

Graybill's Exit  
Going Home to Grenada

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# SPECTRUM

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A Quarterly Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

Volume 14, Number 4

## A CALL FOR AN OPEN CHURCH

The Need for Structural Change

A Model Constitution

In Defense of Participation

Comparing Church Structures

# SPECTRUM

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## About This Issue

The shape of Adventist institutions and structure dominates this issue of *Spectrum*. What has happened to Ronald Graybill, after 13 years as a member of the staff of the Ellen G. White Estate, is a dramatic story: an Adventist tries to remain faithful both to the facts as he perceives them and to his employers whom he considers his mentors. But in a larger sense, it is the story of the Ellen G. White Estate defining its role within the Seventh-day Adventist Church: whether to be a defender of Adventism, as it sees it, or to be an archive, making documents of vital interest available to all members of the church. No doubt the Graybill incident will bring into sharper focus the significance of the White Estate and its policy of not allowing even carefully

trained students to quote from the thousands of documents in its vaults unless the Estate board permits it.

The institutional form Adventism now takes may not be the shape it will have in the future—at least in North America. The report and model constitution which the Task Force on Church Structure announces in this issue, after more than two years of study, will no doubt be of interest to the commissions on church structure that are now becoming active in local conferences, unions, and the General Conference. The report and constitution should also interest individual members, all of whom would be affected if its proposals were to be implemented. It may well be that events such as Graybill's forced departure from the White Estate, the work of task forces and commissions on church structure, and the prospect of a General Conference session next year, will make 1984 the year of reorganization.—The Editors

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# Graybill's Exit: Turning Point At The White Estate?

by Bonnie L. Casey

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**A**fter 13 years of service as a church historian at the Ellen G. White Estate, Ron Graybill, under pressure from the Estate board, agreed to request reassignment. Following a controversy over his doctoral dissertation, Graybill has been reassigned from his position as associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate to one of course author and subject specialist at Home Study International. He will also be available to the General Conference officers for special projects. His assignment at Home Study, which involves preparing a course on denominational history, will run to the end of 1984, when his position will be reassessed. As with other controversies in the recent past, the one over Graybill and his dissertation raised questions about church discipline, the role and leadership of Ellen White, and the policies of the White Estate.

In April 1983, Graybill successfully defended his doctoral dissertation, earning a doctorate in American religious history from the Johns Hopkins University. While it compares the lives and leadership of several women religious leaders of the 19th century, (Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Church

of Christ, Scientist; Catherine Booth, co-founder with her husband of the Salvation Army; and Alma White, founder of the Pillar of Fire Church), the dissertation focuses mainly on Ellen White—how her role as a church leader was legitimated and exercised, and how that role affected her roles as woman, wife, and mother. Graybill argues that because she was a “charismatic” leader—one without official constitutional authority—her authority was exercised through influence. Because of this, her influence had to be jealously guarded against “negative associations.” “I happen to think,” says Graybill, “that her leadership was for good and not selfish ends. My dissertation deviates from some accepted understandings of Ellen White and how she did her work, but it is not negative or defamatory.”

Those in the White Estate whose major criticisms centered on the dissertation itself saw some general themes emerging from the work which, for them, provided a key to Graybill's beliefs and assumptions. According to these critics, two major themes were 1) skepticism about Ellen White's prophetic gifts, and 2) doubts about her character and integrity. They believe Graybill's dissertation leaves the impression that Ellen White's visions were not unique, but arose out of a

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general context of ecstatic religious experiences common in 19th century America; that her ministry was, therefore, not essentially different from that of the other women religious founders discussed in the dissertation.

These critics also charge Graybill with suggesting that Ellen White produced visions as they were needed to assert her authority or manipulate church leaders, and they were particularly disturbed by Graybill's account of the Whites' home life. They believe Graybill slanted the evidence to portray James and Ellen as locked in a personal power struggle for much of their married life, and to show them as poor parents who favored one of their sons over the other.

Of this last criticism, Graybill says, "To really judge the dissertation fairly, you need to read all of James White's letters and all of Ellen's letters to James or that mention James. After doing this, I believe you would see that I tried to present a balanced, fair view of their married life—a subject crucial to my main effort to understand how Ellen's leadership was supported and/or threatened."

As to the charge that he is skeptical of the supernatural origin of Ellen White's prophetic gifts, Graybill explains that he was faced with two basic challenges in writing the dissertation. "I was writing about four women founders or prophets, all of whom claimed divine endorsement and guidance. Because of this, I chose merely to look at the mundane historical factors which bore upon their leadership. My own theological presuppositions lead me to accept Ellen White's claims to prophetic guidance and reject the others. But the dissertation is a work of history, not theology."

Graybill further explains that it is his belief in God, which cannot be documented in a strictly historical work, which leads him to the conclusion that Ellen White's visions were genuine and unique. But so far as

history is concerned, he says, "there are many common factors in the ministry of Ellen White and other religious founders. It does not detract from the importance of her ministry to discover she was not unique in every aspect of her career."

Overall, Graybill does not accept his critics' characterization of his dissertation. He says he is sorry that some have gotten a negative impression from the work, but that there are many responsible people who feel it is much more favorable than unfavorable to Ellen White. "Perhaps," he says, "the dissertation is like a Rorschach test—what we see in it depends to a great extent on what we bring to it."

Graybill's problems with the White Estate arose as much from how he went about researching and writing the dissertation as from the actual conclusions he drew, which he maintains are fully supported by evidence from documents in the White Estate vault. In the first place, Graybill did not seek the advice and counsel of the White Estate staff before submitting his dissertation to his graduate committee. Instead, he relied on the advice of an informal reading committee—five lay members who offered historical criticism and editorial suggestions.

Furthermore, at least half of the quoted material in Graybill's dissertation is from documents the White Estate has not released for publication. He admits that using these documents without asking for their release was "bending the rules," but cites the pressures of time and potential conflicts as his reason for doing so. "I felt the evidence indicated clearly that I had to take some positions that would be objected to very strenuously by some members of the White Estate. It was already late spring, and I knew that if I tried to get release of these documents I could be delayed by as much as a year."

Graybill went ahead and used the unreleased material, then requested that University Microfilms, where doctoral dissertations are automatically filed, place

his dissertation on a five-year restriction. By the terms of this agreement, Graybill understood that his dissertation was still legally unpublished and would be inaccessible to the public or for copying for five years.

The situation changed dramatically, though, when Douglas Hackleman, a writer and editor in Loma Linda, Calif., obtained two copies of Graybill's dissertation through

a series of misunderstandings, and published a review of Graybill's work in the October 1983 issue of his magazine, *Adventist Currents*.

At first, Hackleman wanted only to report briefly in *Adventist Currents* that Graybill had finished his dissertation and received his doctorate. On Aug. 19 he called Graybill to ask for the title and a brief description of his dissertation. Graybill told Hackleman he did not wish to be mentioned in *Adventist Currents* and would give him no information about his

## Responses to Graybill's Departure

Even before Graybill's *E. G. White and Race Relations* came out in 1970, I had learned to appreciate Ron's special skills in helping us better understand the true import of God's special messenger to the Seventh-day Adventists. Ron constantly reminded us that the messenger and the message could not be separated from her time and circumstances and still be correctly understood. His careful research into the "life and times" of a particular statement brought confidence to the Adventist historical fraternity and to scores of thoughtful laypeople. The E. G. White trustees would be well-advised to fill the gap his leaving creates with someone equally well-trained and trusted.

—Richard Schwarz, vice president for academic affairs of Andrews University and author of *Light Bearers to the Remnant*

Ron Graybill gave the Ellen G. White Estate a credibility that it never had before because he was able to approach her writings in a very open way. He made it possible for us to gain a greater appreciation of Ellen White as a person, a mother, a writer, as well as a messenger. With Ron Graybill gone, the White Estate has lost most of its credibility. Another thing that Ron did for us, because of his training, his expertise, and his growing academic contacts is give credibility to Ellen White in non-Adventist academic circles and American Christianity generally.

What has happened to Ron Graybill is going to dampen the interest of serious students in Ellen

White studies because they will think that they will not get the materials they need and they will be fearful that they will be hurt by the church. Some of us feel strongly about the inequity of the discipline meted out to Ron by printing the questions against him in the *Adventist Review* as compared to what was done with administrators involved in conflict-of-interest in the Davenport affair. There is a double standard—one for an elite corps of administrators and another for scholars in the church. Evidently it is easier to discipline those with novel ideas than those with poor ethics in administration. I find this inequity, coming on the heels of the Davenport affair, pretty sordid.

Silencing Ron will not silence the research he carried on. Ron's work will have a beneficial effect in the long run by helping the church achieve a better understanding of Ellen White.

—Paul Landa, Chairman of the department of church history, division of religion, Loma Linda University and editor of *Adventist Heritage*.

I am very sorry to see Ron Graybill go. He has been consistently trusted by the academic community to give the straight story. We are in an era of openness and the church needs competent scholars in E. G. White studies who have a positive attitude toward Ellen White and the church. Ron has been appreciated for faithfully attempting to serve the church in that way.

The White Estate will have enormous difficulty overcoming the stigma of Graybill's

thesis, but referred him to the graduate records office at Johns Hopkins University. On Aug. 25, Hackleman called Johns Hopkins and was given not only the title of the dissertation but also the order number at University Microfilms. Hackleman then called University Microfilms in Michigan, and because he had the order number, the person there did not realize that the dissertation was restricted. Over the phone he was able to order two copies of the

dissertation, which arrived at his home on Sept. 7. (University Microfilms has since apologized for its mistake.)

On Sept. 10, Hackleman spoke to the San Diego Chapter of the Association of Adventist Forums and presented a synopsis of Graybill's dissertation. He also gave the audience the order number of the dissertation and the telephone number of University Microfilms. Within a few days he learned from people who had tried to order the

## from the White Estate

departure. While I believe the White Estate has been making progress in providing more access to documents it could provide greater access.

—Alden Thompson, Professor of Theology, School of Theology, Walla Walla College and author of "From Sinai to Golgotha" *Adventist Review*, (December 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 1981)

Pastors are asked many questions by members who have some evidence about Ellen White writings and have heard many rumors. Ron Graybill was one person we could turn to who was faithful to the evidence and at the same time redemptive. At workers' meetings in my conference, he was candid, non-defensive, open with the facts, and at the same time enhanced Ellen White's role. As a pastor I feel Ron's departure as a personal loss.

What has happened has implications far beyond Ron Graybill. Thinking laypeople and pastors are going to wonder if the questions they have been hearing about Ellen White really can be answered and if anyone who tries to be candid and open with the evidence will get into trouble. The Adventist pastor's role is now going to be more difficult than it was before.

—Rudy Torres, senior pastor  
Glendale City Church

This most recent development in the saga of Ellen White and 20th century Adventism comes as a great surprise and disappointment to

me. I have read Ron Graybill's dissertation, but have not been a party to the White Estate discussions regarding it. What I can speak to, however, is the quality of his scholarship, the careful and studied balance in his public presentations between the demands of scholarship and the requirements of pastoral concern, and his personal commitment both to truth and to the traditional faith of Adventists in the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White.

In my conversations over the last three years with pastors, teachers, and church members at large, Ron Graybill's name has often surfaced as one of the most credible spokespersons on the Ellen G. White study circuit. He is both trusted and appreciated. I have not found one individual acquainted with both Graybill and the issues who has the slightest doubt as to his integrity, his commitment to the best interest of the Adventist church, and his personal faith in the special ministry of Ellen G. White.

His loss to the White Estate at this time of great concern over the legitimate role of the writings of Ellen G. White will, in my judgment, be quite serious but recoverable in time, if the White Estate appoints a replacement who knows the difference between apologetics and research. What is lost forever to Ellen G. White research is the momentum of creative effort Ron Graybill personally exemplified as well as inspired in others.

—Fred Veltman, professor of theology, Pacific Union College, director of the General Conference "Ellen G. White Life of Christ Research Project"

dissertation that they had been turned down because it was restricted. He says this is the first he knew of any restriction on the dissertation.

Hackleman claims he has not copied or distributed the dissertation and is not responsible for its wide circulation. He says only that he lent one copy of the dissertation to some friends, which they returned after a few days. When Graybill learned that Hackleman had obtained copies of his thesis and was planning to review it in his journal, he called Hackleman and asked him to delay publishing a review of it until he had time to "process" it through the White Estate. But Hackleman decided to go ahead with the review since many copies of the dissertation were already circulating and requests for more copies were coming to him from as far away as Australia.

Hackleman says he feels "bad but not responsible" for Graybill's situation. "I am sorry I was a cog in the wheel of his fate," he says. He also claims that had he known from the beginning that the thesis was restricted, he would not have pursued the matter. "Had Ron been more open and forthright with me," he says, "I believe he would still have his job."

When Graybill first learned that the dissertation was being distributed, he told Robert W. Olson, secretary of the White Estate, about it and, before giving him a copy of the dissertation to read, immediately began to "edit" it by expanding the text and deleting certain things from the preface. Graybill says that by expanding the text, he was "trying to show that with a few explanatory sentences, the dissertation would be more palatable to Seventh-day Adventists who are not familiar with scholarly discourse." He adds, "I felt all along that the dissertation was not a complete statement of my beliefs, because I had to leave out any supernatural perspective and anything that might sound like I was favoring Ellen White." Olson remembers that "Ron said he had made some changes in the dissertation he gave me and other

members of the board, but didn't say what kinds of changes."

In the end, deletions from the preface caused even more controversy than expansions in the text. Graybill first of all deleted a reference to himself as "the first doctoral student to have immediate and unlimited access" to the material in the vault. "It is a true statement," he explains, "but somewhat awkward in light of my not asking for release of those documents." The other, and more troublesome, deletion was the removal of two names from the list of people who had read the dissertation before its submission to Johns Hopkins. Graybill says his motive was to forestall any criticism that he had been unduly influenced by these members of the reading committee. Nevertheless, according to both Graybill and Olson, some members of the board saw this as an effort to deceive them, and the deletions became a significant issue with the board and staff of the White Estate.

On Nov. 3, the board of trustees voted to place Graybill on administrative leave because of questions regarding his ability to serve as a spokesperson for the White Estate. During the month of November there were numerous informal meetings and conversations among the staff about Graybill and his future with the White Estate. Graybill talked to several members of the board, trying to determine what might be done in the way of discipline that would be considered sufficient, yet redemptive. Graybill's understanding was that his colleagues were looking for ways not to have to fire him. "Most of the conversation was in terms of my doing something else for a period of time—six months or a year—after which I would come back to the Estate." But toward late November, Graybill perceived "a continual hardening" of the positions of some members of the board.

Meanwhile, mail and telephone calls were coming in from all parts of the country, and, according to Olson, they were



five-to-one in Graybill's favor. (Since the December board meeting, Olson reports, communications to his office are no longer in Graybill's favor.)

The board of trustees met on Dec. 5. Graybill met with them from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., during which time he apologized for his procedural violations and for his insensitivity to the staff in his dealings with them. He then read a statement entitled, "What Ellen White Means to Me in the Light of My Doctoral Dissertation," and submitted to questioning.

Neal Wilson, president of the General Conference, led the discussion and asked most of the questions, which focused more on Graybill's personal beliefs and attitudes regarding the church and the Spirit of Prophecy than on the specifics of the dissertation. As Graybill reported later, "The bulk of the discussion at the board meeting was clearly about me, not about my dissertation." There was also some discussion of his attitude toward Arthur White's biography of Ellen White. Some members expressed concern that Graybill, personally

and now by his dissertation, had not been sufficiently supportive of it.

Graybill left the meeting feeling "pretty good. There had been some emotional moments, but I felt the vote might indeed go in favor of my continuing at the White Estate after a certain period of discipline." After Graybill left, the board took a short break, then came back and deliberated until 8:25 p.m. At 8:30 p.m. Olson called Graybill at home and told him that in a straw vote, the board had voted 7-4 that he should "seek rehabilitation outside the White Estate." Graybill was told that he could meet the following morning at 8 a.m. with Neal Wilson and Charles Bradford, General Conference vice president for North America, to request reassignment to an unspecified position within the church, or be fired.

Graybill told Olson that he did not have enough time or information to make such an important decision. Olson replied that Graybill should trust the brethren and put himself in their hands. Graybill refused to accept the limited, and unknown, options being offered him on such short notice. So

## Board Members of The White Estate

Ultimate authority for the affairs of the Ellen G. White Estate lies with its self-perpetuating

board of trustees. The board selects life-time members (comprising half of the board), five-year members, and the chairman.

### *Life Members:*

- W. Paul Bradley, retired chairman of E. G. White Estate Board
- D. Arthur Delafield, retired associate secretary of E. G. White Estate Board
- W. Duncan Eva, retired vice president of the General Conference
- Robert W. Olson (Secretary), secretary of E. G. White Estate
- Arthur L. White, retired secretary of E. G. White Estate
- Neal C. Wilson, president of the General Conference
- Kenneth H. Wood (Chairman), retired editor of the *Adventist Review*

### *Five-year Members:*

- Charles E. Bradford, vice president of the General Conference, for North America
- William G. Johnsson, editor of the *Adventist Review*
- Louis A. Ramirez, director of the publishing department of the General Conference
- J. Robert Spangler, director of the Ministerial & Stewardship Association
- Francis W. Wernick, vice president of the General Conference
- Jean Zurcher, secretary of the Euro-African Division
- Alternate: Paul A. Gordon, under secretary of E. G. White Estate

the meeting with Wilson and Bradford was canceled, and the board meeting scheduled for the next morning—ostensibly to vote on Graybill's reassignment or to fire him—was canceled as well.

Later in December, after consulting with several members of the board, Graybill wrote a letter to Kenneth H. Wood, chairperson of the board of trustees, in which he "reluctantly agreed" to accept reassignment. He was told that this letter was unacceptable. Following another board meeting on Jan. 5, during which Graybill's case was discussed at length, Graybill, after further conversations with the chairperson and secretary of the White Estate Board, submitted another letter to Wood actually requesting reassignment outside the White Estate. On Jan. 9 the board voted to accept this formal request.

There are many complex reasons for Graybill's troubles with the White Estate. The easiest to explain are the procedural and tactical errors involved in the writing and presentation of his dissertation. But other factors have to do with the White Estate itself, specifically their policy concerning the release of unpublished documents, and their tendency to distrust those who they feel do not share their views on the mission of the White Estate.

On this issue, Olson maintains that the present release policy is "very generous," and necessary to guard Ellen White's right to privacy, but that the board would not have let Graybill go simply for using unreleased material without permission. "The primary issue," according to Olson, "is that Ron could write a dissertation in which he raises doubts and questions about Ellen White's inspiration. Ron argues that he has been misunderstood, but I don't think he has. In his dissertation he clearly gives the impression that Ellen White had visions when it was convenient for her to do so. He

almost describes her as power-hungry, and implies that there was a naturalistic explanation for her visions and dreams. If this is what he believes, then he can no longer be a spokesman for the White Estate. By his own actions, you could say that Ron had taken himself out of the White Estate."

Of what he estimates to be 40,000 double-spaced, typewritten pages still unreleased, Graybill "would favor release of all but a few very sensitive documents, but only in critical, annotated editions." On the matter of why he had to leave the White Estate, Graybill says: "On a most fundamental level, I lost my job because those who felt most deeply that I should be removed from the White Estate don't trust me as one of them, as one who shares their theological views. They don't accept me as one who supports or opposes the same things they do. There are things in the dissertation that they could never say and that they don't believe anyone who believes in the church and Ellen White could ever say."

Graybill says he is not bitter about his experience. He believes the church is in a transition period. "We have so many large groups of people now with very different styles of religious experience and religious backgrounds, that there are bound to be growing pains and dislocations." Referring to the church as the body of Christ, he points out that the joints, where muscle and bone come together, are critical points where stress manifests itself. "People like me, who try to interact between different groups in the church, are like the joints of the body and are very vulnerable to injury and stress. If the stresses get too great between two groups, then persons in those in-between roles sometimes get crushed or strained. That's what is happening to me."

In spite of this, Graybill says he has not lost hope in the church and its future. "We still have the church," he says, "and we still have me, and we still have Ellen White. And who knows, we may eventually get those 40,000 unreleased pages in the White Estate."

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# Home to Grenada: A Seminary Professor On His Role in the New Government

by Roy Branson

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A few days after American and Caribbean troops landed in Grenada, October 25, 1983, Walter Douglas, professor of church history and history of religion at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, received a phone call on behalf of Sir Paul Scoon, the governor general of Grenada. Douglas was asked to serve as one of the 12 members of the advisory council that will rule Grenada as a provisional government until general elections are held. Douglas will serve the provisional government as a consultant primarily for the ministries of education, health, and foreign affairs.

Before making his decision, Douglas visited Grenada from Nov. 19 to Dec. 6, 1983 (taking a few days in Trinidad to fulfill his responsibilities as a member of the board of his alma mater, Caribbean Union College). In Grenada, Douglas consulted with Scoon, participated for a week in the deliberations of the advisory council, conferred with the government ministries of education and health, and preached in Seventh-day Adventist worship services.

Douglas' roots are deep in both Grenada's Adventist and public life. His father was a well-known farmer and merchant in Grenville, Grenada's second largest city, and in 1907 built the first Adventist church on the island. His eldest brother, Benson, before his death in 1975, had been a school teacher who, like other school teachers in Grenada, went on to prominence: Sir Eric Gairy, the first prime minister of Grenada after its independence; Sir Paul Scoon, the governor general; and Nicholas Braithwaite, the acting chairperson of the present advisory council. After legal studies in England and Canada, Benson became an attorney with a following among young Grenadian attorneys, including Maurice Bishop. Benson served as attorney general both when Grenada was an English colony and immediately after it achieved independence. In fact, Benson Douglas drafted the constitution of Grenada.

Walter Douglas's cousin, Waple Nedd, served as parliamentary secretary under Eric Gairy, and later, when Maurice Bishop became prime minister, Walters' sister Mary, served as Bishop's appointments secretary and a nephew became Bishop's body guard. Mary had met Bishop when she discovered him, dumped by Gairy's men beside a road, his head shaved and his body beaten. She had put him in a taxi and rushed him to a hospital. Another sister of Walter's married Ira Simmons, a 12 to 13

year veteran of the Grenadian police force. He is now chief of detectives.

After he returned to the United States, Douglas, who first joined the board of the Association of Adventist Forums seven years ago, gave several public presentations including a talk to the Washington, D.C., chapter of the Adventist Forums. The following is drawn from these comments and several conversations Douglas and I had immediately upon his return from Grenada to Washington, D.C.

**Branson:** What did the members of your family think of your having been invited to join the provisional government?

**Douglas:** On this trip, when I first arrived, my parents were dubious about my becoming involved in the government. But as they heard, day-by-day, what had to be done to get things started again, they became more enthusiastic. My other relatives—Adventist and non-Adventists—definitely wanted me to take part.

**Branson:** What about the other Adventists on Grenada? Do they think that Adventist ministers should be so involved?

**Douglas:** Well, first of all you have to realize that Adventists throughout the Caribbean are active in public life. The minister of transportation and works in Barbados, Victor Johnson (a former head of the Barbados Labor Party, the ruling party on the island) is an active Adventist lay evangelist. In Jamaica right now, three of the ministers in Edward Seaga's cabinet are Seventh-day Adventists. Second, Adventists are prominent on Grenada itself. There are 8,000 members on the church books, out of a population of 110,000—about 7 percent of all Grenadians. Of the four resident Grenadians selected by Sir Paul Scoon to serve on the advisory council, one was Pastor Christopher Williams, the youth and lay activities director for the Adventist Mission.

**Branson:** Besides you two Adventists, are there any other of the clergy on the council?

**Douglas:** No, however, before I arrived Pastor Williams had already arranged with

the other members of the council that he and I would not be available for meetings after a certain time on Friday afternoons or Saturdays.

**Branson:** Have Adventist affairs come up at all on the council?

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**I learned that November 1, 1983 had been set aside as the day that Grenada was to be declared a communist state.**

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**Douglas:** Yes. On Nov. 23, Pastor Williams and I said in a meeting of the advisory council that we thought church operated schools taken over by the previous government, about 85 percent of the denominational schools, should be returned to the churches, and that private property should be given back to its owners. Those proposals were adopted with no opposition. Already, the schools established by the Catholics, Anglicans, Baptists, and Adventists are back in the hands of those denominations. The Bishop Government seized the schools and replaced many of the Christian teachers with Marxist instructors from Guyana, Cuba, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union. Incidentally, Adventists run one of the largest secondary schools on the island with about 300 to 350 students. Also, over \$400,000 in tithes and offerings from Adventists members was blocked in Grenadian banks. The previous government was planning to confiscate the money. The invasion stopped that by only days.

**Branson:** It's interesting that freedom of religious institutions and freedom of property ownership were restored together. Some historians have said that both freedoms developed at the same time in the West.

**Douglas:** That's true. We telescoped western democratic history.

**Branson:** What is the attitude of the Adventists towards the invasion of Grenada by U.S. troops?

**Douglas:** It is the same as other Grenadians. On Sabbath, Dec. 3, Adventists came from all over the island for a major celebration in the biggest park in the capital. The convention stressed total commitment to Christ, but one could also sense the excitement of that Adventist convention in their new freedom, religious and civil. The previous Wednesday there was a mass demonstration by Grenadians of every persuasion in St. Georges, the capital, where many people in speeches and prayers thanked God for the intervention of the United States.

**Branson:** Adventists thanked God specifically for the coming of the U.S. troops?

**Douglas:** Oh yes. The very first night back in Grenada my father and mother told me that the American intervention was providential. The following days I discovered almost all Grenadians felt the same way.

**Branson:** And what about you?

**Douglas:** My considerable doubts about the invasion dissipated when I saw the evidence face-to-face. There is no question that the Grenadian revolution under Bishop had become a threat to the religious foundations of Grenadian society.

**Branson:** You talk about evidence changing your attitude toward the invasion; what do you mean?

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**As far as the Grenadians are concerned the United States was not invading Grenada; it was conducting a rescue mission.**

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**Douglas:** I saw documents that showed that there were 300 Grenadian students studying in Cuba, alone, as well as in Eastern Europe and Libya. I learned that Nov. 1, 1983 had been set aside as the day that Grenada was to be declared a communist state. I was also shown incontrovertible evidence that there were mind-boggling quantities of arms and ammunition stored

all over Grenada that would have clearly made it a launching pad for Communism throughout the Caribbean. Then I talked to the people. As I said, they were virtually unanimous in their praise of the American intervention.

**Branson:** But just because the Grenadians appreciated the Americans coming doesn't mean it conformed to international law—that the use of force was right in that situation.

**Douglas:** That will always be a matter of controversy, but international law is imprecise. After Bishop was killed, there was a vacuum of legitimate authority. Paul Scoon, the governor general of Grenada, was the only constitutional authority, and has said he supported the American action. As far as the Grenadians are concerned the United States was not invading Grenada; it was conducting a rescue mission. In fact, the Grenadians were upset with members of the Congressional Black Caucus who visited Grenada from the United States and criticized the American rescue mission.

**Branson:** How important was it that the American invasion was not an attack on Bishop?

**Douglas:** It was crucial.

**Branson:** Why? After all, he not only left office violently, he had gained it the same way.

**Douglas:** To answer that, I'll have to take a little time to describe the background to recent events. In 1973, Bishop and other intellectuals educated in England and Canada organized a political party, the New Jewel Movement. The following year the party won three seats in the election. In 1977, Bishop became prominent as the attorney representing Grenadian nurses on strike, dissatisfied with hospital working conditions. The following year Gairy's organized criminals, the "Mongoose Gang," beat up Bishop and his associates. One day, early in 1979, Bishop and four or five other leaders of the New Jewel Movement were forewarned by some of Gairy's own men that the prime minister

planned to kill them. That very night Bishop's coup against Gairy took place. It was hailed at that time as divine intervention. I remember that my father was visited in his home at Grenville by Bishop and was happy to pray with him, but told Bishop that if he left God out of this thing it would not succeed.

**Branson:** The people never entirely got over their loyalty toward Bishop?

**Douglas:** Right. I think that there is good

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**The crisis of Grenada teaches us more than anything else that we must stand in solidarity with the world, not in spiritual isolation from it.**

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reason for their feelings. In 1981 the council placed a Cuban or Soviet as an advisor to the head of each government ministry. Simultaneously, Cuban technicians, doctors, lawyers, agriculturists, and educators flooded into Grenada. The next year, the deputy prime minister Bernard Coard, an economist, challenged Bishop for actual leadership of the ruling council. When Bishop returned from a trip to Bulgaria, in 1982, he was told by the party that he was no longer useful to the revolution. On Oct. 11, 1983, the majority of the council voted to invite 6,800 Cubans into Grenada; Bishop refused to sign the document executing the decision. He was immediately arrested, and for three or four days people didn't know where he was. Then the people acted.

**Branson:** Were they led by previous supporters of Gairy or by dissidents within the council?

**Douglas:** Neither. A 19-year-old student at the St. Joseph Convent School in Grenville decided that something must be done. She told her classmates they should all go to the capital and try to free their prime minister. The principal, a nun, tried to stop her, but Geraldine Belmar got a hold of the school bell and rang and rang. She fired up the girls at the school and they started down

the three miles toward Grenville. There, she seized the bell at the largest secondary school in the city, and rang it until the students gathered. Those students joined the girls and headed for the airport outside Grenville. Unfortunately, they smashed windows, but they also ran on to the runway, delaying the landing of planes.

By then the news had gotten around to the other schools in other cities throughout the island, attracting still more students. By this time adults joined, providing buses and cars to bring people from all over Grenada to Market Square in the capital. Rather spontaneously they decided to march to Bishop's house. They broke through the gates, went inside, and found Bishop with his hands tied behind his back looking very weak and emaciated—so weak that he was barely able to walk. He said that he wanted to go to Fort Rupert. It was on the outskirts of town and he suspected that the members of his government had been jailed there. He wanted to talk to the troops, he said, and tell them to put down their arms.

Supported by the crowd, he started to march up the hill to Fort Rupert. Before they actually reached the front gate an armored car drove up and troops seized Bishop. Then the soldiers opened fire on the crowd. Those that weren't mowed down jumped down very precipitous embankments. Some broke arms, legs, necks. I stood on those heights; they had to be desperate to jump. An inspector of police escorting me around the fort said that, all told, about 300 Grenadians died that day. I also went into the central courtyard of the fort. I saw the bullet holes and the blood where members of Bishop's cabinet were taken out of their cells, and, while they were calling out to the soldiers, "comrades, we surrender," were shot.

**Branson:** What happened to Geraldine, the 19-year-old?

**Douglas:** When the soldiers fired point-blank into the unarmed crowd she was shot in the head. Two days later she died. The day before I arrived, her funeral was held,

and people from all over Grenada gathered again. It was the most massive funeral in the history of Grenada; Geraldine has become a national heroine.

**Branson:** It's interesting that in the United States we have hardly heard about her. Maybe it's because we have been preoccupied with other individuals, like the American medical students.

**Douglas:** You know, not once when I was in Grenada—not once—did anyone mention the students as the reason for the American action. Grenadians saw it entirely in terms of their own deliverance.

**Branson:** We keep returning to this theme, that the action by the Americans was justified, that it was an action Grenadians regarded as divinely sanctioned. Are you saying that the American use of violence in the invasion of Grenada was a direct expression of God's will?

**Douglas:** I think a theologian has the responsibility to look at events and developments within society and bring some theological interpretation to it, to introduce

dimensions that may be overlooked by the ordinary citizen.

**Branson:** Yes, but what does such a theologian see in the Grenadian event?

**Douglas:** The overcoming of evil, of bondage; the inauguration of a new beginning; the opportunity for reconciliation; and a brief reassurance, perhaps, but a vivid one, that good can be more powerful than evil.

**Branson:** Does that justify Adventist ministers—two of them, in fact—becoming part of the provisional government and drawing Adventism into public affairs?

**Douglas:** The crisis of Grenada teaches us more than anything else that we must stand in solidarity with the world, not in spiritual isolation from it. We must, as Christians, as Adventists, not abandon the world, or simply wage war against it, but act to redeem it. If we take John 3:16 seriously, if we truly believe that God loved the world, became a part of the world in order to reconcile the world to himself, then we must find fresh ways, surprising ways, in which we can embody Christ in the world.

# The Need for Structural Change

by James W. Walters

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Both the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the world in which it exists have changed in important ways since 1901, when the last major church reorganization occurred. The world has seen more societal change in the last 80 years than it witnessed in the previous 19 centuries, and the church has surely not remained static.

Because of a growing belief that the present church structure is inadequate, the board of the Association of Adventist Forums created and funded the Task Force on Church Structure which is releasing its report in the following pages of this issue of *Spectrum*. The task force is composed of members representing various areas of expertise: the pastorate, theology, ethics, political science, law, and systems analysis. While most members of the task force live in Southern California, the study group has consulted with individuals throughout North America.

The purpose of the task force (which was first titled the Task Force on Lay Participation) was to examine the nature of lay involvement in the governance of the church and to make recommendations. In the course of its study and discussion, the

task force concluded that lay participation could best be facilitated by modifications in church structure. Further, believing that church structure—like all organization—is most effective when it coincides with a particular people's cultural expectations, the task force restricted its study to the North American Division.

The central documents in this task force report, the general statement and the model conference constitution, are the product of hundreds of hours of work by individuals, over a score of committee meetings, and broad consultation with clerical and lay thought leaders. Yet the task force fully realizes that its documents are not the last word. It does think its work is a carefully considered first word. The task force accepts full responsibility for any deficiencies in the documents; it shares all the merits in those statements with the many consultants who made substantive contributions.

The proposal for change in the structure of the Adventist denomination, as put forth recently by the Pacific Union Conference Study Committee, is primarily based on ideas and models drawn from management. The task force applauds this illuminating proposal as well as the study underway by the North Pacific Union Conference Commission on Governance and Management Structure, and by the recently established

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James Walters is assistant professor of Christian ethics, Loma Linda University, and chaired the AAF Task Force on Church Structure.



General Conference Committee on Church Structure. A distinctive feature of the task force's work is its governmental approach. The management and governmental approaches are not in opposition, but are highly complementary. Common sense suggests the need for efficient management, and church operating policy has long recognized the governmental basis of Adventist church organization. The *Church Manual*, indeed indicates a particular type of church governance: "The representative form of church government is that which prevails in the SDA church." In reality, the representativeness of Adventist church government has often been more symbolic than real. Today's challenge is to develop a truly representative structure which can, with maximum effectiveness, be the vehicle for living and spreading the gospel in contemporary North America.

In 1901 the total church membership stood at 78,000, less than the combined membership in 1983 of the two largest conferences in the North American Division. Today a small group of New England Adventists has evolved into a large multinational corporate body. Membership is now more than four million and over 80 percent of these members live outside North America. Total assets of the Adventist

Church have grown to over \$4 billion; the church now employs more than 120,000 people—a work force larger in number than that of Chrysler Corporation.

The members of the church in North America, as elsewhere, now represent a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, educational, and economic backgrounds and have many different needs and concerns. They have become more sophisticated in their perceptions and expectations of their church. They are becoming apathetic toward a church organization which they perceive as distant and beyond meaningful lay participation. The expectations of North American members are also changing. In addition to evangelism, worship and nurture are seen as vital to a fulfilling church life. Further, the increasingly educated North American Division constituency has a variety of professional and social interests which occupy time and energy. If these members are to continue to closely identify with their church, it must increasingly reflect their distinctive involvement in its life and mission.

In modern America, the substantially centralized form of Adventist government appears anachronistic compared to the increasing emphasis on local control of governmental problems, participatory de-

## Members of the Task Force on Church Structure

\*James Walters, chairperson, assistant professor of Christian ethics and religion, Loma Linda University

\*George Colvin, secretary, doctoral candidate in government, Claremont Graduate School

\*Raymond Cottrell, former associate editor of the *Adventist Review* and the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentaries*

\*Nathan Schilt, supervising deputy district attorney, San Bernardino County

Harvey Elder, professor of medicine, Loma Linda University

Jack Provonsha, professor of Christian ethics, Loma Linda University

Michael Scofield, senior systems analyst, Hunt-Wesson Foods

Charles Teel, Jr., associate professor of Christian social ethics, Loma Linda University

Louis Venden, senior pastor, University Church of Seventh-day Adventists, Loma Linda University

Adrian Zytkoskee, professor of behavioral science, Pacific Union College

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### \*Working committee

Thomas Mostert, president of the Southeastern California Conference, was a most helpful and insightful consultant. Although substantive differences of opinion made it impossible for him to join in the report, the task force is grateful for his comments, which improved its work.

cision-making in business, and high lay involvement in other representatively governed denominations.

The 1901 church reorganization had the benefit of direct prophetic guidance, and the reorganization was eminently suited to the needs of the fledgling church of a century ago. But even a prophetically blessed church structure of a bygone era can be a detriment to the modern church if structural policies are solidified and mistaken for eternal Christian principles.

Certainly no mere structural changes will suffice in dealing with modern societal living or directly address fundamental spiritual problems facing the church—spiritual apathy, lack of evangelistic growth, or doctrinal laxity/rigidity. However, the task force contends that the form of structure a church adopts says much to the world and to itself about its principles and its God. To a surprising extent, “The medium is the message.”

**I**n discussing the ways by which to put forward recommendations on these matters, the task force concluded that two basic documents were needed: a general statement of principles, and a model conference constitution which embodies these principles. The general statement develops basic principles of representative church government, indicates how current church practice falls short of these principles, and points toward the form of church structure implied by the principles. The context of discussion is the North American Division and how it relates to the local conferences and churches.

The model conference constitution specifies how the principles can be expressed concretely in procedures and institutions of church structure. This constitution could also be used to revise higher levels of church organization. It addresses the local confer-

ence directly, because that is where transferral of authority from lay members to church officials presently takes place, and because the task force expects that in the future, local conferences will be even more important than they currently are.

In writing the model constitution, the task force was concerned that the constitution authentically embody basic principles held in common by North American Division church members. The constitution is a “model” in the sense of a teaching device. If adopted by a particular conference, the constitution would no doubt be adjusted for unique local needs. Nevertheless, the task force has tried to produce a document that is adapted to the reality of the Adventist ethos in North America.

As an aid to understanding the reasons for the task force’s proposals in the model constitution, George Colvin has produced a commentary on the constitution. Although the statements in the commentary are those of a single writer, they attempt to reflect the thinking of the task force.

The two articles which conclude this cluster come from a larger group of general or preliminary studies out of which the general statement and the model constitution grew.\* Raymond Cottrell, in “Comparative Church Polities,” surveys the organizational structure of 12 denominations in North America and compares the results to Adventist structure. Interestingly, almost all the representative denominations surveyed, except those of a hierarchical or congregational nature, have formal mechanisms of judicial appeal. Hence, the task force advocates an adjudicatory commission in the model constitution.

Ellen White, in 1901, called for decentralization: “What we need now is a reorganization. We want to begin at the foundation, and to build upon a different principle.” The task force’s call is timid by comparison. We call the church back to its ideals. We call the church to make real its commitment to representiveness. We call the church to live out its high valuation of the laity.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

\*Unpublished background papers of the Task Force may be requested from the AAF office in Takoma Park, Md.

George Colvin, "Principles for Church Reorganization," and "On the Moral Basis of Democratic Government."

Gary Land, "Layman and Denomination in Seventh-day Adventist History."

David R. Larson and James W. Walters, "Individual, Community, and Adventist Polity."

## Task Force Proposals

Although the basic principles undergirding church government are given in Scripture, the form of government varies according to culture and needs. At least in North America, the representative form of church government is appropriate. Accordingly, the task force makes the following proposals.

1. A genuine North American Division should be established, with its own constituency that elects its own division officers.

2. Union conferences should be eliminated and local conferences strengthened as the key administrative units. A few regional offices staffed by appointees of the elected officers of the North American Division would aid conference coordination.

3. Laypeople should be thoroughly involved in all decision-making bodies, and comprise at least 50 percent of every permanent committee, commission, and board. At least half of the voting delegates of constituency sessions should be laypeople.

4. Information should be freely provided. All documents should be available for inspection, except for those whose confidentiality is necessary for proper conduct of church operations; church committees and commissions are open except when an executive session is called.

5. A board of information should be established within each local conference and within the North American Division to foster full communication of church programs and news. In addition, the boards should provide a medium for responsible discussion of church thought and life

to ensure the possibility of genuine representative church government.

6. Permanent adjudicatory commissions should be established within each conference and within the North American Division to decide constitutional questions and to review cases of intra-church dispute. These commissions should alleviate the need to use secular courts by the church and its members.

7. A session booklet should be compiled and sent out to delegates before meetings of the constituency. It would contain, among other items, an agenda and an assessment of each proposal: background information, a statement of fiscal impact, and brief arguments pro and con.

8. A conference nominating committee could be appointed two months before the meeting of the constituency. The committee could nominate two people for each conference officer position, and it may nominate more than the number of people needed to fill vacancies on all permanent boards, commissions, and committees.

9. Only conference officers should be elected. The conference president, in conjunction with the executive committee, would appoint all conference staff.

10. The General Conference should initiate a North American Division constitutional commission to conduct an in-depth study of North American polity. After widespread discussion in the conferences and congregations, a North American Division session should convene to adopt the proposed constitution, pending General Conference approval.

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## Task Force Report

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# A Call for an Open Church

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Enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has developed a representative form of government. Representation encourages members to work together for the fulfillment of the church's mission of preparing for Christ's soon return by inviting all men and women everywhere into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

This form of government is especially desirable for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The denomination began as a lay movement, and the great Adventist pioneers chose a representative form of order for Adventism. This form was supported in the first and every subsequent edition of the official *Church Manual*.

A representative church structure is also closely related to the historic Protestant principle of the "priesthood of all believers." The concept that the Holy Spirit works constructively and creatively in the minds and lives of all members of the community, enlightening and guiding them as they cooperate together to fulfill the gospel commission, implies that church structure should be representative rather than hierarchical. The New Testament doctrine of spiritual gifts, which teaches that each member expects to contribute his or her understanding and skills to the community of faith, also implies that church structure should be representative. The Holy Spirit has blessed the members of the community with a variety of gifts, all of which are important for the health of the corporate body. Within the Adventist Church, the strong emphasis on education has enhanced these gifts among the members, many of whom desire more extensive

and meaningful involvement in their church. A representative church can draw all of these abundant gifts together into appropriate ministries, which will upbuild and strengthen the community.

In addition to permitting the church to obtain the benefit of its members' excellencies, a representative church structure takes into account the universal condition of human sinfulness by placing limits on authority and making those in authority accountable. It thereby reduces the tendency to abuse power.

Although the appropriateness of a representative structure has always been accepted in the Adventist Church, the form of its realization has varied. Structures and processes thought to be desirable at one stage of development may later prove superfluous. Changing needs and circumstances have led to minor adjustments and on a few occasions to major changes.

Increasingly, Adventists in North America are concerned that the church must restudy both its structures and its operating procedures. North America, at least, needs to re-examine how a more complete realization of representative government may serve its own members and fulfill the sacred mission Christ has entrusted to it. This conviction, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is finding expression among dedicated Seventh-day Adventists at all levels of church organization. This conviction does not imply that the individuals who administer the church's affairs should be condemned. It is simply that the church has outgrown a structure and mode of operation that once served it well. In the world and the church, circumstances today are vastly different from what they were 25 or even 10

years ago. The principle of "the priesthood of all believers," the concept of spiritual gifts, and the amazing development of the denomination summon all members of the Adventist community of faith to explore ways to make widespread opportunity to participate in the governance of the church, according to each member's gifts, a reality. It is hoped that such participation will help Adventism in North America develop a greater commitment to a sense of mission: a mission that not only responds to the needs of the present but also presents a vision of a future where all both serve and are served.

## *I. Principles of Representative Church Government*

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Understanding representative church government is important both for evaluating the present system and for proposing changes that will make it more representative. The following principles are fundamental for such understanding:

1. The church is both a spiritual fellowship and a temporal organization.
2. Church government has to do with establishing authority in a community. In the sacred community as in other communities, authority must be both just and effective and must be just to be effective.
3. Because basic human characteristics affect all institutions, the same dynamics and processes that operate in other institutions also operate in the church; and church operations may be understood, at least in part, by the same methods that apply to other institutions. The well-being of the church requires acknowledging these similarities among human organizations and using them to benefit the church's self-understanding.
4. As the *Church Manual* affirms, the ultimate temporal authority of the church is vested in the whole body of members, the people of God, who are mutually responsible for its welfare. Adventist church government, if it is to be just and

responsible, must arise from the free and informed consent of the whole body of members. In view of the fact that in large communities, direct vote of the people on all issues is unworkable, the appropriate mode of structure for the church is a representative one which respects the rights of all full members.

5. The right to participate in the choice of one's representatives is the heart of any representational system. Relinquishment of this right to an elite few, at any level of church government, tends to result in leaders who are insensitive and a government that is self-perpetuating. By participating in the selection of their leaders, the members are exercising their responsibility for the church's welfare. To this end, opportunities for participation must be made numerous and effective, and participation must be encouraged. Open discussion is essential for responsible participation.

6. The need for wide participation and the human tendency to abuse power both require the diffusion of power through a modest separation of powers within the church.

7. The extent and quality of participation in a representative community are closely related to the availability and quality of information.

8. The most effective form of representative government for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America will be one that recognizes both the world-wide mission of the church and the need for and right to self-government within its component units.

9. The way in which authority in the church is distributed and exercised is a form of witness. This form of witness is vital to the relationship of employees to the church. To safeguard this witness, the rights of both members and employees should be clearly defined and protected.

10. Representative government does not usually rise above the level of understanding of its constituents. Education of the members of the church in the principles and

practice of a representative church order is therefore of great importance for establishing and maintaining representativeness.<sup>1</sup>

## *II. The State of Adventist Church Structure*

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The present structure of the Adventist Church was established in 1901. At that time the church had 78,000 members, the vast majority of whom lived in North America. There were relatively few institutions, and the educational system in particular was only in process of formation. Since that time, the church has increased greatly in membership, institutions, and financial resources. These internal changes have been accompanied by great changes in the world in which the church exists. However, no important structural alterations have been made to help the church adapt to these substantial internal and external changes. A static structure has begun to cripple the church in North America and to deprive it of representative government.

Apart from historical factors that suggest the need for change, both the Scriptural evidence for divine approval of a New Testament church order very different from the order of the Old Testament church and the important principle of progressive revelation suggest that the Holy Spirit may lead toward new insights that permit more efficient and appropriate methods of achieving goals. That such changes may be needed in Adventist operations does not deny the enormous debt owed to the founders of the church, including Ellen G. White. Their efforts in establishing the church have helped the church to prosper up to the present time. Instead, such changes would only acknowledge that the church's structure, like its members and its environment, exist in the realm of change.

Several conditions in the Adventist Church in North America suggest the imperative need for willingness to recon-

sider present methods. Among these conditions are the following:

1. For practical purposes, communication functions are controlled by church administrators, whose position inevitably limits their objectivity and perspective. The undesirable consequences of this situation are already being recognized by some within the church.<sup>2</sup>

2. The large number of electoral levels in the Adventist Church and the increasing concentration of decision-making authority in the upper levels have combined to separate the principal decision-makers from the members by at least six electoral stages, counting each point at which selection or voting occurs as one level.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this wide separation, those who make the basic decisions may not believe they are responsible or accountable to the members collectively.

3. Laypeople, especially women, are excluded from effective participation at most levels of Adventist church structure. Although other factors (such as race and ethnic background) may also exclude members from participation, limiting authority to the administrative clergy is the principal restriction.

4. Ultimate decision-making authority for the church in North America is vested in the General Conference Executive Committee. As the proportion of Adventists outside of North America has increased (to about 83 percent at present), the General Conference Executive Committee has properly been internationalized. Today, the General Conference Executive Committee is more representative of the world church and less representative or understanding of the church in North America. This internationalization of the General Conference Executive Committee, coupled with the fact that it controls the church in North America (in contrast to the other world divisions, which to a greater degree administer their own affairs) results in serious injury to the life and mission of the church in North America.

5. Effective participation in decision-making, beyond the local conference level, remains with a very small group of people, practically all of whom are administrative clergy. These people often meet in closed committees and in other settings where their actions and views as individuals are unknown to those whom they are supposed to represent. Beyond the local conference, they are not elected by the church at large and are not sufficiently accountable to it.

6. In some areas of the Adventist church structure, meaningful checks and balances within the church structure either do not exist or are ineffective—a situation which can and sometimes does result in abuses of power. Other mechanisms that have proven useful in making elected leaders accountable to their constituents are often absent from Adventist church government.

7. Church statements about the rights of members and employees often remain unclear. Methods for dealing in a procedurally fair way with grievances arising from appeals to such rights also are not firmly in place.

8. Although participation by church members is greatest at the local level of the church, present structures and policies tend to remove real control of resources and decision-making authority even in details of management to higher levels of the church that are more distant from the members. This process tends to diminish participation by the members, responsibility to the members on the part of church leaders, and ability of local units to respond to local conditions.

### *III. Proposals for a More Representative Adventist Church Structure*

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Scripture sets forth universally applicable principles on which the church should be organized and operated. However, the

institutional forms in which these principles find expression may vary from one age and culture to another. Being of divine origin, the principles themselves are sacred; the forms, being of human design, may be adapted to the needs and preferences of the people they serve.

In North America, the form of church structure will be representative. To realize the benefits of a truly representative church, substantial changes in the structure of the Adventist Church in North America are needed. The following changes would tend to make the Adventist Church more representative and more effective.

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**Circumstances today are vastly different from what they were 25 or even 10 years ago. The church has simply outgrown a structure and mode of operation that once served it well.**

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1. The needs of the Adventist Church in North America urgently require the establishment of a fully functioning North American Division, whose officers would be more responsible and responsive to the needs of their constituents in North America. The division would have its own constituency and elect its own officers, who would be directly responsible and responsive to the members of the church in North America. Such a structure appropriately bridges the span between the local conferences and the General Conference. Further, it is necessary if a more representative, responsible church is to exist in North America. Because voluntary loyalty brings greater strength to the world church than what may be perceived as compulsory loyalty, giving North American Adventists a greater voice in the affairs of the North American church would improve their loyalty to the world church. It would also

free the General Conference officers to deal solely with concerns affecting the whole church.

2. The union conferences should be eliminated. They should be replaced by no more than five North American Division regional support offices sensitive to the needs and interests of their respective regions. Local conferences would become the principal governing units of the church in North America. This arrangement would bring decision-making closer to a level at which local conference administration, local congregations, and individual members could influence events. Because the local conferences are intended to be substantially self-governing units, and because such a result is difficult to achieve

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**The way in which authority in the church is distributed and exercised is a form of witness.**

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without a sufficient membership and financial base, local conferences in North America should be consolidated to obtain a maximum of 20 to 30 local conferences. Local congregations would thus relate directly to the conferences, and conferences would relate directly to the North American Division. Delegates to a North American Division constituency meeting and to the General Conference session would be elected by local conference constituencies. At least half of these delegates should be people who are not employed by the church and do not have a business relationship with the church. Efforts should be made at all levels to limit the number of *ex officio* voting delegates and increase the proportion of elected voting delegates.

In such a reorganization, entities now managed by the union conference could be transferred either to the local conferences in which they are located or to division-wide

governing boards. (An example is the Board of Higher Education, which could be strengthened.) Such reorganization would necessarily consider and where possible retain local and regional affiliations and interests.

These changes, together with the establishment of a fully functioning North American Division and the use of modern communications and transportation, would result in a more effective coordination of the resources of North America and a decrease in administrative staff. Major staff functions, such as religious liberty, could be most effectively provided to the local conferences from the division level. They would increase the openness, representativeness, and responsibility of church government. These changes would also permit substantial savings of resources and an appropriate redistribution of talent from administration to "front line" activities.

3. Mechanisms assuring administrative accountability should be established at all levels. At the conference level, these mechanisms could be initiated by or assigned to delegates from local congregations, who should retain their position as delegates between constituency meetings. At the North American Division level, these mechanisms could be initiated by the local conference committees, which would have at least a majority of laity.

4. In any reorganization, attention should be given to removing electoral levels between the members of the local churches and the officers of the North American Division. This approach would bring leaders closer to the members and greatly simplify the organizational structure.

Reorganizational efforts should place power, including financing, on the lowest appropriate levels. Such efforts should recognize the need for resources to match responsibilities. Bringing church government as close as possible to the members will be more effective in creating a sense of responsibility for the success of the church's efforts among the membership as a whole.



5. The North American Division and local conferences should operate on a principle of openness. General organs of information should be established and given sufficient independence and funding to provide responsible reporting and discussion of issues. A division-wide board of information and general informational organ should be established similar to those proposed in the task force's model conference constitution, many of whose provisions could be modified to apply to the division.

6. The rights of church members and employees should be protected by reliable means not directly controlled by administration. These means should include division-wide adjudicatory, constitutional, and ministerial commissions similar to those proposed in the model conference constitution.

7. The composition and operation of constituency sessions is important to effective representation. Delegates to North American Division constituency meetings should be elected by the local church delegates in the local conferences, by local conference executive committees, and from North American Division institutions. At least half of the voting delegates should be people not employed by the church or having a business relationship with the church. The delegates should be provided well in advance of the session with a manual containing the agenda, an outline of the organization and procedures of the session, their responsibilities as delegates, and other information necessary for them to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Area meetings of the delegates should be conducted well before the constituency session; and provision should be made for these meetings to place items on the agenda of the session. All proposals placed before the delegates at a session should be accompanied by explanatory material, including but not limited to arguments for and against each proposal, an unbiased statement of the background of the proposal, and an unbiased estimate of its financial effect.

#### *IV. Achieving Structural Change in North America*

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Any changes in the structure of the Adventist Church in North America should be developed and instituted appropriately. An orderly process by which to restructure the church in North America could proceed as follows:

Upon authorization by the General Conference, the North American Division would appoint a constitutional commission to conduct an in-depth study of church polity and to formulate a tentative constitution for the North American Division adapted to the needs of the church in North America. The commission would be selected from nominees submitted by each local conference. The commission would be broadly representative of the entire church in its various aspects and phases of ministry. It would consist of an equal number of ordained ministers and laypeople selected for their knowledge and expertise in areas that qualify them for membership on this commission. The commission would be given a year to complete this part of its assignment. For another year, the entire church in North America would be involved in in-depth study of the proposed constitution. The commission would lead out in the study, which would include seminars, panel discussions, and open discussion in the church press. It would receive suggestions and incorporate them into the constitution as these suggestions are deemed of value.

At the close of the second year, a North American Division constitutional convention would be convened. The delegates to this convention would be chosen by a special session in each conference. The number of delegates elected by each conference would be proportionate to the number of members in the conference. At least half of the delegates would be people not employed by the church or having a business relationship

with the church. This convention would amend the proposed constitution, as it might deem appropriate, and adopt it on a provisional basis for two years. At the close of that time the constitutional convention would reconvene and make whatever adjustments the trial period might indicate as desirable. After such adjustments have been made, the constitution would become the effective constitution for the North American Division, pending General Conference approval.

The North American Division would remain a loyal, integral segment of the world church, while assuming its place as an equal partner with other divisions in the world church. It would continue to contribute sacrificially to the world mission of the church in both personnel and means, but it would have developed an internal structure and method of operations that would be adapted to its needs. As a result, the North American Division would more effectively fulfill its mission to its own members, to the people of North America, and to the world church.

The church of Christ on earth should always be open to change. These proposals are part of a continuing effort to build up the Christian community on earth. The proposals come from a particular vision: the necessity to make the Adventist Church as responsible, representative, and participatory as possible. Widespread involvement and participation are essential elements in the air of the Christian community. The church should settle for nothing less than the best possible church structure, and church structure at its best can be realized in the Adventist Church. Participation, responsibility, and Christian freedom need to become ever more characteristic of the witness of the Adventist Church to a world so often lacking these blessings. It is with the conviction that such a vision and such a church is what Scripture means by "the body of Christ" that these proposals are submitted to Adventists in North America.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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1. Insights related to points 1, 2, 3, and 10 of this section were obtained from: Keith R. Bridston, *Church Politics* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1969); and Harry V. Jaffa, *The Conditions of Freedom: Essays in Political Philosophy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

2. George W. Reid, "Time to Reorder the Church?", *The Adventist Review* (July 28, 1983), p. 15.

3. Counting each point at which selection or

voting occurs as one level, the local conference executive committee is separated from the members by at least two levels: (1) the selection of conference session delegates by the local churches; and (2) the selection of the executive committee by the delegates through their approval of the work of the "large" or organizing committee and the nominating committee. These two committees may or may not be considered additional levels.

# Defining Participation: A Model Conference Constitution

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## *Preamble:*

### *The Church's Objectives and Polity*

**V**aried concepts of the church and its objectives find expression in diverse forms of church government. The New Testament conceives of the church as a community of faith composed of people who, individually, accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and commit their lives and service to him as head over the church. It is what they are, collectively and corporately; it is not an impersonal entity or a hierarchy to which they belong. In this community of faith all are equal, all are one in Christ, bound together in allegiance to him by the bond of the Holy Spirit. As a corporate body the church belongs equally to all of its members. Each has a legitimate, inalienable interest in and concern for its effective operation and a God-given responsibility to contribute to the success of its mission. This is the corporate aspect of the priesthood of all believers.

According to the New Testament, the church provides an environment and a fellowship within which its members, as

members of the body of Christ, can cooperate together for their mutual edification and encouragement, and for the accomplishment of their individual and collective mission to the world. This ministry includes the present well-being of all human beings, and their reconciliation to Jesus Christ in preparation for his soon return and life eternal.

New Testament principles and church members' governmental expectations will find expression in the organizational structure adopted by the membership. In the North American Division, it will be constitutional and representative, and authority will be exercised in harmony with the gospel and the informed will of the church as a whole. Members of the church have a duty to cooperate intelligently and responsibly with those to whom they entrust authority. Those elected or appointed to positions of authority and leadership will be responsible to God and to the church for the manner in which they exercise the authority entrusted to them and discharge their several responsibilities. They are to serve, not to rule over, the church. Each member, according to his or her natural abilities and spiritual gifts, will contribute to the well-being of all and to the mission of the church

to the world. Directly, or indirectly through elected representatives, each will have a meaningful role in the decision-making process, in the election of leaders to implement the decisions made, and in evaluating the quality of their leadership and the manner in which they exercise authority.

### Article 1: The Conference

**T**his conference shall be known as the \_\_\_\_\_ Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. It is one of \_\_\_\_\_ conferences associated together in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, its designated territory being \_\_\_\_\_. Acting in harmony with the will of its constituent congregations, which it represents, it is the highest authority of the church within its territory.

**Membership.** The membership of this conference consists of the organized congregations and conference-operated institutions within its territory that have been or shall be accepted as such by vote of the conference in regular or special session. Each congregation shall administer its own affairs and cooperate with the other congregations in the basic decision-making and electoral processes of the conference.

**Authority.** This conference, an integral part of the world church, derives its constitutional authority from its constituent congregations and membership, and implements the policies they initiate, and those of the church at large, in so far as they are applicable and appropriate to the church in the \_\_\_\_\_ Conference. Title to all real property and fixtures appertaining to institutions, congregations, and companies of the conference shall be held in the name of the conference.

### Article 2: The Conference Session

**D**elegates. Supreme legislative authority for the \_\_\_\_\_ Conference shall be vested in a Triennial Conference Session, to which delegates shall be elected by the congregations and conference-operated institutions. Each congregation shall have one delegate for the congregation plus one additional delegate for each 100 members or major fraction thereof, to be chosen by the congregation. Delegates from conference-operated institutions shall include the ranking officer of each institution or his or her designee plus one additional delegate for each 50 employees or major fraction thereof, to be chosen by the employees of the institution. Elected conference officers, senior pastors of congregations, and associate pastors of congregations shall be voting delegates *ex officio*. All delegates shall be members of congregations within the conference. Voting delegates shall be elected not later than four months prior to the session. Apportionments shall be calculated as of the end of the preceding calendar year. Fifty-one percent of the voting delegates to any regular or special session shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Unless elected by their respective congregations or institutions as delegates or unless they are voting delegates *ex officio*, members of permanent commissions, committees, and boards of the conference (as specified in this constitution), administrators of conference-operated institutions, and guest officers of organizations above the conference level, duly appointed to the session, shall be non-voting delegates. Such delegates may speak in the same manner as other delegates. As space permits, members of the constituent congregations of the conference may be present as observers but shall have no voice in the session deliberations.

**Calling Regular and Special Sessions.** The Conference Executive Committee shall designate the time and place of regular and

special sessions. Notice of a regular or special session shall be given by publication in two consecutive issues of a regular publication designated by the session, the last of which notices shall appear at least two weeks prior to the session.

A special session may be called by a majority vote of the Executive Committee. A special session shall be called by the Executive Committee when so requested by submission to the vice president for administration of a petition signed by at least 20 percent of the delegates.

*Authority of the Session.* The Conference Session shall have authority to amend this constitution; to elect a president, a vice president for administration, a vice president for finance, members of the Conference Executive Committee and of the permanent commissions, committees, and boards of the conference (as specified in this constitution); to determine the basic administrative policies of the conference; to authorize conference programs; to accept congregations or institutions into the constituency and to expel congregations or institutions from the constituency; to authorize ministerial credentials and licenses; and to transact such other business as may properly come before it.

*Session Personnel.* At least one month prior to a regular session, and at the time a special session may be called, the Adjudicatory Commission (as constituted in Article VI) shall appoint a session chairperson and vice chairperson, parliamentarian and vice parliamentarian, and secretary and vice secretary. The parliamentarian shall, when requested by the chairperson, rule on procedural matters, using as a guide the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*. The secretary shall preserve a true and accurate record of the proceedings and actions of the session and shall be responsible for the tallying of all votes cast. During a session as at other times, the Adjudicatory Commission shall interpret this constitution when questions arise about its intent.

*Voting.* In the election of personnel to fill

all offices, voting shall be by secret ballot. A majority vote shall elect and shall determine all other matters except amendments to this constitution and matters specified in the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* as requiring a different proportion.

*Agenda Proposals.* Not later than four months prior to each regular session the vice president for administration shall solicit agenda proposals for consideration at the session from congregations, conference-operated institutions, the Conference Executive Committee, departmental directors, and the permanent commissions, committees, and boards of the conference. The vice president for administration shall accept for consideration any other proposals that may be submitted. All proposals shall be submitted in writing, shall include an explanation of the proposal and an argument in favor not to exceed 500 words in length, and shall bear the name and position of one to three principal sponsors of the proposal. The Conference Executive Committee shall review all proposals and prepare an agenda for the session. The agenda shall include any proposal signed by at least 10 percent of the delegates.

Not later than two months prior to the session, the vice president for administration shall transmit to all congregations, conference-operated institutions, the Conference Executive Committee, departmental directors, and the permanent commissions, committees, and boards of the conference a statement in full of the proposals approved for the session agenda, with a request for arguments against these proposals. Such arguments, not to exceed 500 words in length, and bearing the name and position of one to three principal opponents of the proposal, shall be submitted to the vice president for administration. From these he or she shall select one that most effectively presents reasons for opposing the proposal.

*Session Booklet.* Not later than one month prior to the session the vice president for administration shall publish a session booklet and shall send it to each prospective

delegate, each pastor and head elder of a congregation, each ranking officer of a conference institution, each officer of the conference, each departmental director, and each member of a permanent conference commission, committee, or board. Copies of the booklet shall be available for distribution at the conference office to other persons requesting it. The session booklet shall contain:

- a. The agenda, including all proposals accepted for the agenda, which shall be given in full.
- b. A brief summary of the background and content of each proposal, prepared by the vice president for administration.
- c. A brief estimate of the fiscal impact of each proposal, prepared by the vice president for finance.
- d. For each proposal, the argument in favor of the proposal.
- e. For each proposal against which arguments were submitted, one such argument selected by the vice president for administration, as specified above.
- f. A statement concerning the organization and procedures of the session and the responsibilities of delegates.
- g. A list of the delegates, indicating their status (elected or *ex officio*) and the congregation, institution, or other conference entity they represent or which with they are affiliated.
- h. A copy of this constitution, and of proposed amendments thereto.

The summary and estimate referred to in (b) and (c) above shall be informative only in nature and shall not be so written or presented as to constitute advocacy for or against any proposal.

Additional information needed by the delegates to discharge their responsibilities shall be supplied to the delegates with the session booklet by the vice president for administration.

*Pre-Session Delegate Meetings.* Prior to each regular session, the conference president shall arrange for at least five area meetings

with the delegates. These meetings shall occur between two to four months before the date of the session. The chairperson for each meeting shall be designated by the Executive Committee and shall not be an employee of the conference. Items for discussion at these meetings shall come from the delegates.

*Tenure and Duties of Delegates.* Delegates to each Triennial Conference Session shall retain their delegate status for three years, until delegates are chosen for the next Triennial Conference Session. They shall be delegates to any special conference session called during the interim between regular sessions, except that delegates who for any reason may no longer be able to serve or who no longer represent their congregation or institution may be replaced by that congregation or institution. Following each conference session, delegates shall make a full report to their respective constituencies, explaining actions taken and assisting in implementing such actions within their constituencies.

*Delegate Roster and Identification Card.* Each congregation and conference institution shall maintain a permanent roster of its delegates, removing the names of those who cease to represent it or who may no longer be able to serve and adding the names of replacements. The church clerk shall inform the conference vice president for administration of such changes.

The conference vice president for administration shall maintain a permanent roster of all voting delegates, with their signatures. He or she shall update this roster at least once each year and shall send this roster annually to all delegates. He or she shall also issue each voting delegate an official delegate's identification card bearing the delegate's name, the name of the constituency the delegate represents, and the delegate's term of service and signature.

*The Organizing Committee.* At least three months prior to the session, each delegation representing a congregation, acting as a unit, shall elect from among its members

people to serve on the Session Organizing Committee. Each congregation shall be entitled to one member of the Organizing Committee, and one additional member for each 500 members or major fraction thereof, computed on the basis of its membership at the close of the preceding year. The Organizing Committee shall meet at least ten calendar weeks before the session. At that time it shall choose its own chairperson and shall select the members of the Nominating Committee. In choosing the Nominating Committee, the Organizing Committee shall recognize that it has a duty to consider the diversity of members within the conference. Either before or during the session it shall perform such other duties as may be requested by the Conference Executive Committee.

*The Nominating Committee.* The Nominating Committee shall consist of not more than 21 members and shall select its own chairperson. It shall meet at least two months before each regular session. At least two-thirds of its members shall be laypeople not in the employ of the conference. For all permanent commissions, committees, and boards it may nominate more people than minimally necessary to fill available positions. It shall be the duty of the Nominating Committee to compile for each nominee a resume of the nominee's service record, qualifications, and major objectives if elected. The Nominating Committee shall recognize in its nominations to all Conference committees, commissions, and boards that it has a duty to consider the diversity of members within the conference. All nominees shall have indicated in writing their intention to serve if elected.

The Nominating Committee may nominate more than one person for each position. Any eligible person favored by at least one-third of the committee or for whom a nominating petition signed by at least 20 percent of the delegates is submitted to the committee shall appear on the ballot. Meetings of the Nominating Committee shall be closed, but the Nominating Com-

mittee shall hear all people who request in writing an opportunity to appear before it and shall receive all documents presented to it that are relevant to its duties. Upon the committee's request, the vice president for administration shall furnish to the committee any conference documents that the committee shall deem necessary for the discharge of its responsibilities.

The Nominating Committee may recommend that the session remove from office any appointed conference official. Proposals for removal of appointed officials may also be made to the session delegates by petitions signed by at least 20 percent of the delegates. Proposals for removal of appointed officials shall take effect if approved by majority vote of the delegates present. Vacancies created in this matter shall be filled in the same way as other vacancies in appointed positions.

*Special Sessions and Action without Meeting.* Special conference sessions may be called by majority vote of the Conference Executive Committee or by submission to the vice president for administration of a petition signed by at least 20 percent of the delegates and submitted to the vice president for administration at least three weeks before the special session.

A session booklet for the special session shall be prepared by the vice president for administration at least two weeks in advance of the session. It shall include all of those items specified above for the regular session booklet.

Elected or appointed conference officials may be removed from office at a special session by a two-thirds vote of the delegates present, if their removal was specified as an item on the agenda for the special session.

By a majority vote of the Conference Executive Committee or by submission to the vice president for administration of a petition signed by at least 20 percent of the delegates, any business except removal of conference elective and appointive personnel may be brought to the delegates without meeting. In such case, the vice president for

administration shall obtain and circulate to the delegates for each proposal the summary, financial estimate, and arguments for and against the proposal specified above for inclusion in the session booklet, in addition to any other relevant information needed by the delegates to discharge their responsibilities. Votes on such actions shall be returned in person or by mail to the vice president for administration. Actions taken by the delegates in a special session and without meeting shall have equal force with actions taken at a regular conference session.

### Article 3: Electoral Procedures

**E**lective Personnel. The president, vice president for administration, vice president for finance, and members of the Conference Executive Committee and other permanent commissions, committees, or boards of the conference (as specified in Article 6) shall be elected at each regular conference session. Unless otherwise specified herein, their term of office shall be three years, or from the time of their election until their successors are elected.

**Qualifications.** The conference president shall be an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister. All other offices and positions shall be equally open to all church members. Any person elected or appointed to conference offices or positions shall be a member of a constituent congregation or company of the conference at election or appointment or shall become a member within a reasonable time after election or appointment.

The vice president for administration shall have education in administration or a related field and administrative experience before nomination. The vice president for finance shall have education in business or finance and business experience before nomination.

Additional qualifications for these positions, clearly related to the duties of the

position and not inconsistent with this constitution, may be established by the Conference Executive Committee. Such criteria shall be reviewed by the Conference Executive Committee four to six months before each regular conference session.

**The Election.** Early in the session, the Nominating Committee shall present its report, which shall be accompanied for each nominee by the nominee's service record, qualifications, and major objectives if elected. Additional nominations from the floor at the session shall not be permitted. Election to all offices shall be by secret ballot. Where only one position is being filled, a simple majority of the votes shall elect. If a simple majority is not obtained on the first ballot, the two names receiving the highest number of votes shall appear on a second ballot. For all elective committees, boards, and commissions, the available positions shall be filled by the nominees receiving the largest number of votes. If only one nominee is presented for a position, the ballot shall provide for an affirmative or negative vote. If negative votes exceed affirmative votes for any nominee, the Nominating Committee shall resubmit a nominee or nominees (who may include the first nominee), and a simple majority shall elect. If a simple majority is not obtained on the first ballot, the two names receiving the highest number of votes shall appear on a second ballot. For members of the Executive Committee and of all permanent commissions, committees, and boards, more names may appear on the ballot than positions to be filled. In case of a tie for the last position to be filled, the tying names shall appear on a second ballot.

### Article 4: Officers and Their Duties

**T**he officers of the conference shall be a president, a vice president for administration, and a vice president for finance,



elected at each Triennial Session. They shall enter upon their respective duties when elected and shall hold office for a term of three years, or until their successors are elected and assume their duties.

As chief executive officer of the conference the *president* shall administer its affairs subject to this constitution and as directed by the Conference Executive Committee. He shall foster and coordinate all branches of the work of the church within the conference, and all conference programs. He shall call meetings of the Executive Committee and preside at its meetings, or designate another member of the Executive Committee to do so; or a chairperson pro tem may be chosen by the Committee on its own initiative to serve in the absence of the president or his designee. He shall coordinate the work of the Executive Committee and the permanent commissions, committees, and boards, and supervise the work of the other officers, the staff, and the employees of the conference. He shall perform all other duties appropriate to the office of president except those reserved by this constitution to other conference officers, committees, commissions, and boards. He shall report to the conference session for review.

The *vice president for administration* shall preserve a full and complete record of all conference proceedings and serve and publish all official conference notices. He or she shall prepare the agenda for each conference session and publish the session booklet. He or she shall perform other duties assigned to him or her by this constitution, by the president, or by the Conference Executive Committee and shall report to the conference session for review.

The *vice president for finance* shall receive and have custody of all conference monies deposited with him or her, together with gifts, legacies, and bequests. In consultation with the conference president he or she shall prepare a budget for the conference, which shall be submitted to the Conference Executive Committee for approval. He or

she shall supervise, control, and be responsible for the keeping of accounts and books of the conference in a manner consistent with the policies, procedures, and guidelines established by the Conference Executive Committee, the North American Division, and the General Conference. He or she shall pay and receive all monies in whatever form necessary to carry out his or her duties. He or she shall make and file a full annual report of all financial business transacted by the conference, and make and submit such other written reports and statements as may be required by the Executive Committee. He or she shall supervise and audit the financial records of each congregation, company, and conference institution, or cause this to be done. He or she shall report to the conference session for review.

The records and accounts of this Conference shall be audited by the auditor of the North American Division or by an independent certified public accountant.

## Article 5: Administration

*The Executive Committee.* Administrative authority for this conference between sessions of the constituency shall be vested in an Executive Committee of 16 members elected by and responsible to the Conference Session. It shall consist of the conference president, vice president for administration, and vice president for finance, and at least eight laypeople not in the employ of the conference or having business dealings involving more than 10 percent of their business with the church or its subsidiaries. The Executive Committee shall have jurisdiction over all matters not reserved by this constitution to the conference session or to permanent commissions, committees, or boards of the conference elected by the conference session.

Meetings of the Executive Committee may be called at any time by order of the president or at the president's request by the

vice president for administration. Upon the written request of five or more members of the Executive Committee, the president or the vice president for administration shall promptly call a special meeting. At such a meeting, in the absence of the president or a chairperson designated by him or her the committee may choose a chairperson *pro tem*, who shall serve for that meeting only.

Written notice of the time and place of meeting and agenda shall be given to each member of the committee by mail, or otherwise sent or delivered by the vice president for administration or other person authorized to give such notice, at least 10 days prior to a regular meeting. Notice and agenda of a special meeting shall be provided in a manner to permit adequate time for members to attend. Meetings shall be scheduled at times and places convenient for the members. Notices of meeting and agendas for regular meetings shall also be transmitted at least 10 days prior to a regular meeting to the senior pastor of each congregation in the conference.

A majority of the full Executive Committee, excluding vacant positions, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Items may be placed on the agenda of the Executive Committee by any member of the Executive Committee.

*Personnel.* Subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee, the president shall appoint assistants to the conference officers, departmental directors, and assistants to the departmental directors. Personnel below these levels shall not be subject to appointment and confirmation but shall be hired according to their abilities and background on the basis of job descriptions which shall indicate with particularity the nature and requirements of the position. Such hiring shall not discriminate by age, sex, race, or national origin. The permanent boards, commissions, and committees of the conference shall appoint their own staff.

*Dismissal.* By a two-thirds vote the

Executive Committee may dismiss any elected officer or member of a permanent commission, committee, or board of the conference upon a clear showing of misconduct in office. By majority vote the Executive Committee may initiate procedures for removal of any elected officer or member of a permanent commission, committee, or board of the conference, as specified in the provisions of Article 2 for special sessions.

Appointed personnel may be removed by majority vote of the Executive Committee on recommendation of the president. Hired personnel shall be discharged only for failure to fulfill the duties and requirements of their position as set forth in the job description.

*Interim Vacancies.* An interim vacancy in the conference presidency may be filled only at a special session. An interim vacancy in any other elective or appointive position shall be filled by vote of the Executive Committee according to procedures that it shall establish. No person who ceases to be a member in good standing of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as determined by his or her congregation (or decision of appropriate adjudicatory authority on appeal) shall continue to serve the conference in any policy-making, elective, or electoral capacity.

*Pastors.* The Conference Executive Committee shall assign pastors to constituent congregations and organized companies after determining their acceptability to each congregation or organized company. It shall issue credentials and/or licenses to all people in the service of the conference.

## Article 6: Permanent Commissions, Committees, and Boards

**I**n this article, as elsewhere in this constitution, the term "layperson" shall be defined as in Article 5. At the time when

members of bodies specified in this article are first elected, their terms of office may be adjusted to allow for overlapping (staggered) terms where required.

*Ministerial Commission.* There shall be a permanent Ministerial Commission consisting of five ordained ministers and five laypeople elected by the conference session. Half of its members shall be elected at each regular conference session and half at the following regular session. They shall serve terms of six years and shall not be eligible for re-election until the next regular session following the expiration of their terms of service. In addition to the above 10 people, the conference president shall be a member of this commission *ex officio* and shall be its chairperson. At least two members of this commission shall be people educated and experienced in biblical studies and theology, preferable on the graduate level. At least one member of this commission shall be a person educated, experienced, and professionally licensed in a field related to counseling.

This commission shall be responsible to the Conference Executive Committee and shall make recommendations to it. It shall receive requests for consideration from the Executive Committee, from any member of the ministerial staff of the conference, or from any congregation; and it may investigate on its own initiative. It shall consider all matters and questions relating to the professional competence and conduct of members of the ministerial staff of the conference, such as eligibility for ordination, credentials and licenses, and doctrine. It shall foster the continuing education of pastors and seek in every way to encourage a high level of competence and quality in their ministry. For renewal and continuance of credentials, each active ordained person shall meet minimum requirements for continuing education as determined by this commission.

*Adjudicatory Commission.* There shall be a permanent Adjudicatory Commission of seven members, six of whom shall be elected

by the conference session. In addition to these six members, the president of the conference shall be a member of this commission *ex officio*. The commission shall elect its own chairperson. Except for the president, incumbent conference officers and staff shall not be eligible to serve on this commission. At least two of its members shall be attorneys who are members of the State Bar and have neither business nor suit with the conference during their term of service on the commission. Three members of this commission shall be elected to the commission at each regular conference session. They shall serve terms of six years and shall not be eligible for re-election until the next regular conference session following the expiration of their term of office.

Upon request, this commission shall review and decide differences of opinion with respect to the interpretation of this constitution. Upon request, it may review the case of a member disfellowshipped by a congregation, and may, at its discretion, reinstate disfellowshipped members in the conference church. Its decisions with respect to the interpretation of this constitution and to the reinstatement of disfellowshipped members shall be final. In all other matters its decisions shall be advisory. With respect to disputes between church members, congregations, and institutions of the conference it may, upon request, review and make recommendations for resolving such differences.

The Adjudicatory Commission shall have access to all documents and all information it deems necessary for the conduct of its responsibilities. It shall adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of its duties and shall report to each regular session. Within the specifications of this constitution, the Adjudicatory Committee shall determine its own jurisdiction.

*Constitution Committee.* There shall be a permanent Constitution Committee elected by the conference session. The Constitution Committee shall receive and initiate sugges-

tions for amending this constitution and shall propose amendments. It shall consist of five members, who shall serve a term of three years and shall be eligible for re-election. At least four members must be laypersons, and one member of this committee shall be an attorney who is a member of the State Bar and has neither business nor suit with the conference during his term of service on the committee. The committee shall be responsible to and report to the conference session. All proposals for amending this constitution shall be published in the session booklet.

*Board of Information.* There shall be a permanent Board of Information consisting of seven members, six of whom shall be elected to the board by the conference session. The responsibility of the Board of Information shall be to assure the availability to members of constituent congregations and companies of the conference of full information on all aspects of the operation of the conference. Its members shall include the vice president for administration of the conference as a member *ex officio*, at least three laypeople, at least one pastor of a congregation, and the editor of its publication organ; it shall elect its own chairperson. Three of its members shall be elected to the board at each conference session. They shall serve terms of six years, after which they shall be eligible for re-election. The Board of Information shall publish an organ of general information, for which it shall serve as the publication board. The editor of this publication shall be nominated by the board and confirmed by the Conference Executive Committee. The editor shall be a member of the board and responsible to it. Subject to this constitution and to the board, he or she shall have full editorial discretion. Among other things, this publication organ shall convey news of local church and conference activities and shall provide an open forum for the responsible discussion of issues affecting the church at large, the conference, its congregations and companies, and their members.

The Conference Executive Committee shall make available to the Board of Information a sum adequate for the discharge of its duties, including publication of the organ of general information, as determined by mutual agreement between the Executive Committee and the board. Monies accruing to this fund shall be kept by the conference vice president for finance as a trust fund, and disbursements from this fund shall be at the discretion of the Board of Information.

This board shall draw up a statement of principles concerning freedom of information within the conference, guidelines for its own operation, and rules and regulations by which to implement freedom of information in the conference. It shall submit this statement to the next regular conference session after its completion for amendment and approval. The resulting document shall henceforth govern freedom of information in the conference and may be amended only by a majority vote of the conference session. Pending approval of this statement, the board shall discharge its responsibilities as specified in and in harmony with this constitution. The board shall report for review at each regular conference session and shall be responsible to the session.

## Article 7: Freedom of Information

Availability of information on all operations of the conference is necessary for the existence and effective operation of representative government. Conference operations shall be conducted in recognition of this principle.

In particular, all documents relating to conference operations shall be available for public inspection, except for documents whose confidentiality is necessary for the effective and proper conduct of conference operations. Documents may be certified as

confidential by the relevant decision-making body, which shall file an open statement of the reasons for making each such document confidential.

All meetings of conference committees, commissions, boards, or other executive, legislative, adjudicatory, or administrative bodies at all levels of conference operations shall be open meetings unless the body shall determine to go into executive session. If such a determination is made, the body shall within five days file a statement of the reasons for going into executive session and a list of the subjects considered, but not the substance of the discussion. This statement shall be a matter of public record. Differences of opinion with respect to the classification of documents shall be referred to the Adjudicatory Commission, whose decision shall be final.

The Board of Information shall implement these principles and shall monitor freedom of information within the conference.

## *Article 8: Amendments*

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This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the delegates present at any regular or special conference session, subject to confirmation by two-thirds of the constituent congregations of the conference in business session. Proposed amendments shall be submitted in writing to the Constitution Committee, together with an explanatory statement setting forth the reasons for the proposed amendments. This statement shall not exceed 500 words in length. The Constitution Committee shall study the proposed amendments and submit them to the Conference Executive Committee with a recommendation for acceptance or rejection. Proposed amendments shall be placed on the agenda for the next conference session, with the recommendations of both the Constitution Committee and the Conference Executive Committee appended thereto.

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## Task Force Report

# Explaining Participation: A Commentary

by George Colvin

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From its inception, the model conference constitution was intended to illustrate the way in which principles of structure could be put into practice. Of the many principles that appear in the constitution, four seem particularly important: (1) the importance of opportunity for participation in church governance; (2) the need for improved information; (3) the necessity for leaders to be accountable to the members; and (4) the desirability of balance among the parts of the structure. All of these principles are suggested in the preamble to the constitution. This topical discussion provides reasons for major proposals in the constitution and explains their interrelatedness. For example, freedom of information about conference operations is important in itself, but also affects implementation of the other three principles. However, this commentary cannot replace a careful reading of the constitution itself.

### *Participation*

The task force believed that opportunities for participation at all levels of church structure should be opened as widely

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as possible. Involvement of members should be informed and meaningful. All conference positions except the presidency are equally open to all members (Article 3). The constitution promotes participation by remaining rigorously sex-neutral. Because the task force thought that the conference president should be someone who had made the intensive commitment to the work of the church that ordination involves and ordination is now restricted by the denomination to males, the unintended effect of the task force's recommendation is to limit conference presidencies to men.

In many ways, the constitution opens ways for laypeople to participate decisively in conference operations. At least half of the executive committee must be lay, and laity are heavily involved on the other four committees, commissions, or boards (Articles 5 and 6). The requirement that executive committee agendas be made available ahead of time (Article 5) is primarily informational, but taken together with the requirement for open committee meetings (Article 7) it allows members to know in advance which committee meetings they wish to attend. Retention of local church delegates as delegates between sessions decisively increases the influence of laypeople. The substantial reduction of *ex officio* voting delegates to the session also increases opportunities for participation by laypeople who are delegates from local

churches. The provisions regarding availability of information would also improve the equality of participation.

Various features of the constituency meeting procedures would make participation more meaningful. For example, the constitution suggests several methods delegates may use to introduce names into election contests or place matters on the session agenda (Article 2).

Participation by minorities of all kinds is heavily protected. The various petitioning requirements (Article 2) permit minorities of the session delegates to put matters on the agenda, to call for a special session, or to call for a vote without a session meeting. One-third of the session nominating committee is sufficient to put a name on the session ballot for vote (Article 2). Each of the 16 executive committee members may place an item on the executive committee agenda, and five members may call a special meeting (Article 5). Although the task force rejected the idea of specific quotas, the constitution protects groups that are often neglected by specifying that the session organizing and nominating committees "shall . . . consider the diversity of members within the Conference" (Article 2).

## *Information*

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**B**ecause it believed better information to be both a pressing need within the Adventist Church and an important support to all effective structure, the task force placed great emphasis on this principle in the constitution. Although church members will continue to be unequally informed, the information provisions are intended to improve both the quality and quantity of information available. Some of these provisions are relatively minor, such as the requirements for education and professional knowledge by some members of conference bodies. These requirements are intended to bring relevant professional information to

these bodies and to improve their ability to deal with other information in their deliberations. The three most important provisions related to information are the session procedures (Article 2), the Board of Information (Article 6), and the Freedom of Information article (Article 7).

The session procedures provide for high levels of information. The delegates are elected well ahead of time, and pre-session meetings (already in place in the South-eastern California Conference) permit delegates to become informed. The elaborate procedures for agenda proposals are intended largely to improve the quality of information available about agenda items. The session booklet (which is *not* intended to be the only information available to the delegates) is a device to provide general information on agenda items and other session-related matters. It should be fairly short, cheaply printed, and widely available. The organizing and nominating committees would meet well ahead of the session to permit the nominating committee enough time to gain the information necessary for an informed choice. The nominating committee would be assisted by the availability of conference information, although the task force did not address the issue of improving information from outside the conference.

The principle undergirding the Board of Information is that those who make the news are not the best persons to report it. The powers and composition given the board give it appropriate freedom of action, while keeping it an organic part of the conference's work. The task force believed that this arrangement would allow the board to increase the flow of information while maintaining its credibility. The task force believes that increasing credible communication will increase the involvement of members in the conference and thereby strengthen their loyalty.

Article 7 is intended to raise confidence in the conference among both members and the public by demonstrating that the

conference has nothing to hide. It also permits the development of an information base on which accountability can rest.

## *Accountability*

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Aside from the triennial sessions and the review and reporting requirements, the principal means of making elected and appointed people accountable to the members are freedom of information, the Board of Information, and the provision that local church delegates retain their delegate status between sessions.

The current practice of selecting a body of local church leaders to be session delegates and then discharging them after one day's work was considered wasteful. Conference operations should be continually responsive to these local church leaders. The authority of the delegates to remove elected or appointed officials at special or regular sessions and to act outside of constituency meetings on other matters helps to maintain accountability. The task force believes that increasing the responsibility of the delegates will improve the motivation and performance of delegates.

In one way conference personnel might seem to be less responsive under the constitution than in present practice. Conference departmental directors are now generally chosen by the session directly. Under the constitution, they would be nominated by the president and approved by the executive committee. The task force made this change because the departmental positions increasingly require specialized expertise and therefore are best filled by a non-elective method. The task force also believed that departmental directors should not have electoral standing independent of the three top elected conference officers. Finally, the task force wished to provide the president with an opportunity to compose his own "team" to manage conference activities.

At the same time, the task force did not want to require the session delegates to remove the president in order to obtain replacement of a departmental director, and it did want to make the departmental directors somewhat responsible and accountable to the members they ultimately serve. Therefore the constitution provides (Article 2) that appointed officials may be removed, although not replaced, by a special or regular session. (The resulting vacancy would be filled by the executive committee.) The constitution also aims to provide substantial job security for secretaries and other support personnel who are hired (rather than appointed or elected).

## *Balance*

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In any organization where authority is not to be completely centralized and unlimited, some forms of balance (formal or informal) must exist. Yet these balances are often the hardest things to perceive, precisely because (as in the model constitution) they are so pervasive. As a fundamental principle, the task force tried to balance the need for administration to operate efficiently with the need to prevent authority from being abused.

A complete explication of the balances provided by the constitution would be excessively lengthy. A few examples, drawn from various portions of the document, should suggest the forms of balance that were thought desirable.

The constitution (Articles 4 and 5) grants the officers and a majority of the Executive Committee substantial authority. In practice, the executive committee and conference officers would probably accrue greater authority. However, their authority is balanced in various ways: the requirements for information; the various provisions for responsibility and accountability; the authority of the Adjudicatory Commission to interpret the constitution (Article 6); the Ministerial Commission's advisory author-



ity concerning the ministerial staff (Article 6); and the ability of special sessions to remove elective or appointive personnel (Article 2).

Because of concern that congregational ownership would lead to organizational splintering, the constitution proposes that the conference (not the conference association) retain ownership of local church real property. The substantial authority involved in this provision is balanced by the requirements that the conference must act "in harmony with the will of its constituent congregations" (Article 1), that the executive committee must consult with local congregations and companies about pastoral assignments (Article 5), and that local churches are directly involved in ratification of constitutional amendments (Article 8).

Although the constitution presumes that the local conference will retain a substantial degree of autonomy from higher levels of the church structure, the conference's financial policies are brought under division and General Conference guidelines (Article 4). The conference is explicitly said to be "an integral part of the world church" (Article 1).

Balances also exist between the officers and the executive committee. The officers have primary power over budgets, appointments, and other administrative areas (Article 4); but the executive committee, on which they sit, has power to remove them between sessions for "misconduct in office" (Article 5) and must approve their budgets and appointments (Articles 4 and 5).

The Adjudicatory Commission was based on the belief that a body separate from the

policy process was needed to handle some tasks. The commission's authority over constitutional interpretation, disfellowship, appointment of session personnel, and disputes about classification of documents (Articles 2 and 6) balances the power of many other bodies. At the same time, the Adjudicatory Commission is itself balanced by the power of the executive committee and the session (special or regular) to remove commission members (Articles 2 and 5); the executive's committee's control over funding of the commission; *ex officio* membership of the conference president (Article 6); and the requirements for openness applicable to all conference agencies (Article 7). The Board of Information similarly balances and is balanced by other groups.

Several general concerns should be considered in reading the constitution. The task force envisioned the conference as the most important organizational unit in North America and believed the number of conferences should be reduced. Consequently, conference administrations would have a larger field of operations and exercise much more "vertical" authority. As a result "horizontal" balances are more appropriate and necessary. Also, the constitution in some ways gives conference leaders more powers than they now have. It is interesting to note that secular governmental executives function well with many more balances and limits than the constitution proposes for conference leadership.

In writing the constitution, the task force did not intend to end discussion. Rather, it hopes that the constitution it proposes will inspire others to surpass its vision.

# The Varieties of Church Structure

by Raymond F. Cottrell

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The polity of a church reflects what the church thinks it is and should become. This comparative study of church polities examines the structure and *modus operandi* of a variety of representative church bodies in North America, with particular attention to their electoral, decision-making, and administrative processes, and the role of the laity in these processes. This study assumes that the participation of knowledgeable laypeople, with the clergy, in the governance of the church will strengthen its ability to fulfill its mission to its own members and the world.

Of special importance in evaluating the polity of a church are such matters as structure (levels of authority and administration and their relation to each other), electoral process (how a church selects its leaders), legislative process (how it determines its objectives, policy, plans, and *modus operandi*), administration (how a church implements its policies and how it holds its leaders accountable for the way in which they administer its affairs), and adjudication (how it resolves differences of opinion respecting constitutional and administrative matters). Also important is the balance between clerical and lay participation in church government.

Case studies were made of 12 North

American church bodies with a combined membership of 90 million, representing the spectrum of polities from the purely hierarchical through the representative to the purely congregational. Direct contact was made with the national headquarters of each church. Some responded fully by personal letter to a series of specific questions, others with more or less extensive documents, including, in several instances, their official publications on church order and discipline. Interviews were on occasion conducted with local representatives, or by phone with national headquarters.

Obviously the objective of this study was to compare the Seventh-day Adventist Church polity with that of other churches. According to the *SDA Encyclopedia* (Article "Organization"),

The SDA form of church government came to have characteristics of several systems—particularly the congregational, with its emphasis on local church authority; the presbyterian, which provides for government by elected representatives; and in some points the Methodist, in that it has conferences as organizational units and in that the conference assigns ministers to the local churches.

The church bodies covered in this report were selected to provide a spectrum of church polities in North America. In addition to those mentioned by the *SDA Encyclopedia*, the Roman Catholic Church was added as a representative of pure hierarchy and because of basic similarities between its polity and that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod because of certain similari-

ties to Seventh-day Adventist polity; and the Southern Baptist Convention because of the noteworthy way in which it combines congregationalism with highly effective co-operation in aspects of service and mission.

Data for each of the church organizations (except the Roman Catholic Church and the congregational churches) are presented in five sections covering structure, the electoral process, the legislative process, administration, and adjudication. The order in which the churches appear suggest their approximate polity type, from strict hierarchy (in which the local congregation and laypeople have little or no voice in the government of the church as a whole) through various degrees of representative government to a strictly congregational polity. For purposes of comparison, a similar analysis of Seventh-day Adventist polity appears in sequence, at its appropriate location in the spectrum of church polities.

An important aspect of church polity is the concept that structure and procedure are dynamic and not static. As the faith and life of a church and its members are an expression of its divine dimension, so structure and function reflect its human dimension. Being human, structure and operating procedures require attention and adjustment from time to time in order to meet the needs of a changing church in a changing world. A comparative study of church polities implies that an in-depth study of the Adventist church structure and *modus operandi* would contribute to a more effective realization of its objectives. The ability to carry through a meaningful evaluation of this kind requires a high level of maturity on the part of the church.

### Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church is a pure hierarchy. Supreme legislative administrative/adjudicatory authority resides in the Holy See, who governs the church through the Roman Curia. The Holy See is

represented in the United States by an "apostolic delegate."

The 49,812,178 members of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States belong to 24,161 parishes, which makes an average of 2,062 to a parish. There are 59,059 priests, or one to every 843 members. The parishes are grouped together in 170 dioceses, over each of which a bishop (or archbishop) presides—with approximately 142 parishes to a diocese. Although each bishop is directly and solely responsible to the Holy See, within his own diocese he has absolute authority.

Vatican Council II gave the bishops of a country permission to organize a national episcopal conference in which they can meet regularly to share experiences, exchange views, and jointly formulate a program for the common good of the church. These national conferences do not have legislative, administrative, or adjudicatory authority because canon law prohibits any other authority between the Holy See and the bishops. The bishops of the United States formed an organization known as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, a "canonical entity," and the United States Catholic Conference, a "civil entity." Both organizations are sponsored by the bishops and are responsible to them.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, or "Episcopal Conference" of the church in the United States, is composed of some 350 bishops who meet twice each year to consider the pastoral needs of the church. Its officers are elected for a term of three years, except the general secretary who serves for five years. The Episcopal Conference has an administrative committee composed of 48 bishops, an executive committee composed of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops officers, one member of the administrative committee elected by that body, more than 30 standing and *ad hoc* committees, and a general secretariat.

The administrative committee, which conducts the work of the Episcopal Confer-

ence between plenary sessions, meets four times a year. Its members are the officers, the chairmen of its standing committees, chairmen and elected members of the United States Catholic Conference committees, and representatives of the 12 geographical regions of the Episcopal Conference committees. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops committees, all of whose members are bishops, prepare proposals for action by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and review the activities of departments in the corresponding United States Catholic Conference. Chairmen of the standing committees are elected by the body of bishops; chairmen of the *ad hoc* committees are appointed by the president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops is the parent body of the United States Catholic Conference, hereafter referred to as the "Catholic Conference," and is the organization through which it carries out its programs. The officers of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops are the officers of the Catholic Conference; the same general secretary is responsible for administering both organizations. The Catholic Conference has an administrative board identical in membership to the administrative committee of the Episcopal Conference. Its executive committee is composed of the officers of both organizations. The General Secretariat coordinates both. The Episcopal and Catholic conferences are served by the United States Bishops' Advisory Council, a 60-member national body of bishops, clergy, religious, and laity who meet twice each year to discuss issues, to review activities, and to make recommendations. The National Council of Catholic Laity and various social service groups work in close association with the Catholic Conference.

The purpose of the Catholic Conference is defined as "to unify, coordinate, promote, and carry on all Catholic activities in the United States" in areas where voluntary

collective action is considered desirable; specifically, "to organize and conduct religious, charitable, and social welfare work at home and abroad; to aid in education; to care for immigrants; and generally to enter into and promote by education, publication, and direction the objects of its being." It is organized around committees and departments concerned with communication, education, social development, and world peace. These committees are composed of bishops, clergy, religious, and laity. Their chairmen are bishops elected by the Episcopal Conference, who also elect two other episcopal members of each committee. These committees formulate and recommend policy to the administrative board and to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

### Seventh-day Adventist Church

**Structure.** At the local conference level the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a representative form of government. Above that level the polity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is hierarchical: authority flows downward and members in local congregations have virtually no voice. Above that level, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a closed, self-operating, and self-perpetuating system similar to the Roman Catholic Church, in which those in authority are not responsible to lower echelons. Above the local conference level, those in authority are not elected by, representative of, or administratively accountable to, local congregations or the membership at large.

In North America there are 622,961 Seventh-day Adventists in 4,043 congregations, which makes an average of 154 to a congregation. These congregations are associated together in 58 conferences, with about 70 congregations to a conference. Conferences are grouped in nine union conferences, approximately six conferences to a union. There are 3,454 ordained

ministers, or approximately one to every 180 members.

There is a nominal North American Division operated by General Conference personnel at General Conference headquarters. The highest legislative/governing body of the church in North America is the General Conference Committee, which exercises this authority through a subcommittee, the North American Division Committee on Administration. There is no constituency just for the North American Division. Between sessions of the General Conference, designated members of the General Conference headquarters staff supervise the church in North America. The North American Division has no designated president; the president of the General Conference functions *ex officio* in this capacity, and a vice president of the General Conference supervises North America for the General Conference.

A policy revision authorized by the 1983 Annual Council reinforces this hierarchical structure above the local conference level. The divisions are considered to be "sections" of the General Conference itself. Union conferences "are responsible to the respective division section (of the General Conference) of which they are part, and are administered in harmony with the operating policies of the General Confer-

ence and of the division." Local conferences are responsible to the union conference of which they are part, and "are administered in harmony with the policies which govern the union." The executive committee of each conference is elected by delegates representing the local congregations and is "vested with the delegated authority of the churches within the conference."

Each division committee is a section of the General Conference Committee, and available members of the General Conference Committee are automatically members of any division committee. Whereas union conferences and missions outside of North America "are expected to maintain close counsel with their respective division offices," union conferences in North America "shall maintain close counsel directly with the General Conference."

The General Conference is the highest organization in the administration of our worldwide work (and) all subordinate organizations and institutions throughout the world will recognize the General Conference in session, and the executive committee between sessions, as the highest authority, under God, among us. *Adventist Review*, 160:1181-1182, November 24, 1983.

*The Electoral Process.* At a conference constituency meeting, delegates elected by the constituent congregations elect the conference officers and departmental directors. Each local conference executive committee appoints delegates to a union

## STATISTICS

Churches	Members (Millions)	Congregations (Thousands)	Ordained Clergy (Thousands)
Roman Catholic	51.2	24.3	58.5
Seventh-day Adventist	0.6	3.8	4.5
Episcopal	2.8	7.2	12.9
Nazarene	0.5	4.9	7.9
Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod	2.6	5.7	7.4
American Lutheran	2.3	4.9	7.1
Lutheran Church in America	2.9	5.8	8.1
United Presbyterian	2.4	8.9	14.7
United Methodist	9.7	38.6	36.1
Assemblies of God	1.8	9.9	23.9
Southern Baptist	13.8	36.0	61.4
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	1.2	4.3	6.6
Congregational	0.1	0.4	0.7

Statistics are from the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches, 1983*, by Constant H. Jacquet. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983. The 1983 *Yearbook* does not provide statistics for the United Methodist church; those given are from the 1982 *Yearbook*. Dashes indicate information not applicable or available.

conference session, which elects the union conference officers and departmental directors. The union conferences in North America appoint delegates to a General Conference session. There they caucus, and recommend officers to be elected by the General Conference session to serve the General Conference for North America. At every level, nominating committees appointed by each session recommend one name for each position to be filled.

*The Legislative Process.* Delegates to a local conference constituency meeting are elected by the local congregations. The pastor may, or may not, be elected to serve as a delegate, but is usually a delegate *ex officio*. Local conference executive committees select delegates for the union conference constituency meeting. Conference officers serve *ex officio*. There is no distinct constituency for the North American Division. The agenda of each local and union conference constituency meeting is prepared by the incumbent administrative staff.

At the 1981 Pacific Union Conference session, 170 of 457 delegates were laypeople appointed by the constituent conference executive committees. At the 1983 Southeastern California Conference constituency meeting, 420 of the 650 delegates were laypeople elected by their congregations. In addition, there were 85 youth observers selected by the conferences and their educational institutions. No tally was kept of laypeople among the 1,335 delegates to the 1980 General Conference session; the General Conference had recommended that 10 percent of each division delegation be laypeople.

*Administration.* At each level of organization, interim business is conducted by a president and officer staff. The officers, along with the directors of the various departments, representatives of specified institutions, and some laypeople, constitute its executive committee. As already noted, however, working policy provides that the conference conform to union policy. Nine of

the 21 members of the Southeastern California Conference executive committee are laypeople, as are 10 of the 50 members of the Pacific Union Conference executive committee. On the General Conference level, there are 11 general departments and 18 service boards, corporations, and other organizations.

*Adjudication.* Otherwise irreconcilable differences of opinion on constitutional and administrative matters are usually decided by the conference or union conference committee. *Ad hoc* adjudicatory committees appointed by each conference committee function as needed, and report to their respective conference executive committees.

### Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

#### **S**tructure. The Lutheran Church - Missouri

Synod has a representative form of government, but assigns the clergy a dominant role along with major provision for lay participation. The 2,623,181 members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod meet in 5,689 congregations, which makes an average of 461 per congregation. The 5,689 congregations are grouped in "circuits" consisting of seven to 10 congregations each. The Synod, as the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod commonly refers to itself, has divided the United States into five districts, each of which is considered to be the Synod itself performing the functions of the Synod within its designated territory. There are 7,211 ordained clergy, or one to every 364 members. The chief administrative officer is known as president. The "Delegate Convention of the Synod," the highest legislative/governing authority in Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, meets triennially. Between sessions of the Synod, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is administered by a board of directors through the five districts and 17 "program boards" and commissions responsible for various aspects of the life and work of the church.

*The Electoral Process.* An elaborate pre-convention nominating procedure involving the entire church assembles a roster of candidates for each position to be filled at a synodical convention. Twelve months in advance, the secretary of the Synod solicits from every congregation, district director, circuit counselor, board, and from other sources the names of potential candidates for the various offices and boards of the Synod, with a statement on the qualifications of each proposed candidate. A permanent Commission on Convention Nominations, half of whose members are laypeople, begins to function Sept. 1 of the year immediately preceding a convention. Each district elects one person to serve on the commission. Following a specified procedure, the commission draws a roster of candidates from the nominations it receives. This roster, which contains biographical information on each candidate, is published at least five months before the convention.

Four months before the Synod convention opens, a special procedure solicits from each voting congregation the names of two clergymen as nominees for Synod president and two for first vice president. From the

roster of nominees thus compiled, the five receiving the highest number of votes for each office become candidates at the Synod convention. Each voting delegate may nominate as many people as there are other vice presidents to be elected. From these nominations a ballot, with three times the number of candidates as there are offices to be filled, is drawn up for the delegates to vote on. At least two names must appear on the ballot for each of the positions to be filled.

*The Legislative Process.* Congregations, ministers, and teachers constitute the membership of the Synod. Voting delegates to a synodical convention consist of one "visitation circuit," or of two adjacent visitation circuits, as may be necessary for each pair of delegates to represent at least seven and not more than 20 congregations. Each electoral circuit elects its pair of delegates not later than nine months before the convention. Delegates thus elected serve a three-year term beginning with the convention. During this time they not only represent the congregations of the circuit at the convention, but report its actions to the congregations of the circuit, serve as members of the

## STRUCTURE

Churches	International/ National	Form of Government	Equal Lay Participation At All Levels
Roman Catholic	I	H	No
Seventh-day Adventist	I	H	No
Episcopal	N	R	Yes
Nazarene	N	R	Yes
Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod	N	R	Yes
American Lutheran	N	R	Yes
Lutheran Church in America	N	R	Yes
United Presbyterian	N	R	Yes
United Methodist	N	R	Yes
Assemblies of God	N	R	Yes
Southern Baptist	N	C	Yes
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	N	C	Yes
Congregational	—	C	—

H = hierarchical, with the locus of authority at the top and authority flowing downward. R = representative, with delegates, chosen by the various congregations, participating in the decision-making process at all levels. In a hierarchy, the leaders rule the church; in a representative polity, they serve the church. In most representative polities, laypeople participate in equal numbers with the clergy as convention delegates, and in the electoral process at all levels. C = congregational, with each congregation autonomous and not responsible to any higher authority. Cooperation with other congregations is voluntary.

circuit forum and as resource persons in the circuit, and assist in implementing synodical resolutions within the circuit. Not later than 10 weeks before the convention, the delegates receive a copy of a convention manual which contains information pertaining to all of the business on the agenda.

The principal business of a synodical convention is to (1) elect officers of the Synod board of directors and all other Synod boards, and (2) consider "overtures" (recommendations). These overtures may originate with any congregation, circuit, district, board, institution, faculty, or pastoral conference, and must be submitted to the Synod president not less than 16 weeks in advance of the session. Those he approves are published in the official convention manual and appear on the agenda.

*Administration.* Between conventions of the Synod, a board of directors elected by the Synod and accountable to it administers Synod business. The board is required to meet at least four times each year. Eight of its 15 voting members are laypeople. Seventeen program boards and commissions are responsible for various aspects of the life and work of the church. Nearly half of their members are laypeople.

A council of presidents composed of the synodical president and first vice president, and the presidents of the five districts, meets three times each year. A council of administrators reviews and supervises the plans, programs, and budget of the Synod.

Each district president represents the Synod in his district. The relationship of a congregation to a district is the same as it is to the Synod. Like the Synod, each district has a delegate assembly which establishes and evaluates policies, and provides direction for the district. A district likewise has a board of directors. The nomination and election of the officers and boards of a district is similar to that for the Synod.

Each district is divided into circuits consisting of between seven and 20 congregations. The principal administrative officer of a circuit is called a circuit counselor.

Within his own circuit, each counselor serves as an assistant to the district president. A Circuit Forum consists of the pastors of each congregation. It meets at least twice a year to plan missionary outreach and to develop programs and services to meet the needs of its congregations, pastors, and teachers.

*Adjudication.* There is a synodical Commission on Adjudication, and a District Commission on Adjudication for each district. Each commission is elected by the constituency it serves. There is also a Commission on Appeals. Each district commission consists of four clergymen and three laypeople, at least two of whom must be lawyers. The synodical commission consists of five clergymen and four laypeople, at least two of whom must be lawyers.

## United Presbyterian Church

*Structure.* The United Presbyterian Church has a fully developed form of representative church government. The 2,477,364 members of the United Presbyterian Church worship together in 8,633 congregations of approximately 287 members each. Twelve or more congregations constitute a "presbytery," and at least three presbyteries a "synod," of which there are 15. The General Assembly, the highest legislative/governing authority in the church, meets at least once each year. A "judicatory" is a session of the local church board, a presbytery, a synod, or the General Assembly. There are 14,092 ordained clergy, or one to every 276 members. The ranking officer is known as the moderator.

Decentralization of authority and administration is a basic principle of Presbyterian organization. So also is representation, with each judicatory represented in the next higher judicatory. Each judicatory is responsible for planning and administration within its own geographical area, but is interdependent with the others.



## ELECTORAL PROCESS

Churches	Congregations May Nominate	Permanent Nominating Committee	Multiple Names On Ballot For Each Office
Roman Catholic	—	—	—
Seventh-day Adventist	No	No	No
Episcopal	Yes	Yes	—
Nazarene	—	No	—
Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod	Yes	Yes	Yes
American Lutheran	Yes	—	—
Lutheran Church in America	No	No	Yes
United Presbyterian	Yes	Yes	Yes
United Methodist	No	No	Yes
Assemblies of God	Yes	No	—
Southern Baptist	Yes	No	—
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	No	No	—
Congregational	Yes	No	—

In some churches, every congregation has the right to nominate candidates for election at all levels. Some churches provide a permanent nominating committee, its purpose being wider participation in the selection of candidates. The electoral process is conducted in the open, and a more informed choice among the candidates is possible on the basis of their records and their announced policies.

*The Electoral Process.* The General Assembly has a permanent nominating committee consisting of 15 members, to nominate members of the various councils, commissions, and boards of the church. This committee is appointed by the moderators of the General Assembly: three committee members are selected by each moderator for staggered terms of five years. The committee represents fairly the various interests and geographical areas of the church, including men, women, young adults, disabled people, and minority and ethnic representatives. This committee nominates candidates to serve on the various councils, commissions, and boards of the church. Incumbent members of these organizations are not eligible to serve on the committee. No person may be reappointed to serve until four years have passed since the expiration of his previous term of appointment. The moderator of the General Assembly and the stated clerk (the chief executive officer) are elected at each session of the assembly. When elected by their respective congregations to serve as commissioners to higher judicatories of the church, both men and women become eligible for election to church office at all levels.

*The Legislative Process.* A presbytery is a group of at least 12 congregations in a particular geographical area. The members of a presbytery are its ministers and an equal number of ruling elders, or commissioners, elected by the member congregations for a term of one year. A regularly organized congregation without a pastor is represented by a ruling elder. Each presbytery has charge of its ministers, serves the congregations in its area, and appoints commissioners to the synod and the general assembly.

A synod consists of the ministers and ruling elders of not fewer than three presbyteries within a specified geographic region. Its membership consists of commissioners elected by the presbyteries, each delegation being composed equally of ministers and ruling elders. Meeting at least biennially, it oversees and promotes all aspects of the life and work of the church within its territory, reviews and approves the records of its presbyteries, promotes the prosperity and enlargement of the church, and assists and guides its presbyteries in their ministries.

The General Assembly, highest judicatory of the church, meets at least once each year. It consists of an equal number of

ministers and ruling elders appointed by their respective presbyteries. Before being enrolled as members of the General Assembly, the commissioners are required to present a statement signed by the moderator of their presbytery to the effect that they have been fully oriented with respect to their duties and privileges, and to the organization, procedures, and documents of the General Assembly. The General Assembly has jurisdiction over all doctrinal and constitutional questions, and general oversight of the church as a whole.

*Administration.* A council on administration appointed by the General Assembly, coordinates the administrative functions of the church on the various levels of organization. Each presbytery has an executive in charge of administering the presbytery, and each synod a synod executive, each with a staff.

The General Assembly Mission Council is charged with cultivating and promoting the spiritual welfare of the whole church. It engages in church-wide planning of objectives and priorities, prepares the budget for the General Assembly Mission Council, and conducts its work through a number of agencies.

*Adjudication.* The General Assembly, each

synod, and each presbytery elects from the ministers and ruling elders subject to its jurisdiction, in equal numbers, a permanent judicial commission of 15, 11, and seven members, respectively. They serve in staggered classes for terms of six years each and are not eligible for re-election. No incumbent member of any commission, committee, or agency of the General Assembly is eligible to serve.

## United Methodist Church

**Structure.** The United Methodist Church has a fully developed representative form of church government. The 9,653,388 United Methodists are members of 38,567 congregations, with an average of 250 to each congregation. Each congregation or cluster of smaller adjacent congregations is a "charge." These congregations are associated together in 73 "annual conferences" of approximately 528 congregations each. The annual conference is the basic structural unit of the United Methodist Church. The annual conferences are grouped together in five jurisdictions of some 15 conferences each. The supreme legislative/governing body of the United Methodist Church is its

### LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Churches	Years Between Highest Level Sessions	Congregations Affect Agenda All Levels	Congregations Elect Delegates All Levels
Roman Catholic	—	—	—
Seventh-day Adventist	5	No	No
Episcopal	3	—	Yes
Nazarene	4	—	Yes
Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod	2	Yes	Yes
American Lutheran	2	Yes	Yes
Lutheran Church in America	2	Yes	Yes
United Presbyterian	1	No	Yes
United Methodist	4	Yes	Yes
Assemblies of God	2	—	Yes
Southern Baptist	1	Yes	Yes
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	2	Yes	Yes
Congregational	1	Yes	Yes

A shorter period between sessions brings administrators into a closer, more responsible relationship with the church at large. In most churches, congregations elect delegates to represent them at every level, in equal numbers with the clergy, or they elect delegates who, in turn, elect representatives to the national delegate session.

General Conference, which meets quadrennially. Between sessions of the General Conference, the affairs of the church are administered by bishops serving as "general superintendents," their staffs, and various councils, boards, commissions, and committees. There are 36,066 ordained ministers, or one to every 268 members. The chief United Methodist Church administrative officer is its president.

*The Electoral Process.* Bishops of the United Methodist Church are elected by their jurisdictional conferences. Officers of the General Conference other than bishops, and of its boards, councils, and commissions, are elected by the General Conference in session; the various boards, councils, and commissions elect their own executive staff members. Members of the jurisdictional conferences are elected by the annual conferences, delegates to which are in turn elected by the congregations composing an annual conference. Delegates to the General Conference are elected by the annual conferences.

*The Legislative Process.* The highest legislative authority of the United Methodist Church is its General Conference, to which clergy and laity elected by the annual conferences serve as delegates, in equal numbers. There are no appointive or *ex officio* members. The ministers of each annual conference elect their ministerial delegates, and laypeople their lay delegates. Bishops of the church preside over its General Conference sessions, but are not members of the General Conference and do not vote. The ministerial and lay delegates vote as one body. Any organization, agency, minister, or layperson may petition its legislative bodies, and such petitions become a part of the agenda.

The General Conference enacts laws, and defines the powers of subsidiary administrative units. It plans and directs the various enterprises of the church. It has sweeping powers to enact legislation it may deem necessary, subject to the constitution. It does not elect bishops or change the Articles of

Religion, the Confession of Faith, doctrinal standards, or the general rules of the church. It may recommend changes in the constitution of the church, which require the consent of two-thirds of the members of the annual conferences.

Within two months after each General Conference session, the same delegates meet in their respective jurisdictional conferences, together with a proportionate number of additional ministers and laypeople. The jurisdictional conference elects its bishop and members of most of the boards and general agencies within the jurisdiction, and lays plans for the following four years. The jurisdictional conferences meet simultaneously. They propose changes in the constitution, which are considered by the next General Conference and, if approved, are referred to the annual conferences for approval.

The annual conference, the basic legislative unit of the United Methodist Church, is composed of the pastors of its congregations and an equal number of laypeople elected by the constituent congregations. It determines the eligibility of the ministers who serve as pastors within its territory, authorizes their ordination, and locates them. It votes approval or disapproval of constitutional amendments proposed by the General Conference. It has jurisdiction over all matters not specifically assigned to the General Conference and the jurisdictional conferences.

At its own discretion, an annual conference may convene district conferences once a year, delegates to which are the ministers of the conference and an equal number of laypeople. The district superintendent (bishop) presides over the conference. A conference administers the district, informs the superintendent with respect to the progress of the churches in the district in terms of plans and objectives, and reviews the state of church property and institutions.

Each charge has its charge conference and its administrative board, with the same people serving on both but performing

different functions. The charge conference is a congregation's governing authority; the administrative board, which technically derives its authority from the charge conference, is its administrative arm. The charge conference must meet at least once a year; the administrative board meets monthly. It elects church officers for the following year and determines its minister's salary. The administrative board serves as the connecting link between the local congregation and Methodism as a whole. It has important executive powers, including jurisdiction over all church property. The primary duty of the administrative board is overall supervision of a church.

At all levels above the local congregation, ministers and laypeople of the United Methodist Church participate in equal numbers in the election of officers and in the formulation of policy.

*Administration.* There is a Bishops' Council whose decisions are advisory. The ranking administrative officers at all levels of the United Methodist Church are its bishop "superintendents." The secretary and other officers of the General Conference may be either ministers or laypeople. The activities of the church are conducted by various councils, boards, commissions, and committees. All subsidiary organizations and

agencies of the church sustain an "accountable relationship" to the General Conference and report to it for review of their operations. There are 15 general boards, councils, and commissions. Of the two general councils, one deals with matters of finance and administration and the other with ministries. A general board is a continuing body accountable to the General Conference for specified programs, administration, or service foundations. A commission is assigned a specific function, either on a continuing basis or for a specified length of time.

*Adjudication.* There is a Judicial Council whose nine members are elected by the General Conference from a panel of candidates nominated by the Council of Bishops and from candidates nominated from the floor. Ministers and laypeople are represented in approximately equal numbers, with either at any particular time constituting a majority of one. As the supreme court of the United Methodist Church, it is concerned primarily with constitutional questions, which may come to it from any entity or agency of the church, or from individual clergymen or laypeople. The Judicial Council is independent of all other church organizations and agencies, and its decisions are final. It responds to

### ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS

Churches	Levels Between Congregation & Highest Level	Accountability To Congregations	Most Offices Open to Laity
Roman Catholic	1	No	No
Seventh-day Adventist	3	No	No
Episcopal	1	No	Yes
Nazarene	2	—	—
Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod	2	Yes	Yes
American Lutheran	2	Yes	Yes
Lutheran Church in America	1	Yes	Yes
United Presbyterian	2	No	Yes
United Methodist	2	No	Yes
Assemblies of God	1	No	No
Southern Baptist	2	Yes	Yes
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	1	Yes	Yes
Congregational	—	—	—

Many administrative levels makes a system cumbersome and tends to isolate congregations from the decision-making process. Some churches require elected officers to report to their delegate sessions, and answer questions.

## ADJUDICATORY PROCESS

Churches	Clearly Defined	Permanent	Independent
Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Seventh-day Adventist	No	No	No
Episcopal	No	No	No
Nazarene	Yes	Yes	—
Lutheran Church/Missouri Synod	Yes	Yes	Yes
American Lutheran	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lutheran Church in America	Yes	Yes	Yes
United Presbyterian	Yes	Yes	Yes
United Methodist	Yes	Yes	Yes
Assemblies of God	No	No	No
Southern Baptist	—	—	—
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	—	—	—
Congregational	—	—	—

A permanent, independent, adjudicatory commission at each level or organization provides an orderly way to resolve differences resulting from administrative decisions, and encourages confidence in authority.

requests for declaratory opinions as well as to appeals.

### *Southern Baptist Convention*

**Structure.** Churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention are congregational in their form of government, but voluntarily cooperate in many ways for the common good. The 13,789,580 Southern Baptists are members of 36,079 autonomous congregations that fellowship together voluntarily in 1,209 district associations and 34 state conventions. On the average, there are 382 members to each congregation, 30 congregations to a district, and 19 districts to a state convention. Each church, district association, state convention, and agency is independent and sovereign within its own sphere. There is no Southern Baptist Church as such, but only Southern Baptist churches, each of which is an autonomous member of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The local church is preeminent. It chooses its own pastor, administers its own property, controls its own finances, and makes voluntary contributions to Baptist associations and institutions. Southern Baptist churches are strictly congregational, but at the same time cooperate effectively with other Baptist churches and agencies in wide

range of matters of mutual interest and concern, for the good of all. Baptist confessions or declarations of faith are likewise voluntary expressions. No general council, synod, or other organization requires uniformity, and no congregation is bound to observe any action of any other Baptist organization. There are 56,200 ordained ministers, or one to every 245 members. The ranking administrative officer of the Southern Baptist Convention is its president.

The Southern Baptist Convention meets annually. Each local church is entitled to at least one messenger, or delegate, plus an additional messenger for every \$250 it contributes to the Southern Baptist Convention, or for each 250 members in its congregation up to a limit of 10 messengers from one church. At each national convention approximately 18,000 messengers are present. Actions of the Southern Baptist Convention are binding on the national Southern Baptist Convention officers and agencies, but advisory with respect to individual churches and other associates and agencies. Like all other Southern Baptist entities, the Southern Baptist Convention is independent and sovereign in its own sphere. Its authority is derived from the churches whose messengers make up the corporate body of the annual session.

The Southern Baptist Convention pro-

vides Southern Baptists with a sense of community and fellowship, and a wide variety of services in education, music, publishing, and foreign missions which would not be feasible for local churches to attempt. The Southern Baptist Convention exists to assist the local churches in their mission, and serves as their fiscal agent in accomplishing their mutual projects. With an executive committee of 67 members to act for the Convention between sessions, the Southern Baptist Convention conducts its work through twenty boards, commissions, councils, agencies, and offices. It acts in an advisory capacity on all questions of cooperation between and among Southern Baptist agencies.

A tangible evidence of the value and effectiveness of the Southern Baptist Convention form of government, and of the dedication of its component congregations and their members, is the fact that the Convention conducts the largest Protestant foreign mission program in existence. In 1981 its foreign mission board was supporting 3,139 missionaries in 95 countries, with an additional 4,709 volunteer missionaries in 63 countries.

Each of the 34 state organizations operates its own colleges, hospitals, children's homes, and other institutions. The Southern Baptist Convention has no jurisdiction over their policies or their operation, but works with all of them and makes recommendations to them. The 1,209 local or district associations are likewise voluntary and independent. They provide close fellowship of the churches in their respective areas, and opportunity to work together in their special ministries.

### *National Association of Congregational Churches*

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Each Congregational Christian Church is independent and autonomous. However,

approximately 400 congregations voluntarily associate together in the National Association of Congregational Churches for fellowship, for a measure of unity and community, and in order to consult together on matters of common interest and concern. The stated objective of the denomination is to continue the congregational way of faith and order in church life. Many congregational churches are not members of the National Association of Congregational Churches. Statistics are not available for either the total number of congregations or their membership.

Congregational churches are included in this study because of their historic role in the United States, and in order to complete the spectrum of church polity with which this study is concerned. Their independence does not reflect non-recognition of other Christian bodies as valid witnesses to the gospel, for they "seek and extend . . . fellowship and cooperation with other churches." They simply prefer the congregational way of church life.

The National Association of Congregational Churches meets annually. It has an executive committee of 12 members who are "directors of the corporation." It serves association members through seven commissions, four divisions, and three standing committees. The executive committee, which elects its own chairman, acts for the association between the annual meetings, and its operation is subject to review and ratification at the next annual meeting of the association. It is "the association ad interim."

One of the standing committees is a nominating committee that submits a list of nominees to the member churches 30 days before the annual meeting. Its principal divisions are concerned with missions, finances, theological studies, and new churches.

Each Congregational Church functions as a complete church as well as a complete congregation. It has its own constitution, legal corporation, and officers and their

duties. It establishes a church council and the various boards and committees through

which the church conducts its various activities.

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#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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#### Reprints Available

Reprints of the task force report are available from *Spectrum* for \$1.75 per copy.

Pay by check made out to the Association of Adventist Forums.

### White on White: A Confirming Biography

Arthur L. White. *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years, 1900-1905* and *Ellen G. White: The Later Elmshaven Years, 1905-1915* (Volumes 5 and 6 of the author's projected 6-volume biography.) Vol. 5: 448 pp., Vol. 6: 472 pp., illus., bibl., index. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981, 1982. \$16.95 each.

reviewed by Frederick G. Hoyt

“If Ellen White becomes better known as an individual . . . as well as the messenger of the Lord,” Arthur L. White writes in the final sentence to the foreword of *The Early Elmshaven Years, 1900-1905* (volume five of his planned six-volume biography of Ellen G. White), “the objectives of the author will have been largely met” (V: 12). That is certainly a reasonable desire, but every reader of this and subsequent volumes, in this long-awaited biography of the author's grandmother should study the entire foreword carefully before reading a word of the text. The author's polite request in the title of the foreword (“An Explanation the Author Would Like to Have You Read”) should have been phrased more forcefully. In fairness to both the author and to himself, it is mandatory that any reader carefully study this introductory section.

Arthur White has aimed, with this massive biography, “to portray accurately the life and work of Ellen White as the Lord's messenger in the Seventh-day Adventist Church,” to “illustrate her prophetic mission,” to emphasize constantly “the major

role the visions played,” and “to present in the narrative, in a natural way, confidence-confirming features” (V: 9-11). Consequently, the reader must not make comparisons with doctoral dissertations or scholarly monographs. It is literature to nurture the faith of believers and not a contribution to scholarly debate. No new thesis is presented by Arthur White, but old convictions receive further confirmation, illustration, and elaboration. The author does not propose to initiate debate with scholars or critics, or to deal extensively with hostile sources. Arthur White's fundamental objective is that the reader share with him “a confidence-confirming experience.”

Using incidents from Ellen White's 1910 return voyage from Australia to America, Arthur White portrays Ellen “as a very human person” who could be both satisfied and annoyed (V: 10). She seemed “pleased with her room” (V: 16), and she was “a good sailor” (V: 17), but during the first Sabbath at sea she was disturbed by noise from the deck above her stateroom where passengers were “pitching quoits” (V: 17). At Auckland, sleep was impossible because of the “constant, thunderous roar” as the ship's coal bunkers were filled (V: 18); she continued to be bothered by quoit playing on the deck above her bridal suite and “at night, when everyone should be sleeping, there was dancing on deck over her head till the wee hours of the morning” (V: 23). Smoking especially irked her. Several times she asked men smoking near her to refrain, but they rudely told her that “she could go ‘somewhere else.’” An officer to whom she finally appealed stated that he was helpless (V: 23).

Her major complaint aboard ship con-



cerned her anxiety over anticipated celebrations: "As they neared the California arrival time, late Thursday night, Ellen White felt she could hardly endure the expected partying that traditionally marks the final day of a voyage" (V: 23). Both she and her son, Willie, prayed for a storm. Their prayers were abundantly answered when the sea became so rough that the party was cancelled, but she had to remain in her berth, too sick "to turn over" (V: 25).

Arthur White balances these brief glimpses of an "ordinarily human" Ellen with his efforts "to keep constantly before the reader the major role the visions (of Ellen White) played in almost every phase of the experiences comprising the narrative" (V: 11). Although references to Ellen White's visions are widely scattered throughout the two volumes rather than gathered into a single chapter, most readers will recognize the critical importance of this topic. Had God not communicated with her on a regular basis from her first vision in South Portland, Maine, in December 1844, through the years down to her last vision at Elmshaven on the morning of March 3, 1915, she would today be little more than a census statistic, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church would doubtless never have come into existence. The varied details concerning these visions, quite apart from their content, make for fascinating reading.

Ellen White apparently experienced several visions during her return from Australia. Direct quotations from her "instructor" during these visions indicate clearly that the speaker was Christ (V: 22). In her last vision during the voyage, she explained later in a letter to an unidentified person, "The Lord revealed Himself to me . . . and comforted me, assuring me that He had a refuge prepared for me, where I would have quiet and rest." She had fallen asleep in "a little anteroom" while filled with dread concerning "the next day's carousal," when she "was awakened by a voice speaking to her. As she gained her senses, she knew what it meant. 'The room was filled with a sweet

fragrance, as of beautiful flowers.' Then she fell asleep once more and was awakened in the same way" (V: 23-25).

For many years Mrs. White experienced frequent visions, but during her last years they became rare, usually appearing as "visions of the night" or dreams given in private. However, Arthur White mentions that a public standing vision occurred in Los Angeles during a church service on March 9, 1901, 14 years before her death (V: 57-58). A very special type of vision occurred several times during this period—but Ellen White declares that in previous years she had experienced this "a hundred times or more" (V: 53)—in which an unusual soft light (sometimes described as azure) filled the room or circled around in it, together with a sweet fragrance and beautiful music. These special occasions apparently were when Christ himself appeared to her without using the usual angel intermediaries. Thus, on one such occasion, "a Voice" spoke to her, declaring, "I am your Saviour (VI: 123-24; see also V: 23-24, 53-54).

Chapter one of volume five picks up the thread of Ellen G. White's long and complex life in 1900, and introduces us to William Clarence White, her son, clearly a very important figure in the period of SDA history covered by these two volumes, second only to his mother. But the reader must quickly comprehend that the author identifies him in a variety of ways and without any explanation of his varied roles: as just Willie or William; as W. C. White, Willie White, William C. White, or William White; or just W.C. or WCW. More unfortunately, Willie is a tantalizingly elusive figure in these pages. He appears in the book and was almost always present when critical denominational decisions had to be made, but Arthur White usually fails to define his specific roles and does not identify his official or *de facto* position. Neither is his relationship to his mother adequately delineated.

The complex relationship of Ellen White's two surviving sons, James Edson

(the elder by five years) and William Clarence, to each other and to their mother, and she to them, is an intriguing subject. What must have been longstanding sibling rivalry, and the elder son's profound distress at being supplanted by his younger brother, surface dramatically in 1906 when word reached Elmshaven that Edson in Battle Creek was declaring that Willie "manipulated" his mother's writings. The result was a six-page letter to Edson from his mother (which Arthur White characterizes as one of "cutting reproof and censure"). These longstanding difficulties, which Mrs. White called "the grief of my life," were finally resolved only when she reluctantly revealed that Christ himself had given her specific instructions on how to handle the situation, with Willie designated "My counselor" and Edson rejected (VI: 100-102, 355-57). In his discussion of this rivalry, Arthur White sides with W. C., his father, and subtly isolates Edson, using no nicknames for him (as he does for Willie) and never referring to him as "Elder," although I presume that both brothers were ordained.

Perhaps the third most important person in these volumes is John Harvey Kellogg. Index references to him are more extensive than for any person except Mrs. White. His dominant role justifies the extensive treatment given him by Arthur White, although some may feel that he unjustifiably has been made the *bete noire* of the story. It is simply incomprehensible that Richard Schwarz's excellent, scholarly, book-length study, *John Harvey Kellogg, M.D.* (based on his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Michigan and printed by Southern Publishing Association in 1970) is not among the sources used for these sections.

Arthur White relates several captivating stories in his biography, but chapter 23 of volume six, "The 1911 Edition of *The Great Controversy*," contains dramatic insights into the formation of *Great Controversy* and illustrates the horrendous difficulties created when research notes or manuscripts fail to give complete citations for sources used. In

this case, these problems were compounded by her "workers" quoting some materials incorrectly in order to make them, according to Mrs. White, "a little better" (VI: 311). It should be carefully read by all who seek publication, but especially by those interested in *Great Controversy's* circuitous road to publication. Apparently there were no formal citations in the original edition of *The Great Controversy* for the 417 quotations "drawn from seventy-five authors, ten periodicals, and three encyclopedias" (VI: 308). Either the manuscript for the 1888 edition had been lost or the citations had never existed there. Ellen White's memory of where she had copied these materials was apparently no help.

It simply boggles the mind that someone would not have urged Ellen White to adopt such a simple, and fairly obvious technique as writing down references to sources used, both as a help to those who would read the book as well as for her own use. Did no one want to check the accuracy or the context of a single quotation prior to printing and request a full reference from the author?

After some four months of research by a number of people in libraries in the United States and Europe, "almost all the quotations" had been located. Thus, "A minimum of quoted materials were left in quotation marks but without references" (VI: 308). Just how many quotations still remained without attribution is not indicated; even one should have been considered absolutely unacceptable (as it is for any college freshman paper in a reputable institution). None of this effort, of course, was directed toward finding the sources for paraphrased materials. There is no indication that anyone was embarrassed at the time by such problems.

These volumes are filled with fascinating minor details concerning Adventist history. In some instances these are interesting but easily forgettable items; in other instances readers may well wish for more information. "The author has encountered some differences of opinion in the minds of different readers as to the value of some of

the details presented," Arthur White states in the foreword of volume five. "It is his opinion that they make a major contribution to reading interest and rather intimate acquaintance with Ellen White, so they have been retained for the sake of the record" (V: 11-12). It is interesting to learn that Mrs. White's salary was only \$50 per month, but we are not told whether she received other allowances, "fringe benefits," or a "package deal," nor where this salary placed her on the denominational wage scale (V: 28). I leave other delightful trivia for the reader to look up: Ellen White's problems with false teeth (V: 142, 319); President Theodore Roosevelt bowing to her (V: 348); how she answered "a rather erratic church member who was on a crusade to save Seventh-day Adventists from the belief that the world is round" (V: 351); an unusual wedding at Elmshaven in 1906 (VI: 116); her shortest testimony (VI: 128); Loma Linda's original name (VI: 274); the make of the automobile in which Ellen White had her first ride (V: 144); and what she paid for her 1913 Studebaker (VI: 392).

The most puzzling aspect of this biography is the author's decision to write and publish backwards, beginning with the retirement years and working in reverse to the first volume on Ellen White's early years. Apparently it is the only multi-volume biography of an important American to have been produced in this manner.

Arthur White's justification for this procedure is twofold: (1) Some people involved in this period were still living and thus could be interviewed; (2) "It seemed that the issues that followed quickly on the turn of the century have a particular relevance to the church at present" (V: 10). The first reason is clearly lesser in weight, since any interviews could have been done and the results preserved for future use. Also, any one of critical importance for the years 1900-1905 must surely now be extremely aged, with a memory highly suspect as far as recalling accurate details of the past. The second reason must obviously have con-

vinced the author as he witnessed disturbing problems in the church, with historic parallels to the last years of Ellen White's life. Another factor may well have been opera-

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**Surely she would find this work by her youngest grandson a confirming witness to her long and productive life of faith and works.**

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tive: a major writing project is often begun with the section that presents the least difficulties. Arthur White would naturally feel most comfortable with that period of his grandmother's life that he had known personally as a child. Also, the author casually notes a fact that could only have been a source of great encouragement to any biographer: "The sources for this period (the Elmshaven years) are very full, almost overwhelming" (V: 10).

Arthur White is obviously concerned with possible charges that an inherent lack of objectivity disqualifies him as the author of this biography of his grandmother. Although admitting that "he takes pride in his relationship to the subject of the biography," he explains that "in the interests of objectivity (he) has, as in his public ministry, largely disassociated himself from family ties" (Foreword, V: 12). Some may seriously question whether this is a psychological possibility, but we have the author's declaration that "he has endeavored to relate himself to Ellen White as would any earnest Seventh-day Adventist in possession of a good knowledge of her work." Each reader must judge whether or not he has succeeded. He has, however, scrupulously adhered to his promise to not call Ellen White "Grandmother."

These disclaimers are not repeated in the foreword to volume six. Yet his opening sentence there is relevant and helpful: ". . . he [Arthur L. White] has spent his working lifetime involved in the custody of the Ellen G. White writings . . ." (VI: 9).

He succeeded William C. ("Willie") White as secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate upon his father's death in 1937, and retained this position until his retirement, so that he might devote full time to the writing of this biography.

For any author concerned with integrity and objectivity, truth should always be hotly pursued with the full knowledge that neither truth nor objectivity will be completely apprehended in this life. Such integrity, along with a clear statement from the author of his relationship to and involvement with the subject of his study, is all any reader can demand. Within the parameters established in the foreword to each of these volumes, and by his ancestry and dedicated work of a long lifetime, Arthur White has consistently maintained his integrity as an author.

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**I leave other delightful trivia for the reader to look up: the make of the automobile in which she had her first ride and what she paid for her 1913 Studebaker.**

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An inspection of the citations to sources in these volumes (using an informal but adequate system) and the bibliographies reveals that Arthur White has relied almost exclusively on the vast collection of primary materials in the White Estate, plus a few standard works by Adventist authors. Of the only 17 works by SDA authors other than Ellen White listed in the two bibliographies, plus the *SDA Yearbook* for 1889, all are by noncontroversial authors, except for *The Living Temple* by John Harvey Kellogg. They all are from SDA publishing houses with one puzzling exception: *The San Francisco Earthquake* by Gordon Thomas and Max Witts, published in New York in 1971 by Stein and Day.

Although Arthur White is undoubtedly familiar with recent relevant work by other

Adventist authors who have written concerning Ellen White—Ronald Numbers, Donald McAdams, Jonathan Butler, and Walter Rea—he makes no reference to them. Neither are there citations to relevant *Spectrum* articles, and surprisingly no references to Schwarz's fine new college textbook of denominational history, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*.

Arthur White's writing style is adequate and well-suited to his general Adventist audience. The high proportion of quoted materials set off in blocks may intimidate many readers; and yet these quotations probably constitute the most valuable part of the work, particularly those from the White Estate files not previously published.

Extreme caution should be exercised in using the indexes. They are highly selective in the items listed, and they are not complete even for those. In checking for specific items, a reader should scan the pages of the appropriate sections rather than rely on the indexes. Occasionally there are puzzling statements in the two volumes that in some instances might have been resolved by a more complete index, but doubtless many obscurities or confusions will be lessened when a reader can study the completed biography in chronological order. In a work of this length and detail (almost 900 pages of text in these two volumes), errors, either factual or typographical, are impressively few, and none is of major significance.

The pictures in both volumes illustrate the text well. Probably most readers will complain that there are not more—particularly of Ellen White. Especially fascinating are the dress and hair styles. Those still high collars must have been particularly uncomfortable for the men. Albion F. Ballenger sports an absolutely fantastic mustache, and W. C. White ranks as an impressive modern patriarch with his luxuriant beard and mustache, and his fierce eyes.

With one exception, materials in the appendices seem well-chosen and valuable to have in their original form. The materials on the Kellogg-Ballenger errors are clearly

relevant to Adventists of the 1980s, and the details on the settlement of Ellen White's estate are interesting and informative. However, the document headed "A. G. Daniells' March 15, 1910, Letter to a Former Pacific Union Conference President" is puzzling. What justification is there for printing this letter in full? Why should the union president's name be deleted here and in the text when virtually everyone else of any importance (and many minor figures) are named, including those, such as Kellogg and Ballenger, who are thoroughly denounced? It is difficult to know how this document relates to the text and when it should be consulted. It conveys a strongly supportive attitude on the part of Elder Daniells, the General Conference president at that time, of Sister White, but even more so, it seems, of Willie White. Is this why it was printed?

These are fascinating and important books for all mature, thoughtful Adventists. All six volumes should be carefully read as they appear, or, read in normal chronolog-

ical order once the set is complete. Perhaps the most valuable aid for the serious reader would be a copy of Richard Schwarz's nicely balanced and scholarly college-level denominational history textbook, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, which can be consulted with profit on almost any topic treated by Arthur White. At the very least, it would provide an invaluable historical framework for this lengthy and detailed biography.

Arthur White has performed an invaluable service for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. His work is unique because of his unique experience and position. The completed six volumes will constitute as near a "definitive official biography" of Ellen G. White as we are likely ever to have. Ideally this magnum opus will stimulate many articles and even a one-volume topical treatment of Ellen G. White.

"I know in whom I have believed," were Ellen White's last words. Surely she would find this work by her youngest grandson a confirming witness to her long and productive life of faith and works.

### Black Adventists Hold Ministry Meetings

by Penelope Kellogg Winkler

Over 400 Adventist black pastors, evangelists, and Bible workers from all over North America met on the Oakwood College campus during the 1983 Thanksgiving vacation for the annual Professional Growth in Ministry Meetings. These meetings, which were started in 1977 by E. E. Cleveland, now director of missions at Oakwood College, and Calvin Rock, president of Oakwood, are designed to promote, growth, morale, and professional pastoral competence within the black community in North America. Six years after the first of these meetings, they reveal the growth in the regional conferences and continue to sustain the morale of black Adventist workers.

An indication that issues of church politics were an important part of at least the informal discussions at Oakwood was a T-shirt worn by some attendees. The T-shirt both promoted the establishment of a black North American division, and decried the recent shutdown of the Riverside Adventist Hospital in Nashville, Tenn. (the only Adventist health institution operated primarily by blacks). Indeed, at an awards ceremony held as part of the meetings, C. E. Dudley, president of the South Central Conference, was presented with a plaque by E. E. Cleveland, chairperson of the meetings and former associate director of the General Conference Ministerial Association, for Dudley's valiant efforts to prevent the closing of Riverside.

Riverside Adventist Hospital, established in 1927, had been sustaining heavy financial losses over the four years it had been administrated by Adventist Health Systems/Sunbelt. While many black Adventists feel the General Conference should have done something to save the hospital, Riverside's problems did not lie in the lack of continued General Conference support alone. One of many factors involved was that blacks themselves did not patronize the small, 50-bed hospital when they felt they could get better care at larger, more modern hospitals. In June of 1983, when it was closed by Adventist Health Systems/Sunbelt, Riverside was \$4.5 million in debt, including the mortgage left on the new hospital building.

Some black Adventist workers emphasize that the mostly white-administered church is not adequately supporting its black-operated institutions in North America, and ask if Riverside has been allowed to shut down, which of the other institutions will be next? Apart from the regional conferences, the closing of Riverside Adventist Hospital leaves the Seventh-day Adventist Church with only four black-operated institutions—Oakwood College, Pine Forge Academy, the "Breath of Life" telecast, and *Message* magazine.

At the meetings this year other workers besides C. E. Dudley received plaques mostly for achievements that dramatized the rapid growth of the black Adventist community. Oscar Lane, a freelance evangelist, received an award for raising new congregations in Huntsville, Ala. and Atlanta, Ga. The new congregation in Atlanta consists of over 1,000 members. An award was also given to Joseph Rodriguez who, while still a senior at Oakwood, baptized 600 Liberians during the 1983 spring quarter he spent in western Africa. Finally, Randy

Stafford, pastor of a Kansas City, Mo., Seventh-day Adventist church, was recognized for baptizing 900 people in Zimbabwe during the summer of 1983.

This year's speakers included Roy Hartbauer, member of the department of communicative disorders at Andrews University, talking about ministry to the handicapped; Harold Cleveland, past president of the Allegheny West Conference and current director, for the regional conferences, of the Thousand Days of Reaping program, surveying the "Thousand Days of Reaping"; and Robert Olson, secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, discussing Ellen White's view of the sanctuary. Caleb Rosado, pastor of the All Nations Church in Berrien Springs, Mich., elicited the strongest response when he challenged black church leaders to help Hispanics and Asians, now suffering from the lack of visibility and representation within the Adventist church structure that used to plague black Adventists.

The 1983 meetings were coordinated by a planning committee which consists of E. E. Cleveland; Benjamin Reaves, chairperson of the religion department at Oakwood College; and Eric Ward, pastor of the Oakwood College Church. The annual Professional Growth In Ministry Meetings grew out of a one-day session on professional growth held at Oakwood in 1977 for black workers from the South Atlantic and South Central conferences. The meetings are now sponsored by all nine of the regional conferences, and the regional departments of the Pacific and North Pacific unions. For the first two years, workers from the regional conferences met without official General Conference sanction, violating an unwritten but generally observed church policy against unapproved inter-conference sessions. Although such meetings would usually be organized by the unions concerned, the regional conference presidents decided to go

ahead and organize on their own. The first two years, the General Conference sent unofficial representatives to observe only. By the third year of meetings, the General Conference had voted the Professional Growth In Ministry Meetings onto the official church calendar, finally recognizing them, according to E. E. Cleveland, as a "positive rather than negative force in black Adventist life."

E. E. Cleveland emphasizes the benefits of the meetings, and stresses the importance of both the "politics of information" and the "politics of growth" within the black community. Black Adventists are making a conscious effort to bring myriad new members into the church. Eventually, the size of the regional conferences may make black unions not only economically feasible, but politically necessary.

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Penelope Kellogg Winkler teaches writing at Columbia Union College and is editorial associate of *Spectrum*.

## Winds of Reform: Structural Transition in North America

by Bonnie Dwyer

By 1985, when the General Conference session is held in New Orleans, the denomination's structure will have received many critiques from study groups established by the church at various levels. The General Conference has already instituted a committee, chaired by a general vice president, to look at the structure of the world church, and current plans indicate that not only committees and commissions, but constituency meetings of conferences will study the topic as well. The Pacific Union has appointed a committee to consider how to

change church structure. In Mid-America a document has been prepared for the union officers which lists options for reorganization, and five conferences in the North Pacific Union have established committees to study church structure. Church publications and public meetings, like the national conference of the Association of Adventist Forums, are also exploring comparisons between the church and both corporate structural models and government structural models.

Francis W. Wernick chairs the General Conference committee on structure that began its deliberations January. The 21-member committee is looking at the need for unions, conferences, and divisions within the world church. The chairperson will give a report on the committee's findings at Annual Council in anticipation of action at the 1985 General Conference.

### *Pacific Union*

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In the Pacific Union, where the most extensive study has been compiled, subcommittees report in March on the "operational feasibility" of the recommendations given to the union officers last year (*Spectrum*, Vol. 14, No. 1). The 39-member committee created to study the recommendations divided itself into three subcommittees: Group 1 is looking at the local church and church ministry functions; Group 2 is considering the local conference and education and publishing systems; and Group 3 is examining the union level and finance and administrative functions.

Final recommendations from the large committee are expected by September or October 1984, according to Chairperson David J. Bieber. Adopting the commission's report will probably take several years, but Bieber expects to see a conceptual change in the way the church operates. Instead of ideas disseminating from administration to the churches for implementation, ideas will

work their way up from the local church. As a result of the suggestions being made by structural studies, the department structure at both the local and union conferences will be much leaner.

### *Mid-America Union*

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One of the most detailed proposals for change has emerged from the Mid-America Union. At the request of the union officers, a document was prepared by Dean Hubbard, president of Union College. His study listed publishing, trust services, and education as the areas with the most inefficiency. Hubbard said that the supervision of publishing and education could best be handled at the union level. Trust services could be placed at the union level, or, preferably in a union-wide foundation. Most other functions could be performed more efficiently at the conference level.

Hubbard then outlined three plans, listing in descending order the extent of reorganization each plan would require and the savings that would result. In the first, most extensive plan of reorganization, the union would be set up similar to a corporation with a president and a number of vice presidents overseeing various functions. "Supervision of the publishing and educational work would be done at the union level with no conference functions in these areas. A union-wide foundation would take over the present association and trust services activities. In this first proposal, only the Central States Conference would be discontinued, with a vice president for black affairs appointed at the union level. All other functions, including evangelism, would reside at the local conference level with a vice president for departmental activities exercising general supervision at the union level." In the first plan, Hubbard estimated Mid-America could save approximately \$2 million each year by eliminating



38½ to 40½ budgets annually (budgets include salary, secretarial support, travel, etc., for personnel).

Hubbard's second, more "moderate reorganization" proposal would maintain the present union structure, but limit supervision of educational work to the union level, with no conference positions in this area. "Publishing work would continue as both union and conference functions, but supervision would be reduced. The Central States Conference would be continued. A union-wide foundation would assume association and trust service activities. All other functions, including evangelism, would reside at the conference level with a director of departmental affairs exercising general supervision at the union level." This second, more moderate, plan would eliminate 26 to 28 budgets, and approximately \$1.4 million annually.

In Hubbard's third, most modest, reorganization plan, the present union and conference structures, including departments (except for education, and the association and trust services) would be maintained. Union departments would be reduced by attrition. Responsibility in these areas would move gradually to the local conference level, until a departmental structure similar to that in the previously described plans is achieved. Relying on attrition, this third reorganizational plan could eventually save the union approximately \$1 million to \$1.25 million annually. Hubbard's document is being discussed by Mid-America, but no action has been taken.

### *North Pacific Union*

**I**n the North Pacific Union, five committees are studying church structure. In addition

to the union committee, which was established after the Davenport discipline session by an expanded union executive committee, the Upper Columbia, Oregon, Washington, and Montana conferences have all established structure committees.

Morris Brusett chairs the 15-member union committee which has seven lay members in addition to Brusett. The committee organized in September, met again in November, and plans four meetings in 1984. Three subcommittees are functioning: a structural analysis committee, a business management committee, and a constitution and bylaws committee. The full committee must have its recommendations ready for the special union constituency meeting September 6. Therefore, Brusett wants to have the committee vote on final recommendations before finally taking them to the constituency.

The local conference committees in the North Pacific Union plan to give their recommendations to the union committee. Glen Aufdehar, president of the Washington Conference, said the Washington committee was created during the conference's May constituency meeting. Chaired by Art Ward, a layperson, the committee is examining staffing, overhead, and duplicated services. One member is thus able to pass along the thoughts and ideas of the conference committee.

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Bonnie Dwyer is a graduate student in journalism at California State University at Fullerton, and is news editor of *Spectrum*.

## Responses

### More On The Sanctuary

**T**o the Editors: It was the group of three articles under the general heading "The Sanctuary Revisited" (Vol. 14, No. 1) which prompted me to write.

Nearly seventy years ago I entered the Seventh-day Adventist Church by birth. Twenty years later I received the rite of baptism. Through the decades of childhood, college, and subsequent responsibility in the work of God, the return of each Sabbath day has reminded me that I am his by creation and redemption, that Jesus is my loving savior and sustainer, priestly advocate and judge, and coming king. Despite the foregoing, I am aware that no spiritual organization or system can justly lay claim to a monopoly of final truth, and that infallibility resides in the godhead alone.

The heart of one of our basic problems was surely touched by Richard Rice when he quoted in his original address: "All theology inevitably fails due to the greatness of its object." As Fritz Guy also emphasized, nothing is entirely adequate to describe or explain the transcendental. "Descriptive fallacy" must be recognized for what it is and yield place to "transcendental reality." God and his dwelling place are extra-dimensional, completely beyond our comprehension. We begin to grow up when we cease ascribing to God and his dwelling place human concepts in thought and dimension.

Richard Rice will forgive me, I trust, if I object to his statement that "Salvation does not simply cancel the results of sin, although it mitigates its consequences over the long haul." To me this part of his thesis is one of despair. It seems to suggest that though I may experience forgiveness and salvation through Calvary, the results of my conduct are extended in their effect on posterity, and therefore require blotting out at the end of history. Such teaching can do no other than dilute the joy of salvation. It may keep us mourning over our failures with family and friends, or our barren and deficient example to others of our daily acquaintance. The fact is overlooked that every individual born into this world is in the ultimate, personally responsible to God.

Any attempt to discover, through various forms of philosophical or systematic theology, a middle ground for what has become to many a misconception of divine legal procedure may in the end prove reversionary. Only the approach of sound, biblical exegesis is secure and its challenge irrefutable. The fact of final pre-Advent judgment stands firm, and every Bible-loving Adventist will anticipate it without fear, for grace in the heart produces far more than "ethical" (a cold word) behavior. What Dybdahl calls the priestly-assurance position has

never been separate from loving, willing conformity to God's standards of purity. This is both the message of Hebrews and of the Old Testament read "in the light of Hebrew"—an excellent way to study it!

Allow me to plead that we pray earnestly for an expanding view of the divine author's magnitude together with a realization of our insignificance. We may then be less inclined to denigrate those who in the opinion of some are without the pale of the "remnant."

Arthur W. Howard  
Somerset, England

### Pierson Requests Correction

**T**o the Editors: In an article by Bonnie Dwyer in the Volume 13, No. 3, March 1983 issue, you stated that while I was chairman of the Christian Record Braille Foundation the Board made a loan to Dr. Davenport. To keep the record straight—(1) I was never chairman of the Christian Record Board, and (2) the C.R.B.F. Board never voted to authorize such a loan.

Thank you for correcting this error.

Robert H. Pierson  
Hendersonville, N.C.

### Dwyer Responds

**E**lder Pierson suggests he did not know he had a conflict of interest when he invested with Dr. Davenport. (His personal loans to Davenport totalled \$18,000 began in May 1971 and ended in August 1977. He received 15 percent compounded interest yielding just under \$32,000.)

Perhaps he should have double-checked the institutional investment portfolios of the foundation just as we should have double-checked the yearbook on his board position. While Elder Pierson did not chair the Christian Record Braille Foundation board, he did serve on that 24-member body, and on Feb. 9, 1976, the foundation lent Donald Davenport \$170,000. Elder Pierson says the loan was made without the knowledge of the board. However, no one was publicly disciplined for making the loan without board approval following the report of the President's Review Commission.

Bonnie Dwyer  
Grand Terrace, CA

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