triumphalism and desire for uniqueness. I am sure the editorial policy of SPECTRUM is to seek truth wherever it may be found. However, this dedication to truth seems to be limited within the confines of certain strictures. These are: (1) the basic rightness of Adventist theology, (2) Adventist triumphalism, and (3) the inspiration of Ellen White (in some modified form).

The rich young ruler trusted wealth and position to give him favor with God. Christ recommended that he abandon all of this and find salvation. Adventists will never rejoice in their salvation until they consider their life-style and imagined uniqueness as dung. They must confess that they know nothing for certain except that Christ is Lord and that even this awareness comes only as a revelation of the Spirit. The impoverishment of the Adventist system that has become evident in recent years in the areas of theology, economics, and prophetic authority, can all be traced to the ongoing effort to devise one's own god and prescribe his activities.

Adventists should confront the reality that by and large they are theologically illiterate, their posture of uniqueness is absurd, and that their special doctrines are merely heresies that obscure the Gospel.

R. B. Maddox
Napa, California

More Comments on SDA's & Homosexuality

To the Editors: Your article "Growing up Gay Adventist" (Vol. 12, No. 13), proved to be credibly stated, as illustrated by the use of primary sources—the gays spoke to us.

While the orientation of gays is not to be denied, it seems plausible that the orientation need not be excused for gay manifestations. Adventist gays, practicing or nonpracticing, face the possibility of censure and ostracism upon identification. A key issue them seems to be "homosexual as against practising homosexual."

The Seventh-day Adventist college campus allows little room for greyness on this matter. It can be debated that "being gay" and practising gayness" is similar to being sinful by nature and practising sin. Church society excuses the former, but surely not the latter.

Perhaps the article points up the need for gay awareness and approach on the Seventh-day Adventist college campus. I do not believe that gays are locked in—I believe it may yet be possible to separate "being gay" (nature) from behaving gay (actions). The orientation is insufficient excuse for the act, although some will argue that insanity arises from an insane nature, thus absolving the individual. The Seventh-day Adventist administrator will very likely follow the most practical and expedient policy whenever gayness surfaces on his campus for an attitude of greyness will be interpreted as "softness" and will bring a swift retort from the Seventh-day Adventist community.

Perhaps someone would like to do an article about "Gays on SDA College Campuses."

Sylvan Lashley
Dean of Students
West Indies College

To the Editors: A few weeks ago you published ten testimonies of SDA persons that find themselves in homosexuality. I felt very touched by their stories and the struggles with which they are dealing.

I was baptized at the age of 14. I went to an SDA college majoring in theology, and was pastor of the student association. I was also a student missionary for a year and later worked as a student chaplain in a major SDA hospital. But I never entered the ministry. I had doubts about my call because of feelings of sexual attraction to men. I would sometimes go into a depression lasting for days, even weeks. It was at those times that I just didn't see how I could claim to be a child of God, let alone a minister of His word.

When, in my early twenties, I had my first real sexual encounter with a man, my faith began to decline. I stopped going to church. I stopped associating with my Christian friends. My life got deeper and deeper into the "gay" lifestyle—bars, baths and discos.

I did look for a way out of my homosexual problem. I've lived in a Buddhist zendo to learn freedom from Zen meditation, traveled to Nevada to seek guidance from a Shoshone Indian shaman named Rolling Thunder, looked into faith healing, toyed with some occult practices, and, of course, tried the more popular route of psychiatrist (3 of them) and psychologist (4 of them). They all left a lot to

be desired. And if prayer alone could remove homosexuality then I would have been healed many years ago as I have spent many nights in prayer, pleading with God to take my burden away. I even went the way of trying to accept my homosexuality, telling myself that it was really all right to be homosexual. I found, after a few years, that I was only deluding myself. I knew in my heart it was not right.

Ten months ago my life changed for the better. I came to Reading, Pennsylvania hoping to find a solution to my homosexual problem at a place called Quest. Since that day I have found at Quest the real meaning of the grace of God. I have seen an actual shift in my sexual orientation. To me Quest has meant total freedom from the power of lust and temptation. To some of us at Quest who had almost given up entirely it means life itself—a new life in Christ.

I would personally invite anyone who feels trapped by homosexuality to come to Quest for one day to evaluate the program for themselves. I don't think anyone can come away from such a place, after hearing the stories of victory in the individual lives, and not see how God is working. Because I am now returning to the faith I once held so dear, I hope at some point to rejoin the Seventh-day Adventist church as a member in good standing.

Dan Roberts
Reading, Pennsylvania

The Sabbath and the International Date Line

To the Editors: Discussions of the Sabbath by Robert Brinsmead and Desmond in recent issues of SPECTRUM have been enlightening, but they failed to address an important problem; the international date line. Seventh-day Adventists have usually said that the Seventh-day Sabbath that they keep within a weekly cycle is the very day upon which God rested at the conclusion of creation. Actually, the day we call Sabbath is dependent upon an arbitrary, man-made date line.

Few Adventists have a clear understanding of the function and necessity of the date line. In 1884 an international congress decided for time-keeping purposes to divide the earth from pole to pole by meridians. At that

time England was the world's greatest sea power and obtained the declaration that zero meridian passed through Greenwich, England. The congress also decided that the international date line would generally follow the 180th meridian. The date line could have been established anywhere down the Atlantic Ocean, or between the place you live and the next town.

When the eastern half of the earth is light from Greenwich to the 180th meridian, at that instant during a 24-hour period, and at that instant only, the whole earth is at one day (say Saturday). As the earth turns the 180th meridian into the darkness, the portion of the earth between where the sun is now set and the 180th meridian is Sunday. The rest of the earth is still Saturday. In other words, the 180th meridian carries Sunday around the globe driving Saturday into the sunset, until the whole earth is Sunday at the instant the 180th meridian is again at sunset. Except for that instant, there is always one day difference on either side of the date line. Problems arise for Sabbath keepers, with the sun high in the sky over the Pacific, it can be Saturday on the Samoa Islands and Sunday on the nearby Fiji Islands.

At the first day of creation, when light first shone on one-half of the globe, God created a date line. However, we do not know its location. It could be argued that Christ kept the proper day when he was on earth. Unfortunately, that does not help us once we leave the limited locale in which He lived. God's date line may have been a few degrees east or west of that area, or anywhere else around the earth. If God's date line were between Israel and what is now the United States, we are keeping the wrong day for Sabbath in the United States.

Some questions arise. Is a flat earth assumed in the Bible since a flat earth would mean the sun rotated around it eliminating any dateline problem? Was the Sabbath logical only for the Jews inhabiting a limited portion of the earth? Was the date line providentially located? Amazingly, this position was taken by Uriah Smith in 1889 (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 1, p. 61) and by R. L. Odom in 1946 who stated it should be in the Pacific because Noah's descendants, spreading eastward and westward from Ararat met there (*The Lord's Day on a Round World*: Southern Publishing Association, 1946).

Finally, to what extent does our obligation to keep the seventh-day Sabbath imply faith in a man-made, 180th meridian date line?

Harry V. Wiant, Jr.
Professor of Forestry
West Virginia University
Morgantown, West Virginia

The Association Of Adventist Women

A new organization of Adventist women has come into existence. The Association of Adventist Women officially organized on June 13, 1982 at the Sligo Church in Washington, D.C. The meeting was convened by Josephine Benton, chairman of the Forum Committee on Women, established in November, 1981, by the Association of Adventist Forums Board.

The purposes of the new association, which is seeking tax-exempt status, is to encourage communication and support among Adventist women, including acquainting the church community with the potential and achievements of Adventist women, assisting Adventist women in achieving their goals, and helping them to increase their professional options within the Adventist church.

The newsletter, *The Adventist Woman*, founded several years ago, is the official voice of the organization. This newsletter is currently undergoing editorial publication and format changes. A new editor will be installed January 18, 1983. The newsletter which so far has appeared only intermittently, will be published on a regular basis after January.

Women from as far away as Colorado, Michigan, and Massachusetts gathered in June to elect a Board of Directors for the new association. Named president was Betty Howard, dean of women at Columbia Union College. Other newly appointed members of the Board of Directors include: Secretary-Legal Counsel, Margaret Mc-

Farland, attorney with O'Melveny & Meyers law offices in Washington, D.C.; Pastor, Jan Daffern, associate pastor at Sligo Church; Liaison with General Conference, Dolores Maupin, member of the General Conference committee and professor of business management at the University of the District of Columbia; Coordinator of Special Events, Beverly Habada, city planner, Seat Pleasant, Maryland. Eight regional directors comprise the rest of the Board: Atlantic Region, Otilie Stafford, chairman of the Department of English, Atlantic Union College; Lake Region, Thesba Johnston, professor of education, Andrews University; Pacific Northwest Region, Helen Evans Thompson, executive director of Alumni Affairs, Walla Walla College; Pacific Region, Pat Horning, editor-writer at Concerned Communications, and Jan Hackleman, executive and clinical director of Inland County Family Learning Center; Southwestern Region, Judy Foll Miles, professor of office administration at Southwestern Adventist College; Columbia Region, Shirley Zork, professor of nursing at Columbia Union College; Mid-America Region, Vickie Danielson, private business in Colorado; Southern Region, Melinda Howes, vice-president of public relations, Florida Hospital.

One Adventist Health Care System for USA?

Adventist Health Systems/United States is a corporation that will soon be incorporated to oversee and coordinate the existing four

Adventist health care corporations. The chairman of the corporation's board will be the General Conference vice-president for North America. The 23 of so members will include administrators from all four Adventist health systems, elected denominational officials, and lay persons from every union in North America.

The North American Division Committee on Administration (NADCA) voted an enabling action in July, allowing work to begin on drawing up the constitution and bylaws for the new corporation. It will replace the existing North American Health Services Board. The new corporation is not now replacing the existing four Adventist health care corporations, although there is conjecture that its formation provides the vehicle for eventually absorbing the four corporations into one. They will be selected by a constituency of some 100 people. Slightly more than one-half of both the constituency and the Board of Adventist Health Systems/United States will be health care corporation executives.

Action by NADCA followed its receiving a recommendation from the 65 persons attending the "North American Health Systems Consultation," meeting in Columbia, Maryland, June 21-23. Convened by the General Conference, and chaired by Charles Bradford, vice-president for North America, half of the 65 persons attending were General Conference officials. The other half were executives of Adventist health care corporations. In addition to the creation of Adventist Health Systems/United States, the consultation recommended that NADCA set up a committee for the purpose of "reviewing the wage and benefit structure for health care administrators."

Where Are Evangelical Adventists Headed?

Evangelical Adventists, as some called themselves once found common cause in

trying to reform the theology of Seventh-day Adventists. No more; their splintering has become obvious. Since the spring of 1982, criticism has been directed at not only the official church, but at other evangelical Adventists as well. In fact, vigorous rejection of the term Evangelical Adventism is part of the debate about the viability of maintaining membership within the Seventh-day Adventist church.

On the one hand, Desmond Ford, Smuts van Rooyen, and their associates at the Good News Unlimited Foundation, continue to declare themselves Seventh-day Adventists and retain their membership. Indeed, during July, the General Conference invited Desmond Ford and his wife to Washington, D.C., for several days of discussions. Evidently, some had urged that the General Conference recommend that Ford's ordination be rescinded, and even that his membership be ended. But no such recommendation was adopted by the General Conference in July.

On the other hand, just two months earlier, both Robert Brinsmead and the editors of *Evangelica*, were urging Ford and others with similar views to take the initiative in abandoning membership in the Seventh-day Adventist church. In May, Brinsmead published a six-page broadside entitled, "To My Adventist Friends." It begins by reproducing a letter from Brinsmead to Ford written in August 19, 1980, just after denominational leaders had met with Ford at Glacier View. Even then, Brinsmead repudiated "synthesis theology," telling Ford that "I hope the church leadership has the intestinal fortitude to stand by its convictions to preserve the 1844 faith without compromise. I hope it has the nerve to pay no attention to the protesting multitudes who are motivated by sympathy for you."

In May 1982, Brinsmead expanded and sharpened his disagreement with Adventism and, by implication, Ford's continued identification with it. "If no event of redemptive significance occurred in heaven in 1844, there is nothing salvagable in the

Adventist system,” and “if the 1844 theology falls, Ellen White and the entire doctrine of the Spirit of Prophecy also falls.” Furthermore, “efforts to vindicate Adventist Sabbatarianism will fare no better than attempts to vindicate 1844 or Mrs. White. The Sanctuary, Spirit of Prophecy and Sabbath doctrines stand or fall together.” What Brinsmead lumped together, he then savaged. “Adventism is a totalitarian religious system which demands an allegiance that belongs only to God.” Brinsmead concluded his polemic by attacking evangelical Adventism directly. “Evangelical Adventism is traveling the road of an Adventist offshoot,” and “will end in swift and sudden disaster.” There must be no compromise. “If a person cannot be an authentic Adventist, he should not be a phony one. Evangelical Adventists must decide whether to submit to that system or obey the gospel, for the gospel has broken through the Adventist system and has left it shattered beyond repair.”

The editors of *Evangelica* appear to agree. The same month Brinsmead’s attack appeared, they published an issue entitled “After Adventism: Going Forth to Jesus.” The editors were students at the SDA Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan, when they founded the journal that did much to popularize the term “Evangelical Adventism”; the editors now rejected it. To the question of his article “Whither Evangelical Adventism?” Editor Alan Crandall answered, “probably nowhere. It has almost run its course. The time has come for us to frankly admit that, notwithstanding the good Seventh-day Adventists have accomplished over the years, the entire Adventist system is bankrupt. As embarrassing as this may be, we must confess that even evangelical Adventism is only a partial solution. Instead of attempting to keep one foot in the gospel and one foot in Adventism, we may as well make a clean break with a system which we have come to see as inimical to the apostolic faith.” He ticks off five doctrines that “the gospel has exposed as faulty: Time proph-

ecies relating to the Advent movement; a final work of atonement and an investigative judgement beginning in 1844; Adventism as the ‘remnant’; Ellen White as a latter-day prophet; the Sabbath as a moral test.”

The rest of the issue includes a story detailing the experiences of several former Adventist ministers leaving the denomination. The editors also provide a handy guide for Adventist looking for another denomination. The first step suggested is to look in the Yellow Pages. Crandall’s own choices of denominations to which “you can safely narrow the field,” receive asterisks: Evangelical Covenant Church, Evangelical Free Church and Presbyterian and Reformed (various denominations).

Good News Unlimited Foundation, of which van Rooyen is a mainstay, took steps to clear up any confusion. In their next newsletter, van Rooyen responded to concern about his position on the Sabbath. “My family and I keep the seventh-day Sabbath. My statement in the interview was not that we should abandon the Sabbath. To the contrary, it was that we need to give it special attention, and that it needs to be studied and considered very carefully. No part of our belief system should be treated as non-negotiable. Non-Sabbatarians should continue to study their position, just as I feel I should study mine.” He took further pains to distinguish his position from others in the same issue. “From my point of view, it was intended to stand on its own and not to deny or endorse other statements with which it appeared at the time of publication.”

The newsletter also included Desmond Ford’s reply to the question “should we leave our local church?” Doctrinal error, he said, was not sufficient reason for leaving, unless that error repudiates Christ and His gospel, makes the performance of Christian duty impossible, or destroys true worship and fellowship with God and man. “If the gospel is freely preached in your present congregation and you are not hindered from following conscience, we would advise you to thank God and remain where you are.”

While Desmond Ford agreed at the founding of *Evangelica* to serve as one of its board members, it is clear that they now have different positions on membership in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Certainly, in the gospel congresses organized by Good News Unlimited in Santa Clara, California, July 23–25, and in Chattanooga, Tennessee, July 30–August 1, the speakers did not urge withdrawal from membership in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. According to Calvin Edwards, administrator of Good News Unlimited, the emphasis was on Bible study, particularly sound principles of interpreting the Gospels.

the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. The probable site is about 15 miles north of its present location.

Pressure to sell will no doubt increase when the Review and Herald Publishing Association leaves its large building vacant, as it is scheduled to do after January 1983. The new plant for the Review, now under construction, will have 220,000 square feet. In addition, an office building is being erected.

General Conference Puts Headquarters Up For Sale

The General Conference continues to look for a buyer for its headquarters in Takoma Park, Maryland, having recently turned down an \$11.9 million offer from a Canadian-owned development corporation.

The present General Conference property, near a station of Washington's new mass-transit system, includes the North Building, a 10-story high-rise office building, and the older Central and South Buildings, each with four floors.

The total space now occupied by the General Conference is some 180,000 square feet. The offer from the Canadian company would have also included the buildings now housing the Review and Herald Publishing Association and the Home Study Institute.

A \$15 million sale would be needed to pay for the construction of a new building of approximately 200,000 square feet on property the General Conference owns in

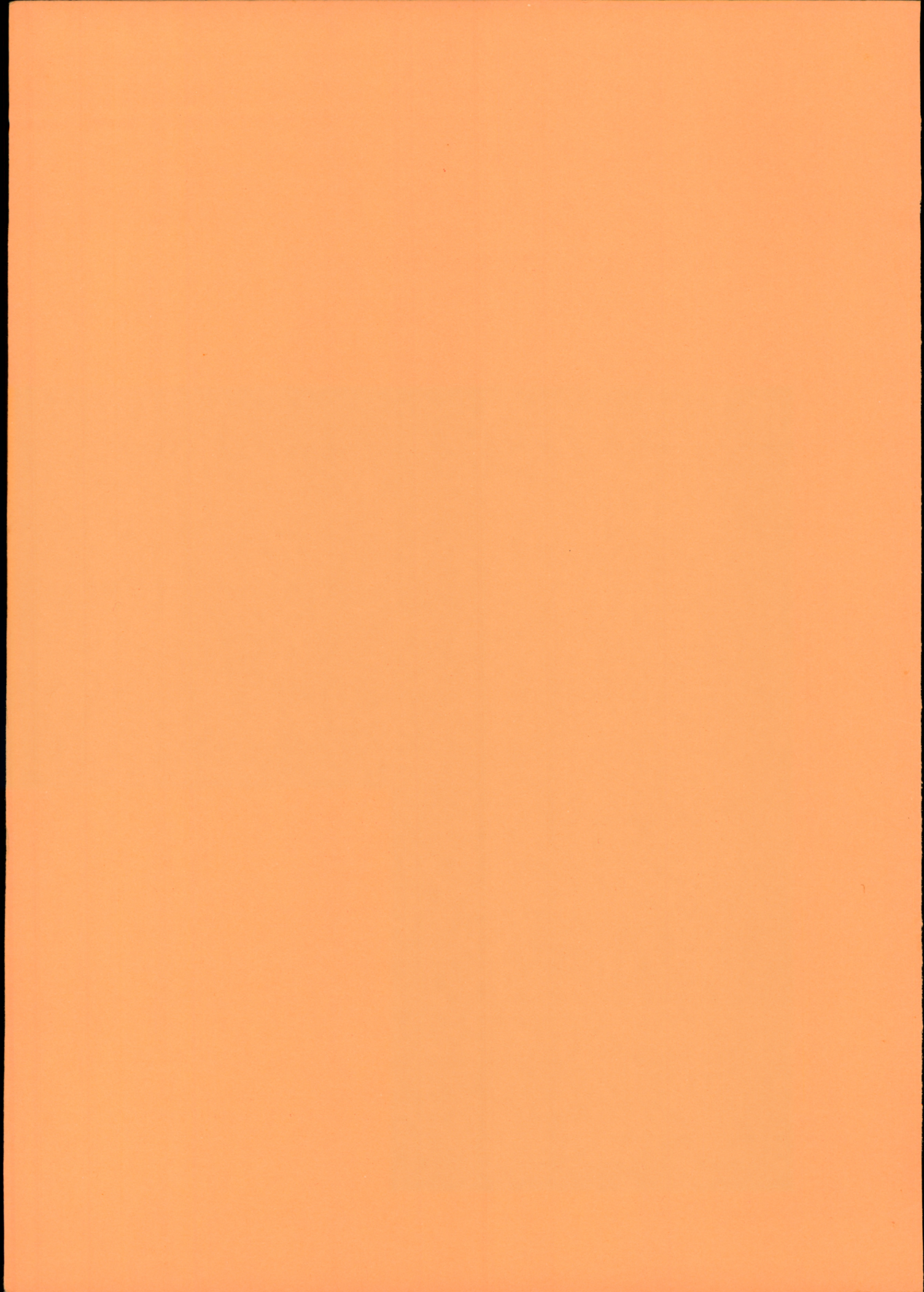
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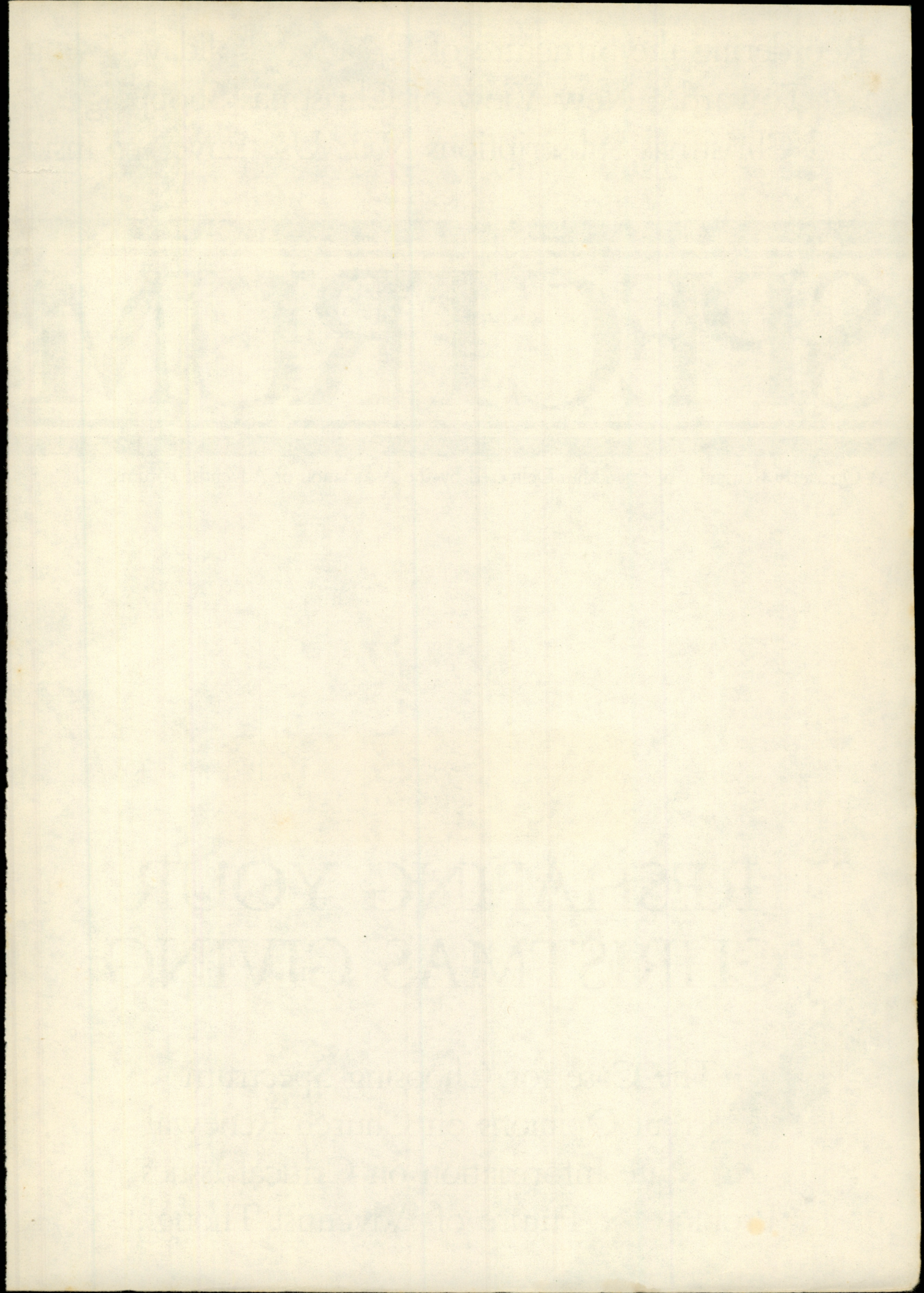


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