

Xmas Story  
New Constitution in North Pacific  
Right Turn At Annual Council

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# SPECTRUM

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Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

Volume 15 Number 4

## Women and The Church

Women of Mission  
On Mislaying The Past  
God as Woman?

ADVENTIST  
HERITAGE CENTER  
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## About This Issue

The sounds of Christmas open this issue. They have a distinctly Adventist ring, and we hope they bring you good cheer beyond the holiday season.

In the last few years, the number of members engaged in theological debate has increased. Now, in North America, we are in the midst of vigorous discussion about the nature of the church. The first few articles report on and contribute to that conversation. As the statement by the board of the Association of Adventist Forums indicates, the association and this journal have been, and will continue to be, a part of such study and reflection.

But, even if the structure of the church were to become ideal overnight, Adventism

would still face the challenge of deciding what beliefs to affirm at the end of the 20th century. This issue's special section explores what the church already says and might say in the future about women and about God in the light of the female experience. The pieces by Otilie Stafford, Bertha Dasher, and Kermit Netteburg reveal that women have been more prominent in Adventism's past than they are in its present. Nancy Vyhmeister demonstrates that those women who do hold responsible positions include more women outside North America than many realize. Finally, James Londis shows how beliefs about God's gender concretely affect Adventist life and doctrine.

We thank Otilie Stafford for her invaluable help in coordinating the special section on women.

—The Editors

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# Xmas Carol

by Steven Spruill

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Major Rapp stared into fire. Slowly he became aware of the weight of the tumbler steadied on his right thigh. His fingers curved around the glass without feeling. He looked down at the tumbler with sour amusement. It was a painfully tacky thing, handed out by Wards a few seasons ago "free with your purchase of 10 dollars or more." It was appliqued with a Christmas tree, three presents beneath, and an amorphous angel there on top.

Rapp raised the glass to his mouth. The Laphroaig burned down his throat, settling in his stomach with the weight and heat of a tiny sun. He waited, keeping the glass at eye level, until the warm rays began to spread through him. That was better. Starting to get a little cold, there.

He looked through the glass at the fire, then set it down, unnerved by the image of the tree going up in flames. I should have gotten a tree, he thought. But then again, what's the point? Edward and Barb and the kids won't make it this year. What about Joey? It would be great to see "Brat." On the other hand, it might be depressing. Rapp imagined the line of patter. *Hey, big brother, when you gonna drop this army stuff and get hitched? Am I going to beat you to the altar too?*

Or maybe Joe would bring his latest girl-

friend. That would keep him quiet about marriage. Good old Joey, always with someone, never alone. Rapp felt a surge of affection. Good for you, Brat. Good for you. *You get married. Give me some more nieces, or maybe some nephews.*

Suddenly Rapp felt almost desolate. He sipped more of the scotch and hitched his chair closer to the fire. The soles of his boots started to heat up, then the knees of his pants. The heat triggered a memory of 'Nam, of sitting out in the elephant grass waiting for action. If you squatted down there in the sun too long without moving, the material of your fatigues would begin to scorch where it stretched tight over your knees.

Bodies spoiled fast in that heat . . .

Rapp groaned and pressed back into his chair. He looked around the room, frantic for a distraction, but it was too late. Behind the glassy, blurred surface of his eyes, he saw the row of bodies his men had pulled out of the tunnel that time outside Dak To. Bonelessly limp. Caked with dust and blood. S'posed to be Viet Cong. Couple of grandmothers, bunch of kids. Men too, yes, don't be so hard on yourself. Probably *were* Cong. Somebody gunned down eight of your men from that copse of trees. They either vanished into the tunnel or thin air.

Grandmothers.

*And eight good men.*

Who said he didn't have company for Christmas?

Rapp refilled the glass and sipped carefully, just bringing back the warmth, then stopping.

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Steven Spruill is a graduate of Battle Creek Academy and Andrews University. He received his doctorate in clinical psychology from The Catholic University of America. Spruill is the author of five novels published in the United States and abroad. One of his two previous short stories was published in *Spectrum*.

Slowly he became aware of the carolers. At first he had to cock his head and listen intently. Yes, definitely singing—coming from down the street, growing more distinct. *Hark the herald angels sing, Glory to our newborn king.* Then: *O little town of Bethlehem . . .* Rapp hummed along. He was struck by a thought. There were no secular songs. *Could it be?*

He went to the front window and inched the drape aside. The group stood under the streetlight next door. Their breath rose in glittering plumes through the falling snow. They finished and trudged through the drifts to his house. Rapp saw a man and woman come down the walk from next door and hurry to catch up with the singers. The woman's arm was cocked up at the elbow, her mittened hand clutching something. An oval can.

Rapp threw back his head and laughed. He could see the can in perfect detail in his mind. Soft blue, and that torch. Dear Lord, he could almost smell it—the thin, pulpy scent of cardboard, slightly damp from the falling snow. His fingertip tingled with a memory of the oval of tin at the top of the can, that sharp edge where it tucked down inside.

Ingathering. Seventh-day Adventists.

Not *Ad-vent*-ists; *Ad-vent*ists.

The group began singing again. Rapp heard the tramp of booted feet up the front steps. The doorbell buzzed, scraping the nerves of his stomach. He walked slowly to the door, anxious and vaguely angry, saying *be nice*, over and over to himself.

He opened the door and let them give the spiel, half-listening to the familiar words as the cold night air bit into his face and the carols flowed up and around him. He looked impatiently past the woman and man to the singers. Several middle-aged adults and seven or eight high school kids. The kids were probably from Takoma Academy. Good voices, young and sweet and clear.

“. . . and for our world efforts with the poor and needy,” the woman said. He

looked at her again. Her cheeks were flushed with the cold—her only makeup. “Any amount you can give would greatly help our work.”

Rapp looked at the can and almost smiled. There was the dollar bill sticking up for bait. No, a five! So inflation had hit Ingathering, too.

“When you help all these people, do you also try to convert them?” he asked.

The woman looked uncomfortable, and Rapp silently cursed himself. The man moved protectively closer to her. “Well, we do try to bring the gospel of Jesus to people, sir, but we help them whether they accept it or not.”

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**What could he say? *Yes, I'm a GS-14 with the U.S. Department of Religious Persecution; I'm taking notes on your activities. Or he could cackle wickedly and twist his mustache and say I'm a humanist—Boo!***

---

Rapp felt the anger creeping back. He thought of winos in a chapel, waiting stoically through the sermon while the soup heated up in the kitchen one room over. Men so chronically malnourished that they could hardly distinguish hunger any more. Their cells whimpering for food as they sat there on the hard pews. But if you gave them the soup first, they'd fall asleep during the sermon.

Fair is fair, Rapp thought bitterly. Everything has a price.

He remembered the NATO hitch—that time in the London tube when the scruffy guy sat against the subway wall playing Bach on his guitar. Such beautiful control of pitch and timbre, such precise, flowing rhythm. His guitar case had been open at his feet, sprinkled with 10- and 50-pence pieces. A lot of people just hurried past. You could listen free. But he'd given that guy a pound, and it had probably gone for drugs.

And the carols *were* beautiful.

Rapp pulled a five from his wallet and put

it in the can.

The woman gave him a beautiful smile. "Thank you, sir. Merry Christmas."

The carolers stayed put out front for almost 10 minutes, and he stood in the open doorway, nodding to the music and humming along. How long since he'd sung? Collegians, way back at Andrews? It seemed impossible. That was what happened when you left the church. You stopped getting furious and arguing mentally with the sermons. You stopped having to cringe while the Sabbath School leader and the visiting missionary and the head elder and finally the preacher tried to shake the last mite out of the congregation's pockets.

And you stopped singing.

Rapp stood in front of the fire. He picked up the Laphroaig and sipped and listened to the carolers recede down the street. He found himself in the dining room, with his ear pressed to the glass, to pick up the last of the sound.

Then he was in his jeep, rolling out the driveway. He followed the carolers, staying about 50 yards behind as they went around the block. He had to crack the plastic window to hear, and the cold seeped in, eating away at the feeble warmth of the jeep's heater. Each time he had to move to keep up, the crunch of snow under his wheels drowned out the singing. He kept his eyes hungrily on the group, watching them spread out between houses, then bunch up again. Two of the kids, a high school guy and girl, always stayed close to each other. Rapp felt warmed by them. They were young—no more than academy sophomores. The closeness was the guy's doing. He edged carefully toward the girl at each stop, always ending up with his arm just touching hers. She seemed unaware of him, giving her full attention to the lead caroler. The poor kid's dying to hold her hand, Rapp thought, grinning.

*What am I doing out here?*

*You know what you're doing. You want to sing with them. You want to be with them.*

Rapp realized that someone was standing beside his door—two of the adults from the group. They were leaning down to the window—they wanted to talk to him. He opened the door.

One of the men was his age and the other older. The older man spoke. "Is there something we can do for you?"

Rapp stared at him, uncomprehending. Do for him? Oh no, were they going to try to convert him now?

"We noticed you've been following the carolers," the man went on. His voice was polite, but the barest bit challenging, and then Rapp understood. The men were worried that he was up to some nefarious purpose. What could he say? *Yes, I'm a GS-14 with the U.S. Department of Religious Persecution. I'm taking notes on your activities. Or, I'm a worldly person looking for someone to influence. Or he could cackle wickedly and twist his mustache and say, I'm a humanist—Boo!*

Instead, he said, "Your singing is so beautiful, I just wanted to keep listening."

The man's face receded a few inches. Rapp saw a fleeting expression of distaste before a smile covered up. "Thank you, sir," the man said.

*What's eating him? My breath—he smelled booze on my breath.*

"Why don't you join us?" said the younger man.

Rapp saw the older man frown.

"No. Thanks, but I'd better not."

"Please. We'd love to have you."

Rapp curbed the jeep, cut the engine and got out. The older man stalked ahead, back to the group. The younger stayed with him, and Rapp saw that he was limping. Under the streetlight a distinctive pocking of scars stood out on his cheek. Shrapnel.

"You were a medic in 'Nam?" Rapp said.

The man looked at him in surprise. "Yes. And you used to be an Adventist, didn't you?"

Rapp almost stopped. How did this guy

know that? Ah—because he'd given him the two little clues. Who else would know that the guy must have been a medic instead of a combat soldier? And current Seventh-day Adventists did not have single malt scotch on their breath. Rapp smiled. "Touché" he said.

Then they were with the carolers.

**I**t was wonderful. People said hello to him and smiled. He stood in the back and sang each remembered carol, picking up confidence and strength. The old pipes were still pretty good for a 37-year-old. Back in Collegians, Ferguson had always said that tenors didn't hit their stride until 40. Dear

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**He opened the door and let them give the spiel, half-listening to the familiar words as the cold night air bit into his face and the carols flowed up and around him.**

---

Jesus, it felt so good to sing, to hear and feel your voice coming out, blending with the rest, strong and clear. To get the appreciative looks from the others in the band, and feel proud—and warm, even though your nose hairs were beginning to crackle and your toes to go numb. The sky was black, the houses looked warm and safe, roofed in snow, molten gold at the windows pouring out when the doors opened.

*Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn king.*

Rapp remembered all those times he'd gone caroling at Andrews Academy just to

be near Sharon Ann DeVries. She never even knew he existed. But he would sing for her, and his face would be warm with adoration—for her, for the soft and silent dreamland of snow-muffled houses and trees, for the black velvet sky and snowflakes glittering like mica in the streetlights. God was up there somewhere in those days. It was a thrill to work for him, while gazing covertly upon his most splendid creation: the sweet, virtuous, and unattainable Sharon Ann.

Rapp saw the boy take the girl's hand at last, mitten against mitten. She let him hold it, and Rapp felt tears springing to his eyes.

Rapp left them as they closed their route back at their schoolbus. The blue can with the torch had filled up. They'd made a big haul. He turned down the offer of hot cocoa in the church basement and watched them clump into the old yellow bus with Takoma Academy written on the side. They waved at him through the windows and he stood waving back until the glass fogged over, graying out their faces.

By the time Rapp got back to his chair in front of the fireplace, it was almost 11:30 p.m. The fire had died to embers. His throat felt pleasantly furry and he knew he'd be hoarse tomorrow. His toes were wet and numb. He stirred up the fire and put another log on.

He closed his eyes and saw the two mittened hands clinging together. He poured a fresh glass and raised it in a toast—to the two kids, and to the scarred medic who'd formed the bridge. How about the stern fellow with the nose for booze? Rapp gave a tolerant chuckle. Yes, him too.

"To my old friends," he murmured.

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# Laity Transform North Pacific Constitution

by Terrie Dopp Aamodt

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On Sunday, Sept. 16, 1984, delegates to a special constituency meeting of the North Pacific Union Conference voted sweeping changes in the union's organizational structure and form of governance. The changes were recommended by the 15-member Commission on Governance and Management Structure, which had been set up in the wake of the Davenport discipline proceedings and had worked for a year to develop a new union constitution and make related recommendations. Commission chairperson Morris Brusett, director of administration for the state of Montana, called the changes "a major step in bringing representative government to the union level."

During the summer of 1984, as the commission finished its report to the special constituency session, the implications sent ripples of concern through the union office all the way to the General Conference. Although the commission chose to retain the union and work within its structure, the changes outlined in its report were comprehensive: they affected almost every phase of the union conference organization. The report called for streamlining the union,

retaining only those functions that were best performed on a regional basis, and recommended the reassignment of the responsibilities of many of the union departments to the local conference level. Items in the commission's report that received the most attention from the delegates to the special constituency session, however, were constitutional issues dealing with the way the union was to be governed. When the session was over, a number of significant modifications had been put in place:

- Lay representation to union constituency meetings and on the union executive committee was significantly increased;
- The origin of the selection process for union executive committee members was moved from the union constituency session to the local conference level;
- The nominating committee for choosing union officers at union constituency meetings was eliminated, and the union executive committee became the nominating committee; the executive committee was also empowered to regularly evaluate union officers and to discipline or terminate them when it deems necessary;
- Of the union staff, only the union officers (president, secretary, and treasurer) were retained as voting members of the union executive committee (eight seats previously filled by union departmental directors were redistributed);
- Broader, more accessible provisions

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were made for calling special sessions of the union constituency.

In general, the changes recommended by the commission were designed to operate the union as a crisp administrative unit and to create an independent, disinterested union executive committee free from conflicts of interest.

### First Major Change Since 1901

These changes were particularly significant because they marked the first substantial modification of the union conference structure since it was established at the General Conference Session of 1901, a structure that Ellen White declared to be "God's arrangement" (*Testimonies*, Vol. 8, p. 232). The delegates to the constituency session were reminded of this fact by keynote devotional speaker William Bothe, secretary of the North American Division and one of the three representatives from the General Conference at the session: "I say this morning how thankful we ought to be for the principles of organization given to this church by God. These principles are scripturally sound and, I believe, will endure to the very close of the church's work here upon this earth . . . From the earliest history of our church, the counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy have guided and directed in the development and in the application of these principles. Consequently, we can say with the utmost conviction that the basic principles of church organization followed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church are as truly inspired as are the basic beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that we hold so dearly." Also, according to Bothe, any proposal that counters the General Conference working policy is counter to the desires of the church as a whole, since working policy is developed by representatives from the entire world church: "the working policy becomes the voice of the entire church."

The commission had anticipated and addressed this issue in its final report: "One

of the lessons of sacred history is that the structures God uses in dealing with mankind have not remained static . . . Ellen G. White led in the organization of the church in the 1860s, but in 1901 she urged reorganization because of changing times and conditions. Thus a particular form of organization is not to be insulated from the need for future modification or refinement."<sup>1</sup>

### Union Streamlining Already Underway

The commission was not the first body to suggest streamlining union structure. That movement began in the North Pacific Union at the regular 1981 constituency meeting, when delegates voted to establish the North Pacific Union Conference Department Restructure Study Subcommittee. That subcommittee issued its recommendations in 1982, and as a result the union began a program that was to pare departmental staff by nearly a third over three years.

The movement to restructure the union further, however, gained momentum in the wake of the Davenport discipline proceedings.<sup>2</sup> The Davenport affair helped focus the attention of many North Pacific Union church members on a range of issues broader than mere economic efficiency, including holding union officers more accountable, a workable mechanism for administering discipline, periodic review of administrative performance, increased lay involvement in union governance, besides a more closely monitored system of financial management. These concerns became so strong in the spring of 1983 that the Davenport discipline committee, consisting of the union executive committee plus 18 additional lay members and four retired ministers, called a special meeting to address them. At the recommendation of this expanded committee, the Union Executive Committee voted to form a Commission on Governance and Management Structure and

voted to call a special constituency meeting for Sept. 16, 1984, to act on the commission's recommendations.

The commission, established primarily by local conference executive committees, was made up of 15 members, eight of them church employees. When the group met for the first time in September 1983, it recognized the need to address and resolve "the widening credibility gap and the need for healing" that existed in the North Pacific Union at that time. Probably neither the commission members nor the union conference officers realized at the outset how far that task would take them.

The commission created four subcommittees: structure, management, constitution, and theological considerations, which spent six months developing their proposals. The union officers cooperated with the commission by hiring its vice chairperson, Connie Lysinger, a management consultant from Portland, Ore., while the report was being prepared in order to coordinate the information generated by the commission and its subcommittees.

### *The Proposals and the Response*

As the commission completed its preliminary work in the spring of 1984 and reported to the union executive committee and to officers of the General Conference, it became immediately apparent that the solutions it proposed consisted of much more than adjustments here and there. General Conference officers noted that the changes had implications for the entire world field, and tried to persuade the commission (and the union officers) to postpone the union special constituency meeting until after Autumn Council 1984. This would have enabled the General Conference at Autumn Council to adopt the report from its own study commission, the Commission on the Role and Function of Denominational Organizations, and to coordinate

reorganization throughout the world field. Many members of the North Pacific Union Commission feared that the General Conference commission would not go as far as was necessary to change the decision-making process, or that a non-substantive General Conference report would be used to discourage changes. The postponement of the special constituency meeting was vigorously debated in a union executive committee meeting in the spring of 1984, but eventually the original timetable was retained.

During the summer, commission members consulted with the GC Role and Function Commission and modified their preliminary report. Charles Bradford and Neal Wilson also responded to the June report in a telex to Morris Brusett dated Aug. 17. After commending the devotion and commitment of the commission members to their task and to their church, the writers continued: "In several areas we see dangerous departures from the accepted recommendations of the General Conference *Working Policy* . . . While some minor variations may be acceptable, we resist anything which would tend to create disharmony in our world organization now or in the future."

The memo went on to clarify the position of the General Conference on church organization:

The authority of the General Conference is to be the authority of the entire church. . . . The union represents a united body of conferences within a larger territory. (While the General Conference and its divisions embrace all unions and churches in all parts of the world and join together the whole worldwide fellowship into a united body.) A union speaks on behalf of the General Conference or its division and must reflect the actions and recommendations of the General Conference, thus uniting all local organizations.

The unions do not create themselves. They are created in counsel with the General Conference and are ultimately accepted by actions of the General Conference in session and can be decertified

as a member of the world sisterhood of unions by action of the General Conference in session.

Among several parts of the proposed constitution that concerned General Conference officers was one crucial item: the way the union executive committee was selected. With the local conferences selecting committee members, instead of their being selected at union constituency sessions, the flow of authority between the local conference and the union conference was altered. Bradford and Wilson stated that the proposed method bypassed the constituency system of government.

### *The Final Report*

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The North Pacific Union commission held its final meeting after the release of the GC Role and Function Commission report. It used this report and the suggestions from the Bradford/Wilson memo to modify its first draft in an attempt to cooperate as fully as possible with the General Conference. The method of selecting the members of the union executive committee, however, remained the same. The commissioners felt that this measure was essential to ensure the existence of an executive committee that would be responsive to the local conferences funding them.

In addition, the commission retained its recommendation that the newly constituted executive committee serve as the nominating committee at union constituency sessions. The commission saw the existing nominating committee method as basically unworkable at the union level; the territory was too large for a reasonable proportion of the nominating committee to vote knowledgeably. The constitutional changes were finished on Aug. 24 and the report was mailed to the delegates. The stage was set for the Sept. 16 meeting.

The delegates had done their homework. Many had attended regional briefing sessions held by commission members and union officers during the summer. It was

important that the delegates had time to study and digest the proposals, which filled over 100 pages of the final report. In addition to the streamlining procedures already mentioned, the report also recommended merging the union conference and that part of the union association that managed church-owned assets, and it provided for the possibility of combining the offices of union secretary and treasurer in the future.

The commission recommended that four departments be retained at the union level: public relations, human relations (ethnic affairs), religious liberty, and education, with the provision that precise staffing levels be determined after further study. It advised that various support departments be retained, at least for the time being. Finally, it recommended that the functions of several departments be shifted entirely to the local level: loss control, ministerial, physician and dentist recruitment, stewardship, health and temperance, personal ministries, Sabbath school, and youth. The commission adopted the suggestion of the GC Role and Function Commission that any union-level functions of the outreach departments should be supervised by one individual, the director of church ministries. The publishing department was left untouched for the time being, since other studies of the Home Health Education Service are currently being conducted.

In both the union constituency delegations and the union executive committee, not less than 50 percent of the membership would consist of those who were not church administrators, departmental secretaries, or pastors. This "lay" category was defined to include denominational teachers and hospital employees, who had not been provided for in existing representation schemes.

### *The Constituency Session*

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Richard Fearing, North Pacific Union Conference president, introduced the chairperson for the day: Dr. Jack Bergman, academic dean

of Western Oregon State College and member of the Oregon Conference committee and Walla Walla College board of trustees.

The first substantive discussion occurred when the delegates began considering Article VII, Section 2b, which states that the General Conference would be limited to no more than 10 percent of the total delegates at a union constituency session (the proportion recommended by the model constitution in the General Conference *Working Policy*). Several delegates questioned the change in the language (from five percent to 10 percent) between the preliminary report and the revised report, and an amendment was made to the original motion, restoring the five percent amount. Elder Bothe protested that this change would be "contrary to the spirit and the basic organization philosophy when it comes to the relationship between the General Conference and the unions." When the vote was taken, however, the amendment passed, restoring the five percent figure.

### *The Sticking Point*

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**D**uring the early afternoon, the main issue of the day came up for consideration. Article IX, Section 1e, spelled out how executive committee members were to be chosen. The constitution defined three groups of committee members: the ex-officio members (union officers, the Walla Walla College president, and local conference presidents); representatives of institutions; and the local conference representatives, determined by a formula based on conference membership and including a substantial number of lay members. The new constitution stipulated that these local representatives be selected by the local conferences. This marked a major change from the model constitution, which has been closely followed in the past by the union conferences. The commission pointed out that under the previous system, the

choice actually lay in the hands of as few as two nominating committee members from a given conference at a union constituency meeting. Furthermore, the nominating committee existed for only a few hours—there was no permanent body to be held account-

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**The changes recommended by the commission were designed to operate the union as a crisp administrative unit and to create a union executive committee free from conflicts of interest.**

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able for less than ideal choices. The local conferences know their own people better and are better equipped to evaluate their qualifications, the commission maintained.

At this point, F.W. Wernick, vice-president of the General Conference and chairperson of the Role and Function Commission, took the floor to warn delegates against adopting a measure different from the rest of the church. In a speech of about 15 minutes, Wernick outlined the General Conference view of how authority operates in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

"The body that elects is of greater authority than those who are elected by it," he said. Thus, using the local conference to select the union executive committee diminishes the authority of the union committee.

"The union executive committee should have more authority than the officers," he added. But when the president is chosen by the union constituency and the committee by the local conferences, his superior, the committee, is selected by an inferior body.

Then a dialogue occurred between Wernick and Oregon delegate Dr. Gordon Miller. The exchange illustrated the frustrations of some of the North Pacific Union constituents on the one hand and the General Conference's concerns for unity on the other.

Miller first asked if the union had authority over the conference.

Wernick said yes: "This delegation here has been appointed by your conference com-

mittee to act as a body. When it created it, it gave it authority to act on behalf of all the conferences. When this body creates an executive committee to act on its behalf, then the local committees are responsible to it. If that weren't true, you wouldn't really have a union."

Miller's second question was whether the General Conference had the same authority over the unions.

Again, Wernick said yes.

Miller then asked a third question. "Why is it, then, that after the General Conference stated it would put out disciplinary measures in a previous problem, that when it came down to the final act that they found out that they did not have the authority to discipline the people in the union?"

"That's a very good question," Wernick replied, "and that's a very interesting part of our structure." Then he explained that although there is a direct line of authority flowing from the local church to the General Conference, the only authority the General Conference has is to guide the world field. He said the GC's authority "is the acknowledgement on the part of all the unions that the General Conference represents and is the sum of all the churches, and we voluntarily give that authority our allegiance. It's not a line authority. The line authority between a union and a local conference is a dotted line; it's not a line authority. But we would hope that if we're going to have unity in the world field that we would be willing to work together with those bodies that have been created to give us guidance and counsel. That's what I mean by authority—not the usual authority as you think of it in a corporate body."

### *The Last Word*

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After more than an hour of discussion, a delegate moved to end discussion and conduct a vote. The chair, since he had already acknowledged him, gave Fearing the floor before accepting the motion. Fearing said

that he would make a few comments, and then the delegates would have to vote as their convictions led. While acknowledging weakness in the present system, he said, "I am not in harmony with the philosophy behind the commission report [on this point]. . . . A committee selected this way would really not be independent from the local field and able to give that responsibility. . . . If you decide that you want to vote this today, you know that it is out of harmony with working policy of the General Conference. . . . We don't want to be out of step with the world body of our churches."

When the issue came to a vote, it needed 143 votes for the necessary two thirds majority. The measure received only 124 votes.

### *Another Try*

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After some discussion and failed motions, a motion was presented by Gerald Winslow, professor of theology at Walla Walla College, and Henry Lamberton, also from the Walla Walla College theology department and a commission member as well: the local conferences would "nominate" (rather than "select") potential union executive committee members; each conference delegation at the union constituency meeting would vote on these names in caucus; the names would then be taken to the floor for confirmation; and vacancies occurring in mid-session would be filled by the local conferences, in order to avoid the conflict of interest that would occur if the union committee filled its own vacancies.

Richard Fearing announced his "complete harmony" with this amendment because it preserved "the constituency principle while still greatly enhancing the information and recommendatory process." Richard Hammill, retired GC vice president, praised the amendment as "a good compromise . . . one that will keep us more in harmony with denominational policy as a whole and yet

give plenty of opportunity for the input by the local conferences."

## *Finishing the Work*

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The amendment passed easily. During the next hour several more sections of the constitution were passed; another long discussion occurred over the issue of having the executive committee serve in place of the eliminated nominating committee at the union constituency meetings. Again the question of violating General Conference policy was raised. Commission member Alvin Kwiram, chairman of the chemistry department at the University of Washington, responded: "It's not clear to me that it is [major]. We're talking here about procedural things. The basic elements of all those aspects of the organization have been preserved. We were very sensitive to that. We think this is a modest change, and all of the changes that have been recommended here are extraordinarily modest. They have been designed to make the system work more effectively, to involve more of the membership of the church, in order to accomplish the task that we're all about."

This amendment passed, and soon afterward the delegates passed the rest of the constitution and the remainder of the recommendations as a whole. A transition

document drawn up by Jim Balkins, an attorney on the commission, and Dave Dunca, legal counsel for the North Pacific Union, spelled out the details of how the governance of the union would be conducted during the changeover from the old constitution to the new one.

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**Although the commission chose to retain the union and work within its structure, the changes outlined in its report were comprehensive and affected almost every phase of union conference organization.**

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The transit document stated that the new constitution would take effect immediately, and that most of the changes will be in place by the next regular union constituency meeting, scheduled for 1986. Because of the revision of the process for nominating and ratifying members for the union executive committee, the committee will be chosen at the 1986 constituency session. That fact will make it necessary for the outgoing executive committee to serve as the nominating committee for that session. During the 1986 session, all union employees on the outgoing executive committee will be replaced by nominees from the local conferences to avoid the potential conflict of interest involved. The new executive committee will be put in place during the session and will then function under the new constitution.

# Pacific Union Considers Greater Lay Representation

by Bonnie Dwyer

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When the Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee commissioned a study of church structure in 1981, it was interested in finding ways to make the church more efficient. Now the union executive committee faces the challenge of whether to accept sweeping changes recommended by the study, changes that would dramatically increase lay representation in both the constituency of the Pacific Union and in the executive committee itself. The Phase II report of the union's church structure committee recommends that "more than 50 percent" of the union constituency and "at least 50 percent" of the 46 member union conference executive committee be laypeople. Furthermore, one-half of the 50 percent non-laypeople in the constituency committee should be active pastors. Before a union constituency meeting, a nominating committee would meet to compile a list of nominees for posts on the executive committee and in the union administration.

Presently, the Pacific Union Executive Committee is composed of 49 members, 16 of whom are officers or department directors in the union conference. There are 10 (about 20 percent) laypeople on the committee. The number of laypeople would therefore increase by 13, and these people would take the place of the union departmental directors who currently serve on the committee. The union conference personnel

would be limited to the three administrative officers and three ethnic minority ministry directors.

The laypeople on the committee would be named in numbers proportionate to the size of their conference. For example, the Arizona Conference would have two laypeople and the Southeastern California Conference would have five on the committee.

Although the 100 pages in the structure committee's latest report contain recommendations for local congregations and conferences, it is the union that would be most affected. That is a change from the Phase I report. That earlier document recommended completely phasing out the unions in North America. The present report explains that "the Pacific Union Conference Church Structure Committee/Phase I reported considerable constituent antagonism to the union conference. Emotions ran strong among persons interviewed or who completed questionnaires: they openly called for the elimination of the union conference level of church organization. However, this committee, having spent many additional hours in discussion and research on the issue . . . believes that the union conference is the most logical and economical place to accomplish these tasks—the most important being executive-management functions involving coordination and oversight."

The Phase II report suggests that what is now a publishing department and a Home Health Education Service be consolidated at the division level and eliminated from the unions. The committee also wants to see Sabbath school, personal ministries, com-

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munity service, inner-city services, health, stewardship, and youth departments phased out at the union level and replaced by a "church-ministries function" to operate a speakers' bureau and engage in planning development. Public affairs and communications would be merged into one, as would the treasury and the association of the union. Staff for special ministries for minority ethnic groups would continue at the union level. A board of education and an information-systems function would be established.

The conferences would organize conventional departments into two functioning groups known as "nurture" and "out-reach." At the congregational level, the committee recommends appointment of a church administrator, "salaried, full- or part-time or volunteer," responsible to the pastor and church board for the fiscal and physical business of the church.

But the Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee can hardly expect other levels of the organization to accept the report's recommendations if the executive committee does not accept them, including changing the executive committee. It will be hard to ignore the report. The union authorized \$100,000 to support its creation, set up hearings in 26 churches across the union, and compiled the results of questionnaires distributed at each of those meetings. Dr. Bieber, the chairman of the church structure committee, says that the hearings and questionnaires caused the Phase II committee to

make some changes in their recommendations. The Phase I report recommended a presidential system of administration, while the Phase II report does not. Before the hearings, the committee had not addressed the topics of elections or communication. In the Phase II report, the committee recommends that "all meetings of the Executive Committees and standing subcommittees and all meetings of other conference and union-conference boards be open to attendance by any constituent on a space-available basis."

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**The Pacific Union Executive Committee faces the challenge of whether to accept sweeping changes that would dramatically increase lay representation.**

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When the Phase II report was presented to the Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee in September, 1984, the committee acknowledged only that they had received the document. It voted to pass the report on to the General Conference for consideration at Annual Council along with the Pacific Union Executive Committee's notes of concern. The Pacific Union committee planned to thoroughly review the recommendations in November, 1984, once it was clear what the General Conference voted on the recommendations from its Role and Function Committee. The next regularly scheduled constituency meeting of the Pacific Union is in March, 1986.



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# Right Turn On The Road To General Conference

by Bonnie Dwyer

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The General Conference solidified its authority during the 1984 Annual Council in what some observers called one of the most significant Annual Councils in the history of the church. Two General Conference officers independently praised the Annual Council for bringing the church back to "basics." A North American conference president said this Annual Council had, by tightening policies, re-established church authority.

"Brakes were applied to liberal tendencies," said Robert W. Olson, secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate. "There was retrenchment theologically, financially, and organizationally. And I would estimate that 95 percent of the attendees were happy with this trend toward conservatism." In an action unusual for a General Conference president, Neal Wilson underscored this trend in two documents he wrote and presented at Annual Council. The paper concerning North America was officially incorporated into the Annual Council document on church structure, and the other paper, which concerned the Association of Adventist Forums and *Spectrum*, was included in the minutes of the council (see appendices A and B).

Three hundred pages of material accom-

panied a full agenda. Judging by the amount of discussion they aroused, the two topics of greatest interest were the role and function of denominational organizations and the role of women in the church.

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## *Role and Function of Church Organizations*

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The importance of unity in the church was emphasized early. The core of the first document discussed at Annual Council—the report of the commission on the role and function of denominational organizations—was unity, which, according to the commission "is basic to the nature of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." The report was adopted by the Annual Council. The 1985 General Conference Session will be asked to adopt an enabling action, which will enact the recommendations, starting with the 1985 General Conference Session.

The document explains that divisions are not to consider themselves independent entities: "As its name 'division' implies, it is a section of the General Conference, not an 'association' or 'joining' of church organizations, as is the case for unions or conferences."

Although North America will be able, like other divisions, to refer to a president, officers, and committee of the North American Division, "it is unwise to plan for North

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Bonnie Dwyer holds a masters degree in journalism from California State University, Fullerton, and is the news editor of *Spectrum*. This report was written with the assistance of other *Spectrum* writers and editors.

America's becoming a division 'like all other divisions.' North America, in the Seventh-day Adventist setting, is unique." The 12-page document on a "Special Relationship" between North America and the General Conference, written by Neal Wilson, stresses that "we should not regularize" the North American Division, because, among other reasons, "people expect the General Conference to have the last word and to speak for the church with ultimate authority." (see Appendix A, pages 22 to 24).

The need to strengthen the authority of church leadership was reflected in the remarks of others on the floor of Annual Council. Walter D. Blehm, president of the Pacific Union, said that the church faces the real challenge of congregationalism. He pointed out that referring to "model constitutions" for unions and conferences implied that they were optional: "We have to have constitutions we can't play with." He reminded the delegates that the Pacific Union was going to have a constituency meeting in 1985, and in 1986, five conferences in his union would also be having constituency meetings.

However, Blehm did not at this point, nor did anyone else at any other moment during the plenary sessions, refer to either the report of the Pacific Union Commission on Church Structure or the recent actions of the North Pacific Union Constituency in adopting a new union conference constitution. In fact, the issue of representation was not explored to any extent.

The primary change in structure approved by the Annual Council was the merging of four existing departments—personal ministries, stewardship, youth, and Sabbath school—into one new department called "Church Ministries." According to Les H. Pitton, associate director of the General Conference youth department, the North American Division Committee has considered recommending that the department of church ministries be organized according to age groups: children, youth, young adults, and adults.

## *The Ordination of Women*

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Maintaining the unity of the world church remained a theme throughout the second major discussion of Annual Council. With the adoption of the form and function document, the Annual Council had also affirmed that unity must be preserved by having "one ordained ministry serving the worldwide church." That, said Neal Wilson, allowed very little flexibility for some parts of the world to ordain women pastors before other areas did.

Consequently, delegates were asked by the General Conference officers to approve the establishment of a commission with two representatives from each world division that would meet in the spring of 1985 to recommend to the 1985 General Conference whether or not the church should ordain women. The decision of the 1985 General Conference Session would "be definitive and should be accepted as such by the church worldwide."

The subject was on the Annual Council agenda because of activities in North America. During 1984, three women pastors in the Potomac Conference baptized 12 people in six different baptismal services. The General Conference officers had met in September with the Potomac Conference executive committee to convey their concern about these baptisms. (see *Spectrum*, Vol. 15, Nos. 2 and 3)

When the subject came up for discussion at Annual Council, an unusually large number of visitors filed into the balcony of the Takoma Park Church. On the main floor many delegates had copies of an anonymous document titled "Equally Different—The Other Side," which argued that ordaining women was "un-Biblical according to God's divine ordering of all things in His universe." Neal Wilson started his hour-long introduction of the subject by noting that in the previous few hours his office had received many phone calls from across the country concerning women in the ministry.

The relationship of North America to the rest of the world quickly re-emerged in this discussion. Charles Bradford emphasized that the entire church had voted many actions that had encouraged women in North America to enter ministerial training in college, continue their studies at the Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary (some on scholarships approved for any ministerial student), and then devote years of their lives to the pastorate. The world field he said, must appreciate the feeling of these qualified, experienced women—and their male colleagues—when these fine gospel ministers were not allowed to be ordained along with their classmates and fellow workers.

Ronald Wisbey, president of the Potomac Conference, said that the young women who were pastoring in his conference included individuals who had been in seminary classes with his son, and that he considered that they had as sincere a call as his son had to gospel ministry. He wanted to make it plain to the delegates that the Potomac Conference was not requesting that the women pastors in the conference be

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**Gerald Christo, president of the Southern Asia Division, said that he had heard more opposition from North America to ordaining women than he had heard from abroad.**

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ordained at this time, but that they be authorized to baptize. In his final comment of the day, he wished that other delegates could be with him the following Sabbath when he would ordain only the male half of a husband and wife pastoring team. They had been classmates at the seminary where she graduated at the head of her class. They had each pastored churches successfully, but only he would be ordained. "Pray for us," Wisbey concluded.

At one point, Earl Amundsen, president of the Atlantic Union, attempted to amend the motion to specify that certain types of

people be included on the commission. Wilson intervened to say that some of the people to which Amundsen referred were on a list of some 45 to 50 people (including some 10 women) that he already had in mind, "but if you are going to load this with North Americans, then we will have a problem, because 80 percent of the membership is outside of North America. I hope that you defeat this amendment." The delegates did.

Some of the presidents from overseas tried to reassure North America that the world might not be as opposed as North America thought to the full participation of women in ministry. Dennis K. Bazarra, president of the 187,000-member East African Union Mission, said that he had just met with a woman in his field who had brought in over 1,000 members. She and others would like to become ordained ministers. Gerald J. Christo, president of the Southern Asia Division, said that he would be recommending that his division committee send a woman as one of its representatives to the commission. Listening to the discussion at Annual Council he had heard more opposition from North America to ordaining women than from abroad.

Several retired officers of the General Conference spoke to the issue. None of them—or any other speaker, for that matter—spoke against the ordination of women. Duncan Eva, a former vice president, suggested that the few months before the General Conference Session was too short a time for the church to inform and educate itself. He was concerned that closing the doors at the 1985 session would divide the church. He then went on to declare that he hoped the church would move on this issue. According to Eva, as one looks at the history of the church, one can see that it took a couple of hundred years to achieve the first part of Galatians 3:28: "There is no Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." It took another 1800 years for the church to conclude that Paul's injunction prohibited slavery. He hoped that now, in

the 20th-century, the church would recognize that in Christ there is neither male nor female. Richard Hammill, another former vice president, asked if the Biblical Research Institute documents on the subject would be distributed widely. Wilson replied that they were available on request, but no decision had yet been made to actively disseminate the essays.

Even though there were six or seven speakers waiting to approach microphones, a motion to end discussion was successfully adopted by over two-thirds of the delegates. In his extended final remarks, Wilson pointed out that neither the Bible nor Ellen White clearly said yes or no to ordaining women. In Wilson's opinion, the church would have to make a decision one way or the other, but that some feel that it is difficult for the church to approve an action without clear support from Scripture.

### *Incorporating the 27 Beliefs Into the Baptismal Vow*

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In a relatively quiet session, the Annual Council took a significant step toward expanding the beliefs individuals must affirm to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Annual Council approved the concept of printing the 27 fundamental beliefs on each baptismal certificate. The Fundamental Beliefs and Baptismal Certificate Harmonization Committee also recommended that the baptismal certificate be revised "with only the slight adaptation necessary to phrase it as a personal response to the *Fundamental Beliefs*." During the discussion, Walter J. Scragg, president of the Australasian Division, pointed out that such a step could be seen by some as asking new converts to personally affirm an extended statement, which might be interpreted as affirmation of a creed. The Annual Council adopted the recommendation, but before new members will be confronted with the

revised baptismal form asking them to avow the 27 fundamental beliefs, the world divisions will provide suggestions, to be considered by the Biblical Research Institute, "before final approval" by the 1985 Annual Council.

The Annual Council also voted to delete from the *Church Manual*, chapter 18: "Appendix: Outlines of Doctrinal Beliefs," a listing of 28 points written before the 27 fundamental beliefs were adopted by the 1980 General Conference Session.

The differences between the baptismal vow now affirmed by new members and the 27 fundamental beliefs are substantial. The statement of fundamental beliefs is over four-and-a-half times the length of the present baptismal vow. Several of the 27 fundamental beliefs expand what already appears in the baptismal vow, but some 11 sections of the fundamental beliefs are barely mentioned in the baptismal vow, for example: creation, spiritual gifts and ministries, and the Millennium and the end of sin.

Interestingly, the baptismal vow does not even mention Ellen White's name. The fundamental beliefs does, saying that "her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction." The baptismal vow uses the word sanctuary once, but never refers to 1844 or the 2300 days. The fundamental beliefs has a 252-word statement on Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

### *Association of Adventist Forums and Spectrum*

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Tuesday morning, Oct. 16, Neal Wilson, speaking on behalf of himself as president of the General Conference, read a prepared statement giving his reasons for resigning as denominational consultant to the board of the Association of Adventist Forums (see Appendix B, pages 25 to 27).

A few days before Annual Council, Wilson had informed the association's executive committee of his intentions. He made it plain at that time that the essay, "A Church Of, By, and For the People," (Vol. 15, No. 2), was the straw that had broken the camel's back. He listened intently to points made by members of the executive committee, but repeated his intention to make a statement concerning the Association of Adventist Forums and *Spectrum* to the 1984 Annual Council.

In his statement, Wilson argued that the Association of Adventist Forum and *Spectrum* had strayed from their original purposes, to the point where it was necessary for him to make what was in effect an indictment of them both. A theme throughout the statement was a concern that the association and its journal were undermining confidence in the organization and leadership of the church. Neal Wilson went further, saying that he does not agree that it is necessary or productive to listen to or discuss all viewpoints, whether positive or negative. He also deplored the fact that *Spectrum* seems to advocate pluralism.

At several places in the statement, Wilson made qualifying and clarifying comments. He made plain that he was not suggesting that people stop reading *Spectrum* or stop participating. (He pointed out that he himself reads *Spectrum*.) He also emphasized that many, if not most, of those involved with the Adventist Forums and *Spectrum* are not radicals, but actively support the work of the church, including its outreach and soul-winning activities, and that they should not be condemned for their involvement with the association.

Although Neal Wilson said at the outset that he did not want any discussion or action by the Annual Council; at the end of Wilson's speech Robert Olson, executive secretary of the White Estate, moved that the statement be adopted. The chairperson of Annual Council repeated Neal Wilson's wish that no action be taken. Olson then moved, and it was voted, that the statement be

included in the minutes of the Annual Council (see pp. 28 to 30 for a response by the board of the Association of Adventist Forums).

## *Theological Freedom and Accountability*

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Annual Council, culminating a process extending over several years, adopted statements providing guidelines for assessing divergent views and for disciplining dissidents.

The first statement concerned employees in churches, conferences (including kindergarten to grade 12 institutions), and non-academic institutions: "It is understood that disciplining . . . a church employee who persists in propagating doctrinal views differing from those of the church is viewed not as a violation of his freedom, but rather as a necessary protection of the church's integrity and identity."

The recommended procedure for disciplining an employee moves from private consultation between the chief executive officer and the worker to a seven-person review committee, two of whom are selected from five people suggested by the worker.

The second statement concerns employees in Adventist colleges and universities. It says that in church-related institutions of higher education, academic freedom "is more important than it is in the secular institution, not less, for it is essential to the well-being of the church itself."

The statement also recognizes that freedoms are never absolutes. The statement does not call for teachers to sign any creedal statements, but says that the *Fundamental Beliefs* define the doctrinal position of the church and "it is expected that a teacher in one of the church's educational institutions will not teach as truth what is contrary to those fundamental truths."

Rather than spelling out discipline procedures for dissidents, the statement

acknowledges that each college and university should have its own clearly stated procedures to follow in dealing with such grievances.

## *Literature Ministry Coordinating Board*

In a potentially far-reaching action for North America, Annual Council established a Literature Ministry Coordinating Board. Its mandate is broad: "To coordinate all phases of the literature ministry in the North American Division." To ensure that it supervises both production and distribution, the action says that the board's responsibilities specifically include "coordination, supervision and evaluation of all areas of the literature ministry, such as publishing houses, Adventist Book Centers, subscription liter-

ature field programs, and its Family Health Education Services and Home Health Education Services."

The constituency selecting the 37-person board will be the General Conference committee, with the General Conference vice president for North America serving as chairperson. A full-time executive secretary will be chosen by the constituency. Members of the board must include the general managers of both the Review and Herald and the Pacific Press Publishing associations, and all the North American Division union presidents and publishing directors.

Few specifics were provided at Annual Council as to the substance of what the board will do, but it is specifically instructed to evaluate and report on the execution of recommendations made by the North American Division Publishing Work Taskforce. Some observers expect that the board

## *A Church on the Move*

The Adventist Church is in motion. In the last few years, yearly baptisms have significantly increased, as has the number of people able to hear the message. The Thousand Days of Reaping, which ends at the General Conference Session next June, 1985, will be a success. But it is only part of a trend which will carry on long past next June. A few revealing statistics follow:

- *Membership:* 4,261,116 (as of June, 1984). The membership as of June of 1985 is projected to be over 4,500,000.
- *Baptisms:* If the current rate of baptisms continues, the church will be able to count 1,100,000 new members for the Thousand Days of Reaping (which began on Oct. 1, 1982). Included among the baptisms are 10,000 new Adventist Church members in China in the last four years (with 3,000 to 4,000 baptisms in one province alone). In North America, 60 non-Adventist ministers have been baptized into the Seventh-day

Adventist Church—an average of one a month for the last five years.

- *Media:* When the radio station the denomination is building on Guam is finished, 2,500,000,000 people—more than half the world's population—will be able to hear its signal. All of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China will be within its reach.

- *Adventist Health Systems/US:* Gross revenue for its 10,517 hospital beds last year was \$1.8 billion, which includes a profit of \$59 million.

- *BECA:* Business Executive's Challenge to Alumni has raised \$4.9 million over the last four years by asking Adventist college alumni to match challenge grants to their alma matters. Over those four years, the percentage of alumni supporting North American Adventist colleges has quadrupled, from 6.5% (16.5% less than the national average) to 25.4% (1.4% over the national average); the total amount of money given has tripled. BECA predicts that \$1.4 million will be donated for the 1983-1984 academic year alone.

will eventually create a new system for printing, selling, and distributing Adventist books and magazines in North America; others question whether the committee, given its composition, will be able to make significant changes.

## *Financial Affairs*

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William A. Murrill, undertreasurer of the General Conference, told Annual Council that the 1985 world budget of \$148.7 million is a decrease of \$9.3 million, or 6 percent from the 1984 budget. General Conference treasurer Lance L. Butler said the strong United States dollar is a major reason for the decrease.

Butler said tithe in North America increased more than \$16.8 million in 1983 to a total of \$292.7 million—an increase of 6.09 percent from 1982. Overall giving for missions has remained relatively steady.

However, Butler pointed out that on the world scene, world mission funds have declined steadily from a high point in 1930 of 33.2 percent of the tithe dollar to 9.2 percent at present. Actual dollars have declined since 1980. By contrast, the internal funds used locally, and not appearing in the world budget, have been fairly constant.

Other observers cited the level of debt in the Adventist Health System as a potential problem. The total debt for the Adventist Health System/U.S. is reportedly approaching one billion dollars.

## *Tithing*

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A document outlining Aguidelines for routing tithe aroused some vigorous discussion. The heart of the document insists that, regardless of the expressed wishes of the tithe-payer, the pre-determined percentages of tithe must be paid to various levels of church administration: "The local church only has authority to accept and remit tithe funds to its local conference/mission treasury," and tithe paid directly to higher levels of administration must be returned to the appropriate local conference. If a person refuses to allow his or her tithe to be allotted in the approved manner, then "the tithe shall be returned with an appropriate explanation and an appeal to the person to be reconciled to his church and/or conference so that his tithe can be returned to the Lord's storehouse in the usual way."

The church continues to grow in number of members—well over four million. There seems to be little question that the delegates to the General Conference Session in 1985 will be able to celebrate 1,000 days of 1,000 baptisms a day. Tithe and offerings in North America remain constant, and more and more of the world divisions are becoming financially self-sufficient. The organized church would appear to have every reason to be confident of its strength.

Nevertheless, if the 1984 Annual Council is any indication, many leaders of the church are determined to use the 1985 General Conference Session to protect the church against possible threats. The road to New Orleans should prove to be a conservative one.

## The Rationale For A "Special Relationship"

by Neal Wilson

### *Historical Background*

The relationship between the General Conference and its North American section (division) must be seen and understood in light of the historical development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is our belief that the Advent Movement came into existence as the direct result of God's plan and His own prophetic timetable; and that the Lord, by divine design and providence, selected the place for the Advent Movement to be born and anchored. We also believe that God specified the mission and the message that should be taken to the world as a final appeal. Then to make sure that the Seventh-day Adventist Church would accomplish its mission in proclaiming the gospel to all the world, we believe that the hand of God was visible in the establishment of an organization and structure to achieve His purpose and eternal design of preparing a "people" for the second coming of Christ.

The Lord does not leave anything to chance. Only God, who knows the end from the beginning, could have foreseen the dramatic developments on the North American continent. It was from this new continent, the home of two young nations, Canada and the United States, and each composed of diverse peoples from many countries, that heaven's final global mission was to be launched. It must be remembered that the United States of America was a land of religious liberty, a land of freedom of conscience, a land of opportunity, a land where slavery was denounced and a Civil War was fought to establish the value of each person; a land of uncalculated natural resources; a land of enormous financial strength—and a land of world influence.

As Elder Bradford so strikingly stated in a recent article entitled "North America at Midpoint," "Something altogether new was happening on this virgin continent toward the end of the 1260 days of the church's wilderness journeyings. The way was being prepared for God's final movements on earth. His last appeal to the human family. The end-time message must be cradled, nurtured, and brought to term. If the new nation was 'conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal,' it was for the purpose of providing fertile soil where the plant of the final message and mission might quickly take root. Seventh-day Adventists have always felt this way, whatever their citizenship or national origin. They have felt that God worked a miracle in bringing about the perfect environment for the 'woman' to emerge from the wilderness to speak to the last generation of earth's history. The

rest of the story is well known. Sturdy New England farmers, learned clergymen, and ordinary citizens joined in intensive Bible study and came under the unshakable conviction that the hour had struck. The work must be given. . . . Audacious, daring, bold, they did exploits for God. They believed in the divine mandate and claimed the whole land for the kingdom of God."—*The Adventist Review*, August 9, 1984.

### *Controversy Over Formal Organization*

A series of unusual events led up to the historic and prophetic date of 1844—a resurgence of Bible study, an interest in prophecy, the "Millerite" movement, the great Advent awakening, and a recognition of the beginning of the hour of God's investigative judgment. As a result companies and groups of Seventh-day Adventist believers emerged and then came the organized churches. Because the pioneers were afraid of falling into the pattern of formalism, spiritual weakness, loss of sense of mission, as seen in the established and organized churches of their day, it was some time before they were willing to organize their churches and companies into conferences.

Those who opposed organization or "order" argued that it would trespass upon the believer's individual Christian liberty and some even said that such a church organization would immediately become Babylon. Those who set forth the benefits of organization pointed out that it would, (a) prevent confusion, (b) control fanaticism, (c) unify the standards for acceptance into the gospel ministry, (d) facilitate the holding of prophecy [sic], and (e) make provision for the support of the work.

Ellen White, as early as 1853, urged the establishing of the church upon "gospel order". After almost a decade of lively discussion, the Michigan Conference, the first of the state conferences, was organized October 6, 1861. In 1862 four other conferences were organized—North and South Iowa, Wisconsin/Illinois, and New York. In January of 1863, Iowa was combined into a single conference and Ohio and Minnesota were also added to the sisterhood of conferences.

### *Significance of 1863*

The General Conference was organized on May 21, 1863 in Battle Creek, Michigan. Delegates from six state conferences gathered for this historic meeting—Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, New York, Ohio, Minnesota. The constitution, after being discussed item by item, was adopted in its entirety. The introduction and the first Article read as follows: "For the



purpose of securing unity and efficiency in labor and promoting the general interest of the cause of present truth, and of perfecting the organization of the Seventh-day Adventists, we, the delegates from the several State Conferences, hereby proceed to organize a General Conference and adopt the following constitution for the government thereof:

“Article I. This Conference shall be called the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.”

As one reads the constitution it becomes clear that it was an unincorporated body brought into existence to administer the general affairs of the church and especially to pursue its evangelistic aim, “to teach all nations the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and the commandments of God.” This body was to coordinate, to guide and to administer the work of the conferences in the North American Division in order to achieve the objectives of carrying the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people. (See *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10, p. 495.)

### **Formation of Unions and Division**

The North American church and the General Conference have enjoyed a mutuality and a close partnership that has continued for 120 years. The General Conference had an exclusive and direct operational relationship with the conferences of North America for almost forty years. Then in 1901 unions were introduced to assist the General Conference in administering the growing world work. Finally in 1919 there is reference to the North America Division, even though nothing had been formally organized.

Unions are accepted and voted into existence by the General Conference in session. They do not create themselves as independent, free-standing entities of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The General Conference in session decides how it will relate to, and coordinate, the activities of unions, which are a part of the General Conference world family of unions and which form the basis and constituency upon which the General Conference itself exists. At no time must any other organizational structure “short-circuit” the relationship between the General Conference/Divisions and the unions upon which the General Conference/Divisions constituency is built.

In the development of the world church and growing out of the 1901 reorganization, it was clearly recognized that a “special relationship” should continue to exist between the General Conference and its North American Division. There was an interesting experiment with a North American Division Conference between 1913 and 1918. It soon became evident, however, that this was an unworkable arrangement. In 1922 the General Conference Session finally established what appears to be God’s leading and providence in connection with the relationship between the General Conference and its divisions.

### **Uniqueness of North America**

At this time the General Conference decided to oversee and administer the work in the North American Division and established what has come to be known as a “special relationship.”

Quoting once more from Elder Bradford’s article: “He planted His last-day movement in North American soil. The work developed progressively—first there were churches, congregations, little flocks scattered here and there. Then there were districts and state conferences, groupings, sisterhoods of churches. At the same time institutions—publishing houses and sanitariums—were developing and organization was growing. The time came when organization must be further perfected, and there was the General Conference, a marvelous organization that brought the branches together in a united whole. The branches of the great tree that first flourished in North America soon spread to other parts of the globe, penetrating its land masses and island communities. But always the North American church provided resources—both personnel and material—until now we see ten great world divisions, all of them sections of the one General Conference.”—*Ibid.*

The relationship that exists between the General Conference and its North American Division is not one that is shared by any other division. In a sense, it is a privileged relationship and one that has served this church well. For that reason, it seems unwise to alter this arrangement. For the reasons already expressed and for others that are yet to be shared, we feel that “the special relationship” should be maintained and strengthened and that we should not “regularize” the North American Division. To one who is willing to carefully review the historical background, it must be evident that the North American phenomena is unique and cannot be equated with any other section/division of the General Conference.

If the General Conference, with headquarters physically located in North America, wishes to relate to the North American unions in a way that differs slightly from unions in other parts of the world, it should not be considered strange. It should be admitted, as a statement of fact, that the General Conference needs North America! The resources in terms of manpower, finance, and leadership influence are important in carrying on a world program. The General Conference needs a base of strength in order to adequately perform its function of holding together a world organization and structure which is being attacked from within and from without.

And so, it seems to follow that the General Conference should take the responsibility and initiative in working out how it will relate to the unions and the activities in the North American Division. This decision should not be determined by popular opinion or plebiscite.

Ultimately, relational decisions must be based on what is perceived to be the best approach in order to fulfill our world mission. Our fathers and

predecessors in denominational leadership showed great wisdom when they recommended this "special relationship". As they sought divine guidance, the conviction developed that the General Conference could not give successful and harmonious leadership to the world church if, in a given division territory, there were two centers of final appeal and authority. The present consensus seems to indicate that time has not changed this basic principle. This is especially true when it comes to the North American Division, but would also obtain if the General Conference world headquarters had been located in the territory of one of the other General Conference division territories.

There are a number of factors that constitute valid and logical reasons as to why a "special relationship" exists. To illustrate, let me identify the following items:

1. Shared office building.
2. The North American Division staff is a part of the General Conference staff and not separate from it.
3. Combined budget.
4. A mutually administered retirement fund.
5. Unified financial system and record keeping.
6. Only in the NAD does the General Conference operate certain major institutions.
7. The General Conference needs, and has always had, direct access to the manpower pool and human resources in the NAD. This is vital in order to recruit an adequate number of missionary appointees.
8. The NAD Board of Higher Education serves as a coordinating body for General Conference institutions of higher education.
9. The NAD Publishing Council gives coordination to General Conference publishing houses.
10. The NAD Adventist Health System/US offers help and guidance to health care institutions operated by the General Conference.

It is obvious that we are interlocked in a "special relationship". The fact that the world headquarters of the church is located in the North American Division territory and has been here from its inception, makes it impossible for the world headquarters to be silent on issues that exist or arise within the church or in the public arena. Public authorities and church leaders expect the General Conference to take positions on matters of current interest and controversy. People expect the General Conference to have the last word and to speak for the church with ultimate authority. This demands a close working relationship between those in the General Conference (world headquarters) and those assigned to give leadership to the North American Division.

## Conclusion

The General Conference is the *highest authority* and the sum of *all the parts*, not only philosophically, but also (1) organizationally, (2) legislatively, (3) adminis-

tratively, (4) judicially, (5) in terms of policy and (6) church standards. This being the case, it seems that it should be the desire of the conferences, unions, and any other organizations to do everything possible to weld the whole family together and strengthen the hands of the General Conference. It is reassuring to note that in the interviews conducted by teams sent out by the Role and Function Commission to all parts of the world, there was a theme which was universally endorsed—keep the General Conference strong!

It would be folly to do anything or say anything that would in any way weaken the influence and limit the leadership capabilities of the General Conference. If the nature of our structure is changed, it could very easily fragment the Seventh-day Adventist movement and lead towards regional or national churches. This human, and rather natural, tendency must be avoided. To do anything that would encourage congregational government would be a move in the direction of disintegration, and the inability to achieve our divine mission.

The General Conference is not something isolated from administration and leadership. It must not become just a "United Nations General Assembly" or a Council of Seventh-day Adventist Churches. It must have the ability to influence and motivate and also require accountability. The church must remain united, and this requires strong, centralized authority derived from all of its parts.

When I visited the spiritual and tribal leader of the Ashanti people in Kumasi, Ghana, I learned much from the philosophy shared by this great statesman. As I left the palace, he gave me a very interesting memento to take with me. It was a carving made from the heart of a tree that grows in the Ashanti forests. His Highness the Asanthe, Nana Opoku Ware II, told me the significance of this carving. It depicts the five fingers of a human hand securely holding an egg. The moral of this is that one who is in authority must hold the egg securely enough so that it does not fall to the ground and be destroyed, but at the same time not hold it so tightly or carelessly that the egg might be crushed within the hand of the holder. This, I think, represents the type of protective authority which the General Conference needs to exercise, and it also cautions against being overly authoritarian.

At the very foundation of Adventism is unity, cohesion and oneness. We feel that the "special relationship" which exists between the General Conference and its North American Division is vital to maintaining world unity.

We believe that the message, the mission, and the organization go hand in hand. To remove any one of these three items would seriously threaten the redemptive effectiveness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in fulfilling the destiny of God's global prophetic movement. The counsel of the Lord is that we should "Press together, press together, press together."

## Statement On Association of Adventist Forums and Spectrum

by Neal Wilson

This statement is intended to clarify the relationship between the Association of Adventist Forums (the AAF) and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Apparently considerable ambiguity and misunderstanding exist at the present time. This being true, it is both necessary and wise to make this statement, and also because so many individuals and groups have asked if Church leadership has given approval or endorsement to the activities of the AAF and its journal, *Spectrum*, and if so, why?

To begin with, perhaps a little historical background will help.

In early 1967 a small group of Seventh-day Adventist graduate students and a few college and university teachers felt that they needed a forum in which to discuss perplexing questions that arose as a result of research and scholarly pursuits.

In addition they expressed disappointment that their church seemed slow or reluctant to express itself with regard to some of the social issues and injustices typical of the 60s. In reaching out for answers and in order to formulate suggestions and possible solutions that might be useful to the Church, they felt the need to organize loosely structured discussion groups. They stated that some young people felt that there were no existing Church channels where controversial subjects could be discussed. Some of these young people were discouraged and were being alienated through frustration and isolation. It was felt that an organization such as was being proposed could provide fellowship and also offer a forum for discussing such subjects and in this way serve a redemptive purpose. A little later in 1967 the initiators of the AAF came to Washington, DC and discussed this matter with me and several in the North American Division and General Conference. They indicated they were anxious to work in harmony with the Church and did not want to create problems or be misunderstood. They were seeking counsel from Church leadership and wanted to maintain a proper relationship with the Church.

The stated aims and objectives of the proposed association were:

1. To provide an organization which will facilitate fellowship between graduate students in different geographical areas of the United States.
2. To stimulate evangelistic contact through cultural interaction with non-Seventh-day Adventist scholars.
3. To serve as a point of contact between graduate students and the Seventh-day Adventist organization, and to encourage and facilitate the service of these students to the church.

4. To encourage pastoral guidance for Seventh-day Adventist students on non-Seventh-day Adventist campuses.

5. To maintain an organ of communication wherein Seventh-day Adventist scholars may exchange academic information, thoughts, and opinions.

Membership in the association, in one form or another, was to be open to all Adventist teachers, graduate and undergraduate students, and persons with professional interest.

Knowing most of these early organizers as committed Seventh-day Adventists and believing that their motives were honorable, we were impressed that perhaps this could be a useful venture. When I presented this matter to the General Conference Officers and North American union presidents at the time of the 1967 Annual Council, it was not felt wise to take any official action authorizing, or approving, or opposing this new organization. We reasoned that the group could organize such an association without even discussing it with us. Since they wanted to stay in close touch with Church leadership in order to avoid misunderstanding, and since they were seeking counsel and guidance, we felt it was desirable to maintain contact with them on an unofficial basis.

The record of our discussion at the 1967 North American Division Committee on Administration, reads as follows:

1. That we express our interest in strengthening the relationship of graduate students to the church and our desire to cooperate as far as possible to the development of any means which will serve to make this relationship more meaningful and mutually beneficial.
2. That we express our sympathy with the stated aims and objectives of the proposed association.
3. That we express our opinion that presently these objectives can be better served if the church leadership were to serve the Association in an advisory capacity and at its invitation.

As you can see, this was a position of sympathy, of maintaining an advisory relationship and of suspended judgment until the 'fruits' of an organization of this kind could emerge and be tested.

Seventeen years have gone by, and the AAF has now grown in membership and the number of subscribers to *Spectrum* has increased. In spite of this growth, the AAF and its publication *Spectrum* are still unknown to the majority of our members in most parts of the world. Several of us, as denominational leaders, have served as consultants to the officers of the AAF. My role has been strictly advisory and I have never been a board member as some have erro-

neously stated. My attitude has been consistently friendly and sympathetic in spite of the fact that in my opinion, my counsel has seldom been accepted, and some things sponsored by the AAF have embarrassed and perplexed me.

It is no secret to my fellow General Conference leaders and to certain officers of the AAF that in the past few years I have grown more and more troubled over what appears to be a decided shift away from some of the original attitudes, aims, and objectives of the AAF for which we expressed sympathy. I fully expected that the Association would follow the pattern established by other professional associations of Seventh-day Adventists and be positive and supportive of the Church's teachings and programs, even when not in agreement with everything that happens in the Church. Instead, in my view the Association and its publication *Spectrum* have followed an increasingly controversial course of speech and recommended action.

The vast majority of elected Church leadership invite and appreciate the input of thinking and supportive lay persons. Most of us are able to profit from criticism provided it is constructive and not destructive. In the opinion of many, there has been a noticeable drift, on the part of the AAF, in the direction of undermining leadership and criticizing the Church, and at times in a cynical manner. Some feel that because some of us have 'smiled' on the AAF instead of 'frowning,' it has been taken as license. The opinion seems to prevail that since General Conference leadership has not made a public disclaimer concerning the AAF, we must actually condone what the organization does, what it says, and what it publishes. Unfortunately, our silence has been misinterpreted.

On various occasions I have privately remonstrated with the AAF leaders and have strongly protested certain articles and items which have appeared in *Spectrum*. On the other hand, and to be fair, I have also expressed appreciation for the quality and content of certain other articles. I want to register the fact that, in my opinion, not all that has been done by the AAF or what has appeared in *Spectrum* has been negative or bad. On the contrary, much has been good! However, as is true in life, the wholesome and the pure can be contaminated, polluted, or destroyed by mixing just a little error or poison with the good. Repeatedly I have been requested to make a statement disassociating myself and the Church from the AAF and officially denouncing *Spectrum*. In good conscience, I have been reluctant to do this, because, especially at the outset, the AAF did participate in helping to anchor some lives to the Church. I refrained from responding to these requests to make a public statement because I hoped that if given a little more time it might never become necessary.

Unfortunately, with the passing of time, it has become more and more evident that the emphasis of *Spectrum* has not been on nurturing evangelism or on providing positive, inspirational, yet scholarly, interaction between academicians and their Church

organization. In the opinion of many, the 'fruits' have not been the building of faith, confidence and trust in an atmosphere of apostolic optimism. Subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, faultfinding has not helped to build up confidence in the authority of the Word, in the Spirit of Prophecy, and the role and function of church organization. To the casual reader the material is perceived as planting seeds of criticism, polarization, negative questioning, undermining confidence in Church organization and lessening respect for the legitimacy and authority of Church leadership.

It is evident that the time has come when we need to reexamine our relationship with the AAF and our 1967 expression of 'sympathy.' Among our concerns are the following:

1. We do not agree with what appears to be a practice, and basic approach of the AAF; namely, that it is necessary or productive to listen to and discuss all viewpoints, whether positive or negative, truth or error. We cannot accept the premise that our journals and pulpits should give equal time and exposure to all viewpoints with the idea that ultimately truth will prevail. We have a distinctive message that needs to be presented with emphasis and conviction.

2. It seems to us that the AAF and *Spectrum* do not take any definite or clearly stated positions regarding doctrinal subjects and issues. Much seems to be rationalized and left tentative. Pluralism seems to be advocated, and even some spiritual values seem to be negotiable.

3. We weary of always being told what is wrong with the Church! Why do we not hear about some positive, workable, and tested solutions and alternatives? Especially do we feel this way when negative comments come from individuals who appear to pose as experts, but who have never had Church leadership responsibility or the more awesome and sacred responsibility of trying to maintain unity in a spiritual world family.

4. We are disappointed that the AAF takes the initiative to provide a platform and arrange meetings for known and declared dissident individuals and groups within the Church.

5. We reject the implication or inference that *Spectrum* is the most authentic source of information regarding Church affairs. We hope it is obvious to many readers that *Spectrum* not infrequently contains factual inaccuracies and faulty conclusions.

6. We observe with concern the persistent involvement of the AAF and *Spectrum* in actively urging what appears to us to be irresponsible concepts of, and changes in, denominational administration, operations, structure, and organization. Unfortunately these ideas are propagated with little apparent concern for what the results might be.

7. Finally, we find it difficult to explain why the pages of *Spectrum* so seldom defend or endorse positions of the Church or say anything positive about its evangelistic thrust.

In addition to these concerns, people often remind us that the name, 'Association of Adventist Forums,'

can be misleading. When the word 'Adventist' is used to qualify a particular organization, it usually denotes that such an organization is promoted by the Church and enjoys at least a semi-official status.

In summation, we find it necessary to state that the activities of the AAF and the content of *Spectrum* do not carry the endorsement of Church leadership, and we seriously question that they are helpful in proclaiming the message of the Church or in fulfilling its mission. Those who participate in the activities of the AAF and who read *Spectrum* should be aware of the foregoing. Realizing the above, and to avoid being the cause of stumbling, I must, at least for the present, no longer serve as advisor and consultant. On the other hand, I do not wish to be severed from my friends, and if requested will always be willing to offer personal counsel. This decision is made with a heavy heart, but with a settled sense of duty.

After counseling with the General Conference Officers and the Division Presidents, I wish to record and make clear that:

1. The AAF is not a denominationally sponsored or endorsed organization.
2. The Seventh-day Adventist Church encourages honest and balanced research and discussion. In fact, creative discussion is welcome, but not divisive and destructive criticism which tends to undermine our message and church organization and impedes the successful accomplishment of the mission of God's prophetic movement.
3. *Spectrum* is not a publication of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
4. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has at no time endorsed *Spectrum* or given approval to its content.

5. We do not consider *Spectrum* to be the voice for the Seventh-day Adventist academic world, but rather, we consider it the voice for a relatively small, self-appointed segment.

6. Any Adventist institution which distributes *Spectrum* does so without Church approval.

Having said all of this, I would now like to conclude with an earnest and personal appeal to the AAF. In the name of our Lord and Saviour, I urge the AAF to reconsider its priorities and return to its original spiritual, pastoral, fellowship, and evangelistic aims. If the AAF and *Spectrum* would exalt Christ and His saving grace and make known His soon coming, they could become a valuable adjunct in the Church. Nothing would make me happier than to see healing take place, but this cannot be at the expense of truth and principle.

I have a further important appeal. Please do not condemn individuals because of their association with an organization. Please be slow to judge the motives of individuals based on their participation with the AAF. In my opinion, many, if not most, of these individuals are not radicals, but are supporters of the Church, participate in soul winning, are active in community outreach and uphold the teachings and standards of the Church.

Finally, we are living in the time when the watchmen on the walls are expected to give the trumpet a certain sound, or otherwise the people will be confused and quickly become vulnerable to every wind that blows. In the relationship of the church with the AAF or any other organization or publication, the Biblical principle identified by Christ is worthy of consideration: 'He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.' (Matthew 12:30).

## A Reaffirmation of Purpose

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The Association of Adventist Forums has served the Seventh-day Adventist Church since 1967 and plans to continue helping members find increasing fulfillment in the Adventist Church.

The association appreciates the cordial, yet candid relationship it has had with Neal Wilson over the last 17 years. As he said in his statement to Annual Council, he is a friend of many active in the association and its journal *Spectrum* and knows them to be loyal, active members of the Adventist Church. We regret Elder Wilson's departure at this time as a denominational consultant to the board of the association. We are further saddened by his stated reasons for resigning. Our respect for Elder Wilson as a person, as president of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, and as a brother in the church, lead us to respond to his public statement about the association and *Spectrum*.

The purposes and goals of the Association of Adventist Forums have remained the same since the association's inception in 1967. First and foremost is a commitment to the Seventh-day Adventist Church as an instrument of God in our time. The association and *Spectrum* remain dedicated to building up the Adventist church.

The association has worked toward accomplishing the goals expressed at its founding. Because of the fellowship created in local Forum chapters and through *Spectrum*, many individuals have improved their relationships to the church they cherish. We have been told by current graduate students at non-Adventist universities that Forum chapters on Adventist college campuses, by

nurturing enduring bonds with members of the denomination, have had a pastoral impact in their lives. The recent national conferences of the association have led individuals to tell members of the board that after years of discouragement, their commitment to Adventism had been refreshed and renewed at the conferences. In a very direct sense, the fellowship fostered by the association has been a form of evangelism that has not only retained members in the church, but helped them lead non-Adventists to join the church. Many of these Forum members now serve the church in varying capacities of denominational and lay leadership.

Meetings of the association and the pages of *Spectrum* have also been open to thoughtful interchanges between Adventist and non-Adventist scholars. The recent conference on Millerite thought and practice is only one example. Also, at the prodding of the association, pastors sensitive to graduate students have increasingly been appointed to churches in university cities. In all of these ways, the association continues to pursue its pastoral and evangelistic goals.

*Spectrum*, as planned in 1967, has served as an organ of communication for many church scholars and writers. For some years the editorial policy of the journal has been to include special sections on significant topics not at the center of church controversy: vegetarianism and Adventism's worldwide food industries; moral issues such as refugees, prison reform, abortion, and the environment; challenges in the local church;

attitudes toward sexuality; various responses by Adventists to nuclear weapons; new directions for Adventism (including praise from a prominent non-Adventist historian for Adventism's core affirmations). The journal has published reports on obvious achievements of the Adventist community: the expansion of radio programs in the United States produced by Adventist ethnic groups, conferences on evangelism by black Adventists in North America, lay-operated schools in India, and the growth of Adventist vegetarian restaurants in urban centers.

*Spectrum* has lived up to its name by presenting a variety of viewpoints. Totally different positions have been published on a variety of topics, for example: Adventists and military service, creation of black unions in North America, the sanctuary and the investigative judgment, ways to improve denominational organization, the sources of Ellen White's writings (including her testimonies on health reform), and nuclear disarmament.

From the outset it was understood by leaders of the denomination and the Association of Adventist Forums that it would be best if the association and *Spectrum* remained clearly independent of church administration. In that way, venturesome responses to crucial questions could be explored without putting administrators in the position of having to approve new perspectives as official positions. The journal has always been, and will continue to be, a place where hard questions can be raised and diverse—and sometimes controversial—answers explored. We have been gratified that denominational leaders at all levels of church administration have told members of the association board that their pride in being Adventists has been enhanced by the quality of exchanges and discussion to be found in the pages of *Spectrum*.

Printing articles with varied perspectives simultaneously encourages fresh thinking and helps individuals to firmly grasp truth for themselves. Ellen White strongly counseled that:

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. . . . It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts. Instead of confining their study to that which men have said or written let students be directed to the sources of truth, to the vast fields open for research in nature and revelation. Let them contemplate the great facts of duty and destiny, and the mind will expound and strengthen. Instead of educated weaklings, institutions of learning may send forth men strong to think and to act, men who are masters and not slaves of circumstances, men who possess breadth of mind, clearness of thought, and the courage of their convictions (*Education*, pp. 17, 18).

Ellen White's statement epitomizes what *Spectrum* has attempted to provide the church. The church is stronger as a result.

In his statement to Annual Council, Elder Wilson mentions most often the undermining of confidence in church leadership and organization as the way the association and *Spectrum* have hurt the church. We note that Elder Wilson recurringly refers throughout his statement to the church's "organization," "structure," "leadership," and "authority." We are concerned that Adventist church structure is being raised to the level of doctrinal orthodoxy.

It is true that, in meetings of the association and the pages of *Spectrum*, the subject of church structure has been more fully discussed during the last two years than during the early years of the association. Rather than simply report complaints about administrators or church organizations, the association felt it was more constructive to sponsor a task force that would do the research and study necessary to produce careful proposals for improving the denomination's structure. *Spectrum* published the substantial report of the Forum task force, along with criticisms of it. When union con-

ferences and the General Conference established official denominational committees and commissions to study church reorganization, their recommendations, have been discussed in association meetings and the pages of *Spectrum*. We have been part of what is a live, open question before the church: What structure best expresses the heritage, affirmations, and mission of Adventism?

We trust that Elder Wilson did not mean to suggest that the few denominational leaders who have "had church leadership responsibility or the more awesome and sacred responsibility of trying to maintain unity in a spiritual world family" are the only members of the church who can legitimately participate in discussions of church structure and organization. If the Protestant concept of the priesthood of all believers is to be a reality, then believers must be free to become informed of and involved in major developments in the life of the church.

**O**n this and other subjects the association remains committed to encouraging the expression and examination of a variety of viewpoints. Nurtured in a church that has always been committed to progressive revelation, we reaffirm our dedication to pursuing truths that continue to unfold. How does

the new come to be acknowledged as truth? By being compared to inspired writings, tested by the witness of the Spirit in our lives, and very importantly—at least in Protestant churches—discussed by the church. Discussed not just by a narrow circle of either administrators or scholars, but by the membership at large. Precisely through the continued probing, searching conversation of the sort that takes place in Sabbath school classes, college classrooms, workers' meetings and within Forum chapter meetings and the pages of *Spectrum*, there develops a consensus about which new ideas are true and which are not.

New insights are not found by imposing silence, but by encouraging their expression; their validity is not best tested by less examination but by more. It is part of the very nature of the church that it continue to search after the God whose goodness and beauty remain inexhaustible. To call members to such a pilgrimage is not an act of betrayal, but an invitation to an eternal adventure, of which God's people will never tire.

Currently, Adventists are in the midst of a serious, searching examination of what form best expresses their Adventist heritage. Now is not the time to become discouraged or leave the conversation. Now is the time to accept anew the responsibility for being, along with leadership, the church.

—The Board of the  
Association of Adventist Forums



## On Mislaying the Past

by Otilie Stafford

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“American women are not the only people in the world who manage to lose track of themselves, but we do seem to mislay the past in a singularly absentminded fashion.” Elizabeth Janeway was talking about the history of women in general, but her statement is certainly also true of the history of women in the Adventist Church. We perceive the past in strange ways, and then we shape the future by those distortions we have placed upon past events. In looking at what has happened to women in the church, we assume that things are better today than they were yesterday, that our age is enlightened and the past was dark. Yet in many ways the church’s treatment of its women today is less generous, and more unjust than was its treatment of our mothers or our grandmothers.

Something happened to women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, beginning in 1915 and sharply accelerating in the mid-1940s, that led to the almost total exclusion of women from leadership positions in the church. The reasons are not yet completely clear. Were men in 1915 so resentful of any woman’s leadership that when Ellen White died they conspired to prevent any other women from having power? Bertha Dasher’s research (see this issue of *Spectrum*, pp. 39 to 41) reveals clearly that it was after the mid-1940s—the period of my youth—when women were finally excluded from the

leadership positions in the church they had previously held. More study needs to be given to what it was that led to the all-male church leadership we have had for the past 36 or more years.

Nothing in my childhood or youth would have led me to believe that women were made to be silent, invisible, and submissive. When I was young I heard several women preachers on Sabbath mornings. Mary Walsh and Louise Kleuser preached frequently. They seemed no more dull and no more frivolous than the men who were more regularly the Sabbath morning speakers. In the New York Conference, my mother for several years was in charge of the Sabbath school department. For an even longer period, Mabel Vreeland was a district leader. Although Miss Vreeland loved young people, we ran when we saw her approaching, not because we disliked her, but because her handshake was so dynamic we feared for our elbows and shoulders.

When I started teaching, Nida Davis was the educational superintendent of the conference. She was an excellent educator and a very professional person, under whose leadership the schools of the conference flourished. At the same time Laura Clement edited the *Youth’s Instructor*, Flora Plummer was the Sabbath school leader for the General Conference, and churches were full of women in positions of leadership: teaching, speaking, and contributing their talents to the church. I know now that even in the days of my childhood there were fewer women leading out than there were during my mother’s childhood.

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Otilie Stafford chairs the department of English at Atlantic Union College. She holds a doctorate in English from Boston University and is a consulting editor of *Spectrum*.

In my youthful naiveté I believed that there was room in the Adventist church for the talents of women to be used. I grew up expecting that if I had talents of any kind, they might contribute to the work of the church, and be used in the service of the Lord, just as fully as the talents of my male classmates might be. My daughters-in-law do not have that perception, nor do the women whom I teach. Nor do I anymore.

This is not to indicate that I have any feeling but joy in reflecting upon my own career in Adventist education. There have been times when anger would have been easy, however. The years of being on a 40-week salary during the year, because women were expected to be supported by husbands or fathers during the summer, were difficult. There was a long time that my salary was about two-thirds of the salaries of even the young, beginning, male teachers in the department I chaired. I might have become bitter, had I not enjoyed my work so much

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**When I was young, I heard several women preach on Sabbath mornings. They seemed no more dull and no more frivolous than the men.**

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that I would have paid to be allowed to teach. But, I was not happy when, long after the event, I heard that the college board had on one occasion investigated me to be sure that I was not neglecting my children. I never heard of such an investigation of any of my male colleagues who were fathers. It has never been easy for any women in denominational employ to feel their heads bumping against a ceiling and to know that at a certain level of accomplishment their male colleagues, however able or lacking in ability, would rise around them while they would remain where they were.

**F**or Adventist women who have an interest in the welfare of the church, it must be a matter of concern that more than half the membership, whatever their energies, dedication, or talents, are passive church members. Not only are they passive, but should they have the temerity to act in any way like leaders, they are condemned as unfeminine. Should they raise their voices in protest over what the church has done to them, they are contemptuously labeled "women's libbers." Sadly, many of those expressing such contempt are other women.

To believe that God-given abilities are to be used to the glory of the Giver, whether the gifts are to men or to women, seems simple Christian doctrine. To believe that the work of the Lord, whether it consists of teaching a Sabbath school class or practicing medicine or preaching a sermon, can be done by women as well as by men should be orthodoxy for a church with a woman as one of its strongest early leaders. To believe that the promise of freedom in Christ is a human promise, not a male promise, is to release energy and to create joy.

But for the women of the Adventist Church, such energy and joy are usually not present in the life of the church and the abilities lost by the church as a result are increasing. A young friend of mine, an excellent teacher and a fine administrator, looking for a challenge, asked what opportunities for educational administration there might be for her in the future. She was told that because she was a mother, there were none. In discouragement, she left her teaching position and entered law school. Her children are no better off, and the denominational schools have lost a most competent person.

Young women studying at denominational colleges and universities observe and learn from such events. The brightest of the young women these days are looking toward the secular world for opportunities in areas like law, business, and medicine. Although the need for teachers is growing acute, few

# FORUM

AAF Newsletter  
Remove if you wish

Newsletter of the Association of Adventist Forums

December 1984

## Vandermolen Assumes Spectrum Advisory Council Chairmanship

A new chairperson of the *Spectrum* Advisory Council assumes his responsibilities with this issue of *Forum*. Robin Vandermolen, M.D., is an anesthesiologist at the Glendale Adventist Medical Center and has been involved for many years with the Association of Adventist Forums. He replaces Ray Damazo, D.D.S. a businessman in Seattle, Wash., who organized the Spectrum Advisory Council and has served as its only chairperson so far.

The Advisory Council is comprised of individuals who contribute a minimum of \$500 each year for three years. Since its inception in 1980, the Advisory Council has stabilized the editorial resources of the magazine, and has ensured that the journal remains a continuing part of the Adventist community. From the time Damazo started the council, it has grown to include 80 members, and subscriptions to *Spectrum* have increased to as many as 7,000.

Dr. Damazo agreed to remain chairperson longer than he had anticipated because he enjoyed meeting the expanding circle of individuals who stepped forward to support *Spectrum*. Although personal responsibilities require him to step down as chairperson, Damazo says that he "is as proud of *Spectrum* as I have ever been and will continue to give it my strong backing."

Robin Vandermolen is an anesthesiologist who attended medical school in South Africa, at the University of Witwatersrand. He moved to the United States in the 1960s after treating the victims of the "Sharpeville Massacre,"—blacks who had all been shot in the back by government security forces.

In the U.S., as a member of the Harvard University faculty, Vandermolen and his wife, Nancy (who is also an anesthesiologist), joined the group

of Adventist professionals and graduate students who later founded the AAF. He says that his wife "found the group so nurturing that she joined the Adventist Church."

In 1970, the Vandermolens moved to Memphis, Tenn., where Vandermolen started and led a chapter of the AAF. Professionals and graduate students—Memphis had a school of optometry—found the AAF chapter a place for both study and socializing. It served as a vehicle for maintaining their relationship to the church. After moving to Glendale in the late 1970s, Vandermolen became president of the Los Angeles chapter of AAF from 1981 to 1983.

Vandermolen sees *Spectrum* as not only a "vehicle for loyal members of the Adventist Church to effect change from within the church," but also as "a missionary journal for those Adventists in secular professions and academic institutions to maintain their ties to the church." He is therefore committed to the Advisory Council helping to vastly increase the circulation of *Spectrum*. "We need to introduce it to the many people who don't know about it."

## Spectrum Increases Number of Issues

by Dana Lauren West

*Spectrum* editors plan, as of January, 1985, to officially increase the number of *Spectrums* to five a year. Association of Adventist Forums members, for the past two years, have been receiving five issues each calendar year at a subscription rate covering only four issues. Beginning in January, *continued on page 2.*

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a subscription to *Spectrum* will cost \$20 and will cover five issues of the journal—a price increase of only 25 cents per copy.

The results of last year's reader survey as well as suggestions from *Spectrum* advisory board members triggered the editors into asking for the journal to be published five times a year.

With the additional 64 pages, *Spectrum* editors hope to include more voices with different focuses without cutting back on the basic fundamental articles. Publishing five issues a year also allows for the reporting of most recent news as well as providing the reader with supplementary insights into particular issues.

Richard Lewis, director of promotion, has drawn up plans to introduce the more frequently published *Spectrum* to people who have never heard of the journal. Lewis will begin by designing a replacement for *Spectrum's* present brochure, "What Do You Expect From an Independent Adventist Journal?" Another plan includes sending *Spectrum* to those thought leaders in the church who do not already subscribe.

## James Cox Challenges Sydney Chapter

by Dana Lauren West

James Cox, until recently president of Avondale College in Australia and now director of the newly-developed Metro Ministries program in Washington, D.C., presented to Australia's *Sydney Chapter* members, "You and Current Issues—Human Rights, the Economy, the Peace Movement, and the Ecology."

During the chapter meeting, held on June 9, Cox addressed an audience of approximately 70 members and described his duties in Washington and the justification for inaugurating the Metro Ministries program. As director of Metro Ministries, Cox will attempt to influence key decision makers on public policy and inform them of the Christian viewpoint.

Cox's main contention was "How can one be a follower of Christ and not be concerned with current issues?" Jesus was interested in all pertinent issues of his day. He challenged the church merchants, gave counsel on the caring for and handling of women and children, and tackled the divorce issue (see Matthew 11 and 19).

Herbert Clifford, M.D., chief administrator of Sydney Seventh-day Adventist Hospital, responded to Cox's remarks by supporting his premise. He also noted that as the church gets more involved in moral issues it must recognize geographical and cultural differences in various congregations.

According to Clifford, there is also a need for the church to allow each culture to develop at its own pace. Clifford cited several examples from his early career in South Africa. A question and answer session followed.

## D.C. Chapter Hears Women in Ministry

by Dana Lauren West

Insights into women and the ministry were presented to Washington, D.C., chapter members Sept. 21. Four women involved in different aspects and levels of ministry reflected on their experiences in front of an audience of approximately 100 people.

Debbie Vance, who worked for *Insight* magazine for three years, was the first panel member to speak. Vance set the stage by reviewing the biblical background of the women's issue. She particularly focused on the New Testament, emphasizing that everyone should share their gifts and be involved in the Gospel commission.

Nancy Marter, a Potomac Conference Executive Committee member, presented the status of women within the Potomac Conference.

Marcia Frost, a Fairfax, Va., pastor, expressed her views on being a woman minister and gave a descriptive account of her life as a church pastor.

Finally, Hyveth Williams, a Columbia Union College theology student, told her story from the perspective of a woman theology student and her place within the Adventist ministry during these uncertain times.

As many as eight General Conference leaders were asked to represent the church's official views, noted Bonnie Casey, Washington chapter planning committee member; however, they all declined.

Preceding the 15-minute presentations, written queries were submitted to the panel. Robert Osborn, General Conference treasurer and local AAF member, answered questions from the General Conference perspective. Previously, Osborn had been given authorization by the conference to speak, although he was not there under the direct auspices of the General Conference.

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*Dana Lauren West is currently finishing her graduate studies in public relations at Maryland University College Park.*

## How To Start An AAF Chapter

The Association of Adventist Forums is a lay organization whose purpose is to encourage thoughtful people with Seventh-day Adventist backgrounds to examine and freely discuss ideas and issues related to the church in all its aspects and to its members as Christians in society. Since 1967, when the AAF was first conceived, chapters have formed worldwide. The only requirement for a person to be admitted to membership in the association is that he or she agrees with its basic objectives and is willing to support it financially.

In order to establish a local AAF chapter, five or more members of the national association must participate. This local group should prepare a constitution and send it to the AAF Executive Committee for approval. (A brochure on "How to Start an AAF Chapter," with a sample local chapter constitution, is available on request from the national headquarter's office: AAF, 7710 Carroll Ave., Takoma Park, Md. 20912.)

People interested in starting a chapter should meet to discuss their concerns, needs, and resources. Once officers or planning committees are elected, the information should be sent to the national AAF. Some chapters ask for minimal

dues. The funds are then used by the local chapters in several ways—a chapter newsletter, airfare for guest speakers, honorariums, or for printing costs for special chapter projects. At any stage of this process, the local group may ask for help from their regional representative (see back page), or Walter Douglas, the director of chapter development for the AAF.

Douglas, elected to this post last year, will help chapters with their special individual needs: contacting speakers, organizing seminars, assisting with chapter growth, etc. He can be reached by mail at 712 Bluffview Drive, Berrien Springs, Mich. 49103; or by phone (616) 471-7107 (h); or (616) 471-3543 (o).

## Program Ideas For Forum Chapters

As the new term begins and the AAF chapter executive committees begin plans for the year, *Forum* would like to suggest some ideas that will help its members get the most out of their chapters and their meetings.

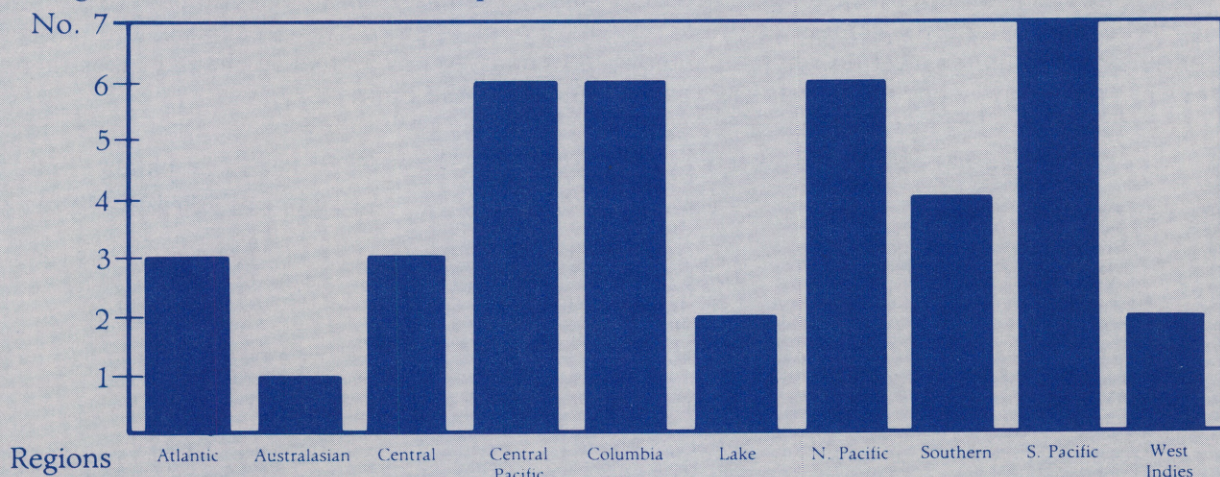
- The *San Diego Chapter* publishes a monthly newsletter. In it, editor Ella Rydzewski announces coming events and speakers. The July newsletter suggested ways to get the most out of an AAF chapter and its meetings: 1) make sure you understand what is being said before agreeing or disagreeing; 2) realize that imprecise language impedes understanding and try to discover *what*

*continued on page 4.*

## Chapters By Regions

The bar graph below illustrates the distribution of the AAF Chapters in their respective regions, as of 1984. As expected, regions covering the largest area claim the largest number of chapters.

AAF Regions and the Number of Chapters in each.



## Southern Region

The *Orlando Chapter* welcomed *Spectrum* editor Roy Branson, who spoke on types of Adventist identity. That meeting took place Nov. 10. Branson met with Forum leaders Friday evening, and delivered a Saturday morning message entitled "The Chasm or the Way" at the Markham Woods Seventh-day Adventist Church. Future guest speakers for chapter meetings include Doug Hackleman, *Adventist Currents* editor.

## Columbia Region

The *Washington, D.C.* chapter was fortunate to hear Bruce Branson speak on Baby Fae and the events leading up to the first implantation of a baboon heart in a human infant. Branson is chairperson of the department of surgery and chief of surgery of Loma Linda University Medical Center. Accompanying him was Richard Sheldon, director of respiratory care and chairperson of the Institutional Review Board of the medical center. There was standing room only in the Takoma

Academy chapel, where the Nov. 3 meeting was held.

## Southern Pacific Region

Jack Provonsha visited the *San Diego Chapter* and spoke about his book *Ethics at the Edges of Life*. Provonsha focussed on abortion and heroic terminal care. Charles Sandefur's cancelled presentation on "Homosexuality and the Seventh-day Adventist Church" has been rescheduled for January 1985.

The *Orange County Chapter* heard Lorna Tobler discuss her part in the Pacific Press litigation. She presented a talk entitled "Loyalties and Conflict: A Spiritual Perspective on the Pacific Press Case."

Dr. Frank Knittel, chairperson of the English department of Loma Linda University, spoke on Nov. 10. His presentation dealt with "Academic Freedom in Seventh-day Adventist Educational Institutions: The Impact of Concerned Laity."

*continued from page 3.*

is being said regardless of *how* it is being said; 3) question the speaker in order to understand, rather than to challenge; 4) disagree if you like, but be able to explain the grounds of your disagreement; 5) focus your attention on the purpose of the presentation, and distinguish the major points from the minor points of the program.

Ryzewski also includes outlines of presentations, notes from the chapter president, and an occasional editorial regarding pertinent AAF-related issues.

- Some chapters are not able to invite as many speakers as they would like. This is not necessarily a disadvantage if they use the vacant meeting slots as informal "think tank" forums. Chapter members decide on an issue about which they wish to be educated. A committee is then appointed to research the subject and the committee presents its findings at a chapter meeting where chapter members can draw conclusions. Lively and

interesting chapter sessions have resulted from this format.

- Some chapters gather to discuss articles from *Spectrum*, enlarging the scope of the pieces by using the bibliographies provided.

- Retreats and weekend theme seminars are becoming increasingly popular among the chapters. The *Orlando Chapter* is sponsoring a seminar with *Spectrum* editor Roy Branson as its principal speaker. The *Treasure Valley Chapter* conducted a successful weekend retreat last year.

- When it is not quite within the chapter's budget to invite someone to speak, some chapters invite a local church or college to co-sponsor a speaker.

Other ideas for chapter participation include outreach programs; agapé feasts; devotional readings or poetry readings; "celebrations" of the Sabbath or creation; prayer breakfasts; and musical programs. When a creative chapter takes flight, the sky is the limit.

### For your Information: Adventist Forum Regional Representatives

#### Atlantic Region

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c/o Digital Equipment Corp.  
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Hudson MA 01749  
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#### Columbia Region

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(513) 298-4331 (o)

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(404) 329-3518 (o)

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O'Brien, Huenregardt & Cook  
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Kimball NE 69145  
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#### Northern Pacific Region

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College Place WA 99324  
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(509) 527-2194 (o)

#### Southern Pacific Region

Mike Scofield  
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(714) 680-2212

young women are interested in the hassles of teaching. Even fewer are interested in the additional limitations of denominational teaching. What this means for the future of church education is sobering.

If the exclusion of women is justified by the emphasis on the home, motherhood, and feminine submissiveness, we are not thinking clearly. To begin with, we must take into consideration the large percentage of women who are not married, are married and childless, or are married and have older children or children in school. The number of women left is such a small percentage that to anchor a policy on them is ridiculous. The fact is, many mothers manage to care for their children, run their households, cater to their husbands, and succeed in careers. Certainly Ellen White provides Adventists with a powerful example of a woman who not only did all those things herself, but urged other women to do them too. Why the husbands, families, employers, and friends of such women do not rise up and call them amazing is the question. Instead, the society of the church loads them with guilt by making them feel they are acting inappropriately.

Perhaps what is inappropriate is the idea that a mother and a child should be tied by an unbreakable cord to each other for the first six, or 12, or 21 years of a child's life. Never in the history of the world has this idea been so hysterically preached. In the more natural world of the pastoral society, or the small-town society, children were the concern of not just mothers, but of fathers, cousins, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and neighbors. We must wonder what neuroses our children are developing by being the center of attention of an exceedingly small world.

A student in one of my classes once said, in discussing the question of where a woman's place was, that she was glad her mother did not work because she liked having her home when she got there, waiting with hot chocolate or lemonade, ready to talk or iron a blouse. It seemed to me then, and it seems to me now, one of the most

selfish statements I have heard. Had she been four, it would have been understandable. But she was 19 and should have seen her mother as something more than a convenience for herself. My mother, who worked during most of my years at home, was not always there when I came home from grade school or academy. But when she was there she was a more interesting person, the guests in our home were livelier, and my concept of what a woman could be was certainly more expansive because she was a competent and successful professional person. I was not the poorer for it, but the richer.

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**After taking into consideration the large percentage of women who are not married, are married and childless, or are married and have older children, it seems ridiculous to anchor a church policy on the small percentage that is left.**

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After the nomination of Geraldine Ferraro, Sylvia Watson said, "It seems theological, this event; it is the way the world was meant to look, and it has taken so long." How ironic that it is the secular world of politics that has a vision of the redeemed world in which freedom in Christ creates equality among all persons. How sad for women who love their church that the church is less just and less visionary than the world where power is a recognized value and pragmatism a respected philosophy.

What creates the greatest sadness is a conviction that nothing will be done. That the all-male church leadership sees nothing wrong in its exclusion of women. That rather than trying to do what can be done, the attitude is to dismiss the problem as trivial, or to condemn any discussion of it as disruptive.

**W**hat can be done? Immediately it should be possible to look at those areas where ordination is not an issue and to establish an equitable basis for employment in those positions. All of the leadership positions in conferences, unions, and general conference structures that once were open to women should once again be available and immediately provide opportunities for qualified women. Certainly women are as qualified as men to head conference or union Sabbath school and education departments, treasurers' offices or publications. Often they are more qualified. Administrative positions in medical and academic structures as well should be available to women. In the elementary school, the academy, and the college and university, women are as experienced, as trained, and as competent as their male colleagues, and should not be limited to non-administrative positions.

Finally, the question of just treatment of those women who feel called to pastoral work should be confronted, not circumvented. If the church cannot act on the basis of what is right, in what do we believe? What power there would be in a church that opened up channels for the energies of all—

men, women, and youth—to be used to their fullest.

Nothing is so depressing as looking at a picture in the *Adventist Review* or in a union paper of the officials in connection with some church endeavor, and seeing a row of men, not a woman there. At the Annual Council, women present are mostly wives,

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**How sad for women who love their church that the church is less just and less visionary than the world where power is a recognized value and pragmatism a respected philosophy.**

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and are not able to speak to issues or to vote. Perhaps the next General Conference session in New Orleans will make evident what Neal Wilson promised in his talk at the last General Conference: a marked increase in the involvement of women, not just in performing music or conducting shepherdess meetings, but in the decision-making processes of the church.



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# Leadership Positions: A Declining Opportunity?

by Bertha Dasher

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Throughout history, women have contributed to God's cause as fully as they have been allowed. The extent of that contribution has varied with the social and cultural setting of each period of history. Women worked lovingly and faithfully in the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness of Sinai. The devoted concern of the women for their master, Jesus Christ, brought them to his tomb in the early hours of resurrection morning to be the first witnesses of the most vital event of Christian history. In the development of the early Christian church, women shared a part in spreading the Gospel of their risen Christ.

So, too, in the early years of the developing Seventh-day Adventist Church, women played a formative role. Dedicated women of talent and ability felt God's call to service and diligently fulfilled that call.

In order to present graphically the work of women in positions of leadership, I chose two administrative positions and two departments of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. By using data found in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbooks*, I counted the number of women filling leadership roles in these

departments throughout North America, for every five years from 1905 to 1980. An interesting pattern emerges, as can be easily seen in the accompanying graphs.

Many women were church leaders during the early years of the century; we had the highest number in 1915. However, as the church became larger and more prestigious, men began taking over leadership positions. By 1950, there were no women in administrative or departmental leadership in any conference in the North American Division.

There have been small improvements in the last 10 years. In 1975, a woman was the departmental leader for Sabbath school in the Mountain View Conference, Columbia Union, the first woman in that post in any conference in 25 years! But by 1980, a man had taken over her job, and another conference, Chesapeake, had a woman as head of its Sabbath school department. In 1980, the New Jersey, Alabama-Mississippi, and Allegheny West conferences all had women leading their education departments.

The women involved in church administration earlier in this century were able to overcome the obstacles imposed on them and bring their creativity to the work of the church. What might be achieved by women today if they too were placed in denominational positions where their abilities to lead were fully employed?

Christ's great commission to his church

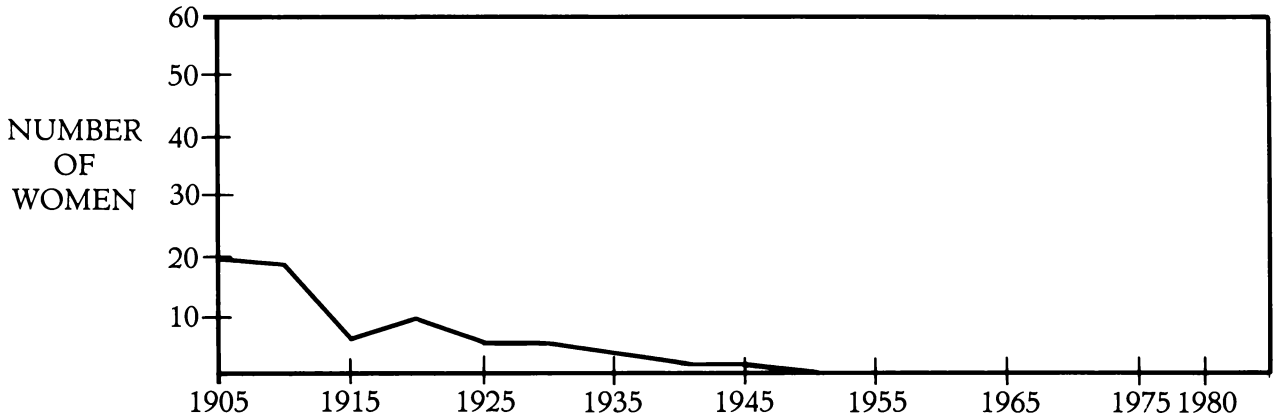
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Bertha Dasher is a writer who lives in Battleground, Wash. A dental hygienist, she received a bachelor's degree in health science from the Adult Degree Program of Atlantic Union College.

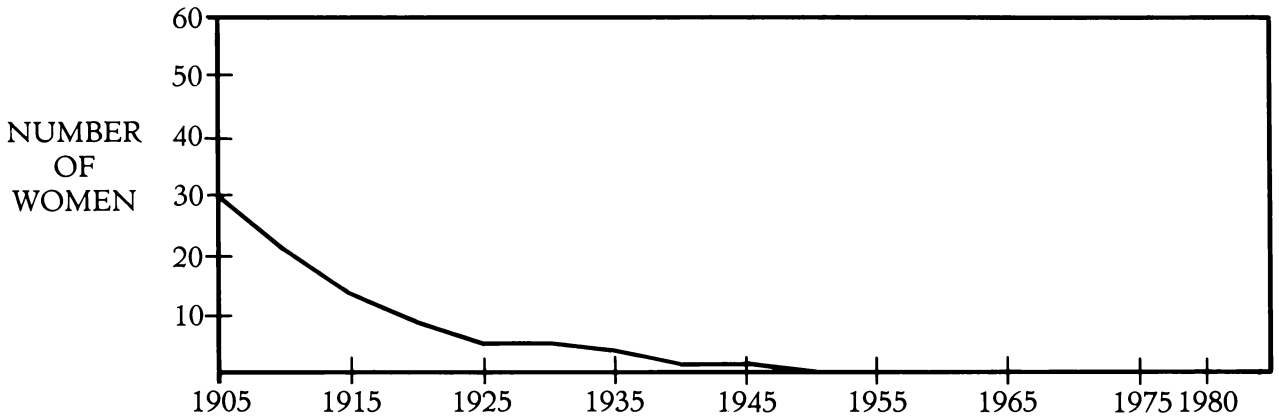
was to win humanity to him. The apostles clearly understood that their task was to carry the message of redemption to all humankind. With that mission in mind, Jesus proclaimed his followers to be the "salt

of the earth" and "the light of the world." The obligation and the power of Christ's mission are thus shared by all Christians, male and female, who form the living body of his church.

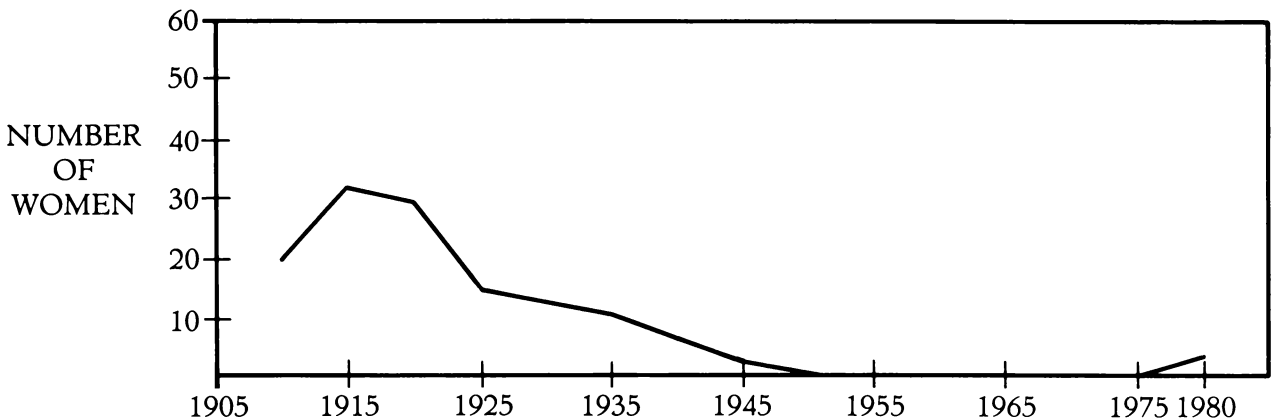
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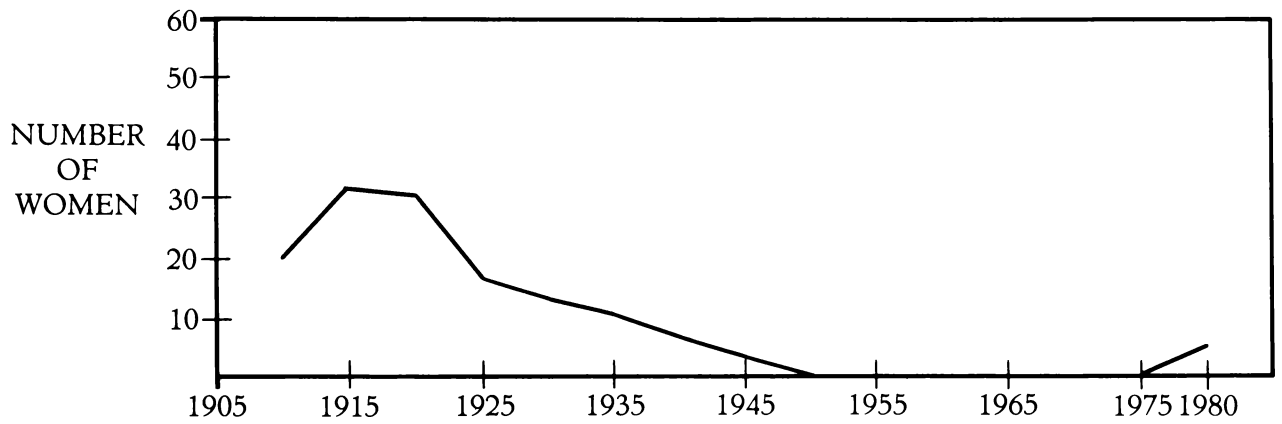
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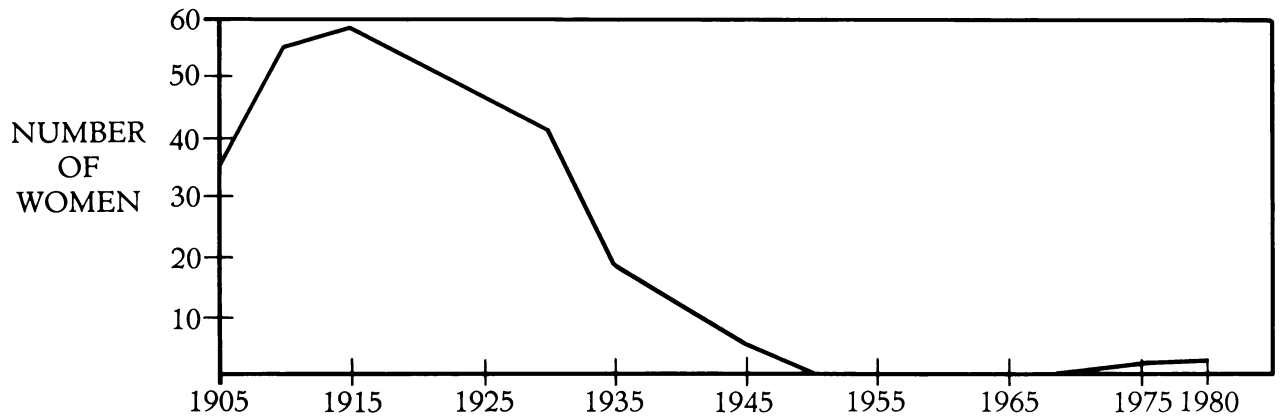
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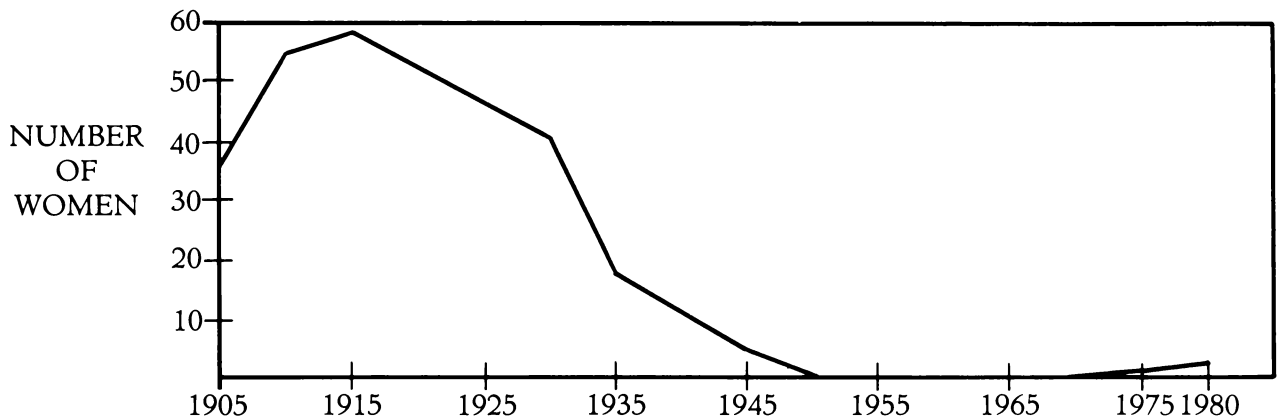
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SABBATH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT LEADERS



SABBATH SCHOOL DEPARTMENTAL SECRETARIES



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# Women of Mission

by Nancy Vyhmeister

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I grew up thinking women could do just about anything they set their minds to. One of my early childhood recollections is that of my mother preaching. When my parents became missionaries in Uruguay, Mother added fundraising to her dietitian's skills, and outfitted her own food laboratory. My first elementary school principal was a woman.

While my husband and I served 15 years in the South American Division, I watched women organize and direct workshops, cooking schools, and Vacation Bible Schools. One of my women friends was the medical director of a Seventh-day Adventist hospital in Paraguay. Another was associate director of the South American Division health department. Raquel Bellido was a masterful teacher of philosophy at River Plate College in Argentina. At the same college, I was well-accepted by both students and colleagues as a teacher of biblical languages. In Brazil, Eurides Brito, an active Seventh-day Adventist laywoman, led the primary schools of the whole country through a process of radical educational reform. Child psychiatrist Verna Alva, daughter of one of the early Seventh-day Adventist workers in Peru, is currently in charge of a multi-million dollar rural health-care program.

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Nancy Vyhmeister was an associate professor in the department of world mission in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and seminary librarian, Andrews University. She now lives in the Philippines.

Thus, my own experiences led me to wonder what women might be doing in other parts of the world. To learn how women are serving the world church, I supervised two informal surveys: the first, an overview of division papers published during the last five years; the second, the mailing of questionnaires to union and division headquarters. Besides asking for information regarding women serving the church in different capacities at different levels, I asked leaders to nominate outstanding women in their geographical areas.

From those surveys, I learned that women have been making a strong showing in fields outside of the traditional fields for women: health and education. Around the world, women manage Adventist Book Centers, retirement homes, and orphanages; direct communication, public relations, publishing, Sabbath school, and welfare departments; edit magazines and books; and pastor churches. In the divisions outside North America which returned my questionnaire, there were 23 women pastor-evangelists reported. One woman was a conference secretary, 16 were treasurers, 29 managed clinics and dispensaries, and over 175 administered schools.

Of the 94 questionnaires I sent out, in April, 1983, only 62 (66%) were returned. When my questionnaires came back with a total of 23 women listed as pastor-evangelists, I mailed another questionnaire to those 23 women—too late, however, to get an answer back from more than six. While I can not claim that their responses

represent all women working as pastor-evangelists, these six women are fascinating. What follows, then, is a division-by-division summary of posts held by women, plus the profiles of six women pastors in five widely separated parts of the world.

## *World Divisions*

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*Africa-Indian Ocean Division.* No women in this division held positions other than clerical on the division level. Two, however, were treasurers, one for a union and one for a mission. At the time of the questionnaire, the director of the health-temperance department of the West Africa Union was Ms. M. Adwoba-Erzuah. The Malagasy Republic (formerly Madagascar) reported one woman pastor-evangelist, one woman who was an editor, and women who managed an Adventist Book Center, a clinic, an orphanage, and four schools. Three more women administered schools in Ghana.

The outstanding women nominated in this division were Ms. K. Haapakoski, an accountant in Ghana, and Dr. Lucette Rakotoson, professor of medicine and a member of the Andapa Hospital board of trustees, in Madagascar.

*Australasian Division.* In the past decade, women headed two union education departments and one communication department, all in Australia. R.V. Moe, president of the Western Pacific Union Mission, reported that Drs. Douglas and Junelyn Picacha, husband and wife, were serving jointly as the medical directors of Atoifi Hospital in the Solomon Islands. Junelyn Picacha is, according to Moe, the "first and only Solomon Islands woman to graduate with an M.D. in the Solomon Islands." Moe added, "We operate 14 medical clinics within our field, eight of them have women in charge—nurses trained at our Atoifi Hospital." Ten women are school administrators in this same mission, which has 80 primary schools.

The front page of the Oct. 20, 1980, issue of the *Australasian Record* pictures a large group of women delegates to the Trans-

Tasman Union Conference session. The accompanying article describes these women, their varied activities, and the letter one received: "Dear Brother: We send you a cordial invitation to attend our conference tea and would be happy to have you bring your wife with you." Two of these women were appointed to the Union Executive committee for the next five years.

Several women in this division are active in the radio ministry. One Seventh-day Adventist woman, Janelle Bennett, teaches Bible on the "School of the Air" for children in the Outback (*Australasian Record*, Jan. 29, 1983, p. 8). Daisy Ardley, a housewife, has a regular radio program (Oct. 8, 1983, p. 1). Irene Ng is also heard regularly by thousands of Chinese on the mainland in a Chinese-language radio program aired from Macao and Hong Kong (Aug. 31, 1981, p. 5).

Another woman, Kathy Hewlett, is the assistant administrator of Sydney Adventist Sanitarium (Sept. 3, 1983, p. 4).

*Eastern African Division.* In this division, a woman directs publishing (she is "a top colporteur and soul winner") for the East African Union; another woman manages transportation services in Zambia; and several other women administrate dispensaries and schools.

The outstanding women nominated in this division were Mary Angawa, magistrate; and Phoebe Asiyo, a member of the national assembly, both of Kenya.

*Euro-Africa Division.* No churches in the Eastern bloc responded, but the division reported seven women who were union or conference treasurers. Also, of 22 women workers, five were pastor-evangelists. Two other women were in charge of Bible correspondence schools.

The outstanding woman this division nominated was Ms. M.A. Pires, a successful evangelist in Portugal.

*Far Eastern Division.* The Far Eastern Division reported the largest number of women workers at both the union and division levels: one was a division comptroller, and

six were associates in departments in the past decade. In general, women in this division have been most active in the education and Sabbath school departments, and in the health/temperance work.

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**Vivian Nyberg, of Sweden, became a pastor "because I felt I could be happy with nothing else; I've been pulled to this from within."**

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The *Far Eastern Division Outlook* (April, 1979, p. 11) carried a picture of Marion Simmons who, after retiring as the associate educational director of that division, returned to serve as an associate in pastoral care at the Bangkok Seventh-day Adventist Hospital. The July, 1983, issue carried an article about "pastora" Nellie Salvan, whose pastoral district in the Philippines totaled 800 members in 14 congregations.

Another article in the same issue told about sister Shige Nakama, a literature evangelist in Okinawa, who sold books until 7:00 p.m., then gave Bible studies to a group of women until 11:00 p.m. every night. (Four of these women later became Christians.)

*Inter-American Division.* Treasurers—two assistants at the division level, one at the union level, and four at the conference level—headed this division's list of woman workers. At the time of my questionnaire, the ministerial/stewardship department was the only department that did *not* have a woman directing it in one conference or another. Women directed or co-directed conference/mission Sabbath school departments, six of them specifically for child evangelism. Book centers were another place where women shone; the division had eight women who were Adventist Book Center managers. Only five women were listed as school administrators, perhaps because only secondary school principals were listed. Finally, there were eight Bible correspon-

dence school supervisors in this division.

The *Inter-American Division *Flashes** (published in Spanish, French, and English, and edited by a woman, Wanda Sample) frequently reports the activities of the division's women, both those paid by the church and those who work for the church out of pure love.

*North American Division.* Only six of my questionnaires were returned so it would not be fair for me to generalize on the basis of so little information. The composite report, however, shows one woman serving as a union treasurer, in the Southwest Region Conference, and seven departmental directors or associate directors. Educational administrators included two women academy principals and one college academic dean.

This division did nominate several outstanding women: LeEllen Bradshaw, founder of the Adventist Adoption and Family Service; Mary Paulsen, area president of the Association of Self-supporting Institutions; Dr. Helen Evans Thompson, vice-president for administration of Loma Linda University; Juanita Kretschmar, health/temperance director for the Greater New York Conference (and director of the van program for New York City); and Sheree Nudd, director of development and public relations for Huguley Memorial Hospital. (Nudd recently received the Trailblazer and Philanthropy Award from the General Conference for raising \$3 million for the hospital.)

*Northern European Division.* This division reported three women directing its union departments. Of seven pastor-evangelists, five were working in Finland. In this division, six schools have women administrators, and a woman directs the theological training program for Finland.

The *Northern Light* had an article in its October, 1981, issue about the appointment of Erja Karkkainen as youth and Sabbath school director for the Finland Union. In the July, 1981, issue, a picture of the graduating class from Newbold College in England, the division's senior college, shows six women in the 24 theology graduates. In July,

1982, another picture shows four women in a class of 23.

This division nominated Dr. Margit Syring, director of the seminary at Toivonlinna Junior College, as one of its outstanding women. Dr. Syring was the first woman to receive a doctorate in theology from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

*South American Division.* This division reported two women directing union departments: the department of education in Northeast Brazil and the department of welfare in Chile. There were women who directed these departments at the conference level as well. Seven women were editors, at the Brazil and the Buenos Aires publishing houses, and 118 were school administrators, including principals of elementary schools.

As its outstanding women, the division nominated Dr. Irma Vyhmeister, from Chile, who is now the associate director of the health/temperance department of the General Conference; and Aurea Soares, who was the dean of women at the Educandario Nordestino Adventista (Northeast Brazil College), then director of education in Rio de Janeiro, then academic dean at the college, and finally director of the conference educational department in the Northeast.

*Southern Asia Division.* This division has had women as associate directors of the education and Sabbath school departments; two women who directed hospitals in Nepal and India; three women who managed Adventist Book Centers in Pakistan; six pastor-evangelists (three of them in Burma); and one woman who served as a conference secretary in Burma.

Among the many news items about women and tributes to women in the *Southern Asia Tidings*, I found a tribute to Gloria Thomas, who had passed away in that year (May 1980, p. 16). Thomas worked for the church beginning as a secretary in 1947, and ending as the associate director of the Sabbath school department, a post she assumed in 1970.

In the February, 1980, issue (p. 3), there is a picture of two smiling women dressed in saris, Ammini Davis and Chinnamon Thomas, carrying shiny new briefcases awarded to them for "working harder than many men" as literature evangelists.

*Attached Fields.* The South Africa Union reported a woman serving as a trust officer in the Transvaal Conference; seven women who were school administrators; two women who were retirement home administrators; and a woman who directed the South African Home Study Institute.

The Middle East Union remembers warmly the long years of service given by Mrs. Kruger at the orphanage in Cairo, Egypt.

The following five sketches of six women are based on answers to the questionnaire I sent to the 23 women pastor-evangelists reported by the divisions who responded to my original questionnaire. They include answers to questions on how being a woman makes being a pastor-evangelist easier or more difficult.

## *Women Pastors*

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*Sweden.* The newcomer in the group is Vivian Nyberg, a young woman in Sweden. She is still in ministerial internship with only 10 months of service—four months of evangelism and six in a church. She is now an assistant and has not yet worked alone, but in the autumn will be in full charge. She wanted to become a pastor "because I felt I could be happy with nothing else; I've been pulled to this from within." Most of her time is spent preparing for Bible studies, sermons, and visits.

Young and single, with no future plans for marriage, she finds it difficult but necessary to adopt "a cautious attitude to single men my own age." Yet, being a woman is an advantage as a pastor because "there are situations which I as a woman can more easily handle than a man—as there are situations a man can more fully meet than I. But, on the whole, I think [success] depends on per-

sonality and experience.”

She finds no difficulty relating to her superiors; rather, they are “appreciative, encouraging, and supportive. There is a need for ministers in Sweden, so we need to cooperate.” Optimistic, expecting acceptance from her future congregations, she is nevertheless realistic: “I also think there will come times when they will wish I were a man, because of always having had men.” But she hopes they will realize not only what they are missing, but also what they have gained.

She encourages other young women to become pastors. Young, enthusiastic, and confident after the first 10 months, she considers her B.A. in theology “sufficient so far.” But she adds, “In a few years I would not mind studying more after having worked a bit longer.” Her message to the Adventist women of America: “Don’t try to be a man. Be what you are in Christ, serving God with the gifts He has given you.”

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**“What I am with my congregation is more than a man can do, therefore they have nothing to say. It is as with the members of the body. Every part is useful.”**

—Ernestine Rabesalama, Madagascar

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*Madagascar.* From the Malagasy Republic comes a letter from a woman pastor, Ernestine Rabesalama, who has been working there a year and a half. She chose the ministry “because the feeling of happiness in knowing Jesus and his love made me choose to make that known to others.” She collaborates with a pastor of a church in ministering and in public evangelism. Most of her time is devoted to giving Bible studies.

The only one of the six pastor-evangelists who is married, “I have adopted seven children,” she writes, “and this large family is not an obstacle for my work.” She obviously loves her work: “To be able to nourish someone from the Word of God and to have

that person convinced, and above all, converted, makes me overflow with joy.”

However, she admits that sometimes, though rarely, being a woman makes her work difficult, “when the congregation is made up of traditional men and women who believe a woman cannot be a pastor or evangelist.” On the other hand, “women are often misunderstood,” she explains; “since I am a woman, I think I understand them and their problems better.” She has had no difficulty with her superiors; and the church members, she says, “accept me as I am. What I am with my congregation is more than a man can do, therefore they have nothing to say. It is as with the members of the body. Every part is useful.”

She recommends the ministry to other young women. “At the seminary I had two friends who were studying to be pastoral assistants and two others who were taking theology. In our union we need more workers. “Sisters, we have our parts to finish in the Lord’s work. Let’s go! Our Lord will soon return!”

*Germany.* From Germany came a letter from Margarete Prange, a woman with 16 years of experience as a pastor. She is in full charge of a district of four churches and her time is taken up in “everything a pastor must do—pastoral care, Bible studies, administration, evangelism, funerals, weddings, and the like.” She does “public evangelism alone, and also with my colleagues. Normal attendance.” Most enjoyable and satisfying to her are pastoral care, Bible studies, and preaching.

Her motive for becoming a pastor was her conviction that “a woman should employ her gift or talent.” As for the questions as to whether her being a woman made her work either easier or harder, she ignores the first and says a flat no to the second. On her relations with her superiors and with her congregations, her answers are “No problems” and “I am accepted. When I begin in a new district the congregation must get accustomed to a lady pastor.”

Would she encourage other young women



to become pastors? "Yes, if they are strong enough." Then she adds an explanation, citing Genesis 2:18 ("It is not good for man to be alone."). "This text I find is fitting not only for marriage, for man should not be alone in pastoral work."

*Philippines.* From the Philippines comes the reply of a very busy woman, Paciencia Sumaylo, who awakens my admiration. She has full charge of a district of 25 churches and companies. What takes up most of her time is, above all, shepherding her flocks. Evidently her flocks are far spread. The only difficulty she finds in being a woman is going "hiking in the rural areas, because of no land transportation available." On the other hand, being a woman makes it easier when she has to take public transportation—perhaps because she gets a seat in the jeepney!

Her last evangelistic meetings, ending a month ago, boasted an attendance of 150 to 200 people. What still gives her the greatest enjoyment and satisfaction is "to have people decide to accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior and desire to be baptized." She reports no difficulty with her superiors caused by her being a woman, and in her long 19 years of experience, the church members "are satisfied with my services."

*Finland.* The two women with the longest records (both now retired) were pressed into service as pastor-evangelists in Finland when World War II caused all ministers of military age to be drafted. Both were already Bible instructors.

One, Elsa Luukkanen (her life story was written in *Elsa*), was pastor for 40 years and had had her own assistant for 35. The other, Hanna Vaananen, served 38 years as Bible instructor, chaplain, departmental worker, assistant pastor, and pastor.

Elsa still conducts public evangelistic campaigns, which sometimes last for six months, and makes pastoral visits. Hanna held her last evangelistic campaign in 1967-1968. Both find their greatest joy and satisfaction in bringing people to Christ; Elsa adds "and

to the Advent Hope."

Both women state they've had few problems from being women in the ministry—"rather the opposite," says Elsa; Hanna agrees, "We can do most of what men do anyway." They maintain that pastoring is easier for a woman because "the congregation is mostly female. Elsa has "always been accepted as a revival preacher;" Hanna points out that "some workers prefer female co-workers."

As for encouraging other women to become pastors, Elsa states: "If a woman has a talent for speaking and love for souls and is free, what could be more blessed?" But Hanna cautions, "Evangelism requires physical strength. Maybe it is more a man's work," and Elsa also warns, "Ministry takes all your time. One who is married cannot really be an evangelist because evangelism takes the totality of time and life." Most importantly, adds Hanna, "Dedicate yourselves completely to God. Further the Gospel so we can soon go home."

The results of this informal survey seem to confirm my suspicions that women are actively participating in and directing church activities. From South America to the Philippines, Seventh-day Adventist women are following *and* leading. It seems to me that the situation is comparable to that of the first-century Christian church. From the New Testament we learn of Priscilla, a "fellow-worker" of Paul's (Rom. 16:2), of Nympha, the leader of a house church (Col. 4:15), of Lydia the seller of purple, whose hospitality Paul enjoyed in Philippi (Acts 16:14,15), and of Phoebe, whose ministry to the church of Cenchrea and to Paul made her worthy of a warm reception in Rome (Rom. 16:1,2). I think Paul would not have minded addressing to the Seventh-day Adventist women of the 1980s the same admonition he addressed to the Galatians: "So let us not become tired of doing good; for if we do not give up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest" (Gal. 6:9, Today's English Version).

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# When God Called

by Kermit Netteburg

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**K**ermit Netteburg teaches journalism and public relations at Andrews University, where he is an associate professor of communications and edits the journal *Christian Scripts*. The following play was presented at the national conference of the Association of Adventist Women, July 11 to 15, 1984.

**Narrator:** God's calls for human helpers have come in unusual ways. He called Moses from a burning bush. He called Israel from a thunder-and-lightning mountain. He called Zacchaeus to come down out of a tree and he called Elijah to come out of a cave.

**Chorus:** Amen. God works in mysterious ways to call men to serve him.

**Narrator:** God also has called for some unusual things to be done. He called Jehosaphat's army to sing at the enemy instead of shoot at them. He called Peter to walk on water. He called Gideon to find the smallest possible army. He called Joshua to march around a city and blow trumpets at its walls.

**Chorus:** Amen. God called men in ancient times to perform his wonders in mysterious ways.

**Narrator:** God's calls in modern times have been no less unusual. He called a frail teen-aged girl to be a prophet to his remnant church. He called two young preachers to present the message of righteousness by faith to the older brethren during a General Conference session.

**Chorus:** Praise the Lord. He still uses men of courage.

**Narrator:** God called a farm housewife to be a successful evangelist in Oklahoma.

**Chorus:** A farm housewife! God called a farm housewife to preach!

**Single Voice In Chorus:** There must be some mistake. God calls women to be mothers and men to be leaders.

**Narrator:** Not according to the historical record.

**Chorus:** Maybe so, but it was never God's plan for women to be leaders outside the home.

**Single Voice In Chorus:** It doesn't work that way in God's church.

**Narrator:** It certainly worked that way in the beginnings of our church. Women were editors, business managers, doctors, teachers, ministers, evangelists, hospital administrators, and pioneer missionaries. The stereotype of women doesn't fit a church with a woman prophet who served the church for 70 years. The stereotype certainly doesn't fit in a church where Minerva Jane Chapman was treasurer of the General Conference for six years.

**Chorus:** A woman treasurer of the General Conference!

**Single Voice In Chorus:** I'll bet she couldn't even keep her own checkbook straight!

**Narrator:** Church leaders thought so highly of Minerva Jane Chapman that she was asked to be treasurer of the General Conference, editor of the *Youth's Instructor*, secretary of the Publishing Association, and treasurer of the Tract and Missionary Society—all at the same time. Another

woman, Adelia Patten, was asked to straighten out the financial mess at the Review and Herald Publishing Company that occurred when James White was ill.

**Chorus:** Did she fix it or cause it?

**Narrator:** She fixed it. Women in the early Adventist Church made contributions in areas other than finance, too. Take Dr. Lillian Eshleman Magan. She helped establish Madison College. Then when the college was established, she worked to put her husband, Percy, through medical school. Together, they devoted their lives to the medical work of the church. Dr. Kate Lindsay, one of the very first women physicians in America, started a nursing school at the Battle Creek Sanatorium.

**Chorus:** Yes. Nurses. Women make good nurses.

**Narrator:** I said Dr. Lindsay founded the nursing school.

**Single Voice In Chorus:** Weren't any of the early Adventist women housewives and mothers?

**Narrators:** Yes, many were housewives and mothers, loving and serving the Lord when he called them to be in the home.

**Chorus:** Amen. A woman's place is in the home.

**Narrator:** These women answered God's call to be mothers of future leaders in God's church.

**Chorus:** They did a good work. It's a great calling to be a mother.

**Narrator:** Some of these mothers even left their children, to answer God's call.

**Chorus:** They left their children!!

**Narrator:** Some mothers left their children—to answer God's call.

**Chorus:** God would call a woman to do that? Come on, give us an example. Who? What kind of woman would leave her children?

**Narrator:** Ellen White.

**Ellen White:** (*writing a letter*) My Dear Willie, we have not forgotten you, my dear boy. When we see the other little children around, we long to get our arms around our Willie again. In about five weeks we will be

home again, Willie, and then we will work in the garden, and tend the flowers and plant the seeds. Don't forget to pray, Willie. You can do that although I am not with you. Jesus, the dear Saviour, will hear you just the same when you pray alone. Your Affectionate Mother.

**Narrator:** Ellen White's baby, Henry, was only two years old, and she just slightly more than 20, when she and James left him. Many other women were also very young when they heard God's call. For instance,

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**“I received my call from Jesus himself. After his resurrection, he commissioned Mary to go and tell the brethren that he had risen. I am following in Mary's footsteps.”**

—Minnie Sypes

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Maud Sisley was only 26 when the fledgling Adventist Church sent her in 1877 to be the first woman missionary in Europe. That was just three years after John Nevins Andrews had gone to Europe. Most of her duties involved . . .

**Maude Sisley:** I'd like to tell my own story, sir.

**Chorus:** Uppity woman.

**Single Voice In Chorus:** I've never heard of her.

**Sisley:** Maybe not, but God did call me to be the first in many instances. I was the first woman missionary to Europe. I was a member of the first Tract and Missionary Society. Later, I was the first woman missionary to Africa.

**Chorus:** What could a woman missionary do?

**Sisley:** In Europe, I wrote and edited literature, contacted people interested in Bible studies, and tried to keep harmonious the relationships between the various nationalities in the European working force. One time there were eight of us in the headquarters office in Geneva, and no two of us

were from the same country.

**Narrator:** Some months later, God called Maud Sisley to work in England.

**Sisley:** I was happy to return to England, for that was the land of my birth. I was helping with an evangelistic effort in Southampton when . . .

**Charles Boyd:** Will you marry me?

**Sisley:** What did you say?

**Boyd:** I said, "Will you marry me?"

**Church leaders thought so highly of Minerva Chapman that they asked her to be treasurer of the General Conference, editor of the *Youth's Instructor*, and treasurer of the Tract and Missionary Society—all at the same time.**

**Sisley:** Who are you?

**Boyd:** I'm Charles Boyd, president of the Nebraska Conference. Come back to America and marry me.

**Sisley:** But this is so sudden.

**Chorus:** This is the way God calls women. God calls them to stand beside good men.

**Narrator:** Maud Sisley agreed, deciding that God was calling her to marry Charles Boyd. The Boyds spent four years in Nebraska and four years in the Pacific Northwest. Then the church felt the time was right for them to begin work in Africa. God called, and the Boyds pioneered Adventist work in Africa in 1887.

**Maud Boyd:** My husband was busy visiting the interests that had grown among the Dutch people studying the Bible. He was gone from home for weeks at a time. But I did my work near home, giving Bible studies. Soon we had a church meeting regularly. I was pleased when Elder I.J. Hankins arrived from America to pastor this growing church.

**Narrator:** South Africa was not good to the Boyds. Their younger daughter died, and Elder Boyd ruined his health from overwork. They returned to America for rest, but he died in 1898. (Pause.) Not every woman

who contributed to the Adventist church was the first to pioneer new work. But another woman, Georgia Burrus, was the first Adventist missionary to India, going there in 1895.

**Georgia Burrus:** I had an awfully hard time getting to India. Sister Myrtle Griffiths and I were to go together after we finished the nursing program at Battle Creek College. But the training was too strenuous for her, so I had to leave America alone.

**Chorus:** You mean she was a single girl going to a foreign mission land?

**Narrator:** Yes. That's correct.

**Chorus:** She'll never make it. A single girl just can't cope with the problems of life alone in a heathen country.

**Single Voice In Chorus:** What if she falls in love over there?

**Burrus:** As I was saying, I had a hard time getting to India. I was to meet the Robinsons in England and travel with them to India. But they were delayed and had to stay in England for an entire year. The mission board was not eager that I should go alone, because we were going to open new territory. But I promised that I would work as a self-supporting missionary if they only paid my way there. They did.

**Narrator:** Arriving in Calcutta, alone in the giant subcontinent, she spent her first night in a strange lodging house. Every sound was new, different, strange. She had dropped her watch on the ship's deck so that even its familiar ticking was gone. Georgia Burrus was so lonely she cried.

**Chorus:** I told you so. She couldn't last even one day!

**Narrator:** Georgia Burrus turned for help to the only friend she had in Calcutta.

**Burrus:** (praying) O Father, I am so lonely and homesick. I think if I could just hear my watch ticking again I would feel better. (Sound effect of watch ticking.)

**Burrus:** God answers small requests as well as large ones. You have no idea what a joy it was for me to have God answer my small prayer, to know that he was there with me in that strange country, and to know that

the call to India was God's call.

**Narrator:** Georgia Burrus supported herself that first year by teaching English to the Indians. But she spent most of her time learning the Bengali language. Each night she would plan her lesson in English and then have her Bengali language teacher help her translate the lesson into Bengali.

**Burrus:** I probably knew more Bengali than any other missionary did, and since Bengali and Hindi are such similar languages, I didn't think it at all unusual when the mission secretary-treasurer, L.J. Burgess, asked me to help him learn Hindi. We spent our noon hours under the palm trees studying the languages. We became quite fond of each other.

**Chorus:** We knew she'd fall in love with some foreigner!

**Burrus:** He wasn't a foreigner. He was an American missionary.

**Chorus:** That's worse! Falling in love with the married missionary!!

**Burrus:** No, no, no. He was a single American missionary who had been called by the mission board to be secretary-treasurer of our mission.

**Chorus:** Oh.

**Burrus:** We fell in love.

**Chorus:** Somebody back at the mission board must have been playing matchmaker.

**Burrus:** Perhaps, but we were married in 1903 and have lived happily ever after.

**Narrator:** L.J. Burgess and Georgia Burrus worked together in India for another 32 years. They prepared literature and spread the gospel in four of the major languages of India—Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, and Khasi.

Adventure was a normal part of the lives of men and women who answered when God called. Travel, which was primarily in open carriage and not in air-conditioned cars, could be very difficult in bad weather. Ellen White wrote to her family about the difficulties of getting to Waukon, Iowa, in a winter snowstorm.

**White:** Here we are, 12 miles from Waukon. We had a tedious time in getting thus

far. Yesterday our horses for miles had to plow through snow very deep, but on we came, feeling confident that our mission was of God. Last Monday, we could get no food that was fit to eat, and therefore rode in the coldest weather I ever saw, from morning until night, with nothing to eat but one apple. Oh, how thankful I shall be to see home, sweet home, again, and my three dear boys, Henry, Edson, and Willie. Last night we slept in a room where there was an opening through the top for the stove pipe. If it had stormed, it would have come direct in our faces. Pray for us. Unless the Lord opens the way for us to return, we may be blocked in with snow for the whole winter. Your Affectionate Mother.

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**In the beginnings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, women were editors, business managers, doctors, teachers, ministers, evangelists, hospital administrators, and pioneer missionaries.**

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**Narrator:** Another woman who found her share of cold winters, unfriendly neighbors, and adventure—Minnie Sype—listened to God's call to become an evangelist.

**Chorus:** A woman evangelist?

**Narrator:** Yes, the Oklahoma Conference asked Minnie Sype to become an evangelist in western Oklahoma. The Sype family—they had two sons and a daughter then—were established on a farm there. But God called and Minnie Sype answered.

**Chorus:** What kind of woman would leave her family to try to be a preacher?

**Narrator:** That's just what a minister asked Minnie Sype during her first evangelistic series. He even rented the hall she had been using, and preached that women had no right to speak in public.

**Chorus:** He's got a point there.

**Narrator:** Minnie Sype attended this meeting. From the middle of the audience, she announced that she would answer his insinuations the following night in the very same hall. The crowd at her meeting was larger than the one the previous evening.

There wasn't even standing room inside the hall, and some listened outside the open windows. Minnie Sype announced that she had tried to make a private peace with the minister, since he was her neighbor. However, he would not make that peace, and therefore she was making a public answer to him.

**Chorus:** That's fair.

**Minnie Sype:** I received my call from Jesus himself. After his resurrection, he commissioned Mary to go and tell the brethren that he had risen. I am following in Mary's footsteps, telling people that Jesus is coming again. Paul mentioned several women who were workers for God. Phoebe, for instance, whom he asks the church to assist. The Bible mentions the other women workers: Miriam, who assisted Moses; Deborah, who led the forces of Israel; Anna, who was a prophetess; and Phillip's four daughters who prophesied.

**Chorus:** That's right.

**Sype:** I came to Oklahoma only to be a blessing to mankind. I settled by this minister neighbor, expecting only to be a help in God's cause. But to my surprise, instead of being treated as a woman should be treated, as a co-worker, as a helper in God's cause, I was treated as heathen women are treated.

**Narrator:** By this time, the minister was looking at the floor and would not raise his head. Minnie Sype continued to appeal to his manhood, to his principles as a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus. She appealed so earnestly that some of the people were crying and some were laughing.

**Sype:** I will close, by wishing my fellow minister every success in the work. We're all brothers and sisters here, and we expect to support him in his work, as we expect him to support us in our work.

**Narrator:** Her public appeal worked. This minister-neighbor never again publicly opposed her. But other ministers did not stop. Minnie Sype became discouraged because she was spending more time debating ministers than proclaiming the gospel.

Shortly after she and her family moved to central Oklahoma, she held a series of evangelistic meetings in which 32 people were baptized. The local minister, whose church was being depleted, challenged her to a debate.

**Minister:** You are leading astray the people of the Lord with your teaching of strange doctrine, Mrs. Sype. I challenge you to debate truth.

**Sype:** I have called Elder Larson from the conference office, but he refuses to debate with you.

**Minister:** Mrs. Sype, you are teaching the strange doctrine, not some conference official. It is you I challenge to debate truth.

**Sype:** You would share your debating time with me, a woman?

**For 20 years, Sara Henry gave every moment of her life to the cause. She sometimes preached two or three times a day, often preaching every day for weeks at a time.**

**Minister:** I would. Will you or will you not debate with me on these strange doctrines you present as God's truth? Will you debate me on which is the proper day of rest?

**Sype:** I will.

**Narrator:** Debating procedure dictated that one debater would present the case in favor of a principle, the opponent would attempt to refute the case presented, and then the first debater would have a short time for responding to the refutation. The minister made his best case for the observance of Sunday as a day of rest.

**Minister:** In conclusion, let me quote from the third chapter of Matthew. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him." We must listen to this son of God as he commands us to worship on Sunday and hallow the day of his resurrection from the grave.

**Sype:** I appreciate my brother minister using the text about the son of God and that

we should listen to him. It is this son of God who created the heavens and the earth in six days—and then rested on the seventh day. It is this beloved son of God who came down on Mount Sinai and gave us the Ten Commandments, one of which says: ‘‘The seventh day is the Sabbath; remember to keep it holy.’’ If we truly listen to this beloved son, we shall keep the seventh day of the week holy to the Lord, not the first day of the week.

**Narrator:** The crowd for the following night’s debate was even larger than for the first night, and Minnie Sype presented the case for the seventh day of the week as Sabbath. She presented an array of texts from both Old and New Testaments pointing to the seventh day of the week as God’s holy day. When she finished, her opposing minister had a difficult task before him—to refute a wealth of Scripture.

**Minister:** I am sorry that we do not have more time. In the few moments given to me I cannot adequately refute the material that my sister minister has shared with us. If we could have more time, I am sure that I could satisfy your minds, as I have satisfied my own through much careful and thorough study, that Sunday is the proper day of worship. It is indeed unfortunate that I cannot have this last amount of time.

**Narrator:** With that he sat down, well before his allotted time was over. Minnie Sype still had her response time to use. She arose to speak.

**Sype:** I was very surprised to learn that my brother minister would be willing to share his debating time with me, a woman, in public. Now I am even more surprised that he is upset that he could not have the last word in a debate with a woman.

**Narrator:** The debates had such profound impact on the townspeople that the leader of the local Sunday school began keeping the Sabbath.

Seeing people accept present truth was a large reward to early women workers. Ellen White always found special joy in visiting homes of those she had earlier influenced

to accept present truth. One such home was a hotel, and from there she wrote to her children:

**White:** We are now at Brother Snook’s. This is a good home. When I see their little babe, and take it in my arms, I yearn for my own dear babe which we laid in Oak Hill Cemetery; but I will not permit one murmuring thought to arise. I enjoy the society of this family. Sister Snook is an excellent woman. Your Affectionate Mother.

**Narrator:** The fellowship of believers was a source of great joy to the women that God called, such women as Ellen White, Georgia Burrus Burgess, and Minnie Sype. But not every woman that God called enjoyed the fellowship of believers. Serapta Myrenda

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**After Dr. Lillian Eshleman Magan helped establish Madison College, she worked to put her husband, Percy, through medical school. Together, they then devoted their lives to the medical work of the church.**

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Irish Henry had never heard of Seventh-day Adventists when God called her. Faced with raising three children after her husband’s death, she turned to writing and teaching school. How this quiet, retiring woman came to lead the Women’s Christian Temperance Union is a story of answering when God called.

**Serapta Henry:** One day I found my son with some dirty candy in his hand. He told me he had gotten the filthy candy in the store behind him. I had never seen a saloon before, so I didn’t recognize the building. But I told him I wanted to see that store owner. Over his protests, we walked inside. I was appalled. It wasn’t just the stench and the filth, but the sight of men reduced by drunkenness. It was a sight I couldn’t forget.

**Narrator:** Sara invited church ladies to the house to urge them to do something. They agreed that something should be done, but would not lead in any effort. Sara asked her

pastor to lead out; he also declined. Sara Henry tried to escape the mantle of leadership, but it would fall nowhere but on her shoulders. Long past her normal hour for sleep she paced the floor. Suddenly the dilemma was clear: would she answer God's call, or would she disregard it?

**Henry:** As soon as I understood the problem, I said I would do what God had called me to do. Immediately I felt peace and immediately I knew what I had to do. I wrote special notices to all the churches in the area asking for a special prayer meeting the following Wednesday night during which we would discuss this liquor problem. Then I went to sleep.

**Narrator:** But Sara Henry was not through fighting with her own timidity. The morning of the meeting she awoke paralyzed. She could not move because of her fear.

**Henry:** I called my women friends to pray for me, and I promised that I would be at the meeting that night. All day I stayed in bed. Finally, after supper, the women got me out of bed, dressed me, and took me out to the carriage. I was still mostly paralyzed with fright. But at the sight of the church and the large crowd that had gathered in support of the fight against liquor, I forgot myself and my strength returned.

**Chorus:** Good.

**Narrator:** From that night on, Sara Henry found the strength each day to answer God's call to become a public evangelist, proclaiming both the blessings of Christianity and the evils of liquor. For 20 years, she gave every moment of her life to the Women's Christian Temperance Union cause. She sometimes preached two or three times a day, often preaching every day for weeks at a time. She became the official national evangelist of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, this shy mother of three who heard when God called.

**Chorus:** Well, what do you know!

**Narrator:** But God planned to call Sara Henry again. God's calls are not always to do his work. God's calls sometimes are sim-

ply to love him more completely. Twenty years of ceaseless work had made an invalid of Sara Henry. So, she turned to the Battle Creek Sanatorium. Friends warned her that the doctors there would try to change more than just her health. They would try to change her religion.

**Henry:** It's not likely that anyone my age with my convictions would change her views. I'm too stubborn and too old to have anybody at Battle Creek do anything to me physically, much less in other ways.

**Narrator:** But Sara Henry's first Sabbath at the Battle Creek Sanatorium did change her. She was impressed by the way the work routines changed. No examinations. No exercises. No special treatments. No unnecessary work. Special worship services. Sara Henry vowed that first week that she would keep both Sabbath and Sunday as long as she stayed there. Weeks later, a large group came to ask her for help.

**Group Of Patients:** Mrs. Henry, we know you are a great evangelist for the Lord. We patients are perplexed about the Sabbath and Sunday business. Would you please show us the Bible texts that prove Sunday is the Lord's day?

**Henry:** I recited to them several of the texts supposedly used to prove the sacredness of Sunday. But even as I spoke the texts fell flat from my lips. I was chagrined. My

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**Adventure was a normal part of the lives of those who answered God's call: "Last Monday, we rode in the coldest weather I ever saw, from morning until night, with nothing to eat but one apple. Oh, how thankful I shall be to see home, sweet home, again."**

—Ellen White

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best reasons were the traditions of men, not Scripture. I was so embarrassed I told them they were all old enough and intelligent enough to search the Scriptures for themselves.

**Narrator:** Sara Henry studied as much and as often as her frail strength would



allow. But the devil taunted her, reminding her of her past dedication to Sunday sacredness.

**Devil:** You'll never decide in favor of the seventh day, Serapta. If your soul's salvation depends upon this, then your soul is lost.

**Henry:** My soul is not lost. It is in God's keeping. I will answer God's call to keep the Sabbath.

**Narrator:** Sara Henry renounced her former belief and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Almost immediately, her former associates in the Women's Christian Temperance Union ridiculed her.

**Henry:** I was heartbroken. I could not understand how they could fail to hear God's call to the seventh day.

**Narrator:** Sara Henry was not the only woman to endure personal heartaches for answering when God called. Maud Boyd buried a daughter in the African mission field. Minnie Sype saw one of her sons die without accepting the present truth she had been teaching. Ellen White already had buried one child when James received impressions from a dream that all was not well with the children. God was calling

James and Ellen to be with their children. Immediately, the couple left their preaching itinerary and returned home.

**White:** When we arrived home, son Henry was already quite sick and confined to bed. He said that he felt unprepared to die and asked us to pray for him. After we had prayed, he called his two brothers to him, hugged them each, and asked their forgiveness for his petty meanness to them. Later, he said he felt peace with Jesus. As his breath came shorter and shorter, he looked at me one last time and said, "Mother, I shall meet you in heaven in the morning of the resurrection, for I know you will be there."

*(pause)* I will, Henry, I will, For God has called me there, and I will answer.

**Narrator:** God calls each of us today. It may not be to India or to Africa or to the General Conference, but God calls each of us. It may be that God has called you to preach the gospel, or to practice medicine, or to witness for him in your own unique way. But God calls each of us.

**Chorus:** He calls both women and men.

**All:** He calls all of us, and we will answer.

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# God as Woman— Blasphemy or Blessing?

by James J. Londis

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Being alone, especially at night, terrified Connie. In her nightmares she was chased by someone seeking to kill her. She had been raped.

Oddly enough it was someone she knew, someone she worked with and trusted. For a variety of reasons she had not reported it to the police. Instead, she had prayed for God to take away her shame.

“I feel so dirty. Perhaps I was dressed too sexy or acted too friendly or something. It was partly my fault. I don’t blame God for not hearing my prayers.”

This tendency to blame themselves rather than their assailants is also often exhibited by the battered wives I counsel. “I can’t understand what I’m doing to make my husband so mad at me,” one woman complained. “I’ll just have to be a better wife.”

Women whose marriages fail echo the same sense of responsibility. Carol believed that Jack was the priest of the family, the leader of the home. But she was never able to live up to his expectations for the kind of wife she was to be. The house was not clean enough, the food was not prepared on time, and her resistance to doing things the way he wanted them done irritated him greatly.

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“I don’t know why I can’t be the kind of wife God wants me to be,” she said. “Maybe I *am* stubborn. I don’t know . . .”

Long before the attack on Connie’s body, her mind had been raped; long before these wives were physically bruised their psyches had been battered; long before Carol and Jack’s separation their perceptions about male-female relationships had been distorted. These women clearly blamed themselves for the evils committed against them because deeply buried in our collective experience as Christians is the notion that the female of the species is the cause of sin, the seductress who lured the male to join her in rebellion against God. She is the reason the world is a place of suffering.

Once women accept responsibility for original sin, it is not difficult for them to blame themselves for every relationship problem they have with men. Should a woman resent being treated as an inferior to men or as a subordinate, she is reminded that when sin entered, she became subject to man. She is to enjoy his achievements and not her own, to be happy in his success and not seek any for herself. She is the “power behind the throne” never to occupy a throne of her own.

For some people, childbirth is the quintessential symbol of her guilt because, according to the Genesis record, it is to remind us that her selfishness brought pain to the world in its infancy. Whether she is

a black woman picking cotton on a hot day or a queen having her nails polished in the palace, her place is the same: she exists for a man in a way he does not exist for her. She is to be his "helpmeet," his "support" and "complement," and if she rebels against what seems to her to be an obvious injustice, she is told that it is *God* who ordered things this way. God wants her to accept her place in the established hierarchy of authority. If she does not, she will never find happiness.

Those women who do not find fulfillment in this supportive role argue that the subordination of women or any other group inevitably and necessarily leads to the exploitation of men and women. Women lose their freedom and thus their dignity if they must define themselves simply in relation to men, while men who subordinate women dehumanize themselves in the process.

Her labor belongs to him. To labor from before dawn to after dusk in his household is her purpose for existence. She has no need to read and write, no need to learn, to travel, to dream. Her sphere is defined, confined; she must not stray from it. . . . Her labor frees him for the momentous tasks of war and politics. He is known at the gates. She is not to be known in public. She is to remain invisible. When he returns in the evening, his food shall be ready, his clothes in order, his couch prepared. In this way her history is stolen from her. It is said that she did nothing. It is his achievements that we read about in books . . .

Early in the morning the army of . . . waitresses, secretaries, nurses, librarians, and teachers march from their houses. The morning chores are rushed, the children pressed through breakfast and off to school so that women can get to work at the same time as men whose women do these chores for them. On the job the women service male work: clean the offices, prepare the food, type the letters, answer the phones, research the studies.

Upon this pyramid of female labor the executive arises, seemingly imbued with superhuman wisdom and magnified power drawn from the combined force of a vast, invisible reservoir; he stands upon it commanding, pronouncing, deciding. . . .

At five o'clock the army of women scatter to markets, nurseries, and kitchens to prepare the home, so that, when the men return, the children are already fetched, the food bought and cooked, the house cleaned. The men linger to consolidate the networks that advance them on the ladder. Women, it is said, just can't compete; they lack what it takes, the drive, the ambition. . . .<sup>1</sup>

After this statement was read to a study group at the Sligo Church, women's eyes moistened and men shook their heads in stunned recognition that there is indeed something awry at the core of male-female relationships. While some believe that the problem is with those women who are no longer content with the place God has assigned them, others insist that the will of God for women is being frustrated by men unwilling to relinquish their power over women. Because I agree with the latter group, both inside and outside the church I would be called a "feminist," that is, a person who believes that women should have social, political, and ecclesiastical rights equal to men. While men and women obviously have different functions in reproduction and parenting, a feminist would hold that those functions do not imply a difference in status or authority. Men and women are all "persons" enjoying a humanity enriched by the lives they share.

**B**ecause of my experience as a pastor, I am forced to wonder about the adequacy of a Christian theology that is still used to justify sex discrimination and oppression. What are we to make of religious tradition in which God is imaged as a male, the ancient system in which "he" reveals himself is patriarchal, the supreme revelation of

his will in the incarnation is through a "son," and all of the early church's leading authorities are male? Can we be comfortable with a theology which asserts that the ultimate reality is essentially masculine, so much so that, as one woman observed, "I'm made in the image of God but a little less so than you are, Jim Londis. At best, I'm an afterthought."

I am left asking: "When we call God 'father,' is it a metaphor, or is it literally true? Is God male? Is 'maleness' divine in a way 'femaleness' is not?"

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**There is indeed something awry at the core of male-female relationships—the will of God for women is being frustrated by men unwilling to relinquish their power over women.**

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At Columbia Union College I teach a course in the philosophy of religion. Whenever we come to the point of discussing the nature of God, my students usually defend the following propositions:

- (1) God has a body just like ours;
- (2) God's body resembles the male;
- (3) I can relate to God only if he has a body of some kind.

They are too sophisticated to believe that God has internal organs like ours or has the limitations of a human brain. But they do insist on a human "form" or "appearance" being a part of God's reality. They reason: "If we are made in his image, he has to look like we do."

When I patiently point out that there is no evidence that the image of God refers to more than our "personhood"—to our capacity to love and decide—and that insisting God has a body somehow imprisons him in the material objects he created, their shock is seismic. They seem to have never been asked to take seriously Jesus' statement that "God is a spirit . . ." who transcends the limitations of corporeality. that his "appearance" is just that—an appearance.<sup>2</sup>

I do not deny that, in an effort to help finite creatures respond to the deity in a mode they understand, God appears in bodily form. But that is quite different from claiming God *is* a body. God adopts a human appearance to reassure us and facilitate our relationship to him. Moreover, an undue emphasis on God's body may lead us to a *reductio ad absurdum*, such as debating the color of God's body. Is it white, as Archie Bunker assumed? Or is it black, as his neighbor Jefferson assumed? Or is God in one sense every color and in the ultimate sense beyond color?

If a body is not essential to God's deity, then maleness cannot be essential either. Of course, one does feel the closeness and warmth of God via human images. When they are absent, God seems remote and unapproachable, so much so that prayer and worship become more difficult. That is why we must continue to think about God in human images.

The question is, how much do we want to restrict those images? If God is essentially personal, then any personal images help us understand his relationship to us. This is why the masculine God of the Bible is also portrayed in feminine imagery. God is pictured as carrying Israel in the womb, as birthing and suckling his people, as comforting them as a mother comforts her child, and as wanting to "gather them as a hen gathers her chicks. . . ." Such feminine images enhance and complement the masculine ones, making God's compassion richer, more profound, and more experientially powerful for all of us. We all have mothers and all understand, to some extent, the unique bodily functions of females. Consequently, men are not the sex opposite to women but complementary to them, both sexes unified by their shared humanity. This unity of male and female suggests that:

God is neither male nor female, nor a combination of the two. And yet, detecting divine transcendence in human reality requires human clues. Unique among them . . . is sexuality. God creates, in the

image of God, male and female. To describe male and female, then, is to perceive the image of God; to perceive the image of God is to glimpse the transcendence of God.<sup>3</sup>

Relating to God as a person with an appearance like our own may be the only way we can have the experiential intimacy with deity we require. But let us not additionally, and therefore wrongly, suppose that God's bodily form in such appearances is identical to his substance. As Phyllis Trible so aptly put it: "A metaphor is like a finger pointing to the moon;" however, "the moon . . . can be seen but not possessed."<sup>4</sup> The moment we equate our finger with the moon, as it were, we are guilty of idolatry. If God's appearance is believed to be more than a pointer, we do not worship God in his transcendence but worship our limited images or metaphors of him. To avoid falling into this trap, we must be willing to enrich the typical masculine language we use about God. Feminine imagery is one way to accomplish that. If we refuse to do so, we divinize maleness and commit idolatry.

Without this issue of male-as-metaphor clearly in mind, we will assume that the patriarchal system of the Old Testament does indeed reflect the nature and will of God. Understanding the metaphorical nature of theological assertions allows us to deal with biblical patriarchalism more adequately.

One cannot deny that there is a strong bias toward God as male and the male as priest/leader in the Middle Eastern cultures of the biblical writers, a bias reflected the Bible. If the feminine imagery and experience that does appear in Scripture is overlooked, the Bible will be used to justify male superiority in the contemporary church.

When we look at the Bible from a woman's perspective, we recognize that the biblical translators who worked with the Hebrew and Greek texts sometimes betray a male orientation. They seem to assume that men developed all the missionary initia-

tives in the early church and always exercised central leadership. Therefore, texts that do not fit this model are quickly translated/interpreted to stress male authority. Romans 16:1-3 is an example. In the text, Phoebe is described as a *diakonos*. When the Greek text applies this term to men it is rendered "deacon" in English. But when Phoebe is referred to, the same Greek word *diakonos* is translated "servant" or "helper." This is obviously not a consistent way to render the Greek term: deacon suggests leadership, while the other terms do not. It is speculated that the translators presuppose

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**Jesus created a unique community in Palestine, one that was egalitarian in every respect, where gender did not merit special treatment of any kind.**

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that women in the early church are *helping* men, not leading in their own right.<sup>5</sup>

Looking at the Bible through feminine eyes, we also notice that while there are glimpses of women in extraordinary roles in the book of Acts—supporting the missionary movement with money and the use of their homes as meeting places—there are no narratives featuring women as they do men. Luke, the writer of Acts, refers to prophetesses in the early church, and Paul takes it for granted that women are speaking in public worship (I Cor. 11), but these references to women are in stark contrast to the stories about men. Where gripping details are given about the men, the women are all but ignored. (The outstanding exception to this pattern in the New Testament is the gospel of John which is full of stories about women.) This suggests that even though it is divine revelation, when the Bible is written by men steeped in a patriarchal culture its silences must be analyzed very carefully. Women may have exercised leadership, but men neglected to report it as fully as they might have.

Scholars also wonder about a peculiar debate in the early Christian community over whether Peter or Mary was the first witness to Christ's resurrection. Some extracanonical documents even record an intense competition between these two disciples. Such a tradition of a struggle between Mary and Peter over priority of witness to the resurrection may have mirrored the church's struggle over the leadership role of women. Otherwise, it is argued, discussion over who was the first witness to the risen Christ would be pointless.

Silence does not have only negative connotations, however; it can be positive. A case in point might be the fact that not one story or statement attributed to Jesus can be found in which he demands women either adapt to or submit to patriarchy. On the contrary, Jesus created a unique community in Palestine, one that was egalitarian in every respect. One's economic class, moral behavior, education, strict adherence to religious practice, or gender did not merit special treatment of any kind. His open, affirming lifestyle, in which acceptance was offered especially to the outcast, was a powerful protest to the dominant culture. Even with his inner 12 being all male, from all we know Christ included women the

same way he included men. Only as the Christian movement became institutionalized in the hierarchical patterns of the first few centuries were women gradually excluded from leadership.

Nevertheless, some point out, even if Jesus was silent about patriarchy, Paul certainly was not. He clearly teaches the subordination of women to men. However, before we jump to that conclusion, we ought to make sure we place all relevant passages in their historical context. What appears to be a text justifying women's subordination may turn out to be a discussion about an altogether different matter.<sup>6</sup> We must also distinguish between those texts that address specific cases in the church ("casuistic" counsel), and those articulating a general principle ("apodictic" counsel).

Feminist theologians insist that if we did not distinguish between cases and principles, we would still be justifying polygamy and slavery, both of which are tacitly supported in Scripture. But we recognize that while God may have tolerated such conditions for a time, they fell far short of his ideal. When the church finally perceived the impossible tension between God's will and the practice of the believers, Christians had to take a decided stand against slavery.

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The same situation exists with respect to the role of women in the church. When God has called people to serve his church in the prophetic ministry, he has made no distinctions based on gender. His promise in Joel 2 is that the spirit will be poured out on "sons and daughters," "young men and young women." If God is "no respecter of persons" when he chooses prophets, why does the church assume it must respect gender differences when it chooses preachers? To the extent that the church prevents women from exercising full leadership in the ministry, to that extent the church turns its back on the ideal to which God summons it.

When we move from the specifically biblical to the more general theological issues, feminists believe that the principle of the full humanity of women is the *sine qua non* of God's will.<sup>7</sup> Up until now, this full humanity has been granted only to men. What it will mean for women to have it is not fully known, for it has never existed in history. When women claim this principle for themselves, their experience changes profoundly; since our experience is an important source for theological reflection, feminist theologies will also be somewhat different from the male-oriented theologies of the past.

Recent publications suggest some of these new directions feminist thought is going. To the extent that hierarchy creates privileged classes, feminist thought is anti-hierarchical. It argues for mutuality and equality, for a relational structure in human existence that appropriates the principles within the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament. Once the supreme authority of the prophetic message of freedom for the oppressed is acknowledged, patriarchy can "no longer be maintained as authoritative."<sup>8</sup> When that happens, anthropology, Christology, eschatology, and virtually all the other doctrines must be re-examined to see how female

experience illuminates their meaning for us. Male and female together, in full humanity, provide the balance needed for theological insight. A feminine theology that ignored the male dimension would be just as twisted as the one we have known. For the truth to be served, both must be affirmed.

To feminists, the thrust of the biblical message is clear: regardless of the reasons for their oppression, God vindicates the poor and oppressed. The Bible points to a new heaven and a new earth in which justice and righteousness flow like a mighty river. Such an eschatological vision bespeaks judgment on the present order of things and summons the church to be the people of God, those who already live under his rule.

Were we now to embrace this vision with all our beings, there would be few, if any, Connies who blame themselves for being raped, or black-and-blue wives who excuse their husbands' violence, or marriages torn apart because they were founded on the principle of male supremacy. Many members in the Potomac Conference watched this vision break into the present last April when several women stood in baptistries to utter the baptismal formula over a number of people they had prepared for baptism. Spines literally tingled from the power of that symbolic act. Men groped for handkerchiefs, and women wiped their eyes. One woman told me that her tearful reaction surprised her, for she would never have predicted the inner stirrings that baptism created. Young girls radiated affirmation and joy, while old men embraced these women pastors with tenderness.

At those baptisms, the sense that the glory of God's coming kingdom had shone on our worship in the present created a moment of transcendent meaning. We tasted the sweetness of Paul's triumphant words: "In Christ there is neither Jew or Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:27,28).

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Rosemary Reuther, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), pp. 261-263.

2. Some theologians like Paul Tillich would argue that strictly speaking even the concept of "person" is a metaphor. God as the ultimate ground of reality is beyond the personal. See his *Systematic Theology I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 223, 233-45, for a discussion of his views. It should also be noted, however, that other scholars like E. LaB. Cherbonnier insist that person is the highest conceivable category that can be applied to God. It is not anthropomorphic to use personalistic language about God, for our concept of what person means comes from our understanding of God and our realization that we are made in his image. See his "The Logic of Biblical Anthropomorphism," *The Harvard Theological Review*, July 1962, pp. 187-206.

3. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 21. Quoted in Sallie McFague's *Metaphorical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 169.

4. *Ibid.*

5. For a thorough discussion of the biblical materials, see Elisabeth Schussler-Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroads Publishing Co., 1983); Krister Stendahl's *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966); Letty Russell's *The Liberating Word: A Guide to Non-Sexist Interpretation of The Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976); and Paul K. Jewett's *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975).

6. An example of this point is Jerome Murphy O'Connor's "Sex and Logic in I Corinthians 11:2-16," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4, October 1980, pp. 482-500. O'Connor argues that Paul's concern in this passage is that men and women be distinguishable from each other in their hairstyles. The apostle is not dealing with the issue of hierarchical structures in church leadership.

7. See Reuther, pp. 93-115.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 25.



## Enjoying the Bible As Literature

Robert Alter. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. xii & 195pp. New York: Basic Books, 1981. \$14.50.

Reviewed by Carolyn Stevens Shultz

When Seventh-day Adventists talk or write about how to study the Bible, they often discuss plans for reading it through in a year or for arranging sequences of key texts to find out what the Bible has to say about baptism or the state of the dead. Unfortunately, in their efforts to supply the systematic theology the Bible lacks, Adventists may too easily forget that the Bible is largely narrative. Thanks to the writings of the renowned critic and biblical scholar Northrop Frye (see *Spectrum 13:2* for a discussion of his recent work, *The Great Code*), we have been encouraged to approach the Bible as primarily a work of literature, to see it as a unified whole, its separate elements each illuminating a part of that progress toward the ultimate restoration of order and holiness that is its pervasive theme.

Robert Alter's recent book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, also contributes importantly to this much-needed emphasis on the Bible as literature. An eminent critic of modern Hebrew literature and the modern European novel, Alter marshals his considerable knowledge and lucid prose style to propose a stimulating new approach to reading the Old Testament stories. He argues that ". . . we shall come much closer to the range of intended meanings—theological, psychological, moral, or whatever—of the biblical tale by understanding precisely *how* it is told" (p. 179, underscoring mine). In particular, attentiveness to such matters as thematic key words; the reiteration of motifs; the delineation of character, relations, and

motives through dialogue; the use of verbatim repetition with minute but significant changes; purposeful narrative shifts from strategic withholding of comment to divulgence of an omniscient overview; and the use of a montage of sources in order to convey simultaneously more than one perspective on a character or event "is important not only for those curious about matters of narrative technique . . . but also for anyone who wants to come to terms with the significance of the Bible" (p. 179).

Alter is aware that because many critics and general readers think of the Hebrew Bible as sacred history, they consider the methods of literary analysis inapplicable to the biblical stories; and he acknowledges that history and fiction are not the same thing. But because history and fiction share a whole range of narrative strategies, Alter characterizes biblical narratives as historicized prose fiction. The Hebrew writers appear to have deliberately avoided the epic genre, with its emphasis on fairly static characters and great specificity of detail, Alter argues, in favor of a narrative style characterized by "rigorous economy of means" and under-girded by "the basic perception that man must live before God, in the transforming medium of time, incessantly and perplexingly in relation with others" because God created him to enjoy and to suffer "all the consequences of human freedom" (p. 22). Only believers in a divine dictation theory of inspiration could disagree with Alter that recognizing the literary strategies used by various authors in no way detracts from the "truth" of the stories or their power to illuminate man's moral condition.

Acknowledging that the Old Testament books were composed by many hands over several centuries, Alter credits the final redactors with purposeful intelligence and analyzes the final products as literary wholes. This approach allows him to find

significant meaning in the habit biblical writers had of including differing accounts of the same event and in their persistent re-use of type-scenes.

Alter clearly illustrates his approach to varied biblical accounts of the same event with his treatment of the two seemingly contradictory accounts (I Samuel 16 and 17) of David's rise to prominence (pp. 147-153). In the first account, God sends Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as Saul's successor. After repeatedly mistaking one after another of the seven older sons as the chosen one, Samuel is finally directed by God to anoint the youngest (repeating a common biblical motif of passing over the firstborn). Soon David is summoned to court to soothe Saul's fits by playing the lyre, and rises to become Saul's official armor bearer. In the second account, David remains on the family farm while three (not seven) older brothers are fighting in Saul's army against the Philistines. David has not been anointed, and no mention is made of his musical abilities or his role as royal armor-bearer. In fact, Alter observes, much is made of his total unfamiliarity with armor. David comes to the battlefield to bring provisions to his brothers and makes an impressive debut by slaying Goliath; but "he is so unfamiliar a face to both Saul and Abner, Saul's commander-in-chief, that, at the end of the chapter, they both confess they have no idea who he is . . . and he has to identify himself to Saul."

Obviously "Saul would have had to meet David for the first time either as music therapist in his court or as giant-killer on the battlefield, but he could not have done both." Alter agrees with Kenneth R. R. Gros Luis that such a contradiction could not have escaped the attention of whoever put the narrative into final form and concludes that the decision to use the two versions, one theological in emphasis, one folkloric, was deliberate. Apparently the final author chose to use both versions because "both were necessary to his conception of David's character and historical role." In the first

account God is active, David is passive; his election is a gift, or a fate. In the second, David's own initiative gains him a captaincy and finally, after banishment and a bloody civil war, the throne.

As so often in the Old Testament narratives, Alter points out, we are left "swaying in the dynamic interplay between two theologies, two conceptions of kingship and history, two views of David the man." Alter contends that biblical narrative is often purposefully ambiguous, a montage of viewpoints arranged in sequence in order to reflect what the authors conceived to be "the abiding complexity of their subjects."

Alter has tried to help us "adjust the fine focus" of our "literary binoculars" so that we can enjoy the "suprising subtlety and inventiveness of detail, and in many instances a beautifully interwoven wholeness" (p. 188). If he had done only that, his book would be useful. But Alter recognizes that the biblical writers' pleasure of imaginative play is deeply interfused with a sense of great spiritual urgency. The biblical writers fashion their personages with a complicated, sometimes alluring, often fiercely insistent individuality because it is in the stubbornness of human individuality that each man and woman encounters God or ignores him, responds to or resists him. Subsequent religious tradition has by and large encouraged us to take the Bible seriously rather than to enjoy it, but the paradoxical truth of the matter may well be that by learning to enjoy the biblical stories more fully as stories, we shall also come to see more clearly what they mean to tell us about God, man, and the perilously momentous realm of history (p. 189).

Alter imagined, when he undertook his study, that he would "ruffle a lot of feathers," but he discovered instead "generous receptivity" to his ideas among professional biblical scholars. His book deserves an equally warm reception from all Jewish and Christian readers.

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Carolyn Stevens Shultz teaches English at Walla Walla College.

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## Responses

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### Women Pastors—Yes

To the Editors: After reading the article "Women Pastors Begin Baptizing" in the last issue of *Spectrum*, (Vol. 15, No. 2), I felt compelled to write you in support of full ordination for women, in particular, for Reverend Marcia Frost, one of the protagonists of the article.

Reverend Frost befriended me and several of my acquaintances while we were grieving for a terminally ill friend. She helped us and the victim deal with the impending death, both mentally and emotionally.

Reverend Frost was a great source of comfort to me and my sick friend throughout his three week stay in intensive care. Towards the end, I had to return to Miami for work. I hated to leave because there were only a few friends and no family members of the victim in the Washington, D.C. area to spend time with him during his last days. Reverend Frost took care of this for me. For nine days Reverend Frost visited my friend twice each day spending hours at his side, holding his hand and talking gently to him even during long periods of unconsciousness. She would then take the time to write or call me regarding his status and to question my well-being.

It was Reverend Frost who called me from the hospital at 2:26 a.m. May 11th to tell me that my friend had died. It was also Reverend Frost who surprised me by being at the hastily arranged funeral in Goodlettsville, Tennessee on May 12th and who had the sensitivity and emotional strength to stand up and offer words of peace and love and friendship when she realized a eulogy had not been thought of for the meager, graveside service.

I have resisted thinking of God, Jesus, faith, the Final Judgement, or anything to do with church or organized religion throughout my adult years. I am an attorney dependent on logic to guide my personal and professional lives. However, I have been so overwhelmed by the love, charity, sensitivity, concern, commitment, intelligence, and peace displayed by Reverend Frost throughout my recent ordeal and since that I have been obliged to open my mind, however small the opening, to the concepts of faith, God, and Jesus.

Many of my concerns and reservations regarding organized religion were rekindled when I heard of the difficulties Reverend Frost and other female pastors were having in their efforts to fully carry out their calling from God.

If the measure of a good clergy person is to be able to inspire people to open their hearts and minds to

each other and through personal example foster feelings of love, charity, patience and understanding, Reverend Marcia Frost is among the best. She and others like her should be allowed complete fulfillment of their religious callings.

Peter J. Andolina  
Miami, FL

To the Editors: Our Glendale City Adventist church board comprises 42 voting members, plus staff. Almost exactly one-half are *women*; one is a teenager. Seven have various postgraduate degrees. Linda Gage, M.A., is an associate pastor involved with family ministries. After all, more than half the congregation is female.

As chairperson, I sense that this board is verbal, caring, and very concerned about local church finances. They do not seem intimidated by man-made traditions and organizations.

After being on the church board for a couple of decades, this is refreshing to me.

Robert L. Marsh, M.D.  
Chairperson, Church Board  
Glendale City Adventist Church  
Glendale, CA

To the Editors: The answer to the question "Can a woman be ordained to the ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?" must be determined primarily by what is good for the church, not by what is good for women. We must ask: "What is the will of God?" "What will further the gospel?" To obey God is always to obey him in an actual situation no matter how difficult the choice or how far-reaching the consequences. Some regard the possible ordination of women to the ministry as an irrelevant question on which the church should not waste its time and resources. They may hold it as self-evident from the Bible and the church's tradition that women cannot be ordained to the ministry; or they may feel that the world's needs are now being met outside the institutional church and the ordained ministry; or they may regard the ordination of women as simply a further "professionalization" of the church's ministry.

The term ministry is used in a wide sense of service in the church and to the world, and is not restricted to the ordained ministry. All Seventh-day Adventist Christians share in the "priesthood" of their Lord and this is the primary order of ministry to which all Christians are called by baptism. In order that all members of the church may grow up into the

fullness of this "priesthood," Christ calls and empowers some to be "priests or ministers of the priestly people," "servants of the servants of God." Ordination is of crucial significance because it is seen as the church *acknowledgment* that God is setting apart a particular person for his own purpose, together with the church's *acceptance* of that person as an instrument through whom God chooses to work.

It is important to emphasize that the church does not call a person to the ministry. That call comes from God alone. The church may be in jeopardy of working against God's will by refusing to acknowledge his call to a particular person and by not accepting that person as an instrument through whom God chooses to work.

Since the mode of entry into the Adventist Church is through baptism by immersion, not circumcision, women have attained fundamental spiritual equality with men; no church administrator or layperson denies their participation in the "royal priesthood."

The cultural argument used by some church leaders against the ordination of women to the Seventh-day Adventist ministry, based on their concern for the unity of the world church, is really a disagreement with the practices and precedences set by the world church e.g., (1) the permission granted to unordained male clergy in North America to perform the duties and ceremonies of the Church including baptism, (2) the M.Div. degree as the normal standard requirement for entrance into the ministry is primarily a North American standard and requirement which is not required in the Third World church, (3) the current discussion on church structure which is viewed with deep suspicion by some leaders of the church in the Third World.

The cultural argument which is made for not ordaining women in North America is fundamentally an argument in favor of the subordination of women. The crucial question that those who oppose ordination for women must face is whether subordination of women is a fundamental biblical principle grounded in creation and continued in Christ. From a careful reading of Scripture it seems clear that the question of subordination of women comes from the story of the fall and not of creation. Scripture does suggest that the subordination of women, far from being part of the Creator's original design, belongs rather to our fallen condition.

Indeed, the practice of subordination may be appropriate in another social and cultural milieu but it is questionable whether we as a church are required to perpetuate it in the interest of "unity." Apart from the cultural argument, I believe there are two more reasons for the opposition to the ordination of women which characterize the attitudes of some of our leaders. One has to do with tradition.

The early Fathers, though recognizing the spiritual equality of the sexes, usually only considered the question of women and their ordination in connection with heretical sects, some of which had women elders. The scholastics of the Middle Ages and even

Protestant theologians like Calvin believed that according to natural or divine law, a woman's sex rendered her incapable of receiving ordination: woman being under subjection cannot signify an eminent status, and so cannot receive ordination.

Is this the kind of tradition that the Seventh-day Adventist Church wants to continue? The second reason for some leaders' opposition is prejudice. Since, on their own admission, there is no biblical or theological basis for their opposition, we may well interpret the opposition to be based solely on prejudice or a fear of sharing authority.

The will of God which Jesus was sent to fulfill and declare was primarily the will of God for his contemporaries. The church is the community of the Holy Spirit, and God's will is discerned in changing conditions and times. He may will a new step in one place while practice continues unchanged elsewhere, for he takes account of all the facts, including sociological ones.

*The New Testament does not encourage Christians to think that nothing should be done for the first time and both the apostolic church and the Seventh-day Adventist Church have done things which Jesus did not do. Those who consider that the time is now ripe for the church to ordain women believe that the ministry now needs to carry the symbolism of both man and woman, and think it possible that women ministers might convey elements in the God-head which are at present hidden. When ordained, women would become neither what men are, nor what men expect them to be, but what they will discover themselves to be through ministry.*

—Walter Douglas, Professor  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary  
Andrews University

## Church of the People?

**T**o the Editors: It was with great interest I read Roy Branson's analysis of our church structure ("A Church Of, By and For the People," *Spectrum*, Vol. 15, No. 2). I would like to express my comments with respect to the *Corporate Model* section, which is within my purview and expertise.

First, it would be a folly to believe that any organization, be it General Motors Corporation, a "Mom and Pop" grocery store, or a charitable entity, such as the Ford Foundation, can ignore established business and financial principles and remain prosperous in its endeavors. Thus, the premise "the church is first and foremost a church, not a business" merely indicates an uninformed opinion as to the fundamentals that guard such church or any other organization from financial disaster. A corporation is accountable to its shareholders; a church is likewise accountable to its constituency.

Second, the only method established by any organization, (be it a small church or Exxon Corporation) to protect itself from financial calamity is checks and balances. Such checks and balances are generally implemented through independent audits. The result of such audits are submitted to audit committees established by the board of directors or trustees. The audit committee members, sophisticated in financial affairs and generally members of such boards, are responsible only to the board of directors or trustees.

Unfortunately, such checks and balances are absent from our church organization. Thus, the church encounters financial debacles and embarrassments.

In certain of the church-supported institutions there have been feeble attempts to establish so called internal audits (as distinguished from independent audits). Generally, these auditors, with limited reports and authority, are responsible to their supervisors. This means that a supervisor may frustrate audit findings which may embarrass him or his associates; in fact, such incidents do occur. This method of reporting, ostensibly established by non-professionals, is amateurish and ineffective.

Unfortunately, faulty business and financial policies and controls established by non-professionals are perpetuated under the present system. The system, as an example, may work as follows: an inexperienced and/or untrained person is placed in charge of financial affairs of an institution; he holds that position for several years. However, before he leaves he trains an assistant or replacement to take over his duties. Thus, the faulty system continues unabated.

Finally, if the church officials responsible for financial affairs were employed by organizations subject to the scrutiny of the Securities and Exchange Commission, they probably would be charged, at the very least, with neglect of their fiduciary duties, in addition to legal actions by the shareholders.

George A. Arzoo, CPA  
Riverside, CA

**T**o the Editors: Is there anything in the Scripture that supports the notion that laypeople should represent laypeople?

I am not opposed to the concept of streamlining the organization of the church for greater efficiency. A God of order would expect us to do no less. I am not opposed to laypeople being called in by the ministry to contribute their expertise to the smooth running of the church. But surely the layperson is being called in on the basis of a felt need, and not on the basis of representation.

T. Arthur Keough  
Theology Department  
Columbia Union College  
Takoma Park, MD

## Tithe to Local Church

**T**o the Editors: Each church, not simply each division, is and must be the place where actual mission takes place. More of the local church's wealth should therefore be left in the local church for the local church to control. One could suggest retaining 25% of the tithe in the local church where alone both ministry and mission actually occur. Such independence would increase mission activity and mission offering.

Two other items I would suggest would strengthen the local church. First, leave ministers in one parish for longer terms (e.g. four to five years) than is currently done. Second, let mission boards not simply distribute gathered wealth, but allocate mission projects to local churches and allow a direct relationship to exist between the local church and the mission personnel in the fulfilling of the project.

Some will fear that any increased control by the local church over its own funds will lead to inequalities and congregational empire building. Structures like conferences or unions are not, of course, free from this temptation. The reality of the risk must not, however, lead us to deny the desirability and need of greater participation by the local church in the use and allocation of its own finances. The mission board's role in distributing projects ensures the kind of equality that Scripture envisages (2 Cor. 8:13-15); the spirit of mission that is already strong in most local churches, when rightly fostered, will prevent congregations from using their funds only for themselves.

Others will have misgivings that greater control at the local church level is moving towards congregationalism. However, the suggested role for the local church is one of mutual participation and limited control, which is no more congregational than central control is papal. Greater involvement by the local church in the fulfillment of its mission will not abolish organization, but make organization function more effectively.

Norman H. Young  
Theology Department  
Avondale College  
Cooranbong, Australia

**T**o the Editors: The local church is the basic unit in our organization and it will always be so for the members of the church. The formulation of ecclesiastical policies and guidelines cannot and never can take the place of evangelism and soul-winning but must ever take second place in our thinking and planning. To use a business term, the local church is the producing agent.

A rearrangement of our financial/tithe structure as follows would be helpful (the percentages are approximations):

	Current	Proposed
General Conference	20%	20%
Union	10%	10%
Conference	60%	50%
Sustentation	10%	10%
Local church	0%	10%

Our local churches need this help badly. Most of our members gladly give to all worthy causes besides returning their tithe. Why should administration use so much of the tithe dollar when the local church, the basic producing agency, is hindered in its evangelistic outreach for lack of funds?

Charles Manoram, pastor  
Kauai, HI

## Adventists in Combat

To the Editors: I have just read James Coffin's article on Adventists in the military.

I don't know whose army James Coffin was in, but the army I served in taught us the principals of triage. If you don't have time to take care of all the wounded, you skip the hard cases and treat those you can save. We were taught that we were to use the less seriously wounded to help take care of the more seriously injured.

Mr. Coffin makes the wildest accusation by declaring it's against military code to treat enemy wounded. The American army I served in stressed that we were to obey the rules of warfare according to the Geneva convention which clearly states that enemy prisoners are to be given the same medical treatment as our own soldiers. He questions whether a medic would really do that; I would ask, does an overworked physician give the same care to a patient who pays his bills promptly as he would give an indigent person who may sue him for malpractice after the treatment?

Arthur E. Westphal  
Takoma Park, MD

## Get Azaria Book Free

To the Editors: For those Spectrum readers who are interested in learning more about the Chamberlain's Azaria murder trial in Australia, I have some more copies of the book by Phil Ward, entitled, *Azaria, What the Jury was Never Told*.

I will be happy to send one of these books free to anyone who will write or telephone for it at the address below.

Roald T. Vinnard, M.D.  
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## Weiss to Oliveira

To the Editors: I am responding to Dr. Enoch Oliveira's letter in *Spectrum* (Vol. 15, No. 2), in which he reacts to an article I wrote about Adventists in Argentina. Ever since the late 1950s, when both of us were classmates at the seminary in Washington, I have considered Dr. Oliveira a valued friend. I hope we can continue to be friends, even if, apparently, we look at the same things differently.

In my article, I described Elder Livingstone as "a still-revered pioneer . . . respected and almost feared by (his) students." I never met Elder Livingstone, nor was I ever his student. But as I grew up I did listen to many young ministerial students tell many stories about Elder Livingstone. I work under the old, unwritten rule that those who are dead may be the subject of a doctoral dissertation. In other words, their work may be critically examined in order to evaluate its impact.

Did I, as Enoch Oliveira asked, "enjoy the beauty of a sunny morning" while in Argentina?" Indeed I did! Among the things that I chose to reflect upon, I said that "the church is losing its inferiority complex vis-a-vis the surrounding culture." I praised "the fine national reputation of the sanitarium . . . (whose) long and well-established mission of mercy . . . could be celebrated with a performance of the most exquisite expression of Argentinian piety." I went on to describe the celebration by saying: "The highlight of the festivities was an excellent performance of the *Misa Criolla*." I also reported that "the church has a wide-open door in Argentina," and expressed my delight "to find studious, sincere pastors committed to their ministry, with a strong sense of responsibility for the people they serve." Finally, I told of the example of two young people, one a medical student, the other a pastoral intern, working together in one of the poorest suburbs of Buenos Aires. There is no doubt that I saw the sunshine in many other places, including my own brother's dedication to his work.

Did I see "mud" anywhere? Not at all! I think my ruminations make clear that some things disappointed me, precisely because I cared and had high expectations. If I mentioned them, it was not to "muddy" anyone, nor to get anyone angry. I intended to open up a dialogue that could eventually lead to changes.

Herold Weiss  
Professor of New Testament  
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